



Gen Dobry!

Gen Dobry! 31 October 2001

***** GEN DOBRY! *****

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*** WELCOME! ***

to the latest issue of GEN DOBRY!, the e-zine of PolishRoots(tm). If you missed previous issues, you can find them at <http://PolishRoots.org>.

PolishRoots now has an up-to-date and accurate listing of all lodges of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, a fraternal organization to which many of our ancestors belonged. This listing was compiled by long-time researcher Jerry Kucharski, who deserves a lot of credit for taking the time to make this info available. You can find it at this address:

http://PolishRoots.org/prcu_a_societies.htm

*** LET'S NOT FORGET THE NEWBIES! ***

by William F. "Fred" Hoffman

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of speaking at two Polish genealogical conferences - - Mass-Conn-ection II, presented by the Polish Genealogical Societies of Massachusetts and Connecticut/the Northeast, and the annual Fall Conference of the Polish Genealogical Society of America. Much as I dislike public speaking at such events (and more particularly the travel required to get to them), I always enjoy the conferences themselves. These were no exception; I had a great time at both.

One thing I like about attending these events is that face-to-face contact with a variety of folks doing research helps me become better informed about the latest developments. It also brings me "back to earth," so to speak. I get to talk to people who tell me what they need, what their problems are. Sometimes I get so wrapped up in puzzling over some 18th-century Russian term that I forget how arcane such concerns are. For every researcher interested in that kind of question, there are dozens who are grappling with much more basic problems -- like how on earth do you even find documents from the 18th century?

Newbies, in particular, deserve more attention than they get from those of us who edit publications. When you've been plugging away at your research for years, it's awfully easy to forget just how baffling research is when you first start out. Yet every day more and more folks become intrigued by the question of where their families came from, and take their first tentative steps toward research. They need, and deserve, all the help we can offer them.

* "I Could Write a Book! *

I'm not going to be able to answer here all, or even many, of the questions that confront beginners. This is one of those subjects about which people say "I could write a book!" In fact, many have written books. There are lots of specialized publications dealing with individual family trees or specific communities or groups, as well as more general guides meant to help genealogists do their own digging.

This raises the first point a beginner needs to realize: **YOU DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH** (unless you're rich as hell and can afford to pay others to do it for you). With relatively few exceptions, there aren't folks out there sitting on a file that's going to tell you everything you want to know. For most researchers, the simple truth is, either you do your own genealogy, or it's not going to get done. Along the way you may very well make contact with someone who's studying the same town or village your ancestors

came from. You may even find people who've already traced some of the branches of a family tree that intertwines with yours.

But by and large, you'll have to do most of it yourself. This is both the challenge and the attraction of family research. It can be a bumpy road to travel -- but there are few experiences more rewarding than the moment when you realize you're starting to get somewhere!

There is a book that has helped many beginners get somewhere: Rosemary A. Chorzempa's *Polish Roots - Korzenie Polskie*, ISBN 0-8063-1378-1. (Incidentally, there's no connection between her book and PolishRoots, except a common subject.) Many, many people have praised it highly, saying it was extremely helpful when they were starting out. It also has the advantage of being easy to find and order.

Still, this book was published in 1993, and a lot has changed since then. Many of the basics remain unchanged, of course, but old organizations have ceased to exist, new ones have sprung up, addresses have changed, and so on. Perhaps the biggest advance not covered by the book is the rise of the Internet as a tool for researchers. While the Internet has been around for decades, it's only in the last few years that it has become a huge factor in genealogical research. That development has occurred since the book was published, so naturally there's not a lot about the Internet in it.

* Online Research*

In a way, though, the Internet itself provides the solution to this problem. You can learn a lot about working online by working online! This point is underscored by the very existence of PolishRoots, a service devoted mainly to helping people use the Web to make progress in tracing their family history. So it's only natural to discuss just a few of the resources that exist online to help newbies. In the process we may even stumble across some aids the "old pros" might like to be reminded of.

Suppose you just got hooked up to an online service, and you sit down to start doing some research. Maybe you go to a search engine and key in "Polish genealogical research beginners." The list that comes back is thoroughly intimidating! There are so many sites that offer help -- just choosing from among them is a job in itself. You feel like you're looking for one grain of sand on a beach the size of Montana!

Obviously, with such a wealth of resources to choose from, I can't begin to list them all. But I wanted to mention a few that might help you take the first step. I'm sure I'll overlook many valuable resources, but here are a few I consider especially valuable.

Of course PolishRoots itself offers some excellent pointers, at this address:

<http://PolishRoots.org/reference.htm#Starters>

It's a good idea to look through some of the items listed there, both under the heading

"Starters" and under the other headings on the basic reference page. Take your time and browse a little. You may click on several links that don't really help much, but just backtrack and try others. You're sure to find at least some pointers that will benefit you.

Since in practical terms family history is likely to involve use of the LDS's Family History Library, it makes sense to acquaint yourself right away with the site that helps you use its resources:

<http://www.familysearch.org>

It's deceptively simple in appearance; once you start clicking on headings and subheadings, you soon find yourself dealing with a powerful resource, and a rather complex one. But you can start out with something easy, say, by clicking on the link to "Search for Ancestors," or on "How Do I Begin" (at the bottom of the left frame). Try going from page to page, clicking on various links, seeing what they offer, till you start to get a feel for how the material is organized.

Another good aid for beginners is the online booklet "Pocza~tki" (Beginnings) at the Website of PGS-CT/NE:

<http://www.pgsctne.org/poczatki.html>

This takes you through the steps a beginner needs to take, one by one. Other sites offering beginners guidance include:

http://maxpages.com/poland/Learning_to_Research

<http://maxpages.com/researchtips>

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~polwgg/polandgen1.html>

<http://www.CyndisList.com/poland.htm>

If you visit these pages, you'll notice they all tend to say much the same thing. But after all, they deal with the basics, and the basics don't change from one source to another. What changes is how each site presents those basics. Find one that lays it all out in a way you feel comfortable with, and work your way toward the more complex material.

Don't make the mistake of succumbing to a false sense of urgency. A lot of us spend our lives rushing around, muttering "Gotta hurry. Can't wait. Gotta get it done." Bull hockey! Much of what we kill ourselves trying to accomplish really could wait while we take a breath and calm down. A hobby such as genealogy certainly should offer an escape from this insanity. I'm always amused when someone breathlessly demands an immediate answer from me, as if in response to a genealogical emergency. I want to ask, "What's the matter -- you afraid your ancestors aren't gonna stay dead?" They've have waited this long for you to find them; they can wait a little longer.

* FHCs and Genealogical Societies *

One thing researchers quickly realize: you're going to have a tough time going it alone. You may not be much of a "joiner" -- Lord knows I'm not -- but it's kind of pointless reinventing the wheel when there are folks standing around ready and willing to hand you one. There are a lot of organizations whose members would enjoy comparing notes with you, to your benefit and theirs.

For instance, since at some point your research will probably involve spending some time at an FHC (Family History Center, a regional branch of the LDS Family History Library), find the one nearest you and drop on by. You can find the nearest FHC here:

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp

Many offer classes and workshops you'll find it useful to attend. At FHCs you'll run into the whole gamut of researcher, from seasoned pros to newbies just as nervous as you are. What better place to ease into the scary world of big-time genealogy?

There are also a number of societies throughout this and other countries, dedicated to helping members with their research -- and that includes an impressive number of Polish Genealogical Societies. A partial list, with links to the pages, is available here:

<http://PolishRoots.org/pgs.htm>

If one of these is located near you, make an effort to attend a meeting. Mixing with other genealogists is great, especially since, no matter how obsessed you may become with family history, you'll run into others goofier than you! It's all relative, if you'll forgive a ghastly pun.

* When To Tackle the Big Boys *

There are some really big, powerful Websites out there, throbbing and surging with tidal waves of data -- for instance, the Hamburg Emigration List site:

<http://www.hamburg.de/LinkToYourRoots/english/welcome.htm>

and the Ellis Island Website:

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

Do NOT start with them. Oh, you'll want to use them for all they're worth -- but not on day 1. Until you get some background, it's highly unlikely you'll be able to find data you need, even if it is in there somewhere. If you search these magnificent, all-powerful sites for your ancestor NQVAROVSKY and find nothing, you'll probably give up in disgust. It's better first to poke around and learn that that can't possibly be the correct spelling of

the name, that what you're looking for is NOWAKOWSKI, and that even though he was Polish he could have been born in "Russia." At least learn to float before you plunge into the deep end.

And here's one I feel like screaming at all researchers: LEARN SOME HISTORY!! I don't mean get a Ph.D. or anything like that -- but visit a good online encyclopedia, or a site specializing in Polish research. Look at the maps of Poland's changing borders. Read a little about the partitions. You really don't have a chance of finding anything, or making sense of what you do find, until you understand the historical context in which your ancestors lived and emigrated. It saddens me to see people desperately searching modern-day Austria for "Brody" because they found records saying their ancestors came from "Brody, Austria." If only they knew the place they're looking for is probably the county seat now in Ukraine!

Along these lines, on Poland-Roots-L, Stefan Wisniowski <swisniowski@px.com.au> recommended these sites:

A thorough political and social history:
<http://www.poloniatoday.com/historyix.htm>

A good timeline of events:
http://www.polishworld.com/polemb/english/poland_history.html

Maps showing changes over the centuries:
<http://www.polishroots.org/genpoland/polhistory.htm>

In summary, genealogy is one of those fields that demand a certain amount of work before you can even start to ask the right questions. Much of what you need to get started is available online. Take your time to find it and use it well.... Now I'd better end this before I turn into some sort of genealogical Yoda and start babbling about the Dark Side of The Source.

*** LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ***

Subject: Reaction to the article on GedLink in _GenDobry!_

[Editor's Note: In the last issue I made some remarks about a project called GedLink. One of GedLink's designers graciously sent me a note addressing some of the things I criticized about the project. I am pleased to pass it on to you, so you can make an informed judgment on GedLink's merits for yourself.)

I read your article about GedLink in the GENDOBRY issue of September. As one of the designers of the project, I'd like to add some comments.

You state that "...you can discover that there is a fee involved, but they don't tell you what it is. Once you visit the site, download the beta version of their software, and register, you can sign on -- but then you're told you have to join the GedLink World History Club to access the full version and to request family trees. The membership fee is US \$19. Until you pay, you can't access the promised features."

This is not exactly true. The GedLink Software can be freely used. With GedLink, you can search for names, issue requests, and send messages without becoming a paying member. We don't want to write that the user has to pay for GedLink before the registration, in order not to frighten him before he has first used the Software, and we think it's not necessary, because there is no cost involved for the basic features the user expects (search, requests...) . On the second hand, it's true that we want to offer more features to paying members, as soon as we end the test phase, but GedLink shall always stay satisfying and useful for simple users who don't want to pay.

For the same reasons, the following "... it costs \$19 to get any real use out of their program. You have to go through a whole rigmarole before they level with you about that. You have to spend the money before you can sample the wares and see whether what they're offering is worth having, and isn't available elsewhere for free" is not true, except that we don't give notice before registration or download, that you can "become member" with a fee. Here too, note that the F.A.Q. in the support area answers the question "Is GedLink free?":

<http://www.gedlink.com/web/en/support/faq.asp>

As you write "Or maybe it will turn out to be one more fly-by-night operation that pops up, grabs some cash, and disappears," let me try to reassure you a little about our company. "Infoduc" exists since 1994. Its main product was a French shareware for genealogy, called "Win Genealogic," until we decided 1999 to "go internet". We created "notrefamille.com", a still flourishing web based service for the family, including genealogical tools. We signed some partnerships with important French portals like "Wanadoo" (France Telecom) and "AOL France", where our genealogical tools, including GedLink, will soon be available. They can be presently seen on voila.fr:

<http://noms.voila.fr/s/f1/welcome/default.asp>

(which belongs to France Telecom).

I hope I helped to clarify some points.

Olivier Hergault <olivier@gedlink.com>

Subject: The Siberian Group

A bit of information for _GenDobry!_. My family belongs to The Siberian Group. It is made up of all the people who were taken to Siberia from Poland during World War II. They celebrated their 50th anniversary in Perth last year, and I am told by my Aunt that there was recently another celebration in Wroclaw. The Perth Group is holding their annual anniversary celebration on the 21st October this year.

Barbara Johnson <bbjohnso@chmail.ch.ecu.edu.au>

Subject: New mail service for Russian Poland and Volhynia Germans

[Rose Ingram <roseingram@shaw.ca> forwarded the following note to PolandBorderSurnames-L@rootsweb.com]:

SGGEE is pleased to announce that it has created a new mail list (also known by other names such as listserv) for the use of genealogists researching Germans in Russian Poland and Volhynia. The vast majority of these Germans were of the Lutheran faith. The name of this service, as you will see it in the subject line of the messages, is [Ger-Poland-Volhynia].

For a statement of purpose, guidelines, and the link to the free subscription page, please go to:

<http://www.sggee.org/listserv.html>

Subject: Prussian Army Records

It is known that my wife's grandfather was born in Poznan and served as a Sergeant in the Prussian Army at the Battle of Metz (1870). The parish of his birth is not known. It occurred to me that the Prussians likely kept meticulous records of military personnel, and that these would include the village of birth and parents names. However, I have read that the Prussian Army records were destroyed during WW II. Do you know whether this is true; if not true, where or how they might be accessed? Such information could be a useful item for _GenDobry!_.

T. Grant Maple <tgmapple@foxinternet.net>

[What about it, folks? Do you have any insights to share with Mr. Maple and our other readers?]

Subject: Family Contacts

[In the September issue we printed an article talking about how contact with family back in the old country isn't always a delightful experience, and asked readers to tell us their stories. Here are a couple of interesting replies.]

In 1998, my husband and I took a tour to Poland. We left the tour and went to Rzeszow where we met for the first time a nephew of my grandfather, and his family. He in turn arranged for us to meet approx. 60 members of our family still living in the Rzeszow area. We were not aware that there were so many members of the family left. It was a very emotional meeting and they could not have been more hospitable. Nothing was too good for us -- from the food to taking us sightseeing and introducing us to other people.

Family gatherings included three generations, almost a command performance to meet the visitors from the U.S. They actually took us to the family homestead. They shared photographs with us and all the genealogy that was available. It was as if we had known them forever and as if we visited them frequently. They would not let us pay for anything and we were glad that we had taken gifts for them.

This experience, which I will never forget, prompted me to take my 80-yr.-old aunt to Poland last September to meet her first cousins for the first time. Through contacts, as well as what I call "divine intervention," we were able to find family members of my grandmothers. We had no idea that there were any relatives left in Poland. It was the highlight of my aunt's life, since she was already terminally ill when we went to Poland and died this past June.

Our family expected very little from us but it was very apparent that the greatest gift that we were able to give them was our visit. They never expected they would ever meet any of the relatives from the U.S. and because of age, none of them will be able to come to the U.S. Yes, I am planning to go back again. Hopefully next year.

By the way, our family name is Kula, and Lis Kula, whose statue is erected in Rzeszow was, a first cousin to my grandfather.

Barbara Malinowski <bbmalin@msn.com>

Subject: 1. Seeking help with location of towns 2. Experiences with family contacts in Poland

1. I have a maternal grandfather, Abrahm Raffalowicz, probably of Tatar descent, Moslem religion, who came to the USA through Hamburg, Germany in 4 June 1904. The place he came from, according to the Hamburg Passenger List Departure records is: Müsarziszna or Müsavziszna or Müsauziszna. It is hard to determine the correct spelling, but it definitely appears to be one of these.

On the Ellis Island Ship's Manifest this same town (???) appears to read: Nurawcisna, Nurawrisna, Murawcisna, Murawrisna, Nurowcisna, Nurowrisna, Murowcisna or Murowrisna.

I have spoken to a former Moslem priest who tells me this is the town of Iwie or Ilie, which is located in Belarus some 30-50 miles North of Novagrudak, near Lida. I have also asked the Chair of Oriental Studies at a Polish University if this is correct. He tells me it is.

I have searched long and hard on the Internet, using various map search engines, Jewishgen.org, have read about Ivye, and am unable to come up with the conclusion, based upon my own independent research, that these are one and the same towns and the name had been changed from Müsavzisna to Ivye. I can find no mention of Müsavzisna anywhere.

I know one brother of my grandfather, Kemil Rafulowicz, was listed as coming from Wilna, in June 1902. (I know where this town is). The third brother, Mustafo Rafalowicz, shows up on the Ellis Island Passenger List 13 March 1903, as coming from what appears to be: Nurasurze or Nurasurhe.

Can anyone assist me in locating my towns, Nurasurze and Müsavzisna ?

2. I have had mixed experiences with Polish relatives I've managed to contact. I have located 3, through writing to addresses on letters that were received 20-30 years ago.

The first, was a young man, a second cousin, who asked for a loan of \$500. This was given via wiring through Western Union. I heard nothing from this individual for a year, even though I requested that he at least write me that he had received the money, as I was concerned that perhaps someone else had picked it up. No response, until about a year later, when he sent me a second letter requesting another \$500 loan. I explained that I was very angry that he had not acknowledged that he had received the money for an entire year.

I got some information as to names of the family for 3 generations in Poland, initially, but nothing after that, no further addresses of anyone else, no further interest in assisting me.

I was told by my mother that in the past, our family would send \$5 in an envelope (circa 1970's), and new clothing that was washed to make it look used. Thank you's were received; however, they one day asked if we could "buy them a car."

A second contact, just about the time the request for another \$500 was made by the above individual, was received via Internet from a girl, age 16. She identified herself as one of the cousins listed by the first individual. E-mails between us went on for a while, but when I asked for a telephone number or an address, communication essentially stopped. No further information has been obtained from this individual who professes to know the first person who I had lent the money to. No request for anything was made by this

individual.

A third contact was made in response to another letter I had sent to an old address in Poland. This was a letter typed in Polish by an elderly lady, and put into an e-mail as an attachment and sent by her daughter who translated the letter. They are from Nowogrodek.

She is an in-law. I requested which Nowogrodek they were referring to. To date, I have received a response from the granddaughter, via e-mail, that she believes Nowogrodek to be "in Lithuania somewhere".

I obtained about information, allegations, which permitted me to add 13 or so individuals to my family tree. I regarded this as a semi-successful contact.

My overall impression is one of disappointment. I am thrilled to learn about cousins in Poland. I don't think they could care less about cousins in the USA.

Edward Poterejko <poterejko@yahoo.com>

+ MICHAEL DRABIK +

[Daniel Kij <DanielJKij@aol.com>, Treasurer of PGS-NYS, sent numerous people interested in Polish Genealogical research this note on the recent death of Michael Drabik.]

Please remember in your prayers MICHAEL DRABIK, founding president of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State, who was pronounced dead of an apparent heart attack Thursday, October 25, 2001 at his place of work in Buffalo NY. He was 51.

A native of the Kaisertown-East Clinton Street area of Buffalo, Michael, who was born in 1950, attended South Park High School, where he was introduced to Polish Language studies. He was an alumnus of Alliance College in Cambridge Springs PA, where he deepened his interest in Polish culture and language. He would often describe with humor his first "disastrous" trip to the land of his grandparents shortly after graduation.

Michael was a champion of Polish religious practices (Gorzkie Zale Lenten Lamentations; Wigilia; Swieconka; Polska Msza), and was an avid researcher and a published Polonia historian.

A dozen years ago, he organized and became first president of the Polish Genealogical Society of Western New York (now PGS-NYS), and contributed many articles to its publication, The Searcher. He was a prodigious collector of Polonian books, publications and artifacts, and an entertaining and informative lecturer. Much of the website material of the PGSNYS on Polonia parishes in the Buffalo diocese was Mike's

work, as was his article about the Polonia clergy in Western New York.

Most recently, Mike had given me for review an unfinished article he was writing about Polish radio broadcasting in Western New York. In the past, he had done articles about Polonia midwives, funeral directors, the Fredro Singing Society, Polish theater in Buffalo, etc.

With his wife and three daughters, he was involved in many fraternal benefit and social organizations: Polish National Alliance, Polish Union of America, Polish Falcons of America, Polish Scouting (Harcerstwo), etc.

In addition to his wife, Bogusia, and daughters Krystyna, Joasia and Kasia, Mike is survived by his mother and two sisters. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Michael Drabik (Boguslawa nee Potwora), and daughters Krystyna, Joasia and Kasia at 299 Barnard Street, Buffalo NY 14206 <michal50@juno.com>

[Editor's Note: In my contacts with Michael he always impressed me as a fine man -- his work to help Polish-Americans find their roots was only one of many unselfish services he performed for others. Czesc jego pamieci!]

*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

From Now - January 13, 2002

"Gifts to the Tsars 1500-1700: Treasurers from the Kremlin"

Paul S. Valasek <Paval56@aol.com> sent us word of this exclusive U.S. showing at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, now through January 13, 2002. It's a study of power and history in a 105-piece collection of metal work and fine silver from Moscow's Armory Museum. 96 of the items have never before been seen in the States. Polish-related items include a silk saddle given to Czar Boris Godunov from King Sigismund III of Poland to conclude a peace treaty in 1600 between the two countries as well as a large silver eagle with two sets of wings resting on a golden base which served as a stand for a crown.

Further details may be seen at:

<http://www.ima-art.org>

Or you can contact IMA at 317-923-1331.

*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

<http://encyklopedia.wp.pl/>

On PolandBorderSurnames-L, Tina Ellis <swarcz@hotmail.com> mentioned this

searchable online encyclopedia. It's in Polish, and she didn't notice an English version, so this will make it harder for many to use. Still, Tina found it was good for getting stats on towns. For instance, she learned that in 1996 Szurpily only had a population of 160 population. (As she said, "No wonder it does not appear on most maps"). So you may find some useful info there.

<http://home.pacbell.net/spmorse/ellis/ellis.html>

Tina Ellis <vcellis@jps.net> mentioned on PolandBorderSurnames-L that Steve Morris has moved his One-Step Ellis Island website to this URL. It is the simplified multipurpose site he developed for researchers. Many of you already know about this, but for those who haven't tried it, a lot of researchers find it much easier to use than the official Ellis Island site.

<http://www.tsm-elissa.org/immigration-main.htm>

James Tye <kurpie@home.com> brought to our attention this site for immigrants who arrived via the Port of Galveston, Texas. It includes an FAQ file, Genealogy Tips & Resources, a Bibliography of Sources, and Access to a Database of Immigration Records. You can read more about what it offers at the site given above.

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