



Gen Dobry!

Gen Dobry! 30 November 2000

***** G E N D O B R Y ! *****

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CONTENTS

Welcome
"I Searched the Web and Found Nothing!"
Feedback from Readers
Genpol Lives!
1793 Land Registry of South Prussia
Source for Krosno Area Research
Review of Book on Polish First Names
Humor
More Useful Web Addresses
To be added to or removed from this mailing list...

*** WELCOME! ***

to the fifth issue of GEN DOBRY!, the e-zine of PolishRoots(tm). If you missed previous issues, you can read them at the PolishRoots site. Thus issue 1 is at:

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

For issues 2, 3, and 4, change the last part of the URL to "_no2.htm" or "_no3.htm" or "_no4.htm," respectively.

Thanks to all who've taken the time to send me your comments, suggestions, and contributions. I was particularly pleased to receive quite a few comments on my piece in issue 4, "Sound Logic In Genealogical Research." I have reprinted excerpts from those notes under "Feedback from Readers." If you have something to contribute, or just something to say, please E-mail me at <WFHoffman@prodigy.net>.

Please don't forget to visit the Website that brings you Gen Dobry!, at this address:

<http://PolishRoots.org>

Among the new additions to this site is the Lwow Cemetery database submitted by Paul S. Valasek <Paval56@oal.com>, with the names of 1,670 defenders of Lwow.

http://PolishRoots.org/lwow_defenders.asp

This is only one of many excellent sources available at PolishRoots.org. More contributions, of material or money, are always welcome!

*** "I Searched the Web and Found Nothing!" ***

I usually devote this space to an essay I've written on some aspect of Polish research. Often these essays get rather long. I want to keep this one short so I can devote more space to the feedback from readers on my essay in issue 4, about name changes "at Ellis Island." The comments of experienced researchers will always be more valuable than my attempts at profound punditry!

I did want to comment briefly, however, on one thing I'm hearing more and more often. Folks write to me, asking about names or particular aspects of their research, and they say "I've searched all over the Web and found nothing!" I always have to resist the temptation to scream, "If all you've done is searched the Web, you haven't done ANY real research yet!"

I don't do that, because it's rude, and it's an overreaction. Such folks are usually newbies, and those of us with research experience easily

forget that newcomers deserve our patience and cheerful help. They may start out with naïve notions, and it's tempting to feel superior to them. But remember, we were all newbies once, and we got over it because no smug, superior jerk jumped in our faces and scared us off. Besides, today's newby, with a little help and encouragement, is tomorrow's seasoned pro. One day a former newby may be the one who can tell you exactly what you need to know to get past your brick wall!

So, if you're an old pro, take a deep breath before you yell at a newby. And if you're a newby, at least try to do a little searching on your own before you ask! Here are a few ideas on how you should look.

* RESEARCH ON THE WEB *

The Web is a great tool for sharing knowledge. Three things, however, are true of any tool: 1) it can be misused; 2) it takes a while to learn to use it well; 3) and any tool is good for some purposes, lousy for others. I've talked about misuse of the Web before, the latter two points deserve a little attention.

Learning to search for things on the Web is partly art, partly science. A methodical approach will help, but you need to develop searching skills, and those don't come right away. No one search engine is going to find everything you want; you want to try several, keeping an eye open for each one's strengths and weaknesses.

For that matter, how you phrase what you're looking for can make a huge difference. Searching for "Polish genealogy" may turn up jillions of sites that don't really help you much. Try to work specifics into your search: maybe "Polish genealogy Galicia Greek Catholic" or "Polish genealogy Prussian army records." If one combination doesn't turn up much, try changing the words or their order. You wouldn't expect to master a lathe in an hour, why would searching the Web be any easier?

Even if what you need is on the Web, as I say, you may have to try a lot of different search engines and different formulations before you find it. If you can't find your great-great-grandfather's birth certificate on the Web, maybe you should ask yourself: why would anybody have put it on the Web? It would be an incredible coincidence if someone just happened to be looking for the same info you are and posted it! It's really asking a lot to expect the very item you need to be served up to you on a platter!

If what you'd like to find isn't available, ask yourself: what source is there that might help me and that someone might have bothered to post? Maybe instead of searching for an ancestor, you should search for the place he came from. A village that was home to a number of individuals is

a lot more likely to have attracted someone else's attention than your particular ancestor is. Finding info on his village, however, may lead you to a source that will mention him.

And never forget: a lot of things just aren't on the Web, and won't be soon. The info you need, if it exists, lies on jillions of pieces of paper kept in a jillion different places. Most of that material still hasn't been put in digital form, and it may take a while to get them on the Web. It may take a long while!

* START WITH THE WEB, BUT DON'T END THERE! *

Don't misunderstand me. If you're just starting, sure, why not plug your name into a search engine and see what shows up? Try different spellings. Add other facts you know to your search target. Experiment, get creative! Just DON'T get discouraged if you come up empty, especially right away.

One thing I promise: sooner or later, no matter how much you may or may not find on the Web, you will have to get off your butt and go do some "real" research. If all you've done is search the Web, you've only just begun. It's a good beginning, maybe, but it's still just a start. Don't let it end there!

*** FEEDBACK FROM READERS ***

[Editor: I received really good comments on the subject of name changes, especially the myth of wholesale changes at Ellis Island. Thanks to all who wrote, whether your comments appear here or not!]

Subject: Sound Logic In Genealogical Research
From: Laurence Krupnak <Lkrupnak@erols.com>

In the INS web page:

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/history/articles/NAMES.htm>

From: T. Grant Maple <tgmapple@foxinternet.net>
Subject: Modification of Names

A possible explanation for modification of names by immigration officials

could be lack of familiarity with the script used in writing particulars on the I.D. forms the immigrant brought from his place of origin. The specially accented characters used in various European languages might also be a factor.

Subject: My "Ellis Island Name Change" experience
From: "ROXANE GEHMAN" <rgehman.ihb@PRODIGY.NET>

My aunt (paternal side) had begun a short SEPIN family history project circa 1980. She gathered vitals and addresses for our SEPIN family and published and distributed in a folder to heads of homes. She had said that our SEPIN name had been changed at Ellis Island by the authorities when gr-gramps and gram immigrated in 1905. She said our last name had been SEPIAL and none of us could imagine why the INS would change the name to SEPIN - it never made any sense to me at all!

Well, this year I began an in-depth family history research into the SEPIN side of the family. I found our name had been SEPIOL, proven from their Hungarian Marriage Registry extract and the fact that there about 1,000 occurrences of SEPIOL in Poland with several spelling/diacritical marks variations (learned this from Joe Armata). Could be one of the variations in Polish - don't know for sure?

As I progressed with my research I found 2 baptism register entries for the first 2 American-born children of my gr-grands in Milwaukee, WI, at St. Stephen Martyr Catholic Church. These entries are written in Czech and the surname appears to be spelled SEPIA~L, with the mark being a tilde above the "a". Don't know if that is how the Czechs translated the Hungarian spelling of SEPIOL yet...

I have proven that they were in Milwaukee from 1908-1911 by using the City Directories. And -- here is the clincher -- the 1911 directory listed Albert SEPIN and Albert SEPIAL, both my gr-gramps! He did not change their surname until 1911! Therefore, it could not possibly have been changed by the INS at Ellis Island!

I submitted a research request to the Golda Meir Library to search for a legal name change document for Albert. However, they found no records at all concerning his name change. Therefore, for now, I have concluded that he changed his name outside of the courts. And, Rosemary Chorzempa's Polish Roots does mention that some immigrants changed their names after arriving in the USA to reflect their new life. Could be his reason - don't know...

I have learned from you and many other wonderful genealogy experts that we should listen to the family traditions and use them as clues to prove/disprove them and hopefully get to the facts because of such clues. But never include them as fact based solely on hearsay!

Thank you for including this info - I hope it helps other to dig deeper and find the truth rather than taking the easy route of blaming the INS for the name change and accepting such "tradition" - they could be missing out on much family history!

Subject: Mangled Polish Names
From: "Jerry S. Kucharski FICF" <jskucharski@prcuofa.org>

I have been doing genealogical research for many years. I have come to a conclusion based on evidence that I have found to be true in many instances.

My grandfather and his brothers came from Hamburg, Germany to the U.S port of Baltimore at on different ships in a one-year period. I do have the Emigration listing from Hamburg. The names were listed correctly at that point as Borzyczkowski. At the port of Baltimore the immigration list has them listed by the names of Borzyczkowski, Borzyckowski, and Borzyszkowski. On various records in the U.S. I have found up to 18 different spellings. I have come to the conclusion that many times people would merely write phonetically what they heard.

The same is true for names of towns in Poland. They were written as they heard them. Knowing the Polish language and having a strong background in phonics, I have been very successful in helping people find their ancestral towns in Poland. I look at what letters in the Polish language would have the same or very similar sounds. As I have said, I have been about 98.5% successful in coming up with the correct Polish spellings, which is borne out by the people finding their ancestors in these town records.

Subject: Name Changes
From: Bill Rutkowski <ImogeneRut@aol.com>

Enjoyed your dissertation regarding genealogical research. After the 1893 immigration law went into effect, each passenger had to answer a series of 29 questions (recorded on manifest lists) before boarding the ship. These questions included among others: name, age, sex, marital status,

occupation, nationality, ability to read or write, physical and mental health, last residence, and name and address of nearest relative or friend in the country from which the immigrant came. Immigrants were asked whether they possessed \$30, whether they have ever been in prison, an almshouse, or an institution, or if they were polygamists or anarchists.

Upon landing at Ellis Island they met their first American, an interpreter (the unsung heroes of the entire immigration screening process) who spoke on average 6 languages, but a dozen languages (including dialects) were not uncommon. The first tests were the physical exams, including the dreaded "eye men." They were looking for symptoms of Trachoma - its discovery meant certain deportation.

Immigrants who passed their medical exams were now ready to take the final test from the "primary line" inspector, seated on a high stool with an interpreter at his side and the ship's manifest on a desk in front of him. This questioning process was designed to verify the 29 items of information contained in the manifest. Each inspector had about two minutes to decide whether the immigrant was entitled to land. Nearly all immigrants (98%) were handed landing cards. (Excerpted from _Ellis Island & Statue of Liberty Magazine_.)

Subject: Name changes
From: Bonnie Haugen <Gen01@aol.com>

My husbands family were of Scandinavian descent. Their name when they left Norway was "Gabrielson." They arrived at the port of Hibbing, MN and promptly changed their name to "Haugen" -- to sound more American, we were told. The family left in Norway changed their name to Haugen also. The Haugen name means "house on a hill," and they were from the hilly country of Norway. I am sure there were others that changed their names to be a part of their new country of opportunity.

Subject: Names!
From: JanBirkner@aol.com

Here is an example of name changing, where and how!

My grandfather was Julian Lambertovich MIERZEJEWSKI. He could read and write, English, Russian and Polish. He was born in 1886 in the Wolyn area of Poland. This area was controlled by the Russians. In 1908 he went into the Russian Army. In 1911, he was discharged, and in 1912 he sailed for

the U.S.

His name, on his military papers was MIERZEJEWSKI, his name on his passport was MERSHIEVSKY. His name on his marriage record, in Chelsea, MA 1913 was MIERZEJEWSKI. His name on the 1920 census was MARISIESKI, and his name on his tombstone is MIZEJEWSKI.

When I was searching for a ship manifest for him, I kept in mind that the variants in spelling could have changed the Soundex code, but I searched for 10 years without finding him! Finally, I came across a note I had made for someone named MORSHEVSKY, I checked it out, and sure enough, there he was!

That name change came from his papers, which he had with him on arrival. The passport spelled it MERSHIEVSKY, and that's what it was on the ship manifest. BUT! The transcription of the Soundex indexes was done by people, and the person transcribing grandpa's made an error in spelling! So, that accounts for that spelling. The census record was probably done by someone who didn't speak Polish, and so he wrote what he heard, and spelled it in English. The tombstone? I'm still trying to figure that one out!! MIZEJEWSKi is the name my father used, it is the name I was born to, but why?

Obviously, grandpa didn't change his name to make it sound more American, or to make it easier for people to say it. MIZEJEWSKI is a Polish name. I think that it was spelled that way by the Polish nuns, when my dad went to school, and it stuck.

What I'm trying to get at here is that name changes sometimes came about because official documents had the name spelled a certain way, and some immigrants who were a bit afraid of authority didn't want to make waves to have the name spelled right. Some couldn't read or write, and so didn't even know their names were spelled wrong in the first place!

So ... how come my dad's birth certificate gives his name as MERJEWSKY??

Subj: Gen Dobry! Vol. 1, # 4

From: Fr. David Turner, O.S.B. <chipmonk@megsinet.net>

Well, let's not be so ready and willing to NOT point fingers at mistakes, especially in spelling! I have paper to prove my point! My grandfather was PAWEL LENCZYK. His marriage record in the St. John Cantius marriage book is spelled correctly. However, I got a copy of his marriage license from Cook County, Illinois, (downtown Chicago is the county building) where his

name is written as PAWEL LINSCH. I know well how many times with these illiterate people the clerk spelled as the clerk heard! The same priest who entered the sacrament in the marriage book (where he wrote LENCZYK) signed the license as my grandfather's name being Linsch. There is also a discrepancy in the dates! I did mention this in my lecture for the PGSA in early October! Remember there is a penalty for late returns of licenses! If he let some sit on his desk until he got "a round tuit" he well could have advanced the date to keep him from being fined! But then, some years ago a young lad come to our university (Benedictine U) as a first-year student, and told me his name was O'Brochta! "Fie on you," said I! Yes, he admitted he was Polish, but that was the way the name was spelled at Ellis Island! Least that was what he maintained!

*** GENPOL LIVES! ***

[Editor: As we mentioned in the last issue, the server used by the Polish genealogy list Genpol has shut down, so a new server had to be found. Listowner Kaj Malachowski sent this note via Genpol:]

Descendants!, once more I apologize for all the inconvenience our migration might have produced for some of us. And thank you very much for your patience, your suggestions, all the warm support letters and test-confirmations I received from you. I am sorry that I couldn't reply privately to all these letters. Let this be a general "thank you". IT SEEMS THAT EVERYTHING IS OK NOW, PLEASE VISIT OUR NEW HOME AT:

<http://www.man.torun.pl/archives/genpol.html>

*** 1793 LAND REGISTRY OF SOUTH PRUSSIA ***

[Editor: James Birkholz <birchwd@flash.net>, list manager of POSEN-L@rootsweb.com, posted this note on Posen-L. It tells of a project many Polish researchers would want to know about, so I wanted to pass the word on.]

Many of us have already contributed funds to this project. But we have many new subscribers, so I'm reposting the info about it. Note that in 1793, the area that was the Prussian province of Posen in the 1800's, was called "South Prussia". - James Birkholz.

=====

I want to invite you to contribute to a fund for obtaining an important research document. Specifically, it is the 1793 land registry of South Prussia. I have known about this document for about a year now and have worked with a researcher in Poland in its discovery. I have learned that it is possible to make paper copies of these 200 year old documents. The work will begin soon. Land records, as you may know, provides only the name of the owner, usually the father. Other family members are listed statistically. However, this allows the surnames to be used as a kind of census because it gives all the names of the fathers in the towns in which the registry was conducted. In this case it was the area known as South Prussia as it existed after the second partition of Poland in 1793. After annexing this central part of Poland, the Prussians then conducted a tax registration which took place 1793/4. More information on the area of South Prussia is described in the following paragraph.

South Prussia is the territory created by the second partition of Poland and covered the area south of the Netze District on the north, continuing to the east on the southern side of the Vistula river to the 20th degree. On the southwestern border it proceeded from the Brandenburg border to the Silesian border and continued east to the Pilica river until it meets the Vistula river south of Warsaw at about the 20th degree.

The South Prussian land registry of 1793 will cost us \$6,000.00-\$8,000.00. It has over 3,000 towns and each town will average 4-6 pages. So if you want to see a document from a later time than the 1772 land registry than this is an opportunity that comes once in a research life time. It has possibilities for many of us who cannot locate our ancestors in the Netze and South Prussian area. We know many of our families moved from West Prussia into Poland by 1790.

It should be noted that the 1793 land registry is a restricted file in Warsaw and you and I would be not be able to view it. Neither should anyone contact the archive because it might disrupt the rapport our researcher has established. Our researcher has developed connections in the archive, is a Polish citizen, and has Ph. D. in History which assists him professionally in gaining research access to the ancient archive in Warsaw.

To contribute to this project please send check or money order to me at my home address. Any questions you may have can be e-mailed to me at: drefs@ix.netcome.com

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Tele.:419 539-9378

*** SOURCE FOR KROSNO AREA RESEARCH ***

From: "James Tye" <Kurpie@home.com>

Thought I would call your attention to a most interesting work entitled
Opis Powiatu Krosnienskigo pod wzgledem Geograficzno-Historycznym, Ks.
Wladyslaw Sarna, 1898, reprint Krosno, 1997. This work written originally
in Szebnie, Rzeszow, Poland in 1898 gives a brief history of the towns and
villages from the 1500's to 1898. Names of residents are also listed.

I obtained a copy through the following for a cost of \$18.90 plus \$5.00
for shipping and handling:

Polish Bookstore & Publishing
135 A. India Street
Brooklyn, New York 11222
email: ASzymanik@aol.com

For those who may have relatives in the Krosno area, the following
villages & towns are featured:

Bajdy, Barwinek, Bialobrzegi, Bobrka, Bonarowka, Borek, Bratkowna,
Cergowa, Ciechania, Chlebna, Chorkowka, Chyrowa, Czarnorzeki, Dlugie,
Dobieszyn, Draganowa, Dukla, Faliszowka, Glojsce, Glowienka, Huta
polanska, Iskrzynia, Iwla, Iwonicz, Jasionka, Jaszczew, Jedlicze,
Kobylany, Kombornia, Kopytowa, Korczynna, Krasna, Kroscienko nizna,
Kroscienko wyzne, Krosno, Lesniowka, Lipowica, Lubatowa, Lubatowka, Leki,
Lezany, Machnowka, Mecinka, Miejsce Piastowe, Moderowka, Mszana, Myscowa,
Nadole, Nizna Laka, Odrzykon, Olchowiec, Piotrowka, Podniebyle, Polanka,
Polany, Poraj, Potok, Rogi, Ropianka, Rowne, Rzepnik, Smereczna, Suchodol,
Sulistrowa, Swiergowia polska, Szczepancowa, Targowiska, Teodorowka,
Trzciana, Turaszowka, Tylawa, Ustrobna, Weglowka, Wietrzno, Wilsznia,
Wojkowka, Wola komborska, Wrocanka, Wrobluk
krolewski, Zarnowiec, Zboiska, Zeglce, Zrecin

The home page of the Polish National Alliance Lodge 3216 which has placed
the index to this work is as follows:

<http://www.ourfrontporch.com/osi/PNA>

You would then select Polish Genealogy; once you have done this, select
Surnames 1 (book listing) at bottom of the page.

*** REVIEW OF BOOK ON POLISH FIRST NAMES ***

Edwin D. Lawson <edlawson@netsync.net>, a scholar specializing in name origins and study, reviewed a book on Polish first names for Amazon.com. He kindly offered to share the review with us:

Polish First Names. By Sophie Hodorowicz Knab. New York: Hippocrene [Books][171 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016]. 2000. Pp. 123. \$11.95 hardcover.

Polish First Names starts off with a brief history of Polish names. The first period is from ancient times to the acceptance of Christianity in 966; the second is from 966 to the present. The importance of the baptismal saint is explained, that is, the feast day for the saint which falls on the date of the child's birth (or the feast day of the saint the parents have chosen). The child would fall under the protection of that saint.

There are about 200 main entries for girls' names and about 250 for boys. The entries list the name in Polish, the English equivalent if there is one, the language of origin, the meaning, and some background information. If there are diminutives, they are listed.

Finally, the feast days for the name are given (some names have more than one feast day). For example, Urszula:

Ursula, Ursuline, Orsula. Latin. "Little bear." St. Ursula was a 4th century martyr. In spite of the Ursuline Order, the name was not especially popular in earlier centuries. It was considered old-fashioned until the end of World War II, when it began to increase in popularity.
DIMINUTIVES: Ula, Uleczka, Ulka
FEAST DAY: October 21

Among the language sources of the names are: Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Latin, Old German, Slavic, and Swedish. While there are many books on first names and many that include at least some Polish names, this is the most complete book on Polish names, at least in English, that I have seen. This publication will be welcomed by genealogists, onomasts, and those interested in Polish culture. It is a fine contribution and should be welcomed by libraries with onomastic and genealogical collections. The author, heritage editor for the Polish-American Journal, is to be commended.

*** HUMOR ***

Patrick A. Bohinski <Pat_Boh@prodigy.net> posted this on
POLAND-ROOTS-L@rootsweb.com, even though it's somewhat off-topic, because
he thought a little humor is never out of place. I agree, and thought you
might enjoy reading it, too.

Many, many years ago
when I was twenty-three,
I got married to a widow
who was pretty as could be.

This widow had a grown-up daughter
who had hair of red.
My father fell in love with her,
and soon the two were wed.

This made my dad my son-in-law
And changed my very life.
My daughter was my mother,
For she was my father's wife.

To complicate the matters worse,
Although it brought me joy,
I soon became the father
Of a bouncing baby boy.

My little baby then became
A brother-in-law to dad.
And so became my uncle,
Though it made me very sad.

For if he was my uncle,
Then that also made him brother
To the widow's grown-up daughter
Who, of course, was my step-mother.

Father's wife then had a son,
Who kept them on the run.
And he became my grandson,
For he was my daughter's son.

My wife is now my mother's mother
And it makes me blue.
Because, although she is my wife,
She is my grandma too.

If my wife is my grandmother,
Then I am her grandchild.
And every time I think of it,
It simply drives me wild.

For now I have become
The strangest case you ever saw.
As the husband of my grandmother,
I am my own grandpa.

*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

<http://www.polishnews.com/>
<http://www.se.com.pl/Iso/dzisiaj/main.asp>
<http://www.zw.com.pl/>
<http://polityka.onet.pl/wnumerze.asp>

On Herbarz-L Jozef A. Wawrzak listed these sites as sources for reading Polish newspapers online. He also said you can find news on Polish servers such as: <http://onet.pl/> and <http://www.wp.pl/>.

<http://hum.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp/POL-AM/progenitors.htm>

This is Rafal Prinke's new Web page on prominent early Polish immigrants to America.

<http://www.mapapolski.pl/>

On Genpol Guido Buldrini <buldrini@TIN.IT> recommended this as a good site for finding various info on locations. He explains that you "just type the name, without diacritics (i.e. using the English alphabet) under MIESCOWOSC, and click POKAZ. You will find postal code, województwo (province), powiat (county), town, coordinates." For Bielsk Podlaski, for instance:

17-100 do 17-102 BIELSK PODLASKI
miasto powiatowe
województwo: podlaskie
powiat: bielski
gmina: Bielsk Podlaski
23 degrees 12' E 52 degrees 46' N

<http://www.pilot.pl/dokladny.php3>

On Poland-Roots-L@rootsweb.com, Lorie <lorie@wdn.com> noted that some folks had trouble accessing the Mapapolski site Guido mentioned, and explained that these addresses will take you right to the window to search

for your town.

<http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/rg/guide/WLPolish18.asp>

On POLAND-ROOTS-L@rootsweb.com Joseph Novotka <novotka@earthlink.net> recommended this as a very useful site. "It has a great Research Guide for translating Polish Names, Places, Numbers, Months, Dates, Time, and an Alphabetized list of Polish to English Translations for many words used in genealogy work."

<http://www.panoramafirm.com.pl/index.php?version=en>

This site offers links to a number of different sources of Polish Websites, E-mail addresses, etc. The phone directories listed are for organizations, companies, etc. - more of a Yellow Pages than a White Pages, so you won't find any individuals' addresses or phone numbers, unless they are listed in the Yellow Pages under their businesses. But imaginative use of the databases available there may help you find something really helpful.

To be added to or removed from this mailing list, contact
[<webmaster@PolishRoots.org>](mailto:webmaster@PolishRoots.org)

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