The area most closely associated with the Deitsch – Kutnowski families was within the triangle of towns formed by Płock, Kutno and Włocławek. Gostynin was at the centre of this triangle.
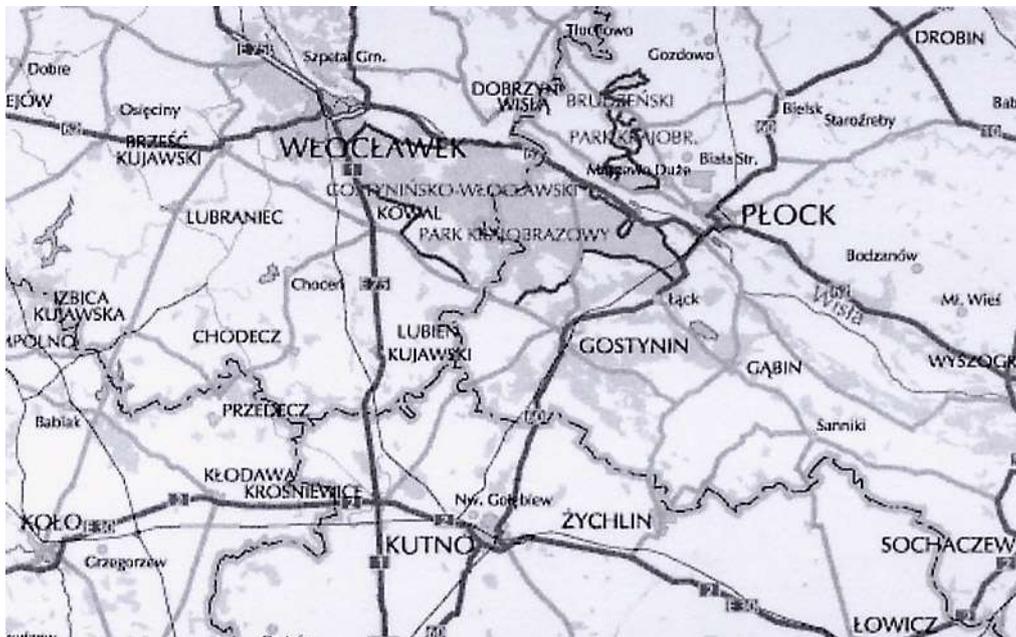
Kutno:

Andrzej of Radzikowo was given market privileges by Prince Siemowit IV of Płock in 1386 for helping the Prince in his endeavours to attain the Polish crown. That marked the beginning of Kutno's municipal character. The first mention of Kutno as a city comes from a document issued in 1444, although residents of Kutno in the 1430's were called "oppidiani" (burghers). Andrzej of Radzikowo was an ancestor of Mikołaj Kucieński (ca. 1430 - 1493), who in 1462, after the death of Władysław II, the prince of Mazowsze, submitted his castle at Gostynin to the king thus incorporating the land of Gostynin and his property with the crown of Poland.

In 1775 Stanisław Kostka Gadomski became owner of the city. Kutno expanded and became one of the biggest municipal centres in central Poland. In that period the new post route from Warsaw to Poznań and Wschowa, running through Kutno, was of major importance to the development of the city's economy and employment structure. New craftsmen came to the city and trade developed. A large Jewish population settled down and received a number of rights and privileges from Stanisław Gadomski. In 1791, not long after Syma Kutnowski was born, Walenty Rzętkowski bought the land of Kutno. He was the 'cup-bearer' of Gostynin and a member of parliament. During his time there were 668 Catholics, 63 Lutherans and 1,272 Jews in the city. After the second partition of Poland in 1793 Kutno was ruled by the Prussians again and became a part of new province called Southern Prussia.

In 1807 Napoleon stopped in Kutno on his way to Tilsit to meet Tsar Alexander I, and was hosted by the city's owner. One result of the Tilsit treaty was the formation of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and the imposition on it by Napoleon of a more bourgeois type of society and state, rather than the previous feudal model. The city's population then numbered 2,105 permanent residents.

The beginning of the new century was particularly difficult for the people of Kutno as Polish, French and Russian soldiers frequently marched through the region. Syma's son Abram was born the year that Napoleon invaded Russia, and the family must have witnessed the French army's disastrous retreat that winter. Over the next few years the townspeople were burdened with excessive taxes and the economy declined. These hardships led to the first determined struggles for independence and in 1815 after the defeat of Napoleon, the Kingdom of Poland, including Kutno, was formed from the divided Duchy of Warsaw.

Later in the century, one of Kutno's most famous Jewish inhabitants was Sholem Asch, the writer, born in 1880.

Gostynin:

The name "Gostynin" appeared for the first time in 1136 in a form of Gostyna or Gostynio. The name might have originated from Goscimir (the town owned by Goscimir), or from the noun "goscie" which means visitors. The town was founded in the 13th century on the Skrwa Lewa River in an area of forests and lakes. It is 14 miles southwest of Płock and approximately 60 miles northwest of Warsaw. About 1370 a castle was built, and on the 8 March 1382 Prince Siemowit IV gave Gostynin city rights.

In 1462 the Gostynin Region was joined to Poland and was subdivided into two smaller units: Gostynin and Gąbin. By 1564 there were 1600 inhabitants in Gostynin, and 2100 in Gąbin. After 1795 both units became a part of the Prussian Province of Płock. Gostynin was destroyed by fire on the 28 May 1809, and was not re-established as the administrative centre until 1866. Today Gostynin is part of

Mazowieckie Province and the Powiat (County) of Gostynin.

Although there are reports of Jews owning the town brewery and a malt factory in 1626, the Jewish Community really dates from 1765 when there were 157 members. The first synagogue was built of wood in 1779, north of the Rynek or marketplace, where the train station now stands.

By the end of the 18th century, Jews formed 26% of the population of Gostynin. They were involved in trade, inn-keeping, tailoring, the fur business, and butchering. Between 1823 and 1862 there

were special residential quarters for the Jewish population, which numbered then 785. Rabbi Yehiel Meir Lipschuetz, a local Hassidic leader, lived in Gostynin in the 19th century. Between 1897 and 1921 the Jewish population was roughly stable at about 1,840, or 27% of the population, and lived primarily in the centre of town around the synagogue and beit hamedrash. In 1896 Benyamin Levi was appointed the shochet, or ritual slaughterer, to the community – a very important position in the town. This photo was taken in 1931 on his 50th wedding anniversary, still acting as shochet.

In 1939 some estimates say that almost 4,000 Jews lived in Gostynin, though a more reliable number is 2,269. They suffered the same fate as thousands of other Jewish Communities during the Holocaust. When the German army entered the town in September 1939, there were mass arrests of Jews and Jewish property was looted and destroyed. The synagogue, which had been rebuilt in 1899 after a fire, was ordered dismantled so that the wood could be used for fuel for the houses of new German inhabitants of the town. Exorbitant fines were levied by the Nazis against the Jewish Community. In January 1941 a Ghetto was set up and approximately 3,500 Jews from Gostynin and the nearby town of Gabin (Gombin) were forced to live in the Gostynin Ghetto and were employed in laundering and tailoring workshops. From August 1941 many people were gradually moved to the Konin Concentration Camp. Sources report that the Ghetto was liquidated on April 16-17, 1942 with 2,000 Jews being taken to the Chelmno death camp. However some were probably taken to the Łodz Ghetto and the Konin Concentration Camp.

The old cemetery in 1989

Gostynin once had two Jewish cemeteries, the "old" and the "new". The old Jewish cemetery was located in the northeast part of the town on a side street that was called "The Lane of the Dead". The new Jewish cemetery was located on Goscinna Street. No traces of either cemetery exist today, having been destroyed by the Nazis. The site of the new Jewish Cemetery on Goscinna Street is now owned by the Gostynin municipality and is occasionally cleared of grass and tree saplings. No burials have taken place in the cemetery since the war.

Most of the Jewish vital records of Gostynin were destroyed during the war, but some records from ca. 1917 to 1938 are still found in the town's Civil Records Office.

There are no Jewish residents in Gostynin today. Memorials to the former Jewish Community are in the Holocaust Memorial Museum and in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. A Yizkor book for Gostynin, "Pinkas Gostynin" was published in 1961 as a joint publication of the New York and Israel Gostynin landsmann groups. Two Gostynin cemetery sections exist in New York City at Montefiore Cemetery and the New Montefiore Cemetery.

Today, those with Kutnowski ancestral connections to the town can be found in many countries, North and South America, Australia, Belgium, England, France, Israel and Spain, although as yet we cannot link all of them into one family.

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