
Searchers



The Journal of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State

Issue 44

PRESERVING OUR PAST SINCE 1988

Winter 2006



Helena Modjeska

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.

Contact: Grace Smokowski, Editor
G.smokowski@earthlink.net

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:

<http://www.pgsnys.org>

PGSNYS OFFICERS

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<i>Secretary</i>	Dan Domino	
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Table of Contents	
Helena Modjeska	4
PGSNYS Meeting Minutes	6
Potpourri	9

President's Message

As the saying goes, "nothing lasts forever". For the PGSNYS there is no exception. A few months ago Jim Harlos e-mailed me his intentions of leaving as editor. This issue of the *Searchers* will be his last. Jim Harlos began editing the *Searchers* in 2001 with Issue 30 and will end in 2006 with Issue 44.

Every editor brings their own style to the newsletter. Every position in our society is accomplished by volunteers. Nobody is paid monetarily for their time. During his time editorship, Jim has enlightened our readership with his inspiring genealogical articles. What was known but to a few and would be a sin not to mention was that his dear wife Carol Ann proofread each issue prior to being sent for mailing. We appreciate their dedicated and faithful service to the PGSNYS.

Beginning with issue 45, Grace Smokowski will be taking over the reigns as editor. Grace comes to us with a Master's Degree in Education and a concentration in Reading and Writing Instruction. For the past three years, she has been teaching Creative Writing to adults in the Orchard Park Community Education Program. She also has her own proofreading and freelance writing business called Content Rich. She has two years of experience writing

newsletters for Barnes & Noble. You begin submitting articles and information to Grace at: g.smokowski@earthlink.net

Please give Grace a warm welcome as our new editor.

Sincerely,

David Newman

Editor's Notes

It is with some regret that I leave as editor of the **Searchers**. I have made some changes in its layout and design and have written many articles for it. However, it is time for a change.

Over the past 2 years I have undergone 7 operations. Between the operations and the recoveries and my other obligations, little time has been left for me to pursue my own genealogic research, the design and layout of my own website, and my programming interests. I look forward to them.

I thank David for his kind words for both myself and Carol Ann. I appreciate his support of my activity.

I wish Grace the best of luck as the new editor and look forward to reading an issue that I have not read before.

Yours truly,

Jim Harlos

Helena Modjeska

By Daniel Domino

The bottle and the actress

In addition to having an interest in Polish Genealogy, I also have an interest in bottle collecting. On a nice, sunny Saturday morning in October, I decided to go to the Greater Buffalo Bottle Show which was held at the Erie County Fairgrounds. At the show, I purchased a small rectangular bottle that was about three inches tall for only two dollars. One side of the bottle read Larkin Soap Company; the other side read Modjeska Derma Balm. The purchase of this bottle raised three questions.

The first question was, "What was the Larkin Soap Company?" Most of us who live in Buffalo know about the Larkin Soap Company. However, let me recap. John Durant Larkin, born in Buffalo in 1845, founded the Larkin Soap Company in Buffalo in 1875. The Larkin Soap Company started out by selling only soap, but eventually it became a mail order operation and sold everything from soap to dishes and furniture. In 1904, Frank Lloyd Wright was selected as the architect to design the Larkin Administration Building in Buffalo. By 1925, the Larkin Company manufactured most of the 900 catalog items in its factories on Seneca Street in Buffalo. The Larkin Company ceased operations in 1967.

The second question inspired by the bottle purchase was, "Who was Modjeska?" Helena Modjeska was born Helena Opid on October 12, 1840 in Krakow, Poland. She was a renowned Polish actress. In 1861, Helena married Gustav Modrzejewski. She kept the simplified and feminine form of the Modrzejewski name as her professional name. After Gustav died in 1865, Helena married Count Karol Bozenta Chlapowski in 1868. It was under Count Bozenta's management that Helena became an international star. Helena continued to act in Warsaw, Poland

for a number of years but because of her husband's radical political views, she was forced to leave Poland in 1876 along with her husband and son.

Helena and her husband and son settled in Orange County, California. Both she and her husband helped to form a utopian agricultural Polish community in Anaheim, California. The community proved a failure and Helena returned to the stage. Helena was considered as one of the greatest dramatic and Shakespearean actresses during her time period. Her American acting career spanned 30 years. She gained such admiration and affection that in 1906, her farewell testimonial had to be held in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. After her death on April 8, 1909, the north peak of Saddleback Mountain was named Modjeska Peak and the canyon in which she and her husband lived became known as Modjeska Canyon. The old city theater in Krakow was also named in her honor. A novel by Susan Sontag, *In America*, although fiction, is based upon the life story of Helena Modjeska, her arrival in California, and her ascendancy to American stardom.

"Why is the Modjeska name on the Larkin Bottle?" In 1878, John D. Larkin went to see a play starring Helena Modjeska at the Academy of Music in Buffalo. John Larkin was so overwhelmed by Madame Modjeska's performance that he named a number of his cosmetic products after her, such as Modjeska toilet soap, Modjeska perfume, Modjeska tooth powder, Modjeska cold cream and Modjeska sachet.

On December 7, 1883, Anton Busath, a candy manufacturer, attended a performance starring Helena Modjeska at the McCauley Theater in Louisville, Kentucky. He was so impressed by

the performance that he named a candy after her. In fact, that candy is still manufactured today by the Bauer Candy Company. A 12oz. gift box of Bauer's Modjeskas sell for \$12.99. I do not know if companies in the past paid royalties to use a person's name on their product. The article about the candy manufacturer merely mentioned that the owner asked Modjeska's permission to name his confection after her.

I searched the Modjeska name on eBay and discovered that many items are offered for sale that bear the Modjeska's name. One of those items is a 1907 postcard of her home in California. In fact, her home which is located in Modjeska Canyon, Lake Forest, California has been designated as a National Historic Landmark and is still a tourist attraction. Another postcard offered for sale is of Modjeska Falls in California. The postcard states that the falls were named after Helena Modjeska. Other items that I found were a postcard of a Canadian Steamer named after her, a book written by her, an original photograph of her, and an 1882 autograph which is a "buy it now item" for \$299.00.

I could not resist doing some genealogical research on Helena Modjeska. One of the articles that I read mentioned that Helena made periodic return voyages to her native Poland where she toured and visited with family and friends. Another article mentioned that she toured Great Britain in 1880, 1881 and 1885. I expected to find her name numerous times on various ships' passenger lists. I entered the surnames Modjeska (her stage name), Modrzejewska (her first married name), Chlapowski (her second husband's surname), and Bozenta (her second husband's surname, as he was known in America) into the Castle Garden and Ellis Island databases. The only information that I was able to find was on the Modjeska surname. It was in the Castle Garden database and that entry recorded her return from Great Britain:

Name: Mad Modjeska [*Mad for Madame*]
Occupation: Lady [*That's a nice occupation*]
Age: 40 [*If she was born in October 1840, she should be 41 years old*]
Arrived: 18 Sep 1882
Origin: Russia [*Poland did not officially exist in 1882*]

Port: Liverpool and Queenstown
Ship: Arizona

I also searched Helena Modjeska's name in the U.S. Census from the state of California for the year 1900. That census showed her living in Orange County, California, with her husband Karol Bozenta (who Americanized his first name to Charles) and four servants. Her husband's occupation was listed as a farmer. The information is as follows:

NAME: Helena Modjeska
DOB: October 1844 [Most biographies list her as being born in 1840]
BIRTHPLACE: Austrian Poland
IMMIGRATION: 1876
OCCUPATION: Actress

It is interesting that a three inch bottle can inspire a historical and a genealogical search. I learned a little bit more about the Larkin Company, a company long associated with Buffalo, New York history. I learned a lot about Helena Modjeska, who inspired men to name their products after her, particularly beauty products and sweet products. Helena was a great personality during her time period. She is worthy of further research.

References:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Modjeska
<http://www.canyonlife.com/docent1.htm>
http://www.josephhaworth.com/helena_modjeska.htm
http://www.angelfire.com/scifi2/rsolecki/helena_modjeska.html
<http://ah.bfn.org/h/larkin/>
<http://ebay.com/>
<http://www.castlegarden.org>
 Wyrwal, Joseph A. *The Poles in America*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1969.

PGSNYS Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2007 Meeting of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State Meeting was held at Villa Maria College, Cheektowaga, NY.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by President David Newman. There were 17 members and 1 guest in attendance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Daniel Domino read the minutes from the January 11, 2007 meeting.

Edward Prabucki made a motion to accept the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Rita Hider. The members voted and the motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Dave Newman read the financial report for the period January 12, 2007 through February 8, 2007. During that period we had an income of \$185.00 from ten membership renewals, two new members and one genealogy lookup. We had expenses of \$60.00 for advertising in the Am-Pol Eagle during that period. Our closing balance was \$2,850.86.

Ted Smardz made a motion to accept the financial report. Seconded by Art Domino. The members voted and the motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Searchers Newsletter will be out shortly. David visited with our new editor, Grace Smokowski, to install MS Publisher on her computer and give her old copies of the Searcher Newsletter so that she could make a smooth transition with her new edition.

OLD BUSINESS:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Library Tour - David contacted the Maple Road LDS. He needs to contact the person in charge of the Maple road LDS.

Buffalo and Erie County Public Library - Downtown Library Tour - David contacted Peggy Skotnicki through e-mail. She forwarded his e-mail to Tom Morrissey. David is now waiting for a reply from Tom Morrissey.

NEW BUSINESS:

Edward Prabucki asked if PGSNYS membership cards could be given to all members. Ted Smardz said that in the past we had a box full of blank membership cards. David said that those cards might be at his home. He will check.

Ted Smardz made a motion to adjourn the general meeting at 7:24 PM.

Seconded by Pierre LaJoie.

After the general meeting we had an open forum where we discussed genealogical problems and solutions.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, March 8, 2007 at Villa Maria College. Our guest speaker will be Don Topolski. His topic will be "What Do You Owe Your Descendants?"

PGSNYS January 2007 Meeting Minutes

Meeting was held at Villa Maria College, Cheektowaga, NY. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by President David Newman. There were 17 members in attendance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

David Newman read the minutes from the October 12, 2006 meeting.

Frank Martin made a motion to accept the minutes as read. The Motion was seconded by Ted Smardz. The members voted and the motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

David Newman read the financial report for the period November 11/10/2006 to 1/9/2007. During that period we had and income of \$467 which consisted of \$21 in Dziennik Lookups, \$15 in New Members, \$135 in Renewed Members and \$296 for Christmas Party Fees. Also during that period we had \$361.25 in expenses for Christmas Party. Our closing balance was \$2,725.86. Ted Smardz made a motion to accept the financial report. Seconded by Ed Prabucki. The members voted and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Christmas Party - Thanks to all that helped and attended. It was suggested that in efforts to gain more members attending the party that we announce the Christmas Dinner in October and plan more on bringing more Polish traditions and food to the party.

Grace Smokowski has accepted duties as our new Searchers editor. President David Newman will send an e-mail to the PGSNYS mailing list announcing her as editor and provide her e-mail address for submitting articles.

Open Forum - President David Newman had an open forum to discuss future improvements to our meetings. The following was brought up for discussion and action:

1. The format of our general meeting throughout the year should be alternating an Open Forum one month, then the following month with a guest speaker.
2. Develop a better inventory of our society resources.
3. LDS Library Tour - Set up a field trip tour at the one of our local LDS Family History Centers.
4. BECPL DownTown Library Tour - Set up a field trip for a tour of the Grosner Room at the BECPL. Sometime in April 14 or 15th.
5. Buffalo & Erie Co Historical Society Project - Looking for information about immigration

Ted Smardz made a motion to close the meeting at 8:25 PM. Seconded by Frank Martin. Our next meeting will be on Thursday, February 8th, 2007 at 7PM in the Villa Maria College Cafeteria.

October 12, 2006. Meeting was held at Villa Maria College, Cheektowaga, NY.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by Vice President Ted Smardz. There were 18 members and 3 guests in attendance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Daniel Domino read the minutes from the September 14, 2006 meeting.

Frank Wilczak made a motion to accept the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Edward Prabucki. The members voted and the motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Chuck Pyrak read the financial report for the period September 14, 2006 through October 11, 2006. During that period we had an income of \$85.00 from four membership renewals, one new member and one Dziennik Lookup. We had no expenses during that period and that left our closing balance at \$2,660.11. Rita Hider made a motion to accept the financial report. Seconded by Walter Kloc. The members voted and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Nominations Committee - Chuck Pyrak reported that to be eligible for election a person must attend at least 6 meetings in the past year.

He said that no records were kept for the Christmas Party and the summer picnic. Also, members sometimes forget to sign in. Therefore, only a few members who are running for office are recorded as having attended 6 meetings. Rita Hider made a motion to waive the 6 meeting rule. Walter Kloc seconded the motion. The members voted and the motion carried. Chuck Pyrak asked if there were any nominations from the floor. He asked this question three times.

There were none. Chuck then read the list of members running for office:

President	Ted Smardz
Vice President	David Newman
Secretary	Daniel Domino
Treasurer	Chuck Pyrak
Trustee	Pat Neuland
Trustee	Frank Martin
Trustee	Walter Kloc
Trustee	Ed Prabucki
Trustee	Frank Wilczak
Trustee	Daniel Kij
Trustee	Pierre LaJoie

Walter Kloc made a motion to close the nominations. Seconded by Frank Wilczak. Members voted and the nominations were closed.

Guest Speaker - Our guest speaker was Tom Tarpacki. Tom is one of the directors of the National Polish American Sports Hall of Fame which is located in Orchard Lake, Michigan. His topic was on how people were selected into the Polish American Sports Hall of Fame.

Daniel Domino did a show and tell presentation on a Larkin Soap Bottle that was embossed Modjeska Derma Balm. His talk concentrated on Helena Madjeska.

Pat Neuland made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Seconded by Ted Smardz.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, November 9, 2006 at Villa Maria College. Our guest speaker will be Grace Smokowski, who is the author of, *Where I Last Saw You*.

September 14, 2006 Meeting of the PGSNYS

Meeting was held at the St. John Gualbert Meeting Room, 33 Gualbert Street, Cheektowaga, NY.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by president David Newman. There were 23 members and 2 guests in attendance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Daniel Domino read the minutes from the August 10, 2006 meeting.

Frank Martin made a motion to accept the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Edward Prabucki. The members voted and the motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Chuck Pyrak could not attend tonight's meeting so Daniel Domino read the financial report for the period August 10, 2006 through September 14, 2006. During that period we had an income of \$246.00 from membership renewals, new members and *Dziennik* Look-ups. We had no expenses during that period and that left our closing balance at \$2,575.11. Ted Smartz made a motion to accept the financial report.

Seconded by Pierre La Joie. The members voted and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Library Move - Daniel Kij, Cindy Kloss and David Newman met with the downtown library staff. The downtown Buffalo and Erie County Public Library will help us to find a University at Buffalo student to catalog our books using the Library of Congress system.

NEW BUSINESS:

Western New York Genealogical Society - David received a phone call from the new president of the WNYGS. The new president wanted to know what projects different genealogical societies have done in

the past or are planning to do in the future. She will then exchange that information with the other societies. The WNYGS has some extra money that they would be willing to use for microfilming projects such as church or cemetery records. Members of PGS-NYS mentioned that records from Corpus Christi Church and Holy Mother of the Rosary Church have not been microfilmed yet.

Rochester Genealogical Society - They are having a meeting on Thursday, September 21st. Their guest speaker is Kathleen Urbanic who will speak on "The Origins of the Polish community in Rochester (1890 - 1909)"

Guest Speaker - Our guest speaker tonight was Allan Kasprzak. He is a Director at the Polish Hall of Fame in Orchard Lake, Michigan. His talk was about Polish Sports Cards.

Dozynski Festival - Daniel Kij mentioned that there will be a Polish Harvest Festival on Saturday, September 16th from noon until 11 pm and on Sunday, September 17th from noon until 7 pm at Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral Parish Grounds, 6298 Broadway, Lancaster, NY. PGSNYS will have a table at the festival on Saturday only. Dan is looking for volunteers to work there for two hour shifts.

Upcoming Lecture - Monica Rzepka mentioned that Keith Kaszubik is giving a lecture on Buffalo's Early Polonia at the Harlem Community Center on Wednesday, September 20th. The program is sponsored by the Polish Arts Club and admission for non members of the Polish Arts Club is \$10.00.

Daniel Kij made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 PM. Seconded by Ted Smartz.

Next meeting will be on Thursday, October 12th, 2006 at Villa Maria College. Our guest speaker will be Tom Tarapacki who is an author, TV announcer and Director at the Polish Hall of Fame.

The guest speaker for our November 9, 2006 meeting will be Grace Smokowski, who is the author of "Where I Last Saw You."

Potpourri

MEMBER DEATH

Dabrowski, Sophia M. (Zakrzewski)
October 18, 2006. Wife of the late Casimer; mother of Casimer and the late Janina (Gale) Denn.

Friends are invited to attend a Memorial Mass on Saturday, October 28, 9:30 AM at St. Aloysius Gonzaga RC Church, 157 Cleveland Dr., Cheektowaga. Memorial donations may be made to Heritage-Oak Foundation, 101 Oak St., Buffalo, NY 14203.

Arrangements LAING FUNERAL HOME, INC.
Published in the Buffalo News on 10/22/2006.

Book Donations

Rememberance: As Long As We Live

A World War I Era Historical Novel

By Charles Casimer Krawczyk

ISBN 1-4208-8118-3

<http://www.bluearmyremembrance.com>

Where I Saw You Last

by Grace Smokowski

ISBN: 1-4259-4278-4

<http://www.whereilastsawyou.com/>

KAZIMIERZ RYMUT 1935 – 2006

by Fred Hoffman <wfh@langline.com>

On November 15, 2006 I received news I'd been dreading for some time: that the Polish linguist and expert on names Professor Kazimierz Rymut, who had long been in poor health, had finally succumbed to illness. Urszula Bijak, one of his colleagues in Krakow at the Instytut Języka Polskiego PAN [Polish Language Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences], graciously took the time to send me a note informing me he had died on the 14th. She included a link to an obituary posted on the IJP's Website (in Polish, naturally):

<http://www.ijp-pan.krakow.pl/polski/polski/00/01/rymut.pdf>

I don't mind saying the news hit me pretty hard. I'd been corresponding with Prof. Rymut for years, and I felt I knew the man. He invited me several times to come visit him in Kraków. I would have loved to do so; but my intense loathing for travel made it awfully hard to face the thought of making that trip, much as I would have enjoyed myself once I got there. I kept hoping I'd be able to talk myself into doing it. Now it's too late.

I was very pleased, however, to see that I was only one of many who mourned his passing. He received a lot of attention on the Genpol Website, for instance. The Webmaster, Tomasz Nitsch, posted notes about Prof. Rymut's death and funeral:

<http://www.genpol.com/displayarticle276.html>
<http://www.genpol.com/displayarticle277.html>

The first of those two pages actually allows you to watch brief video excerpts of a Polish television program on which Prof. Rymut appeared. I already felt I knew the man, but it was a bittersweet pleasure to see what he was like in person. It was obvious his great scholarship did not keep him from being a really good, likable person, a teacher with a sense of humor. I'm grateful to Tomasz Nitsch for making those clips available to those of us who couldn't be there.

I wondered how best to pay tribute to Prof. Rymut, and I remembered I'd been intending for some time to update an article I wrote for *_Gen Dobry!* that appeared in Volume III, No. 8, August 2002. It was entitled "The *_Słownik nazwisk_* Is Online," and while much of it is

still correct, there are a few points that should be modified. I also know a lot of our readers have joined us since 2002, and probably have not seen this article. Updating it seemed a reasonable way to remember Prof. Rymut, because I know he was surprised, and really pleased, to learn that his scholarly work had proven enormously helpful to people of Polish descent living outside Poland. This database has been used by untold numbers of people, to find out how common surnames are in Poland, and in what part of the country they appear most often. On an even more basic level, many researchers have used it to investigate spellings of their surnames, and to establish what the correct (or at least most common) spellings are. The database is a beautiful example of how a scholar, doing his scholarly work, can end up helping people in ways he never foresaw. This "Rymut database" is probably the way most of you would know of him.

THE SLOWNIK NAZWISK IS STILL ONLINE!

If you've ever read anything I've written on the subject of Polish surnames, you've surely seen me refer to the **Slownik nazwisk wspolczesnie w Polsce uzywanych**, literally "Dictionary of Surnames Currently Used in Poland." This work, edited by Professor Kazimierz Rymut, was a wonderful development for those deeply interested in Polish names, because it was the first comprehensive compilation of surnames used by citizens of Poland. It was compiled from a 1990 database maintained by a Polish government agency, with data on about 93% of the population of Poland as of that year. It gave a total of all Poles by each name, along with a breakdown of where they lived by province.

So if you wanted to know what names were borne by Poles, and where those names were most common, this 10-volume set told you. It ran over 6,000 pages and covered over 800,000 surnames (a huge number of which, however, were either misspelled versions of other names, or extremely rare; the actual number of "real" names is considerably smaller). It was not exactly light reading; but for someone seriously interested in Polish research, it definitely had its uses.

When I cited data from this work, people often asked "Where can I get hold of this book?" They

usually lost interest once I told them it was 10 volumes, in Polish, cost \$200, and could only be bought from the publisher in Poland, the Instytut Języka Polskiego PAN in Krakow. Still, some organizations, and some intrepid individuals, shelled out the money and bought copies.

But for some time now the data from this 10-volume set has been available online as a searchable database. If you want to consult this source for yourself, go to this page: <http://www.herby.com.pl/herby/indexslo.html>. But before you check it out, let me explain a few things that may make it easier for you to take full advantage of it.

Uh, OK, I've Got It -- What Is It?

When I learned that this searchable database was online, I chuckled as I thought, "Oh, boy, wait till people start trying to make sense of this!" It didn't take long. Soon the Polish mailing lists were full of people saying "How do I use this?" and "What do all these numbers mean?" and "How can I get addresses for the people with this name?"

These are all legitimate questions, and I'm going to talk a little about each of them. I want people to use this site -- it means they won't be bothering me. ;-)

But please have just a little bit of patience. Some folks seem convinced all they have to do is type in the right URL, and a little Polish elf will jump out of their computer and tell them everything they need to know. Folks, it's not going to happen! With this site, as with anything worth doing, you're going to have to invest a little time and effort. Not a lot, mind you, and the results can be worth it. But magic it ain't.

How Do I Use This?

You can go directly to the Surname Dictionary page at <http://www.herby.com.pl/herby/indexslo.html>; if you want to do that, skip the next few paragraphs, down to where it says "Let's Search for a Surname!" But if you're patient and aren't terrified by the thought of navigating through a little Polish, I recommend starting at the home page of the Center that provides this service:

<http://www.herby.com.pl/>

First off, the top of the page reads "Osrodek Dokumentacji Wychodźstwa Polskiego przy Domu Polonii w Pultusku" -- "Polish Emigration Documentation Center at the Polonia House in Pultusk."

This is the official name of the center that put these materials online. It's headquartered at the Dom Polonii [The Polonia House] in the town of Pultusk, north of Warsaw. This is a splendid complex that includes a hotel, restaurants, conference center, etc. (For more information on the Dom Polonii itself, see its Website:

<http://www.dompolonii.pultusk.pl/>];

you can click on the Union Jack to get the English version of the page).

Back to the home page <http://www.herby.com.pl>. The second line reads "Serwis heraldyczno-genealogiczny," which is, of course, "Heraldic/genealogical service." (Who says Polish is hard?) Next comes a line for choosing the different pages available:

- * Strona glowna — Main Page
- * Genealogia, czyli jak szukac — Genealogy, or how to search
- * Zasady heraldyczne, czyli z czego sklada sie herb — The Basics of Heraldry, or What a Coat of Arms Consists Of
- * Wyszukiwarka herbow — Coat of Arms Search
- * Sownik nazwisk — Surname Dictionary

At the moment we are mainly concerned with the last option. When you have a little time, though, you might want to take a look at the others. They're all in Polish, of course, but if you're patient and don't mind wandering about a Website, you just might find a thing or two that will interest you. Those who'd like to know more about Polish heraldry and coats of arms, for instance, certainly ought to take a look at options 3 and 4. At the worst, you lose a few minutes. At the best, you might find Ultimate Truth! Well, probably not. But you never know....

From the main page, click on "Sownik nazwisk" and you'll end up at the same place as if you had gone directly to the first address I gave

(<http://www.herby.com.pl/herby/indexslo.html>). That's where you access and search the "Rymut database," as some people call it.

Let's Search for a Surname!

Look at the box below where it says "Prosze wprowadzic nazwisko." That's where you enter the name you're looking for.

Now, here's where you need a little instruction. Finding names isn't as easy as you might think. This database uses proper Polish spelling. If that includes one of those characters used in Polish but not in English, you must include that character. Thus a search for Gorzynski will not find Gorzyński; searching for Dembinski will not find Dembiński or Dębiński. I have often seen notes posted online where researchers got the wrong data because they didn't account for those Polish characters -- for instance, finding the 378 Polish citizens under Wisniewski and missing the 104,418 under Wiśniewski!

Are you out of luck if you don't know how to use the Polish characters? Not at all! The database allows you to search using the "wild card" characters * and ?. The symbol * substitutes for any letters and any number of letters; the ? substitutes for any one letter. So a search for GORZY* will bring up all names beginning Gorzy-. Or a search for ZIELI?SKI will bring up Zieliński (as well as Zieliński and Zieliz*ski, as well as Zielinski without the accent -- presumably all misspellings made when clerks keyed in the original data).

I personally recommend sidestepping the Polish characters by using the wild cards * and ? -- it's just easier. If you prefer, you can find the appropriate letter in the rest of the text on that page, highlight it, then copy and paste it into the search box. For the accented n or accented z, however you may have to search around on other pages at the site; I don't see them on the database search page.

If you know how to use Multilanguage support in Windows to input Polish characters, you can do that, too. The point is, there's more than one way to skin this cat!

* What Do All These Numbers Mean? *

The data that comes up gives the total number of Polish citizens bearing the name in question as of 1990, followed by a breakdown of where they lived by province (under "Rozmieszczenie"). Abbreviations are used for the provinces.

Let me stress: the database from which this material was compiled was not comprehensive. It covered about 93% of the population of Poland as of 1990. Complete data was unavailable for some areas; here are the provinces in question and an estimate of how many people were not included:

Bialystok: 66,300	Opole: 220,800
Bielsko-Biala: 99,400	Piotrkow: 303,100
Ciechanow: 30,600	Przemysl: 102,600
Katowice: 703,000	Rzeszow: 283,300
Krakow: 27,200	Siedlce: 141,500
Krosno: 254,600	Sieradz: 46,900
Lomza: 31,200	Suwalki: 48,500
Nowy Sacz: 325,300	Szczecin: 76,800
Olsztyn: 60,700	Walbrzych: 146,900

93% is a lot better than nothing; but do keep in mind that a sizable chunk of the population was not included.

Now, back to the abbreviations for the provinces. To see what they stand for, from the search page, click on the place below the search box that says "Tutaj znajdują się objaśnienia skrotow." It brings up a little window with the abbreviations. It includes the instruction "Zobacz mapę," which means "See the map." Clicking on that will bring up a map of Poland with the abbreviations. Clicking on "Zamknij mapę" closes the map. On the abbreviations page, "Zamknij wykaz" closes that window.

In case you have trouble using the box that gives the province abbreviations, you might want to save this list somewhere you can find it easily:

Wa: Warsaw
 BP: Biała Podlaska
 Bs: Białystok
 BB: Bielsko-Biała
 By: Bydgoszcz
 Ch: Chełm
 Ci: Ciechanów

Cz: Częstochowa
 El: Elbląg
 Gd: Gdańsk
 Go: Gorzów Wielkopolski
 JG: Jelenia Góra
 Kl: Kalisz
 Ka: Katowice
 Ki: Kielce
 Kn: Konin
 Ko: Koszalin
 Kr: Kraków
 Ks: Krosno
 Lg: Legnica
 Ls: Leszno
 Lu: Lublin
 ło: łomża
 łd: łódź~
 NS: Nowy Sącz
 Ol: Olsztyn
 Op: Opole
 Os: Ostrołęka
 Pl: Piła
 Pt: Piotrków Trybunalski
 Pł: Płock
 Po: Poznań
 Pr: Przemyśl
 Ra: Radom
 Rz: Rzeszów
 Sd: Siedlce
 Sr: Sieradz
 Sk: Skierniewice
 Sł: Słupsk
 Su: Suwałki
 Sz: Szczecin
 Tb: Tarnobrzeg
 Ta: Tarnów
 To: Toruń
 Wb: Wałbrzych
 Wł: Włocławek
 Wr: Wrocław
 Za: Zamość
 ZG: Zielona Góra

Note that in the breakdown by province, the number for Wa, Warsaw, always comes first, unless no one by the particular surname in question lived in Warsaw province. Any province with no citizens bearing the surname in question is simply omitted.

Note also that after Wa, Warsaw, the abbreviations are in alphabetical order as figured by the

names of the towns: Lu, Lublin, comes before ło, łomz*a, because plain L precedes ł. In turn, ło, łomz*a, should come before łd, łódz~, because plain o precedes ó. Similarly, Tb, Tarnobrzeg, should come before Ta, Tarnów (again, plain o before ó).

Often you can ignore the diacritical marks, but they are crucial in distinguishing Pl, Piła, from Pł, Płock. I can't tell you how many times I've confused those two!

A Sample Name: Jaworski

So, let's say you key in JAWORSKI, and you click on "Szukaj," Search. You get this:

Jaworski: 44104. Wa:4814, BP:217, Bs:171, BB:826, By:1276, Ch:290, Ci:699, Cz:622, El:767, Gd:1220, Go:652, JG:917, Kl:548, Ka:2709, Ki:1847, Kn:818, Ko:634, Kr:1232, Ks:278, Lg:737, Ls:198, Lu:1228, ło:71, łd:1543, NS:228, Ol:779, Op:697, Os:479, Pl:707, Pt:336, Pł:839, Po:1090, Pr:138, Ra:2267, Rz:400, Sd:818, Sr:611, Sk:748, Sl:461, Su:173, Sz:1196, Tb:838, Ta:482, To:1587, Wb:832, Wł:853, Wr:1867, Za:470, ZG:894

This means there were a total of 44,104 Polish citizens named Jaworski as of 1990 (but since 7% of the population was not included, there were surely more). The data after that is a breakdown of where those Jaworski's lived by province. What more is there to say?

Well, from my experience, there are a few comments in order. For one thing, you may ask -- you SHOULD ask -- what do the numbers mean, and where did they come from?

They indicate the number of Polish citizens who bore that particular surname as of 1990, according to the database maintained by the PESEL Government Information Center. PESEL is a Polish government agency that assigns a unique 11-digit identification number to every citizen at least 18 years old. (Thanks to Dr. Zbigniew A. Wielogorski of Warsaw University for sending me this information. See also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PESEL>.) In practical terms, it's a lot like the Social Security number for U. S. citizens.

OK, so does the data above tell us 4,814 Poles named Jaworski lived in Warsaw? NO!!!! It means that many Jaworski's lived in the province of Warsaw. People often miss this point. The figures for provinces include all the towns and villages in that province, not just the main city which served as its administrative center. We have no access to data on who lived in what town or village -- just a total for the province in question.

Also, the provinces given were the ones in force when the data was collected in 1990 -- the 49 provinces that existed under the setup from 1975 to 1998. Beginning in 1999, all that changed. If you want to figure out how those provinces correspond to the current ones, you need to visit one of the sites online that compare them. Here are two good ones:

http://www.polishroots.com/geo_maps.htm
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~polwgv/49provs.html>

Another point: do the numbers for Jaworski include Jaworska? Yes, they do. For surnames ending in -ski/-ska, -cki/-cka, and -zki/-zka, you can safely assume that the figure for the standard masculine form includes the feminine form as well. Thus Grabowski includes Grabowska, Zawadzki includes Zawadzka, Nowacki includes Nowacka, and so on.

But they dropped the ball on some of the less common adjectival names, such as those ending in -y and -a. For instance, they list Gumienna borne by 756 Poles, and Gumienny by 865. To be consistent, they should have combined them into one entry, since Gumienna is just the feminine form of Gumienny. But someone overlooked this. With names ending in -y and -a, therefore, keep your eyes open!

How Can I Get Addresses?

OK, so now you know what you've got. Now the big question: how do you get addresses?

The short answer is, you don't. The long answer is, you get them the same way you would have if this database had never been put online: by research. Polish privacy laws do a pretty good job of keeping names and addresses, well, private.

In most cases, the question doesn't arise anyway. One of the things you quickly learn from looking at this data is that the vast majority of Polish surnames are not concentrated in any one place. Getting this data usually doesn't tell you a thing about where your family came from. Surnames developed centuries ago, and with all that's happened since then, there's been plenty of time for people to move around. Even surnames that clearly refer to a specific, unique place name usually turn out to be scattered over much of the country.

And besides, if your name is Jaworski and you think your ancestors came from Warsaw, what good does it do you to know there were 4,814 Jaworski's in Warsaw province as of 1990. Even if you had their addresses, are you going to write them all? I don't think so.

Still, having said all this, I must admit sometimes this data does indicate a concentration in one area. In such a case it would be great to have some way of getting an address. The hard way -- the way you'll usually have to do it—is to dig and dig till you trace your ancestors back to a specific area, then try to make contact with a priest or other person in that area who'll help you get addresses.

Is there ever a short cut? Sometimes. If you find a name is highly concentrated in one area, or you know the exact area they came from, you have a better shot at getting addresses than if you just say, "Duh, my ancestors came from Poland." One source that might be worth a look was mentioned in the July 2000 issue of the *Polish-American Journal*. In that issue the PAJ Answerman suggested one can find individuals or families "by contacting the one office in Poland that has on file the addresses of all people currently living in Poland: Centralne Biuro Adresowe, ul. Kazimierzowska 60, 02-543 Warsaw, POLAND."

I have heard from people who have contacted this Central Address Bureau; so it can sometimes work. It's kind of pointless for surnames that are common, especially if you have no way to focus on a specific area. But in instances where a name is highly concentrated in one area, or you know exactly where to concentrate your focus, that chang-

es things. If this Central Address Bureau does provide you with addresses for folks with your ancestral name in your ancestral area, chances are decent those addresses belong to relatives. It's worth a try.

Also possibly worth a try is the Polish telephone directory online at this site:

<http://www.wirtualnafrancja.com/telefony/>

The problem with this is, you have to specify surname, town, and province. So it's not much good for fishing around if you have just a name or a place, but not both. Please notice that this site also demands correct spellings with Polish letters. It won't let you use wildcards. And with the address it only gives street names, not individual residence numbers. Still, some researchers have found leads by searching there. Besides, in most villages and small towns, the street name is all you need. The mail carrier knows who lives where, and will probably deliver your letter. Or you can try calling the phone number given, if you speak Polish or have a friend who can interpret for you.

I should add that Websites offering directories for individuals tend to come and go quickly. Perhaps they run afoul of Polish privacy laws; or perhaps someone's cornered the market on this data and won't share. I'm really not sure why -- but it seems every time I mention an online "White Pages" directory for Poland in *_Gen Dobry!_*, the next time I look it's gone. I can't promise this one will stay around for long. But as of right now, it was the only one I could find that was up and running. And it does list several people I know in Poland.

Subsequent Developments

The publication of the *_Slovník nazwisk_* books, and later the online access to the database, caught people's attention and made them aware that this could be quite a helpful resource. As I said earlier, even if it didn't tell you where your ancestors came from, it could help you spell the name right, which is certainly a step in the right direction. And some surnames are concentrated in specific areas, to the point that frequency and distribution data can give you a real lead.

The Genpol Website subsequently developed a particularly nice resource to help you make the most of the database. If you search for a specific surname and then copy the data in the "Rozmieszczenie" column (for instance, in Windows you highlight the data and hit Ctrl-C), Genpol has an applet that generates a map illustrating the data:

<http://www.genpol.com/Mapa+main.html>

You just paste the data into the big box (for instance, with Ctrl-V in Windows); type in the name in question in the little box underneath, by where it says "Generuj mapke dla nazwiska"; and click on "Pokaz mape" down near the bottom of the page. This opens up a new window with a map showing in which provinces the name appears and illustrating the frequency in darker and lighter shades of green. You can save this map as a BMP file to your computer, or print it out. You also get a table ranking the provinces by the frequency of the name -- but that's separate material, not part of the map. Again, highlight it, hit Ctrl-C, and you can save it as a text file or import it into a word processor.

When students write me to say they need info on their name for a school report, I always recommend they use this resource. A nice map like this can add a lot to a report. And it probably impresses most teachers! As for those of us no longer in school, a map of this sort can also add a lot to a family tree! So using the Genpol page may require a little practice, a little effort to figure it out. But it's probably worth it.

The second major development after the publication of the **Słownik nazwisko** was Rymut's decision to publish an updated version on CD-ROM, **Dictionary of Surnames in Current Use in Poland at the Beginning of the 21st Century**. Over the years Rymut recognized that the 1990 data was full of errors and omissions; and he also wanted to reflect the administrative changes that went into effect in 1999, dividing Poland into 16 provinces rather than the previous 49. He realized that printing another set of books would be very expensive. When I wrote and asked if he'd consider putting out a new version on CD-ROM, he told me he'd already discussed doing so with his colleagues. The PGSA helped provide financing, and in 2002 the CD was published -- the Polish-language version by the Polish Language Institute, and the English version by the Polish Genealogical Society of America.

This new version used data from the PESEL database as of September 2002, and from working with it I'm convinced it's much "cleaner," with far fewer misspellings and bad data. It also breaks name distribution figures down not just by **województwo (province)**

but also by powiat (county). If you'd like more information on this edition's benefits, and tips on how to use it, you can read my review here:

<http://www.pgsa.org/SurnameReview.pdf>

Bless his heart, Prof. Rymut gave me credit for the idea of doing a revised version as a CD. But I'm pretty sure he and his colleagues had already recognized the value of doing it this way. Financial considerations alone would have been enough to encourage an edition on one inexpensive, easy-to-handle CD, rather than 10 massive books, expensive to print and ship.

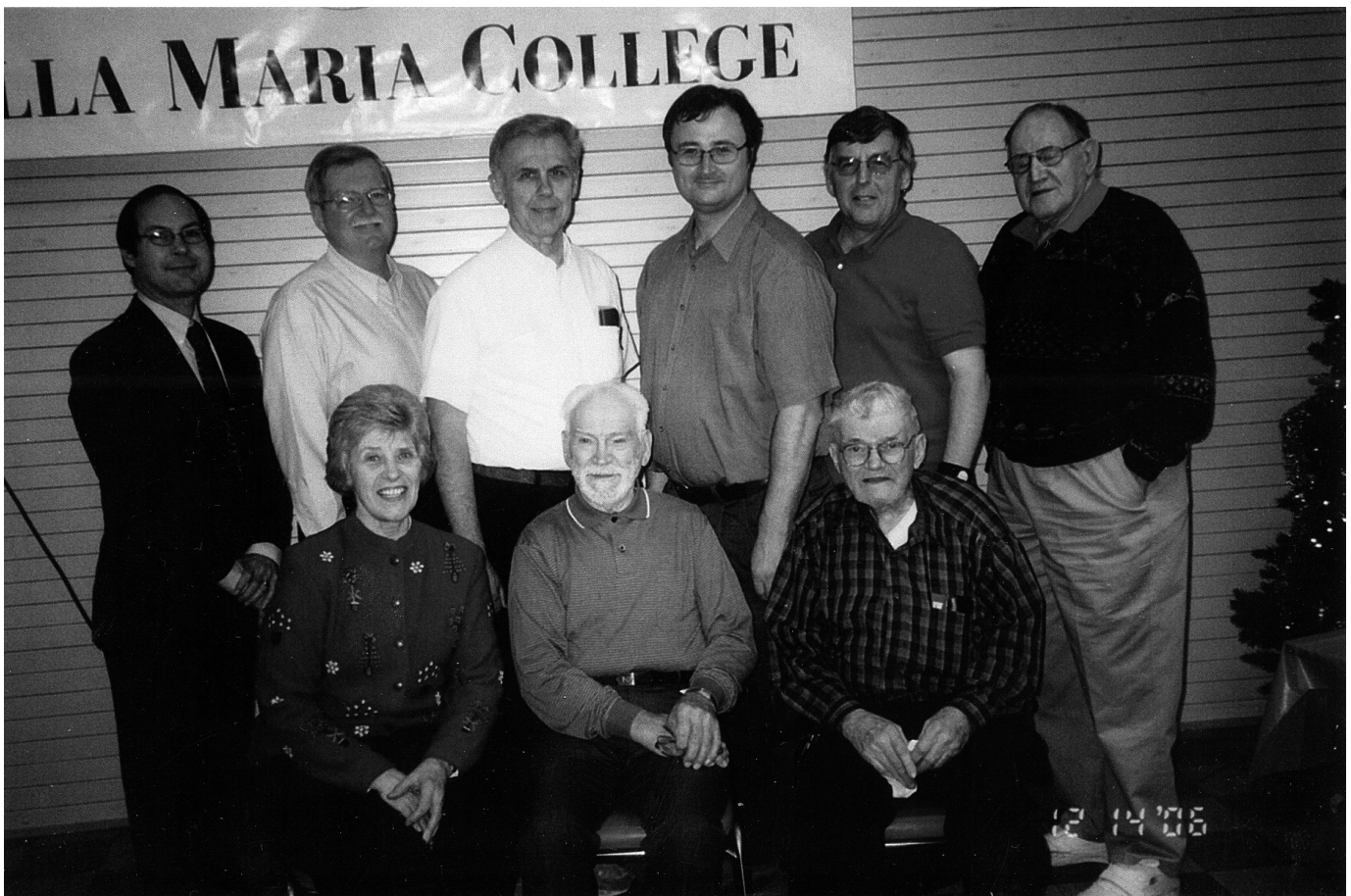
I think it is only fair to say that the CD version is not for everyone. If you just want some decent general data on a few names, the online version will do the job. The CD is invaluable for those who really get into some serious research, and need to look up lots of names and visualize where they are located. In which connection I should mention that the Genpol site I just talked about can generate a map with data from either version, the 1990 online database or the 2002 CD. The CD is not expensive -- \$25 for PGSA members, \$35 for non-members (see <http://www.pgsa.org/Books/cdorders.htm>) -- but you may find the sheer size and scope of the data overwhelming, unless you're a hard-core names freak like me! It's nice to know you have options, however. The CD exists, if you think you want that kind of detailed information. If not, the online database will probably suit you just fine.

Conclusion

It's odd to think that until 1992, no one really knew how many Polish surnames there were, or how common they were, or where they were concentrated. Professor Rymut changed all that. He did it for Polish scholars researching Polish surnames; he had no idea how much he would be helping folks in other countries who don't speak Polish and aren't even linguists! But over time he came to realize what a difference his work had made; and he was delighted to know he'd helped so many people, including those seeking the way back to the home of their ancestors.

Czesc jego pamieci. Niech spoczywa w pokoju - All honor to his memory. May he rest in peace!

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