

CHEŁM

The town has a rich history dating back conclusively to 1442 and anecdotally to the twelfth century. The seventeenth century found Chełm deeply immersed in the trade and exporting of leather and textiles, especially wool and flax. In 1648, Chełm was particularly hard hit by the Cossack armies of Bogdan Chmielnicki, who slaughtered Jews and Polish gentry throughout the region. In the mid-nineteenth century, an important Hasidic community was founded here. In the 1920s, Chełm experienced an economic revival with the establishment of a railroad station.

The Soviets occupied Chełm briefly in September 1939; when they withdrew, several hundred young Jews also left the town before the arrival of the Germans. On December 1, 1939, the Germans deported 1,800 Jewish men toward the Soviet-held town of Sokal; en route, 1,400 of the men were shot. In May and November 1942, most of the remaining Chełm Jews were sent to the Sobibór death camp. When Soviet forces arrived in July 1944, they found only 15 Jews left.

Location

68 km E of Lublin
 51°08' / 23°29'
 Voivodship: Chełm

General Population, 1939

31,000 (50% Jewish)

General Population, 1994

68,846

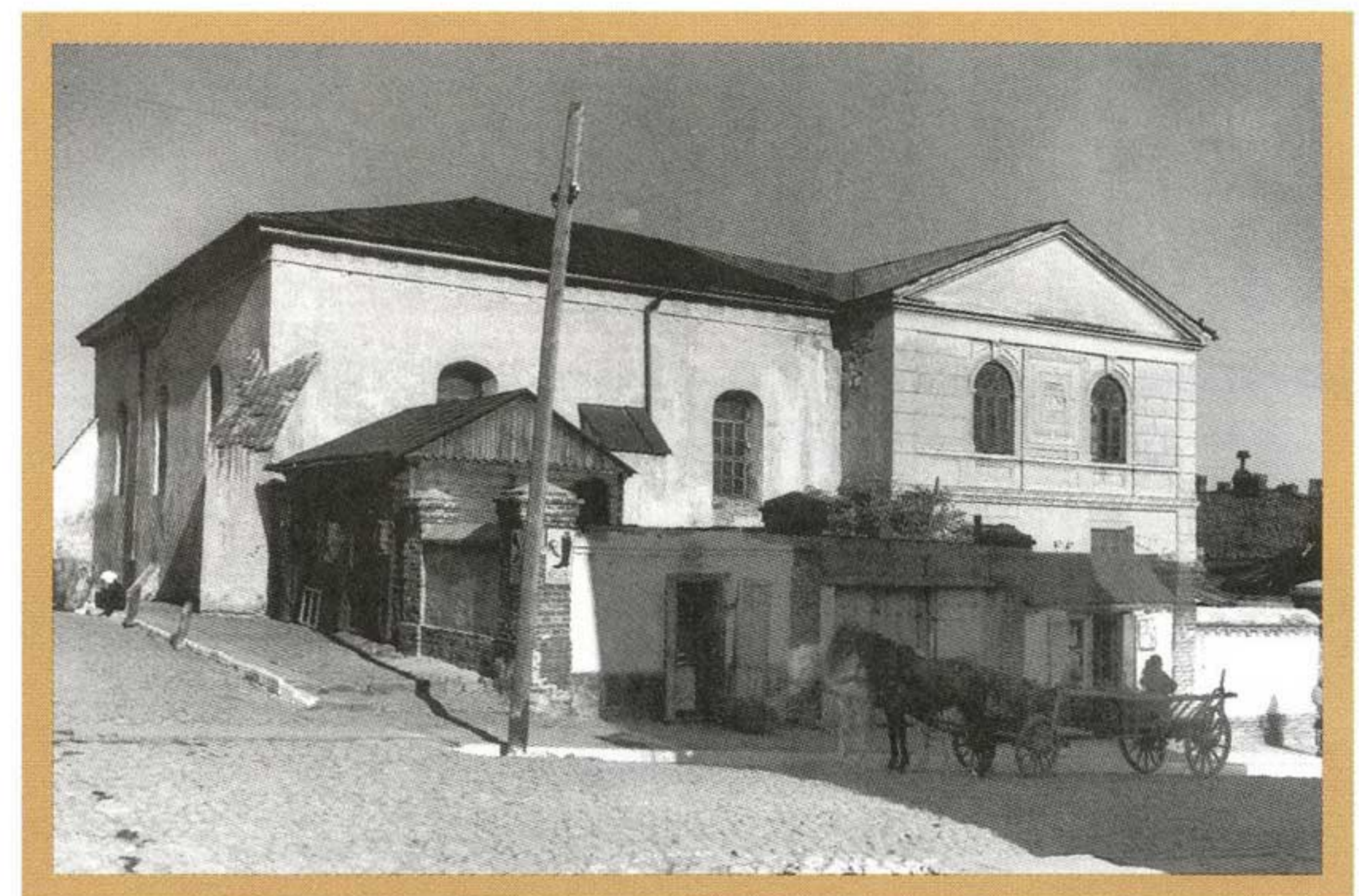
CHELEM, CHELEM, KHELM



SYNAGOGUES

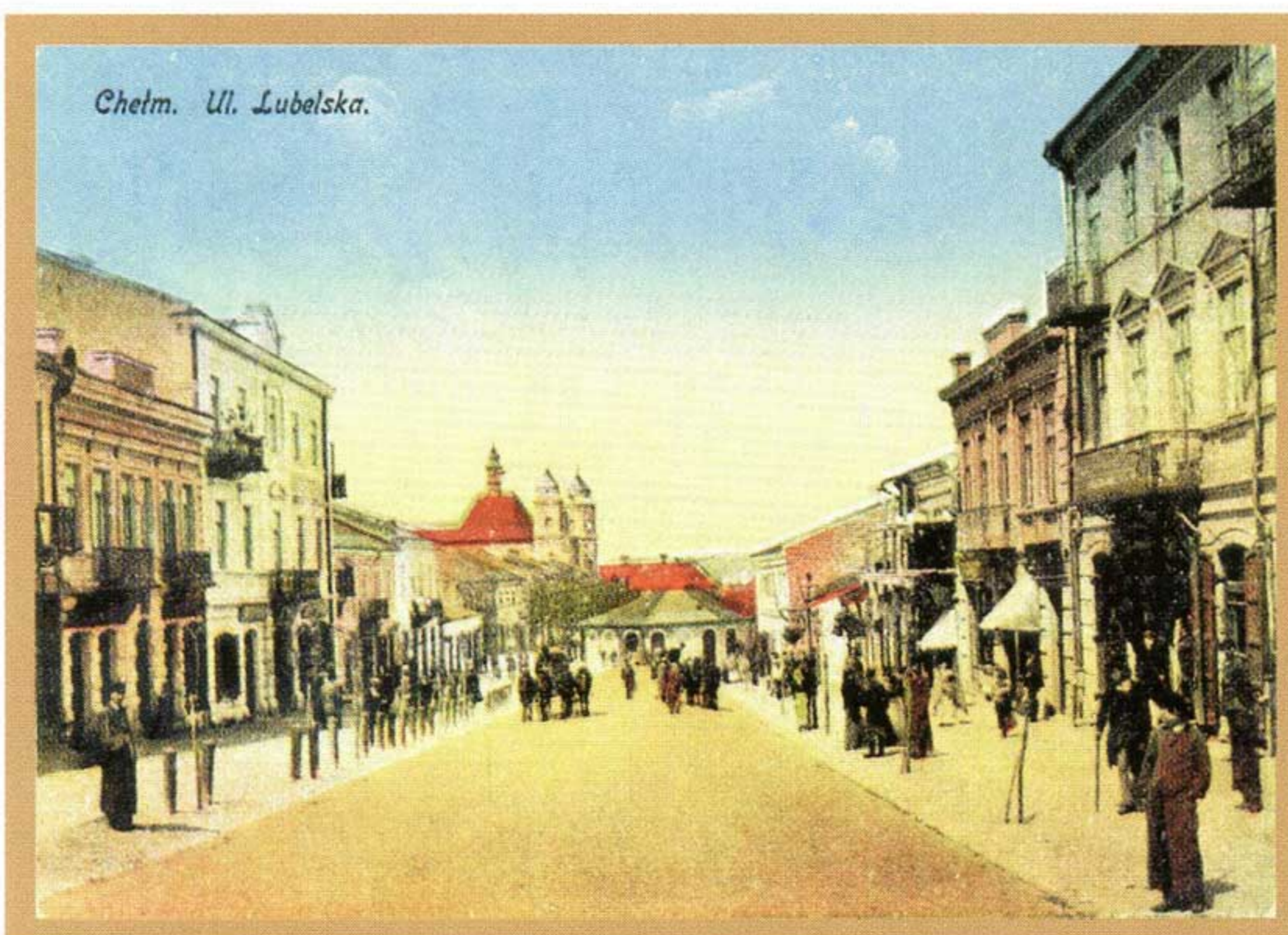
ul. Jatkowa
 Great Synagogue dating from fifteenth century.
 Destroyed by Germans in 1940.

ul. Kopernika 8
 Former synagogue dating from 1914.
 Current use: technical club.



Great Synagogue, ul. Jatkowa, pre-1939

2



ul. Lubelska, c. 1917

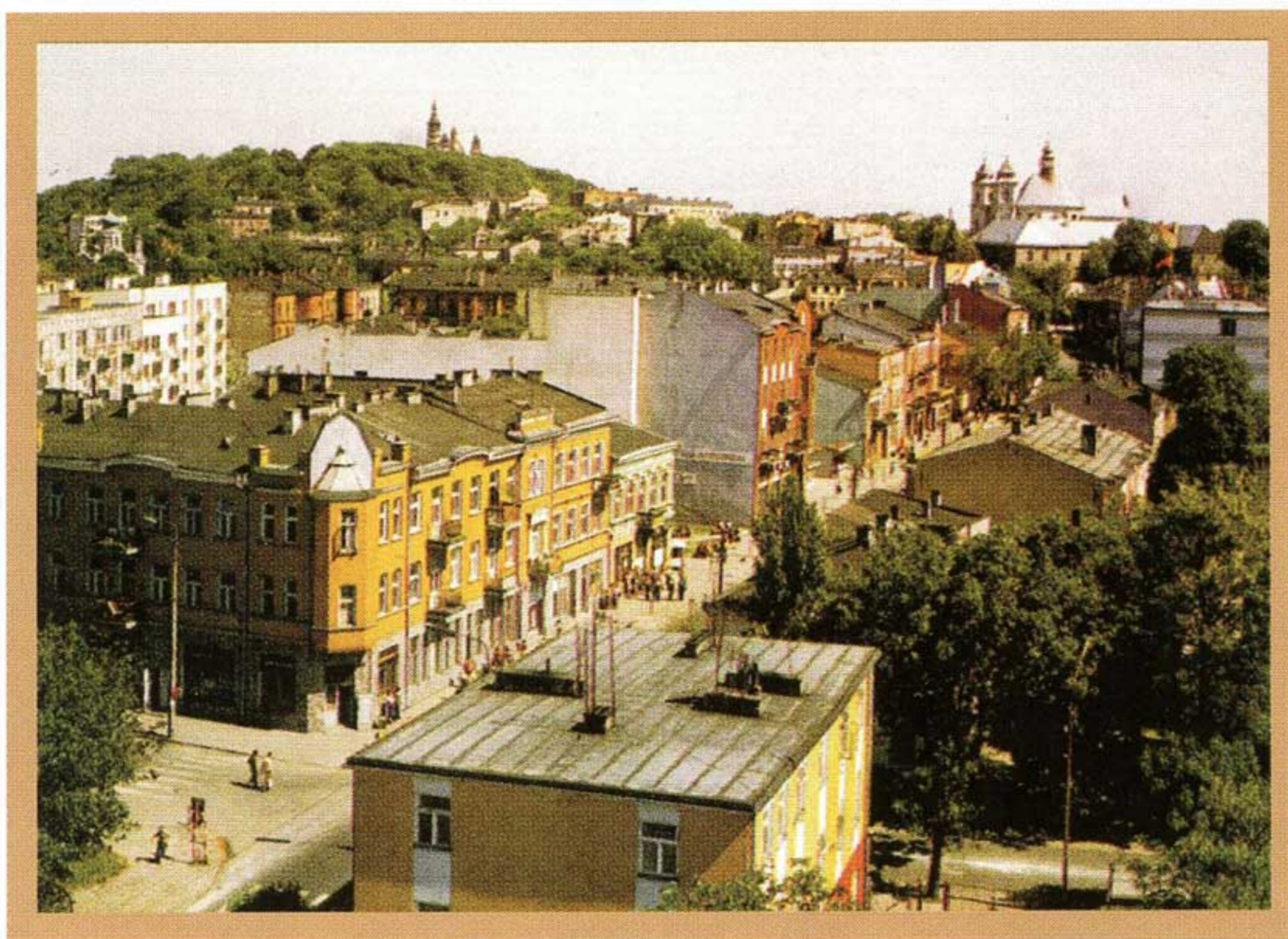
1 Sobibór, Majdanek.

JEWISH CEMETERY

ul. Starościńska
 Cemetery founded in sixteenth century.
 100 tombstones dating from twentieth century.
 Now part of a park.

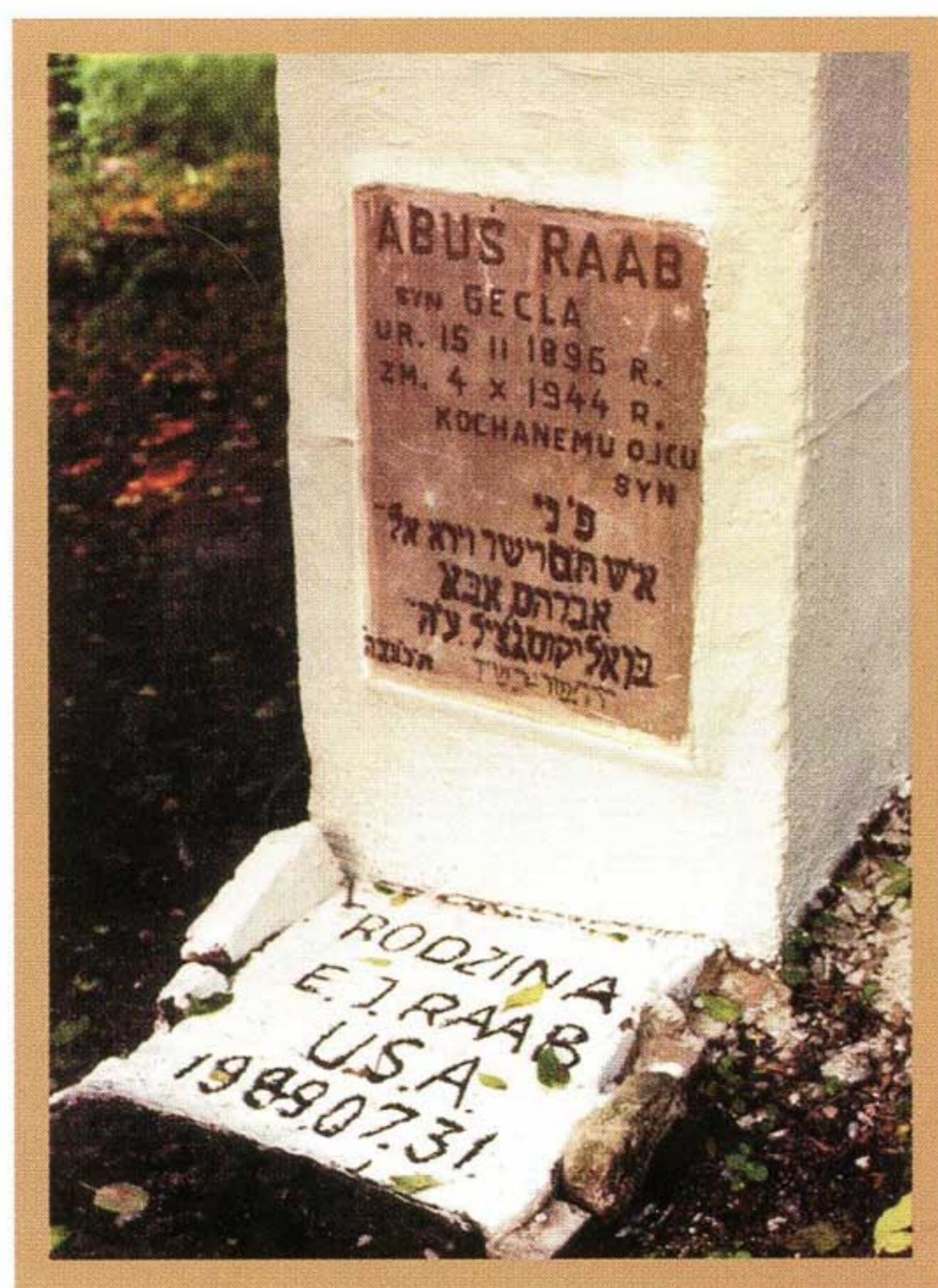
DEPORTATIONS

Sobibór, Majdanek.



■ Chełm, today

3



■ ul. Starościńska, Jewish cemetery tombstone erected by U.S. relative

4



■ Chełm, Jewish cemetery, 1975

5

SELECTED READING

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Kanc, Shimon, ed. *Sefer ha-zikaron li-kehilat Hēlm; 40 shanah le-ḥurbanah* (Yizkor Book in Memory of Chełm, 40 Years After Its Destruction). Tel Aviv: Chełm Society in Israel and the U.S., 1980–1981. (H, Y)

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■ Market square, c. 1921

6

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———. *The Wise Men of Helm and Their Merry Tales*. New York: Behrman House, 1945.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

CAHJP; EDRD; EJ; FRG; GA; GUM3; GUM4; GUM5; GUM6; HSL; JGFF; JHT; LDL; LDS; LVY; PJH; RJHS; SF