

DROBNE ECHA

Installment #3

From *Katolik*, 1894

Dateline: Silver Lake

By Greg Kishel

Via this column, I am presenting translations of local reportage of Polish-American communities in Minnesota, as it appeared in regional Polish-language newspapers around a century ago.¹ While searching Hieronim Derdowski's *Katolik* for a different item, I came across a report from the early Polish settlement at Silver Lake, in McLeod County.² It had everything I like to include in this column--early community and church history, the first Polish settlers identified by name, and some description of the local business and economy. Thus, I'm presenting it, for those members who have roots in this community.

From Katolik, February 22, 1894:

The Polish Colony in SILVER LAKE.

Around the year 1858 the Americans Wite [*sic*; probably should be "White"] and Mines settled on a hill known as Freemont, which slopes into a pretty lake, occupying around 400 acres of land. Because the name Freemont (*Wolna Góra*) had been often used earlier for the names of places during the time the Indians lived there (they having had their own traditional privilege of "Free Mountains"), the name was changed accordingly to Silver Lake (*Srebrne Jero* [*sic*; should be "Jezioro"]), for the beautiful silver waters of the lake, washing the shores of the hill. First they founded a mill and a small store for the convenience of the local German and American farmers, who hitherto had imported their goods from St. Paul.

¹The first installment, a short item on Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, and Gilman published in St. Paul's *Stońce* in 1898, appeared in our Winter 2002-2003 issue; the second, seven reports datelined at Delano and published in Stevens Point's *Rolnik* in 1906-1909, appeared in our Fall, 2003 issue. The series title, meaning "Little Echoes" *po angielsku*, is borrowed from a column of short items of Polonian reportage that appeared regularly in Winona's *Wiarus*.

In 1860 the first Pole arrived here, Andrzej BRYNK, a countryman from the Duchy of Poznań, who before then had resided in Texas for a couple of years. A few years later a relative of BRINK arrived, Stanisław JAŚKOWIAK. The esteemed Father Józef JUSZKIEWICZ was the first Polish priest to visit them, around the year 1871, and in JAŚKOWIAK's house he celebrated a Mass.

Shortly after that--this was in 1873--there arrived from various parts of America or directly from Poland a dozen Polish families or so, namely those of: W. IWŃSKI, P. PAWLAK, Wał. GRZECHOWIAK, Win. BIELEWSKI, Mar. WITUCKI, Sz. SZLANGA, H. RUMIŃSKI, Fr. MIKOŁAJCZAK, W. PAWLICKI, W. SOBKOWIAK, J. MALAK, W. MALAK, An. KIELAS, Fr. KARZMARZYŃSKI, J. KNIOLA, M. MAKOWSKI, and from the Polish area of Germany the German Albert SANATH. It was established that a Polish priest was to arrive here, through the permission of the Bishop in St. Paul, and jointly with the first two settlers they constructed a wooden chapel under the patronage of St. Wojciech.

Then the Czech priests arrived here: first of all Father SZYMONEK, and then Father POWOLNY, who was the first to permanently reside in Silver Lake, visiting the Czech and German settlements in the region. At the same time a Polish priest traveled from Delano to the local Poles.

In the year 1881 the first Polish priest was residing permanently in Silver Lake and was constructing a rectory here. He was the esteemed Father Laurenty ZAWADZKI, who is currently serving in Delano.

In 1888 Father Wł. TYSZKIEWICZ took over the parish; he remains in the position to this day. During his tenure a beautiful brick church, still under the patronage of St. Wojciech, 130 by 50 feet, was built in the year 1889, as well as a home for the organist and the teacher. Since the old church building was still serviceable, it and the basement of the new

²Paul Kulas covered the history of Silver Lake's parish church in our Spring, 1997 issue. See also Wacław Kruszką, *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. 118-119, and Sister M. Teresa, "Polish Settlements in Minnesota 1860-1900," originally published in *Polish American Studies*, v. V, pp. 65-73 (July-Dec., 1948), currently available at www.polishroots.org/pahal/settlements_minn.htm.

church were assigned for a school; the first teacher was P. J. ZACZEK, and the current one is A. WAŁDOWSKI. Another 20 acres of land belong to the church, on which is a cemetery. There is admittedly still \$3,000.00 of debt on all this, but an equal amount is still owing from the people of the parish; when God gives a fertile year, they will pay this off with conviction.

Currently around 200 families belong to this church. Czechs also attend it in great numbers, and a few Frenchmen and Germans.

Since the Poles reside far from the church, in distances from 4 to 10 American miles as it is, their children accordingly attend church irregularly, and in small numbers in proportion to the number of Polish families.

A mutual aid Society of St. Wojciech is here, numbering around 70 members. There is also a Society of Education, under the protection of St. Jan Kanty. Its mission is the maintenance of the parish library and the lending of books for reading. More-over, the Rosary Sodality numbers around 200 members, and the Temperance Society has nearly 100 members. All of these societies were involved in the construction of the new church building. None of these societies are affiliated with the major Polish associations in America; each was self-organized and, better, was organized for domestic and parish work, believing that if each did what it could, the whole thus would come together itself. Along with the general Polish national movement in America, the societies in Silver Lake are striding forward, ever higher.

Currently in Silver Lake, the stores, sawmills, a flour mill, a brewery (*see ad at right*), etc. are exclusively in the hands of Poles or Czechs, as is the town government. Many of them hold even higher county clerkships.

The Polish farmers here have their own co-operative granary, to avoid being exploited and being unscrupulously taken advantage of by the agents of the two other elevators, which belong to the large trading companies. From it, grain is shipped out for sale in more distant places.

This year this business is going poorly, because the harvest is wretched and the other elevators are paying exaggerated prices in order to destroy the farmers' elevator. Still, on the whole this turns out well, because more is given for the wheat than in other places.

A Successful Home Production

Silver Lake Beer is becoming more popular every day and is winning praise from all sides. Its success has been principally by making a beer of absolute purity and being properly aged before sent from the brewery.

It has been brewed under the most exacting conditions, according to the latest scientific rules, by a brewer that knows his business and in a brewery where cleanliness is made an important factor.

You will find Silver Lake Beer rich--with the right color and the right taste.

Chalupsky's Brewery,
Silver Lake, Minn.

The typography and spelling are a bit sloppy in this advertisement from the Silver Lake *Leader*, March 10 1906.

The first line of of the ad copy should read: "Silver Lake Beer is becoming. . ."

The railroad that connects Silver Lake with Minneapolis, which is around 40 American miles away, was built in 1887 by the Great Northern company. Before then the railroad went up to a point around 12 American miles from Silver Lake. Thus likewise from the year 1887 the Polish colony in Silver Lake began to grow in size, in such ways as: the stores have grown in number, brick houses are being built, streets are being set out, sidewalks are being laid, the town has been lighted, etc.

**SPORTING
GOODS**

Our line of Sporting Goods is complete. We have everything the hunter needs

Loaded Shells Powder and Shot
Shot Guns Hunting Coats

Threshers will find our line of Belting, Valves, Oils, etc. as complete and at lower prices than you have to pay elsewhere.

GET OUR PRICES

**J. J. DANEK
HARDWARE**

An advertisement for Danek's Hardware Store in the December 17, 1904 issue of the *Silver Lake Leader*.

The soil in the whole area of Silver Lake is black, with a bottom layer of clay, producing an average of 40 bushels of wheat per acre. Corn always matures well here. On the other hand, in favorable climatic conditions beets produce weights of 15 to 35 pounds each.

This little item was composed a bit closer in time to its subject's founding than were the first two in our series, which means that its recounting of the first families is probably accurate. It places the Silver Lake community among the earliest Polonian settlements in south-central Minnesota, with those at Delano, Wells, and Minnesota Lake. It's nicely balanced in the attention given to clergy and lay-people, church institutions and secular livelihoods. It has the interesting observation of how

the local Poles created and maintained their own parishioners' organizations, not relying on St. Paul- or Chicago-based national groups for their programs or makeup.

It suggests that in McLeod County--unlike in central Minnesota--the Poles arrived early enough to get in on homesteading, or at least the larger-scale early purchase of good farmland; the author's lament about a large number of dispersed rural families not bringing their children to Mass regularly enough at-tests either to that, or to the Poles' prompt accumulation of acreage over the following two decades. In either case, it's clear that the Poles and the Czechs of Silver Lake accrued material stability for themselves; like their compatriots in Delano, they acculturated to the American polity and marketplace economy with reasonable success by the turn of the 20th century. And, by the time Father Kruszka was writing around 1908, they had burned the mortgage on that little brick church.³

³See Kruszka, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908, Part IV*, at p. 119. Father Tyszkiewicz, mentioned in this *Katolik* item, passed away only ten weeks after its publication. *Id.*

The following article has been sitting in my word processing program since 1999. So it is about five years old. I have intended to use it in this newsletter but never found an appropriate occasion until now. The preceding article by Greg Kishel gives a first-hand account of the founding of St. Adalbert's parish in Silver Lake. The following article gives a first-hand account of its closing. It therefore serves as a fitting bookend to Greg's translations.

The article was provided to me by Rev. Eugene Hackert from the Diocese of New Ulm. Fr. Hackert's hand-written note on the copy states: "This is a copy of Bishop Lucker's quinquennial report which every bishop personally takes to Rome while on official visit with the Holy Father. Each parish was invited to write their part." Thank you, Father Hackert, for this and your many other contributions over the years.

Saint Adalbert's baptism, marriage, death records (film #s 1705530 and 1705531) are on permanent loan at the LDS Family History Center in Crystal.

--PTK