



Gen Dobry!

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***** POLISH PIONEERS: THE PUSH AFTER WORLD WAR I TO THE KRESY *****

by Eve Jesionka Jankowicz <ejankowicz@aol.com>

Editor—In the October 2004 issue of Gen Dobry!, Margaret Sullivan <hjmcs@optonline.net> suggested we run an article about the settling of Poland’s “eastern frontier,” the region Poles call Kresy. At the time I explained I didn’t feel I knew enough to write a good article on the subject, but promised to look for opportunities to print one.

Then Eve Jankowicz contacted me and said she was willing to try her hand at writing such an article. The result follows, and I think it’s excellent! It’s a bit longer than we usually print, but it has to be somewhat lengthy to provide enough information to be useful. Eve does a great job laying out the history, while keeping it personal by citing relevant facts about her own relatives who lived in the region. I think many of you will enjoy this enormously—and if you want to learn more, Eve provides numerous references to other material you can look up.

Let me add a little background info. The noun kresy means “borderlands” (among other things). It’s pronounced “kres-y,” accent on the first syllable; the final -y sounds kind of like our short “i” as in “chip” or “bit,” not like “ee.” As a general term it applies to any border region, but as a proper noun Kresy usually refers to the territory east of Poland’s current borders, now within eastern Lithuania, Belarus, and western Ukraine. During the early days of the Commonwealth of Two Nations the whole region was ruled by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; but over the centuries much of it came under Polish rule and cultural domination. If you look at a map of Poland as it existed 1921-1939, the Kresy occupied roughly the eastern third of the country.

It’s only a borderland from the Polish perspective, of course; natives to the region would never think of it that way. Non-Poles with roots there may have a different perspective on history, and I would be glad to print or refer readers to sources that give that perspective. But I think Eve has been fair to everyone involved, and does a beautiful job of presenting the region’s past. And its relevance appears on our front pages today, as western and eastern Ukraine struggle with their different pasts and views of the future. The history of this area is important to their future, and ours!

So read, learn a little, and enjoy!

“All nations and all countries have borderlands. Ill-starred and precarious is the lot of the towns and villages of any such borderland. When the winds howl, their buildings’ foundations are the first to be shaken; when the storm clouds gather, their cornfields the first to be lashed; when the thunderclaps roll, their towers and houses the first to be buffeted. Even while back there, at the core of a nation’s culture, the sun may continue to smile on the people, here black night may still hold sway. And when the time comes when fate requires that winter shroud the entire state with snow—it’s here—in the borderlands—that frost and ice prove the most severe; right here where people catch their breath, where the life-blood freezes in their veins.”

“Ill-starred indeed are the borderlands. And yet it is also here where rests the truest contentment. A contentment emanating from that certainty gained through long-suffering and sacrifice and not engendered by a boastfulness of having wrestled with fate and won. It is a tender, comfortable contentment, almost childlike in its naïveté, which wells up from sublime depths of the native culture itself.”

– Marshal Józef Piłsudski, 11 October 1919.¹

The *Kresy*, or Eastern Borderlands, appearing on the map of pre-World War II Poland, have always been regarded in an almost mythical manner by its diverse population and those familiar with its turbulent history throughout the ages. This is the land Sienkiewicz wrote of in the first and third of his Nobel prize-winning historical novels known as “The Trilogy,” *Ogniem i mieczem* [*With Fire and Sword*] and *Pan Wołodyjowski* [in English translation renamed *Fire in the Steppe*]. Although ethnic Poles had lived here for centuries, on the whole they were always in the minority in this land, for it was loved with just as much fervor by Ukrainians in the southern and central areas. It was also their shared homeland, represented in literature by Gogol’s extremely popular *Taras Bulba*.

Poland’s eastern frontier can be compared to the “Wild West” of the 19th-century United States, with one major difference—the wildness of *Kresy* land began much earlier and lasted for a much longer time period in history. As all those with roots in Poland know, its history is very complicated. For those whose ancestors hailed from the *Kresy* area, history is an even more complicated affair.

Like Poland itself, the *Kresy* borders and its provinces have always been fluid and have drastically changed throughout time. Throughout this article I use Polish spellings of geographical place names, since all fell within Poland’s borders prior to World War II. I am defining the *Kresy* borderlands as the Polish *województwa* (provinces) of Wilno, Nowogródek, Polesie, Wołyń, and Tarnopol, since these are the provinces that shared their eastern borders with Russia. Now these provinces lie within territory of the countries of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. Because I am most familiar with the southern *Kresy województwa* of Tarnopol and Stanisławów since branches of my family lived there, and because, for unknown reasons, so little has been documented about the interwar colonies in the southeastern provinces, I will be concentrating on this area. These *województwa* were the eastern portion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s Crownland known as *Galicia*—now western Ukraine. I was told by a native-born Ukrainian professor that this area of her country, the former southeastern interwar Poland where my family lived, is the most beautiful in today’s Ukraine.

Let me state that there is no more complicated time period in Poland’s *Kresy* history to write about than the years immediately following the first World War. This article cannot possibly be all-encompassing and comprehensive, or I would be writing a book. Researchers wanting to learn more about this fascinating area and time period in Poland’s history will have to delve further.

Kresy land has always been a fiercely disputed battleground from time immemorial, where the blood of its many diverse people has been spilled. During more modern times, some of the fiercest and bloodiest battles of both World Wars were fought on the borderlands and were rarely if ever reported in the West, just as the suffering of its people throughout time was also largely unreported and remains unknown to most of the world to this day. In fact, *Kresy* land was part of the infamous “Eastern Front” of both World Wars.

Why was this land fought over to the death for so many centuries? Primarily this was due to *Kresy*’s geographical location, which could be more unfortunate even than “mainland” Poland’s, if that is possible. It was, after all, a border, and a very long one at that. A person—or army—could not get to Russia, Poland, or Europe without first crossing *Kresy* land. Many initial battles were fought on the borderlands rather than in either Russia or Poland because the first line of defense is always at a country’s borders. In fact *Kresy* has long been a buffer zone between Poland and Russia.

This land was home to many diverse, freedom-loving ethnic groups, primarily Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Cossacks, Tatars, and others throughout the centuries. At various

times throughout history, all these groups claimed *Kresy*, or parts of it, as theirs and theirs alone. It is for precisely this reason that fighting and wars erupted from time to time.

On the other hand, perhaps *Kresy* was one of the first true melting pots of the world. Considering that it was such an ethnically diverse land, it is surprising that more fighting did not occur. This could be due in part to the natural ethnic mixing by intermarriage that occurred throughout the ages.

Kresy's southern provinces contain what is said to be the most fertile soil on earth. Legend has it that Hitler so prized this soil that he had many tons of it transported to Germany during World War II.

During World War I, many had fought long and hard for the three partitioning powers on *Kresy* soil, and my grandfather, Maksymilian Jesionka (b. 1889, Cerekiew, Bochnia, Kraków) was among them. He was a sergeant in one of Austria's cavalry regiments, Ulanenregiment Ritter von Brudermann No. 1. Somehow during the war my grandparents met and became engaged to be married. My grandmother, Karolina Harasymowicz (b. 1891, Usznia, Złoczów, Tarnopol) was *Kresy*-born and bred. She was a woman ahead of her time, a sole proprietor of a shop in the Złoczów, Tarnopol area. Even though my father mentioned this many times throughout the years, it is only now after studying Polish history that I realize just how strong and ahead of her time my *babcia* was.

Approximately 400,000 soon-to-be Polish citizens died fighting for Poland's three partitioning powers in World War I.² On 11 November 1918, the war officially ended. Ever since, this date is celebrated as Independence Day in Poland. How happy Poland must have been to be free and whole again after suffering more than 125 years of partitions! Peace, however, was extremely short-lived for much of the eastern borderlands and a little later, Poland itself.

Kresy still had pockets of heavy fighting where Ukrainian nationalists fought to secure an independent Ukraine. Other factions entered the fray with their own nationalistic hopes. It was in this climate of euphoric Polish freedom, still uncertain in *Kresy*, that my grandparents married on 23 November 1918 in the Roman Catholic Church in Biały Kamień, Złoczów, Tarnopol. (Matthew Bielawa has a photo of the church on his site at <http://www.halgai.com/photobk.html>)

So Poland's newfound peace was not to last for long. Freedom was threatened by Bolshevik Russia, whose Red Army advanced on the heels of the defeated, barely gone German forces. Almost at once, the reborn country was forced to defend herself again, and feelings of patriotism reached a feverish pitch as Poland braced itself for yet another war.

The first order of business had to be the formation of a large national army, even though Poland had many other pressing and immediate problems. From all over reborn Poland they came. Over 6,000 mostly young, primarily single men answered Józef Piłsudski's call to service and joined his famous Legions at once in November 1918. Their numbers swelled to 900,000 by July 1920.³ Some of them were already veterans of World War I. Some had already immigrated to the United States or Canada and had enlisted there to fight for Poland in Haller's Army. The majority, however, were very young, in their teen years or early twenties, and not yet tried in warfare. My grandfather's fighting days were over due to a shrapnel wound sustained in battle. Unbeknownst to him at the time, 24 years in the future he would again try to serve his country.

*** "To be or not to be: That is the question." ***

The Polish-Russian War, sometimes known as the Polish-Bolshevik War or Russo-Polish War, is another largely unknown but important chapter in world history. It was the last cavalry-

fought war in the world, a highly mobile war fought over many fronts and covering great territorial distances. Poland had armored trains in this war, which I picture as exact replicas of Strelnikov's train in the film *Dr. Zhivago*—except in the Polish version, the Eagle was proudly unfurled.⁴

Józef Piłsudski was a genius. He had a vision for a strong and independent Poland far into the future, a Poland which would never avert its eyes from its powerful neighbors, Russia and Germany. He realized that there was greater strength in numbers. To him, Poland and its neighbors' only hope would be the unification of the many ethnic groups inhabiting the borderlands. To this end he sought to form a Polish federation, an alliance, where each nationality would be free and equally share a voice in government. This came to be known as the "Jagiellonian Idea" which would roughly encompass Poland's borders during the time of Jagiełło and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1920 Poland formally recognized independent Ukraine, and a military alliance was signed with Symon Petliura. Ukrainians and Poles, together in this war, mutually fought against Red Russia.⁵

Interspersed with planning, training, and warfare, Poland's diplomats, led by Marshal Piłsudski, still sought the precise frontier boundaries of their reborn country through the Entente powers of World War I. The Bolsheviks ignored their findings. One is simply astounded by the many different delineations, fronts, and borders shown on the map of *Kresy* for the five years immediately following World War I.⁶

Living in this ever-changing map in Usznia, Złoczów, Tarnopol, were the newlyweds, my grandparents, Maksymilian and Karolina Jesionka.

All of Europe watched the Polish-Russian War with great apprehension because if, as Lenin said, "bourgeois Poland" should fall, chances are it would only be a matter of time before the Bolshevik revolution reached their own borders.⁷ Let us not forget that besides Poland, much of the rest of Europe was also in various stages of disarray at this time. The continent had just been through a major world war and its subsequent destruction. Besides this, starvation, malnutrition, and disease held sway in the war torn countries, including Poland. The entire world was in the death throes of a flu epidemic in which approximately 20 million people perished.

For the sake of brevity (since the stories of this war could fill many a book), in August 1920 Polish forces soundly trounced the Russians near Warsaw in the battle known as the "Miracle on the Vistula" (*Vistula* is the Anglicized name of the river Poles call *Wisła*). This was to be the last cavalry battle of modern times, with a total of 40,000 mounted horsemen fighting.⁸ Poland drove its victory home with another decisive win in September. The Polish-Russian War officially ended on 18 March 1921 with the Treaty of Riga.

* Eastward, Ho! *

"This land, exhausted by the sowing of bloody wars, awaits the planting of peace; awaits those who will exchange the sword for the plowshare, and I should count it an honor if, in the future, you would achieve as many victories for peace as you have gained in battle."

— Marszałek Jozef Piłsudski, date unknown⁹

With war always comes great change. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Poland, since now the country was finally both at peace and a free, sovereign nation.

For their military service, some veterans were granted land in *Kresy*, yet others purchased their land. Again from all over Poland they came, this time to stake their claim in *Kresy*, the new country's eastern frontier. At first most men came alone, but some were newly married or had left

their fiancées back in the mainland until becoming established. Some married local *Kresy* women like my grandfather and granduncles, Michał Jesionka (b. 1894, Czaślawice, Bochnia) who had also fought for Austria in World War I, and his brother Feliks Jesionka (b. 1902, Czaślawice, Bochnia). My granduncles had both settled in Czabarówka, Kopyczyńce, Tarnopol.

It was a new age and a new Poland, and life just could not be better. What an exciting time in Poland's history—to be young, alive, and free—to strike out on the eastern frontier as newlyweds to begin a lifetime of happiness.

Like my grandfather and his brothers, the vast majority of pioneer settlers after World War I were from elsewhere in Poland, although my *dziadek* had emigrated to *Kresy* before that war. Sometime before 1910 when my grandfather Maksymilian enlisted in his Austrian cavalry regiment in Lwów, he and most probably his first cousin, Franciszek Jesionka (b. 1891, Besów, Bochnia) left their ancestral home, Cerekiew, where Jesionkas had lived for centuries, for *Kresy*. It is possible that my grandfather's younger twin brothers, Michał and Kazimierz, were with them. Their destination was Lukowiec Żurówski, Rohatyn, Stanisławów, so my relatives had lived in *Kresy* prior to the 1920s when the *Kresy* land rush hit.

Kresy, like the rest of Poland, had always been the destination of colonists of different ethnicities at various times throughout the centuries, with one major difference—since *Kresy* was a borderland and had always been of strategic importance, sometimes the settlements had a military aspect to them.

After all, this vast territory was a border to be protected and guarded, as all countries' borders have been throughout history. For example, even in the 16th century *Kresy* land was used as a buffer zone. For their fighting fire with fire, Cossacks received *Kresy* land grants from the Polish government for their service against the dreaded Tatar horde.¹⁰

Polish colonization of *Kresy* was part of Piłsudski's Jagiellonian plan, but not all politicians or ethnicities agreed with him. His political opponents wanted all ethnic groups to be absorbed into Poland, to become Polonized, rather than each group retaining its ethnic identity while functioning together and living under a Polish umbrella, as Piłsudski envisioned. During this age, ethnic nationalities and aspirations had just been revealed, for these groups were also finally free after living under the partitioning powers for so long.

At this time Poland's largest minority group were the Ukrainians, who numbered over 4 million and were living primarily in the southeastern *Kresy województwa* of Tarnopol, Stanisławów, Lwów, and slightly to the north, in Wołyń. To the detriment of Poland and all its ethnic nationalities, Piłsudski's dream, in retrospect, did not stand a chance. But neither did his opposition's of, at times, stringent Polonization, nor Poland's minorities' desire for their own independent nation-states. It seems likely that if these smaller countries had formed, all would have been doomed to fail, including Poland, for "United we stand—divided we fall."

Land reform was used as a political pawn on more than one occasion through the interwar years; however, the *Sejm* "eagerly" passed the first land reform act on 17 December 1920.^{11, 12} In the former Galician lands, most of the land was voluntarily turned over to the government of Poland by its former owners with large holdings.

Most of the land in the northern and central *Kresy* areas was formerly owned by the Czars of Russia and other large Russian landowners. The purpose of Polish settlement was to increase the number of Poles living in *Kresy* and to spread the Polish way of life throughout the region, not through Polonization, but hopefully through harmonic coexistence, mutual understanding, and help.

Here is the percentage of ethnic Poles residing in the southeastern *powiaty* (counties) where my family members lived during the inter-war years from the Census of 1931:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Brody, Tarnopol | 36.0% |
| Kałuż, Stanisławów | 18.2% |
| Kopyczyńce, Tarnopol | 43.1% |
| Rohatyn, Stanisławów | 28.4% |
| Złoczów, Tarnopol | 47.7% ¹³ |

Beginning in 1921, the veterans who had received land grants on the eastern frontier were sometimes given an old plow or a horse, but usually land only. Sometimes the land granted had been a former World War I battleground with large craters left by the huge cannon of that war; but other than this, it was untouched, virgin land. It was up to the pioneers to build and establish their *kolonia* (colony) or *osada* (settlement) themselves.

Sometimes a settlement's inhabitants were all veterans from a particular brigade who had served together during wartime. Sometimes the colonists varied in their former military rank from general to private. Primarily ethnic Poles lived in the colonies. There were also a few veterans from other countries or ethnic nationalities who had fought for Poland and received land grants.

Life in these early years was extremely difficult because the settlers were starting with a clean slate, from scratch. First they had to build their houses while simultaneously clearing the land to establish their crops which would become the majority's livelihood. Tarnopol land was very fertile and was widely known for its fruit, so besides the normal crops, the fruit trees had to be planted since they would not immediately yield results.

Besides this, the pioneer settlers would have to build their churches and schools and establish the governmental and other infrastructure of the *kolonia*. Since some were not carpenters or builders previous to their emigration, some of the earliest houses were slipshod affairs and little more than temporary shelter, just as they were in the pioneer days of the United States. New settlers were moving in all the time. After a while land became available for purchase.

Some did not know how to farm, but they learned from those with more experience, and the Polish government also had farm agents throughout the frontier. These were like the county farm agents still present in the United States today, whose purpose was to give advice to farmers on the latest methods or to provide general help. The settlers also formed farming cooperatives. By pooling their crops, they had much more of a financial impact. Again, there is strength in numbers.

The pioneering life was too much for some, so they sold or let their land to others, moving back to Poland proper. Still others moved to nearby towns and rented their farms. The majority, however, "toughed out" the early years and remained.

By 1923 my grandparents had moved to Sassów, Złoczów, Tarnopol, where they built a brick two-family house that still stands today. By this time they had three young daughters, Maria, Cecylia, and Teresa. In Czabarówka, my granduncle Michał and his first wife also had three young children, Maria, Tadeusz, and Mieczysław.

In 1925 the last land reform bill was passed by the *Sejm*. In "the early 1920s Ukrainian nationalists waged an underground war against" Poland.¹⁴ There was agitation on the shared Polish eastern border with Soviet Russia, which was probably a combination of Soviet manipulation of the local people plus border skirmishes on both sides. A special border force was created to deal with this, some of who were also *osadnicy* (settlers). Much of the rest of Europe was undergoing great internal strife and social upheaval. The entire world experienced the Great Depression, which hit continental Europe much earlier than the United States.

Inter-ethnic relations must not have affected my Jesionka families in *Kresy* at this point in time. All must have been tranquil because sometime after 1927 my grandparents left Sassów and moved to Hallerczyn, a *kolonia* next to the village of Wysocko in the *powiat* of Brody. Prior to

their move, they had two more children, Lucja and Kazimierz. My grandparents purchased property and had their house and mill built in Hallerczyn. Later the two youngest children, my father, Adam, and his sister, Aniela, were born there.

Hallerczyn was named after Gen. Józef Haller of World War I Haller's "Blue Army" fame. Gen. Haller had voluntarily turned over his land in Tarnopol to the Polish government as part of the much-needed land reform. Gen. Haller attended the dedication ceremony of his namesake *kolonia*, which was an important event, observed by the colonists with much pomp. One of my aunts wrote a dedication poem to Gen. Haller which was recited, and he took refreshment in my grandparents' home.

Of utmost importance to all colonists in eastern Poland was the Roman Catholic Church, for they were devout worshippers. My grandfather was instrumental in the church building project in Hallerczyn, where all Roman Catholics of nearby villages and colonies worshipped. Worshippers at Hallerczyn's church totaled 1,674, where Roman Catholics in the general vicinity were barely 15 percent of the total population.¹⁵

Hallerczyn is not listed in the *1929 Business Directory of Poland*, probably because it was too new and was barely established at that time. Wysocko is listed there with 873 residents, and most probably Hallerczyn's colonists were included in this figure. By 1939 the combined population of Hallerczyn and Wysocko increased to over 1,000.¹⁶

In Czabarówka my granduncle Feliks had married Maria Horodyska and their children Edward and Krystyna were born. Unfortunately my granduncle Michał's first wife had died. Sometime later he married Rozalia Filas (b. 1904, Spytkowice, Galicia), and they had three sons, Adam, Józef, and Kazimierz. Czabarówka, where my two granduncles lived with their families, was not a *kolonia* but was already on the map and established prior to World War I, and still exists today. However, my granduncles were both considered settlers, *osadnicy*, living a distance outside the village. Czabarówka was a stone's throw from the pre-Treaty of Riga Russian border.

*** Were Your Ancestors Colonists/Settlers in Kresy? ***

Eastern Poland is an area that could easily be overlooked by family historians as an area of, in this case, emigration, versus immigration. As written above, *Kresy* has always been a choice destination of pioneering spirits throughout time. But chances are the settlements begun by those who colonized the area prior to World War I can still be found on maps today, for yesterday's settlements are today's towns, whereas the interwar colonies begun by people such as my grandparents cannot.

Throughout this article the words "colonists" and "settlers" have been used interchangeably, but let us now discuss the differences in terminology used by residents of eastern Poland between the wars. In the south, the geographical place of residence was usually called a *kolonia*, "colony" in English. You will sometimes find the word *kolonia* on pre-World War II maps when they have been included. "Colonists" or *koloniści* (the plural form of *kolonista*, "colonist") was used in the south. In the north and central areas, the place of residence was known as an *osada*, "settlement" in English. Sometimes the abbreviation *Os.*, will be found on documents, even in the south.

The word *osadnik*, "settler," seems to have been universally used by all to describe the head of household, rather than *kolonista*. Many in the south never used the word *Kresy* to describe where they lived in eastern Poland.

In trying to determine if your interwar ancestors were settlers/colonists in *Kresy*, here are some clues—but please note that these are general guidelines and exceptions will apply:

- You cannot locate their place of residence on any modern map printed after World War II.
- You have determined that, using pre-1914 maps, the colony would be in very close proximity to the Russian border. “As the crow flies,” Hallerczyn would have been 11 kilometers, approximately 6.84 miles, from the Galician/Russian border. Czabarówka was closer still.
- The colony was begun after World War I, usually sometime in the 1920s.
- The settlements sometimes had patriotic-sounding names. For example, many were named after those who figured prominently in World War I. There was even a Wilsona, after President Woodrow Wilson! There are many Piłsudski variations and at least three named after Haller. Cavalry figures importantly as a root word, i.e., Ułanów, Legiony. There were many colonies named after Polish cities: Warszawka, Rzeszówianka, etc. Other than this, normal geographical naming patterns apply.
- Your ancestor was usually either a veteran of World War I, the Polish-Russian War, or both wars, and was usually from elsewhere in Poland prior to the first World War.
- The residents of the *kolonia* were primarily ethnic Poles.

The Piłsudski quote at this article’s beginning describes so perfectly my families’ life after World War I and tells exactly what it meant to live in eastern Poland at that time. Unfortunately the same quotation foreshadows what was to come the colonists’ way during World War II. It has been almost 65 years since the settlers and their children were forcibly deported to Siberia and other areas of the Soviet Union during World War II, and the colonies that they worked so hard to establish were destroyed as if they never were. Their very names and those of their settlements are in danger of being lost forever.

If you have any information regarding the names of interwar colonies in eastern Poland or their settlers’ names, please contact me.

* Source Citations *

¹ Józef Piłsudski, from his speech given at Stefan Batory University, Wilno, at the University’s opening on 11 October 1919. See *Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing In Eastern Poland: Tales of the Deported, 1940-1946*, Association of the Families of the Borderland Settlers, (London: Self-Published, 2000), p. 116, ISBN: 1-8772286-88-7. For more information about the book: <http://www.stalinsethniccleansing.com/>

² Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 195-196

³ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁶ *Ibid.*, “Map 8: Rebirth of the Polish State, 1918-23,” pp. 198-199.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 200, 202-203.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁹ Józef Piłsudski, from his speech to veterans upon awarding land grants, n.d., Assoc. of the Families, *Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing*, p. 485.

¹⁰ Lukowski and Zawadzki, p. 60.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

¹² Assoc. of the Families, *Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing*, p. 9.

¹³ Paul Havers, "Eastern Borderlands of the II Polish Republic, *Kresy Wschodnie II Rzeczpospolitej*," <http://www.kresy.co.uk/>, 1931 Census Statistics of the Southeastern Woj. extracted from *Na Rubieży* (Poland) magazine, http://www.kresy.co.uk/1931_gus.html#Tarnopol.

¹⁴ Lukowski and Zawadzki, p. 205.

¹⁵ Havers, Wysocko-Hallerczyn, condensed and extracted from *Na Rubieży* magazine, <http://www.kresy.co.uk/wysockohallerczyn.html>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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***** LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *****

Subject: Search for *Przewodnik po polskich cmentarzach wojennych we Włoszech*

Editor—In the last issue we printed a note from Victoria Kerr (Wojtaszek) <missvicky55@rogers.com>, who was searching for a copy of this book. I received a couple of very good replies:

Failing a Web search including Polish newsgroups here and in Poland, I'd try an interlibrary loan at a local public library. If it's in a library you can get the book and copy necessary material. If this fails then State universities that also serve taxpayers have interlibrary loan privileges with international libraries, so this might be an additional approach.

A secondary search could be done on resources of Polish American Veterans organization. I know that they have a sub-group dedicated to Monte Cassino vets, and this sub-group might have a copy.

Given the date on the book, I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't offered for sale in Poland. I would be more surprised if it would be impossible to find a copy.

Fred Zimnoch, PGSMA <zimnoch@crocker.com>

Editor—Fred wrote back a little later to add this:

Just took a quick look at Hollis (Harry Widener Library) catalog and it's there with HOLLIS Number: 005271168.

Subject: Polish book query

Editor—Here's a second note with ideas on this subject:

It is always useful to search not only U.S. Google, but also the foreign editions (<http://www.google.fr>, <http://www.google.pl>, etc.). Google has the attractive facility that it offers translators for many major languages, but even if one is not offered for the language one seeks, it is possible to get the site printed out and see if someone can determine that it is what you want.

Some of the strangest things turn up also on eBay. A guy I contacted about Austro-Hungarian reenactor regiments told me a patch from my grandfather's World War I regiment went on German eBay for like \$12. Sigh.

Sophie M. Korczyk <economist21@hotmail.com>

Editor—You're right about eBay; Paul Valasek is always telling me he's found some neat item you would never expect to turn up in a million years. So searching eBay is a very good idea, as is using the foreign versions of Google. I'm glad to pass both suggestions on to our readers.

Subject: Chomiskovka

Editor—Also in the last issue, Bob Strong, Winnipeg <bob.strong@mts.net> was looking for information on an ancestor who came from "Chomiskovka." My guess was the name was misread and should be Chomiakówka, the name of at least three places now in Ukraine. Gary Mokotoff, publisher of Avotaynu and editor of Nu? What's New, sent Bob and me a note with a basic but vital reminder:

Never try the transcription of Ellis Island records. I went back to the document and determined it is written as "Chomiakovka," not "Chomiskovka." The one Chomiakovka in *Where Once We Walked* is at 48° 34'/25° 18', about 30 miles WNW of Chernivtsi. Now that it is in Ukraine it is spelled Khomyakovka.

Gary Mokotoff <mokotoff@earthlink.net>

Editor—Undoubtedly this does indeed refer to one of the places Poles called Chomiakówka, and the one Gary specified is the most likely one. But the main point is, always go back to the original document to verify spellings, if at all possible. Don't trust other people to transcribe anything correctly!

Subject: Polish Costume Patterns

Editor—It may be too late to help this lady with her query, but if anyone has suggestions, I imagine she, and others, would love to hear about them:

My youngest daughter is participating in the United Nations program in Birmingham, AL. She has chosen Poland, as her country. My family on my paternal side is all Polish. I am looking to purchase a pattern to make the ethnic costume for a young girl. Can anyone help assist me to find a merchant who might sell the pattern?

Katie Briggs <adictomyhistory@charter.net>

Editor—My first thought was that the Polish Art Center in Hamtramck, Michigan might be worth a try. I visited their Website, however, and they sell costumes, but I didn't see any patterns for sale. Still, my experience with them is that they make a real effort to serve their customers. I suggested that Katie might contact them and see if they could point her in the right direction. The Website is at <http://www.polarcenter.com/>, or call them toll-free at (888) 619-9771, or e-mail them at <raymond@polarcenter.com>. But if anyone has a better idea, share it with us, please! I'm sure Katie's not the only one who would be interested in a source of patterns for Polish costumes.

Subject: Christmas without religion

Editor—This has been a hot topic lately, and one reader wished to say a bit about it:

When the next newsletter is printed, we will have all enjoyed Christmas and will be looking forward to a new year.

I started thinking about the news media reporting on changing “Christmas holiday” in the schools to “Winter holiday.” No more singing the Christmas songs, not being able to have a nativity scene displayed, and the list goes on.

I started thinking about the time in my life when the world was a different place. I was born and raised in Albany, NY. When I was in elementary school, every Wednesday afternoon, if you were Catholic, you were able to go to the nearest religious instruction school or church to receive instruction in your faith, to receive First Holy Communion or your confirmation. I can also remember if you were Jewish, you were allowed to take time off for Passover and Yom Kippur. It was done and no problem.

Today, I do not recognize the same country in which all of the above was tolerated without hostility or lawyers.

I bring this up only because our ancestors came to American to get away from the prejudice, whether it had to do with religion or political doctrine.

I realize the world has changed in many ways, but what have we given up to please those who do not really understand or appreciate the sacrifice that those before us have made this country, not a perfect place, but a better place to live, work, raise a family, and worship in one's own way?

As we all continue to find our roots in the past we must give thanks to those who had the courage to start a new life in America, knowing that they would never return to where they came from. I not only thank but respect my father and my mother's parents who took the chance, not knowing what was in store, to come to America and start anew. It was hard and difficult but they were made of the right stuff.

May we all have a healthy, happy New Year!

Cathey Duprey <rcduprey@peganet.com>

*Editor—I understand your concern, and maybe I'm naïve, but I think a religion that's survived murderous emperors and all manner of persecution is going to outlast every lawyer ever spawned. The more you try to suppress something like Christmas, the more it thrives. I think in the long run the lawsuits and other nonsense will prove futile. Still, it's time some folks recognize that showing toleration towards a minority does **not** have to mean being intolerant toward the majority. In the meantime, I believe we all wish each other, and ourselves, a wonderful 2005!*

Subject: Polish handwriting

I was translating a Polish death record for someone and realized that, although some of the difficulty in reading documents is in not knowing the language and in the messy writing, much of it is because the odd letter is written differently—an example is the small letter p. Has this been brought up in your newsletter and/or would it be helpful to readers to have a scan of the common ways of writing letters in Polish?

Barbara Kwietniowski, Ontario, Canada <barbkwie@enoreo.on.ca>

Editor—You're absolutely right, of course: often what a written text says is not so big a problem if you can just read the handwriting. I wanted to print your note to see if we can stir up some interest in this.

I know there are some mailing lists that will let you post images — the Galicia list, for instance — and that's a huge help. You post a scan of the document in question, and different folks get a chance to look it over and make suggestions. I think this is the smart way to do it, and would like to encourage more efforts along these lines.

Of course in one sense I could just tell people “The In Their Words series, and Following the Paper Trail, give many examples of real documents, to help you get familiar with various styles of handwriting. Buy the books Shea and I have done and you'll have your help!” But I realize not everyone wants to — or needs to — plunk down \$35 for a book to help them. We should be able to come up with something online that helps.

So I'll print your note and my answer, and let's see if we can stir something up!

***** NEW BILL WILL CLOSE RECORDS TO GENEALOGISTS *****

Editor—You've probably heard of this development, mentioned in the December 8, 2004 issue of RootsWeb Review. If not, you ought to know about it.

HR10, which was mentioned in the 13 October issue of *RootsWeb Review*, has passed out of the U.S. House of Representatives and is now part of S.2845. The amendments suggested by David Rencher in his letter to the bill's sponsor, Congressman J. Dennis Hastert, were NOT incorporated into this legislation. Thus, the terms of HR10 will now be considered by the Senate, as part of S.2845.

If S.2845 becomes law, as now written, family historians will face some real challenges in attempts to obtain birth records, even on long-deceased individuals. Specifically, what genealogists need to do is suggest to their lawmakers the addition of Sec. 3061(b)(1)(A)(iii) that would read: “who is alive on the date that access to their birth certificate is requested.”

This addition would clarify that the legislation (soon to be law) applies ONLY to birth certificates of **currently living persons**. If you do not know your U.S. Senator’s e-mail address, you can find it at <http://www.senate.gov/>.

This bill can be found online at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. Put in S.2845 (in the bill number window) and then select item No. 3; and go to Subtitle B—Identity Management Security; Chapter 2—Improved Security for Birth Certificates.

[Previously published in *RootsWeb Review*: 8 December 2004, Vol. 7, No. 49.]

***** MICROFILM RECORDS AT THE FHL, FHC, ON CD AND ON THE WEB *****

Bill Tarkulich <bill.tarkulich@iabsi.com>

Editor—On the PolandBorderSurnames mailing list Bill Tarkulich responded to an excellent note posted by Karen Hobbs regarding Austrian military records for Galician Poles; she’s an expert on that subject. Since this issue is already pretty long, I didn’t feel I had room for Karen’s note and Bill’s follow-up. But if you want to read her note, it is well worth looking up:

<http://archiver.rootsweb.com/th/read/PolandBorderSurnames/2004-12/1102781627>

In the meantime, I thought Bill’s comments on microfilm records of the LDS are something you’d want to see, if you didn’t catch it the first time around.

In regard to Karen’s note, “The LDS still has over 1000 films of military records not yet in the catalog”—this is most certainly true. However, there is some good news to report.

While my primary research interest is Slovakia, to a lesser extent I follow Poland and Ukraine borderlands as well. Once a year, I check with the Slovakia “Cataloguer” in Salt Lake City FHL (whose name changes often) to see what new additions have been made to the catalog in the prior 12 months. The cataloguer usually sends me a computer “report” listing all the new films, their titles and film numbers. I then post this to my web site for all researchers to benefit (see http://www.iabsi.com/gen/public/fhl_resources.htm#updates).

What is curious is that there are **orderable films** that do not show up on the FHL index, which is either on the web catalog http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp or on the CD-ROM set. This is partially explained by the sequence in which the FHL processes new records:

1. A “country crew” travels onsite and physically films the records.
2. The films are processed and shipped to the Cataloguer in Salt Lake.

3. The Cataloguer researches the details of the film contents and creates a preliminary catalog entry containing relevant names, alternates and cross-references. This is a slow and exacting process.

4. Once the Cataloguer is done with his entry, it is “released” for publication. At this point, the record becomes visible to computer users at the main library in Salt Lake only.

5. At some lengthy date later, the entry is transferred to the on-line web catalog. The FHL has been making attempts to make this step occur at the same time as (4) but they have been having technical difficulties doing that.

6. The information is published to the CD-ROM, available in the FHC’s and orderable from the FHL. The delay here may be as long as 6-12 months as the CD-ROM is published twice per year.

The other thing to keep in mind is that the FHL marches to its own drummer. While the above process is certain, the schedule is uncertain. This allows the FHL to change priorities on film projects, and they often do. Films could be “stuck” anywhere in the process.

Here’s an example. In June, I received entries on nearly 200 new films and updates to the records of Slovakia (http://www.iabsi.com/gen/public/fhl_update_june_2004.htm). None of these settlements can be found using the FHL catalog or CD-ROM. The process seems “stuck” at step (5). However, all of these are orderable.

So how do you order these “invisible” records? Write, e-mail or call the FHL in Salt Lake, ask for the Cataloguer for your country and ask what is new. If something is of interest, ask for the film number(s.) You may have some difficulty convincing the local FHC center that the film number is “real,” since so many people come in with incorrectly transcribed numbers off the web. Many FHC centers like to verify the number by checking on the Web or CD-ROM. You can see the problem coming, right? Just bring the written correspondence with the film reference with you.

I strongly advise you not to bug them more than once or twice a year. I check once annually. The process is slow, they tend to release them in “batches” about once a year, at least for Slovakia. I find “bugging” them more frequently than once a year becomes disruptive and eventually they may not respond to you. Don’t ruin a good thing. For Slovakia researchers, I’ve done the work for them, so there is no need for separate queries.

I would strong urge someone on the Poland list to pickup the baton and do this for the Poland (or another country) films, publishing the reports to the group for all to use. Who wants to step up and do this? If one, reliable volunteer steps forward, I’ll give you my contacts at Salt Lake and you can get to work. It’s pretty amazing what you can find.

***** POLISH TRIVIA QUESTIONS *****

Editor: In the last issue we gave 5 questions from a Polish trivia game PolishRoots Vice President Paul Valasek <paval56@aol.com> came across. The answers to those questions appear below, followed by this month’s questions, the answers to which will appear in the next issue. We want to thank Tom Bratkowski for permission to reprint these.

Answers to the Questions in the November Issue:

Subject: Christmas Traditions

- Q. What is exchanged with good wishes by Poles on Christmas Eve?
- A. The *Oplatek* or Holy Wafer.

- Q. What is placed in the corners of the room on the Polish Christmas *Wigilia*?
- A. Sheaves of grain of the last harvest.

- Q. What is missing from the traditional Polish Christmas Eve meal?
- A. Meat.

- Q. For what is the wafer (*oplatek*) used at the Christmas *Wigilia*?
- A. It is broken up and distributed to the family members.

- Q. What is the Polish *Choinka*?
- A. A Christmas tree

*Editor—I messed up on the 4th question. It should have read “For what is the **pink** wafer (oplatek) used at the Christmas Wigilia?” The answer is, “It is shared with the livestock.” But I somehow deleted the word “pink,” which changes everything. My apologies, and extra credit to those who knew about the pink oplatek—I sure didn’t!*

New Questions for the December Issue

1. What is the traditional Polish nativity play called?
2. What Polish liquor is named for the Bison?
3. What is the Polish wish for an enjoyable meal?
4. By Polish tradition, why do newlyweds look up the chimney?
5. How many faces did the Slavonic god Światowid have?

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*** UPCOMING EVENTS ***

Note: the PolishRoots Events Calendar at http://www.polishroots.org/coming_events.htm usually has more info than we have room for here. If you have an event coming up you want Polish genealogical researchers to know about, send as much info as possible to <Events@PolishRoot.org>.

March 31 – April 3, 2005

8th New England Regional Genealogical Conference “New England Crossroads 2005”

The Holiday Inn By The Bay in Portland Maine

Four of the country’s best known genealogists will be the lead speakers for this program: Tony Burroughs, Cyndi Howells, Elizabeth Shown Mills and Craig Scott.

Complete program details and a registration form can be found at: <http://www.NERGC.org>.

*** MORE USEFUL WEB ADDRESSES ***

<http://fekids.com/img/klIn/flash/DontGrossOutTheWorld.swf>

Bill Serchak <weserchak@erols.com> sent me and others this URL, asking “How’re your table manners?” It asks a number of very interesting questions about customs of various peoples, and I was proud that I actually knew some of the answers!

<http://www.genpol.com/Poradnik-GenPol-art36.html>

The Polish Genpol site has a number of helpful items, including this Latin dictionary that translates terms into Polish and English.

<http://acweb.colum.edu/users/agunkel/homepage/polxmas.html>

Christmas may be over, but if you’d still like some information on Polish Christmas traditions for next year, you might want to take a look at this site.

<http://users.erols.com/rcuster/RusynsUnderDukla/index.html>

Here’s a site Arlene Gardiner <argard@wi.net> showed Paul Valasek. It centers on Slovakia, but the border regions of Poland and Ukraine are also covered.

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/frameset_rhelps.asp?Page=./research/type/Form.asp&ActiveTab=Type

In response to a question on the soc.genealogy.jewish newsgroup, Gary Palgon <Expert@FamilyTreeExpert.com> gave this site as a place where one can find forms for ordering copies of LDS microfilms by mail. I didn’t even know this service was available.

<http://www.avotaynu.com/nu/v05n23.htm>

The December 19, 2004 issue of *Nu? What’s New*, available at this site, includes articles on *yizkor* books (commemorating Jewish settlements destroyed during the Holocaust) viewable online, New York State Census finding aids on the Stephen P. Morse site at <http://stevemorse.org>, and military maps of 19th-century Europe soon to be published by Avotaynu.

<http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/3felmeres.htm>

Research expert Jerry Frank posted a note on a mailing list that gave this link to a series of Austro-Hungarian maps from about 1910. The scale of these fairly detailed color maps is 1:200,000; they cover much of Russian Poland, Volhynia (Wołyń) and Galicia.

http://www.thornb2b.co.uk/Poland_at_War/

Dan Schlyter of the LDS told Don Szumowski and Paul Valasek of this site, “Photographs of Nazi occupied Poland taken 1939-1945.” The photograph categories are Warsaw at War, the Jews of Poland, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Poland 1939-45, and the Warsaw Ghetto.

<http://www.ukrainianbookstore.com>

On the Galicia_Poland-Ukraine mailing list, Alex Kachmar <alkachmar@hotmail.com> wrote: “The best work describing the life of Galician villagers I know of in English is: *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century*, by John-Paul Himka, 1998 Canadian institute of Ukrainian Studies University of Alberta/ Macmillan Press. The book really explains serfdom, village life, economy, relationship with the landed gentry, clergy other ethnic groups, etc. Unfortunately the book is out of print but copies may be available here and there.” Len Krawchuk <lk248@yahoo.ca> gave the above site as one that might be able to help find a copy—and obviously it might be able to help find other books of interest, as well.

Incidentally, Delores Stevens <deloresstevens@sasktel.net> wrote: “Another really good book is *The Nation in the Village: the Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland 1848 - 1914* by Keely Stauter-Halsted, Cornell University Press, 2001. I have found this to be an interesting book, since John-Paul Himka’s book was not available.” We’ve mentioned this book before in *Gen Dobry!*, but I believe it’s worth mentioning again.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/300polishsquadron>

Stefan Wisniowski <swisniowski@px.com.au>, moderator of the Kresy-Siberia group, told me of this site he learned of. Lucyna <lartymiuk@optusnet.com.au> explained, “Recently I have made contact with other children of former members of 300 Polish Squadron. We have exchanged photos, stories, our fathers’ experiences. I have created this Yahoo group as a forum where others can join this interaction. We believe that you may be interested. I will post photos, documents gradually — and invite you to do so as well. Please promote this Yahoo group to others who may be interested. Let us cherish our fathers’ memory and honour their name.”

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