Not Forgotten: Grand Rapids Polonia Honors Local WWI Heroes With Monument



On a prominent hillside of Holy Cross Cemetery in Grand Rapids, there rests a striking granite monument that was erected to honor local men who left the security of their jobs and families to fight during World War I for the reunification of Poland.

The centerpiece of graceful monument is a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary with arms outstretched in a pose that suggests "welcome home" to the more than 70 local men who answered the call for what had been a dream held by Polanders for more than 100 years: the reunification of Poland as a country from land seized by Prussia, Russia and Austria.

A grass roots campaign to build a monument was launched in fall 1928, publicized by the Polish weekly newspaper The Echo Tygodniowe. Schoolchildren contributed their candy money, card clubs split winnings from gambling parties, and priests encouraged parishioners to dig a little deeper with special weekly Mass collections. In less than a year, the monument committee had collected about \$4,300 – a substantial sum considering the Great Depression had begun.

ECHO TYGODNIOWE (Weekly Echo; ECHO PUBLISHING CO. 704 Bridge St. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Wychodni w kandy pistek. Premumersta wynosi SI rocznie. Entered at Post Office at Grand Rapids Mich. as second class matter. GMwny Agent Cyrkulacyjny. Edward Jarmolkiewics 742 Ozwarta Ul Felefon Citz. 64-130

### Rodacy!

Budujmy Pomnik na Cmentarzu Polskim Poległym Bohaterom Wojny Światowej oraz i wszystkim weteranom, którzy brali udział w tej wojnie. Pomnik ten to będzie pamiątką że my nie zapomnielim tych dzielnych zuchów, którzy śli z ochotą walczyć o wolność Ameryki i Polski.

Nasze dzielne Polki we wszystkich trzech parafjach zbierają składki na Pomnik. Niechaj nikt nie mówi, że niema na ten szlachetny cel, niech dają wszyscy, starzy i młodzi i niech dają nawet dzieci w szkołach parafjalnych, niech każde dziecko polskie złoży choć 5 centów w swej klasie na ręce Sióstr Nauczycielek, niech składają wszystkie towarzystwa choć mało czy wiele, niech złożą wszyscy.

## "Let no one say there is no money for this noble cause..."

The Echo Tygodniowe -- Nov. 23, 1928

"Compatriots!

Let's build a Monument at the Polish Cemetery to the fallen heroes of the World War and to the great veterans who took part in the war.

This Monument will be a reminder that we have not forgotten those brave cubs who willingly fought for the freedom of America and Poland.

Our brave Polish women in all three parishes are collecting contributions for the Monument. Let no one say that there is no money for this noble cause, let all the old and young give. Let every Polish child give at least 5 cents in their classes to the Teaching Sisters in parish schools. Let all societies give, however small or many."



On Nov. 17, 1929, a gathering of 2,000 people processed through the streets of Grand Rapids from St. Adalbert's Church to the then named Polish National Cemetery to dedicate the monument.

Made of Barre gray granite from Vermont, the monument bears the dates 1914 and 1918 and the inscription: "Polskim Bohaterom Wojny Swiatwej Od Polnji W Grand Rapids Michigan" (Polish Heroes of World War I, from Polonia in Grand Rapids Michigan)

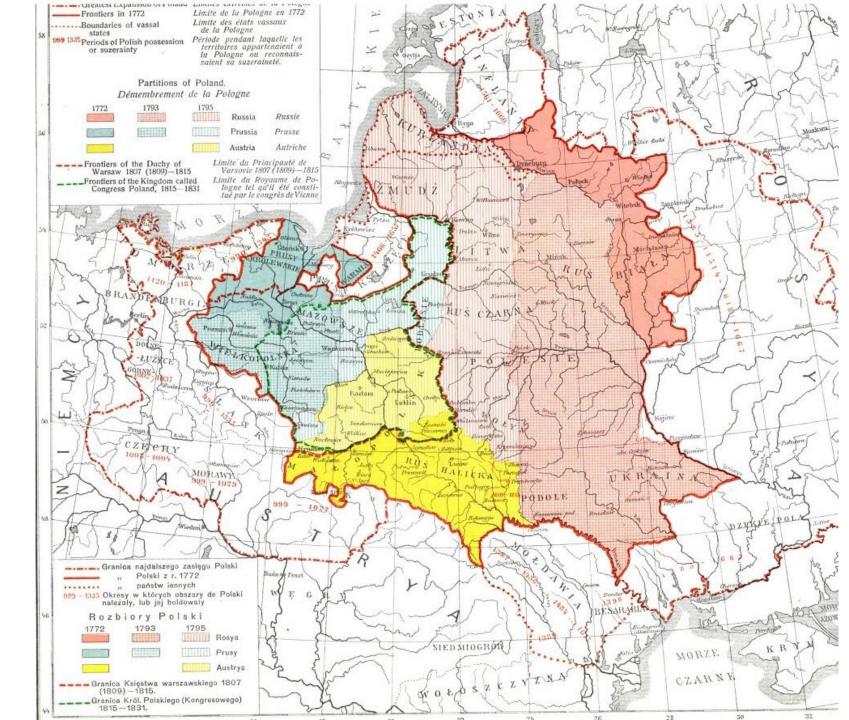


# Yearning for a free Poland

Polanders who immigrated to Grand Rapids dreamed that their native land would one day be reunited.

In 1795, Prussia, Austria and Russia concluded the third partitioning of Poland that erased the country from world maps. Poland would not exist as a sovereign nation for 123 years.

In preparation for a possible military solution, Grand Rapids Polonia formed militias.



#### GRAND RAPIDS PRESS, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 1907

#### DRILL TELL FLOOD VIEWS WILL POLES

### Military Company Is Formed with One Hundred Members.

A new military company is being or-Not ganized in this city, drawing its membership from the Polish parish of the Sacred Heart on the west side. Uniforms have been ordered and a drill hall secured and it is expected that the company will start out with a menibership of one hundred. The company will make its first public appearance. Jury 4 and will participate in the cere-/ho | monies of all public holidays.

The officers of the company are. Anthony, Nowicki, captain; Anthony Plewka, first lieutenant, and Martin Wiktowski, second lieutenant." Many of the members have bad experience in military service in the old country. The company will be drilled in the regular United States army tactics and an attempt will be made to be enrolled in the National Ruards The Rev. L. Kvakowski of Sacred Heart parish is supervising the organization of the young Poles.

IS SEVENTY

Citizens Give Their Opinions by Request of Engineers.

All Join in Extending Welcome to Federal Experts and in Wish That Success May Crown Efforts.

The council chamber was filled to overflowing when the board of United States engineers sent here by the general govemment to look over flood conditionz took their seats yesterday afternoon and whre ready to hear miy suggestions the people of Grand Rapids had to offer. Mayor Ellis introduced Col. Lydecker and the chairman of the engineers briefly stated fat the officers were here to seek a means of remedying the flood situation and wished everybody to feel free to tell their views.

Senator William Alden Smith briefly outlined what conditions had been and declared the city a unit in demanding



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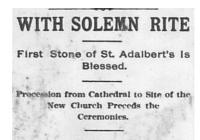
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After a parade in which all the societies of the Polish churches of the city participated, the oremony of the blessing of the first some for the found in of the new St. Adalbert's church we conducted yesterday by the Rt. Rev. Henry Joseph Richter, bishop of Grand Rapids. Many visiting priests, beside all the local Catholic clergy, attended the exercises, which had all the impressiveness of the Roman Catholic ritual. There are the which proved the data

The parade which preceded the dedication, was imposing, the various societies carrying bannees with Polish inscriptions, and the military companies making a fine showing. There were the Polish guards and Uhlans of St. Adalbert's parish, and the Sobieski guards, recently organized by Father Krakowski of Sacred Heart parish. It was the first appearance of the latter and they imade a brilliant display, dressed in uniforms the exact reproduction of the uniforms worn by the Poles in the wars

against Russia. The finish and execution of their maneuvers was remarkable, the company using the regular Polish tactics, similar to those used in the German army today. The uniforms are blue with red stripes and gold trimming, with the regulation big helmet with huge plume. The parade moved from the cathedral across to the new church through Sheldon, Monroe, Canal, and West Bridge streets.

The bishop first dedicated the new stone and then proceeded about the foundation of the church, stopping at each corner. A special service was then held in the old church with a sermon and benediction of the blessed sacrament. Father Edward Kozlowski of Bay City preached the sermon in the Polish tongue, and Bishop Richter, after a short address, himself, gave the benediction. The bishop was assisted, in the cere-

monies by the Rev. It. Schrembs of Louisville, Ky., who acted as deacon, and by the Rev. George Brefeill as subdeacon. The Rev. Michael Galleger was also one of the assitants. Among. the visiting ciergy were the Rev. S. Nowrocki of Chicago, the Rev. J. L. Zapolo of Chicago, and the Rev. Alexander Grudginski of Hilliards, Mich.

The Rev. Casimir Skory is pastor of the church.



POLISH ZOUAVES	5.2 on review at old island No. 1, now the The Pollah Zonaves are being organ- lied and will appear before spring as the only Zonave company in western.	DAZZLES THE EYE
Fr. Krakowski Organizes An- other Military Company.	The Petitit Zonavis are baing scattering and and will provide a comparison of the lichican A. K. Moore, a local drift- matics, has offered his services, arXii willow and the services and drift- matics, has offered his services, arXii willow and the services and the relation of the services of the section of the services of the solidary.	
other Military Company. IS PRIEST MILITANT	soldiery. So Fr. Krakowski snourages the love of notive land in members of his flock. As he walks among his charges he talks	Drum Major's Glad Rags of t Real Fussy Kind.
Army of 500 Men in Grand Rapids Now Equipped.	tion; not of action but of preparation for ac- tion; not of songs of patriotian, but of quiet, collected waiting for the proper time. During the recent Japanese-Hus- man way not a hand to Polace was	ALL GOLD AND WHIT
A STATE OF A	raised against the raing Slavie power. Was it because the Poles are at last re- signed to their fulls after revolutions where women and children fought like	But One Other Uniform Like In United States.
and Dream of Freedom to Be Regained.	Theorem is after the realing of the crac's troops by present soldiery? Ask a Grand Rapids Pole and he will only much at your question. We are not read? " unde to the sub-	Capt. R. A. Christian to Give Engla Teachings to Furniture City Band Members.
Filled with milling orthusines kindled by the undying particular, which has represent the particular state of the open instance of the particular of orthor blocks in display of the parallel of other blocks in display of the parallel begins to a single state on the begins of a milling rates. Like the frick it is like dresses to know day regain the country, dawn it is formed	In order of third space starting we particular the space of the space starting s	Rever um tum ump tum-here comes.
ropean history the Polish-American of Grand Rapids has outstepped the men of other bloods in display of the passion concentration in anture. The measuring	<text><text><text></text></text></text>	Contrast. The loss of all the bowy, the energy of the loss and, do, as popular with and the loss of all the bowy, the energy of the loss of the bowy of the energy of the loss of the loss of the loss of the loss of the loss of the loss of the loss of the flower, sprawide and, "loss bowy of the flower, sprawide and, "loss bowy of the flower, sprawide," loss bowy of the flower, sprawide, "loss bowy of the flower, sprawide, and the loss of the loss
The Pole is of a millingy race. Like the Irish it is his dream to some day	Another interesting organization is found in St. Adalhert's parish, in charge of Roy Casmit Skory. The Polish Unlane, reproducing the kina's horse- ment environments had the bins	Grand Hapids small hoys have so thing to boast about in the new arr
regain no county, polo it in its former	hostile Swedes, Turks and Prussians like a hurricane of steel, was organized last winter. Unable to obtain mounts they drill afoot, uniformed as awalry.	"the flower, gayoet and "just lovell dram major in the middle weat doubtless unexcelled anywhere, permon of the drum major is not
A	Fr. Skory has also organized the St. Csamir's cadets, an American uniformed and drilled boly of Young Poles. The Knights of St. Hedwig, military as the rest, have St. Hedwig, military as the	netly new-he has lived here for a time-but he is new as a drum mi which is to say that he has the b new military togs.
Er	Maryan Mutkowski of Si, Ialdor's par- ish, as well as another company not yet fully equipped.	will be led by R. A. Christian, a
EY3	SNOW COSTS BIG SUM	\$1
<b>E</b> A3	Every Time Plows Are Out Bill Is for \$100.	1
	Some Aldermen Favor an Ordinance Requiring Property Owners to Clean Own Walks.	ALL DE
VIEW		Marile
	While as yet there has been no snow- storm of sufficient magnitude to inte- fere with leaffs, or call, out the snow- plows the annual agitation looking to- ward the enactment of an ordinanco- stration of the state of an ordinanco- stant their own while again is being beard.	- Ville -
	ward the enactment of an ordinance which will compel property owners to clean their own walks again is being heard.	
	Among the many ordinances of this city there is one which says. "Nor shall any such owner or occupant having charge of any premises in said city per-	
AND TRANS	mit any show, les or shigh to remain on the sidewalk in front of such prem- less, or bordering on the side thereof on improved streets, and shall clean and remove such smok, les will diak from	Dram Major R. A. Christian.
- Ales	clean their own weaks again is being Amount the many collinances of this strip theorem is more which says. "Nor shall the theorem is more which says." Nor shall denote the same set of the same set of the same set of the same set of the same many set of the same set of the same set of the same, set of the same set of the same set of the same result of the same set of the same set of the same set of the same set of the same result of the same set of the same	military expert, and Capt. Christian the finest dram major uniform is branch of the forest. Officers of loss, which huin the new residen- clares that it cannot be 'tourhed' beauty or cost, with the possible ex- tion of that us also make by the Kahn also drum major of Christmatt, w uniform was also make by the Kahn
	imouples shall be deemed a sufficient cleaning under this section of the ordi- nance." This final clause in the ordinance	gos, which built the new creation, clures that it cannot be "fouched" beauty or cost, with the possible ex- tion of that worn by the famous mill
One of the Zönkvrs in the new uniforms, potential of military supermassys and with human and Germany from her frastler by virtue of a single frastler. Unland Work has his dream, but milke many distributed to the dream but milke many systematic manner, well itigerrated a potential manner, well itigerrated a potential manner, well itigerrated a potential manner, well itigerrated a potential of some dive hundred men his of the dety.	nance." This final clause in the ordinance- practically destroys its value as a law and show the anomenit perturbing to the cleaning of the mow was enacted, Jan. 17, 1898, there has been to attempt to enforce it.	uniform was also made by the Kala goo firm. Uniform of Gold Braid,
Such is his dream, but unlike many particule races of dreamers he has or- ganized as best he may and gone at in a systematic manner, well illustrated by	The argument is now being made that in most other cities property owners are expected to showel their sidewalks clear of snow, and in the winter time	Epaulettes and signification, which technical for the fassy breastwork the uniform, were especially mad Frames, constructed of solid gold
the multipy movement among the Poles of this city. An army of some five hundred men is constituted in the various Polish mili- tary pomutatics of Grand Punda Revee	the recorders court in Lenton is the seene of dozens of unwilling visitations from laggard residents who had failed to observe the snow ordinance. Few regroups realize that each time	and lace at a cost of \$70. The unit itself is of firest textured broadcloth trimmed in taffy gold braid. Uniformed in white and gold, ca
full companies of soldiers, many of whoto huve served in the Russian or German armies, stand residy to fight if need be for their adopted land, and when	the snowplows are started out in their journeys over the streets of Grand Rap- ids an expense of scarty \$160 is made necessary. The trip of each plow costs	proud forum major should, in from the military band, and the musiciar their new blue and gold uniforms have to do some fancy stepping
the entire process and the board of the second seco	The transmission of the second	Their new drillmaster has been a missioned by the management of band to drill it along strictly mill lines and a few fancy maneuvers
sistors adding a truly huropean cast to the surroundings. There saists what doubtless is the most unique military organization in the state, a body of	showfulls men and terms are necessary to remove the great plies from the gatters in the downtown streets in order to prevent the fooding of bisements in	be added to those of the ragular tac So II will be the aim to make the niture city hand excel, not only in m cal, but in military miness.
areat historical interest and timely sig-	case of unexpected rapid thaws. Thus	Capt. Christian, who received training in the English army, will ploy the European system of h movements, which is far more f
10 2	3	<ul> <li>Total made by Dok Kall</li> <li>Total or Gold Reid.</li> <li>Andream Statistical Statistical</li></ul>
X I		WILL TALK TO BO
No Frank		Dr. A. G. Studer Will Be Speake Happy Hour. The talk by Adoles G. Studer of
1 1 2		trolt postponed from last week with niven tomorrow at the Happy I Dr. Studer's subject will be "The M of a Man" a support of entrain
ante de selection		features are also promised, inclu- a James Whitcomb Riley Chris- stary by Miss Pearl Dunning, a r- ber of band selections and attra-
		Piano for Christmas Gift. Tou can get one of the best pl
Pr. Krakowski, the priest militant, as he or j		ments from C. F. Stahr, 140-344 Se street, cheaper than anywhere ein the city. He has no heavy rent Day nucl is sciented with your
milieuses. Dressed in the ormats un- form worm in the time of Jan Boldoski, Americaniees done of that unfortunate land stand as atteriton hences the land stand as atteriton hences the provident of the avoiders of the accentum arrange of the done and the off Polyaka shared of an europe able of Polyakashed of any current	the mooy problem is a serious and ex- pensive one and it is believed by many officials that a new ordinance should be enacted which would give to the pelice the power of compelling every property owner, ar every resident to clean the own walk.	WILL TALK TO 100 Pr. A. 2. main with the speed- tage to the speed of the speed of the speed of the speed of the speed o
priced and organizer almost an exact reproduction of the soldiery of their ancestors a century ago. They are writted by former schanta of the	which we have a second sound and any	Ladias, Remember Opening Day Men Extes, Jeweler, 57 R. Div., valuable See the Fins Display for Christian A the Latie China Ebut, 50 N. Divi
utilitied by locators excusive of the der- standing of the second second second second second the old Polich standard of any entreme code, Locking at them one has no they stand at attention their polse is artenen. Exclusions for the policy of the second they stand at attention their polse is artenen to be a standard of the second the second second second second second terms of the second second second second second terms of the second second second second second terms of the second second second second second second terms of terms	We will a No. 1 hard cost, \$7.85; Po- cahontas, Jump or car, \$5.37 Campbella Creek, Jump or nut, \$4.75; For cash, C. F. Fetersen Cost Co. Both phones.	Eyles, jeweler, 57 S. Div., valuable See the Fine Display for Christm At the Little Chine Flop, 40 N. Divi "Parker House." the great 25c ct
doubt that they are not addiene. As they stand at attention their polse is statuceque, motionicas, military. Rev. Ladislaug Krakowski well may be termed the network	Christmas Presents at Ryders, For men, women and children. Come and look. 13 East Leonard street. Essencing and Jananning-All Rinds	TO MUSKEGON Every Sunday 500 ROUND
In charge of the pariah he has fostered this unique company and, not content	Enameting and Japanning-All Kinds. Grand Enameting and Painting Works. P. W. English, Prop. Cita. 1377. Trade at "The Heart of Grand Rapids."	Every Sunday

At the beginning of World War I, Poles were fighting Poles – depending on whether they lived in the German or Russian sectors of partitioned Poland. Both the Germans and Russians made cynical promises to reinstate portions of Poland. Only Wilson made a clear promise to reunite Poland.

American declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.



U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points

Delivered Jan. 8, 1918

"XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."



# Recruiting for the Polish Army

On Oct. 8, 1917, the federal government announced that all Poles who were not U.S. citizens and not subject to the draft could enlist in the new Polish army. To coordinate the recruitment, the American National Department of the Polish Central Relief Committee established the Polish Military Commission.

The recruitment campaign exceeded all expectations. By the end of 1917, nearly 6,000 men had begun basic training.

In September 1917, Niagara Camp was chosen as the location to train a Polish Army-in-exile. **From October 1917 to March 1919, 22,395 men** went through the training facility known as Camp Kosciuszko. They were then sent overseas to join the other Polish recruits fighting in France





Polish general Jozef Haller commanded Polish troops fighting on the side of the Central Powers of Germany and Austria against the Russians. But when Russia withdrew from the war in 1917 during the Bolshevik Revolution, the Polish troops no longer believed that Germany and Austria supported an independent Poland.

After joining with French and British forces, he found himself in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Division of Poles from the U.S., Russia, France, Italy, Germany and other countries. They were known as Haller's Blue Army for the blue uniforms provided by the French.



"Of all the nations," observed a magazine correspondent covering the Allies' World War I victory parade in Paris on July 14, 1919, "the Poles, now passing, are getting the most strenuous applause so far, save that for Americans."



## **Returning to America**

Troops returned to America on seven transports in the early months of 1920. After quarantine at Fort Dix, N.J., the veterans were sent home.

The Polish National Department scraped together some items so the veterans could transition to civilian life: a suit, refurbished military boots from the American surplus, a train ticket home and a few dollars for food.

Veterans who were ill or disabled relied on charity, so the Stowarzyszenie Weteranów Armii Polskiej w Ameryce (SWAP), also known as the Polish Army Veterans Association (PAVA) was formed. Famed pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski was a staunch advocate of SWAP.





Names of metro Grand Rapids men who joined the Blue Army

Source: Polish Army in France Recruitment Records

Jan Aksamitowski

Jan Kosakowski Walenty Androkowicz Franciszek Kowalczyk Wincenty Baciocha Stanislaw Kowalski Franciszek Banaszewski Michal Kozlowski Jozef Bogurzewski **Zygmunt Krajewski** Feliks Ciepielowski Mieczyslaw Krzystowczyk **Jozef Cieslak** Wladyslaw Krzykwa Edward Czerniakowski Franciszek Kszystofel Jozef Dajnowicz Walenty Kubaczyk Franciszek Danowski Tadeusz Kudlicki Julian Dlogokinski Stanislaw Lach (Lack) **Karol Falarski** Kazimierz Lapinski Ludwik Ferenc **Bronislaw Lenski** Wladyslaw Gabert Alojzy Libek Aleksander Golubiewski Stanislaw Markiewicz Antoni Gornicz Michal Matejko Karol Gorski Ludwik Miller **Boleslaw Gryczanoski** Wladyslaw Palajski Tomasz Grymbowski Ignacy Pasiek (Pasik) **Bronislaw Janiewicz** Wojciech Pilarski Wincenty Kachanowicz Adolf Popielarski Jan Kaminski Andrzef Portka Antoni Karpowicz Michal Ragowski Stefan Kasnia **Bazyli Rechulicz** 

**Michal Robacha** Josef Rudzik Jan A. Ruminski Josef Rysak Jan Sadlowski Josef Sloniecki Jan Szczerba Pawel Zwonek Waclaw Zychlewicz

Stanislaw Smytkowski **Kazimierz Stasieluk** Walery Szhultz Wladyslaw Szocinski Ludwik Szoczynski Franciszek Tomaszewski **Konstanty Waronko** Sylwester Waskiewicz Nikodem Wechman Nickodem A. Wichonicz Piotr Wlochowicz Wincenty Zakarecki Franciszek Zakrzewski Stanislaw Zawiejski Michal Zubowicz

Over the course of more than 90 years, people forgot the intent of the monument, and it fell into neglect. After rediscovering the monument, the PHS board discussed the need to learn its history and restore it to its former beauty.

Based on that discussion, a proposal was submitted on April 3, 2023 to Holy Cross Cemetery to:

- Determine the history of the monument, since the cemetery and diocese had no information on it;
- Determine the scope of work and cost to refurbish; and
- Execute the work.

More than 125 hours of research was invested to determine the history of the monument.





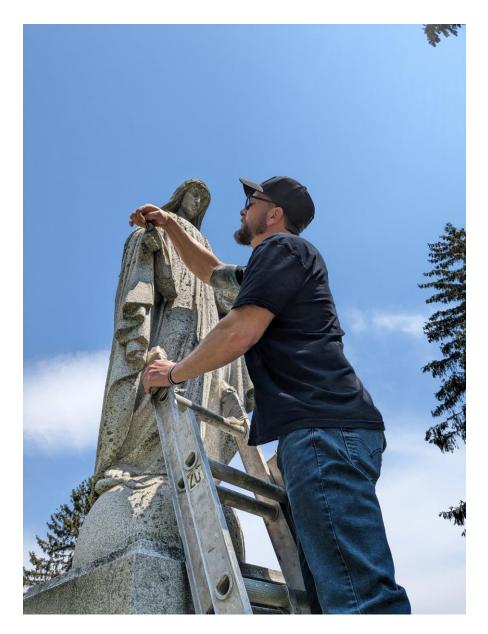




The scope of the work was determined to be:

- Remove lichens and unsightly discoloration with appropriate cleaning;
- Repair the thumb missing from the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
- Recaulk seams of the monument;
- Plant colorful artificial flowers in the urns;
- Purchase and install two 3- by 5-foot Polish flags on the flagpoles; and
- Remove a mound of earth that covered the front concrete slab of the monument.

All of these items were implemented by August 2023.



All of the work was completed in time for a visit by the Consul General for the Republic of Poland in Chicago, Pawel Zyzak, on Aug. 25, 2023.

Zyzak placed a wreath of fresh flowers at the monument, gave a few comments on the sacrifice of the soldiers and led the audience in an Our Father spoken in Polish. In attendance was the family of Michael Buzalski, president of the committee charged with building the monument.

