

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

SILVER LAKE ROUNDTABLE HISTORY DISCUSSION A SUCCESS

This past Saturday, approximately forty people with family roots in the Silver Lake area met at the McLeod County Historical Museum, for a lively roundtable discussion on their memories of the history of the community. The event was a resounding success and there was talk of holding another such meeting, perhaps somewhere in the town of Silver Lake later this year (perhaps during this year's Pola-Czesky Days celebration?). Please stay tuned to this column for further details.

We continue this week, with a guest column by Lisa Alzo, member of the CGSI Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International board of directors, on the subject of finding your Polish ancestors.

FINDING YOUR POLISH ANCESTORS PART 2 OF 2

By Lisa A. Alzo

Immigration and Emigration Records

Polish immigration to the United States occurred in three major waves. The first wave of immigrants, arriving mainly from the late 1800s up to World War I, were considered *za chlebem* (for bread) immigrants. The second wave of immigration took place after World War II. The third wave of immigrants started arriving in 1980.

Immigration and emigration records may show an individual's place of birth and/or last place of residence. Because your ancestors may have traveled indirectly to their final destination, you should search both port of arrival and port of departure records (when available). Many passenger records can be found online. Check the Ellis Island database for ancestors arriving at the Port of New York from 1892–1924.

Some passenger lists for other ports and years can also be searched online at www.ancestry.com and www.genealogy.com. You can also order microfilm copies of passenger records through your local Family History Center at www.familysearch.org. To obtain specific pages of passenger lists, check with NARA.

When searching passenger lists, make a list of all possible alternatives for a name and try searching various combinations. For example, if you are looking for a surname ending in *-ski* try *-ska* (the feminine ending). Likewise, if you're searching for a woman's surname ending in *-ska*, try *-ski*.

Sometimes immigrants made more than one trip to the United States. Always check for multiple entries for an ancestor in both arrival and embarkation records, carefully noting the "Place of Residence" and "Destination" columns in U.S. lists and "State of Origin" for departure records.

Emigration Records

Passenger lists for the Port of Hamburg are preserved in the German State Archives in Hamburg. These records include both "direct" and "indirect" lists and both should be searched so you don't overlook your ancestor. Check for these lists (Auswandererlisten 1850–1934) in the FHLC. Portions of these lists may also be found at www.ancestry.com.

When searching, you will see initial results, but you will need to pay to receive additional details. Hamburg Police records should also be searched. The Hamburg Police Department kept registration

records for all non-citizen residents, until such time they left Hamburg, died, or became citizens of Hamburg. Various types of records (some passport applications, registers of laborers, domestics, workers, and other registers) are included in these records, which have been microfilmed by the Family History Library (check the catalog).

Unfortunately, most of the records from Bremen have not survived. However, thanks to an ongoing reconstruction effort, some Bremen Passenger Lists (1920–30) can be viewed online here (<http://db.genealogy.net/>).

Likewise, for Antwerp, only one passenger register has fully survived (the one for 1855), and there are some incomplete passenger lists for the period 1920–40 (Rijksarchief Beveren) with no indexes. See the Belgium Roots project (www.belgium.rootsweb.ancestry.com/migr/emig/antwerp/index.html)

Chain Migration

If you encounter dead ends in your research, a good strategy is to think beyond your own family. Fellow countrymen and women would set out for America to join relatives or former old-country neighbors already here. This is often referred to as “chain migration.” Look for neighbors in census returns, church, immigration, and tax records. Identifying neighbors can also be helpful in the event that your ancestor married the boy or girl next door.

Polish Immigrants to Canada

A substantial number of Polish immigrants settled in Canada; information regarding Canadian census, immigration, and vital records is available online via the Library and Archives of Canada (www.collectionscanada.ca/index-e.html)

Many immigrants went to Canada and then crossed the border to settle in the United States, so border crossing records should also be consulted. For Canadian border crossing records, consult the National Archives of Canada website (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/>). U.S. border crossing records are available either on microfilm via the FHL or NARA depending on the year. Also check the Immigrants to Canada website (<http://jubilation.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/thevoyage.html>).

Records in Poland

Once your research takes you back to Poland, there are four basic ways to obtain information: (1) check the FHLC to see if the records have been microfilmed; (2) submit a written request to the appropriate local parish, civil records office, or the Directorate of State Archives; (3) travel to the country and perform research in the archives yourself, or have a relative in Poland obtain the information for you; (4) hire a professional researcher.

A good range of sacramental records from parishes in Poland have been filmed and are available through the FHL. While the majority of ethnic Poles were Roman Catholic, others were Greek Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, Calvinist, Mennonite, or Jewish.

While church records were kept in Latin, Polish, German, or Russian, there are language guides with sample forms and translations. You can use a free Polish-English online translation guide (www.poltran.com) or purchase a Polish Genealogical Word List online at minimal cost from the FHL or from your local Family History Center (FHC).

If the records you seek are not available from the FHL, you may want to write to local parishes in Poland

and/or contact the state archives. Free letter-writing guides can be found on the Polish Genealogical Society of America's website (www.pgsa.org) or downloaded in PDF format for free from the Family Search catalog (www.familysearch.org).

Performing Your Own Research

If you decide to travel to Poland to perform research yourself, it's a good idea to contact the archives well in advance to find out the facility's hours, policies, holdings, and any associated fees. Familiarize yourself with the various types of documents available and the various languages. If possible, bring a translator with you. Surf the Web for travel companies specializing in trips to Poland and/or surrounding countries in Eastern Europe.

Your trip should include some time to explore your ancestral town or village. Search telephone directories in Poland to make contact with current residents, as well as the mayor or priest of a particular village. Advanced preparation can help you make the most of your experience.

Hiring a Professional Researcher

If you choose to enlist a professional researcher, search for someone familiar with the area's geography, history, and language who can also access restricted records. While this option may be more expensive, it may prove the most effective for locating multiple records overseas. For information about a professional genealogist's credentials and fees, consult the Association of Professional Genealogists in America (www.apgen.org/) the Board for Certification of Genealogists (<http://www.bcgcertification.org/>), International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists (www.icapgen.org/), or www.polishroots.com/reference.htm#Professional.

Other Research Strategies

You may consider joining a Polish genealogical group to find other people who share your research interests. The Polish Genealogical Society of America (www.pgsa.org) is one of the largest organizations; others can be found throughout the United States and Canada at www.polishroots.com and PolandGenWeb at www.rootsweb.com/~ceneurgw/.

Also, use the Internet as a networking tool for posting queries to message boards about surnames and localities. You can find a number of them on Cyndi's List (www.cyndislist.com/poland.htm#Mailing). Village-based online communities may also help you connect with others who have roots in your ancestral village.

Remember, researching your Polish ancestors isn't always easy. But by following a step-by-step process, you may be able to overcome some of the difficulties inherent to the task. Add a little persistence and the right research strategies and you may be able to bypass some of the most common pitfalls and accomplish your goals with less frustration and greater success.

Lisa A. Alzo, MFA, is an instructor of genealogy and writing courses. She is the author of Three Slovak Women (Gateway Press) and the newly published, Baba's Kitchen: Slovak & Rusyn Family Recipes and Traditions (Gateway Press). Lisa teaches Basic and Intermediate Slovak and Eastern European, and Great Lakes Region Research for MyFamily.com, Inc. and often speaks at national conferences and genealogical and historical societies.

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: tkadlec@gmail.com or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. See this article online at: www.kadlecovi.com Děkuji! Tony Kadlec