



Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15

SPRING 2007

NUMBER 1

DROBNE ECHA

Installment #10

Dateline: Gilman/Alberta

From *Kuryer Polski*, 1909

By Greg Kishel

<gfk1@cornell.edu>

Our locale this time is Gilman, post office address Alberta, in Benton County. Gilman was probably the very first area in central Minnesota north of the latitude of the Twin Cities, to start receiving Polish immigrants, and their numbers grew to comprise a relatively large immigrant agricultural community. While looking through Milwaukee's *Kuryer Polski*, 1909, I found the following article in the December 8 issue for that year. It's about a notable event in the community's history, and one of great pride for the local Poles. Since we have a member or two who actually were pupils in the building that is its subject, or whose parents were, I am presenting my translation of this item.

THE POLISH SCHOOL IN GILMAN.

THE CONSTRUCTION WILL BE COMPLETED AT THE
BEGINNING OF 1910.

A short history of the Polish parish in Gilman, Minn. – The school building has a front of 12 windows and is two stories tall.

Gilman, Minn., December 8 – The Poles in Gilman will have one of the most beautiful Polish parish schools in America, the construction of which will cost quite a few pennies; but likewise the edifice will be exceedingly grand. The foundation is already laid under the school and the walls are already in the course of construction. *Drobne Echa* continued page 19

In this Issue . . .

Drobne Echa

Dateline: Gilman/Albertap.1

President's Letter2

The Bulletin Board3

Correspondence4

Słownik Geograpiczny

(Spytkowice)5

Is There an Ogonek in Kraków?9

Primer on Polish Diacritical Letters..10

A Search for my Grandmother's

Birthplace11

Immigration Quiz12

How I Found My Sister-in-law's

German Ancestors in Poland13

PGS-MN Annual Meeting Scenes.....15

Halka-The Polish National Opera ...16

Drobne Echa (continued)19

A Letter From Auschwitz23

Powązki Cemetery Photographs27

Genealogy in Poland28

Missing Branches32

Upcoming Fall Programs....

Sept. 8 – “Polish Pronunciation for Beginners or How Someone Might Have Misspelled Your Name” – Iwona Srienc

Sept. 29 – Meeting at Little Falls

Nov. 3 – Crystal LDS Library - Hosted by Deb Vevea

Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota

A Branch of the Minnesota Genealogical Society
5768 Olson Memorial Highway
Golden Valley MN 55422 – 5014

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~mnpolgs/pgs-mn.html>

Officers/Board of Directors:

President.....Terry Kita (612-927-0719)
<terrykita@earthlink.net>
Vice President.....John Kowles (612-721-7227)
<johnkow@att.net>
Secretary.....Dori Ann Marszalek (763-535-2296)
<dorim@comcast.net>
TreasurerMargaret Schnell (651-647-4245)
<schnellmm@hotmail.com>
Past President.....Greg Kishel
<gfk1@cornell.edu>
Director.....Jan Bias (651-766-0147)
<geneejb@comcast.net>
Director.....Mary Ellen Bruski (763-588-3801)
<Poland-MN@comcast.net>
Director.....Jerome Biedny (952-944-5905)
<jaybiedny@juno.com>
Director.....Lisa Trembley (952-941-0574)
<ltrembley@comcast.net>

Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs:

Library.....Jan Bias
Membership.....Lisa Trembley
Newsletter.....John Kowles
Program/Publicity.....Terry Kita, John Kowles
Research.....Greg Kishel, John Rys
Website.....Mary Ellen Bruski

Polish Genealogical Society Of Minnesota Newsletter

Editor.....John Kowles (612-721-7227)
Associate Editors.....Paul Kulas, Greg Kishel
Mailing labels.....Lisa Trembley
Surname indexing.....Kay Freund,
Mary Kowles, Dori Marszalek, Connie Waldherr

The *Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota Newsletter* is published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Subscription to the *Newsletter* is included with membership. Dues are \$15.00 per year.

Please use application form on advertising insert.

Items submitted for publication are welcomed and encouraged. We require that feature-length articles be submitted exclusively to PGS-MN only. Articles, letters, book reviews, news items, queries, ad copy, etc. should be sent to: John Kowles, editor, *PGS-MN Newsletter*, 3429-45th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406-2924. or to e-mail: <johnkow@att.net>

Address changes or membership questions?

Contact: Lisa Trembley, Membership Chair
15800 Post Road, Wayzata MN 55391
or e-mail: <ltrembley@comcast.net>

© 2007 Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota



President's Letter

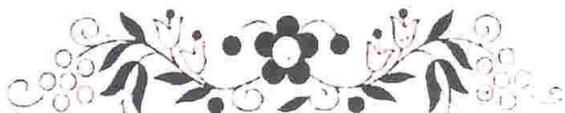
Except for the first few editions of the PGS-MN newsletter, Paul Kulas has been its publisher and editor. Earlier this year John Kowles assumed the role of editor, while Paul will continue as associate editor. What began as an 8-page newsletter, has been transformed by his hard work and leadership, as well as the assistance of others, into one of the finest of its kind. It remains the main source of communication to our members, particularly those who cannot attend our meetings.

Paul has been not only the editor, but also has written the "Missing Branches" and "Letters to the Editor" columns, as well as articles. The initials PTK are scattered over 14 years worth of newsletters' articles. For years Paul has made himself available, one evening per month, for "Polish Night at the Library," to answer any Polish genealogy related question. This he will continue to do, as well as participate actively in our group.

Audra Etzel joined our board as a director in 2001, and became our second treasurer in 2002, succeeding Barbara Rockman. Our treasurer receives the 300 or so annual dues payments, and begins the process of recording, depositing and transferring this information to others, as well as paying the bills. Audra has very ably performed these tasks for over five years, and recently has asked that we find a successor for her. Margaret Schnell, who was recently elected to the position of director, will succeed Audra as of April 26, 2007.

John Rys joined our board as a director in 2003, has co-chaired the Research Committee with Greg Kishel, and has exhibited a passion for vital statistics data extraction and collection, from Twin City area churches with significant Polish membership. His results are available at the MGS Library, and has been the subject of several newsletter articles. John offered to step down from his director position at the Annual Meeting, in favor of Jay Biedny, but will continue his task of data extraction and publication work.

Our thanks to these three, and to those who continue to volunteer for our organization. -TJK



The Bulletin Board

A Message from the Editor:

This is my first "solo" newsletter. I am still learning. I do not think you will notice much in the way of format changes in 2007. You might notice a few minor script changes because the software being used is slightly different. We are always looking for suggestions and volunteers to help as well. We publish original articles on Polish genealogy, history and culture. In this issue you will see the techniques used by a number of authors to search for their roots which I hope you will find helpful.

Paul Kulas is owed a debt of gratitude for 14 years of dedication to the newsletter. Paul will continue to act as Associate Editor and work on a number of continuing features.

Village of Bowlus Centennial

The village of Bowlus, located 95 miles northwest of Minneapolis, will celebrate its centennial on Sunday, July 1, 2007. Bowlus is located in the heart of an area which was settled by Polish immigrants who mainly came from Silesia between 1870 and 1890. The Autumn, 2006 issue of *PGS of Minnesota* newsletter listed eight Minnesota communities with the highest percentage of people of Polish ancestry, according to the 2000 census, and seven of them were within the 10-mile surrounding area of Bowlus.

In 1907 the Minneapolis & Saulte Ste. Marie Railroad (later renamed Soo Line) announced that they were going to build a railroad connecting the cities of Brooten and Duluth which would pass through the Two Rivers Township area. This railroad purchased 80 acres of land from Martin Czech in 1907 and the village was established which included a new railroad depot and post office. Most of the residents were Catholic and in 1909 railroad officials donated a block of land on

the west end of the village and St. Stanislaus Kostka church was built, dedicated in 1910.

The centennial celebration on July 1, 2007 will begin with mass at St. Stanislaus Kostka church at 10 AM, followed by a parade at 11:15 AM. The rest of the festivities will take place at the village park and will include food, games, music and entertainment throughout the afternoon and evening.

Everyone is welcome to enjoy a fun day in Bowlus. – Bob Prokott <prokott@backpack.net>

Annual Meeting – January 20, 2007

PGS-MN held its annual meeting at *Gasthof zur Gemütlichkeit* on January 20 with about 50 members present. Elections for two years included:

Terry Kita – reelected President
John Kowles – reelected Vice President
Jerome Biedny – Director (replacing John Rys)
Jan Bias – Director

John Rys remains as co-chairperson of the Research Committee. A financial report was available indicating we remain in positive cash flow position with income and expenses of about \$6000 and a reasonable reserve. A Polish lunch was enjoyed. Some scenes from the meeting are on page 15.

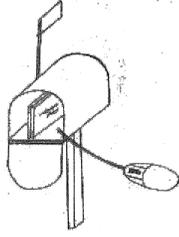
Polish Immigration – February 3, 2007

About 30 people were present for this meeting. John Kowles presented information on 1900 routes from Poland to the U.S. and early Minnesota settlements. Terry Kita followed with a presentation on the business of immigration. Everyone was asked to determine their Immigration IQ. Take the test on page 12 – no prizes.

Beginning Polish Genealogy – March 31, 2007

Greg Kishel's two-hour presentation was well-received by more than 60 people in attendance. Greg started with Polish history and how it affects research and described research sources.

Correspondence ... Komunikacja



My Ancestor's Church Records on Microfilm

The day before I was to leave for Salt Lake City a few months ago, I discovered the church records that I researched at the parish house in Poland had been microfilmed. Words could hardly express how I felt – disbelief, amazement and excitement. The 16 books are on five rolls of microfilm covering the years 1669 through 1928. There is a sixth roll of microfilm that I did not have time to research. They were microfilmed in 2005 at the archdiocese of Opole, Poland. They only recently became available in the Family History Library and were still located in the vault. The records that are in the vault are searchable in the catalog and they can be requested to be available at the library when you arrive. They eventually are made available in the Family History Library permanently.

When I was in Salt Lake City in 2003, I asked how records can be microfilmed and they suggested I write to the Collection Management Department. I sent an e-mail to the department in June 2003 giving them information on the church records in Trębaczów and asking them if these records can be microfilmed. However, I never received a reply, which was a surprise. I believe this request led to the microfilming of these records, or was it a coincidence? I don't know. How would they have known about these records? Of course, Father Walczak in Trębaczów needed to be cooperative.

Subsequently, I called the person in the Collection Management Department and he said: "There is no way to process individual requests," and this message is sent to anyone who makes such a request. However, as mentioned I never received any kind of reply. He said they are very active in Silesia and Opole microfilming records.

In either case, it is less expensive traveling to Salt Lake City or ordering the microfilm through the Family History Center than traveling to Poland.

- Jan Bias

Editor's Note: I always advise researchers to check the LDS catalog before attempting research in Poland. - JWK

Urban Expedition: Poland

A large crowd (perhaps 500) gathered at the Landmark Center in St. Paul to celebrate Polish culture on February 18. The gathering featured several folk dancing groups, demonstrations and Polish food. The PGS-MN stand drew a lot of interest throughout the afternoon.



Polish Dancers in the Atrium

SŁOWNIK GEOGRAFICZNY ENTRY FOR SPYTKOWICE, POLAND**TRANSLATOR IN TRAINING! #4****By John L. Rys <john@john.rys.name>**

After finishing the translations for Wysoka, Toporzysko, and Jordanów, Poland (previously published in the PGS-MN Newsletter), I moved on to my fourth Słownik Geograficzny translation. This one is for Spytkowice, the village of my fraternal grandmother, Ludwika Głowczak. As you may recall Słownik Geograficzny is a geographic inventory of Poland recorded during the years 1880-1902.

Ludwika Głowczak came from Spytkowice, Poland, the same area of the Beskid Mountain range (part of Carpathian Mountains) as Wysoka, Toporzysko and Jordanów. Ludwika was a member of the highland clan called the “Babiagórcy Highlanders” as were my other three grandparents. These highlanders encompassed a region of 41 villages.

Spytkowice, Poland

In Poland there are two cities named Spytkowice and they are relatively close to each other. One Spytkowice is associated with the church deanery of Rabka. The other Spytkowice is associated with the church deanery of Zator, near the infamous Auschwitz death camp. My grandmother was from the Spytkowice associated with Rabka. As a reference point, Rabka is near the highway from Kraków south to Zakopane.

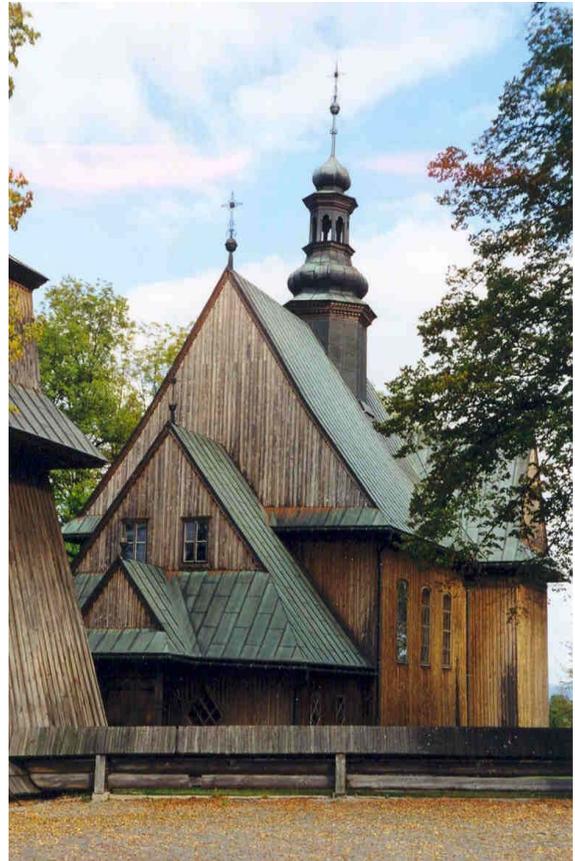
In 1998, Poland established a three level division of administrative government units. At the top level the country is divided into 16 provinces (*województwa*). These 16 provinces are divided into 315 counties (*powiaty*). The counties are further divided into districts (*gminy*). Spytkowice is located in Malopolska province and in *powiat* Nowy Targ and Spytkowice constitutes a separate *gmina*.

Spytkowice has a website at <www.spytkowice.pl>. The website has many Polish language web pages of historic information about Spytkowice. I had some of this website information translated by a Polish translator, Ola Heska <ola@hwwd.com>. The three Spytkowice paragraphs below are from her translation.

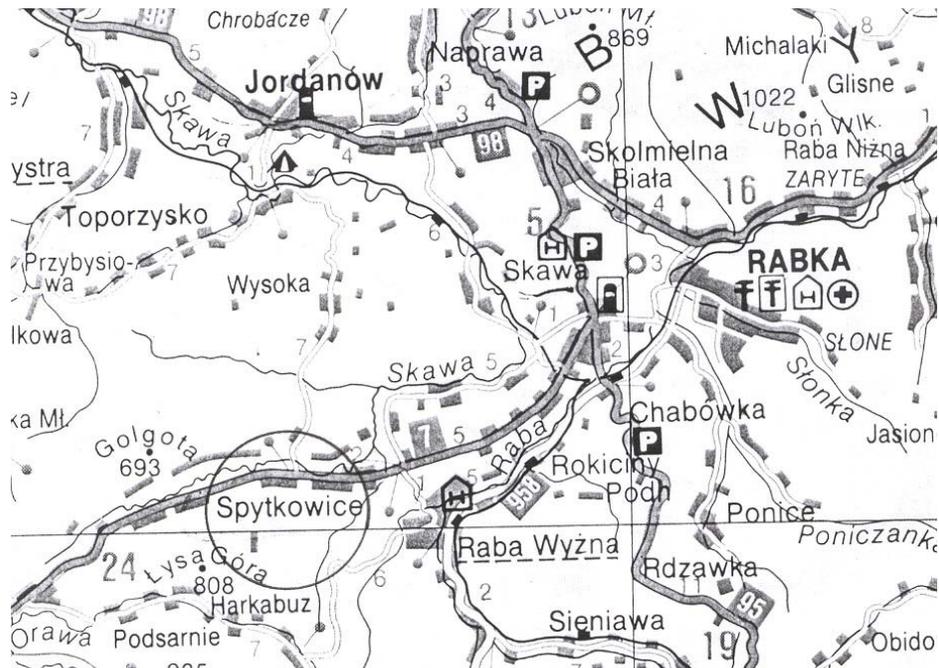
“The name and the beginning of Spytkowice are connected to the colonization in the Beskid region in the middle of the 16th century by Spytek Wawrzyniec Jordan, Cracow voivode. The next owners of Spytkowice in the 16-19th centuries were the Zebrzydowskis, Makowieckis, Soltyks, Sierakowskis, Wilkoszewskis and Lasockis. The upper part of Spytkowice belonged at that time to Jordanów parish, the lower part – to Raba Wyzna. In 1758 Spytkowice became its own parish. Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception church, founded by squire Roman Sierakowski, has served the faithful for the past 250 years. The church, along with the belfry, is a monument of religious architecture.”

“The church was built in 1763-65 out of spruce and larch beams. The founder of the church was count Roman Sierakowski mentioned above (he was also a Cracow standard-keeper, judge of the first instance court, and Olszow starost) along with his wife Teresa. They were both owners of Spytkowice in the middle of the 18th century. The church was consecrated on October 19, 1766 by Cracow suffragan Franciszek Podkanski.”

“The wooden belfry stands near the church; it was probably built earlier than the church. It was originally covered with shingles; currently it has a copper roof. Three bells hang in it. It is one of the most beautiful and one of the most original wooden belfries in Poland.”



Spytkowice Church – Author in Front of Wooden Belfry



Map Shows Spytkowice in Malopolska Province

Translation

My beginner's attempt at a *Słownik Geograficzny* translation for Spytkowice is shown below. The mechanics for making a "training wheels" translation were explained in a previous "Translator in Training" article. (PGS-MN Bulletin, Vol. 13, No. 2, Summer 2005, page 13) To start, the Polish words are entered into a WORD document with enough space underneath them (double space) to write the corresponding English words.

SPYTKOWICE Słownik Geograficzny Entry

Spytkowice 1) wś, w pow. myślenickim, w zwartej górskiej dolinie,
Spytkowice 1) a village in the district of Myslenice, in a narrow mountainous valley

w Beskidzie Szerokim, w pobliżu granicy węgierskiej,
in the wide Beskids, near the border of Hungary (now the Slovakian border),

wzdłuż potoku, dopł. Skawy, i gościńca
along a stream, a tributary of the Skawa river, and it (Spytkowice) is along the highway

z Podwilka do Chabówki, w długości 5 klm./
from the village Podwilk to the village Chabowka, 5 kilometers in length./

W środku wsi (wzn 541 mt.)
In the center village (at the elevation of 541 meters)

stoi drewniany kościółek; w pobliżu zaś (wzn 565 mt.) drewniana kapliczka./
is a stoic wooden church; nearby (at the elevation of 565 meters), is a wooden chapel./

Od kościoła prowadzi na pñ. droga do Jordanowa (15.2klm.)/
From the church on the north is the road to Jordanow (a distance of 15.2 kilometers)./

We wsi szkoła ludowa./
In the village there is an elementary school./

Par. założył Roman Bogusławski w r. 1758./
The parish was founded by Roman Bogulawski in the year 1758 ./

Rozległa wieś liczy 324 dm. (8 wiek. pos) i 1992 mk.;
The spacious village numbers 324 homes, (8 in major estate) and 1,992 inhabitants.;

1980 rz.-kat i 12 izr./ Z obszaru 5412 mr.
*1,980 roman Catholics and 12 jewish inhabitants./ The landed estate has 5,412 morgs
przypada
broken out in the following amounts (a morg equals 1.22 acres in Galicia)*

3,476 na role (pos. wiek. 333, mn 3143 mr.),
3,476 in ploughed field (the major estate has 333 morg, minor estate has 3,143 morg),

204 łąk. (wiek. 19, mn. 185 mr.),
204 morgs of meadows (major estate has 19 morgs, minor estate has 185 morgs),

285 past. (wiek. 23, mn. 262 mr.),
285 morgs of pastureland (the major estate has 23 morgs, minor estate has 262 morg),

1447 lasu (wiek. 736, mn. 711 mr.)/
1,447 morgs of forest (the major estate has 736 morgs, minor estate has 711 morgs)./

Milczą o tej wsi spisy poborowe pow.
It is silent to which village tax registers for the district of

szczyrzyckiego z XVI w. i 1675 r./ Grunta zimne, owsiane i kamieniste./
Szczyrzyc for 16th Century and year 1675./ Lands are cold with oatgrass and stony./

Granica północna wsi od Sidziny, Toporzysk i Wysokiej
To the north are the villages of Sidziny, Toporzysko and Wysoka

ciągnie się lasystemi wzgórzami, dochodzącymi 787 mt. wzn./
extending to woody highlands, reaching an elevation of 787 meters./

Wzgórza te tworzą poboczny dział wodny pot.
The adjoining hills create divided water streams,

Podergi i Wsiowego, z których powstaje Skawa./
Poderg and Wsiow streams, which give rise to the Skawa (river)./

Na wschód graniczą S. z Rokiciną i Rabą Wyźnią./
To the east, Spytkowice borders the villages of Rokiciny and Rabka Wyzna./

Source: *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego*, Vol. XI, page 151, Warsaw 1895

Summary

This completes the set of translations for the villages of my four grandparents. As with the other three translations, this is a beginner's *Słownik Geograficzny* translation. It was an arduous task, but worth the effort. I learned about life as it existed in the villages 100 years ago. I was surprised to find so much background information from Polish village and county websites. Happily, some website versions were in the English language.



Gmina Spytkowice Coat of Arms

Is There an Ogonek in Kraków?

By Mary Ellen Bruski

<mebruski@comcast.net>

This article came about because member Dennis Kulas e-mailed to ask where he could get a list of the diacriticals that show up in the Polish language. I referred him to a couple of websites that I found using Google. You can also go to <www.Wikipedia.com> and request Polish Alphabet or <www.Polish-Translator.net>. But then I wondered if Dennis really just wanted to know how to go about getting those funny little diacriticals into his word processing as he wrote his family history with the names of villages, etc. I did a little experimenting with Microsoft Word's Insert Symbol option and figured out how to do a few things like ś and ę and then replied to Dennis what I'd found and explained how he could look around in Symbols himself and find what he needed. Let me be perfectly clear: I know just about nothing about diacriticals, except that an umlaut in German makes words pronounced different from the way they are without one. I don't know how to speak Polish. I don't know how to pronounce Polish. I don't know what ś and ę do to Polish words. I didn't know the word "ogonek" until I started looking into this. (Ogonek is Polish for little tail, the diminutive of ogon. And little tail is exactly how to describe those things attached to some letters in Polish!)

Readers who are fluent in Polish and often type letters or articles in the language no doubt already know how to change the language of their computer. But I have decided that 99% of us only need the ability to type the occasional word using diacriticals. And thank goodness that is pretty easy.

I will walk you through what I have learned by way of the Help option in Microsoft Word and several internet websites. If you have a marvelous, affordable program in your own computer that does all this in a shorter, easier manner, please let us know!

If you sit at your keyboard and follow these directions, they will make far more sense than they do in just reading.

With Microsoft Office Word 2003 here is what even I can do: Using the Help option, search for Keyboard Shortcuts for International Characters and print out the tips that open. (Your own version of Word will probably have this, also.) You will get a list of letters with umlauts and tildes, but also letters with the little ogonek--the comma attached to the bottom such as with ę. Directions there tell you how to create those letters using the shortcut of Ctrl, Alt and Shift keys plus something else. Reading the directions carefully you will understand that although they may give you a direction of, for example, Ctrl+' O, they do not mean you actually press the plus sign (+), but that they mean for you to press Ctrl and the apostrophe sign at the same time. If the shortcut includes a comma (,) it means you need to press one key immediately followed by another key.

I Googled up a page of Polish text to see what other letters I would need diacriticals for. And when I understood how to read the codes I went back to Insert Symbol in my practice page. When you choose Insert on the toolbar, then Symbol, a page will open with lots of choices. From the list at the top left under the tab called Symbols, Choose Font: Normal Text. Next to that, Subset: Latin-Extended-A. Another box near the bottom right under all the letters and symbols should say Unicode (hex). The other choices are ASCII (decimal) and ASCII (hex). Do NOT choose one of those. Now choose a letter with the diacritical you need, such as ó. Click on that and near the bottom of this window you will see Shortcut Key: Ctrl+, o. This is the shortcut combination of letters and symbols that you will type every time you want ó to appear in your document. It is called Unicode. Yes, you can also click on Insert Symbol and choose the ó and then click on Insert, Close and it will appear in your document. But that's five clicks, whereas pressing Ctrl and the comma together, then o, is just three keys. Some of Unicode is done using numbers with the Num Lock on. This is true for ś which is created (with Num Lock on and using the number keypad) by typing 015B then Alt x simultaneously. If you need to use these diacriticals several times in a document it would be worth either writing these "formulas" down or memorizing these shortcuts.

Please take note: These diacriticals won't work in e-mails. When I e-mailed Dennis Kulas about what I'd found he could do in Word, and then he replied, the symbols that I'd originally sent him came back looking nothing like they did when I sent them.

I cannot speak to how diacriticals work for Mac users. However I did find a website with diacritical tips for Mac Users and hope it will be helpful:

<<http://homepage.mac.com/cohora/computer/Computers.html>>. Mac Users: we would be delighted to hear from you on using diacriticals with your Mac and will publish the information in a future issue.

And to answer the title question: Nope. No ogonek in Kraków. It has an acute accent over the o. Ostrołęka has an ogonek and also an l with a stroke. Good luck!

Editorial Notes: I have not gone through the procedures but I am sure they are correct. The use of the nine "different" Polish letters is complicated. Most keyboards I have used in Poland are the same as they are here. When I receive e-mails which are correct in Polish they don't transmit but instead substitute a surrogate letter. Knowing Polish you can usually determine the exact Polish spelling. The reason for this is the ASCII code which is used in e-mails uses only 7 or 8 bits for a byte (or letter in this case). If it is only 7 bits it can only relate to 128 characters. This is usually enough for English but could not cover all the letters of the languages of the world. Microsoft WORKS software has a character map with fonts and the letters available in those fonts. You can copy and insert; however, you sometimes have to change the font size to make it look right. In Microsoft Office WORD, using the Latin Extended-A, the insertion looks much better depending on what font you are using. - JWK

A Primer on Polish Diacritical Letters

Diacriticals follow the similar Latin letter in a dictionary with *z* coming last. With the exception of *ł*, *ś*, and *ź* very few Polish words start with diacriticals. There are no Polish words which start with *ą*, *ę* or *ń*.

Pronunciation can vary depending on location in a word.

<u>Diacritical</u>	<u>Pronounced Like</u>	<u>Comment</u>
ą	fian <u>ć</u> e <u>o</u> n before consonant	nasal
ć	<u>ch</u> ease	soft
ę	<u>e</u> nd <u>be</u> d at word end	nasal
ł	<u>w</u> in	not pronounced between consonants, e.g. <i>jabłko</i> (apple) phonetically is <i>japko</i>
ń	<u>o</u> nion	soft
ó	<u>bo</u> ot	
ś	<u>sh</u> ee <u>p</u>	soft hiss
ź	<u>az</u> ure	soft hiss
ż	mir <u>az</u> e	

Kashubian adds several more diacritical letters (*ã*, *é*, *ë*, *ò*, *ô* and *ù*), but that is another topic.

A Search for my Grandmother's Actual Birthplace

By John Kowles
<johnkow@att.net>

I had found my grandmother's birth record but the actual location of her birth was still somewhat a mystery to me. Through a fortuitous set of circumstances I found that Krzysztof Kowalkowski had written a book about the little village where her parents died. Krzysztof, an amateur genealogist and historian, agreed to help me. He relates our search in an article published in the *Kociewska Gazeta* shortly after my visit. (The 60-mile-long Kociewie region constitutes the east part of the Pomorze Lake District and is situated in the basin of two rivers flowing into the Vistula. It stretches roughly from Świecie to Tczew.)

I obtained four history books from villages in the area which will be made available in the library in the future. Shortly after the article appeared Krzysztof was contacted by a Fortuna descendant who appears to be related to me. Other family cousins had moved from this area. Needless to say I was quite excited to finally understand my grandmother's birth record and probably locate, within 100 yards, where she was actually born and lived. With Krzysztof's help I was also able to get civil death records of my g-grandparents from the archives in Gdańsk. These proved to be an invaluable resource since they contain birthplaces and parents (my g-g-grandparents). These records originated in Prussia in 1874. This trip reinforced my recommendation that if your trip is primarily for genealogical research it is worthwhile to seek help in Poland. You can view Krzysztof's website in English at:

<http://mipolonia.net/view/kowalkowski/index.htm>

The following is my translation of his article with my comments in parenthetical italics.

Ciekawi ludzie (Interesting People)

Moja babka nazywała się Fortuna (My Grandmother was Named Fortuna)

This is how John Kowles of Minneapolis, USA,

started his letter to me in August this year. Anastasia Fortuna, John's grandmother, was born in 1865 in what was Olszowiec around Skórcz. Baptism was given in the church in Barłożno and schooling in Mirotki. Then in 1880 (probably more like 1884) she left her family for the USA, where she was united with Joseph Kowalewski, who was born in the village of Bielawy, northeast of Czersk.



From left: Matthew Kowles, his father John with author of article Krzysztof Kowalkowski

Starogard Gd John was Kowalewski but Kowles for many years. He is seeking the place where his relatives lived. For some time he gathered various pieces of information about his Polish roots and the places they were born and lived. He knew me from my book from his genealogical research in the USA. I already helped a number of Americans looking for ancestors, therefore I decided to help John.

He and his son Matthew came to Poland on September 30 and we met in Gdańsk on October 1. Next we assembled to Kociewie (*a region where grandmother was born*). John and his son were interested in the market and the church (*in Starogard*) but more interesting to him was where his grandmother was born. We went to Barłożno and waited to meet with the priest, Alexander Kreft. It is a nice church and he was impressed with the

Baroque style of the church but was more interested in the baptismal font where his grandmother was baptized.

On an old German map at Anastazy Piekarski's house (*village official translated as "bailiff" in English*), we found Olszewitz (*German name*). It became Rüsshof (*German name*) and now is Mirotki. Next we went to Kierwald to meet with Mieczysław (*a Slavic name with no real English equivalent*) Fortuna, who was pointed out to us by Anastazy Piekarski. John questioned him about everything (*ancestor details*). Unfortunately, Mieczysław's family was not known to John but still, maybe they are related to John's Fortuna family in Poland.

After that we went to the Olszowiec area. Unfortunately the village is not there anymore. Today there are only fields and one old home in what was Olszowiec. From my book (*about Barłozno*), in 1867 there were 40 Catholic children in Olszowiec who went to school in Mirotki.

John Kowles will not give up his search. Maybe he will learn more about Olszowiec or maybe he will find his relatives.

- Krzysztof Kowalkowski
<k-e-kowalkowski@wp.pl>

Immigration Quiz

1. Neil Diamond's song *America* starts off what movie?
 - a) *Coming to America*
 - b) *The Jazz Singer*
 - c) *Polish Wedding*
2. What Polish general died fighting in the American Revolutionary War?
 - a) Kosciuszko
 - b) Dombrowski
 - c) Pulaski
3. The earliest significant Polish settlement in Minnesota was in:
 - a) Duluth
 - b) Winona
 - c) St. Anthony
4. Immigrants historically picked up English much faster than they do today.
True or False?
5. Which of the following groups were not considered "white" by some well-established Yankee settlers of Minnesota?
 - a) Swedes and Finns
 - b) Italians
 - c) Poles
 - d) all of the above
6. Polish immigration to Minnesota peaked in about what time frame?
 - a) 1883-84
 - b) 1913-14
 - c) 1948-49
7. Before WWI which document was required for an immigrant to enter the United States legally?
 - a) valid passport
 - b) U.S. work permit
 - c) birth certificate
 - d) none of the above
8. Until 1924, how many immigrants could come to the United States each year?
 - a) as many as could cram in
 - b) 10,000 per permitted nation
 - c) numbers differed by country
9. Until 1965, there were no limits on the number of immigrants who could squeeze through the border from:
 - a) Canada
 - b) Mexico
 - c) Bolivia
 - d) all of the above
10. In the 2000 census which state reported the highest number of persons with Polish ancestry?
 - a) New York
 - b) Illinois
 - c) Michigan

Answers: On insert page

How I Found my Sister-in-Law's German Ancestors in Poland

Jan Bias
<geneejb@comcast.net>

It took me two weeks and 40 hours to research most of my sister-in-law's family history and I knew practically nothing about her family. I used techniques and resources that weren't available 10 years ago when I started my family research. However, I did call Darlene and her sisters several times to clarify a few things.

Darlene mentioned to me several times that she would like to know more about her ancestors, especially her mother's side of the family. I looked for immigration information but I was unable to find the manifest. I erroneously thought the parents and only one child immigrated but actually five children did. In hindsight, this was not the place to start. I should have learned more about the family and started with the obituaries and death records.

When I was in Wells, Minnesota in June 2005, researching obituaries in the newspaper, I found one of her family members' obituaries. I met with my genealogy friends that afternoon and mentioned I had found an obituary for the Boelke family and that my sister-in-law is interested in finding out more about her family. One of my friends said she had information on this family. I couldn't believe it. She was related to the family and she had the birthplace but it was misspelled. I used <www.kartenmeister.com> to find the correct spelling and the equivalent name in Poland. Darlene's father's ancestors were from the Province of Pomerania near the Baltic Sea, now part of Poland.

They lived and died in Wells and Minnesota Lake, Minnesota and I was able to go the Minnesota History Center to make copies of their death records and obituaries. I made three trips to the MHC in two weeks researching one generation at a time. I was able to go back four generations on

her mother's side and three generations on her father's side.

The obituaries also held some clues and gave the place of birth. The towns were misspelled, but I was able to find the German names and the equivalent Polish names by using <www.kartenmeister.com>.

Eventually, I found the immigration information on <www.Ancestry.com>. It was spelled as Bellke. The manifest for the Boelke family looks like it is written as Beflke. It is misspelled on the Germans to America CD-ROM as Beflke. No wonder I was unable to find them. They emigrated from Hamburg to the port of New York on May 11, 1881, and then went to Illinois. They came to Minnesota in 1886.

After two weeks, I sent the information and a map of Poland with the birthplaces marked to Darlene. However, I continued to do research to obtain a more complete picture.

I looked at the census records on <www.Ancestry.com> on her mother's side for the year of immigration and to obtain a complete picture of all the siblings. Many of the names were misspelled in the Census Index.

At that time, I had a subscription to Ancestry World and searched for immigration information on Darlene's mother's side of the family. It was a complete surprise when the search brought up the first family. I then searched the other families and found them all in the Province of Brandenburg in the database "Brandenburg, Prussia Emigration Records." This database is awesome because it gives the name of the village in addition to the maiden name of the wife. They were all from the same area near Chojna located in the northwestern part of Poland near the German/Poland border on the Odra River. They immigrated to Dodge County, Wisconsin between the years 1848 and 1867 before settling in Minnesota Lake, Minnesota. I haven't been able to find their manifests and I wonder if they came through Canada.

I like to make copies of the maps showing both the German name of the towns and the Polish name of the towns. The German maps are part of the PGS collection at the Minnesota Genealogical Society Library.

I used the Internet to find the history of Brandenburg and Pomerania and their boundary changes. I used RootsWeb.com for the cemetery project to find names. Faribault County has a very complete list of cemetery transcriptions. I attended a few meetings of the Pomeranian Genealogical Society and talked to several people because I wasn't familiar with that province.

In the meantime, I was in contact with a genealogy friend with the same shared ancestors. When I mentioned that I was doing research on Darlene's family, she revealed she had information on these families because they were also her mother's ancestors. I was able to get Civil War information and other family history which was an enormous help and saved me much time. I, in turn, was able to provide her with the correct spelling of the birthplaces and the maiden names.

Unfortunately, the newspapers before 1956 from Minnesota Lake, Minnesota were destroyed in a fire because the newspaper office burned down. They weren't sent to the MHC to be microfilmed until 1956. I am upset every time I need an obituary before 1956 although I was able to find some obituaries in the Wells, Minnesota newspaper. The Kremer House (historical society) in Minnesota Lake, Minnesota had some old obituaries in their library.

When I was in Salt Lake City in January 2007, one of the ladies helped with the Lutheran records from Pomerania. Eighty percent of the Lutheran records in this part of Poland have been destroyed. She knew of a website which documented the towns and which records were available. Unfortunately, records did not exist or did not survive for the towns I was looking for. However, she did send an e-mail in German to a contact (Margaret) asking if any

records exist for one of the towns. Fortunately, no one else was in line so I didn't feel rushed as she spent about 40 minutes with me. We received a reply (in German) that records are available for Lanzig and included the address, e-mail address and a list of the records available. I sent an e-mail to the archives but haven't received a reply.

Margaret sent me information on the research she did for an Esther who was looking for the same families I was. It included the birthplace of Darlene's grandfather in Krolow. As it turned out, Boelke is spelled Behlke in the old country. Esther had an invalid e-mail address, however, I found her phone number in the white pages in Illinois (remember that the Boelke family immigrated to Illinois before coming to Minnesota). She had an obituary for the Behlke side of the family that said he had a brother in Wells, Minnesota. Esther was able to send me church records from Illinois and the Behlke family tree. However, she did not know the names of the parents.

I followed up on a connection to the Pooch family in North Dakota. I found census records for the family. The North Dakota vital records website has the capability to search death records every ten years and I found three of the family members. I ordered microfilm through Interlibrary Loan from the North Dakota Historical Society for the newspapers. I only found two of the three obituaries and again no parents' names, but I learned the married names of the daughters. I sent for the death record from North Dakota for the patriarch hoping to learn the names of the parents.

I must admit I was not 100% successful on the paternal side of the family. I was unable to confirm the birthplace of the parents on her father's mother's side of the family in Germany. It is possible they were born in a different province.

Darlene was indeed very happy with my results, as I was. It was a challenge and I'm glad they all lived and died in Minnesota.

PGS-MN Annual Meeting Scenes

January 20, 2007



Norma and Dick Lubinski pose for photo



**Robin PanLener (President of MGS)
in the food line**



**Jay Biedny (Newly-elected Director)
is ready for the food.**



Paul Kulas (Outgoing Newsletter Editor)

HALKA – THE POLISH NATIONAL OPERA

By John L. Rys <john@john.rys.name>

Introduction

Halka is an opera written in 1847 by the famous Polish composer Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872). It is considered to be the Polish national opera. Its first performance was in Vilnius (Wilno) in 1854. The story line portrays the nobility in a less than flattering manner, as to their treatment of the peasant class. The government (Russian partition) prevented future performances until Moniuszko rewrote it for its premiere in Warsaw in 1858. According to many, 1858 marks the birth of Poland's national opera.

Performances

Halka has been performed widely in Poland. According to the opera program, “the first full version given in America was staged in 1923 by the Polish American Opera Club of Milwaukee who hired professional singers for major roles and filled out their casting with talented amateurs.” The program also states: “In the United States, excerpts from *Halka* have appeared on musical programs given by various Polish-American organizations.”

This year the Sarasota Opera Company (Florida) became the first professional opera company to perform *Halka* in the United States. My wife Judy and I were fortunate to be visiting friends, Roger and Sue Adams, in Sarasota who knew of our interest in Polish genealogy and culture. In October they told us of the opera so we scheduled our visit to correspond with opening night of *Halka* on Saturday February 3, 2007.



Halka

Painting by Władysław Bakalowicz
Muzeum Teatralne (Warsaw)

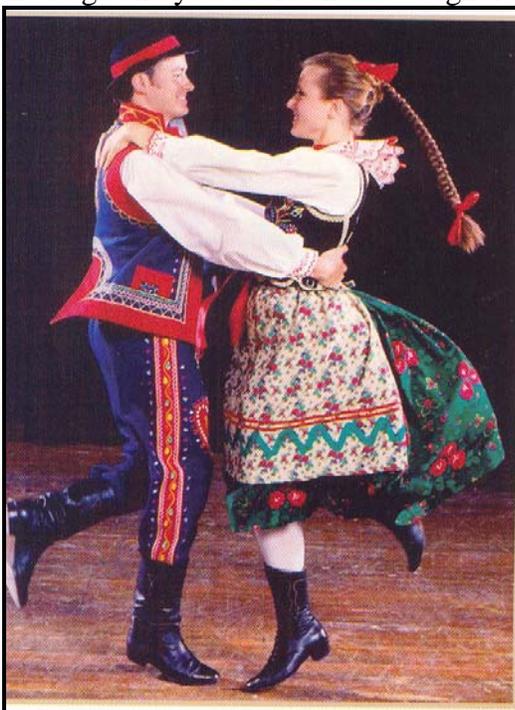
The Opera *Halka*

The opera is in four acts. The story involves a love triangle. The beautiful peasant girl Halka has a village friend, Jontek, who is in love with her. Halka is instead smitten with Janusz, a nobleman of the area. The nobleman lies to Halka and seduces her. This nobleman, Janusz, is already engaged to marry Zofia, a woman of similar noble class. On the wedding night of this noble couple, the beautiful peasant girl Halka, pregnant with the nobleman's child, tragically commits suicide by throwing herself into the river.

Opening Night Performance

There were dignitaries in attendance for the opening night performance. The Ambassador from the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C., Janusz Reiter, spoke to the audience before the performance and presented the Sarasota Opera Company with an appropriate plaque commemorating the American premiere of this significant Polish opera. To add to the Polish atmosphere, some of the opera attendees could be heard speaking in Polish and one mother had her two small daughters dressed in colorful Polish dresses. The Sarasota Opera House itself has a nice traditional appearance which one would expect from a building designed for opera. It was a very exciting and meaningful event to attend.

The Opera was sung entirely in the Polish language. The lead of Halka was sung by soprano Maria Knapik, a native of Kraków, who helped cast members with the Polish language. The lead role of Jontek was sung by tenor, Benjamin Warschawski of Basel, Switzerland. The audience was assisted by a visible screen high over the front of the stage (orchestra pit) with English captions to the Polish being sung. This caption screen did not interfere with the view of the stage and you could choose to ignore the screen.



Lira Dancers- Promotional Photograph

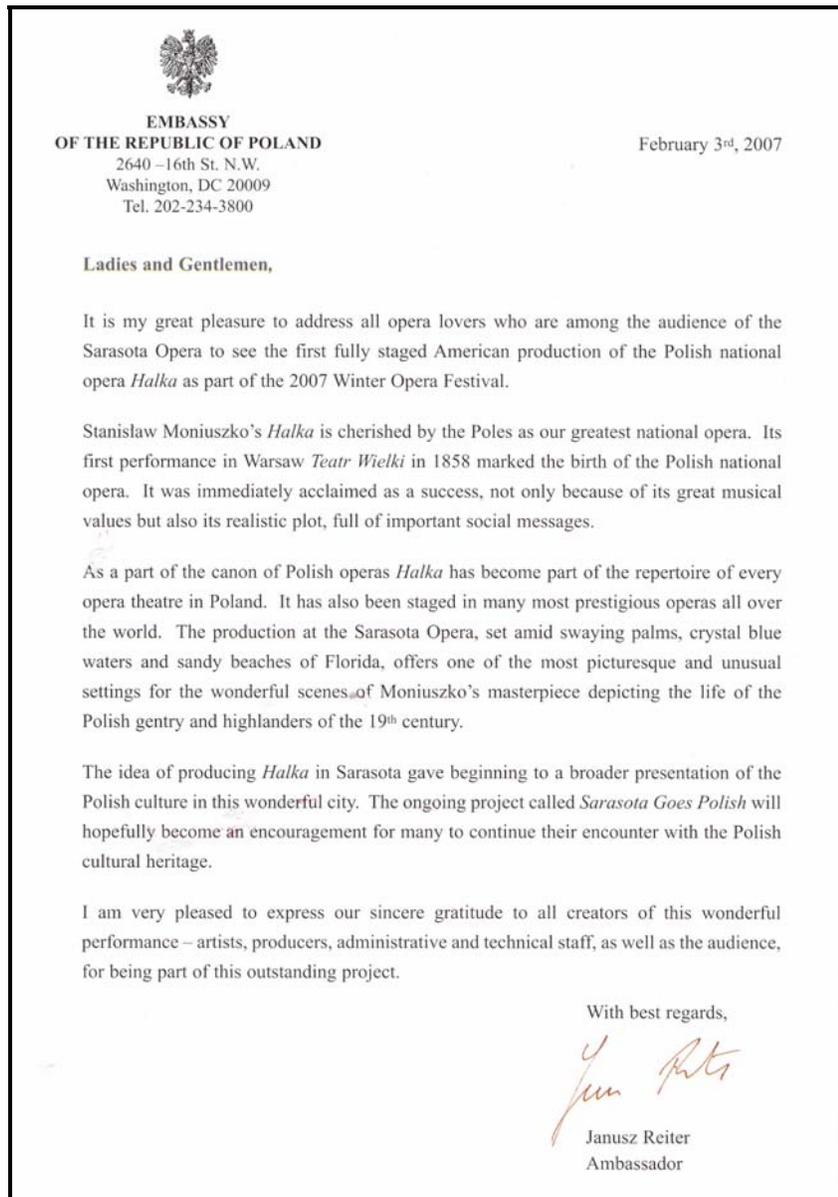
Lira Polish Folk Dance Company

A highlight of the evening was the dance performance by the Lira Dancers, a professional Polish folk dance company from Chicago. Lira Dance Company is an artist-in-resident at Loyola University of Chicago. They danced a "Polonaise" in a nobility scene and danced an exciting "Mazurka" playing the parts of village peasant dancers. The choreographer for this performance was Iwona Puc of Rzeszow, Poland.

Review of the Performance

All four of us in attendance were delighted with the performance even though we were in high balcony seats. Unfortunately, the Polish Ambassador did not invite us to sit with him on the main floor. The captioning in English really helped because I could not recognize the Polish for simple words such as “home” or “falcon” or “brother” even as they appeared on the English caption screen. Maybe it is just difficult to understand opera singers.

The Sarasota newspaper gave the opera high praise in its review. For example “Sarasota Opera has struck gold with the rarely heard *Halka* Filled with thoroughly delightful music infused with the spirit of Polish Folk tunes and dance forms Every element of this first professional production of the opera by an American company sparkles Graceful and at ease, *Halka* held our hearts in her hand.” And finally “the Polish dances resulted in some of the most delightful moments of the evening.”



*Letter written for the occasion by
Janusz Reiter, Ambassador from the Polish Embassy, Washington, D.C.*

Drobne Echa: continued from page 1

This school stands in the Polish parish of St. Kazimierz. The history of the parish goes back all the way to 1859, that is to say 50 years ago. Barely a few of the first settlers remain.

A short history of the Polish school.

In 1864 Father Józef BUH appeared here on missionary work, he currently being the vicar-general of the Diocese of Duluth. He was the first to assemble the local Catholics; and for the want of a church he celebrated the sacraments in a private home, one that had been built of wood beams and assembled in a hurry.

Later Frs. TYSZKIEWICZ and GRUENHOLZ came here. In the group of the first Polish settlers we find the surnames: ROZMIAREK, PAPPANFUSS, RUDNICKI, LICA, OKONEK, MALICKI, WIŚNIEWSKI, ZYGMAN and a couple of others. At the prompting of Fr. GRUENHOLZ the building of a small chapel was started; and since no permanent pastor at all was appointed here, this chapel then served the need for many years still, and even was enlarged substantially. As priests there also were here: Frs. CHOWANIEC, GOCH and CICHOCKI. Also, there was constructed something like a rectory; in the surviving official records Fr. WÓJCIK recalls that this rectory was six feet from its floor to its ceiling, and that its cellar was of the height of three feet. But it is said that three priests resided in turn in this rectory: Frs. SIEDLECKI, SROKA and WÓJCIK. Fr. WÓJCIK from Buffalo wanted already at that time to build a new more extensive church; but not until after the arrival of Fr. MIKLASZEWSKI was the construction of a new, attractive, and spacious church begun. However, the parishioners had not been rejoicing long over the new building, when a fire started in it from unknown causes and the church was destroyed totally, together with the neighboring rectory.

A new large church is built.

Fr. MILASZEWSKI immediately set to the construction of a new temple, which is still the standing parish church now, and which was

dedicated twelve years ago by prelate Fr. J. TROBEC, [currently the bishop of the Diocese of St.]¹ Cloud.

At the time of the dedication of the temple the pastor here was the late Fr. J. BELZOWSKI from Swan River, Minn., who died not long ago. The late Fr. BELZOWSKI was the pastor here through 1898, when Fr. KITOWSKI arrived at the parish. His successor Fr. SUSZCZYŃSKI, on the other hand, was here a very short time.

In June 1906 Fr. J. A. DUDEK, who had been in Browsersville² earlier, took over this parish.



Map Source: *Plat Book of Minnesota; Rockford, Illinois; W.W. Hixson & Co.; 1916; shows a portion of Benton County which includes Gilman*

¹*Transl. note:* The original published text clearly is missing a line or two. I have interpolated the likely content in brackets.

²*Transl. note:* Thus, in original.

The lay sisters will be teaching in the new school.

The education in the newly-erected school, which will be ready at the beginning of 1910, will be managed by the lay sisters of the Academy of St. Joseph from Stevens Point, Wis. At the present moment the parish numbers 400 families and the old school has not been large enough. Also the number of Polish teachers will be increased, since one teacher for 100 or 120 children is not in a position to teach those children anything. If a Polish education is given in the new school effectively and according to current philological requirements, that is that qualified persons are to be engaged in the teaching, the Poles in Gilman will be able to take pride in their work. The school will be under the patronage of St. Wojciech. The structure stands in the center of a spacious plaza; it will have two stories, a front with twelve windows, and a grand front entrance in the style of a gateway. Besides that there are entrances from the sides and the rear of the building. The classrooms in the building are large and light.

* * * * *

When I first came across this report, I was pleased to see its relative length and detail.³ It had most of the things that I like to feature in this series—names of the earliest settlers, some detail on the earliest and ongoing history of the local Polish community and its parish church, some idea of the cohesiveness of that community—so I decided it was worth translating in full and presenting.

Father Kruszka identified Gilman/Alberta as “[s]upposedly, the oldest Polish parish in the

diocese of St. Cloud.”⁴ The enumeration of Polish pioneers in our *Kuryer Polski* report largely coincides with the surnames given for the earliest settlers in the centennial history of the local Roman Catholic parish.⁵

The parish history booklet gives more detail on the first log church building (1872), which was dedicated to St. Wenceslaus, and which was replaced by a frame structure dedicated to St. Casimir (with the log church remodeled into a school). This new building burned in 1891 and the parish had to bear the uninsured loss. After two years of worship back in the original log building, another wood-frame church was rebuilt in 1893, large enough to serve a 400-family congregation that spanned several townships. Finally, a large, brick church building, dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, was built and consecrated in 1930-1931. When post-Vatican II innovations required the relocation of the altar, the parishioners saw to it that the ornate, traditional look and feel of the altar array was preserved as much as possible.⁶

⁴Wacław Kruszka, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908, Part IV: Poles in the Central and Western States* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. 126.

⁵*Saints Peter & Paul Church, Gilman, Minnesota, 1872-1972* (Gilman, Minn. [?]: n.p., n.d. [1972]), pp. [4-5] and [15-16] (hereafter “*Ss. Peter & Paul History*”). A photocopy of this booklet is in the PGS-MN’s Church and Local History Collection, maintained at the Minnesota Genealogical Society’s library in Golden Valley.

⁶*Ss. Peter & Paul History*, pp. [5-6]. See also the following installments of “Picture Story of Early Foley Days...” published in the *Benton County News*: “Dedication Service of Gilman’s Second Church,” April 3, 1985, p. 4; “Interior of Third Catholic Church at Gilman,” Sept. 9, 2003, p. 4; “Gilman Church on Register of Historical Buildings,” Jan. 28, 1992, p. 4.

³I have reviewed a couple of years of *Kuryer Polski* so far, 1908-1909. Though this daily newspaper featured reports in some number from various locales in Minnesota, it was on an irregular basis and few of them in these years were very long.

The parish school was operated from 1890 to 1969. For the construction of the grand new building covered in our report here, the parishioners supplied most of the labor—including wagon-hauling all of the materials from Foley. Apparently the ambitiousness of proposals for the project sparked a dispute among the parishioners, with about 25 families leaving the congregation as a result. The Benedictine Sisters provided instruction in the school from 1912 until it was closed in June, 1969. In 1972 and 1999 the building was being leased by the Foley public school district and was being used as a public school. The structure is still standing today.⁷ See photographs on next page.

⁷*Ss. Peter & Paul History*, pp. [9-10]. See also: “Picture Story of Early Days...Building the Gilman School,” *Benton County News*, Sept. 21, 1999, p. 4.

Author’s Note:

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS: For several years PGS-MN member Mary Ann Quade, a native of Gilman, has been after me with cheerful persistence to cover her home community. Among other things, she’s made the Saints Peter and Paul centennial book available for photocopying, and she gave me a large sheaf of items on Gilman from the Benton County News pictorial history series. All of this material helped me a lot with background for this installment; this is a start, Mary Ann! We also thank Bev Abraham, Executive Director of the Benton County Historical Society, who furnished us with e-format copies of pictures of our report’s subject. Wiarus featured a lot of reportage from Gilman/Alberta, from 1886-on; and in some future installment of this series we’ll feature a compilation of that material as well.

Answers to Immigration Quiz:

1. – **b)** *The Jazz Singer* is a remake of the 1927 Al Jolson movie about a Jewish cantor – first movie with sound.
2. – **c)** Kosciusko was the founder of West Point but died in Poland. Dombrowski lived in the same period and fought with Napoleon - mentioned in the Polish national anthem. Pulaski died in the battle of Savannah in 1779 – founder of American Cavalry.
3. – **b)** The first Poles (Kashubians) arrived in Winona from St. Louis by boat in 1855, although some use 1857 as the first settlement. The first Poles were reported in Gnesen in St. Louis County and Marion Lake in Otter Tail County in 1867 some years later.
4. – **False** Today’s immigrants are younger and better-educated.
5. – **d)** There was not much tolerance for immigrants in the late 1800s.
6. – **b)** The 1880s Polish immigration was significant and the peak at Ellis Island was the early 1900s but in Minnesota it was the 1913-14 time frame.
7. – **d)** Around World War II the U.S. established a formal system. Before that shipping companies were given major responsibility.
8. – **a)** The National Origins Act started setting up quotas.
9. – **d)** There were no limitations for immigration from North or South America.
- 10.–**a)** The rankings are in the order listed: New York, Illinois and Michigan. Minnesota is about 13th.

How did you do? If you got 7 right you know your Polish immigration!



Photograph taken during the construction of the Gilman School (1909)
From left: Bricklayer, George Kujawa, John Hep (the contractor), bricklayer, August Heir (?), bricklayer, Frank Kujawa, Walter Wojchiechowski (?), Paul Scyparski (church organist), John Zlock, Pete Kuzma
Source: Benton County Historical Society



St. Wojciech's School in Gilman (1972)
Source: SS Peter and Paul History, Benton County Historical Society

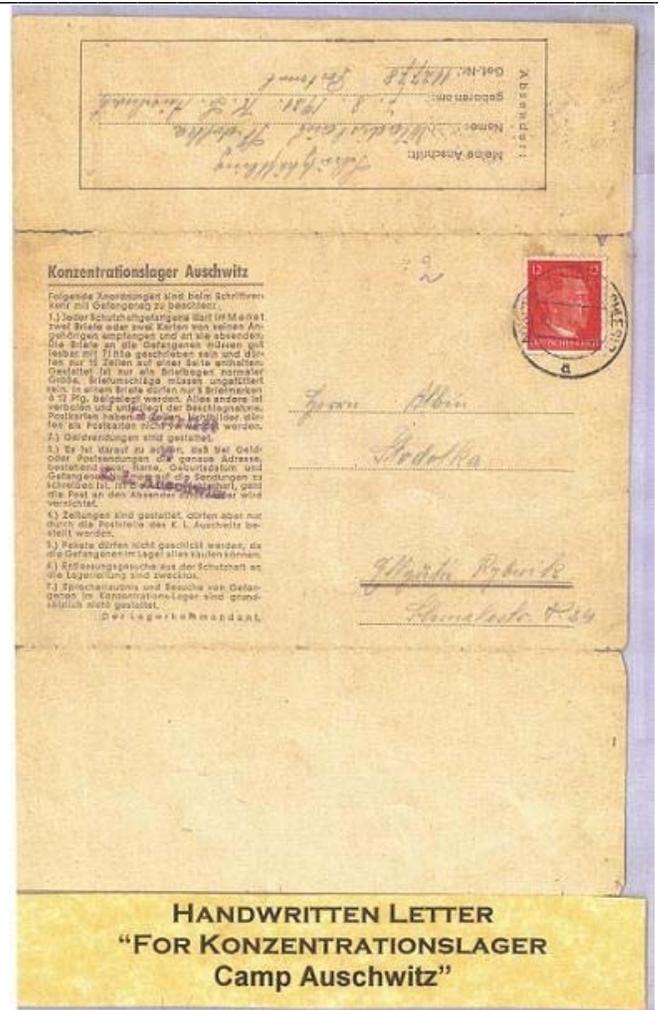
A Letter from Auschwitz
 By Mike Stodolka
 <mstodolka@msn.com>

Two years ago, I received an e-mail from Renee Steinig, a genealogist from the state of New York. She was in search of anyone with the surname Stodolka. She found my name on the internet as a contact person for Silesian genealogy. I'm listed on a few websites as a contact person for names of immigrants from the Opole province, a region between Upper and Lower Silesia, to central Minnesota.

The reason for her researching my name was that Renee had been contacted by an art dealer in New York City by the name of Maxine Workman. Maxine had also been searching for someone who had information on the name Stodolka. Not that the name is that popular but they had reason to search for someone with my name.

You see, Ronald Workman, Maxine's husband, had purchased a laminated and sealed document at a popular weekly art auction in Manhattan, New York. Even though the document was somewhat inexpensive, Ronald thought it was quite an interesting piece. I believe he acquired the document for less than \$60.00. Why was this an interesting acquisition? The document is a preserved hand-written letter written by Wladyslaus (Władysław) Stodolka, 23, to his parents Albin and Jadwiga Stodolka, who lived in Ellguth, Poland. Ellguth has now been named Ligota, Poland. Ligota is a section of what is now Rybnik, Poland in *województwo* (province) *Śląskie* or Upper Silesia near the Slovakian border. What is more astounding is, the letter was written in 1944 from inside Oświęcim (Auschwitz) prison. Wladyslaus was imprisoned there and had been allowed to write home to his family.

The letter is genuinely authentic and is on stationery from *konsentrasonslager* Oświęcim. It includes a genuine red postage stamp of Adolf Hitler and includes German instructions.



Liebe Eltern! Gott zum Gruß teilen Euch mit daß ich gesund bin wie ein Fisch und hoffe von Euch allen daß selbe. Ich danke für die zwei Pakete die ich von Euch erhalten habe, war alles drinnen. Die Pakete können nicht größer sein _____. Liebe Mutter schicke mir zwei Zigarettenspitzen und auch mehr Fett oder Honig. Als ich die Pakete erhalten habe war für mich eine große Freude gleich habe ich mich hingesetzt und gegessen. Liebe Mutter schreibe mir oft und teile mir mit was es bei Euch Neues gibt denn Du kannst jeden Tag schreiben und auch die Verwandten.

Dear parents! Greetings to God, I can tell you that I am healthy like a fish and hope the same is true for all of you. Thank you for the two packages I received from you and everything in them. The packages cannot be larger _____. Dear mother send me two cigarette tips and also more fat or honey. When I received the packages it was a great joy for me; immediately I sat down and ate. Dear mother write often to me and tell me what news there are with you because you can write every day and the relatives too.

The letter is from:
 Wladyslaus Stodolka
 born August 7, 1921

The letter is addressed to:
 Mr. Albin Stodolka
 in Gertrude Rebenik *Translator Error: Ellguth Rybenik*

Wladyslaus wrote that everything is good and he is happy as a “fish” (the fish reference is more likely a code word showing his displeasure). He asks his mother to send honey and cigarettes (we suspect most likely for the prison guards). He also wrote he really enjoys receiving packages from home. As you might guess, Wladyslaus never intended to write this and was, let’s say, “persuaded” to inform his family that everything was good.

After working several weeks with Renee and Maxine to find a connection between my Stodolka recordings and the Albin Stodolka family, we came up empty-handed. I have recorded over 350 Stodolka names back to around 1700. They originate in a small Lower Silesian village named Falkowice, in *województwo Opolskie*. I have yet to find a direct link. Falkowice is about 70 miles from Rybnik. I know there is a link somewhere. So after a lengthy investigation, including a published letter to the PGS-MN newsletter, I was stalled. So I began to think of another way to continue my search.

Last January I had an idea that was labor intense but might work. I decided to try to learn some Polish and try to contact someone in Poland who might help me with my efforts. I registered with <Gadu-Gadu.com>, a Polish AOL-like messaging and internet browser. They use this extensively but you must know someone to acquire contacts. I then discovered <Polchat.pl> and <Czat.pl>. Both of these are chat rooms used by the Poles. I tried <Czat.pl> but it was not as organized as <Polchat.pl>. With these chat sites, I have entered numerous rooms and plowed through many, many contacts using my limited Polish. Most Poles were quite patient with my novice status but they were also understandably not too interested in my quest until I met Lucyna Maciejonczyk.

Lucyna is from Polomia which is a southern town near Rybnik in *województwo Śląskie*. She initially had enough patience with me to let me explain my

situation. She was genuinely excited about my family history. She said she had time to look into it for me. And guess what? She resides just 5 miles outside of Rybnik. We exchanged e-mail addresses and began to communicate almost daily.

Lucyna is married to Bogusław and together they have two daughters, Anna 21, and Agnieszka “Aga” 18. Bogusław 43, is a retired coal-mining rescuer and works now as a part-time truck driver. They live in a duplex with relatives living above them. One is their 95-year-old *babcia* (grandmother).

Lucyna has been nothing short of marvelous in aiding my cause. Lucyna has contacted the staff of the St. Stanislaus church in Falkowice. They are researching to see if there are any Stodolkas connected to Wladyslaus. We are waiting for a reply from them. Even though Lucyna knows virtually no English, we have communicated quite well by e-mail. We write exclusively in Polish. Her daughter Aga, who has studied a few years of English, has helped some. I, too, have surprised myself by learning Polish as this story progresses. I have greatly improved my reading and writing so that I’m able to translate maybe 40% now without a dictionary. I use the Larousse English-Polish *Słownik* (dictionary). I also use the World Lingo online Polish-English dictionary.

After several weeks of exchanging e-mails, Lucyna wrote an astonishing message. Her e-mail subject title was “*wspaniały wiadomość*” (splendid news). Lucyna had called a couple of Stodolkas from within the Polish phone books and to our amazement, discovered Jadwiga Stodolka, the widow of Wladyslaus Stodolka, living in Rybnik! Yes, Jadwiga is 81 years old, in declining health and living alone in an apartment in Rybnik. Lucyna said the widow was open to talk initially but became reserved and tearful to the point of terminating the phone call. She did explain Wladyslaus survived *Oświęcim* (the Poles never say or use the German term Auschwitz) and he died in 1977. She also mentioned she had no relatives which made us feel quite sad for her.

Again at a standstill we were not sure what to do. Lucyna wrote she was not comfortable that another phone call would be productive. I agreed. So after a few days I came up with an idea. I wrote and asked Lucyna that if I wrote a letter explaining the situation, would she edit it so I could mail it to Jadwiga from Minnesota. I figured Jadwiga must have someone who helps her with her mail. We did this and got some astonishing results.

About two weeks after I mailed the letter, Lucyna and Bugoslaw happened to be at the Baltic Sea on vacation, with their daughter Anna staying at home watching their house. Anna received a breaking-news phone call. Anna was up to speed with the situation and took the call from a lady who claimed to Krystyna Zyla (Żyła), the daughter of Wladyslaus and Jadwiga Stodolka. Yes there was also a daughter of Wladyslaus. Jadwiga, either confused or unwilling, had said there were no children. We had just found the daughter of the prisoner of the letter I received from New York. This is quite amazing to say the least! Krystyna is married with two children, Mirosława and Aleksander, and they all live in Rybnik.

Lucyna e-mailed me that she was going along with the daughter Anna to meet Krystyna Zyla, Jadwiga's daughter. They met with Krystyna and her husband. Lucyna had taken pictures of the photos Krystyna had shown her. I have included a few of them with this article. Even though their information pertaining to genealogy was limited, I learned a few more facts.

What we discovered is Wladyslaus was a great man who liked horses and was tortured at at Oświęcim resulting in a broken leg.

He suffered a stroke at age 55 and was not able to speak thereafter. As a result of his torture he died of another stroke at age 56 in 1977. His wife and daughter remain in Rybnik. We discovered his father Albin Stodolka came from Dambrowka Mała, a village in the same vicinity of Falkowice

and Rybnik but Krystyna has no other information beyond her grandfather Albin, who was originally from the area near Falkowice. I am quite sure I am related to Wladyslaus somehow. That is my next task. I must find out with the help of Lucyna how I am related to the branch of the Stodolka family.

Krystyna told us the statement about "happy as a fish" was verified as a coded message meaning just the opposite to his family. There were several other letters Wladyslaus had written that were either lost or destroyed. I guess I am the lucky one to have acquired this one.

Through this letter I have met some wonderful people from New York and Rybnik, Poland. I hope they remain long time companions.



Lucyna and Bogusław – Helped make the Stodolka connection in Poland

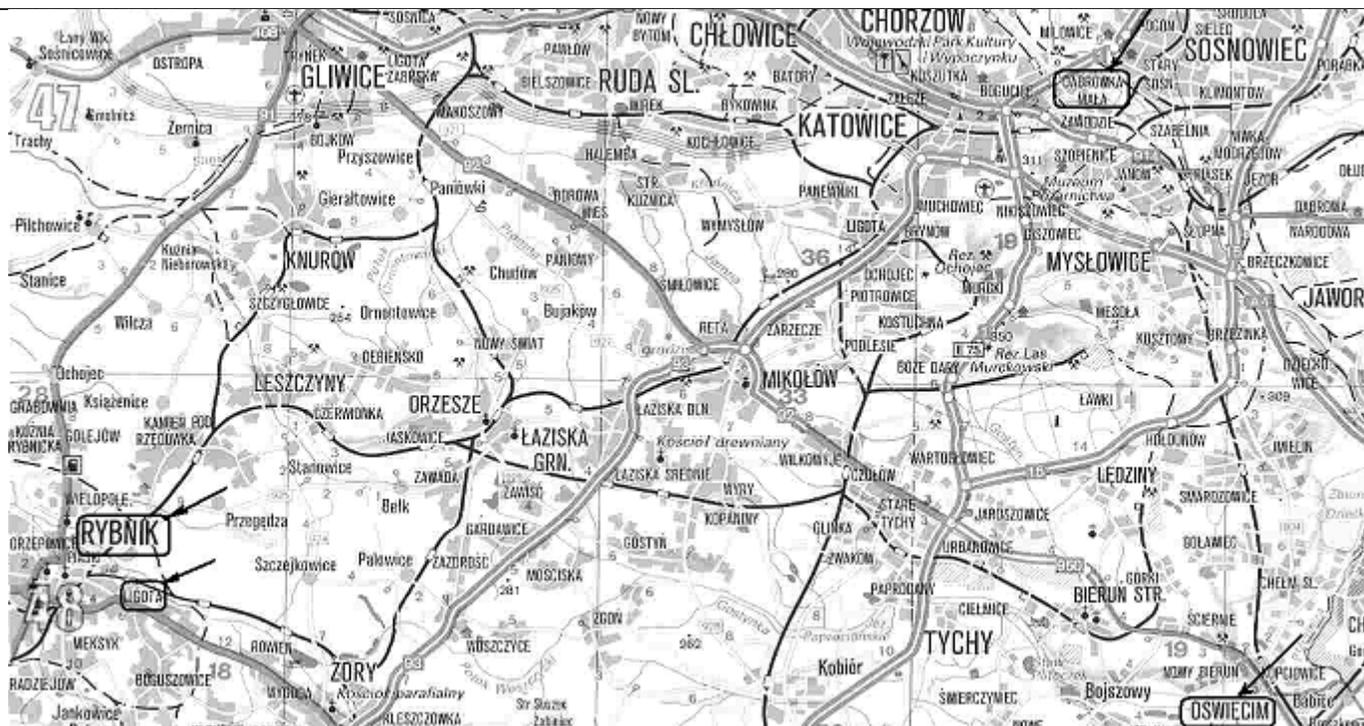




Władysław Stodolka Identity Papers 1964



Post-War Picture – Jadwiga, Władysław and Krystyna Stodolka



Location of the Cities Mentioned in the Article (*Editor's Note: Albin Stodolka came from Dambrowka Mała. I located a city by that name east of Katowice but unsure if this is the correct location?*)



Interesting Photographs Taken at Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw in 2002 by the Editor – On left note the skull and crossbones, on right the tombstone of a young pilot who died in 1937

Genealogy in Poland

Practice and Experience

By Henryk Skrzypiński, Bydgoszcz, Poland

My activities on genealogy started about 30 years ago. American tourists had begun to visit Poland. Still, before the fall of the “Iron Curtain” there were limited possibilities of crossing the frontiers of Communist-governed Poland. Those who visited their relatives could travel just to places indicated in their visa application. Guided tour-groups had a supervisor among the hotel staff; the visitors own itineraries had to be reported to the tour leader. He also was observed by “security” agents or was an agent himself.

Despite obsessive measures in order to minimize contacts between visitors from abroad and locals, on the other hand the regime needed hard currency paid to the state-owned travel companies and exchanged by the tourists during their stay in this country. Step-by-step loosening of the restrictions was due. The unexpected changes and liberation in Poland 25 years ago started by Wałęsa’s “Solidarity” movement caused many citizens to take a new perspective of their outlook on the future. I am one of these Polish citizens. I am a Polish historian and soon became a genealogical consultant, whose education and patriotic feelings started earlier in free Poland and increased through the years of WWII. Back in Poland, no Communist indoctrination was able to change my mind consolidated during years of military service under the command of General Anders and studies common to humanity completed in Italy and England sponsored by the Army.

It must be said that genealogy, which is obvious to almost every citizen of the United States, does not mean the same to the Poles living in their country, unless they get stimulated by their American relatives. The long period of refused access to the archives managed by the Communist government and its suspicious clerks, was the most annoying reason for making people discouraged and indifferent towards any kind of research.

Sometimes those who live in Poland are willing to help searching for their American cousins, but are getting discouraged because of their insufficient knowledge even about the origin of their own

grandparents. Such indisposition, also the lack of historic wisdom and language, makes them hesitant about cooperation.

Thanks to my knowledge of old and modern German and sufficient orientation in Russian and Latin I have the ability to search in the entire area of north and northwestern Poland. Particularly, the present territory of Bydgoszcz, Kuyvia-Pomerania Voivodeship (province) was until 1914 divided between Russia and Germany; therefore records were kept partly in Russian. Under German oppression, Polish priests used Latin instead of German for entries made in church records.

Besides Polish National and Church Archives I found myself quite easily operating in Berlin, Greifswald, Schwerin and Hannover Archives. On the following map there are about twenty archives in Poland marked which I am familiar with and those abroad, too.

My genealogical activity started after one of the first American groups of genealogy-tourists enjoyed the sightseeing of my city. They appreciated the competent way I was guiding them. Particularly because of my attitude to the past, my emotionally-coloured patriotism and tolerance to the reminiscences of the Germans who once lived here, their tribute to the economic development of this country was considered positive, distinguishing good from evil.

Some premises glimmered already in my childhood, when I observed how my grandmother cared for family papers. Her stories, not necessarily of scientific background, made me better understand the way of life in this country. Officially it was not Poland for more than 120 years, being considered just a German province (Posen and West Prussia) populated by genuine Poles and the immigrated German minority, with dominating Polish language (later officially discouraged) and Roman-Catholic belief. Moreover, the land her parents came from (Strzelno-Gniezno area) is ever since called “The Cradle of Polish Statehood.”

The Polish and German languages spoken, written and read, include the Gothic-German that Polish children were obliged to exercise at school (no Polish schools until 1920), all this I used to call my basic way of education learned from the past, so useful now in genealogy.

Besides the tour-group participants, numerous individuals asked me for help, since I became a member of the Polish Genealogical Society of California, thanks to the recommendation of an individual researcher I cooperated with in 1990. It was a lady, Irma Wiese Whipple, who after her visit to Poland, published the book In Search of Family Rutzen where she highly appreciates my assistance.

Most important for my education in genealogy and increased experience were the years of cooperation with the well-known American genealogist and expert Dr. Edward Brandt. Especially helpful was the unforgettable research-tour across Poland resulting in discoveries of earlier not-presumed family traces, settlements, churches and genealogy sources, neglected during half a century of Communist reticence, of which only Edward was aware.

My highest appreciation goes to Mrs. Audrey Somers and her husband, Joseph, of Stevens Point, Wisconsin. During more than ten years of cooperation, thanks to her energy, personal strength in penetrating research that seemed hopeless, she was successful. That lady's, and her friend Miss Kobishop's, generosity gave the community of Gulcz in Wielkopolska - their ancestral seat - many beneficial effects like: local school modernization, restored church, fence at the cemetery and Gulcz-Polonia Memorial. I still do like the memories of impressive Polonian meetings celebrated in that village, crowned by a dance to put the finishing touch on the story.

A particularly grateful American researcher is Mrs. Lorraine Meyer of Minnesota, whose patient efforts and mine effected after years in a reunion with relatives still living on a farm near Chodzież, where her American ancestors came from. We happened to meet in Bydgoszcz on a street where she with her husband looked helpless with their English to find their way to the reserved hotel. I conducted them by my car, so our friendship started more than 15 years ago.

These mentioned are just a few of my friends

selected from about 120 more or less close clients, whom I never consider "customers" in the sense of gaining profits from them. The reimbursement of expenditures is the only charge. During my genealogy routine I was attracted by many Americans to prepare composition books or by delivery of photographs, maps, descriptions of events, stories, illustrations of monuments concerning their ancestors' birthplaces, churches where they were baptized and married. Numerous sheets I have worked out in English, translated from original Polish and German or Russian materials, found in Polish and German archives and libraries.

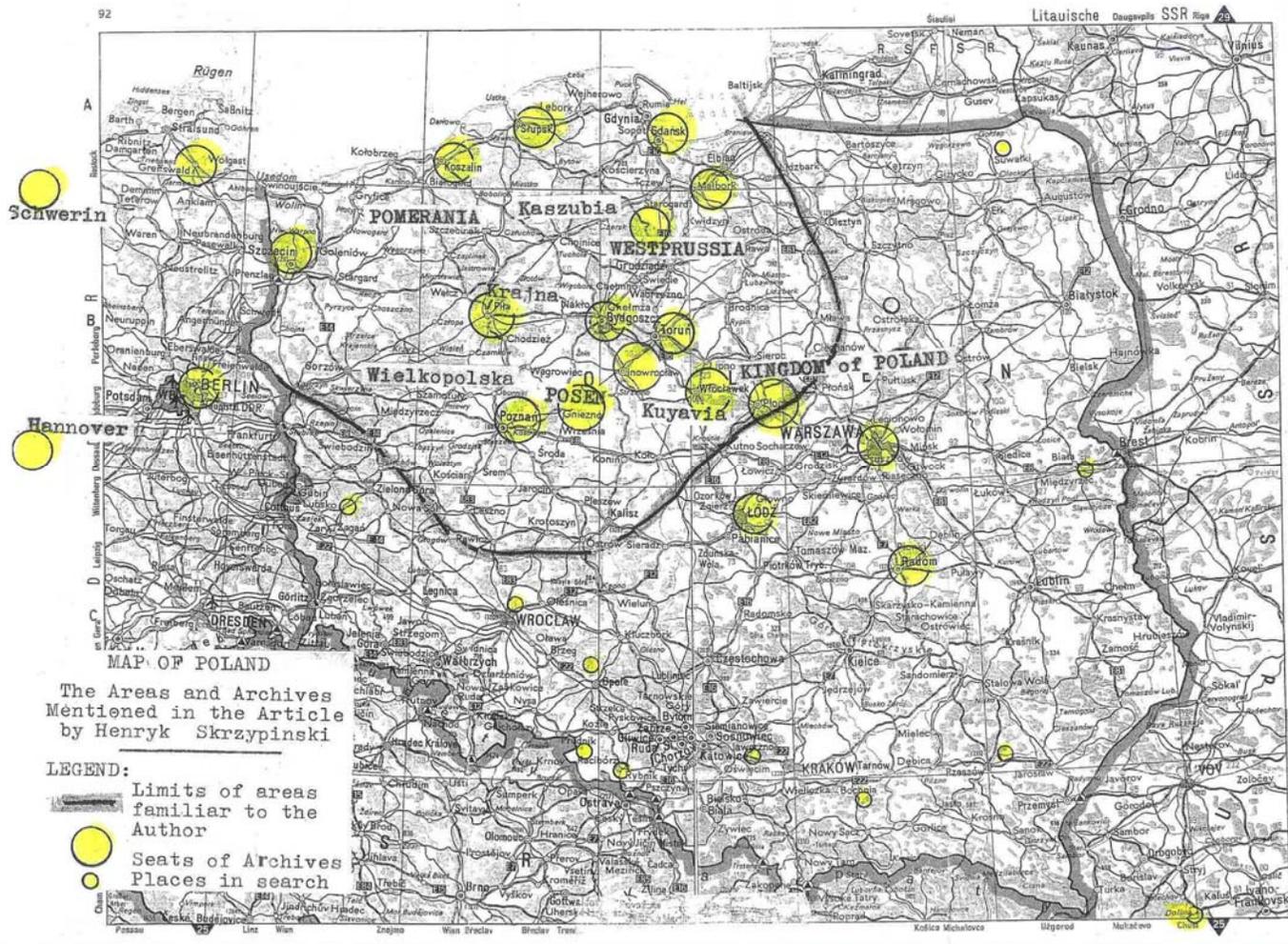
Once an unusual request came from an American lady: a printed name of a town consisting originally of 8 characters but only 3 of them were legible. To make sure the complete name I found was correct, I mailed a letter to the priest of the parish I believed could be the right one. The name of the ancestor was known. Although no records in that parish were preserved, the priest found the name in a 100-year-old census. The evidence was confirmed.

At present there are not as many requests for searching in Poland as years ago. I suppose the LDS-Salt Lake City Archives and genealogical societies make it easier for Americans to find their own way and method for successful research. In Poland no more obstructions but normal, civilized access to the archives makes genealogy even attractive.

Nevertheless, still more young well-educated people than ever, whose English is perfect, do not care for genealogy service, being attracted by higher profitable occupation proposals at foreign companies operating in Poland or by going abroad. I do not condemn them, since my daughter, not long ago a hopeful beginner in genealogy, changed her mind and found a prosperous life in London. Let them take a chance on western markets, after years of Poland's isolation.

Special problems the Americans sometime face at genealogy research are, for instance, trying to decipher papers, finding difficulties in identification of places or location of records - when no clerk can help - I am willing to deal with.

Henryk Skrzypiński can be contacted at ul. Kijoska, 85-703, Bydgoszcz (52) 342-79-21.



Missing Branches: continued from Page 32

Mary Edel Beyer, 260 W. Broadway St., Winona MN 55987 <meme@hbc.com> is researching EDEL, KNOPIK, JANKA in Bytow and the Kashubian area in Poland and in the Winona area in MN.

Linda Krajnak Black, 14825 W. 81st Terr., Lenexa KS 66215 <ljrjblack@earthlink.net> is researching DZIEWIDEK in Wolka Sokolowska in Poland, MIERZWA in Rakszawa, KUDUK in Sokolowska and all in Minneapolis MN and ZYBURA in Auburn, N.Y.

Jeri Borash, 16062 Birchwood Lane, Brainerd MN 56401 <mjborash@charter.net> is researching BORASH/BORASCH in Chroscutz, Norok Kaniow in Poland, BOROSCH/BOROS in

Hirschfelde (Kaniow) and both in Benton, Morrison Co. MN, SCHELONKA, TRUTWIN in Namyslów and in North Prairie, Morrison Co. MN, THOMALLA, KAMPA in Arcadia, North Creek, Burnside, Trempeleau Co. WI.

Donald A. Briese, 22666 Highview Oaks Cir., Detroit Lakes MN 56501 is researching Andreas BRIESE and Wilhelmina HAESKE in Laskowo and Antonienhof (church records were kept at Samotschin, 1836 to 1856) and in Marquette Co. WI later Potsdam, MN.

Darlene Heinzl, 3654 S. 71st St., Milwaukee WI 53220 is researching MASZK in Lipusz in Poland, CHYBOWSKI in Sobacz, TRAWCZYNSKI in Poland, BZDAWKA in Sypniewo and all in Milwaukee WI.

Elgene Jorgenson, 11608 Wren St. N.W., Coon Rapids MN 55433 <ElgeneJ@aol.com> is researching ASMUS in Mischken, Gubinnen, Poland (East Prussia) and in Council Bluffs and Kingsley IA.

Dr. Roger F. Krentz, 88 Guindon Blvd., Fond du Lac WI 54935 <rogerfk201@yahoo.com> is researching KRANZ in Dziembowo, Chodzież in Poland; CZARAPATA, MARCHEL in Runowo, Wyrzysk; CZAJKOWSKI in Czeszewo, Wągrowiecki; DUSZNSKI, POLUS (PAULUS), and BUKOWSKI in Ludomy, Oborniki and all in Wisconsin and CZARAPATA also in Illinois.

Jim Kulas, 7775 Camp David Drive, Springfield VA 22153 <polishpop1@earthlink.net> is researching LABROCKA. Josephina LABROCKA married Jacob KULAS from Bak, Poland. Jan, their first son, was born about 1839.

Raymond D. Kush, 3404 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55408 <raymondkush@aol.com> is researching KUŚ/KUSH, POLAK, RYBA, WOJCIK, PYZIK in Olpiny, Galicia and in Chicago, Illinois.

Lucy Kruchowski, 1100 – 6th Ave. S., South St. Paul MN 55075 <louhr@usfamily.net> is researching WARZECHA in Falkowice in Poland and in Holdingford MN, PHILIPSEK/PHILIPCZYK in Opole in Poland and in Avon MN.

Arthur D. Lang, 1832 W. Crane Ave., Anaheim CA 92804-4509 is researching LETKIEWICZ, BARANKIEWICZ in Ostaszewo, woj. Ciechanów, JARZEMBOWSKI in Brodnica, W. Prussia, woj. Toruń, MYSLINSKI, ABRYSZYNSKA, SMOLINSKI, KAROLSKI in West Prussia and all above in Detroit MI. Also SADY, MIGDA in Porąbka Uszewska, woj. Tarnów and in Lilly, Portage, PA. He asks, “Would like to see any research done in the area in or around Cohasset, Minn.”

Kay and Dave Martin, 5325 Forest Rd., Minnetonka MN 55345 <dekjmartin@att.net> are

researching LUCHT in Storkowo, Mieszatki and Grzmiaca in Poland and in Dayton and Maple Grove MN.

Mary Moriarty, 3885 Niagara Ln. N., Plymouth MN 55446 <mimoriarty@earthlink.net> is researching MURKOWSKI in Kcynia in Poland, CZUBEK in Bobowa and both in Chicago.

Dorothy Pretare, 2344 S.E. 8th Pl., Renton WA 98055-3950 <dpngen@comcast.net> is researching KIEDROWSKI in Lipusz, Pomorskie in Poland, RUDNIK, BLASKOWSKI/BLASZKOWSKI in Oslawa Dabrowa, Pomorski, KONKOL/KONKEL in Koscierzyna, Pomorskie and all in Winona, MN.

Mike Stodolka, 1407 Farmdale Rd., Mendota Hts. MN 55118 <mstodolka@comcast.net> is researching STODOLKA, KARASH in Falkowice Opole and in North Branch MN and also researching WILCZEK.

Mary Ann Trent, 114 Deerwood Trail, Sharpsburg GA 30277-2000 <gatraveler@mindspring.com> is researching BUSZKIEWICZ in Znin, Grylewo in Poland, MADAJ in Turzyn, NONA in Kcynia, Smogulec and all above in Lemont IL and WACHOWSKI in Sadki and in Chicago IL and CZAJA in Chicago.

Ed Wiorek, 805 Chestnut, Mantorville MN 55955 <ewiorek@kmtel.com> is researching NIEMCZYK in Lipusz, Berent in Poland, WIOREK in Morzewo, LEWICZ, CHRZAN, ZWADZICH in Wissek (Wysoka), JAZDZEWSKI in Lipusz, Lesno and all in Milwaukee WI and MAI(J)KOWSKI in Lipusz, Berent and in Minneapolis MN.

Vincent J. Zotkiewicz, 3100 Timber Brook Dr., Plano TX 75074 <vinzot@att.net> is researching ZOTKIEWICZ and ARASIM in Poland (Russian sector) and SOBOLEWSKA in Wozna Wies, Poland and all in Virginia, MN.

Missing Branches

QUERIES, Send to: *Paul Kulas, Associate Editor, PGS-MN Newsletter, 12008 West River Road, Champlin, MN 55316-2145* or e-mail to: <kkulas@ties2.net>

NEW MEMBERS: *We welcome the following:*

James Gonsior, 506 1st St. N., Sartell MN 56377 is researching GONSIOR, KALUZA in Opole, Poland.

Gary Mis, 7577 Armitage Ave. S.W., Montrose MN 55363 <fouroaksmn@juno.com> is researching MIŚ, GADAROWSKI, OGORZALEK in Dębowiec, Łukawiec, Wadowice Górne, Basznia Dolna in Poland and in Chicopee MA.

James Murzyn, 3451 Lincoln St. N.E., Minneapolis MN 55418 <james.murzyn@worldnet.att.net> is researching MURZYN in Letowe in Poland, PAPIERZ in Rabka and both in Minneapolis.

David and Diane Rapacz, 2 Ruth St. N., St. Paul MN 55119-4618 <DJRDER@earthlink.net> are researching TALIK, RAPACZ, BANDAREK, SHUSTOCK/SZOSTAK, KARBOSKY, ULANOWICZ, DARDZIENSKI in Zywiec, Poland and in Minneapolis and Shenandoah, Plaines, and Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania.

Czesław Rog, 2623 Jefferson St. N.E., Minneapolis MN 55418-2825 is a new member.

Marjorie Spektor, 915 E. Via Velitas, Tucson AZ 85718 <dtsmama@msn.com> is researching Paul SZCZESNY/CHESNEY, ancestor of Stephen Szczesny, Agata KILAR, Francesca KIELEZNSKA in Pozno, Poland and in Duluth MN.

Raymond Starmack, 6776 Renkrib Ave., San Diego CA 92119 <lunray@cox.net> is researching STARMAK in Rabka in Poland, LUBINSKI, GRUZKA/GRUCA in Jordanow and all in Minneapolis.

Margaret Stopera, 3055 Benjamin St. N.E., Minneapolis MN 55418 <mstopera@yahoo.com> is researching STOPERA and SIKORA surnames.

Michael Worwa, 3453 Benjamin St. N.E., Minneapolis MN 55418 <polaco@msn.com> is researching WORWA in Rabka, Galicia (last place of residence) and in Minneapolis MN.

RENEWALS: *The following members indicated updated information on their renewal forms:*

Valarie Anderson, 402 Iona Lane, Roseville MN 55113 <mnval06@infionline.net> is researching John P. SOJKA, born 1/11/1842 outside Warsaw, marries Anna BUCHOTZ (approx. 1865). Anna dies between 1866-1869 and John marries Marianna BUHOLTZ in 1869. They arrive in New York on the North German Barque *Columbus* on 11/11/1871. They settle in Mounds View, MN and John becomes a citizen U.S.A. on 2/2/1897. Also researching Michael Lorenzo FABIJANSKI, born Sept. 1835 in Prussia-Poland, became U.S. citizen on 12/16/1896 and died 4/6/1937. Michael married Jozafina LANG, born 1/19/1850 in Germany (Poland?) and died 2/4/1925 in St. Paul, MN. Michael and Jozafina settled in New Brighton, MN.

Missing Branches: continued on page 30

Minnesota Genealogical Society
**Polish Genealogical Society
of Minnesota Branch**
5768 Olson Memorial Highway
Golden Valley, MN 55422

<p>Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage Paid Minneapolis, MN Permit No. 28318</p>
--