

## Matka Boska Coming Up August 14 at Saint Isidore Church

By Richard Panek

One of the most beautiful religious ceremonies tied to Polish heritage in Grand Rapids, the Matka Boska Zielna Mass, will be held at St. Isidore Church, 625 Spring Ave. NE, at 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 14, 2025. Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz will lead this service that is a traditional favorite for local Polish Catholics: a Mass with a blessing of flowers and herbs, music, and a procession to and crowning of a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church courtyard.

According to Polish tradition, August 15 is the day of Our Lady of Herbs, celebrated on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The celebration in Grand Rapids will be held as a vigil mass the evening before on August 14th.

The story of the death and assumption of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was conveyed in 3rd to 5th century Christian apocryphal narratives. However, it was not until 1950 that

Pope Pius XII declared Mary's Assumption into heaven as dogma of the Catholic Church. One of the apocryphal stories answers the question of why this feast is called Our Lady of Herbs.

The story is that after the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles did not find her body in the tomb on the third day, only herbs and flowers. And that is why, on the day of Our Lady of Herbs, the patron saint of the earth and vegetation, almost everything that blooms and bears fruit at that time was blessed in gratitude for her care.

Traditionally, on this day in Poland, known as Święto Matki Boskiej Zielnej, all churches bless the fruits of the earth, especially flowers and herbs, tied in a bouquet. Traditionally, medicinal herbal plants were put into the bouquet: mugwort, thyme, mint, cornflower, and yarrow; field and garden flowers, ears of grain such as wheat, rye or oats, along with poppies. They were to remind

the devout – apart from thanksgiving for the crops – that the apostles, after opening Mary's tomb, found only flowers and herbs.

Old Polish tradition was that the bouquet blessed in a church took on extraordinary protective and healing properties. Herbs from it were used to treat people and livestock, to incense the home and the yard to protect against storms, fires and epidemics or to prevent the devil from tempting. The blessed bouquets were kept behind holy images, next to the wreaths of Corpus Christi above the entrance door, or on the front wall, in the attic, the cowsheds and barn.

All PHS members are welcomed to attend the liturgy. After the Matka Boska Zielna Mass, there will be a reception in the downstairs auditorium where light refreshments will be served. The Polish Heritage Society is an active sponsor of the celebration, providing flowers, herbs and the woven crown for Mary and refresh-

ments at the reception.

Anyone who would like to volunteer to help for Matka Boska by way of setting up tables 2 hours prior to the event for the reception, bringing cookies or baked goods, and clean up afterwards should please contact Marilyn Lignell at [phsgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com).



*Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz will be the celebrant for Matka Boska*

## Dozynki Festival Entertainment and Activity Schedule for August 22-24

### Friday, August 22, 2025

11 a.m. -- Festival Opens  
12 p.m. -- American and Polish National Anthems  
1-5 p.m. -- Recorded music by Polka Pops DJ Mike Boruta  
5 p.m. -- Paczki Eating Contest  
5:30 p.m.-- Food demonstration

6-10 p.m. -- Live Music by Tony Blazonczyk's New Phase & Jerry Kaminski's Polka Network  
6:45-7 p.m. -- Introduction of the Polish Heritage Society Board  
10 p.m. -- Festival Closes

### Saturday, August 23, 2025

11 a.m. -- Festival opens  
12 p.m. -- American and Polish National Anthems  
12-4 p.m. -- Live Music by Virgil Baker & The Just for Fun Band  
1-3 p.m. -- Children's Activities & Face Painting in the Char Czarneki Children's Tent  
1-4 p.m. -- West Catholic Ro-

botics Demo  
2 p.m. -- Lithuanian Dancers  
4:30 p.m. -- Paczki Eating Contest  
5 p.m. -- Food Demonstration  
5 p.m. -- Presentation of the 2025 PHS Citizen of the Year Award to Bob Wojcik

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## Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

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Email us at:

[phsgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com).

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes Polish/Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids.

The Society meets on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October. 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](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com)

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6-10 p.m. -- Live Music by Gerry Kaminski's Polka Network

10 p.m. -- Festival Closes

**Sunday, August 24, 2025**

12 p.m. -- Festival Opens, American and Polish National Anthems

12-5 p.m. -- Live Music by the Bruce Packard Band

1-3 p.m. -- Children's Activities in the Char Czarnecki Children's Tent

1:30 p.m. -- Introduction to Busia Queen Contestants

1:45 p.m. -- Busia Queen Voting Begins

2-2:30 p.m. -- Malbork Dance Group Performance

2:30 p.m. -- Busia Queen Voting Ends

3 p.m. -- Busia Queen Crowning

5 p.m. -- Festival Ends

Members and friends of the PHS are asked to volunteer to help out at the festival. Set up starts the evening of August 21st and volunteers will receive tokens to use for food and drink at the festival. Schedule your volunteer shift

## Woman Finds Historical Treasures Cleaning Out Home

By Matt Gryczan

Like many who are responsible for handling the estates of loved ones, Mary Mancewicz found herself sifting through various odds and ends collected by her mother and father as she was preparing to sell their home.

Her mother, Theresa Palaszek-Mancewicz, passed in 2019 after a long and successful career serving the West Michigan community as an obstetrician and gynecologist out of her office on Lake Drive. Her father, Jerome Mancewicz, who tended to patients as a

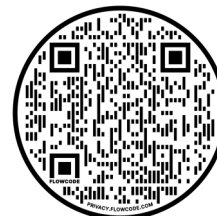


*Calder Plaza in Grand Rapids will be filled with everything Polish August 22-24 during the Annual PHS Dozynki Festival*

by going to the [signupgenius](https://signupgenius.com) link via the PHS website festival page at:

[polishheritagesociety.org](https://polishheritagesociety.org)

You can also scan this QR code with your smartphone to signup:



general physician from his office on Leonard Street NW for many years, passed in 1999.

Among the items Mancewicz found at their house was a miscellaneous collection of books, newspapers, and pamphlets that marked local events related to Polish heritage – everything from a copy of the Grand Rapids Polish newspaper to the 25th year anniversary commemorative book for the Polish Falcons.

Some would have pitched the boxes into the dumpster, but Mary knew that doing so would

have robbed Grand Rapids of irreplaceable records of its local Polish history.

So she emailed the Polish Heritage Society about her find, and PHS Cultural Ambassador Richard Panek answered the call to review the documents.

"We are extremely grateful that Mary let us know these existed," said Panek, who curates the Polish Heritage Collection displayed at the

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Dozynki Festival and the Grand Rapids Public Museum Ethnic Festival. "It's a treasure trove of material that gives us insight to our past."

Not only do Panek and his wife Mary support and organize various PHS activities, but they also have set aside room in their Rockford home to store PHS items in a dry and cool environment for safe keeping.

Mary Manciewicz said her father was active in the PHS through the 1970s, so some of the materials she found were related to the organization's activities from those years. Other items are filling in gaps in local Polish history.

"One real find are some copies of the Grand Rapids Echo Tygodniowe Polish newspaper from 1949," Panek said. "The Grand Rapids Public Library has microfilm of this newspaper from 1908 to 1928, but we're missing the years from then until the newspaper stopped publishing in 1957.

That's tragic because it is probably the best single source of local Polish history."

The PHS has used the Grand Rapids Echo Tygodniowe Polish newspaper and other sources to conduct research into local projects, such as the restoration of the Soldiers' Monument at Holy Cross Cemetery, proof that Gen. Josef Haller visited Grand Rapids in 1940, the doings of the local Polish American Veterans Association, and the restoration of the monument to boxer Stanley Ketchel.

A good part of the contents donated by Mary Manciewicz consist of ephemera, items that were originally meant to be used, enjoyed, or relevant



October 1949 issue of the Grand Rapids Echo newspaper with front page stories on the 50 year history of the local Polish National Association, national and international news, obituaries and a reminder to inspect furnaces and chimneys for fire safety with the start of the heating season.

for only a brief time. Ironically, many of these fleeting objects can become cherished collectibles or valuable historical artifacts for some individuals and organizations.

The trove included multiple copies of Polish travel brochures from the 1960s when the PHS was organizing or marketing such trips. There were also advertising brochures from the PEKAO company regarding package shipping and US dollar money order services to Poland.

At that time, Poland was under Communist rule where western consumer items as well as hard currency were scarce. Poles in America, especially those with relatives still living behind the Iron Curtain, often shipped packages back to the "old country". Clothing, canned foods, and cash remittances were often sent to their relatives in Poland.

The other items in the collection are as follows:

- 1910 list of contributors to the building of the current Basilica of Saint Adalbert
- 1931 Commemorative book for the Golden Jubilee of Saint Adalbert Parish
- 1933 copies of the Nasze Stowo socialist worker's newspaper
- 1939 list of parishioner contributions to Saint Adalbert
- 1944-45 multiple copies of the Polish Review english language news magazine
- 1945 50th year anniversary commemorative book for the Knights of St. Kazimir
- Ten bound copies of the history and cause for sainthood for Blessed Michal Kozal translated by Jerome Manciewicz
- PHS cultural event programs from the 1960s and 1970s

Panek noted that there are a couple of repositories of local Polish history, thanks to the forethought of individuals who saw the value of preservation. The Grand Rapids Public Library holds boxes of materials donated by the estate of local Polish historian Edward Adam Skendzel that are cataloged, and the Grand Rapids Public Museum has items donated by families.

"But I fear that we are losing valuable materials on our local Polish history yearly as people clean out their parents' homes," Panek said. "That's why we're pleading with everyone to at least write to the PHS if they find these types of items. We're always ready to take a look on a timely basis at what people have and either accept or recommend how items should be handled."



**YES, We/I would like to be a 2025 Polish Dozynki Festival Sponsor!**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presenting Sponsor \$5,000      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Tent Sponsor \$2,500                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beer Tent Sponsor \$2,500       | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish Royalty VIP Tent \$2,500                  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activity Sponsor \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Keg Sponsor \$100                                |
| (Select Activity below)                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Banner Sponsor \$100                             |

**Children's Tent**

**Busia Pageant**

**Paczki Eating Contest**

**Demonstration Tent**

Sponsor (organization or individual name), exactly as it should appear in print:

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Please mail your completed form with check payable to *Polish Heritage Society*.

Questions:

John Theisen

[PHSgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:PHSgrandrapids@gmail.com) or  
[John.Theisen@comcast.net](mailto:John.Theisen@comcast.net)



## Polish Heritage Society Membership News

By Marilyn Lignell

The Polish Heritage Society had several new members sign up in July. It is always exciting when we acquire new members, but I especially like it when we have students join in hope that they will become even more excited as they learn more about their Polish heritage. Joining as students this month are Lilly Ohanesian and Hailey Ohanesian.

Joining with annual memberships are John Lesiewicz Jr., Kael Heath and Robert Sypniewski, who also happens to be the Vice-president of The St. Adalbert Aid Society (Fifth Street Hall).

Michael and Diane Dempsey and Rachael and Chris Collins

joined with family memberships.

Rachael and Chris will also be joining Dozynki as vendors, promoting their new carpet cleaning and water restoration business in Grand Rapids called Voda Cleaning and Restoration. They have a twelve-year-old son named Octave Collins.

Finally, joining with a life membership is Rick Szczepanski. Rick had a kind side note thanking the PHS for all that we do. We are so grateful when our volunteer run organization is appreciated!

Szczepanski contacted the PHS last month about donating an accordion that he used as a kid. The instrument is reported to



*Braden and Gabriella Krupiczewicz*



*Rachael, Chris and Octave Collins*

be in excellent condition and we are working on making sure it finds a good home. Hopefully it can be used by a young musician to play traditional Polish folk music.

PHS members Todd and Brooke Krupiczewicz shared some exciting news about their son Braden. Braden Krupiczewicz was recently married to his high school sweetheart Gabriella Hullinger. Braden and Gabby both attended Caledonia Community Schools and Western Michigan University. They have actually known each other since their earliest days of preschool. Braden is now a first lieutenant in the United States Army. He is currently stationed in Fairbanks, Alaska. On their last holi-

day leave, Braden and Gabby visited six European Countries....Including POLAND!!

Make sure to review the Dozynki festival schedule in this newsletter and consider working a volunteer shift before or after enjoying the festivities!

PHS Board meetings take place the 3rd Monday of every month at the Polish Falcons.

Marzanna Butryn still has October Tour of Poland spots available thru Classic Travel. Time is running out, so for more information email:

butrynmazanna@gmail.com

or

margaret@classic-travel.com



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**



**JOIN ONLINE**

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by scanning this QR Code:

**BY 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

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