



Alliance News

Toledo-Poznań Alliance quarterly newsletter – Winter 2016-17

Christmas Traditions in Poland

Year by year the centuries old traditions are preserved and repeated in Polish homes in the U.S. and around the world. Families engage in the same ceremonies and the same dishes prepared for the Wigilia supper. There is an excitement in the air on the Wigilia day because people go to the tree farm and pick out a Christmas tree, in Polish it's called choinka. Once its prepped on a stand and ready to bring it indoors, the tree is then decorated with a silver star on top, and paper chains made with colored paper that all kids would make in school. Then small apples that you force a nail in and tie a string around it to hang it. Then walnuts that were hanged the same way, with a nail and a string. Then just a few pretty little ornaments. The last thing would be candles that had a clip attached to the bottom so that the candles could be clipped to the strongest branch. Only adults were allowed to light the candles. Amazingly enough, there was never a problem with fire. Once the tree was decorated, the children's task then was to watch for the first star in the sky in early evening. Since Wigilia was always a day of fasting, it was agony for the kids to wait that long. Even though the Catholic Church doesn't require fasting on that day any more, many Poles still observe it. When the first star appeared, the family could then sit down and start with the traditional sharing of the oplatek (in English the communion wafer). The meaning of the oplatek was a symbol of love, forgiveness, contentment and family unity. Our Mother would start sharing her oplatek with Dad first, then everyone else around the table. The old tradition required to have an extra place set for whomever might knock on the door that night. Also the old tradition required to place a sheaf of wheat on the table or to spread some hay under the tablecloth as a

remembrance of the manger. The tablecloth was always white to make this meal more festive, and twelve dishes were always served because of the twelve apostles. The meal would always start with a couple of different types of fish such as marinated herring and baked or fried carp. Two kinds of soups was always served, mushroom soup and ezerwony barszcz (red beet soup) with miniature dumplings. Then a couple of different kinds of pierogi, such as farmers cheese, sauerkraut and mushrooms served with stewed sauerkraut with wild mushrooms. Then fruit compote and a variety of pastries, including poppy seed cake, babka (Polish coffee cake). When the meal was completed, Christmas Carols were sung. Then the most important to us was Santa Claus, the bearer of gifts. Santa would always come on Christmas Eve. Then at Midnight the whole family would walk to church for Pasterka (Midnight Mass). There would almost always be snow on Christmas Eve. After Midnight Mass, once we got home, there would be hot chocolate and pastries.

On Christmas day no cooking is done in Poland, it is a day of rest and happiness for all. Poland enjoys a second day of Christmas, the day after, where everyone is off work and school and when families get together visiting and more sharing of food with a baked goose on the second day of Christmas. Christmas trees are kept in Polish homes until the day of the Magi, on January 6.



Polish Cultural Center Update

Efforts to raise money for a Polish Cultural Center took a big step forward following a successful dinner at the Premier. Gene Bak, director of Cleveland's Polish Cultural Center, gave the keynote address to a crowd of about 100 people.

Tom Waniewski then gave a presentation that highlighted the rich history of Polish immigrants who settled in the Lagrinka and Kuschwanz neighborhoods and contrasted historical images to the state of those neighborhoods now. The stark contrast lead up to an architect's rendering of a conception of northwest Ohio's proposed Cultural Center. "We're not going to see our heritage disintegrate like our neighborhoods," Waniewski said. "We're going to get further input from the Polish community on what they would like to see in a Cultural Center, but this gives us the first glimpse of what could be." Ed Glowacki from the Buehrer Group donated his services in drafting the renderings. The renderings showed a large area for a library and research stations to benefit the Toledo Polish Genealogical Society and a banquet and club area for Toledo Poznan Alliance events.

Waniewski explained that the next phase is to get three-year financial commitments from the Polish community. "Just a small commitment of \$1,000 over three years is barely \$28 a month," Waniewski said. For more information, contact Tom at 419-754-3633 or make your commitment online at PolishCulturalCenter.com.

By Tom Waniewski

DID YOU KNOW? Poland's Consul General to the USA (1934-39) is buried in Toledo's Calvary Cemetery?

Wacław Marian Teofil Gawroński was born March 5, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia (under the Tsar). A graduate of a trade school in **Kielce** (Poland) and the Law Department of the University in Kazan (Tatarstan), he received the doctorate of law at the University of (King) **Jan**

Kazimierz in **Lwów** (Poland—now Lviv, Ukraine). Around 1920 he entered the foreign service, among others fulfilling the function of consul in Lille (France, 1924-28), head of the Consular Organizational Dept. in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1928-30), Consul General in Berlin (Germany, 1930-34) and when Dr. **Tytus Zbyszewski** was transferred to the Polish capital of **Warszawa**, Dr. **Gawroński** was appointed the Polish Consul General to the United States of America in Chicago (Illinois), a position he held for over five years (1934-39) until he was succeeded by Dr. **Karol Ripa**.

On an unpaid furlough during the Second World War, Dr. **Gawroński** came to Toledo, Ohio where he spent twenty-two years (1939-61). At the beginning of the 1950's he became publisher and chief editor of Toledo's Polish-language newspaper, *Ameryka-Echo*. Dr. **Gawroński** was one of the main organizers of the Polish Arts Club of Toledo, which would be responsible for bringing such cultural events as the first local performances of Poland's folk song and dance ensemble "**Mazowsze**" and the **Poznań** Boys and Men's Choir known as "**Słowiki** [Nightingales]" to our city, as well as the local observance of the 1000th Anniversary of Christianity in Poland, in the 'Sixties

After *Ameryka-Echo* ceased publication in Toledo in 1961, Dr. **Gawroński** returned to Chicago, where he died on March 27, 1979 at age eighty-six, but he is buried next to his first wife **Zofia Popławska-Gawrońska** (who died in 1957) in Toledo's Calvary (Catholic) Cemetery—Section 42, Lot 408—with a rather simple marker which notes in Polish that he served as "**KONSUL GENERALNY R. P.** [Consul General of the Republic of Poland]." **Cześć jego pamięci!**—Honor to his memory!

David Gwidon Chelminski, Ph.D.



What's in a melody?

What is the secret link between Napoleon, a grandfather clock, Polish soldiers in Italy and a traditional Polish nobleman's dance becoming the Polish National Anthem?

"Dąbrowski's Mazurka" first known by its original title, "Pieśń Legionów Polskich we Włoszech" is now commonly referred to by most Polish-Americans as "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła", which happens to be the first two lines of lyrics from the song.

Two years after the third and final partition wiped Poland completely off the map, Józef Wybicki found himself in Northern Italy helping form Polish units to fight alongside Napoleon. Their aim was to eventually regain Poland's lost independence so Wybicki came up with a marching song to rally the troops.

Every song including anthems has two components: lyrics & music. Wybicki, a poet, composer, dramatist, lawyer, diplomat, and political and military activist - wrote the Polish Anthem's lyrics highlighting the name of the Polish Legion Commander, General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski.

Poland has not yet perished,

So long as we still live.

What the alien force has taken from us,

We shall retrieve with glory.

March, March, Dąbrowski.

From the Italian land to Poland.

Under your command,

We shall rejoin the nation.

It lifted their spirits, reminding them of what they were fighting for. But, for more than 200 years now, it is still a mystery who wrote the music. Our best guess is that Wybicki wrote the melody. The legend in Poland is that it was based on the sound of his grandfather clock. But whoever really scored the piece likely based the music on

the first eight bars of "Pochwała Wesolosci" a Mazur that was quite well known.

Compared to the anthem there is little doubt that the composer borrowed the tune. The resulting 'Marching Mazur' was so popular it survived nearly 125 years of Poland's non-existence. It finally became the official anthem in 1927 despite heavy competition from sacred songs like "Bogurodzica" and "Boże coś Polskę" (God Save Poland) to protest songs like "Warszawianka" and "Rota" (The Oath) ... but that's another story.

by Denny Kutylowski - PolishToledo.com

Tour of Poland - 2018

Anyone interested in the next tour of Poland, please contact me by phone: 419-385-8516, or email: bokat@bex.net. Also, start thinking where in Poland would you like to go. This way we can incorporate in the itinerary the places of interest to you. Your tour of Poland in 2018 should be where you want to go.

Kathy

Attention members

The time has come to renew your membership for 2017. Please consider renewing your membership by the end of January. A gift of membership to a family member or a friend would be appreciated by TPA, and they would receive the Alliance News. Each quarterly newsletter is full of exciting information of events in Polonia, as well as building in the near future the Polish Culture Center (PCC). With every newsletter we will update you on the progress of PCC.

Walter Palicki, Membership

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia