



Gen Dobry!

Gen Dobry! 31 January 2002

***** 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/gendobry/gendobry_index.htm.

Be sure to visit the PolishRoots site and take advantage of the numerous sources featured there to help you with your research. For instance, if you have Galician roots, visit this

page:

http://www.polishroots.org/galicia_towns.htm

It lets you search the database by typing in your village name, powiat, parish location, etc. to find out where the civil and/or parish records are located, including the AGAD (Archiwum Glowne Akt Dawnych).

*** THE POLISH ARMY IN FRANCE ***

by Paul S. Valasek, D.D.S. <Paval56@aol.com>

[Reprinted, with the author's permission, from the Illinois State Genealogical Society Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 4]

* Introduction *

The Polish Army in France - also known as Haller's Army, in recognition of their commanding general, and the Blue Army, named for their French-issued blue uniforms - was a volunteer force recruited from 47 centers in the United States and Canada, starting in October 1917 and ending in March 1919. This fighting force was comprised predominantly of Polish male citizens living in North America who volunteered to fight in France towards the last year of World War I, and to continue fighting in Poland for its independence from all neighboring governments. What started out as part of the Great War to end all wars, ended up as the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921.

* History *

From the last decade of the 18th century, Poland as a political nation ceased to exist on the map of Europe. Its neighbors, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, over a period of nearly 15 years and three separate border divisions, conquered Polish lands and annexed their areas to each of the partitioning empires. Each partition was controlled differently, but a Polish citizen became an official minority within what previously was his own country. The official language spoken and written was that of the dominant empire, whether German or Russian, and rules for individual conduct were accorded to each citizen differently.

After more than a century of disharmony and oppression, the time was right to fight for Polish independence on the heels of the Great War. Polish militants, led by national and international leaders, sought out the opportunity to form an independent Polish army from Poles living outside the historic boundaries of Poland, those areas collectively called Polonia. Countries such as the U.S., Canada, Brazil, France, and Italy were prime sources for recruitment. This movement began a number of years before the outbreak of the First World War as leaders tried to form, through para-military organizations, fraternal aid societies, and the Roman Catholic Church, a 100,000-man "Kosciuszko

Army," in tribute to a son of Poland who sought independence through the American Revolution.

Unable to form and build a foreign national army on U.S. soil, the founding leaders had to wait until final U.S. approval came from President Wilson to allow recruitment of men in the States. These men could not be eligible for the U.S. draft laws, and needed to demonstrate proof excluding them from service in the U.S. army.

* Recruitment *

The first 10 recruitment centers were established by October 1917 and were formed in cities which had large Polish populations. As a result, cities such as Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh started recruiting men (and a very small number of women) to sign up and form the "Kosciuszko Army."

Rec. Center Approx. # of recruits

1. Milwaukee, WI 1300
2. Chicago, IL 5700
3. Detroit, MI 2800
4. Cleveland, OH 1600
5. Buffalo, NY 2300
6. Pittsburgh, PA 2000
7. Wilkes-Barre, PA 1100
8. New York, NY 3000
9. Boston, MA 800
10. Bridgeport, CT 1000
11. Schenectady, NY 200
12. Winnipeg, MB 100
13. Baltimore, MD 250
14. Erie, PA 200
15. Grand Rapids, MI 100
16. Hartford, CT 700
17. Holyoke, MA 400
18. Kansas City, MO 100
19. Meriden, CT 200
20. Minneapolis, MN 200
21. Philadelphia, PA 1200
22. Reading, PA 100
23. Saginaw, MI 100
24. Scranton, PA 150
25. South Bend, IN 100
26. St. Louis, MO 250
27. St. Paul, MN 100
28. Stevens Point, WI 300
29. Syracuse, NY 100

30. Toledo, OH 500
31. Wilmington, DE 100
32. Worcester, MA 200
33. Bay City, MI 100
34. Duluth, MN 600
35. Youngstown, OH 100
36. Mt. Carmel, PA 100
37. Omaha, NE 150
38. Providence, RI 100
39. Toronto, ON 250
40. Wheeling, WV 100
41. New Britain, CT 300
42. South Chicago, IL 800
43. Utica, NY 800
44. Montreal, QU 100
45. Trenton, NJ 200
46. Central Falls, RI 100
47. Springfield, MA 450

Because the training of a foreign army on U.S. soil was still frowned upon, the Canadian government offered their officers and schools at both the University of Toronto and Camp Borden to train the "cream" of the new army for service as its new corps of officers.

Enlisted men and non-commissioned officers set up base at Butler's Barracks, a Canadian training facility located at historic Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. It was here that the new Polish troops, strange in their speech and manners, were cautiously (but later, enthusiastically) received by the local residents. After a crash course of training, the first troops were to ship out of Halifax, Nova Scotia. However, due to that city's horrific explosion of December 1917, these troops had to leave from American ports aboard U.S., British and Russian transports. Arrival in France began in the winter of 1918 and camps were quickly set up in the Champagne region of France. The first major action seen by the Polish Army in France was in July 1918 at St. Hilaire-le-Grand, where casualties ran high as these new armed forces went up against more experienced German troops.

* Polish-Soviet War *

After the armistice of November 11, 1918 and the subsequent Treaty of Versailles, new countries were being created from old empires. Poland's western borders were established by delegates to the Paris peace talks, but delineation of its Eastern borders was not yet set. Concurrent with the peace process in the west were the ravages of the Russian Revolution and the invasion of the Bolshevik armies spreading from Russia to lands westward. With this in mind, the Polish Army in France, along with Polish prisoners of war released from French, German, Austrian and Italian prison camps, soon mustered together in Polish Silesia and organized with the Polish-based Pilsudski's Legions, to continue the war and eventually establish the Polish borders on the east. These were

successful in keeping the spread of the Bolshevik armies and Communism within the Soviet borders until the onset of World War II.

* Genealogical Records *

With any fighting force, paperwork is created multiple times per each soldier. This was true for the Polish Army in France. Upon establishment of the recruitment centers, each man was asked to fill out preliminary information on what has become known as Form A. He further completed a more detailed questionnaire with Form C and a physical exam on Form B. Forms A and C yield the most information, including such items as marital status, birth information, current address, and next of kin in America as well as in Europe. A physical description is included, as well as any previous involvement in either military or fraternal organizations. Occupation and any useful qualities for a beginning army were also noted on form C. Forms A and C are printed and written in Polish only. Form B, however, is in English.

Rosters were completed for each recruitment center, but end at different time periods. The major recruitment centers stayed open until the winter of 1919, but some of the smaller "auxiliary" centers closed and merged with neighboring larger ones as the war in the west was approaching a conclusion. Transport lists, as well as casualty lists for both France and Poland, are just now surfacing and being discovered. Many old documents are being indexed for the first time and resources from the U.S., Canada, France, and Poland are opening up a story which for the past 80 years plus has been kept at a low profile.

* Summary *

I am compiling as much information as can be found on the Polish Army in France as well as the later grouping of regiments who fought under General Józef Haller. Many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of these soldiers are now just beginning to find out their ancestors' role in this valiant effort. Please contact me to request, or better yet, to share, additional information to make this story as prominent and complete as it is important.

Please look at <http://www.polishroots.org> for all additional and updated information.

[The text was followed by a reproduction and translation of a sample of Form C, which yields the greatest amount of genealogical information. This sample contained the following data: Aleksander Tomaszajtys reported at Recruiting Center 42 in So. Chicago, Ill. He was 36, born 22 August 1882 in Szawle, Kowno province (now Siauliai, Lithuania), a bachelor living at "4904 Magun ave. East Chicago Ill.," nearest relative in America a cousin, "Jozef Tomaszajtys, 4856 Norckat ave., East Chicago, Ind.," nearest relative in Poland his father, Jan Tomaszajtys, in Libawa, Courland province (now Liepaja, Latvia). Aleksander was not an American citizen; he had served in the Russian army, in the infantry, for 3 years, attaining the rank of corporal. He was a member of the Zwiasek Narodowy Polski (Polish National Alliance). His occupation was _slusarz_, metal-worker or locksmith, but he was currently working as a _cukernik_, confectioner or

pastry-chef. His height was 5'2", and he had dark blond hair, an aquiline nose, an elongated face, dark eyebrows, blue eyes, good teeth, a rounded chin, and weighed 120 pounds. His head is described as having a cut across the right side. He was sent to the recruiting station in East Chicago, Indiana, with a notation on his record that he had been a corporal in the army. He declared of his own free will he was ready to fight the foes of an independent Poland and to obey all orders. He signed this declaration on 14 March 1918, and it was witnessed by Sergeant Karol Sieradzki, recruiting officer. He was sent to Niagara-on-the-Lake on 6 May 1918.

As you see, these forms can provide a lot of information!]

*** GENTECH 2002: BUYER BEWARE ***

by Ceil Jensen <cjensen@mipolonia.net>

The GENTECH 2002 conference was held January 25-26 in Boston, MA. Their mission is to use new technologies to understand our heritage and connect with our families. This was the 10th annual conference.

This was my first GENTECH conference. At the top of my list was gaining more information about setting up extraction databases. I attended two sessions that really opened my eyes.

A pre-conference Tech Session was held on Thursday evening. The session was entitled "Error Rates and Data Entry Standards". Sounds a bit dry, but the presenters were from Ancestry.com, Eneclann Ltd., Dublin, Ireland, and the Family History Library in Salt Lake, UT. They were knowledgeable and I began to understand WHY Polish surnames show up in databases in a hit or miss fashion.

As commercial publishers they all agreed that they publish databases that have about 90% + accuracy rate. They are hesitant to label their products as such. Some of the errors occur because the documents were incorrect at time they were recorded. Other databases have errors because records are missing due to clerical error or loss of documents due to fire, floods, etc. They can also suffer from keying entry mistakes.

The executive from Ancestry put a new spin on database errors. He coined the word "Findability" as their in-house criteria for saleable material. Can a researcher find his/her information with a little ingenuity? They all agreed it was the researchers' responsibility to be skeptical about their sources. He stated that only 5% of the researchers using the Ancestry site use the advanced search engines. He said they have built-in power that is virtually unused.

The presenters all reminded the audience that accessing original documents is the preferred method of research. The commercial databases may help you find your

ancestors, but if you cannot find them in the database you should not stop your search. This caveat is from the companies who are selling the CDs and online subscriptions! They said online researchers need to know about the variability in databases.

The three database masters discussed:

1. What is an error?
2. What is the individual error rate for their projects?
3. Should there be error rate standards?
4. Tools and Training

Answers:

1. Errors can be a keystroke error, transposed letters, transposed surname and first name or misinformation. The worst error is the record that is left out. An error can be as simple as an annoyance to the researchers using the database, or it can escalate to being so severe it prevents them from finding their data.

2. Some of the projects had up a to 10% error rate.

3. They were in agreement that a 3% error rate was a do-able goal.

4. Tools included extractors who are native speakers of the document language, Asian offshore extractors who do not know the Western languages(!) and OCR software. Both the human extractors and software can be trained to detect errors.

Lets look at Tool and Training.

LDS

The Family History Library is releasing a new CD with the 1881 Canadian Census. It was extracted by volunteer LDS stake members in Canada and checked by students at the University of Ottawa. An audience member from Quebec was consulted about the quality of the extraction and was invited to the vender's booth to evaluate the new release. The presenters reminded the audience to check the Read Me files that are on the CDs. It will let you know where there is missing information.

*LDS uses volunteer extractors

Eneclann, Ltd.

Eneclann told of a government project that was worked on for 6 years using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) only to be scrapped because the software was not sophisticated enough to work with older handwriting and discolored documents.

*The Heritage Centers in Ireland were funded only if they would train unemployed youth in computer extraction. They experienced a high turnover rate. This changed the mission of the centers from genealogy to computer training.

Ancestry.com

Ancestry said the rates can be improved by additional training of extractors, creating programs that have algorithms that will detect "weird things" in the data, and employing post-production teams of genealogists to review data.

The "add comment" function now on Ancestry.com was a post-production add-on to help with error correction.

The session closed with an amusing anecdote. A member of the host committee apologized to the Eneclann team for entering their email and web address incorrectly into the conference syllabus.

Links for this article:

Ancestry.com
<http://www.ancestry.com>

Family History Library
<http://familysearch.org>

Eneclann, Ltd.
<http://www.eneclann.ie/>

GenTech 2003
<http://www.gentech.org/>

THE COMPREHENSIVE SITE OF QUEBEC
FRENCH-CANADIAN GENEALOGY
OF THE XVIIth AND XVIIIth CENTURIES
<http://www.genealogy.umontreal.ca/en/main.htm>

*** RELUCTANT RELATIVES ***

[Editor's note: Raymond B. Green <rbgreen@surfbest.net> wrote this note and posted it on PolandBorderSurnames-L@rootsweb.com. In it he gives his ideas on why our older relatives can be so reluctant to talk about the past, especially life in the "old country." I know this reluctance often puzzles researchers, and I thought Ray made a lot of good points, so I thought you might enjoy reading what he had to say.]

It is extremely difficult for us to understand how deeply offensive it is to old-timers, especially the "come-overs," to inquire into family history, so difficult that we cannot even imagine the strongly held beliefs that are the causes. They may include one or more of the following:

1. The conviction that this is a great country and there is no reason to know about any other.
2. The attitude that history started anew when they stepped off the ship onto U.S. soil. Prior history is to be forgotten.
3. The attitude that if the old country had been so great, they would have stayed there.

4. Family tradition or personal experience with the religious, ethnic and class prejudice, bigotry, persecution, violence, etc., from which they fled, much worse than here, and most often based on family history.

5. Deeply held suspicions (from personal or family experience) of the use that governments or others may make of family history.

6. Inconsistency with the American ideal that we are all equal, regardless of background.

7. Unpleasant experiences with exclusionary organizations based on family tree or heritage, such as Daughters or Sons of the American Revolution, the Mayflower, the Confederacy, the Colonial Dames, the Sons of the Golden West, etc.

8. Embarrassment with the humble or other status of relatives or ancestors, an embarrassment we do not understand, but which is very real to those proud and sensitive people who went through so much so that their descendants can live higher on the the social and economic scales.

9. A form of modesty we cannot conceive. Or some other.

The come-overs wanted to be assimilated, to a large extent (not completely). References to nationality or background, which in the past had often been used against them, were divisive and offensive. "We are all Americans" may best describe their feelings.

"Hyphenated Americans" (Polish-Americans, German-Americans, etc.) have been invented by the newer generations unfamiliar with the old history and experience; the come-overs did not use such concepts. Most first-generation Americans learned English, at least by the first grade, and then did not look back. The present craze for geneology started only 20 or 30 years ago, except for the aforesaid exclusionary and snobbish organizations, which long have used family history to justify a sort of feeling of superiority - which our forbears wanted nothing to do with - or perhaps to claim a (mostly imaginary) connection with ancient royalty, or at least nobility (also a form of boasting). Surely these thoughts were not universal, but may have been, at least, prevalent.

As a third-generation person who had very little contact with the come-overs, I probably do not understand their feelings any more than anyone else. This may be a poor attempt to explain. But it is an attempt.

Raymond <rbgreen@surfbest.net>

*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

February 8, 2002

ANNUAL WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY
GENERAL PULASKI MONUMENT
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Friday, February 8, 2002, at 5 p.m.

The General Pulaski Association plans to hold its annual wreath-laying ceremony at the General Pulaski Monument. Immediately following this brief ceremony, at 6:00 p.m., a banquet is scheduled at the Radisson Hotel 4243 Genesee Street, Cheektowaga. A full-course dinner will be served for \$25.00 per person.

The featured speaker will be Mr. Chris Musial, Channel 4 News Director. Children from the Polish Saturday School will provide the entertainment.

The organizers must have your dinner reservation by February 6, 2002, in order to inform the restaurant as to actual attendance.

Contact Jerry Inda at Jerry_P._Inda@HUD.GOV for reservations.

Saturday, February 9, 2002 at 7 p.m.

THE POLISH AMERICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA
20TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND BALL

at the Fridley Knights of Columbus
6831 NE Hwy 65
Fridley MN

Tickets: \$35

Please call 612-378-9291 for more info.

[From the PGS-MN Newsletter, Autumn 2001]

April 5-6, 2002

Illinois State Genealogical Society 2002 Conference

"ETHNIC ILLINOIS"

To be held at the William Tell Holiday Inn, Countryside, IL

Featured Speaker: Dr. George Schweitzer

Contact: ISGS P.O. Box 10195, Springfield, IL 62791-0195

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilsgs/fallconf/announcement.html>

July 19 - 21, 2002

DISCOVERING OUR LINKS TO EUROPE:
AN INTERNATIONAL GENEALOGICAL CONFERENCE

Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

July 19th - 21, 2002

This event is being hosted by the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society (SGS), in conjunction with the Federation of East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS), the Bukovina Society of the Americas (BSA), the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe (SGGEE), and the East European Genealogical Society (EEGS). It is anticipated that it will attract an audience of several hundred people.

A call for papers, along with additional information on the Conference, can be seen at the EEGS site:

<http://www.eegsociety.org/CallForPapers.html>

January 17 & 18, 2003

GENTECH 2003
PHOENIX, ARIZON
The Phoenix Civic Plaza.

"Digital Technology - The Ancestral Frontier"

Maryellen T. <deeproots@go.com> posted a notice on the Polish_Genius mailing list about this event, saying rightly that it's not too soon to make plans to attend. Past conferences of GENTECH have focused on how to use technology more effectively in your genealogical research (see Ceil Jensen's article, in this issue, on Gentech 2002). You can get more information at the Website:

<http://www.agcig.org/gt03.htm>

or at Gentech's site:

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

Maryellen also pointed out that "volunteers will be needed in January to start work on the publicity campaign for this event. Suzanne Siders is the Chair of that Committee." You can fill out the volunteer form at the above site.

[Debbie Greenlee added that info on this event is included on the Events Calendar of PolishRoots:

http://www.polishroots.org/coming_events.htm

In fact, it's always a good idea to check this site, as it contains more info than we have room for here.]

*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

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

Jean-Pierre Sangin <sangin@sympatico.ca> posted this address to PolandBorderSurnames-L@rootsweb.com, suggesting it's a good site for those who want information on the Brest region of Belarus.

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

Mary Foxworthy <maryfox@attglobal.net> posted a note on Poland-Roots-L@rootsweb.com, suggesting we check out the Centennia Historical Atlas software for a map-based history of Europe from the year 1000. She said, "There's a free downloadable demo version that covers the years 1790 - 1820. It is very interesting to watch the borders change over time. There's a reasonably comprehensive narrative synopsis, too, covering events. I took a look at the demo and will probably be purchasing the full version."

<http://www.ancestry.com/library/view/columns/eastman/3893.asp>

A post on Poland-Roots-L@rootsweb.com by <Xkq001@aol.com> cited this address for a good article by Dick Eastman entitled "The Myth of Ellis Island Name Changes." (This article also appeared in the January 2002 issue of the PGS-California's _Bulletin_. It was originally published in Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter at Ancestry.com.)

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

Tom Wodzinski posted this address on Poland-Roots-L@rootsweb.com, saying it's the home page for the USC system in Poland. He adds that they have a USC contact details database at this address:

<http://www.technika.gliwice.pl/bazausc.php3>

You can also access this database from the home page (on the left, under "Twoj USC w Sieci," click on the 2nd item in the list, "Baza USC").

Enter the name of the "Miasto" or town you wish to search for, click on "szukaj," and

contact information is displayed. The only problem is that it seems to include only towns that serve as USC headquarters; villages do not seem to be included.

<http://erosenbaum.netfirms.com/hamburg.shtml>

Edward Rosenbaum, Webmaster of the Belarus SIG (<http://www.jewishgen.org/belarus>), and President, JGS of Bergen County, New Jersey, sent out a note giving this address as the site for downloading a shareware program he wrote. It is designed to generate possible spelling permutations of surnames for use in searching the Hamburg database. If you're having trouble finding a particular name in the Hamburg Emigration List, you might want to give this program a try.

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/bizdir/start.htm>

The January 20, 2002 issue of *_Nu? What's New?_* (the free e-zine of Avotaynu) reported that the Jewish Records Indexing Project - Poland is tackling the creation of a database of some 750,000 people identified in the 1929 Polish Business Directory. Phase 1 is complete: it involved indexing 34,000 towns represented in the book and placing images of 3,000 pages of the directory on the Web in PDF format at the site given above. Visit this site to investigate this resource and learn more about Phase 2 -- and consider contributing to help bring this project to a successful conclusion.

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