



Gen Dobry!

Volume XVIII, No. 5

31 May 2017

ISSN 1555-774X. Copyright © 2017, PolishRoots®, Inc.

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*** WELCOME! ***

to the latest issue of *Gen Dobry!*, the e-zine of PolishRoots®. If you missed previous issues, you can find them here:

<<http://polishroots.org/GenDobry/tabid/60/Default.aspx>>

*** THE *KRESY* ARE BECOMING MORE ACCESSIBLE ***

by William F. Hoffman <wfh@langline.com>

From my earliest days of interest in Polish genealogy, I have wished it were easier to gain access to records from the *Kresy Wschodnie*, the Eastern Borderlands. That's the name Poles use for territories east of Poland's current borders that were long under the rule of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Much of that same territory came under Polish rule again after World War I, only to be seized by the Soviet Union after World War II.

You see, I first became interested in Polish genealogy because of my wife and her relatives in the Baltimore area. Their common ancestor came to America from Alytus, Lithuania – and back in the early 1980s, this was not the easiest place on earth to learn about. Lithuania was in the Soviet Union then, and the United States was boycotting the Moscow Olympics, so things were a bit on the tense side. We wrote to my wife's relatives there in Polish, and we were thrilled when they answered (in Russian). We wrote back, but never heard from them again.

I was reluctant to press the issue. For all we knew, we might be endangering them by writing to them. As ethnic Poles living in Lithuania, they were already subject to a certain amount of suspicion – and here they were getting correspondence with numbers and dates from American capitalist pigs! Even worse, we learned later they were descendants of minor nobility. All in all, letters from Americans talking about the past was probably the last thing they needed. That may explain why they did not answer later letters – if they even received them in the first place

A few years later, I joined the Polish Genealogical Society of America. I soon realized lots of Polish-Americans have roots in those eastern borderlands. I also realized these Polish-Americans were frustrated: their ancestral regions were mainly in the Soviet Union, which was not exactly committed to the idea of free exchange of information. Some researchers refused to be intimidated and tried to get records of their ancestors. Getting such material from Poland was not too difficult; but once you headed east across the Polish border, the challenges increased.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it took a while for these regions to open up to genealogists. Even if the locals didn't dismiss genealogists as a bunch of nosy, rich jerks trying to dig up things best left forgotten – and that's how a lot of people in Eastern Europe saw things – they were struggling to get their feet on the ground and recover from decades of mismanagement and oppression. Answering questions about people long dead seems pointless when your own child is hungry.

Now, many barriers have fallen and computers have revolutionized access to information all over the world. The situation is changing rapidly. The language barriers, always a problem, remain formidable; but I am seeing more and more material online that I never thought we'd access during my lifetime. I thought I might discuss briefly three sources I've been looking at this month.

Ukraine: <<http://freemap.com.ua/>>

If you have roots in eastern Galicia and aren't intimidated by Cyrillic, this site offers a variety of free maps of the various oblasts of Ukraine; and you can use Google Translate to get a reasonably good notion what the explanatory text says. On the home page is a map showing all the oblasts. Once you click on an oblast – say, Львовская область for Lviv/Lvov/Lwów – you get a more detailed map of that oblast. Then you can position your cursor on any raion (район) of the oblast and click for a chance to download (скачать) the various maps available, including old maps made by the Austrians, maps from Poland's *Mapywig* dating from between World Wars I and II, and many more. You may have to play around with it a little before you find what you want, true. But you'll have a chance to study or download some great maps of varying degrees of detail. You may even gradually soak up a tiny bit of Russian, since that's the interface language used on many pages.

Belarus: <<http://archives.gov.by/index.php?id=645581>>

Belarus has always been a tough place to get information out of, but that is slowly changing. The Belarus State Archive now features on its website a search engine called ДАПАМОЖНИК, “Dapamozhnik,” which means “assistance” or “instruction” or “manual.” The site lets you search archive holdings for mention of specific place names or surnames. The home page, above, is in Belarusian; but Google Translate's rendering in English makes the basics intelligible. Click on the button under the logo to access the search engine. If you select Паселішчы (бел. мова), you look for place names with their Belarusian name; Паселішчы (рус. мова) lets you search for Russian forms, which can differ somewhat from the Belarusian forms. Clicking on Прозвішчы lets you search for surnames. The surname only tells you which settlements a particular surname appears in, according to the records analyzed.

Obviously, this is not for the faint-hearted, as the actual search engine gives results in Belarusian or Russian. But it's a good sign for the future that this sort of info is becoming available; and those who use online help to generate Cyrillic spellings of proper names may find the site useful right now.

LANDS EAST OF THE BUG RIVER: <<http://agad.gov.pl/inwentarze/testy.html>>

For quite a few years, I've heard of the *Zabużański Collection*, a collection of records from lands beyond the Bug river (in other words, east of Poland's modern borders). Some time ago, all this material came safely under the care of the *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych*, the Central Archives of Historical Records, in Warsaw. At that point, researchers began to gain access to the materials.

As you might expect and hope, much of it is now available online. I feel sure we have mentioned this before, but the page cited above, from the AGAD's website, lets you search parish registers from the collection of records from the eastern Borderlands. It's all in Polish, but I'm pleased to see Google Translate does a respectable job of rendering it intelligibly in English.

The sources available at this site are as follows:

- Greek Catholic parish records from the archdiocese of Lwów and the dioceses of Przemyśl and Stanisławów, 1728–1943;
- Augsburg and Helvetic Confession Lutheran records, 1764–1939;
- Registers from congregations of the Jewish faith from the so-called Zabużański lands, 1789–1943;
- Roman Catholic parish records from the territory of the Archdiocese of Lwów, 1604–1945;
- Orthodox Church parish records from the territories of Wołyń [often called Volyn or Volhynia in English] and Polesie, 1823–1909, 1929–1939
- Roman Catholic parish records from the dioceses of Łuck and Wilno, 1799–1905;
- Roman Catholic parish records from the Diocese of Przemyśl, 1590, 1600–1943;
- Protestant congregation records, Augsburg Confession, from the western provinces of the Russian Empire (eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic), 1790–1940
- Parish and congregation records for various different denominations from the region beyond the Bug river, 1685–1942 (Armenians, Autocephalic Orthodox Church, Baptists, Mennonites, Evangelical Christians).

The final item listed on that page, *Jak z tego korzystać?*, means “How Do I Use It?” Clicking the link takes you to a brief (three and a half minutes) clip on YouTube. It’s in Polish, but if you watch what’s going on without freaking out over the language difference, you can get an idea what they’re showing you.

I don’t minimize the difficulties involved with using these sites if you’re not familiar with the languages involved. It will be a challenge. But if you face the challenge and make a little headway, you not only have a chance to learn a lot about your past. You’ll also earn considerable satisfaction and confidence that you can do this – and that is an essential for anyone undertaking serious research.

***** MISSING POLISH FILMS AND RELATED MATERIALS – NEED HELP FINDING! *****

Editor –This item appeared previously in the Spring 2017 issue of *Rodziny*, the Journal of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, and is reprinted with permission. (That is, I asked myself if I could reprint it here, and I told myself I could.)

My cousin, Agata Zalewska, is the Film Collection Manager for Filmoteka Narodowa, the Polish National Film Archives in Warsaw. As a state cultural institution, Filmoteka Narodowa is charged with protecting national cultural heritage in cinematography and dissemination of film culture.

Since its inception in 1955, the Archives has been collecting and restoring all films made in Poland with the hope of finding copies of all films. It has an almost complete collection of films made from 1946 forward. Of course, more early silent films are missing than later films.

As Polish Americans, we can be proud of the work Filmoteka Narodowa has done in preserving Polish cultural heritage. Today it has one of the largest film archives in Europe. It has restored 75% of Polish feature films made between 1930 and 1939. It is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives. Besides films, Filmoteka Narodowa has extensive collections of promotional materials, books, posters, stills and other materials related to films. It makes its materials available in its Library, through movie showings and festivals and lending, and through the production of print and digital media. For instance, Agata gifted me with one of Filmoteka Narodowa's publication of a DVD containing six restored shorts and an introduction about the early days of World War II for Poland especially Warsaw. It was very well done and included an English version with subtitles.

Agata's interest at Filmoteka Narodowa is in finding missing Polish films. Although it has become harder and harder to find films, and in many ways, it is a race against time, Filmoteka Narodowa keeps turning up a gem here and there. There is no telling where a film, full-length, documentary or short, may be found. For instance, in the late 1990s, a 1929 film was found in the Royal Archives in Brussels; and in 2003 a 1914 film was purchased from Filmmuseum, Amsterdam. I believe others have been found in private collections stored away in attics and forgotten.

If you have any materials that would be of interest to Filmoteka Narodowa, know where any are or might be, would you please contact me or Agata?—*Abbey H. Brewer*

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***** AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT PERIODICALS *****

Editor—This is an ongoing feature, meant to inform you of articles published recently in newsletters and journals that may interest you.

***Rodziny*, Spring 2017, Volume XL, No. 2. Polish Genealogical Society of America <<http://pgsa.org>>**

- Family Councils in the Kingdom of Poland, Iwona Dakiniewicz

- PGSA Financial Statement for 2016, David Lewandowski
- The Mysterious Wanda Gruberska, Julie Roberts Szczepankiewicz
- Missing Polish Films and Related Materials – Need Help Finding!, Abbey H. Brewer
- Memoirs of a Peasant, Chapter Eleven – Part One, Jan Słomka, translated by William F. Hoffman
- From the *Słownik geograficzny*: Ostrzeszów (Grand Duchy of Poznań), translated by William F. Hoffman

***East European Genealogist*, Winter 2016, Volume 25, No. 2. East European Genealogical Society, Inc. <<http://eegsociety.org>>**

- Emigration Movement from the Borshchiv Area to Canada in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries, by Ihor Voronchak, translated by Vitaliy Valiuk

***** UPCOMING EVENTS *****

Note: see also <<http://eogn.wikidot.com/>> for a large selection of upcoming events in the world of genealogy.

June 16 – 18, 2017

POLISH FEST

Henry W. Maier Festival Park • Summerfest Grounds • Milwaukee, Wisconsin

For more information, visit the website:

<<http://www.polishfest.org/>>

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Thursday, June 29, 2017

THE HISTORY OF POLISH HERALDRY

By Marek Lesniewski-Laas, J.D., Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland

Chicopee Public Library • 449 Front Street • Chicopee, MA 01013

6:30 p.m.

The Polish Genealogy Society of Massachusetts is pleased to present Mr. Marek Lesniewski-Laas, the Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland, as the speaker for our summer meeting. The title of his talk is “The History of Polish Heraldry.” He will cover the concept of heraldry in Poland, noble and state heraldry, heraldry among Polish Jewry, the structure of the Polish nobility, how the nobility differed from other European countries and other features. The talk is illustrated with many colorful heraldic examples that were significant in the history in Poland. One might see the crest that Babcia spoke of!

Admission is free, please bring a friend and your curiosity.

For more, see the website <<http://pgsma.org/index.html>>.

[From an e-mail sent by Joe Kielec]

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July 28–29, 2017

**2017 INTERNATIONAL GERMANIC GENEALOGY CONFERENCE
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

This is expected to be a unique conference, organized through an international partnership of societies across the United States and Europe. Given how many people of Polish descent came from areas ruled by Germany from 1815 to 1918, this event may be worth your attention even if your ethnic identity is not primarily German.

For more developments, keep an eye on the website: <<http://www.ggsmn.org/>>.

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August 12–13, 2017

**103RD LITHUANIAN DAYS
Annunciation Hall in Frackville. 7 S Broad Mountain Ave., Frackville, Pennsylvania**

The Knights of Lithuania Council 144 voted unanimously to host the Lithuanian Days Festival on Saturday, August 12, and Sunday, August 13 in 2017.

For more details, see the Knights' Facebook page:

<<https://www.facebook.com/knightsoflithuania144/>>

[Based mainly on a note posted by Millie Helt to the Lithuanian Genealogy mailing list.]

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October 28, 2017

**POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN'S ANNUAL SEMINAR
American Polish Cultural Center**

We are very excited to announce the speakers for this year's seminar on October 28, 2017 at the American Polish Cultural Center.

Sophie Hodorowicz Knab, author of several books about Polish culture and traditions, will

speak to us about the different customs as well as present a personal family story which resulted in the book, *Wearing the Letter P: Polish Women as Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany, 1939-1945*.

Julie Roberts Szczepankiewicz offers two presentations. The first one is called, “I Found My Village! Now What?” Julie will discuss the different documents that can be found online which will help us in our research. Her other presentation is called, “The Ins and Outs of Geneteka: How it Works and How to Use It Most Effectively.”

For more information as it becomes available, visit the PGSM website:

<<http://pgsm.org/>>

[From a post by Valerie Warunek to the Facebook page of the PGSM]

***** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES *****

<<http://bit.ly/2a3uLwU>>

Nicole Taufa’ao posted a note to the Polish Genealogy group on Facebook, telling us about a guide to Poland’s history from the Consulate General of Poland in New York. The guide is not for sale; it’s free, and you can download it as a PDF in any of nine languages, including English. Look toward the bottom of the page, where it says “Załączniki do Strony,” and choose the language you prefer. It’s a nice piece of work, well done! I downloaded the English, Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian versions. I love the poster on page 115 of all the versions I checked: it shows a Solidarity poster with a photo of Gary Cooper and the caption “High Noon: 4 June 1989.”

<<https://blog.eogn.com/2017/04/26/how-to-find-someone-who-has-the-book-you-seek/>>

This article from *Eastman’s Online Genealogy Newsletter* (EOGN) talks about LibraryThing, <<https://www.librarything.com/>>, which is sometimes called “the world’s largest book club. It is an online service for storing and sharing book catalogs and various types of book metadata. It is used by individuals, authors, libraries and publishers.” It’s free to enter up to 200 items, and lets you catalog your own collection and, if you wish, make it visible to others. I can see the potential for sharing info, if that’s what you want to do; or just put your own collection in order.

<<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1867931>>

Among the announcements of FamilySearch collections added this month was “Poland, Lublin Roman Catholic Church Books, 1784–1964.” Note that the collection includes parishes in the Lublin Roman Catholic Diocese, and thus has records from numerous places in that diocese. There are 395,682 images in the collection.

<<http://www.genealogyblog.com/?p=39846>>

The *Genealogy News* for 14 May 2017 included a link to this page, with information on a new book by Donna Schilling, *German Genealogy Research in Pomerania: With Specific Examples of Kreis Schlawe Research*. If you have roots in Pomerania, and especially in Kreis Schlawe, take a look at the table of contents given on this web page.

<<http://tinyurl.com/GARFBerlin>>

The May 14th issue of *Nu? What's New?* passed along information provided by Marilyn Robinson of *Jewish Gem's Genealogy*, stating that the State Archive of the Russian Federation has posted a list of foreign passports of Russian citizens kept in the Russian delegation in Berlin during the period 1876–1924. The whole thing is in Russian, so it can be challenging if you're not familiar with the language. But you can use <<http://stevemorse.org/russian/eng2rus.html>> to get a decent notion how the sounds of a name are rendered in Cyrillic. That makes searching for a specific possible.

<<https://blog.eogn.com/2017/05/17/book-review-evidence-explained-2/>>

This page from EOGN gives a review of the third edition of Elizabeth Shown Mills' *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. For folks who want to avoid trial-and-error in documenting their research and making it useful for others, this book is very highly recommended. As the reviewer, Bobbi King, says, "*Evidence* is the style guide of genealogists." Bobbi gives links to buy the book from the publisher, from Amazon, and in Kindle format.

<<https://mymeanderingroots.wordpress.com/>>

This is a very interesting blog in which Chris Bukoski discusses her search for her Ukrainian, Polish, and French ancestry. I work with Chris a lot because she is an editor of *East European Genealogist*, the quarterly journal of the East European Genealogical Society. She's a meticulous researcher—the kind of person you can learn a lot from! The current post, from 16 May 2017, deals with the departure of her grandfather, Nykola Winowicz, from Podhajczyki, Kołomyja, Galicia, and the reasons he came to Canada.

<<http://genealogyindexer.org/>>

Among the many sources added to Genealogy Indexer this month are numerous years' versions of *Address and Business Directories* for the following cities (including suburbs, in several cases): Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), Marienwerder (Kwidzyn), Stettin (Szczecin), Elbling (Elbląg), Gleiwitz (Gliwice), and Łódź.

<<http://www.przemysl.ap.gov.pl/skany/>>

The Facebook page for the East European Genealogical Society mentioned that the State Archives office in Przemyśl announced additions to its online scans. You can search the scans at the URL given above. The drop-down menu for *Nazwa zespołu* or “Name of set” is very helpful, as it lets you see what’s available. It includes various records from notaries in the area; Civil Registrar records from numerous local offices; and elementary school records. *Rodzaj dokumentacji* calls for the kind of documentation, *aktowa* (of records), *kartograficzna* (cartographic), *materiał ulotny* (leaflets, handbills, that sort of thing), and *rękopis* (manuscript). *Opis jednostki* asks for the description of the item. *Daty skrajne* are the from and to dates to search. *Hasło indeksu geograficznego* calls for the entry in the geographic index, that is, the place name; *hasło indeksu osbowego* calls for entry by persons’ names; and *hasło indeksu przedmiotowego* calls for a search by subject. There are over a million scans, so it’s worth using a little patience to get the hang of the search.

<<http://www.mypolcast.com/>>

Paul S. Valasek passed along information a friend gave him about Polcast, “the FIRST EVER English language podcast about Poland and Poles around the world.” Polcast recently released its first birthday episode, number 42 – and this site tells you how you can listen to current or past episodes. Why not give it a try?

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