

BŁAŻOWA



Issue

January/February

7  
2026

# BLAZOWA'S Past and Present

## *News and Historical Notes*

Compiled by the Municipal and Communal Library in Blazowa



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# The Library in Błażowa Offers Much More Than Just Books!

If you believe that the library on 3 Maja Street in Błażowa is merely rows of bookshelves and silence, you couldn't be more mistaken! The Municipal and Communal Public Library serves as the vibrant heart of our municipality, a place where tradition meets modernity. Here, every resident—from preschoolers

to seniors—can find something for themselves. The past year, 2025, was a period of intense activity for the Błażowa library and its branches, focusing on intergenerational integration and demonstrating that the institution can engage everyone.

In summary, the list of events from the year showcases this institution as a genuine „cultural powerhouse,” as it was aptly described. The Błażowa Library has consistently demonstrated that literature can thrive alongside other art forms, such as music. The year began on a musical note, with Christmas carolling marking the start of our celebrations.



Receiving the „Librarian in Action 2025” award.  
Anna and Jakub Heller

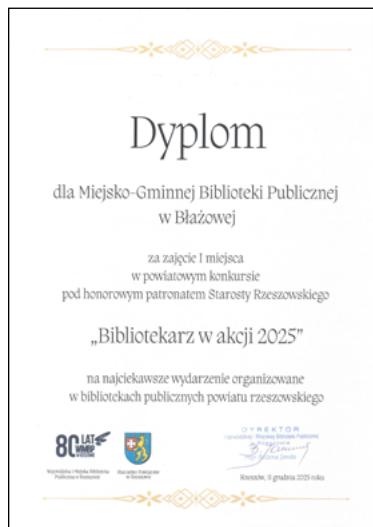
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The library is a true playground for children's imagination. We offer a variety of activities, including winter break and summer holiday day camps, readership awards, family workshops, educational meetings, a St. Andrew's Eve party, theatrical performances, and art competitions. These events transform reading into

an exciting adventure rather than a chore. Our children's section is home to the Friends of the Library Club, known as the „Bookworms.” Additionally, we actively reach out to local schools, preschools, and nurseries to share our book offerings.

The library has actively participated in various nationwide projects, giving it a unique Błażowa character. These include



the „Daffodils Campaign,” „Night of the Libraries” featuring escape rooms, „Little Book, Big Person,” „International Holocaust Remembrance Day,” „Night of the Museums,” and the „National Reading Campaign.” Last year, we celebrated the National Reading Campaign for the tenth time, alongside representatives from local authorities and residents, at Wilczak in Błażowa.

For adults and seniors, the library offers a space for author meetings and exhibitions organised by librarians for their readers and the public. Last year, the library hosted writers showcasing their work, including Joanna Jax, Wiesław Hop, and Anna Ziobro.

On 24 August 2025, the Informal Historical Group „To Save From Obscurity,” affiliated with the Błażowa Library, organised a walking tour

of Błażowa, following locations that hold significant importance in our shared Polish-Jewish history. We began our journey at the library and concluded at the Błażowa Jewish cemetery.

Another walk organised by the group was titled „I Will Tell You About the Błażowa Land, Which No Longer Exists.” This walk took us through Błażowa, highlighting key locations in our town's history. We began our journey at Maria Bator's former shop and concluded at the parish church. The stories shared about the places we visited were enhanced by old photographs. This was the first part of our project, as there are many more locations we still wish to present. A meeting to summarise the project was held at the library, with participation from both seniors and our youth.

Last year, our church celebrated the 125th anniversary of its construction. To commemorate this occasion, we organised an event in the reading room of our library, dedicated to the priests of Błażowa, particularly to Father Leon Kwiatkowski, the builder of the church.

Last year's achievements included winning first place in a competition for the most interesting event organised in public libraries in the Rzeszów district—”Librarian in Action 2025.” The jury awarded first place to the Municipal and Communal Public Library in Błażowa for its project titled „Roads to Freedom – On the 80th Anniversary of Regaining Independence.” This project consisted of a series of educational sessions. The



Anna Heller

inaugural event at the library, held on 23 May, also marked the opening of an exhibition primarily focused on the Polish Armed Forces in the West, though not exclusively.



Thanks to the exhibition, our guests were transported back to the World War II era. The display showcased uniforms, webbing and combat-related items, documents, photographs, newspapers, order logs, humorous announcements, and serious chronicles. Many museums would be proud to boast such an exhibition.

Eleven groups of young people from local schools visited the library. During their visit, they learned about soldiers who fought on various fronts during World War II. Those interested had the opportunity to try on a uniform or a soldier's beret, test the weight of a parachute, and take on the challenge of using an old typewriter.

Our series of sessions concluded with a meeting with the Błażowa Senior Club. Their parents and

grandparents lived through it, and even the seniors themselves often remember the occupation period, as they told us. They had the chance to reminisce while looking at old photographs.

A delightful surprise came from Marta Wójcik, who, on behalf of the Mayor of Rzeszów and the board of the Matzevah Foundation, expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the members of our Informal Hi-



storical Group. She thanked them for their dedication and participation in restoring the original appearance of the Jewish cemetery in Rzeszów.

Our library is a unique place in the region. For 35 years, it has been the heart of local journalism, serving as the editing site for the „Kurier Błażowski.” Because of this, the library not only provides literature but also documents the lives of the residents of Błażowa and its sur-

rounding areas. We continually collect old photographs, and our collection currently holds approximately 8,000 images.

Additionally, we don't only operate in Błażowa! With branches in Lecka,

Nowy Borek, Futoma, and Piątkowa, we ensure that every resident of the commune has access to literature and culture.

We also maintain our commitment to everyday library operations alongside organising events and exhibitions. This includes serving our readers and managing our collection of 51,303 books at the Library in Błażowa. Over the past year, 1,386 readers visited the library and borrowed a total of 22,845 books. Additionally, we purchased 854 new books for the library, including 460 through a project and 394 using our own funds.

During the year, our readers donated a total of 882 books, including 197 during our last December campaign, „Become Santa Claus – Give the Library a Book for Christmas.” We sincerely thank our donors for their generous contributions.

The activities of the Municipal and Communal Public Library in Błażowa are not only the result of the dedicated work of our team of librarians but also of the generous support from community members. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supports our institution, including local government authorities led by Mayor Jerzy Kocój, the Szermach family, Councillor Janusz Szpala, our sponsors, and all those who contribute to the buffet at our meetings. We also appreciate the collaborators of „Kurier Błażowski” for their efforts in building local identity alongside us. Your selflessness proves that the library and our magazine are shared endeavours of our community. We are grateful to our readers for every kind word spoken in our favour. To quote John Paul II:

*„A man is great not by what he has, but by who he is; not by what he has, but by what he shares with others.”*

Respectfully,

**Director Anna Heller and Staff  
Municipal and Communal  
Public Library in Błażowa**



Joanna Bałutowska-Bialic and The Bookworms.



Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey

## News from Błażowa

*„Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning, but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instil in us”.*

Hal Borland

As another year comes to an end, we

feel the need to reflect on the time that has passed, the achievements, and the challenges we left behind with



To commemorate the Golden Jubilee on 5 November 2025, a special ceremony was held, gathering many guests.

the closing days of 2025.

Numerous investments have been made in our commune, enhancing road conditions and pedestrian safety. New sports facilities have been constructed, and improvements have been made to the water, sewage, and heating networks.

The Primary School building in Błażowa Dolna was established 50 years ago to educate and nurture young people in the local community. To commemorate the Golden Jubilee on 5 November 2025, a special ceremony was held, gathering many guests, graduates, former and current teachers, school staff, children, and young people.

The first part of the school's 50th anniversary celebration was held at the church in Błażowa Dolna. Everyone gathered for a Thanksgiving Mass led by Bishop Stanisław Jamrozek,

of students and their teachers. More than one graduate and retired teacher shed emotional tears.

The dance group, composed of students in grades 5 to 7, opened the event with a traditional national dance, the polonaise. Following the dance, the vocal and instrumental ensemble, along with the reciters, presented a poetry-and-music medley expressing their gratitude for the knowledge and upbringing they had received. They also extended their thanks to the school principal, Janusz Maciołek, for his generosity and unwavering com-



along with fellow priests and those who had worked at the school.

The second part of the anniversary celebration took place in the school's gymnasium. The official portion was enhanced by an exhibition of archival photographs and a multimedia photo gallery showcasing each year

of commitment to the school's development.

On 19 December, we gathered in the library's reading room to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the construction of the parish church in Błażowa. During this event, we honoured the priests who have served our parish and recognised

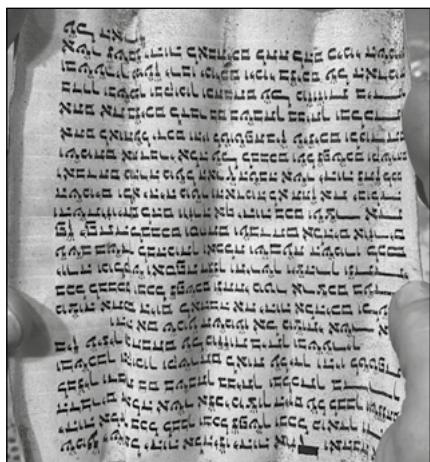


Few members of our Honorary Blood Donors Club, „Kropelka Życia”.



The seniors of the Błażowa Senior Club „Pogodna Jesień”.

family of Father Leon Kwiatkowski, the church's builder.



Our parish church, dedicated to St. Martin, has witnessed many significant events throughout its history. It has been a place of triumph as well as a refuge during difficult times. Its walls resonate with the prayers of our ancestors, and every brick and stained-glass window tells the story

of a faith passed down through generations.



This time, we didn't focus on the church's architecture or its physical structure. Instead, Anna Gellerman shared insights about Father Leon Kwiatkowski and his family, as well as her personal connections to the Kwiatkowski lineage. Following her presentation, Zdzisław Chlebek provided an overview of the priests from

Błażowa. As a treat for our guests, we also took them on a journey back in time through old photographs related to our parish church.

Winter has arrived in Wilczak, bringing with it a beautifully decorated Christmas tree placed in front of the chapel, adorned with lights. Inside the chapel, the air conditioning is already operational, ensuring a comfortable atmosphere. Additionally, an internet connection, funded by the Telephone Cooperative in Tyczyn, is available for use. Preparations are underway for the altar platform, and new pews are being installed. The purchased paving stones are ready and will be laid once weather conditions improve.

The Friends of Wilczak Association would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to all donors, sponsors, and individuals of goodwill who support their work through kind words and deeds.



Anna Gellermann



Zdzisław Chlebek



Celebrating 125 years of our Parish Church.

It is because of your generosity that the chapel is being revitalised and continues to enhance its beauty. If all goes according to plan, we warmly invite everyone to the chapel's dedication ceremony on 31 May.

In the final weeks of 2025, the Błażowa Community Museum acquired several valuable exhibits. All the artefacts are original, primarily sourced from our region, and many have extraordinary stories behind them.

One significant donation came from Rafał Szpala of Błażowa Góra, who contributed a flagpole from the Nowy Borek branch of the People's Party to the museum. This flagpole was discovered in the attic of his relatives' house. Notably, the flagpole is unique because its entire surface is adorned with personal commemorative nails. Among the several hundred nails, most bear the names of private individuals, but many come from People's Party branches both near and far. Of particular significance is the nail belonging to Wincenty Witos.

Maria Kustra from Błażowa donated a klaf, which is a parchment used in a mezuzah. This parchment contains two handwritten Torah fragments from the Book of Deuteronomy, prepared by a sofer. These texts remind us of the covenant with God and include the Shema Prayer,

along with the commandment to place God's words on the doorposts of our homes. Władysław Panek from Futoma donated the original officer's patent for 2nd Lieutenant Adam Ornas, issued on 10 October

workshops, trips, and shared celebrations. Their cheerfulness, commitment to the local community, and participation in various projects and initiatives serve as an inspiration for all of us.

Our Honorary Blood Donors Club, „Kropelka Życia”, has also been very active.

Last year, they organised four blood donation drives, held an educational meeting for children and youth, and attended various community events to promote the importance of blood donation and sharing this precious gift.

In 2025, the Błażowa Music School thrived as successive generations of young musicians honed their talents and showcased their skills through performances, competitions, and concerts. Each concert, competition, and workshop represents not just written successes but also a journey for these young individuals towards developing their sensitivity, discipline, and appreciation for beauty. Moments like these highlight the importance of artistic education, as it shapes not only skilled musicians but also well-rounded individuals.

We are excited to see what 2026 has in store for us.

As C.S. Lewis once said: „There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind”.

**Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey**



New, Orlik-type playing field in Błażowa.

1932, and bearing the signature of Józef Piłsudski, the then Minister of Military Affairs. Adam Ornas served in the 5th Cavalry Regiment in Dębica and participated in the September Campaign, during which he was killed fighting the Germans between Jarosław and Przeworsk. His wife and young son were deported to Siberia, but she later left the „inhuman land” with General Anders' army. In 1945, Zofia and her son Olgierd reached England via Africa, carrying with them the officer's patent—one of the few mementoes of her husband.

The seniors of the Błażowa Senior Club „Pogodna Jesień” have had another active year filled with



The students from the Music School in Błażowa.



Jakub Heller

# Old Photos Tell Their Story

*„A nation that does not know its past dies and does not build a future” – these words take on particular meaning in the context of our small local communities.*

## Local history and old photographs

Local history and old photography are deeply interconnected. Photographs are not just „pretty pictures” from the past; they are powerful visual sources that enable historians and enthusia-

archives, architecture, and important oral traditions. At our library, we aim to create such a communal archive by collecting old photographs, documents, and interviews with older residents of the Błażowa region.

Every region, including ours, has unique characteristics reflected in its architecture. This includes not just castles, palaces, and manors, but especially the urban layout. The old market squares, the houses surrounding them, and the arrangement of the streets tell the story of how social life



Anna Słupek and Halina Furman worked at the restaurant in Błażowa.

sts to piece together a world that has since disappeared. Old photographs, unlike significant historical chronicles, often capture daily life, allowing us to glimpse into homes, workshops, schools, and local celebrations.

Local history is often called the „history of small homelands.” This field allows us to understand and explore the stories of specific towns, villages, and families. Unlike general history, which focuses on kings, battles, and significant events, the study of local history seeks truth in local

was organised in the past.

In Błażowa, for example, the old mill, brickyard, and the Leather Goods and Polychemistry Factory stand as testimony to the „industrial revolution” that transformed our town into a centre of modernity after the war. This transformation also applies to religious buildings; in addition to our magnificent church, the roadside shrines and crosses often represent the oldest connections to our community’s history.

Local history allows us to view events and facts from a unique



perspective. What sets one region apart from another is often the intangible elements, such as dialect and vernacular. The language of our ancestors holds valuable insights into ancient trade connections and migrations, evident in influences such as German in the Silesian dialect and Eastern influences in Podlasie.

I recommend reading Krygowski’s „Memoirs” to experience the dialect spoken in Błażowa at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Additionally, rituals, specific regional dishes, traditional costumes, and local legends all contribute to a shared sense of belonging within a community.

It can be very rewarding to play detective and explore local history.



Engaging in conversations with older residents about how things used to be can help preserve stories that might otherwise be forgotten, stories that aren’t found in any books. Our activities also promote the region and enhance the tourist offer, as people are more likely to visit places with interesting and authentic narratives. While some of these stories may have unfortunate endings, we can’t control their outcomes; we can only influence the future. Sometimes, people wish to erase certain events from their past,

and some argue that it's not the right time to share specific stories. But will it ever be the right time?

In this instalment of my column, I would like to share photos, including those from Anna Ślupek's album, showcasing her time working at a restaurant in Błażowa. Before the war, this building housed Jewish shops on the ground floor and had four separate entrances facing the Town Hall. In 1951, the „Gospoda” restaurant, owned by the Municipal Cooperative, opened in this location, featuring two

dining rooms and a buffet. Among the staff were Anna Ślupek and Halina Furman.

They remember that at that time, the kitchen prepared a significant number of meals, both for dining in and takeaway. The work was demanding, yet enjoyable. On „pierogi day”, all the employees worked together to make them.

In later years, the restaurant was managed by the Sowa family. Zofia Sowa recalls, „Under the Cooperative, the place was thriving and earned

good profits from serving dinners subsidised by the municipality. However, when I took over the „Gospoda”, the times were already changing. Only two people were working in the kitchen, and two in the buffet. Eventually, Henryk Nawłoka purchased the restaurant and transformed it into a supermarket, which his son currently runs”.

As always, I encourage anyone who would like to share their memories to contact the Błażowa Library.

**Jakub Heller**



The “Gospoda” in Błażowa during the Cooperative era.



Catering services from „Gospoda” in Błażowa.



*„Preservation of the past is our gift to the future”.*  
*Paso Robles Historical Society*

# Preserving the Past... Another Successful Year For Our Informal Historical Group

With 2025 now behind us, it's a good time to reflect and summarise this past year. Our Informal Historical Group, associated with the Błażowa Library, has been active for another year. In addition to our regular activities, such as maintaining the Jewish cemetery and collecting and processing old photographs and documents, this past year has also brought many new initiatives and ideas.

In January, we decided to start publishing an English-language supplement to „Kurier Błażowski.” Now, six issues later, we are proud to celebrate the first anniversary of „Blażowa's Past and Present.” We created this supplement in response to the growing interest among non-Polish-speaking descendants of former Błażowiaks, both of Polish and Jewish descent, in the town's history and present-day life.

In August, Peter Buxbaum, who is connected to the Steppel and Guzik families, visited Błażowa. During his

We shared information about their family's history in Błażowa and showed them locations associated with their past.

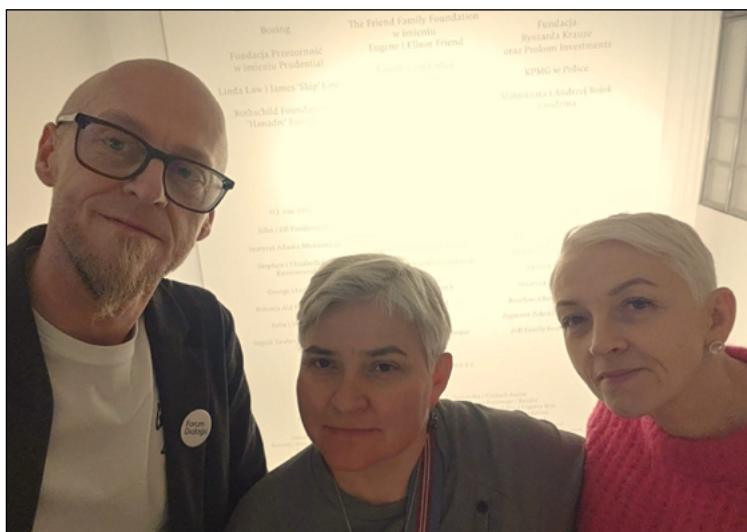
A particularly poignant part of the visit was to the parish cemetery, where Jesse was able to pray at the graves of his great-great-grandmothers.

Our group members are actively engaged in efforts to restore the memory of the Jewish inhabitants of Błażowa and foster Polish-Jewish dialogue, which includes collecting and processing documents,

conducting educational activities, caring for the Jewish cemetery, and participating in commemorative events.

As part of the Shtetl Routes Network training program I participated in, we organised a walk to honour our town's Jewish heritage. By highlighting important sites related to our Jewish neighbours who are no longer here, we emphasised that their history is also part of the legacy of our parents and grandparents. They walked the same streets, attended the same primary school, shared responsibilities on the town council, and worked together for the benefit of the local community. The stories of the Guziks, Wolfs, and Intraters are intertwined with the histories of the Bators, Pleśniaks, and Kustras. The inaugural walk took place in August, and an online version is now available on the Library's website.

We aim to make the walks we develop a permanent feature that enhances our municipality's tourist offerings. It is possible to organise



visit, Peter was our guest on a walk exploring Błażowa's Jewish heritage. He was deeply moved to learn about places that were significant to his ancestors.

In September, Jesse Kustra and his family also visited Błażowa. Jesse's great-grandparents, Jan Kustra and Bronisława (née Sobczyk), emigrated to Canada in the early 20th century.



At the start of December, we travelled to Warsaw to attend an introductory meeting for new members of the Forum for Dialogue Network.

guided walks for groups. In November, members of the Podkarpackie regional group of the Forum for Dialogue Network took advantage of this



opportunity, and additional groups are already planning to participate.

Three members of our group joined the Forum for Dialogue Network last year. The Forum for Dialogue is the oldest Polish non-governmental organisation working to promote Polish-Jewish dialogue, and the Forum Network brings together activists from across Poland. In early December, Anna and Jakub Heller, together with me, went to Warsaw for an introductory meeting for new members of the Network. It was an opportunity not only to deepen our knowledge (by visiting the POLIN Museum and the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street), but above all

to meet together, get to know each other better, and exchange experiences with our colleagues from other parts of the country.

Our group's goal is to „save from



obscurity” the people, places, and stories connected to our region. We had a particularly busy autumn due to our involvement in the project „I Will Tell You About the Błażowa Land, Which No Longer Exists.” This project, the first part of a larger initiative, was carried out as part of the „Act Locally” program, and we plan to continue this effort.

Like many of our activities, this project was also a multi-stage initiative. On the educational level, I conducted oral history workshops with eighth-grade students from the Primary School in Biała and a group from the Primary School in Błażowa.

Together, we conducted interviews and collected and compiled stories about significant places in our town's history, including shops and businesses that no longer exist.

The next stage involved a historical walk that followed

these places and stories, led by Anna and Jakub in November. The inaugural walk attracted a substantial number of participants, including guests from outside our community,



which we were delighted to see. The completed walk is available in both physical and virtual formats, along with maps and a printable guide, on the Library's website.

The project culminated in the premiere screening of the documentary „I Will Tell You About the Błażowa Land, Which No Longer Exists,” held on 17 December in the packed reading room of the Błażowa Library. The film is available on YouTube and is reaching a growing audience.

For us, every project we take on represents the beginning of a new journey rather than an end in itself. This is why our activity continues to gain momentum each year, and more importantly, we have no intention of slowing down.

We warmly invite all local history enthusiasts to join us in a collaborative effort. Together, let's preserve fragments of our Story before those who know it are no longer with us. We must act before dust covers valuable objects and documents, and before time erases the places that witnessed these events.

On behalf of the group,

**Magda Kowalska-Cheffey**



POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.



Members of the Podkarpacie regional group of the Forum for Dialogue Network visited Błażowa.



At the start of December, we travelled to Warsaw to attend an introductory meeting for new members of the Forum for Dialogue Network.

# Let Me Tell You About the Błażowa Land... – project summary

The project titled „I Will Tell You About the Błażowa Land, Which No Longer Exists” had two primary aims.

students actively involved in the project.

From September to November, we

for a get-together, where they continued sharing memories and discussing the history of Błażowa.



First, it sought to promote intergenerational integration by actively involving both young people and seniors in preserving local heritage. Second, it aimed to enhance educational and tourism offerings for the commune's residents and interested visitors.

We have established partnerships with primary schools in Błażowa and Białka. In September 2025, I conducted oral history workshops to prepare young people to collect and process stories from historical witnesses. Approximately 20 young people participated in the workshops, with eight

conducted individual meetings with seniors, recorded their stories, and collected and organised accompanying photos and documents.

On 30 November 2025, under the direction of Anna and Jakub Heller, a research walk was organised to explore the most significant businesses, shops, and places of worship in Błażowa. Both young people and seniors played active roles in leading the walk, sharing stories about the sites they visited. Approximately 40 people participated in the event. Afterwards, the group gathered in the reading room of the Błażowa library

On 17 December 2025, a special screening of a documentary film featuring excerpts from interviews and historical information was held in the reading room of the Municipal and Communal Public Library in Błażowa. Approximately 60 people attended the event, including members of the „Pogodna Jesień” Senior Club in Błażowa, participating students, school principals, and residents.

We utilised the funds allocated for the project, along with our own resources, to purchase a projector. This projector, with its suitable technical specifications, provides high-quality



film presentations and will be essential for future meetings that continue the project.

will be a permanent addition to the commune's tourist offerings.

Furthermore, the film titled „I Will



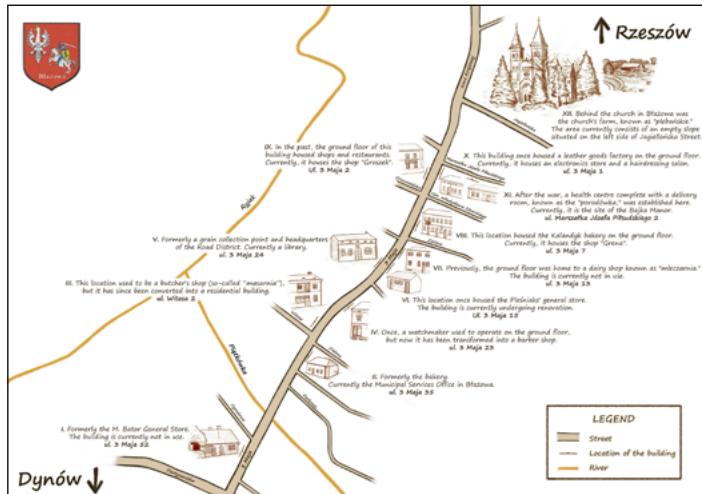
The project successfully achieved its intended goals. All meetings helped strengthen intergenerational bonds, leading to increased interest among both young people and seniors in collecting and sharing stories about our region. The developed walking tour, available in both Polish and English, can be found on the library website and is being actively promoted on social media. This tour

Tell You About the Błażowa Land Which No Longer Exists" is available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mobile-ZGIf1g>) and is also being promoted on social media. It is gaining popularity and reaching a growing audience. The film serves as a valuable resource for education and tourism, showcasing the rich heritage of our region.



Further activities are planned to continue the project's momentum.

The „Act Locally” program is an



initiative of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, implemented by the Academy of Philanthropy Development in Poland, in partnership with the Act Locally Centres.

Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey

## OUR BŁAŻOWA WALK IS NOW AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH.

We have prepared the first part of the walk around Błażowa in English for our foreign visitors interested in learning about our town's history.

Link in walk: <https://biblioteka.blazowa.net/ocalic-od-zapomnienia/blazowska-nieformalna-grupa-historyczna-ocalic-od-zapomnienia/i-will-tell-you-about-the-blazowa-land-which-no-longer-exists-part-1/>

Jakub Heller

# Let Me Tell You About Fela Zucher...

## International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2026

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is a time when we reflect on history and confront its painful



Anna Heller

legacy in the present. Observed on 27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, this day serves not only as a tribute to the six million Jews who were murdered but also as a serious warning to future generations. In light of today's unstable geopolitical landscape—characterised by rising armed conflicts, social polarisation, and a resurgence of hate rhetoric—the memory of the Holocaust assumes an urgent and troubling relevance. History teaches us that significant tragedies do not start with mass atrocities; they begin with words, dehumanisation, and a lack of empathy for the suffering of others.

Once again, we come together to commemorate those who were consumed by the flames of the Shoah. For us, the residents of Polish cities and villages, this day holds special significance. Living in the Podkarpacie region places us in the heart of what was once known as „shtetl country”. Before



Marta Wójcik

the outbreak of World War II, nearly every town and many villages in our area had Jewish communities. The Holocaust Remembrance Day serves as a memorial for our former neighbours—people who, for centuries, contributed to the culture, economy, and daily life of our small communities. Their disappearance has created a void in our social fabric that

cannot be filled. Today, their presence is remembered only through empty tenement houses, neglected cemeteries, and the quiet recollections of the oldest residents.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is commemorated for the eighteenth time in many places of the Podkarpacie region to honour the tragedy of the Holocaust, promote tolerance, and shape a future filled with peace. The organisers are the Institute of National Remembrance, Rzeszów

Branch, and the Institute of History at the University of Rzeszów. The commemorations are held under the honorary patronage of the Marshal of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and the Podkarpackie Superintendent of Schools.

Our Library and the history group also participated in the commemorations.

On 30 January, we learned about Fela Zucher from Schindler's List. Our friend Marta Wójcik shared her childhood and adolescence in pre-war Rzeszów, as well as her survival story thanks to Oskar Schindler's assistance.

Marta Wójcik is a history enthusiast, archaeologist, city guide, and researcher focused on the history of the Jews in Rzeszów. She is professionally



affiliated with the Rzeszów City Hall. Since 2016, she has initiated and led guided walks titled „In the Footsteps of Rzeszów Jews,” co-created exhibitions, and organised educational and commemorative activities, particularly around the Jewish cemeteries in Rzeszów. Her efforts to preserve Jewish memory and heritage were recognised in 2025 when she received the „Preserving Memory” award from the Galicia Jewish Museum. Additionally, she serves as the coordinator for the Forum for Dialogue Network

Podkarpackie group, of which some of us are members.

Fela's story deeply resonated with everyone who visited our reading room. We experienced Rzeszów through her eyes and listened to her vivid descriptions of life before the war, capturing both the joys and the small sorrows of a young girl on the brink of adulthood. Remarkably, Fela's diary survived the war. We listened intently to Marta's story about her personal journey to uncover what happened to Fela during and after the

war, meticulously piecing together snippets of information from various sources. We learned about Oscar Schindler's role and his factory in this tale of survival and love, as Fela met and married her husband, Isidor.

This evening was not only a time to reflect on the past, but also a call to create a world founded on dialogue and mutual respect. We must ensure that the tragic statement „Never again” does not become just an empty phrase.

**Jakub Heller**



It was the evening that fed both the body and the spirit.

# Reverend Canon Leon Kwiatkowski 1852-1914. Part 1

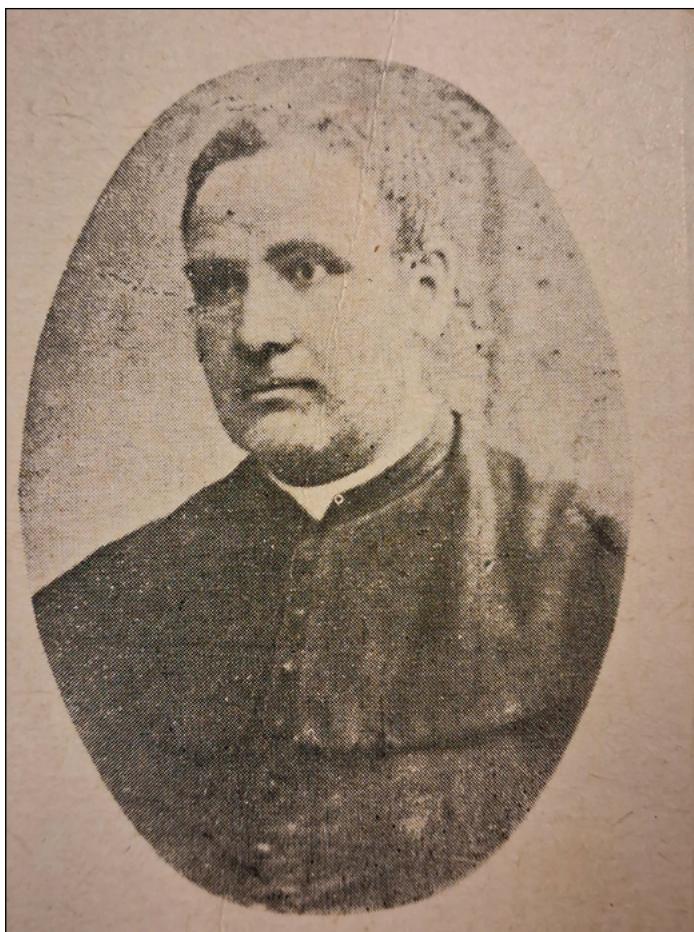
The 125th anniversary of the construction of the church in Błażowa (1900-2025) is closely linked to the life and work of Father Leon Kwiatkowski. As the primary builder of the church, he was fully responsible for overseeing and organising the construction of this monumental sacred structure. Therefore, it is important to examine his life and contributions to the parish of Błażowa in greater detail. (Sources: L. Kwiatkowski, *Zachęty duszpasterza*, Przemyśl 1910. Abbreviation – KZach; the late Fr. Leon Kwiatkowski, „*Kronika Diecezji Przemyskiej*”, 1917, z.1, s. 16-21. Abbreviation – LK; M. Chochrek, *Działalność duszpasterska ks. L. Kwiatkowskiego*, Lublin 1986, mps pracy mag. Catholic University of Lublin (Abbreviation – ChKw)).

## 1. From birth to priesthood

Father Leon Kwiatkowski was born in Grabownica on 7 April 1852. He was one of seven siblings, having three brothers: Franciszek, Stanisław, and Piotr, along with three sisters: Józefa, Maria, and Zofia. Their parents, Wincenty Kwiatkowski and Anna (née Stefańska), initially leased a mill in Grabownica. After a few years, the family moved to Humniska, where their father purchased a mill and a large farm.

In September 1860, Leon, as an eight-year-old boy, began his education at the Public School in Sanok, where he also lived in a boarding house, as Humniska is 18 km from

Sanok. In 1864, he graduated from the public school and then began his studies at the eight-year grammar school in Rzeszów, where he also lived in a boarding house, as there was no student dormitory yet. After completing the fourth grade, he transferred to grammar school in Przemyśl, graduating in 1872. There,



he established contact with Father Bronisław Markiewicz, vicar of the cathedral parish from 1870 to 1873. Leon frequently went to confession and Holy Communion, and Father Markiewicz was his confessor. After graduating from grammar school, he decided to enter the Major Theological Seminary in Przemyśl.

He first had to complete three years of military service, during which he endured unfavourable conditions and many malicious insults. Nevertheless, he exemplified a life

of piety and commitment, setting a strong example for his fellow soldiers without wavering in his vocation. After completing his service in 1875, he reported to the Seminary in Przemyśl while still in his military uniform. He was accepted without hesitation by Father Dr Marcin Skwierczyński. At the seminary, Leon distinguished himself through his piety, diligence, and outstanding academic performance. He earned the nickname „Leoś,” which stuck with him for many years after he became a priest. After four years of study, he was ordained as a priest on 29 June 1879 by Bishop Maciej Hirschler. He first served as a vicar for three years in Błażowa, where Father Bronisław Markiewicz was the parish priest. When Father Bronisław introduced the new vicar to the congregation, he said, „Father Leon, we will build a new church because this one is small and cramped.”

Father Markiewicz introduced Father Leon to both pastoral and social work within the parish, where many residents earned their living by weaving. The newly ordained priest undoubtedly learned a great deal from Father Markiewicz, who was an enlightened priest and theologian. After three years, Father Leon was transferred to the

Tyczyn parish to gain further pastoral experience under the guidance of the parish priest, Prelate Leopold Olcyngier.

When Father Markiewicz resigned from the Błażowa rectory on 4 March 1884, it became essential to appoint a priest to oversee the urgent construction of a new church. Father Markiewicz promptly requested Bishop Łukasz Solecki to reassign Father Kwiatkowski to Błażowa. The bishop granted his request, and after 15 months of work

in Tyczyn, Father Leon returned to Błażowa.

## 2. The Parish Priest: Concerned about the spiritual life of the congregation

Initially, Father Kwiatkowski served as the parish administrator. On 4 April 1884, Countess Wanda Ostrowska, née Skrzyńska, the owner of Błażowa, granted her consent, allowing Father Leon to receive her patronage. On 26 April 1884, Bishop Łukasz Ostoja Solecki of Przemyśl appointed Father Leon as the parish priest. His installation ceremony took place on 22 June, conducted by Dean Tadeusz Żaczkiewicz. After serving as a priest for 4 years and 3 months, at the age of 32, Father Leon became the parish priest of the extensive Błażowa parish, which then consisted of approximately 10,000 parishioners and was continually growing. The parish included the town and village of Błażowa, as well as Kąkolówka, Białka, and Lecka. As the parish priest, Father Leon was assisted by two vicars: Father Stanisław Korczak Hański and Father Walenty Krupiński. In total, between 1884 and 1909, 26 different vicars served in Błażowa (KZach, pp. 203, 226).

Father Kwiatkowski dedicated himself wholeheartedly to his role as a parish priest. His pastoral work primarily focuses on nurturing the religious life and spiritual well-being of his parishioners. This also includes overseeing the construction of religious buildings, an important aspect to highlight in light of the church's anniversary.

Let us first examine the areas of Father Kwiatkowski's work as the parish priest in Błażowa. Father Marek Chochrek discusses these aspects in detail in his master's thesis, which was mentioned earlier.

Viewing these issues, there is a need to develop not only a modest biography but also a detailed monograph that fully describes Father Leon Kwiatkowski's life and work. This contribution would enrich the history of the Błażowa parish at the

turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. We will, however, address this topic concisely here.

At the core of Father Kwiatkowski's pastoral work is his spirituality. Father Leon prioritised the need for God's assistance in preparing for the construction of the church and in all his activities. As a result, his commitment to building the new church in Błażowa was deeply intertwined with prayer. He often expressed this belief with his well-known saying: „Without God's help, it's no use getting up at midnight.”

Father Kwiatkowski was diligent in his prayer life; he prayed frequently, meditated daily, and often recited the breviary in church while kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament. He confessed weekly to the senior vicar and held an annual retreat with the Jesuit Fathers in Stara Wieś, typically going alone.

He often rose at night to pray on his knees, and during times of deep distress, he would open the church to pour out his sorrows and worries before the Blessed Sacrament, where he drew strength and solace. (LK, p. 17).

In 1907, a fire devastated the town of Błażowa, leaving Father Kwiatkowski in deep sadness. The rectory and the vicarage were destroyed, as well as the home of Kazimierz Krygowski, which also contained the second half of the main altar he had crafted. The church's windows facing the town were cracked by the heat.

Amidst the chaos, the priest prayed with his parishioners, firmly believing in the power of prayer—faith that had never let him down. As the town's wooden buildings burned and the flames drew closer to the rectory and the church, the priest rushed to the church, retrieved the Blessed Sacrament, and carried it to a nearby meadow. There, he placed it on a table he had ordered to be brought and knelt before it, praying for several hours.

Although the fire consumed much of the town, including the

rectory and the vicarage, the church itself survived.

The parishioners credited the church's survival to their parish priest's prayers (LK, p. 17). According to Kazimierz Krygowski, the wind changed direction, meaning the fire no longer posed a threat to the church and homes in Księże Budy (Memoir, 3rd ed., Poznań 2016, p. 162).

As Father Kwiatkowski described, the fire was incredibly devastating: „It destroyed 189 Jewish families, two synagogues, and two loan offices. Additionally, it destroyed 27 Catholic families, the town council house, the old school, the credit union, and the Mickiewicz reading room. The fires raged for an entire week, resulting in losses amounting to millions. In total, 177 houses burned down, along with up to 100 annexes and approximately 300 roofs being destroyed.

[...] The church had a mass of smouldering coals in its gutters, and the windows facing the school were cracked” (KZach, pp. 222-223). The farmhouse, barn, stable, coach house, and chaff cutter were preserved. Before the brick vicarage (now the rectory) was built near the road, the vicars lived in the homes of parishioners, while the parish priest resided in a modest apartment within the farmhouse. This illustrates the significant challenges that Father Kwiatkowski faced.

Father Leon cared deeply for his parishioners' religious life, nurturing their faith and piety. He prayed extensively with them, including prayers for the construction of a new church (KZach, pp. 13-15, 108). One parish mission leader wrote in 1904 about Father Kwiatkowski, describing him as „a soul as pure as crystal, as hot as a volcano” (X.W.B. in: KZach, p. 185).

Father Kwiatkowski was an avid reader, particularly of ascetic literature. He took notes on his readings, utilised them in his teachings, and subscribed to various religious magazines. He also had an extensive

personal library. Every day after Mass, he would read a selected text from Catholic magazines to the parishioners or share stories about the lives of the saints. He was quick to assist his fellow priests in the deanery and showed great affection towards the vicars. „He loved his parents with an almost childlike love. When his mother, who was a widow and an elderly woman, became unable to walk, he would bring her Holy Communion almost daily until the time of her passing” (LK, p. 20).

He was very particular about the quality of his preaching and took great care in preparing for his ministry. Guided by the contemporary principles of homiletics—particularly those outlined by Fr. Józef Krukowski in his textbook „Catholic Pastoral Theology,” published in Przemyśl in 1869—he developed a thoughtful approach to his sermons. This commitment is evident in the collection of handwritten sermons he left behind, which are preserved in the Błażowa Parish Archives. These sermons date from his time as a vicar in Błażowa and Tyczyn. Fr. Henryk Rzeźnik wrote a master’s thesis titled „Issues Covered in Leon Kwiatkowski’s Sermons,” published in Lublin in 1989, pp. IX+107.

The systematic proclamation of God’s Word is explored through twelve extensive thematic exhortations related to the construction of the church in Błażowa, which we will discuss later. Below are some activities associated with the liturgy of the church year and the sacraments.

Pastoral work included celebrating Holy Mass on Sundays and holidays at 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM. The sermon or catechesis typically began around 10:30 AM. Vespers were usually held at 3:00 PM in Polish, often before the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed either in a ciborium or in a monstrance. On weekdays, Holy Mass was celebrated at 6:00 AM.

Throughout the liturgical year, various services took place, including the Rorate Mass (held at the altar of Our Lady), the Lenten Lamentations

at 3:00 PM, and special services in May and October. Additionally, a 40-hour devotion was conducted before Lent. The parish priest delivered the sermon at the end of the year.

On the patronal feast day, three Masses were celebrated: the principal Mass, a votive Mass, and a high Mass. Catechesis for the parishioners was also conducted during this time. Between 1884 and 1914, a total of 10,653 baptisms were performed, with the parish priest administering 4,494 of them. In 1913 alone, 31,000 Holy Communions were recorded. Out of 1,995 weddings during the same period, Father Leon officiated at 1,664, which is 85% of the total. He dedicated considerable time to hearing confessions from parishioners and to organising retreats and parish missions. During his tenure in Błażowa from 1890 to 1914, seven new priests were ordained from this parish.

Father Leon took great care of religious brotherhoods. Here are some of them: the Most Holy Sacrament, the Holy Rosary, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Carmelite Brown Scapular. Some of the associations that were formed included the Temperance Society, the Holy Family, Christian Mothers, St. Anthony of Padua, and Guardian Angels. Additionally, there was the Tertiary, or Third Order of St. Francis. Thanks to Father Kwiatkowski and his associates, many parishioners became more engaged in their religious lives, praying more deeply and more often.

As an active and devoted parish priest, he engaged in various pastoral initiatives. He founded the „Pomoc” Loan Society and served as its president. Additionally, he established the Volunteer Fire Department, where he also served as president. He was a member of the Błażowa Weaving Society and delivered lectures for Agricultural Circles (ChKw, pp. 17-18). In recognition of his contributions, the church authorities in Przemyśl awarded him the honorary title of canon (EC). They granted him the privilege of wearing a rochet and

mantelletta (RM), which are part of the attire modelled after the Przemyśl canons.

The bishop appointed him as deputy dean of the Dynów deanery, which included Błażowa at that time. He was not pleased with this appointment, primarily due to his limited time, which was also consumed by the construction of a new church. Later, in 1911, Błażowa became part of the Tyczyn deanery (ChKw, pp. 17-18). In recognition of Father Kwiatkowski’s contributions, a commemorative plaque was created in his honour on 9 August 1899. However, he chose not to have it displayed in the church during his lifetime; it was only placed there after his death. The plaque is still preserved today on the wall near the entrance to the sacristy (KZach, p. 195; LK, p. 20).

In 1904, Father Leon celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priesthood. On 25 April 1909, he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his work as parish priest in Błażowa. On this occasion, he received a letter from Bishop Józef Sebastian Pelczar expressing gratitude for his extraordinary dedication and efforts in building the magnificent church, recognising his many years of devoted pastoral work in the parish, and extending his archpastoral blessing to the Jubilarian, the priests, and the congregation. The magnificent celebration took place on the second Sunday after Easter, on St. Mark’s Day, in beautiful weather. The sermon after high Mass, in the church square, was delivered by Father Gustaw Fihauer. On this occasion, the Jubilarian received the Golden Cross of Merit with Crown as an award. Several people delivered congratulatory speeches: Jędrzej Paluch from the parishioners, Jan Sieńko from the St. Joseph’s Circle and the reading room, Piotr Sieńko from the Volunteer Fire Service, and Zofia Popierówna from the school. The parish priest thanked everyone and outlined the most important activities, expenses, and future plans (KZach, pp. 223-224).

Fr. Jan Twardy



# Tales From Years Gone By. Part VI: Recorded in the Golden Book

Anna Gellermann

To honour the benefactors of the church in Błażowa and to preserve the history of its construction and the earlier history of the parish from oblivion, the Golden Book of the Founders and Benefactors of the Church in Błażowa was printed in 1910 in Przemyśl. The book was written by Father Leon Kwiatkowski and published with the consent of Bishop Jan Sebastian Pelczar.

125 years after the completion of our church, this book serves as a valuable resource for researchers of local history. It not only includes a list of all the donors but also offers an insightful chronicle of the preparations and the construction process.

The text provides a detailed account of the resources collected over the years, including financial contributions, cartloads of stones, bundles of timber, and quantities of bricks produced. According to the Golden Book, in 1886, a large bell named Saint Martin was acquired. The following year, 1887, paintings of Saint Martin and Saint Nicholas were purchased for the high altar. In 1888, new banners were acquired.

In 1892, 125 loads of stone were

brought in; in 1893, preparations were made for brick firing, and several dozen stacks of timber beams and logs were brought in. By 1894, two sheds and two brick kilns were constructed on the manor grounds next to the brickyard, enabling the firing of approximately 400,000 bricks.

In my previous article, I noted that the Golden Book contains a detailed account of the challenges encountered in selecting the church's location and design. This account illustrates the meticulous effort put into gathering all the necessary resources for construction, emphasising that the building process commenced only when everything was fully prepared. The main goal was to ensure that Holy Mass could be celebrated during the construction of the new church.

The process began with the construction of half of the new church, which included the installation of a temporary roof and windows. Three altars from the old church were relocated, allowing for the celebration of the Eucharist in the new space.

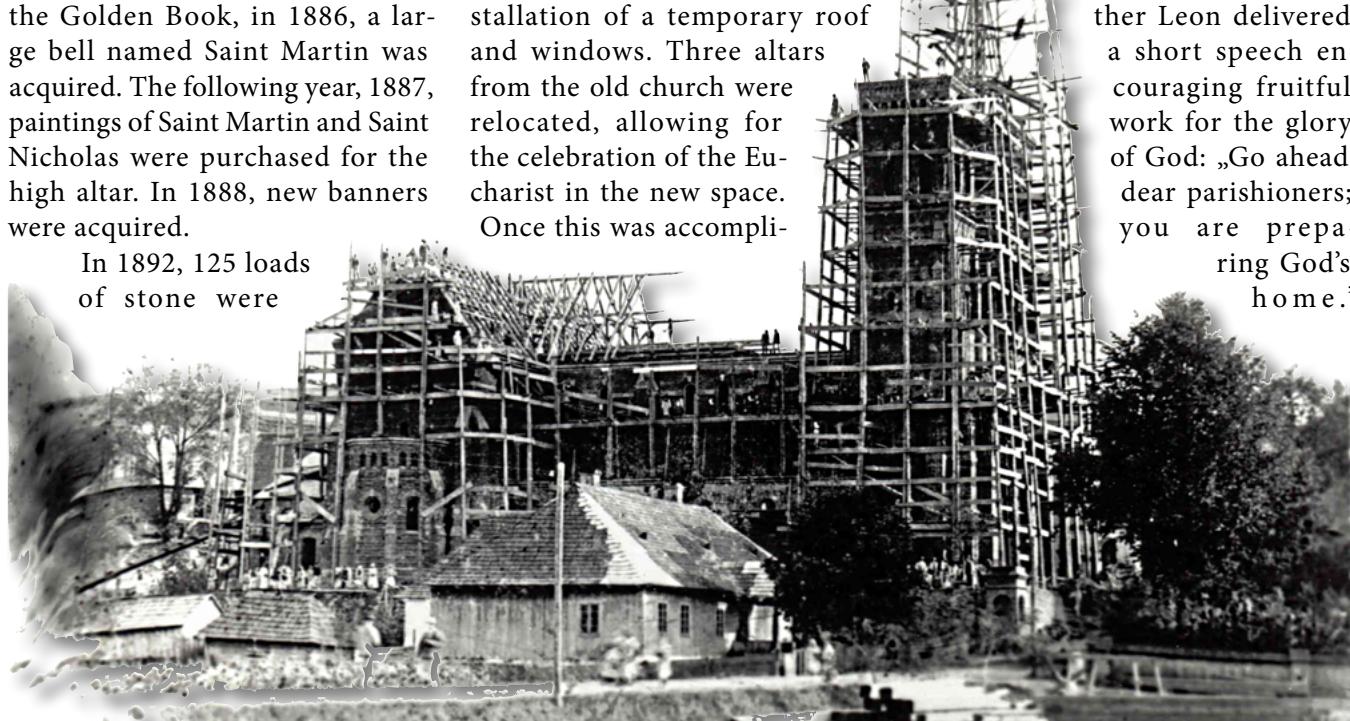
Once this was accompi-



shed, the demolition of the old church and further construction of the new one could proceed. This timeline is notable, as the initial groundwork for the project was laid by architect Jan Sas Zubrzycki on 23 March 1896, and completed within just seven months, with significant progress occurring as early as October 1896.

Let's revisit the beginning. In March, before construction began, an eight-day parish mission was held to address the spiritual aspect of this significant undertaking. As Father Leon Kwiatkowski notes in the Golden Book: „At 8 a.m. on 25 June 1896, last Thursday, I celebrated Holy Mass to mark the successful commencement of the foundations. I then led a procession to the construction site, where the bricklayers and workers had gathered. Singing 'Who Is Under Your Protection?' I guided everyone into the church.” After the

service, the procession returned to the construction site, where Father Leon delivered a short speech encouraging fruitful work for the glory of God: „Go ahead, dear parishioners; you are preparing God's home.”

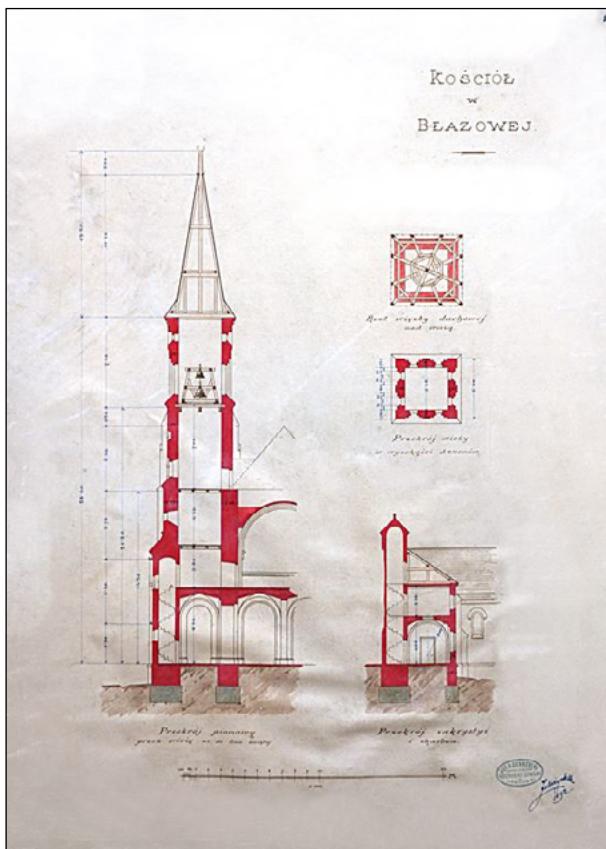


The site was sprinkled with holy water, and mortars were fired to celebrate the occasion. The parish priest, followed by others, entered the trench and placed three stones to form a cross, marking the begin-

horse-drawn carts. It's hard to imagine how challenging the work would have been without cranes or modern equipment. A preserved photograph shows enormous wooden scaffolding, with workers labouring at great heights without helmets or safety gear.

The construction of the church was completed the following year. As

a solemn service, the bricklayers from Ryglice departed from the construction site, marking the completion of the bricklaying and stonework. The year 1900 was designated as the official completion date for the Błażowa church. A parish retreat was held after the event, providing a beautiful closure to this challenging but fruitful period in the life of our congregation. However, this was not the end of the project; finishing work



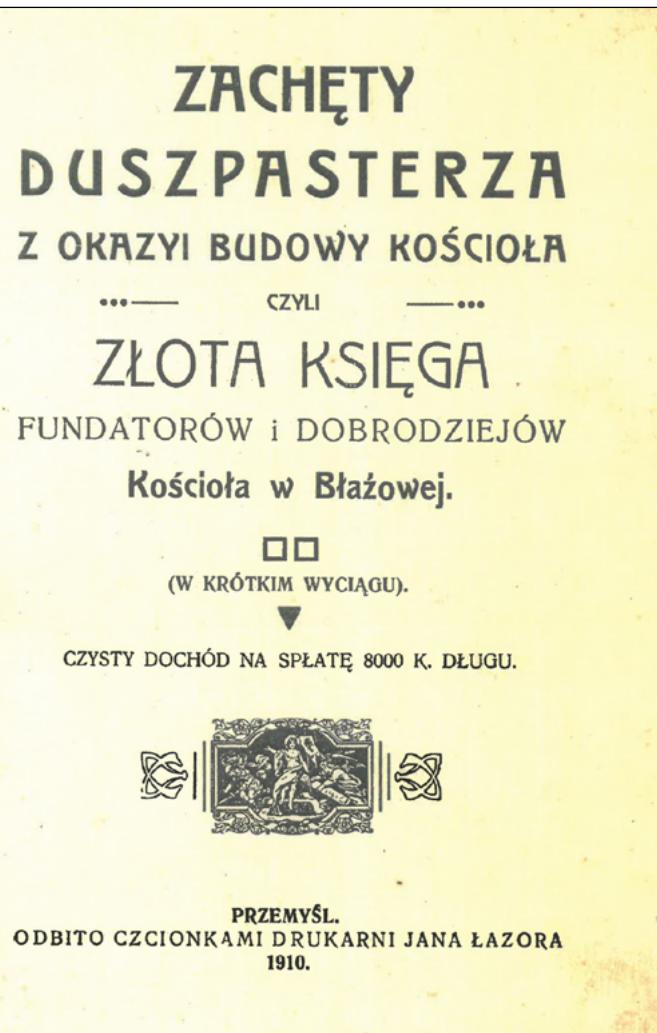
ning of the foundation construction. As noted, on 3 October, the first half of the church was consecrated, the Blessed Sacrament was transferred, and a solemn Mass was celebrated to thank the Lord Jesus for the 74 years He had been in the old church.

„On the evening of the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, the church was beautifully illuminated, and fireworks were set off in the rectory meadow. Mortar fire echoed from 4:00 p.m. until nightfall”. Ten days later, the old church was demolished, and construction of the second half of the foundations commenced under the supervision of Michał Mikoś.

The church was built by eleven bricklayers from Ryglice. Initially, 40 people came to help each day, later increasing to 50. They were assisted by six, and eventually seven,

a commemoration, an inscription was carved from roof tiles, reading „1897” on one side and „D.O.-M.” (Latin: Deo Optimo Maximo – To God, who is the best and the greatest) on the other side, positioned above the chancel.

In 1898, windows and doors were installed, plastering was completed, and spruces were planted on the slope near the church. In December, construction of the bell tower—a small structure above the intersection of the transept and the nave that houses the bells—was completed. On 9 August 1899, after



continued in the ensuing years, including laying the floor, painting the walls, and building the altars.

Dear Readers,

In the next instalment of „Tales From Years Gone By,” featured in the upcoming issue of „Kurier Błażowski,” I will share the extraordinary events and experiences of these remarkable years. I hope you enjoy the read!

Anna Gellermann

# The Establishment and Operations of the Jewish Soup Kitchen in Błażowa from 1940 to 1942.

The online archives of the American Joint Distribution Committee include a file titled „Błażowa: Correspondence with the Jewish Council.” This file contains correspondence between the Błażowa Judenrat and the Kraków branch of the American Joint Distribution Committee, as well as reports on charitable activities. These documents enable us to trace the founding circumstances and the operations of the Jewish soup kitchen, which functioned intermittently in our town from late 1940 until the summer of 1942.

Almost from the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Poland, the responsibility for addressing the needs of the Jewish population fell to

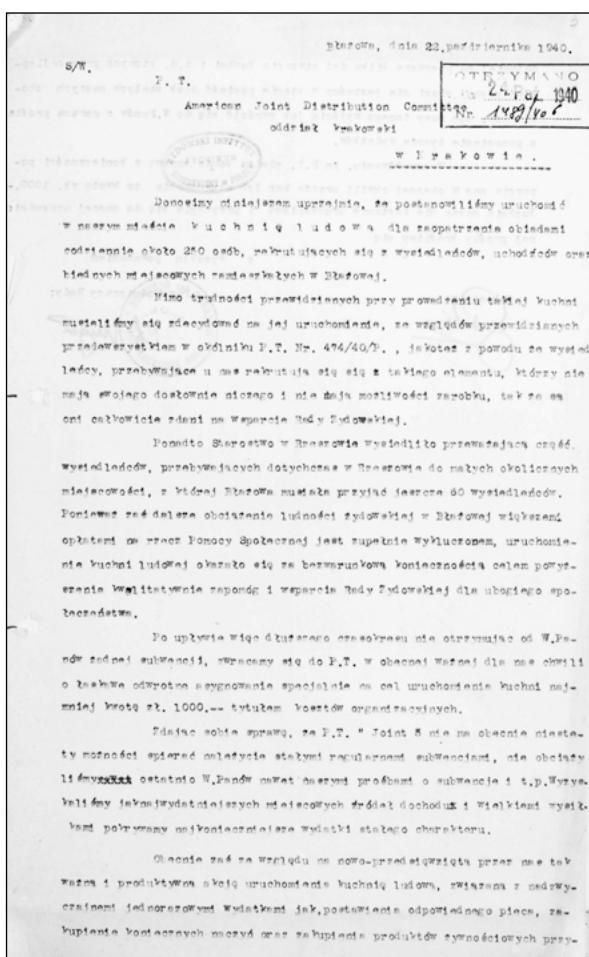
The members of the Jewish councils faced severe consequences for their actions, often putting their own lives and the lives of their loved ones at

risk. In some areas, up to half of the local Judenrat members were murdered by the occupiers simply because they believed that their orders were not being executed quickly enough.

The councils were re-

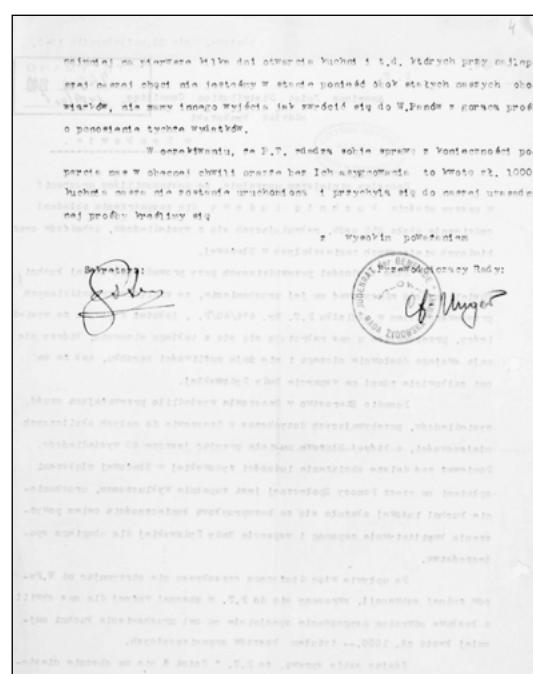
Weiss was tasked with selecting local Jews for forced labour, in line with German demands. Jakub Atlas was also a member of the Council.

In December 1940, the Judenrat reported the following statistics regarding the Jewish residents of Błażowa: out of the 991 Jews living in Błażowa at that time, 778 individuals (comprising 230 families) were locals. Additionally, there were 213 newcomers, of whom 154 (39 families) were displaced persons and 59 (23 families) were refugees.



Jewish councils, known as Judenrats. These councils were established at the request of the occupiers by an official decree from Governor-General Hans Frank on 28 November 1939. Their primary role was to serve as intermediaries between the occupiers and the Jewish community, conveying orders and ensuring compliance.

sponsible for administrative matters and, in light of the growing poverty and hunger affecting Polish Jews, increasingly focused on social assistance. Abraham Unger served as the chairman of the local Judenrat in Błażowa, with Wolf Silberstein acting as the secretary. Mojsze



The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), commonly known as the Joint, was founded in the United States in 1914 by Jewish charities. One of its main goals was to provide aid to Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe that were affected by pogroms and wartime conditions. The Joint established an office in Poland shortly after the outbreak of World War I. During World War II, the organisation offered financial and material support to individual Jewish communities and later to ghettos. While this

assistance was extremely important, it often fell short of meeting the actual needs of Jewish communities in the

the increased social welfare contributions, necessitating external support. Therefore, the Joint was approached for assistance.

Launching a community soup kitchen involved significant expenses. A suitable stove had to be installed, and appropriate utensils and food supplies were needed for at least the first few days. A request for financial assistance of 1,000 złoty was made to cover these costs.

The response from Kraków arrived quickly, but unfortunately, it was not favourable to the Błażowa Judenrat. While the initiative was acknowledged as legitimate and additional questions were raised about its details,

once the soup kitchen is operational, the Judenrat was advised to submit a formal application. Even during the dark times of occupation, the wheels of bureaucracy continued to turn in a fixed rhythm.

The Błażowa council remained determined in its efforts. A letter dated 28 October outlines plans to reach out to the district head in Rzeszów to request additional food and fuel allocations for the kitchen; the extent of operations would depend on the outcome of this intervention. Additionally, a renewed request for financial support was made to the Joint, as work to open the kitchen was in progress. The Judenrat had accumulated significant debts and was unable to bring the kitchen into operation. Although the Joint provided material support to the Błażowa Judenrat by allocating 170 kilograms of flour, it continued to decline cash assistance, citing procedural reasons.

Despite facing significant challenges, including the district office's refusal to allocate any additional rations, the Błażowa soup kitchen officially opened on 26 November 1940. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, it could only offer lunches. A report titled „Report of the Distributed Lunches of the Soup Kitchen to the Poor,” dated 1 December 1940, has survived. What was the menu like during those first few days of operation?

„On 26 November 1940:

- 1/ broth with potatoes
- 2/ meat with cornmeal

112 meals were served.

On 27 November 1940:

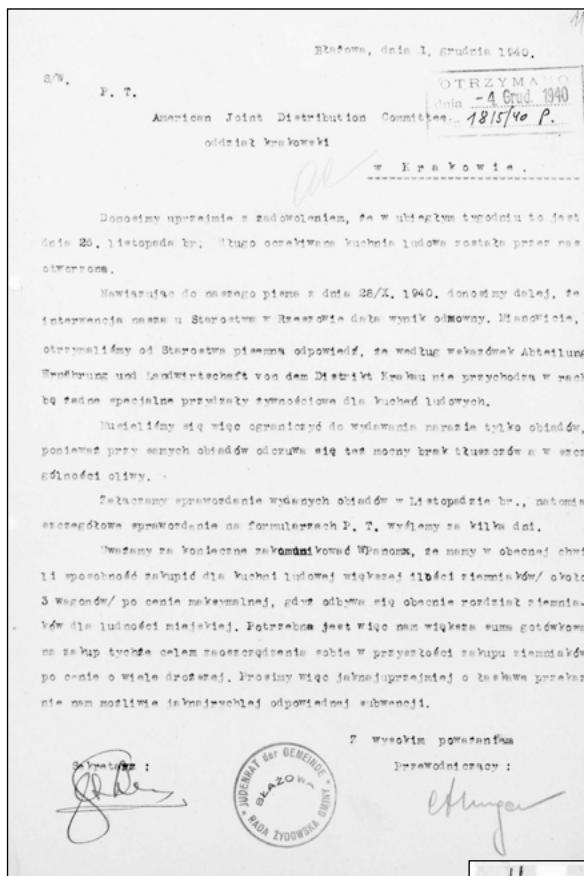
- 1/ Potato soup with

dumplings

2/ Thick buckwheat with beans

117 meals were served.

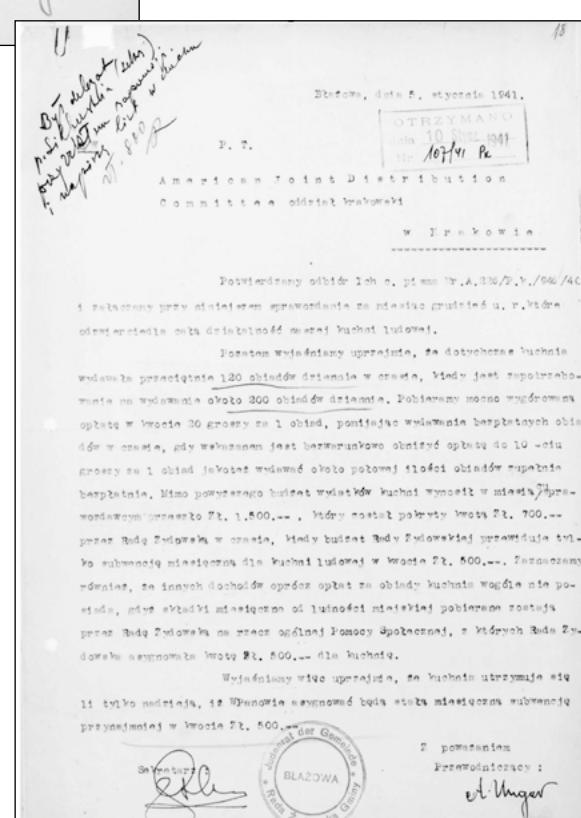
On 28 November 1940:



occupied areas. The situation in Błażowa illustrates this shortfall.

On 22 October 1940, the Błażowa Judenrat sent a letter to the Kraków branch of the Joint, announcing their decision to open a community soup kitchen in the town. This kitchen was intended to provide daily meals for approximately 250 individuals selected from among displaced persons, refugees, and impoverished locals living in Błażowa. It was emphasised that the displaced persons staying in Błażowa came from a group that had nothing of their own and no means of earning a living, literally making them entirely dependent on the support of the Jewish Council.

Displaced individuals from other Polish towns, who had previously been staying in Rzeszów, were relocated by the local starostwo (district office) to nearby towns. Błażowa was required to accommodate sixty of these individuals. However, the local Jewish community struggled to cover



the request for subsidies to establish the kitchen was denied. It was stated that „only existing institutions can apply for our assistance.” Therefore,

1/ Beetroot borscht with potatoes  
 2/ Meat cutlets  
 122 meals were served.  
 On 29 November 1940:  
 1/ broth with potatoes  
 2/ soup meat  
 149 meals were served.  
 On 30 November 1940:  
 1/ thick pearl barley with sugar  
 beans  
 2/ meat cutlets and  
 tea  
 129 meals served."

The previous report focused solely on the soup kitchen's activities. Subsequent monthly reports covering the period until March 1941 also detail the broader activities of the Social Welfare Department of the Jewish Council. From these reports, we learn not only about the types and quantities of products purchased for the kitchen each month, but also about the number of meals served.

Additionally, in February 1941, 150 kilograms of bread, 1,000 kilograms of potatoes, 10 kilograms of flour, and 2 litres of fat were distributed to 420 individuals. In March of the same year, 75 families received cash benefits, 15 individuals received either medication or medication allowance, and 6 people received hospital treatment. However, the funds collected were never sufficient to assist everyone in need.

Each letter from the Judenrat contains increasingly desperate pleas for financial assistance. One from 20 December 1940, reads: „Due to our disastrous financial situation, the debt incurred to start the kitchen, the purchase of quota potatoes, and the receipt of a bezugechain for 5 tons of coal for the kitchen, the lack of cash is pressing us so hard that we simply can't stand it anymore. We are in a chaotic state and completely helpless.”

The kitchen served an average of 120 meals per day, while actual demand was around 200. Each meal cost 20 groszy, which was a significant amount for that time, and these fees constituted nearly the kitchen's sole source of income. However, as living conditions worsened, the cost of a meal dropped to 10 groszy, and

Lieber and Aleksander Klaristenfeld to the board.

A ghetto was likely established in Błażowa during the winter of 1941-42, as a result of the occupier's regulations regarding the creation of separate Jewish districts. These districts were not always enclosed by a physical wall separating them from the rest of the town.

However, Jews were not permitted to leave the town limits without a valid pass, and the fear of severe punishment effectively discouraged them from venturing outside their designated areas.

The community soup kitchen reopened in January 1942, but it only served meals to children, the elderly, and the sick. Unfortunately, not everyone in need could receive a meal, as the kitchen could serve only 70 per day. Although the exact date of the closure of

JÜDISCHE VOLSKÜCHE Zyd. Kuchnia Ludowa Błażowa		Sp r a w o d s z n i e	13
		OTRZYMAŁO	13
1/ 4 Grud. 1940 18/15/40 r.			
<u>rozdzielonych obiadów kuchni ludowej dla biednych.</u>			
<u>Dnia 26/11/1940. :</u>			
1/	roast z ziemniakami	Wydano 112 obiadów.	
2/	mięso wraz z kuskusem.		
<u>Dnia 27/11/1940. :</u>			
1/	zupa ziemniaczana z kuskusem		
2/	pečenek z fasoli na gęsto.	Wydano 117 obiadów.	
<u>Dnia 28/11/1940. :</u>			
1/	bureczek burekowy z ziemniakami		
2/	kotlety z mięsa.	Wydano 122 obiadów.	
<u>Dnia 29/11/1940. :</u>			
1/	roast z ziemniakami		
2/	mięso ziemniaczane.	Wydano 149 obiadów.	
<u>Dnia 30/11/1940. sobota :</u>			
1/	pečenek z cukrową fasolą na gęsto		
2/	kotlety z mięsa i herbatą.	Wydano 129 obiadów.	

the number of free meals also gradually increased. On average, over 3,000 meals were served each month, two-thirds of which were for refugees and displaced persons.

In early May 1941, a branch of the Jewish Social Self-Help (ŻSS) was established in Błażowa, chaired by Józef Natansohn, with assistance from Hersch Lieber and Simche Intrator. The mission of the ŻSS was to take over social care for the Jewish population, including the management of the soup kitchen. Unfortunately, the ŻSS's efforts were unsuccessful, and by August 1941, the kitchen ceased operations due to the lack of funds. In September 1941, upon Natansohn's resignation, Dr Jakub Neiss assumed leadership of the branch. Displeased with the performance of the remaining board members, he proposed personnel changes that resulted in the appointments of Dawid

this reorganised soup kitchen is unknown, it may have operated for only a few months.

In June 1942, the Błażowa ghetto was liquidated, and its inhabitants were relocated to the ghetto in Rzeszów. A month later, most of them embarked on their final journey to the Bełżec extermination camp.

**Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey**

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Zdzisław Chlebek

## The History of Education in Futoma from 1888 to 2015. Part 2.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the school closed for two months.

When it reopened, only four classes were permitted to be taught in German, and the use of Polish textbooks and required readings was banned. Polish literature, history, geography, and religion were removed from the curriculum; however, religion was later reinstated.

In 1940, during the Nazi occupation, the principal, Halig, was transferred to Pstrągowa. Education was promoted in Futoma through clandestine teaching by Antoni Smrek, supported by Franciszek Leśniak, Aniela Blajerówna, and Władysław Sochaj.

Much of the credit for Futoma's spiritual and civilisational development is due to Father Wojciech Stachyrak, who served as the parish priest and dean from 1902 to 1946. He was instrumental in building the current St. Valentine's Church and the rectory, founding the cemetery, and co-organising the Stefczyk Fund and the Dairy Cooperative.

Just before the outbreak of World War II, the young vicar, Father Michał Pilipiec, arrived at the parish. After the September Campaign, he was transferred to St. Martin's Parish in Błażowa. He also served as a chaplain for the Home Army in the area. Tragically, he was murdered on 8 December 1944, along with

his companions, by the Security Office from Rzeszów in the Głogów forests.

The young vicar endeavoured to engage young men and women in the parish by organising frequent pilgrimages to renowned sanctuaries, including Kalwaria Pacławskiego, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, and Jasna Góra.

After setting up the playing field and buying a tennis table, he encouraged the boys to play volleyball and table tennis.

brick-making plant. Inspired by their resourceful leader, the residents gathered building materials, including stone, timber, and bricks. They lobbied the authorities for approval to build the school. They even printed charity bricks and sent them to their compatriots in America for support.

In 1948, Franciszek Wyskiel was appointed the head of the School Building Committee. On 15 September of that year, the cornerstone was laid for a new school on a plot of land in the centre of the village.

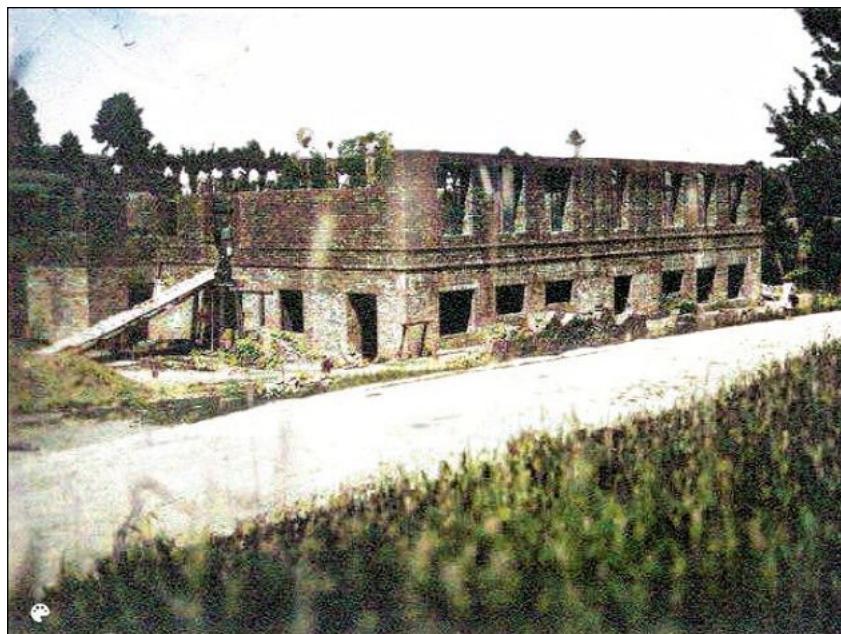
Between 1948 and 1952, a magnificent two-story building was constructed, featuring large, spacious classrooms, a comfortable staircase, and wide corridors. After undergoing numerous renovations and expansions, the school continues to serve students to this day.

The date of construction completion—1952—is

embedded in the floor of the school corridor on the first floor. The progress of the school's construction is documented in a handwritten journal kept by Franciszek Wyskiel, which has been preserved among the school records. During the Stalinist years, the young people of Futoma gained a functional and impressive school. However, they lost their spiritual patron, St. John Cantius. Such figures were not welcome at the time. Schools were often stripped of their original patrons or replaced with new patrons aligned with communist ideology.

To Be Continued...

**Zdzisław Chlebek**



In 1948, Władysław Sochaj became the school's principal. The principal and three teachers taught 240 students. Mr Sochaj recalled:

„I found the school in a deplorable state. Almost everything was destroyed: a lack of teaching aids, burnt-out stoves, and crumbling mud huts. However, my great hope for the future was the schoolchildren, who were very eager to learn.”

The local community, led by Ferdynand Wyskiel, a former Home Army soldier and dedicated social activist, proposed a project to build a new and functional school. Since 1944, Futoma has had its own

# Wild Boar – The Symbol of Fertility and Ferocity

To the hunter, it's considered game; to the forester, it is an ally of the forest; and to the farmer, it is a despised pest.



Let's talk about the wild boar.

In recent decades, there have been significant changes to landscapes and the expansion of large-scale monoculture farming. Animals have responded to these environmental transformations in various ways. Some species have experienced drastic reductions in their range and population numbers, while others have gone extinct. Conversely, some species have adapted remarkably well to the new conditions. One notable example is the wild boar, which, as an extreme opportunist, has achieved remarkable success.

The domestic pig, well-known to everyone, is directly descended from the wild boar. However, there are several noticeable differences between the two. The wild boar can weigh up to 350 kg, although it typically weighs around 100 kg. It has a stocky body and a short neck, topped by a large head and an elongated snout that ends in what hunters call a boutoir. This snout is very effective for foraging, allowing the boar to dig in overgrown meadows

and create deep holes in search of tubers or rodent nests underground.

While the wild boar's eyesight is

**NATURE AROUND US**

colours can range from black to grey and brown. Young ones are lighter in colour and have distinctive stripes that fade as they age. Mature males, typically over 4 years old, tend to be solitary and lead a secretive lifestyle. They develop a thick, protective layer of connective tissue and fat under their skin, especially around the shoulders, which serves as a shield during fights.

Based on my own experience, I have learned how intelligent wild boars are and how they can interact with humans in various ways. They become extremely cautious when they sense danger, which leads them to adopt a nocturnal lifestyle. However, as is increasingly observed in urban areas, they sometimes forage during the day, showing little fear of human presence and can even become aggressive. It's important to note that when a wild boar feels threatened, it raises the bristles on its back and lifts its head. Males then make a characteristic snapping sound, and foam flows from their mouths. In such situations, it is essential to back off for your own safety.

A wild family in its natural habitat produces a variety of sounds, including squeals, grunts, croaks, and whines. This group, typically

not particularly sharp, its sense of smell is outstanding. Despite their seemingly sluggish nature, wild boars can reach speeds of nearly 50 km per hour in short bursts and are also excellent swimmers. However, they struggle with deep snow, which makes movement difficult; after navigating through it, they leave behind a distinct trench or „gutter”.

The animal has a coat consisting of long, stiff, bristle-like guard hairs and a softer, woolly undercoat. Its



In our community, it is common to encounter wild boars and find signs of their presence in many places.

comprising around 20 members, consists of juvenile and adult females related to one another and their offspring. In the face of predatory threats from wolves, these families



come together to form larger, mixed-sex packs, enabling them to defend their young more effectively.

Visits from large groups of wild boars can be a nightmare for farmers and anyone who manages an unfenced home garden or orchard. As omnivores, wild boars are not picky eaters and will readily raid even our compost bins. They enjoy



carrión and sometimes hunt, capturing young birds, hares, and even deer. There have been reports of them actively pursuing wounded game for this reason.

If we encounter wild boars, it's important to know they're likely common in the area. Only male wild boars travel long distances during the autumn rutting season. Female

wild boars typically give birth in early spring, with litters averaging between 4 and 8 piglets. In populations that are heavily hunted or are subject to predation, females may begin breeding as

early as 8 months old. While wild boars were once thought to be seasonal breeders, recent research indicates that farrowing can now occur

where we encounter „painted trees” they enthusiastically rub against, leaving behind muddy patterns. Rooting sites can be found almost everywhere. Meadows with overturned sod, scarred seedbeds, and holes left from harvested potato or corn crops are common features in our fields.

During years when acorns and beechnuts are abundant, we may find fallen litter beneath the trees. Interestingly, beechnuts contain phagin, which causes symptoms resembling alcohol intoxication in our greedy



year-round. The population of wild boars can increase by over 200%, with several factors contributing to this rise, including climate conditions, the availability of acorns and beechnuts, changes in agricultural practices, and hunting regulations.

In our municipality, wild boars are frequently encountered, and we often come across signs of their presence.



Sometimes, among the tall grasses or reeds, we discover dens, intricately padded beds, or even dug holes under trees that serve as summer resting places. Wallows, popular mud-bathing spots, are commonly visited and accessible via well-worn paths.

Wetlands and riparian forests are favoured habitats for wild boars,

wild piggies.

In 2014, a previously unknown viral disease, African swine fever (ASF), emerged in our country. This disease poses a significant threat to wild boars and pigs, and unfortunately, we are still grappling with its impacts. The severe damage to agriculture has led to a substantial increase in wild boar hunting by our local hunting clubs. The risks associated with hunting this animal are captured in the old proverb: „If you go for a bear, prepare a bed for the night; if for a boar, prepare a bier.”

It has become a tradition for our associations to allow cynologists to use their hunting grounds during winter collective hunts. This enables the assessment of wild boar hunting dogs, trained specifically for this purpose, in natural conditions. I will provide more details on this topic another time.

**Dagmara Wichačz**

# Through the Eyes of a Hunter

**A few thoughts on passion, nature, hunting ethics, and tradition**

## Darz Bór! Happy hunting!

With this traditional hunter's greeting, I would like to welcome our readers. Nowadays, traditions and ethics are often viewed as less important values. However, there are social groups for whom these principles remain fundamental, and we hope they continue to do so. One such group is hunters.

For many people, a hunter is simply someone with a gun, sometimes accompanied by a dog, who is found in the forest. This person hunts, shoots, and eats what they catch. However, from a hunter's perspective, the experience is quite different. I want to share our viewpoint on hunting, but before diving into the details, I want to say a few words about myself.

I'm an IT specialist by profession, married to a wonderful, understanding woman, and a father of two amazing children. I have many passions in life, but one has been with me since childhood, although it took nearly ten years for me to embrace it fully. I grew up in the city but spent my summers and holidays in the countryside with my grandparents. It was

there, alongside my grandfather and my dear friend Jacek, that I learned to observe nature, recognise animal species, and understand the relationships within the natural environment. This interest was rekindled two years ago. With the Board's approval, I began an internship at the „Szarak” Hunting Club in Błażowa. The internship lasted a year, after which I completed a course and passed an exam. I formally became a hunter. But did I truly become one?

From the perspective of a centuries-old hunting tradition, the answer is not yet. This brings us to the essence of the hunting oath, which has its roots in Poland and dates back to the Middle Ages. Originally, it was a pledge of allegiance to the king and the land. Over the centuries, this oath evolved into a solemn and symbolic act that introduced aspiring hunters to the world of hunting while imparting a sense of responsibility for nature, the law, and tradition. We are discussing a ritual that is over a thousand years old!

Even today, the hunting oath carries a solemn significance. It is



typically held during important events, such as the Hubert Hunt. This was my experience as well. My friends Łukasz, Przemek, and I stood in front of the gathered hunters, our guardians—commonly referred to as „godfathers”—standing behind us. The most senior hunter, known as the celebrant, stood before us as we took the oath. We knelt on our left knees, placing our weapons beside us, while our guardians rested a hand on our shoulders.

All present removed their hats in respect. The celebrant was Zbigniew Ziaja, president of the „Szarak” Club, who read the oath aloud. We repeated the words after him: „By joining the ranks of Polish hunters, I solemnly pledge to conscientiously observe hunting laws, act in accordance with the principles of hunting ethics, preserve the traditions of Polish hunting, protect native wildlife, and uphold the good name of hunting and the dignity of Polish hunters.”

After the ceremony, the celebrant concluded with the traditional words: „For the glory of Polish hunting, be a righteous hunter, may the forest



bless you!" To which everyone replied, „Darz Bór.”

The ceremony took place in the unique setting of the Szklarska Forest, next to the chapel of St. Hubert. It was impossible not to feel that, through this act, we were spiritually connecting with generations of hunters who came before us. This raises an important question: how many social groups welcome new members with such solemnity and respect for tradition? How many communities maintain rituals that date back over a thousand years? For hunters, tradition isn't merely an afterthought—it is fundamental. From small customs and superstitions to significant moments like taking an oath, hunting fosters a close-knit circle of responsibility, memory, and continuity. By joining, we commit ourselves to nature, history, and future generations.

The tradition of hunting goes far beyond just the oath. It is deeply ingrained in the daily life of hunters and is richer than it may appear to those outside of our community. Over the centuries, a complex system of customs, symbols, and rituals has evolved, accompanying hunters both during the hunt and in their everyday lives. There are countless examples of these traditions; I will mention just a few.

One of the most distinctive elements of hunting tradition is the use of hunting signals, including those made in honour of the hunted game. These signals create a unique language of the forest, conveying seriousness, focus, and a deep respect for nature.

The Pokot is a ceremonial practice that occurs after a hunt, where the game is laid down in a meaningful way. This gesture is not one of triumph but rather a form of thanksgiving and a way to honour the animal that was hunted. The ceremony typically includes decorations such as spruce or fir branches and hunting signals, along with a moment of reflection. This ritual highlights that hunting is not merely about obtaining meat; it is an activity that involves a deep sense of responsibility and contemplation.

It's important to highlight the customs surrounding a young hunter's first game harvest. The traditional hunting „baptism” holds significant meaning; it marks a transition into adulthood and signifies a readiness to accept the consequences of one's decisions in the hunting field.

Saint Hubert is the patron saint of hunters, foresters, and riders, and he holds a significant place in tradition. Events such as Hubert Hunts, St. Hubert Masses, and related gatherings bring the community together, reminding us that hunting has always had both spiritual and communal dimensions.

Numerous additional examples could be provided, ranging from the terminology used in hunting and the attire worn by hunters to the symbolism associated with the colour green and various small customs passed

down through generations. Together, these elements create a cohesive whole that transforms hunting into not just a passion, but also a culture and a unique way of viewing the world.

This article marks the beginning of a series that I hope will become a regular feature in „Kurier Błażowski.” In future instalments, we will explore topics such as: what whispers of the forest, the beauty of nature, the work of hunters, hunting management, ethics, and the events and individuals connected to our local hunting community.

As I start this series, I invite our readers to join me on a mindful journey along forest paths, fostering respect and openness to the messages the forest has to share. Let's listen to the woods together.

Darz Bór!

**Dariusz Ziobro**



