



# SEARCHERS



Number 45

POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE

Summer 2007

Preserving Our Past Since 1988

## The Missing Photograph



*Back Row From Left to right: John Ulinski, Pearl Ulinski, Frank Marcez, Florence Wisniewska-Marcez  
Front Row From left to right: Angeline Wisniewska, Angnes Piontkowska, Franz Kwiecien.*

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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

Annual dues are \$15 (\$18 Canada, \$25 other countries). Your membership entitles you to three editions of the Searchers and participation in the PGSNYS Yahoo Group. New members receive an information packet to help you get started. The expiration date of your membership is on the mailing label.

Please remit your membership by check or money order to:

PGSNYS

c/o Chuck Pyrak

12 Grant Road

Snyder, NY 14226



Please remember to send any changes in mailing or e-mail addresses to the above address or to [cpyrak@roadrunner.com](mailto:cpyrak@roadrunner.com)

### *For submission to the Searchers Newsletter, deadlines are as follows:*

**Spring Edition** - April 15th for June mailing

**Summer Edition** - June 15th for August mailing

**Winter Edition** - October 15th for December mailing

Submissions to the Searchers can made by postal mail (c/o **Searcher Editor**) or via e-mail to [editor@pgsnys.org](mailto:editor@pgsnys.org)

or [g.smokowski@verizon.net](mailto:g.smokowski@verizon.net)

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Presidents

Message

PGSNYS

LIBRARY:

MICHAEL A  
DRABIK

COLLECTION

UPDATE

I have wonderful news to report and update the membership on.

Since 2002 the PGSNYS has been working towards housing our library material in the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library (BECPL) in downtown Buffalo. We've been held up lately because the BECPL requires our materials to be catalogued according to the Library of Congress system.

This past spring, I was contacted by BECPL personnel. They informed me that a student from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, who's name is Agnieszka Chen (nee Kurzeja) who is interested in cataloguing our library this fall beginning her next semester this September. Agnieszka was born in Poland but now lives in the Buffalo, New York area.

I've met with Agnieszka and the BECPL personnel at the end of April. There are several preparations that need to be completed prior to Agnieszka starting the cataloguing our library. We also must sign an agreement with the BECPL. There will also be an Opening Ceremony for our library, tentatively will be in the first week in October. Watch your e-mail and next edition of the Searchers for the confirmed date.

## PRESIDENT ON VACATION

Normally I don't announce my vacations. However I felt it important enough this time. I'll be on vacation from September 7 thru November 18. During my absence Vice President Ted Smardz will in charge and preside over meetings.

Sincerely,

**David Newman**  
**President, PGSNYS**



## *Armchair Genealogy*

By Grace Smokowski

Have you ever wondered how your ancestors lived? Not just birthdays or marriage certificates or death records, but have you actually wondered about their life stories, their everyday experiences?

I do. All the time, I do.

I take this opportunity to harness the present and preserve the past. I do this by what I refer to as “armchair genealogy.” Every member of the family is like a library of stories, history, and life experiences. When we lose a member of the family, it is like a whole library has burned down. During any family gathering or any visit by a family member, pull up an armchair comfortable enough for an elder in the family, and have a tape recorder, or pen and paper ready—and you are all set for armchair genealogy.

For example, my father was in a talkative mood on Easter Sunday at our traditional family Swieconka. He is almost never talkative, but today he was downright loquacious. He began to speak of his Army days before he married my mother. The story came alive as he recalled memories so vivid that it felt like you were there with him. His tone was even yet excited, a true storyteller.

As one story goes, Dad was in charge of the mess hall as

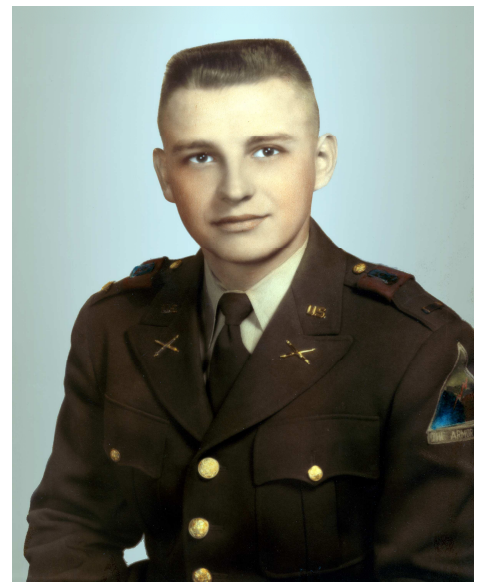
a lieutenant and ran it as a major would run his battalion—with a strong fist. One day a battalion was leaving for Korea, seeing real battle during the Korean War. This encouraged the men to act like pigs, in Dad’s youthful opinion, knowing that they were being deployed they just did not care. Dad would not stand for it and held the entire battalion until they cleaned up all of the hall—tables, floor and all. Tempers flared. Supervisors were called in to mediate. The battalion objected, but Dad held firm to his convictions until the major confirmed Dad’s righteous position and told the battalion to clean up after themselves. Knowing that Dad was the only son of a widow and would never see the action of a battlefield during wartime, he took all of his military duties very seriously. And today he was willing to talk about them.

The tape recorder rolled and hummed. I was capturing for posterity the actual life stories of the eldest living member of my family, my father. I was proud of the fact that he was willing to share and relive memories with me. The armchair relaxed him enough to loosen memories to be recorded for all the family to enjoy for many years to come. Writing about these stories or adding them to a family tree augments the understanding we have of our family’s heritage and history.

The next time a family member is in a loquacious mood at a family gathering or in a private setting, harness the opportunity. Pull up the armchair and record all that is told in vast detail.

for these times. You will be glad that you did. Not only do you have accurate stories of an ancestor’s life, you have a voice enshrined forever belonging to that person. This is an amazing piece of history right at your fingertips to manipulate as you please for the future. It could narrate a video tape or a Web site or just be kept for posterity in its entirety.

Who knows which family member will be talkative at what point in time. Some stories are spontaneous and may be captured by writing them down afterwards. But, when any person is willing to be interviewed for any topic and at any length, pull up the armchair and settle in (making sure the recorder is working) and enjoy. You may find out much more than you expected. I did.



Richard Thaddeus Smokowski

Circa 1956

## *The Missing Photograph* *By Barbara Golibersuch*

I marvel at the connection we have with the past. We hear stories and see photographs, and want to know all the details that went along with these tales. We contact our older relatives in the hopes of solving some sort of mystery that has turned up as a result of our latest research. Sometimes our findings can be justified, and sometimes we must piece together a fabricated story just to suit our need to know. And so it goes with my great aunt Agnes Piontkowski. She was born in Poland and came to America in 1886. As a child, she spent several years in Buffalo. Her widowed mother Veronica remarried, and Agnes lived at a Convent for several years.

Why?

In 1915 Agnes moved to Perry, New York to work at the Perry Knitting Mills. She lived with her sister-in-law Aniela and her brother Lawrence Piontkowski. Aniela and her husband ran the boarding house. There Agnes and a friend, Angeline Wisniewska, also a fellow boarder, met their future husbands.

On October 24, 1916 a double wedding ceremony was performed at Transfigu-

ration Roman Catholic Church in Olean, New York. Agnes married Franz Kwicien, and Angeline married John Ulinski. Why get married in Olean? We were able to find the marriage record in 1999, but it took three more years to find two surviving siblings.

Lillian lives in North Carolina, and Blanche lives right here in Tonawanda, New York. My first phone calls to the girls were magnificent. My husband, Don, and I had this obsession with finding Agnes so we could learn something about Veronica. Lillian and Blanche told us many wonderful stories about their mother, but they really had no contact with the cousins or other Piontkowski relatives.

Both Lillian and Blanche told me that there was a double wedding photograph in their living room as they were growing up. The photograph had been accidentally destroyed after their mother, Agnes, passed away.

My new goal was to find the other couple that was in the photograph. Dona and I were able to locate two great nieces of John Ulinski, Virginia and Theresa.

I called Virginia and

she spoke about her great uncle and his wife Angeline. It appears that the marriage was in Olean, New York because Angeline's sister lived there. Virginia and Theresa had all of John Ulinski's photographs, and they were able to find the missing double wedding picture. Theresa had a 9 x 11 copy made for me. I was so excited to see the elusive photograph! I felt like I was transported in time to an era when Agnes and Angeline were married.

I, in turn, made copies for Lillian and Blanche, and sent them on their way. The girls called me upon receiving the picture. It brought back so many happy memories for them. Now their children and grandchildren have a legacy to look back on. They could not have been happier. Lillian and Blanche never expected to see that photograph again, but with the kindness of Virginia and Theresa, they can.

We perhaps did find out why Agnes spent time in the convent, perhaps her mother could not afford to keep her at home.

## Veronica, Where Are You?

by Barbara Golibersuch

My husband, Don, and I started our quest in 1977. A few years later my cousin Rita Hider joined forces. We did well with some of our relatives, but there is always a stinker you just can't find. And so it goes, we left no stone unturned, and yet we could not find my great grandmother. Somehow we knew that Veronica Ciesielski came to America in 1886 with her husband, John Piontkowski, and their three children. John passed away in June of 1903.

It was during our January genealogy meeting that Sue Myslzka asked if she could be of any help. We gratefully accepted her generous offer. Sue was able to look at the *old* records with *new* eyes, and she did locate my great grandmother's records. Veronica had married Jan Tomczak in July of 1903. Jan's wife died that same year, and he was left to raise four young children. Sue was able to locate the church

marriage, death, and cemetery records. She also provided copies of her documentation.

We are now searching for a member of Jan Tomczak's family in hopes of finding someone who may have information about Veronica and her new family.

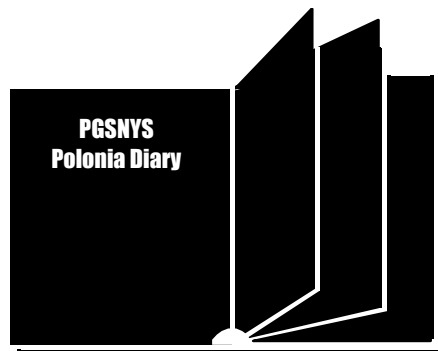
I believe that in some ways it is a blessing that Veronica could not be found right away. During our years of searching, we were able to build friendships with several of the wonderful relatives that we have found.

Genealogy is not just searching for endless data, but also probing into the facts and finding the stories that bind the families.

This short story is not so much about Veronica as it is our way of saying "thanks" to Sue and all the other wonderful people who have shared their memories and photographs and friendship. We, as genealogists, have an obligation to present a life history the best

we can.

Thank God for Sue. She has rekindled our desire to keep searching.





## My Unresolved Years in Poland (1830-1833)

By Edward Prabucki

I have a sentimental, dedicated attachment to my Ancestral Fathers and our ancestral relatives if for no other reason than that thru them and because of them. I became privileged to enjoy the fruits of my life.

There are also other reasons not the least of which is to attempt to find facts of my Ancestors in on era or their lives, if not at least a conjecture that brought them so much unbearable tragedy.

The period I sought in my ancestral research was ambiguous to say the least. After an exhaustive research, I could not ignore or be indifferent to the obituaries during the period of 1830-1833. The year of these obituaries drew my attention to the one fact that Church Records of my Ancestral Fathers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Great Grandfather, Roch Prabucki, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Great Grandfather, Jozef Prabucki and their youthful relatives listed

their deaths but little else during the Insurrection of 1830-33. Many were in their 20s and needless to say, found too much disparity in the records of their youthful demise. The fact is Church records were inadequate and without detail of the cause of their deaths. My desire to reach a successful research ended as an unsuccessful one.

Following is the list of the many youthful Ancestors whose lives were shortened during the Insurrection of 1830-1833:

- 1 John Prabucki June 16, 1830 Youthful son of Walenty-Anna Prabucki
- 2 Walenty Prabucki Oct 30, 1830 Son of Kazimierz-Jadwiga Prabucki
- 3 Tadeusz Prabucki Dec 24, 1830 Husband of M. (Onidzka) Prabucka
- 4 Gregorz Prabucki April 7, 1831 Son of Franciszka Prabucka – in early 20's
- 5 Sylvester Prabucki June 16, 1831 Stepson of Jan Prabucki (also in early 20's)
- 6 Jan Prabucki Aug 20, 1831 Son of Jozef-Wiktoria Prabucki (early 20's)
- 7 Ewa Prabucka Aug 20, 1831 Wife of G. Prabucki (in early 20's)

- 8 Wiktoria Prabucka Sept 6, 1831 Wife of Jozef Prabucki (4<sup>th</sup> Grandmother)
- 9 Katarzyna Prabucka Jan 21, 1832 Daughter of Roch-Maryanna Prabucki
- 10 Ignacy Prabucki Feb 28, 1832 Son of Tadeusz-Anna Prabucki (Late teens)

I came to the conjecture of their possible involvement in Rebellion of 1830-1833 whether voluntarily or whether they were sought after in the initial uprising of that period.

Incidentally in my research of the History of Poland, my ancestors lived in the close proximity of that impetuous struggle. Also I was aware from historical facts that Russian Czar Nicholas I was very brutal and vengeful with those involved in that Rebellion. So without details of their cause of death in the obituaries during that abortive attempt, I came to my own conclusion my youthful ancestors were affected in some act of that Rebellion.

PGS Researcher

Edward Prabucki

## Searching Life Insurance Records

**Daniel A. Domino**

One day, a couple of weeks ago, I was doing research on my great grandmother Franciszka Ostrowska. She was my father's grandmother on his mother's side. I was on the internet and went into the Polish Genealogical Society of America website, [www.pgsa.org](http://www.pgsa.org). In the website there is a search engine for life insurance records from the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA). The PRCUA was organized in 1882 in Detroit as a mutual benefit society; later it moved its offices to Chicago. The PRCUA began selling life insurance policies in 1887 in Polish communities throughout the United States.

I first searched Franciszka's surname and then her married name Ruchalski. Both searches were negative. I also searched her two sisters by their surnames and married names, Rozalia Wisz and Katarzyna Natan-ski. I was pleased to find

that a Rozalia Wisz had an insurance policy with the PRCUA in Chicago. The search engine listed the name of the insured person and the claim date for the policy. I knew the date that my relative Rozalia died and that date was very close to the insurance claim date. Hence, I assumed that this Rozalia was my great grandmother's sister.

I sent the Polish Genealogical Society of America (PGSA) a check for \$15.00 for copies of Rozalia's application for the life insurance policy. It took about a week for me to receive the information, and I was very happy with the information that I received. The PGSA sent me ten sheets of paper with different information on each sheet. The first two sheets were the actual life insurance policy that Rozalia took out in 1929. One was in English and the other in Polish. The policy was for \$200.00.

An interesting sheet

of paper that I received was called the Applicant's Certificate. That certificate had information about Rozalia's parents. Her parents were named Antoni Ostrowski and Balbina Kowalska. I did not know if I read the spelling of the name Balbina correctly because I have never heard that name before. I looked it up in the *Dictionary of Saints* by John J. Delaney and found that Balbina was a 2<sup>nd</sup> century saint whose feast day is March 31<sup>st</sup>. When Rozalia filled out this application in 1929 she listed her parents as being deceased. She listed the ages at which both parents died and the cause of death of each. Rozalia's parents are my second great grandparents and this was new information for me. The certificate listed Rozalia's brothers' and sisters' names, both living and deceased. It gave the ages of the living siblings at the time the application was written, as well as the ages at which the deceased siblings died. The certificate also listed how many years Rozalia was married and how many children she bore.

Another interesting copy that I received was called the Medical Examiner's Certificate. That cer-



-tificate had 32 questions on it. The answers to the questions listed Rozalia's age, height, weight, pulse rate both standing and sitting, her blood pressure and most importantly, the circumference of her abdomen at the waist line.

Enclosed with the paperwork that I received was a copy of Rozalia's death certificate. She died in 1936 and was only 50 years old. She died at St. Mary's Hospital in Niagara Falls, New York. My father remembered her as her being his rich aunt. Rozalia and her husband Thomas owned a tavern on Highland Avenue in Niagara Falls. My father always bought him expensive birthday and Christmas presents when he was a boy. Rozalia and her husband were returning from a vacation trip to Europe when she caught pneumonia on the ship, which eventually led to her death.

Another copy of a form that I received was a Death Claim. That form listed the beneficiaries, their addresses, relationships to the deceased, and their ages.

I would recommend

that members of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State use the PGSA website to see if they have any relatives who had insurance policies with PRCUA. There is a great deal of information that is found on those records. These records helped me to add many names to my family tree.



**Applicant's Certificate**

Applicant must answer each and every question separately. The answers to be written by the Medical Examiner. General and idiomatic statements regarding habits or symptoms and effects of disease will not be accepted in place of the disease on which they depend. In every case ask and state whether Tuberculosis was or was not an element of the fatal disease. Write all doubtful points in personal or family history carefully.

QUESTIONS	IF LIVING		IF DEAD			
	Age	Health	Age at Death	Cause of Death	Duration of Sickness	Quality of Health
1. Father			48	Ulcer	One wk?	Good
2. Mother			66	Natural Causes	-	Good
3. Living brothers	40	Well				
Dead brothers	0					
Number of sisters						
4. Living sisters	59	Well				
Dead sisters	58		42	Cause unknown	-	Good
5. Has any of your relations had? a) Cancer? <u>No</u> b) Tuberculosis? <u>No</u> c) Rheumatism? <u>No</u> d) Mental Disease? <u>No</u>						
6. Have you ever been injured? <u>No</u>						
7. Have you ever undergone a surgical operation? <u>Yes - 1911 - Petric operation &amp; Riparian</u>						
8. Have you ever had any of the following? Answer "Yes" or "No".						
9. Asthma <u>No</u>			18. Any disease of nervous system <u>No</u>		28. Paralysis <u>No</u>	
10. Any disease of brain <u>No</u>			19. Any disease of skin <u>No</u>		27. Smallpox <u>No</u>	
11. " " " lungs <u>No</u>			20. Chronic discharge from ear <u>No</u>		26. Spitting of blood <u>No</u>	
12. " " " heart <u>No</u>			21. Defect of vision or hearing <u>No</u>		25. Habitual Cough <u>No</u>	
13. " " " stomach <u>No</u>			22. Cancer or other tumor <u>No</u>		24. La Grippe <u>No</u>	
14. " " " liver <u>No</u>			23. Erysipelas <u>No</u>		23. Diphtheria <u>No</u>	
15. " " " kidneys <u>No</u>			24. Epilepsy <u>No</u>		22. Gout <u>No</u>	
16. " " " G.U. organs <u>No</u>			25. Syphilis <u>No</u>		21. Varicose Veins <u>No</u>	
17. " " " bowels <u>No</u>						
34. Have you ever had Inflammation Rheumatism a) How many attacks and when? <u>No</u> b) Severity? <u>No</u> c) Was it accompanied by cough, shortness of breath? <u>No</u> c)2 Pain in chest? <u>No</u> c)3 Palpitation of heart? <u>No</u>			35. Are you ruptured a) Form? <u>No</u> b) Single or double? <u>No</u> c) Reducible or non-reducible? <u>No</u>		38. Have you ever been advised by doctor to change climate for your health? <u>No</u>	
42. Has your weight recently increased or diminished? <u>Increased about 5 lbs in past year. Lighter than now</u>			36. When was your abdomen fully vacated? <u>Approximately 12 times</u>		39. Have you taken any patent medicine within last 5 years? <u>No</u>	
43. If so, state particulars <u>Lighter than now</u>			37. Have you consulted physician in last 5 years? <u>Yes</u>		40. Have you taken or used a) alcohol? <u>None</u> b) Tobacco? <u>None</u> c) narcotics? <u>None</u>	
44. a) Has your application for insurance in any Company ever been rejected or modified? <u>No</u>					41. Have you been an inmate of any hospital, sanitarium or asylum? <u>Yes - 1911</u>	
<b>For Female Applicant Only</b>						
45. a) Are you single or married? <u>Married</u> b) If married, how long? <u>24 years</u> c) Has your menstruation always been normal and regular? <u>Yes</u> d) Are the contents of your uterus always normal? <u>Yes</u>			46. Have you ever applied for pension? <u>No</u>		47. Any miscarriages and how often? <u>None</u>	
					48. When were you confined last? <u>19 years ago</u>	
					49. Are the breasts free from tumor or other disease? <u>Yes</u>	
					50. Number of children born? <u>1</u>	
					51. Have you suffered with any female disease or ailment? <u>Yes</u>	
					52. Are you now free from such disease or ailment? <u>Yes</u>	

I do hereby warrant the truthfulness of all the foregoing answers and statements. It is agreed that in case of my death or permanent disability resulting from Small Pox or due to unsuccessful or no vaccination, all claims against the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America for benefit, under certificate issued, or to be issued, to me shall upon such death or disability, by virtue of my signature hereon, be waived by me and by the beneficiaries under said certificate, and said certificate shall hereupon become void, except that the amount of cash accrued against it, if any, in case of said death or disability shall hereupon be paid to me or to the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America upon said disability or to my beneficiaries upon said death.

Witness to Member's signature: Leo J. ... Applicant's signature in full: Rozalia ...

Signed in presence: Leo J. ... Medical Examiner: Rozalia ...

I have inspected and approved the foregoing certificate for: \$ 100.00 Plus 1.00

Date: JUL 3 - 1929

M. D.  
Chief Medical Examiner of the P. R. C. U.

## ERIE COUNTY SURROGATE'S COURT RECORD ROOM

By David Newman [niewczyk@verizon.net](mailto:niewczyk@verizon.net)

Richard Moulton, head of Erie Co. Surrogate's Court Record Room, spoke at the April 12th Meeting of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State. This is a summary of his remarks.

Because of a major renovation project in Erie County Hall, all of the Surrogate's Probate Records (with the exception of those that are currently in process) were relocated to a former fall-out shelter, at the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, Lafayette Square. Not all of the physical improvements at the library that will make these records reasonably accessible have been made. The public is not allowed in this room.

At the present time a request for probate records must be delivered, in person, or by mail, to the Surrogate's Records Office in Erie County Hall.

The mailing address is:

Surrogate's Records Office  
92 Franklin Street  
Buffalo, NY 14202  
716.845.2585

When the workload allows, a person is dispatched to the library to retrieve the record, it is returned to County Hall where copies can be made. The requester is then notified by phone of the availability of the record. This process may take several weeks. Public library personnel have no role whatever in this activity.

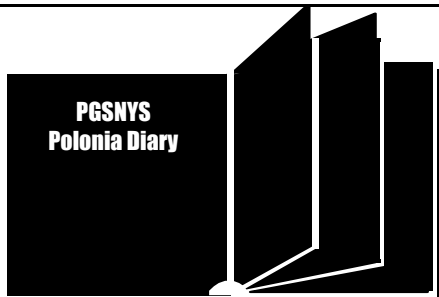
Mr. Moulton quite understands of the needs of genealogists. If you accompany your request with a request to copy the important parts of

the file and a Self Addressed stamped envelope, usually the petition for probate, and possibly the will itself, he will see that these copies are made and mailed to you. The charges for this service are as follows:

If the File Number is unknown, and the probate is more than 25 years ago, \$90 to find the File Number.

If the File Number is unknown, and the probate is 25 years or less ago, \$45 to find the File Number.

If the File Number is known, the only charge is for copies. Copies are \$0.25 per page.



Only money orders or bank checks are accepted for these charges.

If you know the case number, in your request, DO NOT send any

check or money order. Mr Moulton will inform you if there are any fees associated with your request in his reply.

All of the Erie Co Surrogate Court index books have been transferred to CDs, which are currently available only in the Surrogate's Office. They may be used by the public to find File Numbers, thus avoiding the charges above.

Also, the Erie Co Surrogate Court

index from 1800-1929 is on microfilm at the Buffalo & Erie Co Public Library in the Grosvenor Room.

Great care was taken to make sure this information is accurate. If someone learns of something new, please notify me at [niewczyk@verizon.net](mailto:niewczyk@verizon.net) of any changes.

Useful Internet Links regarding Erie Co Surrogate Court Records.

1) BuffaloResearch.com: Genealogy and Local History in Western New York  
<http://www.buffaloresearch.com/vital.html>

2) Buffalo & Erie Co Public Library Grosvenor Room - Genealogy Web Page

Erie Co Surrogates' Index 1800-1929  
<http://www.buffalolib.org/libraries/collections/grosvenor.asp?sec=genealogy>

3) New York Family History Library - They also have on microfilm the Erie Co Surrogate's Index 1800-1929  
<http://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/modules.php?name=Sections&op=viewarticle&articleid=86>



**Genealogists' Pox**

WARNING: Very contagious to adults.

SYMPTOMS: Continual complaint as to need for names, dates, and places. Patient has a blank expression, sometimes deaf to spouse and children. Has no taste for work of any kind, except feverishly looking through records at libraries and courthouses. Has compulsion to write letters. Swears at mailman when he doesn't leave mail. Frequents places such as cemeteries; ruins; and remote, desolate country areas. Makes secret night calls, hides phone bills from spouse, and mumbles to self. Has a strange, faraway look in eyes.

NO KNOWN CURE.

TREATMENT: Medication is useless. Disease is not fatal, but gets progressively worse. Patient should attend genealogy workshops, subscribe to genealogical magazines, and be given a quiet corner in the house where he or she can be alone.

REMARKS: The unusual nature of this disease is -- the sicker the patient gets, the more he or she enjoys it!

Submitted by Denise Oliansky  
--Author Unknown---

**My Adventures In Polonia**  
**By Grace Smokowski**

Ever since I published a book on my travels to Poland, I have had adventures in Polonia: having articles written about my book in the Polish newspapers, sending out postcards to Polish societies to notify them of the release of my book, and making public appearances to promote my book. In specific, my first book signing was for the Polish Genealogy Society of New York State and I received a great reception that catapulted me into a flurry of media coverage for my book, *Where I Last Saw You*.

Most recently, there was an article written on my book in the Polish American Journal, reviewing it. It just so happens that the

***The Polish American Community has been very supportive of me and my book. Thank you!***

Event Coordinator for the New York State Polish Festival read the article and found my book to be just the right thing to feature at the New York State Polish Festival. When she called me to ask if I would do a book reading and a book signing at the Festival in Albany, I was overjoyed. I have been to the Polish Heritage Festival at the Hamburg Fairgrounds, but I had never been to national, or even a state-wide festival before. This was going to be an adventure of a lifetime. The New York State Polish Festival

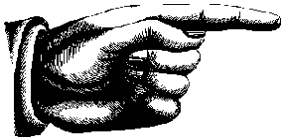
is the third weekend in September. Now I am excited to prepare for the Festival itself, from buying a new dress to do my presentation in to selecting just the right passage to read to the audience, I am ready and raring to go!

Another exciting avenue presented itself as well. In Detroit, Michigan there is a Polish store that decided to carry my book. Now I am represented in Polonia across the United States, not just in Buffalo or New York State. Upon doing some research, Amazon.com was carrying my book as well as a variety of small bookstores across the country, Canada and Europe. This was very exciting news to have and it made me feel like I really was accomplishing something.

Who knows what the next big event will be along the path this book has taken me? Who would have known while I was on this trip to Poland in 2001 that it would be a trip of a lifetime where I would look back on it with fond memories for the rest of my life?

The Polish American community has been very supportive of me and my book and I wish to thank all who have read the book and have supported me through it all.





# Potpourri



## TOUR OF AMHERST FAMILY HISTORY CENTER

The PGSNYS August 2007 Meeting will be held at the Amherst Family History Center located on 1424 Maple Road in

Williamsville, New York on Thursday August 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 – 9:00 PM. Those wishing to attend please e-mail David Newman at

niewczyk@verizon.net

## HEART OF POLONIA WALKING TOUR

This year Buffalo Tours began providing giving this tour in May of this year.

Dominated by its massive Catholic churches interspersed with business and residential designs of the highest order, the Broadway-Fillmore neighborhood was the heart of Western New York's Polish-American community for generations. Learn more about this neighborhood's past, and about present revitalization efforts by Broadway-Fillmore Alive and other groups.

Buffalo Tours is operated by the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier and the Preservation Coalition of Erie County with major funding from M&T Bank and assistance from the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau

For more information on this and other tours they have, visit their website at:

[www.buffalotours.org](http://www.buffalotours.org)

## DANIEL KIJ TOUR OF POLAND

From Septmeber 19 through September 29, 2007 tour the beautiful countryside of Poland with Daniel Kij and his tour group. They will visit Warsaw, Czestochowa, Krakow, and Zakopane. This is the chance of a lifetime to visit your relatives in Poland or to do genealogical research visiting your ancestral villages. We will help you locate and visit your family.

Spending most of the ten-day trip in Zakopane, you may arrange a day trip to the town or village of your ancestors to visit family or churches or gravesites. There is much to do and much to research and explore once you set foot in your ancestral homeland.

Don't miss out of this opportunity to visit Poland. The trip costs \$2, 199! This is a great group rate that is all inclusive. Stay at a quaint villa in Zakopane and experience the charm of Polish living!

For more information or with any questions or comments, please contact Daniel Kij at (716) 822-5258.

Thank you for your interest and we hope to see you in Poland soon!

## FUNERAL CARD

### PROJECT

Our society has been indexing funeral cards for the past few years. If you would like to submit copies of your funeral cards for indexing send your copies to the project coordinator Pauline Gebura using one of the methods below:

- 1) Mail copies to:  
Pauline Gebura  
6471 Deerview Ct.  
Clearence Center,  
New York 14032
- 2) E-Mail scanned copies to:

[pagebura@aol.com](mailto:pagebura@aol.com)

(Put In Subject:  
PGSNYS Funeral  
Card Project)





# BABCIA'S SECRET

## By David E. Newman

Constantly on my mind are visions of my childhood visiting my dear babcia Helen Wojtal. My fondest memories are when my mother took us to see babcia, at her home at 155 Stanislaus Street in Buffalo, New York.

I couldn't wait to experience the taste for her family-famous Placek that she labored intensively in the kitchen from scratch for hours before our arrival without a recipe in sight. Although she was forever making her Polish delicacy for Christmas and Easter, she would always find the time to have one at hand for her precious grandchildren. I didn't mind. I would always put butter freshly purchased from the Broadway Market and sometimes honey.

In the summer of 1982, my mother and her sister Diane set a goal to extract their mother's Placek recipe and archive it for future generations. Somehow they convinced babcia to show them her secret.

One Saturday afternoon, Grandmother and Aunt Diane visited us in the town of Wales, Erie County, New York (a suburb of Buffalo) for this occasion. I remember this extraction process took 4 hours that day because Grandmother would always try to take over the kitchen and the en-

tire preparation process. My mother and aunt would hold firm on actually performing the steps themselves. They would only take directions from their mother. I remember a few arguments ensued. Compromises were made. When babcia was asked how much salt do you add, she would reply in Polish with, "I just throw some in."

Thanks to my mother and aunt, I now can make my own placek. However, it will never taste the same as when grand-

*Babcia's Recipe for traditional Placek is supplied by David Newman's Mother. Thank you for sharing this gift with Searchers!*

mother made it. I'm also able to share this recipe with you. Enjoy.

### BABCIA'S PLACEK

(NOTE: Because babcia always made a batch enough to make 4 loaves, the ingredients of this recipe were reduced by 60%)

This recipe uses about 4 to 4-1/2 lbs. of flour

- 1) Mix and let stand until double
  - Cake of yeast or 2 packages of dry yeast
  - 1/2 cup lukewarm water
  - small amount of sugar

- small amount of flour

2) Melt 1/2 lb. butter in two cups of milk. Cool to lukewarm.

3) In a very large bowl combine:

- 12 eggs
- 1 tablespoon rum
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- dash of nutmeg
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt

**Beat eggs with flavorings: Add Flour, yeast mixture, and butter and milk mixture about 1/3 at a time until all used up. Let rise till double in bulk. Butter pans. Fill 1/2 full. Let rise again. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes.**



## What does the *-ski* mean in Polish surnames?

by Keith Kaszubik

The title of this article is a question which I am often asked in Polonia. The answer requires a little explaining and is far more complex than most people realize. Rather than reply to numerous people on an individual basis, it is better to utilize the medium of a newsletter reaching hundreds of people simultaneously.

The suffix *-ski* in Polish surnames is an adjectival suffix denoting "from/of or pertaining to." The feminine counterpart is *-ska*. It should be noted that the feminine distinction in the U.S.A. is not often used today and is usually only encountered among more recent immigrants from Poland. It is certainly encountered by those doing genealogical research into records of the past. It also should be noted that the suffix *-ska* in Poland today is not always used to distinguish gender and numerous females can be found instead with the suffix *-ski*. There are also surnames formed from nouns ending in *-ska* which have nothing to do with the feminine adjectival suffix (e.g., *Laska* [from *laska*, "cane, walking-stick"]).

A misconception encountered in Polonia among novice genealogical researchers is that the suffix *-ski* automatically indicates nobility or the landed gentry. This misconception stems from the fact that many noble surnames end with the suffix *-ski* because they are derived from the adjective formed from the toponym which was the family estate (e.g., *Jankowski* from *Jankowo*, *Kiedrowski* from *Kiedrowice*, etc.). Obviously everyone surnamed *Jankowski* is not descended from the nobility. Just because one particular *Jankowski* family had a coat of arms does not mean that the same coat of arms can be arbitrarily applied to any other *Jankowski* family. The sur-

name in our example is certainly polygenetic. It is not only derived, at different times, from numerous toponyms such as *Jankowo*, *Janków*, etc. but also may have been formed directly from the proper name *Janek* (from *Jan*, "John" + the diminutive suffix *-ek* [cmp. Eng. *John* versus *Johnny*]) + the compound suffix *-owski* denoting "from/of the Janeks." Just by bearing the same surname does not automatically indicate consanguinity.

Over time in Poland the suffix *-ski* was also indiscriminately added to occupational names, personal names, etc. (e.g., *Piekarski* [from *piekarz*, "baker"], *Adamski* [from *Adam*], etc.). The suffix *-ski* in this case probably indicating something like "pertaining to Adam," "from [the family of] Adam" and/or "kin of Adam" but not necessarily "son of Adam" as is so often assumed.

Another misconception among genealogical researchers is the confusion regarding the neuter adjectival suffix *-skie*. In genealogical research an individual may encounter a reference to "woj. Pomorskie" and incorrectly interpret it as "Province of Pomorskie" (the word *province* is basically a "functional equivalent" to *województwo*). The suffix *-skie* in this instance is already denoting "from/of or pertaining to." Obviously we would not write "City of Toronto" as "City Toronto." We would correctly interpret "woj. Pomorskie" as "Province of Pomorze." In some communities in Polonia surnames are also encountered among individuals which incorrectly end with the suffix *-skie* in their nominative forms. In this instance their surname has acquired a superfluous *e* (perhaps due to ignorance of Polish orthography) in order to indicate the pronunciation of the vowel *i* as long.

We can state without ambiguity that this is attributed to the influence of English (cmp. the words *field*, *yield*, etc.) and German (cmp. the diphthong *ie*).

It is true that some surnames acquired the suffix *-ski* in order to create a surname which sounded better socially speaking. I am sure that there are also surnames which gradually acquired the suffix *-ski* over time because they tended to flow better when pronounced in Polish (e.g., *Szczepański* vs. *Szczepanek*, *Nowicki* vs. *Nowik*, etc.). Genealogical records attest to these transformations. Novice genealogical researchers often assume that the spelling of surnames in Poland throughout the centuries has been fixed just as our surnames here are fixed in spelling today. This is another misconception for it was more important centuries ago how a surname sounded rather than how it was spelled when recorded (for those who couldn't read or write they had no knowledge of how others would have recorded their surname). In the past Polish surnames rarely had immediate changes but rather it has been a gradual superimposed transition which has taken place over an extended period of time.

*Would you like to know something about your Polish surname? Keith is internationally known for his onomastological research work and is willing to provide you with a detailed personal analysis of your surname for \$25. Please mail all checks to Keith Kaszubik, P. O. Box 332, North Boston, NY 14110-0332.*



**CIVIL CONSERVATION CORP (CCC) Part I**  
**By David E. Newman**

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 my paternal grandfather Bernard Edward Newman died. His funeral and burial were a few days later. While going through some of grandfather's files at his home my father came across three Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) Certificates he received during his tours of service. I knew my grandfather was in the CCC, but never talked to him about his experiences when he was alive. This was a great find!

Found were one certificate of service (CCC Form 1-022) two certificates of discharge (CCC Form No 2).

The certificate of service lists that my grandfather completed his tour of duty at "Company 262, CCC, Camp FLA SP-3, Sebring, Florida on March 26, 1935".

The Certificate of Discharge gives allot of information. To best explain this information I've transcribed one of the certificates. I've underlined the filled in information.

TRANSCRIPTION OF CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE (Form 1-022)

By this all will know  
BERNARD NIEWCZYK  
 Served his country well as a member of the

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

That magnificent Army of Douth and Peace that put into action the Awakening of the People to the facts of Conservation and Recreation; and that with all honors he completed his tour of Duty at Company 262, CCC, CAMP FLA SP-3, SEBRING, FLOPRIDA, an MARCH 26, 1935

[signed]  
 Camp Superintendent

[signed]  
 Director of Emergency Conservation Work

[signed]  
 Company Commander  
 Service

[signed]  
 Director of the National Park

TRANSCRIPTION OF SIDE ONE OF TWO  
 CERTIFICAE OF DISCHARGE (CCC Form 2)  
 CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE  
 FROM  
 CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

To all whom it may concern,

This is to certify that Bernard Niewczyk, a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, who was enrolled October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934 at Camp Dix, New Jersey, is hereby discharged therefrom, by reason of expiration of term of service.

Said Bernard Niewczyk was born in Buffalo in the State of New York when enrolled he was 20 years of age and by occupation a truck driver. He had blue eyes, brown hair, ruddy complexion, and was 6 feet 2 inches in height. His color was white.

Given Under my hand at Camp Dix, New Jersey, this twenty-ninth day of March, one thousand nine hundred and thirty-five.

[signed]  
 WINCHELL I. RASOR  
 Major, Signal Corps,  
 Executive Officer

## A Note from the New Editor By Grace Smokowski

### *Witamny*

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

My name is Grace Smokowski and I am the new editor of Searchers Newsletter. It is with great enthusiasm that I undertake this new situation and explore all the different creative possibilities this position has to offer.

To give you a little bit of my background, I have my Master's Degree from Buffalo State College in Education, Reading and Writing Instruction. My first acquaintance with publishing news-

letters began when I was substitute teaching in Silver Creek, New York and edited their school newsletter. Ever since then I have continued to write and to teach writing.

In my new job as Education Coordinator for Housing Opportunities Made Equal, I write and edit the bimonthly newsletter. It is with great satisfaction that I edit and create newsletters for the community at large and for myself personally. I have always enjoyed writing and the benefits of writing well.

I appreciate any feedback you may be able to give me. I see Searchers as being a work in pro-

gress. If you read or see something that you like, please tell me about it so that we may do more of it in the future. If you see something that you do not like, please tell me so that we may fix it and have an even better Searchers for the next edition. Writing newsletters is a collaborative effort and all perspectives concerning newsletter writing should be heard.

Thank you for allowing me to be the new editor of Searchers. Hopefully I will do as good a job as my predecessors did. And hopefully we as a community will work together to make Searchers the best it can possibly be, full of information and community connections, full of visual images and joyful reminiscing. Enjoy!

**SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER**  
POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE  
12645 Route 78  
East Aurora, New York 14052  
*RETURN REQUESTED*

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PLEASE CHECK YOUR EXPIRATION DATE

NOTIFY US OF ANY CHANGE OF ADDRESS