

The First Polish Settlers in Grand Rapids, Michigan (1850s and 1860s)

The following is an introduction to the family history of Mike Jackoboice, one of our fellow PHS members. The full history with accompanying photos will soon be on the PHS Website.

Historian Eduard Skendzel said this was “a frontier town of native Americans, French Canadians, and Irish and German immigrants” in pioneer days of the mid-1800s. By 1850 there were 2,686 residents in this busy logging town (Dutch too). In the 1850s, Polish immigrants found a growing city from Wealthy to Leonard Street and from Straight/Alpine to Eastern Avenue. "Polanders" liked the area's familiar weather, seasons, farms and forests. Many Poles worked with wood. They knew how to cut down trees, move logs, saw lumber, build houses and make furniture. Some settled, some departed and some returned.

Thanks to journalists and historians (including Edward Symanski) we have the names of most of the few Polish immigrants in Grand Rapids in the 1850s and 1860s. Most lived on the west side of the Grand River and knew each other. The following family names appear in books, articles and documents: Bala, Baweja, Cerklewski, Glowczynski, Gruszczynski, Jablonski, Janszewski, Mieras, Nowak, Ojrowski, Olbinski, Polgensak, Razmus, Rozmarynowski, Sucharski, Szymczak, Tloczynski, Zielinski and others.... The old Grand Rapids Herald newspaper printed an extraordinary article on September 19, 1909 with photograph portraits of seven "Founders of the Polish Colony in Grand Rapids." The photo panel caption featured their names and dates of settlement in the city. The lengthy article was headlined: “Poles of Grand Rapids are very Patriotic” and subtitled, “Revere the Fatherland for the Honor of Those Who Gave Much for Liberty... Love Their Adopted Country for the Great Liberty It Has Given Them.” The writer, Frank Sparks, had the best possible eyewitness source of information. He credited “data gathered by Mrs. John Lipczynski, lady commissioner of the Polish National Alliance.” Valeria Lipczynski came from Poland and settled in Grand Rapids in 1869. She helped Polish immigrants find homes and served as a tutor, nurse and journalist. She was active in the Polish community as its grande dame until her death in 1930. Valeria knew the early immigrants and their life stories. She recorded their names for posterity.

The Herald article of 1909 named the "First Polish Residents" [Settlers] of the 1850s and 60s: “Among the first to come to Grand Rapids was Joseph Jackubowicz [Jakubowicz], who left his native home in Russian Poland and came to Grand Rapids in 1855. He with his family lived an honored life in Grand Rapids until his death in 1899. In 1864 two more came. A. Styler and Simon Dzieniszewski and a year later Valentine Pogodzinski" [and returning brother Jacob Pogodzinski. John Lipczynski came in 1869].

Reporter Frank Sparks added, “In 1869 there were in Grand Rapids the following Polish families, all hard working and industrious people, a credit to their nationality and to the city of their adoption: Andrew Popowski, Joseph Jakubowicz, Jacob Pogodzinski...” [and nine other Polish families of: Anthony Styler (Szytyler, Stiller), John Podlewski, Simon Dzieniszewski (Janshefski), Valentine Pogodzinski, Michael Pross (Prus), John Witkowski (Wittkowski), John Lipczynski, Anthony Lipczynski and Frank Szocinski]. In this article, we see the spellings Dzieniszewski, Dzienszewski and Dzeniszewski. And we see the Polish spelling variant Jakubowicz for the actual family name Jakóbowicz (later modified to Jackoboice).

The Evening Press, on February 11, 1899, reported that 74 year-old machinist "Joseph Jackoboice was one of the oldest settlers upon the West Side, and a pioneer of the Polish citizens." The Press noted he was "one of the earliest of the great army of Polish emigrants to come to this part of Michigan" [1850s to 1914]. Joseph was an honorary member of the Polish National Aid Society of Grand Rapids (est. 1878). He was a founding member of Polish National Alliance (PNA) Lodge 57 (est. 1886). In the book, History of Kent County, Michigan (1881), author M. A. Leeson recorded that Joseph manufactured, "All kinds of steam engines, mill work and general wood working machinery" [mainly for sawmills and furniture companies]. He worked with iron to build machines and saws that turned logs into furniture in "The Furniture Capital of America." Joseph founded the West Side Iron Works in 1880.

2020 Polish Genealogical Society of America Tour

Russian Partition – Poland & Lithuania

September 5-16, 2020

We are greatly pleased with the responses from our 2019 tours to the Galician and Prussian partitions. Whether a first time or repeat visit, attendees expanded their knowledge, gained new insights and experienced more deeply their Polish heritage.

Partnering again with Polish Origins, we are delighted to offer a Russian partition tour in 2020. Next September, explore the beautiful and historically important eastern lands of the "Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" with its great diversity of nationalities, religions and cultures. Highlights include...

Warsaw Vilnius Lublin Białystok

Kurpie region Białowieża forest & Bison Trakai castle

Jewish & Tatar History Ethnographic park Ostra Brama

As on the prior tours, there will be visits to archives and lectures on genealogy.

And add personal research and travel with PolishOrigins before or after the tour.

For the complete itinerary and costs, visit www.pgsa.org.

Note: The tour is limited to a maximum of 20 travellers.

SAVE THE DATE!

POLISH/AMERICAN NIGHT at THE WEST MICHIGAN WHITECAPS

DATE: FRIDAY MAY 8, 2020

MORE DETAILS TO COME ON PHS FACEBOOK PAGE

The Well *Seasoned* Table

This month's recipes were provided by Marilyn Lignell and Stephanie Kovitz. Since Lent is upon us, maybe this could be your year to go meatless most days and not just on Fridays. Marilyn's husband considers mushrooms meat when she cooks vegetarian so her **Mushroom Ragu** recipe not only has "meat" but also heart healthy walnuts, loaded with omega 3 fatty acids. Stephanie's recipe for **Sweet Potato Nachos** will transition nicely for Friday suppers during Lent. (just omit the chicken).

Email your favorite recipes to: PHSgrandrapids@gmail.com

Mushroom Ragu

Kosher salt

1/3 cup walnuts

1 pound cremini mushrooms

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 onion, chopped

2 gloves garlic, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand (to rid yourself of any aggressions)

1 small sprig rosemary

1 8.8-ounce package of pasta of your choice, cooked

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

Pulse the walnuts in a food processor until finely chopped. Remove to a small bowl. Add half the mushrooms to the food processor; pulse until finely chopped. Slice the remaining mushrooms.

Heat olive oil in a dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the walnuts: cook stirring until roasted, about 2-3 minutes. Add onion and chopped mushrooms and cook until mushrooms are dry, 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and cook until mushrooms are browned, 2-3 minutes. Add sliced mushrooms and garlic cook until softened, 3- 5 minutes. Add tomato paste and cook until coated, about 1 minute. Add crushed tomatoes and ½ cup of water. Add rosemary and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring, until sauce thickens, about 10 minutes.

Add pasta and half the parsley to the dutch oven until well coated and remove rosemary sprig. Garnish with remaining parsley.

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Sweet Potato Nachos (makes about 6 servings) (Recipe from joybauer.com)

Ingredients:

2 medium to large sweet potatoes, sliced into thin chips (use a mandolin slicer or cut by hand into 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick rounds)

1 TBL extra virgin olive oil

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon paprika

1 cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained (use low sodium)

1/2 cup corn, fresh or frozen

2 ounces pulled chicken (shred cooked or leftover rotisserie)

1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, halved

3/4 cup 2 percent reduced-fat shredded Mexican blend cheese

1/4 cup salsa

1/4 cup nonfat Greek yogurt or light sour cream

1 avocado, diced

2 tablespoons chopped scallions

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Liberally coat a baking sheet(s) with olive oil spray and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, add sweet potato "chips" and olive oil and stir until all pieces are somewhat coated in oil (use your hands to mix, if necessary). Place on baking sheet(s) in a single layer, lightly mist tops with additional oil spray and evenly sprinkle on salt, garlic powder and paprika.

Bake in oven for 20 to 40 minutes on top rack, flipping halfway through. (Oven times will vary, depending upon sweet potato thickness, so watch closely to ensure they crisp up but do not burn). Remove sweet potato rounds from oven and transfer to large skillet or oven-safe dish, allowing the edges to slightly overlap.

Sprinkle black beans, corn, chicken, tomatoes over the tops. Next add cheese and place back in the oven for a

few minutes until the cheese is hot and melted.

Remove from the oven and garnish with salsa, Greek yogurt or sour cream, avocado, and scallions. Add any preferred additional toppings like minced cilantro, jalapenos or lime juice.

