



SEARCHERS



Number 50

POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE

Issue 1, 2009

Preserving Our Past Since 1988

Corpus Christi 3rd Grade Class 1910



**Maryann (Patyk) Petyk -
3rd Row from the bottom, 3rd from the Left
Ed Prabucki's Mother**

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 to your postal or e-mail address to the above address or to cpyrak@roadrunner.com

Also if you are a member not receiving e-mail from the PGSNYS Mailing list, send an e-mail to cpyrak@roadrunner.com

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

1st Edition - February 15th for April mailing

2nd Edition - June 15th for August mailing

3rd Edition - September 15th for November mailing

Submissions to the Searchers can be made by postal mail (**c/o Searcher Editor**) or via e-mail to

editor@pgsnys.org or niewczyk@verizon.net

Searchers is a publication of The Polish Genealogical Society of New York State, ISSN #1528-672X Copyright © 2009, Polish Genealogical Society of New York State, All rights reserved.

Inside This Issue

President's Message	pg. 3
The Old Photo Album	pg. 4
A Trip of the Depths of Time	pg. 6
How the Pussy Willow Got It's Fur	pg. 6
Point and Click!	pg. 7
Woltz Ave Then and Now.	pg. 10
Our Little Poland	pg. 11
Upcoming Events in WNY Polonia - Spring 2009	pg. 13
Polish Genealogist Helps Locals Find Their Roots	pg. 14

PGSNYS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

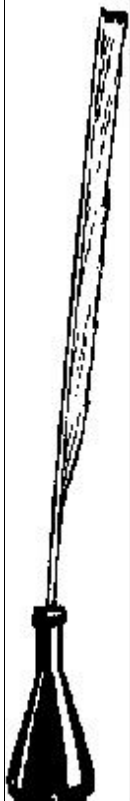
President: David E. Newman
Vice President: Ted Smardz
Secretary: Susan Malyska
Treasurer: Chuck Pyrak

PGSNYS TRUSTEES

Walter Kloc, Pierre LaJoie,
Patricia Neuland, Ed Prabucki,
Frank Martin

Founder: Michael A. Drabik 1950-2001
Historian: Monica Rzepka
Librarian: Denise Oliansky

President's Message



As we enter the year 2009, I would like to place importance around maintaining, increasing and activating our members.

To retain and increase members we need to offer things worthy of a paid membership. We will continue to publish our excellent newsletter three times a year so that, no matter where you live, you will feel connected to the history of New York's Polonia. We also offer

meetings 12 months of the year, with one being a picnic in the summer and another a Christmas Dinner.

I know there are areas we can improve upon to become more effective as a Society. However, it will take time and resources and people to make it happen.

What I would like to see moving forward is more members interacting more often and learning from each other, because that is where the strength and value of our organization lies.

I'm asking the membership for any other ideas or thoughts on how we can accomplish the goals of maintaining, increasing, and activating our members.

Please send me an e-mail or call me at 652-9120. I'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely, Dave Newman

BROADWAY MARKET POISED FOR TURNAROUND

For multitudes of Western New Yorkers, their Lenten and Easter ritual includes a trip to the historic Broadway Market located in the heart of Buffalo's old time Polonia. The sights, sounds, and mouthwatering aromas that fill the market during Holy Week bring back childhood memories of earlier visits with parents and grandparents.

The Market does not disappoint. You can still expect to find all the traditional holiday favorites, including delicious poppy seed cake, fried pastry strips coated with powdered sugar known as chrushiki, molded butter lambs wearing their cute red or purple bows, and every type of Easter candy imaginable. Your reward for patiently standing in the butcher shop lines is the purchase of fresh Polish sausage flavored with marjoram and all varieties of filled pierogi. They also supply the pussy willow branches and squirt guns needed for your Dyngus Day celebration.

The one hundred and twenty-year-old market is facing some challenging issues, including high tenant vacancy rates and declining revenues. A task force of more than 20 members is working to help revitalize business not only at Easter, but year round. First on their agenda is a plan to extend the usual two week Easter celebration to four weeks by staging more events and introducing new vendors that offer products unique to Buffalo's multi-ethnic heritage and culture.

A ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, March 20th highlighted the beginning of the Market's 121st Easter Celebration and Festival.

The Saturday after Easter the Market hosted a "celebration of Buffalo foods." Plans for the April 18th food extravaganza were in the capable hands of Drew Cerza, founder of the National Buffalo Chicken Wing Festival and a task force member.

Martin Biniasz, Chairman of the Broadway Market Advisory Task Force, has said, "Easter at the Broadway Market is one of Buffalo's signature events and one of the largest springtime celebrations in the world. We hope to make the Market an experience that will bring shoppers back throughout the year."

The Old Photo Album - First Holy Communion Photos



Helen Myszker 1904

The Eucharist is the focus of the sacramental life for Roman Catholics. First Holy Communion traditions for Polish-American families in Western New York have always included large family celebrations with the girls wearing beautiful white dresses and bride-like veils to symbolize purity and the boys usually attired in a dark or white Holy Communion suit. A formal studio portrait of the communicant is also traditional on this very important day.

Most early Polish immigrants sent their children to Catholic school at least until third or fourth grade when the child made their First Communion. After that, half or more dropped out or transferred to the public school because the monthly tuition fee of 10 to 50 cents per child placed a financial burden on many families. To counteract this movement, some pastors postponed the First Communion until the child's 12th birthday and that assured the child of a six-year Catholic education.



Isabel and Adeline Myszker 1925
Communion and Graduation

The Old Photo Album - Continued

In later years, the communion date was scheduled when the child was in 2nd grade and seven or eight years old. This timing continues to the present.



Mary Janczylik June 1930

In the beginning of the 20th century, many women learned to become skilled seamstresses. Mothers, Grandmothers, or older sisters lovingly stitched the Communion finery.

As time went by these exquisite homemade dresses were replaced by dresses purchased in specialty shops or bridal salons. As is evident in the accompanying photos, the styles changed over the years, but each young girl looked lovely and felt like a little princess on her Communion Day.



Arlene Kotecki 1943



Jadwiga Lewandowski June 5, 1960

A Trip into the Depths of Time

by Ed Prabucki

It was the photo of the 3rd Grade Class of Corpus Christi Parochial School that stirred my mother's memories. One evening in 1970 in the solitude of our home, my mother gave a lengthy and emotional narrative that deeply connected me to my Grandparents' life during their first years in Buffalo. It resolved what once was an unresolved mystery. After an hour of listening to every word, my quest offered me insight into my mother's youthful life. My Grandparents' migration to America was dictated by necessity and conducted for a better future for their children.

My mother, Mary Patyk, was a small child when my Grandparents arrived in America thru Ellis Island in the first decade of the 20th Century. With optimistic hopes they settled in Buffalo at 20 Lombard Street to raise the family in the faith of their ancestors. My Grandparents, cognizant of their children's need for a Catholic education, decided to have them taught by the nuns at Corpus Christi Parochial School, aware that a family life without faith is nothing but an empty shell. Incidentally, my Aunt Celia, later revealed my mother was a very scholastic pupil, and due to her excellent grades graduated a year earlier than normal.

My Grandfather Patyk, upon arrival in Buffalo, void of any skills except for his service in the Russian Army that obviously had little meaning, and facing a language barrier, sought employment. After a tedious and arduous search, he was thankful to obtain menial work at Dold's Packing Company. I may also add that during this period, due to the meager earnings, my grandfather was compelled to display his dexterity by repairing his family home.

My Grandparents' life was tempered by poverty, confronted with infinite burdens, and due to the lack of daily needs, they had to face unwanted tragedy. It was in this decade that my mother's brother, Janek, playing in one of the popular sports of that time, ran into an immovable object on the unsupervised playfield that resulted in a severe nose bleed. This emergency lacked any dynamic of urgent medical care and assistance that the situa-

tion required. Although, it is now all mere speculation if immediate care would have saved his life. Nevertheless, Grandma throughout that night stayed by his bedside to treat his pain and to comfort her son. Sadly, when morning arrived Grandma's son, Janek, succumbed to his injury. In specter of this tragedy and my mother's need to continue her narrative to relieve her emotions, I solemnly listened.

Though my Grandparents' tribulations continued, eventually in the next decade my Grandparents moved to 165 Gibson Street and rented space in their home to new boarders. Wherein, one fell in love with my mother and in due time this boarder, my father, married her at Corpus Christi Church. Happily this continues my Grandparents' Family Tree.

With these revelations, certainly it had to be the moral upbringing of our Ancestors that carried my Grandparents through their difficult and arduous first decade in America.

Old Polish Myths & Fables How the Pussy Willow Got Its Fur

According to an old Polish legend
legend, many springtimes ago,
a mother cat was crying at the
bank of the river where her
kittens were drowning.

The willows at the river's edge
longed to help her, so they swept
their long graceful branches into
the water to rescue the tiny kittens
who had fallen into the river while
chasing butterflies. The kittens
gripped on tightly to their branches
and were safely brought to shore.

Each springtime since, goes the
legend, the willow branches sprout
tiny fur-like buds at their tips where
the tiny kittens once clung.

POINT and CLICK!

Laurel Keough presents ideas and links for web research

A Birdseye View of Buffalo's Old Polonia Neighborhood and Houses

A genealogist's imagination transports them to many places. At the top of the list is a wish to see their ancestral home. They travel great distances and, if able, will photograph the house. Not a local resident? Are you hesitant to drive to Buffalo's eastside? Then try these options to wander the old Polish neighborhoods from the comfort of your computer chair. Notice that each site gives a different type view and perspective of the streets and houses.

Windows Live Search Maps

<http://maps.live.com/?mkt=en-us>

Type in the address of the house you wish to view. When the image comes up, click on *Birdseye View*. This will zoom the image in and give you the option to view the house from the front, back, or side. You can also click on the + symbol one more time for an even closer view.

This site gives you the perspective of actually flying over the rooftops of the neighborhood. You can then move the cursor over the map and see the adjoining streets and landscape. You will see the many empty lots where the houses have been demolished.



Woltz Ave. near Sycamore St. Buffalo, NY

Google - Maps

<http://maps.google.com>

Type in your address and when the thumbnail photo appears, click on *Street View*. This site gives a completely different view. You appear to be standing at street level right in front of the house. You can then view a circular scan of the street. Move the cursor onto the street pavement and a line and directional arrows appear. Click the arrows and you will move up or down the street in either direction.

Keep in mind that the age of the photos may be very recent or several years old. Of course you can view the Buffalo neighborhoods or any locations you choose to visit.





Clark St. and Corpus Christi Church, Buffalo, NY

More Photos of Eastside Buffalo Houses

Broadway Fillmore Alive

<http://broadwayfillmorealive.org>

Within this web site you will find a survey conducted in 2004 of historic resources within the City of Buffalo. On the left side of the main page under the *Directory* heading, click on **Intensive Level Historic Resource Survey of B-F Neighborhood**. When the page appears, click on *Annotated List of Properties*. There are 97 pages arranged alphabetically with photos of the houses. Additional data on the house is variable, but may include the year or approximate time built, name of the builder or architect, for whom the house was built, date of any alterations or additions made to the house, and a short description of the architectural style.

Intensive Level Historic Resources Survey		City of Buffalo: Broadway-Fillmore Neighborhood
SECTION 5: ANNOTATED LIST OF PROPERTIES		
	<p>Potter - Fronczak House 806 Fillmore Avenue</p> <p>Date: ca. 1895 Original Use: Residential Current Use: Residential (Colonial Revival brick veneer office and dwelling was built in 1941; Joseph Fronczak, architect)</p> <p>NR Criteria: B and C</p>	<p>Dr. Irving W. Potter was the earliest known occupant of this house. It then became the longtime home of Dr. Francis E. Fronczak, one of the most significant members of Buffalo's Polish community. The city's health commissioner for several decades, he had received the Legion of Honor for service his service in France during World War I.</p>
	<p>809 Fillmore Avenue</p> <p>Date: 1910 Original Use: Residential Current Use: Residential</p> <p>NR Criterion: C</p>	<p>Built for painting contractor Frank Hojnowski; in 1924 he added the large connected brick garage at the rear, from which he operated an auto paint shop.</p>

Want more detail? Move down to the *Inventory* section and see several pages on each house with a larger photo, a fuller description of the architectural style, and a replication of the Sanborn Map that illustrates the position of the house on the street map. For the churches and commercial buildings, profiles of the architect and neighborhood history are quite detailed.

So . . . since the chance of finding your ancestral home on the survey are relatively small, as they say in the lottery advertisement, "Hey, You Never Know!" With some luck, you just might hit the photo jackpot.

Woltz Avenue Then and Now

The Buffalo News - June 22, 2008

My View by Michael Lex

The house is gone, but the home remains

Michael Lex, of Clarence, is saddened by the demise of the house where four generations of his family once lived.

It is often said that home is where your heart is. A part of my heart remains on Woltz Avenue on Buffalo's East Side. It was here that four generations of my maternal family resided. It was a place where some family members were born and some died. Upon seeing a demolition listing for the address, I decided to visit my old home one more time.

The drive from downtown east on Broadway was one marked by several vacant lots. The former site of Buffalo Forge stood vast and open, another gravesite of Buffalo's economy. It joined Republic Steel and Westinghouse as ghosts of past industrial days.

As I turned left onto Mills Street, Transfiguration Church dominated the vista. The parish was once one of the wealthiest in the diocese. The church sits sad and rotting with gaping holes in its roof. Its decay reflects that of its neighborhood. Its treasures have long been removed and its spirit scattered upon suburban winds.

Upon turning onto Woltz from Stanislaus Street, it is apparent that the avenue of my youth is vastly different. The homes where my classmates, Scott and Steve, lived are gone. So, too, is Beverly's house. She was my first crush and I expressed my affection for her by chasing her with worms.

My neighbor's home is gone as well. There had been many times I wished he would disappear, particularly when he refused to return the balls that strayed into his yard.

I parked in front of my old home. It seems that most every summer of my teen years I was painting some portion of this four-family home. Today it is covered in graffiti - gang tags and expletives. The flower gardens that my grandmother tended with loving care are trampled and weed-infested. The rear porch roof has collapsed. The windows that aren't boarded are broken. The yard is strewn with trash.

Four generations of life and love cycled through that house. It was a place of family, where hard work was encouraged and values instilled. I would like to go back into the house to explore and to relive the memories that I treasure.

How many more times will I recall playing cops and robbers with my grandfather or the great holiday gatherings around the dining room table? I can still recall the boyhood explorations of the attic, which contained my grandfather's hand tools, fashioned in a time of craftsmanship, and the cigar boxes that held every piece of hardware imaginable. There were my uncle's college books, trunks with photos and clothing of a time long ago.

The attic was a museum unto itself, a place where a boy's imagination could roam. I placed my own time capsule in that attic before I moved out. It contained a religious medallion from a young woman I had loved and lost, a few AFL football cards, a letter from someone dear, a Buffalo nickel, a JFK half dollar and a prayer card from a funeral.

I always imagined some future family member finding the time capsule and wanting to know the significance of each item. I never imagined that the home would not remain in the family.

It's too late to rail against the red lining, predatory landlords and people who treat houses as disposable commodities. My old home is lost. I would rather see it torn down than see it suffer indignity and abuse. It may be erased from the landscape, but not my memory. There is a little hole in my heart. A piece lies buried in a vacant lot in a once thriving city. The house is gone, but not the home.

[Editor's Note: Permission was granted by Buffalo News to reprint this article.]

OUR LITTLE POLAND

Sturdy Immigrants Who Make Good Citizens

How They Live in Buffalo –

Three Settlements and Plenty of Churches –

Rapid Tide of Immigration.

This newspaper extraction was published in the Buffalo Illustrated Express, Sunday, June 28, 1891 and was researched by Denise Oliansky

Of all the foreign populations in Buffalo that are but partially assimilated, the Poles are among the least troublesome.

For the most part they are thrifty, moderately clean about their dwellings, willing to learn the language and adopt the customs of their new home.

As a people, the Poles have been subjected to much ridicule, but unjustly, for the reason, if for no other, that the work by which they gain a living is honest and hard, that of the common laborer or mechanic. There are no beggars or those next to beggars that render alleged services for what recompense is given voluntarily. In the Northern home of their birth they had to labor for the means of existence. They lack the air of device for *dolce far niente* ("sweet for nothing" or "sweet idleness") that characterizes peoples of Southern climes who have little to do to live in their own country and expect to have less to do in America. But they are the gainers, for they have the respect of the thoughtful in their adopted land, as well as the sympathy of the entire civilized world.

Polish immigration is grouped, naturally, in five eras –the revolutions of 1830, 1846, 1849 and 1863, and the immigration of recent years. The first influx of Poles to Buffalo was about 30 years ago and now the Polish colony numbers some 50,000. Four fifths of these came from Prussian Poland, and the remainder from Galicia or Austrian Poland and from Russian Poland. This proportion explains the thrift of the Buffalo colony. The Prussian Poles are economical, industrious, and excessively patriotic. Those from Russia have been coming mostly in the last two or three years.

We have three settlements of Poles, two in East Buffalo and one at Black Rock. The oldest and most thickly-settled of these is in the district bounded by Sycamore, Coit, and William streets, and the Central Belt Line. It is intersected by Fillmore Avenue, which is fast becoming as pretty a thoroughfare as the other parkways. In the new ward division it includes the 9th, 13th, and 14th wards.

The second settlement joins the first on the southeast and extends as far as Clinton Street and Bailey Avenue.

The third is at Black Rock, in and about the lower end of Amherst Street.

Each settlement has one or more churches, for the Poles, almost entirely Catholic, are an intensely religious people, as their finest church, the \$800,000 St. Stanislaus testifies. This church, of which the priest is Father Pitass, is situated at the corner of Peckham and Townsend streets, in the first district. This district also has St. Adalbert's Church, corner of Stanislaus Street and Rother Avenue, Father Mozerewski, and a new church building out Broadway near the Erie tracks.

The adjoining district has St. Casimer's Church, and the Black Rock settlement, which is three years old, has St. Trinity's Church.

Like other foreign populations, the dwellings of the Poles illustrate their gregariousness. Three or four families are sheltered in most of the houses of the common people. But the interior of [illegible] ..sees no sketches here of repulsive surroundings it is because the artist, after diligently prowling around, could find none.

'Twas not so always.

The writer well remembers a cold winter's day six years ago when his assignment was to visit the Polish Barracks which stood on Fillmore Avenue near Broadway. The tide of immigration from Poland was rolling into Buffalo with a rush then, and to accommodate the new arrivals a square of shanties, stables – what you will – was thrown up with the open side to the avenue. Destitution and dirt went hand in hand, and over all scarlet fever hovered. In rooms six by six lived four or five people.

In one room a mother was reading the Polish-church service to a slip of a girl stretched ill with the fever on a greasy narrow bed. Outside shone the bright winter sun, but inside the women and children were hovering about their tiny stoves, wrapped, some of them, in bits of rags and carpets.

Completing the inspection the reporter drew in long breaths of the pure air without, and drove away leaving behind all the scenes of squalor, and, as he hoped, all vestiges of the fever. When next he passed that way, some years later, the barracks had disappeared and in their place stood comfortable two-story frame houses.

In writing up the story of the morning assignment the word "Polack" occurred frequently, and keen was the reproof of the city editor as he told the tyro that the proper word was Pole. And yet Shakespeare in "Hamlet" makes *Horatio* say "He smote the sledded Polack on the ice." Still, Shakespeare said many things that people nowadays leave unsaid.

There are very few of the Poles who have been here for more than four or five years who don't own their own houses, or at least own them under a mortgage. And yet the total number of householders is not more than one-fourth the entire Polish population, so it may be seen how many thousands of the Poles have settled here since 1885.

Joe Bork is the most popular foreigner among

the Poles. For second place the honors are divided about equally between Charles A. Sweet and "genial" Henry Box. All of the three are heavy land-owners in the East Buffalo districts. There are two land associations whose members are entirely or largely Poles – the Home Land Association, and the Pulaski Land Association.

It is extremely doubtful if there are 5,000 naturalized Poles in Buffalo. They are too anxious to hustle for bread to care much for politics until the oleaginous ward statesman comes out and shows them the priceless boon of the ballot.

And that individual can do it, for the writer has accompanied him on some of these nocturnal trips during the season of the year when the days are waning.

Polish immigration is the heaviest in April and May – just in time for the great American institution of Moving Day. Their friends who have preceded them to the land of Canaan send them money or steerage tickets, if their faces have been too close to the grindstone to enable them to come unaided.

There are many wealthy Poles, quite a number, by dealing in real estate and mortgages having accumulated \$50,000 or \$60,000. The richest is Father Pitass, without a doubt, for his possessions are reckoned at nearly half a million. Then there is Jacob Johnson, a Pole with an English name, who lives on Peckham Street; F. Gorski who has a fine brick house on Townsend Street; A. Kakwszki who lives now on Peckham Street, but is building some fine blocks at the corner of Broadway and Gibson streets and will make his home in one of them; and M. Makowski who lives on Broadway.

Best known to residents of Buffalo and among the foremost of Polish professional men is Chevalier De Kontski, the musician, whose home is on Fillmore Avenue near William Street. Far removed from his countrymen, on Pearl Street, is J. de Zielinski, pianist, while on

(Little Poland: continued on Page 16)

Upcoming Events in WNY Polonia – Spring 2009

Presentation: The Story of Corpus Christi Church, Buffalo, N.Y.

On **Thursday, April 23, 2009** at 7:00 PM at the **Hamburg Public Library**, 102 Buffalo St., Hamburg, N.Y., three speakers from the “Friends of Corpus Christi” will discuss the importance of the church building and their volunteer efforts to keep it alive. They will also explain the connection between Corpus Christi and Hamburg. Jim Serafin, Marguerite Nelson, and Eric Sabadasz are the speakers.

PGSNYS May Meeting Speaker

Ted Smardz has arranged for Greg Kinal, a Social Studies teacher at Pembroke Central School to speak at our monthly meeting on **Thursday, May 14, 2009**. Mr. Kinal, a member of the Erie County Historical Federation Speakers Bureau, will present a history of immigration at the turn of the 20th Century.

7th Annual Polish Festival

“Hands Across the Border – International Entertainment Event” is the theme of the 7th Annual Polish Festival scheduled for **Friday and Saturday, May 29 and May 30, 2009** at the **Fairgrounds, 5820 South Park Ave. Hamburg, N.Y.**

The PGSNYS will host a display that includes our popular computer lookups of family surnames in the following databases:

- Localities in Poland where surname is concentrated
- Death notices published in the “Polish Everybody’s Daily” – “Dziennik dla Wszystkich”
- Burials at St. Adalbert’s “Old Cemetery”, Dale Rd. Cheektowaga, NY
- The PGSNYS Funeral Card Database
- Polish Businessmen’s Anniversary Album

Biographical sketches and photos

- Buffalonians serving in the Polish “Blue Army” – Haller’s Army

Jackie Gray will coordinate our efforts this year and volunteers are needed to assist at our table. Admission is \$5 per person and a complete schedule of events can be found online at www.polfunfest.com

St. Adalbert’s Basilica Reunion 2009

St. Adalberts will hold an **all-year reunion** on **Saturday, May 30, 2009**. You may tour the school and basilica from noon to 3:30 PM and enjoy free refreshments in the lower school hall where historical photos are displayed.

A Mass will be celebrated at 4:00 PM featuring the Chopin Singing Society.

The reception will be held in **Harvey D. Morin VFW Post, 965 Center Rd., West Seneca, NY**. A cash bar opens at 5:30 PM and dinner will be served at 7:00 PM, followed by live music. Tickets are \$25. and are in limited supply.

For more information, call Maria, 892-1369 or St. Adalbert’s Rectory, 895-8091 (9-12, Mon.-Thurs) or e-mail st.adalbertsreunion@yahoo.com They are requesting more photos for the display.

The Polish-American Arts Festival

The festival will take place on **July 17, 18, and 19, 2009** at the **Cheektowaga Town Park** on Harlem Rd. Folk artists, Polish bands and dancers, and ethnic cuisine and vendors will be featured. The PGSNYS will also participate in the festival.

Polish genealogist helps locals find their roots

By Kimberly Scherer, Voice Staff Writer

http://www.voicenews.com/stories/110508/loc_20081105008.shtml

Local Polish genealogy buffs were in for a treat last October when a genealogist from Poland made the transatlantic trek to Michigan to be a part of a seminar that offered tips on how to research their ancestry. Lukasz Bielecki's trip from Poznan, Poland couldn't have come at a better time. October was Polish American Heritage Month. Bill Krul, vice president of the Polish Genealogy Society of Michigan, was lucky enough to host Bielecki in his own home for one of the two weeks he was in the U.S. Krul, who admits that his hobby is something he could see himself doing fulltime, is the commander of the St. Clair County Sheriff's Marine Patrol. The Chesterfield Township resident has avidly researched his Polish family and has made a trip to the motherland twice.

"You don't know where you're going unless you know where you came from," Krul said. Bielecki said his interest with genealogy began when he was young with his own family history. The stories his grandmother told had an especially lasting impression on the young Bielecki.

"I wrote down what she

would say," he said. Eventually, he was able to piece together his family tree. The popularity of the Internet made researching even that much easier. "I found so many Polish origins in the U. S.," he said. Not unlike Krul, what started out as a hobby for Bielecki is turning into somewhat of a career. Bielecki has a PhD in biochemistry and maintains a day job in the field. A decade ago, he also started Discovering Roots with two other people.

Discovering Roots is a valuable resource for anyone researching their Polish lineage. Discovering Roots, which can be accessed online at www.discovering-roots.pl, offers a database for individuals to search old records. "I could help lots of people," Bielecki said.

Through Bielecki's own project, the Poznan Project, thousands of marriages have been copied from handwritten documents and uploaded into a searchable database on the Web site. Poznan is the largest city in western Poland.

"It started as an effort to index marriages from 500 parishes," Bielecki said. So far, he along with some 100 vol-

unteers have indexed a half a million names and counting. "If you just have the name, it will pop up with the right parish," he said of the database. "Many couldn't believe it could be done." Because Poland was Communist for a time, many ties were severed between families when family members moved to the U. S. "When it was Communist, it wasn't safe to boast about your American cousins," Bielecki said.

He said it wouldn't have been good if the Secret Police found letters from America. Bielecki said he found a document his grandfather wrote that stated he had no relatives in the United States. He said his grandfather's uncle lived in Chicago, but because of his status as an army officer, he didn't want any connections with the "enemy army" to be known. "He wrote it like that to prevent the Secret Police from finding out," he said. When Communism fell, Bielecki said, all of that ended, leaving a communication gap as wide as a generation. Often that reason makes it more difficult to search out relatives and ancestral locations.

**(Polish Genealogist:
continued on Page 15)**

(Polish Genealogist: continued on Page 14)

However, the Poznan Project helps to make that search easier.

In addition to the Poznan Project, Discovering Roots also offers translation services and roots tours. Krul knows firsthand how beneficial it is to have someone fluent in Polish lend a hand when searching a family history. "I called the local mayor and asked about Bill's family," Bielecki said. He said it could be difficult for someone who doesn't speak Polish to call a local mayor and ask if there are any residents living in their town with a certain last name. Bielecki said it didn't take long to find out that Krul's family was in fact, from that particular town.

"Without him, I would never have been able to find my family," Krul said. The roots tours offered by Discovering Roots will take someone to see the location where their family is from. Bielecki said the tour is often an emotional experience for those searching out their roots. Bielecki's Web site and services can be especially useful to residents in the Metro Detroit area, and Michigan in general, because so many residents have a Polish heritage. In fact, Detroit is known as one of the hot spots that the Polish immigrated to. Bielecki said the Great Lakes region in particular is where many Polish came to. "And then there were important (Polish) communities in Texas," he said. Perhaps the reason why they chose the Great Lakes area is its similarity to Poland. "The climate is similar, the landscape is very similar in Poland," Bielecki said of Michigan. Poland's not so distant history as a nation is one of trials and tribulations. For more than a century, Poland was swallowed by the Partitions of Poland. Austria, Prussia, and Russia each controlled a portion of Poland's territory. "Poland then became a part of German power," Bielecki said. "Poland existed in just the hearts of those." [unreadable]

After World War II, Bielecki said the Republic of Poland reemerged. "Poland has not yet disappeared," he said. The first line of Poland's national anthem says "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła,"

which means Poland has not yet perished. Krul and Bielecki said the words came from a time when Poland only existed in the hearts of its people. "They are a very proud people," Krul said. Krul is planning to share what he's learned about Polish genealogy research during the monthly genealogy meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Chesterfield Township Library, 50560 Patricia Ave. The program is called "Researching Your Heritage in Poland: A Personal Story." "I'll talk about my trip to Poland," Krul said, adding that he will also discuss how he was able to find his roots in Poland. As for Bielecki's first time in the U.S., he said he had a good time. Of the many things that he did during his two-week stay, he said the boat ride Krul took him on in the river was among one of his favorites.

**“Dziennik” Death Notice
Database Updated**

Many thanks to Ed Kornowski for adding 2000 new entries to the “Dziennik dla Wszystkich” (The Polish Everybody’s Daily) Death Notice Database.

If you would like to check the database for your family names, please send an email request to dziennik@pgsnys.org. We now have 30,104 entries.

PGSNYS WEBSITE NEW DESIGN

<http://www.pgsnys.org>

The Society website has been redesigned by our webmaster Susan Malyszka. There will be more improvements and features added in the coming months. We would like our website to be an asset to our membership and the genealogical community. Please visit our new website and tell us what you think. If you have any suggestions, corrections, or comments please e-mail Susan at webmaster@pgsnys.org.

(Little Poland: continued from Page 12)

Eagle Street near Michigan is the violinist Czerwinski. Dr. Marcin Hargwich, or, as he sometimes writes it, Hargurg (?), has a good practices on East [illegible] Street.

In M. Joseph Sadowski the Poles have a good newspaper man whose *Echo* is devoted to their interest. He is a graduate of the University of Law at Warsaw, Russian Poland, came to Chicago about ten years ago, and to Buffalo six years later. He had charge for two years of other Polish paper *Polak w Ameryce* (Polish in America), owned by Father Pitass.

The illustrations on this page are from excellent drawings by Paul King, a rising Buffalo artist who has been making thorough studies in the Polish districts for this purpose. [Contributor's note: there are three illustrations on the original newspaper page, but only one is legible and is presented here.]

**SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER**

POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE
12645 Route 78
East Aurora, New York 14052

RETURN REQUESTED

PLEASE CHECK YOUR EXPIRATION DATE

NOTIFY US OF ANY CHANGE OF ADDRESS