

POLISH CENTER



NEWSLETTER

OF DISCOVERY AND LEARNING AT ELMS COLLEGE



Now that our building has been renovated, we have begun working on preparing our galleries on the second and third floors. Many items from our collections are already on exhibit. It is hard to believe that all these materials were either on display or in our small storage area in our previous space.

The Home in America/U siebie w Ameryce gallery has one wall covered with a rich variety of illustrations that once adorned the walls of Polish American homes at the beginning of the 20th century. The wall facing these illustrations

WORK ON ARRANGING GALLERY EXHIBITS BEGUN



is covered with photos of people from the same period. There are items of clothing, a 100-year-old cabbage shredder, material from the 1939 and 1904 world fairs and much more.

Work has begun on the Journey to America/ Podróż do Ameryki room, which is sponsored by Mr. Walter Wrzesien in memory of his parents. The room features trunks from Poland, a feather bed from 1936, old passports, and a great deal more. A flat screen TV will be placed in the room where visitors will be able to view, among others, a film on Polish immigration at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Polish folk art room, sponsored by Mr. Antoni Żelechowski of Boston in memory of his wife Dr. Krystyna Stróżyk-Żelechowska is almost completed. The main wall in the room is covered with dark red velvet drapes prepared by the very talented Joan Czaja Marsh, a dedicated Polish Center board member for many years. We are grateful to Wacek Szymczakiewicz for the many hours he spent painting, wall papering, and much more. A very special thank you to Henry Dziok for his carpentry skills in making the display cubes.

A PRICELESS PIECE OF HISTORY DONATED TO THE POLISH CENTER

Many books and articles have been published which describe the unspeakable atrocities committed in Poland following the Nazi invasion of September 1, 1939 and the invasion of their Soviet cohorts on September 17, 1939. It is much rarer, however, to actually have an opportunity to hold in your hands a notebook from the past which describes events as they happened. The Polish Center considers itself especially fortunate to have acquired the personal diary of Mr. Czesław Cholewa of Holyoke, Massachusetts in which he records events during and immediately after his family's forcible deportation from Czartorysk, Wołyń. The members of the Cholewa family were among the over 1.5 million Poles exiled by the Soviets to Siberia, Kazakhstan and other remote and especially harsh regions of the Soviet Union.

Time and the appetite of attic mice with indiscriminating taste have not always been kind to the diary. However, an excellent copy of the diary that is much easier to read has been published in a collection of memoirs entitled *Przeznaczeni na zagładę; wspomnienia polonijnych Sybiraków* (trans.: Destined for extermination; the memoirs of Siberian exiles), Chicago-Kraków, Związek Sybiraków w USA, 2003.

Mr. Cholewa begins his diary one day after his 15th birthday, Saturday, 10 February 1940.

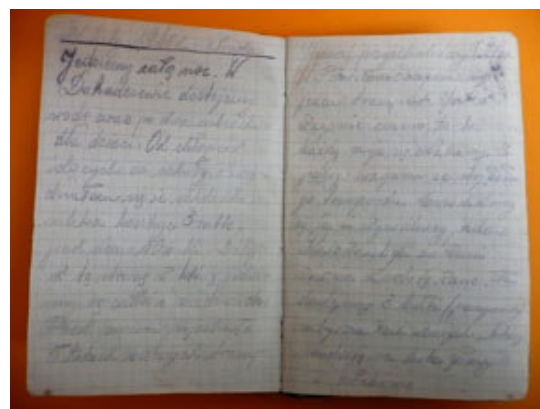
He writes, "This morning a group of Soviet soldiers and a few local Ukrainians woke us at 5 in the morning. They put us—my father Onufry, mother Maria, sister Karola, brother Kazik, and youngest sister Lunia—up against the wall in the kitchen and began searching the entire house, cabinet drawers; turning over the sheets, they moved everything about probably looking for weapons. Next, they gave us 30 minutes to get dressed and told us that we should take a lot of food because they were transferring us to another place. Mama cried and dad turned pale white. After a half an hour, they put us and our bundles onto a sled and we went off under military guard with rifles and on horseback in the direction of

the Czartorysk train station about 8km away. There was a heavy frost and a terrible snow storm.

On arriving at the station we noticed that there were already a lot of horses, sleds and people. A lot of boxcars stood on the train tracks. By evening, they told us to board them."

By February 26, the family arrived at its destination and its Siberian experience began. The camp referred to here was called a "posiołek" and not a gulag. Gulags were more brutally punitive and families were not kept together. Interesting enough, this Russian term was used to denote a settlement of free people by the Soviets, masking the true nature of these camps.

On Tuesday, 5 March 1940 the young boy writes, "Today, Mommy and Mrs. Dominiakowa were cooking lunch when two Soviets came who wanted to put the fire out with water; but, there was no water. They said that there were no longer to be any fires during the day. That those who did not obey would be arrested. Fires were allowed only from 6 to 8 [AM] and in the evening from 6 to 8. Food for children should be prepared in the morning. And what then are the mothers who



have a few small children to do? For love or money you can't get milk for infants here. Yet, you need to give these children something warm to eat during the day. Still, when it comes to the

(continued from page 2)

Soviets, there are no excuses. Let them die of starvation. And that's just how three small children in our camp died as well as an old man of twelve at the other camp. Not out of kindness but poverty and cold. Today an 8-month-old child also died in our camp because its mother did not have enough breast milk. They're making us youngsters go to work. Our parents are already working. They get up at 5 in the morning and walk 5km one way, and since they do not have good shoes or felt boots, they wrap their aching feet with old rags and bags. Those who work get a few rubles a day. And what can you buy with them when a kilo of rye bread costs 1 ruble and 5 kopecks, and a half-litre of sparse soup – 90 kopecks? Its good that we still have a little of our own flour, groats and fat back; but, when we go through that then its starvation. You can buy a

spoonful of potatoes and a small herring (twice as small as in Poland) in the dining hall. The potatoes are as small as the ones which we used to feed our pigs. The herring with the potato costs 1.30 rubles. And what sort of food it that? From the day we came, the soup has always been the same and without any fat. Really, starvation and misery awaits us. If someone has flour, they want that he trade it in. They'll give 1kg of bread for 1.5kg. of flour.”

As Americans of Polish heritage, we have a rich and colorful history that is worthy of preserving for future generations. We must make an effort to document all the many joyous and disturbing events that define us. The Polish Center strives to do its part collecting materials such as Mr. Cholewa's diary. Of course, it can only succeed in accomplishing its very special mission through the concern and generosity of the community.

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A wonderful opportunity to
“EMBRACE YOUR HERITAGE
with a generous donation.

THE POLISH CENTER RECEIVES MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL GRANT



Massachusetts Cultural Council

We are very pleased to announce that the Polish Center was awarded a second \$2,000 grant from the Local Chicopee Council of the Massachusetts Cultural Council to fund, in part, the installation of gallery lighting. These funds helped to complete our work on the third floor. The Massachusetts Cultural Council is a state agency which awards grants through a competitive process. The plans for the second floor include creating galleries focusing on the contributions of Polish Americans to the arts, business, sports and spiritual faith of this country. There are plans for a replica of a Polish cottage and a children's room as well. Our most sincere thanks go out to the Council members for their help.

*The PCDL is a 501 (c) (3) organization.
Donations are tax-deductible to the
extent allowed by the law.
An acknowledgment will be sent.*





\$20,000 BEQUEST RECEIVED FROM MRS. SOPHIE (ZBIERSKA) WANAT-GUNN



I recall meeting Mrs. Gunn, a few years back at the Polish Center, when it was still located on the third floor of Berchmans Hall on the campus of Elms College. She came to visit us along with her friend Mary Downey Costello, an attorney from

Springfield, Massachusetts. I enthusiastically explained to her what the mission of the Polish Center was all about and pointed out some of the materials in our collection. At the time, of course, we did not have the generous exhibit space we have now in our new facility on South Street. It was a pleasure meeting Mrs. Gunn. She appeared to me as a very pleasant person with eyes that betrayed a touch of melancholy.

Mrs. Gunn was born in Warsaw, Poland November 2, 1921. When she graduated from high school, her parents presented her with a special gift, a trip to the United States and an opportunity to visit the 1939 World Fair in New York City. I think she would have enjoyed seeing our Polish memorabilia from that fair now on exhibit in one of our galleries at the Polish Center. At the end of the year, she received a phone call from her father, a professor in Poland, urging her not to return home. Hitler had invaded Poland.

She was fortunate to have an uncle in Easthampton, Massachusetts who was a priest. He sent her to Nazareth Academy in Philadelphia and later she graduated from Northampton Commercial College. Later, she worked as a legal secretary and then Aetna Life & Casualty in Hartford, Connecticut and in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1942, Mrs. Gunn married Arnold Wanat and was widowed in 1963. In 1977, she married Russell Gunn and lived in Springfield until his death in 1999. She resided in East Longmeadow and passed away February 21, 2008 at Mercy Hospital.

Mrs. Gunn's gift to the Polish Center will be applied to the cost of completing Phase II of our project, building a new handicap accessible entrance into the building and an concert/lecture hall to seat 125 people.

— ARRIVAL OF FIRST POLES TO JAMESTOWN IN 1608 — AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A VERY SPECIAL CELEBRATION

The Polish Center is pleased to inform its friends that the Polish American Congress of Western Massachusetts is offering a trip this fall to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Polish settlers to North America in 1608. The trip includes a guided tour of the Jamestown Settlement, including indoor and outdoor ceremonies and reception.

A bus trip by Deluxe Motorcoach to Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia departs September 29, 2008 and returns October 3, 2008 (5 days and 4 nights). The program includes a guided tour of Yorktown Settlement and Yorktown Victory Center, admission to Colonial Williamsburg and Williamsburg Pottery Factory, baggage handling (one bag per person) and all taxes and gratuities (except for driver).

Accommodations for four nights are at the Quality Inn at Kingsmill, Williamsburg, Virginia and include 8 meals: 4 deluxe continental breakfasts and 4 dinners and admission to Busch Gardens.

Prices: room occupancy—double at \$629 per person, triple at \$549 per person, and quad at \$509 per person.

FOR MORE PRECISE INFORMATION AND RESERVATION FORMS, CALL:

Henry Dziok at 413-533-7540

or

Joe Kos at 413-536-3795

Reservation forms are also available at the Polish Center.

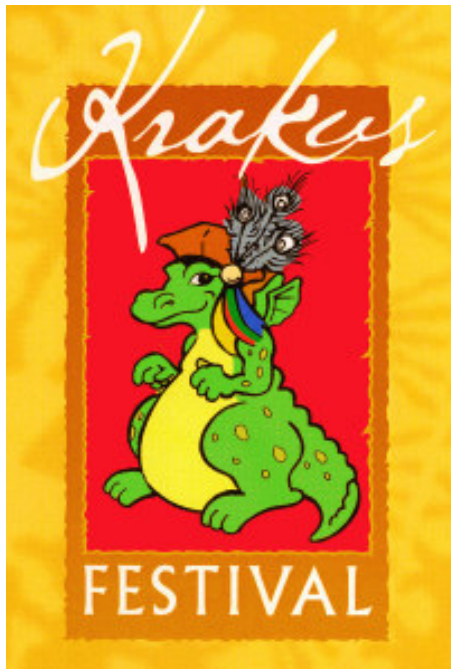
THE STORY OF OUR **Krakus** FESTIVAL HOST — THE WAWEL DRAGON

Krakus refers to the legendary young man (Krak, a shoe maker) who rid the people of a bothersome dragon living in a cavern below their settlement on Wawel (Vavel) Hill. Today, the royal castle and cathedral in Kraków stand on the place of that settlement. Krakus can also refer to a man from Kraków. The term is used in a variety of other ways such as a name for a national fraternity or, of course, the brand name of a ham. Our host has a history that goes back to a time when stories were not written down but passed on by word of mouth from one generation to another.

Many brave and wise men tried to dispatch the dragon, who required a sheep for breakfast, a couple of cows for supper—and heavens—so much, much more. All failed, except for one. Only Krak, the young shoe maker, was successful. He collected two buttons from a tailor, four wooden legs to a chair from a carpenter, and a sheep skin from a shepherd. He then brought back a bag of sulphur from a mine just a short distance from the settlement. Krak took a needle and thread and made a bag out of the sheep skin, which he carefully filled with the sulphur he acquired. Then, he sewed on the two buttons and put the four legs from the chair into the bottom of the bag. Placed between the Wisła (Vistula) River and the entrance to the dragon's cave, his creation appeared much like a real sheep—to the dragon, of course. The careless dragon quickly rushed out of his cave and greedily devoured the fake sheep. After ingesting all that sulphur, his mouth became ever so parched. He rushed to the nearby river and began to drink the water. He drank, and drank, and drank until—he exploded! The people of the settlement were so grateful to Krak for the demise of the dragon that they named the place after the young shoe maker. That is how Kraków got its name.

Now, time has changed our attitude toward that bothersome dragon. These days, we think of him much more fondly. He has become not only a friend but a very important symbol of Kraków and things Cracovian. So, we at the Polish Center have chosen him as our host for our Krakus Festival. “Wiwat Smok Wawelski!”

The word in Polish for dragon is “smok”. This particular dragon is known to everyone as the Smok Wawelski, or Wawel (Vavel) Dragon. “Long live the Wawel Dragon!”



*Our host
Kraków's Wawel Dragon*

Krakus Festival **2008**

Join us for an exciting evening in October! The third annual fund-raising event for the Polish Center will be held at the BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME in Springfield, MA on Saturday, October 25, 2008.

A Polish dinner and dancing to the Eddy Forman, Lenny Gomulka and Echo Orchestras, plus the opportunity to tour the museum will make this a memorable event.

A BENEFIT EVENT
all for furthering the good cause of
the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning.

Mark your calendars and plan to join us. If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to call Joanne Gruskos, Chairperson of the Gala, at 413-733-7341 or Henry Dziok at 413-533-7540

LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE

PRE-1779 LONGCASE CLOCK

Recently, Kas Kielb, of Wilbrahm, Massachusetts donated an eight-day clock (with a chime and powered by two weights) made by Thomas Lister of Luddenden, Yorkshire, England. Thomas Lister is a well-known clock

maker who was born in 1718 and died in 1779. Kas is a clock collector no doubt known to those who have read our previous newsletters as the artist who has designed and is now making the special chandelier which will hang in the new entrance we will be constructing from the parking lot side of our Polish Center. The face of the clock is brass with sand-casted decorative elements in four corners. The face is finally etched and the numbers are engraved Roman numerals originally filled in with pitch. The case is hand carved and probably dark oak. The producer of the case is not identified. It was not uncommon for case makers not to be identified. Most often, they were coffin makers working in their spare time.

Imported clocks such as these certainly must have stood in fine homes of 18th and 19th century Poland. This one most certainly must have been privy to its owners' conversations about the birth of the United States of America, Napoleon, perhaps even Kościuszko and the partitions of Poland.



DECORATIVE VASE MADE FROM ONE SINGLE PIECE OF COAL

Masterfully carved with figures of miners from the middle ages to contemporary times, this fine gift to the Polish Center donated by Mr. Izydor Szymiczek of East Longmeadow, Massachusetts is an example of coal miner art (an artform indigenous to the mining district of Poland and reminiscent of the much older artform of salt carving). The words Wodzisław Śl (Śląski), a town in Polish Silesia, can be seen at base of the vase along with the town's coat-of-arms. The artist is not identified on the vase.



POLSKA PRZY HERBACIE TEA AND POLAND

This summer, we thought we would treat our friends to a two session Polish history lecture and conversation over refreshments. In order to keep the experience intimate and cordial, we attempted to limit the event to 20 individuals, with the requirement that they register in advance. The tea was open free of charge to everyone. Within ten days, the sessions scheduled for July 19 and July 26 were filled. Just in case this event should prove to be successful, we decided to take names for a second series of two sessions to accommodate those who could not attend earlier.

The tea was a much more attractive affair thanks to the special efforts of Joan Czaja Marsh, Cindy Kirejczyk, and Carolyn Czaja Topor. Guests were treated to pączki and poppyseed cake while a brief sketch of the origin of the Polish people and the Polish state was presented.



Joan Czaja Marsh (left) and Cindy Kirejczyk (right) prepare the table and check out the tea.

POLISH TRADITIONS MINICOURSE

Everyone who is on our mailing list (nearly 700 families and individuals) will recall a notice about a four-session non-credit Polish traditions minicourse offered by Elms College through the Division of Continuing Education. The course, which introduced commonly practiced Polish traditions and their roots in Poland, was held evenings at the Polish Center between June 4 and 26, 2008. The success of these classes was due, to a large part, to the enthusiasm of the participants and the fact that it was especially convenient to meet at the Polish Center where many of the materials discussed are housed, whether it be Christmas and Easter traditions or telling fortunes on St. Andrew's Eve by means of melted wax.

THE MISSION OF THE POLISH CENTER: To collect and preserve historical objects representative of the material culture of the Polish people in America and in Poland; to prepare exhibits of historical and cultural materials; to help individuals locate information about Poland and the Poles in America; to offer a variety of lectures, conferences, seminars, concerts and other events which promote an interest in Polish and Polish-American culture; to become a living monument that celebrates the contribution of the Polish people to the arts, economy and the sciences; to provide learning resources and programming.

YOUR SUPPORT

We have experienced a great deal of local support for the Polish Center and this project. The rapid growth of the Center since its inception nine years ago and increased public support attest to a broad endorsement of its mission. The Center cooperates regionally with the initiatives of other institutions and cultural associations and seeks to maintain a strong working relationship with them. We aspire to be a national organization. Our collection activities encompass the entire country, as well as our associations. **OUR GREATEST SUPPORT COMES FROM YOU.**

PLEASE ASK ABOUT MEMORIAL OPPORTUNITIES HERITAGE

Choose to name an area of the Polish Center after your family or someone especially important to you, a fraternal organization, or enterprise.

THE SUCCESS OF THIS VERY SPECIAL CENTER depends on a continued strong expression of interest and support by the College and people like you — the friends of Polish culture! We invite you to become a member (or renew your membership) of the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning at Elms College. **Please encourage others — friends and family—to support the Polish Center.**

___ (Chopin Circle) \$1,000 and above

___ (Copernicus Circle) \$100-\$249

___ (Kosciuszko Circle) \$500-\$999

___ (Matejko Circle) \$50-\$99

___ (Skłodowska-Curie Circle) \$250-\$499

___ (Mickiewicz Circle) \$35-\$49

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- ✿ Zbieranie i przechowywanie przedmiotów o tematyce historyczno-kulturalnej polskiej ludności w Stanach Zjednoczonych i w Polsce.
- ✿ Po zrealizowaniu celów, pragniemy stać się żywym pomnikiem czczącym pamięć polskich emigrantów i ich potomków jako współuczestników życia kultury, nauki i ekonomii tego kraju.
- ✿ Organizowanie wystawy, warsztatów naukowych, wykładów i seminariów
- ✿ Udzielanie pomocy osobom szukającym informacji i materiałów pomocniczych o Polsce i Polakach w Stanach Zjednoczonych.
- ✿ Udzielanie wsparcia osobom dążącym do wprowadzenia polskich tematów do programów nauczania i utworzenie bazy danych informacji dotyczących Polski i Polonii.



FROM OUR COLLECTIONS

Early 20th century photograph on tin of a youthful Marshal Józef Piłsudski. The Polish Center has a number of interesting Piłsudski memorabilia