

Our Polish ANCESTORS

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

JAN. / MAR. 2013 VOL. 22 NO. 1

Smiling Joe Filkowski, The Polish Gangster of Cleveland

By Trina Galauner

During Prohibition, there were many Polish-American gangsters. In Chicago, there was Joseph "Polack Joe" Saltis and Jake Guzik. In Philadelphia, there was the "Kielbasa Posse" and Mickey Duffy (born Michael Cusick). Buffalo had John "Korney" Kwiatkowski and his "Korney Gang". And Pittsburgh had Paul Jarwarski. Even famous gangsters Bugs Moran and Hymie Weiss (born Earl Wojciechowski) had Polish heritage. But Cleveland had it's own Polish-American gangster who made the headlines regularly. It's a dramatic story filled with murder, romance, adventure and strangely, a happy ending.

He was called "Smiling Joe" because he was always smiling when he evaded the law. Sometimes he was called "Pimples" Filkowski or the "Powder Puff Bandit". It is said he carried a powder puff with him to conceal his pock marked face and his flat, strawberry colored nose. He managed to commit crimes and escape the law for 18 years.

Born December 31, 1899 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Victor Filkowski and Anna Sujata, Joseph's family moved to Cleveland shortly after his birth. In 1905, Joseph's father died and his mother remarried Anthony Mroz in November 1908. Joseph was raised at the rim of the Cuyahoga River Valley in the West 14th St./Fairfield section of Cleveland. In 1910, he lived with his mother and stepfather at 2455 W. 4th St. He had at least 9 siblings and it is reported he lived with 13 brothers and sisters at one time. His stepfather was a laborer for Lamson and Sessions and in the summer of 1916, he accidentally drowned in the Shaker Lakes leaving Joseph's mother once again a widow with many children to support.



Joseph Filkowski mug shot taken about 1938

Due to his difficult childhood, it is not hard to believe that Joseph developed thieving proclivities at a young age. When in 6th grade at Tremont School, he was accused of breaking into a confectionery store and stealing BB shot with his step brother. Two years after that it is said that he stole 6 bikes from a railroad boxcar. Then in 1917, he stole copper wire from a B & O Railroad box car and was arrested and charged for the first time. He was sent to the Ohio

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Welcome

If you are not already a member of the PGSGC and would like to become one and receive this quarterly newsletter (cost is \$24.00 per year), please contact Membership Chairman, Ron Kraine, at ronkraine@aol.com for more information.





Letter from the President

“2013” marks my 21st year as President of the PGSGC. During that time I have seen the organization's growth in the number of members and in recent years a decline in those numbers. Unfortunately part of that is due to natural causes. Our membership is getting up there age wise which results in handicaps to being able to get around and of course in the extreme cases, death. The latter is the saddest part of my office. Having been a member since the organization's beginning, it always saddens me to see a member/friend pass away. Each meeting I preside over, I can still look at those in attendance and can imagine some of those that have passed away still sitting there in attendance. As with my deceased ancestors, those departed members are always in my prayers.

With the above out of my system, I would like to encourage each member to try to recruit a friend or relative (preferably younger, but not necessarily so) to come join us. Hopefully, if you can get them to attend a meeting or two, their appetite for genealogy will be awakened?

Each year I have a number of members step up and help out with the various activities of the organization. Pictured below are some of those people that I like to refer to as “Johnny’s Angels”: Elizabeth Joy (Librarian), Pat Baikitis (Membership badges), John F. Szuch (President), Trina Galauner (Bulletin Editor and Website), and Antonette Baciak (Meeting Hostess).

Not pictured are the many members who contribute snacks for the meetings and dishes and kitchen help and setup for the Christmas Party. My thanks to all of you.

Together, we can make 2013 the best year that this organization has seen!



“Johnny’s Angels”

(left to right) Elizabeth Joy, Pat Baikitis, John Szuch, Trina Galauner, Antonette Baciak

John F. Szuch, President

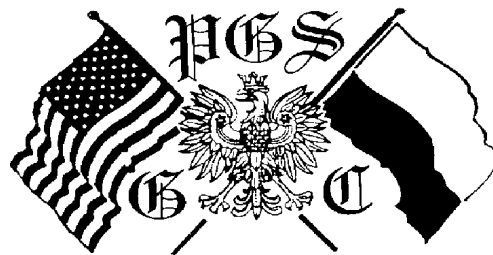
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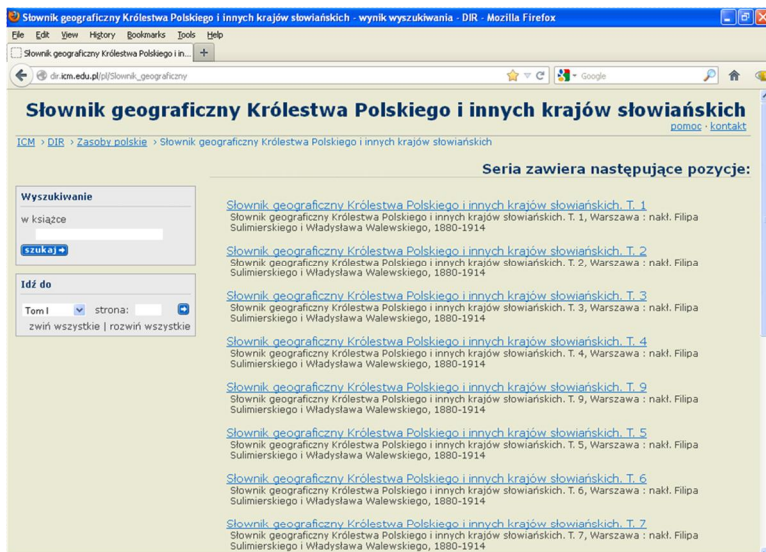


Useful Websites for Polish Genealogy Research

By Ben Kman

For genealogy, the internet is an excellent resource for finding information and making connections. People pour over online databases hoping to tear down a brick wall or to get in contact with a distant relative conducting research on a common family line. However, there comes a point when genealogists have to abandon the search for a quick fix and return to the basics of research: digging through source information. To do that, one has to know where that information is located. For those researching in Poland, that means churches, civil record offices and archives (church and civil). Pinpointing those requires knowing the village and region in which an ancestor lived. One indispensable resource for finding the specifics of a village is the *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego*. This is a multi volume gazetteer that provides descriptions and location specifics for the cities, towns, villages and hamlets of the kingdom of Poland in the late 1800's. It was only available in certain libraries in book format. Then organizations digitized it and made it available for sale on CD. Now it can be found on the internet at the site below.

http://dir.icm.edu.pl/pl/Słownik_geograficzny



These screen scans are not meant to be readable and only provided to give the reader an idea as to what they will view on the screen. Please refer to the website to see in full size.

This screen capture shows what the homepage would look like.

This image provides an example of how a scanned page appears from one of the volumes.



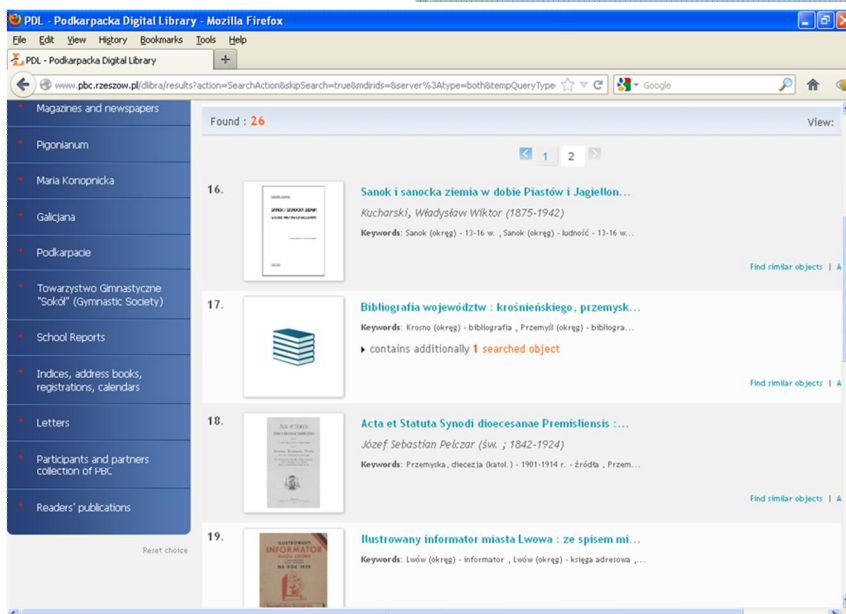
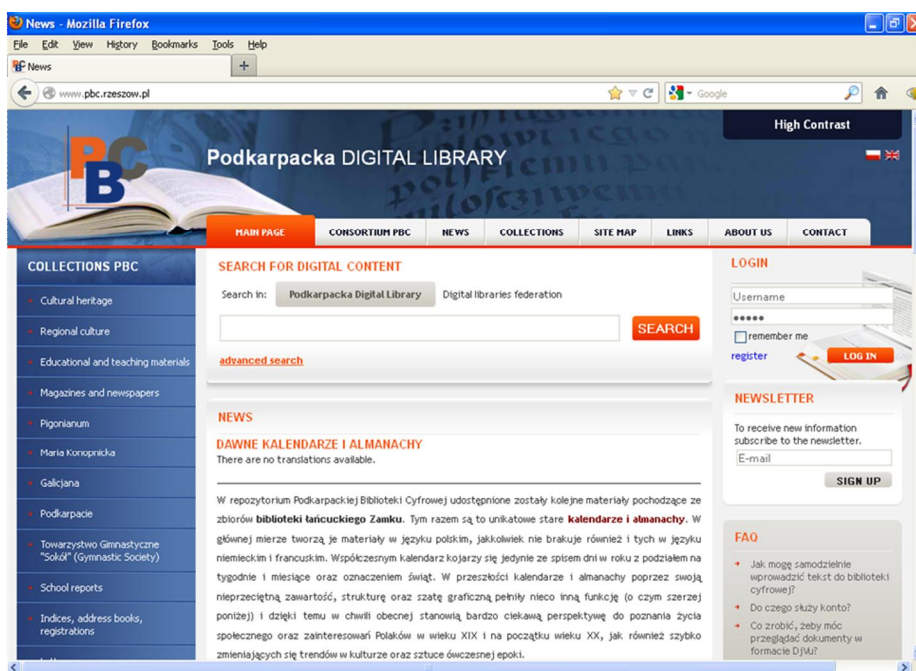
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Useful Websites for Polish Genealogy Research continued from page 3....

Libraries are warehouses of information that often have extensive collections of region specific resources. If someone is researching in the United States, it is easy enough to plan a trip to visit a library in the city of interest or request an inter-library loan. If, on the other hand, you are trying to research in a foreign country, these options are not readily available. Poland has begun to provide digital libraries services on the internet. A search on city, village, surname, etc. provides a list of books and periodicals with content on the particular search term. The books can be viewed online or downloaded and read/researched in greater detail.

One example for a digital library from the southeastern part of Poland can be found here.
<http://www.pbc.rzeszow.pl/>
This is a view of the homepage.



Here is an example of some search results for Dylagowa.

This brief article is not meant to be an exhaustive how-to on genealogy or on using the sites mentioned. It is only providing little known but readily available resources that may help a researcher gather more targeted information to grow and support their quest for their families.



News from the Poznan Project

Recently the Polish State archives has relaxed some of their restrictions on researchers and the Poznan Project has been able to index a large amount of non-microfilmed records, especially Lutheran.

Indexing of the Catholic part of the marriages for the Poznan area approaches 100% of the existent material for certain districts. Progress on transcription of the area which was once part of Russian Poland is continuing but at a slower pace. The Poznan Project has also started to add marriage records from the Prussian civil registrations starting in 1874. These records have more information than a church record and their existence helps to fill in missing years in the church books. The amount of civil records in the database is still small but it growing.

The Poznan Project has helped multiple people find their roots when all they knew was that their ancestor was from the Poznan area. The project always welcomes volunteers to transcribe, donations, and any ideas to improve the website. As of January 17, 2013, the site has 920,000 marriage records in its database.

The website can be accessed at <http://poznan-project.psnc.pl>. If you are interested in finding out how you may be able to help, please contact Dr.Lukasz Bielecki at bielecki@man.poznan.pl.

Cleveland Weather 100 Years Ago

We all know how unpredictable the weather in Cleveland can be. Isn't it strange how drastically different the weather can be on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday in Cleveland? It makes it very difficult to pick out an Easter outfit. Well, 100 years ago in Cleveland was no different than today. Palm Sunday in 1913 was early, March 16th, and Easter Sunday, March 23rd. On Palm Sunday the temperature only reached 31 degrees and just under an inch of snow had fallen throughout the day. But during the Easter week, a warm front moved through and temperatures reached 69 degrees on Holy Thursday only for the bottom to drop out on Good Friday and temperatures dropped to 26 degrees that night. Holy Saturday was cold again but Easter Sunday would bring warmer temperatures with a high of 59 degrees but with it nearly 2 inches of rain. Oh, doesn't it all sound familiar? The weather may change but it's patterns certainly don't seem to. You can search Cleveland historical weather data at the following website:

LOCAL WEATHER.
Rain, turning to snow, with a cold wave; Saturday continued cold.

http://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/index.ssf/2008/09/cleveland_weather_history_find.html

Researching Your Family History?

The Cleveland Catholic Cemeteries realizes that finding your family history is important. They are working on putting this information online. In the meantime to request genealogical assistance please do the following:

- *Email your request to Melissa Malone at mmalone@clevelandcatholiccemeteries.org
- *Provide as much identifying information as you have about the individual(s) being researched.
- *Information available from cemetery records is limited to: name, date of burial, age and location of grave. If additional information is available, such as place of birth, they will include that

If you have requested assistance, please be patient. They respond to every inquiry in a timely fashion.



Images of My Ancestors

By John F. Szuch

In our pursuit of genealogy, we get excited when we find some important date or event in regards to our ancestors. There are, however, other important events that took place in the past that are not recorded anywhere except in our minds. In my case, these are events that I participated in with my ancestors, and although as insignificant as they may seem to the casual reader, they obviously were important enough to me to still be remembered some 65 years later! These are the sort of things that if you don't write them down, they are gone for future generations to know.

By way of background, I grew up on Avon Avenue on the SE side of Cleveland in the Corlett area. When my grandparents, John and Bernice Malicki purchased the two family home in 1927, the neighborhood was a mixed ethnic one made up of Poles, Italians, Bohemians, etc. and that was pretty much as it was when I grew up there in the 1940s-50s. I lived downstairs with my grandparents and my mother, Sophie, who divorced my father when I was 14 months old. My mom's single brother, Steve, and his married sister, Mary Recko, her husband, Steve, and my Cousin Alan (born in 1947) lived upstairs. These are the people that molded me in various and strange ways in my youth.

My grandfather, whom I called "Jacka" (Ja-ka), was the closest thing I had to a father. He worked second shift at the Ohio Forge Foundry, but would drive me to school in the morning. I would also attend Sunday mass with him and my grandmother at Our Lady of Czestochowa on Harvard Avenue. I can still hear the Polish Hour on the radio with John L. Lewandowski as we drove to church. Two incidents that I remember involving Jacka were (#1) a trip to Chambers Bakery on E. 131st Street and (#2) the Old Timers Ale.

The first incident took place when I was around 6 years old. I had gone grocery shopping with Jacka in the E. 131st and Miles Avenue area. We went to the Pick N Pay grocery store on Miles, across from the Corlett movie theater, and then stopped at Chambers Bakery around the corner to pick up some things. He had me wait in the car while he ran into the store. When he came out with the purchases, he handed me a calendar that had a beautiful full color portrait of Revolutionary War General and hero Casimir Pulaski on it! I was immediately fascinated by it. When we got home, I anxiously showed it to my grandmother. She in turn told me who Pulaski was and what he had done. I was immediately "hooked on Pulaski" and have collected items on him and have travelled the U.S. to towns and counties named after him or have monuments to him. I probably have the largest collection of Pulaski memorabilia in the world thanks to that calendar from Jacka! Incidentally, after that year was over, I saved that Pulaski calendar picture which is framed and still hanging in my house!

The second "Jacka incident" took place at home. When I was a kid, we had a fruit cellar in our basement under the front porch. We stored canned goods, had a large kapusta (sauerkraut) crock, and a case of Old Timers Ale sitting on the cold cement floor next to the crock. When I was probably about 9 or 10 years old, I would sometimes come into the house from playing outside in the hot Cleveland summer heat, and then would sneak into the fruit cellar and carefully open the top of a beer bottle, take a couple of swigs, replace the cap and put the bottle back in the case.



Polish calendar with portrait of Kazimierz Pulaski

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Images of My Ancestors continued from page 6....

I don't know how many times I may have done that, but one day Jacka pulled me aside and said that he didn't mind me sneaking a couple of swigs of beer, but, please don't put the bottle back in the case but instead put it in the refrigerator as the beer goes flat otherwise! I guess there were two lessons there, one was that Jacka was a loving, understanding man, and the other was to keep your beer cold.

"Baci" (Ba-chee) as I referred to my grandmother, was not like my easy going grandfather. She was stern and strictly "Old World" in her ways. I remember being in the Olympia Candy Store next door to the Avalon Movie Theater on E. 131st Street. I dropped a dime that went under the counter. I was too embarrassed to get down and look for it. Imagine my embarrassment when my grandmother got down on her hands and knees to find the coin! She knew the value of money and how hard people had to work for it, something I would come to realize as I got older. I also can still visualize her hosing down the sidewalk and then sweeping the street/curb area. She imparted her pride in her home to me.

Because my mother always worked full time, my Aunt Mary, who was a stay at home wife, filled in for her during the day. I spent many hours upstairs visiting with her and helping her with dusting and polishing furniture, etc. Often times when I would be upstairs, I would take a cigarette from my Uncle Steve's Lucky Strike pack which he kept on top of the bread box, and pretend to smoke it. One day I was doing just that when in her infinite wisdom Aunt Mary asked me if I would really like to smoke one? Needless to say, I jumped at the opportunity! She lit the cigarette and told me to puff in on it and swallow the smoke because that was where the enjoyment was. I did that just once and when I stopped coughing, I never tried another cigarette in my life! Wise Aunt Mary cured me of cigarette smoking before I ever started. You've got to love her approach.

Aunt Mary's husband, Steve, was the only one living in the house that wasn't a blood relative. Unlike my blood relatives which came from the Poznan/St. Casimir's neighborhood, he grew up in the Jackowa/St. Hyacinth's neighborhood. He was an all around handy man at home and a foreman at the White Motor Co. on E. 79th and St. Clair. I would often watch him as he made things out of wood, or would melt lead to make his own fishing sinkers which we would use when he took me fishing. What I really owe him for though was my love of movies and old Cleveland movie theaters. In the 1940s and 50s, he was the door man at the New Broadway, Olympia and Grand Theaters. The Grand had two seats in the left back rear under the stairs to the small balcony. I used to love to sit there. Often times he would take me to work with him and while he collected tickets I sat and watched the movies. That wasn't hard to do because being a neighborhood second run movie theater, you had two different movies, with cartoons, newsreels, and preview to watch. I can still hear him jokingly reply to my question as to what was playing that night at the theater, he would reply "Tom Mix and his horse Cement" referring to his childhood cowboy movie idol Tom Mix and his wonder horse, Tony.



With Aunt Mary (Malicka) Recko at the Cleveland Art Museum to celebrate Polish Constitution Day in May 1942

Also living upstairs was my single Uncle Steve Malicki. When he got drafted in World War 2, I remember how proud I was of him. I remember going to Camp Perry to visit him during his basic training and putting on his hat and jacket when he came home on leave. I was thrilled in 1961 to be assigned to Camp Perry for 3 weeks as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot in charge of flying VIPs and military visitors in and out of the National Rifle Matches being held there. That assignment gave me the opportunity one day to fly my helicopter to Cleveland and circle over my old house on Avon much to the delight of my family. Two traits I can remember about Uncle Steve are one, him saying "they saw you coming, I could have gotten it cheaper for you" and secondly, he knew it all (at least in his mind) which is why I nicknamed him "Professor" when I was a youngster. In retrospect, I know he meant well. Two things that I fondly remember doing with him were going to my first Cleveland Indians ball games at the old Cleveland Stadium in August, 1948. I saw the Indians play the New York Yankees in a doubleheader and saw Satchel

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Images of My Ancestors continued from page 7.....

Paige pitch for Cleveland. Secondly, he took me to the only professional wrestling match I ever attended as a kid. It was on November 15, 1949 and we went because he wanted me to see the Polish Strongman, Clevelander Stanley Radwan. That was exciting, but what was more exciting to me was to see my favorite wrestler, Cyclone Anaya, wrestle and also a female match with the gorgeous Nell Stewart who was on the cover of that nights program. After the matches, Nell was set up in the lobby at a card table autographing the program covers. My uncle said to go ahead and get in line to get my copy signed, but I was in such awe of this blonde beauty that I was too embarrassed to do it. That is why I still have that program, but without an autograph. What was of genealogical interest later is that the wrestling referee that night was a relative, Vic Tanski.



Sophie and John Szuch

John's First Communion Day 25 May 1947

Lastly but not least, there was my mother, Sophie Szuch. As previously mentioned, she divorced my father when I was very young and severed all ties with that side of the family. From that moment on, she always put me first and saw that I got a good education at Benedictine High School and John Carroll University. In regards to the latter, I never knew what she had told my Uncle Steve about getting me a job at White Motors the summer before I started college. My uncle told me some 40+ years later that she told him not to get me a cushy job in the office, but one in the factory where I would have to work hard which would make me more apt to work harder in college. Per her request, I ended up on the docks unloading truck parts such as tail pipes, etc. I had another smart woman living in the house!

My mom and I were inseparable, we'd get dressed up and go to the movies either in the neighborhood or downtown. Other times it would be to go shopping and eating downtown. I particularly liked to go downtown at Christmas time to see all the Christmas lights and store window displays and the giant Christmas tree in the Sterling-Linder-Davis Department Store. At all times though, she taught me to be a gentleman and to respect my elders for which I am forever grateful.

All that my ancestors taught me I have tried to pass on to my children and feel that I have been pretty successful in doing so. Unfortunately, all those ancestors are now gone, but as you have just read, I still have fond vivid images and memories of them in my mind.

I'm sure that you all have you own personal memories of your ancestors and I would encourage you to document them for your children and future generations. Please do it while you can, your descendents will appreciate it some day.

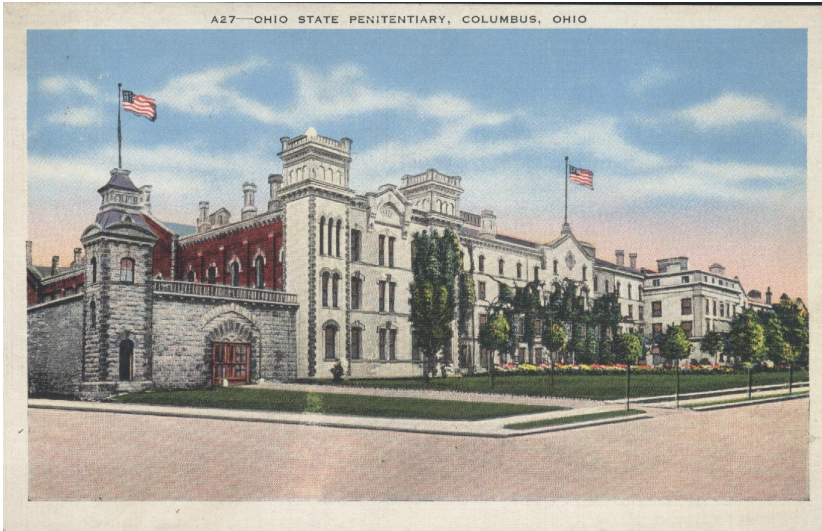
Schedule of Speakers for Upcoming Meetings

- March: Rebecca McFarland, Euclid Public Library – *The Golden Age of Shopping in Cleveland*
- April: Sonia Chapnick, Lucia Dominak and Georgene Jasinski, Members - *Digging for Our Family Roots in Poland* (DATE CHANGED)
- May: Ron Marec, member, *The Polish Constitution*
- June: Jann Pflieger; Past Director of the Sandusky Family History Center for 5 years and currently an Arbitrator for FamilySearch.org – *Great Internet Sites for Great Information*



Smiling Joe continued from page 1.....

Reformatory and later paroled. He continued robbing and thieving and breaking into boxcars until he was again sentenced to the Ohio Reformatory in 1919.



Ohio State Penitentiary, Columbus, Ohio postcard

Courtesy of Ohio State University Library at library.osu.edu

The law was obviously not strict enough on criminals like Filkowski because while out on bail in January 1924, he decided to stick up a local grocer on Jefferson Ave. As he fled the scene, his neighborhood chum, Anthony Bublo (a Union Trust Co. bank guard), happened to be walking to work and drew his gun to try and stop Filkowski. Filkowski responded with a shot to Bublo's head. Even though Bublo was able to I.D. his shooter and childhood friend before he died, the murder charge was not pursued due to insufficient evidence. But Filkowski eventually was sentenced to the Ohio State Penitentiary for six years for stealing an automobile.

Paroled in April 1930, Filkowski returned to his life of crime and began a series of holdups with old pals Joseph Stazek and Charles Frisco. Though their identities weren't publicly known, they were called the "Flats Gang". Filkowski

also started a romance with Mary Keck (Joseph Stazek's young married sister) which would ultimately lead to his downfall and imprisonment for life.

The event that would start to unravel Filkowski's criminal run happened on June 6, 1930. An apartment complex at 10017 Lake Avenue was under construction and Friday was pay day. Anthony Veryk, a 36 year old Polish lathing contractor withdrew \$1,500 cash from the Woodland-E. 55th branch of Union Trust Co. in order to pay his men at the worksite. When he arrived at the construction site, he began to pay his men as Filkowski stalked Veryk throughout the building. Suddenly, Filkowski drew his pistol, shot Veryk, grabbed his money and escaped the building as workers realizing the crime threw bricks at him. A workman, Charles Silver, threw a brick that dented the front door of Filkowski's sedan. A day or two later Filkowski, accompanied by his friends George Keck (husband of Filkowski's lover) and Joseph Stazek, took the car which he drove from the murder scene to remote Crossview Road in Broadview Heights, poured gasoline on the vehicle and burned it.

But Smiling Joe wasn't going to stop there. The identity of the apartment shooter was still unknown so Filkowski could still run around town wreaking havoc. He and his partners in crime started a spree of robberies later that Fall including the robbery of a jeweler and his niece on October 13th, the robbery of Dr. Wilbur J. Sawyer on Henninger Road on October 27th, the Dixie Shoe Co. robbery on November 26th and a payroll robbery at the Chandler & Price plant on November 28th. Filkowski seemed invincible. Police suspected him in the crimes but had no real evidence. He was the "Phantom of the South Side" because he managed to escape authorities after each robbery. But his blossoming romance with Mrs. Mary Keck would soon be discovered. Late on December 5, 1930, George Keck arrived home to find his wife in bed with the infamous Polish outlaw. After the discovery, Keck went directly to the police and reported to them every crime that Filkowski had committed with his accomplices Stazek and Frisco, including the murder of Veryk, claiming Filkowski bragged to him about his crimes. Police staged a trap at Filkowski's home at 861 Jefferson Avenue and when he entered the side door in the early morning of December 6th, police ordered Filkowski to throw his hands up but he quickly drew a revolver and fired at the men and ran from the house. Filkowski escaped so the police went to Stazek's home on 2061 Moore Court. When Stazek resisted arrest, the police shot and killed him. Meanwhile, police also captured Charles Frisco without

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Smiling Joe continued from page 9.....

resistance. A few days later, on orders to shoot to kill, Cleveland Plain Dealer circulation manager Joseph Fortini, was mistakenly shot by police thinking he was Filkowski.

Filkowski was hiding out at a rooming house at 10816 Superior Avenue for the next month until authorities discovered him and he, yet again, escaped out the back door. In January 1931, a man resembling Filkowski was reported to have participated in a holdup at the Belkin Neckwear Co. The Phantom of the South Side felt police were too hot on his trail so he checked himself into the Cleveland Clinic as John Blake of 2510 Fulton Road for a nose remodeling operation. A plaster cast was made of his face before the operation that was later used in testimony at his murder trial. Sometime after his stay at the Clinic, he seemed to disappear from Cleveland and so did Mrs. Mary Keck and her young daughter, Marion. Mary returned after five months stating she had been in Detroit and was convicted of neglecting her boy, Daniel, and sentenced to 30 days in the workhouse. Out on probation in September of 1931, Mary Keck failed to report for parole and appeared to have fled Cleveland with Filkowski again.

Police in Chicago suspected Filkowski of local robberies when a gangster friend of his was arrested there. But Cleveland detectives kept on Filkowski's trail and finally found him hiding out in New York City. They had been corresponding with Filkowski through letters he thought were from a criminal associate. The capture came to a climax with a fight in the streets of New York. When detectives went back to Filkowski's Long Island apartment, they found Mary Keck, a complete arsenal of weapons and a box filled with diamonds believed to be from a recent jewel robbery in New York.

Smiling Joe's trial was filled with drama. George Keck testified Filkowski had tried to kill him several times because he had turned evidence on Stazek and Frisco, two witnesses received life-threatening letters and Mary Keck's infidelities were brought out in the open, including the story of her giving birth to Filkowski's son in Detroit. With all the witnesses identifying Filkowski as the killer of Anthony Veryk, it seemed apparent that he would get the death penalty. But one witness, Charles Silver, who saw the gunman flee the scene of the crime, testified for the defense that he was sure Joseph Filkowski was not the man. This left enough doubt for the jury to find Filkowski guilty of first degree murder but with mercy. He would get a life sentence and this left him smiling.

Over the years, Filkowski's name faded from the headlines. Three times in seven years he attempted to escape from the penitentiary (once in a nitroglycerin plot to blow up prison walls in 1933). Meanwhile, George Keck divorced Mary but she did retain custody of her two children. No other trace can be found of her supposed son with Filkowski.

Filkowski settled down behind bars and took up as a pastry chef for the prison bakery. For 25 years, Mary Keck wrote letters to the governor pleading for Joe's parole claiming that he had been rehabilitated. Eventually, Filkowski won his parole and was released April 15, 1963. In July of that year, with approval from the Catholic church, Joseph Filkowski and Mary Stazek Keck were married at St. John Cantius church in a private ceremony. Joe became a baker and the two lead a quiet, retired life. Nothing more can be found about the couple. Joseph Filkowski died in September 1984 and Mary a year later in September 1985. It appears they did live happily ever after.

Lublin Civil Records

Just a note that you can search civil records in the Lublin area at the following website:

Registry.lubgens.eu

What's New at the PGSGC Website?

- PGSGC Newsletter Index
- The Catholic Directory—Catholic Churches in Poland
- Trips Over Poland

Visit our website at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohpgsgc/> to check out these new additions!



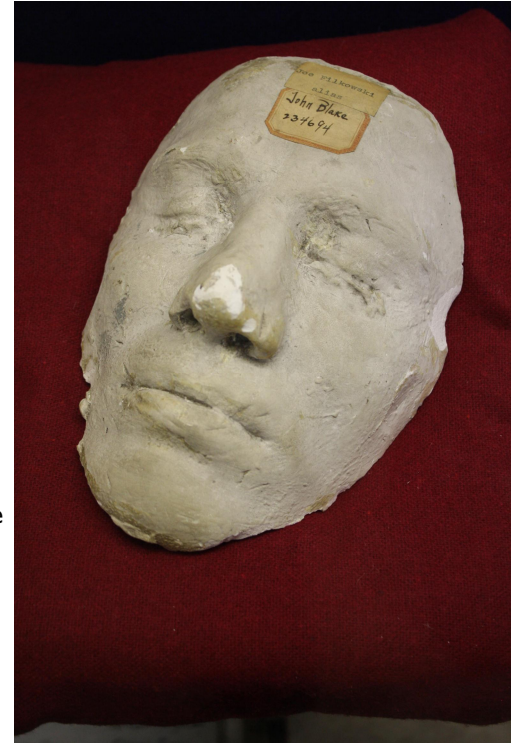
Was it a Death Mask?

By Trina Galauner

While doing research on Joseph Filkowski, I found that Wikipedia claimed Filkowski was tried and executed in Ohio. I also found a book by James Morton called "Gangland International" that claimed the same thing. But as I combed through article after article about Filkowski in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, I found he simply had not been executed and actually was paroled and lived until 1984. The book by Morton indicated that Filkowski's death mask is on display at the Cleveland Police History Museum located at 1300 Ontario St. in downtown Cleveland. So I decided to email them to find out the real story behind the death mask. I knew that Filkowski had plastic surgery at the Cleveland Clinic to get his nose fixed so maybe the mask had something to do with that. According to reports in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Filkowski had used the name "William Blake" when he went in for the surgery. Morton's book indicates his alias is "John Blake".

A return email came to me from Bob Cermak, trustee of the Cleveland Police History Museum. Mr. Cermak confirmed to me that records do indicate Filkowski was eventually released from prison. And the mask was never classified as a "death mask". The department had some very talented artists in the 1930s who created masks to help identify crime victims (such as the Torso Murder victims), but in this case the mask was created after Filkowski's Cleveland Clinic surgery to aid the authorities in catching the fugitive. I visited the Cleveland Police History Museum to see the mask myself and to provide a photo for this article. Police records indicate Filkowski used the alias "John Blake".

The Cleveland Police History Museum is located at 1300 Ontario St. in downtown Cleveland. They are open to the public from 10am-4pm Monday through Friday and admission is free. You can visit their website at www.clevelandpolicemuseum.org and they publish a nice newsletter with interesting stories of past crimes.



Mask of Joe Filkowski AKA John Blake on display at the Cleveland Police History Museum

Polish Boy Disappears in 1890

By Trina Galauner

When Bernhard Bilski was 11 years old in 1890, he stole \$7 from his mother and used it to buy a pair of shoes and a coat. By order of the court he was sentenced to the local house of refuge. On October 16, 1890, police supposedly took him to the house of refuge. The house of refuge was a work farm for indigent children. The house was under scrutiny for its profiting from the work of these young boys. In 1891 there were about 40 children living there. Cleveland Mayor Rose believed the house was more of a dumping ground for parents to send their children when they couldn't afford to support or didn't want to care for them. It was decided the house of refuge would close. Several petitions were made by parents for their children to be released instead of being sent to the Lancaster farm and many were granted release. It is believed that Bilski was sent to Lancaster. After Bernhard Bilski's father died in 1893, his mother requested Bernhard be released but the superintendent at the Lancaster farm claimed to have no record of the boy arriving at the farm. What happened to Bernhard Bilski is still a mystery.

The Polish Genealogical
Society of Greater Cleveland
c/o St. Mary's PNC Church
1901 Wexford Ave.
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About Us

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month from September through June. They are held in the parish hall of St. Mary's PNC Church. St. Mary's is located on the corner of Broadview Rd. and Wexford Ave. in Parma, Ohio. Meetings begin at 7:30 PM and are usually over before 9:30 PM. There is ample parking in the parish parking lot. The entrance is on Marietta Ave. Membership dues are \$2.00 per month through January, then \$24.00 per year.

At many of our meetings, we have guest speakers who address the group on subjects in which we have an interest. The subjects may include genealogical matters, Polish history, heritage and traditions. When we do not have a guest speaker, we have "**Show and Tell**" nights when fellow members discuss their genealogical problems, ask for advice from anyone with a similar problem, tell us of their discoveries, or let us know what they've learned about their ancestors.

Our group maintains a library which is a popular resource our members enjoy. It contains various books, maps, pamphlets and newsletters from other genealogical groups. Materials can be borrowed from the library for a period of one month. We employ the honor system with regard to borrowing of books and other related materials.

We also keep a surname research list. This list includes the surnames of our ancestors which our active members are researching. In the past, members have discovered that they were investigating names that other members were also researching.

We publish a quarterly twelve page newsletter entitled, *Our Polish Ancestors*. Articles for the newsletter are selected that are of interest to our membership. Many are based on materials gathered from the many fine research facilities in and around the Greater Cleveland area, such as: The Cleveland Public Library, The Western Reserve Historical Society, The Cuyahoga County Archives, The Family History Centers and the many Polish-American churches in this part of northern Ohio. Articles written by our membership are always welcome.