



Gen Dobry!

Gen Dobry! 28 February 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 see them at the PolishRoots site. Issue 1 is at:

http://www.polishroots.org/gendobry/GenDobry_vol1_no1.htm

For issue 2 change the last part of the URL to "_no2.htm," and so on, up through Volume 1, No. 6, December 2000. The January 2001 issue is here:

http://www.polishroots.org/gendobry/GenDobry_vol2_no1.htm

Thanks to all who've taken the time to send me your comments, suggestions, and contributions. If you have something to contribute, or just something to say, please E-mail me at <WFHoffman@PolishRoots.org>.

Please don't forget to visit PolishRoots.org, the Website that brings you _Gen Dobry!_. One feature you might take a look at is:

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

There you can read that PolishRoots is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and your financial is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by Federal law. Please consider making a donation!

*** GEN RESEARCH: AN ANTIDOTE TO DUMBTH? ***

by William F. "Fred" Hoffman <WFHoffman@PolishRoots.org>

When I first started out helping genealogical researchers with translations, I did so mainly because it was a productive way to use my knowledge of languages. When I started working in desktop publishing on genealogical societies' newsletters, again, I saw it as a way to put my computer skills to good use. In both cases, I didn't have any particular regard for genealogy per se. In fact, I have virtually no interest in my own family tree, and have taken only the most elementary steps to investigate it.

But as time went on, I began to realize I liked being involved in this kind of work - I felt helping genealogical researchers was doing something worthwhile.

I wondered why? Genealogical research - or "doing gen," as some of us call it - is just another hobby, isn't it? At first I thought so, but came to be dissatisfied with that reasoning. I felt there was a little more to this than just a hobby.

One day I put my finger on it. I really felt gen research might be an antidote to dumbth!

* WHAT IS DUMBTH? *

If you're not familiar with that word, the late comedian and entertainer Steve Allen coined it for the title of his book Dumbth: The Lost Art of Thinking With 101 Ways to Reason Better & Improve Your Mind. He used it to characterize the growth of ignorance and uncritical thinking in our culture. It's typified by idiocies such as sticking a microphone in the face of some out-of-breath football player to catch every nuance of his insights on his last interception, and how he couldn't have done it without God's help. Or letting movie stars who play farmers in movies testify before Congress on the plight of real farmers. Or about a trillion other phenomena - fill in the top items on your own list (I'm sure you have one, so I'll spare you more quotes from mine).

Now Steve Allen could get a bit pompous, and there's always a sour whiff of elitism present whenever a self-styled genius pontificates on the failings of the millions who aren't as smart as he is (or thinks he is). If there were a way to quantify such things, I personally believe we'd find there are more first-class minds at work today than at any other point in history (if only because of larger populations). In addition, because of their environment, they can accomplish more. Imagine Leonardo da Vinci, a man capable of grasping the workings of the helicopter, stuck living centuries before the materials existed from which one could be constructed! These days a really bright boy or girl has a decent chance of being recognized and given a chance to do his/her thing. I don't think as many of us have immigrated into the Land of Duh as Steve Allen thought.

And yet ... I can't deny it: we're up to our armpits in dumbth, and it stinks. It stinks when a first lady consults an astrologer; when TV runs specials on how the moon landings were faked; when about 45 trillion books expound mutually exclusive theories on how President Kennedy was killed (I'm still waiting to see a photo of Elvis on the grassy knoll). Our culture's collective good sense seems to have sprung a major leak. This is somewhat worrisome in a world where getting through the day is requiring more and more mechanical, technical, and ethical sophistication.

* HOW IS GEN AN ANTIDOTE? *

I imagine some folks would say the federal government needs to mount a major war on dumbth -- which is a symptom of how extensive the problem is. (Do we need another "war on _" as effective as, say, the war on drugs or the war on poverty?). My feeling is that the answer to this problem, like many others, is personal responsibility. Let's have no task forces or coalitions bleating on TV. Instead, why not encourage individuals to do something that helps them stretch their intellects?

That's why I don't just like gen researchers, I admire them. They have

taken on something that involves real, honest-to-God research, and that's no picnic. But it is soooo rewarding when you achieve a breakthrough.

Scientists and academics have to deal with research; it's their job. They see firsthand just how hard it can be to establish "the facts." Most people who've never done real research go through life fat, dumb, and happy, sure they know the truth. I think every one of us could benefit from a little experience with just how hard it can be to determine what truth is; if nothing else, we'd learn to care more about it. We might also be just a touch more tolerant with others whose version of truth is different.

Rare is the researcher who hasn't run into documents that contradict each other. Your great-great-grandfather may have been called Jan or Jakub; he may have been born in 1870 or 1873; he may or may not have died at birth (which makes his siring children all the more impressive); and so on. Sort of destroys any naive belief you might have had in the reliability of official records, doesn't it?

Some folks fall apart under the mental pressure of trying to deal with all this. Immature minds can bear no contradictions; they grow frantic if the universe isn't shown to be neat and orderly (and, of course, centered upon them). Those who persist in their research face the reality that they may never establish the truth with certainty. All they can do is gather information and reconcile it as best they can. This is a real step toward intellectual maturity.

In other words, I think F. Scott Fitzgerald was right when he said "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." But few of us are born with that ability; we develop it. I think doing gen is one way of developing it.

* CONCLUSION *

Now that I've boldly dared to face my readers and tell them they're brilliant and the hope of the human race (is there no end to my courage?), I suppose I should backtrack just a bit. If civilization is to be saved, it's not necessarily going to owe its preservation to genealogists. Actually, I've met a few researchers whom I wanted to ask, "Instead of wallowing in your family's past glories, why don't YOU try doing something memorable?"

Still, it's hard not to say good things about a hobby that satisfies personal curiosity through activity that broadens and strengthens the mind. Doing gen forces you not only to search for truth, but also to

recognize how hard it can be to find it. Yet gen is not some dreary, joyless version of adult homework; it's more like play for the mature mind. (No one ever promised play wouldn't occasionally get frustrating!).

Or to put it another way: when the flood of dumbth on television nauseates me past all bearing, I often find relief in getting online and reading what genfolk have to say. You don't have to be a genius to know that's a good sign!

*** THE WIELKOPOLSKI ETHNOGRAPHIC PARK AT DZIEKANOWICE ***

by Ceil Jensen <gvp@oeonline.com>

My great-aunt Katherine Topolewski told me her mother Mary Adamski Wojtkowiak's stories about life in Posen. They provided me with a fleeting image of the life my Adamski and Wojtkowiak ancestors lived during the late 19th century. The stories were cryptic but tantalizing.

Michal Adamski worked for a farmer who owned a lot of land, and the farmer housed and fed his family. Michal and Lucja Adamski lived with their eight children in a house that had previously been a teacher's residence. The house was nice. It had dirt floors and eventually had wooden floorboards. I wondered what their village and home looked like. Would I ever know?

I finally found the naturalization records, and the village was identified as Rogalin. My mother and I traveled to Poland last October to visit the ancestral village.

The Wielkopolski Ethnographical Park at Dziekanowice was one of the first stops we made, and I think it was one of the best. It was what the Poles call a *_skansen_* [a kind of open-air ethnographic park or museum]. The outdoor village is a re-creation of an early 19th-century Wielkopolski community, complete with church, farms, inn, school and manor house.

The visit gave us an intimate view of the economic, social and cultural life in Wielkopolska. The ancestors and information we'd researched on microfilm and sketchy family stones came to life as we walked through the village and explored the interiors of the farmhouses.

* The Village Layout and The Architecture *

The skansen is laid out in typical village fashion: a dozen buildings arranged around an oval center with a pond and a smithy in the middle. We learned the Baroque layout of a village included a manor house at one end,

a shrine in the middle, and the church at the other end. The majority of the buildings have been moved from their original locations to the skansen. The date of construction can be found carved in the overhead beam inside the dwellings.

I never imagined a Polish farmhouse with a thatched roof! But there they were - cottages in the "zre~bowo-sl~upowa" style, a.k.a. a thatched hip roof. The buildings in the village have wooden frames. The inn has a porch with pillars (przyl~ap). Other roofs are gabled and covered with boards in simple geometric patterns. The exterior of most of the farmhouses and buildings are brown - weathered wood. There was only one cottage with a whitewashed exterior.

The farm buildings were laid out to form a square or rectangular central yard. The typical farm had a cottage for the family and separate building for the livestock and a barn. We were able to go into the farmhouses and see the floor plan and household goods of a well-to-do middle-range peasant and a tenant family.

* Farmstead from Dobrzec *

This farmstead was brought from Kalisz. The farmstead also has an apiary with a variety of beehives. They are made out of log, straw and wooden boxes. The beekeeper's workshop is in the livestock barn.

* Cottage from Godziesze Wielkie *

This tenement cottage was built in 1895. It is typical of the poorer rural population at that end of the 19th century. It reminded me of buildings we might have seen in colonial American a century earlier. The thatched cottage has only one room and a small vestibule where a goat was kept.

* Farmstead from Ol~obok *

The farm buildings from Ostro~w Wielkoposki represent a middle-size peasant farm from the second half of the 19th century. The interior consists of a large room called the _s~wiellica_, a small room, and a sleeping chamber. In the large room there is a large stove called a _sabatnik_ with an open fireplace, bread oven and a special place at the back of the stove for sleeping. In the small room there is a fireplace.

* Dwelling Furnishings *

All the interiors share many characteristics. The entry to each house has a dirt floor. Our guide told us the homeowner would invite friends to come over and help them stomp down a new floor. It is only after the small

entry that you can proceed into a room with a wooden floor.

The living spaces are whitewashed. We could see blue stenciling on the walls. One fireplace had a small embroidered mantel cloth. Each farmhouse had a corner of the room set aside for the bed(s). Rich and poor peasant alike followed the same tradition of surrounding their sleeping area with holy pictures and a crucifix. The pictures of Jesus and Mary were hung on the wall and decorated with paper or strawflowers.

There are woven straw decorations on display in the barns and cottages. One chamber showed all the materials used to create the harvest straw decorations.

Links

http://www.zhr.pl/zlot/foto_serwis/przewodnik/park_etnograficzny/
<http://www.ikz.edu.pl/biblioteka/katalog/dyplomy/Skanseny/a8.htm>

Right now my webpages on this subject are at:

<http://oeonline.oeonline.com/~cjensen/poznan>
http://oeonline.oeonline.com/~cjensen/poznan_2
http://oeonline.oeonline.com/~cjensen/poznan_3
http://oeonline.oeonline.com/~cjensen/poznan_4

The webpages will eventually be compressed and linked. They will be at:

<http://oeonline.com/~cjensen/park>

*** WHY YOU CANNOT FIND THE POLISH WHITE PAGES ***

[The following is copied verbatim from this Website:

http://www.masterpage.com.pl/white_pages.html:

Joe Filipowicz <joeflip@earthlink.net> posted this information on Poland-Roots-L@rootsweb.com. It seemed well worth passing on, as it answers a question constantly asked: where can you find online telephone directories for Poland? The answer: you can't - and here's why... As for the claims made there for MasterPage - well, you're all adults. I'm sure you know how to evaluate such claims to decide whether the service is worth trying.]

Hundreds of times a day we get requests for personal phone numbers. We want to help you, but we cannot. Why? Please read this important

information about Poland.

After forty years of abuses under the communist system, Polish people are very protective of their privacy. They do not want any private information revealed to anyone without their written permission. Gathering of any data that can be used to identify an individual is subject to some very restrictive laws. And the people of Poland enthusiastically support the laws. They are very quick to complain if their private information is given out. And people who give out information are prosecuted.

The law is very restrictive. For example, under the law we cannot take a resume from a person applying for a job with us without having a handwritten signature on that resume giving our specific firm permission to have that resume. We cannot keep address lists of individual people without registering that list with the government. Apartment houses cannot list the names of the families on an index.

The law makes publishing white pages information on the Internet effectively impossible. There are none that we know of. So we are posting this section to try to explain to you why there are none and to tell you what we can and cannot do for you. (We do provide an alternative service at the bottom of this page, so please read on.)

We cannot look up a telephone number and give it to you. If we were able to find a telephone number of a person, we would have to write them and get their written permission to give out the number to you. We do not provide that service. It is too time-consuming and you would probably not want to pay for all the work.

And we do not know of anyone who will provide you that information other than the Polish state telephone company. If you speak Polish, you can call their information service. They will not give any information if all you have is a name. If you want information you must know the first name and address of the person. That is the law and they follow the law. And we cannot call them for you and get information either.

To help you as much as we can we put up a special Find Friends and Family service. It has been a very successful service. Over the past few years many people have found each other using it. When you use it you have to be patient because it relies on someone finding your post. But many people look at it every day. We promote it all over Poland and all over the world. People help people and they get results. We have gotten mail from many people who have reunited families through the Find Friends and Family service.

We hope you use the service. It is the best thing that we know of in

Poland.

You can Find Friends and Family in the navigation bar at

<http://www.masterpage.com.pl>

Or you can go directly to the database at

<http://www.masterpage.com.pl/friends/friendsmain.asp>

*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

September 1 - 14, 2001

PLANNED TRIP TO WESTERN POLAND

[This message was sent to a number of people interested in Polish genealogical research, and seemed worth passing on for your information.]

Ever since the completion of our very successful Jubilee Year trip to Poland last September, many of our travelers (and those who regretted not going!) have asked to be informed if we have anything new planned for 2001.

Last year's trip was initiated in May, after many had made other plans, and so it seems proper to tell you now about what is tentatively scheduled for September 1 to 14, 2001.

Having learned only today about a key date in our plans, we hope to go to cities and tourist attractions in western and northern Poland: WROCLAW, POZNAN, GDANSK, GDYNIA, SOPOT (on the Baltic), STRZELNO, GNIEZNO, BISKUPIN, MALBORK, etc., as well as sites like Warsaw, Krakow and Zakopane.

This year's trip is two days longer, and contemplates an OPTIONAL four-day visit to Rome and the Vatican, or a visit to the rich former Polish city of LWOW (now in neighboring Ukraine). There is the possibility that use can use this optional period to visit family and friends in Poland, or just explore Poland on your own!

As in 2000, we want to keep the trip interesting, comfortable, safe....and affordable! Should you want to be informed of developments, prices, itineraries, suggested sites, etc., please e-mail me a note. Please share your ideas with us! If you have friends who might be interested in joining our group - and we've done some brainstorming to make improvements! - send me their names, addresses, phone and e-mail numbers.

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Phone (716) 822-5258

e-mail: danieljkij@aol.com

September 12-15, 2001

THE 2001 FGS/QUAD CITIES CONFERENCE

"A Conference for the Nation's Genealogists"

The RiverCenter, Davenport, Iowa

Sponsored and Co-hosted by the Federation of Genealogical Societies, the
Blackhawk Genealogical Society of Rock Island & Mercer Counties, Illinois
and the Scott County Iowa Genealogical Society

Summary of Events

Over the Pond Lectures:

- British and Irish
- Eastern European
- German
- Scandinavian

"Back to Basics" Lectures:

- Specialized Topics
- Immigration
- Naturalization
- Afro-American
- Computer/Internet

Genealogical Society Management Sessions

Association of Professional Genealogists Lecture Series

Librarians Serving Genealogists Lecture Series

For more info:

- Our email: fgs-office@fgs.org
- Our website: <http://www.fgs.org>

Our phone: 1-888-FGS-1500
Our fax: 1-888-380-0500
Or write us at:
Federation of Genealogical Societies
P.O. Box 200940
Austin, Texas 78720-0940

Register Online at:

<http://www.fgs.org/2001Conf/fgs-2001.htm>

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October 5 - 7, 2001

FEDERATION OF EAST EUROPEAN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES
-- INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2001 --

Ramada Inn South Airport
6401 South 13th Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

An Invitation to Explore the Ancestral Past of Imperial

Austria-Hungary Germany
Russia Turkey

and the modern states of

Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic,
Slovakia, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,
Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Bulgaria,
Romania, Armenia, Georgia

Talks on:

- Manuscript, Digitized, and Filmed Sources
- Germans from Russia and Ukraine
- American Immigrants
- Research Techniques, Databases, Projects
- Genealogical Terminology, Archaic Scripts
- Jewish Research

FEEFHS members will receive a Registration Packet in April. At that time,
packets can also be requested from the Program Chair at
<mehrkb@ldschurch.org> or by post:

Kahlile Mehr
412 South
400 West
Centerville UT 84014

Conference details, as they become available, will be posted at:

<http://feefhs.org/conf/01mil/01mil-hp.html>

or by return mail from:

FEEFHS, PO Box 510898, Salt Lake City, UT 84151-0898

FEEFHS welcomes members from all countries * Promotes research into the ancestral past of east and central Europe regardless of distinction by ethnic, religious, or social group * Provides a forum for individuals and organizations to exchange information and keep updated on developments in the field * Sponsors an annual convention * Publishes a journal * Maintains web site <http://feefhs.org> * Assists in developing databases * For membership information see: <http://feefhs.org/feefaq/member.html>

*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

<http://www.austro-hungarian-genealogy-translations.com/>

William E. Serchak <rice37@erols.com> sent a note to various individuals interested in Polish research giving this URL, the site of Felix G. Game, "a professional genealogist living in Canada and specializing in Hungarian and German research. The numerous articles attached to his Home Page provide many valuable insights and bits of information esp. since the Spis/Szepes area once included our ZARP Polish villages. His descriptions of rural life, the social levels in the village, military service, numbers crunching, etc. all track very well with what I have been finding out in my own research. Even the names used for occupations that appear in parish records now become more easily understandable."

<http://www.archiwa.gov.pl>

On GENPOL@MAN.TORUN.PL Guido Buldrini <buldrini@TIN.IT> posted this new address for the Polish State Archives Website.

<http://www.ijp-pan.krakow.pl/>

This is the Website for the Instytut Języka Polskiego PAN, the Polish Language Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. It

includes the Pracownia Antroponimiczna (Anthroponymic Workshop) headed by Dr. Aleksandra Cieslikowa. Their staff of scholars answer questions on Polish name origins on their own time, as their duties allow. The Workshop has moved, and this is its new street address:

Instytut Języka Polskiego PAN
Pracownia Antroponimiczna
Al. Mickiewicza 31
31-120 Kraków
POLAND

<http://www.ui.jor.br/polaco.htm>

On HERBARZ-L@rootsweb.com, Margaret Odrowaz-Sypniewski <Vondoering@aol.com> posted this address of a page devoted to the history of Polish settlers in Brazil.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Atrium/9615/index.html>

Mrs. Odrowaz-Sypniewski is also the Webmaster of this site, the Website of the Polish Nobility Association Foundation. If you are interested in the history of the Polish nobility and heraldry, this site is a must.

<http://www.avotaynu.com/magnates.htm>

Here Avotaynu has published all known holdings of the private archives of Polish magnates. This may aid Jewish researchers who may find records mentioning their ancestors among these archives. Obviously, of course, the information may also assist non-Jewish researchers who discover family links with magnates. (From _Nu? What's New?_, the e-zine of Avotaynu, Vol. 2, No. 2 - January 28, 2001).

http://www.stat.gov.pl/english/stale/przewodnik/spis_pow.htm

On POSEN-L@rootsweb.com, Kathleen Atwood <katwood@chartermi.net> mentioned this site as giving information on censuses in Poland. However, this still leaves open the big question: how does one get access to this info?

To be added to or removed from this mailing list, go to this address:

http://www.PolishRoots.org/GenDobry_signup.htm

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