

POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE

**PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988**

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SEARCHERS

NO. 70

WINTER

2015, ISSUE 3



Wroclaw Poland

DESTINATION...

POLAND!

Poland would be a wonderful place to visit this festive time of year...or anytime!
By chance, three of the 'Member Moments' articles in this issue relate to members' experiences on their trips to Poland. Their stories begin on Page 6.

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* and
coincides with the anniversary date of when you joined the Society.

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

PGSNYS
c/o 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 (annual picnic) and December (Christmas party for members & guests)

2015 PGSNYS OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

PGSNYS EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: Denise Oliansky
Vice President: David Newman
Secretary: Dolores Ferguson
Treasurer: Chuck Pyrak

PGSNYS TRUSTEES

Maureen Gleason
Patricia Rooney
Pierre LaJoie
Sherry Sojka
Jim Ciulis

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Searchers Denise Oliansky
Library Laurel Keough
Media Maureen Gleason
Membership Chuck Pyrak
Hospitality Rita Hider & Don &
Barbara Golibersuch
Special Events Dolores Ferguson
& Patricia Rooney

Webmaster: Chuck Pyrak

Historian:

Searchers is a publication
of the Polish Genealogical
Society of New York State,
ISSN #1528-672X
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THE *SEARCHERS* NEWSLETTER

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

1st issue (Spring) - due March 1st for April mailing
2nd issue (Summer) - due July 1st for August mailing
3rd issue (Winter) - due November 1st 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,

As another year comes to an end, my holiday wish is that every PGSNYS member, near and far, benefited in some way from the Society's efforts to meet your family research needs. I truly appreciate the time and work put in by the Board and every member who contributed in any way this past year. As we continue to grow and become a popular addition to other Polish and genealogical organizations' events, we increase our opportunities to introduce the community to the joys of family history research.

The November elections brought some changes to the Board. I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to Patricia Rooney and Pierre LaJoie for their years of service and contributions to the Board, and also to welcome Maria Slomczewski, Hank Kozlowski, and Charlie Penasack to their new Trustee roles. I would also like to welcome Donna Ciulis to her new role as Membership Chair and to thank Chuck Pyrak for his many years of superbly accomplishing the responsibilities of that position.

I look forward to leading the Society for my final year as president and hope that the momentum and growth we have seen over the past couple years continues. As more members step up and accept the reigns of leadership, the Society will benefit from new ideas and perspectives that will enable it to remain viable, productive, and accomplishing its mission for years to come.

I wish you all a blessed and Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Wesołych Świąt, Bożego Narodzenia i Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!

~ Sincerely, Denise Oliansky

POTPOURRI

WITAMY! NEW PGSNYS MEMBERS

Marie Ulrich	Debora Zielinski	Linda Nowakowski	Daniel Kulinski	Nancy Ann Foley
Buffalo, NY	West Seneca, NY	Cheektowaga, NY	Cheektowaga, NY	Buffalo, NY

Ruth Fiorello	Shirley Kern	Sharon Dombek	Sharon Isham	Christine Kahr
Akron, NY	Blasdell, NY	Amherst, NY	Depew, NY	Lake Oswego, OR

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The dates for upcoming 2016 PGSNYS monthly membership meetings at 7 PM in the Villa Maria College cafeteria are Thursday, January 14, February 11, March 10, and April 14.

2016 Board Election results (photo on page 20): President, Denise Oliansky; Vice President, Sherry Sojka; Secretary, Dolores Ferguson; Treasurer, Chuck Pyrak; Trustees: Maureen Gleason, Jim Ciulis, Maria Slomczewski, Hank Kozlowski, and Charlie Penasack.

In January, 2016, the PGSNYS will send out the latest Membership List to everyone who provided us an email address. If you do not have email address, you will receive the Membership List in the mail with your April issue of the *Searchers* newsletter. Email is the most efficient and cost-effective way for the Society to provide information to its members. To help save the Society some dollars, if you do not have an email address, please consider setting one up. If you do not have a computer or smartphone, you can set up a free email account on a computer at your local library, where you can check for new emails at your leisure.

If you do not wish to have your contact information in the Membership List, please contact the Society by email (membership@pgsnys.org) or postal mail (address on Page 2) before mid-January.

2015 PGSNYS Projects, Programs, and Participations

In 2015, the PGSNYS became a not-for-profit corporation in New York State and also applied for federal 501(c)(3) tax status (pending)



Member and new Board trustee, Hank Kozlowski, and his accordion entertained us at our annual July picnic and December Christmas party

Projects

***Dziennik dla Wszystkich* (Everybody's Daily) Newspaper:**

Forty-two rolls of microfilm, containing over 51,000 images and covering the years 1911-1927, have now been digitized. An OCR program will be selected soon that will enable scanning all the issues of the paper for your surname requests.

Polish Church Records:

Nicole Pohancsek, Charlie Penasack, and others continue to index the St. Adalbert's and St. Stanislaus church ledger books. Anyone wishing to help index the records, please contact Nicole: npohancsek@gmail.com.

Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral Polish National Catholic Church Cemetery:

Restoration continued this year using ground probing radar to locate buried headstones. Much unearthing, setting upright, and repairs were performed on the recovered stone markers. Transcribing the inscriptions was done as well, and a database was created containing the names and dates of the deceased. A PowerPoint presentation of the ground probing radar results was provided by Buffalo State University Anthropology Department Professors to the church members.

St. Stanislaus Roman Catholic Cemetery:

Barbara Ruppert has photographed over 65,000 headstones and indexed the names and locations into a massive volume. A descriptive map and unique direction guide has been created by her to easily locate either a headstone or unmarked plot. Not only are these gravesites being posted to findagrave.com, but also to a website recently (or soon to be) developed called 'Barb's List.' Using this database will enable you to locate a gravesite in St. Stanislaus Cemetery much easier and faster than walking the cemetery trying to find its location on your own.

Programs (Guest Speakers)

April 9th - Rhonda Konig - *Breaking Old World: Finding Foreign Places of Birth in America Records*

June 11th - Molly Poremski - *Univ. of Buffalo Lockwood Library Polish Room - History, Purpose, and Genealogical Resources*

August 13th - Jim Lawson - *Overcoming Obstacles and Brick Walls in*

Your Genealogy

September 12th - Dr. David Kendall - *When Descendants Become Ancestors: The Flip Side of Genealogy*

Participations

February 17th - Polish Happy Hour at Potts Deli & Grill

April 11th - Polish American Congress of WNY Świeżonka at Saint Stanislaus Social Center

April 18th - WNYGS Genealogy Fair, downtown library

April 25th - Am-Pol Eagle Citizens of the Year Awards Ceremony at Saint Adalbert Basilica - the PGSNYS received the award for Community Organization

July 16-19th - 37th Annual Polish American Festival, July 16-19, Cheektowaga Town Park

September 12th - PGSNYS Genealogy Fair - St. Gabriel's Church, Elma

October 17th - 2015 Family History Seminar, Maple Road LDS Family History Center

October 25th - 2nd Annual Zupapalooza (Polish Soup Festival) sponsored by the Polish American Congress WNY division at the Knights of Columbus, Father Justin Post, Cheektowaga

November 1st - All Soul's Mass and Polish Ancestor Day - Resurrection Mausoleum at Saint Stanislaus Cemetery



Cheektowaga Polish Arts Festival



Getting ready for Zupapalooza



PGSNYS Genealogy Fair



PGSNYS Am-Pol Eagle Citizen of the Year Award

Member Moments

A 2015 Trip to Poland to Teach English to Polish Kids

by Douglas King Sr.

I love my Polish heritage. In the past 10 years or so I have made huge strides researching my KRZEMIEN family tree. My mother was Elinore KRAZMIEN. You probably noticed the different spelling. So far I have found living family with five variations in the spelling on what would be considered primary and official documents. Add to that census and other sources, and I found nine variations. That increased the difficulty of the research because, at the time, I did not know the actual original spelling. I started doing my tree in the early 1960's and only recently found the major breakthrough to locating the birthplace of my great-grand father and great-grand mother in Poland. That has sparked an insatiable interest in me for all things Polish.

My membership in PGSNYS goes back about five years. Since I joined, I have started taking Polish language lessons in night school, I have attended many festivals, and I even went to dance class to learn how to do a couple Polish dances properly. Almost all of the Polish Happy Hours find me in attendance, and I have even volunteered to help at a few of them. I have visited the Polish Arts Club and went to hear Katy Carr when she came from Poland to visit the Buffalo Polonia and sing for us. I am always looking for something new and interesting to do. 2014 was a momentous year for me with a trip to Oswiecim/Brzezinka (Aushwitz/Berkinau) to visit the still standing original homestead of my 1st, 2nd, and 3rd great-grandfathers. My language classes became more useful than I had expected. As you might guess, I fell in love with Poland. The sights, the smells, the traditions, the people all together made the experience one that I will never forget.

Shortly after my visit, I received an email inviting me to join an English as a Second Language (ESL) camp. I don't know who gave them my name, but I loved the idea. However, it would be expensive and require all my vacation time for the year. And, it would mean a month away from my family. When I talked to my wife and son, I was surprised to find how very supportive they were of the idea. That's how I ended up going to Poland to teach an ESL class. This was going to be an adventure well outside of my comfort zone. I have always loved a challenge, so this appealed to me. And, it seemed a great cause as well. I'm not a teacher, but I volunteered to spend three weeks in a classroom environment

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teaching seven rotating classes. The kids ranged from 8 years to 19 years old. To give you an idea how foreign this was going to be for me, I work as an industrial electrician.



I sent a short biography to the director of the English Camp. They needed to look over my qualifications (or lack of them) and consider if I was a fit for their program. As it turned out, they did not need professional teachers, but rather people who were passionate about life and learning. They recognized my love of my Polish heritage and the numerous interesting aspects of my life. I have been fortunate enough to have had some interesting occupations, adventurous hobbies, and some great life adventures. Their main requirement was that they wanted native English speakers to interact with the students. To my surprise, I was a great 'fit' for the role they were seeking. So, I would be going to Bozkow, Poland on the SW border very near the Czech Republic. The town was very small, with a population of only 250. The students would be from Bozkow and many of the nearby towns. During the regular school season it is a well-known agricultural school, Zespół Szkół Agratechnicznych w Bozkow.

When I got there I found that the students had a wide range of English skills. The youngest spoke almost no English, while the oldest were very fluent. Right off the bat, much of my lesson plan went right out the window. It was supposed to be an emersion class, but the younger classes needed more of a beginner's lesson plan. I found myself in town buying children's books. We did typical vocabulary for the kids. They could see the pictures and name of the object in Polish and recognize it. Then we would say each word in English. I had some fun flashbacks to my night school lessons in Polish and used many of the things my teacher said to us to drill us in Polish. Things like "please repeat" and "what is this?" or "very good." Some typical phrases a teacher would use in class. I repeated them in Polish.

I had an interpreter in class for the youngest students. The small amount of Polish I knew was not enough to be useful for them. I was able to keep their attention for an odd reason. They knew that I was struggling with their language, and they thought it was funny. They loved to correct me.



We would do a word or two in English, then one of them would have me say it in Polish. They would want me to repeat it until I pronounced it properly. I found it was a great way to get them to relax and have fun in class. If they enjoyed being there, they may learn a little bit more.

The middle groups were a riot. They spoke English well, and my 'plans' worked as I had hoped. I am not a teacher, so my plans were very unorthodox. One of my ideas was simply to play word games. I had the

kids break up into groups of four and play it in English. They do play Scrabble® in Poland, but the games have the diacritical marks on the letters, and letters are used with different frequencies than in English. So I purchased Scrabble® games and took them with me. As it turned out it was a big hit. They loved it. I walked around rearranging their letters so they might see some words. I let them each have a few extra tiles to make it easier. It was not important to follow the game rules strictly, the point was for them to learn words. Word games were a fantastic tool. We did some Hangman as well, but I picked the words to try to challenge them. Once in a while no one knew the completed word, but not very often. The other teachers told me that the kids told them my class was the fun class.

As the age of the kids in the classes got older, their English skills improved greatly. I repeatedly underestimated the older students. They were very smart and motivated. Those classes turned into conversation periods. Although, they loved using Scrabble® more than the young ones and frequently asked to play again once they knew I had them. They needed help with their pronunciation, but their vocabulary was great. They were very interested in English and the U.S.A. We went over phrases and expressions that we use a lot. Until you learn a second language, you don't realize how the actual words in an expression have nothing to do with the intended meaning. 'Over the hill' means getting old? Second nature to us, but a literal translation makes no sense at all to the idea being expressed. It's the same for me trying to use a phrase in Polish. If I try to say it in Polish, they had no idea what I'm really trying to say. For example I said, "Home sweet home" in Polish, and they were totally baffled.



Doug and friend

I got to be great friends with lots of the kids. Many of them have friended me on Facebook (FB), and we are keeping in touch. A few have told me they even continued on a project we did in class. I took blank family tree forms for them to fill in. The form went as far back as great-grand-parents. I was surprised by how much many of them knew right in class without asking at home. Others told me on FB how, even after I had left, that they completed it. That was great to hear. I told them a few stories from my family, and I believe I sparked an interest in genealogy in some of them. I gave them an assignment, not for class, but for themselves. I suggested that they go talk with the few of their oldest family members and ask

about their childhood. I said to ask about their great-grand parents and about their families as far back as they could remember. If they did, they would be sure to find some stories that would amaze them. Some might be happy or sad, but it would all be family history. I showed them a small sample of my written history and showed how it mingled with U.S. history and suggested they put the stories they heard in a journal. Maybe even begin a hobby of their family tree and save what they heard for their kids or

grand kids. Many of them are keen to learn the history of their Poland, and the stories would put their families into that history. I could actually see the interest in some of them.

One of the best things I did with the kids was letter-writing. I passed out names and addresses of some of my family members and had them write a letter to them. I told each one a little bit about the person they were writing to so they could use it for ideas in their letters. My family members promised to write back to them. Some of the kids even asked for more names so they could write to more than just one person. I have some family members who will be getting four or more letters!

The kids were so much fun to be with, and we got along great. They loved having teachers from the U.S. and had a thousand questions. This is where I was able to make up for not being a regular teacher. We could do anything we wanted as long as we did it in English. We often just talked. They asked about me and my hobbies and family. I asked about theirs, too. My scuba stories about shipwrecks that I had discovered fascinated them. I showed them some photos from underwater and some site drawings I had done showing how the wrecks look today.

Their interest in learning the English language was genuine. And they loved to compare Poland and U.S. histories. They loved learning about U.S. holidays, too. I made some friendships that I hope will last for many years. FB makes it easy to keep in touch, and it helps us all to keep learning each other's language. They send me a post in English, and I respond in Polish.

If you want to visit Poland, this would be a great way to do it. You won't find it in any travel brochure, though. I did even manage to fit in some tourist things. On the weekends the school arranged a few field trips to some nearby cities. Since we were on the southwest border of



Celebrating the 4th of July

Poland, near the Czech border, we were able to visit Prague. And we had another day trip up to Wroclaw, with tons of historic buildings and a great town square for shopping. We also got to Klodzko, where we found a festival going on. There was great food at street stands and music and dancing all around. I was wearing a Buffalo shirt that day, and these two ladies spotted it and wanted to know what it was. More great fun with friendly local people. It just never ends. Learning to speak Polish made the trip all the more fun, but you do NOT need to speak Polish to have a thoroughly fantastic visit there. I would just take off walking and explore the countryside all alone, meeting people and trying to keep up a small conversation. It was a fantastic adventure.



Doug and dancers

I found very many interesting people and places. The local church was built in 1704, and while I was exploring it, I met a wonderful friendly woman who volunteered to give me a tour of the church and grounds. We had a great talk. I had to reach deep into my Polish language to do it. I would find out later that she was Krystyna Gizowska, and that she would be giving a benefit concert in the church that evening. As it turns out, she is a famous



Krystyna Gizowska

singer in Europe.

We were allowed to explore an abandoned palace in the town. It was not open to the public, but one of the people from the school knew the caretaker and, with a small 'tip,' we were allowed in. It was loaded with history and interesting architecture. The stair rails were there and the woodwork was massive. Many of the wall panels were hand carved and pieces of art in their own right. The furniture was all taken out after WWII, but the walls were intact. A

few of the floors were sketchy and had gaps spanned by planks. It was definitely a dangerous place to roam around. The tower was incredible. I climbed way up, farther than I probably should have. It was almost pitch black up there, and the last piece of the single rung ladder was questionable. But I had to try it.

Let me just say, my trip to Poland to teach English to Polish kids was more than I had expected, and so very much better than I had ever hoped it would be. As always, the people we met were warm and friendly. If you get the opportunity to do so, please consider going to Poland to teach.



**Local church
circa 1704**

Things I Learned on My Genealogy Trip to Poland

by Nicole Pohancsek

Visiting Poland had been on my bucket list for a long time. It took an email from LOT airlines in May 2015 to finally help me make up my mind to go. I called my father with a great price for two tickets to Poland, and he accepted. I almost fell off my chair when he said yes.

I have to admit, I am a planner. I plotted our visit to four ancestral villages (two from my mom's side and two from my dad's side). Although it didn't go quite as planned, it was still a very successful trip! Here are some of the things I learned from the experience.

Polish Cemeteries

- 1) If your ancestors were peasants, their cross was most likely made of wood and is no longer there. I spent a lot of time tromping around cemeteries on my trip hoping to find the parents/grandparents of my ancestors that came to the U.S., and I didn't find any. My ancestors came to the U.S. in the late 1800's and early 1900's.
- 2) All the cemeteries I visited seemed to be burying people on top of old graves. I saw piles of old gravestones at one cemetery, which made me want to cry. Although, I did also find a few older gravestones still upright.
- 3) Watch out for holes. One cemetery had a sink hole that was at least six feet deep. If I wasn't paying attention, I would have fallen into it. Don't go to a cemetery by yourself, just in case.
- 4) Families moved around to neighboring villages. We spent a few hours in the snow/rain/cold searching for my great-grandfather's family in a cemetery in the town where my great-grandfather was born. We found no relatives. Later, we found that the family moved to a different town after he was born.

Polish Archives

- 1) Bring someone with you who knows the archival rules and regulations. We received a lot of push back at the archives. For example, they wanted us to come back the next day, they said they did not have time for us, and they said that we could not take pictures of the documents. We were able to overcome all of these obstacles with a genealogist we knew who was aware of the laws and fought for us.
- 2) Make sure the archives have the records that you are looking for. After a certain time frame, the village archives are supposed to turn over their records to the regional archives. If you are looking for records from 100 plus years ago, the records most likely won't be in the village archives.
- 3) The records you find might not be in Polish. Keep in mind that if the part of Poland you are looking in was under Russian rule, then the records will be in Russian. If it was under German rule, the records will be in German.
- 4) Bring proof of how you are related to those you are researching. I brought hard

We were able to overcome all of these obstacles with a genealogist we knew who was aware of the laws and fought for us.

copies (not originals) of my birth and marriage records, my parents' birth and marriage records, my grandparents' birth and marriage records, and my great-grandparents' death certificates (which also included their parents' names). Also bring your passport. You will only be able to take pictures of documents relating to your **direct-line relatives**. You may not be able to take pictures of documents relating to uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.

Polish Churches

1) Poland is a Catholic country. The population is over 94 percent Roman Catholic! You have to be mindful of Catholic holidays when planning your trip to Poland. I visited a church on a Friday afternoon, and they were having a rosary Mass. I came back an hour and a half later, and they were still having Mass. The town only had 1200 people, and I estimate over 500 people were in the church on that Friday afternoon!

2) All Saints Day is a big holiday in Poland. People dress up in their Sunday-best clothes and spend a good part of the day at the cemetery. They have cemetery candles at graves year round, not just for All Saints Day. Sometimes you can find the Cemetery candles being sold outside the cemetery in the larger cities. I found mine in the local post office.

3) I tried to meet with four priests. Three of them were very welcoming. The fourth refused to meet with us because his office hours were 9 AM to 10:30 AM, and we stopped by at 11 AM. The other three priests were amazing. One gave us a tour of the old wooden church in Osiek where my ancestors were from. The records in Osiek dated back to the 1700s, and I was able to take as many photos of the records as I wanted.

4) Churches before the 1900's were built out of wood. Most of these churches did not survive the two World Wars and other wars that devastated Poland. If you are planning to visit the actual church your ancestors went to, realize it might not be there.

This trip was amazing, and I am so happy that I went. Poland is a beautiful country, with a rich history. Most of the information I found was not known by my grandparents and great-grandparents. The names of some of my ancestors have not been spoken in over 100 years. It took over 100 years for my family to make the trip back to Poland, and it was well worth it! Daniel Bucko, a Polish family history researcher, made this trip possible. Without his help in researching my family and in the archives, I would not have had this much success. If you would like Daniel to help you with your research when you visit Poland, please contact him at: danielbucko@gmail.com. He speaks fluent English.

Our itinerary (in parentheses are the surnames we researched) was as follows:



Nicole and church

Weds - Fly overnight from Toronto to Warsaw

Thurs - Arrive in Warsaw and fly to Krakow; take a tour of Krakow's old town.

Fri - Travel to Oswiecim (Krawczyk and Waliczek), Osiek (Krawczyk and Urbanczyk), and Krzeszow (Mikolajek and Watroba)

Sat - A bus tour to Auschwitz and Salt mine

Sun - Travel to Sanok (Patronik and Hydzik)

Mon - Travel to Radechnica (Marek and Kozak)

Tues - Travel to Annopol (Skrzynski and Zamorski)

Weds - Fly from Krakow to Warsaw and from Warsaw back to Toronto

At the February 2016 PGSNYS meeting, I will be doing a PowerPoint presentation about my trip to Poland. It will include additional information and pictures. I will provide the Society with a copy of my presentation to place on the website for those who cannot attend the meeting.



Nicole and Daniel



Congratulations! You've Done It!

by Patricia Filipiak Rooney

All is organized. All your pictures are downloaded into a special folder on your computer, as well as in a thick folder in the file cabinet. Stories have been collected and entered as comments on various family trees. The research is complete. Your ancestors are all accounted for almost back to Adam and Eve, and it feels so good to be D-O-N-E!

As you sink into a comfortable chair and sigh, your Brain asks the question: Now what do you do?

Well. Let me think about these feelings that my brain is dealing with. It's as if you just put your newborn baby to sleep. The silence is so soothing, so you enjoy it. Why do I have to do anything at all?

But Brain interrupts: what are you going to do with all this research?

Brain remembers how so many people have asked, "Why bother? Who will care about all these dead people?"

You agree. After all, how many times did you have to answer THAT question? It still makes you very defensive just thinking about it.

But, genealogy isn't about knowing only flesh and blood alive people. Hearing other people describing memories puts flesh back on the dead. It's realizing what their actions say about these people. How they coped with the trials in their lives? What dreams did they enjoy? Which ones were foiled? What were my own attitudes and preconceptions? Did they change as I learned how my ancestors lived?

Well, let's see. For example, I grew up knowing that my mother's father was a farmer in rural Poland in the south. His mother died when he was a young child, and he was raised by his grandmother.

He was a quiet, hardworking man who was determined to become an American citizen. He rarely spoke to us children directly, but he had no problem having his own eleven children over for Sunday dinner on many occasions, with children and spouses. He seemed to love having family around, but we children were expected to play outdoors and behave.

His two older brothers lived nearby, but we didn't visit with them. We met most of my mother's nieces and nephews for the first time when we went to school. For us, it was a big surprise to find out how large the family was! I mean we're talking 30 kids! We also heard new stories about Grampa.

More surprises came as I began doing research as an adult and the Internet opened the world to me! I learned there were many secrets waiting



Multi-generations sharing stories and values at the Grand-parents' table

to change my preconceptions. The biggest being that my grandfather was not a career farmer. He was a blacksmith who worked on the railroad in Poland with his two brothers. He farmed in Poland to survive. To make money, he walked several miles to the railroad yard in the next town, Debica.

As his life unfolded for me, I learned how strong a man he was. It must have been agony for him to say goodbye to his grandmother. She insisted he leave rather than join the military. How much his faith in God meant to him came up through stories from uncles and my mother. How willing he was to change his Polish ways in order to best provide for his family. It wasn't always easy for him to let go of certain life rules. Like allowing his daughters to attend school instead of working on the farm or finding a housekeeper job for them, as was his fatherly duty according to Polish custom.

Was that all? No, there were all these geography lessons, too. Like finding out that some people never moved from one area in Poland, while others moved great distances. Why? Most of the time it was to find employment. Times were often tough and demanded a move in order to survive. Heaped upon that was the constant fear of war. My grandmother said she left a good life behind because she became weary of seeing dead soldiers in the meadows behind her home.

It gave me a chill when I stood in that backyard in Limanowa, Poland and gazed upon that meadow in 2014. It looked so much like the hills of the southern tier of Boston, New York where I live. I could see why my grandfather moved to Eden, New York. He said it reminded him of home. So it did. I could almost feel their hugs as I daydreamed.

Was it the same for my father's family? Yes, and no. They immigrated in 1909, as a married couple with a child in her mother's arms. Babcia was an only daughter, spoiled by four brothers. We knew they lived as servants on a very large farm estate in the Poznan region. Life was good.

However, their first born twins died shortly after birth, and the threat of war was everywhere! The German border was so close that the workers under my grandfather's care didn't trust his allegiance to Poland. He had an uncle and brother-in-law living in Oberhausen, Germany who kept him informed of all the unrest brewing. History suddenly grabbed my heartstrings once I began researching! The stress was real for my grandparents as they made their plans to leave a large family behind. It was the encouragement and support from close friends that drew them to Buffalo, New York.

The best surprise came when a cousin from Germany in 1978 arrived on Uncle Al's doorstep! He was studying English in the hopes of finding his Filipiak relatives living in America. His father related many stories that had been told to him by his father, who was my grandfather's Uncle Lorenz. Making the connection was more than meeting family, it was grasping hands across the ocean! Several of us didn't let go. With the help of email, we began a friendship that has endured even to now. We exchange lots of stories and family lore.

Now after two visits to Poland ourselves, we have learned how complicated our connection is because of shifting borders and families. There are many cultural similarities and differences. We share both. What is so familiar here is not so there,

*More
surprises
came as I
began doing
research as
an adult and
the Internet
opened the
world to me!*

and vice versa. The learning has only begun.

With the help of Skype, emails, Facebook, etc., we hope the family bonds we have made with our relatives, alive and long gone, will bear sweet fruit. After all, the world can get very friendly.

Gratefully, the European families learn conversational English while we learn Polish and German phrases! Technology helps too. This is called moving forward.

Zycie jest dobre!



The Origins and Meanings of My Family Surnames

by Edward Prabucki

I must offer never-ending thanks to the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State (PGSNYS) for their contributions in the present and in the past in my attempts to find the meanings of surnames in my family research. They were very knowledgeable and competent in obtaining the facts, articles, and books beyond my wildest dreams. One such surname book, authored by William Hoffman, enlightened me very much. Some people in their sincerity advised me to do research on surnames at the Buffalo Public Library or Buffalo Historical Museum, but this bore no fruit for me – no historic significance regarding surnames.

However, lest I forget, the initial credit goes to my father and his revelation that he was certain his ancestral origin was in the town of Prabuty, near Gdansk – an area inhabited at one time by Teutonic Knights. Many confrontations and raids by these Knights in the proximity of Prabuty, Wyschin, Plachty, and Elblag compelled many, including my ancestors, to migrate many kilometers from this violent area.

After my father passed away, my research covered the period of the Second Insurrection in Poland (1830-1833). Three ancestral youthful Prabuckis' death records were found in Church Archives in Poland: Gregosz Prabucki died on April 7, 1831; Sylvester Prabucki on June 16, 1831; and Jan Prabucki on August 20, 1831. Were they, as youths in their early 20s, innocent victims of that Insurrection or, as I conjecture, were they involved and lost their lives in the insurrection against the invading Russian army? Also, may I add, Wiktoria Prabucka, an ancestral mother, who died on September 6, 1831, a day recorded as the most violent on in that insurrection. Church records do not reveal details of their deaths.

Another diligent search followed an impromptu conversation held

One such surname book, authored by William Hoffman, enlightened me very much.

with Eleanor Filipowicz, whose surname has a close relationship with the Prabuckis for many generations in Russian-occupied Poland. I became cognizant of the fact that the Filipowicz and Prabucki families, as neighbors in Udrzyn, intermarried four times in five generations in the parish of Sw.Trocy – thus making Eleanor a close kin of my family. Incidentally, ‘Filip’ is a Greek word meaning ‘lover of horses’ – very appropriate as Edwin Filipowicz, Eleanor’s son, spent many Sundays in Blossom, NY riding horses.

After a lapse of a week or two, I continued my search after I met a member of the PGSNYS, Dolores Konopa, later to be disclosed to be my cousin from the maternal side, related through the marriage of the Rutkowski sisters – Antonia (Rutkowski) Przybysz, grandmother of Dolores, and Jozefa (Rutkowski) Patyk, my Grandmother. Rutkowski translates from Rut- (Polish) meaning a plant or marsh land. I consider this an appropriate surname as Grandma and my mother’s hobby was devoted to planting the roots and seeds of flowers. Jozefa married Michal Patyk (meaning stick or twig), also a very appropriate surname for my very thin Grandfather residing in Lupkowic, Russian-Poland. Incidentally, Grandfather Patyk was conscripted into the Russian Army in 1899 and dispatched to the Manchurian Front. In 1904, he returned to recuperate from a severe frostbite and with a profound ambivalence towards service in the Russian Army. He had no second thoughts about leaving Russian-controlled Poland for a more promising and serene land. He stowed away on a ship for Brazil and later arrived in Buffalo for a permanent and happy reunion with Grandma and the children – changing his name to Petyk in fear of being returned to the Russian Army.

I left my research of the Rutkowskis and Patyks to seek the origins of Podlas, a surname associated with living in the proximity of ‘Forest Lands,’ which is where they lived. Through my curiosity, I became aware that one of my wife’s uncles fought in WWII and lost his life in the defense of Poznan in September 1939. Another Podlas, Lt. Gen. K.P. Podlas of the 57th Army, lost his life in the Battle of Kharkow in May 1942.

From there research returned to the maternal side of the Petyk family and the surname Losin, meaning ‘elk.’ Perplexed over the translation, I added to this search by perusing the map of Poland and noticed a town by the name of Losin, a possible origin of my uncle. Incidentally, my uncle, John Losin, was drafted in WWI, suffering severe wounds in that war in 1918.

I followed this with the search for the origins of Piskorski (my daughter-in-law’s maiden name). The first three letters mean ‘writer’ and piskorz means ‘fish’ – very appropriate for my daughter-in-law’s family as their passion for fishing was very obvious to me. A note must be added, Bruno Piskorski, a U.S. Marine of WWII, was severely wounded on Iwo Jima in February 1945.

I had no intent to overlook Kozlowski, my brother-in-law’s surname. ‘Koz’ means ‘goat’ and it also means ‘obstinate’ and, from my long contact with him, that personality trait applies to him as well. In WWII, in the many invasions of the Pacific Islands as a U.S. Navy serviceman, he came home unscathed.

Finally, the surname Zajac, also a relation, is not to be passed over. An uncle by marriage to my mother’s sister, ‘Zajac’ translates from Polish as ‘hare’ – as I recall him vaguely, it suited him well – even the Draft Board could not catch up with him.

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In my summation, this aspect of research was pleasing and very enlightening in that it featured the origins of my family and relatives and was enhanced by personal events that highlighted their lives. Needless to say, the PGSNYS deserves much credit.

Books Purchased for the PGSNYS Library in 2015

International Vital Records Handbook, 6th Edition, by Thomas J. Kemp

When Descendants Become Ancestors, by David A. Kendall, PhD

Polish Roots, 2nd Edition, by Rosemary Chorzempa

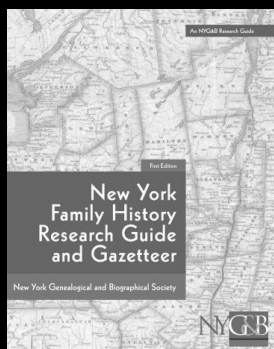
New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer, by the New York State Genealogical & Biographical Society

Books Donated by Denise Oliansky

New York State Probate Records, 2nd Edition, by Gordon L. Remington

God's Playground, A History of Poland, Vol. II, by Norman Davies

Buffalo Memories: the Early Years (1890-1939), by *The Buffalo News*



In Remembrance: Janice Bartoszek

On October 14, 2015, the PGSNYS lost a long-time member, Janice Bartoszek, who passed away after a lengthy illness. Her enthusiasm, creative ideas, and dedication to excellence in Polish family research and the PGSNYS are missed. *The Buffalo News* carried the following obituary:



BARTOSZEK - Janice C. October 14, 2015, predeceased by her father, Julius, stepmother, Sophie and birthmother, Sally (nee Dziulko); survived by many cousins, dear friends, and favorite pet companion, Lucky. Visitation Friday 4-8 PM at COMFORT FUNERAL HOME, INC., 6469 Olean Rd. (near Emery Rd.), South Wales. Mass of Christian Burial Saturday at 9:30 AM at St. Joseph's R.C. Church, 46 North Main St., Holland. In lieu of flowers, the family encourages memorials to Brothers of Mercy, 10570 Bergtold Rd., Clarence, NY 14031 or Hospice of Buffalo, 225 Como Park Blvd., Cheektowaga, NY 14227.



A Tribute to Our Ladies of Hospitality

Rita Hider and Barbara Golibersuch,
the lovely ladies of the PGSNYS
Hospitality Committee.

Every meeting, every picnic, every
party - they are the ones who make the
plans, ensure we are well-fed, and
keep things running smoothly.

**Thank you, Rita & Barb,
for all you do!!**

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