



POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF GRAND RAPIDS

NEWSLETTER

December 2021

The Custom of OPLATEK for Wigilia



There's no time like the present to start the custom of sharing the oplatek, or Christmas wafer, at your Christmas Eve supper if you don't celebrate it already. There are at least six locations in the metro Grand Rapids area where you can obtain the wafers at a nominal price.

The breaking of oplatek (pronounced O-pwah-tek) between family members and any guests at the dinner is probably the most vividly remembered tradition of the holidays – and the one that is most often passed from generation to generation.

While traditions vary somewhat, they all start with the oldest or especially respected member of the family breaking pieces of the oplatek and distributing it to the rest of the people gathered. Each person then offers a piece to everyone else at the dinner, generally stating in

some way how they care about that individual. There are a number of posts on the internet that go into variations -- even so far as offering oplatek to a family pet.

Some families say this Polish phrase: "Daj, Boże, za rok doczekali" as members share the wafer with each other. Loosely translated, its meaning is "God, let us live long enough to see each other next year."

The sharing of the Christmas wafer originated more than 300 years ago in Poland, and it is also celebrated in parts of Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia during Wigilia, the meatless supper of Christmas Eve. During the 19th century when Poland was partitioned, the sharing of oplatek took on an additional patriotic meaning that the nation would someday regain its independence.

The unleavened Christmas wafer itself is baked from wheat flour and

water, the same ingredients as the altar bread distributed during a Roman Catholic Mass as the Eucharist. The oplatek is often a rectangular, almost paper thin wafer embossed with religious images that can be easily broken when grasped by two people.

Here is a list of locations that offer oplatki (plural of oplatek):

Angelus Religious Goods, 641 Diamond Ave. NE, phone (616) 776-0450, oplatki available during store hours Tues. to Sat., 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., \$2.75 per envelope.

Holy Spirit Church, 2230 Lake Michigan Drive NW, phone (616) 453-6369; oplatki available at the parish office open on weekdays, call ahead due to varying hours at the office, \$2 per envelope.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 151 Garfield Ave SW, phone (616) 459-8362, oplatki available at the parish office at 156

Valley, office hours are M-F. 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., \$3 per envelope.

St. Adalbert Basilica and St. James, 654 Davis Ave NW, phone (616) 458-3065, oplatki available after Masses during the weekend and at the back of church during weekdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., access to the church is through the handicapped entrance, \$3 per package.

St. Anthony of Padua, 2510 Richmond Street NW, phone (616) 453-8229, oplatki available at the parish office 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. during weekdays, closed for lunch noon-1, \$3 per packet

St. Isidore Church, 628 Diamond Ave. NE, phone (616) 459-4731, oplatki available after Masses on the weekend or at the parish office at 625 Spring during the weekdays, M-F 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., \$2 per envelope.

**Polish Heritage Society of
Grand Rapids**
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Grand Rapids MI
49501-1844

<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes an appreciation of the Polish and Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

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Students, Plan for PHS Scholarships!

The Polish Heritage Society is encouraging college-bound students of Polish/Lithuanian descent to apply for financial aid offered by the PHS, working through their high school or college counselors.

At its April meeting, the board approved the distribution of a total of \$7,000 that students can use for tuition and expenses to colleges and universities in Michigan. The deadline for applications is March 15, so students should contact their counselors to obtain forms and compile the necessary documents for the application process.

Scholarships are awarded to students who attend Grand Valley State University, Aquinas College, Davenport University, and Grand Rapids Community College. In addition, the PHS awards universal scholarships for those attending any college or university in Michigan.

To view the scholarship guidelines and application form, visit the PHS website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/scholarships>.

To see this year's scholarship winners, visit <https://polishheritagesociety.com/phs-newsletters> and download the May 2020 newsletter. To obtain more

information on the program, contact Scholarship Committee Chairperson Mary Ann Bergivin by writing to the PHS email address phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

Scholarships will be awarded based on the following criteria:

- Must be a full-time student with a minimum 2.75 GPA.
- All recipients must be of Polish descent, and must provide a brief statement (signed and dated) delineating their heritage.
- Financial need will be taken into consideration.
- All applications must be received by the Financial Aid Office by March 15.

The colleges will provide the PHS with the applications. The PHS will select the recipients and notify the Financial Aid Office of the dollar amount that the recipient will be awarded. This will be done within one month of receiving the list of scholarship candidates.

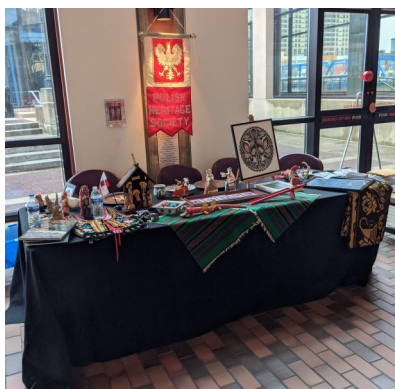


PHS Member News

Hello members! The Polish Heritage Society would like to welcome Ann and Robbie Donnelly and family as new members.

Membership renewals for 2022 are due February 28. We will be sending out new membership cards shortly after that. With the Christmas holiday coming up, perhaps giving someone the gift of a membership would be a gift that lasts all year. Please use the membership form in this newsletter to renew your membership in a timely manner. We thank you in advance for your continued support.

The Polish Heritage Society would like to thank both Jane Bush and Barbara Rylko-Bauer for their donations to the Polish Heritage Society. Barbara's Polish stamp collection was a hit at the Ethnic Heritage Festival at the GRPM. Jane Bush's donation of Polish dolls and Pope John Paul II artifacts were also enjoyed by many.



PHS display at GRPM Ethnic Heritage Festival



Wigilia ornament decorating party: Mary and Rich Panek, Lynn Bucella, Stephanie Kovitz, Sally Stephenson and Marilyn Lignell (not pictured)

PHS Night at the Griffins Game!

Date: **Fri, Feb-4-2022**

Event

Time: 7:00 pm

FIND TICKETS by going to the link on the PHS Facebook Page

A portion of each ticket purchased directly benefits the Polish Heritage Society. Questions? Contact Michael Kiel by calling (616) 774-4585 ext. 3023 or email mkiel@griffinshockey.com.



PHS – September 2021 Board Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Polish Heritage Society board was held at the Falcon's on September 20, 2021. Vice President John Theisen called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

Attendance: Mary Ann Bergevin, Dennis Ziomkowski, John Theisen, Elena Chaidez, Anthony Zasuwa, Angela Zasuwa, Michael Jasperse, Martin Rogalski

Absent: Richard Panek, Adam Porczynski, Theresa Bonham

Minutes from the last meeting were approved as printed.

Treasurer Report: The financial report was given. Did not lose money on the festival, but didn't make a lot either. Waiting for a return check on beer charges and a few outstanding bills yet. Questions on some band charges since Mary Ann did not have the band contracts. Motion was made by Michael seconded by Martin to accept the report. Motion passed.

Correspondence: The checks for renewals were given to Mary Ann and member information is given to Marilyn.

Old Business:

Festival – Calder Plaza booked for next year's festival because the city is not sure Rosa Parks will be done. Looking at the good vs. bad of places. As of now, no Pulaski Days Queen contest at festival next year. Credit card use was very good, may have to add another station next year.

New Business:

Motion by John, seconded by Michael to send a 100.00 memorial gift on behalf of Richard's father's death. Motion passed.

Motion by Angela, seconded by Michael to host the Wigilia dinner in December at the guest house. More to follow. Motion passed.

Martin reported on annual reports that the federal government requires. Two years still need to be reported. He will handle the process of getting them done.

Motion by John, seconded by Dennis to give a 25.00 gift card to the Pulaski Day golf outing as a door prize. Motion passed.

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

ONLINE

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by going to our website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/>, filling out the Membership form and paying by using the PayPal Button.

MAIL

Fill out this form and send a personal check made out to the Polish Heritage Society to this address:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

P.O. Box 1844

Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

ose meeting: Motion by Michael

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