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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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## Church Cookbook a Record of Polish Culinary Heritage

By Paulette Longwell

The Parish of the Basilica of St. Adalbert in Grand Rapids, Michigan, held a Jubilee year celebration in 1981, to commemorate the history and life of the first 100 years of the parish. The church, founded by Polish immigrants in 1881, held events in the Jubilee year that included a banquet at West Catholic High School, a church mission, and a parish renewal program.

The year 1981 also marked the completion of \$450,000 worth of renovations to the church including installation of a new organ. The church had just been deemed a Minor Basilica by Pope John Paul II in 1980 and to celebrate, the centennial events included concerts of sacred music in March, April, October and November, a parish festival in August and a Centennial Liturgy held September 20th, 1981.

Anticipating the Jubilee, parishioner Helen Bajdek conceived the idea of compiling a Centennial Cook Book in the summer of 1979 and was soon joined by Theresa Swidwa and Beatrice Zdybel in compiling recipes. The cookbooks, sold as a fundraiser for the centennial activities, allowed parishioners to share their culinary traditions with the entire Parish family. To promote the cookbook Helen's husband Jerome Bajdek, the Jubilee festival organizer, and

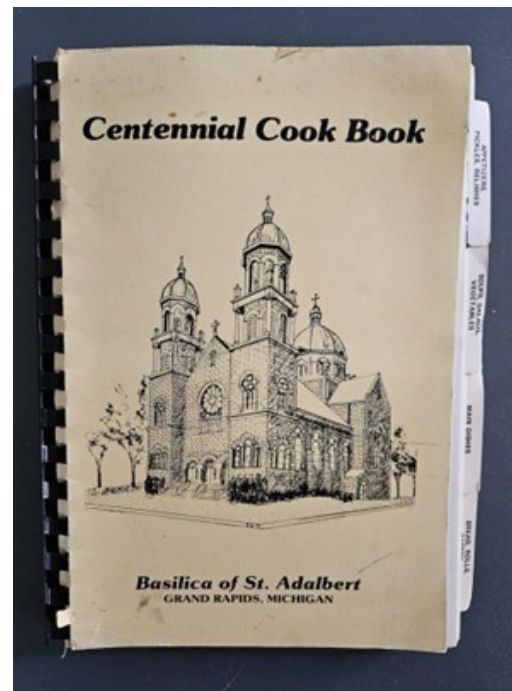
their daughter, Jeanne Penoyer, went on local television to promote the festival and the cookbook. It was the biggest seller at the festival with nearly 3,000 copies sold that year.

Some of the recipes were representative of the times leading up to the 1980's such as Jello salads for parties, Weight Watcher friendly dinners, and dishes made with convenience foods such as Campbell's canned soups. The tomato soup cake recipe submitted by Rose Gorski inspired my mother Shirley Longwell to make something different for a change. It was a hit with our extended family at a birthday party until she revealed the name of the cake, causing her cousin's husband Don Spruit to stop eating mid-slice.

The Polish heritage of St. Adalbert's however was clearly reflected in many Polish recipes in the cook book. It survives as a record of the cultural anthropology of food at the time: how food, eating, and cooking shaped local

culture, society, identity, and even history in Grand Rapids.

Polish cookie and dessert recipes such as kolaczki (jam filled cookies) from Mrs. Edward Plaska,



*Paulette Longwell's Centennial Cookbook holds many traditional Polish Recipes, many passed down through generations by parish families.*

placek (cake) from Jeanne Penoyer, and rugelach cookies (crescent filled pastry) from Sue Liebeck helped represent the roots of the parish. Busia's coffee cake from Mrs. Therese Jendrezak used "busia" in its name rather

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Polish Heritage Society Event Schedule

**PHS Board Meeting**, January 19, 6:00 pm at Polish Falcons - 957 Fulton St SW, followed by Festival Planning Meeting. All PHS members are welcomed to attend.

**Rozmowa Polish Language Club**, January 27, 7:00 pm, Kosciuszko Hall - 935 Park St SW, Grand Rapids

**Polish Night at Griffins**, Friday, January 30. See page 2 for ticket information.

**Pysanki Egg Decorating Workshop**, Save the date: March 21st.

(Cook Book Continued from page 1)

ther than the word “babcia”. Busia is a local name for grandmother used by Grand Rapids Polish Americans rather than the word for grandmother which is used in Poland.

Paczki (raised doughnuts) by Mary Sloma and Martha Krajewski were popular before Lent but my family preferred to buy prune and raspberry ones from American Bakery on Bridge Street near my grandparents’ house. Back in the day, American Bakery was also long known as the source for authentic Polish Rye bread in Grand Rapids.

My grandma Pauline Raczekiewicz made chruściki (bow knots or angel wings) with a recipe similar to the ones in the cookbook from Mrs. Edward Perkowski and Sunny Miknavich.

I remember how the kitchen table would be powdered with flour and the dough rolled out for the angel wings which were cut by hand and then dropped into boiling oil, steaming up the kitchen. They were then sprinkled with powdered sugar for a special treat.

Grandma’s nephew Frank “Sonny” Palszewski remembers that Pauline was an excellent

cook, making especially good coffee cakes. My grandma also made a gigantic apple pie and she didn’t bother with a pie tin and instead used a metal 9 x 13 pan. We called it “horse pie” since it was big enough to feed a horse.



*Grandma Pauline Raczekiewicz*

Some of the Polish food items in the Centennial Cook Book like pierogi had multiple versions of recipes provided from Irene Kor-da, Claire Linski, and Sunny Miknavich. Other offerings were kiszka (blood sausage) from Mr. Joseph Downer, Polska kielbasa from Marlene Laginski, kwas (spareribs) from Martha Krajewski, a “lazy man’s gołąbki” from

Maxine Schaner, and city chicken from Florence Downer. The city chicken (which is actually pork) was a favorite at our home growing up. My Mother would buy it from Lewandoski Meat Market. She also made regular gołąbki, rolling each steamed leaf of cabbage around the meat and rice mixture. I prefer to make the “lazy man’s” version from the cook book which is easier.

Spellings of some of the contributors’ names, as well as many of the food items were Americanized. Many were spelled the same but without using the Polish alphabet (rosol vs. rosół). Mrs. Edward Plaska shared a rosół recipe and my grandma Pauline Raczekiewicz had her own version of the chicken soup recipe. She would make a big pot of it and whenever we visited, we were sent home with soup in canning jars for our family. Several other soup recipes were definitely Polish such as barszcz (beet soup) also shared by Mrs. Edward Plaska, czarnina (duck blood soup) from Gertrude Karasiewicz and szczaw zupa (sorrel soup) from Mrs. Louis Rydzewski.

The recipe book contains lots of dishes made with cabbage: cabbage salad and Polish baked beans from Eleanor Griskoit, sweet and sour cabbage from

Mary Sloma and Mrs. Louis Rydzewski, and canned sauerkraut from Esther Sanborn. While my parents ate quite a bit of kapusta, my mother did not can it, like she did tomatoes and peaches. The canned recipe was simple but it took eight weeks until it was ready to use.

Potato dishes were also popular with placki zimeniaczane (potato pancakes) from Mrs. Edward Plaska, Polish potato babka by Esther Sanborn, and kluski (potato dumplings or noodles) also from Mrs. Edward Plaska, who contributed many Polish recipes. My grandma often made Polish kluski noodles for chicken soup (rosół), rolling them out and cutting them in a similar way to chruściki but instead of being boiled in oil, they went into a pot of boiling water.

Reminiscing about recipes in a church cookbook provides a reminder of the rich Polish culture that permeated many of the kitchens of the west side of Grand Rapids. Some of these cooking traditions continue till today. Smacznego! Enjoy your meal!

To learn more of St. Adalbert’s Centennial, look up the pdf of the St. Adalbert Jubilee Book by going online: [www.mipolonia.net/jubilee-books/](http://www.mipolonia.net/jubilee-books/)

## Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins Coming Up Friday, January 30th

In what has become a winter tradition, the PHS has set aside a block of 160 seats at Van Andel Arena for Polish Heritage Night at a Griffins hockey game.

This year Polish Heritage Night is set for Jan. 30 when the Griffins will face off against the Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m.

To sit in the specially designated section, it is important that participants purchase their tickets through the Griffins box office using this



link: <https://griffinshockey.venue.net/promotions/POLISH>

The link is also posted on the

PHS Facebook page. A portion of the ticket sales purchased through this link will be donated to the PHS.

Tickets to the event are \$30 and the

game is a Friday special with \$2 hot dogs and \$2 beers.

The Malbork Dance group is scheduled to perform on the concourse, and it’s rumored that Busia Queen Laurie Lesiewicz may be riding the Zamboni at the end of the second period.

Griffins Polish Night organizer Anthony Zasuwa said this is a great way to get to know other PHS members and have a great time watching the hockey action.

Be sure to come down and show your Polish Pride!



# Polish Heritage Society Membership News and Events

By Marilyn Lignell

Happy New Year members. On behalf of the Polish Heritage Society, we wish you and yours a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year! We would like to remind you that if you have an annual membership, now is the time to renew your membership.

There are two ways to renew: You have an option to use the form on the back of this newsletter and send a check or you can scan the QR code and use your credit card, Google Wallet or Apple Pay.

New membership cards will be issued after February 28. As a current member you will continue to receive the newsletter and acquire information about upcoming events and opportunities to immerse yourself in Polish culture, history and cuisine.

While you're at it, invite friends and family to become members as well!

We welcome new annual member Hayliegh Gratz!

Also joining as a lifetime member is Heather Piotrowski-Tillman. Heather is 75% Polish and has been a Grand Rapids west sider her whole life. "Growing up I would make our family chrusciki recipe with my mom and we'd make the cookies for our whole family and Polish neighbors. I've traveled to Poland to see where my ancestors were from and I've been trying to learn Polish in my spare time. I enjoy teaching my daughters about our Polish heritage and one of them is in the Malbork Polish dance group (the other isn't old enough to join yet)." Heather said her Polish Heritage is very important to her and she is excited to be a part of PHS.

Past president and lifetime member Mark Levandoski sent well wishes from Evanston, Illinois where he and his wife Barb moved to be closer to their kids



*Heather Piotrowski-Tillman and her daughter Brooklyn*

and grandkids. Mark and Barb's son Luke and daughter Libby, were in Belmont at their aunt's tree farm cutting down their Christmas tree. "Luke is very interested in family roots and Polish heritage. He even put the "w's" back in his name before turning 21." Like so many Polish-American names, Levandoski is spelled numerous ways. Mark said he always regretted having one of the incorrect ones.

Mark's Uncle Ray owned Lewandoski's when he was growing up. His memory of holiday dinners was the discussion surrounding the kielbasa, with all the adult men deliberating on, "who made

it, needing more veal, too much garlic." One Easter vacation when home from college Mark asked if they could talk about something else. He didn't say if they abided.

On a very solemn note, we offer our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of lifetime member Charlotte Ambrose who died November 24, 2025 at the age of 90.

Char was a devoted educator, artist, volunteer, and beloved former member of the Grand Rapids Community Media Center Board of Directors. Emerging from a welfare and single parent home, she proved her industriousness by starting her sign business in her freshman year of high school and was the first in her family to attend college with multiple scholarships.

In 1957 she graduated from Wayne State University with a B.S. in Art Education. She continued at Purdue and then the University of Michigan for her Masters. Char spent more than 27 years teaching art in California, Indiana, and Michigan, including 24 years with Sparta Schools. Charlotte's teaching awards include: National ART Educator of the Year 1985 from the National Art Education Association; Michigan Art Educator of the Year 1984



*Char Ambrose at ArtPrize 2024*

from the Michigan Art Education Association; Outstanding Secondary Teacher 1974 from the Michigan Art Education Association.

A passionate artist, Char would often be seen sketching during PHS outings and she had an ArtPrize entry this past year exhibited in the GRPD Headquarters downtown. Her volunteerism was vast and deeply rooted. She served as a lifetime member and trustee of the Polish Heritage Society, chaired the Grand Rapids-Bielsko Biala Sister Cities relationship for a decade, helped organize festival venues, and brought her passion for storytelling to countless community arts initiatives and productions.

Char was preceded in death by her husband Tom, and is survived by daughters Cherise and Jessica and son Thomas, 2 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. "I loved my children with everything I had to give and would have given my life for them. I was so very blessed to not only have two grandchildren but was able to love three great-grandchildren."

"My calling in life was to be who I was, a teacher and artist. I wanted to share God's love and his beautiful creation, my knowledge and my world experiences with everyone. I wanted to help everyone, not only to lift you up but encourage everyone to be the best you could be!" Char Ambrose.



*Ella Lewandowski, Gus Lewandowski-Wilhelm, Luke and Lottie Lewandowski at the market started by ancestor Ray Lewandowski*



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:**

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

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