

Before Christmas trees – grain, hay and opłatki

BY ROBERT STRYBEL

The Christmas tree did not really take hold in Poland until around the mid-20th century. Earlier in the century it had gradually begun appearing in the manor houses of the gentry and in cities, but to a far lesser degree across the nation's vast countryside. Incidentally, for Poland the 1950s marked the height of Stalinist terror which also aimed its artillery at Polish Christmas.

The Christmas trees adorning public buildings, schools and state-owned stores were officially referred to as “choinka świąteczna” (holiday tree – sound familiar?) or “choinka noworoczna” (New Year's tree).

orating firs, spruces or pines came to Poland and many other countries from Germany. Queen Victoria's German-born husband Prince Albert is credited with setting up a Christmas tree at Buckingham Palace, which helped propagate the custom in Britain and America.

Centuries earlier in Poland, grain, hay and straw were considered the main Christmas accents. Sheaves of unthreshed grain were placed in the four corners of the manor house dining-room and the one-room peasant cottage alike. But while the gentry gradually gravitated towards more citified, foreign traditions, the agrarian accents endured far longer in the coun-

*Peace, good will
and happiness for you
at Christmas
and always.*

*Wesołych Świąt
Bożego Narodzenia
i Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku
on behalf of the board of the Polish Heritage Society*



Christmas wafers

Government printing plants churned out greetings cards proclaiming “Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!” (Happy New Year) and “Wesołych Świąt!” (Happy Holidays), conveniently leaving out the key term “Boże Narodzenie” (Christmas).

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the custom of dec-

tryside. There peasants tied to the table legs and scattered it all over the floor in memory of the humble stable where Jesus was born. His hay-filled manger was symbolized by the hay strewn over the table-top before being covered with a pure-white table-cloth. Evergreen branches and sprigs were

placed behind holy pictures or in vases.

The peasant cottages of yesteryear were scrubbed spic and span and often white-washed before its walls were decorated with freshly made wycinanki or paper cut-outs. The procedure was the same at Easter time. The wycinanki usually sported geometric, floral or animal motifs rather than specifically Yuletide ones, but served to highlight the freshness and festive nature of the occasion.

Other festive decorations of the old peasant cottage were various types of folk mobiles, made of opłatek, paper, straw, feathers, etc. and suspended from the ceiling. Because of their wispieness and the fact that they waved in the breeze whenever anyone passed through the room, they were called “pajaki” (literally spiders) – an allusion to filigree cobwebs. Also, loops of strung dried white peas were used to form chandelier-type decorations resembling strings of pearls.

Our Polish ancestors would also suspend an ever-

green branch or the peak-side-down top of a fir, spruce or pine from the ceiling or rafters, often over the supper table. It was variously known in different parts of the country as “sad” (orchard) or “podłaznik” (creeper). It was usually decorated with home-spun straw, paper and eggshell ornaments, ribbons, and edibles such as fruit, nuts, gingerbread and marzipan (almond-paste) confections. This simple, natural and interesting evergreen bough, which fills the rooms with the scent of the great outdoors, is worth promoting in our PolAm parishes, clubs and businesses. And it is great for small apartments because it does not take up even an inch of floor or table space.

Even after a regular Christmas tree made its appearance, like the “sad” or “podłaznik” it too was originally decorated the same way. Eventually store-bought decorations became more common, and in the inter-war period Poland became famous for its hand-blow and hand-painted ball-type glass ornaments. But these were (and

are) quite pricey, so many trees sported only one or two such masterpieces, with cheaper ornaments and home-made decorations making up the majority. The electric lights that replaced real candles are now universal, and in today's Poland people are increasingly succumbing to passing, commercially promoted fashions such as all red balls one year and silver and blue ones the next.

Like everyone else these days, Polish Americans are over-immersed in commercially pushed fads, trends and fashions at every turn of the way. It might therefore be a refreshing change to occasionally recall some of the old customs of simpler times. Any Polonian Christmas function could provide a good occasion to set up an old-style Wigilia tableau featuring the above-mentioned grain sheaves, straw, hay, evergreen boughs and old-fashion Christmas tree. Candle-shaped Christmas tree lights with yellowish, flame-imitating bulbs might help convey the old-style atmosphere with the safety hazard of real tapers.

Saint Nicholas Day in Poland

BY EWELINA NURCZYK

Every opportunity is good when it comes to gift-giving, and if you have been a good boy or girl, you may expect small presents on December 6th – the official celebration of Saint Nicholas, also known as Santa Claus or Father Christmas. This means, that Polish children are visited by him twice every December.

In many Polish households, the morning of **December 6th**, in Polish referred to as *Mikołajki*, is a blissful moment. This is when children find **small gifts under their pillows, in their slippers** or (nowadays more and more often) **in a stocking** carefully hang out for that purpose the evening before. The gifts are usually tiny – small toys or

sweets are the most popular option, since bigger presents are still yet to be given on Christmas eve, by the very same person – Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas or Santa Claus. So why does he visit Polish kids twice a year?

In the past it was on the Saint Nicholas feast when the little ones received gifts, and Poles generally did not hand out presents on Christmas Eve. With time, when the Western customs of giving major gifts around Christmas started to reach Poland, it became natural that *Mikołajki* is just a prelude to bigger celebrations starting on December 24th. In some parts of Poland it is easier to distinguish these two gift-giving occasions, as Saint Nich-



olas is so tired after his special day, that he is replaced by **Angel** or **Snowflake** around Christmas Day. Nonetheless, in general most Polish children get to meet him twice a year.

Regardless of wheth-

er you celebrate Christmas or not, on December 6th it is always thoughtful to give a small gift to your little Polish friend, of course if you have one. In some workplaces it is around this day when co-workers play

Secret Santa by drawing a colleague to give a small gift to, or gather for an **office Christmas party**. Just be jolly and let us know if you have found something special under your pillow this year!

POLISH NEWSBYTES

COMPILED BY ROBERT STRYBEL

SECOND CORONAVIRUS WAVE
HITS POLAND; RESTRICTIONS
GET TIGHTENED

As October was drawing to a close, Poland imposed new, tighter restrictions in a bid to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Poland’s first case was reported on March 4th and its first Covid-related death followed on the 12th of that month. Since then, the number of new daily cases had inched its way up to 700 by the end of September, but the worst was yet to come. October was a black-banner month for the 21st-century plague. The “magic” 1,000 daily infection mark was soon topped, then over 10,000 new daily cases were reported. By the end of October, daily results were already in the 13,000-14,000 range, followed by another 24-hour record of 18,820 new Coronavirus infections with no end in sight. The new restrictions included adding elementary-school grades 4-8 to the secondary schools and colleges already operating online. On-site dining was banned and, in order to stay open, restaurants had to limit their offer to take-outs and home delivery. Swimming pools, aquaparks, fitness clubs and sanatoriums have been closed, and sporting events are allowed only in front of empty grandstands. Commuters were told that in public transport no more than 50% passenger capacity would be allowed.

When announcing the stricter anti-Coronavirus measures, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki did not rule out a full-scale lockdown should things get worse. Meanwhile, Poland is creating temporary field hospitals to treat coronavirus patients. The first was created with the aid of the Polish army at Warsaw’s National Stadium. Such facilities, usually organized in disused field-houses, exhibition halls and other capacious structures, are going up in all of the country’s 16 comradeship (provinces). With a Covid-19 death rate of 96 per million population, Poland is still far better off than Belgium (897), Spain (727), Britain (643), France (515) and other countries. Neighboring Germany’s death toll per million stood at 118, a commendable achievement for a country of 80 million.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
LENDs POLAND €1 BILLION
TO PROTECT JOBS

The European Commission, the European Union’s executive branch or actual government, has lent Poland €1 billion (\$1,17 billion) to help protect jobs amid the pandemic. The EC’s German President Ursula von der Leyen wrote on Twitter in Polish that Poland had received a €1 billion thanks to support from the SURE instrument of Coronavirus-related assistance intended to protect jobs and workers. This is

just the start,” she wrote. “Poland will receive a total of €11.2 billion from SURE which will include financing reduced working time.” Poland, Spain and Italy were the three countries benefiting from this aid package, but the latter two received much larger shares resulting from the scope of their pandemic crisis. The entire SURE budget comes to €87.9 billion of which €27.4 billion is meant for Italy and €21.3 for Spain, the hardest hit countries. All told, Poland can count on €11.2 billion, the equivalent of nearly 52 billion zlotys.

POLISH NAVY DETONATES BIGGEST
EVER WW2 BOMB UNDERWATER

An enormous World War II bomb was detonated underwater after Polish navy demolition experts attempted to make the device safe. None of them were injured in the blast. The explosive device – nicknamed “Tallboy” and capable of causing a small earthquake – was discovered in September last year at the bottom of a shipping channel in the Baltic port of Świnoujście. The bomb was dropped by Britain’s Royal Air Force in an attack on a Nazi warship in 1945 and was only found during dredging of the access road to the port of Szczecin, in northwest Poland. The delicate operation to defuse the bomb was described as a “world-first” by Grzegorz Lewandowski, spokesman for the 8th Polish Coastal Defense Fleet. “No-one has ever neutralized such a well-preserved Tallboy lying at the bottom of the water.” Protectively, some 750 local residents were evacuated prior to the operation.

“I LOVE POLAND” YACHT
WINS PRESTIGIOUS
AROUND-SICILY REGATTA

A yacht belonging to the Polish National Foundation, has won the Rolex Middle Sea Race 2020, one of the world’s most prestigious such competitions, its organizers announced recently. Captained by Grzegorz Baranowski, “I Love Poland” was one of three Polish vessels among over 50 crews from all over the world sailing in Volvo Open 70 class. The winners crossed the finish line after four days at sea. Held since 1968, the Rolex Middle Sea Race covers a distance of more than 600 kilometers (about 400 miles) and reaches the finish line in Malta’s capital city, Valletta. The fastest yachts and the most modern single-hull and multi-hull vessels compete to break the route’s record.

Marcin Zarzecki, president of the Polish National Foundation, stressed that the main objective of the “I Love Poland” program apart from promoting the country, is to train young sailing enthusiasts who become Polish ambassadors of goodwill by participating in international cruises and regattas.

EC ATTACKS POLISH AND SPANISH
JUDICIAL CHANGES

Under binding European Union treaties, an EU country has the sole right to organize and develop its judicial system without outside interference. But under pressure from Poland’s destructive opposition, which has never come to terms with getting voted out of office, the European Commission began attacking Poland’s judicial

reforms as allegedly violating the rule of law. Recently Spain has also been attacked because changes in the way that country’s Supreme Judicial Council is elected did not appeal to Brussels. Poland’s deputy foreign minister Paweł Jabłoński told the Madrid daily El Mundo that Poland wants Brussels to treat all EU members equally. He stressed that Warsaw does not support EC attempts to punish Madrid for its recent judicial changes. Jabłoński pointed out that the EU Treaty states that each of its member states has the freedom to create the administration of justice that best suits its traditions and complies with its constitution. Poland’s reform of the judiciary was intended to free courts of law of communist collaborators and corrupt judges, But Brussels was deaf to arguments showing that the reforms were similar to the norms functioning in Germany, Spain and other EU countries. Both Poland and Spain had operated under a dictatorship for several decades, after which it was necessary to cleanse the judiciary of people who supported the regime, Jabłoński told El Mundo.

Thank You New members,
RENEWING MEMBERS, and Donors!

The Polish Heritage Society of Northeastern Wisconsin wishes to offer our appreciation and gratitude to **Vern Shukoski** of Ocala, Florida, for his kind and generous donation. We also wish to thank **Dawn Sisel** of Muskego, **Victoria Frederiksen** of Stephenson, Michigan and **Mike & Harriet Wichowski** of Green Bay for their kind donations!


The Polish Heritage Society of Northeastern Wisconsin is pleased to welcome new members the **Lynda Shaha** family of Green Bay, **John Daniels** of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the **Delores & Stanley Bruskiewicz** family of Milwaukee, **David Shukoski** of Menasha as a gift from member **Vern Shukoski**, **Sharon Roso** of Delafield as a gift of member **Vern Shukoski**, **Cheryl Skenandore** of Green Bay, **Michelle Simonson** of Lena, **Kathy Fredrickson** of Neenah, and **Corrine Spadaro**. Congratulations and witamy!

A good number of members renewing include **Malgorzata Daugherty & Aliosha Alexandrov** of Appleton, the **Clara Baker** family of Stevens Point, **Mary Zipp** of Niagara, **Gerald Brzezinski** of Green Bay, the **Kim Dybro** family of Sherrard, Illinois, **Alice Kowalkowski** of Pulaski, the **Chet & Judy Wolniakowski** Family of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, **James Queoff** of Green Bay, the **William & Grace Zurovitch** family of Kaukauna, **Anne Wal** of Milwaukee, the **Ed & Lyn Carns** family of Crivitz, **Leszek Golimowski** of Marinette, **Paul Jankowski** of Murels Inlet, South Carolina, **Marge Kelly** of Carpinteria, California, **Dawn Sisel** of Muskego, **Florence Ahasay** of Green Bay, **Victoria Frederiksen** of Stephenson, Michigan, **Shirley Kegel** of Green Bay, the **Malena & Piotr Dzwonkowski** family of Oneida, the **Richard Behrendt** family of White Fish Bay, the **Sara Lipinski** family of Maribel, the **James Kruzitski** family of Minneapolis, **Mark Wesolowski** of Luxembourg, **Anthony Snyder** of Appleton, **Annette Pelegrin** of Pulaski, the **Richard & Carol Ann Kichowski** family of Appleton, **Kathleen Patrick** of Fort Collins, Colorado, **Gerald Smurawa** of Pulaski, **Jessica Schabow** of Neenah, **Victoria Kononova** of Appleton, and

the **Michael & Harriet Wichowski** family of Green Bay. It is wonderful to see that the organization continues to gain and maintain. 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 the rest of 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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THE PATH HOME (6)

The Villages

HELEN A. SCIESZKA, PH.D.

I have been blessed with the good fortune of having been able to live in different parts of the United States and to travel to many places both here and abroad. Larger cities and towns always have much to offer, but it is the smaller ones that have intrigued and captured my heart. And Poland's villages did not disappoint. Tucked away in hillsides, among mountains or just along the way, seeing them one gets the sense of the everyday life of the people of the area.

My paternal grandparents and my maternal second great grandparents were all from such villages.

I was very fortunate to have become friends with someone who lives in one of them that is less than ten minutes from the home villages of my paternal grandparents. And it was with their family that I was able to stay. Another wonderful gift of this incredible journey.

My grandparents were from different villages, but the villages were next to each other. Just a hill, a bit of a walk and incredible views between them.

I am not sure that I can put into words what it felt like the first time I saw the signs for their two villages. An excitement of course, but also a sense of something bigger and deeper.

My grandfather's village has a current population of a little over 1500 which has grown from the 900 at the time that he lived there. It is one of those that is nestled in-between two hills that are all part of the 370-mile Beskids Mountain range that is within the longer 900 plus miles Carpathian Mountains in the southern part of Poland. Which is why my family is known as Highlanders.

As we drove into the village, I began to sense what I thought was the presence of my grandfather. But it was more than that. Just being in his village I could now not only envision him there, but I could also to see the village in him. It was as if the village actually felt like him. Whether it was

the lay of the land, the houses, etc. I am not sure, but even if no one had told me I just know that somehow I would have known that this was his home village. Who he was seemed to be everywhere.

As we drove the narrow road, I wondered which house he might have grown up in or if it was even still standing. Whichever one it was, he hadn't lived there long having left home at about age 12 to work in the coal mines.

But it was when we drove up into the hills above the village that I truly felt his presence. It was as if he himself was showing me all of the different places that he had roamed in those hills as a boy.

Through my friend I was even able to see where he and his family probably walked from their village to the next one over; the one where my grandmother lived as from our viewpoint I could see both villages at the same time.

Even though they were separate villages, my grandfather's village did not have its own Catholic Church at the time so they were members of the church in my grandmother's village. Both were baptized there, attended Sunday Mass and all of the other celebrations.

As we left my grandfather's village and headed towards that of my grandmothers, I could feel the emotional excitement growing. I loved my grandfather, but had always felt very close to my grandmother and now I was about to see where she too had been born and grew up.

Her village is about the same size as my grandfather's and had only been slightly higher in population than his when they were children. The houses are similar, yet a little different. And, instead of being situated in-between hills as in my grandfather's village, these homes were set up and down the hills.

As with my grandfather, I definitely felt my grandmother's presence here and had absolutely no doubt that this was her village.

But much more was to come. My friend had to go off to work

for a while and so I was able to explore my grandmother's village a bit on my own. The first stop was my grandparents' church. And as there has probably been a Catholic parish in this area since the 1300's and a church on this site since the early 1500's, how does one find the words to express the feelings of preparing to walk into the church where one's grandparents and probably great and second great grandparents and maybe beyond were baptized, received their First Holy Communion, were confirmed and attended Sunday, holy day Masses, weddings and

spend a fair amount of time in the church and on its grounds and wandering its cemetery just up the road from the church. I hadn't been able to meet with anyone at the rectory yet to look at records, but decided that it would be fun just to see what members of my family I might be able to find on my own.

The view from the cemetery of the church and the surrounding hills is incredible. I know it sounds strange, but it was really a

ted in traditional dress at a Sunday Mass. I had the great, great fortune to have been there on one of those Sundays. Again, no words and often tears during the Mass...I definitely felt my family there with me.

At the conclusion of the Mass I went to the front to take some photos of the group while they offered a short concert. As I turned to leave there was a tiny, very elderly woman, wearing a babushka walking towards me. Our eyes met and we



Jot. Archives

funerals? There are none. I was so overcome with simply being there. And to add to it, the church is absolutely gorgeous!

The doors were wide open as I approached...slowly I went through the main doors and then paused before entering the main part of the church. I was just trying to take it all in.

The current building is in the beautiful Baroque style and so is very ornate with paintings and statues throughout. There was so much to see and to absorb. I would look at a few paintings and statues and then just sit in a pew...reflecting. I wondered which pews my family had sat in and if the Baptismal font is the one where they all were actually baptized.

Gratefully, I was able to

wonderful place to spend a few hours looking at all of the tombstones. I was so hoping to find my great grandparents graves as well as the brothers and sisters of my grandparents who had stayed in Poland. There were so many familiar family names from my list of relatives and also from the families in my home neighborhood that I had grown up in. After quite a bit of searching I finally found the grave of one of my grandmothers' brothers. Shortly thereafter, I found two more. Again, no words just gentle tears. How does one describe the feelings of standing at the graves of family that one has never known and yet there is this incredible connection?

Once we were able to look at some of the church records we discovered that there were also house numbers as part of them. A new house has now been built on the same spot where my great grandfather, my grandmother and her siblings were all born, but I at least got to see the land. It is beautiful.

One of the personal highlights though was being able to attend a special Sunday Mass service in that beautiful church of my ancestral family. Periodically, they have special musical groups and choirs outfit-


both smiled. Then she took both of my hands and held them in hers all the while smiling at me and nodding...never saying a word. My grandmother was definitely there.

There were so many incredible moments on this journey. It is a trip that touched my heart, my soul, my entire being. But above all, I felt like I was "Home."

P.S. Sadly, while I was there, I was not able to connect with any known family members but I did meet a few people that although we don't think we are related we do share some of the same family names. However, through the efforts of my friends in Poland, some family connections and contacts have now been made with nieces and nephews of my grandmother and their families.


Watch for my next series "Saints Among Us" starting in the next newsletter which will look at Roman Catholic Saints that are part of our Polish Heritage.

Helen A. Scieszka, Ph.D. is a former ad executive, psychologist, college professor, Catholic church pastoral associate, Diocesan marriage & family life director; published author. Please visit her website drhelenscieszka.com to keep up with news on talks, book sale/signings and new releases!



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Madison Polish Film Festival

The Madison Polish Film Festival is a free annual event organized by the UW-Madison Polish Student Association in collaboration with the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic+, CREECA, Wisconsin Union Directorate (WUD) Film Committee, and the Polish Heritage Club of Madison.

The festival hosts a variety of films each year that explore Polish culture and identity as well as support the work of Polish writers and directors. Join us in celebrating Polish artists and visionaries at this years festival on December 5th and 6th 2020. All the films will be subtitled and available for screening at any time during the festival weekend for those who register and are Wisconsin residents. To register, please visit: <https://gns.wisc.edu/madison-polish-film-festival/>

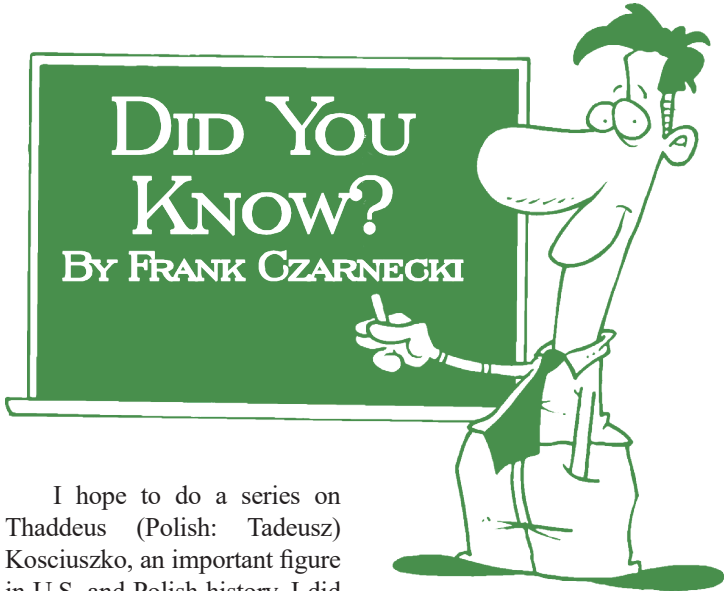
JAK NAJDALEJ STĄD (I Never Cry) 2020. Seven-

teen-year-old Ola sets off to Ireland to bring her father’s body back to Poland after he dies in a building site accident. But never mind her dad, Ola wants to know if he saved the money for a car he had promised her. Dealing with a foreign bureaucracy in her own streetwise way, Ola finally gets to know the father who had been largely absent in her life.

ŻELAZNY MOST (The Iron Bridge) 2019. The dramatic story about a love triangle. Coalmine Foreman Kacper begins an affair with the wife of his friend, Oskar, also a miner. He sends Oskar off to work the most distant and dangerous parts of the pit so that he can meet his lover. During one such tryst there’s a collapse at the mine, and Oskar is trapped. The lovers throw themselves into the rescue operation. They deal with feelings of guilt and

with the realization that they were the indirect cause of the trapped man’s drama. Their strong feelings for each other further complicate their predicament.

IKAR. LEGENDA MIETKA KOSZA (Icarus. The Legend of Mietek Kosz) 2019. Inspired by the true story of the blind piano genius, Mieczysław Kosz. As a child, Mietek (Mieczysław) loses his eyesight, and his mother places him in The Educational Center in Laski outside of Warsaw, a one-hundred-year-old school for the visually impaired. There he discovers music and finds that it is his way coping with the world. Mietek develops into an excellent classical pianist, but when he discovers jazz, he has only one goal: to become the best jazz pianist in Poland. He becomes more and more successful, not only in Poland, but around the world. He wins the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival. Unexpectedly, a charismatic vocalist, Zuza, walks into his life, a meeting that will change his life forever.



I hope to do a series on Thaddeus (Polish: Tadeusz) Kosciuszko, an important figure in U.S. and Polish history. I did not realize how well-acknowledged he was until I came across towns/cities named Kosciuszko in several states in America. Check it out for yourself. Can you imagine living in Kosciuszko, Mississippi? When you finally master the spelling of Mississippi, you have to learn Kosciuszko!

Of all the distinguished military men who came from abroad to fight for the independence of the thirteen colonies, Thaddeus Kosciuszko of Poland was the first. He came to Philadelphia and offered his services to the Continental Congress in August, 1776, and he served continuously until the end of the war seven years later. He earned praise from George Washington

and the special thanks of Congress.

He returned to Poland, became head of the government and commander-in-chief of the army in the Insurrection of 1794, winning a place in Polish history comparable to that of George Washington in this country.

Acclaimed throughout the world as a courageous fighter for freedom, Kosciuszko came back to visit America in 1797 and lived for nearly six months in Philadelphia, then the capital of the nation. The modest brick house in which he stayed at Third and Pine Streets is now preserved by the National Park Service as the Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Kindly airmail all Polish/Polonian-related questions to:
Robert Strybel, ul. Kaniowska 24, 01-529 Warsaw, Poland
or e-mail them to: strybel@interia.pl or research60@gmail.com

Q: Like my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother before me, before slicing a fresh loaf of bread, I first make the Sign on the Cross on the bottom of the loaf. I know there’s a history associated with this custom but I forgot what it is.

CHRISTINA GUTT
Penfield, NY
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A: The Sign of the Cross has been a universal symbol since the dawn of Catholicism. Soldiers would make the Sign of the Cross before going into battle, and people would trace a cross with their thumbs on the foreheads of departing loved ones. The old custom of tracing a cross with a knife point on the bottom of a loaf is a sign of gratitude that our prayer “give us this day our daily bread” has been answered.

In a spiritual sense, it symbolizes the Holy Eucharist, since Christ Himself is known as the “Bread of Life.”

Q: My husband is Polish and loves pierogi. I have never made them but want to try. Is there an easy pierogi recipe? Please do not use my full name, since I want to surprise my husband.

DOROTHY
IN MICHIGAN (surname withheld on request)

A: There is no short-cut way of making pierogi from scratch, but this is an easy way to create an excellent, tender dough that does not fall apart during cooking. Combine 2 c flour with 1 c dairy sour cream, 1 small egg and 1/2 t salt and work into a smooth dough. Roll out thin, cut into rounds, fill with filling of choice (Google “pierogi

gi fillings” for different varieties) and seal well by pinching edges together tightly. Cook in lightly salted boiling water in batches so they float freely and keep the remainder covered with a clean dish towel until read to be cooked. Cook about 8 min, but do test one for doneness. Good luck!

Q: What does “Sto Lat” mean? I’ve heard it sung on birthdays in Polish families.

JOHN SZYMAŃSKI
Troy, MI

jszymanski80@adrian.edu
A: “Sto lat” is a traditional Polish song of well-wishing. It is sung not only at nameday and birthday parties but also at weddings and anniversaries. As the Polish equivalent of “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow” it is sung at election rallies, to welcome visitors and congratulate people on winning some award. It’s basic message is: “May you live to be a hundred!”

Q: I need a good Polish name for my boat. Thinking “Dobre Czasy” – “Good times” in Polish. Any other suggestions?

MICHAEL KIELKUCKI
via Facebook

A: If you want to touch base only with those who speak Polish, then “Dobre Czasy” is OK, although in Polish that means “times of prosperity” rather than fun and enjoyment. But to most Americans it will be just so much foreign gibberish. Your heritage will be more universally highlighted with names such as “Polish Pride,” “Pride of Polonia,” “Pol-Am Skipper” or “Polish Eagle.” If something comical is more to your liking what about “Polish Seadog,” “Kielbasa Cruiser” or “Pierogi Tub?”

COOKING CLASS



On November 7, 2020, the Polish Heritage Society held a virtual cooking class, cooking crepes. It was a highly successful event and proceeds from the event went toward the non-profit organization. Thank you to all whom attended as it was very well received.

JESSICA FROM NEENAH
won a plate of crepes made by our Polish chefs, Alina Misztal and her daughter Malgosia.

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