

A photograph of a rural farmstead. In the foreground, there is a lush green field with some small white flowers. In the middle ground, there are several wooden structures. On the left, a large wooden barn with a corrugated metal roof. In the center, a smaller wooden structure with a large green vine-covered wall. To the right, another wooden structure with a corrugated metal roof. In the background, there are more trees and a utility pole.

Tracing the History of the Jewish Families in Kapciamiestis

The earliest evidence of a Jewish presence in Kopciowo/Kapciamiestis is found in the Wiesieje Kahal page of the 1784 census.

42. David "Judelowicz" Zana Zlata Dzieci 5. o/106 Inn Kopciowo
43. Wolff - Lejbowicz Zana Sora o/106. ~~Korewicze~~ Korewicze
44. Choyna Lejbowicz Zana Chaya Dzieci 4. o/106 Inn Kowale

1-Wiesieje Kahal 1784

- 42. David son of Judel, his wife Zlata and 5 children at the inn Kopciowo
- 43. Wolf son of Lejb, his wife Sora at the inn Korewicze
- 44. Choyna son of Lejb, his wife Chaya and 4 children at the inn Kowale

Korewicze was just outside Kopciowo on the road to Kowale. All three families are living at inns and this suggested they were arendarz holding the monopoly on the selling/distilling of liquor. There is a 25 year gap between this census and the first of the vital records available, and so an identification of families from this information is not possible. The census page confirmed that the town belonged to Bishop Massalski in 1784.

The Early Years

Between 1809 and 1825 we know of 24 births, 9 deaths and 5 marriages registered in Kapciamiestis. The registration was done by the church and also included a number of small villages nearby such as Kowale, Kodzie and Justyanowo. The families identified and whose descendants remained in Kapciamiestis in subsequent generations were: Berenstein, Bonovitz, Chmielevsky, Fridkovsky, Kopchovsky, Kovalsky/Kryvansky, Mencinsky, Miller, Rackovsky, Stolovsky. The earliest birth record available was for Tauba daughter of Hirsz Leybowicz and his wife Liba Izaakowicz on the 20th July 1809. He was an arendarz living at the inn in Kopciowo. His brother Judel testified to the birth. This family later came to be known as Kopchovsky, and descendants of this family were still living in Kapciamiestis in 1941.

14. Pań. Czynnego ośmiennego dziesiętego, dnia dwudziestego trzeciego miesiąca
 Lipca w roku 1809. Wobec nam: Prokuratora Urzędniczego Stanu Czynnego, Gminy Kopylowo.
 który stał w sądzie, Eliza Łopowicz, liczącej lat trzy
 dniem, i żądała nam dać jej płać kasy, które wrodziła się w Do-
 mu Kopylowym na dniu dwudziestym wtórym, tam, brzożcu Mi-
 sica, ośmiadeciązgi, ca upi piodawo wigo i matienki Liby Kopylowej.
 i se wyżaniem iadał Jmci Torbac P. wyżaniem pomyśleć ośmiadeciąz-
 gów i obywateli dać im w przytomności Jmci Łopowicz, lat
 dwudziestu, Jmci, wrodziła w roku 1809, w dniu 2. Sanktela Siede-
 lantowa Czynnego i Mi. Michalicki, lat czterdziestu, puz. maigze-
 go. Mimiogój, akt wrodzenia po pizajtamii onego stawiającego
 podymnie. Podymnie, ośmiadeciązgi wopolnie, i nami. Datto, w
 Kopylowie 2. y. s. iaku wyżej.

Kopylowo

21. 10. 1809 29 29

Jmci Kopylowi P. Kopy-
 Stan Czynnego Gminy Kopy-
 lowo.



Tauba married Yosiel Yitzhak Radin in 1824. Their daughter Beila Chaja married a relative, Yitzhak Zoruchowicz Kopchovsky. Beila Chaja's tombstone is in good condition and can be found in the Jewish Cemetery.

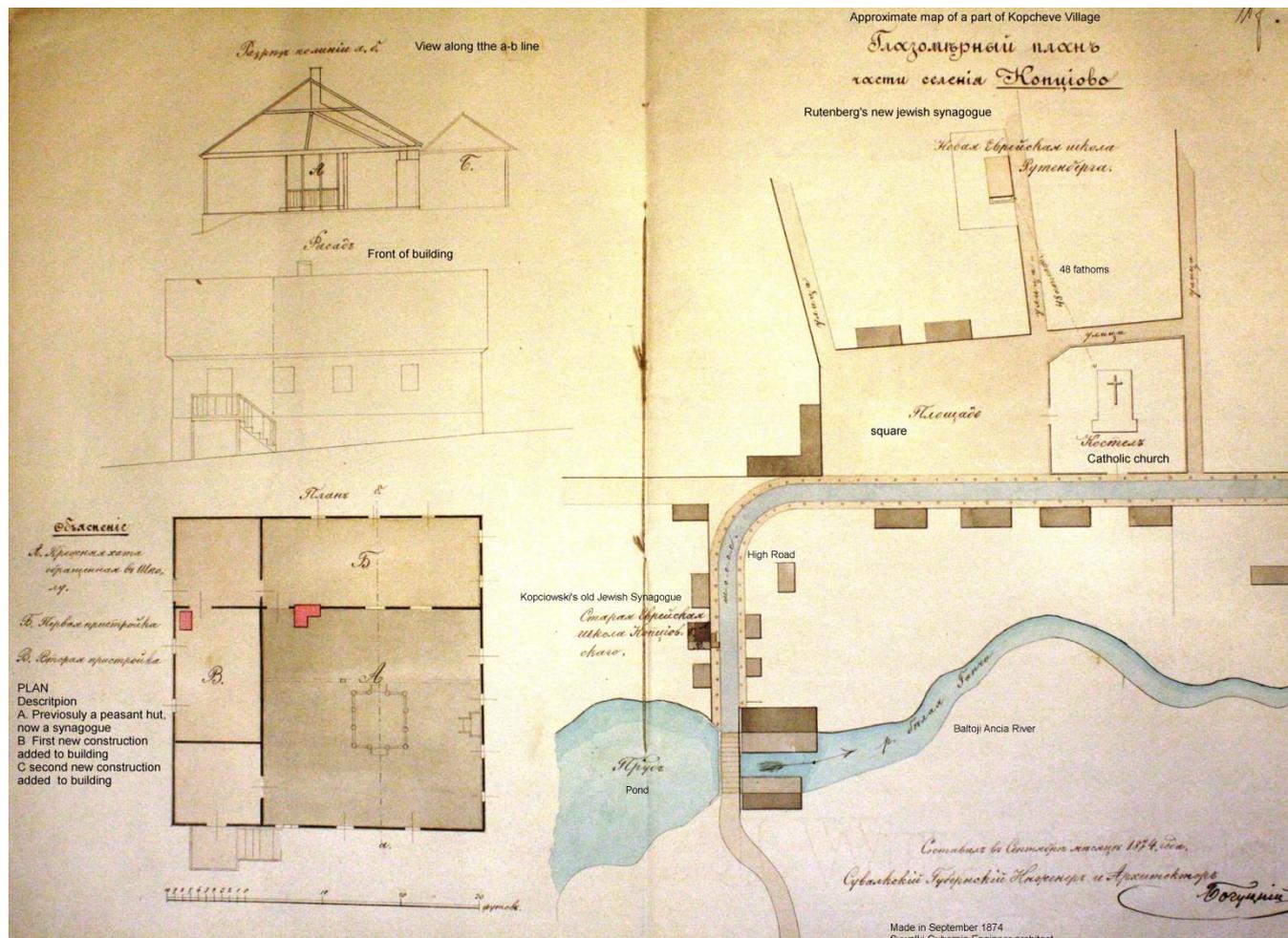


4-Beila & Yitzhak Kopchovsky



*5-Beila Chaya Kopchovsky
old Jewish cemetery Kapciamiestis*

During the period 1825-1840 the Jewish population grew. By 1834 there was a prayer house built near the high road which led towards Sejny. Today that road is known as Eiguliu. No photographs from that time exist. However in 1874, plans for a new synagogue were drawn up and amongst those papers there was also a drawing of the old synagogue and its location.



6-Drawing of synagogue 1874

By 1874 there were 95 Jewish families living in Kopcheve, and the old prayer house was no longer adequate. A new synagogue on land given to the community by Moshe Rutenberg was built. 1874 was also the year when an edict was passed whereby general conscription compelled all men aged 20 and over to serve in the Russian Army. In 1881 Alexander II was assassinated and the comparative liberalism of his reign ended. Jews began to leave, going to larger settlements, other European countries, deeper into Russia and the largest emigration was to the United States.

Photos of some of those families follow.



7- Yitzhak Avner



8-Lilian, Moshe Ber & Beile Ofchinsky



David Ofchinsky, b. abt 1864,
died Katkishes Nov 3 1941

9-David Ofchinsky



I. FILIPOWSKI

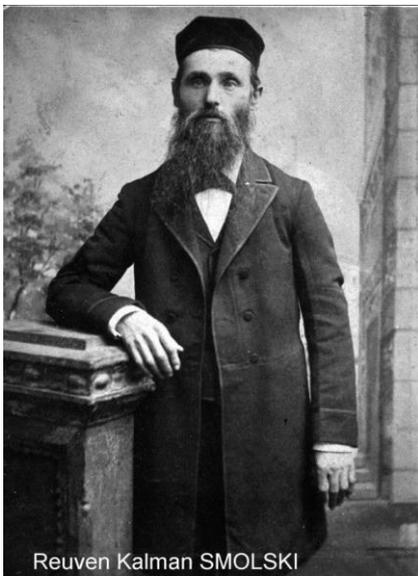
SUWAŁKI.

10-Dvora Rivka Rutenberg



Back row(l-r) Shlomo(1904-1978); Fruma Liby (1902-1941); ?; Dov Arye
Front row: Abram Hazanowski (1870-1935) and his wife Golda ne Markus (1867)

11-Hazanovsky Family



Reuven Kalman SMOLSKI

12-Reuven Smolksy



Leib Jersanski from Leipalingus with relatives from Kapciamiestis: In white dress is Mina (ne Kaplan) wife of Leib Hazanowski (in glasses) Ester (ne Miller) and husband Leib Kopchovsky

13-Leib Jasinsky visiting relatives from Kapciamiestis



14-Leib Kopchovsky



*15-Chana Kochovsky Lev with children
Chaya and Iser*



16-Moshe Bonovitz



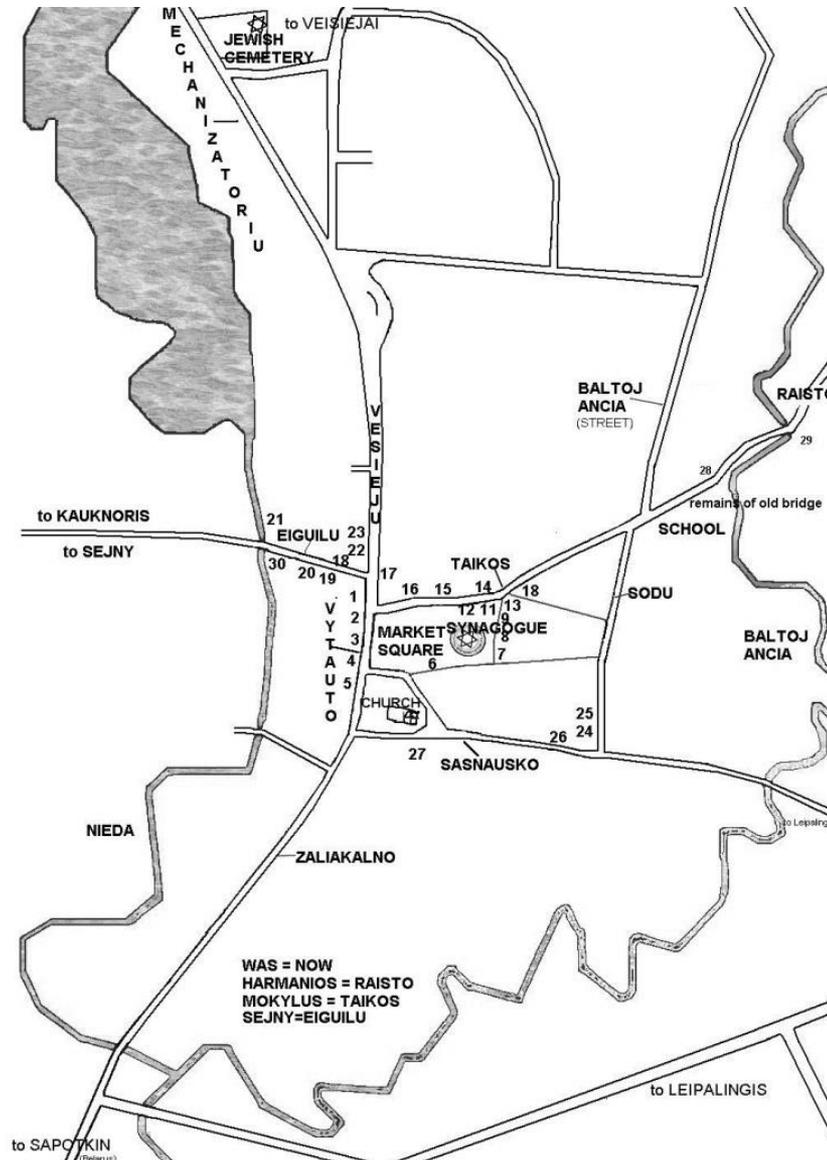
17-Zalman Avner

Twentieth Century

Below is a reconstructed map of Kapciamiestis prior to World War II. It indicates some of the locations where Jewish families lived.

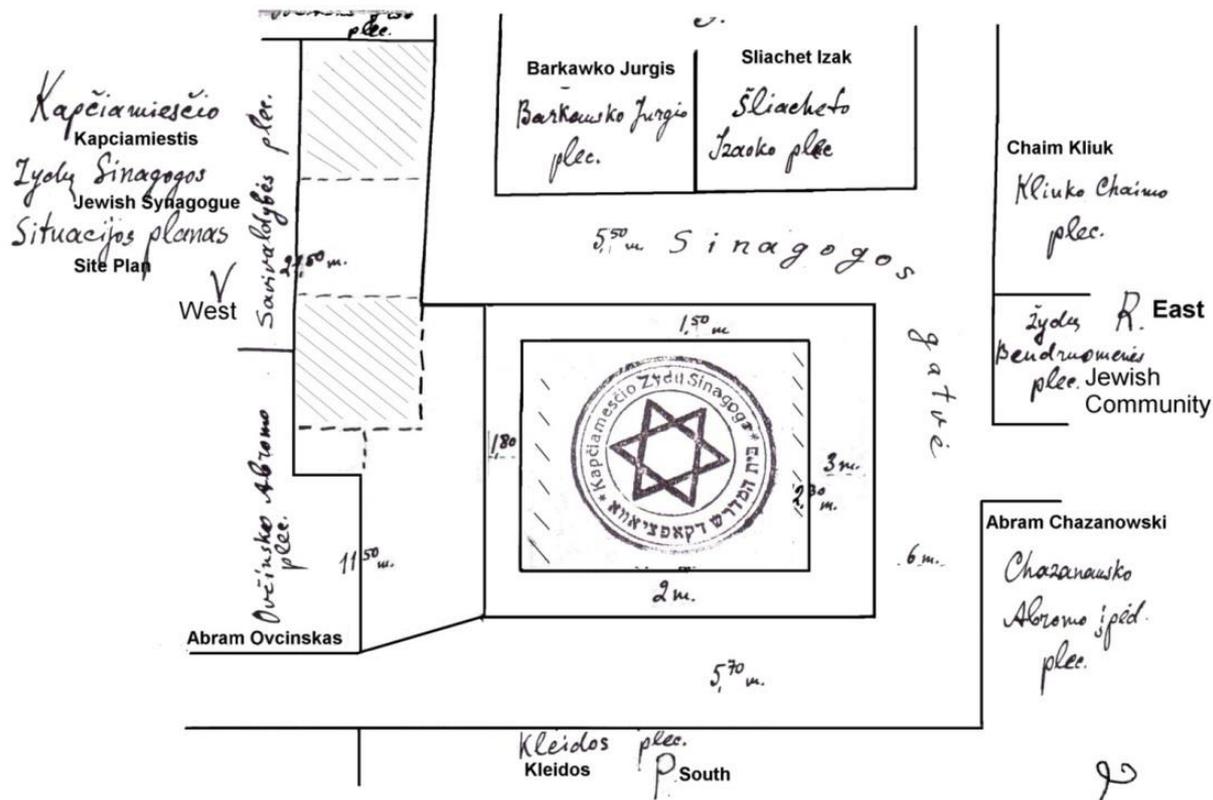
1	Michel Jasinsky
2	Mordechai Blumental
3	Tzvi Hirsh Kopchovsky
4	Pesach Okunewicz
5	Leib Fridkovsky
6	Abram Ovchinsky
7	Abram Hazonovsky
8	Jewish Community Land
9	Haim Kliuk
10	David Ovchinsky
11	Izaak Szlachat
12	Bakrowsko (Lithuanian)
13	Ber Leib Hofman
14	Moshe Smolski
15	Aronson

16	Leib Kopchovsky
17	Hana Lev
18	Yosel Fridkovsky
19	Hirsh Otremsky
20	Nehemia Grashevsky
21	Site of old mill
22	Alter Vodnitsky
23	Rozenstaat (aka Faber)
24	Mina Rybak
25	Aronson
26	Mordechai Pix
27	Abram ?
28	Shlomo Rabinowicz
29	Hirsh Ovchinsky
30	Electricity Station
31	Harmania



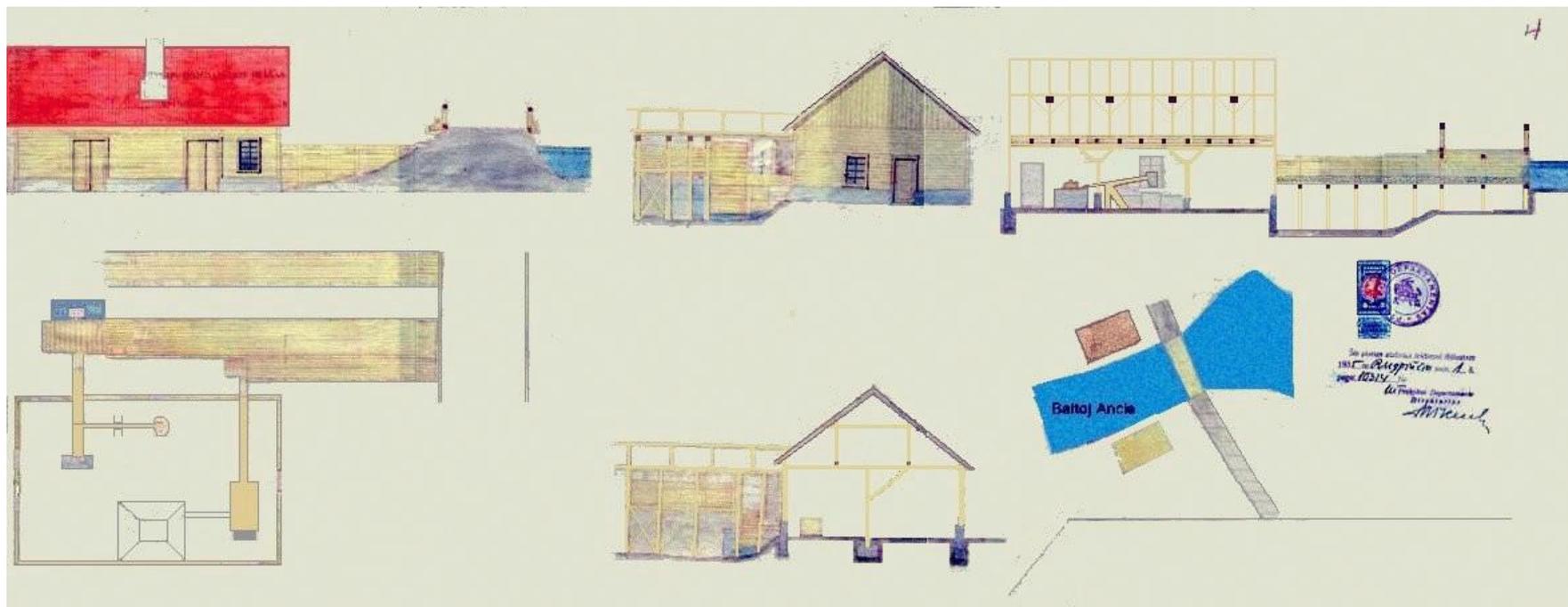
18-Map of Kapciamiestis

The town had a two-story wooden synagogue. It served not only as house of prayer but also as a school for Jewish children. It would appear to be at the same location as the one built in 1874. In July 1937 the Management Committee of Kapciamiestis applied to the Building Commission of Sejny District at Lazdijai for permission to make repairs to the roof of the synagogue. The Synagogue Elder was at that time Moshe Smolsky, and the Treasurer was Hirsh Otremsky. A permit was secured to lower the roof and replace the shingles with tin. The facade and shape of the building would remain unchanged. We have been unable to find a photograph of the synagogue.



19-Rendering of synagogue – permission to repair roof 1937

HAMARNIA on the banks of the Baltoji Ancia was the only hydraulic blackmill in Lithuania, located in Kapciamiestis. It manufactured metal farm instruments. The owners were Abram Auzer Miller and his son in law Shlomo Rabinovitz.



20-Hamarnia

Gordonia was a youth movement similar to scouts. Following is a photo of the children and counselors in 1933 of the Kapciamiestis branch. Some of the people have been identified.



21-Gordonia Youth Group. 25 July 1933

1	_ Hofman	9	_ Krovosky	23	Jakob Miller
2	Meir Kluik	10	Frieda Elka Rabinovicz	25	Leah Fridkovsky
3	Sora Fridkovsky	11	Yehuda Fridkovsky	26	Riva Kopchovsky
4	Nehemia Kviatkovsky	12	Yitzhak Kopchovsky	29	Meir Lantzman
5	Haya Liba Rosenstadt	16	Ester Rosenstadt	31	Shneur Radzin
6	Haya Lev	18	Nehama Lantzman	32	Moti, the teacher
7	Iser Lev	20	Nehama Kliuk	36	Kalvaritsky
8	Roni Smolsky	22	Sora Elka Hofman	38	Kalvaritsky

13,14,17,19,24,27,28,30,33,34,35,37, 39 – unidentified

The German army invaded Kapciamiestis on 22 June 1941 bringing destruction of property and murder of many Jews.

Yehuda Fridkovsky who was born and raised in Kapciamiestis said, “We heard the soldiers talking. They were planning to leave Kapciamiestis because the Germans were soon going to invade from Poland. The Russians started to leave in that and offered to take me, my mother, my sister Sara and Sora Elka Hofman on their truck. The Russian soldiers were going to go towards Leipalingis and then to Druskininkai. Fruma Liba (Hazanovsky) tried to jump onto the truck when we were leaving town. The German planes flying overhead were firing, and she was killed. At that time there was no bridge between Leipalingis and Druskininkai, so we bribed fishermen to take us across to Druskininkai. The train station was chaotic. I pushed my mother and sister onto a train and they escaped to Minsk. Later I would learn it was worse there than where we were.”



22-Sara Fridkovsky



23-Sara Fridkovsky



Fruma Liba Chazanowski, March 16, 1921

24-Fruma Hazanovsky

Two Lithuanian peasants, Zharnauskas and Levulis, gave shelter to the two Fridkovsky sisters, and thanks to them, the sisters survived. After the German retreat, Zharnauskas and Levulis were murdered by Lithuanian nationalists for saving the Jewish girls. Sora Elka Hofman, sister of Leizer, escaped Kapciamiestis on the same truck as Yehuda Fridkovsky and passed as a Christian in Belarus where she spent the war years.

Zigmas SABALIUS was born near Kapciamiestis in the village of Karajwonis in 1928. He described the outbreak of war,

“My father’s two sisters lived in Kapciamiestis, When the war broke out they heard a lot of noise and they saw the smoke. They realised that something was burning in the town, and so we went down to the river where there were many German soldiers with their motorcycles with sidecars and machine guns. The centre of the town was on fire. The church had not yet burned down. Near the river, the Jewish women had gathered and were crying because their homes were burning. I went again to look around and found that the entire town centre had been destroyed by fire, including the church. It was the 22nd June 1941. It was terrible. We had come with my dad to see what was going on. Some Jewish woman pointed out to us the nine Russian soldiers. You could see where the bullets had entered their heads, one was burned completely, and one was shot while he was holding his rifle. These nine had been in the trenches. German planes bombed the Russian soldiers. It was very frightening. There was a lot of noise and shooting.

A Russian airplane approached and bombed the road which was full of Germans. They missed their target and did not kill any Germans. I remember a German soldier on his motorcycle who was near where we stood. He was very frightened and ran to the river to hide himself.

They rounded up the Jews and forced them to put on the Star of David. I think they were all taken to the water mill near Hamarnia but I am not certain. There was a lack of food and my parents would take them food. I saw a forced labour group of five or six Jews with shovels who were taken to repair the damage which had been done to the road by the bombing. It was near Kariavonis on the road to Kalviai. Later they were taken to Lazdijai.”

Julia Ignatiene related,

“After the war broke out, the Germans forced all the Jews to go the house of Smolskas because it house was large and a little bit further from the centre. It was the only house that survived the war but years ago it burned down. They Jews were taken away and did not survive. Only Leizer Hofman survived. Smolskas gave his cow to my mother saying, ‘I will not need it anymore’.”

On 3 November 1941 one thousand five hundred and thirty five (1535) Jews were murdered at Katkiske. They included 118 Jewish men, women and children from Kapciamiesits along with Jews from the neighboring towns Veisiejai, Lazdijai and Rudamina.

Iser Lev served in the 167th Lithuanian division. He attended Officers Training School whilst in the field. The last days of the war found him with the 167 at Kurland where heavy fighting was still raging.



25-Iser Lev

Yehuda Fridkovsky was in the 249th Lithuanian division. He was wounded near the end of the war, and after a stay in hospital was no longer fit to fight. He was put in charge of the food storeroom and was stationed in Latvia. Iser heard that it was Yudka in charge of the storeroom and would go to go to him for food and supplies.



26-Yehuda Fridkovsky

Both survived the war and returned home to find no one was left and that all had been burned to the ground. There were no jobs and no money, so they rejoined the Russian army. Yehuda Fridkovsky remained in Lithuania and eventually moved to Vilnius where he married and had a family. In 1970 he immigrated to Israel. Iser Lev made a clandestine escape to the West in 1945. Risking his life, he crossed the border to the west. He later helped others to escape to the west. He immigrated to Canada in the winter of 1951 and died there in February 2004.



27-Yitzhak Kopchovsky

Yitzhak Kopchovsky attended school in Kaunas from the age of 14. His mother remained in Kapciamiestis and ran a boarding house. She fled to Kaunas where she perished in the Kaunas ghetto. Yitzhak was able to escape from the ghetto with the help of Chemilevich. Chemilevich acted as a letterbox for people in the ghetto receiving and sending mail. Kopchovsky received a letter from Ben Zion Fridkovsky (brother of Yehuda) who was hiding near Kapciamiestis with friends. Chemilevich arranged for Yitzhak to be taken to Lazdijai. He travelled on the top of a transport with packages and other people. It took them four hours to get out of Kaunas. It was chaotic. When he got to Lazdijai, he went to Chemilevich sister's house. She took him in, fed him and hid him. Her husband ran away because he was afraid they would be caught with a Jew in the house. Chemilevich's sister found someone with a wagon to take Kopchovsky to his friends near Kapciamiesitis. In the morning they set off with her little daughter to cross town to the wagon. It was very brave of her to take him, a Jew, so openly and walk across the entire town. They got to the wagon, and Yitzhak was taken to his friends outside of Kapciamiestis where he remained in hiding for about a year.

Riva Kopchovsky and her mother Esther (ne Miller) were in the Kovno Ghetto until its liquidation and were sent to Shtutthof in 1944. Leib Kopchovsky died in Dachau in 1944 of a heart attack as the result of a heart condition exacerbated by camp conditions.



28-Kopchovsky Family

Leizer Hofman (1896-1960), son of Ber Leib Hofman and Braina Ofchinsky was the only Jew to live in Kapciamiestis after WWII. He survived by hiding in a dugout with the Kiblanski family for four years. Villagers took them food and water. After the war he carried on his trade as a tailor until his death in 1960. He lived on the west side of the town with Barkauskus. The Jewish cemetery was on the north side of the town and when he died, he was taken through the town to the cemetery. It was quite an impressive funeral. Although there were no Jews in the town, most of the Lithuanian people paid him homage. The local people liked him very much and got along well with him.



29-Leizer Hofman

What remains of the Jewish people in Kapciamiestis?

There is the old cemetery, the foundation stones of some of their houses and a corner stone from the synagogue.

There are no Jews in Kapciamiestis today.

Their lives, both happy and sad, are remembered.

דער זאגער

