



Hello Again,

Since our last newsletter, due to circumstances beyond our control, our group has had to make some changes.

New Meeting Place—

Beginning in September, our meetings will be held at St. Mary's Polish National Catholic Church. The church is located at 5375 Broadview Rd. in Parma, Ohio. It is on the corner of Broadview Rd. and Wexford Ave. It is a few blocks south of Brookpark Rd. (Rt. 17) on the East side of the street. The entrance to the parish parking lot is on Marietta Ave. It is an excellent location, not far from Rt. 480 or Rt. 77. Meetings as usual will be from September thru June beginning at 7:30 PM. We are grateful to Rev. Dr. Jan Dawidziuk, pastor of St. Mary's, the parish council, and indeed to all the parishioners for allowing our group to meet in their parish hall. We ask that as many members as possible be present for our September meeting so that they may familiarize themselves with our new facilities and meet Father John.

New Address—

As a result of our move, we've also had to change our address. Please address any and all correspondence to:
The Polish Genealogical Society of Greater Cleveland
P.O. Box 609117
Cleveland, Ohio 44109-0117.

To Rev. Ralph Bodziony—

In October this year, our group will be nine years old. At festival time in 1991, we asked Father if we could take something of a survey to see how many persons would be interested in forming a genealogy club. He was supportive of the idea and we went forward with the club. In the nine years that we have met at St. John Cantius, Father Bodziony and his staff have been gracious hosts and we thank them for their support.

Concerning Expiration Dates—

Membership expiration date appears on the first line of the newsletter label. Because we had not published a newsletter over an extended period of time, officers of the group decided to extend the membership period for one year. As an example, if the numbers on the first line are 3/99, the membership would have expired in March of 1999. Extending the membership one year would put the expiration at March of 2000. Therefore dues should have been submitted in March of this year. We ask all members to take a minute and see if they are current with membership dues, and if not, submit their dues as soon as possible in order to remain active. Dues remain \$20.00 a year.

An Open Invitation—

Any of our members who wish to submit something for our newsletter are invited to do so.

History of St. John Cantius Parish

Continued from the last newsletter—

In 1925 the disaffected groups had petitioned the bishop and had been rebuffed. They had even written to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington and had gotten no where. This time, they would take matters into their own hands and they proceeded to do so. In an article in the *Cleveland Press*, dated April 19th, it states, "Pickets were being maintained today at St. John Cantius Church---and have refused to admit the unpopular clergymen to the church". At the time, St. Adalbert's in Berea was also quarrelling with the bishop over the reassignment of priestly personnel and a picket line was set up at that church. The article goes on, "For two Sundays thereafter (after the reassignments) parishioners have kept guard at the churches and have called on the bishop to ask the return of the clergymen". In the case of St. John Cantius, the petitioners were asking for the return of Father Foster and the removal of their pastor. In the case of St. Adalbert's, they were asking for the return of Father Rogosz. The article continues, "Yesterday the Rev. Theobald Kalamaja, pastor of St. Stanislaus Church, celebrated Mass at St. John Cantius. When he preached on matters affecting the controversy, parishioners began singing, it was said. One woman was removed from the church by police. A constant police guard is kept in the neighborhood".

Another article in the *Cleveland Press*, dated April 26th, reported upon another incident at St. John Cantius Church.

"A cordon of 20 police today guarded St. John Cantius Church, College and Professor Avenues, when several hundred persons, largely women, sought to halt a wedding ceremony. The ceremony was that of Miss Lottie Kosik, 21, and Leo Bogusz, 23.

The protest of the crowd was not directed at them, but at the Rev. Fr. Joseph Kocinski, pastor for 17 years, who has been kept from the church for over three weeks by picketing parishioners.

Eight police squads and two emergency patrols were rushed to the scene this morning when the pastor grew alarmed at the threatening crowd.

Women of the neighborhood blocked the path of the

wedding party as the bride and her attendants, in all their wedding finery, sought to join the groom inside the church door.

'Let them by please,' called a policeman as a tumult of words filled the air.

The women stood firm, and after 20 minutes of surging and swaying, police cleared a path for the party. Police lined up on the sidewalk, up the steps of the church and at the door. They scrutinized all guests carefully, and none of the disturbers gained entrance, as far as could be learned.

The ceremony proceeded quietly. Man and girl pronounced the wedding vows, and the strains of the final bridal march brought the crowd milling around the police cordon once more.

As the couple emerged, police escorted them down the steps and a lusty booing went up from the 150 or more women on the curb and sidewalks. Catcalls sounded and jeering was aimed at the guests.

Bride and groom walked unmolested to their auto and drove away. The bulk of the maledictions was reserved for the guests who had the temerity to enter the church against the wishes of many in the neighborhood.

'The trouble had nothing to do with the removal of my assistant', said the Rev. Fr. Kocinski. 'Communists were responsible. They made all the noise. They're trying to stir up my people.'

Families and friends of the young couple proceeded to a hall in the neighborhood for the wedding breakfast. Police stood by in the event of more trouble.

The disturbance is one of several that have torn the peace and quite of the neighborhood along the Flats recently. It began when Bishop Joseph Schrembs of the Catholic diocese issued an order transferring the Rev. Fr. Foster.

Petitions were drawn in protest against his transfer; talk was heard against Rev. Fr. Kocinski. A delegation called on Bishop Schrembs, asked for the pastor's removal and the return of the Rev. Fr. Foster. The bishop told them their request could not be granted at this time, it was said.

A mutiny grew. Pickets were set up at the church and watch was kept night and day to see that the Rev. Fr. Kocinski did not hold services in the church."

Quite a wedding ceremony! The bride and groom had

enough memories of that day to last a lifetime. In the retelling of that story to their grandchildren, it surely must have brought looks of disbelief.

The situation at the parish could not go on. The entire community of Tremont was being effected what with the police being called constantly to control the pickets and to try to keep the peace. And most certainly, the parish must have become the laughing stock of the South Side among the other ethnic groups; the Poles were fighting amongst themselves. Finally, the bishop resolved the problem by transferring Father Kocinski to Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish on the East Side on May 17th.

The story of Father Kocinski's pastorate is a tragic one. He had done much for the Church in the Cleveland Diocese. Under his direction two churches had been built, St. Josaphat's and St. John Cantius. At St. Josaphat's, he donated money for some of the furnishings for that church including a beautiful stained glass window in the choir loft. At St. John Cantius he also donated a stained glass window which bears his name. His family donated one also. His accomplishments were many and he had much to be proud of. And yet, he somehow could not get along with this congregation. One would think that in the face of trouble, he would be willing to compromise and make some kind of an adjustment to restore peace to the parish. This he was unwilling, or unable, to do and took on a more confrontational attitude as the situation deteriorated. Many years later after his reassignment, he returned to St. John Cantius for the closing of Forty Hours Devotions one year. When he appeared, it seemed as though a muttering went through the church. Many were surprised that he would return even for this great occasion, after all the hard feelings that had been displayed on both sides. Perhaps this was his way of showing that he wished to forgive and forget what had happened in the past. How many in the congregation were willing to do the same will never be known. He spent five years at Sacred Heart of Jesus and then was reassigned to St. Josaphat's, the parish he had left in 1917 to become pastor of St. John Cantius. He served that parish as pastor for an additional eleven years before retiring on November 26, 1948. He died November 1, 1954.

During Father Kocinski's pastorate, many profound events took place which would shape the world for

years to come. The Russian Revolution which brought the Communists to power was certainly one of them. The end of the Great War and the restoration of Poland was another significant event. The League of Nations was born and later repudiated by the USA. There was the Russo-Polish War in 1920 and the Miracle On The Wistula, very important happenings in Polish History. W.S.Reymont, a Pole, won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1924, primarily for his works titled *The Promised Land*, and *The Peasants*. In Germany, Adolf Hitler was building his National Socialist Party which would take power soon after Father Kocinski left St. John Cantius.

In the US, Prohibition was the law and it spawned speakeasies, bathtub-gin and "raisin-jack". The Roaring Twenties stormed onward until October of 1929 when the Stock Market crashed. The resulting Great Depression with its accompanying miseries was well under way by 1932 and would continue throughout the thirties.

During the years of Father Kocinski's pastorate, 1917-1932, downtown modern-day Cleveland, as we know it today, was taking shape. Virtually all of the great buildings were being built. Some of these are; the Terminal Tower Complex, the Cleveland Public Library, the Federal Reserve Bank, the Public Auditorium, the Hanna Building, the Playhouse Square Buildings, and many, many more. Cleveland Stadium was built in this period and was the scene of many great events.

On November 19, 1923 seven thousand citizens of Polish origin gathered at the Public Auditorium to honor General Joseph Haller, "The Savior of Warsaw". The Republican Party held its National Convention at the Public Auditorium in 1924. Cleveland Municipal Airport opened in 1925 and would in a few years host the National Air Races. There were many events, both great and small, that took place during this period but perhaps one of the most unusual was taking place in the Tremont neighborhood on Thurman Avenue. For it was in a house on Thurman Avenue that a lady named Helen Pelczar lived.

Most of what we know about Helen Pelczar comes from a small booklet, written in Polish by a Rev. Dr. B. F. Jarzembowski and published by the Mariannahill Mission Society of Detroit, Michigan. When the book

came out in 1936, Helen Pelczar had been dead ten years. The author had gathered material about her life from persons who had known her. Helen lived with her aunt and cousin Frank, and much of the material of the book rests on what they had told the author about Helen. The author wrote to other parties who knew Helen, both here and abroad, and alludes to them in the course of his story. He did not know Helen personally nor did he have any dealings with her while she was alive. One can say therefore that what he says about Helen is secondhand information or hearsay. Still and all, he quotes in his book *Father Kocinski, Father Duda* and others, who relate to him what they knew about Helen from their personal contacts with her. When the book was published in 1936, it was quite controversial.

Helen was born on Christmas Day, 1888, in the small town of Korczynie (Galicia). She was the second of eight children. The family was very poor. When Helen was ten years old, her mother died and she became a domestic servant, first in one family and then another. She was an extremely pious person, much given to prayer and fasting. Her favorite devotional prayers were the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross. Indeed, when she made her way through the Stations of the Cross, she felt as though she were enduring all the pain that Christ felt. She would become totally immersed at each Station, contemplating and meditating over the significance of that Station.

On Easter Sunday, 1910, a very strange thing happened to Helen. The author states that Helen related the story to her aunt, Julia Wiernasz, and her cousin, Frank, after she came to the USA. For the first time, Helen became unconscious and entered into what can only be termed "a state of ecstasy", or a trance of some kind. Helen remained unconscious for three days and three nights. Her eyes were open but unresponsive. During this time she did not hear anything or anyone. Her body was numb. Helen claimed that while in this state, she saw Jesus, His Holy Mother and the Angels and Saints. This was the first time that this "strange illness" came over her but it would not be the last.

Helen came to the USA in 1913 and lived with her aunt and cousin on Thurman Ave. until she died in 1926. Within the first week of her arrival, she entered



Helen Pelczar, 1888-1926

into one of these trancelike states. When this came upon her, she would stay in bed unconscious, eating and drinking nothing. There were times when this "strange illness" lasted ten days. When she regained consciousness, she would feel terribly exhausted and her body would ache with pain. She felt the greatest pain in her right side which appeared as if she had been beaten there. This painful state would last from three to five days in which time she would lay in bed and recuperate. When the pain subsided, she would again become unconscious, but only for a few hours, after which she awoke and would resume doing her chores.

On Christmas Day, 1917, Helen returned home from Vesper Services and became once again subject to her "strange illness". This episode would last until the New Year, January 1, 1918. Until this time, there were no signs of the stigmata (marks or wounds corresponding to or resembling the five wounds on the crucified body of Jesus) but this was soon to change. On Friday, December 28th, round, pale-rose marks appeared on the palms of her hands and feet. All these areas of her body were extremely painful

as was her right side which turned a dark gray color. Her aunt became alarmed and called for a local doctor. After examining Helen, the doctor told her aunt that there was no medical explanation for Helen's "strange illness".

On the 10th of February, 1918, Helen once again became ill. With each episode, the pains were getting more severe. On Ash Wednesday, February 13th, the stigmatic marks on her body became larger and redder and would remain so until Thursday evening. From noon on Thursday until midnight, Helen was unconscious. During this time Helen had the following vision.

The Lord Jesus appeared to her as King. He appeared in a radiant aura of light. Upon His breast, His heart was clearly visible and radiant beams emanated from it. And in this vision, the Lord spoke to Helen:

"Ask your Godmother (Helen called her aunt so) for forgiveness for all the hurt you may have caused her and ask her if she would allow you to go to church daily. Attend Mass daily as often as your health permits. You will fast from noon on Thursdays until noon on Saturdays. During this time you will neither eat nor drink anything. From now until your death, you will not eat meat. I will grant you the graces to be able to recognize sinners for whom I wish you to bear your pain. Your pain will be the same as I endured during my crucifixion. And you will bear everything, with love, and offer it to Me for sinners whom I will indicate to you."

Having said this, Jesus disappeared.

On Friday, the 15th of February, Helen was in bed and in great pain. Along about noon, her wounds began to bleed for the first time. The wounds on her right hand and foot started bleeding. As by an unknown force, her right leg crossed over to her left leg so that the wounds on her feet appeared to line themselves up. And then her left hand and foot began to bleed. About three o'clock, the wound in her right side also began to ooze blood. The bleeding continued until about five o'clock after which it stopped and a dark red scab covered the wounds. Seeing Helen in this condition, it appeared as though she had just been taken down from the cross. During this episode, Helen lay rigid as marble. Her arms and legs were cold and the areas around her wounds were of a dark gray color. Her fingers were curved inward towards

her palms. Her face expressed the great pain she was enduring. From this time onward, every Friday at about the same time, Helen would endure this painful experience.

During her lifetime, Helen had many visions. They included visions of Our Lord, His Holy Mother, the Angels and Saints and her Guardian Angel. Frequently her Guardian Angel would take her to Purgatory where she saw the souls of people she had known in life and who would invariably ask her to pray for them. This she did and in a couple of cases noted in the book, saw the effectiveness of her prayers.

Strange as it may seem, Helen's condition was not known to many people. One would think that in such a close knit community, her visions would be a topic of local gossip. Yet this was not the case. Helen was not predisposed to broadcasting her condition; she endured everything in silence and the privacy of her own home. Yet there were those who knew, among them; Father Duda, Father Kocinski, the various doctors who from time to time were called in and the Sisters from the convent. Indeed, Helen wished to become a Sister. The Mother Superior was more than happy to recommend her but the doctor who examined her for her preinduction physical, determined that Helen had tuberculosis of the chest and would not be able to join the Order. She did the next best thing and joined the Third Order of St. Francis. There must have been others who knew, certainly family and close friends. Yet when the book came out in 1936, it was like a revelation, even to some of Helen's neighbors.

Helen died on the 27th of April 1926. Prior to her death she asked the Sisters to sew for her the distinctive habit of the Third Order of St. Francis so that she might be buried in it. This the Sisters did. Her body was laid to rest on the 1st day of May, the month dedicated to Our Lady, at Calvary Cemetery.

Monsignor M. Orzechowski's Pastorate 1932-1939

The fourth pastor of St. John Cantius was Monsignor Marion J. Orzechowski. He was born in Tupally on March 19th, 1879. After finishing his education at the Polish College in Detroit, Michigan (the forerunner of Orchard Lake Seminary), he was ordained on the 6th

of July, 1902 by Bishop Foley for the Diocese of Harrisburg. He spent a year in Harrisburg after which he was assigned to Pittsburgh where he spent nine years. In February of 1912, he was assigned to Immaculate Heart of Mary on Cleveland's East Side where he was pastor until 1932 when he was assigned to St. John Cantius.

At the time of his assignment to Immaculate Heart of Mary, that parish was just getting over some grave problems. The church which was founded in 1894 began as a renegade community, not willing to submit to church law. The crux of the matter was who would own the church property. The Roman Catholic Church in the USA required that church property be deeded over to the bishop of the diocese. The independent church movement at the time held that church property would be owned by the individual church. The pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary at the time of its founding was the controversial Rev. Anton Kolaszewski. He felt that the congregation should own the church properties and he was having a running battle with the bishop over this matter. The controversy got so bitter that a formal Declaration of Excommunication of Rev. Kolaszewski was issued in Rome, approved by the Pope.

In time, differences were settled and ironed out. The excommunication order was rescinded and church properties were deeded over to the bishop. Rev. Kolaszewski and his followers returned to the fold and the church became affiliated with the Cleveland Diocese in 1908. By 1912 when Father Orzechowski was named pastor, the dissident factions in the parish had quieted down but it took a skillful, patient, firm pastor to keep things on an even keel.

He was held in high regard by the Bishop of Cleveland as well as the church in Rome. In 1925, the Pope singled out Father Orzechowski by naming him Domestic Prelate with the title of Monsignor. Again in 1934, the Papacy conferred on him the decoration, *Star of Bethlehem*, a very high honor indeed. He was very active in Polish-American affairs and nothing pleased him more than contributing to the welfare of the newly created Republic of Poland. He received other medals from other organizations: *Polonia Restituta*, *Haller's Swords* and a medal from the Polish Roman Catholic Union. This was the man that Bishop Schrembs appointed as fourth pastor of St.



The fourth pastor of St. John Cantius (Cantius) Parish,
Monsignor Marion J. Orzechowski

John Cantius, hoping that with this selection, the rambunctious congregation would settle down and get on with its life.

Monsignor began his pastorate in 1932, not exactly an auspicious time in American History. The country was plunging headlong into the deepest pits of the Great Depression. President Roosevelt would be elected that year, the first of his four terms as president, but it would take much time and many government programs to alleviate some of the sufferings brought on by the Depression. One can hardly imagine today what these times were like in the Tremont area. The families were poor to begin with, living from paycheck to paycheck. How were they to survive if the breadwinner of the family was unemployed? And as far as Monsignor was concerned, how could they support the church when they did not have enough to support themselves? And how was he to pay on the huge debt burden the church was saddled with? The congregation continued to grow, so there were more parishioners to contribute to the collection basket but parish income was considerably less than it had been in years past.

The growth of the parish community was amazing. Since its inception, it continued to increase with no sign of letting up. In 1933, one thousand two hundred thirty families were enrolled in the parish. In the course of that year: there were one hundred five baptisms, three hundred fifty were confirmed, three hundred ten received first communion, there were fifty marriages and sixty seven deaths. There were eight hundred sixty pupils attending the grade school. Five masses were offered on Sunday with Vespers sung at three o'clock. There were six parish, male societies with a membership of seven hundred; and nine parish, female societies with a membership of eight hundred fifty four. The youth of the parish was not overlooked. There were one hundred thirty Boy Scouts and eighty nine Girl Scouts. The pastor and his assistants had more than enough to do just to keep everything organized and running smoothly. The good Sisters also had their hands full looking after the students, teaching, organizing dramatic plays, and generally looking after the spiritual well-being of their charges.

When Monsignor died in 1939, the parish was still growing. The Annual Parish Report for 1939 filed with the Diocese showed eighteen hundred Catholic families served by the church. There were now six masses on Sunday with Vespers sung in the afternoon. During the year; there were one hundred fifty baptisms, one hundred forty seven received First Communion, seventy one couples were married and fifty seven deaths were recorded. Seven hundred fifty pupils were enrolled in the grade school. St. John Cantius Parish was the second largest Polish parish in the Greater Cleveland area, serving a Catholic population of seven thousand. Only St. Stanislaus, serving a Catholic population of about nine thousand, was larger.

Monsignor Orzechowski's pastorate spanned seven years, from 1932 to 1939. They proved to be very crucial years in the history of the world. All the leading characters in Europe were preparing themselves for the greatest drama the world had ever seen. Hitler had rearmed Germany during this period, reoccupied the Rhineland (1936), annexed Austria (1938), gained the Sudetenland (1938) and swallowed the rest of Czechoslovakia (1939). Mussolini thumbed his nose at the League of Nation and invaded Ethiopia (1935). He allied himself with Hitler and the two

countries became known as the Axis Powers (1936). France was in a continual state of chaos, not able to form a government that could lead. Spain was in the throes of a civil war (1936-1939). In England, Edward VIII abdicated his throne and his brother became George VI (1936). Prime Minister Chamberlain followed a policy of appeasement and didn't wake up until Hitler had occupied all of Czechoslovakia. In the USSR, Stalin was conducting his purges and eliminating all vestiges of opposition to his regime. The European continent was heading for the explosion which occurred September 1, 1939. The Second World War would change the world forever. Monsignor died May 1, 1939 so he was spared the Fourth Partition of Poland with its accompanying sufferings, pain and agony.

Nationally, the seven years of Monsignor's pastorate were spent trying to solve the problems of the Great Depression. President Roosevelt created new governmental agencies, founded new programs, sought every means to alleviate the economic collapse of the system. He tried to pack the Supreme Court and because of this, as well as for his policies in general, many in the business community hated the man with a passion.

In Cleveland, even though times were hard, life went on. The Cleveland Orchestra hired its second conductor in 1933, a man of Polish parentage, Artur Rodzinski. On October 3rd of that year, Cleveland's premier Polish choral organization, Harmonia Chopin Singing Society, held a reception for the new conductor at their club rooms on East 71st St. The group sang a numbers of songs in Polish for the maestro and he was deeply moved by this show of affection. Conductor Rodzinski held his post for ten years during which time the Cleveland Orchestra flourished and impressed a national audience.

On March 1, 1934, General Joseph Haller arrived in town for a four day visit. During the First World War, General Haller was the head of the Polish Army which was formed in France to fight alongside the Allies. After the war, there were four thousand invalids among the sixteen thousand returning veterans. The great Polish pianist, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, had established a fund named, *The Invalid Fund for Polish Veterans in America*, to help care for this group of veterans. The purpose of General Haller's visit was to

promote the fund, with all proceeds from the various events going to underwrite the programs for the veterans. The General was welcomed to the city by Mayor Davis, Bishop Schrembs and a host of dignitaries from the Polish-American communities of Cleveland, Lorain, Elyria and Youngstown. For four days he was kept busy making speeches, attending banquets in his honor, receiving and presenting awards and meeting with his old wartime comrades. In the end, more than two thousand dollars were raised for the veteran's fund, which was a considerable amount in those days.

Also in 1934, on March 19th, one thousand Clevelanders of Polish descent attended two gatherings; to honor the 69th name-day anniversary of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, to celebrate the fourteenth anniversary of the ending of the Soviet-Polish War and the twentieth anniversary of the forming of the Polish Legion. Pilsudski was a man who all his life was dedicated to the Polish cause. Under his guidance and leadership, Poland negotiated nonaggression pacts with both Germany and the USSR. In 1939, both neighbors would forget about the solemn promises of the treaty and wage war against Poland. By this time however, Pilsudski had died.

On October 28, 1934, the Polish Cultural Garden was dedicated on Cleveland's East Side. It was the twelfth garden to be dedicated in the city's nationality garden spots. The gardens were meant to show the ethnic diversity of the Cleveland community. On May 31, 1937, the garden was rededicated to the memory of the Polish pianist, Frederic Chopin. On each occasion, hundreds of people attended to hear the speeches of the various dignitaries. During the sixties and seventies, the gardens were vandalized and ruined. Some efforts have been made recently to restore the gardens to their original beauty.

The one dominant happening during Monsignor's pastorate which attracted the attention of the world as well as the nation was the Seventh Eucharistic Congress held in Cleveland, September 23-27, 1935. The city had never seen anything like it before and it is doubtful whether it will see anything like it again. At the time, Bishop Schrembs was national director of the Eucharistic Congresses in the United States. And to him and to Auxiliary Bishop James A. McFadden was due the credit for bringing the Congress to the

city. During the four day celebration of the Eucharist, it was estimated that a half million people from around the nation took part in the various religious activities. Dignitaries of the Church, Catholic political leaders from around the country, and the faithful, from all walks of life, descended upon Cleveland to honor the Sacrament. A midnight mass originally scheduled for Public Hall was switched to the Municipal Stadium to accommodate a crowd of nearly one hundred twenty five thousand people. This is believed to be the largest crowd in the history of the stadium which was recently torn down to make way for the new Browns facility. On the final day of the Congress, twenty thousand Catholics who belonged to fraternal and religious societies, the safety forces, and other organizations joined students in a march to the stadium. Once inside the amphitheater, they formed a living monstrosity, the vessel used for the display of the Eucharist. Pope Pius XI spoke by radio from Italy, praising those gathered and asking them to live worthy lives. It was truly a memorable event for the world, the diocese, the city and the faithful.

On May 2, 1937, a crowd of between five and seven thousand Polish-American Clevelanders gathered at Pulaski Square at East 12th Street and Superior Avenue downtown to dedicate a World War cannon as a memorial to General Casimir Pulaski, Polish patriot who died fighting for the American Revolutionary cause. The dedication was held in conjunction with the one hundred forty sixth anniversary of Polish Constitution Day. The dedication was preceded by a parade from Public Square to Pulaski Square. Nearly a thousand people, representing the various Polish veteran groups and their auxiliaries, marched in the parade. The cannon was presented to Mayor Burton who accepted it on behalf of the city.

There were other lesser events taking place in the period between 1932 and 1939, during Monsignor's pastorate. Three hundred fifty persons gathered at the parish hall in March of 1936, to honor Monsignor on the tenth anniversary of his elevation to Papal Prelate. The Lincoln Heights Savings and Loan Co. Bank (currently The Third Federal Savings and Loan) on Professor Ave. was robbed of \$1,500 on April Fool's Day (April 1st) 1937. The Polish Ambassador to the US, Count Jerzy Potocki, addressed a gathering at the Polish Library Home on Kenilworth Ave. on November 14, 1937. Four hundred Clevelanders of Polish

descent honored the Metropolitan Opera Star, Jan Kiepura, at a banquet held at the Hollenden Hotel on April 5, 1938. In July of 1938, Monsignor returned from Europe where he had spent the preceding two and a half months. He led a Polish delegation from the city which attended the Eucharistic Congress in Budapest in May. And so it went---even though times were difficult, people gathered together to celebrate various events.

In 1936, two very different books were published which concerned the Tremont community and St. John Cantius Parish. The title of the first book was *Between Spires and Stacks*. It was commissioned by the Welfare Federation of Cleveland to study the needs of, and services to, boys in a local neighborhood of Cleveland. The neighborhood chosen was Tremont and the age group under investigation was between ten and nineteen. The authors of this study were: Charles E. Hendry, Associate Professor of Sociology at George Williams College in Chicago, and Margaret T. Svendsen, Research Psychiatric Social Worker, Recreation Service, Institute for Juvenile Research in Chicago. To anyone interested in gaining an insight into the Tremont Community in the mid-thirties, this book is a "must read". It was thoroughly researched and is filled with charts, maps and statistics. In Section One, Chapter Four of the book, is a subdivision entitled, *Reputation of the Area*. It is interesting to note what professional people, police, case workers, educators, thought about the area sixty two years ago.

The first sentence begins, "As previously observed the Tremont Area has acquired a reputation which brands it as a tough area." The first paragraph ends with, "Through official reports of the Juvenile Court it is generally known that the area has the highest delinquency rate in the city of Cleveland." The report continues:

"(Tremont) is a veritable hotbed for disease and crime. For many years it has been the rendezvous for such notorious criminals as Joe Filkowski and his cohorts. The number of dangerous criminals who started their unlawful careers under the environments of this blighted area is really startling. --the frequency (of crime) for the district is three times that of the city."

It seems like the only time the city newspapers mentioned Tremont was when something bad happened in

the area. Quoting from the report:

"The newspapers have been anything but negligent in keeping before the public Tremont's less favorable characteristics. A great deal of publicity was given the area from the time Joe Filkowski murdered Tony Veryk, a plastering contractor, and robbed a \$31,000 payroll on June 6, 1930, following his release from Ohio Penitentiary in April of that year, where he had spent six years for auto stealing, through his successful escape from the police in December and up to and including his capture in Times Square, New York City, after a 14 month chase, and the subsequent trial which resulted in a life sentence on April 16, 1932. Off and on for 22 months Filkowski and the neighborhood in which he lived were 'front page stuff.' Full page headlines, prominent front page stories, and pictures lent glamour and thrill to the affair. Children in the Tremont Area kept newspaper scrapbooks and followed events with intense interest. To them Filkowski, 'The Powder Puff Bandit' of the newspaper who had swaggered through 15 years of crime, this fellow who had spent several weeks in the Cleveland Clinic Hospital having his nose remodelled while the hunt was on for him, was a hero. He was generous and he was clever. A six year old boy remarked to the principal of the Tremont School, 'Sure, I know where Joe (Filkowski) is, but I wouldn't tell the cops.' The day he was caught 'an emotional tremor ran through the entire school.' "

Here is a sampling of what others had to say about the area:

"Case Worker; 'Why was that area selected for study? Why chose the worst area in the city?'

Detective; When asked to estimate the number of juvenile delinquents in the Tremont Area, he replied, 'How many juveniles are there in the Area?'

Educator; 'I venture to say that we will have a special reference blank on every child in the Tremont Area (disciplinary record) Some years ago, I think it was Ben Lindsay, when he was visiting Cleveland, said that the Tremont Area was one of the worst juvenile crime areas in the United States. There is bad blood down there.'

Police Desk Sergeant; 'You will never do anything with that Area in all the world. They are just born that way and you just can never do anything with them.'

Store Detective; 'The Tremont Area is so bad, there is not enough money in Cleveland to clean it up.'

Educator; 'I've come to the conclusion that the only

hope for Tremont is sterilization. Liquor and sex are the men's only forms of recreation. Of course, if some families could be segregated, that might help.'

Home Visitor; 'A few years ago the judge asked me what I would do with the Area if I had the authority to do anything I wanted. I told him I'd dynamite the whole area.'

Probation Officer; 'Many of the men working in the flats will not walk home on pay days. They are so afraid. I will bet you that you can't walk from West Fifth and Literary to the Park or from West Seventh along to Railway Ave. without being rolled. A policeman, alone, couldn't walk through those streets without getting battered up...A few years ago I wouldn't have been afraid at night, but not now. There is a spirit of recklessness flowing in the Area, and although several boys have been shot within the last month or so, in spite of these killings by the police there is no letup. Putting police singly in this Area won't help at all. Why, they even stone police cars in the district as they go by. People in this section are absolutely afraid to go out at night and that is true throughout the entire area.'

Fire Chief; 'The Tremont Area is the only district where fireman have been openly attacked upon arriving and leaving the scene of a fire. The boys have thrown bricks and stones at them and in some cases, it has been necessary to turn water on them in order to proceed with their duties'.

Labor Leader; 'It is quite unfair to stigmatize the South Side as a lot of rough necks. The real reason for any difficulties that arise are basically economic and until these are corrected delinquency and these other problems will continue to develop.'

When they go out on sick calls at night, the two assistant priests from one of the churches go together and each of them carries a gun. 'Can you imagine', they said, 'having to take a gun along with you when you are taking the Blessed Sacrament to a sick bed?'

Clearly, the Tremont Area did not have a very good reputation among certain elements in the city. Many of these people would only visit the area when their jobs demanded it or in case of an emergency. They would then return to their homes in the finer neighborhoods of the city. After all, they had jobs and did not suffer the worst hardships of the Depression. The Labor Leader was perhaps the most accurate when he claimed that the problems of the area were mostly economic and if there were jobs to be had, the delin-

quency in the area would go down. One must remember that the report was written in 1936 and it was based on figures of the recent preceding years. Many of the young men in the area joined the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). Five years after the report was published, the delinquents automatically became heroes when they volunteered (or were drafted) to serve in the Armed Forces to defend their country. There was no criticism of the area then, nor was there anymore talk of sterilization.

The second book to come out in 1936 was the one previously mentioned concerning Helen Pelczar, *A Polish Stigmatic---Helen Pelczar*. It was more of a booklet than a book, containing but eighty pages. Characterizing the work is difficult. It is supposed to be a short biography of Helen's life but there is little factual matter presented. A pride in Polish Catholicism is quite evident. In part, it reads like a homily. The intention of the author apparently, is to spread the word concerning Helen's life, to get the local church involved in investigating her life with the object of perhaps leading to her beatification. The last eight pages of the book are excerpts of testimonials from people, primarily from the Northeast and Midwest, who claimed to have been cured of various maladies through Helen's intercession. In nearly every case, a donation was included with the testimonial. This would later give rise to the notion that the book was something of a money making scheme. Be that as it may, the book had an immediate effect.

By 1936, Helen had been dead for ten years. She had been buried at Calvary Cemetery and there was nothing unusual about her gravesite. It was marked by a modest headstone. Suddenly, people began gathering at her gravesite, praying and saying their rosaries, claiming that a saint was buried here. There were stories that people were hearing the *Ave Maria* being sung to the accompaniment of beautiful organ music emanating from the grave. As these stories circulated within the Polish neighborhoods, more and more people began visiting the grave. The crowds became ever larger. People were putting their ears to the ground, hoping to hear the music. Helen's grave, as well as neighboring graves, were being trampled on. It was only a matter of time before the newspapers and the bishop became aware of what was happening.

On November 10th, The Cleveland Press carried an

article with the headline, "Scores Kneel In Prayer At Simple Grave". The story informed the reading public of what was happening at Calvary Cemetery. By this time, the bishop was aware of the gathering crowds. He also knew of the booklet which he asked Monsignor Orzechowski to translate into English. On November 11th, The Plain Dealer headlined a story, "Tests 'Miracles' Of 'Singing Grave'." The article goes on to say:

"The trampled grave of Helen Pelczar in Calvary Cemetery, which through recent months has been visited by thousands listening for miraculous music said to proceed from beneath, will be forbidden ground by command of Bishop Joseph Schrembs unless convincing proof of a miracle is brought forth, Msgr. Floyd L. Begin said yesterday.

Msgr. Begin said that an official investigation of the alleged miracle had begun.

'So far we have encountered no one who was cured at the grave nor who claimed hearing the music,' he said. 'The whole thing seems to be a matter of Mrs. Jones having been told by Mrs. Smith who got it from the grocer who knew someone who heard the subterranean music.'

'We have heard that the story originated in Minnesota from someone who had visited Calvary Cemetery. There seems to be no way of finding its source now'.

The Cleveland Press ran a story on November 11th under the headline, "Believe Woman of 'Singing Grave' Should Be Sainted". The article goes on to say: "(Helen Pelczar) will someday be known as St. Helena of Cleveland.

Two Catholic priests and numerous nuns assert that the mark visited upon St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Sienna--the five wounds of Christ, the holy and blessed stigmata--were seen also on her.

However, those who believe implicitly that Helen Pelczar, in life, received a special sign of God's favor place no credence in the legend of her singing after death.

On the contrary, they resent it, feeling such nebulous gossip tend to cheapen and vulgarize her memory. Particularly do they resent the fact that credulous visitors, over zealous for miracles, have despoiled the grave.

'How silly, the very idea, that she should be singing' says Frank Wiernasz, her cousin--"

ROPE BARRICADE CIRCLES GRAVE

Miracles
Resting Place of Helen Pelczar in Calvary Cemetery

Guarded From Curious
PRESS NOV 13, 1936

Section 21 in Calvary Cemetery, in which the "singing grave" of Helen Pelczar is located, today was encircled by a rope barricade to prevent further damage to the grass from trampling feet of the thousands who have visited the grave in recent weeks.

Watchmen were posted at the cemetery's three entrances to question all visitors entering by automobile, in an attempt to keep the curious away.

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Marion J. Orzechowski, pastor of St. John Cantius Church, said he has not yet completed translation of a manuscript written in Polish, giving the detailed life of Helen Pel-

zar, who died in 1926. Bishop Schrembs has requested the translation.

Stories that Helen Pelczar before her death was marked with the blessed stigmata have led several hundred Clevelanders of Polish descent to believe she will some day be known as St. Helene of Cleveland.

The Catholic Universe Bulletin in a story today said the Most Rev. Msgr. Begin, secretary to Bishop Schrembs, "reminds all inquirers that the church is very cautious in the approach to questions of this kind.

"When facts, if there are pertinent facts, are brought to the attention of the bishop officially he will act upon them in the manner prescribed by the church."

DISCOVERS NEW ISLAND

MOSCOW, Nov. 13—The Soviet scientific expedition on board the ice-breaker Sadko has discovered a low island, hitherto unknown, located on 81 degrees, 12 minutes, latitude and 72 degrees, 20 minutes, longitude.

The German government is placing first aid necessities in mileposts along highways.

Article from the Cleveland Press dated Nov. 13, 1936

On November 13th, the gravesite area was cordoned off by a rope. People continued to come to visit the grave but as time went on, they became fewer in number. After all, the bishop was investigating the affair and the faithful felt that he would get to the bottom of the matter. No one came forward who had witnessed a miracle, been the recipient of a miraculous intervention, or had heard the music emanating from the grave. In a story in the Catholic Universe Bulletin, Bishop Schrembs reminded his flock how cautious the church was in "questions of this kind (miracles)". It is not known whether the investigators interviewed any of the people whose testimonials appeared in the booklet who claimed to have been cured through Helen's intercession. How strange it was that Helen, who was a very private person in life, should have caused such a commotion ten years after her death.

In our next newsletter, we will continue the *History of St. John Cantius Parish*.

Copies of the book are available through the group. The cost is \$25.00 which includes postage and handling. Write to the group at the address which appears on the first page of the newsletter.

**THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND
P.O. Box 609117
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44109-0117**

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Everyone who is interested in Genealogy, and more specifically Polish Genealogy, is welcome to join our group. We meet the first Tuesday of the month from September thru June at St. Mary's PNC Church; 5375 Broadview Rd. (corner of Broadview & Wexford); Parma, Ohio. Parking is available in the parish lot, the entrance of which is on Marietta Ave. Meetings begin at 7:30 PM and usually end at 9:30-10:00 PM.

Membership dues are \$20.00 a year.

President: John F. Szuch (330) 769-4603
105 Pleasant View Dr., Seville, Ohio 44273

Vice-President: Joseph Hadbavny (440) 734-7839
3889 Edgepark Dr., No. Olmsted, Ohio 44070

Treasurer: Richarda Jambrozy (216) 226-1548
1492 Lewis Dr., Cleveland, Ohio 44107

Secretary: Sonia Chapnick (440) 256-8392
7897 Gildersleeve Circle, Kirtland, Ohio 44094

Please submit all correspondence to: PGSGC Newsletter, P.O. Box 609117, Cleveland, Ohio 44109.