

**PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988**

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SEARCHERS

NO. 68

SPRING

2015, ISSUE 1



Michalina Buczkowska's Grave Marker in 1955
From left: Michalina's Nephew David, Niece Susan,
Nephew Arthur, and Aunt Clara

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
ATTN: Membership Chair
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

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, Christmas party for members & guests

2015 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,

2015 is well underway as this issue of the *Searchers* hits the mailboxes. Blue skies and warmer weather are a welcome change from our cold, snowy winter and serve to energize us for several projects and events that are in the works this year.

The PGSNYS has received a great honor being nominated and chosen for the *Am-Pol Eagle* 2014 Citizens of the Year Awards in the category, Community Organization. The awards ceremony is at St. Adalberts on Saturday, April 25th, following 5:30 Mass. Please try to attend if you can.

The PGSNYS has already held tables at a Polish Happy Hour on February 17th, the Polish American Congress Święconka on April 11th, and the WNYGS Genealogy Fair on April 18th. We are becoming quite a popular attraction at other community organization events, so likely more tables will be scheduled throughout the year. We will also have our usual table at the Polish American Arts Festival in Cheektowaga in mid-July. Volunteers to help at these event tables are always needed and welcome!

Initial planning meetings have occurred with the WNYGS for the '2016 Queen City Genealogy Conference,' and a venue is currently being sought. If we proceed, many volunteers will be needed for this endeavor as the year progresses.

Long story, short — there are numerous opportunities to get involved this year! So please...step up, have fun, and share your genealogy stories, findings, and learning with members and guests at Society meetings and at events in the community. Happy Spring!

~~Sincerely, Denise Oliansky

POTPOURRI

WITAMY! NEW PGSNYS MEMBERS

Sandra Maciejewski Porter
North Kingston, RI

Julie Szczepankiewicz
Hopkinton, MA

Richard & Hope Kraus
Buffalo, NY

Stanley Brescoll
Canton, MI

Jennifer Gilbert
Orchard Park, NY

Nancy Stonebraker
Lancaster, NY

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The dates for upcoming 2015 PGSNYS monthly membership meetings at 7 PM in the Villa Maria College cafeteria are Thursday, May 14, June 11, and August 13. There is no regular meeting held in July as we take a break and enjoy our Society picnic on Saturday, July 11.

Upcoming Presentations:

June 11 – **Molly Poremski, Librarian, 'UB Lockwood Library's Polish Room – its History, Purposes, and Genealogy Resources'**

August 13 – **Jim Lawson, Kindred Quest – 'Breaking Through Brick Walls'**

Mark your calendars for **September 12, 2015** – PGSNYS 7th Annual Genealogy Fair at St. Gabriel's Church, Elma, 11AM—3 PM

Michalina Buczkowska: The Rest of Her Story

Editor's Note: *The Winter 2014 issue of the Searchers detailed the story of PGSNYS member Edward Kornowski's successful campaign to restore the wooden Cross grave marker of Michalina Buczkowska (1898-1914) in St. Adalberts old cemetery on Dale Road.*

Sometime last year, PGSNYS member Maureen Gleason posted in Find-A-Grave on Michalina Buczkowska's entry about the efforts that were underway. On March 14, 2015, Maureen received an email from Dave Brent (aka Buczkowski), a nephew of Michalina. Dave provided family photos and a moving story of Michalina's life and what happened to her. Dave's sister, and Michalina's niece, Susan Brent also provided some details about Michalina and her family. Now, with the wooden Cross restored and dedicated on November 1, 2014, it is a touching tribute to be able to share the story of Michalina's brief life, in the words of her nephew and niece. (Use of photos and story permitted by Dave Brent.)

Michalina and
her father (seated)



Dave Brent:

My name is Dave Brent (aka Buczkowski), and I live in Torrance, California. Michalina was my aunt, who I never met since she died 27 years before my birth. See the attached photo of her and her father, Walter (sitting in a chair), and friends (or relatives) in 1902.

I am thrilled to see what you put on the Internet (on Find-A-Grave) regarding my aunt. You have filled in a major (missing) portion of my ancestry. I visited her gravesite back in August, 1955, but since that time I couldn't remember the location in Buffalo. See the attached photo of the gravesite in 1955 [*Searchers* cover photo]. The photo shows (left to right): me, my sister Susan, brother Arthur, and mother Clara.

Michalina died early (16 yrs) and tragically. Michalina was the first child of my grandfather, Walter Buczkowski, and grandmother, Ida Buczkowski (née Spiewak).

When they moved from Poland in May, 1900, they settled in Buffalo. Michalina loved the arts and poetry. When she was a teenager she would join her father, a carpenter, on home building projects.

One day she joined her father who visited a partially completed home in Buffalo. I believe she did this several times. My grandfather sent her to the home to tell one of the carpenters that he was using the wrong wood. He did not take this too well. Being upset he threw a wood board at her, which struck Michalina's foot and crushed her toe.

My grandfather took Michalina to a hospital for treatment. Apparently she stayed in the hospital for some time. Eventually my grandparents brought her home to nurse her. Gangrene set in, so they took her back to the hospital where the doctors told him that her injured foot would have to be amputated. Michalina and my grandfather wouldn't allow that, so he took her back home. She was in great pain. Again they attempted to nurse her. After a brief time she passed away from blood poisoning.

In sorrow, my grandfather went into his workshop and worked continuously for three days on the wooden cross until it was finished. He then placed it at Michalina's gravesite. For some time he suffered from a deep depression. A few years later the Buczkowski family moved to Detroit, where my grandfather continued building homes on the eastside of Detroit.

It was at this time that my father, Anthony, took over Michalina's roll and would visit various building sites with his father. Eventually my father became a well-known architect in Michigan.

Through the years, the wooden cross was mysteriously maintained by some unknown person (or persons). Till this day we don't know who maintained it.

Again, thank you for the work you have done and what you are planning on doing to rebuild the wooden cross.

Susan Brent:

Thank you for your interest in my deceased Aunt. She was greatly missed by my Grandfather and Grandmother, her sisters and brothers. I have heard from my father...the story of her last year...many times. She lingered in a hospital almost one year. There was little hope for her as there were no antibiotics back then. The hospital treated her doing the best they could.

She had a very bad infection that gradually spread throughout her whole leg. And it swelled to twice its size. Then gangrene set in. The doctors said the only way to save her was to amputate her entire leg. She was in constant pain and was near death at the time. They did not know if she would survive the operation. She did not want to go through the operation. My grandfather said she had suffered enough. He could see she was close to death. She wanted to go home. So my grandfather bundled her up and carried her out of the hospital. The doctors did not approve of it, but could not stop them from leaving.



Michalina (far right) with her parents and siblings

She spent the evening surrounded by her family and was very happy to be home.

During the night my grandparents woke up because they heard her crying. They cradled her and comforted her until she passed away a short time later.

When my father came downstairs in the morning he was told she had passed away during the night. All her sisters and brothers grieved at her passing. She was the oldest child.

I think a picture of her was placed in a frame on the base of her grave marker. My grandfather was a finish carpenter and made the large cross. He learned his trade in Poland. He was drafted by the Russians and served in the Russian Army under Czar Nicholas. He was a lieutenant in the Reserves. He defected from the army and brought his baby daughter and wife to live in the United States.

He was 35 and my grandmother, Ida, was 25 when they arrived here. My grandmother's sister, Emiline, was living in Buffalo. Her married name was Nowak. Their maiden names were Spiewak. There might be some Nowaks buried in the [same] cemetery.

**Michalina's First
Communion**



The New York State Family History Conference September 17 - 19, 2015

If you have never been to a genealogy conference (or even if you have), the New York State Family History Conference is worth checking out. It is held every other year in Liverpool, NY, which is just outside of Syracuse, making it conveniently located for all New Yorkers. Even more important is its focus on genealogical research in New York State.

The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society and the Central New York Genealogical Society are pleased to announce that the 2015 New York State Family History Conference has been chosen by the Federation of Genealogical Societies as one of their regional conferences. The Second New York State Family History Conference is increasing in size and duration and will feature three simultaneous lecture tracks and more exhibitors. The Federation of Genealogical Societies is sponsoring the first day of the conference. At present, other conference sponsors include FamilySearch, findmypast.com, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the New York State Library and Archives, the Capital District Genealogical Society, the New York Public Library, and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation.

The 2015 NYSFHC Conference will be three days long and consist of three concurrent tracts, and will run from Thursday, September 17, 2015 through Saturday, September 19, 2015. There will also be a pre-conference research day. Thursday's programming will be organized and hosted by the Federation of Genealogical Societies. The Conference will be held at the Syracuse/Liverpool Holiday Inn, located at 441 Electronics Parkway, in Liverpool, N.Y.

Members of the Central New York Genealogical Society and the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society are eligible for discounted conference rates.

Registration opened on February 11, 2015; there are discounts for early registrants.

Visit the conference website at <http://www.nysfhc.org/> for more information.



Four Tried and True Systems for Organizing Genealogy Research

by **Denise Levenick, The Family Curator**

(Used with permission and credited to www.TheFamilyCurator.com)

Genealogists may not see eye to eye on the Perfect Organizational System for data and sources, but they will certainly agree that they would rather spend time finding ancestors than filing papers. The challenge is to create a system that suits the personality and habits of the user and is easy to create and maintain.

Here are four systems worth investigating –

1. Organize Your Paper Files

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

Genealogical Research Associates recommends using a straightforward numerical system based on Marriage Record Numbers in conjunction with your genealogy database software program. An illustrated tutorial provides step-by-step instructions for setting up and filing papers.

2. Finally, Get Organized

<http://blog.dearmyrtle.com/2009/01/finally-get-organized-jan-2009.html>

Dear Myrtle (speaker and podcaster Pat Richley) describes her system of 3-ring notebooks in the first monthly installment of the series “Finally, Get Organized: January 2009 Checklist.” The monthly PDF checklists highlight different aspects of genealogy work, from organizing files to time management. Find the organizing blog posts by typing “checklist” in the “Search This Blog” search box.

3. Organizing Your Files

https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Organizing_Your_Files

Folders, binders, and overall concepts are all discussed in a comprehensive article on the FamilySearch Wiki. Beginning with a discussion of



Everything in its
place

the value of organizing your files, through organizing principles, setting up a system, maintaining your files, and using document numbers for filing, this article lays a good foundation for any genealogy filing system.

4. How I Organize My Genealogy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrWf6VmKVCs&feature=related>

Elyse Doerflinger is a college student and experienced genealogy blogger and speaker. She has recorded a series of YouTube videos featuring step-by-step instructions for setting up a genealogy filing system and staying on top of the paper piles. Browse ‘videos by Elyse90505’ for more simple, effective filing tips.

If you haven’t found ‘The Perfect System’ yet, don’t despair; keep looking and asking questions. And, as you investigate all the many possibilities, use a simple system that helps you stay in control of your research, so you can spend your time finding – instead of filing – your ancestors.

Ten Tips for Organizing Genealogy Research

1. Sheet Control – Use standard 8 ½ x 11-inch paper for all notes and printouts.
2. Stay Single – One surname, one locality per sheet for easy filing.
3. No Repeats – Avoid errors; write legibly the first time.
4. Dating Yourself – Always write the current date on your research notes.
5. Be Color Clever – Distinguish family lines with different colored folders, binders, tabs.
6. File First – File one research trip or effort before starting the next one.
7. Ask Directions – Write your own filing instructions; a big help when you take a long break.
8. Supply Closet – Keep a stash of folders, plastic sleeves, tabs, printer ink.
9. One File at a Time – Work through paper piles steadily; the mess didn’t happen in one day.
10. KISS – Keep It Simple, Silly! Use an easy to set up, easy to maintain system.



...needs some work!

Member Moments

Please Help Preserve Records for the Future

by Nicole Pohancsek

Most of the 1890 US census -- lost forever. Many WWII Military records -- lost forever. Part of Castle Garden Immigration records -- lost forever. Holy Mother of the Rosary 1800's and early 1900's records --lost forever. In researching my family history, I have run into these and other brick walls due to records being lost in fires or floods. There is no way to bring these records back, and there was only one copy of these records. What would you do if I told you that there was a way to help preserve Buffalo records for our future generations? And you could do it on your own time? And all you needed was a computer with internet access and Microsoft Excel? Could you spare a couple hours a week to help out?

A couple years ago, with permission from Father Ted Bocianowski, PGSNYS members Charlie Penasack, David Lodyga, and Nicole Pohancsek photographed the records from the St. Stanislaus and St. Adalbert parishes. We have had a few volunteers helping to transcribe these records, but it has been a slow process. We are currently looking for additional people to help. You can work at your own pace, and you do not need to know how to read Polish to help. If you are interested in helping, please email Nicole at nikkii911@hotmail.com.

These records are not being published online, but instead, as we complete each batch of records, the files are being given to the secretary at St. Stanislaus Church. This helps her do record searches for any interested parties. The secretary has all the digital copies of the St. Stanislaus books, so she no longer has to find and look through the actual books to do research. Some of the books are as old as 140 years and are literally falling apart when touched.

Why should we care about these records? These are our history. Back in the 1800's you did not have to register births with New York State, but they were recorded in the Catholic records. These could provide the missing link you have been searching for. Especially in those cases when



you do not know the exact birth date or parish they were attending (if your ancestors moved around a lot like mine).

At St. Adalberts we had the opportunity to photograph the pew rental books from early in the parish history. I was proud to find my 3rd great-grandfather, Albert Nowaczewski. I almost fell off my chair when I found Albert's father-in-law, Joseph Gosciniak. I never knew when Albert's wife, Katherine Gosciniak, came to the United States. She was born in Poland in 1875, and sometime during the 1880s she came to the United States (I am assuming through Castle Garden, but I have never been able to find the records). Most of the 1890's census records were destroyed, so I was not able to verify her living with her parents. In May of 1890, at the age of 14, Katherine married Albert Nowaczewski at St. Adalberts, and I was able to find this record in the St. Adalberts records we photographed. It also gave me Katherine's parents' names. No record of marriage was filed with New York State.

You can see how important church records can be, especially in the early history of Buffalo. Please consider helping us out to preserve this history. If you know of any church interested in having their records photographed, please contact Nicole at nikkii911@hotmail.com. We do this free of charge, and all the records go back to the church.

“Blue On Sunny Days, Chipper On Rainy; Anomaly Due, Tis Said, To Boarder”

by Daniel A. Domino

One day while I was doing genealogical research, I went onto the Fulton History website which is a digital collection of old newspapers. The website url is www.fultonhistory.com. Into the search engine of that website, I typed in ‘Mroz and Titus Street.’ Mroz is my Grandmother’s maiden name, and Titus is the street where her home was located.

The website found an article from the *Buffalo Courier* dated Tuesday, February 22, 1910. I was shocked when I read the article. It was written like an article that would appear today in *The National Inquirer Magazine*.

Let me tell you the cast of characters mentioned in this article. Mrs. Kurek is my Grandmother’s sister. In 1910, she would have been 23 years old. Martin Kurek was her husband, and Teofil Katanowski was the boarder. Martin Mroz was her brother. The four of them all lived in the same house at 224 Titus Street.

The article began by stating that the brother, Martin Mroz, was on trial in criminal court charged with second degree assault, due to beating up Teofil Katanowski, who was the boarder at the Kurek home. We learn from the article that Katanowski worked in a brickyard and could not work on rainy days.

“He used to spend his time on those days making love to Mrs. Kurek,” said Martin. “When the sun shone brightly we could see that she was depressed, but when the sky was threatening and dark clouds hovered above, Mrs. Kurek would wear all kinds of smiles, for she knew she could spend

"I never had any trouble with my wife," said he, "until we took boarders."

spoon time with Katanowski, who could not work if the weather was bad. The more gloomy the day was, the brighter was Mrs. Kurek."

Martin Kurek was placed on the stand and told what he knew of the fight. After relating the incidents that led up to the fracas, he said that he and his wife were now estranged. "I never had any trouble with my wife," said he, "until we took boarders."

Martin Kurek testified in favor of Martin Mroz, while his wife testified for her alleged Romeo. Interesting enough, Mrs. Kurek's mother testified in favor of her son-in-law. She said that she lived with her daughter for a number of years and that she left the house when her daughter refused to cease admiring Katanowski.

The article does not tell the final disposition of the trial. I will try looking at that newspaper on dates after the 22nd of February. It is interesting that genealogical research can lead to the discovery of ancestors who were either sinners or saints.

Maciejewski from Tylice

by Sandra M. Porter

Oh, what a difference 20 years makes! In 1991, I started documenting family history, because my family bought a personal computer and I found a program, called Brother's Keeper, to make sense of it all. My original intention was just to document what our family, especially my parents, already knew. Since both my parents were the youngest children of their families, there was a lot of family lore to record.

I started with the basics—birth, marriage, death. Births and deaths only happened once per person, so I expected the dates to be consistent across records. But they were not always. I kept finding gaps and mistakes. Somehow, the older women in some families grew younger as they aged. When I started listing the birth dates I was given, my great-aunts were younger than their baby brother! I needed to find corroborating sources.

Pre-internet, most of my research was personally visiting record repositories. In some cases I actually went to town, city, and county halls and viewed the original documents. I could do this from my home in Rhode Island with my husband's Yankee and Irish relatives, and would take time during visits to my visits to Buffalo to research my Polish family there. I learned that many records had been microfilmed by the Church of Latter Day Saints, so I could order microfilm records from afar and view them

locally.

The early records of St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Roman Catholic parish were among those that had been microfilmed, so I was able to view these baptism, marriage, and death records at the LDS Family History Center. I originally found them hard to read because the mix of Polish and Latin was unfamiliar to me. Where was Boruss, and why were so many of the parishioners born there? The other locations I saw were Galicia and Posen. I needed to learn more about Poland and my Polish heritage.

My elementary school, Our Lady of Częstochowa in Cheektowaga, had been very proud of a series of pull down maps that showed the shifting boundaries of central Europe. I naively thought of them all as “Poland,” but the geopolitical boundaries were more fluid. In the 1880s, when my father’s families came to the United States, there was no country called Poland. My Polish ancestors came from Germany, the Kingdom of Prussia! The Latinized version of Prussia was Borussia.

My great grandfather Jan Maciejewski died in 1896. I was able to back into the date because he was listed with his family in the New York Census of 1892, his last child was born in 1894, and my great grandmother was a widow in the 1900 US census. The St. Stanislaus death record listed his birthplace as Tylice. I wrote it down, but was not able to locate the place in the 1990s. In 1999, Poland reorganized its administrative divisions, into voivodeships (provinces), powiats (counties), and gminas (municipalities), and I became even more confused.

Research is much easier in 2015. A Wikipedia search identifies that:

“Tylice may refer to the following places in Poland:

Tylice, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (south-west Poland)

Tylice, Brodnica County in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship (north-central Poland)

Tylice, Toruń County in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship (north-central Poland)

Tylice, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (north Poland)”

Based on some things my father had said about the city of Wrocław (Breslau in German) before his death in 1995, I tend to believe that his parents’ families came from Silesia (Śląsk in Polish, Schlesien in German). Another Wikipedia search notes:

“Tylice [tiˈlit͡ɕe] (German: Thielitz) is a village in the administrative district of Gmina Zgorzelec, within Zgorzelec County, Lower Silesian Voivodeship, in south-western Poland, close to the German border.[1] Prior to 1945 it was in Germany. Following World War II the native German populace was expelled and replaced by Poles. It lies approximately 5 kilometres (3 mi) south-east of Zgorzelec and 140 km (87 mi) west of the regional capital Wrocław.”





Zgorzelec is the western-most powiat in the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship.

The Voivodeship of Lower Silesia is called Dolnośląskie in Polish. Zgorzelec is the western-most powiat in Dolnośląskie. This area did not become part of the country of Poland until after World War II, when the Potsdam Agreement set the Polish-German border at the Oder and Neisse Rivers (the Oder-Neisse line). The town on the Lusatian Neisse River (Lausitzer Neiße in German, Nysa Łużycka in Polish) was divided between the two countries. The western part in Germany is Görlitz, while the eastern side in Poland is Zgorzelec. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the town councils coordinate urban management and people may again travel freely on the bridges that cross the river.

You may have seen them. According to Wikipedia, “*Due to the historical parts of the city, many movie-makers have used the various sites as backgrounds. Quentin Tarantino shot the movie-in-a-movie Stolz der Nation (Pride of the Nation) for Inglourious Basterds (which incidentally purports to be Sicily) on the Untermarkt and Obermarkt in Görlitz’ oldest parts of the city. Other films shot in Görlitz include the 2013 war drama The Book Thief and the teen years in The Reader. Görlitz was used as the primary shooting location for the Wes Anderson film The Grand Budapest Hotel, with Görlitz standing in for a resort in the fictional Eastern European country of Zubrowka.*”

Google maps shows Tylice is just southeast of the town of Zgorzelec and other nearby villages.

Thus far, I have clues and some evidence, but I do not know if this is the right Tylice. I need to do more research! The St. Stanislaus record says that Jan Maciejewski’s father’s name was Tomasz. My great-grandfather was fifty when he died, so he was born about 1846. Will I be able to find records of his birth? Will they be in German, Latin, or Polish? Before I started this research, I had never heard about Lusatia or the Sorbian people near this region. Will I find that they are part of my heritage?

In researching family history, finding one piece of the puzzle leads to many more. When I started, I thought I would only document what my parents knew. How that has changed!



My Endless Search

by Edward Prabucki

As Memorial Day will soon be upon us, I will dedicate it to the two in my family who served in the military with a strong desire and much stronger conviction. First, my Uncle Franciszek Prabucki, who sought to serve and free his nation from a dictatorial rule by another nation, and my brother, Bernard, who served for the love and freedom of his nation. Each one was lost in the wars in which they served; although, this was never confirmed, since their remains were never found.

While residing in Buffalo, NY, my Uncle Franciszek volunteered to serve in the Polish Blue Army. He was dispatched and served with the Allies in WWI (1917-1918). After the Armistice, he was discharged, but rather than returning to Buffalo, he volunteered again to serve in the Polish-Russian War in 1919-1920.

My father continued to correspond with him until the Battle of Vistula, when my Uncle's letters ceased and all mail was returned as undeliverable. My father, for months on end, wrote endless letters to the Polish Blue Army, and with unwanted sadness their reply offered him little to no hope. No remains were found.

Time went on, and the world moved on into WWII. My brother, Bernard, was drafted and served with the U.S. Air Force. In December of 1943, he was sent to England. In January, 1944, his crew was sent on a mission over Kiel, Germany and was lost. A Missing In Action telegram was sent to my parents from the War Department.

My parents decided to correspond with Lt. Bulawa, who had trained with my brother. He offered my parents hope as he mailed a photo of a B-24 that was forced down after a mission over Kiel, Germany in January 1944, and pointed out my brother and his crew in that photo. I still have that photo in my Treasure Chest. Correspondence continued in the hope it would end the pains of yesterdays, but in each letter the pain returned and became ingrained in my parents until all hope was gone. No remains were found.



*"I kept all I
could find with
the hope of
someday
compiling a
family history."*

Polish Connection

by Patricia Rooney

Sometimes the most unexpected events are the most rewarding. I find this to be truest when doing genealogy.

As a young teen, I was always interested in my roots. I had grandparents who traveled across the mighty Atlantic Ocean in the early 1900's from Poland to Buffalo, Erie, New York. They spoke a strange language, which seemed to be reserved for adult conversations, with an occasional story told to my cousins who knew this language too.

Because of their reluctance to speak of their Polish homeland, a burning desire flared in me as I aged to adulthood. For them, the past was unimportant. It was over. For me, it was a mysterious puzzle to be solved!

Whatever their reason, I could not ignore their silence, a bond connecting their generation but separating them even from their own children. I could not accept their insistence to erase relatives from their children's lives as a good thing, unless the past held evil events.

What I did not understand was that in the 1900's children were 'seen, but not heard.' Children were not to be burdened with the problems of the adults, like war and hatred. Children were meant to obey their parents blindly, work hard, play little, learn in school and be grateful for all they had.

However, some of us cousins dreamed of finding out more.

For me, it meant keeping a journal of any thing I could glean during family events. Most of the information was filled with vague stories. So it was a real thrill when the computer was invented and the Internet made available new worlds! Although my efforts to research Polish history were limited because Poland did not advance as quickly as some countries, I kept all I could find with the hope of someday compiling a family history. This took about twenty years!

Then to my surprise one day in 1979, we received an invitation to our Uncle Al's farm for a family party because a Filipiak relative was crossing the Atlantic Ocean! We were going to connect with our European relatives.

Unfortunately, there was skepticism about their true connection to us. What proof did they have? These people were from Germany, not Poland.

Uncle Al insisted that they were true family because his father had received letters from them over the years. And he would know because his father and mother lived on the farm with him for many years. However, most of the letters were gone since his parents died in the sixties.

However, he did have other proof. The relatives had pictures sent to them by Uncle Al's father, Joseph Filipiak.

For me it was a difficult day because there was so much confusion. I had eleven children of my own and several cousins to reconnect with as well. We did connect though and promised to write.

It wasn't until Joseph returned again in 1996, with his wife Elizabeth and his Uncle Joseph, did we truly connect. What helped was having email and that Joseph and Elizabeth spoke very good English. Joseph was also willing to help with my research and teach me about European history. By 2000, we were sharing so much!

Gradually, we discovered some family surprises. The family tree he constructed was incorrect, mostly because generations were mixed up, but he had original Polish documents that aided us to find the correct facts. My facts were mostly from the LDS library microfilm from Poland. We realized that Joseph's grandfather moved from Poland in 1900 to Germany for a job and never returned.

When I reached a point where I could not find my grandfather's baptismal certificate, I knew I would have to travel to Poland and search the civil records. My grandfather told the family that he was born during a December snow storm and, since his father couldn't get to register his birth for a few days, his recorded birth is therefore incorrect.

With the help of my aunts who were still alive, I was able to secure some documents that gave me the names of towns where my grandparents lived. Added to these were a copy of the baptismal record of Lorenz Filipiak, my grandfather's uncle, and several photos, printed and saved on my laptop computer. These gave me the church and location of the residence of the Filipiak family. The other clues came from the members of the Polish Genealogy Society of NYS in Buffalo, New York. By the time we made our travel plans, I felt very confident I would be able to find my grandfather Josef Andrzej Filipiak's civil birth record and maybe know the area where he lived until 1909.

We flew to Poznan, Poland and rented a car. It was a two hour trip to Wrzesnia. After we settled in our hotel, we drove a short distance to the hall of records. The office was right at the top of the entrance stairs. I handed a paper written in Polish explaining what I was seeking. The woman shook her head, "No." Using hand signals, I asked if she could write the address down. Down the stairs and into the car. We followed the GPS directions to the town hall in Kolaczkowo, which was in the middle of a large flat farming area. The trip was about three miles through small hamlets, past a school and into the town hall parking lot.

I took a deep breath and entered the yellow plastered building, climbed the stairs and followed the female voices to the end of a long hallway. As I entered the

"When I reached a point where I could not find my grandfather's baptismal certificate, I knew I would have to travel to Poland and search the civil records."



**Pat with Mateusz
Maserak**

small office, I spoke in my best Polish. “I am seeking records for Josef Andrew Filipiak, my grandfather.”

The three women stared at me and then one told me in her best Polish to sit down as another woman raced out the door. Another woman opened a book and pointed to the name of Marianna Filipiak and gestured that this is the oldest person she has and that I have to go to Poznan for Josef.

Suddenly a tall young man appeared and said, “I speak English. I am Mateusz Maserak. Do you have an uncle who fought in WWI? Jan Filipiak?”

“Yes, I know him as Johanna Filipiak. He died in the war.”

Mateusz said, “Me, too! My great-grandmother is Marianna Filipiak. Jan is a hero!”

As we struggled with language, the secretary brought up a web page on the computer. I opened my notebook of family history and shared pictures I brought of family and the church where my grandfather was baptized. Mateusz waved his hands and told me to sit down and wait for him.

He disappeared and returned with a copy of his family tree. We compared trees, and yes, we were family! There was my grandfather's name next to Jan.

Then he told me to come back tomorrow at 9:30 AM and he would take us to all the places we want to visit. He would bring the school English teacher and we would meet his grandmother.

By this time my head was spinning. My heart was so filled with joy and excitement!

After the secretary made copies of my documentation, and she made copies for me of what Mateusz had for me, we said goodbye and promised to be prompt tomorrow.

Of course we arrived early. Waiting for us was the Mayor, who sat with Joe in the front. We were so happy to have a large car.

Our first stop was the cemetery where we learned more about Jan Filipiak's heroism and place of honor in Polish history. After photographing several family graves, we went to visit the churches where my relatives were baptized and married. What a



**Mayor Wojciech Majchrzak
at Jan Filipiak's grave**

thrill that was!

The area where my grandparents lived came to life as I recollected the family stories told to us about their life on a 900 acre farm. Meeting my father's cousin, Stefania, brought tears to both of us. She shared that her mother wrote to Joseph until his death in 1963. She told me how happy she was that we found them and that we are reconnected again!

I sat down with the family, opened my laptop and shared what I could of our lives in America. The time sped too quickly by! We exchanged email addresses and swore to keep in touch, which we have! In fact, not only do we write emails, we send letters, share on Facebook, and we Skype.

My Polish will never equal their English, but that is okay. Our love is the only bond we need as we deepen our family connection.



**Family! - Mateusz, Stefania,
Miroslava, Krystyna**

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❧ Święconka 2015 ❧



Members Patricia Rooney, Dolores Ferguson, Laurel Keough, and Denise Oliansky attended and had an information table at the Polish American Congress WNY Święconka on April 18, 2015 at the St. Stanislaus Social Center.

Above, the Święconka table (left) and a packed house enjoying the delicious dinner!

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