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Święconka – Polonia's most popular Easter custom

BY ROBERT STRYBEL

Oplatek-sharing on Christmas Eve and the Holy Saturday food-blessing custom are Poland's and Polonia's two best-known holiday customs. Both are practiced by some 95 percent of all families in Poland and a great many across Polish America. Over the generations they have grown into national heritage rituals.

Throughout the 123 years of foreign partition (1772-1918), during the joint Nazi-Soviet occupation of World War II and again during the 45 years that Poland was a Soviet-controlled puppet state (1944-1989), these customs uplifted the strips of the Polish people and set them apart from their external or internal oppressors.

It's no wonder then that they were taken by Polish émigrés to the far corners of the earth. In the ethnic communities that resulted, these traditions provided a familiar and comforting haven against the forces of anti-immigrant discrimination. And because these are warm, symbolic and generally appealing customs, they have also caught on with many people of non-Polish background who have been exposed to them.

Easter baskets are taken to church for the blessing. Long tables are set up inside or outside of churches (depending on the weather), and priests come out every 15 or 20 minutes to perform the ritual. In the Poland of yesteryear, priests would perform the blessing in the homes of leading parishioners where a special. Święconka table was set up. Peasant women would gather with their baskets outside where the priest would sprinkle them with holy water on the way out.

Wicker baskets of varying size are used for blessing. Large baskets containing a cross-section of all the foods to be served on Easter Morning are common in the Polish countryside. In big cities, the baskets are much smaller

and contain only a small sample of the holiday fare.

Whichever type is chosen, the basket is first lined with a linen or lace napkin whose ends should extend beyond the basket's rim, so the Easter food can be covered while the basket is being carried to and from church. Typical items included:

■ **Easter Lamb (baranek wielkanocny):** Usually made of butter or sugar (rock candy), but also of dough, wood, plaster, fleece or even plastic, the lamb with a usually red banner of Resurrection emblazoned with a gold cross (although other colors are also encountered) should go into the basket last, because, in effect, it watches over the rest of the ingredients. The baranek symbolizes the sacrificial Paschal lamb, in other words Jesus himself, whose banner proclaims the victory of life over death.

■ **Eggs, colored or plain (jaja, pisaniki):** Plain or colored hard-cooked eggs of one type or another are an absolute "must." The egg symbolizes new life, and the way a chick pecks its way out of the shell is a metaphor for Christ emerging from His tomb to bring us the promise of eternal life.

■ **Bread (chleb):** This is "our daily bread," "the staff of life" and "the bread of life," a metaphor for the redemptive grace Christ has showered upon mankind. Small round loaves of bread, whose tops are marked with a cross, are specially baked to fit Easter baskets.

■ **Meat & sausage (mięso, wędliny):** A piece of kielbasa, a slice of ham or roast meat are usually included. All meats are symbolic of the Paschal lamb or Christ resurrected, His victory over death and His promise of eternal life.

■ **Horseradish (chrzan):** Both plain, grated, prepared horseradish and the well-known beet-horseradish condiment ćwikła symbolize one of the bitter herbs of the Passover which foretold the suf-

fering of Christ on the Cross. It is also symbolic of life in which one must accept the bitter with the sweet.

■ **Vinegar (ocet):** A small cruet symbolizes the sour wine (our English word "vinegar" comes from the French "vin aigre" = sour wine) which Jesus was given on a sponge to drink while hanging on the cross.

■ **Salt (sól):** Salt in a salt-cellar, salt-shaker or a small paper cone containing a symbolic portion (1 t or so) retards spoilage, improves the taste of food and symbolizes that which preserves us from corruption and adds zest to daily life. Some also include pepper whose preservative and flavor-enhancing role in food preparation is similar to that of salt.

■ **Easter cakes (babka, mazurek, placek, chałka, sernik):** Babka (a whole small babka or just a slice) together with servings of other traditional Easter cakes are among the typical contents of the traditional Polish Easter basket. Following the 40-day period of Lenten self-denial and mortification, cakes and confections symbolizing the sweetness of eternal life can now be freely enjoyed in celebration of Christ's Resurrection.

■ **Wine and other spirits (wino i inne trunki):** Some but not all Poles include a small decanter of wine or other spirits in their Easter basket. Its moderate use was sanctioned by Jesus at the Wedding Feast at Cana, and wine was raised to the Last Supper where Christ originated the Eucharistic sacrifice of the mass.

■ **Box twigs (bukszpan):** Boxwood, an evergreen shrub with tiny green leaves is used to decorate Easter baskets. Cranberry leaves are used for the same purpose. Some add a few pussywillow twigs. The main thing is to add a bit of decorative plant life.

The baskets should be uncovered for the blessing. If your priest says he'd be happy to practice this custom at his

parish but doesn't know what prayer to say, you can provide him with the following:

HOLY SATURDAY FOOD-BLESSING PRAYER (ENGLISH VERSION)

Lord Jesus Christ, who, on the day before Your passion and death, told Your disciples to prepare the paschal supper, on the day of your Resurrection accepted the invitation of two disciples and sat down to the table with them and later that evening came to the Apostles to partake of a meal with them, we implore You to let us, in faith, experience your presence amongst us during the festive repast on the day of Your victory, that we might rejoice at taking part in Your life and resurrection.

Living Bread, who came down from heaven and in Holy Communion gives life to the world, please this bread and all holiday baked goods in memory of the bread with which You fed the people devoutly listening to You in the desert and in memory of the holiday dishes You consumed with the Apostles during the Last Supper.

Lamb of God, who has conquered evil and cleansed the world of sin, please bless these meats, sausages, and all the foods of which we shall partake in memory of the Paschal Lamb and of the holiday fare You shared with Your Apostles at the Last Supper. Bless also this salt that it may preserve us from corruption.

Lord Jesus Christ, our life and Resurrection, bless these eggs, the sign of new life, so that when we share them with our families, close friends and guests, we could also mutually share the joy that You too are in our midst. May we all attain Your eternal feast there, where you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

The priest now sprinkles the food with holy water, while the faithful make the Sign of the Cross when their baskets get sprinkled.

This is the original Polish-language version:

MODLITWA NA BŁOGOSŁAWIENIE POKARMÓW

Panie Jezu Chryste, Ty w dzień przed męką i śmiercią kazałeś uczniom przygotować paschalną wieczerzę, prosimy Cię, daj nam z wiarą przeżywać Twoją obecność między nami podczas świątecznego posiłku, abyśmy mogli się radować z udziału w Twoim życiu i zmartwychwstaniu.

Chlebie żywy, który zstąpiłeś z nieba i w Komunii świętej dajesz życie światu, pobłogosław ten chleb i wszelkie świąteczne pieczywo na pamiątkę chleba, którym nakarmiłeś lud słuchający Ciebie wytrwale na pustkowiu, i który po swym zmartwychwstaniu przygotowałeś nad jeziorem dla swoich uczniów.

Baranku Boży, który zwyciężyłeś zło i obmyłeś świat z grzechów, pobłogosław to mięso, wędliny i wszelkie pokarmy, które spożywać będziemy na pamiątkę Baranka paschalnego i świątecznych potraw, które Ty spożyłeś z Apostołami na Ostatniej Wieczerzy. Pobłogosław także naszą sól, aby chroniła nas od zepsucia.

Chryste, życie i zmartwychwstanie nasze, pobłogosław te jajka, znak nowego życia, abyśmy dzieląc się nimi w gronie rodziny, mogli się także dzielić wzajemnie radością tego, że jesteś z nami. Daj nam wszystkim dojść do wiecznej uczy Twojej, tam, gdzie Ty żyjesz i królujesz na wieki wieków. Amen.

POLISH NEWSBYTES

COMPILED BY ROBERT STRYBEL

COVID-19 VACCINES ENCOUNTER SUPPLY-CHAIN GLITCHES

American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer has postponed the delivery of new batches of its coronavirus vaccine to eight European nations including Poland. The announcement came shortly after the Polish authorities had launched an ambitious plan to inoculate up to three million people against the pandemic by the end of March. Pfizer said the delay was due to work on the expansion of its factory in Belgium being carried out to increase its production capacity, has not met its promised delivery deadline. Prestige-minded France had hoped to produce its own vaccine, but its effectiveness turned out to be less than satisfactory. The only certainty in the equation is that Poland's "total" opposition, as usual, is blaming the Polish government for the problems. Poland has signed a contract with AstraZeneca for 16 million vaccine doses, and should receive 1.5 million of them in the first quarter of the year.

OVER 771 COVID-19 DEATHS PER MILLION IN POLAND

As the country battles a second wave of the coronavirus, a recent update showed 771 deaths per million population in Poland, a sharp increase over the 277 fatalities reported in mid-November. But despite the spike, Poland remains less affected by the Coronavirus than other European nations. According to Poland's Health Minis-

try, Belgium is in the forefront with more than 1,696 deaths per million population since the start of the pandemic, Italy has a death toll of 1,253 and the Czech Republic, Poland's southern neighbor, has reported 1,137. Also hard hit were Britain (1,108), Spain (1,109) and Hungary (1,034), Poland's northeastern neighbor Lithuania has reported 722 fatalities per million, Its western neighbor, 80-million-strong Germany was among the least affected by the pandemic with only 429 Covid-related deaths per million population.

KRAKÓW UPHOLDS 700-YEAR-LONG TRUMPETER TRADITION

For the first time ever, three women were among the 30 people who had applied for a vacancy on Kraków's famous buglers team at St Mary's Church. Six applicants made it through the initial elimination and got short-listed, but none of them were women. "We picked six candidates who stood out for their bugle-playing skills," said Bartłomiej Rosiek of the Kraków fire brigade. All six were men, hence a 700-year-long male-only tradition has been upheld. The traditional trumpet call is played every hour on the hour and is repeated four times, out of the church tower's north, south, east and west-facing windows. According to legend, a trumpeter saw a Tartar horde approaching the city and sounded the alarm, enabling townsfolk to close the city gates in the nick of time. But a Tartar arrow pieced his

throat before he could complete the call which has been played as an unfinished melody ever since.

A GROWING NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS MOVING TO POLAND

The number of foreign nationals with Polish residence permits increased last year by 34,000 to 457,000, Poland's Office for Foreigners reported recently. That increase was all the more unexpected since the pandemic seriously limited travel to Poland, but those determined to enter the country found ways of doing so. Ukrainians coming to Poland in search of jobs constituted the single largest group of foreign residents but nearly all the world's countries are represented. They include students from around the globe, war refugees, foreign businessmen and Polish Americans rebasing to Poland after they retire. A survey showed that 80 percent of the foreign residents approved the closure of the country's borders during the 2020 pandemic lockdown, and 83 percent said they wished to remain in Poland.

AIR POLLUTION IN POLAND REACHES ALARMING LEVELS

A cold snap, a lack of wind, and emissions from low-quality coal- and wood-burning home-heating stoves combined recently to create a wave of air pollution of rare intensity. Heavy smog descended across the country, but the concentration of airborne pollutants was the highest in central and southern Poland. The government has launched a program to replace old, polluting furnaces with modern, nature-friendly ones but the Coronavirus pandemic

has complicated the situation by siphoning funds away from other vitally needed programs. At the risk of paying a fine, many less well-to-do families continue to burn trash, including highly toxic plastic bottles, in their heating stoves.

BABY RHINO BORN AT WROCLAW ZOO

For the first time in its 155-year history the Wrocław Zoo recently welcomed a baby Indian rhinoceros. The female calf, born to Maruška and Manas, raised hopes that this threatened species may survive. It was a legal holiday in Poland and the zoo was short-staffed when the baby rhino was born. "It was my birthday, and I got the best gift I could ever dream of," remarked on-duty zoo keeper Justyna Nowacka, "The labor was quick, and the first-time mum Maruška knew immediately what to do." The newborn will spend at least two years at the zoo before being released in the wild. There are probably no more than 1,900 Indian rhinos in the world today.

TEXAS UNIVERSITY OFFERS POLISH MINOR FOR COLLEGE CREDIT ONLINE

As of the start of the 2021/22 academic year, undergraduates will be able to earn a minor in Polish Studies in online courses for college credit. The program is being developed by St Thomas University of Houston, TX, which has an 80,000-strong Polish community. It will cover an introduction to Polish culture, the 20th-century history of Poland, and the Polish language. Additional courses on Polish art, film, literature and politics are to be added. "With so ma-

ny people of Polish ancestry in Houston and all over the state of Texas, combined with the rising importance of Poland as an economic and strategic ally of the United States, the time seems right to launch this program," the university's website quoted Dr John Hittinger as saying.

POLES TO CONSTRUCT SOLAR-WIND DEVICE FOR NASA SPACE PROBE

The Space Research Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences is working with NASA on a mission to investigate the Sun's heliosphere. "The heliophysics mission known as IMAP (Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe) intends to study the fundamental nature of our solar system," explained Professor Maciej Bzowski, the Polish team's chief researcher. The Polish center is to construct one of the probe's ten instruments, namely the Global Solar Wind Structure instrument or GLOWS for short. Poles started working with NASA in 1962, but this is the first time that Polish space scientists will be building an entire unit.

Thank You New members, RENEWING MEMBERS, and Donors!

The Polish Heritage Society of Northeastern Wisconsin wishes to offer our appreciation and gratitude to Bill Smaney of Lena and John Bieniek of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota for the kind donations they included.

Members renewing include: **Bill Smaney** of Lena, **Peter & Marilyn DeVaney** of Sturgeon Bay, **Carol & Ed Galkowski** of Sobieski, **Joseph & Elaine Wojtowicz** of Neenah, **Maynard & Jeanette Charniak** of Green Bay, **Rodney Kowalczyk** of De Pere, **Mark & Sue Warpinski** of Green Bay, **Barbara Styczynski** of Suamico, **Vicki Schmidt** of Oshkosh, **Jeff & Kathy Orlovski** of Green Bay, **Susan & Paul Zwicker** of Allouez, **Paul & Gloria Kaminecki** of Green Bay who have increased to Lifetime members, **Robert Checkalski** of Oakdale, Minnesota, **Greg & Rhonda Rozanski** of Florence, Kentucky, **Mark Hank** of Green Bay, **Dennis Wawracz** of Spring Valley, **Tammy & Bruce Brzezczkowski** of Pulaski, **Ray Mroczynski** of Pulaski, **Toni Rozek & Mike Cane** of Green Bay and Sturgeon Bay, **Jayne Jackowski** of Green Bay, **Cheryl & Lenny Passel** of De Pere, **Amber Paluch** of De Pere, **Donald Kleczka** of Suamico as a gift of Jenny Kleczka, **Scott La Londe** of Green Bay, **Karolina & Tadeusz Filon** of Green Bay, and **Edward Derengowski** of Green Bay.

The Polish Heritage Society of Northeastern Wisconsin is pleased to welcome new members: **Brenda Hibbard** of Appleton, **John Bieniek** of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, **Vernon Krawczyk** of Green Bay, **Pam & Rock Mannigel** of Pulaski, and **Matt & Dawn Nurczyk** of Pulaski. Congratulations and witamy!

Wow! It is fantastic to see this organization continue to grow and maintain. I understand our PHS of NEW is the largest social organization by membership in the State of Wisconsin dedicated to Polish heritage. Dobrze jest mieć Was z nami!

Thank you to new members, renewing members, and donors. I appreciate the special notes you include with your membership dues, which I may appropriately share with your Board of Directors. Thank you all for your support and interest in our Polish heritage. If you have any membership status or financial inquiries, please feel free to contact me. Also, your board officers' contact information is listed in this newspaper and on the phsofnew.org website.

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Saints among us (2)

HELEN A. SCIESZKA, PH.D.

As we look at the lives of the Saints for the months of April and May I wanted to first take a moment to talk about a term that I used in the first article relating to saints – Patron! I mentioned that St. Casimir was the patron saint against plagues. So, what does that mean? Just as in daily life we often ask for help, advice or information from a professional, like a doctor, plumber, librarian, etc., so it is also with the saints. Many of the saints have been named “patrons” of various places like a country, city, or a church; for various occupations, states in life, or against illnesses or even weather conditions. What we are asking of them is to pray for us...which means to talk to God on our behalf. Very often they themselves have lived in a particu-

lar place; worked at an occupation or dealt with the illnesses or other natural catastrophes that they are patron of. Thus, our sense is that they might have a better understanding of what we are dealing with and can help to guide us.

Interestingly, there are no Polish saints for April...but as we start the month this year with Easter on April 4th we will still have much to celebrate.

Looking at May we have St. Gabriel Zabłudowski (also known as Gowdel) on the 3rd born on March 22nd, 1684 at Zwierki, Poland, who even at a very young age was known for the strong practice of the Polish Orthodox Faith (which is in full communion with the Roman Catholic Faith) and thus was martyred at age 6 on



St. Gabriel Zabłudowski

April 11th, 1690 for it. Some very interesting events surrounded this child even after his death. First, his body was not found until nine days after his murder, having been buried in some nearby woods. When found the grave was being guarded by some stray dogs.

Thirty years after his death in

the year 1720, there was an epidemic in the area. As children died from it, they were buried near St. Gabriel as the people considered it to be hallowed ground. In the process of doing this, his body was accidentally dug up and found to be incorrupt; which means that there was no decay of the body thirty years after his death. Thus people started praying for his intercession and there were many miraculous cures, including the end of the epidemic.

At this time, his body was transferred to the church in Zwierki which burned in 1746. Even though the deceased saint's hand was burned, it healed. Eventually, his body was transferred to the cathedral of St. Nicholas in Białystok, Poland, where it remains to this day. St. Gabriel is one of the patron saints of children, but I think that I personally would also pray to him during this pandemic.

Also celebrated on May 3rd is St. Louis Soltys (sometimes spelled Scholtis) who took the religious name of Stanisław Kazimierzczak (or Kazimierz) when he joined the religious order of the Canons Regular of the Lateran in 1456. He was born on September 27th, 1433 in Kazimierz, Lubelskie Poland to Maciej and Jadwiga, a couple strong in their faith. He attended Jagiello University in Krakow receiving doctoral degrees in philosophy and theology. Once ordained, he not only took care of those who were ill and poor but was also known as a wonderful confessor, preacher, professor and often called a living saint. He died of natural causes on May 3rd, 1489, and is buried at the Corpus Christi Basilica in the Kazimierz district of Krakow.

On May 3rd (in some areas it is celebrated on April 11th) we have another St. Stanisław...of Krakow. He was born on July 26th 1030, in Krakow to Belislaus and Bogna Szczepanowsky who were Polish nobility. He studied for the priesthood at Gnesen, Poland and possibly also in Paris. He served in Czembocz and Krakow at Wawel cathedral, there becoming bishop of the diocese in 1072. He was known for his tough preaching against sin whether you were poor or of nobility. This included excommunicating from the Church King Boleslaus the Cruel (1042-1082) for his attempted theft of church property and war crimes. King Boleslaus killed St. Stanislaus while he was celebrating Mass on May 8, 1079 (some sources say April 11th) at the chapel of St. Michael in Krakow where he was initially buried. In 1088 his remains were moved to Wawel Cathedral where they are today. He is one of the patron saints

of Poland, the city, and archdiocese of Krakow, and of soldiers in battle.

Next is St. Andrzej (Andrew) Bobola on May 16th. He was also born to Polish nobility November 30th, 1591, at Sandomierz, Poland where later he studied at the Jesuit school there. Eventually he joined the Jesuits and was ordained a priest on March 12, 1622. He served at a parish in Vilna, Lithuania, was a missionary to Orthodox Christians, helped the sick during a plague, and was made superior of the Jesuit community in Bobrinks. Because of all this, he is also known as the “hunter of souls” and the “Apostle of Lithuania.”



St. Andrzej Bobola

During the raids of the Cossacks and Tartars one of the Lithuanian princes offered him a house in Pinsk (modern day Belarus). However, 5 years later, the hiding place was discovered and just after celebrating Mass on May 10th, 1657, he was captured. After being tortured for six days and never renouncing his faith, he was finally beheaded on May 16th. No one knew where he was buried until many years later he appeared to the rector of the Jesuit school telling him where the location was. When his body was discovered in the place he had pointed out, it was found to be incorrupt. His body was moved numerous times after this, including to Rome's Church of the Gesu, the mother church of the Jesuits. Eventually, the majority of his remains were returned to Poland where they now rest in the Jesuit monastery in Warsaw. He is another patron saint of Poland as well as of the Archdiocese of Warsaw.

Note: Information for this article was gathered from various Catholic Saint sites on the web.

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Consensus on NATO, disagreement on “progressive” revolution

Will Biden be good for Poland?

BY ROBERT STRYBEL

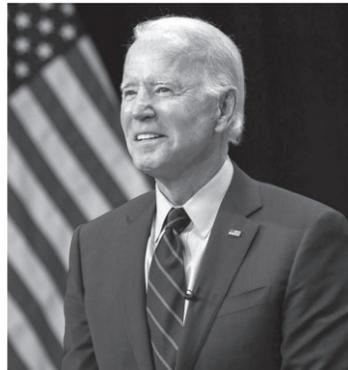
As far as Poland is concerned, for the Biden Administration, Donald Trump will be a hard act to follow. No other American Chief Executive has ever extolled another nation as forcefully as Donald Trump did in Warsaw in 2017. Praising Poles for their fidelity to God, country, and freedom. Trump said he had come to Poland “to hold it up as an example for others who seek freedom and who wish to summon the courage and the will to defend our civilization.”

Nevertheless, political realism triumphed over sentiment in Poland's official reaction to Joe Biden's electoral victory. Privately, Poland's governing conservative establishment and a majority of ordinary Poles had been rooting for Trump, but his defeat drove home the realization that Warsaw must uphold its strong ties with its US ally whoever happens to be in the Oval Office. “I am looking forward to closely cooperating with you, Mr President, on further strengthening the Polish-American Strategic Partnership,” Polish President Andrzej Duda wrote, adding: “God bless Poland and God bless America!” In his congratulatory message

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki emphasized that “Poland considers the United States to be the pillar of global freedom, stability, and peace.”

To Warsaw, a key priority is the continued presence and potential increase of US and NATO troops in Poland as a deterrent to Russia's neo-imperial designs. So far, Biden has given no sign of any policy change in that area. US bipartisan support for sanctions against Moscow and opposition to a pipeline project increasing Russia's share of the European natural-gas market are also heartening to Poland's conservative government.

From a Polish perspective. Biden's strident “green energy” crusade may prove somewhat more troublesome, especially in the short term. Of Europe's 50 most polluted cities 33 are in Poland, and the government has pledged to liquidate the polluting coal industry by 2049. But that may be easier said than done considering its potential social disruption and political backlash. On the plus side, American support could facilitate the development of Poland's wind-farms, solar panels and nuclear energy.



President Joe Biden

But it is in the socio-ideological realm that Biden and Duda are poles apart. Poland emphasizes its Christian heritage, favors the traditional family, and has constitutional backing for its opposition to same-sex marriage, unrestricted abortion and run-away genderism. The Biden camp not only defends such “progressive” innovations but actually intends to promote them worldwide allegedly “in the name of freedom.”

But freedom can have different names. Big Tech's closure of Trump's social-media accounts caused outrage and disbelief in Poland. In fact, its government is now working on legislation outlawing such activities. “Censorship of free speech, the domain of totalitarian regimes, is now returning in the form of a new, commercial mechanism to combat those who think differently,” Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki remarked recently.



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Woodworking passion

John Gliniecki is a born storyteller, he can spin endless tales about his boyhood growing up on a Wisconsin farm, his time as an army veteran in Korea, making a living as lineman in Hawaii, a long-haul trucker, a sauerkraut factory owner, and later as a hardware store owner in Arizona. Now retired, he's returned to Wisconsin and has pursued his passion in woodworking. Inspired by the beauty of the raw material, he processes the lumber himself from tree to finished object. Using his unique point of view, he creates small decorative items up to large furniture pieces, each telling a story.

John got into woodworking in the late 80's. "When Ma built a new house on [County Road] P, she wanted cabinets in the laundry room, I said, 'Well, I'll build them for you!' and that's how I got started." He didn't have a place to work, so he built a small portable workshop in his father's large shed, and worked out of that small workspace for about a year until he moved to Arizona in 1990. Once settled there, he built a new, larger work-



John Gliniecki

space. If you happen to pop by, you may encounter John working alone, listening to classic country music on his FM radio, or you may find him working with his son-in-law crafting a kitchen's-worth of custom cabinetry and hardwood floors. Or maybe he's giving pointers as his grandson turns a spindle on the lathe. Or perhaps he's collaborating with his daughter and grandson-in-law as they carve an heirloom rocking horse for John's great-granddaughter. Woodworking is John's personal passion, but the love for creating is also the tie that binds his family together: "I enjoy my family's ideas and suggestions. I'd love to have them out here more; every week-

end, three or four people farting around in the shop, that would be alright with me!"

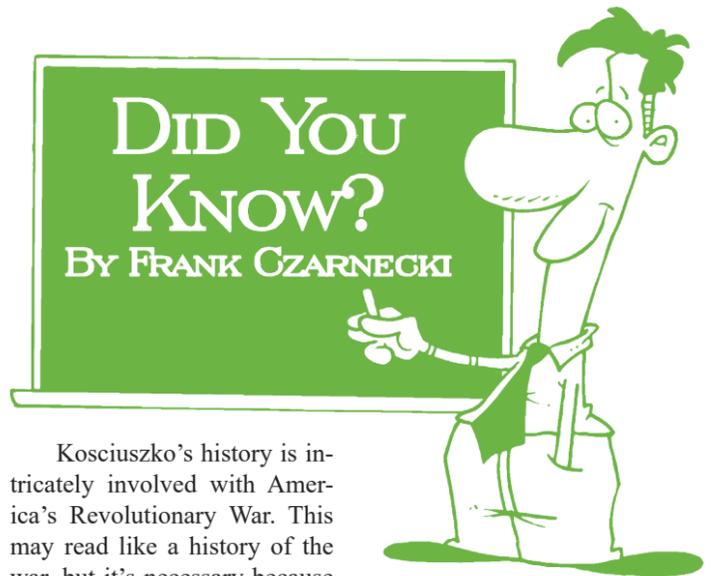
A bit of a "Jack-of-all-trades," John is known for taking on projects of all different kinds. He routinely has small gifts and housewares ready to buy in the small showroom attached to his shop. Cutting boards, wooden bowls, mirrors and cribbage boards are com-



plete and ready for purchase. These smaller projects keep him busy between larger, custom jobs, which are the works where he truly shines. In the past he has made hope chests fully lined in fragrant red cedar and decorated with intricate inlaid panels showing geometric patterns of different colors and species of woods. Another stand out project has been a 6-foot bar top with a translucent acrylic pour "river" running through it. Recently, he has even completed a custom coffin!

For each of these jobs, John places his own special touch, sometimes with a bit of glitz and flair, but always with a reverence for the intrinsic beauty of the wood. When asked his favorite part about woodworking he says, "A satisfied customer, of course, but other than that, the wood. The different grains. The different colors." He prefers giving the works a glass-like shine finish, so the wood almost glows from within. Each custom work is a treasure worthy to be passed down for generations!

Woodworking is a way of life for John. "I jokingly tell people I'm a termite, I love wood!" There is nothing else he'd love to spend his time doing. To inquire about a custom project or to see more photos of his completed works, visit his Facebook page at "John Gliniecki Woodworks" or email him at johngliniecki@gmail.com.



Kosciuszko's history is intricately involved with America's Revolutionary War. This may read like a history of the war, but it's necessary because Kosciuszko played an important part in America's victory.

George Washington's dramatic victory after crossing the Delaware River on Christmas night, 1776, threw back the British and averted danger to Philadelphia. General Gates was transferred to Albany, NY. He took with him his favorite staff officers, including Kosciuszko, who had become a friend of the Gates family. The General was 18 years older than Kosciuszko and, in many ways, served as his American father. From Albany, Kosciuszko was promptly dispatched farther north to Fort Ticonderoga, the strategic post which Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys had captured from the British in 1775.

Gates introduced Kosciuszko to the commanding officer at Ticonderoga by writing: "He is an able engineer and one of the best and neatest draughtsmen I ever saw. I desire that when he has thoroughly made himself acquainted with the works, he point out to you where and in what manner the best improvements and additions can be made."

The British strategy was to go south using the Hudson River to capture Albany. Washington regarded the Hudson as the most important line of defense in America. Ticonderoga was

a key spot. Kosciuszko reported that it was vulnerable. The fortress was overlooked by a steep and rocky hill which was unprotected. The Polish engi-



neer wanted a battery of guns mounted at the top.

General Gates agreed but had to return temporarily to Philadelphia. Other officers decided against Kosciuszko's recommendation since it would be a long and difficult task to haul the guns to the top. When the British army showed up at Ticonderoga late in June, Kosciuszko's point was proven. Within five days, British guns were in place on the Mount, aimed down at the interior of the fort. The Americans decided that the fort could not be held under the circumstances and, during the night of July 5, the garrison was abandoned, leaving it open to the British.

(to be continued)

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Included is a helpful genealogical contact sheet to help check your family records in Poland, track down ancestral homesteads and possibly even turn up long-lost relatives. For more information, please contact: strybel@interia.pl