

PROJECT TO DISCOVER  
SCHENECTADY **COUNTY'S** EASTERN EUROPEAN ROOTS  
NEWSLETTER

October 2017 Vol. 4 No. 4  
Our Fourth Year!

Our objective continues to be to discover, document and digitally preserve genealogy, stories, and pictures of Schenectady County's Eastern European immigrants.

Please share your family history, help pass on the (electronic) word. The next deadline is January 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. To submit your family story, pictures, etc., e-mail Phyllis Zych Budka: [abudka@nycap.rr.com](mailto:abudka@nycap.rr.com). Without your stories, there can be no newsletter. To be added to the newsletter e-mail list, contact Phyllis.

**The Schenectady Digital History Archive** To find our newsletters on-line:

<http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/eer/>

**Polish American Historical Association Link (PAHA)**

Dr. Maja Trochimczyk, webmaster of the PAHA website, added a link to our Project Newsletter archive on the "Schenectady Digital History Archive."

From the PAHA Home Page at

<http://www.polishamericanstudies.org/>

Click on "Resources" then "Lists of Resources."

Thank you, Maja!

**Polish Genealogical Society of America (PGSA)**

Thanks to William F. Hoffman, PGSA newsletter editor, for printing our Table of Contents and contact information in "Rodziny" the PGSA newsletter. PGSA Home Page is found at

<http://pgsa.org/>

**Facebook: Schenectady Polish Heritage Facebook Group**

Thanks to Brianna Jolie (Guckemus) for starting this Facebook group. It's described as a "closed group" which only means that you can request membership and an "administrator" will give you permission.

**Thanks to Bernice Izzo and Carole McCarthy for their help in editing this newsletter!**

## Table of Contents

Title	Author / Contributor	Page
The Galick Farm	Gail Demcsak	3
A Letter from Post War Poland	Ella Anthony Krajewski & Eleanor Anthony Monlea	3
Introducing Leonard Chmieliński and His Wife Michalina Żbikowska	Sandy Chmielinski Dimke	5
The Kalina Glee Club	Bernadine Dwojakowski Mastroianni	10
Pani Katarzyna Kornacka Part 10 – Connections – The Twenties and Thirties	Martin Byster	12

### **Save the Date!**

Church of Saint Adalbert Dozynki - Polish Harvest Festival  
Sunday October 15, 2017



10:30 am Mass Followed by Traditional bread, salt & wine greeting at the parish center

Free Admission

12 noon - 5:00 pm - Polish menu & baked goods (take out available)

3:00 - 7:00 pm - Romanowski Brothers Polka Band

Throughout the afternoon:

Church tour	50 / 50
Genealogy	Collectibles
Cultural Exhibits	Children's game room
Raffle	Grandma's Attic Flea Market

## **The Galick Farm Gail Demsack**

Phyllis's Note: This continues Gail Demcsak's story from the last issue. When I met Gail and we discussed genealogy, her mention of the surname "Galick" rang a distant bell in my memory. I recalled that my family knew the Galik family (Polish spelling), who were also from Nowy Targ, Poland. Nowy Targ lies at the foothills of the Tatra Mountains. It was fascinating to learn that part of this family established themselves in a very special, rugged region in the eastern US. To learn more about this archeologically and ecologically important place, search on "Helen W. Buckner Preserve at Bald Mountain," and perhaps go and visit.

### **The Galick Farm**

West Haven VT is situated almost on the border with Whitehall NY. The lower end of Lake Champlain is what forms the boundary. It is quite narrow at that point. Elaine met us at the B&B where we were staying to guide us to the farm. There is a long dirt road surrounded by water leading into the farm. It had been raining for days before we arrived, so the water was high. There were fishermen parked along the roadside, fishing. A broken down rusted out truck greeted us with a sign that read "The Galick Homestead" and a plaque that summarized its part of the Preserve. As we pulled up to the clearing, I could see the old farmhouse, barn and quite a few other old buildings. None were in particularly good shape. The farm had been vacant since 1989. What I didn't know was that Elaine and Dave are actually living in the house and are caretakers of the property. People were working in the field nearby, but it is an archeological dig.

They graciously gave us a tour of anything we wanted to see. The barn, ice house, dairy barn, sheep barn, mink cages, slaughter house, machine shops, forge, gun and wood working shop, granary, sheds, the farmhouse and more. Bill Galick had also built a house on the property for his family. Except for the lack of rotting food, you might think the family just ran off and abandoned the place. Every building was full of old farm equipment of all kinds. This was real, not Disney's Frontier town. It was very exciting. A hand drawn map Elaine gave me shows a lot of the buildings, not all of which still exist. Some of them date back as far as 1850. We walked through a hayfield and could see the top of Bald Mountain. There is not a lot of money to do it, but the Preserve is trying to keep the land as it was, including the old, broken down buildings. Only time will tell what becomes of it. I feel very fortunate to have met Elaine and Dave who care so much about the place and are working hard to help preserve it. We took lots of pictures and Elaine sent me a lot more from when the family lived there.

Knowing that my grandmother's family lived there, my parents visited and my brother hunted on the property with cousins brings it so much closer to me. I had no idea my ancestors were so interesting.

### **A Letter from Post War Poland**

Phyllis's Note: The letter below, translated from Polish, is shared by twin sisters Ella Anthony Krajewski and Eleanor Anthony Monlea. It was sent to their Grandfather Michael Chmielewicz by his niece, Marija Chmielowiec, who lived in Majdan Krolewski, Province

## **A Letter from Post War Poland**

### **Ella Anthony Krajewski and Eleanor Anthony Monlea**

Kolbuszowa. It is postmarked September 30, 1946. See the newsletter of February 2014 for Eleanor's article about their Grandfather.

#### **May 7 1946**

I am writing this small letter to my uncle, to my sister Jana and to your children.

I hope that this letter will reach you because I cannot walk and am so busy that it seems that my hands will be worn off.

I hope this letter will make its way across the mountains and the forest.

I love you my uncle. Praising our Lord in heaven, who created the forests green who created me and you and all the angels.

We are also asking how you are and how your health is because during the war we had no news of you.

Some of our other family members were taken to Germany, we tried to contact the Red Cross about them but we never got an answer.

Thank God we made these efforts, we survived horrible times, we were persecuted and if we resisted, we were beaten and they took what we had. We were uprooted three times. Our house was burned and now we are in a terrible situation.

We cannot even describe to you everything that happened. We just want to know if you receive this letter and if you are alive.

A lot of people here have received letters but we have not heard from you. I am writing using your old address.

If you receive this letter I will write again and describe our lives in detail.

It is so expensive here, we cannot afford anything, we lack food and clothes, Brother Joseph is sick, he was driving a car and delivering letters but he was in an accident and we feared we would not save his life. I also have a son who is 18. There is no way to live here. Our house was burnt by the Germans. I am trying to write something but I don't know if you will get this letter or if you will write back. I with my husband and son and brother and his wife and aunt send you our greetings.

I also must inform you, beloved uncle and aunt that your brother Mikolay is dead and so are his wife, his son and his son's three children.

We hope you have a long and healthy life. And that you will be able to help us in some way.

Marija, son Feliks and brother Josef

## Introducing Leonard Chmieliński and His Wife Michalina Żbikowska Sandy Chmielinski Dimke

This is the story of my paternal grandparents' journey from Poland to Schenectady and the life they made for their family. Undoubtedly, this tale is similar to those of all the other Eastern European immigrants who came here in the early part of the 20th century. A bit of background information is necessary to understand why Leonard and his siblings took the risks they did to travel so far.

Leonard's father, Jan Chmieliński, was born in Masiak, in the Krzynowłoga Mała parish in the province of Przasnysz in 1829 (Fig. 1). Like most, he was the son of farmers. Jan's first wife, Elenora died in April of 1874 and by August of that same year, he married Tekla Czaplicka, who was half his age but already a widow. I have yet to determine if Jan had any children by this first wife. Tekla and Jan had two sons, Leonard (my grandfather 1878-1943) and Franciszek (1885-1954). When Jan died in 1888, Tekla found herself a widow with small children to raise and soon married 70 year old widower, Kazimierz Rykowski. They had two daughters, Zofia Rykowska (born 1889) and Stanisława Rykowska (born 1893). Kazimierz Rykowski's last child was born almost 50 years after the birth of his first child, so he was nicknamed the "Master of Przasnysz". He died in 1903, when he was 85 and Tekla was only in her 50s.



Fig. 1 Krzynowłoga Mała from a distance

All four of Tekla's children settled in Schenectady. Today, of course, the third, fourth and fifth generations are all scattered throughout the US.

Frank Chmielinski was the first to immigrate from Poland in 1902, leaving Leonard to help support of his mother and sisters. With Leonard's help, Frank arranged for his two half-sisters to immigrate in 1904. Leonard was conscripted into the Polish cavalry and was forced to wait until the Russo-Japanese War had ended before he was able to immigrate himself in 1906. It was only by sheer luck that he survived the war. The army division was transported to Manchuria and during a difficult battle he was shot in the leg, knocked

## Introducing Leonard Chmieliński and His Wife Michalina Żbikowska Sandy Chmielinski Dimke

off his horse and sent to the hospital to recuperate. While he was hospitalized, his entire unit was killed by the Japanese in the Battle of Mukden.

Leonard's half-sister, Zofia Rykowska, married Stanisław Gwiazdowski in 1908. He and Leonard worked together as grocers and Leonard lived with them on Van Guisling Avenue for several years. The Gwiazdowskis eventually opened R&G bottling company on Prospect Street on Eastern Avenue hill. They were active parishioners of St Mary's Church. His other half-sister, Stanisława, married Adolph Purzycki in 1910 and raised their family in Mont Pleasant, attending St. Adalberts.

The following year, in 1911, thirty-three year old Leonard and 24 year old Michalina Zbikowska were married. Michalina was born in the small village of Żarnowo, near Grudusk. When she came to the US, at age 17, she lived with an uncle, Franciszek Tański, on Jefferson St. She then found work in the knitting mills of Amsterdam and moved there until she met Leonard. They married at St. Stanisław Church in Amsterdam and she moved back to Schenectady with him. (Fig. 2)



Fig 2 Chmielinski Family ca 1926

Leonard joined thousands of others who went to work each day at ALCO (American Locomotive Company). By the 1920s, Leonard and Michalina had 3 children (Raymond, John and Henrietta) and Schenectady was an enviable place to live. They rarely talked about "the old country" with his children and socialized with relatives near and far. We

## Introducing Leonard Chmieliński and His Wife Michalina Żbikowska Sandy Chmielinski Dimke

called so many people Wuja and Ciocia that it's hard to figure out who was actually related and who were just from the same village in Poland. Life in the Polish community of Mont Pleasant was a healthy place to raise a family. Free movies, band concerts and playgrounds in the summer and, in winter, the Mohawk River and lakes froze over for skating. Once the PNA (Polish National Alliance) was established in Schenectady and built on Crane Street, it became a huge part of their social life.



Fig. 3 Leonard Chmielinski's ALCO Employee's Pass

In 1926, Leonard and Michalina's dream came true and they bought a small corner grocery store at 271 11th street in Bellevue (Fig. 4)Fi. They lived behind the store and rented the upstairs. It was a working class neighborhood with Poles and Italians where most of the men walked to the GE (General Electric Company) Plant each day. At first, they worked the store together, but during the Depression, Leonard was forced to return to work at ALCO to help support the family. It was here that Michalina learned English and changed her first name to Margaret. She had to deal with both customers and vendors and she thrived in this role. They both became US citizens during the 1930s.



Fig. 4 Leonard and Michalina Chmielinski standing in front of their grocery store at 271 11th street in the Bellevue section of Schenectady

Leonard died in 1943 and Michalina continued to run the store until the mid 1950s. She sold the store and house and bought a small, but brand new brick home in newly

## **Introducing Leonard Chmieliński and His Wife Michalina Żbikowska Sandy Chmielinski Dimke**

developed upper McClellan Street area (north of Union and Rugby Roads). A single family home that she owned free and clear was the epitome of success in her eyes. She and her son Raymond lived there until her death in 1969 when she was 81.

Michalina certainly lived the American dream. Leonard did not live long enough past the depression and World War II to appreciate all that life had to offer. He worked hard, enjoyed his life and friends and never regretted his decision to join his siblings in America. Michalina enjoyed her children and grandchildren, her garden and especially home card parties with other St. Adalbert women, some of whose names I vividly remember: Pani Szczepanska, Pani Janiszewska, Pani Tuniszewska and Pani Ciembroniewicz (of White Eagle Bakery). She would set up card tables in her living room and they would play and gossip all afternoon. She loved to shop downtown. In the fifties, a woman would not dare to be seen downtown in slacks or casual clothes. Even children dressed up to shop downtown at The Carl Company, Wallace's or Barney's. Michalina would be seen every Thursday, walking to the corner to catch the bus, complete with her hat and gloves.

Side Note: Leonard's brother Frank eventually moved to Albany where he raised his family. He died in 1954 in a train accident while inspecting track for a utility company in Albany.

### **OUR RESEARCH IN POLAND:**

My husband and I, along with my cousin Richard Kenton (Henrietta Chmielinski's son) had the pleasure of traveling to Poland in 2006 to visit the home villages of our grandparents. We hired a friend of a friend who drove us from our hotel in Pułtusk to Masiak, and Krzynowłoga Mała. The further we traveled from Pułtusk, the further back we seemed to go in time. Stands of poplar trees began and ended each village - villages that were so small that it is hard to imagine how they survived for centuries. They were crossroads - that's all, with a few farms and houses. Someone suggested that they were all part of estates that were originally ruled over by noblemen. We were able to visit the Parish church in Krzynowłoga Mała. and were surprised at how ornate these village churches were. Peasant farms all around, but wealth was certainly in the churches. We met a family with the Chmieliński surname, who had a small farm in the village but we were unable to establish any relationship. We also went to Żarnowa and found it a sleepy little village where we found no one around but a peaceful crossroads and vast farmlands also. We were more successful in Pułtusk, where we were able to visit the archives and, although they were closed for the summer months, we convinced one of the researchers to take pity on us and to look up a few birth records for us (Fig. 5a and b). I learned that my great grandfather Jan was born in 1829 to Bonaventura Chmieliński and his wife Maryanna. It was thrilling to see him hold actual ledger books where my ancestor's names were inscribed for posterity.

## Introducing Leonard Chmieliński and His Wife Michalina Żbikowska Sandy Chmielinski Dimke



Fig. 5a Sandra Dimke and Richard Kenton at archives in Pultusk



Fig. 5b Archivist holding birth record ledger from the 1820s

## The Kalina Glee Club



Phyllis's note: This picture comes courtesy of Bernadine Dwojakowski Mastroianni. The date is unknown. Kalina (Women's) Glee Club and Chopin Male Chorus members in this picture include Jean Dwojakowski Sekowski, Stephanie Chylinski Rupinski, Wanda Sardynski, Robert Chylinski, Frank Smith, Vitold Chylinski, Ray Kidalowski, Virginia Dziediec Bailey, Genevieve Dwojakowski Rubinski, Bernadine Dwojakowski Mastroianni, Mary Ausfled, Jane Wajda Gwiazdowski, Vicki Nosal Mlodzianowski, Adele Chylinski Podgorski

The Kalina (Women's) Glee Club was an important part of Schenectady's culture for at least 6 decades. The information below is excerpted from articles found on [Fultonhistory.com](http://Fultonhistory.com). The "?" indicates where scan was unclear.

Schenectady Gazette, Thursday morning, December 27, 1928 Page 20

### **Kalina Glee Club Plans 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Concert**

The club originated as the Symphonia, an organization devoted to promoting interest in Polish national songs. Richard ?Hapke founded the club in 1907 and the late Miss Emelia Makawska was the first president. In 1908 the Symphonia and Zorza, another singing society were combined and the new organization named Kalina. Miss J. ?Majewska was the first president. The society has had a prosperous history and numbers 75 members. Miss Lottie Rakowski is the present president and Miss Modesta ?Weyleng is the director of the ??. The club has appeared in many Polish singing contests and has received first

## The Kalina Glee Club

prize every time except at the present contest in Herkimer, when the prize was lost by only seven counts.

### **Six Choirs To Take Part In Concert**

Gazette December 18 1948 page 6

Three local choirs and three from Amsterdam will take part in the 40th anniversary concert and ball of the Kalina Glee club at 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 26, In PNA hall. Chopin Male chorus, Echo Choral society and St. Adalbert's choir, this city, and Paderewski choir, Harfa choir and Polish National Legion Glee club, Amsterdam, will join in the program.

### **Kalinas Plan Concert and April Social**

?Newspaper source unknown April 11 1952

The Kalina Glee club will attend the Polish Singers Alliance convention, concert and contest May-24 and 25 at Amsterdam.

**Pani Katarzyna Kornacka**  
**Part 10 – Connections – The Twenties and Thirties**  
**Martin Byster**



**Fig. 1: 1920s-1940s Kornacki Family Album<sup>1</sup>**

The Kornacki family photo-album begins in the late 20s and continues thru 30s into the 40s. Pictures in the album increased over the 30s and slowly declined in the 40s as a first generation of Polish Americans married and started families of their own. The collected pictures are few and far between in five volumes, some not half-filled, tended by the daughters until they married. Except for her wedding picture, there is not one photo with Pani Katarzyna Kornacka taken before the late 40s or early 50s.

Pauline, my mother, the oldest daughter probably took most of the pictures in the 20s and 30s with her Kodak Six 20 camera and those she didn't take were collected from extended family, the Dobies, Kornackis, and Rybickis; friends, and neighbors. The earliest album tended by my mother is carefully labeled in her own handwriting.

The pictures in these albums tell a story seemingly at odds with the struggle Pani Katarzyna (Katie) Kornacki and her family faced in the 20s and 30s<sup>2</sup>.

Pictures of the 20s and 30s which follow represent some the Kornacki family connections with their extended family, their neighborhood and their friends with which readers may find their own family connections.

Rexford Park and the trolley bridge which crossed over the Mohawk River near the park are two places for which my mom had fond memories and spoke of them, it seems, about every time we crossed the present highway bridge at Rexford. The bridge was gone but for her it was there just yesterday, no need for pictures in a picture book.

---

<sup>1</sup> NOTE: Many of the pictures from the 1920s and '30s in the Kornacki family album were taken by my mother Pauline Kornacki including those some of my father Benjamin Byster before they were married. The camera is in my (Martin Byster) personal collection as are the family albums and unmounted pictures.

<sup>2</sup> Parts 6, 7, 8, and 9

**Pani Katarzyna Kornacka**  
**Part 10 – Connections – The Twenties and Thirties**  
**Martin Byster**



Fig. 2: 1901-1935 Rexford Park; Left to right, Dance Hall, Trolley Line, and Boat Slide.<sup>3</sup>

In the story of the Rexford Park amusement park, its easy and difficult times, reflect those in the community including the Kornackis. Through the 30s times became more difficult. Rexford Park closed in 1933 but the Kornackis persevered for a healthy recovery in the 40s.



Fig. 3: 1902-1942 Trolley Bridge, looking (1920c.) east to the Erie Canal Aqueduct.<sup>4</sup>

*“On a summer’s night, the gentle breezes which blow in from the river through the lofty pines in the old Rexford Park ...create strange far-off sounds ...if one listens ...hard, ...the downward rush of a roller coaster, shrieks of excitement ...laughter of a happy crowd.” --- (Hart, 1974, p.44)*

Memories, come and gone like the wind.

---

<sup>3</sup> 1974; Hart, L.; Schenectady’s Golden Era; Old Dorp Books; pp.43-44, 55 (Fig.1)-56 (Figs. 1 thru 5); Note: Started by Jacob Ruppet, NYC Brewer in 1901, named and renamed Luna, Dolle’s, Collonade, Palisades, and finally Rexford Park which was closed in 1933 except for socials and clambakes and completely in 1935

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.44, 122-123, 136 (Figs. 1 thru 3); Notes: 1) Built in 1902, dismantled in 1942. 2) In 1935 the Aqueduct and Saratoga trolley line was still operating thru the beginning of WWII.

**Pani Katarzyna Kornacka**  
**Part 10 – Connections – The Twenties and Thirties**

**Martin Byster**

**Fig. 4 (left)**  
**1928: Wanda????**  
**w/ Pauline**



**Fig. 5 (right)**  
**1929: Helen Stanek**



**Fig.6 (left)**  
**1930c.: School Mates**  
**(obverse)**  
**????, Koral**  
**Siminska, Kaczor**  
**Przekop, Kowalska**  
**Polutowska**



**Fig. 7 (right)**  
**1932: Stella Koral**  
**w/ Pop,**  
**Feliks Kornacki**  
**18 River Street**  
**Schenectady, NY**



**Pani Katarzyna Kornacka**  
**Part 10 – Connections – The Twenties and Thirties**  
**Martin Byster**



**Fig. 8: (left)**  
**1933**  
**Violet Gemi w/  
Pauline Kornacki**  
**Auriesville, NY**



**Fig. 9: (right)**  
**1935**  
**Stanley**  
**Chliedzinski**  
**w/ Chester**  
**Rybicki**



**Fig.10: (left)**  
**1935**  
**Clare Rybicki**



**Fig. 11 (right)**  
**1935**  
**Janet w/  
Josephine**  
**Imbirski**  
**Amsterdam, NY**

**Pani Katarzyna Kornacka**  
**Part 10 – Connections – The Twenties and Thirties**  
**Martin Byster**



**Fig. 12: (left)**  
**1935**  
**Joseph Jankowski**  
**(Junior)**  
**16 River Street**  
**Schenectady, NY**  
**Graduation**  
**Saint Mary's**  
**School**



**Fig. 13: (right)**  
**1935**  
**Joseph w/ Mrs.**  
**Anna Jankowski &**  
**Janet Kornacki**  
**16 River Street**  
**Graduation**  
**Saint Mary's**  
**School**

(TO BE CONTINUED)