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**Subject: Request for Proposal for Non-Invasive Archeological Research
to Define the Boundaries of WWII Mass Grave Sites in Rohatyn, Ukraine**

Dear Dr. Sturdy Colls,

This letter includes a request for proposal (RFP) for non-invasive archeological research and analysis at the WWII-era mass grave sites in Rohatyn, Ukraine, with a goal to define the physical boundaries of the burials at those sites with sufficient accuracy to serve as a clear and permanent record for ourselves, the city of Rohatyn, and the local land and business owners. As described below, there are two marked mass grave sites in Rohatyn, and a possible/suspect third site. We invite your proposal to plan and execute the work, perform the analysis, and provide a report with the data and results of your analysis, together with a defined boundary for each site.

We intend to use your proposal to raise the funds necessary to complete the work.

In this letter we will briefly outline the historical background, the location of the sites, the project goals, and some practical issues, plus give a more detailed description of our RFP.

Background

Rohatyn Jewish Heritage is an informal, volunteer-led program of heritage, history, and education projects intended to re-connect Rohatyn's now-lost Jewish community with the modern town. Born out of a family history research group, the heritage preservation work is now a separate program. Most of the work over the past 5 years has been focused on the recovery of Jewish headstone fragments from paving and building uses, and the return of those fragments to the Jewish cemeteries. Much of this has been work funded privately by us to cover a variety of heritage needs, but we have also had very helpful donations for headstone recovery from other descendants and supporters. The full scope and status of the program is described on our website: <http://rohatynjewishheritage.org/>

Rohatyn today is a town of more than 8000 people, almost all Ukrainian. Before WWII the town was similar in size, but mixed Ukrainian, Polish, and Jewish in roughly equal numbers. As part of historical Galicia, there was tremendous diversity between the several ethnic groups, and significant diversity even within just the Jewish population. WWII killings and post-war forced deportations dramatically changed the make-up of the town, as in many towns of today's western Ukraine. Very little material heritage of the past Jewish community survives in Rohatyn, and there are no Jews living there today; the nearest small Jewish community is in Ivano-Frankivsk, 60km to the south.

Evidence of the lost Jewish community of Rohatyn is provided by two pre-war cemeteries, both mostly denuded of their matzevot during and/or after the war; each also has a memorial stele placed by Jewish descendant organizations two decades ago. In several actions through 1942 and 1943, thousands of Jews from Rohatyn's ghetto were variously deported to Belzec, shot on the streets, shot in the hospital, or marched to pits at the edges of town and shot, then buried in mass graves. After the war, memorial markers were placed at two Rohatyn mass burial sites first by the Soviets, then by Jewish descendant groups. Today, the City of Rohatyn and one long-term volunteer in town maintain the cemeteries and the mass grave memorials with respect and persistence.

Our relationships with the city administration, the local church, and the townspeople of Rohatyn are very good; we visit Rohatyn typically twice per year with an interpreter for updates and to manage new issues. We have been aided significantly by the actions of an elderly local historian and retired school teacher in town, who manages the recovery of headstone fragments for us as a volunteer. His long service in the Rohatyn schools means he is known and respected by nearly everyone in town, and he has been a contact in Rohatyn for foreign Jewish descendants for several decades. We are also fortunate that there is strong respect for all burial grounds in Rohatyn, including the mass graves.

The mass grave sites

Some information about the two marked mass grave sites in Rohatyn is available from our website project page: <http://rohatynjewishheritage.org/en/projects/mass-grave-memorials/>

The **southern mass grave markers** are located at approximately [49.4034N, 24.6278E](#). The site is beside a dirt road in an area that is almost exclusively farm land, about 1.5km southeast of the town center. In historical and survivor eyewitness accounts of the killings and burials, this site is sometimes referred to as "near the Rohatyn railway station", or "behind the station on a hill", or "on Putyatyntsi mountain", and which at the time was well outside the residential areas of town. Witness memoirs and official descriptions of the site are vague; at the memorial events in 1998, survivors disagreed about the exact number and location of the grave(s); elderly townspeople of Rohatyn today point to land near but southwest of the markers as the actual burial site.

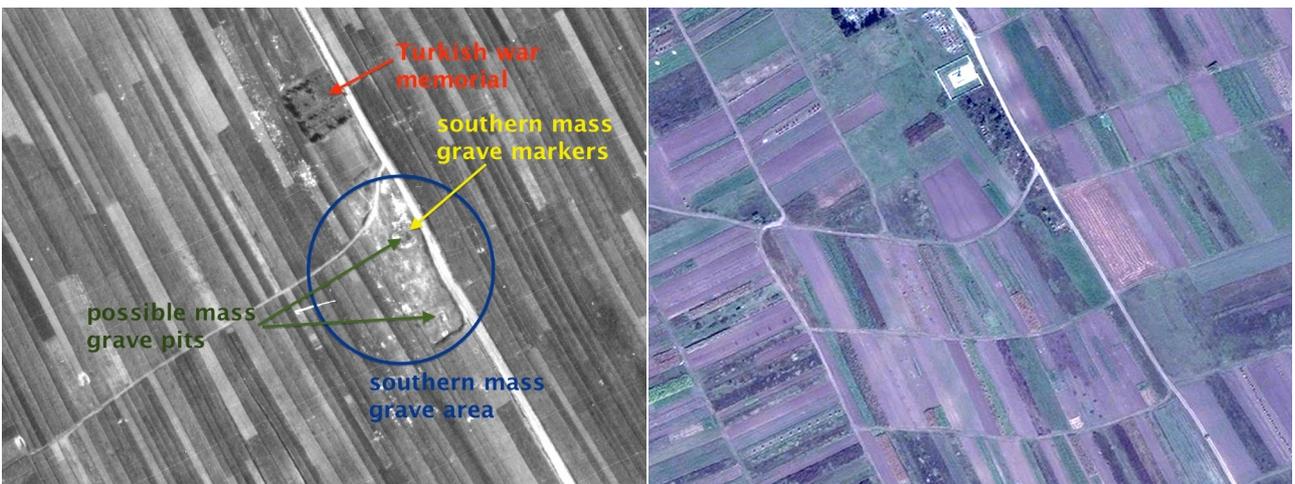
In the images below from 1944 Luftwaffe aerial surveys over Rohatyn, the area of disturbed surface soil at the southern site is large, perhaps 60m x 20m, with two or more smaller areas (15~25m square) within that perimeter showing greater visual difference from the surroundings.

Today the southern site is still surrounded by farmland; we do not yet know who owns or works the land immediately around the memorial markers. Although the land adjacent the markers is cleared seasonally by the local farmers, in our years visiting Rohatyn we have never seen the presumed burial ground used for farm or grazing purposes.

The **northern mass grave markers** are located at approximately [49.4175N, 24.6080E](#). The site is at the rear of a city building materials yard, a little less than 1km north of the town center. Although descriptions conflict in historical accounts and survivor testimonies, this may be the area referred to as "at the Rohatyn brick factory" (other accounts place another brick factory southeast of town, near the southern mass grave). The northern markers are placed at the foot of a steep slope at the edge of the industrial yard.



The southern mass grave site: A full-resolution image from the 1944 Luftwaffe aerial survey.



At left: A reduced-scale image of the same 1944 photo, with key features (southern mass grave area and markers) annotated.

At right: A 2016 satellite image from Bing Maps of the same view at roughly the same scale.



The northern mass grave site and cemetery: A full-resolution image from the 1944 Luftwaffe aerial survey.



At left: A reduced-scale image of the same 1944 photo, with key features (northern mass grave area and markers, northern cemetery and possible mass grave) annotated.

At right: A 2016 satellite image from Bing Maps of the same view at roughly the same scale.

In the images above from 1944 Luftwaffe aerial surveys over Rohatyn, the northern marker site is part of a large area of disturbed surface soil perhaps 200m in diameter, which appears to be some form of quarry or other source of building material. The dimensions and placement of buildings suggest to us a pre-war brickworks; we have also seen pre-war bricks in scrap piles on the site.

Today the northern site is operated as a city-owned building supplies and maintenance yard. During our most recent Rohatyn visit two weeks ago, we spoke with several city workers at the site, who told us that preliminary work to erect a large greenhouse frame northwest of the memorial markers a couple of decades ago brought human bones to the surface, and work was stopped. We believe based on this news that the mass grave is at least partially under the still-existing, unused greenhouse frame. Some photos of the area can be seen in a [news report from 17 May on our website](#).

There is a **third possible mass grave site** in Rohatyn, to date not commonly documented in historical accounts or survivor testimonies. During a visit to the heritage sites in November 2014 with Rabbi Kolesnik of Ivano-Frankivsk, he studied the land in the northern ("new") Jewish cemetery (which dates from the 1920s) and used dowsing rods to evaluate his hunch, after which he suggested the possibility of a mass grave in the lower (southern) portion of the cemetery. If real, it may correspond to one historical account which states that in June 1943, "the last Jews of the community were murdered in pits in the cemetery." In the images above from 1944 Luftwaffe aerial surveys over Rohatyn, the northern cemetery is at the top of the image; the specific area highlighted by Rabbi Kolesnik does not appear disturbed, but we are not discounting the Rabbi's hunch. Because the boundaries of any mass grave here would fall completely within the perimeter of the existing cemetery land, this area is already preserved as burial ground and does not need additional protection, so any research here would primarily serve to clarify history.

Selected testimonies and summaries about the places of execution and burial:

- Encyclopedia of the Jewish Communities of Poland (*Pinkas ha-kehillot Polin*), Volume II (Eastern Galicia); eds. Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, Aharon Weiss; by Zvi Avital, Danuta Dabrowska, Abraham Wein, Aharon Weiss, Aharon Jakubowicz; [Yad Vashem](#), Jerusalem 1980 (in Hebrew). [Online English version hosted by JewishGen](#). Pages 506~510 on [Rohatyn](#) coordinated by Alex Feller, English translation by Ruth Yoseffa Erez.
- Yizkor Book for Rohatyn: The Community of Rohatyn and Environs (*Kehilat Rohatyn v'hasviva*); eds. M. Amihai, David Stockfish, and Shmuel Bari; Rohatyn Association of Israel, 1962 (in Hebrew). Online [image version](#) hosted by the [New York Public Library](#). Online [English version hosted by JewishGen](#), coordinated by Michael J. Bohnen and Donia Gold Shwarzstein. Testimonies on pages [HY213~215](#), [HY222~228](#), [HY234~238](#), [E27](#), and [E40](#).
- Yad Vashem, [Killing Sites Catalog](#) (Online Guide to Murder Sites of Jews in the Former USSR), [list for Stanisławów region](#).
- Ruta Sakowska, "Die zweite Etappe ist der Tod", quoted by Edgar Hauster in his [Rohatyn blog page](#).

Project goals

The primary goal of the project is to create well-defined geographic boundary definitions of the actual burial places near both of the marked mass grave sites in Rohatyn. An

additional (optional) goal is to determine whether a third mass grave exists in the northern Jewish cemetery in Rohatyn, and if so to define its geographic boundaries. The boundary locations should be defined in a quantitative format suitable for use by our heritage program as well as the City and other land surveyors, and should include an estimate of the uncertainty of boundary locations based on the quality of the research data. The placement of temporary markers at boundary corners would be a useful supplement, if practical during the research and analysis onsite. Ultimately it is our hope to physically delineate the grave boundaries with modest but permanent markers for the benefit of local farmers and businesses, subject to their practical needs; this is a goal outside the scope of the current RFP but is in line with goals outlined to us by the City of Rohatyn in a meeting with the mayor and his staff two weeks ago.

Practical issues

A number of practical issues will need to be addressed in the plans and proposal:

- Only a small number of Rohatyn city officials and local service providers speak English and/or other foreign languages. If your team lacks Ukrainian or Russian speakers, arrangements will need to be made for an interpreter. We can recommend a paid interpreter from Lviv who is familiar with our program, if you need those services.
- Depending on the size and weight of your equipment, the best transport between the nearest airport (Lviv) and Rohatyn may be a rental car or van; those are available at the Lviv airport.
- Adequate lodging is available in and near Rohatyn, or in Lviv (about 80km/1.5hr away by car). Please ask if you need suggestions for places to stay.
- We assume that permission to work at the several sites will be required both from the Rohatyn city administration and from local land and business owners. We have promised the City to coordinate your proposal and schedule with them, and they have volunteered in return to assist with permissions and local management of access and work, both on their own site (north) and on private land (south). Given your past experience in this type of work, we welcome your advice about the details of these and any other needed permissions.
- We are not aware of any living residents of Rohatyn or nearby villages who witnessed the killings or burials in 1942 and 1943. We and others have interviewed several town elders with some experience of the events, but none had seen the events with their own eyes, and the stories we were told lacked specifics for places and times. Our local contact in Rohatyn saw the southern mass grave site as a child during the war, but the terrain lacks sharply-defined features to aid memory over 70+ years. Jewish witnesses to the killings and burials in Rohatyn have since died; the living survivors either did not see the sites at the time or were too young then to remember details with precision.
- As you know, Jewish traditions regarding burial grounds are as applicable to wartime mass graves as they are to pre-war cemeteries. It is our strong preference that all work to establish mass grave boundaries be non-invasive, i.e. that it should involve as little disturbance of the ground over the graves as possible, as described in your text *Holocaust Archaeologies*. We also recognize that questions or issues may arise which suggest some deviation from that preference, and we ask only that you show the same sensitivity to Jewish tradition which you have demonstrated at other work sites.

- As a non-invasive research project, we do not anticipate that rabbinical oversight will be required for this work. However, we would like to inform the Rabbi of Ivano-Frankivsk about the plans and schedule before work commences, and to invite his advice and comment. Rabbi Kolesnik has been a valuable adviser to our program for several years, and has proven to be both wise and practical in dealing with heritage issues, as well as encouraging relations between current Rohatyn residents and the descendant Jewish community.

We would also like to express our interest in joining the research work in Rohatyn, as observers and as untrained volunteer labor, if practical and if our presence would not interfere with your work. We may be able to explain or assist with questions in town, and our direct observation of the work would help us interpret the later analysis and report for our further use. We can discuss this topic further after the planning, proposal, and initial schedule discussions.

Detailed Request for Proposal

In summary, our request is for a proposal:

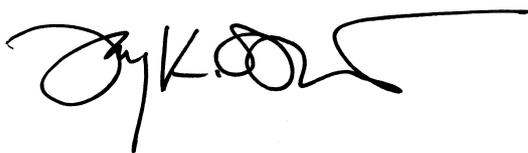
- to perform non-invasive archeological research and analysis at two WWII-era mass grave sites in Rohatyn, Ukraine, plus an optional third site, as described in this letter;
- to clearly define the physical boundaries of the actual burials at those sites;
- including an estimate of the uncertainty of boundary locations at each site;
- and to publish a report with the data and results of your analysis and conclusions.

We request that your proposal include cost and schedule estimates for all phases of your work, as well as any requirements which we or others need to meet in advance of the desk-based and on-site work. It will also be helpful for us if your proposal includes:

- qualifications of the research team (or typical qualifications if the specific individuals cannot be named in advance);
- reference past field work similar to the Rohatyn project (plans, costs, issues, results, report sample, etc.);
- opportunities for engagement and education for ourselves and for the local community, if possible.

We understand that prior to submitting a proposal, you will need to review the information we have provided, perform some initial feasibility analysis, and probably ask additional questions of us and perhaps others. We welcome your review and comments.

Kind regards,



Jay Osborn
RJH program manager, logistics and technical



Marla Raucher Osborn
RJH program lead