



# Our Polish ANCESTORS



THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

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## Undertaking the Needs of the Community— The Roots of the Komorowski Funeral Home

By Trina Goss Galauner

In the early days of the 20th century in the Polish immigrant neighborhoods of Cleveland, wakes were held in the homes of the deceased. However, there were some funeral homes such as, Golubski on Fullerton Avenue and Mosinski and Slezak, both on E. 65th Street. Golubski primarily serviced the Immaculate Heart parish and Mosinski and Slezak were both located adjacent to St. Stanislaus.



Komorowski Funeral Home, 1941

Sacred Heart of Jesus parishioners had a need for a funeral home near their church. Florian Komorowski felt the calling in this profession. He was a first generation Polish-American who was encouraged by his parents to serve his community in the best way that he could.

The Komorowskis were from Rak, a small village in the county of Rypin, district of Płock, in the Russian Partition of Poland which was, at that time, called Congress Poland. Florian's father, Jozef (Joseph), was only 17-years-old when he arrived. On May 21, 1906, Joseph and his sister, Franciszka, stepped off the SS Hannover at Baltimore, Maryland, looking to start a new, and better, life in Cleveland, Ohio. They were going to stay with their brother-in-law, Felix Bobrowski, who lived at 3 Purkyni St. (later E. 72nd St.), in a Polish immigrant neighborhood on the far southeastern side of Cleveland. Joseph's oldest brother, Jan, was already in Cleveland and working for American Steel & Wire Company where Joseph also obtained employment.

Florian's mother, Helen Krajewski, was born in Cleveland in 1892. Her parents, Jan and Joanna (nee Deptowicz), were also from the county of Rypin in Poland and were married at the Roman Catholic parish in Świedziebnia in 1876. Helen had two older brothers who immigrated with their mother, Joanna, in 1886, coming to Cleveland to join their father. They belonged to the Sacred Heart of Jesus parish at E. 71<sup>st</sup> Street and Kazimier and lived on Sacramento Street (aka Scott Street and, after 1906, E. 73<sup>rd</sup> Street). Joseph Komorowski lived just around the block.

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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 Michael Speare at [pgsgc@yahoo.com](mailto:pgsgc@yahoo.com) for more information.





## Letter from the President

Wow! Where do I begin? What can I say to all of you at this moment of time? Hopefully, you are all well and are learning with me just what “new normal” means. If the order of “only groups of 10” gets lifted before the September meeting, we will look forward to seeing you then. Announcements and reminders will be posted on our website and all members who have furnished the PGSGC with a good email address will be notified. Others will be called.

This pandemic has prompted me to revisit my paternal grandfather’s death certificate as he was a victim of the 1918 influenza pandemic. My knowledge of his death consisted of family stories and my mom’s memories. She was 4-years-old at the time and her three siblings were 3-years, 2-years and 3 weeks old. New information I discovered was the length of time Adam Zielachowski was in St. Alexis Hospital, a wrong date of birth and that bronchial pneumonia was the official cause of death with influenza considered contributory. There is much more important information on such a document, sometimes it might be good to revisit your research.

Till we see each other again. Stay well!

Anthonette Baciak, President



The scheduled guest speaker for the September meeting is John J. Grabowski, historian, curator, editor, professor, author and foremost authority on Cleveland local and ethnic history. Guests are welcome.



### Polish Genealogical Society of Greater Cleveland

c/o St. Mary’s PNC Church

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[www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohpgsgc/](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohpgsgc/)



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# Certificates of Arrival—Are they valuable in research?

By Trina Goss Galauner

Very recently I was researching a great grand uncle who came to the U. S. in 1909. I was putting together a family sheet and wanted to be accurate on the date of arrival of my great grandfather's brother.

Jan (John) Mliczek was born in Pstragowa, Ropczyce, Galicia, Austria-Hungary (Poland) on 21 October 1891. This I knew for a fact since I had his actual baptismal record. When searching for passenger arrival records, if one isn't found easily, the next step is to find the immigrant's naturalization records if he/she was naturalized. All of John's naturalization papers were very consistent in stating that he arrived on 1 September 1909 on the SS President Grant.

Form 8012 **15783**

**CERTIFICATE OF ARRIVAL—FOR NATURALIZATION PURPOSES**

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
NATURALIZATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF CHIEF NATURALIZATION EXAMINER  
AT CLEVELAND, OHIO

Date: **November 2, 1922**

**FILED**  
NOV 2 1922

This certificate does not purport to verify the landing or admission of the alien named below, but is issued to enable him to file a petition for naturalization. It is based upon an examination made subsequent to the date of his entry from statements under oath and such pertinent evidence as he has furnished.

Name of alien: **John Mlicyk.**  
Port of entry: **New York, N.Y.**  
Date of arrival: **September 1, 1909.**  
Manner of arrival: **Pres. Grant.**  
(Name of vessel, railroad, or other means of conveyance.)

No record of his arrival could be found for the reason that name cannot be found on ship manifests and indexes.

Chief Naturalization Examiner.

Certificate of Arrival for John Mliczek filed on 2 November 1922

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
NATURALIZATION SERVICE

**15783** ORIGINAL 83

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION**

In the Honorable the District Court of the United States for the Northern District of Ohio, at Cleveland, Ohio:

The petition of **John Mlicyk known as John Merrick** hereby filed, respectfully sheweth:

First. My place of residence is **10517 Lorretta Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.**

Second. My occupation is **laborer.**

Third. I was born on the **22** day of **Oct.** anno Domini **1891**, at **Pstragowa, Poland**.

Fourth. I emigrated to the United States from **Hamburg, Germany**, on or about the **20** day of **Aug.** anno Domini **1909**, and arrived in the United States, at the port of **New York, N.Y.** on the **1** day of **Sept.** anno Domini **1909** in the vessel **President Grant**.

Fifth. I declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States on the **5** day of **March** anno Domini **1920** at **Cleveland, Ohio**, in the **Common Pleas** Court of **Cuyahoga County**.

Sixth. I am married. My wife's name is **Catherina** she was born on the **17** day of **Sept.** anno Domini **1896** at **West View, Ohio** and now resides at **Cleveland with me**.

I have **two** children, and the name, date and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children is (Give names, dates and places of birth, and places of residence of each of said children.)

**Carl Oct. 17, 1914 West View, Ohio resides at Cleveland, Ohio**

**Edwin October 22, 1917 West View, Ohio resides at Cleveland, Ohio**

I am not a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government or a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposed to organized government. I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy. I am attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and it is my intention to become a citizen of the United States and to renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to **the Republic of Poland**, of whom at this time I am a subject, and it is my intention to reside permanently in the United States.

I speak the English language.

I have resided continuously in the United States for the term of five years at least immediately preceding the date of this petition, to wit, since the **1** day of **Sept.** anno Domini **1909**, and in the State of Ohio, continuously next preceding the date of this petition, since the **3** day of **Sept.** anno Domini **1909**, being a residence within this State at that time next preceding the date of this petition.

I have not heretofore made petition for citizenship to any court. (If made petition for citizenship to the \_\_\_\_\_ Court of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ anno Domini \_\_\_\_\_ and the said petition was denied by the said Court for the following reasons and causes, to wit: \_\_\_\_\_)

THE TESTIMONY of each of said petitioners, his or her name read or verified:

Attached hereto and made a part of this petition are my declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States and the certificate from the Department of Labor, together with my affidavit and the affidavits of the two verifying witnesses thereto, required by law. Wherefore your petitioner prays that he may be admitted a citizen of the United States of America.

**John Mlicyk known as John Merrick** residing at **2404 Bush Ave., Cleveland, Ohio**

Declaration of Intention No. **46497** and Certificate of Arrival No. \_\_\_\_\_ from Department of Labor filed this **2** day of **Nov.** 19 **22**

Done at Cleveland in Ohio on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ anno Domini \_\_\_\_\_

**AFFIDAVITS OF PETITIONER AND WITNESSES**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Northern District of Ohio, ss:

The aforesaid petitioner, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is the petitioner in the above-entitled proceedings; that he has read the foregoing petition and knows the contents thereof; that the said petition is signed with his full, true name; that the same is true to his own knowledge, except as to matters therein stated to be alleged upon information and belief, and that as to those matters he believes to be true.

**John Mlicyk known as John Merrick** residing at **2404 Bush Ave., Cleveland, Ohio**

**Verma F. Keeley** occupation **housewife** residing at **10517 Lorretta Ave., Cleveland, Ohio**

and **Michael Kibler** occupation **carpenter** residing at **10517 Lorretta Ave., Cleveland, Ohio**

each being severally, duly, and respectively sworn, deposes and says that he is a citizen of the United States of America; that he has personally known the petitioner above mentioned, to have resided in the United States continuously immediately preceding the date of filing this petition, since the **1** day of **Nov.** anno Domini **1917**, and in the State in which the above-entitled petition is made continuously since the **1** day of **Nov.** anno Domini **1917**; and that he has personal knowledge that the said petitioner is a person of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and that the petitioner is in every way qualified, in his opinion, to be admitted a citizen of the United States.

**Verma F. Keeley** (initials)

**Michael Kibler** (initials)

Subscribed and sworn to before me by the above-named petitioner and witnesses in the office of Clerk of said Court at Cleveland, Ohio, this **2** day of **Nov.** anno Domini **1922**

**B. C. Miller,** Clerk.

**Robert Wood** Registrar, Deputy Clerk

Petition for Naturalization for John Mliczek filed 2 November 1922

Three years previous to John's arrival, in 1906, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization had been created. One new requirement was that an immigrant needed to submit a Certificate of Arrival when he petitioned for citizenship in order to prove the length of his residency. This document gave the place of entry, manner of arrival, and date of arrival.

John's Certificate of Arrival indicated at the bottom "no record of his arrival could be found for the reason that name cannot be found on ship manifests and indexes." But this certificate, which supposedly was meant to verify his time of arrival, was needed in order for him to become a naturalized U.S. citizen. As it turns out, the Office of the Chief Naturalization Examiner, would still issue these certificates based upon "an examination made subsequent to the date of his entry from statements under oath and such pertinent evidence as he has furnished." So, John's certificate was granted based on good faith. But this still did not give me his immigrant passenger manifest.

I kept searching passenger lists, trying wildcard spellings of John's last name and first initial. Finally, I found him! He actually arrived on the SS President Lincoln on 15 September 1909. He was going to his brother, Jozef, in Columbia (Twp.), Ohio. He was coming from his father, Antoni in Pstragowa and I knew that was his father's name too.

.....continued on page 6



Undertaking the Needs continued from page 1.....

In 1911, when Helen was just 19-years-old, she married Joseph Komorowski. They immediately purchased a home on Rathbun Avenue where they started their family. Joseph continued as a machinist at American Steel & Wire (later called U.S. Steel) where he would work for many years. They had three children, Florian (b. 1912), Theresa (b. 1915) and Albina (b. 1917). A devout Catholic, Helen encouraged her son, Florian, to attend St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Michigan after he completed high school.

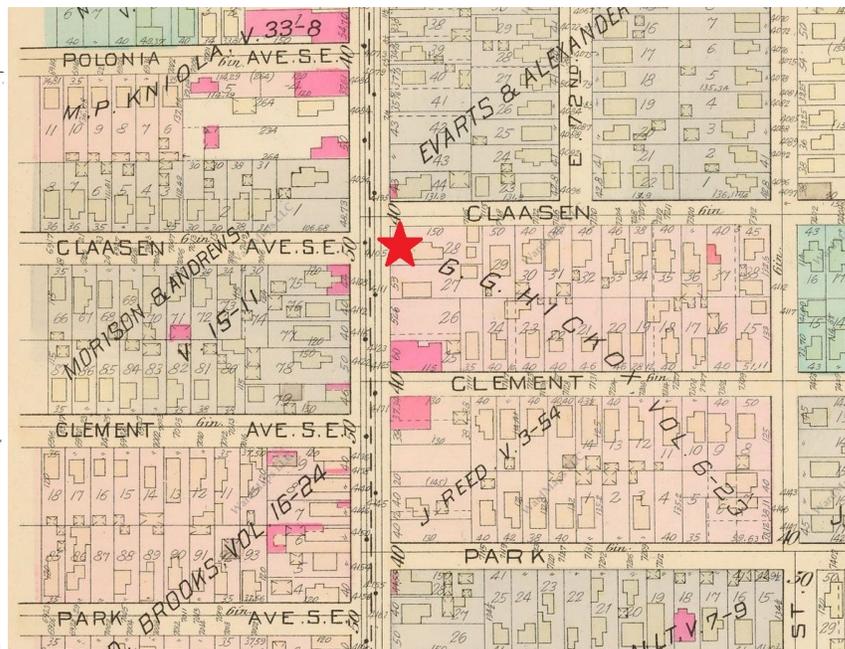
Knowing that there was a need in his home community for an undertaker, Florian obtained his license as an embalmer and funeral director. Helen Komorowski, in support of her son's career, purchased a property at 4105 E. 71<sup>st</sup> Street in May of 1937 from a retail merchant named Siegfried Pfundstein. The property was ideal for a funeral home. It contained a large, 2-family wood frame home and was located on a main thoroughfare just up the street from Sacred Heart. The Komorowskis began remodeling it and added a brick exterior.



Joseph Komorowski & Helen Krajewski  
Married October 23, 1911  
Photo courtesy of Patti Gabb

Deed document for the property at 4105 E. 71st Street, May 22, 1937. The document is titled 'Know all Men by these Presents' and is signed by Siegfried T. Pfundstein and Mary L. Pfundstein. It details the sale of the property to Helen Komorowski. The document includes a notary seal for Charles J. Hodous, Notary Public, dated April 22, 1937.

Deed for the property at 4105 E. 71st Street  
May 22, 1937



Location of the Komorowski Funeral Home at 4105 E. 71st Street



Florian married Regina Lowiec on June 18, 1938 and the couple moved into the upstairs portion of the home on E. 71<sup>st</sup> Street. In December of 1939, the Komorowski Funeral Home was opened to serve the personal funeral needs of the neighborhood, primarily serving the Sacred Heart parish. Located just down the street from the church, it was the most convenient funeral home for the congregation.

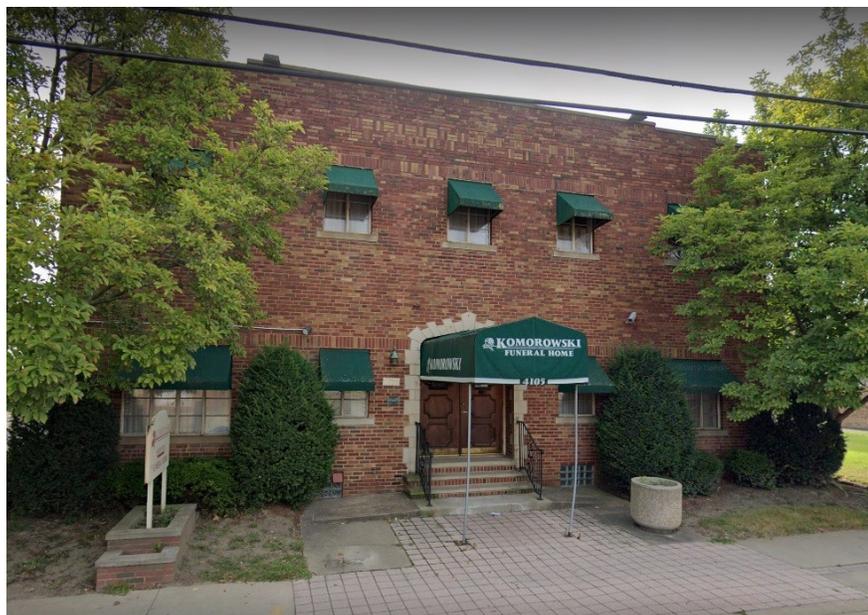


Wedding of Florian Komorowski and Regina Lowiec  
June 18, 1938  
Photo courtesy of Patti Gabb

The Komorowski's funeral home business was busy and over the years they expanded the building to provide more visiting areas, meeting rooms for post-funeral luncheons and a casket and vault selection room. A mourning family could attend to all their funeral needs at the Komorowski Funeral Home. Florian's extended family helped with picking up bodies from hospitals, parking cars during calling hours and lining up cars for the funeral procession. They also served to greet mourners at the funeral home entrance.

Florian was also involved in the Polish community of Cleveland. He was a member of the Union of Poles, Alliance of Poles and the Polish National Alliance, as well as, the Cleveland Council of the Knights of Columbus. Florian was also an avid bowler and his name appeared frequently in the local newspaper. His friends affectionately nicknamed him "Digger".

Florian's dear mother, Helen, passed away in 1966. Shortly after her passing, Florians' son, David, who was a graduate of the University of Cincinnati and had studied embalming, received his funeral director's license and joined the family business. David moved his family into the upstairs of the funeral home to raise his children there, just like his father did. Florian's other son, James, who graduated from Cleveland John Marshall Law School, became a licensed funeral director in 1969. David handled the day-to-day operations of the funeral home and James helped with the legal aspect of the business.



Florian passed away suddenly in 1972, just before Christmas, of a heart attack. David and James continued the business in their father's belief of providing caring and compassionate services in the funeral needs of their clients. Florian's wife, Regina, continued working with her sons at the funeral home until about 1980.

In 1991, a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation joined the business. David's son, Michael, joined his uncles. That same year, the Komorowskis purchased the old Hyber-Domagalski Funeral Home in Tremont on Cleveland's southwest side to serve the funeral needs of the area around St. John Cantius Church. This location was closed recently and is now a bar and restaurant.

The Komorowski Funeral Home on E. 71st Street, Cleveland, Ohio as it stands today

In 2005, the Komorowski Funeral Home business merged with Tabone Funeral Home and became Tabone-Komorowski Funeral Home in Solon, serving the Chagrin Valley area. Michael and his family moved to Solon to continue "the tradition of raising the family in the community that they serve."

Certificates of Arrival continued from page 3.....

John probably vaguely remembered his arrival in the U.S. He probably knew it was in 1909, that it was sometime in September and that the ship name was that of a U.S. president. Maybe he remembered the SS President Grant at the port in Hamburg at the same time as the SS President Lincoln (which would have been very possible given they embarked only 2 weeks apart). Or maybe he intended to sail on the SS President Grant but for some reason was delayed and ended up on the SS President Lincoln. He was just shy of turning 18 years old and this must have been a confusing and scary time for him. After all, he had already made the trek from Eastern Galicia to Hamburg, Germany which surely was daunting. I guess this error is understandable. However, then what is the purpose of a Certificate of Arrival if when the information can't be verified a certificate is issued anyway? And were there immigrant aliens that were refused naturalization if this information could not be verified? Something to think about.

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES											STATES IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL										
Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered to the United States Immigration Officer by the Commanding Officer of any vessel having such passengers on board upon arrival at a port in the United States.											Arriving at Port of New York SEP 15 1909										
S.S. President Lincoln											SEP 15 1909										
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Color	Rank	Profession	Place of Birth	Last permanent Residence	Whether subject to laws of United States or other country	Place of Birth	Whether subject to laws of United States or other country	Place of Birth	Whether subject to laws of United States or other country	Place of Birth	Whether subject to laws of United States or other country	Place of Birth	Whether subject to laws of United States or other country	Place of Birth	Whether subject to laws of United States or other country	Place of Birth	
1	Chyngonow	Male	35	White	None	None	Poland	Poland	None	None	None										
2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
15	Jan Mliczek	Male	17	White	None	None	Pstragowa	Pstragowa	None	None	None										
16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Passenger Manifest for the SS President Lincoln arriving on 15 September 1909  
Entry for Jan Mliczek from Pstragowa going to his brother, Jozef, in Columbia, Ohio



## Getting Lost in Poland 2018....Part 4

By Ben Kman

**The following is the story (offered in quarterly installments) of member Ben Kman's 16 day journey to his ancestral villages in Poland in the spring of 2018.**

### Day 5 Tuesday May 1

Today was Labor Day in Poland and most of Europe. It is a national holiday and everyone had the day off. I woke up early again, despite the previous evening's activities, and didn't have any significant hangover. Hangover in Polish is "koc", pronounced kots. It really means "blanket" which is a pretty good description of a hangover. After breakfast, we sat around and watched some t.v. I told my cousin, Mariusz, about my cell phone problems and he started researching it. He asked me to call him to see if I had service. Surprisingly, my call went through. He then tried to call me back which worked as well. It was good to know that at least I could use my phone to make calls. We tried entering activation codes and received messages stating that we would receive and update momentarily but the updates never came.

Later in the morning we walked over to the działka (JOW-ka). We stopped over at Piotr's działka first. He had been drinking with us last night so out came two half liter bottles of beer for Mariusz and me. I guess we needed to take the edge off from our drinking session last night. Fortunately, I wasn't going to be leaving for several hours so the beer would be out of my system before then. There is a zero tolerance policy for drinking and driving in Poland so I couldn't be messing around. Piotr was painting some short pieces of fence for edging around his garden. While we were there, he was telling Mariusz that his weed burning flame thrower wasn't working. This led to a whole episode of diagnosing why the thing wasn't working (no spark) followed by disassembling it, testing the igniter, pulling an igniter from a lighter, trying to install and test it, watching Mariusz shock himself several times and finally giving up after figuring out that there was a short somewhere. We left at this point and went to Mariusz's działka. His Mom wanted some szczepiorek (chives) for obiad (the main meal of the day).

After we picked the chives, we headed back to the flat which was about a 5 minute walk. The afternoon was spent visiting and watching Polish music videos by groups called Slawomir, C bool, Tulia and Przystanek Bieszczady. They are worth checking out on YouTube. The next round of guests arrived and I was introduced to them. These folks were relatives and were from the same area near Poreby from which the Sochas came before WWII. The guy supposedly owned a business and a hotel as was explained to me earlier in the day. They came from Slupsk near the Baltic sea. He, his wife and two daughters were visiting during the week off. The Sochas go to Slupsk to visit in the fall and pick mushrooms. Supposedly, there are nice forests there for mushroom picking.

Shortly after they arrived, we sat down for lunch. We had tripe soup (flaczki) and chicken cutlet with chanterelle mushrooms and cheese. It was DELICIOUS. I never had tripe soup in Poland before and it was fantastic. We sat and talked and ate and eventually finished our meal around 3:30pm. Unfortunately, I had to get going. A 3-hour drive lay ahead of me to get to Wdzydze. I decided to go to Wdzydze instead of Kartuzy so I could avoid going through the construction again. After I grabbed my roller bag and backpack, I said my goodbyes, made my way to my car, packed it up and programmed Tom Tom. Before leaving Paslek, I fueled up. It was the first fill up of the trip.

Off I went getting back on the highway headed to Elblag. When the construction began in Elblag, I started to follow Tom Tom's directions closely because I didn't want to get stuck in construction again. After about 15 minutes, I realized, with abject horror, that Tom Tom was routing me through Gdansk to Wdzydze. I was going through the construction AGAIN. Perhaps it was due to my defeated spirit or just the dogged determination that I just had



to deal with this horrific stretch of road for the third time and final time, but traffic seemed to be lighter and I seemed to be travelling at a decent speed with little stop and go. In a little more than an hour, I was near Gdansk and Tom Tom was beginning to route me to Wdzydze. At this point, I figured that I may as well go to Kartuzy so I stopped the car and reprogrammed Tom Tom for Kartuzy. After back tracking a bit, I was back on a highway and on my way to Kartuzy.

I realized that I was in Kaszubia when the village name signs changed to bilingual Polish/Kaszubian. Many Kaszubian village names were similar to Polish but some were radically different. This area of Poland is beautifully forested with many nice lakes. I didn't have any accommodation arranged for the evening so that was going to be one of my top priorities. As I arrived in Kartuzy, I drove past a hotel that looked like an old communist era hotel in a state of renovation. I continued on for a bit and decided to go back and check it out. It was called Hotel Milosz, probably named after the poet, Czeslaw Milosz. I pulled into the driveway and noticed the parking lot was a maze of pot-holes. The outside of the building was quite "old school" with random debris around the foundation. My heart leapt. I loved finding these age-gone-by hotels in Poland. I parked my car in a place that may or may not have been designated for parking and entered the hotel to check if rooms were still available. The inside of the hotel was completely refurbished in an old-meets-new kind of style. The second thing that I noticed as I approached the front desk (the cute receptionist was the first) was that there was a whole display case of dietary supplements and protein powders available for sale. What kind of hotel was this?

I asked if a one-person room was available and the receptionist said that there was a room. She asked if I wanted breakfast included and I said "no" at first then changed my mind. She booked me for the night, gave me my key and the wifi credentials. While she was processing my reservation, I asked if she spoke Kaszubian and she timidly said "yes". I then left to get my baggage from the car and went up to my room via stairs since there was no elevator. The hotel was surprisingly nice. There was some unfinished work and exposed wires waiting on light fixtures but all in all it was very serviceable. When I walked into my room, there were three beds but only one had sheets and blankets, a interesting approach to a one-person room. These were the traditional single beds with a super thin mattress.



I dumped my stuff and decided to take a walk around town while it was still light. It was all downhill from the hotel, literally. Attached to the hotel was a soccer club with their own field. The soccer pitch was completely torn up and being upgraded. During my entire walk, there was no one to be found. I only saw one or two other people. As I made my way to some undetermined point in town, I took note of a gas station where I could check the air in my car tires in the morning. I then came across a map showing the Kaszubian region around Kartuzy and all of the different historic and cultural sites. I made a mental note to take a picture of the map on the way back to the hotel. At the next intersection, I saw an interesting marker on a telephone pole, a stylized, yellow-colored scallop on a blue background. It was the same trail blaze used frequently on the Camino de Santiago in Spain. From some additional verbiage tied to the trail blaze, I guessed there was a Kaszubian pilgrimage route dedicated to St. James as well. (Further research after returning home showed that this was actually a northern extension of the Camino de Santiago in Spain that started in Lithuania.)

Further down the road there was a Kaszubian heritage park. No one was there and I didn't see a need to stop to look around. Across the street, there was a large parking lot and what appeared to be a lake so I wandered that way to see what the views were like. It turns out the lake was quite far away from the parking lot with no readily accessible trails. This was as far as I wanted to go so I started to work my way back to the hotel. I walked through a small city park surrounded by shops but everything was closed. I did see a couple quaint hotels on my walk. Little did I realize how close I was to the rynek or town square. It would have been nice to take a stroll around there



on my way back to the hotel but serendipity did not dictate that. When I looked at a map after I got home, it showed that I was just a minute or two away. But, sometimes it is just nice to wander and explore without being tied to a map. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose.

Back at the hotel, I wanted to get something to eat and asked the receptionist if the restaurant was still open. This was a new receptionist and equally attractive. The restaurant was still open so I asked if I could take a tourist book from the front desk with me into the restaurant and whether there was any tourist info the front desk could offer me. She loaded me up with maps and pamphlets and then I headed into the restaurant.

I went to the bar to get a Zywiec beer and to look at my tourist propaganda. When I bought the beer, the girl at the bar gave me a handful of coins in change. After I finished the beer, I ordered a Kaszubian beer and a plate of ten meat pierogi. When I tried to pay with the coins, the total came out such that it was easier to pay with a bank note and the bartender asked if I had a note instead. I gave her a menacing look and she laughed at me knowing full well that I wanted to get rid of the change. I sat back down, looked at some maps and the book and then uploaded my pictures for the day. The food came and the pierogi were excellent. Well satisfied, I headed back up to my room for the night where I updated some trip notes and watched part of *With Fire and Sword* by Siekiewicz on TV.

## Day 6 Wednesday May 2

Today was flag day in Poland and the second day of Majowka. After getting washed up and packed, I headed down for breakfast. The buffet consisted of cereals, cold cuts, cheese, cottage cheese with chives, parowki (hot dogs), a hot dog sized breakfast sausage, bread, pickled mushrooms, smoked salmon/egg/mayonnaise salad and other assorted items. The “breakfast sausages” were quite good but the star dish was the salmon/egg/mayonnaise salad. Wow! The breakfasts in Poland are always such a unique experience. When you are accustomed to eating cereal and a piece of fruit or bacon with scrambled eggs, having something like cold cuts, cheese and bread or salmon/egg salad is quite a shock to the system. Now when I go to Poland, I look forward to the breakfast variety. After breakfast, I checked out. The cost of the room with breakfast had only cost US\$42.

The first stop today was going to be the Muzeum Kaszubskie, a Kaszubian heritage museum. I am really not a museum person and I was seriously considering ditching this museum but I figured I was there so I'd give it a quick walk through before moving on. First, I stopped at the gas station and checked my tire pressure. All tires were holding air! At this point I finally stopped obsessing about the tires even though I regularly visually inspected them for the rest of the trip. The museum was literally 5 minutes away and there was plenty of parking. It turned out I was the only visitor. After paying, I started walking through the main floor exhibits. These were dedicated to household and farming. In the farming section, they had a beekeeping display which had some very interesting old tools and a log beehive that was the oldest existing beehive in that wojewodztwo (equivalent of a state in Poland) dating from the 1700s. As I headed upstairs, there was a display on the wall at the top of the stairs that had musical notes and pictures on it. As I was reading the descriptive sign to figure out what it was, the girl who sold me my admission ticket came upstairs holding a wooden stick. She started explaining what the Kaszubskie Nuty was. Basically, it was a rhyming song that teaches the unique sounds and letters of the Kaszubian dialect/language/ alphabet. Then she started singing the song and pointing with the stick so I could follow along. Wow, that made my day. It was so interesting. You can find it on YouTube if you want to hear it. She then offered me Kaszubian snuff which I wasn't really interested in trying and politely declined. I spent the rest of my time either whistling or humming the tune while I finished exploring the upstairs. As I went downstairs to leave, I stopped in the office to thank the museum staff and to let them know I was leaving. I mentioned that the Kaszubskie Nuty song was stuck in my head and they beamed with pride. They asked me to wait a minute and one of the ladies took me to a separate building, unlocked the door and showed me some additional exhibits. I guess they appreciated my interest.

Today was my day to drive through Kaszubia and explore a bit on my way to Znin. I'd never really spent time in this region and I thought it would be a nice, relaxing, scenic drive instead of taking highway E75 between Gdansk and Torun. It was scenic! Most of the ride from Kartuzy to Wdzydze was through forested countryside with



intermittent lakes. I made it to Wdzydze, which is pronounced just the way it looks, in about an hour but had some issues finding the entrance to the open-air architectural museum ("skansen" for short). I ended up driving through a field. The skansen had a brand new, high tech welcome center. There was a display of pictures depicting life in Kaszubia back in the day. The description of the exhibit at the end of the display explained that it was very difficult to find actual old photographs depicting life in the region so the museum staff staged each of the photos in the display with modern re-enactments to simulate how things were. Honestly, I probably never would have known that was the case if I hadn't read it.



I really like skansens. Seeing the old preserved architecture, walking through centuries old peasant houses, shops and farm buildings really helps to get a good sense of what life was like and how hard it was. I walked away wondering, "how did fifteen people live in that two room house?" (It all became really clear to me when I got home and showed the genealogy club I belong to pictures of "manor" houses and one member asked, "What makes that a manor house? It doesn't look that big or special." And that's when it struck me that now-a-days most peoples' homes in suburbia and exurbia would qualify as a manor house and would be something that only minor nobility or higher could have afforded. Most people in Poland in days-gone-by lived in dirt-floored hovels with two rooms, one room for living and one room for the animals. It's interesting how perspectives change.) This particular skansen had quite a few manor homes and peasant homes and it became repetitive very quickly. They did have two nice old wooden wiatraki (windmills), a couple of old churches and a school. It made for an interesting stop but I wouldn't have missed anything if I decided not to visit. There was also a fire tower somewhere in Wdzydze that I was hoping to find because the views were supposed to be fantastic. Unfortunately, I didn't see any signs, it was starting to get late and I still had a 2-3 hour drive to Znin.

Tom Tom took me on a very scenic drive through forests and past lakes until I approached Bydgoszcz. Then it seemed like it routed me through the suburbs of Bydgoszcz until I was past the city then back to main roads to Znin. I arrived at my next relative's house around 4:00pm. Edward and Anna were home. Almost immediately I learned that Edward was in very poor health. He had issues with his back and legs and had trouble walking as a result. He couldn't do anything physical anymore and called himself an invalid, no work in the działka, no work in the garden. Anna had to do everything. She took care of him and kept up the house. She looked very tired and worried. It was very concerning and weighed on me during my visit. Usually the stay at Edward and Anna's was one of the highlights of the trip. This time I couldn't help but feel sorry and sad.

We sat and talked for a while. I found out that Edward's mother was born in the U.S. in South Bend, Indiana. Since she was born in the U.S., at that time it would have made her an American citizen. She never shared that information with anyone so all of the scenarios in which Edward could have come to the U.S. were only dreams when they could have been reality. Anna told me that her grandfather went to the U.S., left his wife and daughter behind and never returned. The daughter was Anna's mother. My head was swimming with all of this information. I took some notes so I could do some follow-up research when I got home. It would be nice if I could answer some questions for them about their families' experiences in the U.S. Edward and I talked about gardening like we always did when we were together. He told me how the cucumber plants died because the ground was too wet and how well the fruit trees did last year but that it didn't seem like any fruit was setting this year. He had started his tomatoes already and had them growing on the window sill.

Anna brought out some cold cuts, bread and cheese for dinner and we had a light meal. When we finished, I helped Anna clean up then we prepared to go for a walk around town. Anna also mentioned that there was a concert that evening that she thought might be interesting. We made our way to the rynek in Znin along our usual route, cutting through the park at the northern end of Maly Jezioro (Small Lake). Anna and I had chatted via Skype regularly and last year she told me about a massive storm that caused extensive damage to homes in Znin as well



as in the park. As we walked through the park, I could see that most of the trees were now gone. Some stumps and some root balls of toppled trees still remained. The damage was incredible. It will be interesting to see how the park will be developed/re-established during subsequent visits.

We worked our way toward the rynek and walked down a street that I've nicknamed Ulica Bankowa (Bank Street). Every other storefront on either side of the street is a bank. The street was pedestrian friendly. Antique lights

were put up and the buildings were renovated. It made for a nice entrance to the rynek. The rynek was crowded with people and a large concert stage was set up. We walked around the rynek and eventually found a seat on a bench inside a fenced-in area for the concert. Anna and I talked a bit while we waited for the concert to start. About 9:00pm, the music started and Maryla Rodowicz was introduced. Maryla is a well known singer in Poland and her popularity was evident in the number of people who were crowded into the area cordoned off for the concert as well as the surrounding open areas of the rynek. When she came on stage I was rather surprised that Maryla wasn't a pencil thin, young thing. Anna told me that Maryla was in her late 60s, which I found interesting for a rock star. Anna was surprised that Maryla didn't have her guitar for the first song. I guess that was one of her trademarks. By the third song, she was playing her guitar. One thing I've noticed about Polish people is that music doesn't seem to segregate generations. If you go to a concert, you will see people of all ages regardless of the type of music being played. After listening to a couple of songs, we slowly walked back home.



When we got home Anna and Edward's son, Wojtek, his wife, Bianka, and two sons, Radzislaw (Radek) and Stanislaw (Staszek), were there visiting. I guess there was a parish Olympics that day. Wojtek and his 9-year-old son, Staszek, competed in several sports. Stasz was sound asleep on the couch. Radek, his 13-year-old son, was now wearing glasses. He really grew in the last 4 years. I remembered meeting him when he was only 2 or 3 years old in 2007. Wojtek and I talked for a bit over a beer and tentatively planned a kayaking outing for the next day. In addition to being a physical education teacher, Wojtek started a small company renting out kayaks for use on Male Jezioro and the canals and rivers that flow into it.

When Wojtek, Bianka and the boys left, Anna explained that Edward needed an hour to get washed up before bed and gave me first dibs on the bathroom. I hadn't really done much that day and felt guilty about keeping Edward up later than normal so I let him shower. It was a long day!

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## Schedule of Presentations for Upcoming Meetings

Sep: **John Grabowski**

Locally famous historian, curator, editor, professor, author and foremost authority on Cleveland local and ethnic history shares his knowledge

Oct: **Comparing the Genealogical Giants: Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Findmypast.com and My Heritage.com**

Presented by Sunny Morton

Nov: **Annual Party**

Come join us for our annual potluck dinner. It's a feast to homemade Polish cooking. No one goes away hungry and you have a great opportunity to try other families' long kept secret recipes.

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### About Us

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month (except July and August) at St. Mary's PNC Church parish hall, 5375 Broadview Rd., Parma, Ohio. We have summer break in July and August. St. Mary's is located on the corner of Broadview Rd. and Wexford Ave. in Parma, Ohio. Meetings begin at 7:00 PM and are usually over by 9:00 PM. There is ample parking in the parish parking lot. The entrance is on Marietta Ave. Membership dues are \$24.00 per calendar 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.