

# Searchers

The Journal of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State

Number 36

PRESERVING OUR PAST SINCE 1988

Winter 2003



Family of Dolores Konopa: Grandfather Ignatz Szalasny holding her father Walter, and grandmother Katarzyna holding her uncle Mike. Picture is *circa* 1909,

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### MEETINGS

The PGSNYS meets on the second Thursday 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:

<b>Spring Edition</b>	April 15th for June mailing
<b>Summer Edition</b>	June 15th for August mailing
<b>Winter Edition</b>	October 15th for December mailing

**Contact:** James P. Harlos, Editor  
Articles@pgsnys.org

### 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 Corre-

spondence, 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>	<b>David E. Newman</b> president@pgsnys.org
<i>Vice President</i>	<b>Ted Smardz</b> zdrams@aol.com
<i>Secretary</i>	<b>Dan Filipski</b> djf@adelphia.net
<i>Treasurer</i>	<b>Chuck Pyrak</b>
<i>Founder</i>	<b>Michael A. Drabik</b> 1950-2001

### PGSNYS TRUSTEES

**Walter Kloc** whiteniko@email.msn.com  
**Frank Martin**  
**Patricia Neuland**  
**Ed Prabucki** prabucki77@aol.com  
**Frank Wilczak**

### In this issue.....

Last meeting...	3
President's Message	3
Peter Smokowski Library	4
Bag Men and Bed Wrenches	5
Potpourri	6
Three Languages from Two—Part 2	7
If at first you don't succeed...	11
Information Please...	12
Annual Christmas Party	15

## Last Meeting...

At the last meeting, past officers Ed Kornowski and Dan Domino, were honored for their dedication and services to the Society over the past 3 years.

A brief reminder was put forward to the officers for 2004 that our task is to assist and encourage new members and guests in their resolve to research their family lines, giving new life to the many generations of their ancestors whose dedication, vitality, inspiration, and love of family gave us the life we presently enjoy. Also as officers we should provide an example for sharing information, experience, and knowledge with others.

Members of our Society would hardly be human if we didn't take pride in our ancestors. We celebrate those who survived the many adversities, in troubled times, with only the minimum of what we would consider to be necessities for a normal life. These ancestors live on in our research, and documentation of their lives.

We will continue the work of the founder of our Society, Michael Drabik, whose voice was silenced two years ago, in promoting the activities of the Society in aiding its members in the study of their family lines.

Edward Prabucki  
(Trustee)



## President's Message

As I look back at the year 2003, I can't help but think of the great year we had.

The fact that our presence at every Polish Festival and Genealogical Conference draws large crowds like bees attracted to honey proves that there is a big demand for our genealogical network of people and resources. This demand grows every year.

I believe this is due in large part because within our membership we have solid core knowledge, consisting of individuals with strong diverse interests and experiences in genealogy and Polish history. Another part of this "demand equation" is we have a solid foundation of technological expertise which allows us to share our knowledge base with others. Finally, without our dedicated volunteers, societies like ours just wither away and die.

I mention all this because I'm proud to be associated with the PGSNYS. I'm thankful for the friendships I've made throughout the years and the knowledge I've acquired by being part of our unique network of researchers.

As we embark on our journey through 2004, I plan on guiding the society in building our strong foundation of knowledge, technology and volunteerism, so we can continue our voyage of discovery.

*David Newman*

President

# The Peter Smokowski Library

*By Grace M. Smokowski*

The door creaked open with unusual ease, the usual alarm system and multiple locks disarmed in the frenzy of liquidating the estate. My elderly cousin, the daughter of my great grandfather's brother, kept her house on 875 Fillmore Avenue as it was in the height of Polish society fifty years ago, the building and all its contents frozen in time like a strange Dickens novel: the baby grand piano welcomed visitors in the receiving room, bookshelves lining three walls, where the guest would then be ushered into the parlor where a mission style fireplace warmed oneself between sitting room furniture, elegant lamps and side tables, and again three walls lined with bookshelves. The rest of the house was off limits, the dining room and kitchen barely in sight from the parlor and a grand staircase leading to comfortable bedchambers on the second level of the house. Leaded stained glass windows adorned each window frame on the first level of the house.

This was the residence of the Peter Smokowski family, consisting of him and his wife Jean, his daughters Isabella and Zenia, and his son Jordan. Peter was a lawyer for the mayor of Buffalo in the 1930's and a prominent figure in Buffalo's Polonia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Zenia herself was a



woman ahead of her time, being the first woman to graduate from the University of Buffalo's Law School. She went to work for her father, as his legal secretary. Their home office was a cylindrical room in the front of their Victorian home on Fillmore. Much of Buffalo's Polish history took place in that room as Peter litigated for the rights of Polish immigrants to abstain from the draft of World War II.

Now years later, we sift through the remnants of the house that held so many memories and history. Bits and pieces lay around the rooms now littered with boxes of books and other dear objects for donation or sale. At 82 Zenia's health was failing and she was placed in a nursing home. The estate must be liquidated however the family was able to take items before general sale to antique dealers and others. I had the privilege of taking the books that applied to the history of Poland and Polonia of Buffalo, in order to donate the books to the Polish Genealogy Society of New York State, the Adam Meiszkevicz Library and other associations interested in preserving local and Polish history.

I began by calling David Newman for

*(Continued on page 13)*



# Bag Men and the Bed Wrench

By Edward W. Kornowski

**T**his past November [November 13, 2003] the Polish Genealogical Society of New York held it's monthly meeting at the Buffalo Fire Historical Society, located at 1850 William Street in Buffalo. After a short business meeting we members and guests were treated to a tour of the museum.

The museum's collection includes fire engines, horse drawn steam-pumpers, hand-pumpers, ladders, equipment, clothing, and memorabilia associated with fire-fighting and firemen. There were working examples of fire alarm call boxes, and the electric switching units that eventually notified the firehouses with the location of a fire. Even Buffalo's fireboat, the "Edward Cotter" that serves the city's waterfront was represented with a scale model and photographs. Each item seemed to elicit numerous questions from the curious visitors. We all learned a lot more about fire-fighting past and present.

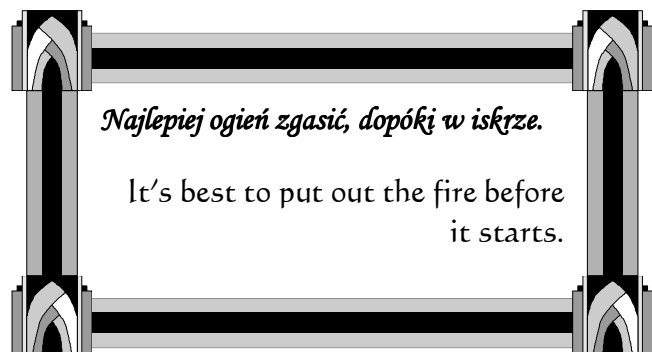
As genealogists, we naturally are curious about any aspects related to history. Yes history, and how everything can relate to our ancestors era. What was it like to have your house on fire in 1900? How did a person call for help? What sort of equipment was used to put out the fire? How long did it take for help to arrive? Where did firemen get the water to put out a fire? These and many more questions received answers on that November evening. It was a fascinating tour.

Since the tour I often think about something I learned at the Fire Museum. In the "Old Days" each Fire Company had "Bag Men". These men had one job at a fire, it was to run into the burning house with a large canvas bag and grab all the valuables they could and put them in the bag and run out. They even had a special tool called a "Bed Wrench". This was a special wrench, sort of a predecessor of today's

adjustable crescent wrench. This unique wrench was used to unbolt bed frames, the bed had to be disassembled to fit through the door! Houses didn't have much furniture, and one of the most important items was a person's bed. So just imagine a fireman risking his life to save a piece of furniture!

Besides saving furniture, I also think about all the priceless family pictures and documents. We all know or have heard of someone who lost everything in a house fire. Just think that possibly some of your old family pictures might have been saved by a "Bag Man" long ago. Just think of all the families that lost their homes in the California wildfires last year. We saw on the TV News how families had only a few hours or minutes to evacuate their homes. Only a few minutes to grab what was most important, the most valuable, the irreplaceable. The Californians became their own "Bag Men". The items they deemed worthy will become their descendant's heirlooms.

We thank our ancestors for treasures preserved and passed down to us, but let us also thank the firemen and women who risk life and limb each day to save our loved ones and property.



# Potpourri

## **PGSNYS Road Show 2003**

### **Our Lady of Częstochowa PNCC, Latham, NY**

On Sep 27 + 28, David Newman drove 280 miles to Latham, New York, a suburb of the state capitol Albany. He gave a presentation each day on Polish Genealogy during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Polish Festival or Our Lady of Częstochowa Polish National Catholic Church. An average of 20 showed for each session. Our new multi-database search engine was successfully put to the test.

### **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Heritage Festival**

On Saturday October 11th David Newman gave a genealogical presentation to a captive audience of 25 at the Maple Road Family History Center (FHC) in Amherst, New York. The festival was well received by the many new budding genealogists in the community. Again our new database search engine was a hit. The FHC plans to host another event next year.

### **PGSA 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference/Orchard Lake School Visit.**

During the weekend of October 3, 4, & 5, David Newman and Lynn Mycek Rzepecki attended the Polish Genealogical Society of America's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference. On our way to Chicago we stopped to drop off some local Buffalo church bulletins to Orchard Lake School near Detroit, Michigan. We also encountered a rainstorm from Detroit to Chicago.

As always, the PGSA gathers a team of great speakers from all areas of genealogical research. My favorite this year was John Colletta who is the author of "They Came in Ships: A Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Records. One of his lectures was on Less Used Federal Records, which opened my eyes to US Passports. Look for an upcoming article in the next edition of the Searchers about this topic.

## **Center Aims to Improve Record Access**

By Brian Meyer  
Buffalo News Staff Reporter

The small sign outside a city-owned business park will put smiles on the faces of folks who want to trace their families' roots, track their homes' tax history or inspect documents from former mayors.

The sign reads "City of Buffalo Records and Research Center" and it hangs outside an office in the Buffalo Free Trade Complex on River Rock Drive off Hertel Avenue. When it opens to the public in early January, people will have access to indexes of birth and death records, along with hundreds of thousands of documents that are contained in bound volumes and on microfilm.

As it stands now, researchers have to rely on overstretched staffers in City Hall to look up documents for genealogy projects and other purposes. City Clerk Charles L. Michaux III, the chief records custodian, said the new center - unlike the setup in City Hall - will have document viewing areas, microfilm machines and other tools for helping people do their own research.

Staffing constraints in the center will initially limit public access to 2 ½ days a week, although the schedule might be extended if demand is high. Existing employees are being shifted from City Hall into the center.

People will continue to obtain birth and death certificates in the city clerk's office on the 13th floor of City Hall, where the actual birth and death records will remain. Future plans call for electronically linking the two sites so that documents can be easily scanned and transmitted to either location. A fax machine will allow researchers to obtain copies of some documents that are still stored in City Hall.

---

### **August 5-8, 2004**

#### **THE SOCIETY FOR GERMAN GENEALOGY IN EASTERN EUROPE – 2004 CONVENTION**

**Coast Plaza Hotel & Conference Center**

**1316 33<sup>rd</sup> Street NE**

**Calgary, Alberta, Canada**

**Phone: 403-248-8888**

**Contact: [convention@sggee.org](mailto:convention@sggee.org)**

**Web: <http://www.sggee.org>**

**Web: [http://www.clickcalgaryhotels.com/  
coast\\_plaza\\_hotel\\_and\\_conference\\_center.html](http://www.clickcalgaryhotels.com/coast_plaza_hotel_and_conference_center.html)**

**SGGEE is a Poland and Volhynia genealogy group for people of German origin interested in the genealogy, culture and history of their ancestors who migrated through present-day Poland and Volhynia (now western Ukraine) and the surrounding areas.**

---

# Three Languages out of Two

A look at English, Polish and “Half-Na-Pół” - Part 2

by Andrew Golebiowski

This is Part 2 of the article which started in the Summer 2003 issue. Part 3 will be in the next issue.

## History of Polish Contact with English

According to Elżbieta Mańczak-Wohlfeld [1994], the first written use of “Anglicisms” to appear in Polish writing was found in an 18<sup>th</sup> century Polish book on geography. She cites the following words: *cutter*, *ket(c)h*, *sloop* and *yacht*.

Though Poles have emigrated to all of the English speaking countries, in this paper I want to focus on contact between Polish immigrants and their descendents in the United States.

The first Polish settlers in America arrived in 1608, a handful of craftsmen who were recruited to work in the British colony of Virginia run by the infamous Governor John Smith. I am not sure how the “Polanders”, as they were referred to in reports of the time, and the British communicated with each other. The Polanders may have been the first to use borrowed terms in Polish speech in what was to become the United States of America. Perhaps on the way across the Atlantic they were already using English terms in their communication with each other. They may have heard British sail-

ing terms on their voyage on the *Mary and Margaret* and repeated them, perhaps as quotations when they spoke to each other. As far as I’ve been able to ascertain, no correspondence from these craftsmen to Poland has survived.

Larger groups of immigrants to the United States consisted of veterans of the fight for Polish independence from Russia, most famous of whom were Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski. An inspection of their letters back home may reveal the use of borrowing.

Successive immigrations of Poles to the United States followed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and included soldiers on both sides of the Civil War.

The largest wave of immigration reached American shores in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A large Polish-language press developed in this country which gave ample opportunity for half-na-pół to find its way into print. [Doroszewski, Kruszk]a

Substantial numbers of Poles returned home after Poland regained its independence in 1919. One wonders how long their hybrid language lasted in Poland or whether they planted any borrowings permanently in Poland.

During and after World War II, groups of refugees who had been in Soviet or Nazi camps settled in the United States, and other English speaking countries. Most members of this group were officially called Displaced Persons. The initials D.P. soon became a pejorative used by Polish-Americans when referring to all post-World War II immigrants. I recall my father, who arrived in the U.S. in 1952, using a polonized version of D.P., *depista*, when referring to a newcomer he didn’t like.

Andrew Golebiowski has been a Polish translator and interpreter for the past 20 years. He has been invited to present this paper at the Polish American Historical Association's Annual Conference in January of 2004 in Washington, DC. The PGSNYS and The Searchers are grateful to Andy for allowing us to publish it. The half-na-pol word list is still in formation. Any suggestions of additional terms are welcome. Andrew can be reached at [andyg81@hotmail.com](mailto:andyg81@hotmail.com)

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Interestingly enough, some post-WWII immigrants have used the older term *grynol* (newcomer) to describe older native-born Polish-Americans when referring to them in negative terms. So *D.P.* has been used both by outsiders and insiders and has replaced *grynol* while *grynol* has been appropriated and given a new definition by the newer immigrant group. Part of the conflict between these two groups had roots in the different educational levels and Polish language proficiency along with attitudes of prestige attributed to these factors.

The earlier immigrants were mostly subsistence farmers and farm hands or servants who in many instances had not had the opportunity to go far in school. Some were illiterate in their own language. Those who did know how to write, wrote letters for others, filled out applications and so on, sometimes for a fee. Shortly before WWII, thousands of letters from Polish immigrants in the United States had been discovered in the Polish State Archives [collected by the Kulas and published in 1973]. These were letters addressed to family members and friends in the part of Poland that had been under Russian rule at the time. Tsarist authorities seized the letters in the hopes of stemming the tide of emigration. The history of these letters and their fate are fascinating, but too elaborate to relate in this paper. For our purposes here, what is interesting is the use of polonized English words in a number of these letters.

What is fascinating to me is that the writers, or those dictating their messages, inserted half-na-pól into letters to family members and friends, using words that may have not been known to the reader in Poland. Per-

haps some had been explained in earlier letters that managed to elude the Russian letter hunters and censors. One immigrant writer from Buffalo explains the use of half-na-pól terms in the following excerpt written in 1891:

“And now I have moved to another street. Here *Ulica* (*Polish for street*) is called a *Strita*. Let it not be strange to you that that’s what it is called, because in every country it’s different.”

*Many half-na-pól terms have been names for objects or local concepts that did not exist in Poland or were names of concepts that did not exist in the world of the immigrant back home. This was especially true of immigrants who came from rural areas in Poland to American cities to work in industrial jobs. A concept of moving, as in changing place of domicile within a city, may have not been experienced by the newcomer whose family lived on the same plot of land for generations*

Other writers peppered their letters with terms like *mufował* (moved) and *ro-bota zastapowała* (referring to a work stoppage) with no translation or explanation. Included were a variety of phonetic spellings of American place names and streets such as *Nort Ameryka*, *Nort Amerika*, *Perth Mboj*, *Perth Amboj*, *Jerzyct* (Jersey City), *Plimótc* (Plymouth) and so on. One writer even signed her letter with her first name in English as pronounced with a Polish accent: *Eny* (Annie), when in Poland she would have been called *Anna*, *Ania* or some other diminutive derivation beginning with the letter “A”.

The collection of letters may also give us a look into Polish dialect pronunciation of the time and the region from where the letter writers originated, as many Polish words appear to be written as they are spoken in today’s varieties of speech in Poland.

Writers taking part in a competition organized by the Polish Institute for Social Economy for the best emigrant memoirs in

(Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8)

1936 also used numerous half-na-pół terms in their writings [published in 1977]. Some writers enclosed English terms in quotation marks, while others used them in their polonized versions without translation or explanation for the judges. Some letters had a combination of terms that were translated in parentheses, preceded by the modifier “so-called” as well as those that were left untranslated. Some of the words that appear are *kosztumerów* (customers=klientów), *na korcie* (referring to a “court or civil wedding”=w sądzie or ślub cywilny), *interes groseryjny* (grocery business=interes or sklep spożywczy) and *hurry jop* (hurry up=pośpiesz się).

One wonders what the reactions were of the judges of these memoirs. Did they scratch their heads, reach for dictionaries or mourn the loss of their countrymen to far-away America?

## Why Borrow ?

*“Ask the people themselves. They themselves do not know, because they do it by instinct.”-Wacław Kruszką in A History...*

*W moim doświadczeniu, ci którzy słabo mówili po angielsku, to mówili słabo po polsku.* (In my experience, those who spoke English poorly spoke [their own native language] Polish poorly.

-opinion of one email writer in response to why he thought other Poles he met in England borrowed, 2002

The question of why someone would insert borrowings into their native tongue is an interesting one. Surely the reading or hearing of borrowings has the potential to confound, enrage, amuse and/or pique interest on the part of a non-English speaking recipient. Following is an attempt at some answers to the question:

Necessity: the need to name concepts that do not exist in the country or language of

origin, or at least not in the experience of the speaker

Many half-na-pół terms have been names for objects or local concepts that did not exist in Poland or were names of concepts that did not exist in the world of the immigrant back home. This was especially true of immigrants who came from rural areas in Poland to American cities to work in industrial jobs. A concept of moving, as in changing place of domicile within a city, may have not been experienced by the newcomer whose family lived on the same plot of land for generations, though changing the place of residence may have been part of a city dweller's experience in Poland.

For more recent immigrants who arrived from a state-run economy in Poland, names for certain free market concepts may not have been in frequent use or in use at all.

Olgiarda Furmanek, in her article entitled “Polglish: a valid sub language or a horrifying unacceptable deviation?” [2000] states:

*‘Words such as cosigner, company, insurance are commonly used in Poland today. They do not exist, however, in the register of those born and raised in the state controlled society where there were no companies (firmy) but only plants (zakłady pracy) and where nobody needed to worry about insuring anything because nobody owned anything and everything was provided by the government.’*

The terms Furmanek cites have existed in the Polish language for some time, but for close to 50 years they had been hidden away in dictionaries, old magazines in antiquaries, on the tongues of linguists or in the memories of a generation that remembered a different economy, one that existed prior to 1946. In the Polish communities of the United States, previous generations handed them a ready-made language that they too would

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

need.

A few year ago, a web page under the title *Słownik Tubylczy: Jak Zostać Amerykaninem nie znając angielskiego* (The Native's Dictionary: How to become an American without knowing English) was introduced as a serious dictionary (actually lists of phrases) for those arriving in Chicago from Poland in order to be able to understand what their more established compatriots were saying. Whether this description is tongue-in-cheek or not, it does point to the fact that new arrivals will not understand some of what is being said to them. Someone may not know that he is to exit the automobile when someone orders them to *Siarap z mojej kary* instead of *Wyjdź z mojego samochodu*. (In this example, taken from the *Słownik*, *siarap* did not equal 'shut up' to the user, but rather 'get out').

Other reasons for borrowing include:

- the lower frequency of use in native country and higher frequency of need to name a specific thing or action in new country.

- the need to be understood by individuals one senses do not know equivalents in their own language.

- the need to be understood by English speakers; while not knowing the correct English term, at least coming halfway with a hybrid. ("*want nowa kara*"=I would like to buy a new car=*Chciał(a)bym kupić nowy samochód*)

The idea of necessity or the inadequacy of one's native language (or a person's lack of full knowledge of their native language) do not suffice in fully explaining all borrowing. Many individuals are aware of equivalents in their native language, and even use them prior to arriving in the half-na-pół world, and as Kruszk suggests, just after arriving, they try to pin the Polish flag to the tongues of their *rodacy* (countrymen).

But even though a new word has developed for "automobile" in Poland since the greatest wave of immigration, recent immigrants often drop that term (*samochód*) and

come to use the local term Polish-American name for car: *kara*.

## **Social/Psychological/ Physiological**

In order to understand borrowing that does not fit the scenarios mentioned above, we need to look at social, psychological and even physiological motivations. As human beings, we have a need to be accepted by others, not only for immediate practical reasons, but also out of a need to feel good about ourselves. Native-born Americans adjust their speech to each other's patterns on a regular basis. These adjustments occur on a daily, informal basis, as well as in education. An entire industry has developed around 'speech modification' that intends to change the perception of others about a speaker. An immigrant usually has an even greater desire to be accepted by certain individuals or groups of individuals.

By adopting half-na-pół speech, and in some cases using it to replace well-known equivalents in Polish, a speaker can either rise in status, or use the process in order not to be perceived as being snobbish. English being considered a language of 'prestige' among Poles enhances this. Thus a one-year 'veteran of life in America' can use half-na-pół speech to impress a newcomer or friends and family back home. Often immigrants have a need not only to prove themselves in their new environment, but also show that they are assimilating in the new context, not only to impress, but to quiet the worry of a parent back home. At the same time, an immigrant can use half-na-pół as a way to reflect on one's own progress on the road to learning English.

There may also exist the need or desire for acceptance by a group or individual, by adjusting one's speech to another's, in order not to be perceived as being above that person. Someone who is sensitive to the potential negative association of speaking 'that high Polish' as some native-born Polish-Americans call it, may use

(Continued on page 13)

# If at first you don't succeed ...

By David E. Newman

Akdave@pgsnys.org

**M**any times in genealogical research, you've asked for a record from one of our beloved government agencies and they reply to your request as they can't locate the records you requested. Then when you make a second request the record mysteriously materializes in your mailbox one day. This happened to me this year (2003).

Following is my experience with the US Military Personnel Office in efforts to obtain my great-grand uncle Wladyslaw Niewczyk (uncle Wladyslaw) military record.

My genealogical goal in the next couple of years is to obtain all records of relatives who served in the military. I learned from four sources that uncle Wladyslaw served in the United State Army: His death notice said he was a WWI Veteran. His tombstone in St. Stanislaus Cemetery has a WWI emblem engraved on it. His death certificate stated he was a WWI Veteran. And finally, he is listed in Daniel J. Sweeney's: History of Buffalo and Erie County 1914-1916 under the US Army's Roll call Roster as a Private.

Since I didn't know anything about his service record, I visited the Family History Center in Amherst and obtained a copy of his World War I Draft Registration Card. Although this record doesn't tell me about his military service, it does give his place and date of birth, place of employment. It also contains his place of residence which is helpful in locating his military records.

At age 36, I don't have the luxury of traveling to the National Archives at a whim. So I do the next best thing and send a letter to the National Personnel Records Center (Military Records), NARA, 9700 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63132. This is where you are to write for records for relating to service in World War I or II or subsequent service. In my letter I included all perti-

nent information needed to located said record. I gave them alternate spellings of the surname NIEWCZYK (ie NIWCZYK, NEWCZYK), past addresses uncle Wladyslaw lived during WWI and provided a summary of sources that prove he served in World War I. Finally, I attached copies of all sources mentioned in the summary.

On June 11th 2003, I sent my letter to St. Louis. During the first week in July, I received a reply back telling me they could not locate any records. I never take the first reply of a government agency as gospel. On July 11th 2003, I resubmitted my request to St. Louis, adding an alternate surname spelling to my search request.

On October 24th 2003, I received a reply. This time I was graced with uncle Wladyslaw's basic military information transcribed on NA Form 13164: "Information Releasable Under the Freedom of Information Act". The following information was listed about uncle Wladyslaw:

**Name:** Walter Niwczyk

**Branch of Service and Serial Number:** National Army - 703 201

**Dates of Service:** 25 February 1918-  
6 March 1919

**Duty Status:** Discharge

**Rank/Grade:** Private

**Decorations and Awards:** WWI Victory Button (Bronze), WWI Victory Medal w/Battle Clasps for Defensive Sector

**Place of Entry:** Buffalo, NY

**Place of Separation:** Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD

A researcher should always ask more than once to obtain a copy of a record. Not to be persistent, would be futile to genealogical research.

## Information Please...

*Recently one of our members, Dolores Kopopa, had a suggestion. Why not allow members to post queries in the journal. This is a membership benefit in many genealogical societies. This is an excellent idea and not only did Dolores suggest it; she also provided one for this issue. - Editor*

Seeking info on: Ignatz SZALASNY  
who was born on: about 1875  
place: Brzeszcza  
resided (where): 506 Peckham then at 71 Mohr  
Buffalo NY  
died: 23 Dec 1909  
place: Harlem Road Railroad Yard  
married on: about 1903  
place: Buffalo NY  
married to: Katarzyna WENCKOWSKA

Any other information known: from his death certificate it was written that his parents were Martin SALASNY & Agnes CHA of Germany. In the Buffalo City Directory in 1905 at the 506 Peckham address there was also a Michael SZALASNY occupation was that of laborer.

Information desired: Does anyone know if Michael was a brother of Ignatz? of if there were any other siblings of Ignatz in the Buffalo NY or even in the Ontario Canada area?

=====

Submitter's name: Dolores L Konopa  
Address: 533 Herr Rd  
City: Angola County: Erie  
State: NY 9-digit zip: 14006-9245  
E-Mail Address: [szal@webtv.net](mailto:szal@webtv.net)

Information request form. Use this form or facsimile to submit a request for publication in the Searchers. This is only for members of PGSNYS. Send request to:

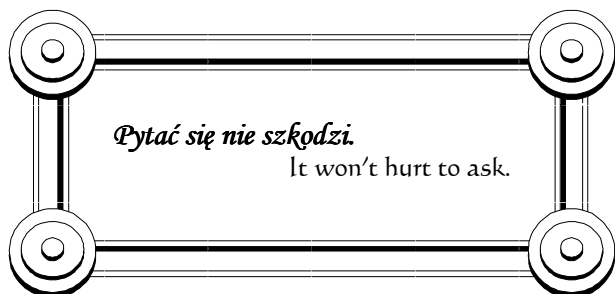
James P. Harlos, Editor  
62 Jeffrey Dr.  
Amherst, NY 14228  
Or by e-mail to [harlos@adelphia.net](mailto:harlos@adelphia.net)

Seeking Information on: \_\_\_\_\_  
Born on: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Resided (where): \_\_\_\_\_

Died: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other information known: \_\_\_\_\_

Information desired: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitter's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_



(Continued from page 10)

half-na-pól terms to get along with a person or simply to be understood. The reverse may also be true, when a person who is used to using half-na-pól, drops such speech temporarily in order to rise in status or to be understood among a different audience. These of course, are not phenomena limited to bilinguals, but occur among speakers of different varieties of English as well.

Issues of convenience or ease of pronunciation should not be overlooked. Some English or half-na-pól terms are simply easier to pronounce even for native speakers of Polish. Let's take for example the word for chlorine bleach, which in standard Polish is *chlorek* (an earlier borrowing), a Polish American has the option to use the monosyllabic *blicz* (bleach). The half-na-pól *kara* (car) has one less syllable than *samochód* and even has an exact homonym in Polish (used for the word 'penalty' or 'fine').

Among the factors described above, it is also important to consider the following:

- habit and forgetting own word when surrounded by other borrowers
- practice and preparation for saying a term in an English-speaking environment
- specificity of definition even though a similar concept exists in native language
- quoting written or spoken English
- in the case of vulgar terms, a perception that the borrowing is less offensive and carries less weight than the native vulgar equivalent.
- humor, either offensive or as self-reflection

The question 'why borrow' is one that needs to be explored beyond the above and more in depth by asking the users themselves. Why are some words borrowed while others are not? Why do some people stick to their own speech pattern regardless the audience, while others constantly adapt by mimicking or hyper correcting their speech?

(Continued from page 4)

his assistance in transporting the books from 875 Fillmore Avenue to our houses for cataloguing before donating to the various libraries. David was eager to help, as always, and suggested storing the books at his home. He taught me how to use Microsoft Access to catalogue the books. We shared the books: the books on Poland and Polonia were separated for David to catalogue and decide where to donate the books; to the society or to other libraries. Literary books were left for me to catalogue and decide which I wished to keep them and which to donate to libraries.

We discovered many gems within the books that were given us by Zenia: draft cards of Polish immigrants wishing to be released from military service, immigration law books, a first-edition tribute to Paderewski book, endless books on Polish history and literature written in Polish and English. Cases of books jammed my kitchen and living room, and many cases of books were stacked in David's garage. What a marvelous project we were undertaking to preserve history. I knew that Zenia would be happy that these books would find respectful homes, as she worked so hard to preserve during her lifetime the contributions of her family to Buffalo's Polonia, so we would work hard to ensure the preservation as well.

The books are not all catalogued yet, still many more to be arranged and coded before finding all books a new home. Most books will be donated to the Adam Meiszekiewicz Library and The Polish Genealogy Society of New York State library. It is important for those interested in genealogy and history to preserve as much as possible, books, items of Polonia and any other items that may be of historical value. I was fortunate enough, also, to be given a painting that Jean Smokowski painted in the 1920s. This is a beautiful memory of my family's rich heritage in the arts, which I will treasure always.

So look to the elders of your family, not only for the stories that they may share and their link with the past of your heritage, Buffalo's heritage and Polonia, but for the ways in which you may be able to help them preserve their contribution to our Polish community.

# Annual Christmas Party of the PGSNYS

Keeping up tradition is one of the things that comes naturally to a genealogist and the PGSNYS kept one of its traditions at the December 11, 2003 meeting. At the time the cafeteria of Villa Marie College rang out the seasons greetings as we celebrated our annual Christmas Party. This year at our



celebration we opened with the traditional sharing of the opłatek. This was followed by the dinner comprising kielbasa (fresh and smoked), salads, pierogi, gołąki, bigos, sauerkraut, and as many types of desserts as one could hope for.





God bless us, everyone.



---

**PGSNYS**  
**12645 Route 78**  
**East Aurora, New York 14052**

---

## **2004 PGSNYS Offices and Trustees**



*Left to Right:* Walter Kloc, David Newman, Dan Filipski, Ted Smardz, Patrica Neuland, Frank Martin, Edward Prabucki, Charles Pyrak, Frank Wilczak