

# Our Polish ANCESTORS

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

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## Madame Helena Modjeska—Famous Polish Actress Performs in Cleveland

By Trina Goss Galauner

On 25 March 1878, Helena Modrzejewska Chłapowska, better known as Madame Helena Modjeska, made her first theatrical debut in Cleveland at the Euclid Avenue Opera House. She performed an original interpretation of “Camille” Monday through Thursday evening and as a Saturday matinee. Friday night, she graced the stage in “Romeo and Juliet” and Saturday evening Clevelanders were treated to her great performance as Adrienne in “Adrienne Lecouvreur.” An excursion train was run on Lake Shore Road to accommodate attendees for a round trip fare of \$1.10 by reservation only.

Helen Modjeska toured the United States and Canada ten times from 1877-1907. During her third tour from 1878-1879, she visited Cleveland accompanied by her husband, Count Karol Bozenta. They toured for eight months and visited forty-nine cities, as far west as St. Louis, in seventeen states including Ontario and Washington D.C.



Helena Modrzejewska as Juliet  
ca 1877

AMUSEMENTS

**Euclid Avenue Opera House**

**Engagement Extraordinary**  
SIX NIGHTS and SATURDAY MATINEE of  
Madame Helena

**MODJESKA**

(The Countess Bozental), of the Imperial Theater, Warsaw, supported by Mr.

**W. F. BURROUGHS.**

FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 29th,  
**Benefit of Modjeska.**

**ROMEO AND JULIET.**

JULIET ..... MODJESKA.

Saturday Matinee, CAMILLE.  
Saturday Evening, ADRIENNE.

Cleveland Plain Dealer  
29 March 1878

Helena Modrzejewska was considered Poland’s greatest actress of all time and was especially known for her Shakespearean roles. The Old Theatre in Krakow, Modjeska Narodowy Stary Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej (Helena Modrzejewska National Stary Theater in Kraków), was named for her. In the Cleveland Plain Dealer’s interview of Madame Modjeska 25 March 1878, Helena stated, “From the age of fourteen I said that I would be something in the world. My mother laughed at me, and said it was good enough for me to marry well and be a good mother. I paid no attention to this, for my mind was made up.”

Helena Modrzejewska Chłapowska was born Helena

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### Welcome

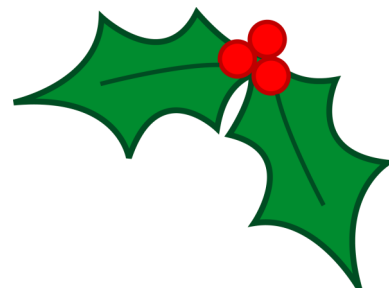
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The Polish Genealogical Society





## Letter from the President



In what seems like a bad habit, I am writing a message while recovering from hip replacement surgery. While all this was going on we sold our house and moved into a one floor condo. The good news is that God gave us only two hips. I am again grateful for a wife and family who have given me such support during this time.

Not being able to do many routine activities did give me some time to read. I have always been fascinated by Greek history and literature. I revisited the epic tale of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* through a book written by a professor of Greek literature. Briefly, the *Odyssey* is the story of Odysseus ten-year journey home after being gone for ten years during the Trojan wars. Because he had offended a god, his labors were many. The start of the tale begins in Ithaca at the home of Odysseus with his young son Telemachus who seeks to learn about the father he never knew, by visiting the surviving leaders of the war.

My professorial guide indicated that a son can never really know his father or parents. That would seem logical since one can never know the experiences that shaped our parents' lives. Upon further thought, I changed my mind a bit. Did I really know and understand my parents when I was a young man? No. But as I grew in the shared experiences of life, I came to appreciate the choices they made to guide me in my life. Those mean things they made me do as a 13-year-old suddenly made sense and were even appreciated. As we search for our ancestors, we should apply the same thinking. Why did our ancestors make the big decision to come to America? What was going on in the old country or with their family? How much of our parents/grandparent's frugality was driven by the Great Depression? Was their love of family the result of so many early deaths of children and parents? I encourage us to think of these ancestors as real people experiencing the unique challenges of everyday life. This insight will make them so much more interesting than just names and dates.

We are now entering the Christmas season which for many of us brings memories of special church services, good food and warm family gatherings. May we pass some of those memories on to our families, as well as the hope and joy that comes with Christmas. Merry Christmas to all.

Michael E. Speare, President

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This is the first in a series of articles highlighting Polish individuals who made significant contributions to the arts, science, politics, sports and other areas. They also gave pride to their fellow Poles who shared their heritage often in times of special needs for Poland.

## Ignacy Jan Paderewski

By Michael Speare

Ignacy Jan Paderewski was a widely acclaimed Polish pianist and composer who became a spokesman for Polish independence. Ignacy was born on 6 November 1860 (18 November 1860 according to the Julian calendar which was used in Russia until 1918). Paderewski was born to Polish parents in the village of Kuryłówka, then part of Russian-occupied Poland. The village is now part of Ukraine. His father, Jan, was an administrator of estates. His mother, Poliksena, née Nowicka, died several months after Paderewski was born. At an early age, Ignacy showed a strong interest in music. His father was among many Poles who challenged their Russian overlords. He was arrested in connection with the January 1863 failed uprising. Soon after, Ignacy was adopted by an aunt.



Initially, Ignacy Paderewski took piano lessons with a private tutor but, at the age of twelve, he went to Warsaw and was admitted to the Warsaw Conservatory. Upon graduating in 1878, he became a tutor of piano classes at his alma mater. In 1880, Paderewski married one of his students at the conservatory, Antonina Korsakówna. The next year, their son, Alfred, was born severely physically handicapped. Antonina never recovered from childbirth and died several weeks later. Paderewski decided to devote himself to music and left his son in the care of friends.

A chance meeting in 1884 with famous Polish actress, Helena Modrzejewska, began his career as a virtuoso pianist. Helena was an internationally-known actress reknown for her Shakespearan roles. She was not a musician but was taken by "his intensity" which was "almost hypnotic." Modrzejewska arranged for a public concert and joint appearance in Kraków's Hotel Saski to raise funds for Paderewski's further piano study. The scheme was a tremendous success, and Paderewski soon moved to Vienna to continue his studies.

Another important woman in Paderewski's life was Helena Gorska who would become his second wife. She was the caregiver of his disabled son. Her troubled marriage was annulled prior to her marriage to Ignacy 31 May 1899. She was supportive of his musical ambitions. No children resulted from this second marriage.

Ignacy was ambitious in scheduling concerts, often performing 2-3 per day in local theaters but also playing at small home gatherings of wealthier clients. While incredibly time-consuming, these concerts were not very lucrative as receipts barely covered travel and lodging expenses.

Vienna was a magnet city for musicians and Ignacy met many famous artists, most notable, Johannes Brahms. Brahms gave him lessons in composition to broaden his skills. Armed with new confidence in his talents, Paderewski moved to Paris. There he met with increasing success even catching the eye of the famous Saint-Sans, among others. He repeated his success with a tour of London. One commentator wrote, "Paderewski was the glittering centre of musical life in London whenever he went there. Apart from his genius and physical beauty, he carried with him a compelling atmosphere of inward mobility and dignity." Paderewski, who was from a small and humble village of Poland, was becoming friends with the likes of Henry James, Prime Minister Lord Asquith, and Jennie Jerome, the mother of Winston Churchill. He was asked to play at Windsor for the Princess of Wales, the future Queen Alexandra, and Queen Victoria.



While in London, his agent obtained a contract for Paderewski to play a series of eighty concerts in the United States with the Steinway Company. They were to pay all expenses and guarantee him the handsome sum of 6,000 pounds in 1891. Despite his personal doubts about his own talent, he was greeted everywhere by glowing words from the critics.

The Steinway tour was not the financial success it could have been but resulted in independent U.S. tours in the following years. These were smashing critical and financial successes. In the 1893 tour, Paderewski netted about \$160,000. He showed his appreciation to America by holding several charity concerts, including one at the Metropolitan Opera, to raise funds for the Washington Arch.

It was during these tours that he unknowingly started to take a political stance. At his concerts he made a point of playing music with a Polish flavor and talked about his hopes for a reconstituted Poland that was still under the control of Germany, Russia, and the Habsburgs. This became a growing theme as time went by.

With his financial security assured for the moment, he returned to composing and spending time with his crippled son before his death in 1901 at the age of twenty-one. Among his more famous compositions was Minuet in G Major, Op. 14 No. 1 written in the style of Mozart. It became one of the most recognized piano tunes of all time.

What separated Ignacy Paderewski from the gaggle of other pianists was that he was said to be incredibly handsome and his hair was a bit on the wild side which seemed to be synonymous with genius. He played with a vigor and energy that captured the audiences wherever he played. In today's terms he was a rock star of his age complete with female admirers jumping on stage to show their devotion. Ignacy was always generous with his money, giving to charity and movements, but also quickly learned to enjoy the good life. As a result, he was forced to return to the concert circuit over the following years. He returned to the United States thirty times in his fifty years of performing, often to replenish his finances. Whether in London or Sioux Falls, the seats were always full. "Paddy mania" was in the air.

Paderewski came into public politics through the philanthropic route. By 1910, the artist was an extremely wealthy man and generously donated to numerous causes and charities, especially for Polish orphans and victims of reprisals, but also for scholarships for young musicians, endowed music posts, and unemployment stipends, support for veterans, rehabilitation clinics and maternity wards, and many others. For the 500th anniversary of a historic victory of the Polish King Jagiełło over the Teutonic Order (the precursor of Prussia) at Grunwald, Paderewski sponsored the construction of a statue of the king in the Polish medieval capital, Krakow. Unveiling the monument was an occasion for a great patriotic demonstration. Paderewski spoke to the gathered masses and proved to be as adept at capturing their hearts and minds with his oratory for a political cause as he was with his music. He was a great speechmaker with a passionate delivery and no recourse to notes. The fact that he was an artist and a philanthropist, not a member of any of the Polish political factions fighting for influence over the movement, was one of his greatest assets. From this position, he could legitimately appeal to higher ideals of unity. His public role as Poland's champion began in earnest.

During World War I, Paderewski became the voice for the Polish National Committee in Paris, which was soon accepted by the Triple Entente as the representative of the forces trying to create the state of Poland. Ignacy had formed a relationship with Colonel House, an aide to Woodrow Wilson. He did the same with the leaders of France and Great Britain. He helped form and lead many relief organizations bringing assistance to Poland during and after the war. Once the United States entered the war, his lobbying efforts showed in one of the fourteen points Woodrow Wilson promoted for a just settlement after the war.

"Point 13: An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and

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## Remember When: Playing a Musical Instrument

By John Prokop

Here is an interesting fact about myself that I rarely share with anyone, I used to take music lessons and I played the accordion. As long as I could remember, I always liked and enjoyed listening to music, and I liked dancing to music even better. Living next door to us on Bellevue Avenue, I had a neighbor who I looked up to like a role model who played the accordion. I used to like to sit on the front porch in the summer and listen to him practice and play his accordion in the evenings. His name was Raymond and he was about seven or eight years older than I was and he was very smart and talented. He was going to be a doctor, which was very admirable in itself for him to have such aspirations.



When I became eligible, age-wise, to be a candidate for my Confirmation, I had already planned on asking him to be my sponsor. When he accepted, I was very happy and thrilled to have such a positive role model be part of my spiritual life. I even took his first name. Raymond, as my Confirmation name. As we prepared for Confirmation classes, I got to spend more time with him and got to know him better. We already had known Ray and his family, as our family had lived next door to his for years. Sometimes I would go over his house and watch when he practiced and played his accordion. I was amazed that he could read music and translate those notes into such beautiful sounds and melodies.

When my Confirmation day arrived, we had a small party afterward at my house. Ray and his family were all invited and came over to celebrate my new "indelible mark" of faith. After we ate, I opened cards and gifts that I had received and was quite surprised when I opened a gift that had music books titled "Learning How To Play The Accordion." I was puzzled receiving such a gift and wondered what I would do with these books when suddenly Raymond brought out a very large gift-wrapped box. I opened it to discover it was his first accordion

that he learned to play on many years ago. Not only did I receive the music books and his accordion, I also was told he would provide me with music lessons so I could learn to play it. I began to have dreams and visions of myself playing like one of the Polka King All Time Greats, like Johnny Vadnal, Johnny Pecon, or Ray Budzilek. Maybe one day I would be a guest on The Gene Carroll Amateur Hour Show, The Sunday Polka Varieties, or The Lawrence Welk Show.

Music Lessons began that following week. I was very excited and thrilled to learn how to read music. There was so much memorization, almost as much as learning how to do arithmetic (which

### The Staff

Treble Clef (higher registers)  
Bass Clef (lower registers)

### The Notes

Together the note head, stem and flag indicate what note to play, and how long to play each note.

### Meter & Rhythm

beats per measure

the type of note receiving one beat.

1 half note = 2 quarter notes = 4 eighth notes

1 whole note = 2 half notes = 4 quarter notes

### Melody

Follow the notes on the staff with the notes on a keyboard to play the C scale.



like arithmetic, music had its own language and symbols.) To learn how to play any musical instrument, of course you had to study and practice. You have to develop a sense of timing, rhythm, talent and expertise in controlling the instrument, to make it create those beautiful sounds and melodies.

In the beginning, I was eager and quick to learn. Lessons and practice sessions were interesting and challenging. It required concentration and discipline. When I reached the Sixth grade, however, my interest began to wane. Middle School and the arrival of adolescence made me restless and a little rebellious. Ray suggested I take a break for awhile and rethink if I wanted to continue taking music lessons. I agreed and within three months, I lost all interest in continuing my lessons and practicing.

My interest in music was changing, as were so many other things in my life. Except for my family and neighbors, no one else I knew was taking music lessons, or playing the accordion. I realized and knew I would never be able to impress or get the attention from a girl by playing the accordion. Contemporary music at that time, by the Beatles and the artists of Motown, just couldn't be played on an accordion. Besides, the music from the guitar and drums were more appealing to me during this time. I never talked about my learning to play the accordion after I started high school. I never ran into anyone afterward who told me they played the accordion either. I also had other adolescent activities competing for my free time, including a part-time job after school. My priorities had shifted and so did my accordion practice and interest.

Interestingly, I never lost my love for polka music, of which the accordion was a vital component of that genre of music. Polka music was an anchor in my life, which tied me to my culture and ancestry. With my Polish ancestry, I grew up listening to Polish music and polkas, on the radio and television, and attended all those Polish weddings of family, neighbors and friends as I grew up. In fact, my wife and I had a "Polish Orchestra" play at our wedding reception. At all the wedding receptions I attended and listened to that great polka music, I always thought in the back of my mind, if I had continued my accordion lessons, could I have been on the stage playing the accordion at a wedding reception also? But, that was never meant to be. However, I will never forget my neighbor and Confirmation sponsor, Raymond, who gave me my first introduction to that fascinating musical instrument and the music lessons to play it.

This article is reprinted from St Casimir Alumni Newsletter of East 82nd & Sowinski Ave Cleveland, Ohio, with their permission.



John A. Prokop is a freelance writer and has published articles about growing up on Cleveland's East Side Polish neighborhood (Poznan) in the 1950s and 1960s. He attended St. Casimir Grade School (Class of 1962) and then Cathedral Latin High School (Class of 1966). He is also the Prokop Family Historian and Genealogist and has studied Genealogy for about 5 years. John tries to capture and record his feelings of the times, culture, food, religion, people and relationships, as he perceived and lived them. He also chronicles personal information about his family genealogy, which is often rarely recorded or documented. John currently is retired and lives in St. Petersburg, Florida with his wife, Laura, and their two married daughters, Holly and her husband, Hamlet, and Jennifer and her husband, Robert. John and Laura are also the proud grandparents of Jennifer and Robert's son, Robby.





## What's Polish in the Historical Cleveland Plain Dealer?

“Millions For Her Freedom”

Cleveland Plain Dealer, 8 October 1900



Zygmunt Fortunat Miłkowski aka Teodor Tomasz Jeż.  
ca. 1895  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Count Zygmunt Fortunat Miłkowski (aka Teodor Tomasz Jeż) spoke to the Poles of Cleveland in an emotional Sunday afternoon address October 1900 at Columbia Hall on Broadway Avenue. He came with a plea to collect funds to finance the struggle for Polish freedom.

Count Miłkowski was born in 1824 to a noble family in Podolia (Ukraine). He was educated in Niemirow and in Odessa and attended the University of Kiev. He fought with the Hungarians during the 1848 Hungarian Revolution, was exiled to Turkey, and then emigrated to England where he joined the Polish Democratic Society (Polish National League). He continued to support Polish independence in Moldavia, Turkey, Walachia, Servia, and Bulgaria and was an army commander during the January Uprising in Poland in 1863 after which he settled in Lau-

sanne, Switzerland. Not only a political and social activist, Miłkowski was a journalist and novelist who wrote under the pen name Teodor Tomasz Jeż. His writings included about 90 novels.

Zygmunt Fortunat Miłkowski made the journey to the United States in 1900 under the guide of Tomasz Siemiradzki to promote Polish interests abroad and collect funds for the Polish National League headquartered in Rapperswil, Switzerland. He died in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1915 at the age of ninety.

### Sources:

- Adam Walaszek, “Tomasz Siemiradzki: An Intellectual in Ethnic Politics,” *Polish American Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Autumn, 2005), pp. 47-73.
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## MILLIONS FOR HER FREEDOM.

Poles Have \$7,000,000  
Fund to be Used for  
Mother Country.

Count Thaddeus Milkowski,  
Polish Leader, Talks  
to Large Audience.

Count Thaddeus Milkowski addressed a large assemblage of Poles at Columbia hall on Broadway Sunday afternoon. Count Milkowski is the founder of the Polish National treasury at Rappersville, Switzerland, and it at the head of the Polish National league of the world. He is conceded to be the greatest Pole living, and now, at the age of seventy-seven, is traveling over the United States in the interest of the freedom of Poland. He has been a soldier since boyhood and figured to a great extent in Polish history. In 1848 he engaged in the freedom of Hungary, and in 1863 fought in the interest of the liberty of Poland. Since that time he has been battling for their interests with the pen, writing under the name of T. J. Jez. The count is accompanied by his son and will leave for Pittsburg this morning. Oct. 30 he will sail from New York for his home in Lucerne, Switzerland.

His address Sunday afternoon was listened to with great attention, and when he feelingly referred to the downfall of Poland there was hardly a person in the vast assemblage who was not weeping. The count can speak no English and the address was given in Polish.

Preceding the address a large parade was formed and the line of march was over the principal streets in the vicinity of Columbia hall. The parade was nearly a mile in length, composed of a guard of fourteen civic and four uniformed societies. A mounted cavalry escort rode on each side of the carriage in which the count was seated.

Columbia hall was artistically decorated for the occasion, the American colors and the red and white of Poland predominating. Over 800 people were in the hall and that many more could not gain admittance.

Count Milkowski, while in the city, was the guest of Mr. Henry Du Laurence, No. 2028 Broadway. During the entire visit, a constant stream of callers poured into the Du Laurence residence to pay their respects to the greatest of Polish generals. He was greatly pleased with his Cleveland visit and the courtesies shown him.

Mr. Du Laurence stated that at the present time there is over \$7,000,000 in the fund for the freedom of Poland, and it is increasing daily. At the meeting Sunday afternoon a collection was taken and \$57 subscribed, which was turned over to the count for the general fund. Mr. Du Laurence also states that if necessary in the interest of the freedom of Poland, every Pole would sell his home and willingly turn every penny over to the Polish National league for such purpose.





*Madame Helena Modjeska continued from page 1.....*

Jadwiga Bendowa 12 October 1840 at 39 ul. Grodzka in Kraków, Galicia, Austrian Empire and was baptized the same day at Parafja Wszystkich Świętych (All Saints Cathedral) in Kraków. Her mother was Józefa Müzel (Mizel) Bendowa, widow of the nobleman and merchant, Szymon Benda, who died 29 November 1834. When Szymon died, he left his middle class widow with two houses on which to support her three living children, Jozef Szymon (born 1827), Jan Szymon (born 1830), and Feliks (born 1833). It was rumored that Helena was the illegitimate result of an affair her mother had with Prince Władysław Sanguszkó. After Helena's birth, a music teacher named Michal Opid moved in with the family. In 1842, Helena's youngest sister, Jozefa Michalina Benda, was born. Even though Helena referred to Michal Opid as her legitimate father, he was not the father of her and Jozefa. However, both girls took the surname Opid as their own. Michal Opid died around 1844 but Helena credited him with cultivating her love of the arts at a young age.

The city of Krakow in the 1840s and 1850s was a depressed town marred by political unrest. Since the partitioning of Poland in 1795, Krakow was a divided city at the border of Austrian, Russian and Prussian control. The Free City of Krakow was established in 1815 by a treaty between Austria, Prussia and Russia which made it a hub of Polish political activity and rebellion. After the November uprising of 1830-31, Austria occupied the city and after the unsuccessful Krakow uprising of 1846, Krakow was annexed to Austria leading to further political turmoil. The Austrian bombardment of the city in 1848 introduced a young Helena to the horrors of war and death and made her particularly patriotic towards her Polish homeland.

The great fire of Krakow in July 1850 destroyed Jozefa's properties. Up until the fire, Jozefa was able to manage her assets well and provide prestigious educations to her older sons and private tutoring for her daughters. Now she was left with only a small coffeehouse she had established which supported the family thereafter. This left the family somewhat impoverished. Helena and her sister then studied at St. John's Convent and had occasional lessons in French, dance and music.

In 1850, a married man estranged from his wife named Gustaw Zimajer moved in with the family. He served as the family's German teacher and theatrical mentor and called himself "Mr. Modjeski." Gustaw introduced Helena to Shakespeare, took her to the Krakow Theatre and eventually enticed her to marry him despite their age differences. Helena's theatrical interests were also influenced by her older brothers, Jozef Szymon and Feliks, who were actors, and Jan Szymon, who was a musician who studied at the Vienna Conservatory. Her constant interaction with performers, along with Zimajer's guidance laid the groundwork for the formation of Helena's professional theatre career.

Helena became the star in Zimajer's travelling theatre troupe. He went by the stage name "Gustaw Modrzejewski" and she was "Helena Modrzejewska". The touring troupe travelled by foot or in wagons throughout the Austrian partition of Poland to Bochnia, Czerniowce and Nowy Sacz performing nightly. During their theatrical tour, Helena gave birth to two children, Rudolf (Ralph) and Marylka. The troupe was not highly regarded in aristocratic circles, but Helena's performances caught the attention of the higher social classes. Through connections, Zimajer had Helena engaged by the Lwow Theatre and later by the Czerniowce Theatre. He pushed to have her master the German language so that she could perform in the German partition but Helena's patriotism to her native Poland made her reluctant.

Due to unconfirmed reasons, Helena left Zimajer taking her son with her in August of 1865. Her young daughter, Marylka, had died suddenly the previous Spring and it was rumored that her death was the result of domestic violence at the hands of Zimajer. Helena had also learned that her marriage to Gustaw was not valid since he was still legally married to his first wife. She returned home to her mother's house in Krakow and accepted a four-year theatrical contract with the Krakow Theatre. Her husband abducted their son Rudolf in 1866 and Helena struggled over the next four years to get Rudolf back.

While performing in the Prussian capital of Posen (Polish: Poznan), Helena met Karol Bozenta Chłapowski. He was





a journalist and theatre critic from a noble family. The two fell in love and were married. They returned to Krakow where Chłapowski supported her theatrical endeavors. He wrote raving theatrical reviews for her and brought her into the elite social circle. In 1868, through these measures and her marriage to Chłapowski, she debuted at the Warsaw Imperial Theatre and became their prima donna for the next eight years.

Stress and illness plagued Helena during those years. In 1870, she returned from a three-month vacation in the Carpathian Mountains with typhoid fever. Her recovery was slow, and a false report of her death filled newspapers. She was also discouraged by the behavior among the artistic community at the Warsaw Theatre. The multiple personalities and selfish motives of the directors, writers and performers made it difficult for the company to produce the true art that Helena was passionate about. Also at that time, a novel written by a jealous ex-suitor called "The Actress" was published which mirrored her early life with Zimajer and painted a picture of a naive, dominated woman who was taken advantage of. Later, a play written by the same man called "The Bat", was a satire that caricatured Helena's husband, Count Chłapowski, as a freeloader off his wife. Several performers and theatre personnel succumbed to diseases over a few years and her beloved brother, Feliks, died from tuberculosis in 1875. These events, personal attacks, a grueling theatrical schedule and fatigue from previous illness ultimately led Helena to take a leave of absence from the Warsaw Theatre.



Karol and Helena Modrzejewska Chłapowski

Helena and her husband kept company with a small, tight knit group of writers, performers and artists. One of them suggested a trip to the U.S. and raved about the benefits of the California mountain air and a lush land full of orchards and livestock. Chłapowski added that they should start a colony there and settle on a ranch where they could farm and live a simple life of artistic expression.

So, the group set out for the U.S. on the Donau and arrived in New York on 5 August 1876. They eventually sailed on to San Francisco, by way of the isthmus of Panama, and settled on a farm in Anaheim. But the colony would end up a failure as the group was not accustomed to the labor required of farmers.

Helena hired an English teacher to learn the English language so she could retake the stage in America. Her intent was to become a sensation in the United States and then return to the Warsaw Theatre. She Americanized her name to Helena "Modjeska" and debuted in San Francisco at the California Theatre on 20 August 1877. She was a complete success and soon after began her East Coast tour in New York. She became an American theatre sweetheart and several times traveled back to Poland to perform in her homeland.

Her health plagued her again in 1895 as she suffered from thrombophlebitis and became ill for several months. She tried to return to acting but continually fell victim to illness. Her engagements became shorter and less often and in 1907 she retired from the theatre. Helena died at her home in Newport Beach, California on 8 April 1909 at age 68 and was buried in Krakow. Her autobiography "Memories and Impressions of Helena Modjeska" was published posthumously in 1910.



*Ignacy Jan Paderewski continued from page 3.....*

economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.”

Paderewski was invited to Versailles in the talks to compose a peace treaty. This was difficult ground as there were many competing interests. Germany was defeated, Russia was still immersed in the civil war that would establish communism, and the Austrian-Hungarian empire had collapsed. All the subjugated countries of the Habsburg's, along with Poland, sought to reconstitute themselves. Thrown into that mix were the hopes of many ethnic people. Poland was among the most ethnically diverse countries of Europe with a population of Germans, Jews, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians.



Ignacy Jan Paderewski delivers a speech at a gathering in New York, 1919  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Additionally, there were natural resource areas that were fought over such as the coal fields of Silesia. All these interests fought for the ears of the conquerors who would ultimately draw the lines. Poland did get its independence but there was much to be unhappy about as well. To give Poland access to the sea for trade, a Polish corridor was established at Danzig. This was a narrow strip of land bordered on both sides by Germany and would remain an area of contention until 1939 when war would once again come to Europe.

Paderewski would be one of the two signers of the Treaty of Versailles for Poland. He became the President and

Foreign Minister of the new government. Chosen because of his non-political image, he did not do well among the fighting of the many new political parties led by more partisan men. After ten months, Paderewski resigned his post as Prime Minister, but continued to represent Poland abroad at international conferences and at the League of Nations. Thanks to his diplomatic skills and great personal esteem, Poland was able to negotiate thorny issues with neighboring countries and gain international respect.

In 1921, Paderewski resigned all his official posts and retired to his villa in Switzerland. He returned to the piano which he had all but abandoned during the war years. He began touring again in 1923, and enjoyed a warm reception in his beloved United States while earning much needed income. His philanthropic activities continued unabated. He donated \$28,600, the largest single contribution, to the cause of disabled American veterans. At the age of 76, Paderewski played himself in the motion picture *Moonlight Sonata*. Something of his legendary presence and distinctive style of piano playing can be glimpsed in the film, which can be found online at [YouTube](#) along with other performances.

Paderewski's marriage to Helena remained happy and she became a philanthropist in her own right, heading the first Polish Red Cross in 1919. Helena died in 1934 just as the rise of fascism in Europe and Nazism in Germany brought Paderewski back into the political arena. His Swiss home became a hotbed of political thought and discussion amongst Polish politicians who found themselves in exile. When German and Soviet aggression obliterated the Polish state yet again in 1939, Paderewski offered to help in any way he could. He accepted Sikorski's offer to serve on the National Council (a government in exile). He turned again to the United States for help. He spoke to the American people in broadcasts carried by hundreds of radio stations imploring their aid. In 1940, he crossed the Atlantic again to advocate in person for the cause of aiding Europe and defeating Nazism.

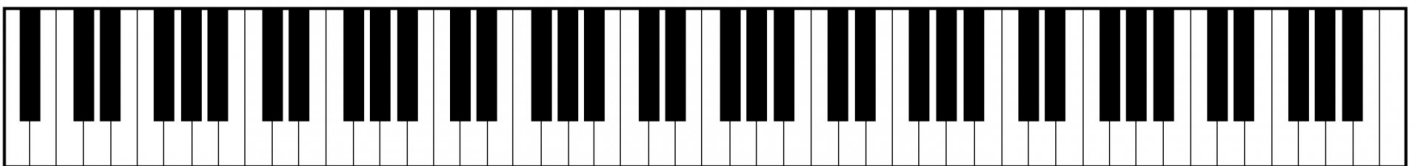


In 1941, Paderewski witnessed a touching tribute to his artistry and humanitarianism as U.S. cities celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first American tour by holding a Paderewski Week with over 6,000 concerts in his honor. He became ill in New York and died there June 27, 1941. His funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral was attended by a crowd of 4,500 with 35,000 outside the church. President Roosevelt issued a special decree allowing Paderewski's body to be laid to rest (not buried) at the Arlington National Cemetery in a crypt on the USS Maine Mast Memorial. The artist's wish was to be buried in free Poland when it again became possible. This wish was granted in 1992 when his remains were transferred to Poland and his ashes placed in a crypt in St. John's Cathedral in Warsaw. Ignacy Paderewski was truly a man for all seasons.



Burial of Ignacy Jan Paderewski at Arlington Cemetery  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

On a local note, Paderewski was a frequent guest at Stan Hywet Hall in Akron, which was the home of F. A. Seiberling one of the founders of Goodyear Tire & Rubber. Gertrude Seiberling was an accomplished opera singer and frequently hosted notable artists. A newspaper article from 1952 about Stan Hywet Hall's many famous guests mentioned one of Paderewski's visits in March 1916 where he performed Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" in the music room for the Seiberling family. When leaving, Helena asked Ignacy to translate the ancient saying over the entrance door. He translated it as "Welcome as thy need may be, find here gladness, happiness, peace, sanctuary." He remarked, "What it said is true."



## Schedule of Presentations for Upcoming Meetings

Jan:     ***The Full History of Prussia – A Documentary*** (video)

Feb:     ***Northeast Ohio's Polish Parishes***  
Don Demor

Mar:     ***Captured in Liberation*** (Andrew Bajda presents his book on the life of his father and his own journey to discover his personal history.)  
Andrew Bajda, Polish American Cultural Center



The Polish Genealogical  
Society of Greater Cleveland  
c/o St. Mary's PNC Church  
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Parma, Ohio 44134



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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.