

**October 2008**

**Suzan Wynne**

**Author, *The Galitzianers: The Jews of Galicia, 1772-1918***



*Photo Courtesy of Jack L. Weinstein*

### ***The Lives of Our Galician Ancestors***

Suzan provided two handouts at the Meeting, which are reproduced below.

#### **Handout #1**

Judische Kultus Gemeinde = Jewish Cultural Administration 1772-1918

Other titles:           Kahal (central body)  
                          Kehillah (local district body)

#### Characteristics

Self-governing system established by Austrian law through most of Empire  
Continued under Poland rule 1919-1926

Governmental tool to:

- Communicate with Jewish communities about laws
- Track Jews for official purposes
- Enable government to hand-off enforcement of unpopular law & taxes

Useful for Jewish community to:

- Promote cohesion
- Promote standardization of compliance with Jewish law
- Organize advocacy for more favorable laws and taxes

Gemeinde mandated Jews to:

- Belong to a Jewish community
- Attend annual service in the official synagogue of district
- Obey secular and Jewish law
- Pay required taxes to the district

Maria Theresa died 1780

- Legislation for central appointed Kahal comprised of 12 men;
- Later changed to 6 appointed and 6 elected

Josef II died 1790

- Reformer;
- revamped Kahal to 141 Jewish communities;
- Disbanded Gemeinde structure 1789, retaining 141 recognized communities

Leopold died 1792

- Reinstated Gemeinde;
- Overturned some of Josef's reforms

Franz Ferdinand 1792-1835

- Overturned rest of Josef's reforms;
- Enacted new Jewish taxes;
- Harsh rule; return to occupational restrictions

Ferdinand 1835-1848

- Ruled under regent;
- Increases in special Jewish taxes;
- More occupational restrictions

Franz Josef 1848-1916

- Abolished some special taxes and in 1848-1868;
- Emancipation throughout Empire 1868 and in Galicia 1869;
- Retained Gemeinde structure with new duties

Charles 1916-1918

## **Handout #2**

Jews were born into a district where they were registered for life unless given permission to change, but generally residence could be changed at will for marriage or work.

Composition of Gemeinde:

- 12 elected men;
- President selected to represent Jewish community with respect to state and local government and church leadership;

- Appointed Chief Rabbi for each district:
- Court composed of 3 rabbinical elders, and
- Administrative personnel.

Who voted? Eligible men 13 years old and up and, apparently, women in business or with property. Eligibility meant that taxes were current.

How often were elections? Every 4 years

Were there political parties? Yes, many of them as time went on.

Gemeinde responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Jewish community, i.e. infrastructure; production of kosher wine and candles; kashering standards; integrity of *eruv*.

Annual approved budget for administration paid for with tax receipts.

Taxes were numerous and high for Jews until 1848: kosher meat; candles; "head" tax; synagogue; cemetery; marriage. Candle tax collected weekly by a "*lecht pachter*."

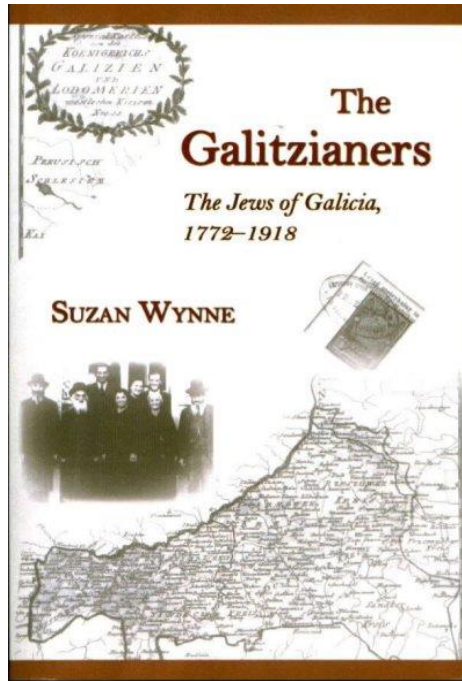
Franz Josef: came to power in 1848 during Hungarian uprising at age 18. Emancipated Jews throughout Empire, except Galicia in 1868; Galician Jews emancipated 1869.

- Mandatory elementary secular education 7-14
- Access to higher education
- Access to land ownership
- Reduction in occupational restrictions
- Mandatory military service for men

Expanded role of Gemeinde in 1875 legislation to include registration of births, marriages and deaths. Regulations issued 1877.

Hassidic influence very strong within Gemeinde

- Major roles in elected governance; struggle to dominate chief rabbinate;
- Organized resistance to civil marriage and mandated secular education;
- Advocacy for relaxation of restrictions, special taxes, prohibition of production and importation of Hebrew & Yiddish books.



**To Purchase Suzan's Book**