



Gen Dobry!

Gen Dobry! 30 September 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 announces the launch of another exciting database with the addition of the

1907 Krakow City Directory. This searchable database of about 25,000 Krakow inhabitants has been compiled by Janet Kisz from information taken from a directory for Krakow published in 1907 (Wielka księga adresowa Krakowa i Podgorza). Each entry comprises surname, first names (and titles), occupation and street address. You will find it here:

http://www.PolishRoots.org/Krakow_citydir_1907.htm

*** THE COST OF GULLIBILITY ***

Over the course of the last week I've been struck by three instances of iffy or downright false information being spread on the Internet. Two of them dealt with out-and-out hoaxes; one may be legitimate, but people need to look at it a little closer before jumping in feet first. I thought all three illustrate the problems with believing or accepting what you see on the Internet, and it might not hurt to talk about this.

Please note, I don't mean to sound like some nanny scolding wayward children. I'm not criticizing anyone. I only want to emphasize that good sense applies as much on the Net as anywhere else. In other words, don't believe everything you read. As you'll see, this applies to genealogy as much as any other aspect of life.

* NOSTRADAMUS *

My sister-in-law sent me an item someone was spreading on the Internet which claimed that the 16th-century mystic Nostradamus predicted the attack on the World Trade Center. She had long ago dismissed Nostradamus as a load of crap, but felt this latest item was uncomfortably accurate. It cited this alleged quotation:

On the 11th day of the 9 month,
two metal birds will crash into two tall statues
in the new city,
and the world will end soon after.

She asked what I thought. I said, "You're right. Nostradamus is a load of crap." But I was a little surprised; this quotation is more lucid than his usual mumbo-jumbo. Your standard Nostradamus quatrain from Centuries (1555) is so vaguely worded you can read into it anything you want -- whether you read it in English translation or the original French -- whereas this kinda, sorta, halfway fit what happened.

Turns out I was too gullible. A few days later columnist Eric Zorn wrote a piece in the Chicago Tribune discussing this very rumor. Zorn showed me I'd given Nostradamus too much credit -- he didn't even write this! It's a retrofitted version of a sample prophecy from a Web-page essay exploring how people massage the words of Nostradamus to fit what they want to hear. Someone took the sample, added a few words, changed others,

and started floating it around, saying Nostradamus wrote it. No wonder it seemed to fit better than his usual drivel!

I felt like an idiot. Why did the obvious explanation -- outright fraud -- not occur to me? Apparently I still have a lot to learn. In an effort to do so, I took Zorn's suggestion and visited a site devoted to urban legends and other hokum:

<http://snopes.com>

If you have a chance, take a look, especially at the page devoted to the legends already forming around the events of September 11. It's fascinating reading!

In this case the cost of gullibility was small. I lost a little confidence in my own judgment, which is probably not a bad thing. We all need to be reminded occasionally how prone to error we are, or we got snotty and arrogant. (Well, at least I do.)

* KILLER SPONGES *

A few days later a good friend sent me an e-mail warning meant to save me from a deadly virus being spread by mail. I appreciated my friend's concern, but I couldn't remember signing up for any Pathogen of the Month Club ("This month's fatal virus will be sent to you automatically unless you return the enclosed card"). He quoted a note from someone whose judgment he trusted, which in turn quoted a warning that terrorists are soaking little sponges with the dread Klingerman Virus, putting them into large blue envelopes, and mailing them out to unsuspecting dupes. You open the envelope, touch the sponge, and all is woe and chaos!

This one I didn't fall for -- I'd seen this same warning make the rounds last year. What bothered me is that all it takes to expose this hoax is to visit a good Web search engine (e. g., <http://google.com>) and type in "Klingerman virus." Within seconds you have your choice of pages explaining in detail what a load of rubbish this is. I told my friend -- who's nobody's fool -- that I strongly recommend checking online before spreading word of viruses, whether they're the kind that kill your body or your hard drive.

What's the cost of this gullibility? Probably nothing. Still, it's sobering to think perhaps one day there will be a real hazard we need to be warned of quickly. If too many of us engage in this Chicken Little routine online, when the sky does fall no one will listen. So I beg you: don't pass on tales of impending doom till you've taken at least some elementary steps to find out whether you've been had. Unless, of course, you enjoy being played for a fool.

* GEDLINK *

A day or two later, I started seeing notes on the mailing lists devoted to Polish genealogy talking about an organization called Gedlink.com (<http://www.gedlink.com>). It was e-mailing researchers invitations to join their project, a new enterprise designed to help

people connect with others researching the same names or places. Apparently the folks behind the project visited some online sites listing names researchers were looking for, copied their e-mail addresses, and sent them invitations to join up.

The catch? If you read their promo material carefully 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.

Most of the folks who posted notes on this project approached it with caution and backed out before they were charged. They have already learned an important lesson: do NOT download software, or register with a company, unless they tell you up front whether money's involved, and if so, how much. When in doubt, visit various online lists and see what others are saying about it.

Now let me make this clear: I am not saying Gedlink is a con. I'm willing to give it the benefit of the doubt (but not my money). As a very small-time entrepreneur myself, I know that coming up with a good product is only the first step. This is a big, big world, and getting the word out to potential customers is a huge challenge! If I wanted to start up a legit project of this sort, contacting researchers who posted names they were looking for might seem a good way to spread the word. That action, in itself, doesn't bother me.

My problem is, they're coy about what they charge. I'd feel different about it if they simply told you up front 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. Reputable companies don't act that way. Or maybe I should say, companies that are going to get my money don't act that way!

Now \$19 is not a huge amount, especially if they deliver the goods. Maybe Gedlink is for real and will go on to become a valuable resource, widely used and respected by researchers. Or maybe it will turn out to be one more fly-by-night operation that pops up, grabs some cash, and disappears. We'll have to wait and see.

But here's an instance where you can count the cost of gullibility: \$19.

* CONCLUSION *

The beauty of the Internet is that you open yourself up to a great big world. That's also its danger. If you're active online you will meet a lot of really great people. You will also, inevitably, come into contact with liars, frauds, jerks, and even people who mean well but still have a lot to learn.

How do you protect yourself? Apply to your Internet dealings the same good sense you try to use in everything else you do. Be just a little skeptical. A skeptic isn't a person who refuses to have faith in anyone. A skeptic is a person who's learned faith is too valuable, and powerful, to simply hand over to any schmoe who asks for it. Make 'em earn it!

Or as Dr. Joan Borysenko (among others) put it, "Keep an open mind, but don't let your brain fall out!"

*** LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ***

Subject: Family contacts in Poland

I would like to submit an article, "Missing Links_ For Future Generations," from the RootsWeb newsletter, for your review and discussion in _Gen Dobry!_. I found the closing paragraphs of this article a bit disheartening. I've heard wonderful stories of family contacts in Poland which resulted in generous hospitality, bountiful genealogical information, and new family bonds. This article represents another picture. I'm curious about what the general experience has been when making family contacts in Poland. Would it be possible to open a discussion on this topic and print the results in your newsletter?"

Pamela J. White <pwhite1214@earthlink.net>

[Editor's Reply: I contacted the author of this article, Ally Hauptmann, who graciously gave her permission to reprint it. It follows this note. If you care to comment about your experiences with family contacts in Poland, please feel free to write me at <WFHoffman@prodigy.net>. And take a look at Ally's Website -- it's pretty interesting.]

*** MISSING LINKS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS ***

by Ally Hauptmann <artifex2@bigpond.com>

Website: <http://www.users.bigpond.com/artifex2/Screenplay.htm>

I want to tell you a story that many people will find difficult to understand -- but everyone has to do what's right for him or her at the time and in the place where they are.

As artists we meet many people. Recently, we met three Eurasian women who are sisters. The person through whom I met them had mentioned something about Russia and India, so I naturally got confused and curious. As it turned out, their late father was Russian. He left his family in Russia on foot, circa the early 1920s. Nobody knows why. He settled in Afghanistan and had a second family. Then, probably just before WWII, he walked to India, where he met a Chinese girl and had a third family. He taught these children to

speak and write Russian. He also sang Russian songs to them. At some point, they decided to move to Australia and that is where I met them.

Having written a screenplay that starts out in Tsarist Russia, I know more about Russian history than most. We speculated why he may have left the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, but we could not get a real handle on it, as they did not even know the exact years. Was it political, personal, the famines, the new bureaucracy? Did they coerce him into the secret service? Had he committed a crime? I am convinced the authorities were after him, because he did not use the railway, where they could have caught him more easily.

And what prompted him to flee Afghanistan, leaving another family behind? My guess is, he may have feared Stalin would march into Afghanistan, and Stalin's agents were after him. In 1979, the Soviet Union did go into Afghanistan -- the descendants of this man might well have shot each other.

To the Russian descendants, it would have looked like he was one of the thousands who disappeared into the Gulags or the psychiatric hospitals. One day the person was gone, and it was unwise to make inquiries.

One of the women said: "My father made me a list of all the children he had fathered, all 21 of them."

"So, you'd have relatives in Russia and Afghanistan?," I asked.

"Oh yes, definitely."

"Have you tried to find them?"

"No, we don't want to."

We discussed how difficult it can be for the average person in the West to have relatives in the former East Block countries, let alone war-torn Afghanistan. I have heard dozens of stories of family contacts from Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, and Russia, where the visiting relatives were "milked." They come back without any of their clothes, or even suitcases. One recent story from Germany took the cake. The Russian relatives had come to visit on a one-way ticket, in the full belief their relatives would buy them a car, and when they did not, the visitors disappeared very quickly and without a kind word. Having relatives in Afghanistan or the camps in Pakistan is another matter altogether.

There will be no family reunion of the descendants of this Russian man. Blood is not thicker than water here and the links will never be found -- I think.

I do not know more details than I have mentioned here. I just thought someone might put the story on record for posterity.

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[Editor's Note: This article previously appeared in the RootsWeb e-zine _Missing Links_, Vol. 6, No. 31, 1 August 2001, editors Julia M. Case and Myra Vanderpool Gormley, CG, RootsWeb: <http://www.rootsweb.com/>.]

*** POLISH RECORDS TO RETURN FROM REGENSBURG ***

Roman Kaszycki <rkaszyc@calia.daewoo.lublin.pl> posted the following note to the "Polish Genius" list <polish_genius@yahoogroups.com>:

- > Hi everybody!
- > Yesterday's Gazeta Wyborcza wrote:
- > "Records coming back from Germany.
- > Records from parishes belonging before the war
- > to the Deutsche Reich will be transferred by the
- > German Catholic Church to the Polish one. It was
- > informed by spokesman of the German Bishops
- > Conference dr Rudolf Hamerschmidt. Almost 4000
- > books were taken away by the Germans after 1943.
- > Nowadays they are kept in Regensburg. The Polish
- > side first requested the return of these books in 1947,
- > and the discussion in this subject have lasted more than
- > 30 years, off and on. After being transferred to the Poles,
- > the records will be still available for German citizens."

Debbie Greenlee posted the following comment:

- > Some of you may not realize the importance of the return
- > of the records from Regensburg, Germany as posted by
- > Roman Kaszycki.

- > During WWII the Nazis removed records from some Catholic
- > churches in Poland (and probably other records as well). These
- > missing records were not duplicated and placed in the diocesan
- > archives and of course, LDS has not filmed them. It seems that
- > now these Polish records are being returned to their homeland.
- > There isn't an indication as to where these books will be archived
- > however.
- >
- > It was possible to request a search of the Regensburg records via
- > mail and I think e-mail (it's been a while since I contacted them)
- > before now. I know the records for the parish of Brodnica in Torun~
- > archdiocese (Chel~mno previously) were taken to Regensburg. This

- > Brodnica was in old woj. Torun~.
- > If anyone else knows which records were taken to Regensburg,
- > would you please post to the list?

Ceil Jensen <cjensen@oeonline.com> responded by citing information from:

<http://www.ghi-dc.org/guide13/germarch.html#anchor110>

Among the info she quoted was the following:

- > Holdings:
- > The archive contains the administrative, judicial, and commercial
- > records of the Bischöfliches Ordinariat Regensburg from 1500 to
- > 1945/1961, church books and registers of the bishopric of Regensburg
- > from 1600 to 1890, as well as the church registers of the bishoprics
- > of Danzig, Ermland, und Kulm from 1650 to 1880.

Ceil also cited this Web address:

<http://www.westpreussen.de/kirchenbuecher/kbdirschau.htm#katholisch>

She explained, "Here is a useful chart that states the records of Landkreis Dirschau that were kept at Regensburg."

I wanted to repeat this information because I know many researchers have found that records they wanted to find were supposedly taken to Regensberg, but they have had trouble actually locating them. Ceil's and Debbie's posts may shed some light on this subject. As for the report Roman quoted from *_Gazeta Wyborcza_*, if these records are actually returned to Poland, we'd expect it to be good news for researchers. We'll try to keep up with what happens and pass the word on.

*** COMMENTS ON POLISH MAPS***

[Posted by Dave Obee, of Genealogy Unlimited, to Poland-Roots-L@rootsweb.com as part of a discussion on maps:]

1. Speaking of army maps, there are modern Polish maps in 1:25,000, 1:50,000 and 1:100,000 scales; all of these series were based on mapping done by the Polish army. The 1:100,000 series covers all of the country, and the 1:50,000 series almost all of it. The 1:25,000 series covers bits and pieces; generally, I would put the coverage at no better than 40 per cent. The ones that I've seen are fantastic, with great detail and a very professional appearance. None of the maps in any of these three series are indexed.

2. Regarding the use of a map of Poland instead of an atlas, bear in mind that the best maps are generally 1:650,000 to 1:750,000 scale -- and they fold out to become large, large maps. There are atlases available in 1:300,000 and 1:200,000 scale. With 1:200,000 scale, one square inch on the map covers just over nine square miles. With 1:650,000, one square inch has to cover about 100 square miles. Something has to give, and that something is the names of villages. With 1:650,000 scale, the mapmakers don't have the room to show anywhere near the number shown in the 1:200,000 atlas.

So, an atlas might have 10 places with the same name. A map might have just one. The search is a lot faster with the map, but the information it provides can be very misleading. I have linked my ancestors to four primary villages in Poland -- and only one of those villages is shown on my 1:650,000 map. All four are in my 1:200,000 atlas.

What does all this mean? Use a map of the entire country to see how your village/town/city relates to the rest of the country, to the major cities, the ports, the rivers, etc. Use a large-scale map to get a better sense of the community itself -- depending on scale, it will show the neighborhoods, and sometimes the actual streets your ancestors lived on. Use an atlas and a gazetteer, if possible, to find your village.

Want more on this topic? I've given a presentation on the use of maps at several genealogy conferences in the past couple of years. A version of that talk is on the FEEFHS site:

<http://www.feefhs.org/maps/obee-1.html>

Hope this helps.

Dave Obee, Genealogy Unlimited <daveobee@home.com>
<http://www.GenealogyUnlimited.com>

*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

October 5 - 7, 2001

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

Ramada Inn South Airport
6401 South 13th 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

[Editor's Note: Among the scheduled speakers at this event are Dan Schlyter, of the LDS Family History Library, and Paul S. Valasek of PolishRoots.org, speaking about "Haller's Army," "Tracking the 20th Century Immigrant," and steamships. If you attend, be sure to say hello to Dan and Paul!]

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October 6, 2001

MASS-CONN-ECTION II
New Britain, Connecticut

Last year's first Mass-Conn-ection Polish Genealogical Conference was a big success, so a second one is planned for this year. Like the first, this conference is being sponsored jointly by the Polish Genealogical Societies of Massachusetts and of Connecticut/the Northeast. It will be held on Saturday, October 6, at General Jozef A. Haller PAV Post, Grove & Broad St., New Britain, CT. It will include a Beginners Workshop, and talks on Records in Poland, Polish Surnames, and Using the US National Archives. There will be a Polish lunch! The price is \$35. Conferences on Polish genealogy are not often held in New England, so if you live in the area, this is one you want to attend! You can learn more by e-mailing PGS-CT/NE at: pgsne2@aol.com., or call 860-223-5596.

[Editor's Note: Incidentally, I'll be speaking at this event. And the last I heard, PolishRoots Webmaster Don Szumowski hopes to attend. If you come, be sure to stop by and say hello! -- Fred Hoffman]

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12-14 October 2001

Polish Genealogical Society of America
Annual Fall Conference

"...AND THE RESEARCH GOES ON"

Ramada O'Hare Hotel
6600 N. Mannheim Rd.
Rosemont IL 60018
phone: 1-800-2RAMADA

The keynote speaker will be William F. "Fred" Hoffman, and presentations will be given

by: Maureen Brady, Brian Lenius, Brother Joseph F. Martin, Gayle Schlissel Riley, Maralyn A. Wellauer, and Jan S. Zaleski. Mass will be celebrated at 6 p.m. Saturday evening by Fr. David Turner, O.S.B.

+++ It's not too late to make plans to attend! +++

Contact:

Bernadine Saelens
277 E. Gladys Ave.
Elmhurst IL 60126
phone: 630-833-1355
e-mail Bsaelens@aol.com

or get details at the PGSA site:

<http://pgsa.org/2001Conference.htm>

[Editor's Note: As noted, I'll be giving the keynote speech at this event. If you come, be sure to stop by and say hello! -- Fred Hoffman]

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28 October 2001

39TH ANNUAL STS. CYRIL & METHODIUS
SLAVIC HERITAGE FESTIVAL
Houston Texas

Debbie Greenlee <daveg@airmail.net> informs us that the 39th Annual Sts. Cyril and Methodius Slavic Heritage Festival will be held on Sunday, October 28, 2001 at the University of Houston Athletics/Alumni Center, Yeoman Field House, 3100 Cullen, Houston.

Polkas! Pierogi! Piwo! Spectacular Music, Dancing and Singing! What more could you want?

The festival will feature folk dancers, musicians and singers representing the Croatian, Czech, Polish, Slovenian and Ukrainian Greater Houston Ethnic Communities. There will be ethnic food, cultural exhibits and displays.

Hours are noon - 6:00 p.m.

There will be a traditional Slavic mass at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church on Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

Admission adults - \$4.00 Children under 12 are free.

For more information: 713-821-1188 or 281-474-7266 or email:
<marketing@ieiem.com>

Booths available on a first come, first served basis. Applications must be received by
October 1.

*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

<http://www.geocities.com/polishnobles>

On HERBARZ-L@rootsweb.com Rafal Heydel-Mankoo <rafalhm@hotmail.com>
announced the launch of this new web page, The Polish Aristocracy: The Titled Families
of Poland. It is intended to serve as the Internet's definitive English language guide to the
titled families of Poland. He invites anyone interested in finding or contributing
information on this subject to visit the site and leave comments in the guest book.

<http://www.pgsnys.org/Dziennik/>

David Newman, President of PGS-New York State, posted info on this site to
GENPOL@MAN.TORUN.PL. It provides info on PGS-NYS's progress in indexing
death notices in Buffalo's _Dziennik dla Wszystkich_ newspaper. He says "requests to
search the current index can be made by email or postal mail (postal mail include a
SASE), we will respond with the surnames we have listed at no charge. We can search
females by maiden name when it was given. Please limit request to five surnames. Send
your e-mail requests to: <dziennik@pgsnys.org>"

<http://www.emailchange.com>

Edward Potereiko <edwardp@writeme.com> suggested using this service to eliminate
outdated e-mail address and record address changes. Keeping up with changes in e-mail
addresses is a big problem for anyone who relies on e-mail, so any service that helps do
so is worth investigating.

Need to change _Gen Dobry!_ registration information?

While you're online, bring up this issue. Go to the very last line, where it says "To
unsubscribe..." With some services, if you click on the URL (the long line of words and
letters beginning http://), it may take you directly to BCentral, where you can
unsubscribe, change the e-mail address to which _Gen Dobry!_ is delivered, and so on.

If that link doesn't work, however, you can still use that URL to make the changes you
want. Highlight the URL (hold down "Shift" while you arrow over it, or hold down the

left button of your mouse and drag the cursor over it) and press the keys for CTRL and the letter C at the same time. Then call up your browser and click on the address portion, the part near the top that shows the address of each Website as you visit it. Highlight whatever address is showing, and press Ctrl and V simultaneously. This pastes the BCentral URL into your browser. Press <Enter>. If you've done everything correctly, it will take you directly to your customized page at BCentral, where you can change settings.

If you have any problems, please e-mail us at: <GenDobry_Issues@PolishRoots>.

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