

Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota NEWSLETTER

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No. 4

THOMAS AND TEKLA WOLAK & FAMILY

Their Immigration and Settlement in Pennsylvania, Illinois,
Minnesota, Indiana and Nebraska (1881 – 1995)

RESEARCHED AND PREPARED BY AMY JOWERS

INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of my interest in learning about my Dad, Alex Wolak, and his family. I remember visiting his mother, Francis, when I was young. But, I knew very little about his aunts and uncles or dad, John, nor about when these relatives had first come to the United States and came to settle in Minnesota.

Over seven years ago, I joined the Polish Genealogy Society of Minnesota (PGSmn) and began my research on Ancestry.com. Two of my cousins, Barb Holland and Mary Ann Quade, generously shared research, including pictures, so I did not have to start from an empty slate. My search branched out to other websites sponsored by the MN Historical Society, the Family Research Center, the Benton County Historical Society & Museum, and historical societies in Illinois, Pennsylvania and Indiana. I've been fortunate to research when information is available via the internet, as it is much faster than visiting a library. For example, passenger lists are now online, so I was able to find the names of Thomas and Tekla Wolak, my Great Grandparents, on the 1881 passenger list for the Strassbourg ship arriving at the port of Baltimore, MD. That was a thrill! I was also able to find online the baptismal records of several of their children that remain my only proof that this family lived in Illinois.

This article is full of these wonderful finds about my Great Grandparents and their children, 16 individuals total: Thomas and Tekla (Alice) Wolak; Joseph and Sophie (Jarek); John and Francis (Smelter); Leon; Mary and Joseph Ochwat; Peter and Nellie

(Helmin); Sam and Mary (Smolen); an unknown child born before 1900, and Anthony and Rose (Kampa).

OVERVIEW

The majority of information is gathered from census reports, military records, birth & death certificates, and newspaper obituaries. I have not inserted copies of original records (which

are often difficult to read), but have reformatted the information into a more readable, and hopefully interesting, layout. Each record's source is noted, so that you can research further if interested. One note: U.S. census reports are only available after 72 years, so the 1940 U.S. Census report will be available in 2012. Until then, 1930 is the last available year.

Wolak Family ...continued on page 4

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Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota

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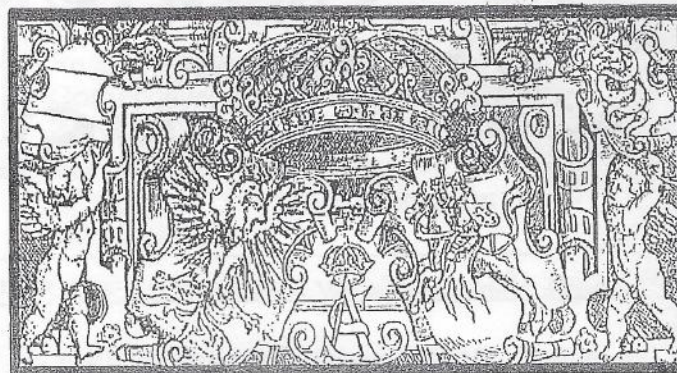
Please use application form on insert page.

Items submitted for publication are welcomed and encouraged. We require that feature-length articles be submitted exclusively to PGS-MN. Articles, letters, book reviews, news items, queries, etc. should be sent to: Editor, *PGS-MN Newsletter*, 6909 West 82nd Street, Bloomington, MN 55438 or: <jaybiedny@juno.com>.

Address/e-mail changes or membership questions?

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3901 - 61st Ave. N., Brooklyn Center MN 55429-2403
or e-mail: <doripgs@comcast.net>

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**President's Letter**

Dear Members,

As we close the Society's books for the year 2010, I have some good news to report: While many genealogical organizations are losing members to the internet's cyber space, our membership has grown and we are holding our own financially. We hosted several excellent monthly meeting presentations this year as well as a combined meeting with our friends in the Pomeranian group. We staffed a booth at the now-annual Polish Festival in Minneapolis in August. Dozens of our members have visited the library on research trips and, we continue to deliver this fine newsletter to your door.

You will notice that a large part of this newsletter is devoted to one article. It is wonderfully researched and written by one of our members, Amy Jowers. It shows just how productive a methodical work effort can be. Many of you have this level of data sitting in paper stacks somewhere. Please take the time to write it up. If not for a newsletter, at least as a wonderful present for your whole family! Both my parents died this year and the realization that my siblings and I are now the oldest generation adds a sense of urgency to my genealogy work. Write it up- or at least write it down.

On a final newsletter note: our faithful Editor, John Kowles, has fallen ill and will not be able to devote the time he usually does to the newsletter each quarter. So, the Board of Directors has divvied up John's tasks for the next few issues. But, **we really need a new member to take charge of the Newsletter and make it their own.** The compiling and editing is not a huge task... and we have a step by step guide on what needs to be done, and when. With email, etc., you would not even need to live in the Twin Cities to take this on. If you have some computer skills and really want to help the Society deliver its #1 communications tool- contact me.

Happy New Year!

Jerome Biedny

<jaybiedny@juno.com>



The Bulletin Board

Correspondences ...

Thanks for all that you do!

Enclosed please find the check for my yearly dues. I sure do enjoy the newsletter and the Minnesota Genealogical Library. I'm glad you also participate in the Polish Festival in Minneapolis. Thanks again for all the work that you do.

Sincerely,
Natalie Hanson

Children's Christmas book

I just learned about this information & thought I'd share it...

The following website:

<<http://www.wigiliabook.com/index.html>> has information about the book, "Wigilia, A Tale about a Polish-American Family on Christmas Eve" by Paulina Karwowska, which could be interesting to children & grandchildren. Merry Christmas!

Dorothy Pretare <dpngen@comcast.net>

Extra Contributions...

We thank the following for their extra monetary contributions to PGS-MN and/or its Library Fund:

Mary Ellen Bruski
Judy Patzner Danielson
Gerald Keeville
Richard Theissen

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

Upcoming Dates...

Our Annual Meeting

— 11 a.m. Saturday, 15 January 2011

PGS-MN will hold its Annual Meeting at *Gasthof zur Gemütlichkeit*, 2300 N.E. University Ave., Minneapolis. The agenda is as follows:

- **ELECTIONS** - President and Vice President and two directors will be elected. If you would like to be a candidate please contact Rick Theissen at: <rfttheissen@comcast.net> or 651-739-1490.
- **BUSINESS MEETING** - Review year-end finances and announcements.
- **POLISH BUFFET** - Pork loin, chicken, pierogi, potatoes, vegetable, sauerkraut, dessert and beverage (cost will be about \$17 which includes tax and tip).
- **Members** are encouraged to bring up any other business for discussion.
- *The theme of the meeting will be "open mic," where members are encouraged to speak on any related subject.*

Please **RSVP** by 3 January 2011 to Terry Kita at: <terrykita@earthlink.net> or 612-927-0719.

Our meeting calendar for 2011 has been set as follows with more information to come:

5 March, **Migration Patterns** by Dana Halberg
2 April, 7 May (Auditorium), 10 September,
8/9 October (MGS Conference),
5 November (Aud. with Pomeranian group)

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings will be held in the Board Room of the MGS Library's building in South St. Paul. See page 28 for directions.

A wonderful evening out:

BAL KARNAWALOWY
Fine Food, Entertainment, and Dancing

Saint Paul Hotel
6pm Saturday, 12 February 2011

Tickets are \$60 per person and can be ordered at www.PACIM.org or by leaving a message for Phyllis at 612.378.9291. See you there.

Each person is individually presented, with a Narrative Summary providing an overview of his/her life, followed by documentation of what I could find that happened in their lives (Events and Reports). I have found historical record-keeping notoriously inaccurate, so an Event or Report may have several cited sources, if possible, to ensure accuracy.

I've added Historical Notes and Pictures to give perspective about regions, working conditions, and specific buildings, as Thomas and Tekla move from Pennsylvania to Illinois to Minnesota. To be true to historical documentation, errors or discrepancies are not corrected. For example, Tekla's name is spelled many ways and each version is included (i.e. in one place she is called Tillie). Some of these differences reflect nationality (i.e. baptismal names); some reflect cultural biases of that time (i.e. Germany versus Poland as the birthplace).

The questions I had before this research have mostly been answered: when did my Dad's first relatives arrive in the States? (1881); where did they first settle? (Pennsylvania); who were their children and where did they settle? (Indiana, Minnesota and Nebraska); what did they do for a living? (farming, retail, barber, policeman); when did they arrive in Minnesota? (1895).

The question I still cannot answer is what is the birthplace of Thomas and Tekla in Poland? I believe my research points to the Galicia region of Poland near the Ukrainian border and Carpathian Mountains, but until I can find the documentation for it, this is nothing more than my guess.

I hope you enjoy reading and learning about Thomas, Tekla and their children as much as I did in researching them. And if you can share additional information, please do! Your information may confirm their birthplace!

THOMAS WOLAK, my great-grandfather was born in Poland around 1847, based on information from U.S. census reports, however the exact date and year cannot be confirmed. While noting his birth country as Poland (and native language as Polish) on census reports, he qualifies this by noting Austria, Aus/Poland or Germany (Pol) in recognition that these countries currently rule his birthplace.

The 1910 U.S. Census is the most specific in noting that Thomas and Tekla have emigrated from the Galicia region. Thomas is married to Tekla shortly before they immigrate to the United States. After arriving at Baltimore, MD in 1881, they settle in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania and have their first child in January 1882. Thomas lists himself as a laborer, although his occupation has not been verified. Thomas and Tekla are possibly members of the St. Casimir Catholic Church in the Shenandoah region, based on historical writings about Polish communities in PA.

After several years, they move to Lemont, Illinois and have at least five more children; one that will not survive past one month. The family belongs to the Ss. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church in Lemont, IL, based on their children's baptisms. Thomas' occupation is unknown.

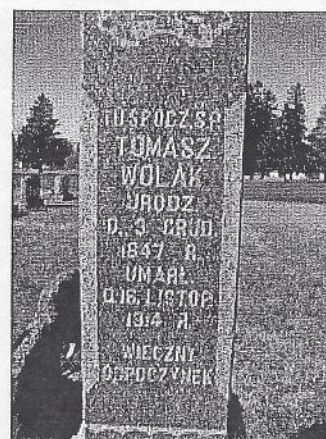
Moving to Minnesota in 1895, Thomas and Tekla have their last child and remain in Gilmanton Township for the rest of their lives. There is one more child that is born before 1900, according to the 1910 U.S. Census, but no confirming records have been found. Thomas is a farmer. The family belongs to the St. Casimir Catholic Church in Gilman, which is later destroyed by fire and rebuilt as the current Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church. Based on census information, Thomas

and Tekla read English, but cannot write or speak it; Polish remains their main language. Thomas dies in 1914 at age 68 from a wagon team accident that happens in Foley.

DOCUMENTATION

EVENT: Birth in 1840's Thomas' gravestone has December 3, 1847 as his birth date, however, census records note 1849 and his obituary states 1846. His birth or baptism record has not been found to confirm either one, nor to confirm his birthplace.

[Right, Thomas Wolak's gravesite in Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church cemetery, Gilman, MN]



EVENT: Marriage in 1881

Thomas and Tekla marry in Poland sometime during 1881 before immigrating, based on the 1900 U.S. Census that records they have been married for 19 years.

EVENT: Immigration in 1881

Thomas and Tekla Wolak arrive on the ship ""Strassburg" which leaves Bremen, Germany June 22, 1881 on its 3rd journey, and arrives at Baltimore, MD July 9, 1881. Thomas is 32 years, Tekla is 23 years. It notes their last legal residence as Austria.

Baltimore Passenger Lists, 1820-1948 [www.ancestry.com]

Date: Thomas Wolak	Arrival Date: Jul 1881
Age: 32 Years 0 Months	Est. Birth Year: abt 1849
Gender: Male	Race: Austria (Austrian)
Ship Name: Strassburg	Port of Departure: Bremen, Germany
Port of Arrival: Baltimore, Maryland	

Microfilm Roll Number: M255_34

Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s-1900s [www.ancestry.com]

Name: Thomas Wolak	Year: 1881
Age: 32	Est. Birth Year: abt 1849
Place: Baltimore, MD	Source Publication Code: 206.7
Primary Immigrant: Wolak, Thomas	

Annotation: Date and port of arrival. Country of origin and name of ship are also provided. Extracted from National Archives Microcopy 255, rolls 32 through 50 and Microcopy T844, rolls 1 through 15. Place of intended destination may also be provided.

Source Bibliography: BACA, LEO. Czech Immigration Passenger Lists, Volume IX. Richardson, TX: Author, 1701 Woodcreek, Richardson, TX 75082, 1999. 210p. Page: 196

"List of the Steerage Passengers of the North-German-Lloyd Steamship Strassburg" (www.ancestry.com)

Capt. O. Heimbruch, III Voyage; Left Bremen (Germany) on June 22, 1881
(Arrived Baltimore, MD on July 9, 1881) (page 26)
#1091 and 1092; Thomas Wolak, 32 age and Thekla Wolak, 23 age
Last legal residence: Austria
Destination: Baltimore
Occupation: workman

HISTORICAL NOTE: [Rootsweb.ancestry.com] "Statistics show that turn of the 19th century was the period of the largest immigration to the United States from Eastern Europe. During this time, there was no country known as "Poland". When doing genealogical research in Poland, it is important to know these dates. On August 5, 1772, Poland lost the lands of Galicia to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. After the signing of the Constitution of May 3, 1791, there was revolution, war, and generally, a lot of turmoil in Poland. As a result of the wars "fought in defense of the Polish Constitution," there were two more partitions of Poland – 1793 and 1795. From 1795 to 1918, Poland ceased to exist as a country."

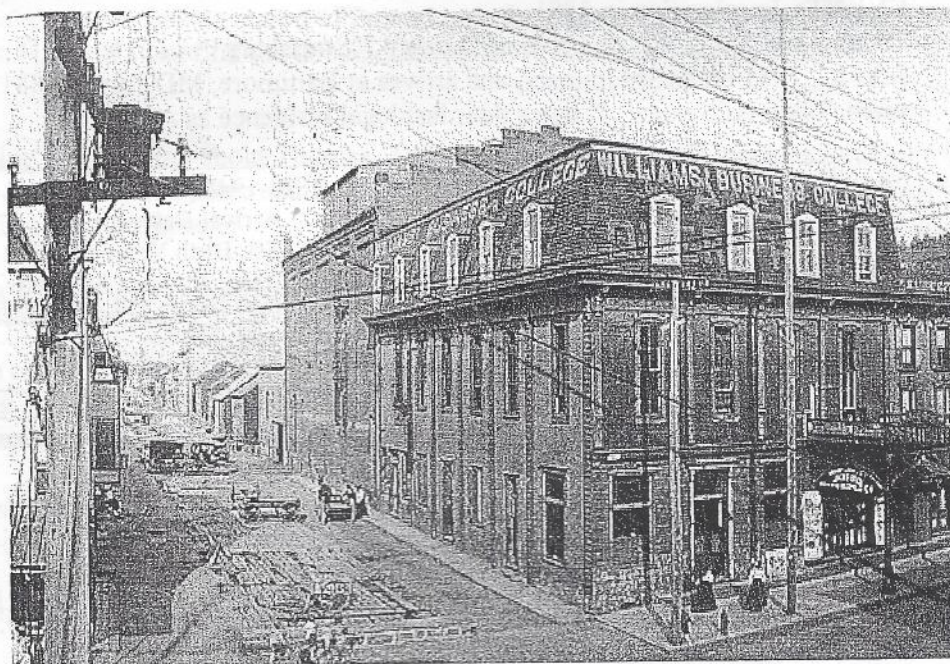
EVENT: Settlement in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania in 1881

After arriving at Baltimore, Maryland in June 1881, Thomas and Tekla head to Pennsylvania (Mahanoy City) and have their first child born in 1882. They live here for several years, but the reason for settling is unknown. Below is a picture of Mahanoy City in the late 1890's to help give an idea of the area they lived. It is from the Mahanoy City website.

MAHANOCY CITY, PA c late 1890s

THE KAIER OPERA HOUSE AT THE CORNER OF S MAIN AND E MARKET. THE WILLIAMS BUSINESS COLLEGE IS LOCATED ON THE UPPER FLOOR.

NOTICE E MARKET STREET - THIS PORTION OF THE MAHANOCY CREEK APPEARS TO BE COVERED WITH PLANKS - AND THERE IS A STONE WALL AT THE END OF THE BLOCK.



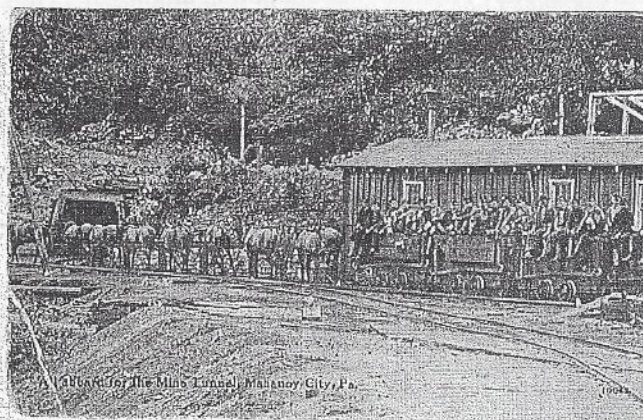
THIS PHOTOS SHOWS HOW E MARKET STREET APPEARED LONG BEFORE THE VICTORIA THEATRE WAS BUILT IN 1925 AND THE US POST OFFICE LOADING DOCK WAS BUILT IN 1937.

EVENT: Birth of First Child – Joseph, 1882

Thomas and Tekla have their first child, Joseph George Wolak, who is born January 1882, less than 7 months after their arrival in the United States. He is likely baptized at St. Casimir's Church, the local church for the Polish community.

RECORD: Occupation in 1882

Thomas lists himself as a workman and laborer when he immigrates to the U.S. His employer is unknown, but historical writings report that Polish immigrants came to Pennsylvania to work in the coal mines. Below is a picture of Mahanoy City miners at work in the 1800's.



HISTORICAL NOTE: Mining the Coal Country Anthracite Long Ago Abdicated in this Pennsylvania Region. But you can get to the bottom of its story on a ramble from Pottsville to Scranton; By Mike Shoup, Inquirer Travel Editor; August 14, 1994

"Anthracite burns longer and provides much more heat than bituminous coal. For years, anthracite was not only the main fuel for America industry and transportation; it also heated the nation's homes. And almost all of it was mined here, in a narrow band that stretches less than 100 miles through Northeast Pennsylvania – relatively small spot on the Earth that still contains more hard coal than anywhere else in the world (19.6 billion tons remaining, about 9 billion tons mined) [emphasis, author].

Anthracite 'was responsible for the transformation of American manufacturing in the 1830s and 1840s,' points out a history of the region titled *The Kingdom of Coal*, as well as for the development of America's canals and railroads, which took the product to market. The railroads, in fact, owned most of the mines. King Coal reigned here for the better part of a century, from 1850 to 1950, attracting a flood of immigrant workers to difficult and often deadly labors (more than 12,000 miners were killed just in the years 1900 to 1920)."

"Driving that stretch of Route 54 between Mahanoy City and Ashland is as close as you'll get today to life as it once was in hard-coal country." [emphasis, author]

Thomas Wolak could also have worked on the railroads, as they were being established in PA.

HISTORICAL NOTE: From Railroad websites:

The profitable Pennsylvania Railroad, which had the leading service to the Midwest, tried to cash-in on the Anthracite industry by building a "Schuylkill" branch in 1884 that paralleled the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad into the coal regions. It ran through Bala Cynwyd, then crossed the Schuylkill into Manayunk over the "S" bridge. It went to Reading and Pottsville (like the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad) and then continued north to Hazelton and Wilkes Barre. [emphasis, author] It also had a connecting branch from Phoenixville to West Chester. By 1917, the "S" bridge through Manayunk became weak and was replaced by a Spanish-arched concrete bridge (currently partially restored as Manayunk's biggest landmark). The Schuylkill branch did not do as well as anticipated. The passenger stations were in odd places and the anthracite industry already had strong ties to the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. By the 1960's, passenger service via the Pennsylvania Railroad was limited to Manayunk with limited freight service to Pottsville.

EVENT: Move to Lemont, Illinois in 1884. Thomas and family move to Lemont, Illinois in 1884 for unknown reasons. The Chicago region by then had an active and growing Polish community. They have at least 5 children in Lemont (John, Mary, Leo, Peter and Sam). Leon dies within a month of his birth; another child is born and dies before 1900, but it is unknown if in Pennsylvania, Illinois or Minnesota. Thomas' occupation is unknown. They are members of the Ss. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church in Lemont, where their children are baptized.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Village of Lemont Community Profile; Website; Sonia Aamot Kallack, *Lemont and Its People 1763-1910*, (Louisville: Chicago Spectrum Press, 1998), p. 146-140.

"The construction of the I&M Canal in the mid-nineteenth century brought an influx of European immigrants, particularly Irish, to Lemont. By 1870 the population was almost equally Irish, German, Swedish, Danish, and native-born. In the decades that followed, Polish and other eastern European immigrants became a large part of the ethnic mix. Today's racial and ethnic compositions of the Village reflect the northern and eastern European roots of the community's population. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Polish is the most prevalent ancestry; 32.8% of residents identify themselves as of Polish descent."

EVENT: Thomas and Tekla have John in 1885, the first child verified to be born in Illinois.

EVENT: Thomas and Tekla have Mary in 1887 in Lemont, Illinois.

EVENT: Thomas and Tekla have Leo in 1890, but he apparently dies within a month of birth.

EVENT: Thomas and Tekla have Peter in 1891 in Lemont, Illinois.

EVENT: Thomas and Tekla have Samuel in 1893 in Lemont, Illinois.

EVENT: Move to Gilman Township, Minnesota in 1895. The family moves to Gilman Township, MN in 1895, based on the 1900 U.S. Census. Thomas is a farmer, based on probate papers and his obituary.

HISTORICAL NOTE: This article is reprinted from *Polish American Studies*, Vol. V, No. 3-4, July-December 1948, with permission from the Polish-American Historical Association. Benton County had four great Polish settlements: Duelm, Sauk Rapids, Foley, and Gilman. Ludwik Jurek, writing in June 1880, remarked that twelve years ago he bought a farm of 240 acres in Duelm. He offered forty acres for a church.³⁶ At this time about 30 families who had settled some years ago were living in Duelm; now, 125 more families bought land, because the railroad company was selling it at three to five dollars an acre.³⁷ Always in search of good land, the Polish farmer encouraged others to move westwardly over the State.³⁸ Foley and Browerville likewise developed as a result of the north branch of the Great Northern Railroad (1882-1884), but Polish workers and their families were already well established there by 1876. Most of them came directly from Europe; some left Chicago for the wild and heavy timber lands of the North.⁴¹

EVENT: Naturalization. Thomas and Tekla become US Citizens on 4 Dec 1897 in MN.

MN Naturalization Records / Final Citizenship Paper [www.ironrangerresearchcenter.org]
State of Minnesota; County of Benton / District Court, Seventh Judicial District
THOMAS WOLAK having appeared in open Court and produced due and satisfactory proof as to his qualification; therefore, IT IS ORDERED, that he be admitted as a CITIZEN of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, upon his taking and subscribing to the oath prescribed by law. Dated: Dec 4, 1897

L. Wisniewski and Ignacy Piotrowski of said County, being duly sworn, depose and say, and each for himself deposes and says, that he is a citizen of the United States, that he is well acquainted with THOMAS WOLAK of said County, that said THOMAS WOLAK has resided within the limits of the United States and under their jurisdiction of the State of MINNESOTA, and that during the same period he has behaved himself as a man of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same.

Subscribed and sworn to in open Court, this 4 Day of Dec 1897, LEO H. HOMAN (Clerk District Court); Witnesses: L. Wisniewski and Ignacy Piotrowski

I, THOMAS WOLAK do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Minnesota, and that I do absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity I owe to any Foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to the AUSPICES OF GERMANY of whom I was a subject. And further, that I have never borne any hereditary title, or been of any of the degree of Nobility of the country whereof I have been a subject.

SIGNED: Thomas Wolak; subscribed and sworn to in open Court this 4th Day of Dec 1897; Leo H. Homan (Clerk District Court) [*Tekla automatically becomes a U.S. Citizen, based on her husband's status. During that time, married women do not receive this status by themselves.*]

EVENT: Pre-1900 - Unknown date – Birth of Child – Unknown Name

Based on the 1900 U.S. Census, Thomas and Tekla report that five of seven children have survived birth. Leon is very likely one of the children that did not survive, but that leaves an unknown child, born before 1900, in Pennsylvania, Illinois or Minnesota. A record of this child's birth has not been found.

RECORD: Census in 1900

Thomas and Tekla's family is first reported in MN on the 1900 Census, but under the name of "Vallak". This record was accidently found when researching the first name of "Alice" on websites, rather than the last name of Wolak (which would never have pulled up a name starting with "V"). As the first official record of the Wolak family in the States, it provides the best picture of Thomas and Tekla, as it records their marriage (19 years); length of time in the States (19 years); Naturalization status; farm home; & 5 of 7 children are surviving. Note that Thomas' birth date differs from his gravestone date of December 3, 1849, as does Tekla's.

Twelfth Census of the United States: Schedule No. 1 - Population; June 8, 1900

Gilmanton Township, Benton County, Minnesota

Name: Thomas Vallak; Head	Born: April 1848; 52 years old
Married; 19 years	Birthplace: Poland/Austria
Parents' Birthplace: Poland/Austria	Immigrated in 1882; in the States for 19 years
Citizen Status: Naturalized	Can Read; Cannot Write/Speak English
Occupation: Farmer	Home: Owned; on farm, no mortgage
Name: Alice Vallak; Wife	Born: May 1857; 43 years old
Birthplace: Poland/Austria	Parents from Poland/Austria
Five of 7 children are living	
Household Members:	
Joseph: Jan 1882, 18 years, farm laborer	
John: May 1885, 15 years, school	Mary: Aug 1886, 13 years, school
Peter: Apr 1890, 10 years, school	Samuel: May 1892, 7 years

EVENT: Thomas and Tekla have their last child, Anthony, in 1901 in Minnesota.

RECORD: Census in 1905

Thomas and his family are recorded on the Minnesota Territorial and State Census, dated June 10, 1905. Thomas lists his birth location as Austria, often noted by Polish immigrants from the Galicia region. Poland is not in existence at this time. Polish immigrants from the Posen region usually list Germany. The census gives the approximate date when Thomas' family moves to Minnesota: March of 1895. Their first child, Joseph, is no longer living with them. Thomas' birth year again is different than what was recorded previously.

Minnesota Territorial and State Censuses, 1849-1905 (www.ancestry.com)

Name: Thomas Wolak	Census Date: 10 Jun 1905
County: Benton	Locality: Gilmanton
Birth Location: Austria	Gender: Male
Est. Birth Year: abt 1849	Race: White
Father's Birth Location: Austria	Mother's Birth Location: Austria
Line: 34; Roll: MNSC_108	

**Fifth Decennial Census of Minnesota Population Schedule;
Gilmanton; Benton County; June 10th, 1905**

Name: Thomas Wolak	Age at last birthday: 56
Place of Birth: Austria	Parents' Place of Birth: Austria
Resident of this State: 10 yr, 3 mo (1895, March)	
Regular Occupation: Farmer-Laborer	
Household Members:	
Alice - 47	John - 20; farmer-laborer
Mary - 18	Peter - 14
Samuel - 12	Anthony - 4

RECORD: Census of 1910

Thomas' family is next recorded on the 1910 U.S. Census. Note his and Alice's birth locations have now become 'Germany (Pol)', with nationality noted as Polish. Alice records only 6 of her 8 children have survived. The immigration year is now correct as 1881.

**Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910-Population
Gilmanton Township; Benton County; State of Minnesota; 30, Apr 1910**

Name: Wolak, Thomas; Head	Age of last birthday: 62
Married: 30 years	Place of Birth: Germany (Pol)
Parents' Birthplace: Germany (Pol)	Immigrated: 1881; Nationalized
Polish: Native Language	Occupation: Farmer, self-employed
Six of 8 children living	Unemployed in 1909: No
Household Members:	
Alice - 52; Birthplace: Germany (Pol); Polish: Native Language	
John - 24; Birthplace: Illinois; English-Nationality; Farmer-laborer	
Peter - 19; Birthplace: Illinois; English-Nationality; Farmer-laborer	
Lam - 17; Birthplace: Illinois; English-Nationality; Farmer-laborer	
Anthony - 9; Birthplace: Minnesota; English-Nationality; none	

HISTORICAL NOTE: "Counting Poles"

"Efforts to count the number of Polish Americans have been fraught with frustration for scholars. Because Poles who immigrated prior to 1918 came from a country that did not officially exist, they were often undercounted or miscounted. In 1900, for example, U.S. census takers were officially instructed not to record Poles as Poles (though some still did). In Minnesota, the large immigration from Western Poland meant that many Poles who spoke fluent German were counted as Germans, especially in areas where Germans dominated the ranks of the census takers."

Poles in Minnesota: The People of MN, page 3, John Radzilowski MN Historical Society Press; 2005

EVENT: Death in 1914

Thomas Wolak dies on November 16, 1914 from a wagon team accident. The article below lists his age as 68 and his birth year as 1846. This is contrary to the gravestone inscription. The article also errs in stating his son, John, is in New York. John and Frances marry in 1911 and have 2 children born in MN by 1914. Mary's residence in Duluth is also not verified.

Foley Independent, Nov. 19, 1914 / Farmer Killed In Runaway

Thomas Wollak Met Instant Death Monday Afternoon When Returning From Foley / Team He Was Driving Got Frightened at a Passing Automobile Near Monroe's Corner

Thomas Wollak, age 68, one of Gilmanton's prominent and most respected citizens, was instantly killed last Monday afternoon when his team becoming frightened at a passing automobile ran away throwing the aged man from his seat down onto the wagon tongue and dragging him head downwards over the frozen ground for a distance of about 40 rods. James Cross, mail carrier, John Kosloski Jr., near whose place the accident occurred, and Clemens Cismowski, driver of the car, were the first to reach the unfortunate man. When they arrive he was dead, his head battered to an unrecognizable mass.

Dr. Freeman of Foley, coroner, who was notified immediately, had the body removed to Foley, where an inquest was held the following day. According to the evidence Mr. Wollak was returning home from Foley where he had marketed a load of hogs, when he met a six-cylinder touring car at Monroe's corner containing Clemens Cismowski, driver, and Mrs. Mike Gappa of Bemidji, owner, in the front seat and a little daughter of the woman in the back seat. The car slowed up to let the team by, and just as Mr. Wollak was passing, the team broke into a run, and on reaching a culvert a little further on, the old gentleman was thrown from his seat down onto the wagon tongue where he was suspended head downwards, in which position he was dragged for a distance of about 40 rods before he was released. Death was probably almost instantaneous.

Thomas Wollak was born in Germany in the year 1846. He came to the United States when a young man, and about twenty years ago he took up a homestead in the town of Gilmanton in this county, where he resided at the time of his death. He is survived by his widow, and six children; Joseph of Chicago; John of New York; Mrs. Mary Ochwat of Duluth; and Peter, Sam and Anton who reside on the homestead. The funeral will take place from St. Casimer's church this morning.

Here is the gravestone for Thomas Wolak:

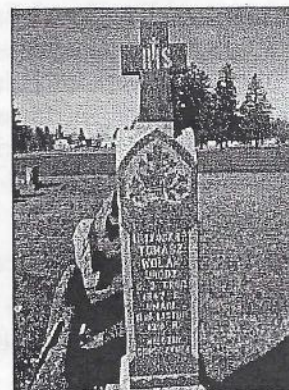
Insription:

Wolak, Thomas

b. Dec 03, 1847, d. Nov 16, 1914

urod 9 Grud 1847, 16v List 1814

[photographer: R.L.Jowers]



TEKLA (ALICE) KMIOTEK, my great-grandmother, is born in Poland around 1858, although as with Thomas, her birthplace in Poland cannot be verified and there are variations of her birth date on documents. The correct spelling of her last name is unclear, as it is written differently on official documents. Her first name also becomes interchangeable, as Alice is the English version of the Polish name of Tekla, and from 1920 that becomes the name she is known by on most documents.

Tekla marries Thomas Wolak in 1881 shortly before they immigrate to the U.S. and is pregnant with their first child, Joseph, while on the ship, as they arrive in Baltimore, MD in July 1881 and he is born in January 1882. She has eight children, two of which will die in their early years.

Most significantly, Alice survives her husband by 15 years, with his death in 1914 and hers in 1939. During that time, she remains living in the Gilman area of Minnesota – in 1920 with her son, Anthony, and in 1930 with her daughter, Mary. During this time, she is noted on local documents as Tekla Wolak.

Alice dies in 1939, at age 80 in Gilman.

DOCUMENTATION

EVENT: Birth in 1850's. Tekla Wolak is born on June 4, 1858 based on her death certificate. On various census reports this date varies.

EVENTS: (1881-1914; see *Thomas Wolak*)

RECORD: Census in 1920

Alice Walak and her son, Anthony, are listed on the 1920 U.S. Census in the Village of Foley, Benton County, Minnesota. Her husband, Thomas, has died in 1914. Note: Alice can speak English on this census, but on the 1930 census, she says she cannot.

Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 – Population

Village Foley, Benton County, State of Minnesota; January 13, 1920

Name: Alice Wolak; Head	Home in 1920: Foley, Benton, MN
Home: Owned; Free of mortgage	Age at last birthday: 62
Marriage Status: Widowed	Can Read/Write: Yes/Yes
Immigrated: 1881	Citizen Status: Naturalized; 1900
Birthplace: Austria (Pol)	Parents' Birthplace: Austria
Able to Speak English: yes	Occupation: none
Name: Tony W. Wolak; son	Age at last birthday: 18
Able to Read/Write: Yes/Yes	Birthplace: Minnesota
Parent's Birthplace: Austria	Occupation: laborer
Employer: working outside	

RECORD: Census in 1930

Alice Wollak and her daughter, Mary Ochwat, are listed on the 1930 U.S. Census. Some of her information is not correct, as in the immigration year of 1884. On the 1920 census, Alice owned her house free of mortgage; on this census, she states she has a mortgage.

Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930

Foley – Village, Benton County, State of Minnesota; April 19, 1930

Name: Alice Wollak; Head	Age at Last Birthday: 72
Home: Owned, Mortgaged	Value of Home: [blank]
Owns a Radio Set in Home: [blank]	Age at marriage: 23 years old
Attended School in 1929: No	Can Read/Write: No
Birthplace: Poland	Parents' Birthplace: Poland
Mother Tongue: Polish	Immigration Year: 1884; Naturalized
Able to Speak English: No	Occupation: None
Name: Mary Oschwat	Relation to Head of Household: Daughter
Age at Last Birthday: 38	Married at 19 years old
Attended School in 1929: No	Can Read/Write: Yes
Birthplace: Illinois	Able to Speak English: [blank]

RECORD: Application for Old Age Assistance – 1936

Tekla Wolak is granted Old Age Assistance of \$6.00 on April 30, 1936 by the County Agency of Benton County.

Office of the County Auditor; Benton County, Minnesota; Foley, April 30, 1936

The County Board of Benton County, Minnesota met at the office of the County Auditor on Thursday the 30th day of April at 10 o'clock A.M. on call by the Chairman to act as the County Agency for the purpose of acting applications for Old Age Assistance. All members of the Board present.

Meeting called to order by G. A. Holdridge, Chairman.

Applications for Old Age Assistance were presented by J.A. Kraus, Chairman of the Benton County Poor Commission.

On motion by Commissioner Kilgard seconded by Commissioner Fischer and carried the following applications were approved: #110, Wolak, Tekla; Foley; \$6.00

RECORD: Modification Request to Old Age Assistance – 1937

Tekla Wolak is denied a modification to the Old Age Assistance she is receiving; however, there is no other information on what this modification is, or why it was denied.

Office of the County Auditor; Benton County, Minnesota; Foley, April 6, 1937

The County Board of Benton County met as the County Agency at the office of the County Auditor in the Village of Foley on Tuesday the 6th day of April, 1937 for the purpose of acting on applications for Old Age Assistance and modifications of same as presented by J.A. Kraus, Administrator of the Poor Commission.

Meeting called to order by Chairman.

"April 5, 1937; To the Honorable Board of County Commissioners In session as the County Agency for Old Age Assistance: Gentlemen: The following Old Age Assistance cases have been carefully considered during the month of March. Our recommendation in each case is briefly stated.

Respectfully submitted, Benton County Poor Commission, BY: J.S. Kraus (signed) Administrator"

On motion by Commissioner Zablocki seconded by Commissioner Lindblom and carried the following applications were allowed, modified or rejected.

"MODIFICATIONS DENIED": #110, Tekla Wolak, Foley

On motion the County Agency adjourned. Attest: M.G. Winter, County Auditor; THE COUNTY AGENCY OF BENTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA. By: G. A. Holdridge, Chairman

EVENT: Death in 1939

Alice Wolak dies on January 20, 1939 at age 80 and is buried at Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church cemetery in Gilman, MN. She mentions two surviving sisters, one living in Hammond, Indiana, but information on her could not be found.

The St. Cloud Sentinel, St. Cloud, MN; Thursday, January 26, 1939, Page 3

OBITUARY: Mrs. Alice Wollak

Mrs. Alice Wollak, 81 years old and born in Poland, died Friday afternoon at her home in Foley. The deceased came to this country as a young girl, living in Benton County for the past 58 years. Mr. Wollak died in 1914.

Children surviving are John in Gilman; Peter and Anthony in Foley; Joe and Sam in Indiana; and Mrs. Mary Ohotta [sp] in Nebraska.

The funeral was held Monday morning, with services in St. John's Catholic Church in Foley and interment in the Gilman cemetery.

OBITUARY: Foley Independent, Jan. 26, 1939**Mrs. Teckle Wollak Died Last Friday**

Mrs. Teckle Wollak, a pioneer of Benton County, died at her home in Foley on Friday, January 20th at 4 P.M. at the age of 80 years, seven months and 16 days. She was born June 4, 1858 in Poland and came to America 56 years ago. She was married to Thomas Wollak just before the young couple came to this country. Her husband died November 14, 1914. They first settled in Pennsylvania, where they lived for two years, after which they lived eight years at Lemont, Ill., coming to Benton County 45 years ago.

Mrs. Wollak is survived by the following children, Joe of Hammond, Ind., John of Gilmanton, Mary Achat of Lincoln, Neb., Peter of Gilmanton, Som [sp] of Hammond, Ind., and Tony of Foley. She also left two sisters, one in Hammond, Ind., and one still in Poland; 23 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

Funeral services were held Monday, Jan. 23 at 9 A.M. at St. John's church in Foley, with Rev. Wrobel officiating. Interment was in the Gilmanton Cemetery. The casket bearers were Vincent Gorecki, John Semrau, Raymond Levandowski, Albert Piotrowski and Louis Quade.

MN Death Index, 1908-2002 (www.ancestry.com)

Name: Alice Wallak
Death County: Benton
Certificate Number: 000873
Record Number: 801912

Death Date: 20 Jan 1939
State File Number: 000873
Certificate Year: 1939

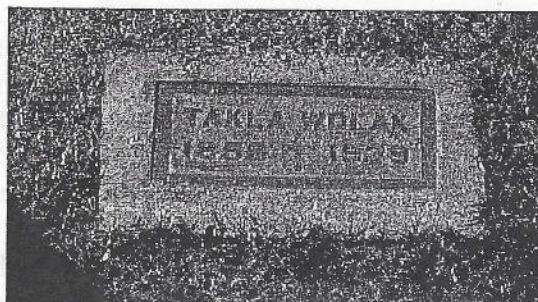
Certificate of Death; # 873; State of MN; Division of Vital Statistics; Filed Jan 23 1939

Full Name: Alice Wallak
Residence: Foley, MN
Widowed; Husband: Thomas Wallak
Age: 80 years, 7 months, 16 days
Last Worked: Jan 1939; 56 years total career
Father's Name: Matt Kmeotke
Mother's Maiden Name: Unknown
Buried at Gilman, Minnesota; 1/23/39
Primary Underlying Cause: Cerebral Hemorrhage; duration 8 hours
Informant: Anthony Wallak, Foley, MN

County: Benton; Village: Foley
Sex: Female; Color of Race: White
Date of Birth: June 4, 1858
Trade: Domestic; housewife; 56 yrs
Birthplace: Poland
Birthplace: Poland
Birthplace: Poland
Date of Death: January 20, 1939 (4 P.M.)

This is Tekla Wolak's gravestone translation from the Cemeteries Online website, as well as a picture of her gravesite at the Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Gilman, MN:

Takla Wolak
1858 * 1939



You are now through about half this article. Isn't it riveting! Note the nice mix of personal and historical information. Amy employed a program called "The Complete Genealogical Reporter" to help her organize and present her thoughts. But, the research is hers. The excellent source noting makes this a fine gift to her whole family.

The fact is, **YOU could write such an article.** We are looking for excellent newsletter material all the time. We can't promise to print every article – and certainly not everyone of this length. But, we'd love to have you submit something for review. In these winter doldrums, fire up that word processor and send us something.

Correction: In our last newsletter there was a reference to a website for the Taczanowski family. The link should have read as follows:
www.elonka.com/public/family_tree

Important: Please renew NOW! Check the mailing label on this issue for your memberships expiration date and renew using the form on Page 29.

JOHN WOLAK, my grandfather, is born on 12 May 1885 in Lemont, Illinois. He is the first child verified to be born in Lemont, Illinois to Thomas and Tekla Wolak. He is about 10 years old when his family moves to Minnesota.

John is listed on the 1900 U.S. Census (age 15); the 1905 Minnesota State Census (age 21); and the 1910 U.S. Census (age 24), living at home with his parents and siblings in Gilmanton Township, Minnesota.

He marries Frances Smelter on October 17, 1911 in Gilman.

John enlists in the 1917/1918 WWI registration at age 33, listing the residence address of 3 Foley, Benton County, Minnesota, as he is now the owner and farmer of his father's land. His father, Thomas, died in 1914 from an accident. Thomas' probate papers grant the land to John, with ownership to remain in the family should John give it up or die. The first-born son, Joseph, is not granted this land, as his career is as a police officer in Hammond, Indiana.

The 1920 census lists John and Frances with 4 children. By the 1930 census, John and Frances have 9 children (Victor, Alex, Florence, Henry, Selma, Alphonse, Josephine and Joseph-twins, and Angeline). John is now 45 years old and remains a farmer. He will sadly die of leukemia in 1939 at the young age of 54 years old.

Andrew Smelter and
John Wollak
(this picture is unique in that it
is a postcard)



DOCUMENTATION

EVENT: Birth and Baptism in 1885

Based on records from the Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church in Lemont, Illinois, John is born on May 12, 1885 and baptized on May 13, 1885. The English translation of the baptismal record records the Polish form of his name, Johannes. John and his siblings' baptismal records are the only current proof of the Wolak family in the Lemont, Illinois area. It is also interesting to note the different spellings of Tekla's first and last name for each birth record.

[English Translation of the Baptismal Record, Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church]

The Holy Sacrament of Baptism

This is to certify that JOHANNES WOLAK, Child of THOMAE WOLAK and THECLAE KMIETEK, Born in LEMONT, IL on MAY 12, 1885

Was Baptized on the THIRTEEN day of May, 1885 in the Church of SS. CYRIL & METHODIUS

By Rev. LEOPOLDUS B.M. MOCZYGEMBA

Sponsors were THOMAS POLONIASZEK and MARIANNA KABARZYNA

Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church, Lemont, IL Birth Index Results:
[Lemont History Center website; Family Research center of Latter Day Saints]

Name	Father	Mother	Enum	Date of Birth	Film	Item	Volume:
Wolak, John	Thomas	Thecla Kmietek	313	5-12-1885	1571873	9	1
Wolak, Maria	Thomas	Thecla Kmetek	616	8-11-1887	1571873	9	1
Wolak, Leo	Thomas	Thecla Kmietek	14	1-29-1890	1571873	10	2
Wolak, Peter	Thomas	Thecla Kmietek	25	2-6-1891	1571873	10	2
Wolak, Simon	Thomas	Thecla Kmietek	88	7-18-1893	1571873	10	2

Source: Czuchra, James J., "Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church, Lemont, IL Death Index," Database. Polish Genealogical Society of America: 2007, (<http://www.pgsa.org/stcyr.php>), accessed on 9 Jun 2009.

EVENTS: (1895-1910, see *Thomas Wolak*)

EVENT: Marriage in 1911

John Wolak marries Frances Smelter on October 17, 1911 in Gilman, Minnesota.

**Certificate of Marriage between John Wolak
and Frances Smelter / State of Minnesota;
County of Benton; Certificate No:
1220051911E-350**

I Hereby Certify that on the 17TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1911 at GILMAN, in GILMAN, BENTON County, I, the undersigned, a/an ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST did join in Marriage: JOHN WOLAK, a resident of the County of BENTON, State of MINNESOTA, and FRANCES SMELTER, a resident of the County of BENTON, State of MINNESOTA. The names of the parties after marriage shall be Unknown and Unknown.

Witnesses: PETER HALAK, ROSE SMELTER

Name of Person Performing Ceremony: JOS.

A. DUDEK, Credentials Recorded

OTTERTAIL COUNTY, MINNESOTA

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said office at Foley, Minnesota, this 18th Day of February 2010.

Marilyn J Novak, Benton Co Recorder by
Cheryl Kantor, Certificate filed on: 05/07/1913



Wedding photo of John & Frances Wolak

EVENT: John and Frances have their first child, Henry "Hank" Jerome, in 1913.

EVENT: John and Frances have their second child, Selma, in 1914.

RECORD: Property Ownership in 1914/17

John Wolak inherits the family farm when his father dies in an accident in 1914. The probate process takes three (3) years to complete.

EVENT: John and Frances have their third child, Alexander "Alex", in 1917.

EVENT: John and Frances have their fourth child, Victor Paul, in 1918.

EVENT: World War I Draft Registration, 1917-1918

John registers for the WWI draft in 1917. Adam Helmin is the Registrant who signs John's form, and is possibly the future father-in-law of John's brother, Peter, who marries Nellie Helmin in 1915.

1918 WWI Registration Card

John Wolak

3 Foley, Benton County, MN
per Rootsweb ID 14832
Roll 1675335

**World War I Draft
Registration, 1917-
1918;**

**Serial # 1351 / Order
#A1080 / 22-3-1 C**

Name: John

Wolak

Address: 3

Foley, Benton, MN

Age: 33;

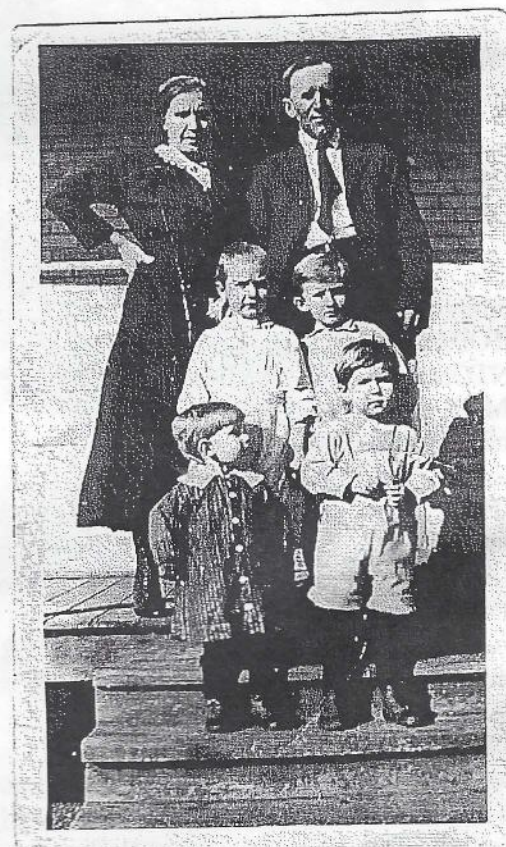
Birthdate: May 12, 1885

White; Native
Born
Present
Occupation: Farming

Nearest Relative:
Frances Wolak; 3 Foley,
Benton, MN

Description:
Medium Height;
Medium Build; Blue
Eyes; Light Hair
Signed: Adam Helmin

Date of
Registration: September
12, 1918

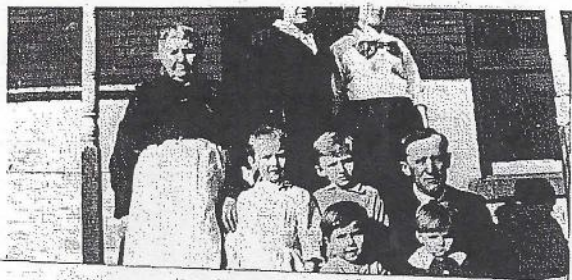


About 1920:

Front Row (l to r): Victor, Alexander

Middle Row (l to r): Selma, Henry

Back Row (l to r): Francis, John



*Alma Ineta Sally Wolak Herb Wolak
John Wolak
Alex Wolak - Victor
Wolak*

About 1920: Front Row (l to r): Victor, Alexander Middle Row (l to r): Selma, Henry and John
Back Row (l to r): Grandma Francis (cut off: Francis and unidentified young woman)

EVENT: John and Frances have their fifth child, Florence, in 1920.

RECORD: Census in 1920

John Wolak's family is listed on the 1920 U.S. Census. A niece, Frances Thomas, is living with them. John's parents' birthplace is noted as Galicia, Austria.

1920 Census of the United States [www.ancestry.com]

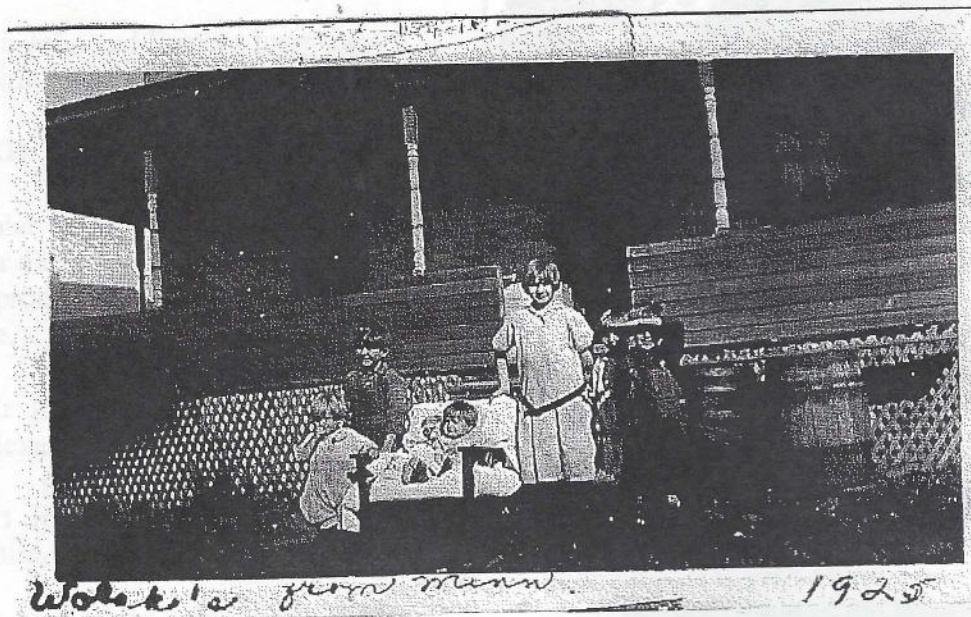
Name: John Wolak; Head	Age: 34 years
Birthplace: Illinois	Occupation: General Farmer
Father and Mother's Birthplace: Galicia, Austria (Poland)	
Spouse's Name: Frances	Race: White
Home Owned: Yes	Able to read / write: Yes
Members of Household:	Frances - 28 Henry - 6 Salina - 5
Alexandra - 2 10/12 Victor - 1	Frances Thomas - 17 (niece)

Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 - Population

Name: John Wolak	Home in 1920: Gilmanton, Benton, MN
Home: Owned; Mortgaged	Age at last birthday: 34 years
Can Read/Write: Yes/Yes	Birthplace: Illinois
Parents' Birthplace: Galicia/Aus/Poland	
Occupation: Farmer; general	Spouse's Name: Frances
Age at last birthday: 28	Able to Read/Write: Yes/Yes
Birthplace: Minnesota	Father's Birthplace: Germany
Mother's Birthplace: Poland	
Members of Household:	
Henry; son; age 6	Salina ; daughter; age 5
Alexandra; son; age 2 10/12	Victor; son; age 1
Frances Thomas; niece; age 17	

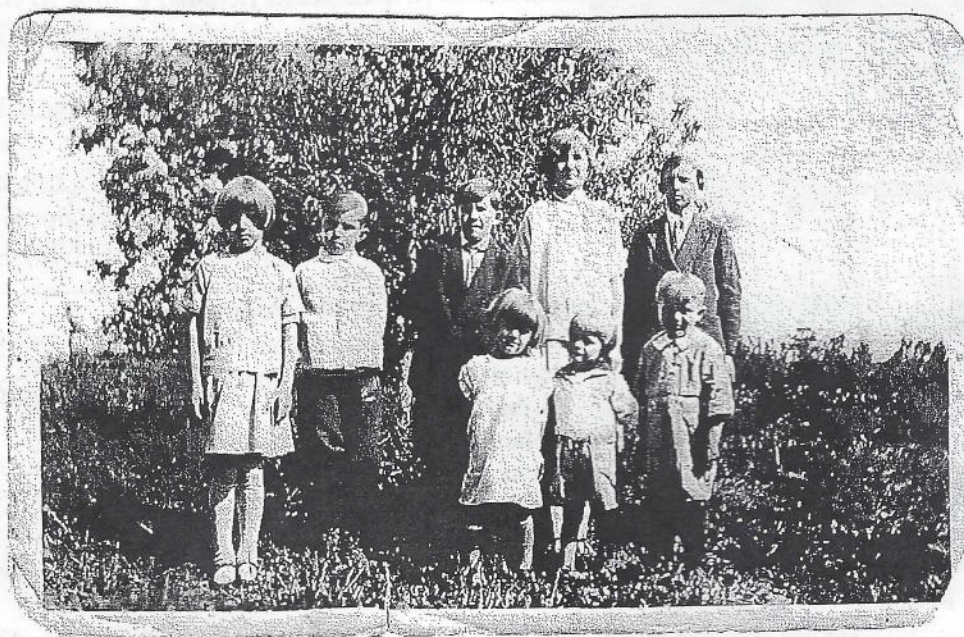
EVENT: John and Frances have their sixth child, Alphonse Aloysius, in 1923.

EVENT: John and Frances have their seventh and eight children – twins – Josephine and Joseph Francis, in 1925.



1925 Wolak Family in Granite Ledge

L-R: Alphonse sucking thumb, Alexander standing, Joseph & Josephine in chair, Selma, Florence, Victor. (notice the barrels used for catching rain water to wash clothes and clean the house)
(source: Mary Ann Quade's "Smelter Family Tree")



About 1928: Front Row (l to r): Josephine, Joseph, Alphonse
Back Row (l to r): Florence, Victor, Alexander, Selma, Henry
(source: Mary Ann Quade's "Smelter Family Tree")

EVENT: John and Frances have their last child, Angeline Ann, in 1929.

RECORD: Census in 1930

John Wolak's family is listed on the 1930 U.S. Census.

Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 Population

Granite Ledge, Benton County, State of Minnesota; April 12, 1930

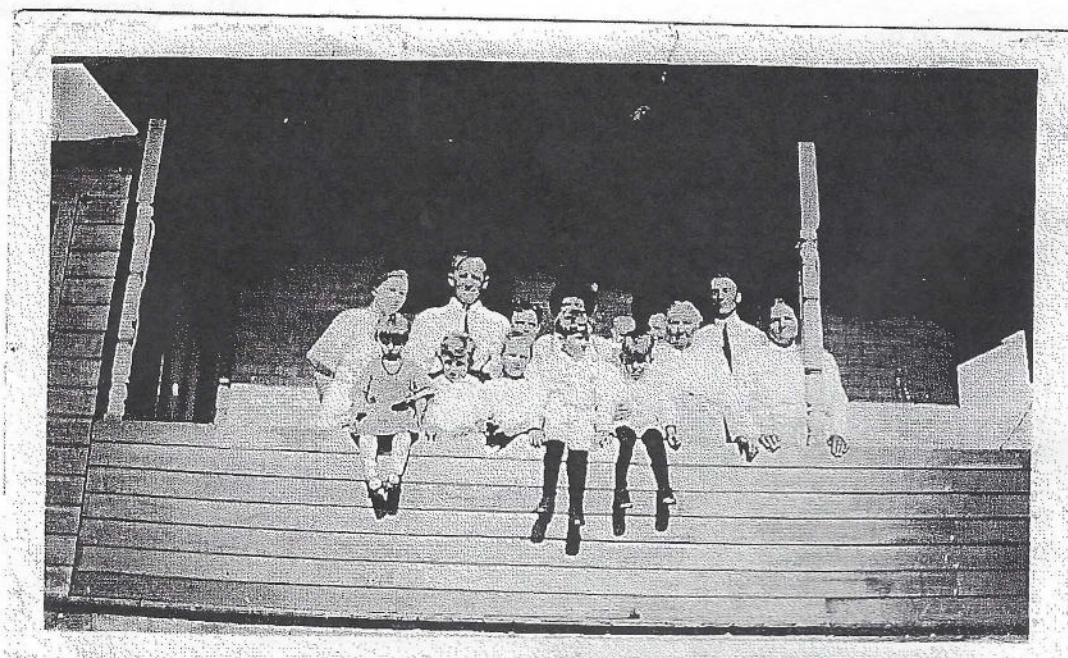
Name: John, Head	Age at Last Birthday: 44
Home: Owned; on Farm	Value of Home: [blank]
Owens a Radio Set in Home: [blank]	Age at First Marriage: 26
Attended School in 1929: No	Can Read/Write: Yes
Place of Birth: Illinois	Parents' Birthplace: Poland
Occupation: Farmer, general farm	Worked Yesterday: Yes
Veteran Status: No	Name: Francies [sic], Wife
Age at Last Birthday: 37	Age at First Marriage: 20
Attended School in 1929: No	Can Read/Write: Yes
Birthplace: Minnesota	
Members:	
Henrey - 16	Salma - 15
Victor - 11	Florance - 9
Joseph - 4 10/12	Josephine - 4 10/12
	Angelin - 10/12

1930 United States Federal Census; [www.ancestry.com]

Name: John Wolak	Home in 1930: Granite Ledge, Benton, Minnesota
Age: 44	Est. Birth Year: abt. 1886
Birthplace: Illinois	Relation to Head of Household: Head
Spouse's Name: Francies[sp]	Race: White
Household Members:	
John Wolak, 44	Francies Wolak, 37
Salma Wolak, 15	Alexander Wolak, 13
Florance Wolak, 9	Alphonse Wolak, 6
Josephine Wolak, 4 10/12	Angelin Wolak, 10/12 months



About 1930: Front Row (l to r): Joseph, Josephine, Alphonse, Florence, Victor
Back Row (l to r): Alexander, Selma, Frances, Angeline, John, Henry
(source: Mary Ann Quade's "Smelter Family Tree")



***John and Frances Wolak in Gilman, Minnesota with his mother, Tekla; his mother-in-law, Frances Smelter, and their children.



John and his five sons (l to r): Victor, Hank, John, Alex, Alphonse, Joseph

EVENT: Death in 1939

John Wolak dies on November 9, 1939 from leukemia at the age of 54. He leaves Francis with 9 children to rear. He is buried at Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church cemetery in Gilman, Minnesota.

Benton County News; 1939 (Foley Independent, Nov. 9, 1939)**Funeral Services for John Wollak Held Today**

John Wollak of Gilman died Sunday afternoon at the age of 54 years. He was born in Illinois, coming to Minnesota with his parents at the age of nine years. He had farmed in the vicinity of Gilman since his marriage 28 years ago.

Mrs. Wollak survives with the following sons and daughters: Henry Wollak; Selma in Denver; Alex, Victor in Milwaukee; Florence, Alphonse, Josephine, Joseph and Angeline. Joseph and Samuel Wollak, brothers, live in Hammond, Indiana; and Peter and Tony Wollak in Foley; Mrs. Mary Ochwat of Lincoln, Neb., is a sister.

The funeral will be held at 9 o'clock Thursday morning in St. Peter and Paul church in Gilman with Father Wotzka officiating and burial made in the Gilman cemetery. Pallbearers will be Ben Zimmerman, Raymond Lewandowski, A.D. Helmin, Albert Pietrowski, Tony Kosloski and John Sobkowiak. The body is at the residence.

MN Death Index, 1908-2002 Record

State File No.: 015393

Certificate No: 015393

Certificate Year: 1939

Record No: 823927

Certificate of Death; State of MN; Division of Vital Statistics; #306**Filed Nov 6 1939**

Full Name: John T. Wolak

Residence: Gilman, Minn, Benton County

Place of Death: St. Cloud Hospital

Length of Stay: 6 days

Sex: Male; Race: White

Marital Status: Married

Spouse: Frances Wolak

Date of Birth: May 12, 1885

Age: 54; 5 months; 23 days

Usual Occupation: Farmer

Kind of Business Industry: Farm

Last Time Worked: Nov 1939

Total Time in Occupation: 30 years

Birthplace: Lamont, Illinois

Father's Name: Thomas Wolak

Birthplace: Poland

Mother's Name: Alice Kmoteck [Kmiotek]

Birthplace: Poland

Informant's Name: Frances Wolak, Gilman, Minn.

Burial: Gilman, Benton, Minn; Nov 9, 1939

Date of Death: Nov 5, 1939 (3:40PM)

Immediate Cause of Death: splenouryalogenous leukemia; Duration: 1 yr



[John and Frances Wolak's gravesite at Ss. Peter & Paul Church cemetery in Gilman, Minnesota.]

[photo by R.L.Jowers]

FRANCES SMELTER, my grandmother, is born on 28 April, 1891 in Gilmanton Township, Benton County, Minnesota to Anthony Smelter and Frances Chevienski.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY:

Frances Smelter is born in Minnesota on April 28, 1891 and named after her mother. She will be one of six children of Anthony and Frances Smelter.

She is listed on the 1900 U.S. Census (age 9), the 1905 Minnesota State Census (age 14), and the 1910 U.S. Census (aged 19) with her parents and siblings in Alberta & Granite Ledge Townships, Benton County, Minnesota.

Frances marries John Wolak on October 17, 1911 in Gilman. They have 9 children and she survives her husband by 42 years, as well as one of their children (Victor).

Frances dies on 20 July 1981, aged 90, in the Foley Nursing Center. She is buried in the St. Peter & Paul Church cemetery, Gilman, Minnesota.



Berth (Konarski) Westphall, Julie (Konarski) Zurek, and Frances (Smelter) Wolak in the early 1900's in Cleveland (source: Mary Ann Quade's "Smelter Family Tree").

Frances Smelter in her early teens
(source: Mary Ann Quade's "Smelter Family Tree")



DOCUMENTATION

EVENT: Frances Smelter is born on April 28, 1891, based on her death record.

RECORD: Census in 1900

Frances is age 9 when she and her family are listed on the 1900 U.S. Federal Census in Granite Ledge, Benton County, MN. She is one of six children of Anton and Frances Smelter.

**Twelfth Census of the United States: Schedule No. 1 - Population; June 8, 1900;
Gilmanton Township, Benton County, Minnesota.**

Name: Frances Smelter	Residence: Granite Ledge, Benton, MN
Age: 9; Birth Date: April 1891	Birthplace: Minnesota
Race: White; Gender: Female	Relationship/Head of Household: Daughter
Father's Name: Anton	Father's Birthplace: Poland Ger
Mother's Name: Frances	Mother's Birthplace: Poland Ger
Status: Single	Head of Household: Anton Smelter, 51 years
Members:	Frances, spouse, 46 years
	Vernia, daughter, 17 years
	Andrew, son, 14 years
	Anton, son, 10 years
	Frances, daughter, 9 years
	Rosa, daughter, 7 years
	Joseph, son, 4 years

RECORD: MN Census in 1905

Frances is now aged 14 on the 1905 Minnesota Territorial and State Census in 1905.

Minnesota Territorial and State Censuses, 1849-1905, (www.ancestry.com)

Name: Francis Smelter	Census Date: 6 Jun 1905
County: Benton	Locality: Granite Ledge
Birth Location: Minnesota	Gender: Female
Est. Birth Year: abt 1891	Race: White
Father's Birth Location: Prussia	
Mother's Birth Location: Prussia	
Roll: MNSC_108	

**Fifth Decennial Census of Minnesota Population Schedule;
Granite Ledge; June 6th, 1905**

Name: Anton Smelter	Age at last birthday: 56	
Place of Birth: Prussia	Parents' Place of Birth: Prussia	
Resident of this State: 21 yrs, 2 mos (1884, April)		
Regular Occupation: Farmer-Laborer		
Household Members:		
Francis - 51	Andrew - 19	Anton - 16
Francis - 14	Rosa - 12	Joseph - 9

RECORD: Census in 1910

Frances is 19 years of age on the 1910 U.S. Census, at home with her parents and siblings.

1910 United States Federal Census; [www.ancestry.com]

Name: Francis Smelter	Age in 1910: 19
Est Birth Year: abt 1891	Birthplace: Minnesota
Relation/Head of Household: Daughter	Father's Name: Antony
Father's Birth Place: Germany	Mother's Name: Francis
Mother's Birth Place: Germany	
Home in 1910: Granite Ledge, Benton, MN	
Marital Status: Single	Race: White; Gender: Female
Household Members:	
Antony Smelter, 66	Francis Smelter, 56
Andrew Smelter, 24	Antony Smelter, 21
Francis Smelter, 19	Rosy Smelter, 16
Joseph Smelter, 15	

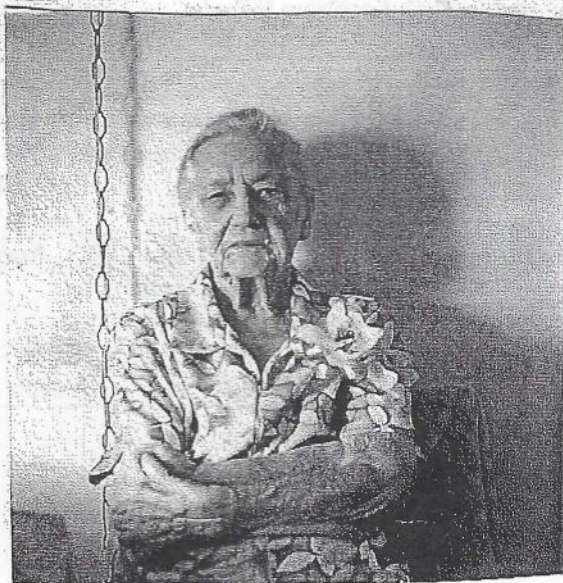
EVENTS: (1911-1939; see *John Wolak*)

RECORD: Property Plat Information in 1973

Property plat information for Mrs. John Wolak's farm and home site in Gilman, Minnesota from the 1973 Benton County Pictorial Atlas.

WOLAK, FRANCES: O; Town; PH 387-2244; Husband was John; CH Henry, Sally, Alex, Victor, Florence, Alphonse, Joseph & Josephine-Twins, Adeline; MI Catholic; General farming, beef & dairy cattle, hogs, poultry. Gilman.

EVENT: Victor Wolak, John and Francis' fourth child, dies unexpectedly of a heart attack on May 4, 1973 at the young age of 55.



A favorite picture of Francis Wolak

EVENT: Death in 1981

Frances Wolak dies on July 20, 1981 at the age of 90. Her husband, John, and son, Victor, precede her in death. She is buried in the Ss. Peter & Paul Cemetery in Gilman, Minnesota.

From Barb Woolhouse Genealogy Research: Likely from the Benton County Newspaper; July 21, 1981 or St. Cloud Times, July 20, 1981

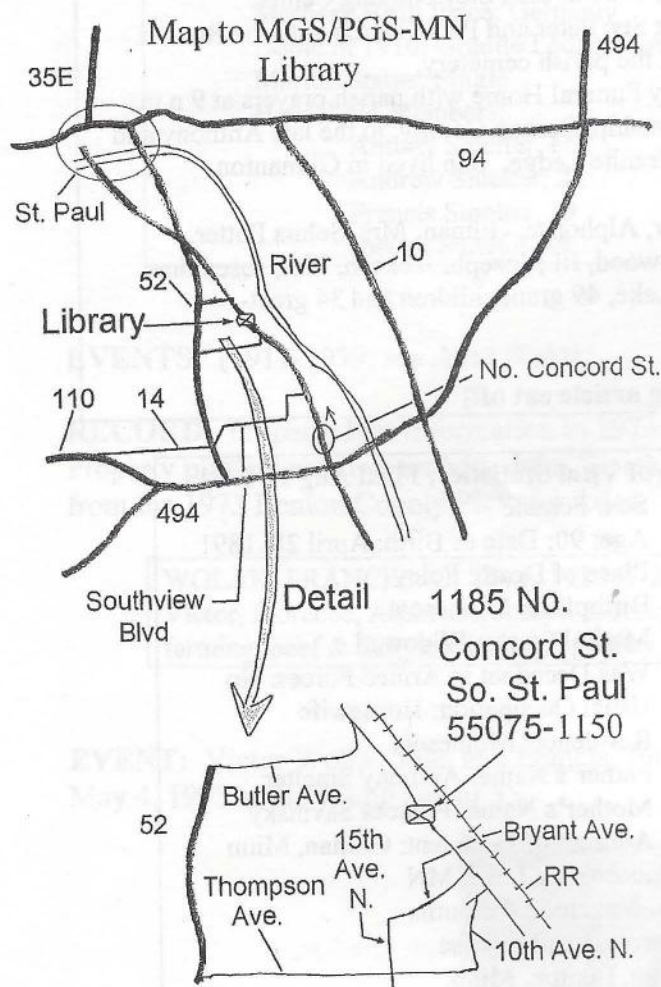
Mrs. Frances Wolak, 90, passed away Monday, July 20, 1981 at the Foley Nursing Center. Funeral services will be 10:30 a.m. Thursday, July 23 at Sts. Peter and Paul Church with the Rev. Raymond Schultzenberg officiating. Burial will be in the parish cemetery. Friends may call after 3:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Foley Funeral Home with parish prayers at 9 p.m. Mrs. Wolak was born April 28, 1891 in Gilmanton Township, Benton County, to the late Anthony and Frances Smelter. She married John Wolak in 1911 in Granite Ledge. She lived in Gilmanton Township most of her life. Survivors include sons and daughters, Henry, Alexander, Alphonse, Gilman; Mrs. Selma Potter, Denver, Colo.; Mrs. George (Florence) Heffron, Streamwood, Ill.; Joseph, Jackson, Mo.; Josephine, Minneapolis; Mrs. Robert (Angeline) Woolhouse, Big Lake, 49 grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren. Pallbearers will be grandsons. She was preceded in death by her....[copy of remaining article cut off]

Certificate of Death; State of MN; Division of Vital Statistics; Filed Aug 17 1981

Full Name: Francis Wolak	Sex: Female
Date of Death: July 20, 1981	Age: 90; Date of Birth: April 28, 1891
Race: Cau; County of Death: Benton	Place of Death: Foley
Facility Name: Foley Nursing Home	Birthplace: Minnesota
Citizen of What Country: U.S.	Marital Status: Widowed
Spouse: John Wolak	Was Decedent in Armed Forces: No
SSN: 472-60-0979	Usual Occupation: Housewife
Kind of Business Industry: Home	Residence: Minnesota
County: Benton; City/Village: Gilman	Father's Name: Anthony Smelter
Birthplace: Prussia	Mother's Name: Frances Savinsky
Birthplace: Unknown	Address of Decedent: Gilman, Minn
Informant's Name: Mrs. Angeline Woolhouse, Big Lake, MN	
Immediate Cause of Death: myelogenous leukemia; 6 months	
Other Significant Conditions: arterio sclerotic heart disease	
Burial: Ss. Peter & Paul Cemetery, Gilman, Benton, Minn.	
Date of Burial: July 23, 1981; Foley Funeral Home, Foley, MN 45329	



If you have not visited the library in a while
Come this month! With recent state grants,
the MGS has received several new
microfilm collections including
City Directories

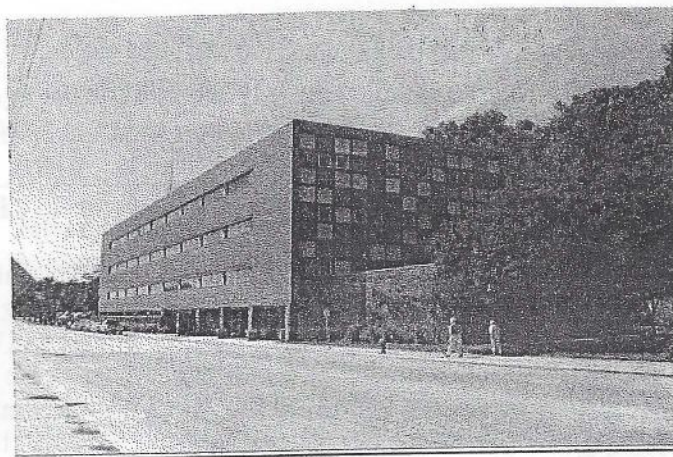


Directions to the MGS Library:

From West or East on 494, go north on Concord through South St. Paul to the address.

From W or E on 94, go south on 52 over Lafayette Bridge to Concord, then south to the address.

Parking is directly across the street or in adjacent lot on weekends. Street parking is also permitted.



Library Building, looking south on Concord St. The Library itself is located in Suite 218. Meetings will be in the Board Room (fourth floor) or Auditorium (first floor). Internet and WiFi are available in the library.

LIBRARY INFORMATION

PGS-MN's **Polish Collection** (books, maps, etc.) is located at the MGS Library, 1185 No. Concord St. in South St. Paul (see adjacent map). Hours are:

Tuesday: 6 – 9 p.m.
Wednesday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Thursday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. & 6 – 9 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Staffing is all volunteer, so check the website or call before heading over to verify it is open. Use:

651-455-9057 or <<http://www.mnpgs.org>>

SPECIAL POLISH DAYS AT THE LIBRARY

Except on library closure dates, the “Polish Night at the Library” is held on the **second Thursday of the month** from 6 to 9 p.m.. Similarly, the “Polish Afternoon” is held on the **first Saturday of the month** from 1 to 4 p.m. Either time, one of our experienced genealogists is usually available to assist you with your Polish research problems. Call ahead to verify.

Publications for sale by PGS-MN:

- Chrozempa, *Morbus—Why and How Our Ancestors Died* \$4.00
 Fitzpatrick and Yeiser, *DNA and Genealogy* \$22.50
 Golembiewski, *The Study of Obituaries as a Source for Polish Genealogical Research* \$10.00
 Hoffman, *Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings* \$25.00
 Hoffman and Helon, *First Names of the Polish Commonwealth: Origins and Meanings* \$20.00
 Jensen, *Sto Lat: A Modern Guide to Polish Genealogy* \$25.00
 Litak, *The Latin Church in the Polish Commonwealth in 1772* \$17.00
 Müllerowa, *Roman Catholic Parishes in the Polish Peoples Republic in 1984* \$15.00
 Ortell, *Polish Parish Records of the Roman Catholic Church* \$12.00
 Radzilowski, *A Traveller's History of Poland* \$14.95
 Schlyter, *Essentials in Polish Genealogical Research* \$3.00
 Shea, *Going Home: A Guide to Polish American Family History Research* \$35.00
 Shea and Hoffman, *In Their Words: A Genealogist's Guide To Polish, German, Latin, and Russian Documents*, Vol. I: Polish, \$35.00 - Vol. II: Russian, \$35.00

Make check payable to PGS-MN and order from:

Paul Kulas Attn: PGS Books
 12008 West River Road,
 Champlin MN 55316.

Minnesota residents add 7.275% sales tax. Please add 10% to the book costs for shipping & handling. Some of our most popular titles are available for sale at the library.



Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota

A Branch of the Minnesota Genealogical Society
 1185 No. Concord St.
 So. St. Paul MN 55075-1150

Members Please Note

If your address label is highlighted in yellow your membership expires with this issue. Renewals are \$20 for one year or \$50 for three years. *A membership is also a unique gift.* Please consider a three-year renewal as this will reduce the possibility of missed issues. Detach and mail the renewal form below. Throughout the year, we endeavor to provide quarterly newsletters and six interesting programs. Thank you for your support.

If you move...Please let the Membership Chairperson know at <doripgs@comcast.net>. The newsletter is bulk-mailed and is not forwarded. We must pay to receive notification of non-delivery. We do endeavor to mail out a copy first-class to your new address. Thanks.

Membership Application:

New _____ Renewal _____ Rejoining past member _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Winter and Summer addresses? Please indicate both addresses and dates each time you renew.

Individual/Family--\$20.00 _____ Three-year renewal--\$50.00 _____ Library donation \$ _____

List Surnames from Poland
that you are researching:

List locality in Poland where
each surname originated:

List locality in North America
where immigrant settled:

I consent to publishing of this information in the Society's newsletter and/or website Yes _____ No _____

Please make checks payable to Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota and mail to:

Michael Eckman, PGS mn Treasurer; 7222 Oak Pointe Curve; Bloomington MN 55438-3405.

Kevin & Kris O'Brien, 421 Constnccē Blvd NW, Andover MN 55304 <Kob0313@aol.com> is researching ZAJAC and PENKOWICZ in Poland.

Marie Fierck Przyński, 1848 Prosperity Rd., Maplewood MN 55109-4618 <przyński@comcast.net> is researching NIEDZIELSKI in Czersk in Poland, FIERCK, PRZYŃSKI in Bydgoszcz, JUREK in ? and all in Stevens Point WI to St. Cloud MN.

RoxAnn Splittstozer, 7984 160th Street East, Hastings MN 55033-9520 <roxann@mninter.net> is researching Eva Rosine JANOWSKI in Tuchola, Sepolno Kraj. and Pruszcz in Poland. Eva Rosine married Johann WIESE. Daughter, Justine Wiese, was born 25 July 1840 in Zempelburg.

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

Mary Ellen Bruski, 3412 Parkview Blvd., Robbinsdale MN 55444 <mehruski@comcast.net> is researching BRUSKI, WRYCZA in Chojnice (Czersk) in Poland and in Owatonna MN and KRUSZEWSKI in unknown in Poland and in Ontario to St. Paul MN (18740).

Thomas E. Burke, 1152 Via Capri, Winter Park FL 32789-2660 <thomas.burke@1962usna.com> is researching MATCZYŃSKI in Wysoka Posen and in Melrose and Fergus Falls MN and HELINSKI in Wysoka and in MN and MT.

Vivian Chamberlain, 34675 Fountain Blvd., Westland MI 48185-9436 <vivdonchamberl@ameritech.net> is researching JARNOT in Kety in Poland and in Holdingford MN; MORON in Osiek and in Holdingford; WODNICZAK in Odolanow, Poznan and in Wisc. Minn. and N. Dak.;

WIZNER in Ociąg, Poznan and in Wisc. Minn. and N. Dak.

Mary Christl, 2927 Clawson Ave., Royal Oak MI 48073 <marychristl@wowway.com> is researching Augustinus EBERTOWSKI, born in 1883 to Joannes and Josephina de PRADZYŃSKA. He remained in Poland although the rest of the family settled in MN.

*Editor's note: Mary indicates that she obtained this information from PTG Pomorskie Towarzystwo Genealogy - Pomeranian Baptism Index. The home page website address for this organization is: <<http://www.ptg.gda.pl/index.php/certificate/action/main/>>. The site indexes baptism, marriage and death records from Pomorskie province (Go to the pull-down menu under PomGenBase). I entered the information that Mary supplied above and found that Augustinus Ebertowski's baptismal record can be found in **Borzyszkowy** parish. Members with family ties to Pomorskie province (the Kaszuby area) would do well to explore this site. And then write an article for this newsletter about how to navigate the site and what information you found about your ancestors. --PTK*

Francine Fitting, 3991 Gulf Shore Blvd. N., #503, Naples FL 34103 <francinefs@sbcglobal.net> is researching PALUBICKI in Poland; RYMARKIEWICZ in Poznan; MAJKOWSKI in Lipusz; PIECHOWSKI in Kiedrowice and all in Winona MN.

Joan Gordenier, 10069 Hadley Rd., Gregory MI 48137 <jgbones@juno.com> is researching PIKULA, STANEK in Wola Debwiecka in Poland; DOMBOVY, YOREK in Falkowice; DZIABAS in Mlynkowo; MASLOWSKI in unknown--looking and all of the above in Morrison Co., MN.

Rod Julkowski, 2410 Rosewood Ln N., Plymouth MN 55441-3921 (Summer), 11415 E. Natal Ave., Mesa AZ 85209-2908 (Nov. to April) <julko001@umn.edu> is researching JULKOWSKI in Chelmza in Poland and in NE Minneapolis and POLLOK in Opole in Poland and in Browerville MN.

Gerald Keeville, 10773 181st Circle, Elk River MN 55330 <gkeevill@ties2.net> is researching LESSNAU, WREZA, MUDLOF in Gdansk/Danzig/Pomorskie in Poland and in Benton County in MN.

Tom Losinski, 3360 Rosewood Ln. No., Plymouth MN 55441 <tlosinski@aol.com> is researching LOSINSKI in Wiele, Poland and in Winona MN and Pine Creek WI.

Nancy Lyslo, 1893 - 190th St., Russell MN 56169-3081 <nlyslo@yahoo.com> is researching BABULSKI, STAMA in Poland and in Wisconsin.

Linda Mike, 515 W. Curtice St., St. Paul MN 55107 <ldahermike@q.com> is researching SUCHY/SUCHIE in Poznan in Poland and in Urbank MN; GBUR/GEUR in Flatow and in Millerville MN; also PISCHKE.

Gilbert Mros, 5025 Johnson St NE, Columbia Heights MN 55421-1957 <gil.mros@gmail.com> is researching GUTOWSKI in Lomza in Poland and in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio; MROS in Cupel and in New York and Michigan; MROZKA in Sokolow and in New York and Minnesota.

Louis Ochocki, 9157 Alamo St NE, Blaine MN 55449 is researching OCHOCKI in Plock in Poland and in Pittsburgh and Lincoln Co., MN; LIPINSKI in the Kushubian area of Poland and in Lincoln Co.; PARULSKI in unknown in Poland and in Lincoln Co. via Pittsburgh PA.

David & Diane Rapacz, 2 Ruth Street North, St. Paul MN 55119-4618

<djrder@earthlink.net> is researching RAPACZ, ZUTOWSKA, BANDAREK in Minneapolis MN.

Richard Theissen, 1147 Mary Pl. So., Maplewood MN 55119

<rftheissen@comcast.net> is researching ANDRZEJEK in Posen, Poland and in Chicago IL, Ivanhoe MN and Milwaukee WI.

Mary Ann Trent, 52 Wexford Lane, Crossville TN 38558

<gatraveler@mindspring.com> is researching BUSZKIEWICZ in Znin/Grylewo in Poland and in Lemont IL, Muskegon MI and in Fairmont MN; NONA in Doieszewo/Kcynia and in Lemont, Houston TX and Michigan City IN; WACHOWSKI in Smogolec/Sadki and in Chicago IL; CZAJA in ? and in Chicago; MADAJ in Szubin and in Fairmont MN.

Ron Tomczik, 158 Peninsula Rd, Medicine Lake MN 55441-4178 is researching COPA, SOPA in Winona, Sobieski and Platte MN and TOMCZYK, URBANSKI, BINCZYK in St. Cloud, Sobieski and Platte.

Karen Westphall, 1448 Edgcumbe Rd. St. Paul MN 55116-1701

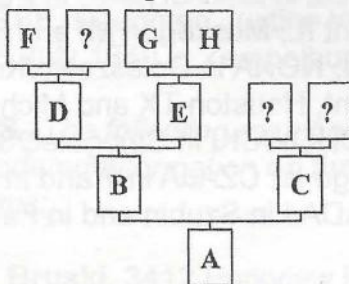
<weskar2003@yahoo.com> is researching ZAMYS,OWSKI in Marcypor'ba, Kraków and in Crosby MN; MILANOSKI in ? in Poland and in St. Paul MN; NIEZGOCKI in Poznań and in Crosby; THERING in Opole in Poland and in Foley MN.

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Missing Branches



Send queries and branch updates to: **Paul Kulas**, Associate Editor, PGS-MN Newsletter, 12008 West River Road, Champlin MN 55316-2145 (e-mail: <kkulas@ties2.net>) or with new or renewal membership forms.

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

George Koleas, W156 N10640 Cobbler Lane, Germantown WI 53022 <GeorgeJK676@wi.rr.com> writes: "John or James SZUKALSKI, born 1823, married Salome STANIZEWSKI, born 1834. Their child, Joseph, born 1874 and Regina GORENTKIEWICZ or KURENKIEWICZ, born 1891, were married July 28, 1891 in Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Regina's parents were Wojciech Gorentkiewicz or Kurenkiewicz and Julianna ZAHONOWICZ. I would like to find the arrival of these families in Milwaukee and their villages in Poland. Any information is appreciated."

NEW MEMBERS – We welcome the following:

Judy Patzner Danielson, 17015 - 12th Ave. N., Plymouth MN 55447 <judyd014@gmail.com> is researching her grandfather, Anton A. LEJK, in ? in Poland and in Waumandee WI (he was a farmer) and in Winona MN and her Grandmother, Julia ROSSA Lejk. Julia's father was Bartek ROSSA from Alt. Sholkowitz in Poland and was a farmer in North Creek WI. Judy's parents were Anton PATZNER Jr. and Blanche Lejk Patzner in Cross Township WI (also known as Eagle Valley) and in Wyattville MN. Judy asks, "What part of Poland did Grandfather Anton Lejk come from?"

Marcel A. Derosier, 3280 Lake Johanna Blvd., Arden Hills MN 55112 <frogskor@gmail.com> is researching Aleksandr GRAJKO in Vicora, Polish Russia and Teofilia LEWANDOWSKI in Wierbe, Polish Russia and both in Rhode Island.

Anne Klejment, 2018 Stanford Ave., St. Paul MN 55105 <amKlejment@stthomas.edu> is researching CHMIELARZ in Jankow Zalesny parish in Poland and in NY and MN; WEGNER in Krolikow & Godziec parishes and in NY, IL, WA & WI?; PIASECKI in Pultusk and in NY, MI, & ?; WIET/WEJT in Kalisz prov. and in NY.

Sr. Margaret Mewhorter, c/o Poor Clare Monastery, 8650 Russell Ave. S., Bloomington MN 55431 is a new member.

Missing Branches continued on page 30