Stained Glass Windows and Wooden Benches from Olomouc Synagogue
Symbolic Monument to the Victims of the Holocaust

Construction of the Olomouc synagogue started in 1895. In 1897, it was consecrated by Rabbi Dr. Berthold Oppenheim. On the night of the 15\textsuperscript{th} of March 1939, the synagogue was burnt down and destroyed by local Fascists. Today only a few wooden benches and eight stained glass windows remain.

One of the recently \textit{discovered} windows bears the name of Rabbi Oppenheim.

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STAINED GLASS WINDOWS AND WOODEN BENCHES FROM
OLOMOUC SYNAGOGUE
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The Olomouc synagogue, built during 1895 – 1897, in Oriental - Byzantine style, was based on a design by the foremost Viennese architect, Jacob Gartner. While the synagogues in Lostice and Úsov were saved, the great synagogue of Olomouc was burned down and destroyed by local Fascists in March 1939. Only ten wooden benches and eight stained glass windows survived the destruction. Following the removal of the ruins, the area was turned into a park. Shortly after the war a stone statue depicting Lenin and Stalin was erected on the site.

From 1940 the stained glass windows were hidden in a private dwelling in the suburbs of Olomouc. At the end of 2006, the Foundation Respect and Tolerance, with the help of an anonymous donor and thanks to the understanding of the Jewish Community of Olomouc, succeeded in complicated negotiations, found and acquired these unique windows. In the near future the windows will be registered in the National List of Historical Monuments and after restoration will be presented to the public.

One of the windows bears the name of the first Olomouc rabbi, Dr. Berthold Oppenheim. He was involved in the initial planning to build the synagogue, donated funds for its construction and consecrated the synagogue in 1897. Rabbi Oppenheim served his community for 47 years – until 1939, when his synagogue was destroyed. Before the Nazi occupation he was also the rabbi in Lostice. He perished in Treblinka in 1942.

Period photographs, materials and information about members of the prewar Jewish community are on display in the Lostice synagogue. The stained glass windows and benches will be the focal points of the museum display, which documents the history of Jewish settlement in the Lostice region.

Synagogue Olomouc, postcard, 1919
“Gift from Rabbi Dr. B. Oppenheim and his wife Marie nee Fried in memory of their beloved deceased:”
Photo: Rabbi Dr. Berthold Oppenheim, Olomouc, around 1915
“in grateful memory of Moritz Gross.”
"Donated in memory of his unforgettable father
“Daniel David Gross”
"Donated in memory of our unforgettable parents Marcus and Netty Zweig."
“In memory of our unforgettable, beloved mother Theresia Sonnenschein”
“To the praiseworthy representatives of this community, with gratitude for their blessed service;”
Wooden Benches from Olomouc Synagogue

Originally, the synagogue contained over seven hundred seats, now only ten benches (70 seats) remain. For a period of 65 years, the carved wooden benches were used in a village church in the Prostejov area. In 2004, the Krnov Synagogue Foundation moved them to the synagogue in the town of Krnov. After this transfer, the Foundation Respect and Tolerance acquired three rows of benches (21 seats) for the Lostice synagogue.

The benches are dedicated to victims of the Holocaust. Each seat is devoted to a family or a small group of Jews, from the Lostice region, which perished in the Holocaust. At the same time, individual seats honor people who morally or otherwise support programs of the Foundation Respect and Tolerance and those who fight against racism and injustice around the world.

The Seat of Honor - the first seat in the first row - is dedicated to the prewar time rabbi of Olomouc and Lostice: Dr. Berthold Oppenheim, as well as Nobel Peace Prize Winner and honorary member of the Respect and Tolerance Foundation: Professor Elie Wiesel.

Examples of other seat dedications include: members of Hafaka Congregation and Rabbi Bruce Elder, who in 2005, brought back the original Lostice Scroll to Lostice synagogue - where he performed the first service since the Nazi occupation. And prominent members of the Jewish communities in the Lostice area: Artur Langer who now lives in Israel and Petr Malina (formerly Armin Morgenstern) presently living in Prague, who fought the Nazis during WWII.

Small Stained Glass Window and Wooden Benches from the Olomouc Synagogue

Windows and Benches Which Survived:
Stained Glass Windows - height: 230cm (90”), steel frame, 6 pieces
Stained Glass Windows - height: 50cm (20”), steel frame, 2 pieces
Benches - length: 400cm (13”), oak wood, 10 rows with 70 seats
A Witness of the Destruction of the Olomouc Synagogue Tells His Story

Excerpt from the letter written by Holocaust survivor Petr Broch:

“Today, as I watched the short program on TV regarding the benches from the Olomouc synagogue which was destroyed almost 70 years ago, I was very excited and moved. I am glad that the benches were saved and installed in your synagogue. I remember that tragic night very clearly. I was eight years old at that time. My parents, brothers and I lived right around the corner from the synagogue on Havlickova Street, so I was almost there, on the very site of the devastation. High flames lashed and encircled the entire building. The firemen came, but they were given strict orders not to fight the blaze. The night was filled with sounds of cracking wood and shattering glass. Pungent smoke rolled out of the synagogue and was everywhere. The next day we witnessed a sad site, the building was almost completely burned down. The lone walls protruded towards the heavens and the fluttering sheets of tin on the domes, thundered in a reoccurring rhythm. I managed to be one of the first to enter the building. (I was friends with Jiri Munch, whose parents were the custodians of the synagogue and they lived next door). Upon entering we were overwhelmed by a strong odor of burnt wood. I could not believe my eyes, almost everything was scorched; the walls were black from the smoke and flames. The stained glass windows had burst apart from the heat and I was afraid that the ceiling would fall down at any moment. I shall always remember what happened.... Within a few months the synagogue disappeared...

Often I would sit in these benches with my parents during the holidays, so I am glad that they found a dignified place in your synagogue. If my health permits me, I would like to visit your synagogue and sit for a while in the benches and remember my dear ones and friends from Olomouc, who once prayed in these benches, but unfortunately did not make it home. I am proud of you, that you took up this task of preserving an integral part of Jewish tradition in the Olomouc area.”

Petr Broch
Plzen, June 24, 2005

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Spirit of Olomouc Synagogue Continues to Live

Barbora Hukelova: Olomouc Synagogue, Denisa Pospisilova: Stained Glass Window, Michal Horvath: Olomouc Synagogue
Works of Art by Students of the Demlova High School in Olomouc, Grade 8
Foundation Respect and Tolerance Education – Art Program
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