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The Polish Heritage Society meets at the Polish Falcons at 6:00 pm on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October.

The Polish Heritage Society publishes this newsletter monthly. Submit story ideas and content contributions to Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to: phsgrandrapids@gmail.com

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Sharing Polish and American Easter Family Traditions

By Paulette Longwell

Holiday meals are a very important part of family traditions. In 2011, I recorded the Easter food traditions of my family who live in Grand Rapids, Michigan. These traditions were influenced by my mother's Polish background since her father was born in Poland and her mother's parents were born in Poland. The traditions she grew up with were first continued by my grandparents while they were alive and then by my parents and me and my siblings. Since I had the opportunity to visit Poland in 2023, I have been learning about my family member's holiday food traditions in that country and have enjoyed comparing them to the traditions in my family.

Eugeniusz Raczkiwicz, my mother's cousin who lives in Sabaudia, Poland, contributed pictures and descriptions of their food used in this article. Other pictures are from his brother Bolesław Raczkiwicz, who lives in Tomaszów Lubelski, and a second cousin Lucyna Raczkiwicz Duszyk, who lives in Kraków, Poland.

Shirley Longwell, my mother, remembers when her family carried a basket of food to church to be blessed in a tradition called "Święconka". Many Catholic



The traditional Polish Easter meal with made-ahead salads and other cold dishes. Sliced ham and sausage (warm or cold) is also featured.

Churches in Grand Rapids still carry on this tradition of the "Blessing of the Baskets" on Holy Saturday.

The basket for blessing would typically contain bread and lamb shaped butter ("Baranek Wielka-

nocny"), ham and kielbasa, eggs, salt, and horseradish and would be covered by an embroidered linen. Our family stopped following this tradition, though it continues to be available at some

(Continued on page 2)

Polish Heritage Society Event Schedule

PHS Board Meeting, Monday, April 20th, 6:00 pm at Polish Falcons - 957 Fulton St SW, All PHS members are encouraged to attend. Bar will be open.

Rozmowa Polish Language Club, April 28th 7:00 pm, Kosciuszko Hall - 935 Park St SW, Grand Rapids.

PHS Scholarship Application Deadline, April 15th, (See page 4 for details)

See Events Calendar on the PHS website or go to the PHS Facebook page for up to date information

(Easter continued from page 1)

local parishes. Contact your church to see if they participate. You can also contact the historic Polish churches such as St. Isidore, Sacred Heart and the Basilica which still carry on this tradition yearly for their schedule. Eugeniusz' family continues to follow this practice in Poland at their local church.

While my mother no longer brought a basket of Easter foods to church, she always made up individual baskets for her three daughters with a chocolate bunny, bright pink Peeps, and small chocolate eggs. These would be hidden inside the house in places like a closet or behind the living room drapes and we would have to look for them.

The Easter menu typically consisted of foods that were made ahead so that the fourteen or fifteen people can eat after they arrive at her house after Sunday Mass at St. Adalbert Church. It is similar in Poland where according to Eugeniusz, "After the Resurrection, we meet at our place with about sixteen to eighteen people."

Meat figures prominently in the menu. In 2011, my mother bought nine pounds of ham with some of it thinly sliced, along with kielbasa for \$4.00 per pound from Ralph's Market on Leonard Street. Other years the kielbasa has been purchased from 20th Century Meat Market, Levan-doski's Meat or Frank's Market. She starts to boil the kielbasa in a large pan at 11:00 a.m. after returning from church. It will come to a boil after 20 to 25 minutes and then she will let it cook another 20 minutes before browning it in an electric fry pan. During this time, the last touches are put on all the other food.

Lamb shaped butter was always purchased by my mother from one of the nuns from St. Adalbert Church who made it back in the day. We used to spread it on thinly sliced rye bread from American



Sliced ham and sausage (warm or cold) accompaniment

Bakery, but since they closed it is a challenge every year to get just the right bread and none of the current bakeries slice it thin enough. Other items on the menu include potato salad, jello salad, hard boiled eggs colored with vegetable dyes and placed in a basket on the table, and spicy horseradish.

Eugeniusz shared the following Easter wishes from Poland, "Greetings to all those who want to learn about Easter traditions in Poland related to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In our country. The tradition of Easter is as follows: First we share a blessed egg. I serve each person according to age sliced with wishes. Then white borscht based on sorrel with bacon and sausage is served. (for me the most delicious dish). Related to the other items, Eugeniusz said, "We also serve dishes similar to yours."



Eugeniusz Raczkiewicz Easter Family Meal in Poland

My mother's potato salad recipe is well regarded among the extended family. Some of the boiled eggs go into the potato salad. Grandma Pauline Raczkiewicz (Shirley's mother) always thought the potato salad needed more salt and often Shirley would think something is lacking -- maybe mustard?--or that there is too much onion. "But it is hard to tell until it has been chilled," she always said, "It's got to get cold, it's not good until it is cold."

About my mother's potato salad recipe, Eugeniusz said, "We add green peas, carrots, pickled cucumbers and apples to the potato salad."

Mom's Potato Salad Recipe:

Potatoes, peeled and chopped (6)

Hard cooked eggs (8)

Celery, finely chopped (1 ½ cups)

Radishes, thin sliced (a few)

Onion, finely chopped (one, very small)

Green pepper, finely chopped (two strips)

Mayonnaise (one cup)

Sugar (1 Tablespoon)

Mustard

A lot of salt and pepper Cook potatoes in boiling water until a fork can go in easily. Remove from the water and cool. After cooling, cube the potatoes.

Add the celery, radishes, onion and green pepper and mix.

Mix the mayonnaise, sugar, mustard, salt and pepper and fold into the ingredients.

Chill the salad before serving.

Desserts vary a little year to year. One year my sister Linda made a decorated bunny cake. A home-made apple pie might be baked for the occasion. Often my mother will make the dessert the day before with granddaughter Marissa and also have her help to put on the table cloth and set the table.

Eugeniusz said, "Finally, a babka cake with a festive smell and taste ends the meal." This is what the gathering looks like in our country. In the family circle we discuss various matters taking advantage of the festive atmosphere."



Boleslaw Raczkiewicz family

Comparing my family traditions with those of current Polish families living in Poland was interesting. Our traditions from Poland continue in the United States but we are getting more casual and relaxed about them as the years go by. While the traditions were most similar when my grandparents were alive and we went to their house for the holidays, there still is some similarity in the foods we enjoy for Easter and our purpose in gathering.

This message from Lucyna Raczkiewicz Duszyk sums it up, "Wesołych Świąt Wielkanocnych (Happy Easter) from our Polish family to our beloved American relatives! May your Easter be filled with joy, love, and the warmth of family gatherings. Sending our best wishes for a blessed celebration. He is Risen!"

Meet Max Golczynski, Grand Rapids' Hand-made Couverture Chocolate Artisan

By Richard Panek

The Wealthy Street Shopping District known as Uptown is home to a unique Polish American family-owned business that caters to lovers of chocolate. Mokaya Inc, run by Max Golczynski, is an artisan chocolate and confections boutique located at 638 Wealthy SE in Grand Rapids, Michigan which has been proudly serving the Grand Rapids community for over ten years



Mokaya, located at 638 Wealthy St. SE, Grand Rapids

Golczynski is ½ Polish and his great-great grandparents were immigrants but he is not sure when or from where they emigrated from Poland. He was raised on the east side of Grand Rapids and grew up working in the family catering business learning to cook and bake under his father. His Dad, who grew up on the west side, ran the former Jersey Junction in East Grand Rapids. Max attended college for music and anthropology but ultimately returned to his family roots in the culinary arts.

Max is proud of his Polish background and serves with Grand Rapids Sister Cities International as the liaison for Bielsko-Biala, Poland. Grand Rapids has 6 other sister cities

in Ghana, South Korea, Japan, Mexico, Italy and Ukraine.

This year, in fact Golczynski will be making a trip to Bielsko-Biala, Poland in advance of hosting their Polish contingent visiting for Grand Rapids' ArtPrize event in September. In addition to this, the GR Sister Cities will have a float in the Pulaski Days Parade so you may see him on the float if you attend that event.

What makes his shop, Mokaya, unique is that they are a retail artisanal couverture chocolate producer. This is not your typical supermarket chocolate. Couverture is a high-quality chocolate with a higher cocoa-butter content, designed specifically for tempering, coating, and fine confectionery work used in truffles and bonbons. What makes couverture special is the high cocoa-butter content (typically 32–39% cocoa butter), significantly more than standard chocolate. Its elevated cocoa-butter percentage gives it exceptional shine, smooth melting, and the crisp “snap” prized by chocolate lovers.

The chocolate most consumers use for home baking, on the other hand, is technically known as compound chocolate. Some purists may consider it a “chocolate substitute” made with cocoa powder, vegetable fats (like palm kernel or coconut oil) and sweeteners, instead of cocoa butter. This makes it cheaper, easier to melt, and doesn't require tempering—a major reason it's used in mass produced candy coatings and quick home projects.

Couverture is extremely sensitive to room temperature, humidity, airflow and the surface temperature of tools and molds. Clean, efficient work habits with impeccably dry tools, clean molds and no water contamination are required since one drop of water can ruin a batch. This gives you the shine, snap, smooth texture, and room-temperature stability that couverture is prized for.

There is no one particular training path to become a chocolate maker. Working at a professional level with couverture chocolate however, requires a unique combination of talents. Understanding cocoa butter crystallization (tempering science) is the skill that separates couverture from “just melted chocolate.” Tempering techniques demand precision and the ability to read the chocolate's behavior.

According to Golczynski, most chocolate candy makers are technically pastry chefs who apply standard kitchen skills in their craft. “The term chocolatier is the name for one who makes our raw materials, converting the cocoa butter and solids into the cocoa commodity rather than the final product of truffles or bonbons. We source our chocolate from carefully selected suppliers, the vast majority of which are Fair Trade Certified small, often family, growers located in Honduras, Ecuador and Peru” said Golczynski.

He states his business philosophy as follows: “We believe that operating a business in an environmentally and socially responsible manner is fundamental to who we are. Because we are in the chocolate business, we are especially interested in protecting the environment that cacao needs to grow and thrive. We prioritize suppliers that are closer to us in proximity, so we can reduce the miles traveled for our ingredients and packaging purchases.” Golczynski explained that all their chocolate confections are crafted on site and sold in the attached retail store, so there is no extra transportation needed once they



Max Golczynski displaying showcase Easter Bunnies in production at Mokaya

get the ingredients and packaging in hand.

At the time of this interview, Mokaya was preparing for the Easter season with a variety of confections and bonbons in the shapes of eggs and bunnies. Golczynski said “There is some seasonality to the business with Valentines being the highlight of the year, but any time is a good time for chocolate.” In addition to chocolates, they produce indulgent cookies, tarts, desserts as well as hot chocolate.

Max's personal favorite treat at the shop is the brown butter toffee chocolate chunk cookie. In the summer, they also produce ice cream for a cool treat. If you need some superb chocolates, truffles, bon bons, cookies or brownies, stop by. It is an excellent place to visit and a good excuse to check out the Uptown area of Grand Rapids. Remember, the Easter Season lasts for 50 days after Lent so go treat yourself to something special.

They are open from Noon to 6:00 pm Tuesday through Saturday.

Polish Heritage Society February 16, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

Board members present: Susan Ulanowicz, Teresa Bonham, Rosemary Maciejewski, Eric Tetsworth, Thaddeus Broda, Susan Ulanowicz, Marzanna Butryn, Sarah Sharpe

PHS members in attendance: Marilyn Lignell, Richard Panek, Judy Serba, Laurie Lisiewicz

Old Business

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm.

Previous minutes were read and approved by the board. Treasurer's report –pushed to next meeting due to treasurer's excused absence.

Pysanki class: as of Feb 16, the first session was filled and there were 8 spaces left for the 2nd session. Location is 6th street Hall. Teresa is arranging for hospitality.

Program Ad purchase to support Malbork dance recital taking place March 21–Teresa made the motion that we purchase this, Marzanna 2nd, and board approved.

Griffins game; PHS experienced some challenges working with the Griffins organization.

Teresa will serve on the board election committee

New Business

Teresa is planning a Pierogi and Plates event where participants can decorate serving plates for

glazing at Pottery Lane. A store in Ohio charges \$50, so we can target that price. Plan is to have pierogi for snacks during the workshop. Target date around Mother's Day.

Grant applications: we don't have any yet, so Teresa is proposing a possible eligible student.

Cultural Report: The pianist Cezary Karwowski offered to do another piano recital. Rich listed a few options for other cultural opportunities and an application was submitted for a Michigan Arts and Cultural Council grant for programming.

Stephen Kusmierczak met a choral group in Chicago willing to do Polish Carols in Grand Rapids. Rich and Stephen are working on planning.

XVI Latvian Song and Dance Festival taking place July 1-5, 2026 is a huge event in Grand Rapids and PHS will be supporting by newsletter mention and encouraging potential volunteers.

Polish language class is one year old! Because of weather, only one student came last month, so re-run of that lesson and a Final Exam are planned.

Teresa will get Rich contacts for Polish Halls corner of Newsletter.

Babcia/Busia Queen: There was a discussion about having questions on the application and the board gave input on the draft application.

Meeting Adjourned 6:43pm

PHS Student Scholarship Program Deadline April 15

The PHS annually gives out scholarships totaling several thousands of dollars to students attending institutions of higher learning as a way of supporting Polish heritage.

Even those who are aware of the scholarships may not know that the PHS board loosened requirements last year to make even more high school and college students eligible for financial assistance.

The board opened eligibility to students who plan to attend or are enrolled in just about any post high school education including vocational/trade schools.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- be of Polish American descent;
- reside in Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon or Ottawa county; and,
- plan to attend or currently attend an accredited 2-year trade/vocational program, 2-year community college program or 4-year college or university.

Applicants need to provide:

- a completed scholarship application form;
- a copy of academic tran-

scripts that show a minimum 2.75 GPA;

- two letters of recommendation from a teacher, mentor, coach, or advisor;
- a brief statement signed by the applicant that delineates his or her Polish heritage; and,
- a 200-word essay that shares career goals and why they are deserving of a scholarship.

Applicants can provide additional information that they wish the scholarship committee to consider.

After the April 15 deadline, the PHS scholarship committee will review applications and notify recipients of the scholarships and financial aid offices of the institutions by May 15. Winners will be asked to provide a photo of themselves for a story in the Echo newsletter and will be invited to the Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival in August for special recognition.

Applications are available online at <https://polishheritagesociety.com> or from the counseling offices at high schools or post high school institutions. Completed applications can be emailed to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com or physically mailed to Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids, PO Box 1844, Grand Rapids MI 49501.

Deadline to get on the Ballot for May PHS Board Elections is April 15

The Polish Heritage Society will conduct its annual board election on Monday, May 18 at the Polish Falcons Hall to fill three officer seats and three director seats. Doors to the hall at 957 Fulton St will open at 5:30 p.m., the normal board meeting will take place

from 6 to 6:30 p.m. and then the doors will be locked promptly at 6:30 p.m. to conduct the election. No one will be admitted after 6:30 p.m. while the election is conducted.

Lifetime members and members who have paid their annual dues

are eligible to vote.

Up for election are the positions of 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary and 3 Director positions. All incumbents have the option to run again and plan on serving an additional term. These

positions however, may be challenged and if you have questions on the responsibilities of open positions please feel free to reach out for additional information or submit a nomination to the Polish Heritage Society at phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

Polish Heritage Society Membership News and Events

Saturday, March 19 was a busy day for Polish cultural activities in Grand Rapids. The PHS sponsored a Pysanki Workshop on that day conducted by ArtsMidwest Culture Bearer Award winner Jozefa Rogocki at the Knights of Saint Casimir Aid Society 6th Street Hall. The workshop was organized by the PHS and had a full class of 24 people over 2 sessions. During the class, participants learned the process for decorating these colorful pysanki eggs by applying a wax-and-dye batik process using supplied tools and demonstrated techniques.

PHS President Teresa Bonham attended and noted the “eggstravaganza” was a wonderful experience. “Jozefa shared the symbolism & meaning in colors



Mother and Daughter Tracy Piasecki and Lola Lawrence preparing their eggs at the Pysanky Workshop March 19 at 6th Street Hall

age. The ensemble brings together children and teens ages 3–18, teaching traditional folk dances that connect young people to centuries-old cultural roots.

Performing in authentic costumes handcrafted in Poland, the dancers showcase regional styles with color, precision, and pride. Their appearances have become highlights of West Michigan’s Polish cultural calendar, including our Dożynki Polish Harvest Festival, the Polish Heritage Night at

Griffins Hockey as well as attending in costume for the annual Matka Boska Mass.

Broda was there to present a check from the PHS to support the purchase of new costumes for the dancers to their Director Natalia Szczygiel.

Malbork’s mission reflects the long legacy of Polish and Polish-Lithuanian immigrants who shaped the West Side more than a century ago. Through music, movement, and community en-

agement, the group ensures these traditions remain vibrant and visible—passing them to the next generation while enriching the cultural life of the region.

Finally, in addition to the PHS Scholarships mentioned on page 4 of this newsletter, we want you to be aware of another scholarship opportunity for college students of Polish descent. The American Institute of Polish Culture is inviting applications for The Harriet Irsay and The Lennox Family Scholarships for full-time university students in the US.

The Harriet Irsay Scholarship Fund awards students who are preferably of Polish decent or interested in Polish related issues. The Lennox Family scholarship is students studying education. For information on applying, including requirements go to the following website:

<https://ampolynstitute.com/application/>

Attached are your 2026 membership cards. If you have received a blank card that means that we have not received your updated payment. If you feel this is in error, please email us phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.



Mitch Mileski's decorated egg

and patterns used in the intricate designs. It was nice to get together and share an Eastern European Cultural tradition especially with the Easter Season coming up. We are looking forward to her being a part of the Dożynki Polish Festival in August.”

While Teresa was busy at the Pysanki workshop, PHS Corresponding Secretary Tad Broda was attending the Malbork Polish Dance Group Recital taking place just a few miles away at West Catholic High School.

Founded in 2017, the PRCUA Malbork Polish Dance Group has become one of Grand Rapids’ most joyful expressions of Polish herit-



Tad Broda presenting a \$2,000 check to Malbork Director Natalia Szczygiel to support the purchase of Polish dance costumes



Join the Polish Heritage Society to receive our monthly newsletter and other benefits!

Annual Student Membership for full-time students through college \$5

Annual Adult Membership \$20

Annual Family or Business Membership \$35

Lifetime Membership \$150



Scan the QR code with your phone camera to become a member:

OR BY MAIL:

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Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

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