



Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota NEWSLETTER

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NUMBER 1

FROM THE *VIRGINIA PIONEERS SCRAPBOOK:* EARLY POLISH SETTLERS ON THE MESABI IRON RANGE

By Greg Kishel

A century ago, the iron ranges of northeastern Minnesota were among the most ethnically diverse areas in the United States.¹ Polish immigrants were among those who settled the largest of the three ranges, the Mesabi. However, most published history on the Mesabi's ethnic groups either does not acknowledge a Polish presence there, or mentions it only in passing.² Regardless of how much more demographically prominent other national groups became, this underrecognition is neither accurate nor fair. People of Polish extraction came to the central Mesabi almost immediately after the great ore bodies were opened at Mt. Iron and Mesaba Mountain by Virginia; some of them became prominent in the business, political, and social communities of the city of Virginia during its first several decades. This is how I rediscovered and documented that earliest arrival, otherwise lost to public attention for fifty years or more.

Scrapbook, continued on page 10

¹By the time of the 1910 census, the Mesabi Range had residents of nearly forty different ethnic extractions. John Sirjamaki, "The People of the Mesabi Range," in Gilman and Holmquist, eds., *Selections from "Minnesota History": A Fiftieth Anniversary Anthology* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1965), at p. 262.

²To note just a couple of examples: Michael G. Karni, ed., *Entrepreneurs and Immigrants: Life on the Industrial Frontier of Northeastern Minnesota* (Chisholm, Minn: Iron Range Research Center, 1991), is a fine collection of scholarly papers about the Iron Ranges' early social and ethnic history. It has well-researched essays about the Native Americans, the Finns, the Italians, the Jews, the Cornish, the Norwegians, and the Croats and Serbs: no Poles, however. In his early essay Sirjamaki mentioned in passing that "some... Poles" were among the first wave of settlers in the 1890s, "The People of the Mesabi Range" at pp. 262 and 265, but he gave more detailed attention overall to the Finns and the later-arriving South Slavs and Italians. He did note that by 1946 the Poles were among the half-dozen "most numerous" "minority groups," due to the demographic winnowing-out of many of the less-numerous ethnicities in the intervening decades. *Id.* at p. 271. There are more to be cited, but I don't want to appear to be too much of a grump.



The Polish settlement in Virginia, MN
is featured on pages 1, 10-17, 18-26
in this issue.

In this issue . . .

<i>Virginia Pioneers Scrapbook</i>	page 1
President's Letter.....	2
Program reports.....	3
The Bulletin Board.....	4
Program notice	
Translators/guides for Poland	
<i>GenDobry!</i>	5
<i>Polish American Journal</i>	
Polish divorce	
Letters to the editor.....	6
Bronko Nagurski	
Frank Brimsek	
Russian translator.....	7
Demmin near Breslau	
Researcher in Poland	
Researching Philipsek.....	8
Seeking Kotowski relatives	
Johnnies/Uncle Johnny.....	9
Fantastic	
<i>Scrapbook, continued</i>	10
Appendix: from <i>Scrapbook</i>	16
Drobne Echa.....	18
From Wiarus, 11893, 1905, 1908	
Dateline: Virginia, Minnesota and Bessemer-Ironwood, Michigan	
Missing Branches, continued.....	26
Missing Branches.....	28

Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota

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Items submitted for publication are welcomed and encouraged. Deadlines for inclusion are: March 1, June 1, Sept. 1 and Dec. 1 respectively. Articles, letters, book reviews, news items, queries, ad copy, etc. should be sent to: Paul Kulas, editor, *PGS-MN Newsletter*, 12008 West River Road, Champlin MN 55316-2145 or to e-mail: <kkulas@ties2.net>

Mailing or e-mail address change?

Membership questions?

Contact: Lisa Trembley, Membership Chair
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President's Letter:

Genealogy involves the search for information about one's ancestors. This search often uncovers clues which must be ferreted out and verified. Sometimes the clues appear in a language other than one's native tongue. The clue to the origin of my Polish great grandparents came to me as the phonetic, anglicized version of a Polish village name which had been Germanized. My first step was to determine how this conversion may have taken place and what the original Polish village name had been. I had no prior knowledge of Polish language.

I took a Polish language class, not necessarily to learn the language, but to learn something about its pronunciation. I did learn enough to be able to find the village name, and my great grandparents' ancestral home. I have found the foreign language classes I've taken to be of great assistance in my searches--and in my travels. A basic knowledge of a language's structure can be used to determine possible name change variations, whether for place or surname.

There are a number of Polish language classes offered through the Community Education system in the Twin Cities. These are usually weekly evening classes, very affordable, and offered for 6-8 week duration throughout the year. They come in varying degrees of difficulty and purposes. I will not describe or critique the offered classes. The following are sources of information about Polish language classes:

1. Two classes are advertised in the Minneapolis Community Education Program Listing. Classes start about mid-April, and can be accessed via <www.mpiscommunityed.com> or via the free class listing available at most Minneapolis libraries.
2. Two classes are offered through St. Paul Community Education system. For information call 651-293-8811, or see their website. Classes start about mid-April.
3. Czeslaw Rog teaches a Polish language class at Logan Park Community School, one evening per week. For information call him at 612-378-9291.

It is not necessary to learn to speak a language fluently to benefit from some knowledge of it.

--Terry Kita

Program reports:

**Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota
Annual Membership Meeting
January 17, 2004
Lakewood Cemetery Chapel**

The annual meeting of the Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota was held at the Chapel at Lakewood Cemetery, on January 17, 2004. The building known as the *Chapel* has as its model the *Sophia Haj* in Istanbul, Turkey. This beautiful building is on the National Register of Historic Buildings. The annual elections were held at this meeting. The results are as follows:

President: Terry Kita
Vice president: John Kowles
Secretary: Mary Ellen Bruski
Treasurer: Audra Etzel
Directors: Lisa Trembley, John Rys, Jan Bias

Program Summary

Tom Rice, a genealogical researcher and lecturer, was the guest speaker. The topic of his talk was "Research in Death Related Records and Cemeteries." He summarized all of the records which may result from the death event. His main focus was key aspects of cemetery research: mortuary death notices, burial related records, cemetery and grave location, tombstone transcriptions, plot layout, etc. His overhead presentation included many personal examples from his research. The presentation included several little known records, and was of interest to all who attended. A Q & A session followed. Tom included a hand-out which summarized the lecture.

One of the discussion points was the proper protocol for retrieval of tombstone inscriptions. Each cemetery may have its own requirements or preferences for inscription retrieval which are to be followed. Lakewood, for instance, recommends white paper and crayon, or treated paper.

Mr. Rice teaches genealogical related classes at Century College, and has the following website: www.heritagehunters.com

Mr. Gjerde of the Lakewood Cemetery graciously donated the use of the Chapel for our meeting. A summary of our organization's 2003 activities follows.

--Terry Kita

2003 Year-in-Review Summary

1. Treasurer--Audra Etzel
 - a. cash receipts: \$6,034.35
 - b. cash disbursements: \$5,236.32
 - c. cash on hand: \$8,584.66
2. Membership--Lisa Trembley
 - a. paid members in 2003: 257
 - b. members not renewing in 2003: 26
 - c. exchange newsletters: 20
 - d. complimentary newsletters: 31
 - e. program announcements sent to members
3. Newsletter--Paul Kulas
 - a. four editions in 2003
 - b. resume surname indexing of past issues
4. Library--Jan Bias
 - a. added 100,000:1 scale map set of modern Poland
 - b. catalogued all library items
 - c. monthly volunteer at MGS library
 - d. monthly Thursday Polish night at MGS library
 - e. additions to library collection
5. Programs--John Kowles
 - a. annual meeting
 - b. PGS-MN participation at MGS Branching Out
 - c. four membership program meetings
 - Ceil Jensen's three lectures
 - Poland's Changing Boundaries,
 - Family histories
 - Translation aids in Genealogical research
6. Research--John Rys and Greg Kishel
 - a. continue with extraction of St. Philip's records and additional Polish parishes
 - b. purchase of St. Paul diocese microfilm records
7. Website --Mary Ellen Bruski
 - a. regularly updated
 - b. library collection listing added

PGS-MN Meeting--February 14, 2004

About 30 people attended an informative program in which **Mark Rucinski** presented a digital tour of his family research. He recently spent two weeks in Poland, traveling 1,200 miles to meet his cousins. Mark presented the preparation background which included taking a lap top computer, scanner, etc. and family information to present to his cousins in the form of CDs which he could display on his computer. This sparked great interest and cooperation from his Polish relatives. Many tips were provided regarding his research and trip. He emphasized using CDs for storing pictures and documents safely, cheaply and allowing them to be readily retrievable.

--John Kowles



The Bulletin Board

Notice: e-mail change

My e-mail address has changed. My new address is: <kkulas@ties2.net> Please use my new address in all future electronic messages to me.

--Paul Kulas, editor, PGS-MN Newsletter

Extra contributions:

We thank the following for their extra contributions to PGS-MN (either through Sponsor membership or to contributions to the Library Fund):

John A. Duscha	Gene Kishel
Rosanne Jaunich Eppel	Arne Kowalzek
Jerry Gracyalny	Larry and Betty Kulis
Diana Gustafson	Ray Marshall
David L. Hintz	Janet Mitchell
Bobbi Hoyt	Ron Zurek
Evelyn A. Kam	

We are a non-profit educational organization. Contributions beyond basic membership dues may be income tax deductible.

PGS-MN Program Notice

April 17, 2004, 10:00 am.
MGS Library

A working session for those with Polish research questions is planned. We will display a sampling of our four different map sets and introduce several books from our Library collection. We will also have available a number of laptop computers and a variety of genealogical compact discs for individual use. The CDs available will include *Germans to America*, Rymut's *Słownik nazisk* and *Słownik geograficzny*.

If you have a Polish genealogical CD that you would like to share or are willing to bring a laptop PC, call me at 612-927-0719.

Bring any and all questions about your Polish research and we will attempt to assist you.

--Terry Kita

Translators/Guides for Poland

The following is from Joyce Gardner <gardner@deskmedia.com> She is interested in primarily Pomerania and Silesia but these guides might be available for anywhere in Poland. She writes:

As a translator/guide in Pommern I highly recommend:

Anetta Korowaj,
ul. Gryfitow 5/10,
72-200 Nowogard
POLAND

E-mail address: <a.korowaj@wp.pl>. Her telephone number from the U.S. is: 011-48-91-3925-294.

I also recommend Danuta Jampolska as a translator/guide in Poland. Danuta works for the Polish Cultural Ministry in Warsaw. She came by train to Wroclaw/Breslau where we picked her up. Danuta set up appointments with parish priests for us, made room reservations, and guided us to the villages, etc. I understand if Danuta is not free, she has a friend who is also an experienced translator/guide.

Danuta Jampolska
ul. Ostro Bramska 78, Apt. 114
04-175 Warsaw
POLAND

E-mail: <jamposka@wp.pl> or
<jampol@oko.com.pl>
Phone: 011-48-22-613-93-86
Fax: 011-48-22-22-93-17 (addressed to Danuta Jampolska's attention)

Last year Danuta had mentioned that she had a friend who is an accredited genealogist and translator. I contacted Danuta about two weeks ago and she had her friend, Tadeusz Pilat, get in touch with me. Here is his information:

Tadeusz Hubert Pilat, A.G.
ul. Matejki 1 / 15
39-400 Tarnobrzeg,
POLAND

Tel: 4815 822 71 33
E-mail address is: <tadpilat@poczta.onet.pl>

My last suggestion is from someone in our Pommern Group who hired a genealogical tour group/translator service off the web last year.

The web site is: <WWW.man.poznan.pl/~bielecki/dr.htm>

I believe the name of their group is *Discovering Roots*. This web site explains their services and charges and gives contact information. I was told they are a young, opinionated and enthusiastic group.

Joyce Gardner <gardner@deskmedia.com>

Joyce is--Researching in Pommern, Kreis Regenwalde (and Naugard) family names: Roloff, Steffen, Ladwig/Ladewig, Kröning, Bütow, Buchholz, Ehmke, (Backhaus).

And--Researching in Silesia, Kreis Münsterberg and Kreis Falkenberg family names: Wagner, Wies, Sonntag, Baum, Kretschmer, Clemenz, Henshel,
--Terry Kita

Gen Dobry!

Gen Dobry! is a Polish genealogical electronic magazine edited by our friend and colleague, William F. "Fred" Hoffman. The title is a combination of the e-zine's subject matter (genealogy) and the Polish greeting, *Dzień dobry* (Good day). *Gen Dobry!* began publication via the internet in July 2000. You can find all back issues at: <http://www.polishroots.org/gen_dobry/gendobry_index.htm> For those of you who do not have internet access, we have down-loaded each issue and the hard-copy is now available in a binder in the Polish Collection at the MGS library.

Polish American Journal

When we published a "special issue" featuring the National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame in Summer 2002 (see *Letters*, pages 6-7) we sent a copy to Tom Tarapcki, the Sports Editor of the *Polish American Journal*. Tom mentioned that issue of the *PGS-MN Newsletter* in his February 2003 sports column in *PAJ* and he made special mention of the speculation about Bronko Nagurski's heritage. In the September 2003 issue of *PAJ*, Tom picked his all-time Polish American baseball team which differs somewhat from the all-time Polish American team that we picked in our Summer 2002 issue. And Tom did us one better when he picked his all-time Polish American college football team in the February 2004 issue of *PAJ*. Readers, check out Tom's teams at the Polish Collection at the MGS Library. We have all issues of *PAJ* published since June 1989. To subscribe to *PAJ* check: <<http://www.polamjournal.com>>

Polish divorce

A Polish man married a Minnesota girl. After he had been in the U.S. a year or so, and although his English was far from perfect, they got along very well. Until one day he rushed into a lawyer's office and asked him if he could arrange a divorce for him --"very quick." The lawyer said that the speed for getting a divorce would depend on the circumstances, and asked him the following questions:

LAWYER: "Have you any grounds?"

POLE: "JA, JA, acre and half and nice little house with three bedroom." *Only in Minnesota can you say "Ja, Ja" and think that you are speaking English.*

LAWYER: "No, I mean what is the foundation of this case?"

POLE: "It made of concrete, brick, and mortar," he responded.

LAWYER: "Does either of you have a real grudge?"

POLE: "No," he replied, "We have two-car carport."

LAWYER: "I mean, What are your relations like?"

POLE: "All relations are in Poland."

LAWYER: "No, I mean; Does your wife beat you up?"

POLE: "NO, I'm always up before her."

LAWYER: "Is there any infidelity in your marriage?"

POLE: "Ja, we have hi-fidelity stereo set and DVD player with 6.1 sound. I don't necessarily like music she plays, but answer is yes."

LAWYER: "WHY do you want this divorce?"

POLE: "She going to kill me."

LAWYER: "What makes you think that?"

POLE: "I got proof."

LAWYER: "What kind of proof?"

POLE: "She going to poison me. She buy bottle at drug store and put on shelf in bathroom. I can read, it says--'Polish Remover'."

OK, OK. I know. It's a lame joke. It's my attempt to interject a little humor into these pages. I blame my cousin, Larry Kulis, for sending it to me. Oh, I had to edit the conversation a bit to keep it somewhat politically correct.

--PTK



Letters to the Editor Listy do Redaktora

Bronko Nagurski

Your ballot for this year's National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame election should be received by you sometime in the next couple of weeks.

For years our nomination committee has wrestled with the true heritage of Bronko NAGURSKI. We can-not come to a definitive answer about his heritage. Do you know anything about Bronko Nagurski and his heritage? Any information you have would be helpful. I also seem to recall that he lived in the International Falls area. Since you are the resident expert in Minnesota, I thought you might be able to help.

Hon. Paul J. Paruk, Board Chairman
National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame

I'm looking forward to receiving this year's National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame election ballot.

Regarding Bronko Nagurski: Most references to the ethnic heritage of Bronko Nagurski list him as being Ukrainian. As you know (see PGS-MN Newsletter, Summer 2002, page 15, which I sent to you), I found his baptismal record at a Roman Catholic parish in Rainy Lake, Ontario, Canada. In the article in the newsletter, I suggested that he might have some Polish ancestry since Ukrainians were not likely to be Roman Catholic; Greek Catholic, yes, but not Roman Catholic. But being baptized in a Roman Catholic church on this side of the Atlantic doesn't necessarily mean that the family was Roman Catholic in the Ukraine. I guess thorough genealogical research into Bronko's ancestry is needed to definitively answer the question of his ethnic heritage.

The question of ethnicity is a complicated one. Because of the movement of people over the centuries, very few people are pure anything. The Poles especially--because of invasions, immigration, border changes, intermarriages, etc.--are a mixed race. So are the Ukrainians, And the same can be said to a greater or lesser degree of any other nationality. As you know, many Poles settled in the Ukraine over the centuries. As time passed many came to consider

themselves to be Ukrainian. Perhaps this was the situation of the Nagurski family, I don't know. At any rate, I believe that a key marker of ethnicity is self-identification--that people are what claim to be. I visited the Bronko Nagurski Museum in International Falls, Minnesota several years ago. I raised the question of Bronko's ethnicity with the curator on duty at that time. She was adamant that the family was Ukrainian, and, certain displays indicated that Bronko was Ukrainian. Certainly Bronko's family had some input into the content of the museum displays. If the family wants him to be considered Ukrainian, I am of the opinion that he should regarded be as such.

Readers: *The nominees for election to the National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame can be found at <<http://www.polishsportshof.com>> Those elected will be listed in our next newsletter. Since the publication of the NPASHF issue in Summer 2002, several of you have mentioned to me the names of people you thought should be included in the Hall. Please drop me a note and I will forward your suggestions to the NPASHF.*

Frank Brimsek

I received a call from a fellow board member who asked if we had ever considered an NHL goalie named Frank BRIMSEK. Frank was born in Eveleth, MN and played in the NHL during the '30s and '40s. His name could be Polish, German, Czech, etc. I do not know much about him other than he was a tremendous goalie and is in the Hockey Hall of Fame and in the US Hockey Hall of Fame in Eveleth, MN.

As with anything regarding Poles and Minnesota, I am wondering if you have any information regarding Frank Brimsek's heritage. Anything you can provide will be a big help.

Paul Paruk, Board Chairman
National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame

I went to the Minnesota Historical Society Library and checked the 1920 U. S. census schedules for Eveleth. I didn't find any family with the "Brimsek" spelling but I did find a family with its name spelled "Brimseck." I believe this is the correct family (Census enumerators were not always careful to spell names accurately). This family had a son named Frank, age 6.

Frank's parents are listed as John and Johanna. The listing indicated that both were born in Slovenia and that their "mother tongue" was Slovenian. So it seems that Frank Brimsek was Slovenian and not

Polish. This is not surprising, since Eveleth was the home of many Yugoslavs (Croats, Serbs and especially Slovenes). Relatively few Poles settled in Eveleth--Virginia was the home of most of the Poles who settled on the Iron Ranges of northern Minnesota (See articles by Greg Kishel about the Polish settlement in Virginia on pages 1, 10-17; 18-26 in this issue).

While I was at the MHS Library, I also checked the 1920 census listing for the Nagurski family in International Falls, MN (see previous letter). I found that Bronko's parents, Mike and Michalina Nagurski, indicated that they were born in "Galicia" and that their mother tongue was "Ruth." (Ruthenian). So was Bronko Polish? Well, it depends upon how that term is defined. The language that Bronko's parents spoke as children was Ruthenian (Ukrainian--or possibly Rusin [No!, not Russian]), so the answer most likely is "no." On the other hand, Galicia was part of the Polish Commonwealth for centuries prior to it being taken by Austria in the first partition of Poland (in 1772) and was also almost entirely included within the boundaries of the Polish Republic (1919-1939) when Poland reemerged as an independent nation following World War I (See maps pp. 17, 18, 22, 23, PGS-MN Newsletter, Winter 2003-04). In that sense the answer might possibly be "yes." Today (since 1945), the western part of what was called Galicia lies within the borders of Poland and the eastern half is now in the Ukraine,

Russian translator

A friend of ours from St. Petersburg is available to do translations from Russian. She knows the pre-Revolutionary Cyrillic script, which differs from contemporary Russian, and spoke on the subject at the 1996 FEEFHS convention.

She did a top-notch job for me on a document from Russian Poland with which two other Russian experts (one Russian-born, one a Russian expert on the staff of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia) could not translate fully, presumably because of the no-longer used pre-Revolutionary letters.

Her address: Nina Zhezhel, 1421 Yale Place # 1408, Minneapolis, MN 55403

Her e-mail address: <jejel@gte.net>

I think it would be a service to members to publish her availability. Please ask all interested societies with which PGS-MN exchanges newsletters to copy this information. So far as I know, there are few others with knowledge of the pre-Revolutionary Cyrillic script known within the genealogical community.

Ed Brandt <brandtfam@prodigy.net>

Demmin near Breslau

You can imagine my surprise when I opened my mail this fall and found within the Autumn 2003 issue of the *PGS-MN Newsletter* two pages (pp. 6-7) outlining my efforts to locate the Polish village of my grandmother. I was not only surprised but also totally impressed and gratified. The professionalism of your newsletter is outstanding and you are to be congratulated for the high quality job that you are doing. I am most appreciative of your efforts on my behalf. Albeit belated, thank you very much.

My quest continues. So far, I have not received any responses to your request for input from your readers regarding the correct spelling and location of my ancestral village in Silesia. However, my hopes remain high.

Frank R. Culhane, Tucson AZ

Frank, See the following response by Ed Brandt.

Re: Frank R. Culhane's query; I agree with you that the name before Breslau is probably *Demmin*. I checked all conceivable alternatives in *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrslexikon* and found no other spelling that matched any alternative. My best guess is that the reference may have been to a specific parish in Breslau, which had 16 Catholic churches in the 1880s. I think it might be possible to check this with the FHL or perhaps even its website to see if it has any films from there.

Ed Brandt, <brandtfam@prodigy.net>

Researcher in Poland

Thanks for the Polish researcher name. Maybe my husband and I will be able to take a trip to Poland. PUNSK, Suwalki is loaded with our Lightstone family in the 19th Century up to second world war, when they were all killed. The LDS records are good for this location. Now I have found another branch of the family is from Exin, Poznan now called KCYNIA, but the records are not in the LDS. Then a third area of research is in Lithuania, KALWARIJA, just a few miles across the border. It is possible that it will be too difficult to make the border crossing.

I enjoyed the recent two meetings that I attended. It seems to be a vibrant group who attend the meetings. Well done for helping to keep the group together.

Jenny Lightstone, <JLightstone@mn.rr.com>

Jenny had asked me for the name of a Polish researcher that was mentioned at a PGS-MN meeting which she attended. Her name is: Katarzyna (Kasia) Grycza. Her e-mail is: <elviska@poczta.onet.pl>

Researching Philipsek

I NEED HELP! I have been researching the PHILIPSEK name. My father was Stanley Phillips (Stanislaus Philipsek(cyk). I am enclosing bits and pieces of information which I have gleaned from other family members. But, we have not been able to find the home/birthplace and church in Poland (Germany) where they originated. I have heard of Mechnitz, (Mechnine) near Opole. Kasper Philipsek (cyk) was born January 6, 1831 and died in 1924 and buried in St. Anna, MN.

An enclosed sheet from my cousin lists Kasper, his father Joseph Sylvester, and his grandfather, August. Another enclosed sheet lists the children born in Poland to Casper and his first wife (no name), and his second wife, Mary BIAS and their children. What adds to the confusion, is the many different spellings of the name..

Lou (Lucy) Phillips Kruchowski, South St. Paul
<loukr@usfamily.net>

You mention Mechnine, near Opole. Have you checked LDS records of parishes near Mechnine? The closest villages with churches are Komprachcice and Chmielowice. The LDS Family History Library has filmed the records of both of these parishes; Komprachcice (1747-1935) and Chmielowice (1742-1930). You should order the appropriate films for these parishes through your nearest LDS Family History Center and see if you find the baptismal record of Kasper Philipsek in 1831.

Other than that, I see nothing among the items that you sent that gives any clue about the place of origin in Europe of Kasper Philipsek (other than the general Silesia). The passenger list states that the family was going to Minnos. (Minnesota). Since they knew already knew their destination was Minnesota, they probably knew someone who had already settled there. Do you know who that might have been? If so, you might see if you can find clues to the place of origin of that family since they probably knew each other in Europe.

I recommend that you check the church records for each of Kasper's children. Six of the children were born in Europe. I would check the church marriage records of each of them first (Church marriage records often give the parish of origin in Europe). Then check the baptism records of each of the children born in the U.S. especially if they were baptized in St. Anna (the baptism records of several of my father's brothers and sisters who were baptized in the St. Anna parish give the village of origin in Poland

of their parents, Jan Kulas and Józefa Junik). Then also check the church marriage records of the children born in the U.S. Finally, check the church death records of Kaspar and Maria--although this is the least likely to give the place of origin. An obituary notice in a local newspaper (the Albany Enterprise or the Holdingford Herald) is more likely to have that information. Hopefully, one of the above records will give the place of origin in Europe. After you have done all of this, research strategies are much more problematic but other steps are still possible.

Seeking Kotowski relatives

I am seeking missing relative here in the U.S. as well as family in Krakow where my family originally came from. I am a third generation Polish-American but a first generation non-Polish speaking Pan-Am which saddens me. I wish to enhance my knowledge of who and what I am--a Polish American who knows less then he should about his heritage and homeland. I want to seek out lost relatives as well as gain a broader perspective of what life in Poland was like and also make some sort of contribution to the Polish-American community. My family settled in Ivanhoe in Lincoln County in the late 1800s and over the years it has scattered widely. Any help you can offer to help me achieve my goal of finding lost relatives both here and abroad will be greatly appreciated.

John J. Kotowski, Rush City

PGS-MN member, John Radzilowski, has re-searched the Lincoln County Poles extensively (he has written several books about them and they were the subject of his Ph. D. dissertation). He has recently sent us his extensive research notes regarding Lincoln County Polish families. His reference to "family # 104" follows:

Kotowski, Anastazy, 49 in 1905, wife Antonia 49, (Pol), Leokadya (Mrs. Julius Bonczak) 21, Maria P. 19 (U.S.), Franciszek 17, Leon 15, Walter 12, (Mn.), Saloonkeeper, Butcher, Ivan. [LB: 161,215, 230, 275, 342; IT: 93, 100, 128, 154, 168, 178, 180, 189-90]

Are these your relatives? I believe this data was taken from the 1905 Minnesota State Census. Anastazy and his wife Antonia are 49 years old in 1905 and were born in Poland. Leokadya, age 21 and Maria P., age 19 were born in the U.S. but apparently not in Minnesota. Franciszek, Leon, and Walter were all born in Minnesota. Anastazy was a saloonkeeper and a butcher in Ivanhoe. The notations in brackets are references to items found in local newspapers.

In the Summer 1996 issue (pp. 7-10), I wrote a article about the history of St. John Cantius Church in Wilno. In it I list Anastazy Katowski (sic, should be spelled "Kotowski") as a member of the assessment committee for the building of the new church in Wilno. Also that stained glass windows for the church were donated by Ambrose Katowski and Anatasy Katowski--so there were apparently at least two Kotowski families among the early settlers of Wilno.

Readers: If you have any information about the Kotowski families from Lincoln County and/or their descendants, please contact us or write directly to John Kotowski (see his address on page 28).

Johnnies/Uncle Johnny

Thank you for the *PGS-MN Newsletter* (Winter 2003-04). I found the changing borders to be most interesting and it appears that the Kalisz area (*the area of our ancestors in Poland*) pretty much stayed within the borders of Poland.

Now forJohnnies Win !!!!....; Nice job on the article (*on page 7*) and I noticed the challenge for more information on a Polish-American success story. I will consult with the family historian., brother Lee, and attempt to come up with a paragraph or two. Now the \$64,000 question; would you have published my condolences if the Johnnies had lost ?

I would like to get on the newsletter mailing list and have enclosed a check for a subscription and for some of your other costs at the Society.

When we visited the church in St. Anna (*our ancestral Minnesota parish*) recently, Betty could not get her camera to work. You stated you had some photos of the KULAS family stained glass window. I would appreciate a copies so I can share with Lee and with our children.

Larry and Betty Kulis, Homosassa FL

Larry, Thanks for joining PGS-MN. No, I probably would not have published anything had the Johnnies lost. I will send you copies of our family's stained glass window in the St. Anna church. And when you and Lee write up your father's story be sure to include why your branch of the family spell our family name incorrectly. Oh! I notice an e-mail arriving from your brother Lee right now!

Thanks for your consideration and thinking of me by sending the latest issue of the *PGS-MN Newsletter*. After perusing the article on my father, I am prompted to make some corrections... Dad was born in '03 and started at Ford when he was in his early twenties and worked there until his mid-sixties when he retired

for health reasons. He also stated many times that he left school after the sixth grade...worked in ND...and left home before age 21. So, '03 plus 20 would place him at Ford in the early to mid-1920s and not arriving during the depression as stated in your article. Also Dad and Mom were married in '27 and Dad was already working at Ford. And yes, Dad was active in the union...as most of the hourly workers were. Ford wasn't organized until 1941. You are correct that there were "cells" which met in basements because of fear of dismissal. Larry and I both met Walter REUTHER (*President of the United Auto Workers and later President of the CIO*) in the basement of our home. Towards the end of his working at Ford in Detroit and after our move to Cleveland, Dad was part of management and he got to see the other side of the conflict between ownership and the work force.

Lee Kulis, Fort Myers FL

Fantastic

I just want to tell you on this tenth anniversary of my membership in PGS-MN (*see Winter 2003-04, p.4*), that your newsletter is fantastic. Because I am so far away and can not attend meetings, workshops etc., it is the reason why I have remained a member for ten years and will continue as a member as long as your newsletter retains the quantity and quality of information and presentation that has been your trademark. It has also served as a model for my own *Wilno Heritage Society Newsletter*. Thank you so much.

I am also writing with a query about Greg Kishel's reference on page 10 (*also in Winter 2003-04*) to Waclaw Kruszk's *A History of Poles in America*--is this book translated into English, do you know?

I love the whole section--the mini-historical Atlas of Poland from 1795--excellent! May I use the Prussian Partition (1773-1918) in an upcoming *Wilno Heritage Newsletter* crediting you and the original source/ Take care and thank you for providing so much information so effectively.

Shirley Mask Connolly, Ottawa ONT, Canada

Thank you for your kind words and for your continued membership these past ten years.

Yes, Waclaw Kruszk's A History of Poles in America has been translated into English and is available for purchase through the Catholic University of America Press. Information on purchasing the book is available on-line at: <http://cuapress.cua.edu> (See also Greg's review of this work on pp. 18-19 of the Autumn 2003 issue of our newsletter).

You certainly may use the map of the Prussian Partition. Be sure to credit the original source.

Scrapbook, continued from page 1

I grew up in Virginia, in a small but distinct Polish-American community in the mid-20th century. The Roman Catholic parish of St. John the Baptist was its central institution, and held it together until the parish merged with the neighboring "Irish church" of Our Lady of Lourdes in the mid-1970s. Searching out material on the early years of St. John's, I made my first visit to the library of the Virginia Area Historical Society in late December, 2001. Archivist Betty Birstihl was very helpful with the VAHS's file on St. John's, but she was especially excited to show me an item that the Society had just recovered after some years of misplacement.

Early in the 20th century, a group of the Queen City's residents formed an organization called the Virginia Pioneers. Membership was limited to the earliest local settlers, defined in various ways over the years. For many years the group was active for both social and serious purposes. Its members clearly took pride in their families' local heritage and in Virginia's colorful history; they expressed it by organized involvement in various formal celebrations and anniversaries as well as by convivial events.

The group made one of its most lasting legacies in conjunction with the Minnesota Territorial Centennial of 1949, for which a very large celebration was organized starting in late 1948.³ The group published a solicitation to everyone who had been a resident of Virginia for at least fifty years, to come forward and register in order to receive recognition and to participate in pioneer-related events. Dozens of replies to

³It's often observed that our present American culture cultivates twenty-minute attention spans. A stark illustration is provided by the contrast between the Territorial Centennial and its later Sesquicentennial in 1999. For the former, towns throughout the state pulled together multi-day events; local residents researched, assembled, and published written community histories. The celebrations were excuses for good parties; however, their pageants, plays, and parades showed a larger public consciousness of local history that one does not see now. The surviving copies of the published histories are often quite precious to us as genealogists and historians, especially where their source materials have since been lost. By contrast, and despite some effort by the Minnesota Historical Society, the Territorial Sesquicentennial of just five years ago was close to a non-event in outstate Minnesota. In its own displays and publications the MHS nicely focused on the events of the nine years of Minnesota's territorial status, bringing many of their obscure aspects back to public view. However, neither the metro area nor outstate communities marked the anniversary by celebrating their own intervening history in a big way, as had been done in 1949.

Attention Virginia Pioneers

A Virginia pioneer has been defined as a person who was a resident of this community 50 or more years ago.

Are You A Pioneer? If So!

THEN, for the purpose of giving assistance to our Virginia Centennial Celebration in July, will you please register full name and address here below? Thank you.

NAME: John A. Danzey STREET NO. 725-4th St
 Last Name Middle Name First Name
Oct. 1 - 1891
 Date of Arrival in Virginia

Any other information or suggestion you may here offer for the success of our celebration:

That we have a banquet.

Cut This Out and Mail or Bring the Information to the Office of

Centennial Celebration Committee
 CITY HALL

A former grocer wants to see that everybody is fed!
 Source: *Virginia Pioneers Scrapbook*

the solicitation were made on the published form, which called for the respondent to state a date of arrival in Virginia (*See example above*). The information from these forms was later published in installments in the *Mesabi Daily News* in the early summer of 1949.

The reply forms themselves became the nucleus of a scrapbook assembled at some point after the Centennial. To them were added photographs of the surviving pioneers at Centennial events, and a few photos of early settlers and places taken in the first two decades of Virginia's existence. References in the written text indicated that a Mrs. Anna MARIT had assembled the scrapbook.

This priceless item is what Betty showed me. A quick skimming showed forms for my paternal grandfather Alex KISHEL and his older brother Zygmunt, as well as my paternal grandmother's cousin Joe GUSSMAN.⁴ A slower review showed a lot of names

⁴My maternal grandmother, Hulda WALBERG STICKNEY, was also in there; she had been one of the first girls born in Virginia, in 1895, and was quite active in the Pioneers in the late 1940s.

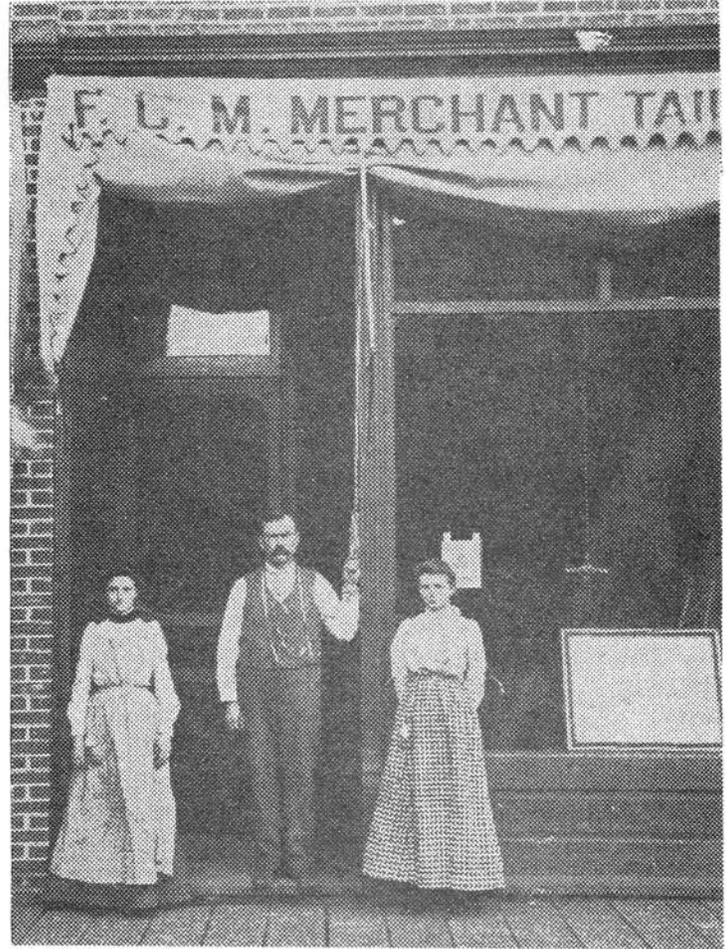
familiar to me from growing up in the parish of St. John's--and the stated dates of arrival for some of them would have been at the time of the town's platting and incorporation in late 1892, or very soon after.⁵ Then I noticed many Polish names in the captions of the 1949 photos of members of the Pioneers. Finally, there were several photos of a businessman identified as John MEEHAN, with the notation that he had operated the first tailor shop on the Range. I remembered this family name from memorials offered from the pulpit at St. John's during my childhood--and, sure enough, in one of the photos were two young women, identified as Mrs. Helen KISHEL and Mrs. Irene "NAUPERIA," with Mr. MEEHAN outside his brick-fronted shop (*See photo at right*). Helen had been my great-aunt, and I recognized that the correct spelling of the surname given for the other young woman was NAPIERAŁA, a name familiar to me from St. John's.

All this piqued my imagination: could it be that Polish-Americans had come to Virginia in some numbers, that early? I tried to identify resources that would help me investigate this suspicion.

I started out by going through the forms in the scrapbook, to get copies of all that had obviously-Polish names and others that I remembered as belonging to parishioners of St. John's. At first I was concerned about the possibility of confusing ethnic origin; however, I found that there were virtually no pioneer-respondents with Slavic surnames other than my Poles and a few Slovaks who had been in the flock at St. John's.

I used them to compile a list. I knew that this might not be a comprehensive enumeration of all of Virginia's Polish pioneers--only of those who stayed and survived to 1949--but that would be significant enough. I consulted the other contents of the scrapbook, clipping files from the VAHS and the North east Minnesota History Center at UMD, and the text of the 1955 jubilee book and the 1965 annual report of St. John's, to begin fleshing out the backgrounds

⁵The plat for the town was filed in the office of the Register of Deeds for St. Louis County in mid-September, 1892; the vote of the very first residents to incorporate as a town was held on November 12, 1892. Einar Anderson and Centennial Booklet Committee, *The Virginia Story* (Virginia, Minnesota: n.p., [1949]), pp. 6-7. See also Marvin Skaurud, *A History of Virginia, Minnesota*, ch. II, pp. 2-3 (unpubl. M.A. thesis, Univ. of Minn, June 1941); David A. Walker, *Iron Frontier: The Discovery and Early Development of Minnesota's Three Ranges* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1979), p. 96.



Laura RASKOWSKA (later NAPIERAŁA), Jan MICHAN, Helen DÓMEN (later KISHEL) in front of Michan Tailor Shop. Date unknown. Source: *Virginia Pioneers Scrapbook*.

and later lives of the people I listed. This produced results.

One significant realization was that Anna MARIT had been John MEEHAN's daughter, and clearly was a person important to my project: she became a grand dame of Virginia's heritage, not only for her work on the Territorial Centennial celebration, but also as an unofficial historian of St. John's throughout the 1950s and 1960s. She was honored for her stewardship of the city's past by being named Queen of Virginia's Statehood Centennial celebration in 1958.⁶ In various writeups for both celebrations, there were mentions that the MEEHANs were of Polish origin. From various sources I learned that this surname had been

⁶"Pioneers Named Centennial Royalty," *Mesabi Daily News*, July 3, 1958, p. 10. In a farewell address, Mrs. MARIT gave more details about the story of the MEEHAN family in Virginia. *Mesabi Daily News*, December 31, 1958, p. 12.

spelled MICHAN in the early years of the family's residence in Virginia. Sure enough, that turned out to be a Polish spelling,⁷ pronounced not too much differently from the later, Americanized spelling.

My investigation kicked into high gear when I exploited 21st-century resources. I accessed the Minnesota Historical Society's new on-line Death Certificate Index, using its search feature to find dates of death for most of the respondents I'd chosen.⁸ I then used the death certificate index of the St. Louis County GenWeb page as a backup and corroboration, to locate a few other decedents who did not turn up in my use of the MHS's page.⁹

After that I used these dates to locate obituaries from Virginia-area newspapers for virtually all of my respondents, from the microfilming at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul; I also retrieved copies of the death certificates for selected individuals.¹⁰ From the obituaries I was able to corroborate many dates of arrival in Virginia. For some of my subjects, they identified parents or collateral family members who would have migrated to Virginia at the same time. Using these leads, I went back and expanded my list considerably.

Most excitingly for my personal interest in immigrant migration patterns, I turned up evidence to corroborate something I'd suspected for a few years, that many of the earlier members of Virginia's Polish-American community had come there from the

⁷It's listed in two variant spellings, MICHAN and MICHAN, in the comprehensive dictionary of surnames extant in Poland in 1991: Kazimierz Rymut, ed., *Słownik nazwisk współcześnie w Polsce używanych*, tom VI, p. 319 (Kraków: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Języka Polskiego, 1993). Rymut indicates, however, that in 1991 there were no Poles at all actually on register with the government under the surnames--something to give pause to the members of the American branch of the family!

⁸This is available at www.mnhs.org; a link to the Index is prominently noted on the site's front page. See n. 10, *infra*, for the subject matter of the Index.

⁹Of all my individual subjects, John MEEHAN was most prominent omission from the MHS index--and I looked under many variants of the Polish and American spellings of his name. His wife Mary and several of his children were there under the American spelling. Once I got the Department of Health record number through St. Louis County, I found his death certificate in the MHS microfilms. Obviously, no project as massive as the on-line index could be finished without some errors and omissions!

Polonian settlements of the Gogebic Iron Range of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. If the recitations in the obituaries were accurate, it seemed like almost all of the respondents I had culled had been in the towns of Ironwood or Bessemer, Michigan, before they came to the Mesabi.¹¹ And another published secondary source for two of my subjects was probably quite reliable: the narrative-form "Pioneer Histories" for selected old settlers that were published in the *Mesabi Daily News* throughout the late spring and summer of 1949. Those for Thomas LAZELLA and Anna MARIT attested to the migration of the LAZELLA and MICHAN families from Ironwood to Virginia in the very first wave of settlement.¹²

Of course, the list that I expanded from my scrapbook findings is not a complete enumeration of all of the Polish pioneers of Virginia's first decade; it only includes those whose family names did not die out, and who had at least one pioneer surviving to 1948 who cared enough about family roots to come forward to be counted.¹³ Nonetheless, there are a few

¹⁰A couple of years ago, the MHS obtained the Minnesota Department of Health's filming of all death certificates officially filed there from 1908 to 1996, and opened it to full public access at the History Center. We're still relegated to the county registrars for pre-1908 records, but the MHS's action was an incredible boon to genealogists and local historians. The records are very heavily used at present.

¹¹As all of us know, one can't automatically take obituaries' recitations of family historical "fact" at face value. After all, they are assembled from information given from memory alone, by bereaved survivors under stress. From time to time one sees corrections of the content of a first death notice, in the fuller obituary the next day. (I found one such, for Mrs. Agatha LORBIECKI of Virginia and Gheen, in the *Mesabi Daily News* for February 23 and 24, 1954.)

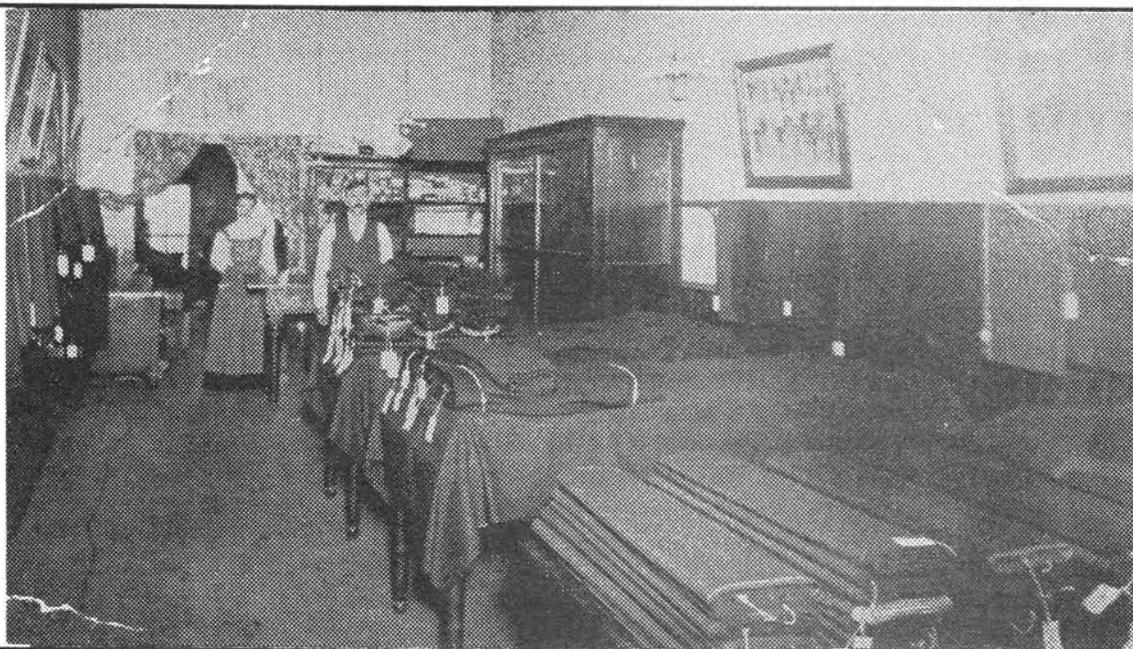
¹²Anna MARIT's long account of the MICHAN family's first decade in Virginia appeared on June 10, 1949. She told of their arrival from Ironwood in May, 1893; the losses they suffered in the two great Virginia fires of June 18, 1893 and June 7, 1900; her father's early business practices; and everyday life on the Iron Frontier. Thomas LAZELLA's story was published on June 28, 1949. In it, he told of coming from Ironwood to northeastern Minnesota in 1892, to work for a year on the construction of the Duluth and Iron Range Railroad, and then being part of the very first crews on the Commodore and Franklin mines as they were opened to the east of Virginia. Unfortunately, none of the other Polish-descended Pioneers wrote their stories for publication in 1949.

¹³For instance, I have found that the PRONDZINSKI, the SZYMONIAK, and probably the CZAJKA were in

**Interior of
MICHAN
Tailor Shop,
with
Minnie
and
Jan MICHAN.**

Date unknown.

Source:
*Virginia
Pioneers
Scrapbook.*



conclusions to be drawn from this secondary-source evidence, subject of course to the internal contradictions in what I've reconstructed.¹⁴

First, it's clear that a nucleus of Poles came from the Upper Peninsula's faltering mining economy almost as soon as Virginia was founded as a town. Assuming the dates of arrival stated in 1948 are accurate, they would have included the families of MICHAN, DOMEN, REMUS, SZYMONIAK, JANECKI/JANESKY, MATUSIEWICZ/MATCHEFTS, KLONOSKI, and Thomas LEŻAŁŁA/LAZELLA. Coming as they did to the ramshackle, hastily-built first settlement, the very first Polish arrivals would have been a noticeable demographic presence during the first months.¹⁵ Though the fire of June 18, 1893 must have caused loss to all of them, they stuck it out through a personal and civic recovery, to share in the very substantial economic growth that the city experienced after the 1900 fire.¹⁶ These people displayed that Polish trait, of surviving great adversity doggedly, without fanfare, and tenaciously.

Virginia before 1900. We see the first two names as birth surnames of the spouses of a couple of our listed Polish pioneers, but there is no one bearing pioneer status who registered under either name in his or her own right.

¹⁴The internal contradictions mostly consist in the difference in dates of arrival in Virginia, between those given in the Scrapbook and those I've reconstructed.

¹⁵When the petition for town incorporation was presented to the St. Louis County Board in September, 1892, the settlement's population was 181. Skaurud, *A History*, Ch. I, pp. 1 and 3.

In the six or seven years after, other Poles followed: the SZLAJ/SCHLEYs, the LISOWSKI, the BENKUSKYs, the SMIGIELSKI/SMEGALs, and my own KISIELEWSKI/KISHEL and GUZMANN/GUSSMAN ancestors and relatives. These pioneers of the 1890s were the heart of the founding membership of St. John's--augmented by a greater number of new Polish immigrants in the first five years of the 20th century.

However, what to make of those stated 1891 arrival dates for Thomas LAZELLA and the Michael JANECKI/JANESKY family? By all accounts, at that time there would have been no human habitation in the swampy valley where Virginia was platted the following year.¹⁷ Thomas LAZELLA's reference might well be to his arrival in northeastern Minnesota generally, as he spent his first year on a track crew laying the line for the D. & I. R. north from Lake Superior, before he went to work at the mines around

¹⁶The growth that came in the years after 1905 is mentioned in the Polish-language correspondence presented in translation in our *Drobne Echa* installment this issue. The Virginia newspapers from 1905 on are filled with reports on the expansion of sawmills, the opening of new ore bodies, and the building of new homes and businesses in Virginia.

¹⁷In the winter of 1891-1892, the only residents of the valley were the 25 men in the Merritt brothers' test-pit crew, joined in March, 1892 by ten more men in the crew of David T. Adams. Skaurud, *A History*, Ch. II at p. 1. See also Walter van Brunt, ed., *Duluth and St. Louis County Minnesota: Their Story and People*, v. II, pp. 574-578 (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1921).

Virginia.¹⁸ Perhaps, he and John JANESKY were referring to an initial residence in the settlement of Mesaba Station, established in 1890 between present-day Aurora and Babbitt as the very first townsite on the Mesabi Range.¹⁹ Or, maybe, these men just suffered a lapse of memory when filling out the Pioneers' form, and confused the number of years back. Absent some sort of evidence like family correspondence or a diary, we can neither prove nor disprove the stated dates.

Once these people made it to the central Mesabi, though, they stayed. Some of them prospered. Jan MICHAN had a successful tailoring business until his death in 1914. He was elected to the Virginia board of aldermen in 1898 and served a two-year term. He truly was the patriarch of Virginia's Polonia, instrumental in the founding of its beloved parish church and a founder and sustaining member of the local chapter of the Polish National Alliance.²⁰ The KLONOSKI family also produced leaders for the community's early years. Father Martin was the local agent for *Rolnik*, the Stevens Point, Wisconsin-based Polish-language newspaper; son John was a correspondent for *Rolnik* for a short time, until his tragic death in a mining accident in 1906.²¹ The JANESKY family became prominent; son John became a retail

grocer, and then had a number of other occupations during his lifetime.²²

Peter GUSSMAN moved north from Virginia to be one of the first homesteaders in the small Polish farming colony at Greaney/Gheen; his son Joseph remained in Virginia, employed as a policeman and very active in the Polish and broader communities. And the sons of my great-grandparents Joseph and Maryanna KISHEL faithfully supported St. John's for decades.²³ They founded a large family whose farther-flung descendants now include engineers, educators, a physician, a dentist, a university professor, and a federal judge.

What I've found here is just a start, the identification of a phenomenon in its outline alone. It's pretty strong evidence of an ethnic "internal chain migration," from one part of the rapidly-growing America of a century ago to another, and almost certainly prompted by economic reasons.²⁴ That migration gave significant strength to the fledgling settlement that later became the Mesabi Range's largest city. I can't summon up the true immensity of the individuals' experience in pioneering; nearly all of that is gone, lost to us when the vessel of memory passed with their deaths by the late 1960s.

Still, anyone who's lived through a long winter on the Range, smelled a cut white pine log, brushed red ore dust off pants cuffs, or even inhaled incense during an old-time benediction in Polish, has shared a bit of their experience, from imagination alone. It's not really falling prey to genealogy's stereotyped filio-

¹⁸This is noted in his pioneer's account, *Mesabi Daily News*, June 28, 1949, p. 5.

¹⁹See Walker, *Iron Frontier* at pp. 87-88 (description) and 92 (map). Mesaba Station was located where the D. & I.R. line crossed the Mesabi ore body; Edmund Longyear made one of the first effective uses of the modern diamond drill just west of there. *Id.* at p. 87.

²⁰As to the election, see *The Virginian*, April 6, 1898, p. 1, and the *Virginia Enterprise*, April 8, 1898, p. 1. For his career, see death notices at *Daily Virginian*, June 19, 1914, p. 1, *Duluth Herald*, June 20, 1914, p. 10, and *Duluth News-Tribune*, June 20, 1914, p. 3, as well as Anna MARIT's Pioneer account, cited *supra*. As early as 1899, Jan MICHAN was a delegate to the national convention of the PNA. *The Virginian*, October 12, 1899, p. 4.

²¹Martin KLONOSKI's agency for *Rolnik* was announced in its issue of January 5, 1906, at p. 4. Reports about Virginia, including the KLONOSKIs' efforts to recruit Poles in Stevens Point to come to work in Virginia, appeared in *Rolnik*, March 2, 9, and 16, and April 27, 1906. Then, on November 23, 1906, *Rolnik* reported how Jan KLONOSKI had fallen down a shaft in the confusion of an underground fire at the Tesora Mine. See also *The Virginian*, November 9, 1906, p. 1. After that, *Rolnik* had no more Virginia-dated reports until a couple penned by Jan MICHAN starting in mid-1908.

²²Michael JANESKY resided in Virginia until 1918, when he and his wife Mary moved to Kenosha, Wisconsin. See obituary at *Virginia Daily Enterprise*, July 30, 1935, p. 3. By the time of his marriage to Edna WALSH in 1911, John JANESKY was in the grocery trade in partnership with Stanley GULAN. *The Virginian*, July 14, 1911, pp. 3 and 5. He went on to become a timekeeper for the City of Virginia, and then was a detective on the police force for 20 years. See obituary, *Mesabi Daily News*, June 3, 1971, p. 2.

²³Our surname is on more windows than any other in the 1921-built structure of St. John's--which is still standing, recently refreshed, and still serving as a chapel of Holy Spirit Parish.

²⁴Whether those very first families had a deeper connection in a common place of origin in Poland can't be told from my sources. I have found evidence that some of them had settled first in Stevens Point, before moving to the Gogebic Range--which would make it a two-segmented internal chain migration for them.

pietism to recognize that these were brave, tough, and resourceful people. They deserved that little "hive," that little "nest" that they made for themselves in Virginia and at St. John's. And, they gave us, their descendants, our roots up there, where the wind hits heavy on the borderline.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS:

Those who've heard my presentations to the PGS-MN will remember that I had suspected the existence of the U.P.-Mesabi Polish chain migration for some years. By sharing her enthusiasm for that rediscovered scrapbook, however, Betty Birnstihl gave me the vector through which I was able to construct

the proof for it. So this one really grew out of your help, Betty--thanks! I'm also grateful to the other Virginians and Virginia descendants who gave me leads, help, and material on several of the families: Dorothy Petroskey, RosaLee Niemi, Kathy Bergan, and Clarence A. "Clancy" Graham, Jr., as well as my distant GUSSMAN cousins Mrs. Clarice Ryan and Kay Helgeson. If you don't see too much of your stuff in this article, it's only because the tight focus and lack of space did not permit; as I tell more of the story, it will appear! Pat Maus was again helpful with materials in the collection of the Northeast Minnesota History Center at UMD. And Joanne Sher, the volunteer genealogist at the St. Louis County Recorder's Office, cheerfully helped me by e-mail. *Dzienki, wszyscy kolezanki!*



Vizanko (?) home in the Finntown neighborhood of Virginia, across from Bailey's Sawmill, 1900.
Included, not in this order: Paul VIZANKO; Joe, Anna, and Kate GUSSMAN, Matt MARIT, Joe VIZANKO.

Source: *Virginia Pioneers Scrapbook*.

APPENDIX: SOME EARLY POLISH SETTLERS OF VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA, GLEANED FROM THE *VIRGINIA PIONEERS SCRAPBOOK*:

compiled by Greg Kishel

This table is built out from my first findings in the *Virginia Pioneers Scrapbook*. The persons whose names are flush with the left-hand margins are those whose reply forms appear in the *Scrapbook*, in order of their arrival in Virginia as stated there. The persons noted with indented asterisks are their close relatives, usually those likely to have arrived at the same time, identified from the first subjects' obituaries or other sources. The arrival dates for the latter are calculated from information given in their obituaries or other sources, usually calculated back from the date of death on a stated length of residence in Virginia. "Origin" refers to the place of residence in the United States next preceding Virginia, from the sources used. Those with "[?]" indicate a stated place of birth, taken from an obituary, for someone who would have arrived in Virginia as a young child within a few years after that. Newspaper abbreviations are as follows: *DV*, *Daily Virginian*; *MDN*, *Mesabi Daily News*; *QCS*, *Queen City Sun*; *TV*, *The Virginian*; *VDE*, *Virginia Daily Enterprise*. "Not found" means that I was not 100% effective in my search; perhaps those persons died elsewhere. And I have included married women's birth surnames whenever I could, taken from death certificates and given to show possible family connections by marriage. All surname spellings are in the form given in the source document, though I have given the original Polish spelling whenever I found it for a subject.

* * * * *

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DOA/VA</u>	<u>ORIGIN</u>	<u>OBITUARY</u>
LAZELLA/LEŻAŁŁA, Thomas * Wife, LAZELLA [b. ?], Mary	6-1891	Ironwood	<i>MDN</i> , 3-31-1959 <i>MDN</i> , 6-19-1969
JANESKY, John * Father, JANESKY, Michael	10-1-1891 c. 1892	Ironwood	<i>MDN</i> , 6-3-1971 <i>VDE</i> , 7-30-1935
ANDRZEJCZYK [b. DOMEN], Annie * Father, DOMEN/DOMIN, Anton * Mother, DOMEN [b. BENKOSKI], Mary	3-21-1892	Bessemer	<i>MDN</i> , 10-17-1961 <i>VDE</i> , 6-14-1934 <i>VDE</i> , 11-16-1944
KISHEL [b. DOMEN], Mrs. Helen Mary * Husband, KISHEL, Zigmund John, q.v.	3-1892		<i>MDN</i> , 8-18-1966
JUBALA [b. REMUS], Rose * Father, REMUS, John * Mother, REMUS, Lorna, q.v. * Husband, DZIUBALA, Andrew	1892 [1893?] c. 1909	Ironwood Ironwood	<i>MDN</i> , 9-22-1988 <i>VDE</i> , 2-26-1931 <i>MDN</i> , 4-11-1964
MEEHAN, Frank B. * Father, MICHAN/MEEHAN, John F. * Mother, MEEHAN [b. SIMESKI], Mary	1892 1893 1893	Ironwood Ironwood Ironwood	Not found <i>DV</i> , 6-14-1914 <i>VDE</i> , 9-14-1935
MEEHAN, John B.	1892	Ironwood	<i>VDE</i> , 3-21-1922
MEEHAN, Joseph	1893		Not found
MEEHAN, Frank	5-5-1893	Ironwood	<i>MDN</i> , 12-22-1953
MARIT, Matt J.	1893 - 1892	Ironwood	<i>MDN</i> , 1-16-1958
MARIT [b. MICHAN] Anna * Husband, MARIT, Matt J., q.v.	1892	Ironwood	<i>MDN</i> , 12-3-1982

REMUS, [b. SYMONIAK]Lorna * Daughter, JUBALA, Rose, q.v.	1892	Ironwood	MDN, 2-24-1961
GUSSMAN [b. JANESKY], Mrs. Katherine	1893	Ironwood	MDN, 12-12-1966
MATCHEFTS/MATUSIEWICZ, Tony [Anton] * Wife, MATCHEFTS [b. PETERSON], Helen * Father, MATCHEFTS, Joseph	1893 1895 c. 1890	Iron River, MI [?] b. Virginia	MDN, 6-19-1949 MDN, 9-16-1973 VDE, 7-21-1927
GULAN [b. ?], Mrs. Ada	1893		Not found
NAPIERALA [b. RASZKOWSKI], Mrs. Laura * Husband, NAPIERALA, Joseph	6-15-1893 c. 1900		MDN, 7-8-1963 MDN, 1-12-1949
VIEZBICKE, Rose E.	6-1893		Not found
KLONOSKI, James P. * Father, KLONOSKI, Martin * Mother, KLONOSKI [b. PRONDZINSKI], Cecelia * Brother, KLONOSKI, John * Brother, KLONOSKI, Barney	1894 c. 1893 c. 1895 c. 1896 c. 1890	Ironwood Ironwood	MDN, 10-22-1953 VDE, 2-3-1919 VDE, 9-23-1931 TV, 11-9-1906 VDE, 11-22-1940
MIEZO/MEIZO, [b. DOMEN], Wanda C. * Husband, MEIZO, Bruno	11-17-1892	b. Virginia	MDN, 6-11-1972 MDN, 12-17-1970
REMUS, Stanley John	3-15-1894	b. Virginia	MDN, 3-10-1986
SCHLEY, Barney William * Father, SCHLEY, William * Mother, SCHLEY [b. MUSOLFF], Julia	4-4-1894 c. 1895 c. 1894	Milwaukee [?]	MDN, 7-9-1969 QCS, 12-7-1928 VDE, 4-9-1942
LISOWSKI, John	3-3-1895		MDN, 8-2-1949
LISOWSKI [b. HINTZ], Victoria	2-1895		MDN, 5-8-1950
MEEHAN, Louis	1895	Ironwood	MDN, 9-23-1973
BENKUSKY, William * Father, BENKUSKY, Albert * Mother, BENKUSKY [b. PIPKE], Martha	1896 c. 1894 c. 1894	b. Virginia	MDN, 8-8-1962 VDE, 12-10-1937 MDN, 11-28-1960
KISHEL, Zigmund John * Father, KISHEL/KISIELEWSKI, Joseph * Mother, KISHEL [b. WROCZYŃSKA], Mary * Brother, KISHEL, Frank * Sister, BEARD [b. KISIELEWSKA], Grace	12-21-1897 c. 1894 c. 1898	Ironwood	MDN, 3-17-1952 VDE, 11-26-1940 VDE, 6-19-1939 MDN, 11-19-1959 MDN, 6-13-1949
KISHEL, Alex Stanley * Wife, KISHEL [b. PIONTEK/FRIDAY], Anna	? 8-1908	Bessemer	MDN, 4-21-1964 MDN, 1-4-1982
OZDOWSKI, Irene Domen	10-16-1897		MDN, 7-26-1978
KLONOSKI, Florence	5-2-1898	b. Virginia	MDN, 9-15-1978
GUSSMAN, Joseph * Father, GUSSMAN, Peter * Mother, GUSSMAN [b. DROST], Augusta * Wife, GUSSMAN, Katherine, q.v.	1899	Bessemer Bessemer	MDN, 2-7-1970 VDE, 4-5-1943 Not found
SMEGAL, Mike * Wife, SMEGAL [b. PRODZINSKI], Martha	4-2-1899		MDN, 10-26-1949 MDN, 9-15-1950

DROBNE ECCHA

From *Wiarus*, 1893, 1905, and 1908
Dateline: Virginia, Minnesota and Bessemer-
Ironwood, Michigan
By Greg Kishel

To my own personal delight, I found with the help of Ray Marshall and John Radziłowski that *Wiarus* published three major items of correspondence datelined in my home town. These pieces appeared contemporaneously with the foundation and first growth of St. John the Baptist, the parish in which I grew up. They're remarkable for their vigor, sauciness, and vividness. Over the course of a year, I translated all three--and had a lot of fun doing it. Here they are, with an earlier *Wiarus* report datelined in the Upper Peninsula. That one may explain why that first group of Poles left Ironwood for the Mesabi Range.

From *Wiarus*, August 24, 1905:
VIRGINIA, Minn.

Around 60 Polish families reside in Virginia, dispersed among a diverse group of nationalities. To date they have not had their own national parish church; only now has the Lord come to their aid, such that they have built themselves a place of worship. They have their own Polish priest in the person of the esteemed Father Michał SINGER [SENGIR], of whom all of them have become fond and who delivers beautiful sermons to them. The chief founder of the new church is Mr. J. F. MUSIAŁ, a good Catholic and a true member of the old guard; one should take an example from him. Given time, the new parish will be improved, because each Pole readily gravitates to such a church in order to hear the Word of God interpreted in his own ancestral tongue. -- No wonder that the gossips went to their neighbors and talked it around among themselves over a glass of beer, because they had to have something to do while their men were working arduously in the mills.

Mr. J. F. MUSIAŁ is the proprietor of a large tailor shop... ***** In Virginia our countryman Mr. Marcin MUSIAŁ has a saloon, the Poles should give their support to their own... *****

A WELL-WISHER.

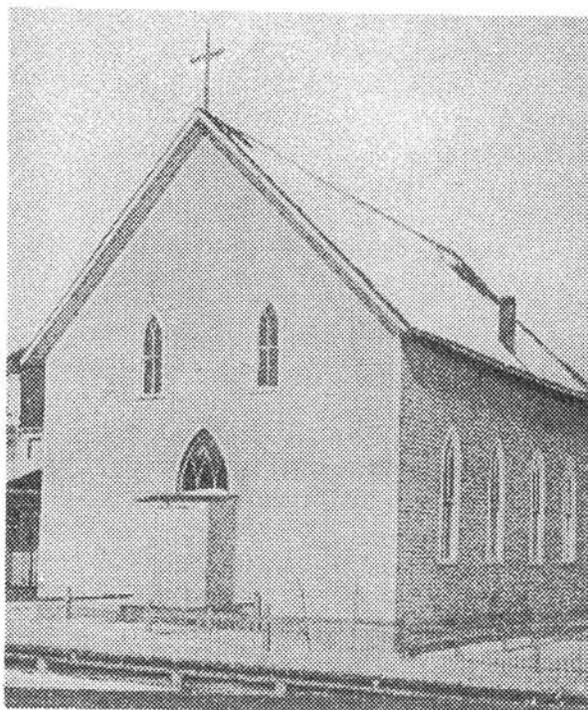
From *Wiarus*, September 14, 1905:
FROM VIRGINIA, Minn.

Wherever Polish people gather, they immediately set to work to support the belief in Christ. In cities and towns alike we find churches and chapels where the word of God is declaimed in the tongue of our motherland. Our people love each other in their belief in Jesus and they also willingly teach their offspring to do so, because they build schools--one might call them mother schools--in which the little children learn religion, morality, and the language of their forefathers. Thus the education of young people is improved and by this design they are better people.

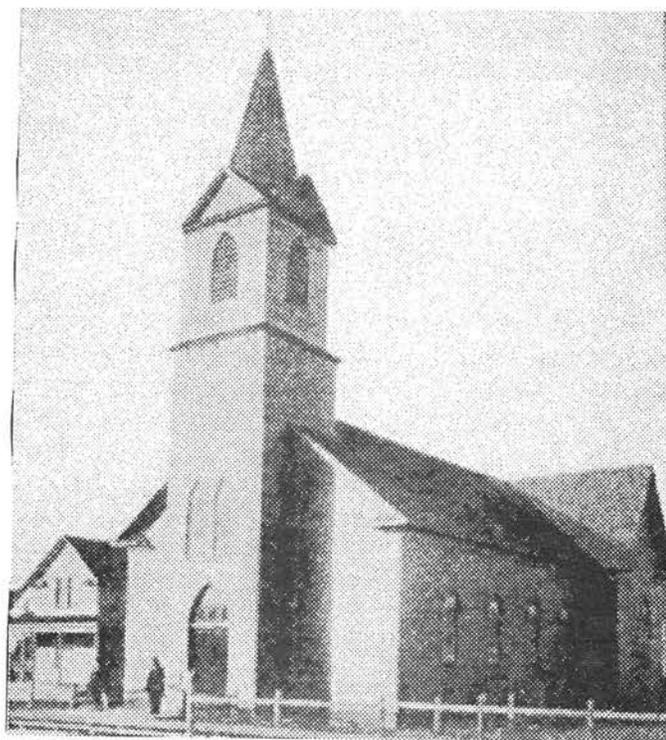
Thus it happens that even among farming people, to the extent that they can afford it, they build churches and places for the nurture of their children, in order to carry this on. Truth to tell, the heart of a fellow smiles when he visits such a progressive parish, and it does him good to be there. Still, everyone is not able to travel to such concentrated settlements to inquire after news of the wellbeing of his countrymen, because the trip may cost a lot of money. Not everyone is able to live in large cities, or in large parishes; that may be an impossibility for some.

Because the Poles are scattered over nearly the whole of the United States, accordingly, only from the newspapers do many such individuals learn about the circumstances of their countrymen who live here and elsewhere. Also, not all Poles have their own Polish church, because a great many of them are mixed in with the Irish in one church, or--what is worse--with the Germans, and for the most part the latter are present in large numbers. As long as a house of God like that remains in debt, the Pole is a welcome and careful parishioner; but as soon as the said Irishman or the German sees that the debt is repaid, out from the manor-house with the Pole. Willy-nilly the Pole must depart and he says, only too late: "Oy! If I would have known thus I never would have given so much money for that church." Thus it is said: Only after the damage is the Pole wise. Nonetheless, in such a situation the Pole does not drop off to sleep and he does not lose hope.

The Lord always chooses something to progress for the sake of the common good. Though at the beginning a small handful of Poles sets to work to build a church, they persevere to the end and they achieve it by themselves. Although they have to carry a great burden, it does not fall on the roof; they continue to eagerly make their offerings in the praise of God, and for their own benefit.



Original building of St. John's ,
prior to addition of steeple and transept.
Source: 1908 Industrial Edition of
Virginia Enterprise.



Original building of St. John's,
after addition of steeple and transept.
Source: Virginia High School yearbook,
1909.

One after another encourages, "Brothers, let us not give the Irishmen and Germans reason to laugh at us." Sometimes flattery is used by such a penny-snatcher to trick a few dollars from the Poles for its own church, but this does not succeed often at present.

It was desired to use this plan here, in this town; however, it was unsuccessfully tried because the Poles smelled the message with their noses and gave the Irishman a rebuff.

Presently there are two parishes here, one Polish-Slovakian and the second Irish. Up to a few months ago, and for the preceding twelve years, there was but one church, rather than two. A new church building of brick was desired for the Irish; the Irish thought that when the Poles were with them it would be easy to pay off such debt. When building a church, it is necessary to build a new rectory also, and that house was raised first; but that was not the end of it, more money was needed.

The Irish priest, a very exemplary and energetic pastor, resolved on a tithe of twenty-five dollars per each Polish family. The Poles regarded this tax unfavorably and some of them anticipated the time when it would be put into effect. Well, it began that one to

another asked what their views were; said Kuba to Bartek, "What do you think of this tax?" Kuba being Kuba, lacking knowledge, and Bartek being no better, did not know enough about it to state an opinion. But once the Irish priest definitely began to insist on the money, a swarming began immediately among the Poles. And then Bartek, not being a yokel, said, "I am not giving, because once I did they would repay us."(?)

A Polish meeting was called; with few exceptions, every Pole appeared. Citizen Jan MICHAN made a motion that the Poles no longer belong to the Irish church because there the fish are uncertain. He said, "If we have to give up to twenty-five dollars there anyway, we could set up our own cashbox and could deposit \$25.00 for the foundation of a Polish parish, and we would have a Polish parish." All supported that motion, and of one mind they united in the project. Soon enough money was collected, and lots for a church and rectory were purchased on the same block on which the Irish church stood.

Ill-tempered about all of this, the Irish priest began to make inquiry, wishing to prevent the Poles from completing the work; however, he was already too late. In order to pour out his vengeance on the Poles,

the same well-meaning pastor said "As long as I am here, the Poles will not build their own church." But, despite such laudable wishes, in the end he had to give the old church building to the Poles and to move it at his own expense to their lot.

In the interior of the church, all had been wrecked; there were no pews, nor an altar nor even one thing left where the altar had been.

At the end of March this year, the bishop sent a priest to the newly-founded parish. There was no rectory; hence he had to stay with one of the parishioners and boarded with others.

But shortly it was thus. A house was purchased for \$1,225.00 for a rectory; they obtained it at little cost even though it was a splendid house. However, it was necessary to have it moved, which they did on sticks somewhat larger than those that serve for the cleaning of teeth. The moving of the building cost \$300.00; the repair of the church cost \$375.00; \$131.00 was collected for a monstrance; pews were purchased for \$300; citizen KICHAN [MICHAN?] made a gift of a mantel of a value of \$50.00; Mr. Wojciech CZAJKA made a gift of a thurible of a value of \$15.00. Thus there were now the church, the rectory, and the Polish priest, and thus were frustrated the previous words: "As long as I will be here I will not permit a second priest."

At present the parish numbers 75 families: 50 Polish and the remainder Slovaks and other nationalities. With the help of God and the good intentions of the people this parish will proceed to greater improvements, but still it will not be necessary to regret sacrifice and generosity. There is more than enough opportunity for the improvement of everything, if in solidarity and unity the people quietly join hands, and one day undoubtedly this parish will rise with great power.

Now our local brothers and sisters in Christ will have to contribute more to the work around the church than before, because no one can use the excuse of not understanding the priest for not contributing to the church.

And now a few words about Virginia. And thus a trip to that place! It is situated on the train line called the Duluth, Missabe & Northern, which leaves Duluth at 7:40 a.m., and has a second train at 3:50 p.m. This train races two miles over the lowlands, after which it must climb the Duluth uplands. This little iron dog goes chug, chug, puff and puff, puff to itself, as it climbs up the bald mountain hilltop of Duluth.

One must then travel 73 miles to our city. Toward the end of the journey they cry out, "Next station, Virginia," "Virginia," and yet again "Virginia"; one would think that this fellow is never going to stop crying out, "Virginia." This name, Virginia, comes from the Latin *Virgo*, and this means "virgin." For a few years, this town gave forth a fragrance of virginity (?), and even the nose and eyes had to be covered; however, through the good effort of Mayor FAY this town clothed itself in a different form.

Virginia is built on a level area three miles square, surrounded by hills like a crown woven from roses.

Great wealth in iron ore is found in the embankments of these hills. Virginia numbers more than five thousand inhabitants of various calibres and nationalities, Catholic and non-Catholic together as if they were a mixture of peas and cabbage.

Thus the city is growing considerably; over the whole year there is enough work in the mines, in the city, and in the sawmill, day and night the work continues.

According to the most recent rumors a second sawmill has to be built this year or the next; it will employ about 500 people. Whatever the work is, the Poles have priority in getting hired because they are not as eager to strike as the Finlanders and the Italians are.

If today there were five times as many Poles here, every one would get work. Polish craftsmen of almost every occupation would be able to find employment for themselves.

For example, a good carpenter receives up to four dollars a day and more; masons also earn good money. If our esteemed countrymen in the big cities are without work and are squeezed together like bees in a hive, these excess swarms should fly forth to the north and be responsible for themselves now that the Poles are building such a straw hive for themselves there; they will find an occupation here and they will be content. They forecast that next year there will be still more work here, because new mines will be opening.

The more that finished goods of iron are in demand, the more ore is extracted from the mines.

You countrymen on those meager farms out in the woods, desert your hoes, axes, and plows! You are enriching only the shopkeepers, and you will lack freedom all the way unto death.

You work from dawn all the way to dark, as long as you are able to see in front of yourself, but what sort of advantage do you have from such work? It's uncertain. Look here, countryman! You went as a young person to the farm in the woods; you have worked on it ten years and more; you have cut the wood and then had to turn it over to the shopkeeper for food, not only for your family but also for the livestock, because there are no oats for the horses and the hay ran short.

Start out with debt and you are in debt; you will not pay it off, it will carry over from one winter to the second, and thus later it gets to where the shopkeeper says, "I cannot give provisions to you like before, unless you give me a mortgage on your livestock or on your farm." The time comes for repayment of this debt, which is thus stuck to you when you don't have the money and thus you are compelled to leave farming, like a young girl from a dance. Your situation at the finish is worse than at the beginning. Your children are living without education, because you needed every hand for the clearing of so many stumps; your toil-worn little children scarcely can shuffle their legs one after the other; sometimes in spite of all their work they must go to sleep cold and with empty stomachs.

The truth is, nowhere do roast pigeons fall into the mouth by themselves; however, it is entirely different in places of plentiful wages.

A fellow will make from \$2.75 to \$3.00 per day for himself, and will be able to dress handsomely, will eat well, and will drink champagne. The little children have full access to school inasmuch as they need not miss it on account of work, because there is no need for them to work.

Although a friend is angry with his comrade now and again, he does not long look askance at him. "Hey!" says one to the other, "what will we have to worry about. May the good old days dawn on us once again; let's drink to the souls of our mothers, and thus they will put an end to our worries, so they won't come back to bother us."

The Polish people in Virginia have a cheerful life for themselves; among them there is no poverty; though with a little candle you could look for it among them, you will not find it. On the other hand, when poverty shows itself to anyone, not long will it prevail, because there is enough gunpowder and dynamite to blow up its armor, or to dispatch it in its entirety to the Russians.

Countrymen, come to us; this place will be enough for you; there is work for the taking and money for the making; there will be a great throng of us, and the Italians and the Finlanders will flee before us.

ONE FROM THE PARISH.

* * * * *

From *Wiarus*, January 7, 1909:
VIRGINIA, Minn.

I respectfully ask for the kind placement of these several words in *Wiarus*.

The day of November 30 will long be remembered by we Poles in Virginia, Minn., because on that day our countryman, the Very Reverend Bishop Paweł RHODE, arrived here, through the efforts of our parish priest, The Reverend Father SENGIER. At the same time there arrived the priests Fathers BĄCZYK, ICIEK and LASKOWSKI. Our parish priest, Father HAGAN [sic; should be "HOGAN"], Father BILBAN, and also the societies went to the train station to meet these distinguished guests. Under the leadership of the undersigned, in the capacity of a captain, the members of the societies were drawn up in rows, like soldiers off to battle. From the train station we set forth via Chestnut Street and at length we came to a stop. We escorted the reverend Bishop to the rectory. After just five minutes the Bishop came out of the rectory, surrounded by the priests. Going before the main doors of the church, the Bishop said a prayer and consecrated the renovated church, after which the priests said a litany before the large altar. After that was finished, Father BĄCZYK celebrated a High Mass, during which Bishop RHODE gave a beautiful sermon. After the completion of the services, the Bishop gave the people his personal blessing. Although the weather was not favorable (because the snow was falling and it was wet), the church was overflowing with the faithful.

The Polish settlement in Virginia, Minn., has been in existence since 1892. Nearly on the very edge of our country, because it is only 86 miles from the Canadian border, there were only a few of us roving Poles here in the beginning. In association with the Irish and the French, we constructed a church. For a priest, we received Father KRANIEC, who could speak only a little Polish. Still, we did not decline in spirit. In 1895, I established the Society of St. John the Baptist, and in the following year, on March 9, we rose under the standard of the Polish National Alliance in the capacity of Group 297. For twelve years we lived here, harmoniously and happily like

brothers of one mother. Once per year, there came to us various Polish priests: Father SROKA, Father M. SENGIER (currently our parish priest), Father BABIŃSKI, and Father LASKOWSKI. These chaplains reinforced us with spiritual comfort. Finally, Father BABIŃSKI came to my tailor shop and said: "Dear friend! Seek a little home for your Poles, because the Irish soon will be expelling you."

In 1902, together with the Irish, we Poles started to build a new church at a cost of more than \$13,000.00, and the old church was transferred to the lots that were being reserved for the parish school. The next year the church already was near completion, but then the bishop from Duluth took Father BILBAN away from us and transferred him to Eveleth, and gave us Father HOGAN, an Irishman, in his place. This one at once removed me from the post of collector of tithes, and put an Irishman in my place. From his position, he lent the best of everything to the Irishmen. And what is worst, he began to hear confessions through a translator, because he was not able to speak Polish. To the ailing Maryanna DYLEWSKA he gave penance through a translator, even though it was possible for her to have received it through Father BILBAN in Eveleth (because that place is close by). The people fiercely resented that.

I had resolved to cover the cost of a trip to Duluth, so that I could go to the bishop and could petition that Father BILBAN be sent back to us. I presented this matter to the bishop, but the bishop answered in the negative: "I gave you Father HOGAN, so listen to him, and if you do not know the English language, then you will learn it." I returned home with nothing, and I related the whole matter to my countrymen. But then we seized the occasion by the forelock.

With two others, in the capacity of a committee, we went to Eveleth, to Father BILBAN, so that he could write a letter to the bishop in Duluth for us. Father BILBAN satisfied our request and immediately furnished us with a rough draft of a letter. My little girl copied the letter over to a neat form and we sent it. In a short time, we received a response from the bishop. The bishop gave me permission for the organization of a new parish, but he laid down the condition that he was not giving us a permanent pastor, only one priest who would be coming once a month.

So I went from one Pole to another and I showed the letter from the bishop, that gave me permission for the organization of a new parish. Some of our countrymen leaped all the way up from great joy; others said that hair would sooner grow on the palms of their hands, than MICHAN would bring this about

by himself. I assembled a parish meeting on the 23rd day of October and I showed all present the letter from Bishop McGOLRICK. A parish committee was immediately elected at the meeting, of the following makeup: J.F. MICHAN, president; Antoni SZYMONIAK, secretary; Franciszek TRAMPUSH, treasurer; CZAJKA and MUSZEWSKI, guardians. Immediately we imposed a tax as well: \$25 per family, and for single people \$10. On that note, this conference was concluded.

On the second day, Father BILBAN came to me from Eveleth and asked, "What's new, MICHAN?" "Everything is well," I replied. "I received permission from the bishop and also elected a parish committee." On that, Father BILBAN said: "Very fine, MICHAN, but listen to me now: those lots, which were purchased for a parish school several years ago, and on which the old church now stands, belong to me, and I have legal title to them. I will now sell those lots to you for the price I paid for them, with an additional charge of five percent, which makes \$557 in all." We were in agreement and that was that! I promised the priest that I would deliver the money in a few days. That night I was not able to sleep, thinking only to myself, how those Irishmen would be caught on the fishing rod.

On the second day I went to TRAMPUSZ and told him, that I was going to Eveleth, to buy the lots from the priest. He went with me immediately, he harnessed the horse to the wagon, and we left; and in half an hour we were there already. We paid the money, Father BILBAN gave us the legal title in proper order--and the lots were ours. "Now," we thought to ourselves, "my clever Irishman, the Pole has you in a snare!"

After we returned to the city, I went resolutely and cheerfully to Father HOGAN. I said to him that we had organized a Polish parish, and we were demanding that the old church be returned to us, the one that was known to have been built in part with our money. To that Father HOGAN said: "I am not giving the church to you, because we need it for a school, and you Poles must hearken to me for two years more; after two years, I will give you permission for that." "Well," I said, "I already have permission." "From whom?" "From Bishop McGOLRICK. And the lots are mine, and that which stands on them, that also belongs to me." "And how are they yours?" "Because I bought them." "From whom?" "From Father BILBAN. And I ask that the old church be returned to us, because it justly belongs to us Poles."

After long negotiations it ended up that Father

At right:

**Father Michael SENGIR
and PNA honor guard.**

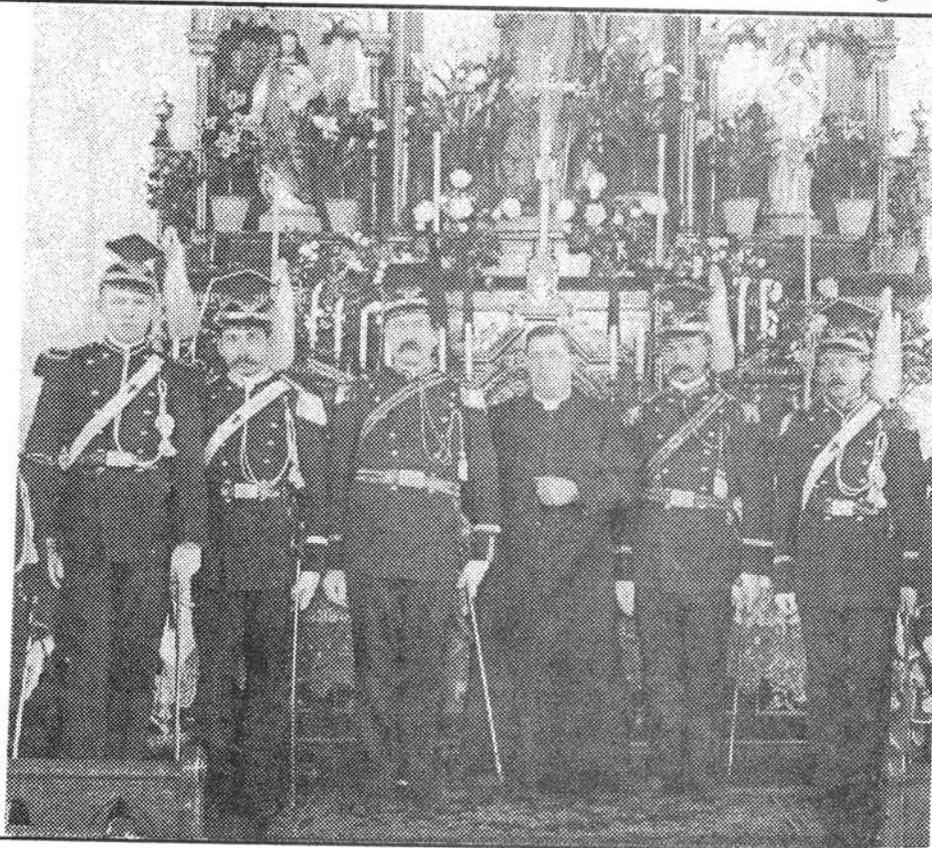
From left:

Joe GUSSMAN,
Adam BOHO,
Jan MICHAN,
Father Sengir,
Peter GUSSMAN
unknown.

Date unknown.

Source:

Virginia Area
Historical Society
photo collection.



HOGAN returned the old church to us, but he ordered it to be taken away, so that it was not standing close to the new church, even if that were beyond the very edge of the town. He declared this to us at a parish meeting that he had called himself, in the presence of all the Irish parishioners. "I am not consenting to that," I answered, "The lots are mine and the church must remain on them." "When we need those lots for the parish school!" shouted Father HOGAN. "Then give us, in exchange for them, the four lots that are on the right side of the church," responded TRAMPUSZ.

And thus it then stood. On the second day, immediately in the morning, the Irishmen got to work and brought the church to those lots. In such a way, all of this work was finished by January 9, 1905, and the new parish was incorporated on January 21 of that year, under the patronage of St. John the Baptist.

So we had come one step forward. At once I gave a contract for the repair of the church, at a cost of \$247. On February 12 I went to Eveleth, in order to take a plan from the steeple on the church there, for the purpose of constructing the same sort of steeple on our church. I called on Father BILBAN there and he told me that he had received a letter from the bishop, with the information that the bishop already had a priest for us. "Instead of building a steeple, MICHAN, it is better to make efforts for a rectory," said Father BILBAN to me.

Good counsel, but how was it to be accomplished? And yet right away I learned about a sturdy little house, suitable for a priest's dwelling place. On the next day Father BILBAN came to us with Father SENGIER--this had to be our future priest. So I showed him that little house, and I asked if it would be good for a rectory. "Yes," he replied, "buy it right away." So we bought it, and in another couple of days Father SENGIER came to us. In a word, I can say, in the space of two weeks everything was already in complete order, and the debt for the parish was only \$1,600.

Father SENGIER assumed the administration of our parish on April 1, 1905; he immediately set to work, and has been working to the present day. Within two years the aforementioned debt was already repaid in its entirety; and, in the current year, through the efforts of our new parish priest, we took another step forward, since we completed the construction of a 36-foot church and a steeple 12 feet by 12, and 85 feet in height. In such a way, we showed the Irishmen what we Poles are capable of doing!

And in all of this the principal merit of our priest, is that after the construction the church presents itself so magnificently and the steeple is so beautiful. At six o'clock in the morning he has been celebrating Mass, and at seven he was already working on the construction with hammer and a carpenter's square in hand,

was watching over all, and was ordering people to keep working so they would not laze. And thus now the Irishmen, as they pass nearby, open their eyes wide like onions, and they say, "This too that Polish priest has accomplished with his Poles!"

Thus, it also is not strange that the Polish parishioners are deeply grateful to their priest for his pains and labors. Two local women, Mrs. DOMINKA with her neighbor, even took a collection and gathered \$53 for a sheepskin coat for the priest, because the winter here is harsh, but with a good sheepskin coat he will not be cold. In the church, our priest publicly thanked these two women and the whole parish alike, and said that he did not require a thing more for his work.

Now I speak on behalf of the whole parish, and offer heartfelt greetings and thanks to our priest. Through the drops of sweat that he has shed for us, let us all wish our Reverend Father benefactor an old-fashioned Polish "Bóg zapłać!"

J. F. MICHAN

...and, from *Wiarus*, December 14, 1893:

IN THE IRON MINES in the vicinity of Bessemer and Ironwood, Michigan, as well as Hurley in north-eastern [sic] Wisconsin, there is no longer the work now that there was earlier. This is because there have been found on the other side of Lake Superior, around the Mesaba region in Minnesota, deposits of iron ore that are so very close to the surface of the earth that it does not cost very much to extract it. In some places one needs only a steam shovel to dig out the ore, whereas the excavation of ore by the method of mining, deeply in the earth, costs five times as much. The Poles who set up business in Ironwood and Hurley will be having to sell out for cheap and move out, because where there will be no work, the workers also will be leaving the area. The mills and other sources of earning a living are no longer there, and it is not possible to make a living off the soil, because it is only stone.

When I first started translating this material, I had no idea how interesting and how historically valuable it would be, for several different reasons.

First, I'll point out a few bits of Polglish that I found in the text. I could not find the word *sztornik* in *Wielki słownik* or any of my other Polish-language

dictionaries, and it drove me crazy for awhile. Finally, from the context, it came to me: this was a hybrid word born in America, the root word being the English "store," rendered in Polish phonetics and then suffixed with -nik to signify "storekeeper" or "shopkeeper"! A more obvious one was *Finlandr*, a word that could have emerged only from the close encounter between Polish and Finnish immigrant populations in the North Country of the Upper Midwest.¹ One I'd seen before in other Polish-American reportage was *mityng*, dropped very accurately into Polish phonetics.

On the plane of historical study, these pieces are actually very good evidence--set down as they were in close proximity to the Poles' defection from the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes. They round out the story from the English-language materials on the foundation of St. John's that I've found so far. The local newspaper reportage seems to have been limited to *The Virginian*; its competitor the *Virginia Enterprise* completely ignored the Poles' institution-building effort, even when a dignitary like Bishop Rhode came to town.²

¹Though I could be accused of ethnic insensitivity, I've translated it directly to the English source word--a term some modern-day Finnish-Americans consider pejorative. (My mother, Virginia-born and of Finnish ancestry on her mother's side, has always used the word quite readily--and so will I.)

²The first efforts for a Polish-Slovak parish were noted in *The Virginian* in the issue of December 9, 1904, at p. 5. Then followed "The Polish-Slavonian Parish," *The Virginian*, January 20, 1905, p. 6. Though this story reported that the first pastor would be Father Buh, the Slovenian-born apostle to the Ojibwa who was still serving parishes in Ely and Tower, that changed within several weeks. In that same story, *Virginian* editor David Cuppernull was politic enough to report that "Father Hogan is doing all in his power to make things comfortable and business matters easy for those who have the forming of the parish in hand." *The Virginian* made only sporadic mention of St. John's for several years thereafter--the joint OLL-St. John's confirmation class noted in the issues of September 21 and 28, 1906, and scattered bits on weddings and funerals. Then in 1908 Cuppernull reported the beginnings of Father Sengir's renovation effort: *The Virginian*, June 17, 1908, p. 3 (building ready for plaster work); August 7, 1908, p. 4 ("...Rev. Sengir...uses the square and compass and lays out all the framing and carpentering. He has been a very busy man this season...") After covering Bishop Rhode's visit in the issue of December 1, 1908, he featured a lengthy

I have tried to deduce the author of the unattributed *Wiarus* piece of September 15, 1905.³ The answer is probably lost in the passing of a century. However, the clues point to Father Sengir himself. There's no mention of him by name, nor praise of his ability, which would be consistent with the humility of a priestly author. The use of metaphor, sometimes flowery, and the exhortative tone sound very much like a homilist.⁴ Father Sengir undoubtedly would have been the most formally-educated member of Virginia's Polonia at the time, and the most likely to have a self-consciously literary writing style. Finally, the author had the goal of rapidly growing the local Polish community and the St. John's flock, which of course would have been a natural for Father Sengir. This is all purely textual evidence, of course, but it has some weight.

During this translation I made a broader historiographic discovery as well: these *Wiarus* reports seem to have been the sole (and unattributed) source for

piece on the 1905 founding, attributed to "(Contributed)." "New Slavonic Catholic Church," *The Virginian*, December 4, 1908, p. 2 ("Rev. Sengir was the boss contractor, architect and carpenter. The work was telling on his hands and steel square. It was a very laborious undertaking. Most of the time the boss and two men were at work and some times only one. Still, perseverance won the battle."). Finally, with a front-page banner headline and a rare locally-taken photograph, *The Virginian* presented a view of the newly-steeped and renovated building. "Virginia's New Slavonic Catholic Church," *The Virginian*, December 15, 1908, p. 1.

³The shorter, nastily-toned, and misogynistic item of August 24, 1905 doesn't have the clues that the other piece does.

⁴I really liked the endearing reference to a steam locomotive as a "little iron dog," and the likening of Virginia's surrounding terrain to a red crown captured the look of the hillsides being stripped of their hematite. Perhaps most tellingly, there's the metaphor of the bees and the hive for the ethnic population and the church, one often used by Slavic-American clergymen and one used by that "Contributor" of the December 4, 1908 *Virginian* piece. Finally, there's the use of the ironic "fragrance of virginity" to emphasize-by-contrast the licentious atmosphere of a raw mining town a century ago. It certainly resonates with Shakespeare's "Get thee to a nunnery," at *Hamlet Prince of Denmark*, III, i, 121. (Some backdrop on our Polish reporter's little jeremiad, to put his references into context: A successful mining captain and business developer, Mayor Marcus Fay was

Father Waclaw Kruszk's text on Virginia in his *Historia Polska w Ameryce*.⁵

Finally, a broader conjecture on my part: I think these items are significant evidence of the early development of the "Iron Range personality," barely a decade after the Mesabi's first settlements. Those of us who grew up there, or who married into a local family, or who have substantial contact with modern-day Rangers, should recognize a few character traits here. Note the strong sense of ethnic identity, with an undercurrent of sharp competition between ethnic groups in a diverse community; a powerful sympathy for the underdog, and support for his overcoming of the obstacles to his advancement; a canny but sometimes ruthless "political" sensibility; a bit of a chip on the shoulder; a deepening attachment to the harsh but beautiful climate and geography of the area; and a tendency to a bombastic, overstated style of self-expression. Sound familiar? It all does to this son of the Mesabi.

elected in 1903. He immediately cracked down on the gambling and prostitution activity in Virginia that catered to single male lumberjacks and miners. See "Exit Old Enter New," *The Virginian*, January 8, 1904, p.1; "Violated the Ordinance," *The Virginian*, February 26, 1904, p. 4; "The Marble Heart Swells the Receipts of Municipal Court Several Hundred Dollars," *The Virginian*, March 18, 1904, p. 8; "Mayor and Council at War," *The Virginian*, May 20, 1904, p. 4; Marvin Skaurud, *A History of Virginia, Minnesota*, ch. III, p. 41 (unpubl. M.A. thesis, Univ. of Minn, June 1941). For his pains, Mayor Fay was the victim of arson of his horse stables and an attempted bombing of his house. See "Mayor Fay's Home Blown," *The Virginian*, November 18, 1904, p. 5; "Mayor Fay Victim of Fire Bug," *The Virginian*, January 20, 1905, p. 6. Several years later he left Virginia for Duluth. See "Captain M.L. Fay Sells Out," *The Virginian*, November 30, 1906, p. 1; and, in general, Charles E. Ellis, "Captain Marcus L. Fay, One of the Foremost Upbuilders of the Range," *Iron Ranges of Minnesota: Historical Souvenir of the Virginia Enterprise* (Virginia, Minnesota: Virginia Enterprise, 1909), n.p. [p. 20].)

⁵The modern English translation of Father Kruszk's material is found in *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), pp. 134-135. Kruszk not only quoted directly from the September 14, 1905 report, he repeated the error of the August 24, 1905 report in misidentifying founding father Jan MICHAN with the surname of bartender MUSIAŁ.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS: Once again, I had a lot of help to get this done. Using the results of John Radziłowski's comprehensive review of *Wiarus/Katolik*, our PGS-MN colleague Ray Marshall assembled a large sheaf of reportage on Northeastern Minnesota Polonian communities; these are the first items from that collection to actually be published here in translation. Many thanks to them for their investigative work! (Those Duluth-bylined items are next in line for print, Ray.)

I again posed a dozen translation "stumpers" to William F. "Fred" Hoffman of the Polish Genealogical Society of America; Fred again got me into their meanings with imagination, perseverance, and humor. Finally, I am greatly in debt to Betty Birnstihl of the Virginia Area Historical Society and Pat Maus of the Northeast Minnesota History Center at UMD, for their help on the backdrop of Virginia's earliest history. These knowledgeable archivists are a great resource. They also are dedicated servants of the public and wonderful people.

Missing Branches: continued from page 28

Connie Waldherr, 8444 Yates Ave No., Brooklyn Park MN 55443 <mcwaldherr@earthlin.net> is researching JUREK, KALISZEWSKI in N.E. Minneapolis and in Krakow, Poland.

RENEWED MEMBERS: *The following are renewed members who indicated additional names and areas of research on their renewal forms:*

Valarie Anderson, 402 Iona Lane, Roseville MN 55113-2324 is researching John Joseph SOIKA, born 1842 in Poland, died 1-20-1908, interment--Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul MN; Anthony BUHOLTZ/BUCHOLZ, born in Poland and his wife, Mary born 9-30-1809 in Poland, died 1-23-1903 and buried at Calvary Cemetery; Michael Lorenz FABIANSKI, born 1839 in Prussia, interment--St. John the Baptist Cemetery, New Brighton MN and his wife, Jozafina LANE/LANGE, born 1-19-1850 in Germany or Poland and died 2-4-1925, interment--St. John the Baptist Cemetery.

Jeanette Bias, 657 Belland Ave., Vadnais Hgts. MN 55127-5020 <Jbstpaul@earthlink.net> is researching BIAS, STALOCH, DULAS, WANZEK in Silesia (near Sycow) and in Wells, MN.

Tom Boelz and Emilie Trushenski, 607 Center Str., Clear Lake MN <emilietru@aol.com> are researching TRUSHENSKI aka TRUCEINSKI/TRUSCHENSKI in Kreis Neidenberg and in Benton County, MN and HETMAN in Krakow and in Silver Lake, MN.

Edward R. Brandt, 241 Arthur Ave. SE, Mpls. MN 55414 <brandtfam@prodigy.net> is researching a "large number of German-speakers (though many were of Dutch or Belgian origin) in all three partitions of Poland listed on my website at <<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~brand050>>. Only those in Galicia, where

Germans were a 1% minority, arrived after partition. The others were mostly beneficiaries of the tolerance of Jagieleonian Poland."

Joan Davy, 8711 Summit Dr., Eden Prairie MN 55347 <jcdavy@aol.com> is researching NOVAK, JANBOSKI in Warsaw? in Poland and in Willow River, St. Paul and Chaska in MN and ZYWICKI, JACZKOWSKA in Winona, Willow River and Duluth, MN.

Diana Gustafson, 1565 NE 148th, Portland OR 97230 <gramagus@msn.com> is researching Władysław KURCHARSKI in Raciaz in Poland, Hedviga URBANIAK in Skrzebowa in Poland and both in Sturgeon Lake MN and Grays River and Skamokawa WA.

Bobbi Hoyt, 22 E. Skyline Pkwy., Duluth MN 55805 <bobbihoyt@aol.com> is researching BRONIKOWSKI, WALKOWIAK, CZEKALSKI, SOBCZAK in Posen in Poland and in Duluth and Gnesen twsp. in St. Louis Cty. in MN. She suggests: "Have a meeting in Hinckley for the northerners who always have to drive to the cities."

Duane L. Jabas, 2651 Martin Way, White Bear Township, MN 55110 <djabas1244@comcastnet> is researching DZIABAS in Mlynkowo, Posen and in Morrison Co. MN, POPILEK (POPIOLEK) in Komprachcice, Opole and in Benton Co. MN, DRELLECK in Morrison Co., DEZURIK in Slovakia and in MN and PA.

Kevin and Mary Ann Johnson, 3210 - 139th Lane NW., Andover MN 55304 <kmmmkjohnson@msn.com> are researching MANIAK, BUTKIEWICZ, OWERANEK, CIESIELSKI, SERWANSKA, SZEDIS (SHADYS), KRZESZEWSKI (KRISKE), MUSOLF (MUSSOLF), KUBICKI (KUBISKI) OLSZEWSKI, KOSLAKIEWICZ (KOSLAKOW-

ICZ), BOGUMILLA in Poland and in Duluth, Split Rock and Winona MN, Superior WI and Buffalo NY.

Elgene Jorgenson, 11608 Wren St. NW, Coon Rapids MN 55433 <ELgeneJ@aol.com> is researching ASMUS, GUSSMAN, QUITSCHAU, KRIEG.

Arne Kowalzek, 114 - 7th St. NE, Little Falls MN 56345 is researching KOWALCZYK, SWORA, ZGORZELSKI, SOLGGA/SOLGA in Silesia and in Delano in Wright County and then Morrison County, MN.

Jim & Lim Kulas, 7826 Lakeland Valley Drive, Springfield VA 22153 <polishpop1@earthlink.net> is researching KULAS in Caersk in Poland and in Warsaw ND, KRYZSKO in Posnan and in Greenbush MN and GRABANSKI in Warsaw ND.

Lucy P. Kruchowski, 1100 6th Ave. S., S. St. Paul MN 55075-3230 <loukr@usfamily.net> is researching WARZECHA, WARWAS, PHILLIPSEK in Falkowice and Dammaratsch in Poland and Holdingford, Avon, Opole in Stearns Co., MN (See her letter on page 9).

Hubert Kukowski, 2424 So. 76th St., Milwaukee WI 53219-1850 <hubertk@wi.rr.com> is researching KUKOWSKI in Lipusz in Poland and in Winona MN and LUKASZEWSKI in Poznan? in Poland and in Pine Creek WI and Winona.

Peter Dale Lamusga, 6 NW 9 1/2 St., Chisholm MN 55719 <pdlcom@2z.net> is researching LAMUSGA, KALA, KALLA, MARCINCZYK, BERCZYK, BUJALA, PHILLIPSEK, WARWAS, PLOTNICK, CEBULA, CZYPPEK in Browerville and Long Prairie in Minnesota.

Mary Ann Maniak, 8711 62nd Ave. N., Minneapolis MN 55428 is researching KUBICKI in Winona and Duluth, MN.

Jack Murray, 7040 Ticonderoga Trl., Eden Prairie MN <murcommod@aol.com> is researching LIPINSKI in Lipiewice, CIEMINSKI in Borzyskow and BORZYSKOWSKA in Choynice, and all in Little Falls MN.

Daniel Nedoroski, 2470 Beverly Rd., St. Paul MN 55104-4904 is researching BARTUSIAK in Rostokamala in Poland and in Pennsylvania, BABIAK in Barnowiec in Poland and in Ohio,

BARNOWSKI in Barnowiec and in New Jersey.

Dona Paris, 420 Lake Aires Rd., Fairmont MN 56031 <jdparis@charter.net> is researching PIETROWIAK, SZUKALSKI, MADAJ, LUBINSKI, SYMANSKI, WIERZBICKI/VIERBICKI in Szubin, Warsaw and Posnan in Poland and in MD, WI, IL and MN.

Ronald Parrish, 716 - 37th Ave NE, Mpls. MN 55421-3607 is researching ZMUDA, ZAJAC, KOWAL, CHRYC, PITEK in Raba and Olszowka in Poland and in Minnesota.

Shirley Schaikoski, PO Box 89322, Sioux Falls SD <shirleyray@aol.com> is researching CZAJKOWSKI/SZAJKOWSKI, IZBAN, ODOR, MASLANKA, LEGE, RENTZ, JAWORSKI, SOPCZAK, PYTLEWICZ in Morzewo and Kacsory in Poland and in Wilno and Ivanhoe MN.

Julia Schmolke, 506 W. Laurel, Stillwater MN 55082-4720 <jkeschmolke@hotmail.com> is researching SCHMOLKE, PESCHEL in Kreis Falkenberg in Silesia, BEKA, HORTSCH in Kreis Neustadt in Silesia and all in Morrison County, MN.

Paul Warzecha, 919 E. Courthouse St. Cuero TX 77954-2105 is researching WARZECHA in Biestrzyznik near Opole in Upper Silesia and KUCZKA/KUTCHKA in Kosice near Opole and both in Texas.

Tom Woychick, 2885 S. Swallowtail Lane, Boise ID 83706 <rondolefty@aol.com> is researching WOJCIK (WOYCHICK) in Opielow in Poland and in Independence WI.

Vincent J. Zotkiewicz, 3100 Timber Brook Dr., Plano TX 75074-8742 <vinzot@att.net> is researching ZOTKIEWICZ, ARASIM, ARASIMOWICZ in the Russian Partition and in Virginia MN.

Ron Zurek, 12569 Parke Cr., Etiwanda CA 91739-2377 <rzurek@aol.com> is researching ZAWACKI, FROST in Danzig (Gdansk) in Poland and in Gilman, Benton Co., MN. *Ron Zurek is the Benton County Coordinator for the MNGenWeb/USGenWeb Project and has developed a Web site for individuals with a genealogical or other interest in this Central Minnesota region.* <www.rootsweb.com~mnbenton/> *Ron is also the author of the book Sauk Rapids and Benton County (ISBN 073851960X).*

Missing Branches:

QUERIES, Send to: *Paul Kulas, editor, PGS-MN Newsletter, 12008 West River Road, Champlin, MN 55316-2145 or to e-mail: kkulas@ties.2.net*

NEW MEMBERS: *We welcome the following:*

John A. Duscha/Cathleen Barczys, 253 Banfil St., St. Paul MN 55102 <johnaduscha@msn.com> are researching DUSCHA in Minnesota and California and BARCZYS in New York.

Jack J. Elias, 1632 Serenity Lane, Sanibel FL 33957 is researching Joseph Martin GUSSMAN/GUZMAN in Stevens Pt. Wisc., Bessemer Mich., Coeur d Alene ID and Virginia MN and in Poznan in Poland and JANE(I)CKI/JANESKY in Ironwood Mich. and Virginia MN.

Mary Hamblet, 1322 N. Sutton Pl., Chicago IL 60610 <MKH1322@aol.com> is researching JANESKY, GUSSMAN in Virginia, MN by way of Ironwood and Bessemer, Michigan.

Kate Elias Heleson, 5306 N. Hertford Way, Boise

ID <HelgesonJ@msn.com> is researching GUSSMAN/GUZMAN in Stevens Pt. Wisc., Bessemer Mich., Coeur d Alene ID and Virginia MN and in Poznan in Poland and JANE(I)CKI/JANESKY in Ironwood Mich. and Virginia MN and in the So. German Partition.

Jil Hopland, 2045 Thure Ave., St. Paul MN 55116-2519 <jilhop@hotmail.com> is researching ORZOL, GRABOWSKA in PA, WI and MN and in Poland/Russia.

Richard F. and Muriel A. Kishel, 610 N. Kylewood Dr., Muncie IN 47304-3517 are new members.

John J. Kotowski #151583, 7600 525th St. Rush City MN 55069 is researching KOTOWSKI, PUKROP in Ivanhoe, Lake Benton, Wilno in Lincoln Cty. in Minnesota and in an unknown place probably in eastern U.S and from the Krakow area in Poland. They came to the U.S. in the 1880s (See letter on page 9).

Larry and Betty Kulis, 13 Oak Village Blvd. S. Homosassa FL 34446 are new members.

Missing Branches: continued on page 26



Ad for Jan Michan's tailor shop that ran in *Virginia Enterprise*, 1897.

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