

## DROBNE ECHA

Instalment #6

Dateline: Sturgeon Lake  
From *Wiarus*, 1886-1891

By Greg Kishel <gfk1@cornell.edu>

For our sixth venture into the coverage of Minnesota in Polish-language newspapers around 1900, we go to northwestern Pine County. Sturgeon Lake and its environs were the scene of a concentrated Polish-immigrant presence from their first settlement, in the mid-1880s; a large Polish-American agricultural community founded its own Roman Catholic parish there, and has retained a sense of ethnic identity for over a hundred years.

Here is a group of early reports datelined at Sturgeon Lake from *Wiarus*, the Polish-language newspaper published at Winona, in my translation.<sup>1</sup> It begins with a remarkable contemporaneous account by the colony's patriarch, of his family's arrival at their new home.

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*From the issue of July 8, 1886:*

### New Polish Farms.

Sturgeon Lake, July 7, 1886

Beloved Master Editor!

Though I am not an erudite writer at all, I still am venturing to write a couple of words to you, as I am able, because in the end, Master Editor, whatever you can improve, you will.

I am well-known in Winona, because I lived among you for a long time, but now I am more than 200 miles distant from you. On March 19 I left you, in order to found a new Polish settlement under the name of Sobieski here in Sturgeon Lake; and still to this day I have not sent any news about myself, and how we are getting along, though many countrymen from Winona asked me if I would write to them, particularly J. ANGLEWISZ, I. JEZEWSKI, J. ZABOROWSKI, W. KUPFERSCHMIDT, and many others.

<sup>1</sup>I have again used the genealogical publishing convention of capitalizing surnames in my translated text, to help those who skim the content for "their names."

Esteemed countrymen! At the moment we like it well enough here, but at the beginning I really did not feel at home here!

Arriving at the last train station, we found nothing other than the station building; in every direction all around, wherever one looked through the windows, on all sides there was only wilderness! One of my sons and a son-in-law set out then to reconnoiter the area, and about a mile from there they found three families of other nationalities. From them they borrowed stovepipe and blankets to keep us warm; the stove was found at the station and thus the problem was solved immediately. On the second day, there arrived a railroad car with the other things, and then we had in hand all the fittings for a household.

I bought 7000 feet of boards for \$6.50 per thousand, and in a couple of weeks we moved to our own place.

Others from Winona arrived with us, but not finding a roast of stag at the station as they had expected, they immediately left on the return train. Things did not appeal to one crone because she would have too few neighbors, nor to her 18 year old son because there are no girls here. They exclaimed thus to the father: "Let's get out of here!" And they left.

A strange thing this, that the father, who considered himself an expert in land when he was here on inspection, and did not have enough words of praise for the area and the soil, after that followed the advice of his scatterbrained son and returned, having incurred half again a hundred in expenses. Thus it happens sometimes, that the younger goof is wiser than the old one.

As far as I am concerned, I neither praise nor criticize this. It is true, that the ground here is not as fertile as on the prairies, but the land is cheap and there is wood in abundance. In Wilno for instance, the cheapest land costs \$5.00, but here it is \$2.50.

So if I were to have, let's say, 800 dollars, I would spend the whole thing at one time if I were buying 160 acres in Wilno, whereas here, buying the same area of land, I would keep 400 dollars, from which I would be able to live for three years, because whoever has a cow, he will have enough milk, it is quite possible to plant potatoes immediately in the first year and to raise quite a few domestic animals, and wood is so plentiful that it is possible to sell it here.

It is still possible to get government land, but for that it is necessary to make an effort as quickly as

possible. I have homesteads for myself and for my two sons and both of my sons-in-law; further from here SADOWSKI has a homestead, which WATKOWSKI had given up, and now Wojciech MAGDZAS and Roman SKWIERA, both from St. Paul, have taken up homesteads for themselves. Earlier there were 12 others from St. Paul here, but I do not know what they bought; MAGDZAS however told me that one of them had purchased 600 acres and wants to build a sawmill.

At the beginning I had some bad luck here. I bought a couple of nice-looking oxen, 5 cows, a bull and a pair of calves. Without warning, the best cow was killed by a train; but the Lord afforded me consolation, because the company compensated me \$47.50 without further ado.

At present we work together with God's help, only we feel sad that we do not have a church, nor a priest, nor even a saloon.

Whoever would like to visit me, buy a ticket to the station of Willow River, Minn., from which I live only half a mile away; but write to me beforehand under the address, "M. DUNAJSKI, Sturgeon Lake, Pine Co., Minn." so that I am able to come and fetch you. Our closest post office is in Sturgeon Lake.

At present Mr. RUDNICKI is here, and two other people have also bought land.

In October we will see each other and will rejoice, and at present, Master Editor and all of the old faithful ones of Winona, I send hearty greetings.

With respect

Maciej DUNAJSKI.

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*From the issue of September 30, 1886:*

#### **A Letter from Maciej Dunajski.**

Sturgeon Lake, Minn.

September 18.

Esteemed Master Editor!

I am hoping, that Master Editor will not turn me down in putting this couple of words in the pages of our beloved *Wiarus*, addressed to our beloved countrymen and especially to those in Winona.

It is certain that nobody will believe what I am about to write, but nonetheless this is how it is.

On Tuesday the 14th of the current month, the esteemed Father HILLAR came to us, arriving from the realm of BISMARCK. He comes from my part of the Polish lands--by birth he is from Rajkowy by Peplin. He was a vicar in Nowy, two miles from my home village, but because he said something from the pulpit about the iron prince, he had to serve a jail sentence and pay a rather large fine.

But let us set that aside for now. It is enough to say, that on the first of this month he disembarked at New York and there he stayed for a couple of days with a certain priest, where our beloved *Wiarus* was given to his hands, and this was number 20, in which was my communication to our Winona countrymen. And thus, having *Wiarus* in hand, he went to my address near Willow River; he arrived at night, thus only in the morning did a Frenchman bring him to us.

He stayed with us two days. He brought all of the apparatus for Mass with him, because he had thought we already had a chapel in which he would be able to celebrate holy Mass. He even wanted to donate some money for the chapel, and we would not have to support him in the beginning. And he said, that if he were to be with us, it would not be a year before our colony would be large enough that it could organize its own parish, because this area is worth it for Poles to take up residence here. And truly I myself would take up such an endeavor, but just now I am constructing a building for myself, and thus I have little time for other things.

We hosted the priest as best we could, and after two days we guided him to the station with pain in our hearts. But he promised to visit us shortly and to take up residence with us.

He traveled from us to St. Paul to the most esteemed Bishop and he wanted to use that opportunity to visit the esteemed Father MAJER also.

This is a youthful person, because he is only 25 years old at this time; and he became so close to the heart, that we were shedding tears emotionally when bidding farewell to him, whom, the Lord grant it, will be our first parish priest.

With respect

M. DUNAJSKI.

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*From the issue of November 10, 1887:*

On Friday, November 4, Mr. Józef ŁABĘDZKI, formerly a saloon-keeper in New York, arrived at the new Polish settlement of Sturgeon Lake, Minn., to take up residence there.

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*From the issue of November 17, 1887:*

STURGEON LAKE (the new Polish settlement). --- Several head of cattle belonging to Maciej DUNAJSKI, the patriarch of our colony, have died; without bells, they were lost in the forest. Everything else fares well for us here. No matter what they had in the field, all of it bore a rich crop--particularly potatoes, which are expensive here. They are paying us 60 cents per bushel.

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*From the issue of December 8, 1887:*

FROM STURGEON LAKE, Minn., they send word to us that Mr. Józef ŁABĘCKI who recently moved here from New York, while sitting down about a thousand steps from his house, came across a deposit of a stratum of the purest alabaster. If he were only able to find a customer for this commodity, he would be able to earn around 2000 dollars in a short time.

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*From the issue of March 22, 1888:*

### **THE POLISH FARMERS in Minnesota.**

Sturgeon Lake, March 15, 88.

Esteemed Editor!

The undersigned request the gracious placement of the present correspondence.

On March 13, 1888 there was a general meeting of the assembled farmers in Kettle River, at which the officials for the coming year were elected. For assessor of the 11th township our countryman Józef ŁABĘCKI, who had returned to our parts from New York only recently, was elected almost unanimously. The English, the Swedes, and the Poles voted and only 6 votes fell in opposition.

It is expected that our choice this time will turn out to be a correct one, and we judge that Mr. ŁABĘCKI will endeavor to stand on the side of our Polish community at every opportunity.

In closing, we wish our assessor a heartfelt *Szczęść Boże!*

Maciej DUNAJSKI, president;  
Józef BEITKA, vice-president;  
Fr. MADEJ, financial secretary;  
Jan DUNAJSKI, cashier;  
Fr. CHMIELEWSKI, guardian of the cash-box.

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*From the issue of May 31, 1888:*

### **A NEW POLISH SETTLEMENT.**

Sturgeon Lake, May 19, 1888,

Esteemed Master Editor!

Please do not deny me the placement of a couple of words about our colony in the columns of the beloved *Wiarus*, so that the subscribers may know how things are thriving here.

I am receiving very many questions, even from Texas, from people who write that they had gotten my address from you, and they are asking me how costly the land is here, how the soil is, and if it is worth one's while to go to Sturgeon. When all is said and done, there is much work in the fields now, thus it does not appear possible to do enough there and to respond to these letters alike. With that inconvenience to me, I have reckoned it best to write correspondence to *Wiarus*.

Already it is not possible to get government land close to the railroad here, such as within 6 miles, because there are already 40 families of Poles who have been living in Sturgeon, and secondly, as many more will be arriving shortly after the harvest. The Swedes have taken between ten and twenty homesteads.

It has unfortunately come to that here; the culprits are those undergrown cowardly gadabouts from Winona who came here to look and were surprised that this place was not made up of hills of gold from which they would be able to chop out treasure for themselves. If Polish people are not like that, they should come here with all haste. It would then fall to the Swedes' lot, as it fell to us in the old country.

Still, this is not yet a great shame, that the Swedes have infringed on us and are regretting it. They dreamed about a Swedish school, but already they are saying that it would not pay to establish it, because they are surrounded on all sides with Poles. May they yet clean up after everything, and then leave for the



Above: **MACIEJ DUNAJSKI**, founding father of the Sturgeon Lake Polish colony; his wife Anna, and his daughter Frances.

Date of photograph unknown.

Source: Bernice Mullen, PGS-MN member, granddaughter of Frances Dunajski and great-granddaughter of Maciej Dunajski.

Swedish colony *Gustaw Adolf*, named thus for that king who waged the Thirty Years' War with the Germans.

These are well-founded signs that our colony will be purely Polish.

Esteemed Countrymen! Anyone who has a few or a great many cents scraped together, buy from the Company, while it is still possible to get land that is both good and cheap, and close enough to the railroad. The Company has raised the price of land by 50 cents per acre, thus an acre of land now costs \$3.00.

We have a Polish agent of the Company here,

Józef ŁABĘCKI; write to him under the following address: Józef ŁABĘCKI, Sturgeon Lake, Minn.-- and he will give you help with all the further details you desire. Those who would not be afraid of living a little further from the railroad, would be able to get government land as well.

You are inquiring, esteemed countrymen, about our priest and school. The esteemed Father WOJCIK travels to us from Duluth, and the train costs him only \$1.85 round-trip. From the railroad, he comes across my farm on foot, because this is only half an English mile, and such a young person prefers to go out walking, and he is usually in good company because someone always goes out to meet him. We are planning to build a church in the winter; and when the Lord enables us to do that, then the one prophet from Winona will have to give up his head, because he said that he would give up his head, if and when a Polish church is established in Sturgeon Lake.

All the rest with us is like before, only this year the cool weather of early spring is much longer than the previous two years that we have spent here, and even worse because this year there is much more precipitation. Though bridges are already finished through the area, it has still burdened the farmers who manage to reach their land, it is not even possible to do much work in the fields. (At Winona, it is the same. -- A note from the Editor of *Wiarus*)

Potatoes cost 75 cents here. By now the Swedes have taken over 100 bushels from me, and still they flatter themselves that that was at little cost.

In closing, I am telling those countrymen who wish to settle on a farm, if they have not yet considered it, just come to select land for themselves in Sturgeon Lake, in the state of Minnesota.

Your well-wishing countryman

*Maciej DUNAJSKI.*

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*From the issue of August 16, 1888:*

IN THE NEW POLISH COLONY in Sturgeon Lake, Minn., there have already arisen two parties, disposed in adversity toward one another. The party of Maciej DUNAJSKI is bent on having a church built now, whereas the other party, under the leadership of Mr. ŁABĘCKI, the county assessor, more reasonably wants the colony to first fit itself out with everything else that is necessary, and thus feather its nest in this way, and only afterwards be thinking about a church.



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[Lemberg]  
(Galicya).

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**NA FARMĘ!**  
**GRUNTA**  
w Polskiej Kolonii  
**STURGEON LAKE**  
w PINE COUNTY  
w lesistej Minnesocie  
ZIEMIA ŻYZNA.

Warunki kupna bardzo przy-  
stępne. Wszelkich informacji  
udzieli bezpłatnie Józef  
Łabęcki, Sturgeon Lake,  
Pine Co., Minn. Zwrócić je-  
dzak uwagę Szan. Ro-  
dakom, iż nadarza się sposo-  
bność kupienia dobrego grun-  
tu i tanio w bliskości kolei.  
Familię polskich osiadłych w  
tych stronach jest około 70 a  
tej jesieni zamierzamy budo-  
wać kościół i szkołę polską.  
Spieszcie się zatem i kupuj-  
cie, póki cena przystępna,  
gdyż wkrótce ceny pójdą w  
górze. Cena 4 dolary za akier.

**Notaryat Publiczny**  
**Asekuracja Ogniowa**

San Martin des Germanieres in Gola West Alerik, Minn., 1st April 1889

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At left: **ADVERTISEMENT FOR SALE OF  
RAILROAD LAND IN STURGEON LAKE**  
from the June 14, 1888 issue of *Wiarus*.

Translation: "ON THE FARM! LAND in the Polish Colony of STURGEON LAKE in PINE COUNTY in forested Minnesota. FERTILE SOIL. Very straight-forward terms of sale. Józef Łabęcki, Sturgeon Lake, Pine Co., Minn. will impart all information without cost. Still, however, I must make an observation now to my Esteemed Countrymen, that the opportunity has come your way, of purchasing good land, and cheaply as well, in the vicinity of the railroad. There are around 70 Polish families settled in our area, and we intend to build a church and a Polish school this autumn. Make haste right now and buy, while the price is moderate, since shortly the price will go higher. The price is 4 dollars per acre."

have cause to do that. We have our hands full of work, and even if a guy had ten hands, he would not be in a position to handle it all.

This fall a company is planning to build a so-called *pulp mill*, in which around 200 people will have permanent employment winter and summer, and to which the farmers will be able to sell their wood for cash.

Near the railroad station we have two *family stores*; an Englishman holds one, while a Polish Jew has the second one. If a countryman could be found, who would like to secure for himself and his family a livelihood for the future and who had from 2000 to 3000 of capital, I could have one of these stores for a private sale; 80 acres of land belongs to that store, near to it and near to the same railroad station.

The price for the 2 story house and the store with all fixtures and merchandise as well as the said 80 acres: 2000 dollars cash. The present proprietor plans to leave America. It is thus an opportunity to get into a ready business like this, in which it is never possible to lose, and in such an inexpensive manner.

Our settlement lies in a very favorable location, inasmuch as it is only 45 English miles from the port city of Duluth, and 103 from the large cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. In the event that any of our countrymen would like to visit our parts, please inform me about that by letter straightaway.

With regards

Józef ŁABĘCKI

Sturgeon Lake, Pine Co., Minn.

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From the issue of June 20, 1889:

Poles on their farms.

Sturgeon Lake, 20 June 89.

In almost every issue of the Polish-American periodicals, we find any number of reports, short or long, from the far-flung corners of the United States that are settled by Poles. Still, so those of our countrymen who are familiar and interested do not think that our settlement has become extinct through an epidemic debility, I take up the pen today to exchange news with our Esteemed Countrymen, and then to give the happy news, that the Polish settlement in Sturgeon City is alive and enjoys the best of success.

The Polish farmers settled here currently number 130 families; besides that there are 27 families of Swedes, 2 of French, and 3 of Germans.

From almost every State we read, that the people are complaining of a lack of work. Our settlers do not

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*From the issue of July 10, 1890:*

Esteemed Sir Editor!

Though I am not a great literary hack, I am sending our Beloved Editor the following correspondence; and I ask that he work it on his own anvil, and publish it in *Wiarus*. Esteemed Countrymen--while we were writing about the project for the construction of a church in the new settlement of Sturgeon Lake, many undoubtedly thought that the plan would end up in idle talk and that we were building nothing. These days it is not so, because we have already built the church structure, and we have so far completed it that on July 1 and 2 the esteemed Father SROKA celebrated Holy Mass in it, he heard confessions, and he gave a beautiful sermon.

We have a church--though there are only walls, roof, and windows--and it is still necessary to complete it, to make the furnishings and the many other things that are essential.

It is thus appealed to you, Beloved Brethren, who are supposed to be taking up residence in Sturgeon Lake, that you contribute to the completion of the church. Here there are already enough settlers who for the most part are poor people, who settled on government land delivered to them free of charge, and among these are many such, who came here without any monetary funds whatever--some even borrowed money to get themselves here. These ones thus are not able to offer anything for the church, because they do not have anything. There are many, however, who purchased land here, and only contemplated settling here later. They thus should come to our aid, because when we finish up the church it will be to their advantage--and they will be arriving at the time the church is completed. The two MARSZAŁs from Duluth already sent us \$90 for that purpose, identical to another donation they had already made. All donors are inscribed in the parish books, but we know likewise of those who have bought land here--and who have contributed nothing for the church.

Whoever would want to make such an offering, send it to the hands of the president, Maciej DUNAJSKI, or to the hands of the secretary, Antoni MILANOWSKI.

Whoever still wants to settle on government land, come with all possible speed--because there is still room for a few families in the vicinity of the church. The grain and hay are growing very beautifully this year; only the corn has failed somewhat, inasmuch as

there was a long and wet winter. Get here immediately, and you may yet view our abundance in the field.

Respectfully,

Maciej DUNAJSKI.

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*From the issue of August 21, 1891:*

**From Sturgeon Lake, Minn.**

15 August.

Esteemed Countrymen!

It certainly must surprise you, that nothing has been heard about our colony for so long. Perhaps you are thinking to yourselves, "they died from hunger there, and if they live, they are concerned only with their own poverty"--but it is not so, my dear ones.

We have something to eat, thank God, and indeed we are selling a large supply of food. This year we are having beautiful harvests. There are so many potatoes, that they are saying they have fallen to 8 cents a bushel--there is such an abundance of them.

Everyone among us has work. There are two sawmills and one planing mill in our colony--and one of them goes day and night, if it has enough workers, and it pays the workers from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day. At present the local farmers do not have the time to work in the sawmills, because they must tend to their own business, thus it is easy to get work of that sort once one has settled here permanently.

Our church, which was finished on the outside in the winter, is thus now standing, though at the present time there is a lack of money. I know about how much; to date 18 citizens have not contributed for the church, and many others have contributed only a one- or two-dollar offering. Still, there is hope that after the harvest a more abundant donation will flow forth.

Since we have a church, we are also longing for a Polish store. There is one store here, to be sure, but it should be possible to have a second one, to be Polish-owned. There is already a suitable building for a Polish store; it is two-storied, and a Polish Jew once maintained a store on one of the floors. It belongs to one of the mercantile firms in Duluth, which would have leased it out willingly.

If anyone from the Polish community is known for

the management of a farmers' grocery store and has two thousand dollars or more, come give it a try. The building stands empty--one could rent it or buy it, dirt-cheap. Hurry up, countrymen, lest the raven or the goshawk snatch it up; let a Polish sparrow of our own arrive here, who would sing with us: chirp, chirp, chirp, because the goshawk is still wheeling around and around in the air and is watching closely so he can seize something.

We already have a saloon here, and at present we do not desire for any more.

Will there be enough work for five years yet? There will be as long as the local settlement is in existence; formerly there were only silent forests on all sides here.

A resourceful man always finds bread here--if not on the farm then in work in the sawmill. Our great sawmill, being in motion day and night, is found in *Willow River*, only a mile from me and 3 miles from the train station in Sturgeon Lake. In Willow River the workers have built little houses for themselves and walk to the mill to go to work. They live cheaply, because they do not pay rent, and fuel does not cost them anything.

On the farms, on the other hand, there is nothing of poverty, nothing that requires too hard work or too much--and we all happily look forward to the days to come.

With esteem,

M. DUNAJSKI

Sturgeon Lake P.O., Minn.

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These are almost all of the longer *Wiarus* reports from Sturgeon Lake that were published in the first five years of the Polish settlement there. I have included some of the shorter, single-subject items that were sprinkled throughout those years as well.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>I have omitted a couple of letters from Sturgeon Lake locals on politics within the Polish National Alliance; these really don't fit this column's mission, of showcasing our local history. *Drobne Echa* will feature a couple of follow-up instalments on Sturgeon Lake; I have begun to assemble the other short items from 1888-on, plus longer reports for years after 1891. The third instalment will include a fascinating account of the great Willow River flood of 1897, as it impacted on the Poles of northwestern Pine County.

This project is particularly important to the PGS-MN's mission to develop the history of our many local Polish-American settlements; even less has been formally collected and preserved about Sturgeon Lake than has been done for the other Polonian outposts of rural Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>

This dearth of earlier attention highlights what a marvelous discovery these items were. We have a vividly personal viewpoint in them, foremost from principal correspondent Maciej DUNAJSKI, a veritable founding father of the community. The evidence strongly suggests that the man deserved that title; everything reinforces the picture of DUNAJSKI as an early builder of a community,

<sup>3</sup>I have not been able to locate a jubilee book or anniversary history of St. Isidore's, the Polish-ethnic parish at Sturgeon Lake; apparently none has ever been written. A two-page document written by one of the pastors of St. Isidore's seems to be the most detailed narrative history of the parish's founding and early years. It is rich in its enumeration of individual names, but the narrative content is pretty scant, after some interesting details about the first efforts to organize the parish. See Rev. Stan. A. Libold, "Brief History of St. Isidore's Church at Sturgeon Lake, Minn." (unpublished ms., March 10, 1949, on file at the Archives of the Diocese of Duluth). One locally-produced history of Pine County, published for the Minnesota Territorial Centennial in 1949, *does not mention a single Polish name* in its coverage of Sturgeon Lake. Pine County Historical Society, *One Hundred Years in Pine County* (Askov, Minn: Pine County Historical Society, 1949), pp. 75-77. (The author of this short chapter was one Oscar W. Anderson. At the risk of stoking up old ethnic rivalries, I will wonder whether he was of Swedish descent!) A more recent county history gives more credit to the individual Polish settlers and their descendants in respectable numbers, and it covers the long-time local persistence of Polish customs; however, its treatment of Sturgeon Lake could not be any more than a survey. Jim Cordes, *Pine County and its memories* (North Branch, Minn.: published by the author, 1989), pp. 175-181. St. Isidore's and a couple of its parishioners received a brief treatment in *Historia Polse w Ameryce*. Waclaw Kruska, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908, Part IV: Poles in the Central and Western States* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. 136. In his recent survey, John Radziłowski touched on the nature of the Sturgeon Lake colony and the roots of many of its settlers in the Russian Partition, an anomaly in rural Minnesota's Polonia. *Poles in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), pp. 6 and 12. In the end, though, these few writings, terse and none too detailed, are the only extant published material about the early years of Sturgeon Lake's Polonia.



forward-looking and fairly disinterested.<sup>4</sup> Among other things, we have his fine fulminations against land speculators from the Polish-American community itself, and against the summer settlers and sunshine pioneers from Winona who simply couldn't take the rigors of carving a new home out of raw, unsettled territory.<sup>5</sup>

Several other themes run through DUNAJSKI's observations: ethnic competition with the local Swedes for land and prominence<sup>6</sup>; the current price

<sup>4</sup>Unlike the case of Józef ŁABĘCKI, our other signatory on these reports, there is no evidence that DUNAJSKI had a direct financial stake in populating the region with Poles. Father Libold notes that ŁABĘCKI was a "land salesman" from the first. "Brief History" at p. 1. ŁABĘCKI is often noted as the agent of the St. Paul and Duluth Railroad Company in the numerous ads promoting settlement in Sturgeon Lake that appeared in *Wiarus* in these years. E.g., Radziłowski, *Poles in Minnesota*, p. 13, and *Wiarus* ads cited by him. Father Libold credits ŁABĘCKI with procuring the donation of land from the St. Paul and Duluth for the construction of a Roman Catholic parish church for the Poles. "Brief History," p. 1. He also notes that the Duluth Polish-American community was solicited to recruit settlers for Sturgeon Lake. *Id.* (The ties between these two communities are also illustrated by the mention of the MARSZAL/MARSZAŁKIEWICZ brothers of Duluth as early benefactors of the Sturgeon Lake church. Our readers will remember how these men figured in the last instalment of this series, in our Summer, 2005 issue.)

<sup>5</sup>These complaints are quite funny to us in the early 21st century. What we cannot tell now is the extent to which they were heartfelt diatribes, rather than a ploy to match the author's style to the wickedly-humorous polemics that characterized *Wiarus* in general. See Waław Kruska, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), pp. 275-276 ("Anyone who had a sharp pen and wanted to employ it to annoy its opponents would go quickly to *Wiarus*; if his article was spicy enough, he found a friendly reception...") and Part IV, p. 123 (terming Hieronym Derdowski "the sharp-tongued editor of *Wiarus*..."); Radziłowski, *Poles in Minnesota*, at p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>The reference in the 1888 report to what befell the Poles "in the old country" shows the long-term persistence of ethnic antagonisms in Europe. It clearly was a reference to *Potop*, the "Swedish Deluge" of 1655, in which the Swedish army swept over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth almost to its southern boundary. Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and Their Culture* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994), pp. 168-170.

of potatoes<sup>7</sup>; the yearning to have a church in which the Poles could hear Mass and receive the sacraments in their own language<sup>8</sup>; the powerful wish to make a successful home place in the area, in which Poles would be economically secure. And (as we see here and will in the ensuing instalments) those unfenced cows kept wandering in front of trains--though the beloved "Company" seems to have been eager to make good financially to the locals.

Those Polish pioneers made their two big wishes come true. St. Isidore's, named for the patron saint of farmers, is still a functioning parish (though it is now served as a mission church from St. Mary's in Willow River). And, the near-complete predominance of Polish surnames at St. Isidore's Cemetery--including multiple generations from those families named in these early reports--shows that those early settlers made deep family ties to northwestern Pine County that are still alive nearly 120 years later.<sup>9</sup>

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#### WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS:

As I did in several earlier instalments of this series, I used John Radziłowski's index of Minnesota-bylined correspondence in *Wiarus*, to locate this material. Once again, John, we're all indebted to your scholarship. Rose Knudsen of the Chancery Office of the Diocese of Duluth graciously gave me copies of Father Libold's typescript and a couple of other items from the very thin file for St. Isidore's in the

<sup>7</sup>Look at the crash that took place between 1888 and 1891. The thin, sandy soil of northwestern Pine County was not good for a lot of crops--but once the Poles got going on their *ziemiaki*, they had great success in production, perhaps even too great.

<sup>8</sup>It was not until 1893 that a resident pastor was appointed for St. Isidore's, the first being Father Mikołaj TOLPA. Kruska, *A History of the Poles in America, Part IV*, p. 136; Libold, "Brief History," p. 1. One wonders where young Father HILLAR ended up; his name does not appear in the index to Kruska's *History*, and that author (a priest himself) went out of his way to name Polish-born priests and detail their American careers.

<sup>9</sup>Among others, the MAGDZIARZ and CHMIELEWSKI families, mentioned prominently in these reports, have stayed in the area since the founding. For those who may be wondering, I have not had the opportunity to do a final on-site updating and proofreading of my transcription of St. Isidore's cemetery, first promised in these pages several years ago. With luck, it will appear here in several instalments in 2006.



Diocesan Archives. Long-time PGS-MN members Bernice Mullen (a direct descendant of Maciej Dunajski) and Jenny Hall provided the rare photographs--Bernice the one of the Dunajskis and Jenny the one of the first building of St. Isidore's. (See, guys? We finally got around to covering your ancestral territory!) For translation assistance, I again thank Anna Kuroczycka, a student of mine at the 1999 UNESCO-sponsored English language summer camp in Toruń and currently an American Studies

major at the University of Warsaw. Among the terms that Anna pursued for me was *spozimek*, a word not found in current Polish-language dictionaries. After consulting older relatives, Anna herself learned that it's an archaic word that denoted the period of cool, icy weather between the end of snowy winter and the beginning of "true" spring--a phase of the year that is longer in northern Minnesota than it is at the latitude of the Twin Cities. *Dziękuję bardzo* to all!



Above: **ORIGINAL STRUCTURE OF ST. ISIDORE'S CHURCH**, built 1890-1893

Date of photo unknown. Source: Jenny Hall, PGS-MN member