

Our Polish ANCESTORS

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

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Portrait of a Polish Immigrant Funeral Director, Antonius J. Tomon

By Virginia Tomon

Anthony J. Tomon, (A. J. for short), was a prominent member of the Berea and Tremont Polish Community at a time of the great influx of Polish immigrants to the U.S. in the early 1900s. A. J. was one of eight children and was born on May 5, 1892 to Franciszek Tomon and Apollonia Bogaczewicz in Golcowa, County (Powiat) of Brzozow, Poland. He and two brothers, Joseph and Michael, decided that after the family farm was divided eight ways, there wouldn't be much left to farm in Poland. The parcel of land was always divided equally between the siblings.



Anthony J. Tomon

Joseph, an elder brother, immigrated in 1900 at the age of 24, and headed for southwest Pennsylvania coal mines. This type of work did not appeal to the young Polish farm immigrant, so he made his move to the Cleveland area.

Antoni immigrated in 1910 at the age of 18 leaving Antwerp, Belgium aboard the ship "Laplander" and joined his brother in Berea, Ohio. Antoni held several jobs working at the copper company on Train Avenue making barrels and at the Singer Sewing Machine factory. He spent his spare time at the local library learning to read and write English. He was able to save enough money to purchase a "touring" car in 1914. Soon, he became very popular and important in the community especially when a death occurred in a family.

Up until the late 1930s, it was still traditional for families to hold wakes in their homes. There was really no such thing as a funeral home. There also was no funeral or embalming licensing. If the body was not embalmed, the mourners would give flowers as they provided better fragrance in the home. At times, when a family wished the body to be embalmed, A. J. and Joseph complied and either used the family's kitchen table for embalming or took the body to a building they owned on Bagley Road between Front Street and Riverside in Berea for embalming. Using hand or foot pumps and formaldehyde and an injection needle, they embalmed the body. Because A. J. was the only one in the neighborhood with a car, he was able to transport the mourning family to St Adelbert's Church in Berea for the funeral mass and then to the cemetery rather than the family using a horse and buggy. In 1914, this was his introduction into the "funeral" business.

....continued on page 4

Inside this issue:

<i>Portrait of a Polish Immigrant Funeral Director, Antonius J. Tomon</i>	1
<i>Letter from the President</i>	2
<i>Polish Family Heirlooms</i>	3
<i>A Polish-American Home in Goosetown</i>	6
<i>PGSGC Family Tree</i>	7
<i>How to Use the Digitized Collection of the Polish National Archives</i>	8

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

I'd like to dedicate this letter to my best friend of 70 years, Cirino G. Scavone, or Jerry as he was known when I first met him in 1943. His Grandparents moved into the house kitty corner from mine and as kids would do, we met when we were outside playing. Jerry was 7 and I was 5 and I'm sure neither one of us would have expected our close friendship would last 70 years. About 7 years later, he and his parents moved in upstairs from his Grandparents and that really cemented our long lasting friendship. I was either across the street at his house or he was at mine.

What was interesting about our friendship is that he was of Italian heritage and I was of Polish/Hungarian descent (but lived with my Polish Grandparents). The other kids on Avon were also of Italian heritage but it is to Jerry that I owe a large debt of gratitude! Being two years older and having a Mother who was active in Italian organizations, he would always brag about his Italian heritage and their history and culture. In response, I learned about my Polish heritage so I could combat his bragging. As a result, we both learned about each other's heritage. To this day, I probably know more about Italian culture and history than most Italians!



Cirino (Jerry), 17 on the left and John, 15 on the right. Photo taken in May, 1953

Over the years, Jerry lived all over the U.S. including Alaska, but we always kept in close touch either by mail, phone, and later, by computer. For a number of years, he lived in Tennessee and I would stay at his house when I was on the road as a salesman. Being retired at that point, he even went on the road with me on one trip and we visited Pulaski, TN.

Thanks to him, I developed my love of my Polish heritage and I joined the PGSGC where I have been the President for the last 21 years. Some years later, I returned the favor by getting him interested in doing his own family genealogy!

Unfortunately, Jerry (Cirino) passed away rather suddenly on February 19, 2013! He is physically gone, but he left me with 70 years of memories and a deep love for my Polish heritage. Like they say, "you can't pick your relatives, but you can pick your friends!" In Jerry's case, I sure picked good.

John F. Szuch

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Polish Family Heirlooms

By Trina Galauner

This 100+ year old music box photo album belonged to my great grandmother, Mary Wisniewski-Moniak. It had a velvet cover with a heart-shaped mirror. In it she kept very precious family photos. It is believed it originally belonged to her mother, Katarzyna Nowak-Wisniewski. In it were found old family photos dating from the late 1890s to early 1900s. It is being cared for by my great uncle Joe (Mary's son). It is truly a family treasure!





Continued from page 1....

Antoni Tomon was very sociable with a charismatic personality that had Polish immigrants and others seeking his advice about such things as banking and citizenship or to just interpret laws and help immigrant Poles read letters in English. (Now I know where my Grandson gets his gift of gab!) Antoni was a member of the Polish National Union, Union of Poles, the Polish National Alliance and St. Joseph Lodge.

A. J. married his first wife, Barbara "Bessie" Niewiarowska in 1913 and started a family in Tremont on Professor Avenue. Bronislaw "Bert" Antony Tomon was born on August 19, 1914. Two more sons were born in this union, Edmund and Richard. The second generation of funeral directors had developed. In 1928, the parents divorced and A. J. moved the children to Berea to help in a tavern he named Lindey's Tavern located on Lindberg Avenue. The funeral business was still operating



A. J. Tomon Funeral Home on West. 14th Street in Tremont ca. 1939

out of the building on Bagley Road and later moved to 2155 West 14th Street in Tremont near Fairfield and Abby. Bert, the eldest, graduated from Berea High School and was sent to Cleveland College of embalming at what is now Case Western Reserve. By the mid 1930s, the State of Ohio mandated a person in public health services to have a medical education and be licensed.

The A. J. Tomon and Sons Funeral Home joined the ranks of many other funeral homes in Tremont. Funeral home names such as Kolodij, Lynhorst, Bania, Rusynk-Yurch, Hyber, Kmiecik, Mallchock, Parobek, Holowczak and Holan were found throughout Tremont. My husband, Bert Richard, would tell me stories of he and his father going down to the Terminal Tower to pick up remains at the train station after World

War II. Bert at 10 years old had to wash the car, vacuum, and help set up chairs. Tomon became a respected name in the community. They dealt fairly and with true sympathy for the families. My children would always be astonished at the number of people who knew Bert A. when they went anywhere with him. He always knew someone from the "old neighborhood" and remembered every detail about them. We went to Whitey's in Richfield, Ohio one day for hamburgers and Dzia Dzia (Grandpa Bert) disappeared from the table for awhile. When we found him, he was talking with the owner who was a friend from Tremont. He even remembered my family, the Skwarlos. Dzia Dzia knew everyone!

The dress of the funeral directors was quite unique too. They would wear waist coats, tails and a top hat. After World War II, they changed to dress suits. When Richard came back from the war, he too went in the business. Bert recalled his Dad having the burials of the Mayor of Linndale and Monsignor Duda of St. John Cantius Church.

I guess certain things are meant to be. I also lived in Tremont and met A. J. when my father paid his dues to the Union of Poles. My family moved to the west side just two doors away from the Tomon Funeral Home at 4772 Pearl Road. I lived right around the corner on Vandalia Avenue. Marcie, Richard's daughter, was a playmate of mine. My son, Mark now calls Tremont his home on West 6th Street. He is rather proud that he sits in the pew at St. John Cantius Church where there

....continued on page 5



Continued from page 4....

is a name plaque "A. J. Tomon" attached. Years ago, every man wore a hat when he went outdoors and that pew hook is where A. J. hung his hat!

The hardest part of being a funeral director is to bury your own. Edmund, the middle brother, was a U. S. Navy Merchant Mariner. He later owned a sailboat named "Nomot" ("Tomon" spelled backwards) to do trading in the Caribbean. Sailing was his life. In 1950, he died in a car crash coming home from Florida.

Eventually, the funeral home needed more room and expanded in the 1940s. Bert A. was married to Frances Kolezynski and their first child was on the way. His name was Bert Richard Tomon, beginning the third generation of funeral directors. A daughter, Barbara, and a son, Michael, followed. An old Victorian house was up for sale across the street. The house was built by Mr. Yurich, a lumber supplier, for his daughter. It was the right size and had maid's quarters upstairs for the growing family. The move was made.

I would have given anything to see the home. It had embroidered silk on the walls, an atrium with a glass ceiling, large sliding wooded doors between the parlors, dumbwaiters and original light fixtures (some that still used gas) and, of course, a grand staircase. It would have been my dream home!

Much to their chagrin, the home eventually was in the pathway of I-71 and was scheduled for demolition. At this time, the family moved the business from Tremont to 4772 Pearl Road in Cleveland. Here my husband was introduced even further into the funeral business. After graduating from Dayton University, he later attended embalming school in Cincinnati, Ohio and became a licensed funeral director. When A. J. died in 1973, Bert R. took on more responsibilities with his father and Uncle Richard.



A. J. Tomon with sons Bert A., Edmund and Richard

The Tomon Funeral Home now has two places of business, one on Pearl Road in Cleveland and one on Pearl Road in Middleburg Heights. The third generation of Tomons continues to service the public. Michael, 9 years younger than Bert R., manages the Middleburg Heights home and Richard's son, Rick, manages the Cleveland home. A fourth generation may be forthcoming. Michael's son, Cody, is in training and is doing a good job continuing the tradition.

Membership News

By Ron Kraine

In order for any organization to remain viable, it must maintain and grow its membership base. Like any other group, our "Polish Genealogy" group could use a little boost in membership. We ask all members to try to "talk-up" our group's activities and purposes, and try to bring a friend or neighbor to one of our meetings. They may discover a real interest in the lives of their ancestors.

Dues were due the first of January and if you are in doubt about yours, please contact Ron Kraine at 440-838-5743.



A Polish-American Home in Goosetown

By Trina Galauner



Polish immigrants were very proud of their homes. My grandfather was a bricklayer and he built this home at 6925 Clement Avenue. The home has been remodeled over the years. Originally, the home had no basement but over the years a basement was dug out and running water and radiator heating was added. In the 1930s, my then 16 year old teenage grandmother who had two younger brothers desperately needed her own bedroom. An addition was made to the back of the house which added a bedroom and a full bathroom. At some point, a walk out porch was added on the front of the house on the 2nd floor. It was a double home and in early years the upstairs was rented out. When my grandmother married in 1940, her and her husband took the 2nd floor living quarters. My Dad and my Uncles slept on the 3rd floor. It must have been awfully hot in the summers and cold in the winters! The interior of the house has beautifully varnished woodwork around the doorways and wooden pillars as you enter the

parlor. To duplicate the interior woodwork today would cost a fortune! The iron fence is no longer there but the front porch brickwork is still intact. The kitchens on both floors are pretty roomy and have multiple windows that line the side of the house. I remember how narrow the driveway was when we would go visit. You had to pull all the way to the back or else you could not open the car door to get out. Today the house is over 100 years old.

Message from Betty Joy, PGSGC Librarian

The library has a new addition. PGSGC Member Richard Szczepinski donated a CD with church records from Wielki Garc, a village in northern Poland. Wielki Garc is in the administrative district of Gmina Pelplin, Tczew County, Pomeranian Voivodeship. It lies 4 miles northeast of Pelplin, 11 miles south of Tczew and 30 miles south of Gdansk. The CD contains the following records:

Baptisms 1752-1899

Marriages 1732-1888

Deaths 1778-1899

The CD is available to PGSGC members to borrow from the library. See Betty Joy for more information.



PGSGC Family Tree

By John F. Szuch

Starting with this issue of "Our Polish Ancestors" we will have a regular feature about news of our members and their families. Although we all basically search ancestors with different last names, we as a group are like one big family! This feature will give members an opportunity to share news with the other members. We would like to get news about births, marriages, and other happenings of importance, and unfortunately deaths.

With this first installment we have some sad news to report! First, long time member Helen E. Palshook (Krasucki) passed away on March 16, 2013 at age 91 and a half years old (born July 24, 1921). Memorial services will commence with a gathering at 9 am, Friday, June 7 at St. Victor Church in Richfield with a Mass at 10 am and immediate internment of remains at St. Mary's Cemetery on E. 71st in Cuyahoga Hts. (Cleveland). Her daughter, Gayle, is concerned there will be an empty church because the services are two months after Helen's death. Gayle prays for your attendance. Helen was a regular meeting attendee almost right up to the time of her passing.

Also on a sad note we have learned of the passing of Christopher E. Marec, age 50. Chris was the son of members Ron and Judith Marec, and the nephew of member Elaine Marec. Ron is a former Vice President of the PGSGC and Elaine was our meeting refreshment hostess for a number of years.

Another sad loss was the passing of Reverend Monsignor Leo Telesz on March 27, 2013 at age 95 (10 days shy of his 96th birthday). Msgr. Telesz was the former Pastor at St. Casimir Parish on Sowinski Ave. in Cleveland for 36 years! He helped me find my Grandparents marriage date of November 11, 1912, and although retired and living at his parents homestead on Francis Ave., he was kind enough to celebrate a Mass for me at his home on their 100th wedding anniversary. He loved getting our society's bulletins and in a letter I received from him this past January, he said: "Thank you and keep me in your records." We now keep him and all deceased members and relatives in our prayers.

With news for future bulletins, please email John F. Szuch at pulaskipro@aol.com.



Former members, Helen & Peter Palshook prior to a PGSGC meeting years ago

Schedule of Speakers for Upcoming Meetings

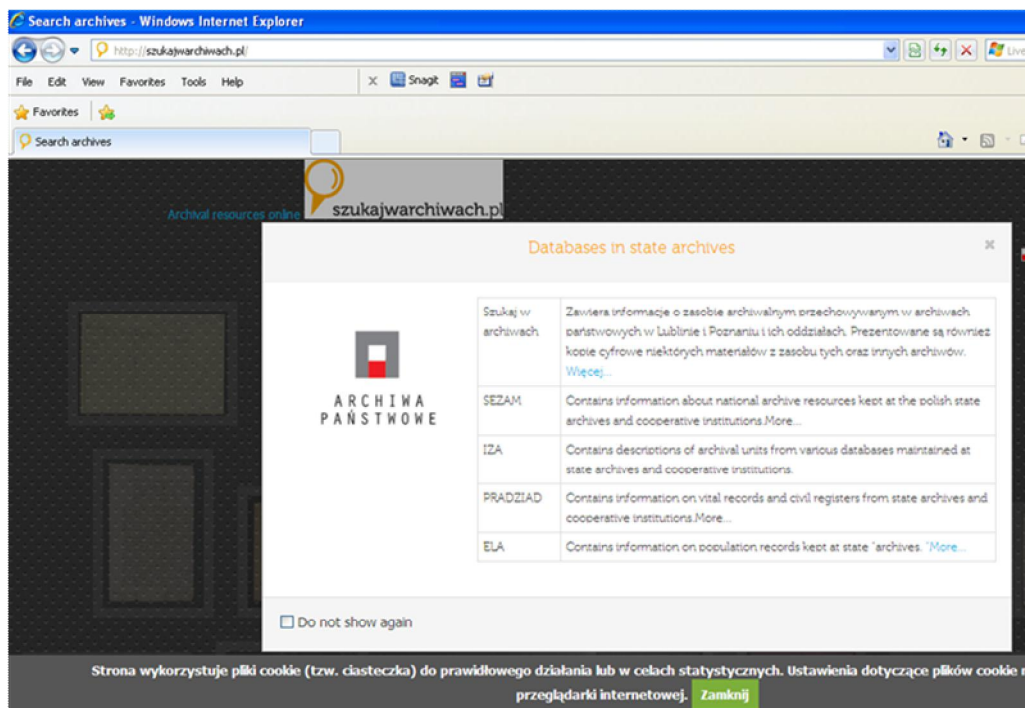
- June:** Jann Pflieger, Past Director of the Sandusky Family History Center for 5 years and currently an Arbitrator for FamilySearch.org – *Great Internet Sites for Great Information*
- September:** Lucia Dominak, Member, *Digging for Our Family Roots in Poland, Part 2*
- October:** Norman Lewicki, *Putting It All Together: Writing A Book of Your Family's (Polish) History*
- November:** Rebecca McFarland, Euclid Public Library – *The Golden Age of Shopping in Cleveland RESCHEDULED*



How to Use the Digitized Collection of the Polish National Archives

By Ben Kman

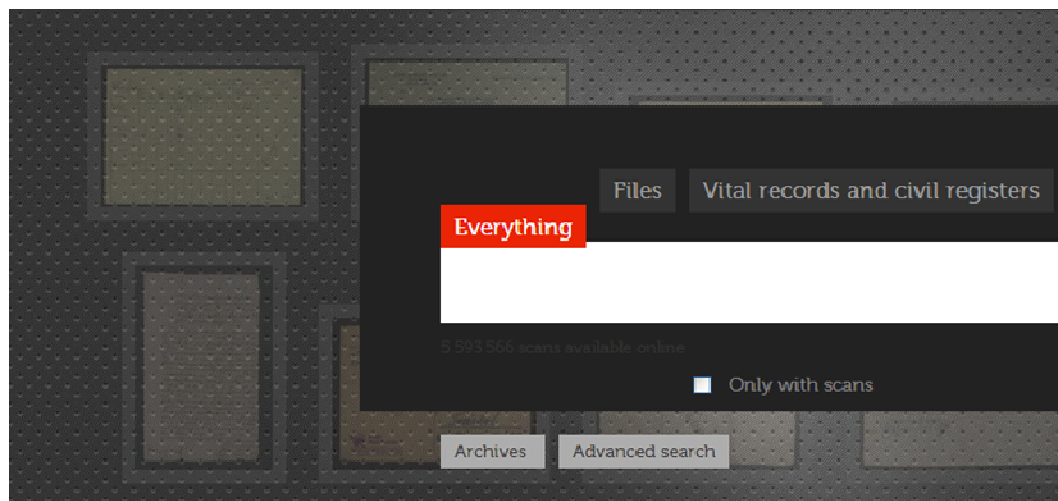
First, I would like to thank Mike Eliaz (aka Stanczyk – Internet Muse) for posting instructions on how to access the digital images being created by the Polish National Archives. It is not intuitive and I had difficulty trying to navigate the site so his posting was very informative. My goal here is to continue to spread the knowledge on how to access these records and to provide more detail based on my experience. Let’s begin...



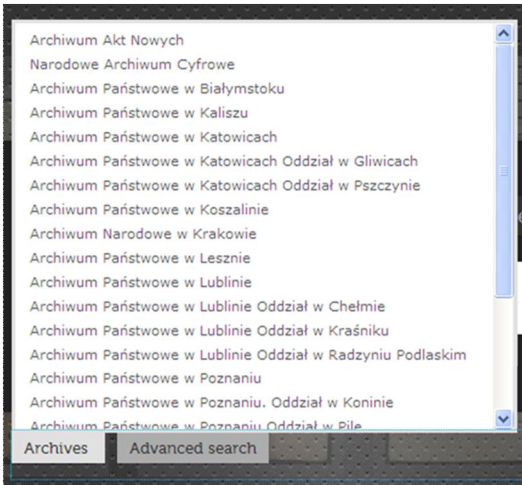
This is the homepage: Szukajwarchiwach.pl

This site can be switched to English by clicking on the British flag (not pictured here). This will not translate the digital images only the website information.

First, close the pop up listing the archive databases by clicking on the X.



By clicking on the “Archives” button a list of archives with available digitized images will appear.



This is the list of archives with currently available digital images. When I tried to visit archives not on this list, I could not find any digitized records. I am assuming as new archives post information, they will be added to this list.

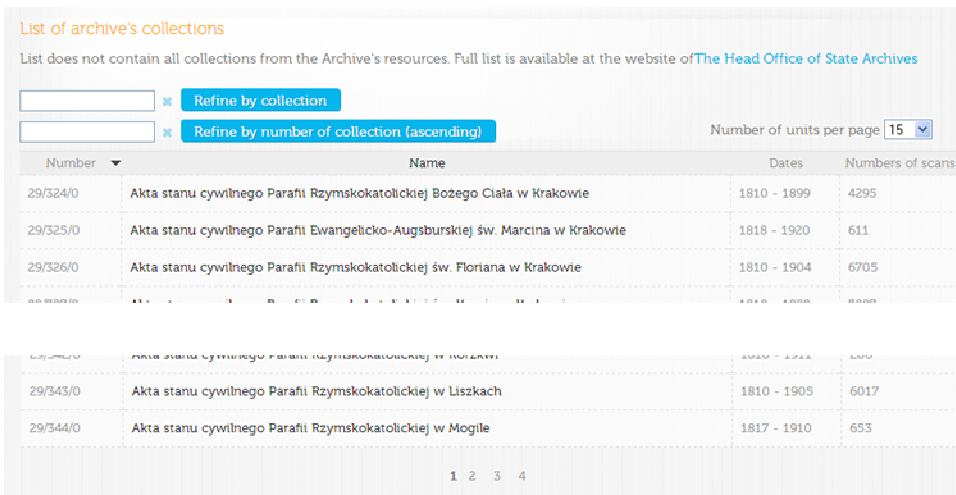
Select an archive of interest by clicking on it. For this example, Krakow.



Now you should see the Krakow Archives page.

Click on "Resource"

This will take you to a listing of parishes with records at the archive

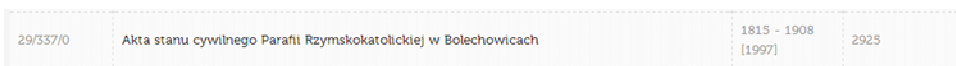


Each parish is listed showing the date range of records available as well as the number of scans. If the number of scans is zero, nothing is currently available for that parish.

Sometimes multiple pages of parishes are available. To view the other parishes, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the numbers.

In this example, there are 4 total pages of parishes.

To view a particular parish's records, click on the specific line of interest.





Collection: 29/337/0 Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Bolechowicach

Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Bolechowicach

Archive **Collection** Series [4] Units [123/123]

Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie	
Former title of the collection: - brak danych -	Dates: 1815 - 1908 [1997]
Foreign language title of the collection: - brak danych -	Dates: 1815 - 1854 1890 - 1908 1960 - 1960 1997 - 1997
Name of the creator: - brak danych -	Access conditions: tak
Category: urzędy stanu cywilnego i akta metrykalne - urzędy stanu cywilnego	Languages: polski łaciński

Amount of archival material

Total (archival units): 123

Processed (archival units): 0

Without inventory (archival units): 0

Total (linear meters): 0.71

Processed (linear meters): 0.00

Without inventory (archival units): 0.00

Amount of non-archival material

Total (archival units): 0

Total (linear meters): 0.00

At the parish site, click on the "Series" button to view the specific information available.

Collection: 29/337/0 Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Bolechowicach

Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Bolechowicach

Archive Collection **Series [4]** Units [123/123]

No.	Name	Units	Dates	Numbers of scans
	Units without series	0		0
1	Akta urodzeń	42	1815-1997	1065
2	Akta małżeństw	39	1815-1852	1056
3	Akta zgonów	40	1815-1854	804
4	Dublety do akt zgonów	2	1853-1854	0

Here you should see the records available and the number of scans for each type of record.

Click on the type of record you want search. Marriage records are my favorite!

Units in series: 2 Akta małżeństw

Number of units per page: 15

Reference code	Title	Dates	Numbers of scans
29/337/0/2/M1	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1815-1815	22
29/337/0/2/M2	Alegata	1815-1815	0
29/337/0/2/M3	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1816-1816	24
29/337/0/2/M4	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1817-1817	25
29/337/0/2/M5	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1818-1818	23
29/337/0/2/M6	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1819-1819	20
29/337/0/2/M7	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1820-1820	20
29/337/0/2/M8	Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw	1821-1821	29

A listing of available records broken down by year is now seen.

Select the year of interest.

Zapowiedzi (banns) often contain a wealth of information on the individuals being married.

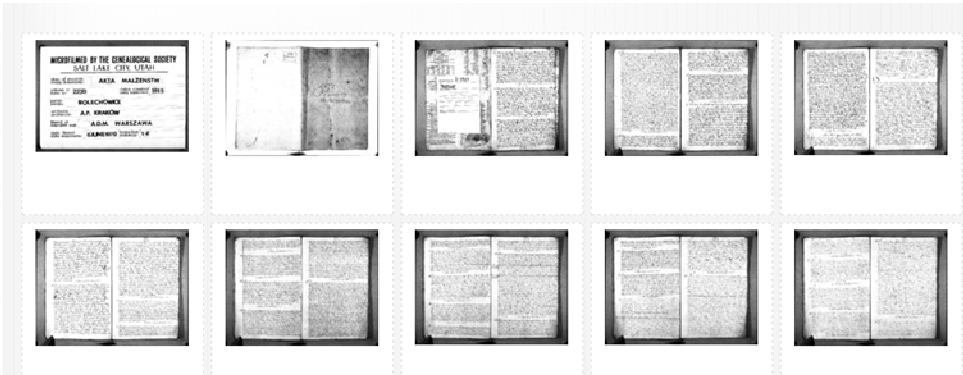
Collection: 29/337/0 Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Bolechowicach » Series: 2 Akta małżeństw » File/unit: M1

Księga zapowiedzi i małżeństw

Archive Collection Series [4] Units [39] **29/337/0/2/M1** Digital copies [22] Indexes [0] Item

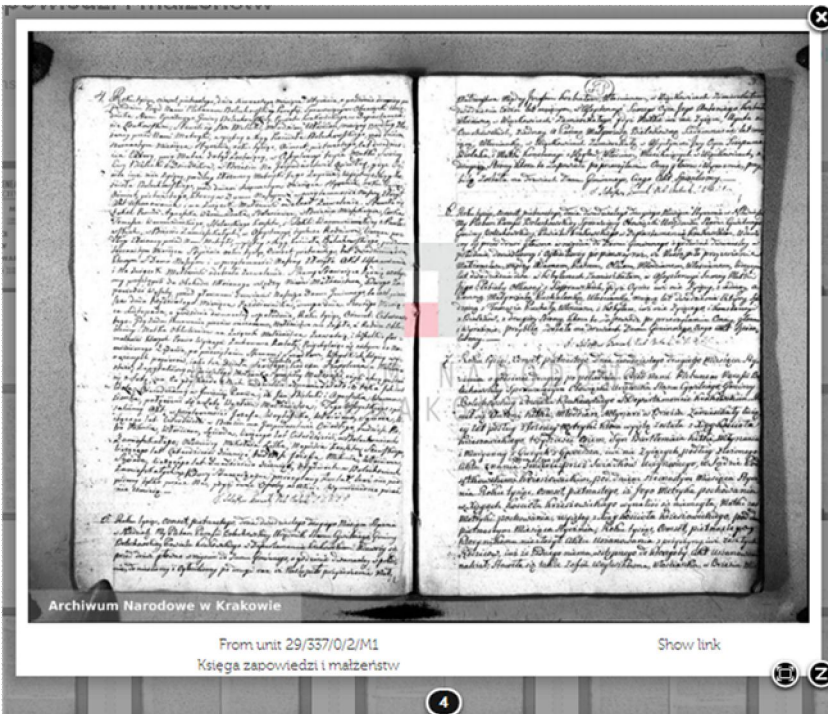
Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie	
dokumentacja aktowa	Reference code: M1
Translated title: - brak danych -	
Date: 1815-1815	

To see the digital images, click "Digital copies".



Thumbnails of the images now appear on the screen.

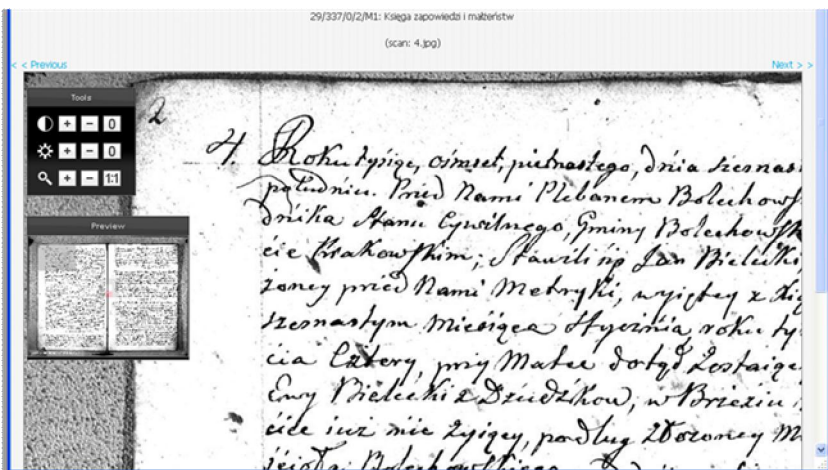
Click on a thumbnail to view it.



A larger image appears but is still difficult to read.

To see a legible version, click on the "Full Size" icon.

The number under the image (4) represents the number of the image in the series you selected to view.



A new window will open in your web browser and you should now be able to read the records.

Be patient. These take a short while to load.

You can scroll around the document by clicking and dragging your mouse. By using the +/- buttons, you can adjust the contrast, brightness and zoom respectively. To view the next or previous image, click the "next" or "previous" link.

Hopefully this helps to get researchers started using the information that has been made available and prepares them to take advantage of future additions.

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**Please submit all correspondence to:
PGSGC Newsletter
c/o the return address above**

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 \$24.00 per year starting in January, prorated \$2.00 per month thereafter.

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.