



SEARCHERS



NUMBER 31

PRESERVING OUR PAST SINCE 1988

SPRING 2002

Am-Pol Eagle Citizen of the Year Heritage Award



Edward Kornowski realized his future oddly enough when he was searching for answers to his past.

As vice president of The Polish Genealogical Society in Buffalo, Kornowski has helped many Polish Americans find their ancestors, and assisted Polish people to locate their families in the U.S.

For his dedication to genealogy and his willingness to lend a helping hand to any stranger without hesitation, Kornowski has earned this

years *Am-Pol Eagles* Heritage Award.

Kornowski became involved in genealogy back in 1996 when he went to Rywald, in search of some information on his ancestors. He got to visit the church his grandfather was baptized in located in a city just outside of Rywald.

"I don't have any Polish relatives living", Kornowski said, who is an adult student of the Msgr. Adamski Polish School. "I kind of envy the people that find relatives. But to be able to visit that church where my grandfather was baptized and to be able to walk on the same steps he walked on, to be able to say that we were both there, is an amazing feeling. It's my only link to Poland."

Jerry Inda a friend of Kornowski said, "A couple of years ago, I casually mentioned to Edziu that I was planning a trip to Poland to search for my relatives Without hesitation he volunteered to help me find them. Within a couple of days, I had phone numbers and addresses of my relatives."

"That's the way Kornowski lives his life", said Stanley Kaznowski Jr. "He's always been a great help to the physically-impaired responding whenever he is contacted with a question regarding ge-

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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

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nealogy." Kornowski also makes numerous trips to cemeteries, record centers, the historical society or the main library, at his own expense, searching for family history, some-times dating as far back as the 19th century.

"I don't mind spending a few bucks here and there", Kornowski said; "When you see the results it's always rewarding."

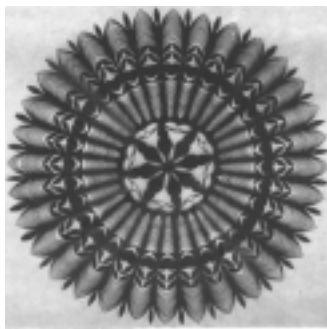
One of Kornowski's biggest genealogical discoveries happened last summer when he read in the *Buffalo News* of a woman from Switzerland who had come to Buffalo for a week in search for the father she never met. The woman had a postmark of a letter that proved the man had lived in Buffalo at one time, but little else to go on.

Kornowski was able to compile some research and responded to the article just days before the woman was scheduled to board a plane back home. A day later Kornowski took the woman on a tour of where her father had once lived and led her to his gravesite in Buffalo.

"I told her she could take pictures of the house he lived in and his gravesite, so that she would at least know about him", Kornowski said. "It was such a touching thing to see."

Kornowski has spearheaded a project along with other volunteers searching for copies of the *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* Buffalos Polish daily newspaper published from 1911 to 1957. He created an Internet database containing statistics hand-compiled from death notices in the paper. The database currently contains more than 23,000 Polish surnames.

"He has been responsible for providing Polish people an outstanding amount of valuable information about their ancestors without them ever leaving their homes", Kaznowski said. "This means so much to those of us who cannot travel without difficulty."



*Geniusz w gruncie rzeczy jest
tylko zaharowanym talentem.*

Jerzy Broszki ewi cz (1922–1993)

Genius in effect is just hardworking talent.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year, 2002, the PGS of NYS will celebrate its 14th birthday. Your elected president has the following membership information to report:

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

STATE	COUNT	STATE	COUNT
Arizona	1	New Hampshire	1
California	4	New Jersey	3
Connecticut	3	New York	87
Florida	4	Ohio	2
Georgia	1	Oregon	1
Illinois	1	Pennsylvania	2
Massachusetts	2	Rhode Island	1
Maryland	4	Tennessee	1
Michigan	6	Virginia	2
Minnesota	1	Washington	1
North Carolina	2	Wisconsin	2

Total Paid Members 132

CONGRATULATIONS CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Vice President Ed Kornowski for winning the Am-Pol Eagle's Citizen of the Year Award in the Heritage Category. Ed's achievement is not just a credit to himself but to the PGS of NYS. This is the 2nd year in row that one of our members won this award. Who in the society will be next?

PGSNYS POSTAL MAILING ADDRESS CHANGE

Please note that we now have a new mailing address. This became necessary after Mike Drabik passed away. Mike's address was the address of the society since its inception in 1988. The new address is:

PGSNYS
c/o 12645 Rt 78
East Aurora, New York 14052-9511

BY-LAWS CHANGE

Our address is tied to the society's By-Laws. Any change to the By-Laws is required to go through an approval process. This was done during the March and April General Meetings. The required notification to New York State of the change in the By-Law has also been completed.

Sincerely,

David E. Newman
President, PGSNYS

My Great - Grandmother Pauline Friedman

The kitchen was illuminated by only a single bulb which could be turned on and off by pulling a red and white striped string. The furnishings were sparse. There were none of today's gadgets designed to simplify the tasks of the modern housewife. There was not a food processor or microwave oven or bread machine to be seen. The pots and pans had no fancy labels embossed upon them. The dishes were neither fine china nor contemporary stoneware, and each had a chip or a crack on it. Still, with it's lack of grandeur miracles were accomplished within that small room. Dough for pierogies was rolled out by arthritic hands. Soup was stirred. Liver was chopped. A fine dance of food preparation was accomplished nightly by the master choreographer of that room, my Great-grandmother.

She stood not quite five feet tall and her upper arms jiggled and swayed as she worked. Her eyes a watery blue moved slowly and shone with wisdom and kindness. Her face was a roadmap of wrinkles that was always freshly powdered. She smelled like lemons and cinnamon and roses. She seemed to always wear the same blue dress and nylons that came up only to her knees and wide brown shoes that ties on the sides. She spoke a magical language that I understood completely but could never utter.....a beautiful mixture of English and Polish and Hebrew. The sound of it was more beautiful than a symphony.....full of poetry and quiet passion.

When she was three years old my Great-grandmother met the man she was to marry while playing in the grass in her tiny Polish village. They were married when she was fifteen and then he had to flee Poland to escape from fighting in the first World War. She remained behind with her mother and sisters while he traveled to the United States. Neither of them knew at the time that she

by Jody Stoner Eichhorn
Jody827@aol.com

was carrying their first child. She could neither read nor write and there no telephones, so I am not sure how they remained in contact with one another, but six years later a ticket arrived for my Great-grandmother to travel across the ocean and be reunited with her husband. When they found each other at Ellis Island my Great-grandfather met his daughter for the first time. They settled in a tenement in Manhattan's Lower East Side where they raised their daughter and eventually two sons in a one bedroom apartment.

My Great-grandmother never worked outside of her home. She never read a newspaper or learned to sign her name, She never accomplished anything of greatness by today's standards. She lived a simple life solely for the purpose of taking care of her family. She cooked and scrubbed and mended. Still, her quiet importance as the family matriarch fill me with a sense of pride regarding where we came from, and a serenity in knowing that simple tasks can sometimes be viewed as miracles.

**Wszystko, co najważniejsze,
Staje się tylko raz w życiu.**
Jerzy Zawiej ski (1902-1969)

The most important things in life happen only once.



Potpourri



On May 4th Concordia Cemetery was alive with the sounds of lawnmowers as volunteers spent the day spring cleaning and cutting grass. It was the Great American Cleanup hosted by the Polish Genealogical Society. There were over thirty volunteers representing "We Care Neighbors Block Club," "Buffalo Weed & Seed", "Friendly Fruitbelt Block Club," "Buffalo Urban League" and "Youths from the Belle Center." Individuals from places like Akron, West Seneca, Kenmore, East Aurora, and Eden gave of their time and labor to help beautify this "East Side" cemetery in time for Mother's Day.

Volunteers brought food, snacks and beverages for the hungry workers. Trash bags and gloves were donated and even the use of a portable toilet was provided by Modern Portable Toilets Inc. of Lewiston. Crews from the City of Buffalo helped out by removing large debris and the trash we collected.

The Polish Genealogical Society wishes to thank all those who helped out.

For more information or donations contact Michael Kon at the Urban Center, 893-7222 ext. 211.

Edward Kornowski
VP Pgsnys

The picture includes, left to right, Ed Kornowski, Gloria Kornowski, Dave Newman, Dan Domino, Laura Domino



We meant to take a larger group picture but were so busy never got around to it. We posed for this one late in the day when most volunteers had gone home.

Guest Speakers:

January 2002: Meeting Postponed

February 2002: *Sophie Hodorowicz Knab*. Local Polonia author and member of PGSNYS, Ms Knab had just completed her 5th book entitled "The Polish Country Kitchen Cookbook". (ISBN: 0781808820) She donated one of the first copies of that book to our Society's library. She spoke on the topic of how she finds inspiration for writing her books and told us about her newest project which will be a book on Polish forced labor.

March 2002: *Ed Kornowski* gave a lecture on "Reverse Genealogy". Ed used a video recorder to show an example of how he helped return a purple heart certificate that was found at a flea market to the recipients family and how he helped a Swiss woman locate her fathers house in Buffalo which was still occupied by her half sister.

April 2002: No guest speaker

May 2002: *Mike Nowicki* a local FBI agent gave a presentation on Terrorism which included discussion around the events Sept 11, 2001, the Unibomber Ted Kaszynski and the Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. He also provided information regarding how to obtain FBI files using the Freedom of Information Act.

Book Donations

Daniel J. Kij : *Polski Ksiazki Telefontyczne Year 2000 Warszawa i region of Warszawa also powiaty: nowodworksi, otwocki, woloominiski*

Sophie Hodorowicz Knab: *The Polish Country Kitchen by Sophie Hodorowicz Knab*

Dead Man Talking

Edward W. Kornowski

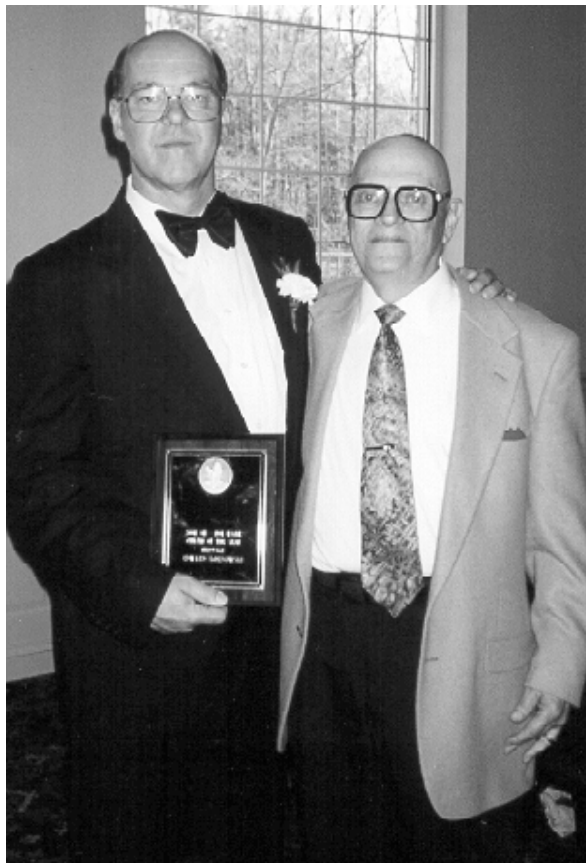
15 May 2002

The early morning sun has not burned off the dew. The cuffs of my pants are getting wet as I walk among the rows of low headstones. I read off the names, Jankowski, Nowak, Romanowski, and finally Michael Kornowski. The stone is weathered and no date is visible. The year is 1891, I don't need the stone to tell me that. I have a thousand other questions that are far more important to ask.

Michael, what kind of schooling did you have? What kind of job did you have? How did you hear about this country called America? How did you and your wife manage to travel with all those children? Did you ride a horse, wagon or train? How much did it cost for the boat trip? What did you eat? I think every genealogist has asked those questions. I have asked them many times. Sometimes I ask them to his gravestone. Sometimes I ask them to his citizenship papers.. I can rub my finger along his signature. I can touch the ink that I know that came from his pen. I strain my ears trying to hear an answer. But it's no use, he's not talking.

I'm not alone, other genealogist have the same problem. All the elders are gone, no one around to tell

the story. This brings me to the story of another Polish immigrant named Louis Koronowski. The spelling is close to my name but is in fact a totally different surname. I come across this surname quite a bit, sometimes my family name is misspelled as such. I have met the grandson of Louis, his name is Richard Koron. Yes his Dad had the name shortened, as did many other Polish-Americans.



Edward W. Konowski and Richard Koron

Richard Koron is a genealogist, he has traced his grandfather back to the tiny village of Zielona, Poland. This village is located in the province of Plock, which at the time was in the Russian partition. I am sure that Richard has asked many of the same questions that I have. He was curious about his ancestor as we all are. I am sure he talked to a few gravestones without success.

Now here's the fun part. During the years of 1890-1892, lots of people were leaving Poland. You have heard the expression "If you don't like it here, then just leave". Well this expression did not apply to those

in the Russian Partition. It was illegal to leave. Persons had to sneak out of the country. Later when they wrote back to their families, the letters would be intercepted. The cash or tickets enclosed would be confiscated, and the letter never delivered.

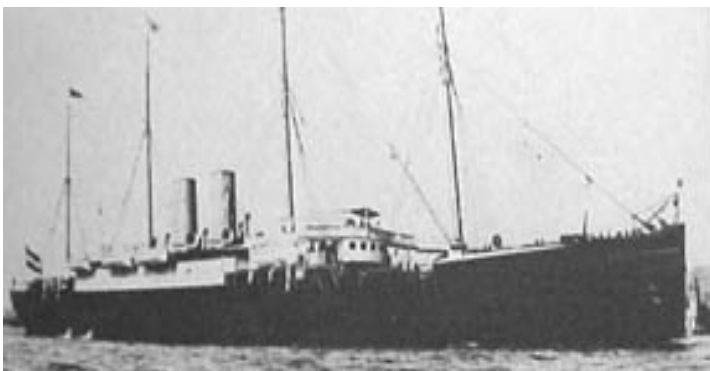
Well a few months ago a PGSNYS member Delores Konopa tipped me off as to this fact. She sent me a link to an Internet webpage that had an index of names of people who wrote some of these letters. It seems the letters were discovered in a warehouse in Warsaw in 1941. A few of these letters ended up published in a book "WRITING HOME: IMMIGRANTS in BRAZIL and the UNITED STATES 1890-1891". Later this book was reprinted in English in 1987. Recently a Marylyn Novak created the index of names contained in the book. Which brings us to the rest of the story.

One such letter was written by Louis Koronowski on March 6, 1891, describing his journey from Zielona to Bremen. He writes his wife Emilia as he waits for his ship to sail. This letter brings to life what it was like to leave Poland. The fear and loneliness the immigrants faced in search of a new life.

On May 5th, 2002 I had the great honor of reading this letter before a Polish audience. In that audience sat Richard Koron. He could hear his grandfather's words as if he was speaking directly to him. Answering all his questions. The letter was finally delivered after one hundred and eleven years. Who says "the dead can't talk?"

Text of the letter below.

Letter 169 Louis Koronowski, en route to the United States writes from Bremen to his wife, address unknown. On stationery of F. Missler's Travel Agency, Bremen. Near the printing is a picture of a ship and next to it in the author's handwriting: "This is the ship." 6.III.1891



Steamship "Elbe"

Bremen 6 March 1891

Dear wife, the first words of my letter are, praised be Jesus Christ!

Now, dear wife, I will tell you about my entire journey from the moment I left Zielona until today, on which my letter ends. From Zielona, I reached Zielun safely. I stopped in to see mother, ate supper [at her place], and then she arranged for a guide. I went with him to the border near Budy, where he picked up two others. I asked him what he was going to charge; he told me 5 rubles. I bargained with him until we agreed on 3 rubles.

We reached the border before noon where I had to keep watch for 6 hours until there was a change of Russian guards. At exactly 6 in the evening, a second one did come and only then did we start to move cautiously across the border to Lidzbark. When we arrived there, it was already 8 in the evening. And he, Jarzynek, about whom I speak, went across on a pass in the morning of that day, that is, 27 February. He was the first one in Lidzbark. [Once there] I went to his friend and told him to take me to my stryj. (Uncle on fathers side) We became acquainted and right away he [and his family] welcomed me. They gave me a bedroom and good food to eat on Saturday and Sunday until two in the afternoon. They did not want [to accept] anything from me, only some time to have a Mass said for their intentions. May God reward them a hundred times.

On 1 March, that is, on Sunday, at two in the afternoon, we left Lidzbark to press forward by train. In one coach there were over 40 of us. We traveled until Jablonowo where we [deliberately] changed coaches. We were somewhat cautious and looked around at everything. As soon as the train stopped, we immediately got off and went across, not on the station side, but in back of the coaches to the side opposite the railroad station.

We went in back of the railroad station where

nobody could see us. We kept a sharp eye on everything as to what was happening there. When the rest of them were coming out of the coaches, the gendarmes took all of them, and I am told, sent all of them back to the Old Country, so that only 6 of us were left. Later, another train arrived and we got on it, and we fearfully rode to Berlin, arriving at 5 on Monday morning. As soon as we got off the train and [went into] the railroad station, we were taken through the city. It was like some kind of paradise, for that is a marvelous city. There, there was already peace. Right away the agent's representative took us by coach to the agent whose address we had. He took us to the place where the agent lived, and we bought a steamship ticket [from him].

Then we were driven through Berlin. Here work for the day had already begun; the masons were already building. It was as warm as it is in May in Poland.

On Monday at 3 in the afternoon, we were transported to the railroad station to go to Bremen. When we were traveling to Bremen, it was daytime and we saw people working in the fields; they were plowing and spreading manure around, which they got on their shirts. As it was warm, the rye was getting green. In Poland maybe there was still snow.

On 2 March, that is, on the very same Monday that we left, we arrived in Bremen at 11 in the evening. From the coaches, we were taken to the director's office to have the steamship ticket issued, and then we were escorted to the hotel where we paid on mark for one night and a half day. We were supposed to depart on Wednesday; but because of the large crowd of people, we had to wait until Saturday. Even though we had to wait, it was without any cost to us; no one had to pay a pfenning; because room and board were provided for us at the expense of the travel agency. We had purchased a steamship ticket to sail on Wednesday, but our ticket number was not selected until somewhat later because there was no space already for us on that ocean liner. Those passengers who had their steamship tickets sent out to

them earlier [departed first], and for that reason many people were detained until Saturday.

That letter, which you have received or will receive from Berlin from our agent, has the address you are to go to. Do not lose it because it will come in handy either for your wife or for somebody else; hold on to it. And now I will tell you the kind of food I have in Bremen. For breakfast, 3 rolls and as much coffee as one can drink, even 10 cups. Lunch is like this, potatoes and carrots cooked together in a broth, potatoes with cabbage also cooked in a broth, very fat and lean pork meat; for snacks, bread; and for supper, bread and butter on a plate and all the coffee one wants to drink. And now I will tell you about the loneliness I feel; if I had wings, I would immediately fly to you, dear wife.

During this time everything is fine here in Bremen. I have very decent sleeping quarters and food. I will be staying here from Monday until Saturday. I do not know what I am thinking of, that is, I will be staying in Bremen until the 6th day of March. I am well, thank God, which I also wish you dear wife and our children, and I wish for their good upbringing. And now give my regards to Pan Kociecki and to Panstwo Spejni. I wish all of you a happy holiday. I will be boarding ship on 7 March at 8 in the morning, so do not expect a letter from me any sooner until God has seen me through and I have managed to find work. I am not going to write any more now because I have little paper left.

Louis Koronowski

Notes:

Zielona was located in the Russian partition of Poland, province of Plock.

Louis Koronowski sailed on ship "Elbe" arriving at Philadelphia, PA on 18 Mar 1891

Emilia, his wife came to the USA one year later with their four children.

Louis & Emilia lived on Clinton St. in the Kaisertown section

(Continued on page 16)

LDS Microfilmed Records for the Parish of Środa

By James P. Harlos

The Roman Catholic parish of Środa is one of the 14 parishes of the deanery of Środa and served the following communities in the years around 1880: Anna, Annapole, Babin, Bojnice, Bukowy Las, Czartki, Henrykowo, Jarosławice, Kopaszyce, Kijewo, Marcelino, Mieczysławów, Murzynowo Kościelne, Pętkowo, Pławce, Podgaj, Połazejewo, Romanowo, Sabaszczewo, Słupia, Środa, Streszki, Tadeuszowo, Topola, Włostów, Żabikowo, Zberki, Zdziechvice, Zielniki and Żrenica. For the most part these are small communities. Marcelino for example consisted of 1 house with 9 inhabitants. Henrykowo had 8 houses and 68 inhabitants. Środa itself was the largest with 295 houses with 991 families giving 4855 inhabitants. Of these the majority were Catholics with a much smaller number of Protestants and an even smaller number of Jews.

The Roman-Catholic Church records have been microfilmed by the LDS and are available on 10 microfilms. The film numbers and contents are given in Table 1. The film labels are in Polish. The collection is the Księgi metrykalne (Certificate Records) of the Kościół rzymsko-katolicki Parafja Środa (Roman-Catholic Church of the Parish of Środa). In the title sections of the film the word urodzen is birth (Baptism), malzensł is marriage and zgonól is death. I believe that the church involved in these records is the church of the Assumption of Our Lady.

The language used in these films is Latin. In the films that I have looked at the Latin is fairly basic. The information is presented for the most part in narrative form, although in later years a tabular form was also used. The handwriting ranges from "chicken-scrawl" to a elegant handwriting. For the most part the reproduction is pretty good. There are some faint imaging and some dark imaging. This represents the quality of the pages being copied. In the earlier years some pages have damaged edges. Communities that the

Table 1—LDS Films for the Parish of Środa

Film Roll Contents B = Birth, M = Marriage, D = Death	LDS Film Number
B 1615 – 1641 M 1615—1718 D 1698—1817	1194601
D 1776—1877 B 1817—1829 M 1764—1831 D 1817 - 1819	1194540
D 1819—1836 B 1830—1850 M 1832—1850 D 1837—1848	1194602
D 1848—1858 B 1850—1868	1194541
M 1851—1868 D 1859—1868 M 1868—1900 B 1868—1872	1194851
B 1872—1884 D 1868—1879	1194540
D 1879—1894 B 1885—1893	1194242
B 1893—1902 D 1894—1901	1194543
B 1900—1913 D 1900—1908	2120458
D 1908—1913 B 1914—1918	2120159

people lived in are identified. Birth records give Priest's name, Father's name, Mother's name (and usually Maiden name), Religion (usually Catholic), Dates (Baptism and Birth), Godparents names and sometimes occupations. The order of the information varies.

Wincenty & Emilia

by Grace Smokowski

What is her name? Although much was known of her husband, Wincenty Smokowski, I did not even know her name. The traditional means of genealogical research were still aloof—research guided more by heart and whim than by any scientific means. Discovery of the artwork drove the research.

“Her figure plays in shadow”, I wrote in Searchers Issue 30 “Wincenty and Me”. That image was all it took to pique the interest of Jacek, the librarian of Kórnik Castle who supplied the first history book to launch a lifetime of projects and research. He garnered information through a network of advanced techniques to finally discover her name...Emilia. A four-page encyclopedia entry, in Polish, accompanied a letter explaining some of the contents. My father took the document to translate. I relied on Jacek’s letter. Emilia Kublicki was the daughter of a doctor and member of a prominent and wealthy family. Wincenty was under her father’s guidance as intern when they met. Wincenty was a brilliant young artist and doctor. Emilia was a hunchback, niece of a writer and Member of Parliament. Did they marry for love? Did Wincenty marry for wealth and power? The lives of ancestors intrigue.

Wincenty and Emilia did not have children. At the end of his life, Wincenty wrote that he did not wish his strange marriage to be public; he was embarrassed. Also, there was no evidence of Emilia being a poet as my cousin purports. The direct link of great grandfather that our family perpetuated in legend was not so. The inspired union of painting and poetry was

not openly apparent. I was startled and saddened. What is the relation? There must be a connection somehow.

As some questions are answered, others arise. With this information I drove to Washington, D.C. to visit family for Easter. During that week I scheduled an appointment with the Assistant Curator of Prints, Greg, at the National Gallery of Art. My sister Frances, an art therapist and painter, has shared my enthusiasm for genealogy and accompanied me to the appointment with Greg. The glass and marble of the pyramid that is the gallery’s library shined pink in the warm glow of sunshine and



cherry blossoms. Although the National Gallery of Art did not have any of Wincenty's prints, Greg listened to the story and offered advice and assistance on how to proceed, offering the name of an associate in Warsaw who would know more about Wincenty and his works. Upon Greg's suggestions, Frances and I searched in the gallery's library and the Library of Congress databases to stumble upon a German encyclopedia entry on Franciszek Smokowski. Could this be our familial link?

Alas, no. Franciszek was Wincenty's brother, and a painter and sculptor also. He only lived until 1840 in Wilne, a short life of forty years, never marrying. There must be a relation. Frances and I giggled over the striking similarity of two creative brothers, one venturing to larger cities for bigger experiences as the other remained happily inspired at home, while we as sisters are much the same: together yet separate in art and vision. It would be wonderful to view Franciszek's paintings one day.

The Smokowski name is rare (editor's note: 370 in 1990 Poland). Therefore, all Smokowskis should be related at some point in time. The lineage just stretches further back than originally anticipated. With these comforting thoughts, I left Frances still excited to discover another artist in the family line (and for her a namesake and painting forefather), still excited about the lessons Wincenty may teach.

I returned to Buffalo to find my father had translated Jacek's information: it relayed everything discovered in Washington and more. If I only knew Polish I would be more focused, more aware of the depth of information found. I must learn Polish. And so research inspires study and learning as much as familial connection.

There is so much more to learn. There is so much more to create. Yet again, I am grateful to so many for their support and friendship without which I would be lost; Wincenty and Emilia would be unfamiliar. In time I will know them and their relation to our family, and extend their art in mine. Perhaps the best of genealogy are the friendships made along the path of discovery.

THE PGSNYS E-MAILING LIST

In January 2001 the PGSNYS E-Mailing List was created as a benefit of membership in the PGSNYS.

Our mailing list is like having access to a network of Polish Genealogists. You are allowed to ask any questions pertaining to genealogy or ask questions about the PGSNYS.

At our April 11th, 2002 meeting we discussed how only a few people are using the Mailing list. It seems most members are not sure how it works or how to use it. Below are some tips for using the PGSNYS Mailing List:

To Subscribe to the PGSNYS Mailing List - If you are a member of the PGSNYS and would like to be a member of the e-mail list, send a message to

pgsnys-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

In the body of the message enter your FIRST NAME and LAST NAME. By return e-mail you will receive a message welcoming you to the mailing list and will contain instructions for submitting questions to and how to "unsubscribe" from the mailing list mailing list. It is suggested that you save this message for future reference.

NOTE: Most members are added to the e-mail list after they submit their application for membership with their e-mail address.

To Post Questions or Information to the PGSNYS E-Mail List - Send a message to pgsnys@yahooogroups.com
Your message will be sent to all members of the PGSNYS E-Mail List

To Unsubscribe from the PGSNYS E-Mail List - If you no longer want to belong to the PGSNYS E-Mail List, send a message to pgsnys-unsubscribe@yahooogroups.com

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RULES OF THE PGSNYS E-MAIL LIST

When you send that email it will go to all PGSNYS members who have email and are on our list.

Things you can do with this privilege, but not limited to:

- You can ask if anyone is researching a surname that

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FROM POLONIA TO POLAND

Genealogy Take 1

by David E. Newman

From September 9th, 2001 to September 23rd 2001, I visited Poland for the first time. I learned from this trip that no other event could send a chill up your spine as the moment you meet relatives in Poland. Once this happens, genealogy becomes more than just the compiling a bunch of names, dates and places. It becomes alive with first-hand stories to your family history you could never get from any micro filmed archives.

Within this three-part article I'm going to share my wondrous adventure in Poland. My hope is to encourage those with the ability to travel, to plan a trip to Poland. You won't be disappointed.

TRIP PREPARATION

Daniel J. Kij (PGSNYS Treasurer) often plans trips to Poland. He's always asked me to tag along, but until now I've always turned him down for one reason or another. Each trip Dan has planned is as unique as a snowflake. This trip was no exception. It included:

- ◆ Round trip air fair
- ◆ Lodging in various hotels.
- ◆ 2 meals a day
- ◆ 4 Days touring on your own. (Some tour members went to Lwow, others to Rome, Italy and some stayed in Poland)
- ◆ 6 Days touring with a guide.

Ed Kornowski (PGSNYS Vice President) suggested I contact Danuta Jampolska who lives in Waszawa and helped me obtain some translators for the first 4 days in Poland.

Danuta Jampolska – It only took 4 e-mails but Danuta suggested Darek and Agnieszka Pieróg as translators. There fee was \$100 dollars a day plus meals and lodging. We used their automobile and were responsible for filling up the tank too. The entire expense was split between Keith Kaszubik (PGSNYS Board Member) and I, which was \$500 dollars apiece. To us their fee was a bargain.

Keith Kaszubik and I planned a rough day by day outline of our traveling itinerary and e-mailed it to Danuta

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

September 9th/10th, 2001

We took off from Toronto Canada. Late in the evening and arrived 8 hours later in Warszawa. With the time change it was already 2 PM on September 10th. We met with our tour guide Jan Muranty and were bussed to our hotel to drop our luggage before taking a tour of Warszawa (I will cover our tour in Warszawa in Part II.)

September 11th, 2001

Keith and I met Darek and Agnieszka Pierogi at 10 AM. Our first destination was my mother's birth village Sokolniki (near Lodz). Before arriving in Sokolniki, I went over all the information I had about my mother's family, which wasn't much.

My grandmother Helena Wojtal *nee* Werbicka and her 4 children during WWII were in the Dakau concentration camp in Germany and later in the resettlement camp Altenstadt. She divorced her husband Kazimierz who stayed in Poland and took her children to the United States in 1952. When they arrived in New York harbor their original sponsor no longer needed workers, but my determined *babcia* with the help of charitable organizations, found another sponsor in Pennsylvania. They worked on a farm for a year before finally settling in Buffalo.

My mission in Poland was clear. I needed to find my grandmother's Werbicki family. Shockingly, after 6 years of researching the family tree, my mother hands me a list of addresses before driving me to the bus for this trip and says, "Here's a list of addresses you grandmother wrote to." After lifting my jaw off the floor I reply "Mother, You tell me about this list now!". I could've started researching 6 years ago.

Apparently my grandmother wrote back to family in Sokoliniki until she died in December of 1983. No one in the family continued writing.



SOKOLNIKI

As we approached the Sokolniki village sign we took a picture. Our first order of business was the kocioła (church) which was locked. We then strolled over to the rectory. Learning the priest was performing a funeral in the cmentarz (cemetery) we immediately drove there. It was only about a mile from the kocioła.

Not disturbing the pogrzeb (funeral), Keith, Darek, Agnieszka and I combed the small fenced-in acre cmentarz (cemetery) for tombstones with my maternal grandmother's maiden surname Werbicki. We found 10 tombstones that I took pictures of with my digital camera.



We then decided to verify the addresses from the list my mother gave me earlier. By using a local phone listing found at the poczta (Post Office) every address was found. We then went to the first house on the list but were disappointed to find an abandoned house

that was boarded up. We proceeded to the second address and spoke with a young woman.

I was amazed and impressed with Agnieszka's determination to obtain information from everyone she spoke with. The young woman didn't know much about her family but she called her father to the door. After speaking with the older gentleman for a few minutes, Agnieszka told me the some of his relatives moved to the United States as a result of World War II. I couldn't believe my ears at what the gentleman said next, which needed no translation. He said the names of the relatives who emigrated were, Helena, Janina, Zdisław, Zygmunt and Kazimierz. BINGO!! We found that this gentleman is my mother's older cousin. He use to take care of my mother and uncles when they were kids.

He asked us to follow him and he'll introduce us to the family and hopped on an old 1930 style bicycle (which is a common bicycle in Poland) and went a couple of houses down the street. We followed in the car. In front of this house was a elderly man who later was identified as my grandmother brother Antoni. We were told this was the house my mother's family grew up in. We then went a few houses further to the house of Czesław Werbicki. My mother's cousin.

We were welcomed with open arms into this house. We were introduced to many cousins and also my mothers aunt Rozalja. Rozalja showed me family pictures including some of my brother, sister and me. I was given several of the pictures. One included was of my grandmother, mother and uncles taken a couple of months after their arrival in the United States.



We were given a traditional lunch: kielbasa, kapusta, and herbata. Agnieszka was working overtime to translate everything said by a room full of people.

EXPERIENCING 9/11 IN POLAND

During our conversation someone came running into the house and said "Quick turn on the TV, America is being bombed". We all watched patiently the news regarding September 11, 2001 as it occurred.

To be frank, I was too much involved in the moment with being in Poland visiting relatives to be concerned with the outside world. I felt as though I was at home safe and sound. That might sound heartless, but it is an accurate description of my state of mind. After watching the news events for a few minutes, we continued our discussion of the family while eating kielbasa, kapusta and a wide variety of other foods. In fact, we talked for the next 4 hours. I met more cousins and my grandmother's brother Antoni.

Rozalja, also told me she has kept all the letters my grandmother sent from America. She showed me the very first letter she wrote her in 1952. I took a picture of it for later translation. I met Rozalja's son Czesław who is about my mother's age. He told me that during World War II, while my grandmother went to the United States her 3 sisters went to France where their families live today. Czesław graciously invited my family in America to meet him in France to meet the family there next year during Easter. I accepted without hesitation. Czesław also mentioned that he helped the family in France put together the family tree but didn't have a copy made. He told me that he would help me piece the Werbicki family but I would have to return to Poland. He feared I would never return to Poland if he told me then.

One question that seemed important to the family was why I came to Poland in the first place. I told them that there are many Polish descendants in search of their family and I was one of them. Recording and discovering my roots was important to me. I wanted to experience the culture and environment of my ancestors. Had I known I'd find living relatives on my first day, I'd have made plans to stay longer. Had my mother given me the list of addresses 6 years ago when I started my family tree, I would have been to

Poland sooner. Agnieszka surely earned her pay translating. I was amazed she could keep up with several people at once conversing.

At around 9:30 PM we said our good bye to the Werbicki Family in Sokolniki and drove 5 miles to the town of Wieruszów where we stayed at a very nice hotel. I really hated to leave. Driving to the hotel, I had tears down my face.

GENEALOGY NEVER SLEEPS_ 9/12

I fell asleep watching the 9/11 disaster on CNN and woke up the next morning amazed that the same newscaster was still reporting.

You'll never know when your next genealogical encounter will occur. Poland was no exception. During breakfast, the waiter asked if I was visiting from America. He introduced himself as a Werbicki cousin. He said he heard that someone from the United States visited and was hoping to see me on his work-shift. He told us that about 5 years ago the German friend of the family who helped many family members escape, came to visit and that they were very happy to see me. They thought they'd never see the family from the United States again.

CERTAINLY NOT THE END

Since returning to the United States, I've been writing the Werbicki family on a constant basis. We had to cancel our plans to meet in France because of the family buying some land. However, plans are being made for a reunion within the next year.

From having little information regarding my mother's family, to having an abundance of information, I have my work cut out for me. One of my goals is to have my grandmother's letters that her sister-in-law Rozalja has kept all these years translated.

Our journey just began. I've only covered 2 days travel. In Part 2 of this article, I'll tell about the genealogical gold-mine of information found in the old city of Poznań on my father's side of the family. Stay-tuned for **"FROM POLONIA TO POLAND PART II OF III - Genealogy Take 2"** in the next edition of the Searchers.

Translation Services

Attention researchers, since the death of Michael Drabik we can no longer offer free translation services. We are a nonprofit organization and hesitate to recommend commercial vendors. We receive many emails in search of translations. Therefore we feel obligated to direct you to a qualified provider. Mr. Golebiowski is a respected member of Buffalo area Polonia. Any monetary transaction is strictly between you and vendor. PGSNYS is not paid, nor party to these transactions.

Andy Golebiowski

Polish-English Translator

- Official documents, letters, e-mails, etc.
- Interpretation of conversations in-person or over the phone.
- Reasonable rates. Fast, reliable service by email or regular mail.
- Translation to/from other languages available as well.
- Over 20 years experience.

Please contact Andy at: andyg81@hotmail.com



Polish Farmer



Typical farmhouse in Central Poland



Central Polish Village

These fascinating photographs are just 3 of many that are presented on the **Polish Roots** website (<http://polishroots.com>) and are taken from a rare book by Dr. Wilhem Noting entitled **Polen** published in Berlin in 1936. This book has pictures depicting people and places during the time between the wars. The pictures can be found at http://polishroots.com/polen_book.htm.

The website itself is a veritable treasure-house of information and links to information of interest to the Polish genealogical researcher and I strongly recommend it.

- Jim Harlos

(Continued from page 11)

you are interested in.

- You can ask if anyone is researching a town or village that you are.
- You can ask how to get or find various records. Census, directories, military etc.
- You can pose questions about all sorts or genealogy or historical interests.
- You can share interesting websites with other members.

Once you pose a question, if another member wants to answer you they will. Please try to respond directly back to the original sender and not to the whole group. Unless you feel the answer will benefit the whole group.

Just because you asked a question, does not mean someone will answer it. If someone does answer it, the answer might not be correct. Take everything with a grain of salt.

Things you can't do with this privilege.:

- You can't send Spam to this list. (No Jokes or Junk E-Mail)
- You can't use this list to promote your business, or to give out someones private phone number.

- You can't drive people crazy with 20 postings a day.
- You can't criticize, insult, or defame other members or PGSNYS.

Only members on this list can send to this list. Non members mail is not even accepted. The mail is prescreened so the bad stuff wont show up.

We look forward to reading some interesting postings,

Sincerely,

David Newman, President
PGSNYS

(Continued from page 8)

of Buffalo, NY

Website for index of names in letters is:

<http://pgsa.org/database.htm>

Webpage to read the History of the Letters:

<http://pgsa.org/histletters.htm>

Name of book is:

WRITING HOME: IMMIGRANTS in BRAZIL and the UNITED STATES 1890-1891 Translations of Letters into English, Edited and Annotated by Josephine Wtulich Columbia University Press, New York 1986 ISBN 0-88033-107-0
Based on the original work in Polish by Witold Kula, Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, and Marcin Kula

Indexed by Marilyn Novak - December 2001