

Searchers

The Journal of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State

Number 34

PRESERVING OUR PAST SINCE 1988

Spring, 2003



Polish wooden church in the village of Czerlejno, Wielkopolska, Poland

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

MEETINGS

The PGSNYS meets on the second Tuesday of each month in the Villa Maria College cafeteria, 240 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

Dues are \$15.00 for the year. This entitles you to three editions of the searchers. New members receive an information package to help get them started. **Please notify us of any change of address.**

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

All articles concerning Polish Genealogy, history, and information are considered for publication in the Searchers. Submission deadlines for articles 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. 76
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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ABOUT OUR COVER...

There are many wooden churches in northern Europe. Poland has examples of wooden Roman Catholic, Uniate, Greek Orthodox, and even Mosques. The one on the cover is a church in the village of Czerlejno, located about 6 kilometers south of Kostrzyn. In 1826 the Great-Great-Grandfather of Jim Harlos, Józef Harlos (also Harwaz) was baptised here. He was born in another small enclave called Węgierskie, located about 6 km southeast of Czerlejno. This is interesting because the name of Harwaz, which is the earliest spelling that I have found, sounds Hungarian to native Poles. What makes this interesting is that the name Węgierskie translates to Place of the Hungarians.

The church has another interesting feature that I have not seen before. I must quickly add that I am by no



means an expert of church architecture but I have seen a lot of European churches. The interesting feature is the keyhole on the church door, located to the upper right hand side of the door pull is in the shape of a number 3.

New Look

You may have noticed that this issue of the Searchers has a different appearance. We hope that this meets the approval of the membership. Let us know what you think, we are always open to suggestions.

- Jim Harlos
- Editor

President's Message

MEMBERSHIP NOW AT 149

Our membership is now at 149. This is due to current members renewing and spreading the word about our society.

MAY 18TH 2003 POLISH FESTIVAL

On May 18th our society was part of the 1st Annual Polish Festival sponsored by the Polish American Congress and Polish Arts Club. We used computers at this event to search PGSNYS databases for eager and novice Polish genealogists. I'm proud to report that our booth had the largest crowd gathered around it compared to all the fraternal organizations at this event. According to the festival statistics, 2,000 were in attendance. Thanks to all members who made this possible.

MICHAEL DRABIK COLLECTION PGSNYS LIBRARY

At a recent Executive Board meeting, a motion was approved unanimously to call our library The Michael Drabik Collection and take actions to move our library to the Special Collection department of the Buffalo and Erie County Library in Downtown Buffalo. Our goal is to have a ceremony on or around the late Michael Drabik's birthday in October. I've sent a letter to Rya Then, who is in charge of the Special Collections department and am waiting a reply.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

The PGSNYS has several technological assets, the *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* and *"Przewodnik Hondlowy"* databases and our web site located at (www.pgsnys.org) to just name a few. It is imperative that we preserve these assets and any future assets to be used for years to come. For this cause, I have created a Technology Committee and appointed Chuck Pyrak, Lynn Mycek Rzepecki, Jim Harlos and Ed Kornowski to this committee. Chuck Pyrak is the committee chairman. I thank them for accepting their appointment. As president I am *ex officio* member of this committee. This committee has the broad goal of ensuring that all technological assets of the society are preserved for the future.

Look for updates to these topics in future editions of the Searchers.

Sincerely,

David E. Newman, President
PGSNYS

Yesterday's News

This feature will replicate actual newspaper articles that pertain to news and events in Buffalo, New York's Polonia during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The Buffalo Express **May 20, 1887**

East Buffalo

A Day among the Poles – A New \$20,000 School house to be Built

Dr. W. Wolf, a Polish physician has just taken up his residence on Fillmore Ave. He has only been in this country seven months. The doctor is a graduate of the University of Vienna and a well read man. In the rear of his house is being erected a frame building 25 by 35 feet, which is to be used as a Russian bath house. There will be accommodation for ten bathers. Now that the Poles have a physician of their own nationality they want a druggist. They are trying to induce one to come to this city.

The Polish people are a thrifty lot and very generous with their money for church purposes. Only a comparatively short time ago they built that large and handsome gray stone church which stands on Peckham Street near Fillmore Avenue, known as St. Stanislaus Church. Previous to the erection of this church the congregation worshiped in a frame church which stands next to the present one. Since the new edifice has been in use the old one has been used for the parochial school. The number of pupils has steadily increased until there are now 1,500 and the building is too small to accommodate them. Last Sunday after service Father Pitass called a meeting of the congregation, which numbers 15,000 people. He spoke of the large attendance and the need of more room for the school and asked for the contribution of a few hundred dollars with which to make an addition to the present structure. The congregation would have nothing but a new school house. After some talk they

decided to erect a large three-story brick building on the lot which they own next to the church and on the corner of Fillmore Avenue and Peckham Street. The plans are being prepared and the new school is to cost about \$20,000.

Last Sunday was St. Stanislaus Day, and it was duly celebrated. Father Pitass took occasion to expect the parishioners to refrain from unacceptable conduct, quarrels, fights, and hanging around saloons. He also told them they would never make respected citizens until they did. The singing in the church is a feature of the service. The choir is composed of 75 voices and is directed by Prof. James Rozar.

Mr. J. Sadowski, editor of the *Polak w Ameryce*, is getting subscriptions from his people to start a free library to contain Polish novels and American history. A building is to be rented and the rooms are to be open day and evening.

Jacob Dold is to erect another building before the storehouse row under way is finished. His intention is to build a large ice house which will be 80 feet wide and 130 long. The excavations have been started.

This morning the first issue of the only Illustrated Polish-American weekly in this country is to appear. Robert Dobrzelewski is the editor and proprietor. It is the intention to print romances and poems, and as the editor says, "it will be like *Harper's Weekly*." The illustrations will be made by Matthews, Northrup, & Co.

A new chapel is building on Genesee Street near the Belt-line crossing.

Researched by Laurel Myszkier Keough



POTPOURRI



WHERE WERE THEY BORN?

Recently at the January 2003, meeting of the Polish Genealogical Society of NY State, Vice President Edward Kornowski held an impromptu brain storming session. Attending members brain stormed about the problem of discovering the names of ancestral cities and villages. Below is a list of sources of which you might possibly learn the location of your ancestors origins.

Church records, Baptism, Marriage, or death.
 Naturalization Records
 Ellis Island passenger search.
 Germans to America Indexes.
 Emigrants from the Russian Empire Indexes
 Death notice or obituary.
 Border crossing cards for Canadian border.
 Death certificate
 Passports
 Polish Businessmen's Directory [Przewodnik Handlowy]
 Will or probate records.
 Social Security records. [SS-5 application]
 Newspaper articles.
 PRCUA Insurance records. [Polish Roman Catholic Union of America]
 Military records. [WWII discharge DD214]
 WWI Draft registrations

- Ed Kornowski

Witamy

We are pleased to welcome to the PGSNYS the following new members:

Mary	Bakowski	Buffalo, NY
Dolores	Lauricella	Satellite Beach, FL
Sandy J.	Maidans	Charlotte, NC
Gary L.	Augustyn	Bremerton, WA
Bob	Kurneta	Cheektowaga, NY
William P.	Ciesla	Millersville, MD
Susan	Webster	West Seneca, NY
John	Opacinch	Cassadaga, NY
Deborah	Russell	Ozark, AL
Patricia	Coale	Bowling Green, OH
Monica	Winter	Newtown, PA
Jeffrey	Brylski	St Cloud, MN

We find it very interesting to see that out of 12 new members, two-thirds of them are from states other than NYS.

Scrapbook Donation

The Special Collections department of the Downtown Buffalo & Erie County Public Library recently has received a Scrapbook donation from David Maka of Talladge, Ohio. He writes:

"Please accept this scrapbook for your Polonia collection. It is a scrapbook my grandmother Antoinette Wilczynska of Sycamore and Rother kept of World War II in Poland. Please find a home for it where it can be seen and appreciated and asset anyone looking for info on WWII in Poland."

Facts from the past

By Edward Kornowski

St Adalberts Basilica of Buffalo, NY was founded in 1886. At the time it was the second largest Catholic church serving Polonia of Buffalo's "East Side." The first Pastor of the church was Ks. Antoni Klawiter. The church still operates to this day, albeit at a much smaller scale. The current Pastor is Ks. Tadeusz Bocianowski who came to the parish from Czystachowa, Poland. The church has three cemeteries, two on Dale Road in Cheektowaga, NY, and the newest one on Broadway in Lancaster, NY.

I had a chance to browse through the Fiftieth Anniversary "Golden Jubilee" Book which was published in 1936. I would like to share these historical facts I found printed on page 138 of this wonderful book. Although the church was formed in 1886, the Parish experienced an immense fire, the records from 1886 to 1889 were burnt and therefore not available, so the official records start at 1889. [see note below]

First Christening

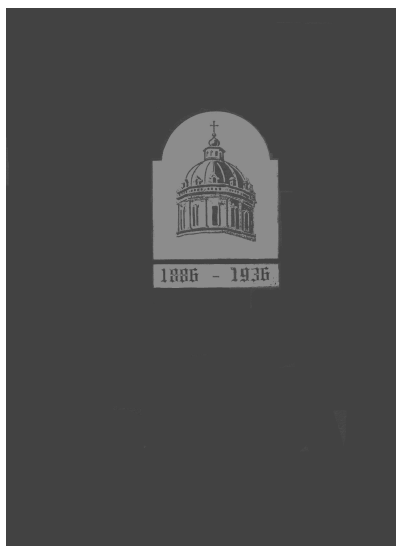
Anastazja Brauza, she was born January 21, 1889 and christened on January 25, 1889

Her parents were, Jozef Brauza and Zofia Malecka
Godparents listed as Stanislaw Sierzchula and Julianna Borowiak

First Marriage

Wawrzyniec Skalski married Zofia Potwora on January 9, 1887.

The witnesses were Jan Kankiewicz and Anna Murawska



First Funeral

S.p. Wawrzyniec Chudzinski who died on January 1, 1889
He was buried on January 5, 1889

First Confirmations

Marjanna Pawlak November 20, 1892, confirmed Magdalena

Stanislaw Pilarski November 20, 1892 confirmed Wladyslaw

As genealogy researchers we constantly look for famous and interesting people within our family tree.

The above eight people hold title as the first, in the above categories. I hope that someone reading this can match these names to their ancestors and add a footnote to their biographies. If so please be kind enough to send us note and let us know.

Note: PGSNYS member Monica Rzepka reports that on microfilm LDS 1292862 it does contain a marriage record of Aleksander Jeruzal from Lisewo married Franciszka Szejnrok from Starogardo on 10.1.1887

Interested in doing your own research in this book?

It's always easiest if you have your own copy—and you can! The 50th Jubilee Book of St. Adalbert's Roman Catholic Church have been scanned as images and put on CD disks in PDF format. The cost of the two disks is only \$20 and benefits PGSNYS. To get your own copy contact Jim Harlos at harlos@adelphia.net or by mail at

James P. Harlos
62 Jeffrey Dr.
Amherst, NY 14228

Payment by check.

A River, A Directory, and a Hairpin

By Grace Smokowski

Fascination with my grandfather's printing press has colored my dreams ever since childhood. Dinnertime stories revolved around the hum of the press: printing anything from wedding invitations to brochures to newspapers, Dad would reminisce on my grandmother's thirst for perfection in each job. If perfection were not attained, the rejected jobs would find their way to other uses, wasting nothing. It was not until I cleaned out my grandmother's kitchen that I fully realized the extent of the creative use of misprints: her cupboard shelves were lined with misprinted advertisements for hairpins and scarves, with blotchy misprints of posters and puzzles. These amusing remainders of the careers of my grandparents and great-grandparents only aroused my curiosity.

How did they start a printing press? Why was it their chosen career? To validate my perseverance for a career in publishing, I look to the past for wisdom. And found much.

Research began with a trip to the downtown location of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library that led to a disparity of information: my father's oral history was different from records as I began to search documents. In the Buffalo City Directory of 1898, it shows Peter Smokowski as a priest living at 172 Sobieski Street, next door to Warta Publishing Company. So far the information coincided; John and Peter Smokowski came to America as priests in the Polish National Church. It would make sense that Peter

would be registered as a priest in the city directory. Since John may not have been considered head-of-household, having no entry for him in the directory was not thought of as unusual.

Further information was found in the 1900 Buffalo City Directory, listing 172 Sobieski Street as Church of the Holy Mother of the Rosary with Peter

Smokowski as the rector of this parish. Again, it was next door to Warta Publishing Company. This information startled me, as oral history did not note anything about a Warta Publishing Company, only the name of the publishing house that my great-grandparents founded, called Hercules Press. More directory listings would highlight in-

consistencies. The reels began to pour from spool to spool through the anxious search for congruity.

The 1905 Buffalo City Directory lists Peter Smokowski as a lawyer with a business address in the Ellicott Square Building and a home address on Sycamore Street. Yes, this corroborated my father's story of Peter leaving the priesthood to become a lawyer and marry. Accordingly, John left the priesthood for publishing. One fact was confirmed. Now if only I could find some information on John Smokowski, my great-grandfather. Another spool of microfilm would quench doubts.

The thread of crimson brown tape sped through



An advertisement of holiday wishes from the publishers of "Warta"

microfilm reader as the screen in my mind hoped to discover insights into the characters that were my forefathers. I stopped at 1906. The city directory lists John Smokowski as editor of Warta Publishing Company at 174 Sobieski Street with a home address on Rother Avenue. My eyes were hungry for this information. John Smokowski was the editor of Warta Publishing Company. I began to put pieces together without knowing the full truth but hoping that the logistics followed: John Smokowski came to America in 1898 with his brother Peter and was resident and associate priest in the same church that Peter was rector. Around the time when Peter left the priesthood, John became the editor of the press and moved from the church to a private residence, possibly leaving the priesthood at the same time. But what is Warta Publishing Company? A Polish press named after a Polish river? Why didn't my father remember this press, especially when John was its editor?

This excursion to the library was fruitful; however it raised more questions than it resolved. Triumphantly, I walked out of the library hugging copies of all directory listings to study at home. Maybe if I studied the print of these directory listings the lives of ancestors would leap into my imagination from the pages, as truthful disclosers of lives well lived.

With this in mind, I asked David Newman, our Polish Genealogy Society President, to assist me in locating information on Warta Publishing Company. With worlds of genealogy knowledge, he was able to advise and assist me easily. On a balmy Saturday afternoon in mid March, we aimed our sights at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society library, which has archives of printers and publishers in Buffalo.

The neoclassical structure dated from the time of my great-grandfather, built for the Pan-American Exposition of 1901. Did John Smokowski ever visit this building? Across a threshold of enormous doors and coffered ceilings we entered the library where the afternoon light shone a river of green and gold through stained glass windows. The amiable librarian asked us to sign the registry and asked if she could be of assistance. David quickly and quietly explained my search.

Emerging from rows of archives, she brought two files that housed information on small presses, miscellaneous presses. After scouring these two files, nothing was found. While still sorting through the last file, the librarian returned with an encyclopedia called *The Periodical Press of Buffalo*. Within this resource, she found a short entry on Warta: name meaning "Watchman" and subtitled, "Organ of the Independent Catholic Polish Church of America"; a Polish weekly periodical printed from 1898 to 1911; founded by Rev. Stephen Kaminski and located at 174 Sobieski Street. My eyes grew wide as I read the entry over and over. This seemed to be the missing piece of the reel of John Smokowski's life in my mind: of course he would immigrate to America and work at a Polish newspaper; he did not found the newspaper but later became editor of it; when the newspaper folded, he established his own press. This excursion was a success. Warta was found.

David suggested hunting through microfilms of *Dziennik dla Wszystkich*. He once noticed an advertisement for Hercules Press in it and thought that Warta might have advertised in it as well. Possibly the city directories had advertisements from either press also. Contentedly I began to meander through the ebb and

(Continued on page 16)



Reading Handwritten Church Records

Part 1

By James P. Harlos

Sooner or later, everyone doing genealogy gets to the point where the records that they are interested in are not on the Internet, not extracted and typed up, and not legible. This happens when you begin to examine the original records, or facsimiles of them, whether that takes the form of photocopies, microfilm, or fiche. The most commonly encountered of these records are church records.

While it is impossible to cover the deciphering of handwriting in a single article—whole books have been written about this, we can give some hints and techniques that may prove useful.

Language

The source language is often the first problem. For us this means that the source document is written in a language other than English. It is a proven fact that it is easier to recognize a word if you have an idea of what the word is. If this wasn't the case most of us would be incapable of reading our own 'chicken scrawls'. I know this for a fact – my handwriting at an earlier point was such a scrawl – earlier one day I had written a document that my secretary was to transcribe and type up. This was obviously years ago – nowadays one type up your own documents in a word processor. She came to me later in the afternoon asking if I could read part of the document for her – I looked...and looked...and looked, and realized I couldn't read my own writing. I changed my handwriting and never had this problem again. However, the message is clear.

In the case of genealogical records the situation is often easier than people think. We are not reading literary works; we are reading documentary records, written by people who had many other duties, such as

priests, civil servants, and clerks. Also the content was usually very stylized. All this means that the vocabulary that one needs is usually very limited. So the first step is to identify the language. For Polish genealogy the choices are not really very large in number – Polish, German, Russian, Latin, or English. In this article we will concentrate on all except Russian. If you have records in a Cyrillic alphabet language I would recommend you get a copy of Shea & Hoffman's book (see Bibliography).

For Polish, German or Latin I would strongly recommend purchasing the excellent and cheap Genealogical Word Lists published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). These have a very good introduction to the language and a excellent list of words that have genealogical import. They can usually be purchased a local Family History Center or on-line at <http://www.familysearch.org>. The on-line cost is \$1.25 per booklet. The catalog numbers of the word list are: Latin – 34077000, Polish – 34098000, German – 34067000. Church records of the Catholic Church are often written in Latin and less often in Polish. Civil records can be in Polish, German or Russian depending on the time frame.

Tools and Reading Tips

I find two tools to be of paramount importance. The first is a magnifying glass. Details of the script become a little more apparent when magnified, especially with my eyes. The second tool may seem a little odd – it is a non-writing stylus. I often use the stylus that came with my PDA. I use this to trace the letters in the script. The reason for this is that it triggers the so-called muscular memory. Sometimes the act of tracing gives me a feel for the letters that allows for easier recognition than just viewing them. Examples would be the m, n, u group of letters. These are often just

spike points on the line. Sometimes the feel of tracing gives me a feel for the number of spikes and where they start from which is necessary for identification.

Another tool that I use very often is my computer and scanner. I will often scan in a document and then clean it up using Adobe's PhotoShop or Jasz's Paint-Shop Pro. At a magnified view I can remove the unwanted scratches, stains, blotches, dust particles, etc. The only problem is to make sure I don't remove any of the *kreska*. What are these? They are the little diacritical marks above c, n, o, s, and z. There are also the *ogonek* or tailed letters of *ą* and *ę* and the slashed *l*.

Alphabet

The alphabet is the beginning of all transcription. The Polish alphabet has 32 characters:

a, *ą*, b, c, *ć*, d, e, *ę*, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, *ł*, m, n, *ń*, o, *ó*, p, r, s, *ś*, t, u, w, y, z, *ź*, *ż*

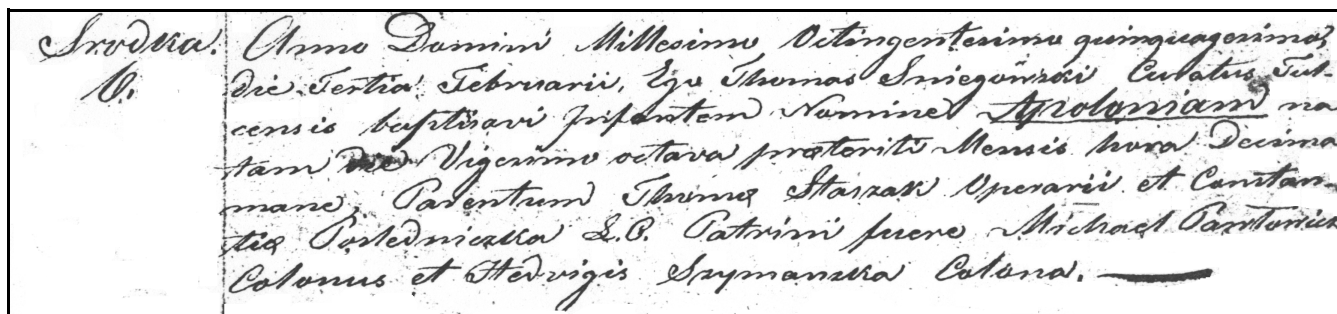
Note that when handwritten the *ę* sometimes looks like a g, but then again so does the *ą*. Also note that the slash *l*, *ł*, in lower case often has the slash above it. Upper-case *l* *L* usually has the slash through the letter.

Examples

Rather than give a table of letter forms, I will present a series of examples in various hands along with the transcriptions and some notes.

Example 1 is a fairly typical Baptismal record in Latin. Note the following—the d in Srodka, also in the same word the o is not completely closed at the top. This is repeated in several locations. Note the A in Anno. This is related to the Gothic or Germanic A with a loop and a firm down stroke forming the backbone. Notice the k in Srodka also the l's in Millesimo. They start at the baseline and go up and down. In the case of the k there is a upstroke, lift of the pen and then the tail for the lower leg. In Apoloniam we have another type of A, like a upside down capital V and a cross stroke. This can be confusing since in the same example we have several t's that are formed the same way. Look at the T in Tertia and right after it the F in Februarii. Look the same? Almost—in the F the line going to form the e touches the F, in Tertia it doesn't. Pay attention to how the i's are formed, also the z in Szymanska.

Once the transcription is done, then easy part begins.



Example 1—Baptismal record

Transcription of Example 1

Srodka 6	Anno Domini Millesimo Octingentesimo quinquagesimo die Tertia Februarii, Ego Thomas Sniegawski, Curatus Tulcensis baptisavi Infantem Nomine Apoloniam natam die Vigesimo octava protoriti Mensis hora Decima mane, Parentum Thomas Staszak Operaris et Constantia Posledniczka L.C. Patrini fuere Michael Pawłowicz Colonus et Hedvigis Szymanska Colona -
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Yes, it is easier to do a translation than it is to do a transcription. Just remember what type of document you are reading, that the language, usually Latin, is inflected, and that the usual information conveyed will just be dates and names. Inflected languages (those that have grammatical endings indicating the function of the word) can sometimes lead to difficulties for English speaking people. This is because English uses word order to indicate function. Fortunately in simple records like these word order indicating function seems to be the rule. Taking a look at the Latin Genealogical Word List, I get the following:

Anno Domini	In the year of (our) Lord
Mille(simo)	thousand
Octingenti(simo)	eight hundred
Quinquagintus	fiftieth
Die	on the day
Tertius(tertia)	third
Februarius	February
... and so on.	

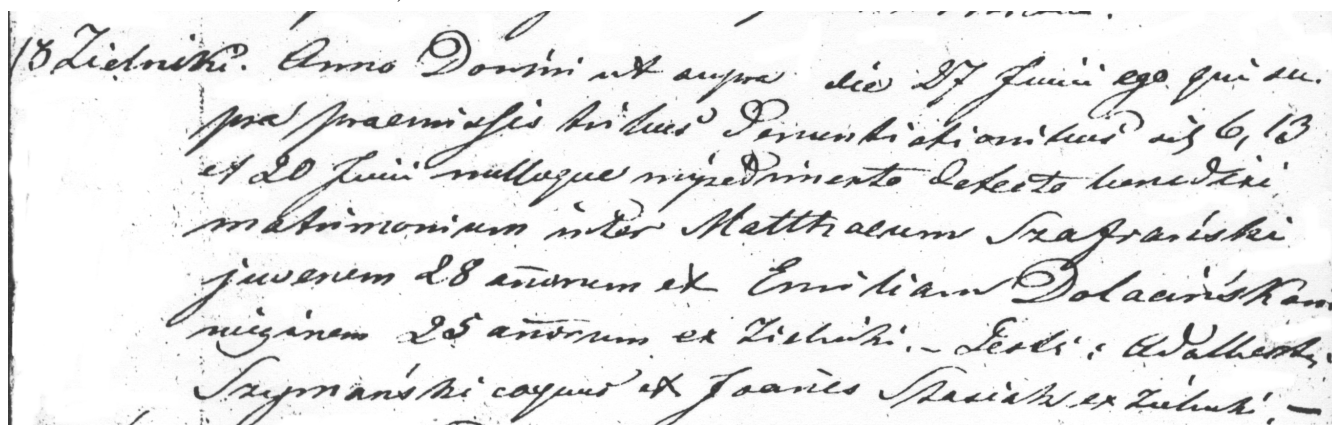
Putting this together we get a rough version -

In the year of Our Lord One thousand, eight hundred, fiftieth on the third day of February, I, Thomas Sniegawski, Curate in Tulce, baptized a infant (with the) name Apolonia born the twenty eight of the previous month at the tenth hour of the morning, parents (are) Thomas Staszak, a day laborer, and Constantia Posledniczki L.C. (=legally married). Godparents to be Michael Pawłowicz and Hedvig Szymanska, peasant (female)

Example 2. The next example is a marriage record that I present to illustrate several points. The first is that it isn't always easy. I worked at this entry for practice. I think I can read most of it, but I know I under-

stand all of it. So rather than go through it all, I'll just point out some features. The town is Zielniki. *Anno Domini* is as before, but this is followed by *ut supra* which means 'as given above' — you have to look at the top of the page or at some previous entry where the year is given. This is followed by the date — '*die 27 junii*' — on the 27th day of June. The next part is the tricky part — I can not read it entirely, but I know what it says! It start with *ego*, I, but the I is not given, it just says who is mentioned above. It is followed by a statement that banns have been read on the 6, 13, and 20th of June, with no objections. You can recognize this type of statement by the three dates, usually a week apart. The *nullique* phrase starts the no objection statement— there must have been no objections, otherwise you wouldn't have the marriage record. The marriage is indicated by *matrimonium inter* — marriage between, Matthew Szafranski, *juvenem*, youth, actually unmarried male would be a better translation, 28, *anorum*. *Anorum*? However, look above the n, notice that there is a bar. This is a common method of indicating that the barred letter is to be doubled. Therefore the word is actually *annorum*, and the phrase means of 28 years. This is then followed by the brides name *Emiliam Dolaczńska virginam 25 anorum*, Emily Dolaczńska, virgin, again a better translation is unmarried female, of 25 years. This is then followed by the witnesses names. Notice that the her maiden name is given with the Polish ending of -a; her father's name would have be Dolaczński.

With two examples I have barely started. I have not covered tabular records because they are the easiest, I have not covered Napoleonic era records, nor have I



Example 2— A marriage record

had any Polish language records. These will be covered in future installments. I am including a short annotated bibliography.

Bibliography

Thornton, Tamara Plakins **Handwriting in America—A Cultural History** Yale University Press, 1996, ISBN 0-300-07441-7. A interesting book dealing with the cultural impact of penmanship in America. Not a necessary book for genealogists, but still interesting to social historians.

Shea, Jonathan D. & William F. Hoffman, **In Their Words—A Genealogist's Translation Guide to Polish, German, Latin, and Russian Documents**. Language & Lineage Press.

Volume 1: Polish ISBN 0-9631579-3-0

Volume 2: Russian ISBN 0-9631579-4-9

I have a very simple attitude towards books written by these guys—buy them. If you want to get some facility at reading documents these are the books to buy. Two more volumes are yet to come — German and Latin. They can not write them fast enough to suit me. Not cheap but valuable.

The Church of the Latter-Day Saints of Jesus Christ. **Genealogical Word Lists**.

Absolutely the first booklets to obtain—you may need nothing else.

Bentz, Edna M., **If I Can You Can Decipher Germanic Records**, ISBN 0-9615420-0-4

A classic on interpreting Germanic handwriting. Yes the words are in German, but you will see the character shapes and styles appearing in all Northern European handwriting.

Treasure

A veritable treasure-house is how I would describe the PGSA web site, <http://www.pgsa.org>. One of the treasures therein is the estimable William 'Fred' Hoffman's downloadable document located on the Resource page entitled "A Crash Course in Polish—Words you can use." Fed has even including his useful 'Chopping Block'. You might also download some of the other resources on the page.

JPH

Book Review

In Their Words—A Genealogist Translation Guide to Polish, German, Latin, and Russian Documents by Jonathan D. Shea & William F. Hoffman. Volume II: Russian \$30 + \$4 postage
Language & Lineage Press, 2002
ISBN 0-9631579-4-9
[Http://www.langline.com](http://www.langline.com)

IN THEIR WORDS
A GENEALIST'S TRANSLATION GUIDE TO POLISH,
GERMAN, LATIN, AND RUSSIAN DOCUMENTS
by Jonathan D. Shea & William F. Hoffman



VOLUME II: RUSSIAN

LANGUAGE & LINEAGE PRESS

If your family came from the Russian Partition, if they came from Poland when it was under Russian rule, then almost certainly some of the records of your family are in Russian. This is **the** book for you. It gives a rough working guide to the structure and genealogical vocabulary of Russian language records. In form it follows the previous vol-

ume dealing with Polish language records. The first chapter, 32 pages, covers Phonetic and Spelling, including The Cyrillic Alphabet, Handwriting, and much more. Chapter 2 (40 pages) goes onto the Structure of Russian and covers such topics as Grammar, Date & Time expression, Familial relationships, and a short list of occupations. Chapter 3 deals with locating records in America that lead back to Europe, which is a topic all of us can use. The remainder of this large 486 page book is filled with examples, advice, vocabulary, and an index of first names.

J.P. Harlos

Nie masz góry bez doliny.

You don't have a hill without a valley.

Changes at Erie County Hall — Erie County Clerk's Office

Those of us who have been researching for a while know the value of original records for determining the events of our family's past. One source of these records was the collection of records, Marriage Licenses, early Birth records, Naturalization records, and selected census data, that were stored in the basement of Erie County Hall. These were the original records and the storage facility was not ideal—nevertheless we did have access. This however led to abuse. Some of these records, particularly those of prominent Buffalo citizens had a monetary value and people being what they are, records were stolen. I know this for a fact having caught someone doing this for their own family record. The problems of storage, maintenance, accessibility, and preservation led to the microfilming of the records. The microfilmed records were then available on the main floor. There are only a few microfilm readers and the cost of photocopying the records is the highest that I have seen in WNY, but at least the records were still accessible.

This has now changed—if you go looking for the early Birth records microfilms, you will not find them. Asking at the desk for them will get you a confused statement about 'legal protection of privacy'. However, from Linda, a floor clerk in the Erie County Clerk's Office, I did obtain a copy of the regulation with an Effective Date; of 4/7/03. You will notice the statement about paying the specified fee, yet even offering to do this may lead to difficulties due to other provisions. In any event, the regulation seems to have resulted in the Birth records being no longer available. For those who do not know, these were early of before and about the turn of the century—19th to 20th turn that is. Marriage records went up to 1935. I guess my major problem with all this is the cost—if the cost is like City Hall, \$10 per record, and I had 100 records to look up that would be \$1000.

This is a political problem created by greedy legislators who wish to nick taxpayers for everything in life. We pay taxes, and yet they try to charge us for services too. I guess we do get the government we deserve.

Effective Date:

Title: Section 35.5 - Genealogical research; method of disclosure; searches

35.5 Genealogical research; method of disclosure; searches.

(a) Information from records of birth, death and marriage may be provided for genealogical research purposes, subject to the restrictions of this Part, in the form of an uncertified copy or abstract upon written application and payment of the applicable statutory fees, which are contained in Public Health Law, sections 4173 and 4174 and Domestic Relations Law, sections 19 and 20-a. If a search discloses no record, the applicant shall be required to pay the specified fee for the time spent for the search for the record and for a certification that the search disclosed no record. Information will not be released if it is to be used for commercial or profitmaking purposes.

(b) Records searches shall be conducted only by the following persons in the files maintained by their respective agencies:

- (1) authorized employees of the Department of Health;
- (2) a local registrar, deputy registrar, or an authorized employee of the registrar; and
- (3) a town or city clerk, deputy clerk, or an authorized employee of the town or city clerk.

(c) Information may be released subject to the following limitations:

(1) no information shall be released from a record of birth which has been placed in a confidential file pursuant to Public Health Law, section 4138;

(2) no information shall be released from a record of birth unless the record has been on file for at least 75 years and the person to whom the record relates is known to the applicant to be deceased;

(3) no information shall be released from a record of death unless the record has been on file for at least 50 years; and

(4) no information shall be released from a record of marriage unless the record has been on file for at least 50 years and the parties to the marriage are known to the applicants to be deceased.

(d) The time periods specified in paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) of subdivision (c) of this section are waived if the applicant is a descendant or has been designated to act on behalf of a descendant of the person whose record is being requested. A descendant is a person in the direct line of descent such as a son, daughter, grandson or granddaughter. The applicant shall provide documentation of descendency prior to the release of information in those instances where a waiver of the waiting period is requested. A party acting on behalf of a descendant shall further provide documentation that the descendant authorized the party to make such application.

(e) All uncertified copies, abstracts or information issued for genealogical research purposes shall be clearly marked with the statement "for genealogical purposes only ." --

1st Annual Polish Heritage Festival

On May 18, 2003, The Polish Union of America sponsored the 1st Annual Polish Festival at the Creekside Banquet Facility, 2669 Union Road, Cheektowaga, New York. With the support and participation of numerous Polish-American organizations, including our PGSNYS, the festival can only be described as a resounding success. There were numerous displays of Polish-American fraternal, religious, social, educational, historical, and cultural activities.

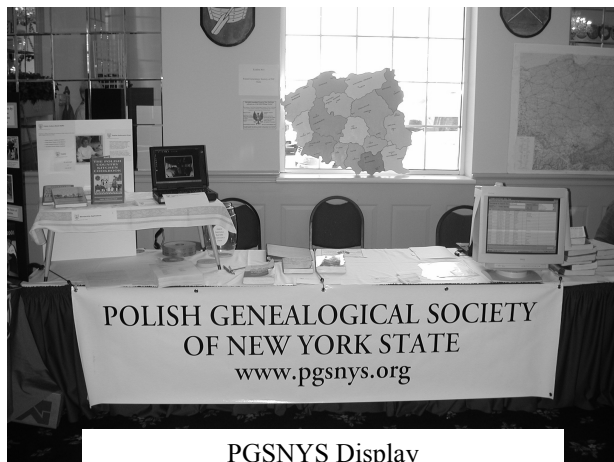
PGSNYS rose to the occasion by sponsoring two tables manned by Dave Newman, Chuck Pynak, Walter Kloc, Ed Kornowski, and others. Our exhibit had Polish maps with Walter giving his expert help and advice for locating towns in Poland. Chuck and David unveiled our new computer database retrieval system allowing visitors to determine if their families are in our indices. Family surnames could be looked up in our copy of Rynut's Surname Index. This plus the expert advice of our members gave the many visitors to our display a rewarding and informative experience. Next year's festival has already been announced to be on Sunday, May 16, 2004.



Walter Kloc prepares to get to work



Chuck and Dave check out the computer display



PGSNYS Display



Well-known Am-Pol Eagle columnist, Ed Wiater, provides some Polish color at the Chopin Singing Society display.



A view of the hall before the opening



Cultural Exhibition Table



Ed Wiater's Solidarność Flag signed by Lech Wałęsa on display at the Pomost table.



Young dancers entertainment in the banquet room



Student Wycinanki art competition

Na wszystko jest przysłowie.

There's a saying for everything.



Pretty dancers

PGSNYS
12645 Route 78
East Aurora, New York 14052

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flow of somewhat interesting microfilm, looking closely at ads. It was 4:30 pm. The library closed at 5:00 pm. Leisurely scanning for ads will pleasantly end the day of research, I thought. Then our smiling librarian came to me and whispered that they had Warta on microfilm; it was in the first cabinet top drawer. I was stunned and elated at once. A broad grin and a hearty "thank you" were not far from a rush to the drawer. Warta. Warta. I could not find it. David began to look as well. Warta. Warta. At the end of the last column of microfilm a box with a label that had "Warta" lightly scrawled across it.

I grabbed it with the exaltation of catching the brass ring. I hopped the five feet over to the microfilm readers. This was the excitement of finding a fine work of art by an ancestor; this was the manifestation of my grandparent's labors and loves. This represented how they lived, what they thought, how they contributed to their community; this was real and why I love genealogy and writing. David laughed at my exuberance. The librarian smiled serenely at the reaction to her research. It was 4:45 pm.

Masthead scrolled through microfilm reader and poured onto screen. My Polish language classes ■ were paying off now, as the newspaper was mostly in

Polish. David's translations help a great deal. Articles ranged from world news and local news to religious articles and advertisements. Now David became excited because there were death notices. Warta may become a resource for other genealogists, if it consistently lists death notices. This possibility made David grin and scamper with a mischievous glint in eye that only an archivist would dare to interpret. It was now 5:00 pm. Very quickly, I noted several pages to be copied for my records, and the librarian produced the copies with pleasant efficiency. We voiced our appreciation for all of her assistance. She was happy to help.

I bounced down the limestone stairs to the parking lot where our cars were the last to occupy. There will be many more days of research to come, many more satisfying hours filled with reading articles possibly written by my great-grandfather and edited by him. When I shared this information with my father, he was surprised he never knew about Warta. Wouldn't my grandmother, or any family member, have remembered it? All that matters was that it was found, and holds one more key to family history. And reveals many more stories that may be told...