

Letter from the President

by John Szuch

It has been a long time since I last did a Letter From the President and figured it was time to bring members up to date as to what is happening in our organization. All our officers are back for the current year, but some other changes have happened!

Eddie Mendyka, our founder, has been slowly relinquishing his PGSGC duties and now has completed that task. Trina Galauner has successfully taken over the responsibility of our website and has added some nice innovations to it. Cindy Spikowski took over the library and has given it a professional look. In addition, as of the first of the year, Cindy has taken on the responsibility of editor of the bulletin. As evidenced by her first issue, she is off and running with it. Incidentally, Cindy is always looking for article contributions for the bulletin.

Besides the above mentioned people, my thanks to my fellow officers, Ron, Sonia, and Richarda who make my job easy. Others worth mentioning are Georgene Jasinski (for lining up speakers), Elaine Marec (for taking care of our refreshments before the meeting), and to all the members who bring bakery to each meeting, and last but not least, Ben Kman who hounds us at each meeting to buy 50/50 raffle tickets.

Our organization currently stands at 111 paid members and of that, 35-45 regularly attend meetings which is darn good considering that we have many members who live outside the Greater Cleveland area!

Another area I would like to touch on is our 7:30 PM meeting starting time. It has become a tradition to start the meetings at 7:38, and I wondered why that was and it finally dawned on me. As I sit there with the other officers and look out at the membership, I see what a great time they are having sitting there and discussing things with each other and it almost makes me feel guilty to interrupt that.

To me, we are all "one big happy Polish family," and I love you as such and have been honored to have been your President for the past 15+ years and hope to be able to continue to do so.

Welcome--New Member--Witamy

Leonard & Roberta Pokorski 982 West 14th St. Upland, CA 91786 KRASINSKI, GAWRYSZEWSKI, PACZEK, ERD-ERDT-ERDT GIZPANSKI-GISZPANSKI

A Not So Famous School Fire in 1908

BY TRINA GALAUNER

It was a calm day on May 12th, 1908 and Fr. Anton Kolaszewski of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church was presiding over the funeral services for a child named Emil Lewandowski. Church services at that time were held on the second floor of the building at E. 65th and Lansing Avenue with a school room below. It was a school day and children were immersed in their lessons.

As the funeral procession left, an overheated censer was mistakenly placed near flammable church vestments. It would only take seconds for the vestments to go up in flames. The fire went unchecked for several minutes before being discovered by a 12-year old student named Charlie Nowicki on his way out of the building for a 2 o'clock recess. "The church is afire" he shouted to his teacher, Antony Matuszewski. Flames were shooting out from the window above the doorway. The teacher assured his students there was no danger and kept order as he marched the children out, youngest ones first.

At hearing of the fire in the church, Fr. Kolaszewski rushed back in to try to save precious church vestments. The church sexton, John Gosuoronski, concerned when his pastor hadn't come out for several minutes, ran upstairs through thick smoke to find Fr. Kolaszewski passed out on the floor. He carried the elderly pastor out to the street where he came to in a few minutes.

As firemen worked to control the fire with six lines of hose, neighbors of the church were forced to guard their homes from fire with buckets of water. The sixty-foot steeple toppled to the ground nearly injuring several firemen. The fire was finally extinguished forty-five minutes later and had completely destroyed the interior of the church and school. Other church items stored in the basement were ruined by water. But firemen saved a large portion of school furniture by throwing desks and chairs out of the building.

The fire most likely would have claimed some lives had it not been for the quick thinking of the teacher and sexton. Perhaps many lessons were learned from the fatal Collinwood School fire just two months before that claimed 174 lives. Nonetheless, this "not so famous" school and church fire was largely forgotten after it happened only to be contained in the history book of the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish. Now, exactly one hundred years later, we celebrate how two heroes saved lives, a much happier ending than that of Collinwood.

A Genealogical Mystery within The Immaculate Heart of Mary Fire

Who exactly is the sexton, John Gosuoronski? Having scanned Cleveland city directories, the spelling of this name can not be found. The closest possibility is "Gosiorowski". There were two John Gosiorowskis living in the area near the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church at the time of the fire in 1908.



The first John Gosiorowski was married to Mary Ratajczak just months before this fire, in September of 1907. Fr. Anton Kolaszewski presided over the mass. He was the son of Michael and Frances Gosiorowski of E. 66th St. This John Gosiorowski was known to hold "odd jobs" and could quite possibly have been the sexton at the church for a short time. Both his parents and his in-laws were instrumental in the forming and management of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish.

The second John Gosiorowski was about 12 years older, lived on Worley Ave. and was married to Mary Drula. Most times his occupation is listed as a painter.

Both John Gosiorowskis were parishioners of Immaculate Heart and are now buried at St. Mary's Cemetery. There is no known relationship between them.

Any one having more information regarding this fire, the history of the Immaculate Heart Parish or this sexton, please contact Trina Galauner by email at galauner@yahoo.com.

The First Polish Woman in Cleveland

by Trina Galauner

When Mr. Norm Davis contacted me with information on the first Polish woman to have settled in Cleveland, I was skeptical. Being a genealogist and perfectionist, I needed to prove to myself that this was indeed the very first Polish woman that made her home in the city of Cleveland. This email sent me on a journey through various early Polish Cleveland families and put me in contact with several decendents of this woman.

The obituary from February 1924 was entitiled "FIRST POLISH WOMAN IN CLEVELAND DIES". The article read as follows,

"Was mother of eight, grandmother of forty-one and great grand mother of twenty-eight. When Mrs. Catherine Smigel and her husband came to Cleveland from Poland, they did not find another Polish family in the city. Six months passed before they met another family of their own nationality. Five children accompanied their parents from Poland. Three others were born here. Five of them are living. In addition there are forty-one grandchildren and twenty-eight great grandchildren.. Mr. Smigel died nineteen years ago. Mrs. Smigel died yesterday at the home of Dr. Peter S. Smigel, 7211 Broadway S. E. after an illness of a week. She was identified with three Polish societies doing welfare work. The surviving children are Mrs. Rose Marlewski, Mrs Francis M. Laskowski, Dr. Peter Smigel, Henry Smigel and Mrs. Mary Rutkowski, all of Cleveland. Funeral services will be conducted Saturday morning at 10 at St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic Church. Internment will be in Calvary Cemetery."

So my first plan of action was to visit www.castlegarden.org and quickly pull out the passenger arrival list information for Mrs. Catherine Smigel. Of course, most will realize that this does not always work as planned. So next I visited census records for 1900 at www.heritagequest.com which I was able to access for free through my local library website. Well, in 1900, the Smigels only had one 25-year-old child still living with them. But I did find that they arrived in 1872. This means I could check the 1880 census. Ah, yes, the family of Anton and Katie "Schmegel" lived on 26 Praha St. with children, Rosa, Josie, Frances, Peter, Andrew and Mary. In the same house also lived, Joseph and Katie Deranek with son, Peter. The Smigels and Deraneks were considered as Prussian (or German Poles). Scanning the 1880 census of their neighborhood, I see only Bohemians and a few people of Irish and Scottish heritage living in the area. Could she really be the first Polish woman in Cleveland? Who were the Deraneks? Could Katie Deranek have been in Cleveland first?

A visit to the Ohio Death Records website accessed through www.familysearch.org and viewing Catherine Smigel's 1924 death certificate reveals that the Deraneks, Joseph and Katie, are her parents.

Back at www.castlegarden.org I am able to find the arrival records for Joseph and Catharine Deranck who arrived in 1875. So the Smigels would have arrived before them but still I can not find their passenger record. I also find another Deranek family that arrived in 1881, Casimir and Bertha Deranek. I remember that Bertha Deranek is the midwife that delivered my great grandparents. Could I be lucky enough to have a connection to this early Polish family?

I scan the internet for others researching the Deraneks or the Smigels. I find www.rogalskifamily.com, designed by a descendent of Casimir and Bertha Deranek. There I see some very early photos of the family and I find out that Casimir Deranek is Catherine Smigel's brother. I also contacted Jim Piechorowski, who has Rogalskis and Deraneks in his family. He directs me to two different Wolfgang Deraneks from Germany. With their help, I piece together the family further back.

So I've finally compiled pages of information regarding the Deranek and Smigel families but still have no proof of Catherine Smigel's arrival date. A visit to my local library where I can access www.ancestry.com would finally give me the proof that I need. Passenger records finally reveal that Anton "Schmiegel" along with Catherine, Rosalia, Josepha, and Franziska arrived in the U.S. on 18 April 1872. At the Castle Garden website, the family can be found under the last name "Sch".

So is the claim made in 1924 that Catherine Smigel was the very first Polish woman to settle in Cleveland valid? I believe it, unless someone else comes along that claims otherwise. And then I'll start the whole ball rolling again!

If you would like more information regarding the pedigree of the Deranek and Smigel families, please visit http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?db=deranek-smigel.



Katarzyna Smigel, photo courtesy of Ellyn Vander Kaay

POLISH PARTICIPATION IN THE GREAT LAKES EXPOSITION BY CINDY SPIKOWSKI

On June 27, 1936 at noon, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt pushed a button in Washington and opened the Great Lakes Exposition in Cleveland, Ohio. To invite other cities to the grand event 1,200 carrier pigeons were released. Originally planned to be open 100 days and nights from June 27 until October 4, 1936, the exposition would commemorate the 100th birthday of the city of Cleveland and the century for progress of the Great Lakes region.

The planning committee boasted all the famous names of Cleveland: Robert F. Bingham, Dudley S. Blossom, Eben G. Crawford, A. C. Ernst, etc. The actual laborers remained anonymous, however. According to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on June 21, 1936, "2,784 Men, 90 Days - Expo Rises." They are electricians, painters, carpenters, laborers, tinners, plumbers, surveyors, ironworkers, cement finishers, glaziers, awning workers, tile setters, linoleum layers, truck drivers, steel hoistmen and WPA garden workers. Many of our ancestors could have been among those workers. The excitement about the approaching event was evident in the newspaper articles leading up to opening day. Fortunately, these articles were gathered, clipped out and now preserved on microfiche by librarians at the Cleveland Public Library. The 1,200 carrier pigeons were merely ceremonial, as all of Ohio and also the nation was aware of the coming Exposition. There was so much to see: President Garfield's cabin, Admiral Byrd's South Pole ship, "The Four Lorenzos" (a trapeze act), the Submarine S-49, the Goodyear blimp, and trophies and relics of the Great War, to name only a few attractions.

At the eastern end of the exposition adjacent to Lake Erie was the "Streets of the World" exhibition, which included more than 200 buildings built in 30 distinctive national styles. Each of the nationalities would have between three and twenty buildings to represent their nationality - shops, cafes, cottages. Of particular interest is the Polish section of the "Streets of the World", which was planned with the help of Thomas Dombrowski of 7426 Claasen Avenue, a student of Polish history who had traveled extensively in Poland. Also helping with the planning were Edmund P. Lewandowski, president of the League of Polish Organizations, Z. P. Zakrzewski, Mrs. Mary Mondzelewski, K. J. Zielecki and Frank Rell.

At the center of the Polish section was a replica of St. Mary's Cathedral in Krakow, Poland, where, in the 13th century, the Polish trumpeter was killed by Tartar invaders, while warning of their arrival. The interrupted trumpet call was given every hour in that summer and fall of 1936. Krakow's famous "Rynek" (public square) was also reproduced on Cleveland's lakefront and the Cloth Hall (Sukkienice) occupied the middle of that square. One of Krakow's best known restaurants, Hawelka or Zywice was reproduced in

the Polish section. There was also a Polish creamery in operation. The buildings, Polish products and food were enhanced by dancers, musicians and attendants all in native costume. Thanks to the newspaper clippings we know the names of two of the girls who greeted visitors to the Polish village - Sally Polak of 3805 E. 53rd Street and Adele Nowakowski of 4136 E. 71st street. Both girls would graduate in 1937 from South High School in Cleveland.

The Great Lakes Exposition Official Souvenir Guide states that "scores of orchestras, bands and choruses (will) play and sing music of foreign lands all day and night." The June 13, 1936 Cleveland Press announced that "Leopold Stokowski may lead the Philadelphia Orchestra in a concert at the Great Lakes Exposition in October." On June 21, 1936, the Cleveland Plain Dealer said that "George Paderewski, Cleveland's versatile pianist-singer-accordionist is returning from the east to become part of Duke's (Jules Duke) ensemble." The Polish League in Cleveland raised the funds to finance an exhibit of famous paintings, etchings embossed books and sculptures from Poland. There are other Polish names listed among the concessionairs in the official souvenir guide: C. S. Jablonski (novelties), Jane Karpinski (soft drinks and ice cream) and John Zuchowski (novelties).

The newspaper clippings mentioned another Polish family who became connected with Exposition news - Z.(Zigmund) W. Kobylanski, the proprietor of a drug store at 3240 Superior Avenue. Two young boys, Martin Dardis (age 13) and Buster (Albro) McCoy (age 15) had hitch-hiked 400 miles from Binghamton, New York to visit the Exposition, which they thought was free. They did not have enough money for admission and asked Kobylanski for a postcard and a stamp so that they could notify their families that they were safe and were returning home! Mr. Koblyanski and his wife Agnes had two sons of their own, Zigmund (age 15) and Francis(age 12). The *Plain Dealer*, upon hearing about the boys from Binghamton, gave the Kobylanskis and their guests tickets to see the Exhibition!

General admition was 50 cents, but there were additional fees for some of the exhibits (Inflation between 1936 and 2008 has typically multiplied prices by fifteen). There was an additional fee of 25 cents for each of the following exhibits: Streets of the World, Parade of the Years, the Horticultural Building, S. S. Moses Cleaveland, Admiral Byrd Polar Ship, The Globe Theater and The World a Million Years Ago. It cost visitors an extra 10 cents each to see the snake show, television and the Iroquois six nation Indian village. It was an extra 30 cents to see the submarine. Of course the various rides, such as the ferris wheel, paddleabouts, tumble-bug and the merry-go-round had different prices.

Everyone who visited the Great Lakes Exposition signed their names in a "Giant Golden Book" which measured six feet by four feet ,contained 5,000 sheets of paper and reportedly weighed 1,500 lbs. Unfortunately, that book has been lost. It would have been interesting to search its pages to see if our ancestors had joined Martin Dardis, Buster McCoy and the Kobylanski family at the Great Lakes Exposition.

Bibliography for Great Lakes Exposition

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"Life Begins at Graduation" Cleveland Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine, May 24, 1936.

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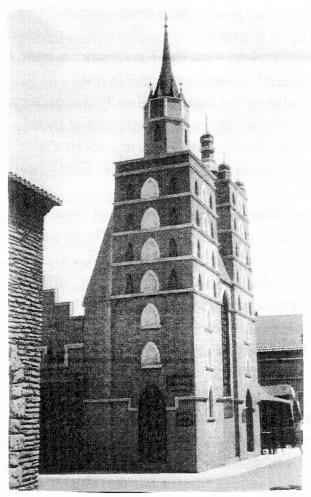
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Pullen, Glenn C. "Footlights and Brightlights". Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 21, 1936.

Randall, Edwin T. "Abroad at the Great Lakes Exposition". Cleveland Plain Dealer Magazine Section, May 31, 1936.

Vacha, John E. "Biggest Bash: Cleveland's Great Lakes Exposition" *Timeline* (Ohio Historical Society), 13:2, March/April, 1996.

Information about the Great Lakes Exposition can be viewed on line "Ohio Memory Online Scrapbook" http://www.ohiomemory.org/



ST. MARY'S CHURCH POLISH VILLAGE
GREAT LAKES EXPOSITION, CLEVELAND, OHIO

Reproduction from Walter Leedy postcard collection. Subject: St. Mary's Church

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In Memoriam - Colonel Casimir I. Lenard AUS (Ret.)

We thank Ralph Lysyk for calling our attention to the death of Colonel Casimir I. Lenard, recipient of the first ever Polish American Congress Medal of Freedom. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on February 15, 2008. Colonel Lenard's grandson has written a moving tribute that can be found at

http://manassasfire.com/previous_headlines/jan2008/2008_01_25_col_casimir_lenard/2008_01_25_col_casimir_lenard.htm

His grandson states "... How do you condense the life of a veteran of three U.S. wars and a fighter for the betterment of the Polish American community and the people of Poland into a few paragraphs?" Colonel Casimir I. Lenard is a relative of Charles and Teresa Ćwiąkała, members of PGSGC.

Kosciuszko Foundation

The first annual awards banquet of the Kosciuszko Foundation was held on April 12, 2008 at the Polish American John Paul II cultural center on 6500 Lansing Ave. The foundation promotes educational, scientific, and cultural exchanges bewteen Poland and the United States to promote understanding and friendship. Zosia Prochoroff of Shaker Heights High School received recognition for her essay on the Katyn massacre. Christine Kuskowski, the National director of the Teaching English in Poland program was also honored. Mrs. Kuskowski awarded participation certificates to the teachers from Ohio who have taught English in Poland. For more information about the foundation, contact Mary Kay Pieski, Chapter President, at 330-633-5679.

Fir Street Cemetery Restoration

Judge Raymond Pianka, a member of our genealogical society, was the speaker at our February meeting and gave an interesting and informative talk on the use of DNA in genealogy. Member Bud Brady mentioned that Judge Pianka has also been busy with another project - the restoration of the Fir Street Cemetery, an old Jewish cemetery located near the judge's boyhood home. After years of work, he has finally been able to obtain enough money, support, guidance and volunteers to begin the repairs.

Details of the effort can be found on pages 68 and 69 of the March/April 2008 issue of *Everton's Genealogical Helper* (a copy is in our library) as well as on line http://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/articles/2008/01/02/news/local/bcover1228.prt. Vicki Blum Virgil also gives details of the cemetery in

How the weak dollar hurts Polonia

Rosanne Ewazen has made us aware of an article which appeared in *Polish News* on January 12, 2008 entitled "How the weak dollar hurts Polonia?" It was written by Robert Strybel, who write for numerous Polish newspapers and works for Reuters News Agency in Warsaw. According to Strybel, the weak U. S. dollar will affect Poland as fewer Americans will travel there, causing a drop in tourist revenue. Polish goods will become more expensive in the United States and fewer performing groups from Poland will visit the United States. The entire article can be found at:

http://www.polishnews.com/news,165,how-the-weak-dollar-hurts-polonia.html

Polish Citizenship for Pol-Ams

Rosanne Ewazen also mentions that in a January 22, 2008 article for *Polish News*, Robert Strybel outlines the reasons many Polish Americans are considering dual citizenship with Poland. A Polish passport facilitates travel in Poland and Europe. The idea has become more popular now that Poland is no longer a communist country or a Soviet satellite. For many, it is also a tribute to their ancestors who dreamed of someday returning to Poland. Now, the descendants of Polish immigrants to the U.S. can possibly return to Poland to retire. More information can be obtained from: Consular Division, Polish Embassy, 2224 Wyoming Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008-3992 phone: (202)234-3800

The entire article can be found at:

http://www.polishnews.com/news,178,polish-citizenship-for-pol-ams.html

GENEALOGY RESEARCH AT THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY LIBRARY

Hello Everyone! The Genealogy Collection at Fairview Park has recently received a set of books that might be helpful in tracking your Polish ancestors. *In Their Words* by Jonathan D. Shea & William F. Hoffman is a set of two volumes which will help you make sense of Polish ancestry.

IN THEIR WORDS

A Genealogist's Translation Guide to Polish, German, Latin, and Russian Documents

by Jonathan D. Shea & William F. Hoffman



VOLUME I: POLISH

LANGUAGE & LINEAGE PRESS

IN THEIR WORDS

A GENEALOGIST'S TRANSLATION GUIDE TO POLISH, GERMAN, LATIN, AND RUSSIAN DOCUMENTS

by Jonathan D. Shea & William F. Hoffman



VOLUME II: RUSSIAN

LANGUAGE & LINEAGE PRESS

Volume I of *In Their Words* focuses on the information researchers will need to find Polish records, understand the archaic Polish language found in the documents, and make sense of the information contained within the documents. To help researchers with this process the authors provide historical context of various types of records, background information about the records, and examples of those documents with translations. Many different records are explained including: obituaries, cemetery inscriptions, consular records, military records, death claim records, church records, tax lists, passport records, birth, marriage, and death records, and much more.

Volume II of *In Their Words* focuses on Polish ancestry in the lands formerly ruled by the Russian Empire. Like Volume I, this volume uses sample documents from areas that were once a part of the Western region of the Russian Empire and are now the independent nations of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine.

To use these materials and others valuable to your family history research, visit the Cuyahoga County Fairview Park Branch Library.

JONI MIHELICH
Subject Specialist - Genealogy
Cuyahoga County Public Library

What's Happening

Schedule of Speakers for Upcoming Meetings--

- May Ron Marec, Vice-President of PGSGC, taught history at Brecksville-Broadview Hts. High School and was president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO for 22 years before retiring in 2000. He is a member of the Greater Cleveland Society of Poles, American Institute of Polish Culture, and the Polish Ameican Cultural Center:

 Polish Food Through the Ages.
- June Bernadette Zubel, Member of the Polish National Alliance, Polish American Cultural Center and Polish Language Teacher at St. Mary's PNC Church:

 Polish Traditions, Culture, Language and Organizations.

Sept - Norman Braun, Member of PGSGC: Sources.

Calling All Members -- PGSGC Website News

Check the PGSGC website <u>www.freewebs.com/pgsgc</u> for maps, history and places of interest for the following neighborhoods: Warszawa, Krakowa, Jackowa, and Kantowa.

Our genealogical society continues to collect funeral memorial cards. The list can be found on our website under Cleveland transcribed records. Please continue submit the original cards or photocopies to our collection.

Are you interested in hearing from others researching the same surnames as you? If so, get your surnames listed on the PGSGC website. This is a benefit to you as a member. It enables others to find you and help you fill in the gaps in your family tree. You may choose to be contacted directly by email or by mail c/o PGSGC. Why not let your long lost relatives find you instead of you looking for them?

Submit your surnames to Trina Galauner at galauner@yahoo.com or bring them to the next meeting.

Each surname submitted should include:

Your first and last name, surname, place of origin (if known),

Contact email address (or indicate mail c/o PGSGC)

Also, remember to check the surname list regularly as you just might find someone to whom you are related!

Library Videos

Struggles for Poland

Our library is fortunate to have a VHS recording of the 1988 PBS production of *Struggles for Poland* narrated by Roger Mudd. It is the history of Poland in the twentieth century and contains historical footage as well as interviews with those who participated in the various events. There is a rare clip of Josef Pilsudski. This series is not available commercially. First 8 of 9 episodes, about 55 minutes each.

The Historic Salt Mine in Wieliczka.

Polish Television Cracow 1994. About 40 minutes.

THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND c/o St. Mary's PNC Church 1901 Wexford Ave. Parma, Ohio 44134

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: http://www.freewebs.com/pgsgc

FIRST CLASS MAIL

"Our Polish Ancestors"

is published by

THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

OF GREATER CLEVELAND



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.

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