

Project Title	Przerosl 2019
Project Dates	August 19-23, 2019
Project Lead(s)	Steven Reece
Project Description	In partnership with Hatte Blejer, her family, descendants, and the local community we continued the cleaning and restoration work in the Jewish cemetery of Przerosl.
Participants (#, countries, etc)	There were eight participants: USA (4): Hatte Bleje, Mike Blejer, Tandy and Kimberly Ford France (1): Jean-François Abramatic Poland (1): Agata Liszewska Israel (2): Ben and Elia Stern
Partners	FODZ, the Jewish descendants of Przerosl, and the community of Przerosl
Lodging	Dworczysko nad Hańczę
Transportation	Rented vehicle
Educational	There was no direct educational interaction with the local community; however, Hatte Blejer led a seminar on how to read and interpret the inscriptions on matzevot in the Przerols Jewish cemetery. Mike Blejer worked with Ben and Elia Stern, photographing matzevot and uploading to photographs to Billion Graves. Hatte worked with Elia Stern to translate the Hebrew inscriptions.
Cultural	Met with Jan Wiktor Sienkiewicz in his home for coffee and cakes, where we learned about Jewish residents, who lived on the square and owned businesses. We also traveled to Trójstyk Granic , the point where Poland, Lithuania, and Russia meet. On the same day, we traveled to the Stańczyki Viaducts , which are abandoned railroad bridges.

Meetings	We met with the mayor and one of the county council members regarding assistance in the restoration works. Both the community and county governments dispatched men with chainsaws to cut and clear small and fallen trees.
Meaningful Outcomes	We received cooperation from the local government for the first time in a significant manner. In her August 23 FB post, Hatte Blejer formally thanked local leaders for their support: : Thank you to our new friends and supporters, the Vojt (Mayor), Marcin Brzozowski and to Rafal Bukowski, who sent us help each day from the city and county and who supported us in multiple ways. Thank you to our friend, the folklorist/historian, Jaroslaw Rynkiewicz, who has been a constant supporter. Thank you to Monika Wolinska, a Przerosl city council member, who came to help drag brush with us in the cemetery. And a huge thank you to the entire Liszewski family for raising a wonderful daughter and for taking on her three young children this week so she could drag brush and dig out matzevot! Agata, you're the best!! From an excerpt of an August 21 FB post by Hank Mishkoff: Almost exactly 20 years ago, I visited the Jewish Cemetery in Przerosl, Poland, the town where my great-great-grandfather, Lejb Myszkowski, was born. The cemetery seemed to be largely intact, but it was so overgrown that it looked more like a wooded lot than a cemetery. I launched an effort to clear and restore the cemetery, not only because it was the right thing to do, but because I hoped to find the graves of my ancestors. I worked on the project on-and-off for more than a decade, but I made very little progress, and I grew frustrated and discouraged by the bureaucratic difficulties I encountered. Eventually, I threw in the towel. Luckily, my cousin Hatte Blejer was getting more interested in the project as my interest waned. She enlisted the assistance of Steven Reece of the Matzevah Foundation, a Christian group that specializes in lovingly restoring Jewish Cemeteries in Poland. For the last three summers, Hatte and Steven have led groups of Przerosl descendants and local residents in doing a REMARKABLE job of clearing the cemetery and locating headstones, cleaning and translating them in

	increasing numbers as they literally hack their way through the underbrush.
Unmet expectations?	None.
Unexpected issues?	None.
What we learned	In contrast to the situation in Krosniewice, the idea of linking Jewish descendants with local communities to care for and maintain Jewish cemeteries is possible.
Pictures	Przerosl Jewish Cemetery Google Photo Album
Participant Feedback	Quotes, etc

Narrative:

This is my third year working with Hatte Blejer and the Jewish descendants of Przerosl. This year's work was especially satisfying in the face of all of the resistance and obstacles that I have faced personally in initiating and leading this project.

For the first time, I see hope in developing a working but albeit modified model of linking Jewish descendants with local Polish communities for the long-term preservation of Jewish heritage as seen in Jewish cemeteries.

A critical element is a local advocate/activist, who will take on leadership to liaise with the local government and community. Agata Liszewska is that person. Without her assistance, there would still be a great deal of inertia to overcome in engaging local government assistance and resources. For the first time, community government officials in two government divisions directed chainsaw workers to assist us to cut down trees. These officials also provide a portable toilet and removed massive amounts of green waste (SEE Meaningful Outcomes above).

Moving forward, Hatte et.al. are planning to finish the cleaning next summer with the cooperation and assistance of the local community governments. They would like to rededicate and commemorate the cemetery next summer in early July.

Thoughts on future involvement:

We should finish our commitment to the project next summer.