

Polish Heritage Society December 2019 Newsletter

Hello Members! December is the month when we continue to focus on family and celebrating the traditions that have been handed down to us by our ancestors. Although it is easy to get caught up in the commercial aspects of the season, with little effort, we can stay focused on what is most important.

Many of you may have memories of family Wigilia celebrations on Christmas eve. I remember growing up, when my mother would prepare a multicourse meal for that day (meatless of course) in anticipation of the birth of Jesus. Courses of fresh vegetable salads, beet broth with mushroom pierogi, pickled herring with dark rye bread, boiled dill potatoes, baked fish, cooked vegetables, more bread and butter (light rye with caraway seeds) and finally a sweet dish with tea were my favorites. After dinner (if we were good children) we got to open our presents before midnight mass.

During this time, we would also listen to my parents Christmas Mazowsze albums. A nice way to celebrate your Polish Heritage at the Holidays would be to listen to the Mazowsze Holiday songs at home. The music can be found on Pandora or Spotify. You will love the melodies and voices.

Many of our ancestors immigrated from Poland to escape economic hardship and persecution. Others were forced out by conflict. Some came alone to a new land while others were fortunate to come with family. Those in transition as refugees and finally as immigrants and naturalized citizens, kept their Polish traditions alive by celebrating Wigilia. You can join your PHS family in celebrating as well:

Wigilia Dinner will be held on December 7th this year at the Guest House. Mark your calendar so you don't miss this important event! We have kept the price the same for the last 10 years so you are getting a good deal for an evening and program consisting of great homemade food, beautiful singing of carols in Polish and English and a program that explains this long-held tradition in the homes of Poles on this celebrated evening. We are fortunate to have Laura Szczepanek as our chef at the Guest House to make authentic Polish food for this to complete the Wigilia experience.



POLONIA AND POLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS

Although most PHS members may not be fluent in Polish, it is important to remember that for our ancestors, English was a second language sometimes long after naturalization. Poland's one hundred and twenty year partition under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia did not eliminate the cultural identity and language of our people in Europe. Poles that fled those areas also kept their language and traditions alive wherever they settled.

The Polish Diaspora around the world is collectively referred to as *Polonia*. In the US, dating back to the 1890's, our ancestors relied on Polish language newspapers for the news of the day. Major cities such as New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee had major circulation daily Polish language newspapers. Some of them exist to this day.

According to Wikipedia, **Dziennik Związkowy** (*Alliance Daily*) or **Polish Daily News**, is the largest and the oldest Polish language newspaper in the US. Established in 1908 in Chicago as an organ of the Polish National Alliance, it is still considered the leading voice of Chicago's Polonia. Dziennik Związkowy has been published without break from its founding in 1908 until the present day. Its weekend edition of about one hundred pages has a circulation of about 30,000. Grand Rapids at one time had a smaller weekly newspaper for Polish inhabitants as well.

The following is an excerpt from the website polishroots.com :

“On September 15, 1900, the Polish weekly *Echo*, was published by Walter Buszkiewicz, It was edited by Louis Skory, nephew of Msgr. Casimir Skory, pastor of St. Adalbert's Church. As a Polish language newspaper, with a format of 17" by 23" and four pages it presented a well balanced coverage of news and information of domestic and foreign origin. Until the First World War, it covered closely events occurring in the partitioned areas of Austrian, German and Russian-Poland, of interest to the settlers coming from those parts. A weekly, its subscription rate was \$1.00 per year. It ceased publication in 1957, having outlived every other Grand Rapids foreign language newspaper except the Dutch. As a newspaper, it kept a good record of the social history of the Polish-American community during its formative years. Issues of it from 1908 to 1928, part of the most important period of development are on microfilm at the Grand Rapids Public Library. It is deeply regretted that the entire fifty-seven years of the publication were not saved, since they would have given a fairly complete and good picture of those years for the future student of the Polish ethnic group in the city.”

If you happen to run across any old Grand Rapids Polish language newspapers or old clippings of news stories in Polish, please save them. They could be a significant addition to the Grand Rapids Public Library Microfilm collection.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Board of the Grand Rapids Polish Heritage Society has revised the bylaws, amended the articles of incorporation and officially changed the name of the organization to the Polish Heritage and Education Society Inc. This action was taken to make the legal definition of the society consistent with the mission of sponsoring education and awarding scholarships. This will eventually make PHS an IRS certified 501c3 organization for tax purposes.

We will still maintain the Polish Heritage Society name for business and correspondence.

Did you also know we have 275 members?

Polish Festival 2020 We are continuing to plan Polish Dozynki Harvest Festival for 2020 and are looking for more volunteers to help head and support different departments from start to finish. We have several mentors that are willing to guide you through the process. We currently have 3-4 people doing most of the initial planning and we really need more help, mainly to have succession plans and share knowledge of what goes into planning our festival.

There are many ways you can volunteer to continue to make this one of Grand Rapids most successful Ethnic festivals:

Work the token booth cheerfully greeting people and selling tokens and Tee-shirts. This is a fun job and you get to meet lots of happy people. (People come to festivals to have Fun!)

Help with set-up and take down. If you like the immediate gratification of using your energy and ingenuity to make a festival venue change before your eyes, this is for you. Many hands make for light work.

Have a unique talent, skill or expertise that exemplifies Polish Culture? Give a presentation in the Demonstration tent. This could be your chance to shine!

Like making people even happier than when they buy their tokens? Work the bar! (Must be over 21)

All volunteers get some tokens for food.

It is OUR festival, OUR main fundraiser, OUR responsibility to have it run smoothly and accurately so we are able to fulfill our mission and make money for scholarships and community engagement. You will find it very rewarding to know that you are part of such a well-organized and attended festival. It is fun to be involved with groups of people sharing new ideas and ways to make our festival even better.

If you are interested please contact **Adam Porczynnski at 616-443-1191 or aporczynnski@farmersagent.com**. Our next Festival Planning Meeting is 6:00 PM, Monday January 13, 2020 at the Polish Falcons Hall. All members are welcome. Come join our team and Thank you!!

WEBSITE NEWS

Check out our changing website polishheritagesociety.com. We are so fortunate to have **Matt Gryczan** volunteer to give it a new updated look. It will be ever changing over the next year to become a Polish community hub!


BOARD NEWS

A Heartfelt “Dziekuje Bardzo!” goes out to Marilyn Lignell, out-going President and Newsletter Editor of the PHS for all her years of service. Marilyn is a tireless supporter of the Society and has helped make it what it is today. The PHS is now in the capable hands of long-time supporter, President Greg Rosloniec. Richard Panek has taken over as Newsletter Editor. If you have any announcements or stories of interest for the newsletter, please email rwpanek@gmail.com.


A CHRISTMAS TRADITION CONTINUES...

HOLLY HOP

"Polkas and Pops"



GERRY KAMINSKI'S
Polka Network



DAVE SLIVINSKI
& The Notables

Sunday, December 15
MUSIC & DANCING - 3:30-8:30PM
DOORS OPEN AT 2:30PM

the Guest House
634 Stocking Ave NW
Stocking at Fourth St NW

Dinners, Sandwiches, Snacks & Desserts
prepared by **That Polish Girl Catering**
www.thatpolishgirl.com

CASH BAR!

LIMITED TICKETS \$15/person OR RESERVE A TABLE FOR 8
FOR TICKETS CALL:
Laura Szczepanek (616) 970-6641
Eddie Sypniewski (616) 791-4930

A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT PROGRAMS FOR THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS AT THE BASILICA OF ST. ADALBERT

