



POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF GRAND RAPIDS

NEWSLETTER

October 2021

October is Polish-American Heritage Month

By Richard Panek

This year's Polish Festival was the event that highlighted the importance of the PHS Heritage Display Tent. Matthew Gryczan and I were impressed with the number of people who visited the displays and spent time learning about Polish heritage. Together we discussed ways to make it more engaging for fellow members as well as local festival visitors.

Matthew, a past Board Member noted, "People like to learn about local history. Grand Rapids is

fortunate to have 14 Polish-Lithuanian halls in the area. These halls were started as mutual aid societies to support new immigrants to the US."

He pointed out that some local halls have preserved historical documents as well as photos that are displayed in these venues. He also believes that other halls may have items in storage that have been overlooked for decades.

Matthew and I are interested in learning about any historical documents

that could provide insight into the conditions of the early Polish immigrants in the area.

My parents immigrated to the US in the early '50's and kept records of their deportation and exile from Poland during the Second World War. Their story was the basis for a presentation I did for the PHS in 2018. I treasure these records and plan to hand them down to my children and their descendants. It is hoped that some of the original Grand Rapids Poles did the same.

The Polish Heritage Society is interested in studying items of historical interest related to the original Polish-Lithuanian immigrants who settled in Grand Rapids. Photos, correspondence, newspapers and other local publications may hold vital items of interest regarding Polish-American history.

If you have any historical documents related to Polish Immigration to Grand Rapids in the late 19th and early 20th century, please contact the PHS.

I Survived



Pulaski Days Grand Rapids, MI

Pulaski Days 2021

After missing out on 2020, Pulaski Days in Grand Rapids was back in business. Great weather helped make the annual celebration a success. Fourteen Halls opened their doors to the public for food, drink, music, dancing and internationally beloved Polish Hospitality. Festivities included a Polka Mass, Parade, Dancing by the Malbork Polish Dance Ensemble, 5 different culinary themed competitions and over 40 musical acts.

Congratulations to Eastern Avenue Hall for being named Hall of the Year!

Also congrats to Teresa Kozal-Bonham who was Busia Queen in the Parade!

Be sure to participate next year to show your Polish Pride.

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Grand Rapids
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<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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The Polish-American Identity of College Students

David J. Jackson is professor of political science at Bowling Green State University. His research interests include U.S. political behavior and the interactive relationship between politics and culture, with a current focus on the Polish American community.

For the past several years, one topic has increasingly drawn his attention: what it means to be Polish American for the fourth, fifth, and beyond generations removed from the immigrant experience? Most scholars of white ethnicity believe that the meaning declines substantially because of movement away from ethnic neighborhoods, abandonment of the Polish language, intermarriage, and a host of other factors.

Recently he sent a survey to 10,000 students enrolled at Bowling Green State University's campuses in Bowling Green and Huron, Ohio. Just under 1,100 students completed the survey, for a response rate of nearly eleven percent. Of those respondents, 97 consider themselves to be Polish-American. Of those who consider themselves Polish-American, 59% have at least one great grandparent born in Poland, while 23% have a grandparent who was born in Poland, and another 17% identify as Polish American but were not born there, and their parents, grandparents and great grandparents were not either.

In summary, for the young Polish Americans sampled, Professor Jackson concluded that ethnicity does not appear to have significant effects on voting, partisanship or ethnicity. However, there is a minority for whom Polish American ethnicity is meaningful politically, and an even greater number for whom it is meaningful in terms of food ways, family and community practices, and beliefs about the hardships of life and the opportunities and benefits of being an American.

Finally, there appears to be an openness among many young Polish Americans to learn more and experience more of their heritage, and the organizers of festivals and other events could reach out to young people to get them more involved and to grow their ethnic identity.

DID YOU KNOW? Some 10 million people of Polish ancestry live in America, although different estimates range from nine to 12 million. Of that number, no more than 10 percent speak Polish at home. Americans of Polish ancestry have been variously referred to as Polish Americans, American Polonians, Ampolonians, Am-Pols, PolAms or even American Poles.

*From the September 2021 Issue of the
Polish American Journal*

PHS Member News

The Polish Heritage Society would like to welcome a couple of new members.

Our first new member is **Laurita Chmielewski**. Laurita said that both of her father’s parents came from Poland to Ellis Island to become Americans. “My father told me they wouldn’t speak Polish to their children because now they were citizens.” Laurita’s mother is Native/Tex Mex and together they had 5 daughters. Laurita has 26 letters in her name and quipped, “Imagine trying to learn that in kindergarten!” Growing up, Laurita’s food and culture was primarily from her mom’s side. Now she wants to learn more about her Polish side. “I have 3 wonderful children and 4 grandchildren. I’d like to learn some words, cook some traditional food and learn more about my culture. We have a strong Polish community here in Grand Rapids. So proud to be Polish!”

Our next new member we would like to highlight is **David R Kistler**. “Well, first of all, my heritage isn’t Polish (unfortunately).” David is Norwegian/German. “I’ve lived in west Michigan for the past 25+ years. I have a number of friends and customers who are west-siders. One of my co-workers invited me to Pulaski Days a number of years

ago. We toured a number of halls; she encouraged me to eat unfamiliar foods (which I loved) and I thoroughly enjoyed the entire environment.” David said he enjoyed not just the social aspects, but the friendliness of the members, the sense of belonging, and the overall atmosphere. David is married (Nancy) for 26 years, have 2 teenage boys (Morgan and Zachary). “ We live in Lowell on Murray Lake and my profession is banking.”

PHS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

SUNDAY OCTOBER 17, 1:00PM

AT POLISH FALCONS, CORNER OF Fulton and Lane, Grand Rapids

Come meet your PHS board and get involved with the Society! We welcome your input.

The board will be discussing plans for Wigilia as well as other activities planned for the Holidays and beyond!

PHS – August 2021 Board Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Polish Heritage Society was held on August 16, 2021 in person at Polish Falcons Hall. President Adam Porczynski called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

Attendance: Mary Ann Bergevin, Adam Porczynski, Dennis Ziolkowski, Theresa Bonham, John Theisen, Elena Chaidez, Anthony Zasuwa, Angela Zasuwa

Absent: Richard Panek, Michael Jasperse, Martin Rogalski

Minutes from the last meeting were approved as printed. Minutes were sent via e-mail to the board. Motion was made by John and seconded by Anthony to accept. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: The financial report was given. Pay Pal and Venmo accounts were cleared out. Correction on CNA Security not CAN Security. Aprox. balance is 39,000.00 Motion was made by Anthony seconded by Angela to accept the report. Motion passed.

Correspondence: The checks for renewals were given to Mary Ann for deposit. Member information is given to Marilyn. Our domain renew will be in September. Keg sponsorship money also coming in.

Old Business:

New shirts – will have available for festival. Will sell old t-shirts at festival at a reduced price.

Festival – working on lay out, movability, rain issues, parking and waiting for liquor license, bands all booked,

Looking for helpers still.

Election process will be looked at in our September meeting.

New Business:

Motion by John, seconded by Elena to expense another 100.00 to the Polka Pops show to promote society and festival. 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 _____

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