Gen Dobry! 31 March 2001

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Editor: William F. "Fred" Hoffman, E-mail: WFHoffman@PolishRoots.org

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CONTENTS

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*** WELCOME! ***
to the latest issue of GEN DOBRY!, the e-zine of PolishRoots(tm). If you
missed previous issues, 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:

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

If some of you have written me and haven't heard back, I might not be at fault. A couple of weeks ago PolishRoots.org Webmaster Don Szumowski discovered something had messed up the PR e-mail links: people had been sending notes, but the notes weren't being delivered. Don fixed it and now all appears to be OK -- if you call being deluged by a backlog of notes OK. I think I've answered them all, but some may have slipped by me. If so, write again.

Finally, remember to visit PolishRoots.org, the Website that brings you _Gen Dobry!_. One new feature you might find valuable is the list of lodges of the Polish National Alliance (PNA):

   http://Polishroots.org/pna_lodges.asp

Dr. Paul S. Valasek worked hard to put it together, and encourages you to visit and search for information, or provide additional information if you have it. Zapraszamy!

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*** A FARMER BY ANY OTHER NAME... ***

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

Not long ago I received an e-mail from Armela Hammes <armelahammes@hotmail.com> in which she asked some smart questions. It occurred to me there may be others of you who have asked yourself the same questions. Perhaps you would find an expanded version of my answers helpful. First, here is what she asked:

> In searching through FHL microfilm for Dembnica/Gniezno/Poznan,
> in the 1840's and 1850's, I found family listed as gospodarz...
> In summary, what would you give as a definition for the 1850's for the
> words koscielny, wyrobnik, parobek, gospodarz, komornik and huby?
> Before I started typing up notes for two rolls of microfilm, I wanted to get
> the translation done correctly. Should I just use the FHL Word List?
> Would a self-sustaining farmer own the land?

Part of the problem with translating these terms is that the social and economic setup we're used to differs substantially from the one in Poland a century ago. There are a lot of classifications that were important in their society that never generated distinct terms in ours. I don't know about you, but I've never met a serf or peasant. When I think of a "farmer" I tend to picture the kind of farm my dad grew up on in Kansas, one stretching for acres and acres. In Poland you can't make that assumption. So it doesn't help much to know what such a term "means" if you don't understand how it fit into the whole socio-economic system.

That's why different sources, such as the FHL Word List and a good dictionary, may give different definitions for the same terms. They're all trying to indicate briefly what these words meant. But since there are no exact equivalents in English, the best they can give is an approximation. And by their very nature, approximations are not precise!

What's more, the usage of these terms in records was not always consistent. You had a variety of people classified as farmers or peasants, but of different status because of how much land they farmed, and these terms indicated where a given person fit into that overall scheme of things. The usage and meaning of the same term can vary from area to another, and from one time-frame to another.

We can, however, give definitions of what these terms meant in general by the 19th century, definitions that will prove reasonably accurate. So let's look at the terms Armela asked about, and a few others in the same category.

* Gospodarz and Kmiec~ *

[Online I use ~ to indicate the diacritical marks of Polish letters: a~ and e~ for the nasal vowels with tails, c~ for the c with an acute accent, l~ for the slashed l, etc. I use z~ for the accented z, and z* for the dotted z. Using these symbols is awkward, but preferable to making you reconfigure your browser, and perhaps download and add plug-ins, to show the Polish characters properly.]

Before the 19th century the nobles owned the land. Peasants farmed it, and they might farm large sections or small, depending on various circumstances; but as a rule the nobles owned the land itself. By the 1800s, however, giving peasants legal ownership of the land they worked -- called the "emancipation of the peasants" (in Polish _uwl~aszczenie chl~opo~w_) -- had become a major issue, and it was only a matter of time before it happened.

The three partitioning governments emancipated peasants under their rule

at different times and to different degrees. Thus in the Prussian partition a series of administrative measures gradually gave the peasants more and more rights, from 1811 on into the 1860s. In the Austrian partition (Galicia) emancipation went into effect in 1848. In the Russian partition partial emancipation was introduced in 1863, followed by a proclamation of the Tsar in 1864 that implemented full emancipation.

So, depending on where your ancestors lived, before 1848 or the 1860s terms for peasants referred to how much land they farmed; but they usually didn't own it. In return for the right to work that land they had to recompense their lord, by providing some prescribed form of labor service, produce, or money. After emancipation, however, peasants owned the land they worked (although often there were strings attached).

A _gospodarz_ was a farmer who worked/owned a full-sized farm, that is, one large enough that he could support himself and his family from it. The general notion was that it took about 30 _mo~rgs_ (or _morgas_) of land, or roughly 40 acres, to do that. So a _gospodarz_ would usually work or own that much, possibly more. Other kinds of peasants worked less land, from half-sized farms (maybe about 20 acres) down to just a garden-sized plot. These folks could not grow enough on their land to support themselves, so they had to hire themselves out to do work for richer peasants.

Incidentally, the terms used for a "full-sized farm" (one of some 40 acres) were _l~an_, literally "field," and _wl~o~ka_, literally "a drag, dragging." As a rule either would cover some 30 _mo~rgs_ (or _morgas_), a term that originally came from German _Morgen_, "morning"; it was originally the amount of land a man with an ox could plow in one morning (according to Ernst Thode's _German-English Genealogical Dictionary_). This area was set at about 1.4 acres in the Russian and Austrian partitions, but closer to 0.6 acres in the German partition. (I don't know; maybe German oxen plowed slower?!).

You sometimes see place names in Poland that include the word Huby. It comes ultimately from _Hub_ or _Hube_ or _Hufe_, and that's a German term for "full-sized farm." A place named Huby Orl~owskie would be a large farmstead near a village called Orl~owo... sort of like "Orl~owo Acres." (Polish _zielony_ means "green" -- would Zielone Huby be Green Acres, Polish-style? Complete with Arnold the s~winia?).

So a _gospodarz_ worked a full-sized farm, in return for services rendered his lord; after emancipation he owned a full-sized farm. Another term meaning much the same thing was _kmiec~_ (assuming these terms were used accurately, which is not an assumption one can make automatically). The Latin term used in records as the equivalent of _kmiec~_ was _cmetho_,

genitive case _cmethonis_. Interestingly enough, both words came originally from Latin _comes, comitis_ used in the sense of "ruler's companion." Later this term _comes_ was used to mean "count, dignitary." By the 18th century its derivative _cmetho_ or _kmiec~_ had come to mean "peasant," especially one who had enough land to support himself, and thus was comparatively well off.

You see here a phenomenon we encounter often with words: a gradual democratization of meaning. Just as _pan_ once meant "lord" but these days is the way you address any Tomek, Rysiek or Heniek, so _kmiec~_ started out meaning a big-wig, but eventually slid down on the social scale to mean almost any peasant. When you see these terms and titles used in records, part of your task is to assess just where they stood on that scale at the moment in time when the record was drawn up. As a rule, in the records we deal with, _gospodarz_ or _kmiec~_ would mean "peasant, farmer"; _gospodarz_ implies that one worked a full-sized farm, but by the 1850s _kmiec~_ was often used for any old farmer.

* Half-Farmers and Half-Men*

We sometimes run into interesting references to a _pol~ownik_ or _po~l~kmiec~_ or _po~l~rolnik_ or _po~l~chl~op_ (in Latin _semi-cmetho_). The prefix _po~l~-_ means "half," so these were half-men, half-farmers, half-peasants. These words evoke images of vicious Turks or Scythians (or taxmen) galloping through the peaceful fields of Poland and lopping poor peasants in half -- who, apparently, got right up and kept on working their farms. We knew life was tough in the old days, but this is ridiculous!

Actually, a "half-farmer" was one who had a half-sized farm. How did this come about? There were various possibilities, but often it was due to dividing an inheritance among heirs. Poles did not practice primogeniture -- the custom of giving the whole inheritance to the oldest son -- but divided property among the sons (the daughters' share went toward dowries). Thus a full-sized farm big enough to support a family could be subdivided in a generation or two to the point that you had half- and quarter-farmers scrambling to make ends meet.

Such farmers could not grow enough on their land to support themselves, so they had to supplement their income. Often they would work part-time for wealthier farmers. Since farming any land at all (before emancipation) required labor service or rent paid to the lord, these fractional farmers had a tough row to hoe. Between working off their duty to their lords and working for wealthy peasants, they might have no time left to farm their own fields. But there were even poorer folk around who might be able to help them out, in exchange for food or shelter.

* Little or No Land *

A term used for a peasant who worked/owned a piece of land, with a house
and maybe a few farm animals, was a _zagrodnik_ (sometimes _ogrodnik_), in
Latin _hortulanus_. These terms mean literally "gardener," and indicate
that the land these folks worked couldn't have been very large. Actually a
zagrodnik was one who owned or worked a _zagroda_, a croft or farmstead
or enclosure; and in the 15th century it meant a farmer who did not use
beasts of burden to work his land, but did it under his own power. As time
went on it came to mean one who had a piece of land, but one substantially
smaller than that worked by a _kmiec~_ or _gospodarz_.

A _chal~upnik_ was literally a "cottager," who worked or owned a small
plot of land along with a little _chal~upa_ or cottage. By the 19th
century we often see this term used for one who was employed in a cottage
industry, i. e., worked at home producing items for sale such as cloth or
clothes. Such people didn't earn much, but they still were better off than
many others.

A _komornik_ was like a tenant-farmer. As a rule he had no land of his
own, and had to work for another, richer peasant; he lived on the
wealthier peasant's land and worked it for a share of the produce. Elderly
people who'd turned their farms over to grown children often lived as
komornicy. The term _ka~tnik_ was also used for one who owned no land
and lived in a corner (_ka~t_) of someone else's home.

Originally Latin _inquilinus_ was another term for "farmer," but by the
19th century it was generally used as a Latin equivalent of Polish
komornik or _ka~tnik_.

Lower on the scale was a _parobek_ or farmhand. He owned nothing, and
worked as a hired hand for a wealthier peasant. As a rule he did have
steady employment on one large farm. The Latin term used for this was
famulus.

A _wyrobnik_ was a day-laborer, one who had neither land nor a steady job.
He hired on as a hand to help out with chores on the farms of wealthier
peasants; he would do basically whatever needed to be done. I think the
practical difference between him and a _parobek_ is that the _parobek_ at
least might have steady work in one place, whereas a _wyrobnik_ had to
find work whenever and wherever he could.

Originally a _kolonista_, Latin _colonus_, was indeed a colonist, one who
came from elsewhere -- often a German -- to settle a new colony. But by
the 19th century that term was frequently nothing more than another way to

say "farmer, peasant." Polish _rolnik_ and _wl~os~cianin_, and Latin _agricola_, were also generic terms for "farmer," as in "You all look and smell the same to me, like farmers, and I ain't interested in the details."

Finally, to get away from the farm altogether, a _kos~cielny_ was a sexton or sacristarian, an attendant who worked at the church and helped out with the various duties there. He was usually in or near the church, so he'd make a handy witness for weddings and such; that's why we see him mentioned in church records. The exact nature of his duties could vary from one parish to another: helping with the choir, digging graves, keeping the grounds in good shape, that sort of thing. In some parishes you'd have a _kos~cielny_ as well as an _organista_, who played the organ. In some parishes the duties of the _organista_ included those done by the _kos~cielny_ in other parishes. I guess "church attendant" is the most accurate translation for _kos~cielny_; his duties would often overlap those of a sexton, but a sexton isn't exactly the same as a _kos~cielny_.

If all this seems a little much, at least these occupations are ones not totally foreign to our experience. In my research on names I ran into _bl~oniarz_, an archaic term for one who made windows out of _bl~ona_, animal membrane! I guess you could sit by your membrane window and sip on your _czarnina_ (soup made of duck's blood). Sounds gross -- unless you've lived on a farm yourself, or have ever been really poor and hungry. If you've ever had either experience, you understand that those who can take nothing for granted are careful to waste nothing!

* Conclusion *

If you'd like more information on these terms and titles, visit Rafal Prinke's page on this subject (from which I have borrowed freely and, I hope, without error!):

    http://hum.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp/GEN/soc-pl.htm

You might also find much interesting material at this page:

    http://main.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp/GEN/zawody.htm

I hope this clears things up a little. As I said, we can't always get them crystal clear because people sometimes used these terms sloppily; what one record keeper called a _parobek_, another might call a _wyrobnik_. And a particular clerk might use the term _gospodarz_ loosely, applying it to one who owned a small farm. But as a rule, by the second half of the 19th century a _gospodarz_ did own his farm, and it was big enough to support him and his family, and often farmhands and tenant-farmers as well.

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*** SEARCH ENGINES ***

Edward Potereiko <epotereiko2@hotmail.com>

I think your readers may be interested in the use of the Internet's search
engines to find unexpected information that previously had been unknown to
the researcher, no matter how familiar with the individual being
researched. The location of places to purchase Polish dictionaries and
presumably other items may be found. Many interesting and, to me, unlikely
items are posted on the internet. The trick is to use the right Search
Engine.

I have a very distinctive surname, "Potereiko." Every so often, I pick a
search engine and type my surname, or one of the ten or so surnames that I
am researching, just to see what may show up. I have come up with several
hits that I felt were a bit unusual.

My son did a lot of cross country running several years ago, while
attending high school. I located newspaper articles, from our town, about
races in which he had run, with his placing in that race. I located his
placing in a race run several states away, in Idaho. This race was over
one year old, but all the contestants were listed, along with times run.

More recently I have typed in my surname to

    http://www.google.com

which has resulted in different hits. The most recent and astonishing, to
my mind, was my search the other day of:

    http://www.copernic.com

I don't know if this is technically considered a search engine. It employs
11 other search engines in a simultaneous search for whatever one is
looking for; those search engines include Hotbot, AltaVista and Excite,
one of my favorites. This service, Copernic, is free, or you can upgrade
and purchase premium (additional) services; but I use the free, more
limited service.

By using Copernic, I located the Collins 2-volume _Polish Dictionary_,
Vol. 1, English-Polish, and Vol. 2, Polish-English. I had seen this
dictionary mentioned in "Teach Yourself Polish", but had never been able
to locate it. I scoured the larger booksellers, including Barnes and
Noble, and no one could even find it as having ever been published. They

searched their printed catalogues and computer databases and came up negative.

Using Copernic, I located and purchased it for about $25 USA dollars, if my recollection serves me, from http://Amazon.co.uk. The normal http://Amazon.com and http://Barnesandnoble.com did not list it. I paid by credit card, placed my on-line order and it arrived within 5 days of ordering it, via normal shipping services.

The most recent discovery occurred yesterday, when I typed my surname into Copernic, asking it to search the Web and the Web-UK. Lo and behold, among the many message boards to which I have placed postings -- some I could not remember the URL's for, but found them through Copernic, where other searches had failed -- I was able to locate some postings several years old that I had been looking for.

The best discoveries for me were two postings, one located by AltaVista: a "Special Order" dated 16 April 1964, from Headquarters 555th Air Force ROTC Cadet Squadron, Brooklyn College. It showed my promotion to Airman Second Class (A2C), along with the other members names in my unit, an actual copy of the one page memo that I was able to print from the computer monitor.

The next unexpected posting, discovered by Fast Search Lycos, was done by the Union I belong to, American Federation of Government Employees, AFGE. Their site had a listing of Memorandums of Understanding that had been negotiated with management. I had been a Union Vice-President, and had negotiated an MOU on April 3, 1987, for the Denver Region. I have not been a union representative in over 8 years. I was not aware that this spreadsheet type of document existed, let alone was accessible on the Internet.

I was able to find historical information on myself, pages printed off the Internet, that I will include in my own genealogy.

Seek and ye shall find. Never give up.

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*** LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ***

[Editor: I received a number of notes from people who enjoyed my piece on "Dumbth." I appreciate them very much; it's always gratifying to hear that people liked something you wrote. We don't have enough room to reprint those notes here, but I will take room to say "Thanks" to all who wrote!]

Subject: Dziekuje

Just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your _Gen Dobry!_. They really hit the nail on the head. I was just looking through the LDS records, found my grandfather's birth and baptism and noted that his _patrini_ were tenant farmers. I got home to read in your newsletter about the domicile of the tenant farmer and it really hit home. My Busia (b. 1869) told of having dirt floors at her home.

The article on the telephone numbers reminds me of the problem I am having getting information from my old bachelor cousin in Poland -- "What do you want this information for?"

John Szaroleta <momszar@toast.net>

Subject: International Refugee Organization

I need to know the e-mail address of the International Refugee Organization or its depository of records. I am looking for a register of my mother, who was born in Poland and had an IRO passport number 50075. If you know any other way to find this please e-mail me. Thanks.

Eduardo Gomez <szumyckyj@yahoo.com>

[Editor: I couldn't help him. Can you?]

Subject: FHL Acquires Detroit Federal Court Naturalization Index

I have some news that you might consider including in the next issue of _Gen Dobry!_. It is news of a fairly recent acquisition at the Family History Library of a naturalization index for the federal court in Detroit. Many Polish immigrants from the Detroit metropolitan area were naturalized in this federal court. The Family History Library has the Soundex index to naturalization petitions of the U.S. District Court (Eastern District of Michigan) in Detroit, Michigan for 1880-1995. The collection consists of 280 16-mm microfilm reels and begins with film number 2116210. They are listed on the Family History Library Catalog-CD. Each Soundex card generally contains a name, birth date, petition number and date. Sometimes an alias is also included on the card.

The National Archives and Records Administration-Great Lakes Region has custody of the naturalization records which were filed in this court through 30 September 1991. They are filed in petition number order and the NARA Chicago office does not have an index. It is necessary to have a petition number to make a request. The petition number may be obtained from the abovementioned Soundex index, now available at the Family History Library.

NARA charges $10.00/name for a mail-in request for naturalization papers and $.50/page for an in-person request, when the petition number is known. Alternatively, naturalization papers may be obtained by making a Freedom of Information request to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for naturalizations after 1906. Including the petition number and date increases the likelihood of success of a Freedom of Information request.

Judith Zack <zack@pilot.msu.edu>

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*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

September 1 - 14, 2001

DAN KIJ TO LEAD 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 1-14, 2001.

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!

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.

Daniel J. Kij
1200 Electric Avenue
Lackawanna NY 14218-1417
Phone (716) 822-5258

e-mail: danieljkij@aol.com

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September 12-15, 2001

THE 2001 FGS/QUAD CITIES CONFERENCE

"A Conference for the Nation's Genealogists"

The RiverCenter, Davenport, Iowa

For more info:
  Our email: fgs-office@fgs.org
  Our website: http://www.fgs.org

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 South13th Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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

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*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

http://katalog.republika.pl/hobby/genealogia/index.html
   Jan Birkner posted a note on Genpol, saying she'd learned of this site
from the March Bulletin of the PGS-Massachusetts. It's about Polish
genealogy, from Poland, and has lots of names.

http://langline.com/StateArchGuide.htm
   This page contains the text of a guide written by your humble editor to
help people translate letters from the Polish State Archives. The guide
appeared in the August 1995 PGSA Journal ago and was reprinted in our book
In Their Words... Volume 1: Polish. The State Archives can deal with
letters in English but usually respond in Polish. This guide -- kind of a
free sample from our book -- may help you figure out what they're saying.

http://www.man.poznan.pl/~bielecki/roots.htm
   Charles Gohlke <c.gohlke@postoffice.worldnet.att.net> posted a note
on POSEN-L@rootsweb.com, saying that he'd asked Kasia Grycza why the
Discovering Roots Website wasn't working. She told him the URL had been
changed, and the one shown above should work. It does.

http://eleaston.com/polish.html
   Pat Smith <pita@WESTOL.COM> mentioned this site on Genpol, saying it
has a bunch of good links. She felt the most interesting was the "E-Pals
Classroom Exchange," which connects classrooms around the world.

http://www.avotaynu.com/csi/csi-home.html
   The March 18th issue of _Nu? What's New?_ mentioned that Avotaynu has
just made a major update to its Consolidated Jewish Surname Index at the
above URL. They've added the surnames contained in the following
databases: JRI-Poland; All-Lithuania Database; All-Belarus Database;
All-Latvia Database; JewishGen Family Finder. CJSI is an index to 31
different databases of information on (mostly) Jewish surnames.

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

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