



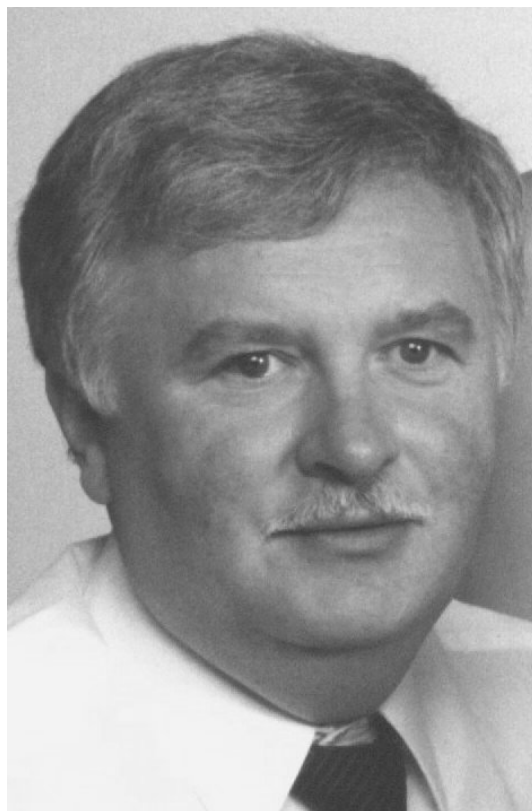
SEARCHERS



NUMBER 30

PRESERVING OUR PAST SINCE 1988

WINTER 2001



October 23, 1950

October 25, 2001

Michael A. Drabik

Please remember in your prayers MICHAEL DRABIK, founding president of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State, who was pronounced dead of an apparent heart attack yesterday evening (Thursday, October 25, 2001) at his place of work in Buffalo NY. He was 51.

A native of the Kaisertown-East Clinton Street area of Buffalo, Michael, who was born in 1950, attended South Park High School, where he was introduced to Polish Language studies.

He was an alumnus of Alliance College in Cambridge Springs PA, where he deepened his interest in Polish culture and language. He would often describe with humor his first "disastrous" trip to the land of his grandparents shortly after graduation.

Michael was a champion of Polish religious practices (Gorzkie Zale Lenten Lamentations; Wigilia; Swieconka; Polska Msza),

and was an avid researcher and a published Polonia historian. A dozen years ago, he organized and became first president of the Polish Genealogical Society of Western New York (now PGS-NYS), and contributed many article to its publication, Searchers. He was a prodigious collector of Polonian books, publications and artifacts, and an entertaining and informative lecturer. Much of the website material of the PGSNYS on Polonia parishes in the Buffalo diocese was Mike's work, as was his article about the Polonia clergy in Western New York.

Most recently, Mike had given me for review an unfinished article he was writing about Polish radio broadcasting in Western New York. In the past, he had done articles about Polonia midwives, funeral directors, the Fredro Singing Society, Polish theater in Buffalo, etc.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Meetings:

The PGSNYS meets the second Thursday of each month in the Villa Maria College cafeteria, 240 Pine Ridge Road, Cheektowaga, New York, at 7:00 p.m.

All meeting cancellations due to bad weather will be announced on News Radio 930, AM WBEN.

Membership Dues... A reminder from the Treasurer:

Dues are \$15.00 for the year. This entitles you to 3 editions of the Searchers. New members receive an information package to help get them started. Annual membership dues are to be received by your expiration date which will be listed in the upper right hand corner of the mailing label. Please refer to this date when paying dues the following year. **Please notify us of any change of address.**

Article Submissions:

Submission deadlines for articles to the Searchers Newsletter are as follows:

Contact: James P. Harlos, Editor articles@pgsnys.org

Spring Edition - April 15th for June mailing

Summer Edition - June 15th for August mailing

Winter Edition - October 15th for December mailing

Mail

Please note when writing us for assistance, that due to the large amount of mail received: The PGSNYS will answer ONLY correspondence that includes a self-addressed, stamped reply envelope. All correspondence should be directed to:

**The Polish Genealogical Society of New York State
12645 Rt. 78
East Aurora, New York 14052**

If you wish to contact one of our committees, please write the committee name on the front of the envelope. The committees are General Correspondence, Searcher Editor, and Membership Chairman.

Please visit The Polish Genealogical Society of New York State's Web Site:

www.pgsnys.org

PGSNYS Officers:

<i>President</i>	David E. Newman president@pgsnys.org
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For several years, Michael had been in charge of the East Side office of the Crime Victims Compensation Board, a New York State project conducted through Buffalo's Neighborhood Information Center. Residents of Stadnitski Gardens, a hundred units of senior citizen housing across the Broadway Market at Beck and Stanislaus Streets, fondly remember Mike as its manager for many years.

With his wife and three daughters, he was involved in many fraternal benefit and social organizations: Polish National Alliance, Polish Union of America, Polish Falcons of America, Polish Scouting (Harcerstwo). Michael was also the recipient of many awards, including

1972-1973

Received a certificate from Alliance College for being elected to Who's who among students in American Universities and Colleges in recognition of outstanding merit and accomplishment as a student at Alliance College.

1988

Received a plaque from PGSNYS for being the Founder and 1st President of the PGSNYS.

1991

AmPol Eagle Citizen of the year award for Heritage.

1992

Received a plaque from Cheektowaga Polish Festival for his untiring efforts and dedication in promoting Polish Culture Throughout the community.

1995

Received a plaque from the PGSNYS for a workshop presentation.

Daniel Kij



President's Message

Thanks to everyone who voted me as president of the PGSNYS for the 4th year. Many thanks to the officers and board members who served this year. Your time is appreciated and recognized. Congratulations to the new and continuing officers and board members. I look forward to working with you in 2002.

As I look back at the year 2001, I notice our society experienced a great deal of change.

The biggest change is the death of our Founder Mike A. Drabik who passed away on October 25th. I've relied on Mike's friendship, knowledge of Polonia and wisdom to guide me as president the past few years. Mike dedicated his life to the Polish Genealogical Community. His contributions can fill a set of encyclopedias. Till the day he died, Mike was still working on a few Polonia research projects. Two that I know of are on Polonia Radio and Polish Midwives (<http://www.pgsnys.org/midwives/>).

Plans are being made to complete his works for publication. Mike will be sincerely missed.

The PGSNYS welcomes Jim Harlos (harlos@adelphia.net) as the new Searchers Editor. Jim has been a member since September 1998 and brings the experience of being Managing Editor of *Cell Biophysics—An International Journal*. Jim is taking over for Lynn Mycek-Rzepecki who has been our Searchers editor since Winter 1999 with Issue 24. She has brought our newsletter to a new plateau of quality. We thank and appreciate her time, dedication and motivation to Searchers.

Without change our society can never grow I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

I would also like to thank the women who put together the Christmas party. Rita Prabucki, Barbara Golibersuch, and Rita Hider.

Sincerely,

David E. Newman
President, PGSYS

January Meeting

The January meeting was unfortunately canceled due to location scheduling problems.

Open Records for Adult Adoptees

by Tim Roberts

Each year, November is designated as National Adoption Month. It is a time when extra attention is paid to those children who, being in foster care or other temporary situations, are waiting for a loving family to provide a stable environment for them to grow and flourish.

While the majority of people will focus on the 'newly adopted' aspect of this month, attention also needs to be directed to the 'forgotten adopted' of this country. These are the people who, merely through the act of being adopted, have lost all of their heritage and genealogy because of the closed adoption system in this country. Many people do not realize that adoptees are the ONLY group of people in the United States who are denied access to their original birth certificates. They are also denied access to any medical records or paperwork that was issued before their adoption took place. Even if the adoptee has a valid reason for having their records open, such as a genetic medical condition or life threatening illness, they are oftentimes refused. Adoptees in this country have died because the court system has declined to open their records for medical information, citing reasons of confidentiality. This type of mindset has its origins in the adoption laws written in the 1930's.

The first adoption statutes in the United States went into effect around the 1850's. However, it wasn't until the 1930's that social workers began asking that adoption records be legally sealed. Their rationale at the time was to protect the birthmother from the stigma of illegitimacy in a society that looked down upon pregnancy outside of marriage, and to protect the child from being labeled a 'bastard'. Other reasons were to prevent blackmail of the birthparents and to protect the child from possible disturbing events surrounding their birth, such as rape.

Each party, the adoptive parents and the birthparents, were encouraged to get on with their lives as if none of it had ever happened. Birthmothers may have been told that their identities would be forever concealed. There was only one thing wrong with these concepts. No one remembered to tell the adoptee.

The adoption laws of the 30's and 40's have remained in effect to this day, with very little revision regarding the sealing of records. However, progress has been made, most notably in Oregon, Tennessee and Alabama, to open these records to adult adoptees. The word 'Adult' needs to be emphasized. No one is advocating those records be opened for minors. There are now six states that allow adoptees various accesses to their adoption records.

However, most of the states in the union still look upon adult adoptees as forever children, and therefore deem them unable to deal with the information that is kept from them, supposedly for their own good. Despite the enlightened society we now live in that no longer looks down upon birthmothers and their prodigy, there are still those individuals and groups in our country who are

looking to deny adult adoptees their heritage. Among these are the National Council for Adoption, and Pat Robertson, who helped found the American Center for Law and Justice, and is well known for his Christian Coalition political party. Both these parties were involved in the lawsuits in Tennessee to try to prevent adoption records from being opened. Listed below are some reasons why it is time to open adoption records, as well as rebuttals to the common arguments opponents such as these put forth against opening them for adult adoptees.



Many people do not realize that adoptees are the
ONLY group of people in the United States
who are denied access to their original birth
certificates.

Illegitimacy and infertility are no longer looked down upon by society.

As mentioned above, a primary consideration for sealing records was the concern of social workers and child-placing agencies about the stigma of illegitimacy of children born of parents who were not married to each other. Changing or substituting birth certificates was seen as a way to remove that stigma and concealing the word "illegitimate" that might have been marked on the original birth certificate. Many social workers believed birth mothers desired anonymity and wanted a chance to start over after the stigma of an out-of-wedlock birth.

Today, the stigma of illegitimacy no longer exists. One-parent households are common. Single motherhood is championed. Infertility is no longer the shame it once was, but is now the recipient of numerous medical advances. Those who bore children and released them for adoption need no longer fear the reprisals of society, and those who adopt are no longer shunned for being unable to conceive.

Sealed records do not prevent reunions. They only drive people underground and force otherwise honest people to break the laws.

You need only watch television to see dozens of reunions taking place before the camera. For every reunion that is facilitated by a television show, there may be hundreds that are being facilitated

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by private investigators or individuals themselves. The internet has helped spawn reunion registries, chat rooms and mailing lists filled with those who are desperately searching. Some adoptees looking for birth parents, and vice versa, spend from hundreds to thousands of dollars to hire anyone from private detectives to state-sponsored searchers.

If you try to go through the system, the same system that arranged your adoption, you are likely to get the door slammed in your face if you mention the word 'adopted'. To be fair, these workers are only doing their job and abiding by the current laws. It is these laws that are forcing adoptees and birthparents into secrecy again, as they try to gather information about their families by relying on contacts and individuals who have learned how to go around such doors, rather than through them. Some who have hit dead ends on their own may resort to illegal methods of obtaining their information. All for pieces of paper that someone 70 years ago decided they shouldn't see. There will always be reunions. The laws are not stopping them.

Abortions will increase and Adoptions will decrease because birthmothers will lose their confidentiality.

No evidence has been brought forth to support this claim. On the contrary, there is much evidence against it. The abortion rates in both Alaska and Kansas, states which grant adult adoptees unconditional access to their original birth certificates and adoption papers, were lower than the national average as a whole: 14.6 and 18.9 abortions respectively for every 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 44, compared to the national rate of 22.9. This research comes from the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit organization focused on sexual and reproductive health research, policy analysis and public education, located at <http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/>.

From the same institute, statistics from England and Wales, for the period of 1961 through 1987, show abortions began to increase steadily from 1961 through 1973. However, starting in 1974, when England and Wales opened records to their adult adopted citizens, abortions and the abortion rate in these countries actually decreased.

Birthmothers and Adoptive parents were promised confidentiality

Confidentiality was more often 'imposed' rather than 'offered'. If adoption was the path women chose or were forced to accept, privacy was often part of the adoption package, not an option. The adoption system assumed that confidentiality was desired and needed to protect the adoption. Birthparents were, by signing away their parental rights, accepting a nonnegotiable condition of confidentiality.

No surrender agreements, except possibly within the last 5 years, have surfaced that included confidentiality as a legal option for the birthmother. Opponents have used these oral or assumed contracts spoken years ago to justify the continuation of 'implied' confidentiality.

Individual states have begun to strike down this implied confidentiality myth. In Oregon, the court of appeals ruled that confidentiality was never guaranteed by statute. The fact that people representing an agency offered this confidentiality did not bind the state to any agreement of such a clause. In denying an appeal to keep adoption records sealed, Tennessee, the 6th Circuit court of appeals ruled

since a birth was recorded by the government, these records could serve a myriad of purposes, including 'furthering the interest of children in knowing the circumstances of their birth..'

Birthparents (or Adoptees, or Adoptive parents) are against open records.

There will never be 100% agreement on this issue, and opponents can always find someone who will agree with them about keeping records sealed. But Democracy, by definition, is; 'government by the people; especially : rule of the majority.' The majority in this case swings toward open records.

There have been many polls taken over the years, and they show that most Americans support opening adoption records for adult adoptees. 77% of respondents in a Parenting Magazine poll taken in November 2000 agreed that adoptees should be able to access their own birth records.

In a poll taken by Cornell University in 1997, 83% of adoptive mothers and 73% of adoptive fathers agreed that adult adoptees should be able to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate.

In Oregon State, where Measure 58, (allowing adoptees access to their original birth certificates), was finally implemented in May 2000, 6,181 applications have since been filed requesting pre adoption birth certificates. Measure 58 also included an option for a birthparent to file a contact preference if desired. As of October 5, 2001, 420 such preferences were filed. 313 stated contact was welcome, 27 wanted contact through an intermediary only, and only 80 desired no contact.

Most states have a registry where birthparents and adoptees can register if they want to find each other.

This is a common argument that the opposition provides those who advocate open records. But registries are notoriously inefficient. For example, the New York State registry, established in 1984, had only 35 matches of adoptees with "birth" parents, as of June, 1992. While there are more matches currently being made, most are not the result of the registry itself. Rather, they are matches that were put together by mailing lists or organizations who had been helping individuals with their search. The participants were then encouraged to register with the state to confirm the match.

Most registries are run by the individual state. They are often the last concern when it comes to budget, and therefore, they are not widely advertised. Many people in that state don't even know a registry exists. The chances are even slimmer that a birthmother or adoptee who has moved out of state will ever find out about the existence of such a registry.

Most registries also contain restrictions that limit the people who register. Again using New York State as an example, a provision was just recently added to their registry that allows the biological siblings of an adoptee to register their information. However, the registry is still unavailable to those adoptees who were born in another state and brought into New York to be adopted. Registries will never be able to take into account all the circumstances that occur during adoption.

For one group of people though, a registry will do no good at all, no matter how many provisions are added. This is the group of adoptees and birthparents who have died. Unless both parties register with the state, there will be no information released to the other party. Most

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registries do not differentiate between 'wanting no contact' and 'deceased'.. Therefore the adoptee/birthparent will never know if their counterpart actually does not want to reunite, or if they are deceased. The only way to solve all these situations is to have an open records law.

Adoptees need to be protected from the physical and emotional abuse that was present in their biological family.

This is an important concern expressed by many adoptive parents, especially those who have adopted older children. Minor children must be allowed to grow up in a loving, supportive family where they do not feel threatened. Open records would not change this. What open records would do is allow the adoptee, once they reach adulthood, to delve into their past and make a decision that will be best for them. Ignorance of their roots will do nothing to help them deal with emotional or physical scars. Knowledge of the circumstances of their birth and adoption will allow them to move ahead with their own life and empower them in future relationships.

Other barriers to open records

Adoption is a multi-billion dollar industry in this country. No one wants to upset the machinery of the adoption system, no matter how faulty it is deemed to be. Lawsuits have been brought against various states ranging from violation of civil rights to denial of adoptees 14th amendment rights of equal protection under the law. These suits have been continually struck down, even in states where they proclaim to have the best interests of the child in mind. Finding lawyers to work on these cases is extremely difficult, both from the prospective of the enormity of fighting the adoption system, and from the lack of financial awards that law firms can usually expect in such civil cases.

Many birth moms, especially from the era of the 1940's to the 1970's, are afraid to come forward into the spotlight. They have learned their lessons from the social workers all too well. They are to be ashamed of their past, forget about the children they gave away, and never speak of them again. How many mothers do we believe can or will forget about a child they carried for 9 months? Yet they still cower in fear, unable to express any concern about someone who was such an integral part of their lives.

Adoptees too, may internalize the supposed shame of adoption. They feel guilty about asking questions while adoptive parents are alive. Those who do feel the need to search while their adoptive parents are still living often harbor feelings of guilt about betraying the people who raised them. Some adoptive parents prey on this attitude. Those adoptive parents who do not understand the adoptees need for information may make the adoptee feel guilty for "betraying" them or for not being grateful and loyal to the parents who raised them. For this reason, searches are often done in secret, and the adoptive parents are never made aware of a reunion. Adoptees often wait until the adoptive parents are deceased before they start a search. The adoptee is therefore forced to keep his own secret as well, for fear of alienating those who raised him. They are afraid to venture into the public eye to support that which they believe in.

What open records can achieve

With open records in place, the registries in those states can be eliminated. Medical updates can be placed directly into adoption files, as well as letters or other forms of communication the two parties involved want passed on. If an adoptee seeks to open his records, all the information will be there.

With open records in place, there will be no need for maintenance and administration of such registries. Time that previously went into protecting and updating registries, as well as separating paperwork, will be eliminated, reducing costs.

Family and Surrogate courts will be able to devote more time to their regular duties, rather than having to take the time to deal with the many petitions from adoptees/birthparents who seek to have their records opened.

Adoptive parents will be able to provide better care and preventative treatment for their adoptive children when their medical/emotional background is known. What adoptive parent would NOT want to know if there was a treatable medical condition present in their child's genetic history? Oftentimes an illness will skip a generation, and then adoptive parents find their grandchildren struggling with issues of health that might have been resolved had the adoptee had access to their own medical records at birth.

Conclusions

By continuing to refuse to open adoption records for adult adoptees, state governments are telling them that they don't trust these adoptees with their own lives. They need to stop 'infantilizing' adoptees and give them the same rights that other adults in this country have taken for granted. Society has changed. It is time for the laws to change with it. When the purpose of a law ceases to exist, so should the law.

Adoptive parents need to realize that their children are not theirs to possess. They are theirs to raise and develop and teach, so that they may go on to lead their own lives as productive members of society. Our children will always think of us as mom and dad. The definition of a parent encompasses much more than physically giving birth. We want to do what is best for our children. What can be better than letting them, as adults, seek out their origins?

Adoptees contend that they are co-owners of information about themselves, and, thus, it is unfair to deny this information to them. They themselves have never consented to the sealing of information. Most adoptees do not question confidentiality during their childhood but believe that the conditions justifying such protection are no longer needed when they reach adulthood. Not all adoptees will wish to have their original birth certificates and adoption records. Of those who do, not all will choose to search any further. Of those who do choose reunion, they will need to respect the feelings of the birthparents.

Birthparents will have at least 18 years before their children will even be able to attempt to contact them. A lot can happen in those 18 years to change a birthparents ideas about wanting to reunite with their child. A birthmother, whether she wants confidentiality or not, always has the option to say 'no' to a reunion. If an adoptee is too persistent in their demands, there are already laws in place to deal with that issue. A woman who brings a child into the world has a responsibility to that child. Only she can give him his story and explain why the adoption took place. Only she can deliver to the

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child his biological and historical identity. She can always refuse contact if the adoptee ever searches her out. Society should not guard the birthparent with the protective cover of anonymity. If someone has to be favored, let it be the innocent party, the adopted adult, who maintains that his rights are being denied and his best interests not being served by yesterday's arrangements. If adoptees need to be re-connected to their origins, why should separation be judged the higher good?

The decision whether to reunite or not needs to be placed in the hands of those whom it will affect the most; the adoptee and birthparent, not a government whose sole reason for denying access to records is based on an antiquated law adopted for a society much different than we have today.

Birthmothers **do not** forget. Adoptive parents **should not** forget. Adoptees **will not** forget.

Tim Roberts is an adoptive parent and a reunited adoptee. He is a member of the board of P.A.C.E.S (Post Adoption Center for Education and Support) of Western New York. The Group can be contacted at P.O. Box 1223, Amherst, NY 14226-7223. Their website is located at <http://www.paceswny.homestead.com/files/index.htm>. Email: Paceswny@juno.com.

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1. Jane Does 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, Appellants, v. THE STATE OF OREGON; JOHN A. KITZHABER, Governor of Oregon, and EDWARD JOHNSON, State Registrar of the Center for Health Statistics in Oregon, Respondents, and HELEN HILL, CURTIS ENDICOTT, SUSAN UPDYKE; and THE OREGON ADOPTIVE RIGHTS ASSOCIATION, IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF OREGON. Filed December 29, 1999.

2. PROMISE DOE; JANE ROE; KIMBERLY C. and RUSS C.; and SMALL WORLD MINISTRIES, INC., *Plaintiffs-Appellants*, vs. DONALD SUNDQUIST, Governor of the State of Tennessee, in his official capacity; CHARLES BURSON, Attorney General of the State of Tennessee, in his official capacity; and LINDA RUDOLPH, in her official capacity as the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services for the State of Tennessee, *Defendants-Appellees*. ON APPEAL from the United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee Decided and Filed February 11, 1997

3. (Parenting Magazine, August poll results, November 2000, p. 30)

4. <http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Jan97/adoptionrecord.ssl.html>.

5. Oregon State Vital Records Office, as of 10/05/01

Dusza ludzka jest jak pszczoła, która szuka słodzczy nawet na gorzkich kwiatach.

Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846 + 1916)

The human soul, like the bee, extracts sweetness even from bitter herbs.

PART II HOW I FOUND MY ANCESTORS WITH THE ELLIS ISLAND ARRIVAL RECORDS DATABASE....NOT!

by David E. Newman akdave@pgsnys.org

After reviewing the microfilm at the Family History Center (FHC), I discovered the records for Wojciech Niewczyk was not to be found. I was mislead to believe that the date of arrival is the date the individual signed the record which was a couple of days after the date of arrival, but this isn't the case. I had to order the microfilm with the date of arrival as on the record.

In two weeks after reviewing the correct microfilm I found that the entry in the Ellis Island for Wojciech Niewczyk is wrong. The person who indexed the record misread an "M" for a "W". So the correct entry should have read Wojciech Niemczyk and not Wojciech Niewczyk.

Although disappointed, I wasn't surprised. I myself have indexed records misspelling the name. We're all-human and therefore make mistakes. I'm just grateful someone has indexed the New York City Arrival records.

I would like to leave my readers with the following Tips for a smooth genealogical Ellis Island Record Adventure

1. When ordering Arrival Records from the LDS, the date of arrival is the date to make sure is on the microfilm you order.
2. Don't be surprised if the record you're looking for turns out to be a mistake in spelling.

Immigration and Passenger lists

The Passenger arrival manifests for the most part are not on the web. If your ancestors arrived at the Port of New York after 1892, the site (<http://www.ellislandrecords.org>) is definitely worth a look. However, I prefer to check the site by Stephan P. Morse's one step search access site. This nifty site has various ways of entering information to be transmitted to the Ellis Island site which effectively allow for broadening or limiting the search. Try all the features. Also for those times when the Ellis Island site reports that there is no original image available, I would check the Morse site using the 'missing manifests' button. the address for this truly useful site is <http://home.pacbell.net/spmorse/ellis/ellis.html>. Bookmark it, it will be useful.

Another source for passenger manifests on the web is from the Immigration Ships Transcribers Guild (ISTG). This is a group of volunteers who go through and transcribe microfilm copies of passenger manifests and submit them to the guild. The site

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Potpourri



VITAL RECORDS INDEX AVAILABLE

The Vital Records Index is located in the Central Library, 115 South Ave, Rochester, N.Y.

Rochester, Albany and New York City are the only locations for accessing the Vital Records Index within the state. The index here includes data for the entire state outside of New York City.

The index contains marriage and death records filed from 1880 through 1950; such records are made available to the public after 50 years. Birth records, available from 1880 through 1925, are made available to the public after 75 years.

For data before that time period has elapsed, a researcher must be a direct descendant of the individual named in the record.

An alphabetical index book lists, by year, the microfiche index card and will contain such data as name, date, county and certificate number.

The number can be entered on a form, available at the counter, to request an actual certificate from the state. There is an \$11 fee.

For more information about Vital Records, call the Rochester Public Library at 428-8390 or try www.archives.nysed.gov/holding/fact/vltal.htm.

PGSNYS Library Contributions:

Ted Smardz donated

Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present

by Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt

Ancestors: A Geginner's Guide to Family History & Genealogy

by Jim and Terry Willard with Jane Wilson

Keith Kaszubik donated:

Keith A. Kaszubik, *The Suchy-Lipinski Genealogy*, Hamburg, N.Y., 2001

Polish Proverb

Glos matki, glos Boga.

Mother's voice is God's voice.

23rd. Psalm for Genealogists

Genealogy is my Pastime. I shall not stray.

It maketh me to lie down and examine half-buried tombstones.

It leadeth me into still Courthouses.

It restoreth my Ancestral Knowledge....

It leaded me into the Paths of Census Records and Ships

Passenger Lists for my Surnames' sake.

Yea, though I wade through the Shadows of Research Libraries and Microfilm Readers, I shall fear no Discouragement, for a Strong Urge is with me. The curiosity and Motivation, they Comfort me.

It demandeth preparation of storage space for the acquisition of countless documents.

It annoineth my head with burning Midnight Oil, my family group sheets runneth over.

Surely Birth, Marriage and death records dates shall follow me all the days of my Life; and I shall dwell in the House of the Family History Seeker Forever.

Anonymous

Polish Christmas Traditions Homepage

by Ann Hetzel Gunkel

(<http://acweb.colum.edu/users/agunkel/homepage/polxmas.html>)

Midwives in Buffalo, New York

webpage by Sophie Hodorowicz Knab and

Michael Drabik

<http://www.pgsnys.org/Midwives>

Hamburg Passenger Lists Online

This online site

http://www.hamburg.de/fhh/behoerden/staatsarchive/link_to_your_roots/english/index.htm

Has now become a pay site for obtaining the records. Records are now complete from 1890-1898.

Check the site for costs. Lookups are free.

My Day in Kashubia, Poland

By Keith A. Kaszubik

I had put off a trip to Poland far too long. It was time to get back to the villages where my family lived and the churches in which my family attended for hundreds of years. Genealogy alone can't compare to actually visiting our fatherland.

Daniel Kij's group from Buffalo was traveling primarily through northern Poland for two weeks this year, and my friend, David Newman, president of our locally based Polish Genealogical Society of New York State (PGSNYS), had decided to go too and we would share the cost of hiring a husband and wife team, Darek and Agnieszka Pierog of Warsaw, as our guides for 5 days.

Leaving Toronto on September 9th, we arrived in Warsaw on the 10th. It took my great-great-grandfather, Joseph Kaszubik, over 5 weeks to cross the Atlantic on a sailing ship in 1872, and over 2 weeks for my great-grandfather, Francis Kaszubowski, on a steamship in 1886. It took me just over 8 hours and I was too excited to sleep for even a minute. Arriving exhausted at the airport in Warsaw, David prompted me to remember what I said I would do upon arrival. I said, "Kosciusko we are here!"

Spending the first night in Warsaw we were picked up by our guides the next morning. While visiting David's Werbicki relatives in Łódź province, we witnessed the bombing of the World Trade Center on Polish TV. At that point we didn't know when or if we would be able to return home. I tried to put it out of my mind and enjoy our adventure in spite of the devastation. The following days we passed through numerous villages in Wielkopolska [Great Poland] where my Polish and maternal German ancestors had lived.

Leaving from Poznań in the afternoon of the 14th we headed for Chojnice, considered the gateway to Kashubia, up near Gdańsk where we had hotel reservations. Arriving in Chojnice it seemed like

a dreary sort of city. We had supper at an Italian restaurant where two beautiful brunettes were working. I commented how beautiful the one girl was and learned she was a Kashube by the name of Ewa Kubiszewska. I informed her of the Kubiszewskis which settled in Wilno, Ontario -- Canada's oldest Polish settlement. That night I slept very little since I would soon be in Kashubia in a matter of hours and I was very excited. In the morning we headed out for Wiele where my great-grandfather was baptized in 1860.

Wiele has great significance among the Kashubes in that it is the birthplace of the famous poet/writer, Hieronim Derdowski (1852-1902). He died in Winona, Minnesota where he had edited the well known Wiarus newspaper. I stood proudly in front of the monument with his bust, above it which reads, "Nie ma Kaszub bez Polonii a bez Kaszub Polsce" [There can be no Kashubia without Poland, nor a Poland without the Kashubes].

Before we left I stopped at a produce stand where I developed a desire to eat an apple which was grown locally. I commented how there was nothing like eating an apple from Kashubia, for which the woman vender replied without expression or delay, "everything is the best in Kashubia." Passing through Kliczkowy, where my family last lived before they emigrated in 1886, we headed for the outdoor ethnographic park in Wdzydze Kiszewskie. It was established in 1906 and is the oldest in Poland. At the souvenir booth we talked with a man named Brzezinski (of the noble Spiczak-Brzezinskis). I told him my surname and he knew instinctively that Kaszubik and Kaszubowski were the same name. I recited the Kashubian proverb, "Na codzien to Kaszeba je Kaszeba a na święto Kaszubowski" [For everyday a Kaszuba is a Kaszuba, but on holidays he's a Kaszubowski]. He was amazed, to say the least, that an American over 4,000 miles from home could recite a local idiom in the Kashubian language. So amazed he was that he gave me a discount of 40 złoty (about 10 dollars) off my souvenirs. I purchased a beautiful handmade tapestry of the Kaszebsci Nute [Kashubian Notes] used the teach people the unique sounds in the Kashubian alphabet.

Another highlight was when I came to my Kiedrowski's (arms Ostoja) manor house from the village of Radun which was being used as the museum's office.

Walking through the park, other visitors made a comment of resentment that Poles think that this is their land (instead of German lands). I mentioned to our group that my name is Kaszubik and we are in Kaszuby, who do they think belongs here?

Attempting a way to get to Piechowice, the birthplace of my great-grandfather, we were sidetracked and lost down some sandy dirt roads. We came across a group of Kashubes picking potatoes, both men and women, loading them into a horse-drawn

(Continued on page 10)



wagon out in the middle of nowhere. Although Kashubia is very beautiful it is still very poor in some areas.

We gave up the idea of getting to Piechowice since we were pressed for time and ventured on to the village of Kalisz which was the family nest for centuries. It was a beautiful little village set in a little hollow. On the western part of the village was the train station, Kalisz Kaszubski. We took numerous pictures but the real highpoint was yet to come.

We next travelled north a little to Lipusz where my family attended church. The road to Lipusz offered us the most picturesque views in Poland of the entire trip. Gentle rolling hills, crystal clear blue lakes, evergreen trees, old cottages and a holstein cow here and there on the landscape. No fences for the pastures but rather the cows are on ropes staked into the ground and moved about the field by the farmer to different areas for grazing. At this time I began to feel a real connection to my ancestral lands and could not imagine the poverty and German oppression that would have been severe enough to drive them to America from such a beautiful place. I was a little choked up inside but managed to hide it from the others. To the north of this area is Szwejcaria Kaszubska [Kashubian Switzerland] an area even more beautiful which is hard to imagine. Perhaps I will be there on my next trip to Poland.

We next stopped in Koscierzyna, historically known as the center of Polishness in Kashubia. Unfortunately we did not have enough time to visit the museum of the national anthem in nearby Bedomin. A Kashube by the name of Jozef Wybicki wrote that tune. From there we headed northeast to Gdansk some 30 miles to meet with our travel group at the hotel. Before joining the group we stopped for pictures of myself standing at the headquarters in Gdansk of the Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie [Kashubian-Pomeranian Association (ZKP)]. An organization of perhaps 8,000 people and the publisher of the magazine, Pomerania, of which I receive free copies due to my undying interest.

Even at the hotel in Gdansk my Kashubian adventure continued with a display of Kashubian art in the hotel lobby itself. The clerk on duty was also of Kashubian descent. I was really in my element at that point and realized that my trip to Poland was well worth the cost involved.

Words can't explain all the experiences of such a trip and the memories will last a lifetime. But just in case they don't I put it down to paper and wrote this article for you.



(Continued from page 7)

allows lookups by time, ships, captain's name, and passenger name. The odds are you will not find that elusive ancestor, but you never know. The address for ISTG is <http://istg.rootsweb.com>.

If you wish to find ship docking information, e.g. dates when a particular ship docked or what ships arrived on a given date try accessing the CIMO (Cimorelli Immigration Manifests Online) site. This is an on-line reference compendium to the Morton Allan book, the NARA microfilms, newspapers and other sources. Here you can answer those questions that I posed – and others. This site is located on the web at <http://www.cimorelli.com/safe/shipmenu.htm>.

Do not forget to take a look at the index materials at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). This site can link you to various bits of resource information. Its main page is <http://www.nara.gov>.

Witamy

A warm welcome to the following new members who have joined the PGSNYS in the last few months.

CURTIS W. BAJAK
LOS ANGELES CA

LINDA A. GRABOWSKI
CHEEKTOWAGA NY

WILLIAM L. GWOREK SR.
WARREN MI

PATRICIA S. HAGGERTY
FAYETTEVILLE NY

PATRICIA J. HUPKOWICZ
ORCHARD PARK NY

HELEN KOCZAJA
DEPEW NY

BETH KOWALL
GREENFIELD WI

DAVID MICHALAK
JOHNSON CITY NY

JOHN L. PACZOS
AMHERST NY

STAN TOPOR
CHEEKTOWAGA NY



Wincenty and Me

by Grace Smokowski

It all began when we were children, really much before then; our parents would wonder how a health physicist and a librarian begot seven children who loved to create. One brother was painting portraits by age ten; another was sculpting buildings out of potatoes as long as I could remember. My parents blamed it on our heritage.

Family legend had it that in the mid-nineteenth century an artist in our lineage married a poet. They prospered in Warsaw. My father's cousin perpetuated this family legend by studying the Smokowski lineage and proclaiming this couple the most interesting in the line. This idea of a creative couple guiding our artistic pursuits through school inspired us. We progressed as painters, writers, an architect, and an inventor.

In high school my sister wrote a book report on our genealogy. Again, this cousin was enlisted to provide specific information leading up to the heralded couple. My cousin supplied a copy of a page from a Polish encyclopedia from the turn of the century, complete with translation. The report was enthusiastically received and then, as most childhood school work, lost. Being very young at the time, I did not remember details.

For the past year my parents were debating the prospect of traveling to Poland. They alternately were interested in rediscovering their roots; yet they worried about touring foreign lands at their age and state of health. Finally they decided to make the trip with a group of people, mostly retired people, who were also interested in their heritage. I was very lucky to be offered the chance to go with my parents.

For a month before the trip I contacted everyone in the family to track down that school report. I was on a mission to learn the truth about our heritage. No one had any idea where the report could be. I contacted my elderly cousin who had all of the original documents only to find her ailing and physically unable to help. Three days before the trip my sister who had just moved into her new home in Maryland found a copy of the report in a box. It was a box of old paperwork that she had not opened for years. The day before the trip I had a rushed delivery of the encyclopedia page in hand. And so began my concrete knowledge of Wincenty Smokowski on a plane to Warsaw.

Wincenty Smokowski was a painter and writer who lived from 1797 to 1876. He was educated to be a doctor in Wilne, then moved to Warsaw where he was city doctor and professor of painting and writing. He was the first in Poland to carve woodcuts as illustrations for books. He wrote biographies and painted portraits of prominent figures of the time. Yet, his greatest works were his na-

ture sketchbooks in pencil and crayon. There was no mention of his wife or her artistic endeavors in the encyclopedia entry.

We toured around Poland for several days before I showed the paper to anyone. In our group there were two genealogists, David Newman and Keith Kaszubik, who had vast experience for researching lineage through official documents, but my mission was directed more towards locating manuscripts and sketchbooks rather than birth certificates. I showed the paper to our tour guide, Jan, who was very interested in helping and explained how to use a Polish library. Not knowing Polish, I did not feel confident in researching on my own. Then I asked Daniel Kij, the coordinator of the tour, to help. On the threshold of the Castle of Kórnik he scanned the paper, then quickly and beautifully took reign.

The medieval Castle of Kórnik towers three stories high, complete with moat and turrets. Between stucco ceilings and parquet floors, each room held various wonders of art and interior design from the sixteen through nineteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century the castle was the private estate of Tytus Działyński, who collected documents, books, and other artifacts and artwork based on the science and the history of Poland. Through his hobbies and interests, the collection grew until his death when it was transformed into library and museum.

Without a second thought, Dan whisked me through the tour group to the second floor of the castle, the library. Politely he asked a lady in the library if she knew English, or if anyone on staff new English. She called a young man to help us and then departed for an inner office. This curator, Jacek, was only comfortable speaking Polish, so we showed him the paper and he looked through the catalog. Sure enough, there was one entry: a history book from 1843 illustrated with Wincenty's woodcuts. Jacek said he could have it ready in half an hour. I was elated. On first attempt I was going to have in hand a piece of history, family history made real.

Gliding back to the group, we informed my parents of the news. I could not wait a half-hour. Dan escorted me back to the library where we roamed around the reading room busying ourselves with other reference material. In a current encyclopedia I found an entry on Wincenty which had an example of his woodcuts in it. I requested that Jacek make a copy of this page. He graciously took the book and left the room for about forty minutes. Dan and I browsed Polish periodicals and dictionaries, the coordinator quietly translating text into my ear. Jacek returned not only with the requested copy but with Wincenty's history book as well.

The cloth binding felt the weight of its age. I gingerly took the book, turning pages with gentle caution. One page after another revealed a treasure: a woodcut of a medieval family by a tree followed one of jousting knights and coats of armor. These were incredible line drawings, intricate and delicate in composition yet pow-

erful in depicting scenes of various aspects of medieval life and Teutonic Knighthood. Since I work in stained glass, my mind began to translate images into glass window technique. These woodcuts could be interpreted in glass with little difficulty. What an incredible undertaking that would be! My mind raced as my studies of Wincenty Smokowski were born this moment. Dan listed the page numbers and descriptions of drawings as I perused each page. I could not believe that I was holding a hundred sixty-year-old tome, which was a contribution of my ancestor to Polish history. My heart swelled with pride and excitement over the discovery.

The new encyclopedia page gave more current information: manuscripts and sketchbooks were in the collection at the National Library and paintings were in holdings at the National Gallery in Warsaw. I could not wait to get back to Warsaw to do more research. Dan gave his wise advice though: take the remaining tours and learn about the rich traditions and history of Poland and the background from which Wincenty was composing; this information on his works should be available in the States.

Yet gathering information in America is not the same as interacting with original works of art in Poland. Since it was my first journey to Poland, I knew that he was right. To understand the whole brings more meaning to the specific. Wincenty will be there, having a place in history along side other figures. I will only be in Poland a few more days. Better to make the most of it.

To think that Wincenty has a place in history. He is the biographer of a generation of scientific exploration and leadership in politics and arts. His contributions span word and paint and wood. He is an amazing figure to guide childhood and mature aspirations. What about his wife, the poet? Her mysterious figure still plays in shadow. I will one day know them both intimately.

I was given tremendous kindness and assistance from my Polish and American guides, and, of course, the Castle of Kórnik Library, especially Jacek. I departed the library with its address, e-mail address and Jacek's offer to help research if problems arise. I also have the e-mail address of the National Library in Warsaw. Much hope surrounds me today

These hopeful connections, of Poland past and present, should last and grow with nurturing. New perspective comes with this experience.

Dan and I toured the castle on our own, examining the opulent living rooms on the main floor and the armor museum on the second floor. Unable to control my excitement, I bounced back to the tour group ready to share my stories and feelings. Everyone shared in my elation and congratulated me on such a success. I must return to Poland someday soon. Wincenty is waiting for me.

Interesting Web Site—Jim Harlos

In surfing the Internet recently, I visited the website *Ancestry—The Polish Connection*. The is an interesting site covering all sorts of topics for the Polish community. I recommend paying a visit.

Ancestry—The Polish Connection

<http://homepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~atpc>



Jewish Wedding Scene

Wincenty Smokowski (1797-1876)

Wspomnienie

Please remember in your prayers Joseph J. Pocziwinski who has been a member of the PGSNYS since February 22nd, 2000.

POCZCIWINSKI - Joseph J. 11/18/2001

Of Gasport, NY, November 16, 2001, beloved husband of Frances E. (nee Ruszczyk); dearest father of Joseph (Lynne), Pauline (John) Gebura, Thomas (Sherry) and Frances (Michael) Fachko; grandfather of Thomas, Gary, Victor and Margaret Pocziwinski and Peter and Stephen Gebura; brother of Helen (Sam) Gerace, Josephine (Bill) Janeczko and the late Richard (Kay) Schultz, John (Stella) Schultz, Henry (Erma) Schultz, Frank (Jane) Schultz, Cecelia (Victor) Costanzo and Andrew Pocziwinski.

Services were from the URBAN BROTHERS FUNERAL HOME, INC., 6685 Transit Rd., East Amherst, NY, Tuesday morning at 8:30 AM and from Queen of Peace Church at 9:30 AM. Deceased was a member of the Polish Genealogy Society.

The 'Hoffman' Collection

William F. "Fred" Hoffman has written several books of use to the Polish genealogist. They are useful additions to your genealogical library.

IN THEIR WORDS: A GENEALOGIST'S TRANSLATION GUIDE TO POLISH, LATIN, AND RUSSIAN DOCUMENTS: VOLUME I: POLISH by Jonathan D. Shea & William F. Hoffman ISBN 0-9631579-3-0

POLISH SURNAMES: ORIGINS AND MEANINGS by William F. Hoffman ISBN 0-924207-04-3

FIRST NAMES OF THE POLISH COMMONWEALTH: ORIGINS & MEANINGS by William F. Hoffman and George W. Helon ISBN 0-924207-06-X

A Letter Home

By **Armela Hammes**

After having made three research trips to Salt Lake City's LDS Library with the PGSA, and one trip on my own, I had really wanted to go to Poland to get family history information first-hand. So when a genealogical trip to Poland, lead by Daniel Kij from Lackawanna/Bufalo, NY was mentioned in Fred Hoffman's e-mail newsletter, GenDobry, my dream was on its way to realization. The first four days of Daniel's trip were to be spent on our own in either Rome, Lwow, or in Poland. Dave and I opted to spend the four days in Poland. I e-mailed the Warsaw Archives and asked them for permission to research their records for my father's side of the family in Dzialdowo and Dlutowo. A week before our departure date I received an e-mail from the Warsaw Archives saying that the records I wanted to research were not in Warsaw but in Mlawa, and I didn't need permission to do research there. Panic set in!

How do we find our way to Mlawa? I forwarded the Archive's e-mail to Fred Hoffman and asked if I was understanding the Polish correctly. Did he know of a genealogical guide in Poland that could help me out? Fred very kindly and quickly e-mailed me the name and e-mail address of Iwona Dakiniewicz, a very qualified researcher. Thank goodness for e-mail! Iwona replied that she would be happy to help me out.

Dave and I left Ohio on Sunday, September 9th, to meet the group in Lackawanna. From there we took a bus to Toronto and left by Lot Polish Airlines, arriving safely on Monday, September 10th. What a difference in the airport since our last visit in 1978! The airport was new and bright, not dreary. Plenty of amber jewelry shops and so many cell phones being used! And no armed soldiers! As we were unpacking at the hotel, Iwona contacted us to tell us that there had been a change in plans. The records I wanted to see were not at Mlawa, but at Nidzica, because the Mlawa Archives were being renovated.

On Tuesday, September 11th, Iwona picked us up in the lobby of our hotel and took us to the Warsaw Archives, where we did indeed have to get permission to look at the old records before heading to Nidzica. In Nidzica we stopped at the castle on the hill for lunch. Iwona found out that there were available rooms in the castle for us to stay in overnight. We were delighted to stay in an old Teutonic Knight's castle for the next three nights. After lunch we proceeded to the Archives where we found my grandparents' marriage, and the birth of their five children. I finally found the names of Jan's parents, my great-grandparents, Wilhelm and Julianna Jablonowski. The records were written in Russian. Thank goodness for Iwona again because I don't read Russian and Iwona did.

We stayed at the Archives until closing at 3 pm and then took a tour of our castle. There were actually old artifacts from Dlutowo! Then we went to take a look at the woodworker's shop. He told us of a suicide plane that had destroyed the World Trade Center. We ran to our hotel room and watched the TV report in utter disbelief. It just looked like a science fiction movie being played over and over again.

Iwona took us to an internet cafe where she got us logged into her internet server. I sent a message to our three children asking if they were safe and had anyone heard from Anne, our daughter, who lives in Brooklyn and works in Manhattan. Back to the hotel for dinner and then back to the internet cafe where our son, Matthew, had replied that he had talked to Anne and she was safe.

On Wednesday, September 12th, we listened to the reports saying that estimates couldn't even be made as to how many were dead in NY. Then on to the Archives for more research. Found out that my father was not born in 1892, but in 1890, and that the one and only sister that he had, Maryanna, died at the age of six. Then we hit a dead end. We didn't stay to look at the books from the 1700's. We headed for Dzialdowo where Iwona had called ahead asking for a death certificate for my grandfather, Jan Jablonowski. Now I have the exact date of my grandfather's death, June 27, 1932, at the age of 82.

Iwona took us to the local cemetery and we searched for Jan's grave, in the rain, but no luck. We stopped in the church to ask the priest if there were any records for the burials, but he said no. Too many wars had taken place in this small town. From there we proceeded to Dlutowo and looked through the church cemetery for my grandmother and great-grandmother's graves. No luck here either. From here Iwona drove us to Nick, my father's village. Iwona removed a piece of bark from a tree that she said my father possibly might have leaned against 90 or so years ago. We went on to Plosnica and Iwona struck up a conversation with the organist who happened to live across the street from the Catholic church that once was Evangelical. He took us to a 300-year old cemetery that was pretty much covered with Shrubbery. Iwona took a stick and started to rub the dirt off of the visible gravestones, looking for any of my relatives. No luck!

We went back to Nidzica and the internet cafe. Checked our e-mail. Our son-in-law sent us an e-mail saying that Anne was ok and so was his friend that was working in the Pentagon at the time of the attack. We received an e-mail from Anne also. She was ready to move back to Ohio.

Thursday, September 13, we were up early for Olsztyn and its Archives. We were not successful in locating Jan's birth. Checked our e-mail in Nidzica and heard from Anne again. What a wonderful electronic world we live in!

Friday, September 14, we checked out of our lovely, memorable castle and headed for Olsztynek and the Folk Architecture Museum/Ethnographic Park, after which Iwona drove us back to Warsaw to meet our tour group. What a lot of catching up we had to do--where we were when we first heard the news about the tragedy in the States, etc. On our way to Malbork the next day our bus driver took us past the American Embassy where we saw the sidewalk filled with flowers and candles. Every town that we visited for the next nine days had flags lowered at half-mast in sympathy with America.

I really should end this epistle, but I must tell you about our visit to

(Continued from page 13)

what was listed on our schedule as a farm. We joked about this on the bus, what were we going to do there, milk cows. As it turned out the farm was an agro turystyka, more like a pension, or a bed and breakfast. The food was delicious. We had a great time roasting kielbasa over a bonfire, after a huge dinner I might add. Daniel Kij led us in singing Polish songs around the campfire. What fun! The other fun meal Dave and I had was at a Pizza Hut in Warsaw. Would you believe a delicious bowl of mushroom soup and a Żywiec, a Polish beer.

I have so much more to tell about our tour, but I will stop here. All in all, it was a wonderful, memorable trip to Poland. It was so nice to see how well the Poles are doing--all the cars, cell phones and latest fashions. Yes, Anne, DKNY perfume ads abounded. The only sad note was the appearance again of soldiers, with guns, at the airport and the tight security. It was to be expected after the terrorist attacks in America.

Polish Genealogical Society -Italian Genealogical Society Christmas Celebration

December 13, 2001
Villa Maria College



Preparation



Dave Newman welcomes the participants



Father Tadeusz Bocianowski gives the blessing



We all listen

Christmas Party continued



Dan Kij explains Polish customs



Marie A. explains Italian customs



Sharing the optatek



Everything looks so good!



PGSNYS
12645 Route 78
East Aurora, New York 14052

2001



2002

PGSNYS Officers:

Front row, left to right: Daniel Kij, Treasurer; Walter Kloc, Trustee
Back row, left to right: Ted Smardz, Trustee; Dan Domino, Secretary;
David Newman, President; Frank Martin, new Trustee; Edward Pra-
bucki, Trustee; Edward Kornowski, Vice President