

# Dzygivka

*Historical information on the Jewish community there*

The following pages come from a chapter in a book in Russian that I found many years ago. I cannot recall the name of the book. I asked Dima (Vadim Rosenberg) to translate it. That is what follows. Unfortunately, Dima has misplaced the original. If we can locate it, perhaps more information can be extracted.

I cannot verify the accuracy of this account, but much of the data rings true. For example, it says that in 1889 there were three synagogues. The map presented to me by the mayor of Dzygivka also located three synagogues.

The description of the town's market and economic life is fascinating.

It also says there was an attempted pogrom in 1905, the year before David Maidenberg emigrated. We believe he was living in Odessa at the time, but a threat to his hometown might have been known to him.

The account notes accurately that the Germans and Romanians turned Dzygivka into a ghetto during World War II. In Dima's translation there is a reference to "Transilvania"--this should have been "Transnistria". I am not sure if the error is in the original or the translation.

Some names of Jews are given: Yakov Tsuzmer and Zvooloon Zeling Balaban [Zevulun or Zalman in updated transliteration]. Balaban is also the surname of a man who married the eldest of the Maidenberg sisters, Malkeh. The account notes he published a book in Philadelphia in 1949 called, in Hebrew, "Mini Kedem" or "From Days of Old." I was able to locate the book, but it turns out the "days of old" were from the time of The First Temple, not life in Dzygivka.

-Mike Maidenberg, Feb. 11, 2014

From a book in  
Russian - TRANSLATED  
By DIMA

## Dzygivka

**Dzygivka – a village in Yampol region of Vinnitsa county, or before 1923 a town in Yampol oo'yesh of Podol county.**

**The village is located at banks of the river of Korytnaya (flows into r. Rustava of Dnestr basin), 2km away from the Vinnitsa-Nemirov-Yampol highway, 17km north from Yampol.**

\* \* \*

**A village of Dzygivka was known since 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1787 it received a status of a township and a privilege to do scheduled regular fairs from King Stanislav August. At that time several Jewish families were already living there. At the end of 1780s the Dzygivka Jews had been assigned to the Myastkovkee community (congregation?).**

**In the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to the official data of 1853, the town had a synagogue and a religious school (total 1056 members) , with the rabbi r. Meir Slobidker. In 1845 there operated six first stage heders (total 88 students), and six second stage heders (over 30 students). In 1852 there were 35 Jews professionals with total sales of 1,500 rubles/year. In 1871 there were 1510 inhabitants considered to be of a traders' class (mostly Jews), and 2640 considered to be of a farmers' class; there were total of 721 homes.**

**In 1889 the congregation of 1007 contained three synagogues named Shool, Beth-Hamidirash, and Klaus. Klaus was located in a house that was not the community's property but belonged to a private person, and was subject to an appropriate taxation. In 1899, with regards to the tax bill received by the owner of the building, the congregation had applied to the local government asking to cover the state tax bill with the leftovers of the rest of the local tax. The claim was based on the fact that the building was initially built with public funds and was originally designed to be a synagogue.**

**According to historical accounts, at the end of 1880s the "Palestinian idea" that pursued making Jews used to productive labor had found its following even in this hidden province. At that time in Dzygivka young people from wealthy families tried to collect some money for creation of a Palestine-oriented organization.**

**Major sources of income for the most of the Jewish population (consisting of owners of small shops, small traders, professionals and handymen) were the fair held twice a week, and the local wine-tobacco factory.**

**"Usually on a fair day the local farmers bring their wheat and sell it in small quantities to the Jews. The Jews, not being able to take this wheat somewhere farther away for more profitable return, have to immediately re-sell it to the wine-tobacco factory for a minimal profit. This profit may total 3-4 rubles per fair. This**

sum, split into 10-kopeck dinners and suppers, is the source of survival for a whole family during the two weeks between the fairs.”

Economy stagnation in the Southwest region in 1890s had reflected on the material state of the Dzygivka Jewish population, frequent bad harvests even more worsening the situation for small wheat-traders.

“When the harvest is good, the commerce is boiling, the town comes to life; thanks to the presence of large land owners in our area there are many traders who come here and buy large quantities of wheat; all contracts to clean the wheat and deliver it to the stations of the Southwest railroad the traders always give to the locals. But now, it’s a complete stagnation and the business people, especially the traders, are depressed.”

Commenting on this “unheard-of calm” and “inactivity” of the commercial workers and traders, the correspondent mentions that more agricultural workers appear among the Jews, working at wheat milling.

\* \* \*

Yakov Tsuzmer who as a 9 year old boy had moved into Dzygivka in the beginning of the 1880s together with his father, had studied at the Kloiza, and tutored as a private Torah and Hebrew teacher, dedicated a few lines to a special spiritual atmosphere of this small town:

“It was a forgotten town, not decorated by neither nature, nor by the people. There was no hill, no forest, not even a stream to do a religious service or just to wash, there was no industry, no considerable trade. It was remote from road intersections, and its whole income was supported by the weekly fair that attracted buyers and sellers from the four corners of the surrounding area into this town. But this place was blessed by a strong source of clean and tasty water that was erupting from under the ground with loud noise day and night and was famous to the whole area; and there were other healing waters described as: “Is there any other water than the Torah?” – and this source was also known to them. Dzygivka was special by the richness of spirit and supplied the whole area with teachers, educators, and wizards.”

Zvooloon Zeling Balaban (1877-1949) – a teacher, business man, writer – was born in Dzygivka. He published his poems and humorous stories, as well as the collected and refined folk tales in newspapers in Yiddish and Hebrew. He had lived in the US from 1913. In 1949 in Philadelphia he’d published a book “Miney Kedem” (“From the old times”).

\* \* \*

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were five synagogues and houses of prayer. The majority of the Jewish population – the technicians and small traders – lived in poverty, while more wealthy Jews owned shops and stores (about 50 of them), and also pharmaceutical and wood warehouses, a pharmacy and a guest

house. The Jews served in a bank, hospital, worked at the honey and wine-tobacco factories where the managers were Jews too.

In November 1905 there was an attempted pogrom in Dzygivka, but the government had been able to stop it. In the fall of 1917 the farmers from the town and the surrounding villages had managed to destroy all Jewish shops before the arrival of the government troops:

“On October 26 around 2 pm during a riot the Jewish shops in Dzygivka were destroyed. It started with looting of the wagons with leather and ropes, and then the crowd of up to 3 thousand people engaged into breaking the locks from the shops and breaking through their doors and windows. Having broken inside, the mob had stolen all the goods, not a single shop stayed un-touched.”

The Bund faction of the Central Ukrainian Rada (parliament) had submitted an official inquiry regarding this pogrom.

In 1919 regular division of the Ukrainian Army was stationed in Dzygivka. It had put a “contribution” on the town, and had held the Jews as hostages. Consequently, the town had suffered numerous times from the attacks of bandit bands.

Between the wars a Jewish school was opened in Dzygivka, and the Heder was operating unofficially. According to the “Der Emes” newspaper, in the beginning of the 1920s Jewish population of Dzygivka consisted 70% from “traders and small shop owners”, 30% from technicians and handymen. By 1922 about a half of the Jewish population of the town had united into a collective farm. According to the Communist Party sources,

“The Jewish population of the collective farm does not yield to the Party and Soviet influence, but instead to the one of a small-materialistic nature. This twist of “Dzygivka” collectivization cannot be considered normal since the participants do not fit their status due to their social composition, and the land is worked by contracted labor... so this collective farm exists on paper only.”

\* \* \*

In 1787 there were 17 Jews in Dzygivka

In 1790 – 18 Jews

In 1847 – 1,028, in 1897 – 2,187 (30% of total population)

In 1923 – 1,561, in 1939 – 858 (12% of total population)

In 1998 – 12 Jews

\* \* \*

Dzygivka was occupied by the Germans at the end of July 1941 and was considered a part of Transilvania. About 100 deported from Romania Jews had been relocated to the town. Ghetto had been created. Jews were used for involuntary agricultural work, and a large group was taken to the bridge construction in Nicolaev.

\* \* \*

After the liberation of Dzygivka in spring of 1944 the Jewish community counted several hundred people. During the years after the war Jews moved to big cities,

**and only old people had stayed in the village. The “minian” had been gathering in a private house till the end of 1980s. In 1998 only 12 elders-Jews were living in Dzygivka, cared for by the congregation of Yampol.**

**\* \* \***

**The rest contains some not very interesting architectural facts. Dzygivka Jewish cemetery still has over 1,000 tomb stones mostly from 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.**