

PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988

SEARCHERS

NO. 65

SPRING

2014, ISSUE 1

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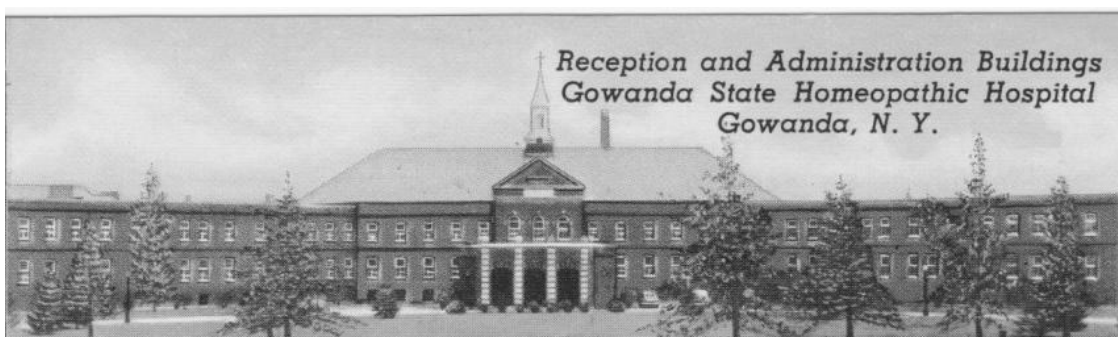
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Welcome Spring 2014!



Postcard depicting two buildings from the Gowanda State Homeopathic Hospital

Read the story at, 'The Gowanda State Hospital
and a Family Member Found' - Pg. 4

PGSNYS - FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988**

**FOUNDED BY
MICHAEL
DRABIK
(1950-2001)**

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 \$20 (\$25 Canada, \$30 other countries), and membership entitles you to three issues of the *Searchers* and participation in the PGSNYS Yahoo Group. As a new member you will receive an information packet to help you get started. The expiration date of your membership is on the mailing label of the *Searchers*.

Please remit your membership dues by check or money order to:

PGSNYS
c/o Chuck Pyrak
12 Grant Road
Snyder, NY 14226

Please send any changes to your postal or E-mail address to PGSNYS at the above address or E-mail: membership@pgsnys.org

Postal Mailing Address:
PGSNYS
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

If you are a member, but not receiving E-mail from the PGSNYS mailing list, please send an E-mail to membership@pgsnys.org

*Exceptions: July - picnic and December - Member Christmas party

2014 PGSNYS OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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THE SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER

For submissions to the *Searchers* newsletter, deadlines are as follows:

1st issue (Spring) - due February 15th for April mailing

2nd issue (Summer) - due June 15th for August mailing

3rd issue (Winter) - due October 15th for December mailing

Submissions to the *Searchers* (articles as MS Word doc; photos as .jpg)

should be sent via e-mail to:

denise.oliansky@gmail.com

PGSNYS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

It's hard to believe that as I write this we are a quarter of the way through the year already. After a long winter there are some exciting events on the horizon. We have a terrific lineup of guest speakers every other month this year, and in-between we have a research how-to series designed to help both beginner and experienced researchers hone their skills.

In an effort to establish or strengthen collaborations with other local genealogical and historical entities, vice president Dave Newman is presenting on Polish Genealogy in various venues this year, and a member of the Niagara County Genealogical Society is speaking at our June meeting.

We can also look forward to a tour of the genealogical treasures found in the Grosvenor Room of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, the PGSNYS picnic in July and, if sufficient interest is there, a couple road trips to enhance our dedication to Polish history and increase our awareness of genealogical resources available to us in New York State.

It is my hope that members become more involved by voicing their ideas, helping each other with research issues, and volunteering to help with the Dziennik digitization project and at the PGSNYS tables at upcoming Polish festivals and other events this year. It is through member participation that the Society can grow and accomplish its mission. Let's make this a great year! ~ Sincerely, Denise Oliansky

POTPOURRI

WITAMY! NEW PGSNYS MEMBERS

Katherine Tomasulo, West Seneca, NY

Brian Pokorski, Snyder, NY

Magda Miller, Buffalo, NY

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The dates for upcoming 2014 PGSNYS monthly membership meetings at 7 PM in the Villa Maria College cafeteria are on Thursday, May 8, June 12, July 10, and August 14.

An enthusiastic and sincere thank you to member Ed Madar for his exquisite new rendering of the official PGSNYS logo, as shown to the right.

PGSNYS member tour of the Grosvenor Room at the downtown Buffalo & Erie County Public Library on Saturday, May 3rd at 10 AM. Meet at 9:45 in the Grosvenor Room on the second floor of the library. Rhonda Konig will be our guide through the myriad of genealogical resources available.

June 12th PGSNYS meeting: Jeanette Sheliga of the Niagara County Genealogical Society will be presenting on *Newspaper Research: A Genealogical Treasure Trove*.

June 6th and 7th, the PGSNYS will have a table at the Polish Heritage Festival (PolFest) at the Hamburg Fairgrounds. Volunteers will be needed to cover the two days. Please see Dolores Ferguson or Pat Rooney.



The Gowanda State Hospital and a Family Member Found

by Barbara Golibersuch

*“It was believed
the whole future
life of the patient
may very well
depend on the
employees and
the care they
gave.”*

The Gowanda State Homeopathic Hospital at Collins, New York was opened Aug 9, 1898. The hospital was situated on 500 beautiful acres of open country, thirty miles south of Buffalo. The railroad station was one mile away (easy access from Buffalo). The hospital was created to afford homeopathic medical care for the treatment of the insane. Please note that patients were also sent there because no family members were able to take care of them. At its peak in the 1950's, more than 93,000 patients were in mental institutions statewide. About one-third of them wouldn't even be considered mental patients today, including people suffering from Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, and alcoholism.

The primary goal of the Gowanda Homeopathic Hospital was the welfare of the patient. It was believed that in the care of the insane the golden rule was doubly important, for at any time a similar affliction might come to one's own relatives. Rudeness, ridicule, violence, or bad language were forbidden. It was believed the whole future life of the patient may very well depend on the employees and the care they gave.

The buildings constructed during 1898 were a power house, water tower, water supply pipes and one hospital wing known as the West Wing. Soon a laundry, kitchen, dining room, storeroom, and connecting corridors were added.

In 1901, it was suggested that two wings be built, one for each sex. Capacity then increased from 200 to 710 patients. In 1904, further construction created a superintendent's residence, a staff house, a home for 150 nurses, and an amusement hall with seating for 750 patients. Over the years, nearly 100 more buildings would be built as the institution census rose to over 4,000 patients. By the late 1950's, the Gowanda Psychiatric Center, as it was then known, and the State's other psychiatric hospitals housed nearly 100,000 mentally ill New Yorkers.

Then began what we now call 'deinstitutionalization.' With the development of antipsychotic drugs, previously chronic cases could sometimes be restored to functioning and discharged. Often patients were put into 'halfway houses' or transitioned into care centers. In other cases, community care options eliminated the need for admission to State

psychiatric hospitals.

Gowanda, with only 600 patients in 1982, would be the first mental health institution to yield land to the Department of Corrections (DOC). A section of the center was converted into a medium-security prison. In 1994, it was announced that the DOC would take over the entire complex, closing the doors of the psychiatric center. The Gowanda Psychiatric Center became the Gowanda Collins Correctional Facility.

Almost 1,200 people, whose bodies were not claimed by relatives, were buried in the Gowanda Psychiatric Center cemetery on Wheeler Road. The cemetery is not visible from Wheeler Road and is only accessible by a one-quarter mile long dirt road that leads to the cemetery and Clear Creek. It is a cemetery without a sign. There are no names on the graves, only numbers are engraved on a stone or metal marker indicating a final resting place. New York State does not even know for sure who most of the people are who are buried there. A second cemetery is on Route 62 and has a small wooden sign marking it. Both cemeteries were in very bad condition. A plan called Operation Dignity was started to improve conditions and, in 2008, the Mental Health Association of Cattaraugus County was working to restore the cemeteries. Patient records were to have been sent to the Buffalo Psychiatric Center, but records before 1960 were destroyed.

“There are no names on the graves, only numbers are engraved on a stone or metal marker indicating a final resting place.”

Finally Found

My family connection with the Gowanda Homeopathic Hospital is through my great-grandmother, Veronica Ciesielska. My search for Veronica started in 1977. I found that her first husband, John Piontkowski, died in June 1903. Together they had 12 children, only seven of whom survived to adulthood. In July of 1903, Veronica married John Tomczak, who was eleven years her junior and who had four young children of his own. There was one girl named Helen and three boys. Veronica had a total of six children at home in 1903. By 1905, John's three boys and Veronica's son were listed as Orphans at the Sacred Heart of Mary Asylum. Apparently Veronica and John were having problems. It has been rumored in the family that during this time Veronica's daughter, Agnes, spent time in a convent. In December of 1914, John Tomczak died.

In the Spring of 2013, I was finally able to find my great-grandmother's death certificate. The hunt was over. Her last name was incorrectly spelled Domczak instead of Tomczak. The certificate indicated she had been a resident of the Gowanda State Hospital from November 1915 until she died there in January 1917. It said she died from typhoid fever, but I say it was a broken heart.

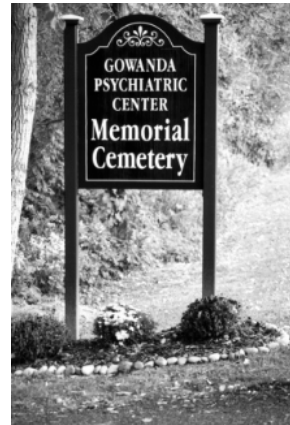
I did write to the Buffalo Psychiatric Center at 400 Forest Avenue to see if there were any records for Veronica, but they responded that records for that time period were, in fact, destroyed. Veronica is now at rest in St. Stanislaus Cemetery.

Information about the Gowanda State Homeopathic Hospital from Phil Palen and the Collins Historical Society. Cemetery pictures from Find-a-Grave.com.



Gowanda State Hospital cemeteries. One section (top left photo) has rusty metal markers with only numbers on them. Another section (top right photo) has stone or concrete markers with numbers and either crosses for Catholics (left photo), wreaths for Protestants, or Stars of David for Jews

Recent restoration efforts included the erection of a new sign to identify the cemetery located on Route 62



In 1994, Gowanda State Hospital became the Collins Correctional Facility

**In Remembrance:
Rita R. (Podlas) Prabucki and
Dr. Leonard Amborski**

The PGSNYS mourns the loss of two long-time PGSNYS members in January, 2014. We offer our deepest condolences to the families of Rita R. (Podlas) Prabucki, who passed away on January 17th, and Dr. Leonard Amborski, who departed this life on January 8th. The following obituaries were published in *The Buffalo News*.

PRABUCKI - Rita R. (nee Podlas) of West Seneca, NY, January 17, 2014, beloved wife of Edward R. Prabucki; dearest mother of Margaret Dunn, Michael, James, Bernard (Darcy), Mary Jane Cutrona, Karen (Robert) Adams and the late Edward Jr. (Carol) and Mark Prabucki; fond grandmother of nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren; sister of Lucille (William) Ess, Diane (Gerald) Dubiel and the late David Podlas and Bernadette (Richard) Franklin. Friends may call Thursday and Friday 2-4 and 6-8 PM at the PAUL A. KLOC BLOSSOM CHAPELS, INC., 4680 Clinton St. (corner Borden Rd.), West Seneca (668-5666) where funeral will be held Saturday morning at 8:15 AM and from St. Gabriel's Church at 9:00 AM. Friends are invited. Sentiment may be expressed through a contribution to St. Gabriel's Renovation Fund in memory of Rita Prabucki.



Published in *The Buffalo News* from Jan. 22 to Jan. 24, 2014

AMBORSKI - Dr. Leonard E. Of Fox Run, Orchard Park, NY, formerly of Amherst, NY, January 8, 2014, beloved husband of the late Irene P. Kazmierczak Amborski; dearest father of Donna (Dr. Ronald) Eckert and David (Leslie) Amborski of Aurora, Ontario; fond grandfather of seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; brother of Alice (late Joseph) Brownsey and Christine (Eugene) Tytka and the late Dolores (late Raymond) Kazmierczak. Friends may call Sunday 2-4 and 7-9 PM at the PAUL A. KLOC BLOSSOM CHAPELS, INC., 4680 Clinton St. (corner Borden Rd), West Seneca, (668-5666), where a funeral will be held Monday morning at 8:45 AM and from St. Gabriel's Church at 9:30 o'clock. Friends are invited. Sentiment may be expressed through a contribution to the Alzheimer's Association or Canisius College in Memory of Leonard Amborski.



Published in *The Buffalo News* from Jan. 11 to Jan. 12, 2014

Growing The Tree Upward: A Unique Perspective on the Family Tree

by Pat Rooney

“The roots are the deceased ancestors. Branches are the living. They bear the fruits of years of labor from the roots buried in fertile ground.”

Now that the data gathering is done and the family roots are spreading in several directions and some growing very deep, what is the next step?

Why, it is time to spread those branches upward into the sunshine! Time to give names to all those leaves!

Think about it. The roots are the deceased ancestors. Branches are the living. They bear the fruits of years of labor from the roots buried in fertile ground.

While the branches that are connected to the trunk are the current relatives, the tender stems sprouted from those mature branches have many leaves inscribed with the names of the future ancestors! The names go down and upward. Into the ground as roots and upward into the sky as branches. The new generations spread into the sky dome, transforming the tree into a mighty Tree of Life. But not only one tree, but a whole forest! Imaging it is a tricky process.

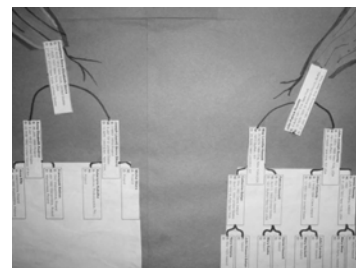
Why not give it a try. Be creative. Try making a tree to illustrate this fact. Add a pencil drawing of a tree over the names or make trees that intertwine so as to illustrate the concept of “the two shall become one,” as I did with the assistance of my eight-year old granddaughter. She inspired the intertwined top tree holding her generation.



Family Forest

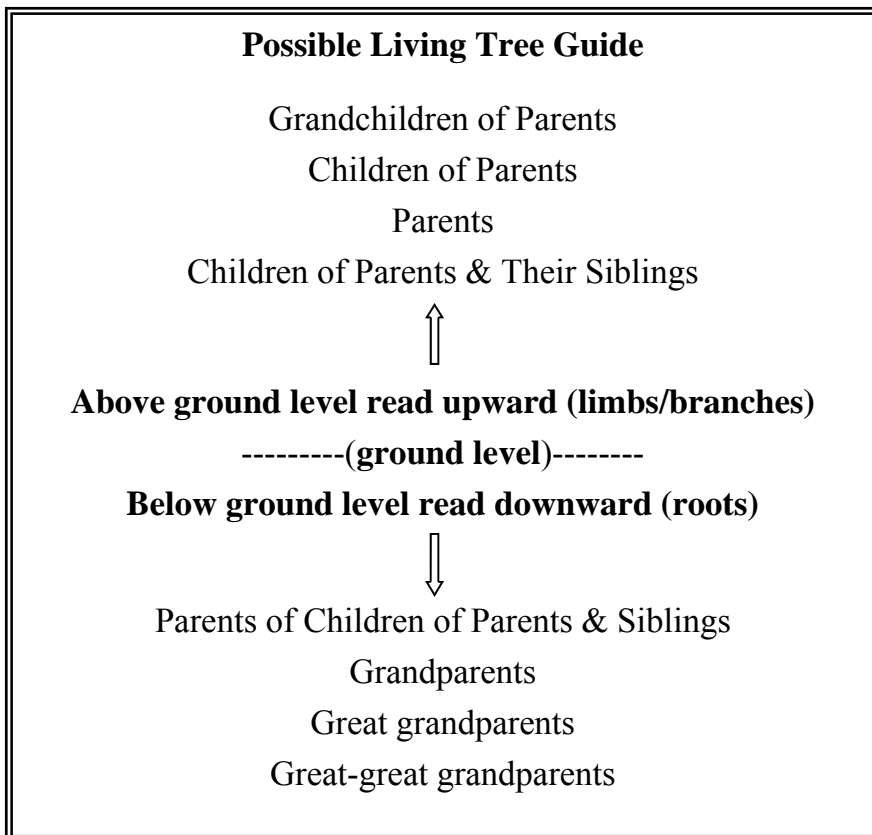
This is my first humble attempt at creating my Family Forest.

Notice that there are three trees with black roots sprouting from the trunks. The underground roots are represented by white tags at the bottom. On the



Roots

top root tags are written names and data of my



“Remember, these trees are living and keep evolving.”

deceased parents on the left and my husband Joe's deceased parents on the right.

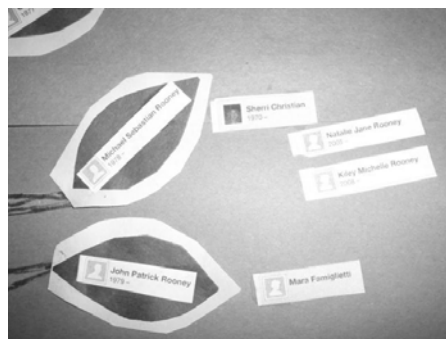
Remember, these trees are living and keep evolving. As they grow, trunks thicken when generations pass into the next world and their branches slowly sink into the ground to become part of the root system below ground.



Joe's leaf

Above the ground, the trees multiply and are the visible living. New branches sprout from the trunk and grow upward. From the branches smaller stems shoot and leaves burst forth. And, yes, some die before they mature and they will become part of the root system prematurely.

Take time to create this living tree. Expect it to take time and effort with lots of starts and stops.



Leaves of our children and grandchildren

Ways to proceed

In order to create this living tree, data and pictures (which are optional) need to be gathered mostly from family. Arrange interviews to make videos, secure photos with names, and/or keep a notebook to jot down stories. Always have the

“When writing down a family story, get several points of view, because, like any news story, everyone remembers it differently.”

notebook handy while attending family gatherings. Have a box ready for collecting pictures. Keep a camera available. Some people will whip out old and new photos unexpectedly. Grab your camera and take a snap shot immediately! You don't need the original, just a good, clear picture.

The stories won't be put on the tree, but should be saved in an album or notebook or on video.

While ancestors inscribed names in the family Bible, new technology has made it easier to save all types of history for future generations; almost too much of it. Beware of becoming an addict of information! One good picture is better than hundreds of duplicates and/or poor quality ones.

However, with this technology, comes a responsibility. It needs periodic updating. Like all things in life, change is constant. Just as languages have faded and evolved, devices keep improving and some become obsolete too quickly. Keeping a hard copy is still a good idea, so keep it simple.

Mankind has saved data forever. However, what was saved on stone tablets had to be transcribed to parchment. What was chiseled with rod and hammer was later set to paper using pen and ink and later a printing press. Then came moving pictures and now videos. Who knows what is next!?

Keeping this in mind, consider what is truly important to preserve. Use any means that is comfortable and affordable. Let go of the rest. Remember, keeping one good picture is better than having ten poor ones or too many duplicates. Even God kept the Ten Commandments brief.

Begin with the basics. Write down family names, dates and stories. Set up dates to interview family members in a comfortable setting, like the kitchen, and with only a few people. Remember to keep track of people by insisting everyone use first names and not pronouns like Auntie or Grandpa. Use surnames! And no fighting! Keep it civil. (wink) Make sure everyone has your email address and/or phone number. Once the gray cells are stimulated, the memories will flow like a creek after a heavy rain!

When writing down a family story, get several points of view, because, like any news story, everyone remembers it differently. And by all means, don't 'correct' the person's version! Just record what you hear and tag who is speaking. Having a Timeline available is helpful, too. It will jar memories. Be sure to date the interview, and record where the interview took place. Include location! Years down the road no one will know what the house address was and sometimes not even the state or country. Have a non-family member read the story, because they will know what is missing. They are your best editor!

Be prepared to have people become secretive, leave out facts and

mix events and dates. The living are very protective and emotional. They will disagree. Although they love sharing gossip, no one wants to be accused of being wrong or judgmental.

Speak of good times and sad ones. Remember the politics of the day, Faith practices, and surprises. What the next generation wants is an interesting story, and if that means expanding or coloring the facts a little, so be it. Just keep it civil and spin some humor into it where possible. No one wants to ruin someone's honor or good name, so keep children home with a babysitter. Enjoy playing with the older family members one more time.

Another source is the local library and local newspapers, which can also be found on the Internet. Key-in family names on sites like Google and research what pops up. There is a lot of free information out there! Seek it out.

Remember to check those school and college yearbooks, wedding announcements, business announcements about promotions, and graduation ceremonies. Share with others, you will be surprised who is sitting next to you on a plane, train, bus, or restaurant counter!

Not only will the stories give a sense of family, someone is liable to remember a family member for the Tree. Maybe a premature baby who died, or a relative who left and was never heard from again, or who changed his or her name. Maybe adding a little note to each leaf might make your Tree even more alive!

Preserving the Past means moving upward by recording the Present as it becomes Past so the Future can enjoy the Past.



*“Maybe
adding a
little note to
each leaf
might make
your Tree
even more
alive!”*

Beginners' Latin 1086 – 1733:

A practical online tutorial for beginners

Dick Eastman's email newsletter of 3/1/2014 provided this useful information.

Many old documents in Europe and the in British Isles were written in Latin. That presents a challenge to genealogists who wish to read the information. The National Archives (of Great Britain) has an online tutorial that provides a lot of assistance. The tutorial covers Latin as used in England between 1086 and 1733, when it was the official language. After 1733, official documents were written in English. Please note that this type of Latin can be quite different from classical Latin. Knowing Latin will help you to read documents from this period.

No previous knowledge of Latin is required. This tutorial is suitable for everyone who wants to learn. It provides tips on learning Latin, a 12-session tutorial, reference (which includes word lists, common problems, dating Latin documents, etc.), and documents on which to practice. Check it out at:

<http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/latin/beginners/>

Member Moments

Analysis of a Photo of Carl and Francisca Dysarz: My Paternal Great-Grandparents

by M. Dolores Dysarz Hausch

My only picture of Carl and Francisca Dysarz, my paternal great-grandparents, was taken at Joseph Sowinski & Co. Studio (as was printed on the bottom of the original photograph) located at 867 Riopelle St.,

Detroit, Michigan, just down the street from their house. The photographer is listed in the 1893 Detroit City Directory as 'J. Sowinski and Stanislaw Piotrowski, Photographers.' From 1894-1896 he is listed as only 'Joseph Sowinski, Photographer, h. same.' In 1897, Sowinski moved his studio to 376 Canfield. Therefore, I believe the photo to have been taken about 1895, which would have made the couple 63 years old at the time. I was extremely happy, and fortunate, to have received this treasured photo from my cousin, Dorothy Malewski Benson, of Buffalo, New York.



Carl and Francisca
Dysarz

Taking my 10x jewelers loupe, I studied the original picture carefully. Seated on a bamboo chair, my great-grandma Francisca wears no jewelry except for what appears to be a pin on the ribbon under her chin, which ties the 'fascinator' (a knitted headcovering made with worsted and mercerized cotton yarns) around her head. Additional ribbons form a crown at the top, and just a bit of hair shows above her forehead. The lace collar of her heavy-looking dress peeks out on each side of the bow. I noted the amount of toe room in her shoes that show beneath her dress. She holds a well-worn book with embossed designed cover, which was probably used as a prop. Her stature appears to be petite.

Great-grandpa Carl's suit looks like a heavy wool worsted fabric,

and his tie appears to be of a thick knit fabric. The back cover of the book he holds reads, 'Approved School Books' at the top, but the rest of the print is too tiny to make out; no doubt this also is a prop. As he sits on a four-legged stool, he appears to be a tall man. His fingernails look dirty, the hands of a hard-working laborer. They do not appear to be dressed in 'Sunday best.'

Their only home in Detroit was at 865 Riopelle Ave. By the 1900 U.S. Census they owned their home free of a mortgage. It was their residence until each of their deaths. They had arrived at the port of New York on May 14, 1882, with five of their children, having left their home, a daughter, and the graves of three of their children in Wyschin, West Prussia. Their two eldest sons had immigrated earlier. I found them on the passenger manifest of the S.S. Polaria, with their surname wrongly spelled as 'Dizasch/Disasch.'



The March Blizzard of 1888

by Denise M. Oliansky

During a winter that seemed unrelenting, western New York endured yet another snow storm on March 12, 2014. It approached blizzard status as wind gusts were clocked at 40-50 mph, the heavy snow fall lasted for several hours, and the temperature was decidedly frigid. In the end, depending on one's location, snow fall amounts ranged from about 8 to 18 inches. Generally, it was not really any worse than other storms we weathered this winter. It was significant to many merely because it followed a couple days of relative warmth, making it that much more onerous when hopes for an early spring were dashed yet again.

But our storm stirred a connection to another storm in history, that being the 'White Hurricane' or the 'Great Blizzard of 1888' which, on March 11th and 12th, devastated the eastern seaboard, sweeping onto the coast at Baltimore, Maryland and moving northward to ravage New York City in a terrifying and deadly display of nature's fury. It too followed a period of relative warmth. People were out and about enjoying what many hoped was the end of winter; underdressed and unprepared for what was to come later in the day. More than 400 people in the Northeast died during the Great Blizzard, the worst death toll in United



States history for a winter storm. Because of the extensive damage to the above ground trains and telegraph, phone, and electric wires, the storm actually changed the future face of New York City. The plan for the subway system and the decision to bury electrical wires were direct results of this storm. It was also the first major storm in history to

“The storm’s impact must have been unimaginable, and certainly must have made them question the sanity of their decision to come here.”



**Celia Mary
Zimmerman**
(date unknown)

be widely documented through photographs.

What makes the Great Blizzard poignant to me is that 1888 was the year my great-grandparents, Marcellus and Antonina (Pulczynski) Koralewski immigrated to the United States through the port of Baltimore. The storm was not an issue for Antonina and their six children who immigrated with her, because they arrived on August 8th. However, Marcellus had immigrated earlier in the year and, since I cannot find his ship manifest, I do not know the exact month he arrived. But, regardless, it makes me think about all the immigrants who arrived in Baltimore or New York City right in time for the Great Blizzard and how it must have affected them, both physically and emotionally.

They had left their homes and everything behind, traveled on uncertain seas for two weeks in less than ideal conditions aboard crowded ships, arrived on a foreign shore, and endured customs and the anxious uncertainty of being allowed into the country, only to find themselves immediately engulfed in one of the top ten worst blizzards in history. The storm’s impact must have been unimaginable, and certainly must have made them question the sanity of their decision to come here. It is a testament to their steadfastness and endurance that they survived this and many other hardships, securing a future in this county for their descendants.



Celia Mary Zimmerman Kazmierczak

Submitted by Dolores Szalasny Konopa

***Editor’s Note:** Dolores is a 2nd cousin once removed from Audrey Kazmierczak Williams, the daughter of Ellen Kazmierczak who wrote an article titled, Stories My Mother Told Me. Ellen’s mother was Celia Mary Zimmerman Kazmierczak. Dolores received permission from Audrey to share this excerpt from Ellen’s article.*

My mother Celia’s father, Joseph Zimmerman, came from Poland as a young man and was raised by relatives here in America. He was actually at least part German, which is not surprising since the Polish/German border has been very fluid for centuries. However the only thing noticeably German about him was his name, Zimmerman. Culturally, he was Polish. He was the youngest of 13 children in a family that had a minor title, but no money. His father, Henry L. Zimmerman, felt he would have no future in Poland and, since he could scrape together only enough

money to send one of his children to America, he sent the youngest.

It is not clear whether Celia's mother, Rose Gosielewska, came to America as a child, or if she was actually born here. However, like Joseph, she lived in the Polish community in Buffalo, New York; she on Coit Street, he on Townsend Street. They eventually met, married, and began to raise a family. They had seven daughters and one son.

Celia's family was not totally dirt poor, but with eight children they were not rich. Her father, Joseph, was a supervisor at a local factory, possibly one of the steel mills or auto plants. They lived on Coit Street, where they and their neighbors created, as much as possible, a replica of the small villages most were born in. The children all spoke Polish and ate Polish foods, such as kielbasa, kieszka, pierogi, and babka. Their diet also included cabbage, potatoes, dairy products, and homemade black bread. Like most of their neighbors they did not have electricity, central heat, or indoor plumbing.

Celia was very happy as a child, but later expressed no desire to go back to those days. "People really stank back then," she told me. Since they had no indoor plumbing, bathing was strictly a Saturday night ritual. First they had to drag the tub into the kitchen and heat the water on the stove. Then the whole family took turns bathing, one after another. They did not change the water in-between each person; they only added more hot water. When everyone was done, they dragged the tub back outside and dumped it in the alley. Also, they did not change clothes as often as we do today. Since all clothing was washed by hand with a washboard, they only wore one or two outfits in a week. Daily grooming consisted of quickly washing their face and underarms by the kitchen sink. Of course, as Celia pointed out, since everyone smelled pretty much the same, it was not quite as socially unacceptable as it would be today.

Celia and her brother and sisters helped with the household chores and went to the local Polish Catholic school, possibly Saint Stanislaus. Most entertainment was of the sort they made for themselves, such as singing and playing games. Her brother, Joe had a favorite trick he played on the rag man. The rag man was rather like a mobile thrift store. His horse drawn wagon was loaded with old clothes, rags, pots and pans, and assorted odds and ends. He bought and sold rags and anything else he could scavenge. Waiting until the man was busy dickering with a customer, Joe would take the horse's reins and reverse them. When the rag man pulled left on the reins, the horse would turn right. Joe thought this was great fun, especially when the poor man could not figure out why his horse was acting backwards! Celia also recalled an uncle who was considered rich because he actually owned a car. He would come over on occasion and take all the kids for a ride and even buy them all an ice cream cone.

Just as in the old country, the real neighborhood leader was the Catholic priest. Polish Catholics are noted for their devotion, and in those days practicing their faith meant regular fasting, abstaining from eating meat on Fridays, going to confes-

“Celia and her brother and sisters helped with the household chores and went to the local Polish Catholic school, possibly Saint Stanislaus.”

“Bells rang to wake you up, to send you to breakfast, to tell when to go to school, and when to do chores.”

sion every Saturday, and to Mass every Sunday. The final authority on any moral question was always the priest, whose authority was absolute. Because of this, the Church contributed to the tragic end of this happy phase of Celia's life.

Celia's mother, Rosalia, had already borne eight children when she began to have trouble with her pregnancies. Each baby she gave birth to was bigger than the preceding one, and none of them survived. Although some lived a few hours, most were stillborn. The doctors told her she must not have any more children, because it was so dangerous to her health, and the babies would not survive anyhow. However, since the Catholic Church did not allow the use of birth control she went to the parish priest for advice. He told her to trust in God and that whatever happened would be God's will. The priest also told her that no exceptions were allowed to the rules against birth control. The use of birth control was a mortal sin and, if she tried to prevent pregnancy, her soul would burn in hell forever. Well, she believed the priest. She had four more pregnancies and four more stillbirths. Rosalia died with the last one, leaving eight orphaned children and a husband who was unable to cope.

Celia was only about eight or nine years old when her mother died in 1927. Her father tried to keep the family together, but he became ill and was unable to care for them. He died in 1931. The children were split up and sent to live with relatives for a while. After the stock market crashed in 1929, and the Depression began, her relatives were also unable to support the extra children. They were put in St. Anne's Home for Children (or possibly, Immaculate Heart of Mary Home on William & Kennedy Streets in Cheektowaga), which was an orphanage run by a group of Polish Catholic nuns called the Felician Sisters. Nita, Celia's oldest sister, got married, but died in childbirth only a year later. Two other older sisters, Hedwig (Sister Mary Anise), and Sophia (Sister Mary Seraphine), became Felician nuns. Many years later, Mom speculated they might have done this both to keep from having to raise all their siblings and also from fear of dying in childbirth themselves.

Celia spent the next few years at St. Anne's Home. She described her life there as like being in jail. The nuns at the orphanage ran everything on a tight schedule signaled by bells. Bells rang to wake you up, to send you to breakfast, to tell when to go to school, and when to do chores. The children never left the building, not even to play. The cafeteria, school, and dormitories were their entire world. Mom tells several stories about her life at this time. She learned to read, write, and speak in English from a nun who was only one step ahead of the class, learning the English lessons at night to be

able to teach it the next day. As the Depression grew worse, the nuns would go to the bakers and butchers and beg for food. They were given stale bread, old cake, beef fat, soup bones, and anything too spoiled to be sold. Mom told me once that until she left the orphan home she never knew that angel food cake wasn't supposed to be green!

Although some of the nuns were kind, many were actually rather mean. One year, for example, the Mayor had arranged for all the orphans to receive a present for Christmas. Since this was her first Christmas present in years, Celia was very excited. She opened her package and was delighted to find a toy tea set. It wasn't very fancy, just a small tin teapot with a tin cup and saucer. Only a few minutes later one of the nuns saw it, decided she wanted it, and simply took it away.

Celia finally left St. Anne's on her 14th birthday. She went to live with her Aunt Celia, her mother's sister. Aunt Celia only wanted her because by this time the State was paying a small stipend to help support orphans, and Auntie wanted that check. The money was intended for clothes, food, and lodging for Celia, but Auntie kept all the money. Celia was required by law to go to school and required by Auntie to do the majority of the cooking, cleaning, and laundry for the family. Since the State ended her support checks on the 16th birthday, Auntie gave her one week to find a job or leave. Fortunately, by this time her older sister, Rita, had married and was able to give her a place to stay for a while.

Celia quit school and found a job working in a restaurant. Eventually, as the years passed, she worked, and met my father, Chester J. Kazmierczak, possibly at one of the St. John Kanty dances. They got married in Saint John Gualbert's Church in 1942. Chester was the son of Stanley Kazmierczak and Victoria Szalasnny. Celia and Chester had five children. Celia had become an excellent cook and continued to work in restaurants. She taught her children the old Polish customs that she remembered from her earliest years. I am proud to say that in 1977, she received her G.E.D. and, in 1978, she earned a degree in Secretarial Science.

“She taught her children the old Polish customs that she remembered from her earliest years.”



Wedding picture of Celia Mary Zimmerman and Chester Kazmierczak

Polish Genealogy Databases Tool: Indexed Databases & Websites

The 'Polish Genealogy Databases Tool' was compiled by Zenon Znamirowski, the owner and operator of PolishOrigins.com, and is reprinted with his permission. This page will be added to the PGSNYS website, which will allow for an easy link to the various sites. Searching through the sites from Poland can be a little tricky. At the bottom of the page, under Practical Hints, are instructions and tips for navigating through the Polish sites.

A privately owned Web site, very rich in data and information: <http://stankiewicz.com>

A large project of digital library of old Polish historical documents: <http://fbc.pionier.net.pl/owoc/>

A Polish history forum: <http://historycy.org.pl>

Our own website: <http://PolishOrigins.com>

Al's Wierzba Polish-American Genealogy Research blog: <http://polishamericangenealogy.blogspot.com/>

Index of the Parishes/Records of Poland: <http://parafie.genealodzy.pl>

Vital Records Indexing Project by Polish Genealogical Society: <http://geneteka.genealodzy.pl/>

Lublin Genealogical Society. Indexes of many vital records from Lublin area parishes: <http://ltg.pl/content/category/1/24/62/>

Pomeranian Genealogical Association. Indexes of many vital records from Pomerania area parishes: <http://www.ptg.gda.pl/>

Great Poland Genealogical Society "Gniazdo" including many valuable resources from Poznań area: <http://www.wtg-gniazdo.org/>

Historical and Genealogical resources of Great Poland Nobility from 15-20th centuries: <http://teki.bkpan.poznan.pl>

Polish genealogy and heraldry: <http://ornatowski.com/>

NEW Monuments and memorable places of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania: <http://radzima.org/eng/>

NEW Polish Genealogical Society headquartered in Warsaw. The websites includes resources of indexes of vital records from hundreds

of parishes, databases, articles, forum discussions: <http://www.genealodzy.pl/>
NEW Polish Genealogical Society of America headquartered in Chicago. The website includes databases, education center, news about genealogy events: <http://pgsa.org/>
NEW Reach Polish genealogy resources, including online transcribed vital records, passenger manifest pages, tombstone inscriptions, and more: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~polwgw/>
NEW JewishGen – Selected pages of the Special Interest Group of regions covering the old territory of Poland: <http://www.jewishgen.org/>
NEW Information about indexes of parish records and scans stored on various Polish websites: <http://www.ksiegi-parafialne.pl/>
NEW Noble Families of Western Mazovia: <http://www.nobiles.republika.pl/>
NEW Kresy (Borderlands) library including scanned vital records of State Archives in Lithuania: <http://www.mm.pl/~wwmkiewicz/>
NEW Polish Air Force in WWII: <http://polishairforce.pl/>
NEW The Internet Polish Genealogical Source: <http://www.ipgs.us/>

Visit also Polish Genealogy Databases Tool - Practical hints: http://polishorigins.com/document/pgd_practical_hints

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❧ **Olde Photo Album** ❧



Leonard Post & Anna Wojcinska July 3, 1923

Leonard H. Post married Anna Wojcinska on July 3, 1923 at St. John Kanty Church. This was his first of three marriages. Anna died on Jan 8, 1933. Leonard was a brother to Barbara's maternal grandmother. He was also the father of Leonard H. Post Jr., after whom a local VFW Post is named. Leonard Jr. was the first soldier from the Cheektowaga area to die in WWII.

Submitted by Don & Barbara Golibersuch

SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER
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