

Flavia Matei

**THE ART NOUVEAU PALACES OF ORADEA:
A JEWISH INNOVATION OF YESTERDAY, A COMMON
HERITAGE OF TODAY**

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Central European University – Privatuniversität

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by

Flavia Matei

(Romania)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Historical Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, **Flavia Matei**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 20 November 2024

Signature

Abstract

Oradea developed into one of the major touristic attractions in Romania, a circumstance largely attributable to its captivating architecture, particularly its Art Nouveau (Secession) palaces from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These buildings were once carriers of a distinct Jewish influence since many of the designers or initial owners who brought these structures to life were Jewish. In this thesis, I draw attention to this influence found in the city's Art Nouveau (Secession) palaces using data from historical documents, academic literature, interviews, and fieldwork as a tour guide. I blend the historical background of these buildings with real-life stories of their inhabitants. Based on these fieldwork findings, I suggest a walking tour promoting the city's architecture and history. It is my conviction that only knowledge can prevent another Holocaust and that we need to enhance the public's understanding of the Jewish contribution to common life in the past and the present day.

One of the main contributions of this thesis is that, for the first time in Oradea, I have integrated the voices of some of the inhabitants into the discussion of Art Nouveau architecture, thus bringing living memory to these beautiful edifices. Various locations with their unique histories and personal stories as recounted by current inhabitants will be featured within this tour. Some of those inhabitants have ties to the buildings stretching back generations while others are from present day inhabitants who have no personal memories of the past. I could not, of course, document every building from the Art Nouveau (Secession) period in this way, but I intended to collect interviews that may serve as basis for the discussion and examination of the most prominent palaces and to select buildings inhabited by living witnesses of their deeper past.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to CEU for offering me the opportunity to participate in one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, even at a later stage. This achievement represents a collective effort. I am grateful for the encouragement, inspiration, and assistance I received from each person who played a part in making this project a reality.

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A special note of thanks goes to Prof. Michael Miller, whose encouragement led me to apply to CEU and whose belief in my abilities was the foundation of this academic pursuit. Toda Raba!

My sincere gratitude extends to all the professors and classmates and colleagues who generously shared their ideas, provided support, offered constructive criticism, or shared valuable insights, contributing significantly to the completion of this work. Each one of you played a crucial role in bringing this project to fruition.

I reserve particular thanks to my parents, Virginia and Adalbert, with special acknowledgments to my mother. She not only introduced me to the enchanting Art Nouveau (Secession) architecture in our hometown but also initiated and guided my initial exploration of Jewish culture. *Mulțumesc mama!*

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Introduction

*We must consider the problem we are confronting as not only historical but actual...*¹

Aims and scope of the thesis

The past years have witnessed a revival in local tourism in Oradea (Nagyvárad in Hungarian), a small town located in western Romania by the Hungarian border.

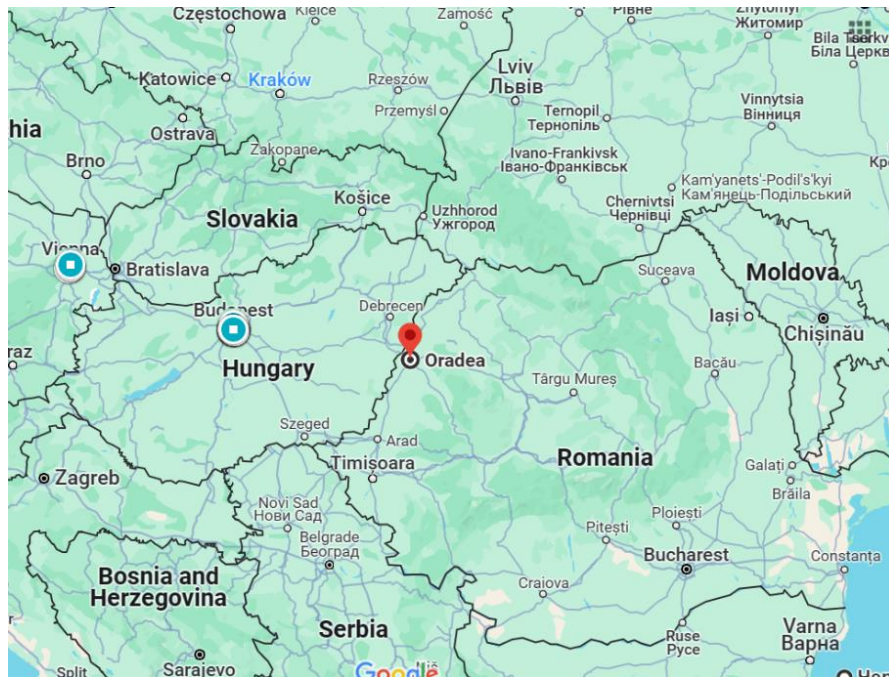


Figure 1: Map of Romania and its neighboring countries. Oradea is highlighted in red.

Source: Google Maps

At the heart of the town, and some of the main attractions, are the Art Nouveau buildings, a style easily recognized by its curves and linear shapes, geometrical forms, or rich decorations

¹ Shmuel Almog, ed., *Antisemitism through the Ages*, vol. Studies in Antisemitism (Pergamon Press, 1980), 384.

with vegetal and animal forms or even human faces. Most of these residential buildings erected in this style originally were commissioned by and belonged to Jewish families or entrepreneurs. Some buildings were also designed by Jewish architects.

When researching and promoting this heritage, I often realized that my initiative demanded more than aesthetic expertise and communication skills. It raises important questions about the meaning and potential of heritage for inter-community relations and historical memory. I was chatting casually with an acquaintance from Oradea when he asked me a question that has really stayed with me. He wondered, "What made you become interested in Jewish people?" His tone seemed curious but he also sounded a bit suspicious of me. Then he said something unexpected: "You know, they were the ones who killed Jesus, right?" It was surprising because it came right after what seemed like a simple question. This conversation happened a few months ago in 2024 in my hometown, and it left me feeling all mixed up inside—anger, sadness, disappointment, and a kind of resignation.

The topic chosen for this thesis is one of deep personal interest and one lately present in many areas of our lives. The legacy of the Jewish community, which has been living with us for many centuries, remains still largely unknown to the general public and is often victim of unfounded stereotypes. In the past years, the evidence of rising anti-Semitism in Europe has become impossible to neglect. Europe, scene off the holocaust 70 years ago, has seen a rise in antisemitic acts and attitudes.

The ongoing turmoil in the Middle East and the recent outbreak of antisemitism were brought to light in December 2023 by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)². The Anti-Defamation League, or ADL, is a well-known American organization that

² European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, "STATEMENT ON THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM IN EUROPE AS A RESULT OF THE CURRENT CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST," 2023, <https://publicsearch.coe.int/#k=antisemitism#f=%5B%5D#s=51>.

fights anti-Semitism and advocates for justice and equitable treatment for all. This organization's graphic representations are intended to raise awareness among people all around the world. These walking tours presented in this thesis focus and operate at the base of the pyramid in the “fight” against anti-Semitism and prejudice towards ‘other’ peoples.

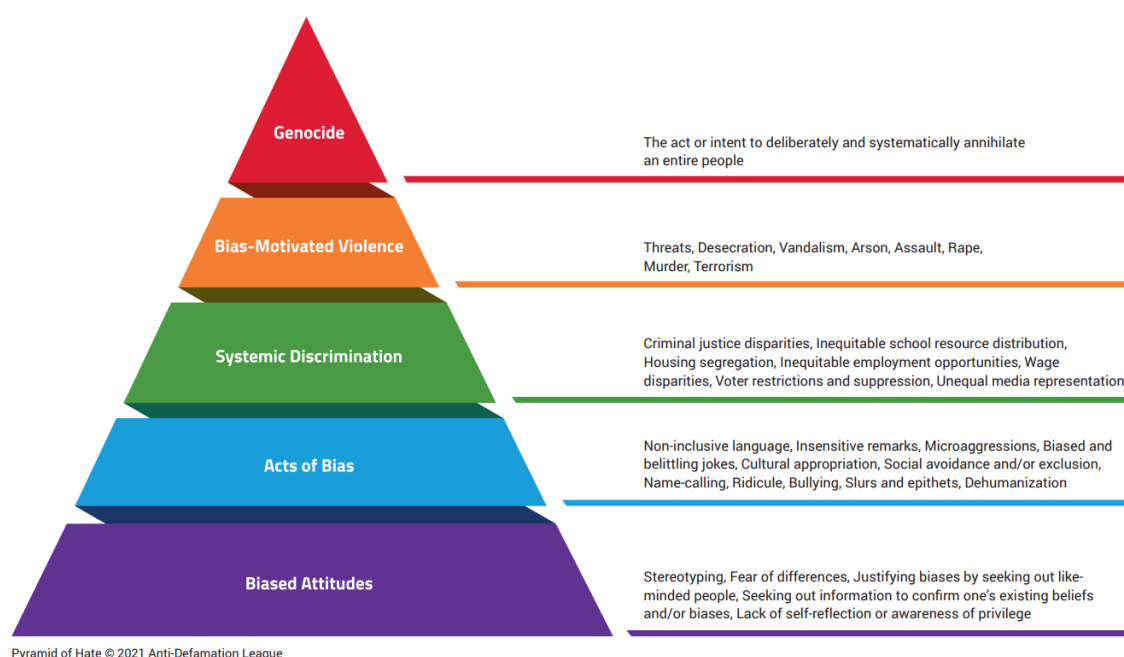


Figure 2: Pyramid of Hate. Source: <https://www.adl.org/>. Last accessed : 23.05.2024

I firmly believe that education – not only through academia but also through tourism – provides much needed pathway for a better understanding of this community and its contribution to our society. I am convinced that it is possible to use tourism, even the tourism industry, to improve public education. In this way, tourism-based education is an essential factor in fostering intercultural understanding, and to educate people is one element in preventing another Holocaust.

The more immediate topic of the thesis concerns the connections between Oradea’s Jews, their historical background in this geographical region, and the connection and influence they had

on the development of the local Art Nouveau architecture. In the past years there has been a growth of literature written about the Art Nouveau architecture in Oradea. Still, the study of European art during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the role of the wealthy, educated Jewish community in shaping urban landscapes, has received relatively little attention in academic circles and remains largely unknown to the public.

The purpose of this research was not to add more historical details regarding the architecture. The novelty of this thesis is that it focuses on the heritage of these Art Nouveau palaces as they are related to the Jews in the city and bringing these edifices to life through some of the local life stories for an app designed walking tour. The framework for guided walking tours aimed at raising awareness of this topic lies at the core of the thesis.

Following a brief exploration of the historical background, including the Holocaust and the Second World War Period, and various heritage presentations, the thesis will introduce a specially designed walking tour within the city of Oradea, highlighting the heritage of the Art Nouveau Palaces and their inhabitants as crucial components in the struggle to promote better understandings between people. This tour, crafted for a mobile app (with potential for modification or extension to other app types), seamlessly incorporates the Art Nouveau Palaces and the compelling narratives associated with each of them. The interviews gathered for this work are one way of introducing and integrating the public into the topic by personalizing the history of the buildings.

The purpose of the thesis is to increase awareness of the role played by Jews in the design and building of these structures, which have put modern Oradea on the global map of Art Nouveau architecture and serve to unite its people and inspire future generations, as well as educate the public (both visiting and local) via the walking tours. Furthermore, the tours aim to educate

visitors, helping to prevent antisemitism by providing insight into the nearby Jewish community.

Theoretical framework

Heritage, as a concept, is a modern one. Heritage became a very important and lively topic of conversation in the late twentieth century.³ Oradea's Art Nouveau represents a tangible heritage and can be understood from the perspective of an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), a concept developed by Laurajane Smith, an Australian heritage scholar. It refers to the dominant way of thinking about and managing heritage, typically controlled by governments, heritage institutions, and experts. The AHD shapes how heritage is defined, valued, and preserved, often focusing on material aspects like monuments, buildings, and landscapes, especially those connected to national identity and history.⁴ Including Oradea's Art Nouveau palaces as part of the Authorized Heritage (AHD) Discourse means choosing to talk more about the past and the physically pleasing part of the heritage. On one hand, the ADH makes it easy for the museum directors or tour guides to create stories and follow the outline of the events that have unfolded since the creation of these edifices. In ADH these original values are fading. The importance of the object, the building, is given by the perspectives and power of those in charge of this discourse. Laurajane Smith criticizes the fact that such discourse lacks objectivity, shaping the image of the heritage as tangible and inflexible.⁵ At the same time, these edifices, as "inscribed" in this ADH, are already a subject of care and protection (being renovated or protected against demolition), as per the Romanian law

³ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 5.

⁴ Smith, 29.

⁵ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*.

422/2001⁶ the most important law regarding the national cultural heritage. The Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) can serve as a foundation for future tours, discussions, workshops, and community connections within the city. Its emphasis on material heritage and historical context provides a valuable starting point for engaging with the past. However, I argue that the AHD often creates a top-down approach that risks marginalizing the voices of local communities. Also, it tends to miss the perspectives of interviewees, limiting its ability to give a personal and emotional connection to the building. To address this, the language used in tours, educational programs, and cultural activities should be more inclusive, incorporating residents' opinions and ideas for a broader understanding of heritage.

Because they reflect different and often conflicting parts of history, these Art Nouveau palaces can be also understood as examples of *dissonant heritage*. Dissonant heritage refers to the idea that all heritage is a contemporary interpretation influenced by history. This perspective recognizes that different interpretations of the past can create disagreements about what that heritage really is and whom it symbolically belongs to.⁷

Methodology and sources

I will trace the impact of Jews on the face of the twentieth-century Oradea, which already possessed a multifaceted community, where the emergence of the upper- middle-class together with the drive toward assimilation (Magyarization/Hungarization) of the Jews inspired them to play a major role in promoting the newly emerging architectural movement. The assimilation of the Jews into mainstream society, and the economic power of the wealthy families who

⁶ PARLAMENTUL, “LEGE Nr. 422 Din 18 Iulie 2001 (**republicată**) *Privind Protejarea Monumentelor Istorice*” (MONITORUL OFICIAL nr. 938, November 20, 2006), <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/29761>.

⁷ Milena Dragičević Šešić and Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović, “Balkan Dissonant Heritage Narratives (and Their Attractiveness) for Tourism,” *American Journal of Tourism Management*, March 2014, 11, <https://doi.org/10.5923/s.tourism.201402.02>.

ordered the buildings or commissioned the architects, transformed the urban landscape of most of the cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The thesis will mention their crucial contribution in shaping Oradea's architectural landscape, focusing on the Art Nouveau (Secession) buildings known in the city as palaces.

While involving some limited archival research, this thesis mainly adopts a practical approach. The research conducted for the thesis includes a large component of oral history, fieldwork, and hands-on data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents and people who were connected with these edifices. I conducted more than 10 interviews with people having close associations with the buildings highlighted in the thesis. The interviews took place between June 2021 and 2024, however, only 10 were included in the thesis. These semi-structured interviews, conducted in Romanian, ranged in length from 20 to 60 minutes. The target group comprised current inhabitants of the Art Nouveau edifices as well as individuals connected to these buildings, such as former residents, their family members, and even workers who carried out repairs or reconstruction work on these edifices. The interviews with the tenants, landlords, or those who somehow interacted with this residential place show their perspectives and approaches to the buildings vis-a-vis the value of this heritage, now seen by many of the inhabitants of the city as part of its cultural patrimony and a source of pride. The results of these interviews show the different values these edifices hold for various people.

Additionally, two interviews were undertaken with people in different positions of power. One key stakeholder was Angela Lupșea, the former director of *The Foundation for the Protection of the Monuments (Oradea Heritage)* who oversaw the renovation of these palaces, and the programs held at *Darvas House*. The second stakeholder was one of the leading members of the local Jewish community. The interviews with actual, present-day residents of the Art Nouveau buildings proved to be very useful. They offered firsthand insights into the historical

and cultural significance of these structures to different people. They provided a unique perspective on what living in these historic edifices was like and showed how the buildings were adapted and transformed over time to meet the socio-political needs of the time. Their stories revealed lesser-known aspects of these places. This information helps improve the way the history of each place can be understood as well as directed attention to how to promote and preserve these edifices for future generations.

Most of the interviewees valued the architectural importance of the building they inhabited, and the majority knew even a little about its historical importance even before the renovation. Half of the interviewees had some kind of family connection to the Holocaust (parents or grandparents), as part of the second or third generation following these catastrophic events. However, all of these individuals were willing to share a message with the world in order to perpetuate the memory of these buildings and those who had lived within them as well as to foster social cooperation and acceptance.

There are a few reasons why conducting a larger number of interviews for this study was not feasible. Firstly, it proved challenging to find individuals who were both available and willing to participate. Many potential interviewees were hesitant to open up, possibly due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed or personal privacy concerns. Additionally, my organizational challenges contributed to the difficulty in arranging more interviews.

The decision to research only about a few of the Art Nouveau buildings was connected with the difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of interviews and also the fact that the palaces that were selected are those edifices that today attract most of the tourists in the city. They were the first of the Art Nouveau buildings to be renovated and promoted by the municipality and the primary buildings where I managed to find people to conduct interviews with. Due to scheduling constraints, for example, the planned interview with the local Jewish community

could not be completed, although I will ensure that it happens at a later time. The material I gather will be utilized specifically for the tours.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis contains four main parts: In the first part, a short introduction regarding the history of the Jews in Oradea will be presented. I will focus on the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century. The historical and local social context of these Hungarian Jews in a Romanian town will be presented as well as the connection between the Jews and the Art Nouveau in Oradea. The second chapter will concern the *Holocaust period* that saw the physical removal of Jewish life in Oradea in nazi occupied Romania during the Second World War, followed by another period of disruption which was Communism, with its social agenda. Even though there is a discussion of the Holocaust in this chapter, I chose not to discuss this topic in depth in my MA thesis beyond the direct impact on the buildings in the focus of the thesis. Instead, the research focused mostly on the current occupants of these buildings while emphasizing the need to remember the victims and the tragic history connected to these structures. Thus, although I acknowledge the significance of the Holocaust to the current cityscape of Oradea and these buildings in particular, it does not lie at the heart of my thesis topic. The third part, entitled *Forgetting and Remembering*, will contain some of the interviews that were conducted along with some of the stories lying behind these edifices and the post-World War II transformation of Oradea's population of the Art Nouveau Palaces. The first section explores the Communist era, marked by the nationalization of public and private property. The centralization of property influenced the way these apartments were to be used, especially properties once belonging to Jewish families. This ownership shift left an impact on the city's architecture and on the local memory. The next section within this chapter describes

Oradea and the commemoration of the Holocaust in the city today. The chapter continues with a description of the structure of Oradea's current real estate market. The challenges and opportunities that these Art Nouveau buildings face will be discussed in this section. The final sections will explore how these preserved historical buildings are presently integrated into Oradea's cityscape as well as their role in boosting tourism. In Chapter IV, the way Art Nouveau in Oradea brings people together as a shared heritage will be explored. These buildings act as material connections, tying together different parts of Oradea including different social groups, religions, and economic interests. Using data from the interviews it will be shown how these buildings are to different people today and what they mean culturally and personally to those who come to see them. In the last chapter of my thesis, I have mapped out a tourist route incorporating some of the Art Nouveau Palaces, a route that can be used for future walking tours in the city. These palaces and those who created them need to regain their properly contextualized place in the local memory, in cultural heritage memory of Oradea.

Chapter 1- Oradea's Art Nouveau: A Hungarian Jewish Legacy

“The industrial architectural complexes and Secession palaces are examples to demonstrate the involvement of both Jewish financial decision-makers and architects and contractors in the process of the shift of the city on the banks of the Crișul Repede river from the medieval stage to the modern stage of its existential level and beyond it.”

Aurel Chiriac, *The Jews' Contribution to the Urban Development of Central Europe (Economy, Culture and Art)*, 2011

1.1 Oradea, Historical and Local Context

Located in western Romania, Oradea was part of the Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian Empire until the town was integrated into the Romanian state in 1918 although there was a short period between 1940 and 1944 during World War II when Oradea again fell under Hungarian domination. Following the war, the city again was controlled by the Romanian state authorities. Known in Hungarian as Nagyvárad, and in German as Grosswardein, the town is located on the banks of the Crișul Repede River. Jews were not permitted to live there until the eighteenth century. The first Jews who settled in this area received the right to live in Váralja District (*Subcetate*). Two years after their emancipation (Jewish emancipation refers to the ending of unfair treatment and special restrictions against Jews, giving them the same rights as other citizens)⁸ in 1869, Oradea's Jewish population numbered around 6,438 souls. At the turn of the twentieth century, Jews made up roughly 24% ⁹of the city's total population. However, recent

⁸ Emancipation of the Jews was seen as a recognition of their equality with other citizens. The emancipation of the Jews had some similarities to the new freedoms given to slaves in The United States.

Source: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/emancipation>, Accessed January 18, 2022.

⁹ “Oradea,” in *Jewish Virtual Library*, 2007, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/oradea>.

figures provided by the local Jewish Community indicate that the Jewish population in both the city and Bihor County has now declined to approximately 700 to 800 individuals. This is a dramatic decrease, particularly when compared to the more than 180,000 residents reported in the 2021 census.

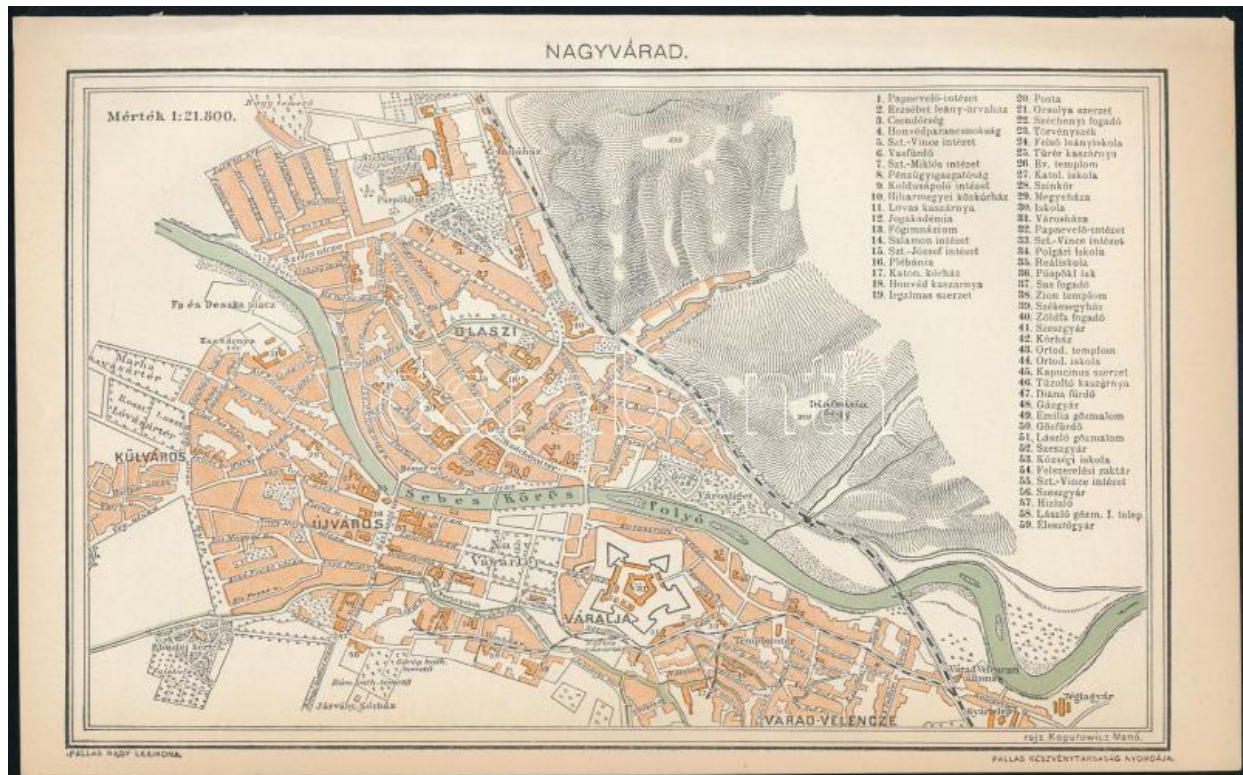


Figure 3: Map of Oradea around 1900 (Oradea is the actual name given to the city by the Romanian authorities)

1.2 The Jews of Oradea: A Short Overview of the Jewish Population in the City

From a Jewish perspective, Galician and Hungarian Jews were always considered to be two distinct groups, regardless of their formal nationality, be it Polish or Austrian in the case of Galicia, or Romanian or Czechoslovakian in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁰

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Austro-Hungary became home to an important Jewish population, after Poland, the second largest in Europe. Jews were treated differently in the regions which today form Romania. In the late nineteenth century, the Jews living in Transylvania were emancipated, and unlike other regions, there were no shtetl settlements,¹¹ although from the beginning in these regions, Jews tended to live in areas that neighbored each other.

Directly connected with urbanization processes in the country, Jews came into contact with the ideas of the Enlightenment and new cultural values, differing from the norms and values they had grown up with. In Budapest, Mary Gluck wrote about Jewish life in the Empire after the emancipation in magazines such as *Flaneur Urban Modernity, Popular Culture and the "Jewish Question" in Fin-de-Siecle Hungary*, when the lifeways of Jews increasingly resembled that of their Christian neighbors. Their new appearance and clothing styles they adopted left their “visible Jewishness” behind as this new class of Jews began to adopt new ways of living.¹²

¹⁰ Menachem Keren-Kratz, “Global Politics and the Shaping of Jewish Religious Identity,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 30, no. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (2019): 100.

¹¹ *Shtetl* means town in Yiddish. This word refers to a small town from before the World War II period, especially in Eastern Europe. These towns were occupied by a very important Jewish population. Source: <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/shtetl>, Accessed January 18, 2022.

¹² Mary Gluck, “The Budapest Flaneur: Urban Modernity, Popular Culture, and the Jewish Question in Fin-de-Siecle Hungary,” *Jewish Social Studies* 10, no. 3 (2004): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jss.2004.0012>.

The religious reform movement¹³ and factors heralding important social changes in Jewish life in Western and Central Europe manifested themselves in Hungary around the 1830s, one or two generations later than in Germany. The Reform movement in Hungary did not mark an extreme change in Jewish life as it did in other places in Europe but advances in education and religious life did move forward. In Hungary, this reform movement was referred to as “neológ irányzat” (neolog trend, tendency). After the Jewish Congress held in 1868–1869, several such reformed communities appeared everywhere in the Austro-Hungarian territory: the Neologs, the Orthodox, and a third orientation that called itself the *status quo ante*. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, *status quo ante* means a state of affairs that existed previously¹⁴. In this specific case, it referred to a group of Jews who decided to remain as they were before the Jewish Congress of 1868–1869. By the beginning of the twentieth century, a significant group of Hasidic¹⁵ Jews could be found in Oradea as well.

Oradea's Jewish population was, thus, not homogenous. After the 1860s split within the community, there were disputes between those who were more assimilated into local upper-class society and those who chose to remain closer to the old traditions.¹⁶ The split within the Israelite community of Oradea was made official in 1870. The Neolog Jews began to open up to the non-Jewish world, influenced by its aesthetics as well as notions of civic freedom. This

¹³ “The movement for religious reform in modern Judaism began in Central Europe around the beginning of the nineteenth century as a response to the confrontation between traditional Jewish thought and practices and the values and demands of a modernizing state, society, and culture.” Source: From German-speaking Europe, Jewish religious reform spread eastward to Hungary, Bohemia, Galicia, Russia, and Poland.” Source: https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/reform_religious, Accessed January 18, 2022.

¹⁴ “Status Quo Ante,” in *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/status%20quo%20ante>.

¹⁵ Hasidism, which originated in the eighteenth century in eastern parts of Europe, was a religious revival movement. The father and founder of this movement is considered to be Ba'al Shem Tov (Yisra'el ben Eli'ezer).

¹⁶ Liviu Borcea, *Memoria caselor* (Arca, 2003), 130.

openness to outside influence was visible in the architecture of synagogues, as well as in their interior design.



Figure 4: Religious groups in Hungary, around the twentieth century¹⁷

After the revolutionary year of 1848, the bourgeoisie (whether Jewish or Christian) came to lead society from a political, economic, and cultural point of view: In Europe, “the culturally and economically leading Jewish stratum in cities had a crucially important effect on the eclectic mentality of the nineteenth century and the development of modernism and the avant-

¹⁷ Keren-Kratz, “Global Politics and the Shaping of Jewish Religious Identity,” 113.

garde until about 1930 and in America to a great extent after 1930.”¹⁸ There were a significant number of Jewish entrepreneurs who represented modernity in this newly created society. “*The most assimilated Jews no longer aspired for a return to the Holy Land and instead, they wanted to turn the whole world into their promised land.*”¹⁹

1.3 Jew and Art Nouveau

Art nouveau, or *Szeceession* (in Hungarian), marked a period in European art when artists broke away from academic traditions and forms, bridging a gap between traditional and modern styles.²⁰ *The Encyclopedia Britannica* defines art nouveau as an “ornamental style of art that flourished between about 1890 and 1910 throughout Europe and the United States.”²¹ Urbanization was one of the main factors that helped this art movement spread internationally. The parallel economic growth of the period was immediately evident in the new architectural landscape of European cities. All spheres of human activity and thought were examined afresh. Art Nouveau encapsulated almost all the facets of ‘newness’ that abounded in the Europeanized world in the 1890s and 1900s.²²

Part of the same Austro-Hungarian Empire, along with cities like Paris, Vienna, or Budapest, the new architecture of Oradea was influenced by the same art movements, producing construction of buildings designed by the same designers, or architects, or, at least, influenced by the same architectural schools: “The architectural remodeling of Oradea brought by the schools of the Budapest and the Viennese Secession movement, defines the architecture of

¹⁸ Fredric Bedoire, *The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture 1830-1930* (KTAV Publishing House, 2004), 7.

¹⁹ Rudolf Klein, “SECESSION: UN GOUˆ T JUIF?,” *Academia*, 2008, 97.

²⁰ Klein, 94.

²¹ “Art Nouveau Artistic Style,” in *Britannica*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/art/Art-Nouveau>.

²² Howard, *Art Nouveau*, 3-4

Oradea by its sumptuousness, independence, and personality among the great European families of Art Nouveau.”²³ Their common character is still visible within these cityscapes. After a fire, that destroyed a significant part of the city center in 1836, the character of the built heritage of Oradea changed dramatically. Designed mainly as a baroque town, the buildings located in the center of the town were later constructed in Art Nouveau style: “...an architecture was aimed at that would, at one and the same time, be nationally Hungarian, oriental, and Jewish. Budapest was the center of this manifestation, and Magyar-Jewish architecture was to leave its imprint on a number of minor towns in Greater Hungary: Kecskemet and Szeged in present-day Hungary, Szabadka (Subotica) in Serbia, and Temesvar, Arad, and Nagyvárad (Oradea) in what is now Romania. The ambition to create a new, colorful, and variegated Jewish city is especially apparent in Nagyvárad.”²⁴

This new architectural style greatly impacted the face of cities and towns in Hungary and other territories belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Art Nouveau as a movement “can be both, decadent and progressive, national, and liberal, eastern, and western, vernacular, and international, urban, and rural, imperial and social, natural and artificial, material and spiritual.”²⁵

The influence of the Jewish community in the architectural evolution of early twentieth-century Hungary is a significant yet often underexplored aspect of cultural history. The Dual Monarchy presented two sides of the *Sezession*: its modern face and a national, cultural, and possibly even religious front. Both of these intellectual camps contained Jewish actors.²⁶ This duality illustrates the significant role Jewish individuals played in shaping both the modernist and traditionalist aspects of the *Sezession*, contributing to the broader cultural and architectural

²³ Rodica Hârcă, *Oradea. Arhitectură și Decorație Neoromânească* (Muzeul Țării Crișurilor, 2011), 11.

²⁴ Bedoire, *The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture 1830-1930*, 8,9.

²⁵ Jeremy Howard, *ART NOUVEAU. International and National Styles in Europe* (Manchester, Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1996), 2.

²⁶ Klein, “SECESSION: UN GOUˆ T JUIF?,” 95.

landscape of the period. Jews saw the new artistic movement as a bridge between their historical heritage and the modern world, allowing for a renewal of their own culture.²⁷ Even though Jews have been involved in architecture and its design for millennia, no consistent "Jewish architectural history" exists so their work appears discontinuous. There was a difficult relationship between Jews and architecture. Because Jews moved around so frequently, they lacked the stability needed to develop a continuous architectural tradition.²⁸ It could also be argued that European Jews did not have the freedom to choose their professions until the late nineteenth century.

Thus, during this period, the Jewish population played a pivotal role in the dissemination and development of the Hungarian national style in architecture. Prominent Jewish architects and patrons were instrumental in promoting this architectural movement, which sought to fuse nationalistic elements with modernist tendencies. Their contributions not only enriched the aesthetic landscape of Hungary but also symbolized a form of cultural integration and identity expression.

By financing and designing key buildings, Jewish individuals helped to establish a unique architectural identity that resonated with Hungary's broader national aspirations. At the same time, they could demonstrate their connections to the modern world, both to society in general and to other Jews. This intersection of cultural and architectural history underscores the multifaceted impact of the Jewish community on the artistic and national narrative of Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian empire in general, highlighting the essential role of Jewish entrepreneurs and intellectuals in shaping the country's environment during a transformative era. *The 19th century was a high period of Nationalism and the issue of national style in the arts was raised in many places in Europe and even in the Americas. How could it have been*

²⁷ Bedoire, *The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture 1830-1930*, 16.

²⁸ Klein, "SECESSION: UN GOU^ T JUIF?," 95.

*avoided in a multi-ethnic Hungary that tried to regain its independence from the Habsburg Empire throughout the century in vain? No wonder that the national character of the arts was the subject of a more or less permanent discussion from the 1850s to the Great War.*²⁹

The Sonnenfeld House (appendix 4) was the first Secession building erected in Oradea between 1898 and 1899 (modeled on the notion of an aristocratic residence), and unique in its style. The architect's sister, Iren Spiegel, married into the wealthy Sonnenfeld family.³⁰ When talking about Sonnenfeld Place, a former printing house and residential complex erected by the same architect a few years later, Gabriel, the last surviving member of the Sonnenfeld family, mentioned the following: *From what I'm being shown, from what I have been pointed towards by friends who are in the field, it's a very, very good example of Art Nouveau. Good because, beyond the instruction, beyond what Art Nouveau looked like, that was the style of life in an Art Nouveau building. That's how people lived there. Little innovations, little things, that seem natural to us today.*³¹

The educational system may be the main reason behind the evolution of the regional versions of Art Nouveau. The diversity could be found in the “Fachschulen” (technical and craft school) system which was a unique educational network in Europe, at the beginning of the twentieth century. This education in the applied arts was supported by the state created by the Ministry of Commerce and continued by the Ministry of Culture and Education. These schools, in turn, were part of the network in the Dual Monarchy and conducted all manners of training, teaching, design, or organizing annual exhibitions.

The Jewish contribution to the Oradea's economic and cultural development was undisputed. From an economic and cultural perspective, Hungarian Jews from the upper-middle-class had

²⁹ András Ferkai, “National Identity in Hungarian Architecture and the Shaping of Budapest,” 2010, 1.

³⁰ Mircea Pașca, *Oradea 1900. Un ghid de arhitectură* (Primus, Oradea, 2012), 142.

³¹ An Interview with Gabriel Sonnenfeld, 2022.

a significant influence on the growth of European cities before World War II up until the 1930s.³² The Jewish community also made a significant impact on the cityscape of Oradea. The upper-middle-class Jews actively participated in the growth of Oradea as well as other large cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. “Families such as Adorjan, Ullmann, Weiszlovitz, Deutszh, Moszkovits, Stern, Fuchsl, Schwartz, Brull, Goldstein, Bleyer, Guttmann, Grunfeld, and others left their mark on the city's socio-economic and political activities. Their influence is also visibly reflected in Oradea's appearance through the cosmopolitan architectural trend that has come to define the city.”³³

Regarding the visible Jewish influence on the buildings, very few art nouveau buildings in Oradea actually have Jewish symbols decorating them. Such "self-awareness" was only evident in the architecture of Ullmann Palace, which features Nubian lions and a candelabra with seven branches, or on the Rosenzweig residence, which has a star of David over the Postăvarului Street entrance.

³² Bedoire, *The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture 1830-1930*, 7.

³³ Borcea, *Memoria caselor*, 130. Original text: Familii precum Adorjan, Ullmann, Weiszlovitz, Deutszh, Moszkovits, Stern, Fuchsl, Schwartz, Brull, Goldstein, Bleyer, Guttmann, Grunfeld si altele, și- au pus amprenta asupra intregii activitati social-economice si politice a orasului si, cee ce a rămas vizibil, asupra aspectului sau, prin tenta cosmopolita a arhitecturii, care a devenit definitiva pentru orasul Oradea.



Figure 5: Ullmann Palace detail of Nubian lions and a seven-branched candelabra. Source: photo by Mara Vida, 2021



Figure 6: Goldstein House, the Star of David, has details on windows over the main entrance. Photo taken by the author, 2024.

The importance of the Jews in the cultural and economic development of Oradea at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century can easily be documented and, today, has started to be acknowledged once again by the local population despite being virtually forgotten for decades following World War II. While this first chapter focused on the history and cultural contributions of the Jewish community in Oradea, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is also important to recognize the significant change that occurred during World War II. In the next chapter, the physical destruction of Jewish life in Oradea during the war will be discussed, a tragic series of events that had a significant impact on the history of the buildings.

Chapter 2 – The physical removal of Jewish life in Oradea during World War II

2.1 Empty buildings and ruined courtyards

The Holocaust and the Second World War marked a physical turning point in the history of the city and its Art Nouveau palaces marking an important break in the biography of these buildings. The inhabitants and prior architects, engineers, as well as commissioners of the buildings, were erased physically during the Holocaust, and their memory almost erased. Most of the Art Nouveau buildings were emptied and their use changed. The deportation and elimination of those who contributed to the erection of these edifices and were a part of the city fabric made the Holocaust an important event but did not mark a real shift in the physical arrangement of the city. The Second World War, as in many other places in Europe, caused significant changes to the local Jewish population of Oradea. By the turn of the twenty-first century, little effort had been made to preserve and showcase this part of the city's history. As a result, awareness of the Jewish community's role in Oradea's cultural heritage had declined. The story of some of these Art Nouveau buildings in Oradea tells of how the Jewish populace was dragged away and vanished. Tereza Mózes notes that, under the Hungarian government's emergency ordinance 1610/1944, Jews were compelled to surrender their homes. They were then relocated to new housing within the ghetto.³⁴ One of the examples of the gap between historical truth and the tendency to overlook Holocaust details can be seen at the Black Eagle Palace. Here, a memorial plaque notes the year 1944 as the time of the founder's death but does not explain the significance of that date! In 1944, Emil Adorjan, one of the building's owners,

³⁴ Tereza Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea* (București: Editura Hasefer, 1997), 192.

died in the Holocaust. According to Tereza Mózes, he was seventy years old when he was closed into the ghetto, tortured, and sent to Mauthausen where he died. Here, one cannot speak of any tangible absence of the built heritage, but rather a black hole in the continuity of the population who had, in part, dwelt in these buildings.



Figure 7: The memorial plaque of Emil Adorjan, one of the owners of The Black Eagle Palace. Photo taken by the author, 2024.

Hungary was the first European country to adopt measures that aimed at limiting the freedom and opportunities of the Jewish population in the first years after the end of the First World War. In 1920, the first anti-Jewish law was voted in. Transylvania's power was transferred to the Romanian State after the Treaty of Trianon following the First World War. The Jews found themselves as a minority of the Israelite faith within a Hungarian-speaking community once Romania took over.³⁵

³⁵Zoltán Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania," January 2021, 148, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348817567_The_Holocaust_in_Transylvania.

During the next twenty years, most of the Jews of Oradea remained more connected to the Hungarian language and culture, and only some of them associated themselves to Bucharest and Romania.³⁶ The Second Vienna Award³⁷ returned part of Transylvania and its population back to the former owner: Hungary. From 1940 until the end of the war, the neighboring state of Hungary took over the northern part of Transylvania, an area inhabited by 2.5 million people, with a population of around 165,000 Jews.³⁸ The rise of the Dome Sztojay government following the German invasion provided the last push for the total confiscation of Jewish assets before the commencement of their expulsion in May 1944.³⁹ Adrian Gerson (known by his artist nom de plume Andre, and as Bandi by close friends) was man of 74 years. He was one of my first interviewees. He recalls when talking about those who lived in the *Stern Palace* where he currently lived in an apartment: *I'm happy to be here if I can't be in my original home anymore. These walls, if they could talk, stood there and were friends of their parents, most of them. They could talk about those times, and now... then people would fall on their asses... What a life I led here in Oradea! Here in Oradea, lived over 60,000 Jews, and out of 60,000, maybe 50,000 were taken to Auschwitz or these concentration camps, or they killed them here already.*⁴⁰

Bandi's parents were deported and survived the Nazi camps before he was born. Born in Oradea, Bandi later lived in Germany and Israel for a few years before embarking on an international career as a hairstylist. He even had the opportunity to work with Romy Schneider, the world-famous Austrian actress. Eventually, he returned to Oradea to be nearer to his

³⁶ Zoltán Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania," January 2021, 148,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348817567_The_Holocaust_in_Transylvania.

³⁷The Second Vienna Award was a territorial decision made by Nazi Germany and Italy in 1940 when Northern Transylvania was given to Hungary (Sources: "Second Vienna Award," Encyclopedia Britannica)

³⁸ Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania," 148.

³⁹ Catherine Horel, *La Restitution Des Biens Juifs et Le Renouveau Juif En Europe Centrale: Hongrie, Slovaquie, République Tchèque* (PETER LANG, 2002), 42.

⁴⁰ An Interview with Bandi Gerson, July 2021.

mother's gravesite. With pain in his soul and sadness in his eyes, he expressed his regret for the fact that the present generation and his contemporaries know nothing or very little about his or his co-religionary life stories, especially the stories of those who had once lived in the building.



Figure 8: The Stern Palace, the entrance gate with Secession elements. The studio apartment of Bandi Gerson can be seen on the ground floor in the background. Source: photo taken by the author, 2024



Figure 9: Romanian newspapers with interviews given by Andre Gerson (Bandi). Source: photo taken by the author in 2021

Gabriel Sonnenfeld recalls the period when his father was alive and used to communicate via letters about the end of an era and the future of freedom. Gabriel's father was a member of the Sonnenfeld family, who owned one of the biggest printing houses in the city before the Second World War. During the Holocaust, he was deported to Auschwitz and Mauthausen and only returned to Oradea in 1945. During communist times, he was chased and pursued by the regime, until 1969 when he was finally able to emigrate to Israel. Talking about his father, he recalls: *He returned from deportation a year after, a year and a half even, after all the other deportees had returned, because he had been released to Mauthausen, where he would serve the second half of his deportation. Although on his arm was tattooed the Auschwitz number A12984. He was selected having been a former swimmer and water polo player in the Romanian and then Hungarian national team, or well, in the Romanian and then the Hungarian team... He was selected for bodily experiences that did not take place in Auschwitz but in Mauthausen, from where he was liberated by the Americans, fortunately, because he spoke the language. At 1.78*

cm, he weighed 34 kilograms. And the Americans kept him for a year and, a year and a few months in a field hospital that they made there. But he finally came back at the end of '46, it seems. He was brought back to Oradea by truck.⁴¹

2.2 The Holocaust and its Aftermath

Romania was one of the most important allies of Nazi Germany in the Second World War. According to Radu Ioanid, 756,000 Jews were living in Romania in 1930 (10% in Transylvania). In 1944, the Hungarian authorities deported around 150,000 souls from the northern part of Transylvania. More than 27,000 Jews were deported from Oradea and its surroundings.⁴² Mr. 'I.' was born and raised in Oradea where he worked for the *Metalica* Factory before emigrating to Israel. Today he lives in Israel with his wife and their son. However, a few years ago he bought a flat in the *Goldstein House* so the family can come every year and visit the city. His grandparents from his mother's side died in the Holocaust, but his parents escaped: *Grandma... before she got on the train, she drank poison, yes...She was from the Reisler family. I mentioned that some of the Beiusenii*⁴³ *had escaped, but the mother was in Oradea. She had to procure false papers and flee to Hungary. She attempted to escape with false papers.*⁴⁴

⁴¹ An Interview with Gabriel Sonnenfeld.

⁴² Borcea, *Memoria caselor*, 132.

⁴³ *Beiuşeni*= inhabitants of *Beiuş*, a small town in Bihor County which belonged to Romania between 1940 and 1944

⁴⁴ An interview with Mr. 'I', 2022.



Figure 10: Hungary in 1944; the Hungarian names of cities with ghettos⁴⁵ Today's Oradea is mentioned as Nagyvárád on the map

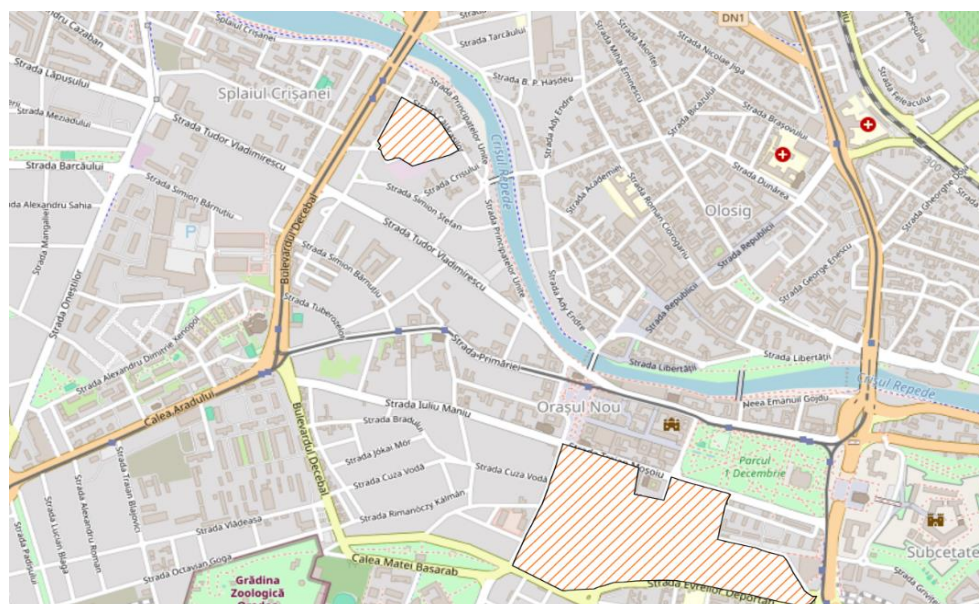


Figure 11: The location of ghettos in Oradea in 1944. Source <https://holocausttransilvania.ro/ro/exhibits/show/ghetouri-si-lagare/ghetou-oradea>. Accessed: 09/02/2024. Ullmann Palace is marked in blue within the main ghetto.

⁴⁵ "Historical Background: The Jews of Hungary During the Holocaust," Yad Vashem, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/jews-of-hungary-during-the-holocaust.html>.

Some of the Art Nouveau buildings of Oradea were also located in part of the main ghetto including the *Ullmann Palace*, situated within the confines of the ghetto, and surrounded by an area where Jewish individuals were murdered.⁴⁶ Many of these buildings changed their function during the ghettoization times. After the deportation of the inhabitants, the nature of the population living in the area also changed. During the Holocaust, many of the Art Nouveau buildings were emptied out and their function changed. Along with the new antisemitic laws, the Jewish population was forced to empty their houses a few days before the deportations began. The *Ullmann Palace* played an “active” role in the ghetto of 1944, its apartments and the courtyard were used as spaces to gather Jewish families before being sent to the camps.

Many people believed and often talked about how some Jews would secretly dig underground storage spaces to hide their belongings before they were forced into ghettos and deported. ‘A.G.’ a lady who formerly lived in *Ullmann Palace* as a child, remembers: *You are aware that it comprised part of a section of the ghetto's perimeter, and you should also be aware that during the 1960s—I was born in 1956—people continued to say things like, "It's likely the Jews hid- who knows what valuables- here," and they continued to drill holes in the walls and genuinely believe that the residents had dug secret cellars.*⁴⁷

Another story related to the same family and the area where Ullmann Palace is located (part of the ghetto in 1944), revealed more details about the history of this place. ‘A.G.’ s’ stepfather was Jewish. In 1944, he was confined to the local ghetto and later was tied to a chair and beaten during an interrogation. At that moment, he was recognized by a Hungarian gendarme, who had known him from his boxing days. The gendarme helped him by lending him his clothes,

⁴⁶ Borcea, *Memoria caselor*, 132.

⁴⁷ An Interview with 'A.G.', 2021.

allowing him to blend in and escape the ghetto. He went into hiding and crossed the border into Romania and found refuge on a tomato farm.

During and after World War II, Jews were impacted by property confiscation twice: first, during the Nazi rule when was a general confiscation of properties while later private goods were affected during the Communist rule. Therefore, in this context, the phrases "restitution" and "compensation" refer to different processes. Compensation is given to individuals or their descendants as reparations for the harm they have suffered, including damage to private property, the effects of expulsion, and forced labor. Restitution refers to the direct return of confiscated property to identified members of the Jewish community. Solutions for repairing the damage caused by these two systems differ from country to country.⁴⁸

The Jews of Oradea County and Bihor were exterminated in the final days of Auschwitz's existence. It is unknown how many people perished in the gas chambers and disappeared in the crematoria's devastating fires. Nobody prepared a scenario or kept records. All that is known is that very few of the Jews removed from Oradea and Bihor at that time—not even including those who had been sent to the labor camps- ever returned to their homes.⁴⁹ Very few survivors came back, and not many of these folk originally hailed from Oradea. The number of Jews from Oradea who perished in Auschwitz is unknown, due to a lack of proper data. Only a few managed to return to their original homes.⁵⁰ For instance, Bandi Gerson was not a participant in the Holocaust, but his parents were: *They don't even know, maybe no one has even told them*

⁴⁸ Horel, *La Restitution Des Biens Juifs et Le Renouveau Juif En Europe Centrale: Hongrie, Slovaquie, République Tchèque*, 11.

⁴⁹ Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 217.

⁵⁰ Antonio Faur, *Un deceniu din existența evreilor bihoreni(1942-1952). Contribuții istoriografice și documentare* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2012), 212.

*who lived here and who the owners were. They were taken to Auschwitz and exterminated, burned like animals, children, old people...they didn't care...*⁵¹

The destruction resulting from the events of the Holocaust left behind a city depopulated by almost 30,000 people, empty buildings, and an uncertain future. The nationalization that took place during the time of the Communist regime disrupted life differently. Today, the city's demographic landscape regarding its Jewish population looks completely different. As per the last information received from the local Jewish community, around Jewish 200 families live in Oradea and Bihor County. These buildings and the tales of their new inhabitants will be the focus of the next chapter.

⁵¹ An Interview with Bandi Gerson.

Chapter 3 – Building Biographies: More Forgetting and Remembering

“Wealth and social rank are the major distinguishing features which have shaped the architectural forms taken by buildings with a predominantly domestic function”-

David Hey, *Family and Local History*

3.1 The aftermath of World War II: Communism and nationalization

When analyzing the impact of World War II on the Jewish population one of the primary difficulties for historians is accurately determining the number of victims. “The precise determination of the number of victims is complicated by specific circumstances, such as frequent territorial changes, the lack of accurate statistical data from the immediate pre-war and post-war periods, and the return of a significant number of Jews who had been deported to various camps.”⁵² The Jewish community of Oradea made great efforts to preserve its material legacy, ensuring the protection of goods abandoned during the deportations. In 1985, the local Jewish community assumed responsibility for managing these possessions, as well as overseeing the 250 properties belonging to individuals who never returned.⁵³

However, the immediate postwar era did not facilitate the pursuit of truth and the recovery of lost property. Under Communist rule in Romania, there was an intensified compulsion to

⁵² Liviu Rotman, *Evreii Din România În Perioada Comunistă.1944-1965*, Polirom, 2004, 27.Original text: *Stabilirea numarului de victime este dificilă, din pricina unor împrejurări speciale : schimbările teritoriale repetate, lipsa unor statistici exacte din perioada de imediate inainte si dupa razboi, venirea dupa razboi a unui numar apreciabil de evrei, fosti deportati in diverse lagare*

⁵³ Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 250.

obscure and remain silent about this shameful past.⁵⁴ The architectural legacy that was seized has not yet been appropriately restituted through the restitution process. Gabriel Sonnefeld and Adam Freidlander spent around 10 years fighting in the courts to get the *Sonnenfeld Palace* which had belonged to his family before the Second World War. Today, this edifice is the property of a Hungarian NGO and will become a Hungarian Cultural hub in the city.

My father's suffering did not end with the deportation, on the contrary... At the end of '47 his father, Gustav, my grandfather, died, and my father was named director of the printing house for a couple of weeks when the security came and imprisoned him for a hundred days during which time he as convinced to 'donate' the printing house to the workers' paradise, which was the Romanian state at that time. He didn't need much persuading; a hundred days were enough. He donated the printing press, after which he was told: "We don't need elements like you, we don't need such elements in communist paradise. March out. Look, take your things and...", This is documented in a letter from the security management, still the security, from the period of '47, '48. He was taken, given two hours to gather his things from the house that he was still living in, in the same house with Adam Friedlander with his cousin, the one with whom I, half a century later, I'm still working to get the house back for... The contents of the two suitcases are described, in which there were, I don't know, four or eight pairs of socks, three or six pairs of underpants, but no high school diploma, no school diploma, nothing, and he was taken, taken in the evening to a forest and told: "That's Hungary, march!" Fifty meters further on, two other boys with blue eyes said to him: "Where are you going?" And so, he entered the Danube-Black Sea canal area for three years. Or whatever, first there was no canal yet, he stayed in that prison where the heads of the traditional Romanian parties were executed. It is known that he stayed in Sighet, he stayed in a few places, and then he went to the canal prison.

⁵⁴ Geissbühler, Simon, "The Struggle for Holocaust Memory in Romania and How Ukraine Can Learn from It," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 3 (January 5, 2017): 471–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2016.1259866>.

*He got out of the canal prison in '51 and went back where? To Oradea, he had nowhere else to go. He married my mother, and I was born too. From that moment on, his life in Romania was marked by his attempts to get to Israel.*⁵⁵



Figure 12: Sonnenfeld Palace on Moscovei Street nr.8: Source: <https://www.oradeaheritage.ro/palatul-sonnenfeld-oradea/>

Bandi remembers that his family house, on 21 Vasile Alecsandri Street, was confiscated by the communist regime and never given back: *He didn't give it back to us, because they said it was a nationalized house like this one, and I still have other properties: the fur factory in Velența, that one was ours...*⁵⁶

There must have been many similar stories. In Romania, the first laws which took away Jewish property were passed in July – August 1940, during the royal dictatorship. Until 1943, more

⁵⁵ An Interview with Gabriel Sonnenfeld.

⁵⁶ An Interview with Bandi Gerson.

than 75,000 persons were evicted from their apartments.⁵⁷ Oradea and the northern part of Transylvania (starting from August 1904) were subject to Hungarian laws until 1944. As per National Decree 111 from 1951⁵⁸, the empty houses (of those who had been deported and never returned; or of those who left the country) were taken by the state. The remaining property of Jews, victims of racial, religious, or other fascist measures of persecution, deceased, without heirs, shall, by the present law, pass into the property of the Federation of Unions of Jewish Communities, to be used for the relief of the needy Jewish population. The property of Jews of Oradea and their relatives who did not return from deportation was transferred to the Union of Jewish Communities. Tereza Mózes mentions 250 such properties.⁵⁹ Numerous young people were left homeless, without resources, and with their belongings either looted or taken over by strangers.⁶⁰ In Oradea, very few requests have been addressed to the city hall by Jews, and of those few who have tried to get their family properties returned have focused on buildings in Cuza Vodă Street. No documents documenting ownership survived.⁶¹ As per the following document found in the National Archives in Oradea, in the same building at 21 Vasile Alecsandri Street at number 14, 2nd floor, the owner was deported.

⁵⁷ Sabine Fischer, Heiko Pleines, and Hans-Henning Schröder, *Defining and Defending Societal Interests in the Post-Soviet Space: NGOs, the EU and Restitution Policies*, vol. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society (Ibidem-Verlag, n.d.), 176.

⁵⁸ “DECRET Nr. 111 Din 14 Iulie 1951 Privind Reglementarea Situației Bunurilor de Orice Fel Supuse Confiscării, Fără Moștenitori Sau Fără Stapin, Precum Și a Unor Bunuri Care Nu Mai Folosesc Instituțiilor Bugetare,” n.d., <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/68>.

⁵⁹ Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 250.

⁶⁰ Mózes, 239.

⁶¹ An Interview with Angela Lupșea, the former director of The Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor, May 21, 2024.

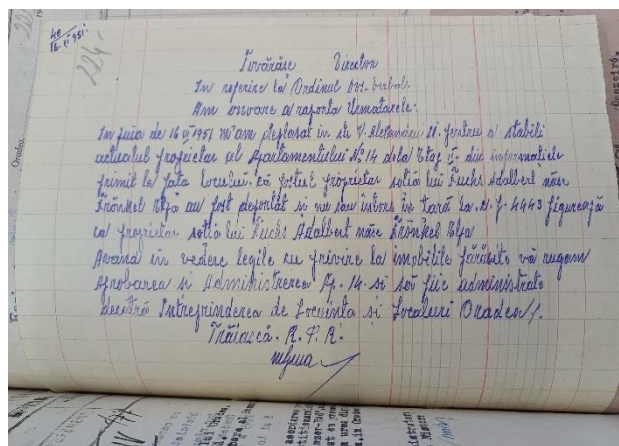


Figure 13: Document from the archives⁶²

“On the day of 16. VI.1951 I went to 21 Vasile Alecsandri Street to establish who the current owner of apartment no. 14 on the 2nd floor was. From the information received on the spot, the former owner, the wife of Fuchs Adalbert nee Frankel Elza, was deported and did not return to the country. Considering the laws regarding abandoned buildings, we request the Approval and Administration of Apartment 14 to be administered by the Oradea Housing and Premises Enterprise. Long live the R.P.R.”⁶³

At apartment number seven in the same building, a comparable incident occurred. Since the couple relocated to Israel in 1948, the apartment remained unoccupied:

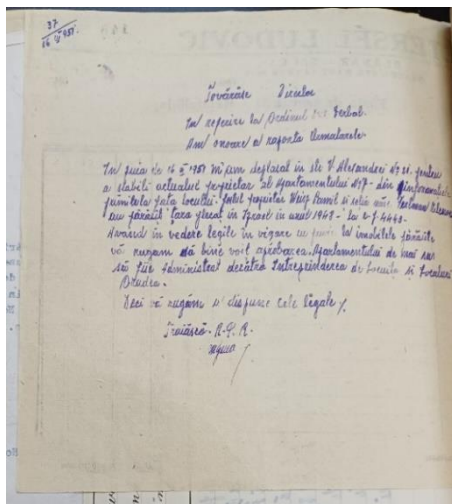


Figure 14: Ownership document from the archives

⁶² “Arhivele Naționale-Serviciul Județean Bihor, fond Primăria Municipiului Oradea, dos.15/1950, f.224,” n.d., accessed December 13, 2023.

⁶³ Republica Populară Română or Romanian People's Republic

After the war, these edifices retained their original function, and one of the examples is the *Ullmann Palace*. The building had been created for wealthy families, with extravagant apartments on the exterior and more modest for the servants in the inner courtyard.⁶⁴ The owner of this building was Sándor Ullmann, the head of Oradea's Orthodox Israelite Community and a leading Jewish merchant in the city.⁶⁵ Reflecting the religious and cultural needs of the Ullmann family, the entire second floor was designated as the private residence of Sándor Ullmann. This floor featured a prayer hall, a ritual bath (*mikvah*), a space for the *Sukkot*⁶⁶ tent, and a garden terrace.⁶⁷ The *Ullman Palace* returned to its previous state as a residential block following the war. Professional artists were given access to the attic workshops in exchange for a nominal rent.⁶⁸ The original prayer room today is used by a local ceramic artist and transformed into her creative artistic space. When questioned about whether working in a former synagogue had given her any particular inspiration, Márta Jakobovits answered: *But you know what? There is a certain vibe to the entire building, which I find quite appealing. The area itself also has an aura, which you can sense, of course. For instance, this foldable roof was present because the Jews celebrated a particular holiday outside...Thus, this division comes later. Because the rain was still coming down, I had to fix the roof more than once. You know, it's intriguing and lovely. These gorgeous stained-glass windows bothered me because I require more white and natural light, but after a while, I got used to it and could open the windows, so it's not a big deal.*⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Borcea, *Memoria caselor*, 131.

⁶⁵ Pașca, *Oradea 1900. Un ghid de arhitectură*, 39.

⁶⁶ A *sukkah* (Heb. סֻכָּה) is a booth erected for the festival of *Sukkot*, in accordance with the biblical commandment "Ye shall dwell in booths for seven days"

This is a temporary dwellings the Jews use during the holiday of *Sukkot*. One is supposed to eat meals there and some Jews have the custom of sleeping in the *sukkah* (Source: www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sukkah)

⁶⁷ Mircea Pașca, "Frânturi de Arhitectură Orădeană La Început de Secol XX," *Arhitectura*, 2019, <https://arhitectura-1906.ro/2019/11/franturi-de-arhitectura-oradeana-la-inceput-de-secol-xx/>.

⁶⁸ Borcea, *Memoria caselor*, 132.

⁶⁹ An interview with Márta Jakobovits, 2022.

The *Ullmann Palace* is mostly utilized as an apartment complex these days. Whereas the majority of people under communism lived in apartments and received social assistance, an increasing number of apartments are now purchased by private investors. In the *Ullmann Palace* today around 50% of the apartments belong to the city hall, and the other half are privately owned. This is the only palace building where the city hall possesses that amount of space. In most of the Art Nouveau buildings, the city hall owns little or nothing.⁷⁰ One of my very first interviews was with 'A.G', a woman who works as a translator. She grew up in the *Ullmann* building during the Communist period. Her parents obtained an apartment after relocating to Oradea from another part of the country: *There were 52 apartments... So, in the '50s it must have been like that, but that's what my parents told me, that they had, you know that in those days they used to get assignments, and as my mother already had a job in Oradea, she was working at the butter factory then, and my father was a reviser...They got their assignment: the Ullmann Palace, the address was given to them - Be there in front of the gate on this day at eight in the morning- No...of course they went. And downstairs there were 80 people, each with their assignment in hand. They thought they were being allocated flats and so they let them in. No. They opened the gate. Whose apartment did he get to occupy? So, that's how my parents got their apartment there. We had a big room, which we eventually divided into two smaller ones, a kitchen with a toilet. There was no bathroom...*⁷¹

The population shifts created a break in the overall story. Because the records were destroyed when the Jews were relocated to the ghetto, there was a lack of knowledge about the former local Jewish community during the years before World War II.⁷² To the question addressed to some of the interviewees: "What was it like to be Jewish in Oradea after the

⁷⁰ An Interview with Angela Lupșea, the former director of The Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor.

⁷¹ An Interview with 'A.G.'

⁷² Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 252.

Holocaust?”, Bandi Gerson replied: *Because of what happened we were not synagogue visitors.*⁷³ He also remembers what his parents told him or tried to tell him: *It was very hard. That after the World War, when everything was taken away, the family and the rest, that was the most important. You had to start to rebuild your life all over. How and in what way? They didn't explain that, they cried...*⁷⁴

Gabriel Sonnenfeld reflected on his father's predictions and strong belief that communism would eventually collapse, and that those who had lost their properties under the regime would ultimately regain them. This belief existed at a time when very few could imagine it happening. *Nobody in '84 writes and does not think that communism can fall. I haven't found five people in the whole world who think that. My father writes this stuff in black and white—well, blue and white: Communism will fall, the Iron Curtain will fall, and all those who have... uh, the heirs of those who worked and possessed, what they had behind the present Iron Curtain will come into their own- he writes to me. He writes to me in English, true, but he writes to me.*⁷⁵

The emotional trauma and disconnection from pre-war Jewish life show the significant change in Jewish identities after the war. This break was marked by the community's physical destruction and the loss of its history, leaving a deep emotional and cultural void.

⁷³ An interview with Mr. "I."

⁷⁴ An Interview with Bandi Gerson.

⁷⁵ An Interview with Gabriel Sonnenfeld.

3.2 Memory and Commemoration of the Holocaust today or Oradea and its haunted memories. The representation of the Holocaust in the city's landscape.

The memory of the Holocaust in Romania is still debated. When it comes to the “dark heritage” and the crime scenes, victims, and local involvement, it is not easy to always formulate the best (the right) narrative and pass on the appropriate message to different audiences. From a tour-guiding perspective, the memory of the Holocaust in an urban space - especially in the countries and cities where these hard events took place, and where the consequences were devastating, is a vital but difficult topic to deal with. A subject neglected during the communist times, the events and ramifications of the Holocaust started to come out only in the past years. Although Oradea had the second biggest ghetto in Hungary in 1944, post-communist Romania did not exhibit a strong, and clear attitude towards the Holocaust or local responsibility in it. The Holocaust is an unknown territory when it comes to the local population. The generations of my parents and grandparents lived in denial of the Holocaust's existence and did not have the opportunity to learn about or study this history in detail in schools as it was largely ignored in the curriculum. Marxist school textbooks provided a false vision of reality, confusing entire generations: facts were hidden or rewritten to suit this ideology so that, the years of Communism resulted in a distortion of history.⁷⁶ In November 2021, the Romanian Parliament adopted a law project related to the introduction of “Jewish History including the. Holocaust” in the framework plans of high school and vocational education. The law was finally implemented in 2023. Romania and the Holocaust is a topic which needs to be deepened in

⁷⁶ Horel, *La Restitution Des Biens Juifs et Le Renouveau Juif En Europe centrale : Hongrie, Slovaquie, République Tchèque*, 13.

Romanian society.⁷⁷ According to Dr. Alexandru Florian, the head of the *Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania* (INSHR), the Holocaust is a “niche topic,” yet less than 40% of Romanians agree that the Holocaust has any connections to their nation.⁷⁸ Things did not change immediately, as right after the 1989 revolution, the Romanian State did not officially admit any local involvement in the Holocaust. Things started to change only around 2004 when a final report on the Holocaust was published by the *International Historians’ Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*. In the same year, the 9th of October was chosen for commemoration, the day in 1941 the first Romanian Jews left Bukovina⁷⁹ and were deported to Transnistria.

On a local level in Oradea, memory-preserving and Holocaust-related events were primarily organized by the remaining Jewish community in memory of those who were deported and killed during the Holocaust. *Yahrzeit* (Yiddish for “year time”), or *yortzeit*, is one of these gatherings. This commemoration is when family and community come together to remember someone who died. Most of the events that today commemorate the Holocaust in Oradea are initiated by local Jews whose family members, originally from other locations in the countryside, survived the camps and moved to Oradea after the war. Following the Second World War, Northern Transylvanian Holocaust survivors started building monuments in memory of the victims (family or neighbors) of the catastrophe.⁸⁰ Very few memorials have been built to honor the victims of the Holocaust in Oradea; the most well-known is the *Memorial of the Victims*, which is located near the main synagogue. In 1946, this memorial was built in the area of the former major ghetto. Oradea had two ghettos: one for the Jewish

⁷⁷ Geissbühler, Simon, “The Struggle for Holocaust Memory in Romania and How Ukraine Can Learn from It.”

⁷⁸ Florian (‘‘Elie Wiesel’’), *Despre Antisemitismul Din România*, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2umGwNUK_Y.

⁷⁹ The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Bukovina,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed August 4, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Galicia-historical-region-Eastern-Europe>.

⁸⁰ Zoltán Tibori-Szabó, “Memorialization of the Holocaust in Transylvania during the Early Post-War Period,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2017, 8, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2017.132426>.

residents of Oradea and another for those Jews from the surrounding districts, (see map in figure 10). Since 2022, every year, members of the Jewish community, students from different schools in Oradea, and local authorities visit this Holocaust Memorial as part of the March of Memory organized during the month of May, to commemorate the deported Jews of Oradea and the surrounding area.



Figure 15 :The Holocaust Memorial in Oradea. The Ullman Palace can be seen behind the monument. Photo taken by the author, 2021



Figure 16: The Holocaust Memorial in Oradea, detail. Photo taken by the author, 2021

Another place where the memory of the local Jews is preserved is the *Museum of the History of the Jews in Oradea*. Here visitors can learn about its history, daily life, and contributions to the city's growth, as well as its tragic experience during World War II. Situated on the site of the city's newest synagogue (the Aachvas Rein synagogue) built in 1920, the museum comprises two buildings that intricately narrate the story of a community that played a pivotal role in Oradea's growth before World War II. The ground floor hosts a permanent exhibition featuring religious artifacts and donations from local Jewish families, accompanied by photographs and personal items. The second floor is dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust, presenting information and artifacts related to the ghettos established in the city in 1944. Additionally, a poignant tribute is reserved for the "Anne Frank of Transylvania," Eva Heyman, a 13-year-old girl who was deported and tragically perished in Auschwitz.



Figure 17: The Museum of Jewish History in Oradea. Source: Oradea Heritage, <https://www.oradeaheritage.ro/the-aachvas-rein-synagogue/?lang=en>

At the national level, starting in 2023, the government implemented a law regarding teaching the Holocaust at the high school level. The secondary and vocational education framework curricula will incorporate "Jewish History: The Holocaust" as an academic subject within the core curriculum.⁸¹ While I think this change is a good start, I do not think it goes far enough in teaching about the Holocaust since the Holocaust only comprises a proportion of Jewish history. The pre-World War II era and the Jewish contribution to the Oradea cityscape and life in the city are equally significant. The Oradea Heritage Foundation already champions walking tours, where the history of the local Jews is presented. Additionally, Guru Walk Free Tours, with whom I collaborate, also features a Jewish walking tour.

⁸¹ "Romania, Legea nr. 276/2021 privind unele măsuri pentru studierea istoriei evreilor și a Holocaustului, Art. 18" (Parlamentul României, 2021), <https://lege5.ro/gratuit/he4dombwga2a/legea-nr-276-2021-privind-unele-masuri-pentru-studierea-istoriei-evreilor-si-a-holocaustului>.

Tour guiding has an exceptional potential to improve understanding of the Holocaust for visitors and the local public in Oradea alike. Adrian Gerson (Bandi) remarked: *Your generation has no idea of the situation then and now. No way, nah...So, here if the walls could talk...oh my, they'd all shut up, not a word.*⁸² In the first place, a clear delineation of the ghetto area, akin to the approach adopted in other European cities where Second World War ghettos existed, along with demarcating the former Jewish quarter, would greatly contribute to locals and tourists gaining a more comprehensive insight into this historical period. A collaborative effort involving the *University of History, Tourism, the City Hall, Oradea Heritage (Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor County)*, and *Visit Oradea*, responsible for local tourism promotion, could yield fruitful results.

3.3 Integration into the Cityscape and Boosting Tourism

The contributions of the Jewish community to the city's growth are now publicly recognized. The importance of the Jews in the cultural and economic development of Oradea at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century is documented and has started to be acknowledged by the local population. Since the political mandate of the former mayor of Oradea, Ilie Bolojan, the municipal administration has initiated gradual investments in preserving the cultural and Jewish memory and recognizing its significant contribution to the city's development. This effort commenced with the restoration of the Art Nouveau palaces and culminated in the establishing of *the Museum of the History of the Jews in Oradea*.⁸³

⁸² An Interview with Bandi Gerson.

⁸³ “Muzeul istoriei evreilor din Oradea și Bihor a fost inaugurat,” June 12, 2018, <https://oradea.ro/stiri/muzeul-istoriei-evreilor-din-oradea-si-bihor-a-fost-inaugurat/>.

The museum was founded primarily for two purposes built on a matter of moral reparation. According to the city hall: the first purpose is to honor and reflect on the Jewish community's historical contributions to Oradea. The second one is to commemorate their legacy.⁸⁴ There was a collaboration between the local Jewish Community and the municipality regarding how the museum should be presented to the public. To get more insights into the municipal approach for the way the setup was created, I interviewed Angela Lupșea, the former director of Oradea Heritage, in charge of the museum: *We collaborated with the community for some items that we brought from the buildings and houses of the community,... But the rest of the information we've added ourselves. So, the community gave us part of and the support for obtaining part of the objects and probably information on how to arrange certain showcases that are related to worship.*⁸⁵ The museum showcases the art nouveau palaces as part of Oradea's Jewish heritage. Visitors can immerse themselves in narratives of the Art Nouveau Palaces, which not only earned Oradea a place in the Art Nouveau Network but also forged enduring connections with the city's Jewish community. The museum is a comprehensive repository of the Jewish community's rich history in Oradea, preserving their stories and contributions for future generations. The former director of Oradea Heritage in charge of the creation of the museum stated: *Now, in that museum, you find the history of the buildings in Oradea, which belonged to Jewish families. So, you don't find that information anywhere else, because only the architecture of the buildings is talked about. We showed that that building was built by Jews, it was owned by Jews, and what businesses they had. That's what you discover in that museum, not the building itself as architecture and style.*⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Smaranda Chișbora, "Merită vizitat! Muzeul istoriei evreilor din Oradea și Bihor a fost inaugurat (FOTO/VIDEO)," www.ebihoreanul.ro, December 5, 2018, <https://www.ebihoreanul.ro/stiri/merita-vizitat-muzeul-istoriei-evreilor-din-oradea-si-bihor-a-fost-inaugurat-fotovideo-145747.html>.

⁸⁵ An Interview with Angela Lupșea, the former director of The Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor.

⁸⁶ An Interview with Angela Lupșea, the former director of The Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor.

When asked if visitors have complained about the museum's association of the built heritage with the Jews of Oradea, she replied: *On the contrary, they appreciated the fact that we developed and exploited the heritage in this way.*⁸⁷

3. 4 Real estate market and historical buildings in today's Oradea

The flats in the city's Art Nouveau buildings that are historical monuments now belong to new owners. Some of the real estate companies have direct access to these apartments for selling or rental purposes. According to the CEO of "*Gabi Imobiliare*," one of Oradea's real estate firms, most sellers are new owners who have remodeled their flats before listing for sale. Old owners do not do this as often. When asked if selling an art nouveau apartment is more difficult than selling other apartments, Gabriela recognized the importance of the marketing, and the interventions carried out by the municipality in renovating these buildings: *For any property listed for sale promotion is necessary but if this property is listed at the right price and has good marketing promotion it sells easily. Selling these properties is not difficult due to high demand, as Oradea is, in my opinion, the most beautiful city in Romania. The restoration of these buildings has significantly boosted the real estate market in Oradea. These apartments offer a unique identity compared to those in new or old blocks. However, there is also demand for properties in residential complexes and apartments in older buildings.*⁸⁸

The marketing efforts of the same company highlight the advantages of purchasing an apartment in historic buildings including high ceilings, spacious rooms, and the use of high-quality materials like brick and solid wood in their original construction. However, one of the

⁸⁷ An Interview with Angela Lupșea, the former director of The Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor.

⁸⁸ An interview with Gabriela Moza, CEO at *Gabi Imobiliare*, May 25, 2024.

downsides of investing in such an apartment is the maintenance cost because of the materials and building methods that were unique to the time they were constructed.

3.4.1 Art Nouveau edifices as tourist magnets

The Art Nouveau palaces bring visitors to Oradea. In this case, the tourism related to the heritage buildings is vitally related to the built heritage which it depends on.⁸⁹ The town palaces are part of the list proposed as tourist attractions by *Oradea Heritage* (the foundation responsible for monument protection in Oradea), one of the promoters of these buildings, along with *Visit Oradea (The Association for the Promotion of Tourism in Oradea and The Region)*. Both foundations are run by the local town hall. On the city hall's webpage, Oradea is mentioned as the Art Nouveau Capital.⁹⁰ Cecilia, one of the interviewees who spent her childhood in the *Markovits-Mathézer* building, recalls how easily recognizable her home was for the local community: *...however, when someone needed to know where we lived, I would say, 'You know, that secession house on the corner where the park is.' And everybody would say, 'Yes, you live in that beautiful house. Every time I pass by, I admire how beautiful it is.'*⁹¹

These edifices began to be integrated into walks promoting cultural tourism. In tandem with the renovation program initiated by the city hall in 2014, all these structures have undergone refurbishment, albeit the work primarily focused on the facades. The buildings in Oradea have started being renovated, mostly because of the city's strategic efforts to preserve its

⁸⁹ Dallen J. Timothy and Gyan P. Nyaupane, *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Developing World: A Regional Perspective* (Routledge, 2009), 230.

⁹⁰ oradea.ro, "Capitala Art Nouveau," n.d., <https://oradea.ro/turist-in-oradea/capitala-art-nouveau/>.

⁹¹ An Interview with Cecilia Hausmann.

architectural heritage and boost tourism. Oradea's inclusion in the European Art Nouveau Network (RANN) also helped raise awareness of its architectural significance. The goal was to preserve these cultural landmarks and make the city more attractive to tourists and investors by improving its appearance and highlighting its historical significance. This revitalized appearance, coupled with the promotional efforts of Visit Oradea and Oradea Heritage, more than twice as many people attended the city walking tours in 2023, which were organized by Visit Oradea for the second year. The tours took place over the weekend of June 1–September 17, with 1,191 participants comprised of locals and Romanians visiting from other cities. A significant portion of these visitors hail from within the country, including Romanian expatriates returning home for holidays.⁹² According to data from the *Association for the Promotion of Tourism in Oradea and Region* (APTOR), there has been a significant increase in the number of international tourists selecting Oradea as their destination over the past year.⁹³ Demographic analysis of visitors provides important insights into the source nations that substantially support Oradea's tourism sector. Hungary leads the list of the top 10 nations from which foreign tourists come, followed by Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Austria, Israel, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy.⁹⁴

⁹² APTOR, "*Raport de Activitate 2023*," January 2024, 26, https://www.visitoradea.com/files/shares/RAPORT_DE_ACTIVITATE_APTOR_2023.pdf.

⁹³ APTOR, 5,6.

⁹⁴ "ARTNOUVEAU2 Strengthening the Cultural Identity of the Danube Region by Building on Common Heritage of ART NOUVEAU," n.d., <https://dtp.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/artnouveau2>.

Graficele de mai jos reprezintă evoluția sosirilor turiștilor în anul 2023:

Sosiri turiști	Ianuarie	Februarie	Martie	Aprilie	Mai	Iunie	Iulie	August	Septembrie	Octombrie	Noiembrie	Decembrie	total
2015	6,587	7,833	8,972	9,024	13,249	17,381	18,438	20,179	16,993	16,960	15,317	11,320	162,253
2016	10,386	10,437	12,633	13,964	17,164	16,984	21,285	23,242	19,299	17,255	14,964	12,409	190,022
2017	8,928	12,187	12,870	16,507	18,489	22,063	26,342	29,333	22,171	19,610	19,280	15,576	223,356
2018	15,137	14,281	17,568	18,676	20,561	22,044	27,661	34,395	22,495	23,108	19,236	15,233	250,395
2019	12,660	13,929	16,026	18,341	22,383	23,345	24,770	30,593	21,343	18,615	17,954	16,834	236,793
2020	16,597	13,594	4,492	1,210	2,349	5,618	12,597	22,051	14,757	8,227	6,040	5,590	113,122
2021	6,584	8,534	7,601	8,281	12,605	15,326	22,655	26,700	18,888	11,229	11,392	10,540	160,335
2022	9,406	9,472	12,678	15,213	18,486	22,354	26,097	29,653	19,148	19,428	16,015	17,954	215,904
2023	13,637	14,530	15,233	17,705	18,930	20,683	23,703	26,876	18,818	18,732	18,539	17,942	225,328
2023vs2022	45%	53%	20%	16%	2%	-7%	-9%	-9%	-2%	-4%	16%	0%	4%
2023vs2019	8%	4%	-5%	-3%	-15%	-11%	-4%	-12%	-12%	1%	3%	7%	-5%

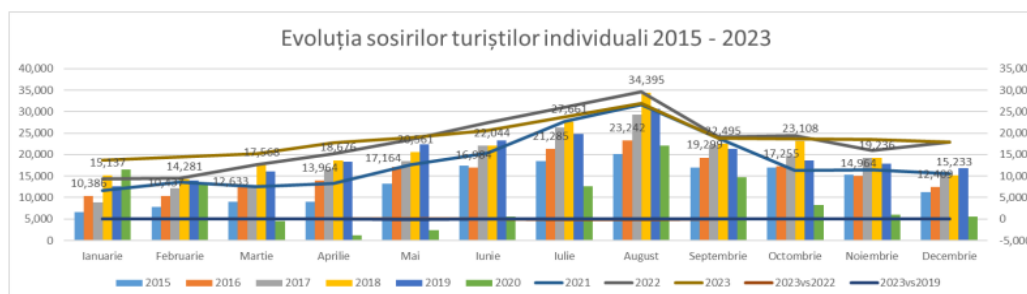


Figure 17: Tourists coming to Oradea in 2023

Source: http://www.visitoradea.com/files/shares/RAPORT_DE_ACTIVITATE_APTOR_2023

In recent years, Oradea's Art Nouveau palaces have attracted interest from both local and international visitors. This rise in popularity is often attributed to the recommendations of fellow Romanians, particularly those residing in the cities tourists plan to visit, who encourage them to explore the architectural marvels of Oradea, particularly the Art Nouveau Palaces. In the past years, several vloggers and passionate world travelers stopped by and started praising the city's Art Nouveau architecture. One of the top-rated vloggers who have promoted Oradea can be found on *Haihui în doi*.

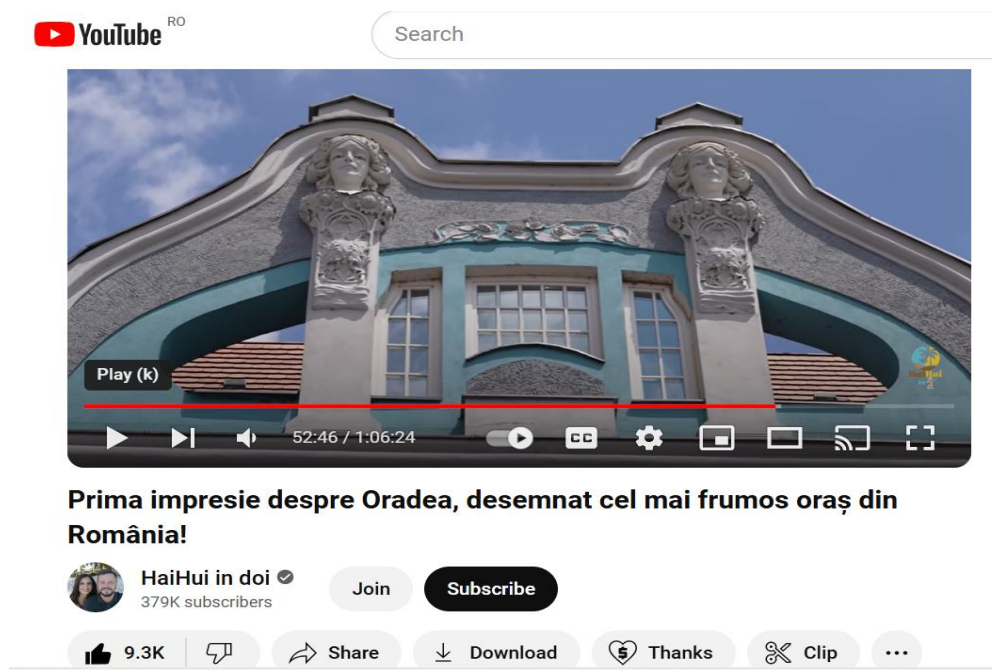


Figure 18: Video filmed in the city in the summer of 2024 by Haihui în doi.

Locally, Oradea started to promote and educate the actual population about this style of building. *The Saint Ladislau Days* of Oradea is an annual celebration organized by the Hungarian community in Oradea, Romania. Named after King Ladislau, the founder of Oradea, the event became a celebration embraced by the entire city. Among other things, it serves as a platform for the promotion of Oradea's rich architectural heritage. This experience is facilitated by various tour initiatives, including those organized by *Visit Oradea*, the distinctive tours offered by Cecilia Haussman and Zuh Deodáth during the *Saint Ladislau Days*, and the year-round tours led by certified local guides. Each of these initiatives provides a unique perspective on Oradea's cultural and historical heritage. This experience is facilitated by various tour initiatives, including those organized by *Visit Oradea*, the distinctive tours offered by Cecilia Haussman and Zuh Deodáth during the *Saint Ladislau Days*, and the year-round tours led by certified local guides. Each of these initiatives provides a unique perspective on Oradea's cultural and historical heritage.

In June 2024, I participated as a local tour guide during the annual Art Nouveau Days, an event designed to familiarize the local population with this architectural style and its history. The municipality, in collaboration with Oradea Heritage, organized and promoted city tours focused on the Art Nouveau (Secession) heritage. These tours took place on June 15th and were offered multiple times a day in Romanian, English, and Hungarian. By teaching the local community about this architectural style, Oradea strengthens its cultural identity through yearly events and guided tours that highlight its rich history and architecture.

Chapter 4 – Cultural Tours and Common Heritage of Oradea: Focusing on Art Nouveau Palaces

4.1 Oradea's Art Nouveau Palaces: Whose Heritage and Whose Voice?

The *Ullmann Palace* is one of the best examples of the clash between the contrasting historical memories that underscore authorized and dissonant approaches to heritage. It is one of the two Art Nouveau buildings in the city that has visible Jewish symbols on its façade and, it is a building many visitors ask to see. During the Holocaust period in 1944, as per the ghetto regulation, families were assigned to different buildings, apartments, and rooms as were the gendarmes assigned to work related to the ghetto, supervising the implementation of these regulations: "Laszlo Marton threw himself from the second floor of the Ullmann alace for the same reason that led Stolz Gyula to choose the path of death: he was afraid of the tortures awaiting him at Dreher⁹⁵. And these tortures resulted in many more victims!"⁹⁶ During the communist era, there was a clear contrast between the impressive architecture of these palaces and the poor living conditions inside, where many apartments lacked basic amenities. 'A.G.' who lived in *Ullmann Palace* in the 1960s, highlights the contrast between the building's impressive appearance and the lack of basic utilities experienced by the people living there: *...I had a large room, which I eventually divided into two smaller ones, along with a kitchen and a bathroom. There was no bathtub, none at all. The bathtub was the entire bathroom, as there wasn't enough space to install a shower... We didn't build a bathroom at all because we had nowhere to build one, and for eighteen years I washed in a basin. But you can take a bath in a*

⁹⁵ Dreher was the research office of the Gendarmerie, located in the former rooms of the Dreher-Haggenmacher brewery (Tereza Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, page nr.206)

⁹⁶ Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 206.

*basin too. If you want to wash, you can do it with a basin of water, but it's more uncomfortable.*⁹⁷

To highlight the Jewish influence in the local Art Nouveau edifices, a short documentary film was created as part of an Interregional Project centered on Art Nouveau Heritage. *Strengthening the cultural identity of the Danube region by building on the common heritage of Art Nouveau*, is a component of the *Interreg Danube Transnational Program of the European Union*, which began in July 2020. This is an extension of the 2017–2019 ART NOUVEAU project. The first Art Nouveau project dealt with the protection and promotion of this heritage in the same Danube region(2017-2019).⁹⁸ Professor Dr. Rudolf Klein, an esteemed expert in Architectural History from Budapest, Hungary, expertly unveiled the Jewish imprint on the architecture of Oradea. This presentation is currently showcased at *Darvas-La Roche House*.

⁹⁷ An Interview with 'A.G.'

⁹⁸ "ARTNOUVEAU2 Strengthening the Cultural Identity of the Danube Region by Building on Common Heritage of ART NOUVEAU."



Jewish architecture in Oradea



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45



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Figure 19: YouTube screenshot from part of the documentary: Jewish architecture in Oradea, as part of the Interregional Project centered on Art Nouveau Heritage. Strengthening the cultural identity of the Danube region by building on the common heritage of Art Nouveau

4.2 Art Nouveau Buildings: Shared Heritage of the Local Community

Art Nouveau palaces in the city not only boosted its cultural life but also connected people through shared heritage. The building belongs to everyone, and it is available for those visiting as well as for the locals.⁹⁹ *Joia la Darvas* 'gathering in the courtyard of *Darvas-La Roche* house was one of the first local events to connect the local tangible patrimony with its local population and those visiting and linking people together. Later on, last summer, the municipality

⁹⁹ Elisa Panzera, Thomas de Graaff, and Henri L.F. de Groot, "European Cultural Heritage and Tourism Flows: The Magnetic Role of Superstar World Heritage Sites" 100 (February 2021): 106.

organized several events `which took place in the courtyard of other institutions and public buildings, aimed at connecting people and people with the local patrimony.



Figure 20: One of the gatherings was held during Joia la Darvas in the courtyard of the Darvas Villa. Live concert Alexandra Ungurea u. Source: Oradea Heritage. Last accessed: 20.05.2024.

During my internship in Oradea, the initiative *Joia la Darvas* (which literally means Thursday at Darvas') was initiated, a project developed with the intent of reconnecting the local community with its architectural heritage. Collaborating with Mara Vida, a local architect passionate about built heritage and community, and Angela Lupșea, the former director of *Oradea Heritage*, we conceived the notion of returning the building to the community, particularly its garden, which remained largely unused. The concept involves the local population, the engagement of the municipal authorities, and the increasing number of tourists and visitors each year. This idea has proven successful and has become one of the city's distinctive features, actively promoted on various platforms, including the City Hall's page.

Joia la Darvas continues to champion local heritage, preserving its history, and fostering community cohesion.

During my time in Oradea, I co-managed a French conversation club with a colleague. Depending on the season, we gather every week in various locations. We meet in the winter in a café, and in the summer, we sit on a terrace attached to an old building. The Lokal pub is located in one of the premises formerly belonging to one of the most famous hotels in the city. Hotel Vaiszlovich (1915) was built by Emil and Gyula Veiszlovits. The building is not a homogenous space and is decorated with 1900 different elements.¹⁰⁰ No repairs or modifications have yet been carried out on the building or courtyard area.



Figure 21: A French conversation evening at the Lokal pub, 2023. One part of the group.
Source: Facebook

¹⁰⁰ Pașca, *Oradea 1900*. Un ghid de arhitectură, 149.

The architecture itself can serve as a medium for dialogue between different communities. *Oradea* and *Oradea with many faces*, are two of the most used Facebook pages where the city is promoted. Each week, old and contemporary images of the city's architecture are shared, prompting public discussions.

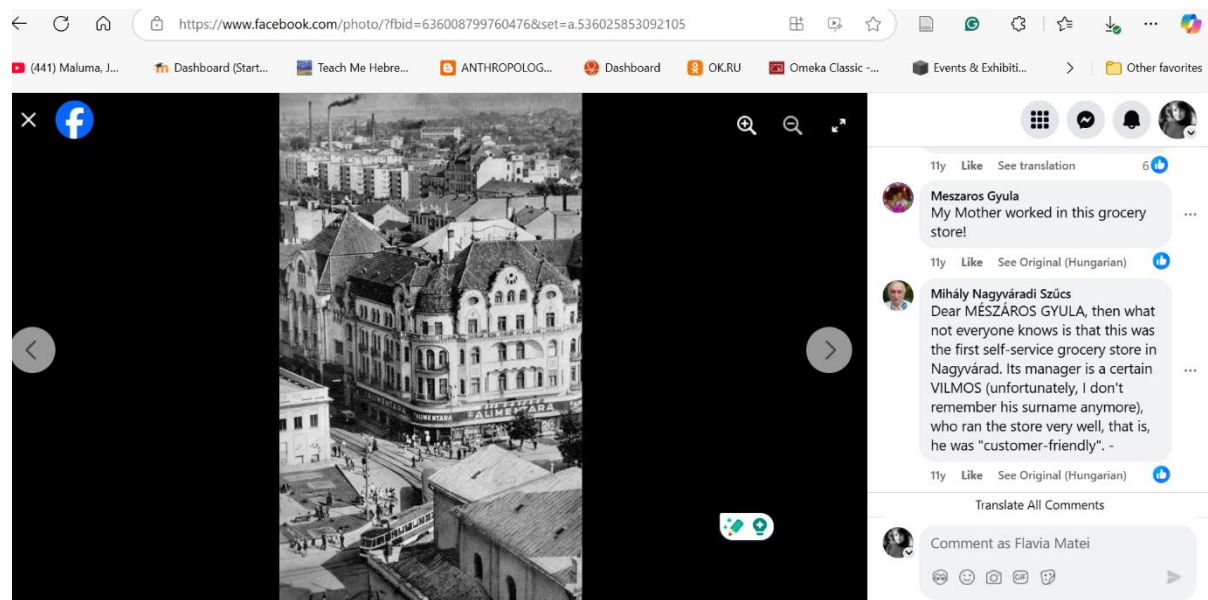


Figure 22: Black Eagle Palace in 1964. Screenshot made from the Facebook page, comment section(translated) *Oradea with many faces* (Többarcú Nagyvárad / Oradea cu mai multe fețe)

Most of the interviewees are emotionally connected with their places and especially with the memories created there. ‘A.G’, was able to capture the essence of the building's early years before its renovations, resulting in a vivid account for readers or listeners. *But the building itself still gives me fond memories, because at one time there were 15 children in the courtyard, and we were still playing.*”¹⁰¹ Cecilia Hausmann, a PhD student in Budapest and young entrepreneur, reflects on her childhood in the Art Nouveau *Markovits-Mathézer* house. While she was aware of its unique style, she did not fully understand its architectural significance

¹⁰¹ An Interview with ‘A.G.’

until later. Her experience illustrates how personal history can shape, and eventually deepen, an appreciation for cultural and architectural heritage. *So, at the time, I was born there, and I knew it was an Art Nouveau building, or secession, as it's called in Hungarian, which is a synonym for Art Nouveau. But how can I put it; I didn't know anything specific about the style of the building because it's a very particular building (Markovits-Mathézer House). Even up until now, not much has been written about this house. Apart from Paşca, who, from an art history point of view, hasn't written much about it either. Recently, we've become aware of many references to Finnish architecture from the early twentieth century by Eliel Saarinen and others. But when I was little, while I lived there, I just knew it was something strange, a mix of German, Hungarian, some classical elements, but I didn't know the specifics.*¹⁰²

4.3 Short overview of the tours I held in the city

I believe that cultural tourism can be an amazing way to teach, educate, and transform people's lives!

Walking tours (in my case) are a space for sharing information. They are a scene for (re)creating the past, by adding meaning, and giving life to an individual (hi)story. *Let's walk Oradea and talk buildings* and the *Oradea Jewish Heritage Free Walking Tour* are two of the tours I designed for the city of Oradea, both mentioning and narrating the local patrimony related to the history of Jews in the city. For more detailed descriptions of each tour, please refer to Appendix 3.

¹⁰² An Interview with Cecilia Hausmann, July 28, 2021.

Flavia's Walks

Hi everyone! I am Flavia, born and raised in Oradea. I recently moved back home and started working as a local tour guide.

I love discovering new cultures, places, people, and their life stories. I am passionate about the French language, and I have a special interest in Jewish culture.

Join me for a general walk in Oradea, a Jewish heritage tour, or simply having a specialty coffee while talking buildings ☺.

2 Tours of Flavia's Walks



Contact Flavia's Walks

Figure 23: Walking Tours proposed by the author via the www.guruwalk.com platform. Last accessed: 05.20.2024.

My personal tours framework:

- Tururi Gratuite Visit Oradea (Free Tours organized by the city)
- Personal tours
- Free Tours (Guru Walk)

The tours I run in collaboration with the city hall mainly had Romanian tourists who came for a short visit to the area and visited the city and the region. Most of these tourists on my tours were on a short trip to Oradea to explore the local culture or came for the thermal spas in the region, taking advantage of these free tours advertised by Visit Oradea on several platforms. A few foreign tourists were also searching for someone who could explain the city. These tours explored the history of Oradea, its architectural and intangible heritage, and some of its urban legends and local story gems.

When it comes to personal tours, the tourist profile can vary from schoolchildren to CEOs or people simply in need of a short explanation and guidance in a new place. The school children in most cases are more focused on other aspects and parts of the tour (such as taking pictures,

making videos, or simply enjoying ice cream during the tour), but the personal stories of those who lived in the palaces caught their attention as well.

Over 90% of those visiting Oradea and requesting a free walk via the “Guru walks” platform are foreigners (Germany, Spain, Australia, Netherlands, or Israel). According to the data from the Guru Walks platform for July 2023 to July 2024, the following countries are where most of the visitors to Oradea come from: Romania: 14 visitors, Germany: 12 visitors, Spain: 4 visitors, Australia: 4 visitors, Netherlands: 3 visitors, Israel: 2 visitors.

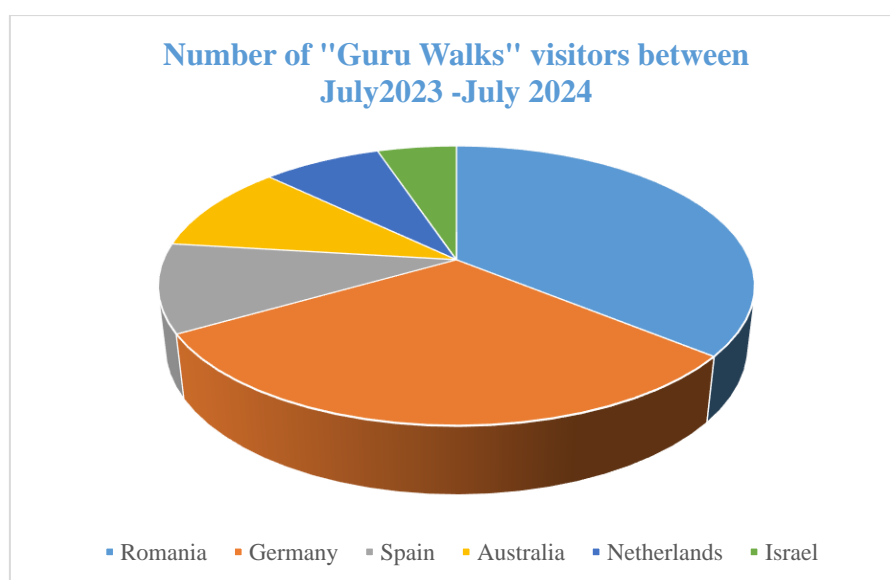


Figure 24: Number of visitors between July 2023-July 2024 (“Guru Walks” platform)

The data indicates that visitors from Germany and Romania show a strong interest in Oradea, However, it is worth mentioning that the Romanian tourists who book tours through this platform are also increasing in number every month. Most of them are already familiar with these types of tours from other cities in the world. Most are educated people, who often travel the world and take tours to get to know the area better.

The tourists' backgrounds play a crucial role in the manner in which a tour is conducted, and what language is used. Understanding the diverse cultural, educational, and experiential backgrounds of tourists allows guides to tailor their presentations to the comprehension and

satisfaction of the guests. Israeli visitors, especially those with family ties to the city, often have some background knowledge about the Holocaust. While the Romanian tourists often don't know much about the buildings' Jewish connections or the impact of the Holocaust, the visitors coming from Israel typically have a basic understanding. Knowing the tourists' backgrounds helps tailor the tour to better meet their needs and at the same time, makes the experience more engaging for everyone. The situation is similar for the foreign tourists who found my tour via the free walking tour platform. More than 90% are interested in culture and they are in general knowledgeable about history in general, but not trained in the local events. Most of the tourists were visibly touched, happy, curious, and open to all the personal stories I managed to record from people who had been associated with the palaces.

Understanding tourists' perceptions of the information provided during a tour is essential. Although tourists are often interested in the architecture and history, many don't initially know about the Jewish community's connection to the buildings or events like the Holocaust expropriations and deportations. They often show surprise and sympathy when learning about these topics. Their feedback, gathered in 80% of the tours, helps improve the content for future tours.

4.4 Better Integrating the Art Nouveau Palaces into the City's Cultural and Tourist Landscape

The municipality is the primary entity currently associated with these structures. The municipal hall is compiling an inventory of the city's Art Nouveau heritage through *Oradea Heritage (The Foundation for the Protection of the Monuments)*. One of the main contributions of Oradea Heritage is the safeguarding of historical monuments situated within the public and private domains of the administrative-territorial units of Bihor County. As part of a program that began

back in 2014, it prepares the paperwork needed to make the facade renovations easier. The same foundation contributed to numerous regional, national, and international initiatives that aided in the restoration of the Art Nouveau (as well as other buildings) in the city center. When I asked for an official document listing all the Art Nouveau edifices, the former director of Oradea Heritage told me the following: *There is no such list. There is an official document that can be found at the Bihor County Department of Culture (Directia Judeteana pentru Cultura Bihor) document which lists all the historical monuments in the county and some of the art nouveau edifices as well. Oradea Heritage created its document and marked the art nouveau edifices on this list of historical monuments.*¹⁰³

For the Art Nouveau architecture of Oradea to be valued by its residents, people must be regularly informed about it through various means, such as workshops, documentaries, art events, exhibitions, and lectures. Providing different viewpoints and keeping the community engaged through these activities will help make the importance of these architectural treasures clearer and more appreciated. In response to the question, "What message would you share with future visitors to these buildings, and with the tour guides who will bring them here?" 'A.G.', a former resident of the Ullmann Palace, replied as follows: *I would certainly address myself more to the people of Oradea, to whom I would give just one piece of advice: "To feel good in the present and to have the courage to hope for a different future, you have to know your past. And you have to accept some undeniable facts. Yes, Jews, Hungarians, Romanians, and Gypsies lived here. And it would be very good if we didn't live next to each other but with each other. We should shake hands and try to make an even more beautiful city of Oradea."*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ An Interview with Angela Lupșea, the former director of The Foundation for the Protection of Historical Monuments in Bihor.

¹⁰⁴ An Interview with 'A.G.'

Bringing heritage to life requires action. The interpretation of the tangible heritage, in this case, the Art Nouveau Palaces via the guided walks, can increase people's awareness of our common ideals and give heritage a deeper significance.¹⁰⁵ All the interviewees agreed that mentioning their life stories and talking about these edifices helped to better develop further understanding. *Because it's a gem of a building, you know? And if it functioned like that. Once we decide we want a tourist city, we want cultural tourism to exist too, it is known that tourism, especially cultural tourism, has extremely strong economic effects on a city, you know? And the tourist comes to see something, to admire...*¹⁰⁶

One result of this thesis research will be a renewed walking tour and podcast, where stories of people who once lived or worked in these historic buildings can be shared. These stories are intended to connect listeners with the city's rich architectural history and with one another. It is planned that the same audio will be posted for the upcoming walking tours, intended for smartphone applications, and will be featured on the main page of these walking tours. The edifices shown below will be part of the walking tour created as part of this thesis. They are included in the walking tour available on Google Maps, with the English translation provided below:

1. Ullmann Palace
2. Füchsl Palace
3. The Black Eagle Palace
4. Postăvarului Street nr.2, Goldstein House
5. Darvas-La Roche House (Iosif Vulcan Street nr.11)

¹⁰⁵ "Interpret Europe. European Association for Heritage Interpretation," accessed May 21, 2024, <https://interpret-europe.net/>.

¹⁰⁶ An interview with Márta Jakobovits.

6. Iosif Vulcan Street nr.21(Markovits-Mathézer House)
7. Aurel Lazăr nr. 7 (Sonnenfeld House)
8. Stern Palace, Republicii Avenue nr. 10-10A
9. Moszkovits Palace, Republicii Avenue

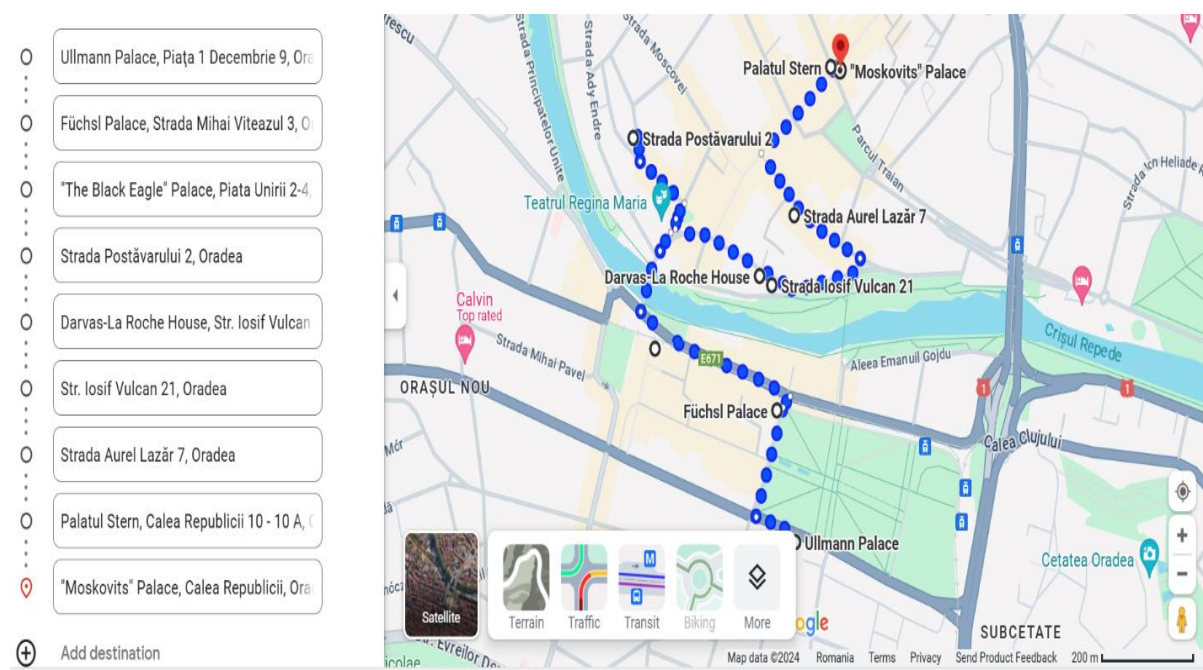


Figure 25: The tourist map displays the walking tour and the 9 locations, featuring spots added by the author using Google Maps.

Another future idea of how to promote these edifices and collect stories is via crowdsourcing. The "Edifice in Action", or "Edification", is a crowdsourcing project, created to collect, preserve, and share pictures, and information about the Art Nouveau Palaces. This project will be designed with the purpose of gathering, conserving, and disseminating images and data regarding Art Nouveau architecture, but also for connecting people with their heritage. The grouping together of buildings and people is the goal of this project. We can rediscover the buildings that made Oradea famous in Europe and on the global Art Nouveau network by working together to produce an exquisite, precise, and trustworthy photo album of our city.

In February 2024, I participated in a meeting with a team of local tour guides and the head of the Tourism Office in Oradea. In this session, we presented a proposal for Jewish Tours to be incorporated into the city's summer program, featuring Free Walking Tours every weekend from June to September. There is a strong likelihood that these tours will be added to the program. As an aside, the group of tour guides from the area that I was working on various tourism projects with, including this one, was formed in 2022 as a result of an Art Nouveau gathering in the city.

One of the tours that is about to be launched on the touristic market is an online platform that offers tours of the city: descriptive ones and game-type tours. The walks also include tours related to the Jewish topic. This kind of tourist visit comprises a sustainable way of visiting the city and learning about its past and present.

- At a local level, I will advocate for the establishment of a Jewish Heritage Tour in the city. From a tour-guiding perspective, the Holocaust memory in an urban space is a vital topic that needs to be dealt with. It is also a subject neglected, and well-hidden during communist times. The impacts and events of the Holocaust have only recently started to be revealed in the past years
- Creating a QR code for some of the buildings is another way to better market and revitalize historic structures and provide interested parties with access to additional information.
- Creating a cultural center in the Ullmann palace. This idea comes from one of the interviewees: *So here, a cultural center with artists, with open, visitable workshops could be established. Thus, you could implement one of these extraordinary European programs after it has been restored. It needs repair. It's a shame to leave it in such a state of disrepair...The City should recognize the importance of this jewel of a building.*

*In every city where culture and the arts are respected and open to the public, you feel a sense of spirituality and overall efficiency. You feel good in a city that welcomes you and respects you through its spirituality and culture. That's respect for humanity. Of course, you need to eat, have good roads, and maintain buildings, but you also need a functioning cultural environment with artists. There are great examples in Europe, such as Bilbao in Spain or certain areas in Germany, where formerly poor regions have been revitalized through cultural investments.*¹⁰⁷

All interviewees agreed on the importance of preserving the memory of these palaces for those who will visit in the future. By sharing personal stories and historical narratives, these tours raise awareness of the city's architectural treasures and highlight the Jewish contributions to Oradea's growth. Gabriel Sonnefeld expressed deep appreciation for this effort, stating: *Who's going to visit, I don't even know how to say this. It's like a stranger visiting me and looking at me with admiration. That's how I feel. I enjoy every bit of interest they take. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed your interest and the fact that you are writing your thesis on this subject.*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ An interview with Márta Jakobovits.

¹⁰⁸ An Interview with Gabriel Sonnenfeld.

Conclusion

In this thesis I presented an overview of the history of Oradea's Jews focusing on the way its Art Nouveau heritage has been transformed during several periods: the Holocaust period and its aftermath, the period of Communist nationalization, and today with its challenges of preserving memory. These edifices, indeed, have within themselves the potential to unify Oradea's diverse communities and to welcome visitors.

By presenting some of Oradea's Art Nouveau palaces as more than just notable pieces of architecture, but also active examples of the resilience of Jewish culture and tradition, the purpose of this thesis was to increase awareness of the role played by Jews in the construction of this structure. These edifices today are part of the global map of Art Nouveau architecture and serve to unite its people and inspire future generations. At the same time, obstacles can be placed before another Holocaust by mentioning and explaining the Jewish contribution to the growth of the city, as well as through the Art Nouveau (Secession) buildings and some of their narratives. These walking tours are educational, and the knowledge shared on these walks is intended to inspire individuals to embark on their search for a better world.

Today, the built heritage including the Art Nouveau palaces, is a shared treasure. This heritage stands ready and open to be explored and unraveled as part of guided tours, inviting curious visitors to delve into the local history.

I believe that knowledge fosters connections between people. These tours provide an opportunity to learn more about the individuals behind the creation of these buildings and those whose names are still remembered today. At the same time, they offer a chance for connection through the personal stories of those currently linked to these edifices. This tour design only

marks the beginning. There is still more to be done including searching for more people to interview.

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APPENDIX 1- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Romanian and English)

1.	Nume, prenume, ocupația și vârsta.
2.	Câteva cuvinte despre părinți (statut social, cu ce se ocupă/ocupau/educația).
3.	Câteva cuvinte despre bunici (statut social, cu ce se ocupă/ocupau/educația). Ce s-a întâmplat cu familia în timpul Holocaustului? Cum a fost să fii evreu după Holocaust(dacă ai citit, sau ți s-a povestit în familie)? Erau bunicii evrei practicanți? Dar părinții? Tu ești într-un fel sau altul legat de această moștenire religioasă mozaică?
4.	Locuiești în clădire, sau ai locuit? Dacă da, de cât timp?
5.	Dacă nu ai locuit sau locuiești, ai lucrat acolo? Care a fost tangența ta cu acest edificiu?
6.	Ai putea să ne povestești câte ceva despre acest edificiu, din punct de vedere arhitectural, al celor care l-au construit sau conceput, perioada?

7.	Ai vreo amintire interesantă legată de spațiul în care ai lucrat, vecini sau un obiect din această clădire?
8.	Ai conștientizat vrodată valoarea acestei clădiri, din punct de vedere arhitectural(înainte de restaurarea și promovare turistică făcută în ultimii ani)? Dacă da, te-a afectat acest lucru în vreun fel?
9.	Când ți se cere adresa, cum formulezi răspunsul?
10.	Ai petrecut perioada(o parte din perioada) communistă în această clădire)? Dacă da, ai vreo poveste, o amintire din această perioadă legată de apartamentul de aici, de un obiect din casă, sau de membrii familiei?
11.	Ai putea reda orice altă amintire legată de casă după ani 90?
12.	Ce mesaj ai avea pentru cei care vor veni să viziteze aceste clădiri, și pentru ghizii turistici care vor aduce oameni în aceste locuri?
	Ai putea recomanda o altă persoană/familie care a locuit, locuiește sau a avut contact într-un fel sau altul cu aceste clădiri?

1.	What is your surname, first name, occupation, and age?
2.	Say a few words about your parents (their social status, what they do/did, education).
3.	Say a few words about your grandparents (their social status, what they did/occupation, education).
4.	Do you live in the building, or have you lived in the building? If yes, for how long?
5.	If you are not living there, have you worked there? What was the nature of your connection with the building?
6.	Could you tell us something about this building, architecturally, who built or designed it, and in what period?
7.	Do you have any interesting memories of the space you worked in, neighbors, or an object in this building?
8.	Have you ever been aware of the value of this building from an architectural point of view (before the restoration and tourist promotion done in recent years)? If so, has this affected you in any way?
9.	When asked for your address, how do you formulate your answer?

10.	Did you spend the communist period in this building? If so, do you have a story, a memory from this period related to the apartment here, an object in the house, or family members?
11.	Could you recount any other memories related to the house after the 1990s?
12.	What message might you have for those who will come to visit these buildings, and for the tour guides who will bring people to these places?
	Could you recommend another person/family who has lived, is living, or has had contact in some way with these buildings?

APPENDIX 2- INTERVIEWEES

Nr.	Name	Gender	Occupation	Building adress
1.	A.G.	Female	Translator	Ullmann Palace/Stern Palace
2.	Márta Jakobovits	Female	Ceramic artist	Ullmann Palace
3.	T.S	Male	Editor	Füchsl Palace
4.	Adalbert Haraji	Male	Sound engineer	Black Eagle Palace
5.	Mr. I.	Male	retired	Goldstein Palace
6.	Angela Lupșea	Female	Former Director of Oradea Heritage	Darvas Villa
7.	Cecilia Hausmann	Female	Phd.Student/Ceramic artist	Markovits-Mathézer
8.	Gabriel Sonnenfeld	Male		Sonnenfeld House
9.	Adrian Gerson (Bandi)	Male	Retired(former hairdresser) -died in 2023	Stern Palace
10.	Anonymous	Male	Retired(former hairdresser)	Moskovits Palace

APPENDIX 3- OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION OF GUIDED TOURS CONDUCTED FOR *GURU WALKS* IN ORADEA

❖ WALK ORADEA AND TALK BUILDINGS!

This free tour is a must-see type of walk!

Promoted as an Art Nouveau city, Oradea offers much more...

Starting from the Baroque Complex and finishing in the heart of the city (Piața Unirii), the tour will help you understand why Oradea possesses such unique architecture. Get ready to discover some of the stories of those who left behind such a tangible heritage. The walk will cover the most "instagrammable" places in the city while sneak-peeking into some less-known places and unveiling some of the hidden gems in the area.

Ready to walk?

❖ ORADEA JEWISH HERITAGE FREE WALKING TOUR!

Have the city's palaces always captivated you?

Do you want to learn the history of the largest ghetto after the one in Budapest in the region, built in 1944?

I'd like to welcome you on a less typical neighborhood stroll where:

- You can enjoy learning about the individuals and structures that helped Oradea become known as one of Europe's Art Nouveau (Secession) cities;
- You will hear the histories of the buildings that served as mute witnesses to the city's worst tragedy in the past century;
- We'll make a stop at the Orthodox Synagogue (optional visit).

APPENDIX 4- THE ART NOUVEAU EDIFICES INCLUDED IN THE WALKING TOUR

Ullmann Palace



Figure 26: Ullmann Palace. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Ullmann Palace
Year of construction	1912-1913
LMI code	BH-II-m-0126
Address:	Piața 1 Decembrie 1918, nr.9
Initial purpose	Apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments and commercial premises
Photo 2024	Taken by the author

Füchsl Palace



Figure 27: Füchsl Palace. Photo taken by the author, 2024



Figure 28: Füchsl Palace, original gate. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Füchsl Palace
Year of construction	1902-1903
LMI code	BH-II-m-B-01053
Address:	Independenței nr. 11-13
Initial purpose	Apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments and commercial premises
Photo 2024	Taken by the author

Black Eagle Palace

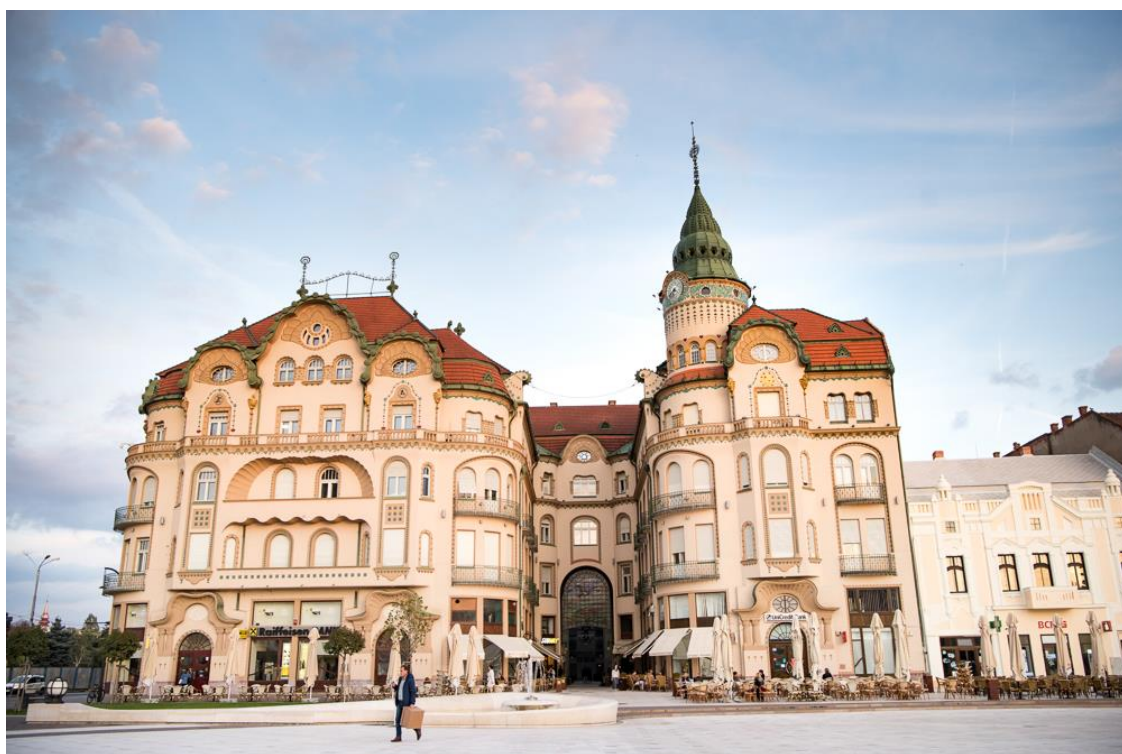


Figure 29: The Black Eagle Palace, one of the city's landmarks - the main entrance. Source: <https://www.oradeaheritage.ro/palatul-vulturul-negru/> 31.05.2021

Name of the building	Black Eagle Palace
Year of construction	1907-1908
LMI code	BH-II-m-A-01086
Architect	Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab
Address:	Unirii Square 2-4,.Independenței nr.1
Initial purpose	Hotels, cinemas, apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments, offices and commercial premises

Goldstein House



Figure 30: Goldstein House (former Rosenzweig) front side. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Goldstein House
Year of construction	1910-1911
LMI code	-
Architect	Sztarill Ferencz
Address:	Postăvarului nr. 2 corner with Teatrului/Coșbuc street
Initial purpose	Apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments and commercial premises

Darvas Villa



Figure 31: Darvas villa. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Darvas-La Roche House
Year of construction	1909-1910, 1912
LMI code	BH II-m-B-01090
Address:	Iosif Vulcan nr.11
Architect	László Vágó and József Vágó
Initial purpose	Apartment house
Today's use	Museum

Casa Markovits-Mathézer



Figure 32: Markovits-Mathézer House before today's renovation. Source: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casa_Markovits-Math%. Accessed, 19.05.2024

Name of the building	Markovits-Mathézer House
Year of construction	1911
LMI code	-
Address:	Frigyés Spiegel
Initial purpose	Apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments and commercial premises

Sonnenfeld House



Figure 33: Sonnenfeld House. The first Art Nouveau house was built in the city. Photo taken by the author, 2024



Figure 34: Sonnenfeld House, door detail, and window flower holder. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Sonnenfeld House
Year of construction	1898-1899
LMI code	-
Address:	Aurel Lazăr nr.7
Initial purpose	Apartments
Today's use	Apartments

Stern Palace



Figure 35: Stern Palace. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Stern Palace
Year of construction	1904-1905
LMI code	BH-II-m-B-01077
Architects	Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab
Address:	Republicii nr.10
Initial purpose	Apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments and commercial premises

Miksa Moszkovits Palace



Figure 36: Moskovits Miksa Palace. Photo taken by the author, 2024

Name of the building	Miksa Moskovits Palace
Year of construction	1904-1905
LMI code	BH-II-m-B-01065
Architect	Kálmán Rimanóczy junior
Address:	Parcul Traian nr.2- Republicii str.
Initial purpose	Apartments and commercial premises
Today's use	Apartments and commercial premises