

Hrodna History

(Birth place of Stefan Konstaninovich Koshko and Michalina Mary Zybko)

The first mention of Hrodna (Grodno in Russian and Harodnya in old Belarusian) appeared in 1128 A.D. in the Ipat'ev Chronicle. The name of the city stems from the eastern slavonic work for town, "gorod," and refers to a "fenced settlement." Hrodna was founded on a high hill overlooking the confluence of the rivers Nyoman and Hradnichanka.



The symbol of Hrodna since XVI, St. Kazimir's Deer. Apparently, St. Kazimir was a saint of hunters and the very first nature conservationist!

In 1496 Hrodna was awarded a Magedeburg "Right" to promote its economy and the 500th anniversary of that important event was celebrated in 1996.



From the second half of the XII Century Hrodna was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and in 1569 it merged with the Kingdom of Poland to form Rzecz Pospolita Polsko-Litewska - the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania. At that time natives called the area Rus', while foreigners called it Litva. The name Belarus appears only later. During the period of the Vitaut Duchy and the reign of King Stefan Batory of Rzzech Pospolita Hrodna was their residence and the capital of entire state.

In 1588, there were two castles in Hrodna, nine Orthodox and three Catholic churches, one synagogue, 31 streets and 4,000 inhabitants.



Between 1760 and 1780 the mayor of Hrodna, Antonij Tyzenhaus, founded a number of royal manufacturing businesses. Also, during that period there was a medical academy in Hrodna with Dr. Jan Emmanuel Jilibier, a French surgeon and botanist, serving as rector. He founded the botanical garden in Hrodna which at the time was considered the best in Europe. The Central City Park is located now in place of his garden.

In 1795 Hrodna was incorporated into the Russian Empire. Hrodna was occupied in 1812 as Napoleon's Army marched toward Moscow. It was liberated in the wake of Napoleon's defeat.



Famous Belarusian poet Maksim Bahdanovich was living in Hrodna. His house is nowadays a museum of Bahdanovich.



Hrodna was in the front lines of World War I. From September of 1915 it was occupied by the German Army. In the subsequent turmoil caused by the end of the war and the onset of the Russian Revolution Hrodna was captured by the Pilsudski Army in 1920, was ceded to Poland by the Treaty of Riga and remained part of Poland until 1939.

In September 1939 Poland has been occupied and divided between Nazi Germany and USSR according to Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. At this time Western Belarus (including Hrodna) rejoined Eastern Belarus (BSSR).

At the beginning of the Nazi attack on the USSR, June 22, 1941, Hrodna was bombed by the Luftwaffe. It was occupied the next day by the Nazi Army. My Grandmother stayed in fascist occupation with my Mother and Aunt (6 and 5 year old girls) for three long years. Hrodna buildings did not suffer the massive destruction during the war - the fate of other major cities between Berlin and Moscow. The population, however, did suffer at Nazi hands, especially the Jews who had lived in three large ghettos. The population of Hrodna decreased more than in half - from 57,200 in 1939 to 25,000 in 1944.

The Soviet Army liberated Hrodna from Nazis in 1944. Most of the battles were conducted on the banks of Nioman outside the city. There were no battles in the streets. My Grandmother told me that one day she simply saw a lone Russian soldier walking down the street and started to cry out in happiness. She was hiding with her daughters for two last weeks under the bridge listening to approaching cannonade, because fascists were executing people from their black lists and destroying strategically important objects before their retreat.

Ever since, Hrodna has been a part of Belarus. Many of the old churches survived the war and the destruction of the Nazis, but in the late 1950s the huge XIV Century "Garrison Catholic Church" was criminally destroyed by they Soviets in their effort to stamp out religion. Today Hrodna has more of the old architecture than any other belarusian city.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990 Belarus has been an independent country.

Here is how Hrodna population has grown over the centuries (in thousands):

1588.....	4.0
1897.....	46.9
1939.....	57.2
1944.....	25.0
1959.....	72.9
1965.....	98.0
1970.....	132.0
1980.....	202.0
1988.....	272.0
1995.....	300.0

Economy



Hrodna has 109 enterprises: 31 - state, 10 - joint stock, 21 - joint ventures with foreign capital, 47 - of middle and small business. The biggest companies are "Azot" (chemical products, nitric fertilizers), "Himvolokno" (synthetic fiber), "Radiowave" (electronics), two fabric manufacturing companies "Pryadil'no-Nitochnyj Kombinat" and "Tonko-sukonnyj Kombinat".

The major products manufactured in Hrodna are: mineral fertilizers, TV sets, best portable radio's in former USSR - "Okean", auto cassette tape recorders, fibers and fabrics, clothes, cigarettes, shoes, tools, atomotive products.

There are 836 shops in the city: 194 - state, 642 - private.

Transportation

Our train station is a very busy place. Some 65 trains arrive from or depart to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Minsk, Vilnius, Warsaw and other cities daily. The municipal airport is some 10 miles from the city center, near the city of Abuhava, and has a modern runway upon which the largest or planes, even the Space Shuttle, can land :-). But ever since "Perestroika" began there are no regular flights from or to Hrodna. People can not afford it. During USSR times not only Hrodna, but each of the regional centers in Hrodna Voblast' was accessible by plane everyday. Today the most convinient and safe way to get around within Belarus are the inter-city busses. 60 - 85 of them are leaving Hrodna every day to Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia.

Distances from Hrodna to

Vil'na.....164 km
Minsk.....278 km
Warsaw.....294 km
Kiev.....900 km
Prague.....900 km
Berlin.....950 km
St. Petersburg....970 km
Moscow.....1000 km

Science and Education



The largest educational institutions in Hrodna are [Kupala University \(older webpage\)](#), Hrodna State Medical Institute and the Hrodna State Agricultural Institute. There are also seven technical colleges and 10 professional schools in the city.

Institute of Biochemistry of the Belarus Academy of Sciences, which was founded by the academician Ostrovski, is located in Hrodna, as is the Division of Economics of Natural Resources. The two academicians, 84 doctors habilitat and 569 Ph.Ds. live in Hrodna.

All children from six years old to 16 must attend school. There are 47,200 pupils in attendance at 38 schools in Hrodna. Take a look at [the picture tour of Hrodna](#) made from the drawings of children from school #30 in Hrodna. It was published in the [MidLink Magazine](#) on the [Global Skylines](#) page.

There are many libraries in Hrodna. The biggest and oldest is the Hrodna Public Library which is named after the academician E. Karski.

Latest Info on Belarus

The Grodno region lies in the west of Belarus. It is one of the six administrative regions (or oblasts) which make up the country.

The **Grodno** region of Belarus borders Poland in the west and the Lithuania in the north. It's a popular international trading partner with both Europe and Russia.

The people of the Grodno region

- **1.072,4 million people** live in the Grodno region
- 66.7% of the population are Belarusians
- 21.5% are Poles
- 8.2% are ethnic Russians
- 1.4% are Ukrainians

Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism are the main religions.

There are 451 cultural and historical buildings in the region, including 212 Orthodox temples, 216 Catholic churches, 18 Protestant churches, 4 mosques and 1 synagogue.

Towns and cities in the Grodno region

Grodno is the main city in the region. There are a further 17 districts, 12 towns – of which 6 have their own regional administrations – and 21 villages.