



Polish Heritage

Published Triannually by the American Council for Polish Culture

Winter, 2020

Vol. 71 No.3



We extend our best wishes for a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season to all the members of our constituent clubs, organizations and cultural groups.

And may the New Year bring each one of you much Joy and Happiness -

Wesołych Świąt!

Zioła Lecznicze

HEALING HERBS

by David J. Motak

Poland, like all other countries around the world, is currently dealing with COVID-19 as best as it can. As with any disease or outbreak, whenever there is a major health crisis people often espouse various folk remedies (such as recommendations to inject bleach) rather than listen to the medical experts. However, I wonder how our ancestors handled various health issues before the advent of modern health services.

Our ancient Slavic ancestors lived off the land and through generations of trial and error developed various folk remedies that were sometimes surprisingly effective in curing numerous ailments. Folk remedies were passed along over the generations and were employed at various times to treat illness when doctors were not generally available. Some treatments, however, were not too effective and can even strike us today as rather humorous.

Many of these treatments were derived from the fields and forests. Herbs, plants and weeds were used for such traditional remedies. In most cases, there was a regimen as to how to gather, store and prepare these plants. The “magical” properties of these plant-based remedies - their healing power - were determined not only by the type of plant, but also when, where and how they were harvested. The ideal time was on clear, rainless days in the late morning after the drying of morning dew. This applied to most plants, with the exception of rhizomes and roots which could be harvested regardless of the weather. However, it was important to say a specific prayer while picking the plants, and to avoid saying the final “amen,” which apparently had a detrimental effect on the plant’s potency. Also, plants were gathered by women for use by their own immediate family; any woman picking herbs for someone else’s use was often considered a witch.

Plant preparations included *napary* (infusions) which were prepared by pouring boiling water over the herb and covering it for approximately 15 minutes. *Napary* were not suitable for storage and were prepared fresh each time; *wywary* (decoctions) were liquid extracts obtained by boiling ground raw materials; like infusions, *wywary* had to be prepared on an ongoing basis;



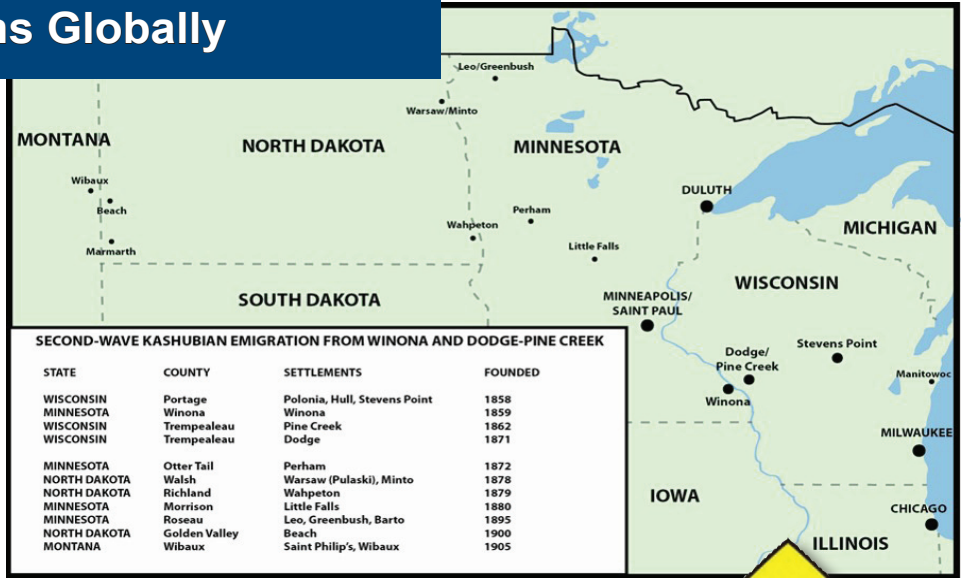
Woodcut depicting the preparation of herbs from “O Ziołach” (“About Herbs”) by Hieronim Spiczynski, Kraków, 1542.

continued on page 10



Minnesota Museum Connects Kashubians Globally

by Mark Dillon, 2nd Vice President, ACPC



Coronavirus-related travel rules prevented Polish historians and genealogists from flying or even showing up in person in Winona, Minnesota in October to mark the originally planned Kashubian Centennials, but the show still went on virtually.

Through four webinars over two days on Oct. 1 and 2, a panel of U.S. and Polish experts discussed *Kashubian Emigration in Winona and USA – History and Heritage*. The effort was a collaboration between Minnesota’s Polish Cultural Institute & Museum, Pomeranian University in Slupsk, Poland and Winona State University.

Under a program called Kashubian Capital Centennial 2020, the museum had partnered with the City of Winona and businesses with the hope of creating 35 cultural events this year to mark the 100th anniversary of the addition of the Kashubia region into the Republic of Poland.

Since March, the coronavirus crisis put a halt to these plans, including the museum’s annual *Smaczne Jabłka* Apple Festival fund raiser, as well as all live events and in-person classes for ACPC’s PACIM Minnesota affiliate in Minneapolis between March and October. .

Polish ingenuity in Winona still brought people together. At the Oct. 1 morning webinar, Dr. Karolina Kierlanczyk of Chicago talked about role of the city of Winona in shaping the political and national identity of American Polonia in the Midwest while Dr. Jozef Szymanski talked about the leading role of St. Stanislaus parish in building the region’s Kashubian-Polish American identity from 1890 to 1922.

Several participants at the event signing on from across the United States as far as Charleston, S.C. and Poland shared that they are or might be related to Winona’s founding Polish families. Fr. Paul Breza, founder and builder of the Winona museum, said he hopes the conference, the first of its kind, will be a catalyst for additional events that help Kashubians expand connections and renew family ties globally.

The Breza family has been part of Winona since their maternal great grandfather Antoni Pehler from Bytów, Poland moved to the town in 1859 with other family members. Although he was not yet a citizen, Pehler would serve in the 17th Missouri Infantry Regiment in the Union Army during the U.S. Civil War, participating in many major battles including the siege of Vicksburg and Sherman’s March through Georgia.

Illustration above: Winona, Minnesota served as a starting point for Kashubian Poles who later moved to northwest Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Montana. This map by Dr. Joseph Hughes of Missouri State University shows the various towns they settled.



A parish of their own

Winona is home to the Basilica of St. Stanislaus, built in 1895. Planning for a church of their own first began in 1871 when approximately 100 Kashubian-Polish families met and formed the St. Stanislaus Society, a fraternal organization.

Getting started wasn’t easy not only because these first generation immigrants of rural Minnesota had limited incomes and resources, but also because they did not have experience building churches or running social organizations which, as Kashubia was part of the Prussian-German partition of Poland, were the exclusive realm of the Prussian nobility.

“They were third class citizens” as far as the ruling Prussians were concerned. said Dr. Joseph Hughes, professor emeritus at Missouri State University and a descendent of the parish’s co-founding Bambenek family, during the morning Oct. 2 webinar. Eighteenth and 19th century Prussia’s discriminatory social hierarchy and land ownership policies placed Germans at the top, then “pure” Poles, then Kashubians, Hughes noted.

Once in Minnesota, many Kashubian immigrants around Winona were classified by other Americans as being Polish, which was considered a “step up.”

“They must have thought, wow, we’ve been promoted,” Hughes said, adding that in Winona “nowhere else in the Kashubian diaspora did such a predominance of Kashubian Poles arise within a Polish community; its influence resonates to this day.”

Dear Readers:

I am very pleased to present this particular issue of the *Polish Heritage* for your enjoyment. This is the 2020 Christmas Edition and, as you will find in the center spread (pgs 6 and 7) I have prepared a presentation of several of the most beautiful Polish Christmas Traditions. This was done in response to a request by Cecilia and Ray Glembocki who asked that I create parallel Christmas material to the two-pages of Polish Easter traditions that I featured in the Spring, 2020 *Polish Heritage*. Their intention is to reprint both the Christmas and Easter materials as a two-sided brochure to be distributed at NCSS conferences and other public events. Once we format this new brochure, we might also wish to distribute copies to our member organizations for their use.

As has been said many times, 2020 has been an exceptional and trying year. In visiting these beautiful Polish Christmas customs, I am reminded that certain things are worth cherishing and sharing with others, including passing them along to future generations.

As we try to find comfort during the upcoming winter months, I hope that this presentation of our cherished Polish customs will help sustain you and your loved ones. Some of our loved ones have passed away; some cannot be near us this year due to the COVID virus. Although many of us cannot be together with those whom we love, I hope that these images will help brighten your Christmas.

Dave Motak

Pre-World War I U.S. censuses in Minnesota apparently mistakenly enumerated some Kashubian Poles as being from Austria-Hungary's Galicia partition. However, most Kashubians upon arrival to Minnesota and elsewhere did not self-identify as Kashubian but as Catholics from extended families from a particular village.

For some Kashubians, Winona was a jumping off point to further settlements in northwest Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan (See map), Hughes explained.

Tracing how Kashubians maintained their heritage in the face of adversity and without many tangible connections or regular use of a unique language was a topic touched on by several speakers, notably Dr. Daniel Kalinowski of the Pomeranian University in Słupsk.

Kalikowski observed that noted Kashubian writer Jan Dzedzdzon found only trace evidence of language use when he visited North America in the 1970s. Rather, Kashubian heritage survived as oral traditions, food recipes and folk customs such as Pusto Nocor Empty Night, a night of shared memories, food, and singing about a deceased person (later in the U.S., drinking) before a funeral Mass.

Kashubians in Canada, Chicago, and Milwaukee

Another speaker at the two-day event was Dr. Aleksandra Korowska-Susdorf of the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia who detailed traces of Kashubian heritage in various places in North America.

In addition to coming to Winona in 1855 and moving west and north, Kashubians also formed the town of Wilno in 1858 in Renfrew County, Ontario, Canada. Kashubian immigrants founded St. Josaphat parish in Chicago's Lincoln Park community in the late 19th century, as well as the parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Irving Park.

Korowska-Susdorf also mentioned that in the 1870s a fishing village was created on Jones Island in Milwaukee, by Kashubian immigrants, growing to a peak of 1,600 around 1900. However, the City of Milwaukee evicted them as squatters beginning in 1920. She showed a photo with the last trace of this Milwaukee fishing village, a city park named Kaszube's Park on land where the last Kashubian resident of the island, once lived, bar owner Felix Struck.

Note: A version of this story originally appeared in the November 2020 issue of Polish American Journal.



Smaczne!

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The Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford, Inc. is proud to offer a treasured collection of recipes shared by Club members and friends.

Newly published, it contains 300 recipes, including: Appetizers and Condiments; Soups and Salads; Vegetables and Side Dishes; Main Dishes; Breads, Rolls and Muffins; and Desserts. Also included are traditional Polish Easter (Wielkanoc) and Christmas Eve (Wigilia) favorites, as well as 16 bonus pages of helpful cooking hints. At only \$16.00, it makes a PERFECT Gift for the Holidays or ANY occasion. (\$30 for two cook books.) Please include \$4.00 for postage and handling per book.

Please mail your check or money order to:

Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford, Inc.

P.O. Box 380699

East Hartford, CT 06138-0699

For information please call 860-659-0356



From the President



*President
Raymond
Glembocki*

Presidents Holiday Message:

We hope that you have had a Happy Thanksgiving, as we usually spend this time with friends and family in social gatherings that are festive and traditional. This year however we will be different. Cecilia and I are decorating the house for Christmas knowing family will be together to celebrate our Wigilia Supper.

So it is with our ACPC family. We have been affected by the "Year of Covid-19 Confinement" which is likely to continue. However, we are doing "what we always do." in many creative ways. We had a Board Meeting as we always do with reports from the Officers and Committees, but it also was a step into the future. It was virtual. I can see in the future that we will have such meetings with participants from Boston to St Louis, from Tampa to Minneapolis and locations in between.

A special thanks to Mark and Debbie for their efforts to make our virtual Board Meeting a success. We had about thirty people participating in the meeting and almost all were on the agenda to make presentations. I want to thank all the participants for preparing and presenting their material. The meeting took about the same amount of time as our previous meetings. If you have concerns about the meeting format, send me any suggestions.

There was a consensus that we should increase our efforts to encourage affiliates to pay their dues and to introduce our activities to organizations who are not members. Hopefully, using our virtual capability may increase affiliate participation. We have several presidents of affiliates and supporting organizations on the Board. It was good to have Richard Poremski the President of The National Katyn Memorial Foundation, join our meeting.

In summary, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the president of the ACPC during this year. ACPC is an organization that is functioning well and bringing value to its members and participating communities. Can we do more and do better? I think we agree this is true. So, as president, my goal will be to move the ACPC to an even better state. In one year, I hope to make a difference that builds a platform to allow the organization to accomplish even more in the future.

We celebrate the value of differences among people and the valuable skills we each have to contribute to the organization. We should help mentor others who are entering into this new world of virtual meeting and socializing. We want to ensure continuing relevance and influence in an ever changing environment through our adaptation, innovation and openness and responsiveness to change.

The Board of Directors has launched us on a phase of continuous improvement through our virtual sessions. We need to publicize and enhance the legacy of our heritage with our programs and our scholarships. To be relevant, we need to project an appropriate image that is reflective of our organization. It is important to periodically revitalize how we convey our unique identity.

We need to encourage new members to join so we can benefit from the diversity of the membership, it is the lifeblood of the organization and we welcome their ideas and initiatives.

We just completed a virtual board meeting, communicating in a new way. We are all learning together. Let's make the most of this new age and use this time to strengthen our affiliates and supporting organization through collaborative efforts to make everyone feel welcome and to create an excitement of new learning and communicating.





Dr. Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm

by Marie Hejnosz

To know Aleksandra is to know someone of great personal charm, great intelligence and a heart of gold. I know that, each time I see Aleksandra, I will be greeted by a beautiful smile and warm embrace. Looking at her shy demeanor, one would never know how accomplished she is. She was educated at the University of Łódź and the University of Warsaw where she received her Ph.D. in Humanities. While still a student, she published number of short stories and newspaper articles, but her true writing career took off when she began her work for Melchior Wańkowicz, a prominent Polish writer. For her help and research with his latest book, Wańkowicz dedicated that book to her, and in his last will, he bequeathed all his archives to her.

In the years 1977-1981 she was a member of the Repertoire of the Polish Television Theater. She created the scenario for *2 Korpus w piosenkach Ref-Rena*, a musical, for Warsaw TV in 1991. She appeared in four documentaries dedicated to: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Stanley Haidasz, Melchior Wańkowicz, and her own uncle Korczak Ziolkowski. From 1981-83, she resided in Toronto, Ontario, Canada as the recipient of three writing scholarships. Since April 1990, she has lived permanently in the United States, in Wilmington, Delaware and spending nine years in Texas (Houston and Dallas).

My fascination with Aleksandra is intensified by the fact that she is the niece of Korczak Ziolkowski, the famous sculptor of the Crazy Horse monument in South Dakota. The monument is dedicated to the famous, brave, Native American leader. Like Aleksandra, I am captivated by the history and culture of Native Americans. I passionately collect books and other information about their way of life and their nearly forgotten culture. In today's climate of equality for all, somehow no one remembers about those Native Americans whose way of life and culture the European invaders destroyed.

Aleksandra traveled extensively throughout the South West and beyond with her, now deceased, husband Norman Boehm. Together they visited many Native American communities and Aleksandra diligently took pictures and notes, which served as source material for her later writing. One of her books about Native Americans is *Open Wounds. A Native American Heritage*. Anyone who has an interest in our collective history should read it.

According to Bruce E. Johansen, PhD, University of Nebraska: "Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm takes us across the United States, visiting Indian Country, with insight and compassion, raising many issues along the way with the

eye of a traveler from overseas (the book first appeared in Poland). Few people in this country know that the first craftsmen at Jamestown were from Poland, or that the family of Polish ancestry (relatives of hers) are carving a huge memorial to Crazy Horse in South Dakota."

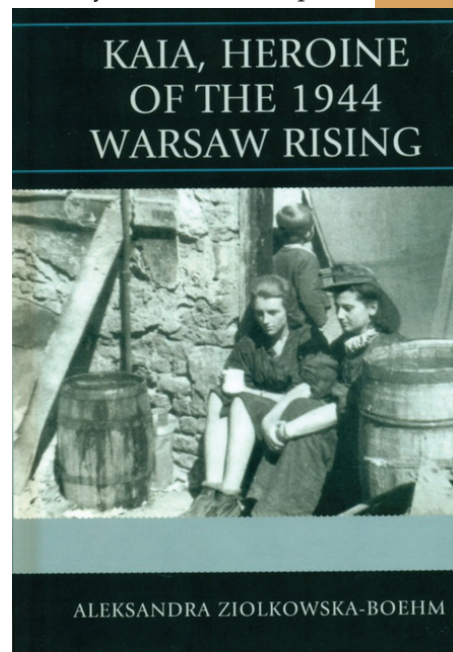
According to Homer Flute, Apache, Trustee/CEO Sand Creek Massacre Descendants Trust, Anandarko, Oklahoma: The book *Open Wounds* depicts many of the past and present problems facing Native Americans as minorities in their own country, where bias, envy and jealousies are still strong influences among the Indian people, as portrayed in the author's story about Crazy Horse being betrayed by his own people. This still happens today. Many non-Indians are misinformed about Indians and reservations because their only source of information comes from fictional movies and books.... This book outlines the tragic obstacles encountered by sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski while carving the statue of the Lakota Sioux war chief Crazy Horse. The sculptor experienced many similar situations that parallels the Indians' situation."

Aleksandra is the author of over 30 books some written in Polish and some in English. She is the recipient of many awards and scholarships that are too numerous to mention here. One of the most prestigious is the Fulbright scholarship which she received in 2006-2007 and award in 2008. Most recently, she was chosen as the recipient of the *Wybitny Polak* in literature award.

Aleksandra made her permanent home in Delaware but she travels to Poland frequently where many of her books are published and widely read. Her Polish repertoire includes books about Melchior Wańkowicz and number of other Polish personalities. Many of her books are also about the heroes of World War II describing the Polish suffering and heroism.

One of her latest books on that subject is *Kaia Heroine of the 1944 Warsaw Rising*. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, PhD, author and National Security Adviser to President Jimmy Carter, Aleksandra's book is "A moving and compelling account of what heroism entails and what suffering can be endured for the sake of a higher cause."

"Kaia" also received very positive reviews from



continued on page 9

Polish Christmas Traditions

by David J. Motak

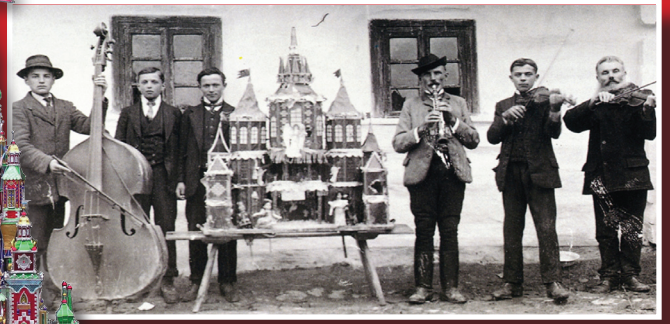


Święty Mikołaj

The Christmas Holidays in Poland begin with St. Nicholas Day or **Święty Mikołaj** on December 6. Unlike the American Santa Claus, the Polish St. Nicholas is less commercial, dressed in a long robe, bishop's "mitre" and carries a staff. He distributes candy, gingerbread cookies (*pierniki*) and apples to good children, while those who have misbehaved receive twigs.



Szopka Krakowska



The **szopka** art form originated in the late 1700s as elaborate sets for traveling, musical puppet shows in the environs of the city of Kraków. Built from wood, cardboard and colored foil paper, the szopka incorporates whimsical interpretations of architectural motifs in ornate structures of varying sizes. The city of Kraków hosts an annual szopka competition in which hundreds of young and old craftsmen enter their whimsical szopka structures, some of which feature mechanical figures.



JASEŁKA



The **Jaselka** is a Christmas performance that tells the story of the Birth of Christ and other biblical tales with musical accompaniment. Jaselka plays are sometimes performed using a szopka and hand puppets.

PODŁĄŻNICZKA



Although the Christmas tree (*choinka*) tradition is now common in Poland, the original winter decoration in Polish homes was the **podłazniczka**. These date back to ancient times when the pagan Slavs would celebrate the winter solstice by hanging a pine branch in their homes and decorating it with fruit and nuts and lighted candles. Some Polish country homes still maintain this practice today.



The Turoń

The Poles have many lovely Christmas Carols and caroling is a popular activity during the Christmas Holidays. Carolers often carry a nativity scene (*szopka*) and are often accompanied by allegorical figures including the **Turoń** which is a stylized goat with large, curved horns and a large, flapping mouth.

HERODY

Beginning on St. Stephen's Day (Dec. 26), groups of young men canvass countryside villages singing Christmas carols and performing morality plays. These groups are called **Herody**, and are named after King Herod, who is prominently featured in these plays. Knights in gaudy costumes accompany the evil king, along with such allegorical figures as Death, the Devil and an Angel. These characters perform for homeowners who are expected to reward the performers with coins, food and drink.





Kolędy

Poles love Christmas Carols. The first Polish *kolęda* or Christmas Carol was written in 1424 and the number today goes into the thousands; some claim

that no other country has as many carols as Poland.

Polish *kolędy* include pastorals and lullabies sung to the Baby Jesus. Many follow the rhythms and harmonies of Polish traditional dances, such as the *mazurka* or *polonaise* and many *kolędy* were referenced by famous Polish composers such as *Frederyk Chopin*. One 16th century carol, *Bóg Się rodzi* ("God is born") is set to the stately melody of the coronation *polonaise* for Polish Kings dating back to the 1500s.



Pierniki



There are many favorite Polish desserts enjoyed during the Christmas season, among these are *pierniki* (gingerbread) a Polish tradition that dates back to the 1300s. These are highly spiced cakes that come in a variety of shapes, often covered in chocolate. The city of *Toruń* is famous for gingerbread making. Since the Middle Ages, *Toruń* bakers have used elegant and intricately carved wooden molds to create beautiful molded *pierniki* as prized gifts, which were originally made especially for royalty and dignitaries. Today, everyone in Poland enjoys these wonderful confections.

The Caroling Star



WIGILIA

The term "Wigilia" comes from the Latin word for vigil. This beautiful traditional meatless Polish Christmas Eve meal is considered the most important evening of the year. The table is covered with a white tablecloth and the best household china is used. Straw is placed under the tablecloth in remembrance of the stable of Bethlehem.



An uneven number of foods are served for *Wigilia*, a tradition that harkens back to the ancient Slavic belief that this will bring good luck in the following year. Poles are excellent cooks and present a wide range of wonderful foods for the Christmas Eve feast, including red beet soup (*barszcz*) with little mushroom filled dumplings, mushroom soup, marinated herring, *pierogi*, baked or roasted fish.

No matter how large the gathering, during *Wigilia*, there is always an **empty chair** set at the table for an unexpected guest, especially those who do not have their own *Wigilia* to attend. These are treated as honored guests as one would treat the Christ Child who comes into the world on this special evening.

The **Opłatek** is a thin rectangular unleavened wafer bearing various Christmas scenes that is shared by every person at the *Wigilia* table. Each person takes a piece of other's wafers and they exchange best wishes for good health and success in the coming year. It is an old Polish custom that no grievance be brought into the New Year, so forgiveness is asked and always granted. This ceremony is repeated between every person present.

The Three Kings



One of the most colorful of Polish holiday traditions is **Orszak Trzech Króli**, or the Procession of the Three Kings which occurs on the Feast of the Epiphany. This festive public celebration features the arrival of the Three Magi accompanied by their entourage of gaily attired courtiers, knights and servants. In some celebrations the Three Kings arrive on foot, in others they are riding on floats or astride live horses or even camels.

During Epiphany, using blessed chalk, Poles inscribe the initials of the Three Kings: *Kacper*,

Melchior and *Baltazar* and the year - above the main door to their homes: *K+M+B+2021*. Poles regarded this as a special blessing for the entire household.

Polish Caroling Stars (Gwiazda Kolędnicza) are crafted in a variety of styles and help lead caroling groups during the holiday season. Many are often illuminated and rotate.

Polish American Arts Association of Washington, D. C.



VIRTUAL WIGILIA 2020

by Celia Larkin

By any measure, 2020 was not the best of years. But was it the worst? For some it was, indeed, tragic with personal loses. But overall, life goes on and as we look at history, we realize that things are never so bad that they couldn't be worse. The current pandemic affects us all in ways that the past ones didn't because we see all its extent and details in real time right in our own homes. There is no place far enough nor a village so remote that it cannot be added to the statistics. By the same token, the closer an afflicted locality happens to be, the greater anxiety it causes in all of us. So yes, this is the worse pandemic ever in terms of having to deal not only with physical discomforts but with constantly fueled fears. There is another side to the story, though. The same electronics that bring us the bad news with admonitions to isolate, also keep us connected with our families, friends, and for better or worse, the entire world. We converse on the phone that shows us a face of a loved one or through Zoom where smaller or larger groups can meet. We hear of people having virtual weddings, birthday celebrations and holiday gatherings. So as we approach the holiday season, let's recall some traditions dear to us and celebrate with a feeling of hope and the knowledge that this too shall pass.

Among Poles, wherever they are, the most beloved and beautiful of all traditional festivities is that of Christmas Eve. It is then that the Wigilia or Christmas Eve meal is served. As the evening approaches, the children of the family watch the sky and announce when the first star or Gwiazdka appears and it is time to start the Wigilia supper. There are many customs and traditions associated with Wigilia, such as plac-

ing a layer of hay under the white tablecloth to symbolize God's birth in a manger, setting an extra place for an unexpected guest, and the sharing of traditional wafer or opłatek while exchanging good wishes for health, wealth and happiness in the New Year.

Throughout its over fifty-year history, the Polish American Arts Association of Washington, DC, like many ACPC affiliates and other Polish organizations, has been celebrating Wigilia, each year, although not always as the elaborate event that it is now. Recently, as I was looking through some archival material, I came across references to the "first annual PAAA Wigilia in 1979" and realized that it was just one year after I moved to Washington and found some of my first friends in the area in the ranks of this organization. I came from Detroit where PAAA's counterpart, the Friends of Polish Art, had a long standing tradition of holding Wigilia at Christmas and Święconka at Easter time in large scale settings. Of course, the PAAA also held Wigilia dinners in the past but they were small, intimate gatherings in private homes. I suggested to the then PAAA president, Myra Lenard that we should organize Wigilia for our members and invite anyone else who wanted to come.

So we rented a hall in Arlington, prepared most of the food ourselves or had some donated, made tree and table decorations, and made copies of the texts of *kolędy* for singing. I still remember how Stefan Lopatkiewicz, who had just ended his tour as the youngest PAAA president, and I made two hundred meatless *gołąbki* for the ninety

some people that came to celebrate with us. Due to the small size of the hall, many had to be turned away. Since that time, Wigilia became an annual PAAA event, held in grander spaces and professionally catered, at times boasting some two hundred guests.

Since 2014, the PAAA Wigilia is held each December in a historic mansion, at one time the home of former President James Monroe and now housing the Arts Club of Washington. In the beautifully festooned rooms we enjoy traditional Polish food, sing Polish *kolędy*, share *opłatek* and talk about age-old customs and traditions of the Polish Christmas. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic and associated requirements of social distancing, any larger gathering in a public place is impossible this year. So we decided to go with the trend and celebrate our Wigilia online. This will happen on **Sunday, December 13** of this year at **5 p.m.**

The event will consist of a live Zoom gathering, combined with recorded passages sent in by members and friends with reminiscences and stories of Wigilia traditions and celebrations. We will virtually share the *opłatek* and exchange wishes for a better and, most of all, more healthy 2021. As always, the main attraction will be singing of *kolędy* that everyone who is participating or simply watching can join in, following the words running in subtitles

Traditional Wigilia meals will be available to order from *Creative European Cooking*, with a special menu created by Danuta and Bogdan Konefal.

Please visit our website <http://paaa.us/> or **PAAA Facebook** for information on how to watch the streamed program on December 13, 2020.

Let's all gather around the table and celebrate Wigilia!



Merry Christmas and Happy
New Year

Wesołych Świąt
Bożego Narodzenia i Szczęśliwego
Nowego Roku

This card, designed by Club artist Ursula Brodowicz, exemplifies the beauty and special significance of a Polish Christmas. We share with everyone our heartfelt wishes for a lovely Wigilia celebration and the blessings and good will that follow.

from

THE POLISH CULTURAL CLUB
of
GREATER HARTFORD, INC.

Dr. Aleksandra Ziółkowska-Boehm

continued from Page 5

Stanley Weintraub, author of *The Last Great Victory: The End of World War II, July–August 1945*, "In pages of striking contrast, Kaia moves from a colorful, nearly idyllic life by Polish exiles in southern Siberia earlier in the last century to the graphic horrors of Nazified Poland—and then to the moving aftermath of loss and recovery."

Another interesting fact about Aleksandra is that for 26 years she was happily married to a close relative of Ingrid Bergman. Aleksandra's husband's grandmother and Ingrid's father were brother and sister. Aleksandra writes about this family connection in her beautiful book *Ingrid Bergman and her American Relatives*."

Her husband Norman was a staunch supporter of Polish causes; wrote many letters to senators and took other supportive actions. Norman's bio and his letters to American senators are in the book written by Jan Nowak Jezioranski

Poland's Road to NATO.

On a lighter side, Aleksandra is a dedicated feline lover and in her home in Delaware, one can always find a fascinating feline. One of Aleksandra's favorite cats was Suzie and she wrote a lighthearted book about her entitled *On the Road with Suzy: From Cat to Companion*.

In summary, I would like to add, that thanks to Aleksandra's writings, my life and the lives of many others were enriched immeasurably. We are very proud to have Aleksandra as a board member of the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia.

For additional information, see Wikipedia (both English and Polish.versions).



Alexandra and Norman at the Crazy Horse Monument in 1994.

HEALING HERBS

continued from page one



wyciągi (extracts) were obtained by pouring boiled water over herbs and steeping them for several hours; *nalewki* (tinctures), were derived by pouring alcohol over the herb or soaking it in the liquid; *maści* (ointments) were comprised of ground herbs in a paste of butter, honey or oil (often from a religious ceremony.)

The most common form of the drug used in herbal treatments was the liquid form. Drugs consumed in this way were used, among others, for ailments of the digestive tract, liver and bile ducts, urinary system, heart and kidneys. The second way to take the drug internally was by consuming the solid "drug" (i.e. plant) such as garlic, onion, pears, apples, plums, elderberry and carrots. These "herbal remedies" usually were taken for diseases of the upper respiratory tract and internal diseases as well as for toothaches or gum disease.

In addition to introducing the drug internally, there was also the external route. The most frequently used methods were: cold compresses from plantain leaves, birch, black alder, coltsfoot, beetroot, yarrow, stonecrop, horseradish leaves, comfrey and others; warm compresses were used for skin diseases, injuries, headaches, throat problems, sore teeth, rheumatism, edema, colic and female disorders

Another method was lubrication - spreading the ointment over the surface of the body. This method was used for skin diseases. These folk remedies included burned tobacco, spruce resin, pine resin and comfrey root. External rubbing was also used. This entailed spreading the substance on the surface of the body until it was absorbed. It was used for arthritic and rheumatic pains. Plants used for these purposes were toadstools, flowers and various fruits, horse chestnut, spruce shoots, horseradish roots, birch leaves and comfrey root. Washing or a short-term action of applying the liquid

to the surface of the body were used for rinsing the eyes and hair, the ears and throat, and washing the genitals. For rinsing remedies, Polish peasants often used decoctions of oak bark (for wounds, scabies, eczema) and infusions of chamomile (for wounds and ulcers).

Baths - including sitz baths, provided longer body contact with the substance liquid. These were called *nasiadówki*, and were used for

women's disorders over hot steam water in a decoction of oak bark, mistletoe, heather, or an infusion of thyme or sage. Baths were also used for childhood diseases (rickets, parasitic worms) and utilized heather, thyme, oats, peas, ivy and/or oat straw.

The strange practice of "smacking" (*smaganie się*) involved hitting the body with a freshly broken nettle. This was supposed to cure arthritic and rheumatic diseases.

Patients also maintained contact with the herbal remedy

by carrying it or holding it in the hand. These methods were used, for example, in the treatment of rheumatism (chestnut fruit) and toothache (oak fruit). Children suffering from epilepsy were encouraged to play in peony petals.

If you had respiratory problems, you could burn appropriate herbs and inhale the fumes. The most common infusions were chamomile infusions (sore throat, runny nose, fever) and lovage (angina, coughing, tooth ache).

Many of the plants that played a leading role in folk medicine were subject to numerous superstitions:

- Basil (*bazylija*) which comes from Jerusalem, the place of Christ's crucifixion, was to be placed around the room in the form of a cross and used as sprinklers for holy water;
- Periwinkle (*barwinek*) was considered a flower of love and an emblem of virginity;
- It was believed that if you boil ivy (*bluszcz*) six times in one pot, pour out the decoction, and on the seventh time cook meat in it and eat it, you will understand the speech of animals and birds;
- Mugwort (*bylica*) was stuffed with thatch to defend the house hold from a devil's attack;
- Oak (*dąb*) should not be planted as whoever does so will die when the tree reaches maturity;
- Peas (*grochy*) were believed to come from the tears of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
- Children who was bathed in hazel (*leszczyna*) are healthy and beautiful;
- Ferns (*paprocie*) possess strange and wonderful properties and take the lead in healing;
- Sniffing pine branches was supposed to be good for adult tuberculosis and the traditional method of wearing a string of garlic about one's neck probably did not ward off vampires, but the odor was supposed to cure rhinitis.



Old Polish "zielnik" ("herbarium") from the 1500s.

Unfortunately, our ancient Slavic ancestors had no cure for COVID-19, so it's up to us to listen to the medical experts, social distance, wear our masks and stay safe!

Bądźcie bezpieczni!

David Motak

Source material for this article was taken from an article by Aneta Domańska in „Zeszyty Wiejskie,” 2016.

Joseph Zazyczny

(1935-2020)

Former President, ACPC



Martha and Joseph Zazyczny

Joseph Zazyczny, born July 17, 1935, a well known figure in Philadelphia political and Polish American life, passed away on March 26, 2020 at age 84. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Martha (nee Stronski), better known as "Marti," with whom he had six children: Jacqueline, Joel, Jocelyn, Jayda Lynn, Jason and Justin. He was grandfather to 15.

He graduated from Northeast Catholic High School and continued his education at Alliance College, University of Colorado and Temple University in Philadelphia. He attended the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

He devoted his entire life to public service and a good portion of that was given to Poland and Polish-Americans living in the Philadelphia area. He was president of the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) from 1986 to 1989. Under his administration the ACPC established the American Center for Polish Culture in Washington D. C. During his tenure, the ACPC organized the Norwid Memorial Committee, which culminated with a bronze memorial to the poet in Harper's Ferry, and supported the translation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy* by Wiesław Kuniczak.

He was an elected member of Philadelphia City Council (1967-1978) for the 6th District and an original founding member and later president of the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia, one of the ACPC's affiliate groups.

In 1987 he went to work for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Health. Later, he was appointed by the governor to the Cabinet Post of Secretary of Administration, where his policies effected substantial savings within the state employee health and retirement programs.

During his time in Philadelphia City government he played an important part in several projects that were di-

rectly connected to Poland and Polonia, including:

- Monument to astronomer Mikołaj Kopernik (1969)
- Tadeusz Kościuszko Memorial (museum) under the U. S. National Park Service (1976)
- International Sister City agreement between Philadelphia and Toruń (1976)
- Statue of Tadeusz Kościuszko, donated by Poland (1978)

After leaving public office he supported other Polish cultural initiatives including Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Historical Commission markers for bridge engineer Ralph Modjeski (2007) and tandem-rotor helicopter inventor Frank Piasecki (2010).

In 2013, the President of the Republic of Poland awarded Joseph Zazyczny the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit in recognition of his work.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, his funeral was held in private for the family. A Celebration of Life Ceremony is planned for a later date. His mortal remains are interred on the Avenue of the Meritorious at the cemetery of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, PA.



VIRTUAL HOLIDAY GATHERING

In light of the inability to gather due to COVID-19, Polish Falcons of America will host a virtual **Sharing of the Oplatek** on **Friday, Dec. 18, 2020** via Zoom. The event will take place at 7:30 p.m. eastern time and is free and open to all. Join with us for this beloved Polish tradition to wish one another a blessed Christmas, good health and good fortune, offer forgiveness, and look towards a New Year.

Make your own Oplatek wafer using the simple at-home recipe posted on our website, use a cracker/cookie of your choice – or request a wafer from us. Those interested are asked to register at polishfalcons.org/oplatek. Upon registering, an email will be sent with the Zoom link to participate.

An event page has also been created on Facebook at facebook.com/events/3652856204781362/. Please share with your family and friends. Questions regarding the **Virtual Oplatek** may be emailed to Courtney at cgaughey@polishfalcons.org.

We look forward to "seeing you" on December 18th!



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Polish Heritage is the official publication of the American Council for Polish Culture, a confederation of affiliated Polish American organizations and individuals in the continental United States, propagating the knowledge and appreciation of the culture and civilization of Poland, and the contributions of Americans of Polish descent to the history and culture of the United States of America. The Council conceived and helped fund the establishment of the American Center of Polish Culture in Washington, D. C.

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Editorial Office: David Motak, 3205 Kennebec Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241.

Business Office: 805 N Hickory Ridge Road, Highland, MI 48357-4126

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POLISH AMERICAN JOURNAL

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION AND
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