



MEMORIES OF OLD JESENICE SETTLEMENT

PROJECT

Memories of Old Jesenice Settlement

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

Development Agency for Upper Gorenjska and Jesenice Upper Sava Museum

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On the back cover: Postcard of Jesenice from 2021 (photo by: Gregor Vidmar, Miro Podgoršek)

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

As part of the five-year project “Memories of Old Jesenice Settlement”, the Development Agency for Upper Gorenjska has created a 3.3 km thematic trail that showcases the history and development of Jesenice through 32 information boards. Local stories and photographs bring the past to life as you explore various parts of Jesenice.

The trail begins in the west at the old town centre known as Murova and continues along the former Gosposvetska Street (Center II) to Kolar Park, past the railway station to Tone Čufar Square, and TVD Partizan (Physical Education Society Partizan). It crosses the road to Hrenovca and over the Herman Bridge to the Podmežakla Sports Park.

The project is supported and fully funded by the Municipality of Jesenice, managed and implemented by the Development Agency for Upper Gorenjska, with professional support from the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum.

Links:

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Information board along the trail (Photo by: Nik Bertonceelj)

MUROVA

The thematic trail “Memories of Old Jesenice Settlement” begins with a walk through Murova, the oldest settlement in Jesenice, also known as “Altassling” or “Old Jesenice”. This area, along with Plavž and Sava, later formed the town of Jesenice. The farmers built their houses on the sunny side of the Mirca hillside. Below the houses were fields, while livestock grazed on the pastures above. With the success of mining and ironworks in Savske Jame (Planina pod Golico above Jesenicami), Frederick of Ortenburg issued the Ortenburg mining decree in the 14th century, regulating relations and operational rules. This enabled the development of trade in Murova and later fostered various crafts, which had a significant impact on the settlement’s growth, its residents, and their way of life.

The trail begins at Čufer Manor, also known as Mencinger House or Smuk Castle, located next to the road to Golica. The manor was the residence of former mayor Andrej Čufer (1876-1944), who served as mayor from 1924 to 1931, the years during which Jesenice became a town.



Čufer Manor
(Photo by: Miro Podgoršek)

The trail leads past Višnar Trough, which was used by the inhabitants of Murova for drinking, laundry, and watering their cattle, up the hill to the junction of Murova and Kosova streets, where the centre of the settlement used to be. The Old Mining Route ran nearby, and life was bustling at the trough. Gatherings were always filled with laughter and conversation, accompanied by music and singing. Young people engaged in sports and games, as there was no television at the time. In winter, they went sledding, skiing, and ice-skating. Ski runs were set up with various degrees of difficulty from Pejce above Murova down to the houses. They poured water over the slope and smoothed it with hot cloths to create an ice rink for skating and ice hockey. Through volunteer work, they arranged a spacious venue for athletics training on the grassy area above the settlement. This is where they organised the so-called “Murova Games”, a competition featuring athletic disciplines such as high jump, pole vault, and long jump. However, table tennis has always been the number one sport in Murova. It was played in backyards, barns, at “Pri Markežu”, and at a designated area on the slope. In 1972, at the initiative of Franc Ravnikar, a small hall for table tennis was built on the site where the Murova Games had taken place a few years earlier and was named the “Mini hall”.

On Murova Street, which is mostly surrounded by old farmhouses, the Markež House stands out due to its unique construction. With its preserved late Baroque green tuff portal and late Gothic stone basement portal, it showcases traces of high-style architecture. The house once served as an inn, a tannery, and a shoemaker’s shop. In the second half of the 19th century, it was purchased by Jožef Markež, an electrical engineer and innovator, who introduced light bulbs to homes and assembled a solar panel.

In 1825, the first school in Jesenice was opened in the “Pri Janezku” House, which was also home to great athletes, including Olympians. Janez, the teacher, was said to be of shorter and slighter build, which is why people affectionately referred to him as Janezek (‘Janezek’ is the diminutive of ‘Janez’). This is the origin of the school’s name. According to the records, he lived in a modest dwelling with a stove, located at the school, where he cooked for himself. The school was attended by pupils from farming and working-class families, who carried a sack made of sturdy canvas over their shoulders. They wrote on hard, parchment-like paper or on black writing slates. They used boiled and dried tree fungi to erase the blackboard. The students learned how to read, write, and calculate.

Škafar Trough is one of only two troughs preserved today. There used to be five of them, including Smuk Trough (at the beginning of Murova), a trough on the slope, also known as Mlinar Trough (in the middle of the settlement), and Svedar Trough, which was located further down next to Kos Manor, but still considered part of the old Jesenice settlement.

From the Škafar Trough, steps lead to the parish church of St. Lenart, which replaced an older church in 1523 and became the parish seat. In the 18th century, it was stylised in the Baroque style and received its present appearance in 1931.

From the church, the trail descends to Kos Manor, the former administrative manor of the Weissenfels nobility, built in 1521. Three hundred years later, it was purchased by merchant and entrepreneur Frančišek Pavel Kos, who gave it its current appearance and name. In the 19th century, the manor house was acquired by the Jesenice district administration and served as a folk school from 1883 to 1915. During both world wars, Kos Manor became the seat of the municipality; during the Second World War, it functioned as a Gestapo prison, and after the war, it served as the seat of the court. Since 1985, it has been converted into a museum.



Kos Manor (archived in the Photographic library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

FORMER GOSPOSVETSKA STREET



Gosposvetska Street, 1929. A chestnut tree, which still grows today between the tower blocks opposite the park, is visible in the photo (archived in the Photographic Library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

The bourgeois architecture and memories of the town's former life and its inhabitants can also be found further south along a street that harmoniously connected with Murova. This is the former Gosposvetska Street, which runs from the Jesenica stream in the west to the former Tancar House (now the Ejga restaurant) in the east. Locals refer to this area as the "Old Jesenice".

A regular postal connection between Kranj and Villach was established in the second half of the 18th century, following what would later become Gosposvetska Street. Next to it stood a post station, where horses and carts were exchanged, mail was picked up and dropped off, and travellers could board or disembark. The station also

featured a large horse stable and an inn. During both world wars, the Pošta Hotel was constructed next to the original building. Town houses, shops, and restaurants lined the road.

With the growth of the settlement at the turn of the 19th century, pubs, taverns, cafés, restaurants, and hotels began to flourish. In addition to drinking and dining, patrons could read daily newspapers, discuss current events, play cards, and enjoy chess. Visiting taverns also allowed the residents of Jesenice to express their national and political affiliations, as certain establishments were distinctly aligned with particular identities.

Among the more prominent "bourgeois" establishments were those in hotels, including the Pošta Hotel, Novak Café, and Triglav Hotel. These venues were frequented only by the upper classes (officials, engineers, merchants, successful craftsmen etc.), and foreign guests.

The Korotan Hotel was built in 1935. Before the building that still stands today was constructed, the site was occupied by Hauptman tavern or shop. From the very beginning, Korotan has been regarded as one of the most distinguished bars in Jesenice. It housed a restaurant, wine tavern, manufacturing and fashion shops, as well as accommodation for foreigners, travellers, and tourists. To enhance its offerings, Korotan provided newspapers, billiards, a gramophone, and dance evenings featuring live orchestral and jazz music.

In the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the ironworks industry and the railway significantly transformed the landscape of this part of Jesenice and the entire Upper Sava Valley. On 20 March 1929, the formerly independent settlements of Murova, Plavž, and Sava were merged into the town of Jesenice, with its administrative centre located in Kos Manor below Murova.

By the end of 1930, Jesenice had its first street system established. It was during this time that Gosposvetska Street was introduced; it is one of the oldest streets in Jesenice and has also been one of the most frequently renamed. The street was known by this name from 1930 to 1941 and again from 1945 to 1961. During the Third Reich, it was called Adolf Hitlerstrasse, but since 1961, it has been known as Marshal Tito Street.

The area of Gosposvetska Street was heavily impacted by the bombing of Allied forces on 1st of March in 1945. At that time, the town authorities were under Nazi Germany's rule. The aim of the Allied bombing was to destroy the railway infrastructure in Jesenice. As the end of the war approached, the Allies also sought to demoralise the population, further breaking the resistance of the Third Reich and forcing it to surrender. Due to the bombers flying at a high altitude (3000-4000 m), significant unnecessary damage was inflicted on civilian structures, resulting in many civilian casualties. The bombing was carried out in two waves: the first at around 1.15 PM and the second at around 2 PM. Most of the bombs fell near the railway station and along the route from the former Peklar Inn (now 18 Marshal Tito Street) to the parish church. The bombing completely changed the face of the city. Those left homeless were forced to relocate to nearby areas such as Bohinj, Kranjska Gora, Žirovnica, Dovje, and Bled.



Kolar Park around 1950 (archived in the Photographic library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

After the war, the reconstruction of Jesenice began. Tower blocks were constructed where the demolished buildings once stood, and most of the original structures were replaced. New urban planning schemes were introduced, one of which was Kolar Park, built in the early 1950s in the area that was then known as Gosposvetska Street. Its construction was ordered by Matevž Kolar, the mayor of the Municipality of Jesenice at the time. The park is divided into levels by steps and fencing, following the steep base of Mirca peak. Opposite its entrance, an iron gate leads to a shelter.

LIFE AROUND JESENICE TRAIN STATION

The merger of the Gorenjska ironworks under the Kranjska industrijska družba (Carniola Industrial Company), founded in 1869, marked the beginning of a new era in the development of the ironworks industry, highlighted by the worldwide invention of ferromanganese in the Javornik blast furnace. In 1870, Jesenice was connected to Ljubljana and Tarvisio by rail, and in 1906, with the construction of the Bohinj line, it gained direct access to Villach, Gorizia, and Trieste. At the turn of the 19th century, Jesenice emerged as the centre of the steel industry and an important transport crossroads. As people from all over Slovenia and other countries moved here, the number of school-age children increased alongside them. Kos Manor, once the only four-grade school, soon became too small, leading to the need for a new, larger school. Thus, in 1914, a primary school (now a secondary school) was built, which was attended by 694 pupils. The grand opening took place on 5th of April in 1915. During the First World War, a military hospital was temporarily established on the school premises.

The Gimnazija Jesenice secondary school was founded in the 1945/46 school year. For the first four years, lessons were held in the premises of a vocational secondary school, in a building that later housed a dry-cleaner's. In 1949, the secondary school moved to its current building and was named Gimnazija. Initially, it shared its premises with the primary school until a new school building was constructed on Tomšičeva Street (now Prežihov Voranc Primary School) in 1959. Until the school reform in 1958, the secondary school was divided into lower (up to 4th grade) and higher levels (from 5th to 8th grade). In the following decades, it developed into a strong preparatory school for university studies and became a notable presence in the cultural, sports, and social life of Jesenice. A legacy that continues today.



Tancar House (archived in the Photographic library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

As the population grew, so did the number of accommodation and catering establishments. An example of the latter is the Tancar House (now the Ejga Restaurant), which was built in 1906. From the very beginning, the Tancar family operated an inn with accommodation for foreigners here. Dr. Avgust Tancar opened his doctor's office in the building in 1938. Next to it once stood Kogoj Manor, notable for its typical pyramid turret. Designed by Viktor Tolazzi in 1903 for Dr. Kogoj, a doctor and pharmacist, it was demolished during the construction of the underpass to Podmežakla.

One of the most prestigious hotels was the Paar Hotel, named after businessman Franz Paar. It stood opposite the railway station and was known for its drink called "siphon". In autumn, walnuts were purchased by the hotel on-site, and in winter, there was an ice rink nearby. The hotel was demolished during the Allied bombing of Jesenice on 1st of March in 1945 and has since been replaced by a car park. The chestnut trees that once separated the hotel courtyard from the main road have now been replaced by plane trees.

After the Second World War, the railway station and its surroundings remained the centre of activity. Residential blocks, shops, and restaurants were built along the main road, connecting the railway station with today's Tone Čufar Square. According to local resident Mitja Volčič, this area is the second centre of the town, situated between the secondary school, today's Tone Čufar Theatre, and TVD Partizan (Physical Education Society Partizan).



TVD Partizan (Physical Education Society Partizan). Jesenice building from the south, 1979 (archived in the Photographic library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

HRENOVCA ON THE SAVA RIVER



Hrenovca in the early 20th century (Source: Photographic library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

The area between today's Stara Sava and Tone Čufar Square is known as Hrenovca, or Hrenovca in the local dialect. This area is believed to be named after Lenart Hren, the mayor of Ljubljana and father of Bishop Tomaž Hren, a 16th-century ironworker on the Sava River. Due to his indebtedness, he sold his share in the ironworks to the Italian ironworkers, the Bucelleni family, who were succeeded by the Belgian ironworkers, the Ruard family, in 1766. A 19th-century map shows Hrenovca as a wooded and gently undulating terrain, with an altitude ranging from 564 to 571 metres above sea level, and it also marks a zoo. According to oral tradition, the Ruard family kept deer, monkeys, and a bear named Mežek there. At the end of the 19th century, the company Kranjska industrijska družba (Carniola Industrial Company) purchased the Sava ironworks from the Ruard family and established the Jesenice ironworks. In Hrenovca, they built sports facilities, walking paths, a restaurant in the manor house, as well as apartments for senior factory employees in four villas.

Industrialisation at the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century significantly changed the appearance of Hrenovca. The Gorenjska railway, established in 1870, and the Bohinj line, built in 1906, marked the boundaries between the settlements of Jesenice and Sava. They remained connected by a "crooked bridge" near the former Sokolski Dom (now known as TVD Partizan (Physical Education Society Partizan), as well as overpasses and a tunnel. In "Kako so na Jesenicah včasih živel?" (How did people live in Jesenice in the past?) (Kokošinek, Torkar Tahir, ed., 2007), Franc Jerala also recalls the underpasses under the railway station. The first narrow underpass served its purpose until 1930. In the same year, a new, wider underpass was built to accommodate smaller freight vehicles. Due to the expansion of the ironworks to Hrenovca and the increase in traffic, the current Podmežakla underpass was built.

Between the two world wars, the ironworks, with its industrial buildings (coke warehouse, lime kiln, and factory railway), encroached heavily on the Hrenovca park area, which had previously been a green oasis, a promenade, a playground, and a gathering place for young people. After the Second World War, the expropriation of the property of the Kranjska industrijska družba (Carniola Industrial Company) transformed Hrenovca and a large part of the Stara Sava area into an industrial zone. The park, the villas, and the crooked bridge were replaced by roasting furnaces, processing plants, and the sinter plant. In 1968, France Prešeren Street was closed, and a few years later, the last buildings were demolished, leading to the enclosure of the area by a factory fence. This reduced the wider area of Stara Sava to merely the remnants of the former ironworks plants.

The sinter plant was deemed unnecessary after the shutdown of the blast furnaces in 1987 and was demolished in 2001. To honour Jesenice ironworkers, the Jesenice Students' Club organised a concert in one of the sinter plant's buildings on 8th of December in 2000, featuring music and captivating lighting effects, symbolising the transformation from old to new. Young, current, and former ironworkers came together to bid a fond farewell to the final remnants of the ironworks in Hrenovca. Today, the Hrenovca area is an urban and residential neighbourhood, featuring four multi-apartment buildings known as "Gorenjski Sonček" (Gorenjska Sunshine).



Hrenovca area today, 2023 (photo by: Gregor Vidmar)

SPORT IN PODMEŽAKLA



A performance of the Sokol Jesenice Gymnastic Society at Ferjan's Garden, 1905 (archived in the Photographic library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

Organised sports life began at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the founding of various cultural and sports associations in Jesenice (a branch of the German Turnverein Gymnastics Society, the Sokol Gymnastics Society, the Orel Gymnastics Society, the Svoboda Gymnastics and Culture Society, the Prijatelji Prirode Alpine Society, the Skala Tourist Club, and others). Gymnastics held a special place within these societies.

The most important winter sports included skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, ice-skating, and later, ice hockey. Carinthian Slovenes employed at the Kranjska industrijska družba (Carniola Industrial Company) introduced ice bowling to Jesenice, initially played on natural ice surfaces such as lakes, ponds, and slow-moving river sections. In the summer, young people, and even a few older individuals, gathered for swimming. Jesenice had two swimming pools: Čufer's bathing place on the Sava River and the Kranjska industrijska družba (Carniola Industrial Company) bathing place on the Ukova River. Those who could not afford to swim there would bathe in the Sava River, while children from the Sava area often swam under the Herman Bridge. Leading up to the Second World War, football emerged as the predominant sport in Jesenice, alongside skiing. Other sports practised included athletics, tennis, table tennis, and bowling, primarily at the Bratstvo (Brotherhood) Stadium located in Podmežakla. Behind the Sokolski Dom, young boys set up a volleyball court.

With the help of volunteers, two ski jumps and two football fields were constructed in Podmežakla before the war, along with a ski lodge at Mežakla. In the late 1930s, the Bratstvo football ground became the central venue for sports competitions and other events in Jesenice.

After the Second World War, a new era began, promoting unity and accessibility in sporting activities for the wider public. The varied pre-war activities laid the groundwork for the organisation of physical culture activities shortly after liberation. Athletes organised themselves into sports societies. The Jesenice Physical Culture Society and the Edinost Physical Culture Society were established in 1945. The individual sections of the two societies encompassed all the sports activities of the time.

The first thirty years of organised physical culture in Jesenice after the Second World War were extremely dynamic, varied, and successful, achieving excellent results. During this period, sports in Jesenice ranked exceptionally high in both Slovenian and Yugoslav contexts in terms of the diversity of disciplines and the representation of athletes in national teams. The Jesenice Ice Hockey and Skating Club and the Jesenice Ski Club were the best in the country. Additionally, there were successful athletes in sledging, ice bowling, volleyball, basketball, bowling, and table tennis.

The buildings and sports equipment that were destroyed or damaged during the war were refurbished or rebuilt with the help of volunteer work and financial support from Jesenice Ironworks. In 1959, a basketball court was concreted in Podmežakla. By 1962, a new south stand was built at the hockey field, replacing the existing wooden one. Between 1967 and 1968, the football pitch was renovated, featuring a grass surface and an athletics track. In 1972, a roof was constructed over the hockey field, and several years later, the hall was completely renovated. Around 1980, a modern automatic bowling alley was built. In 1983, a ski lift was constructed on the slopes of Mežakla, though it was later demolished when the motorway was built. With the voluntary efforts of table tennis club members, a new hall was constructed in Podmežakla, and the club moved there in 2000.

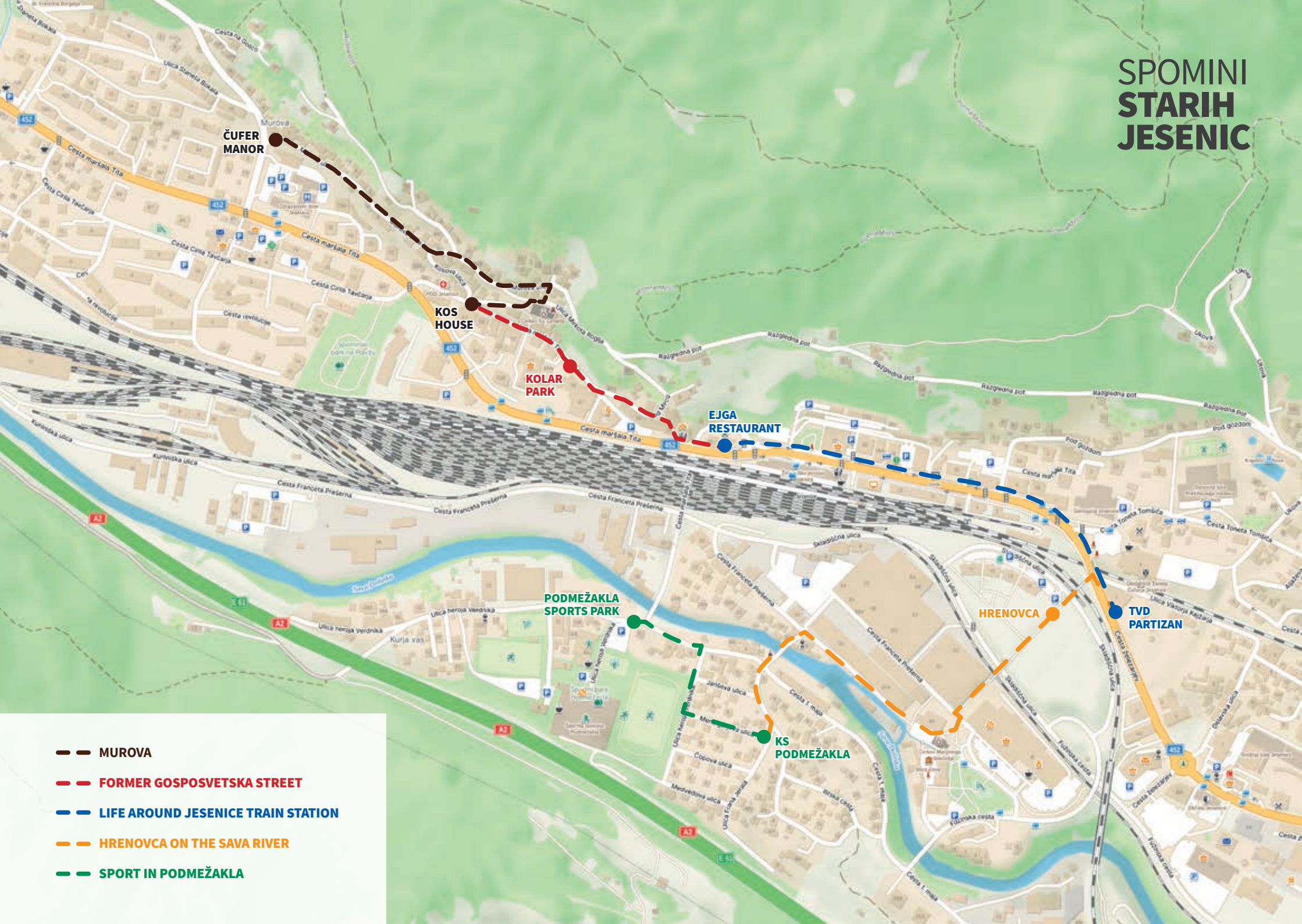
After Slovenia gained its independence in 1991, a new era in Slovenian sports began. In the 1991/1992 season, the Acroni Jesenice team won the first national hockey championship title in independent Slovenia. The women's team of the volleyball club Mladi Jesenice began to achieve visible results for the first time after several years of effort. The Jesenice Curling Club team became the first Slovenian curling team to win a medal for at the 2012 European Championships.

Today, the Podmežakla Sports Hall hosts numerous events and competitions, including international matches of the Slovenian national ice hockey team, the international figure skating competition for the Triglav Cup and the Narcisa Cup, as well as Charity Curling, among others.



The first hockey players after the liberation played on natural ice on the football pitch (archived in the Photographic Library of the Jesenice Upper Sava Museum)

SPOMINI STARIH JESENIC



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