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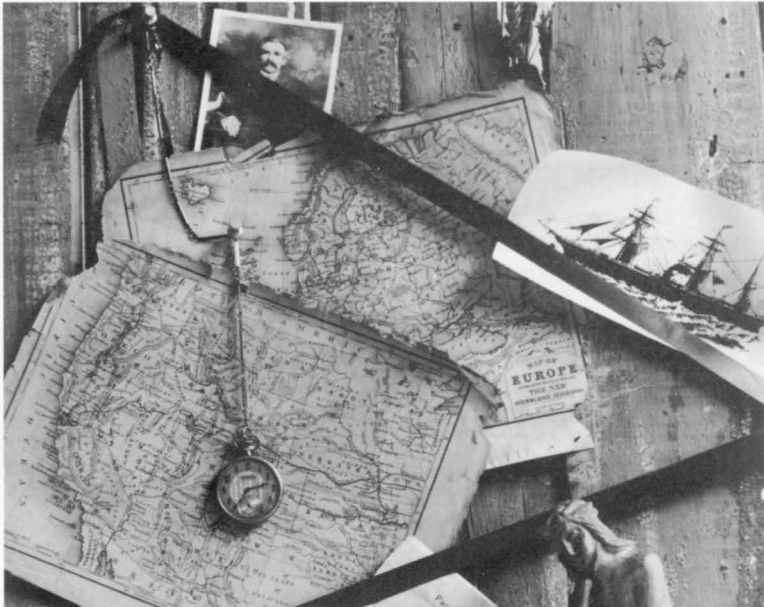
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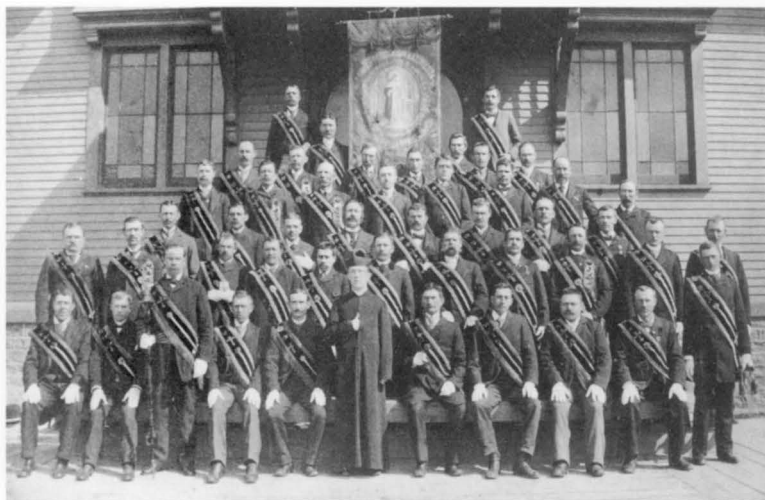
SEEKING PROSPERITY

A Brief History of Rochester's Polish American Community

Part One

by Kathleen Urbanic





The Society of St. Casimir, pictured with Father Teofil Szadzinski in front of the original church of St. Stanislaus Kostka. (St. Stanislaus Parish)

COVER: This collage depicts the mixed emotions of the immigrant experience—looking forward with hope to a new life and back with a sense of loss to the homeland left behind. (Photo by Frank Anders)

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Seeking Prosperity

"We left our dear homeland, ancient churches, and cemeteries where the remains of our fathers rest. We came across the ocean, many hundreds of miles, seeking prosperity...and we chose Rochester, New York."¹ Those words were written by Wojciech Kaczmarek, one of the first Polish immigrants to settle in the city on the Genesee Falls at the end of the nineteenth century. Rochester was an overwhelming new world to him and his fellow emigres, Kaczmarek goes on to recount, sometimes intimidating but at other times filled with the promise of the lives they had come to build.

By the late 1880s, approximately 70 Polish Catholic families had arrived in Rochester on the "immigrant trains" that clattered their way northwest from New York City on the Central Line. Their journey had begun in villages in Eastern Europe, in regions that they regarded as the Polish nation although their homeland had been ruled by Prussia, Russia, and Austria-Hungary for nearly a century. Artisans, farm workers, and peasant laborers in search of livelihood, they represented a tiny count within the total 2.2 million Polish immigrants who would sail to the United States between 1860 and 1914.²

The settlement they established in Rochester, modest in its beginnings, would become the foundation of a community that remains among the most distinctive ethnic groups in the area today. Through the 1970s, this community was synonymous with a neighborhood that radiated from the intersection of Hudson Avenue and Norton Street, home to thousands of immigrants and their descendants. Long characterized by self-sufficiency, Rochester's "Polonia" included churches, schools, businesses, social clubs, insurance fraternals, civic and cultural societies, athletic teams, political organizations, veterans' posts—a full complement of institutions that enabled Polish Americans to maintain for the better part of eight decades an area described in the Rochester press as "a town in itself."³

Although subsequent generations have outgrown the confines of the immigrant town, Polish Americans in the Rochester area share an identifiable heritage today. The story of the formation and maintenance of their community is a rich and colorful account—concerned less with prominent individuals, more with family cohesiveness, religious faith, ethnic fraternity, regard for tradition, and ties to the "dear homeland." Those themes can be traced from the start of the Poles' history in Rochester, with the arrival of a few families from the Prussian-ruled region of Poznan in the end of the nineteenth century.

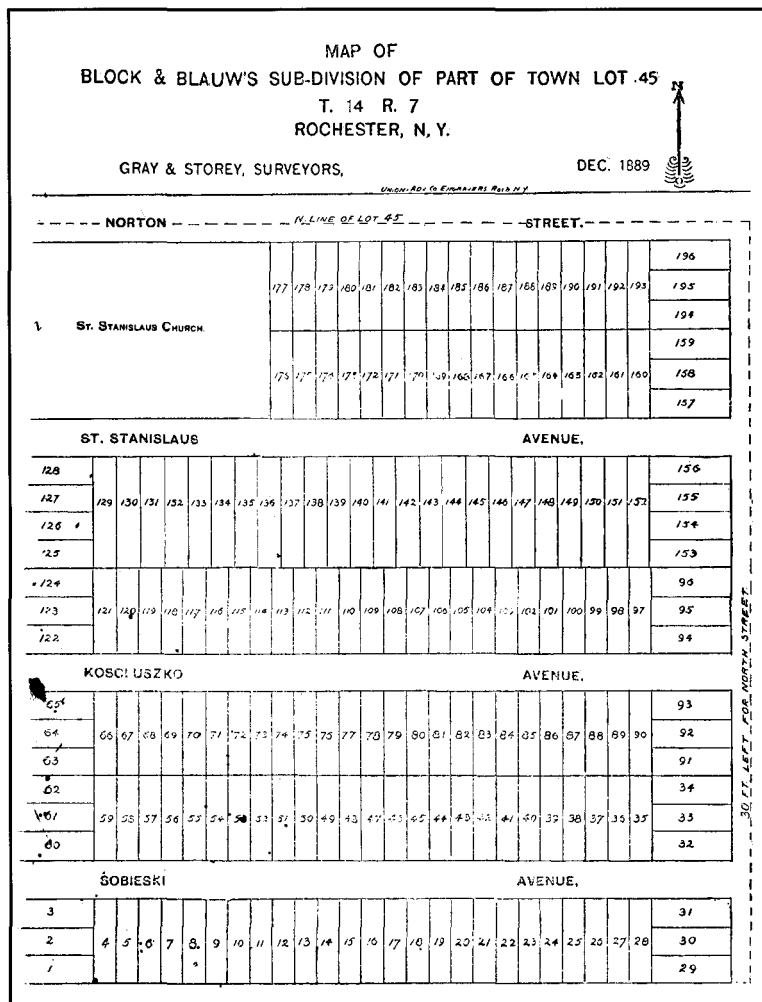
Nowe Zycie: New Life

The first Poles who made Rochester their destination resided initially on streets like Gilmore, Sellinger, and Weeger, in the northside neighborhood wedged between the railway tracks and the river that had been home to Irish, German, and Jewish immigrants before them. They gravitated to this area near the German Catholic parishes of St. Joseph, St. Michael, and Holy Redeemer, where the language they had learned in Prussian schools aided them as they sought work and places to stay. Factories and garment mills established by German and Jewish settlers offered promise of employment, and the German churches provided places at which to worship and meet other Polish families as they arrived.

Despite their knowledge of German, however, the Poles' attachment to their own traditions and their homeland's history of bitter conflict with Germany made their assimilation into the German settlement unlikely.⁴ As they sought each other out for companionship, the newcomers began to discuss the possibility of forming their own parish. In that goal, they received support from Father Fridolin Pascalar, pastor of St. Michael's Parish, who helped them form a fraternal society in honor of St. Casimir in May 1887. With Bishop Bernard McQuaid's approval, the society began fund-raising and invited priests from Buffalo to visit St. Michael's Church to offer services in the Polish language.

In April 1888, the Poles purchased two acres of land at St. Joseph Street and Weaver Street.⁵ At \$3,500, the cost of these lots was beyond the Polish families' means, but a loan from the treasury of St. Michael's Parish allowed St. Casimir's Society to complete the purchase. Interested in this development, the Rochester *Union and Advertiser* sent a reporter to the northeast side. "Few people are aware," he observed in an article printed in April, "of the rapid growth of the Polish people in this city. There are seventy families who have signified intention to join the new congregation...Many of them have been saving money for some time, refraining from purchasing homes until they could know the location of the church. Now that the land is bought they may be expected to buy lots and erect their homes in that section of the city."

In a turn of events that would determine the location of the Polish settlement, the Society of St. Casimir reconsidered its choice of property a year later, when its members met to discuss another site: an uncleared tract of land at the city's northern line, extending 240 feet on Hudson Avenue and 350 feet on Norton and Salmon Streets.⁶ Town Lot 45, as the



The location of Rochester's Polish settlement was featured on the front page of the Feb. 27, 1890, issue of Echo, a Polish language newspaper published in Buffalo. The accompanying article invited Poles from Buffalo to visit and consider buying housing plots in the area. (St. Stanislaus Parish)

tract was known, was located two miles beyond the commerce and traffic of the Four Corners. A remote stretch of grass, wildflowers, and fruit trees crossed by a small stream, the area lay a half-mile north of St. Jacob Street, where the horse-drawn streetcar pulled to its final stop. Beyond this point, Hudson Avenue was a dirt road that cut uninterrupted through the fields until it reached Moulson's Nursery at the Norton Street line.

To the Polish families, the advantages of Town Lot 45 were considerable. Although overgrown with grass and bisected by a sluggish stream, the tract was an expanse of land on which they could build homes, a parish, and a school—a community where their language could be spoken and their traditions maintained. The proposal offered by realtors Block and Blauw acknowledged the Poles' hopes for their own settlement: in exchange for the lots on St. Joseph Street, the realtors would give the Poles the parcel of land at Hudson Avenue and Norton Street, and would sell the remaining land in Town Lot 45 exclusively to Polish Catholics for the next ten years (from Hudson Avenue east to North Street, and from Norton Street south to the street that would be named "Sobieski").

Block and Blauw's offer was brought to St. Casimir's Society for a vote on November 24, 1889. Nearly 100 men representing the Polish families took part in the decision, registering their preference on sheets of paper designated "St. Joseph Street" and "Hudson Street." Overwhelmingly, the voters chose Town Lot 45 for the parish site, receiving as part of the package Otto Block's plans for the design of a church.

Within a year, a small wooden church, financed with the immigrants' savings, was completed on Salmon Street (soon to be renamed "St. Stanislaus Street").⁷ Bishop McQuaid dedicated the "pretty little church" of St. Stanislaus Kostka on November 16, 1890, attended by Teofil Szadzinski, the young priest whom he had brought from Europe to take charge of the congregation. "I wish to say a few words to you," McQuaid told the Poles in his sermon that day, "hoping that many of you can understand what I say and repeat it to those who cannot understand English. Here you are establishing a home for yourselves in this portion of the city, and a church for Catholics of the Polish nationality. You have left behind you much that you dearly loved, a country and a home in that Polish land, much that was most dear to your hearts...

"[But] you have brought with you, as the Irish, German, Swiss and others did, your holy religion to this new country. This is your home before God in things spiritual...And when you have a home for your priest you will want a place where your children can be educated in the

principles of our holy religion and you will build a school. When you do, I will send you as teachers Sisters who can speak both Polish and English, thus your children will make rapid progress. United and firm in their faith, religion will grow and flourish in this parish of St. Stanislaus of Rochester."



These 66 children were enrolled in the second grade at St. Stanislaus School in 1912. (St. Stanislaus Parish)

Outside the small wooden church, a settlement of homes would transform the fields of Town Lot 45 into a neighborhood as the number of Polish immigrants continued to grow. From 27 men three years earlier, the Society of St. Casimir had expanded to 100 members, and the 70 Polish families living in the city had doubled to 145.⁸ Father Szadzinski's 1890 tally of parishioners accounted for 650 persons: 375 adults and 275 children. In the next 16 years, those numbers would swell to include 400 families and more than 2,000 persons.

On Streets Named Pulaski and Sobieski

The first children born to the city's Polish immigrants grew up in the community that their parents formed near Hudson Avenue and Norton Street, in the settlement that local reporters dubbed "Little Poland" and "Polish Town."⁹ Following construction of St. Stanislaus Church, the Polish families' houses, gardens, shops, and meeting halls began to displace the wildflowers and fruit trees of Town Lot 45. To outsiders, the area seemed a place apart, a remote outpost of city life. "Most of the readers of the *Post Express* probably know more about distant Warsaw than of the Polish settlement on northern Hudson street," remarked one reporter

who visited in 1893. "The houses are separated from the city proper by a third of a mile of open fields and one must walk a mile after leaving the cars to reach Sobieski Avenue."



A view of Hudson Avenue, looking north from Sobieski Street, 1913. (Local History Division, Rochester Public Library)

To the families buying housing plots within view of St. Stanislaus Church, the inconveniences of living at the city's northern boundary were more than offset by the significance of forming their own community. The Polish settlement quickly became a close-knit unit of homes, shops, and societies centered around the church, a neighborhood removed from services like the streetcar that nevertheless offered its residents the comfort of familiar routines. "We live here together," one Pole told the visitor from the *Post Express*, "to do just as we used to in the old country."

Scores of houses went up in the settlement's first years, set on roads cut through the fields east and west of Hudson Avenue. The majority of these homes were built by the firm of Szczepan Zielinski, a contractor born in Poznan who invested in the land near St. Stanislaus Church and provided employment to other immigrants.¹⁰ The first wooden sidewalks on north Hudson Avenue were laid by Zielinski's crew, who are credited with construction of more than 500 homes on the northeast side between 1890 and 1910.

As the community grew at the end of the century, immigrants from Austrian Poland and Russian Poland joined those who had come earlier from Poznan. Some of the heads of the Polish households had been

skilled laborers such as leather craftsmen in Europe and were able to secure related work in Rochester.¹¹ Others entered the local work force in jobs for which strong shoulders were qualification enough, logging long hours as cement masons, construction workers, laborers on Irondequoit farms, and tenders of the glass furnaces at Bausch & Lomb. Those who had worked as tailors in Europe, carrying the tools of their trade from village to village, sought employment in the city's clothing firms.

According to reporters, the homes of the Polish families were small and neat, plain but comfortable, maintained by housewives whose daily routine was as strenuous as their husbands'. To obtain water for cooking and cleaning, the women hiked through grass and mud to wells in the fields adjoining their homes. Oblivious of Rochester's winters, they boiled laundry in large tubs in their kitchens and hung the wash outside to dry even in bitter December. They supervised households with many children, as well as backyards populated with chickens, ducks, geese, and an occasional cow or goat. They baked bread and mended endlessly, hurried to market in all kinds of weather, and tended gardens that yielded large quantities of vegetables each season. Many also took jobs to supplement their husbands' income, scrubbing laundry for families in other neighborhoods or sewing piecework for garment firms in spare hours at home.

In the Polish section, one reporter observed, "children, dogs, ducks and doves predominate. The dogs are irascible and mangy and currish, but the children are good to look upon. Fat, rosy-cheeked, with laughing eyes, they appear to be the embodiment of perfect health." These robust-looking children, often growing up in families of eight or more, were typically assigned a share of the household chores. The oldest daughter might supervise a crew of younger sisters and brothers scrubbing their home's wooden floors, while another daughter walked the family's cow up Bauman Hill to graze. A young boy might tend the kitchen stove, feed the ducks and chickens, or cart home piecework from a tailor shop on St. Paul Street.

Most of the Polish children received their education at St. Stanislaus School, in a two-story brick building constructed for the parish by Zielinski's firm.¹² When instruction began in May 1897, the school was staffed by three Sisters of St. Joseph and enrolled 160 children: 68 in Class 1, 48 in Class 2, and 44 in Class 3. Sixty-eight in a classroom under one Sister's eye was undeniably a challenge, but studying was soon underway in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, history, and religion.

The opening of St. Stanislaus School was one of several accomplishments that Polonia could cite as it completed its first decade. Since the

formation of St. Casimir's Society, the immigrants had established a parish, homes, societies, markets and shops, and a school for their children's education. In 1900, Father Szadzinski recorded the count of an expanding congregation: 212 families, or nearly 1,200 persons.¹³

To outward appearances, the community seemed unified and directed to common purpose. Despite appearances, however, the settlement had little claim to peacefulness as the century turned. A conflict rumbling beneath the surface would soon break out with a force that would leave bitterness lingering for decades in the Polish section.

Two issues formed the roots of the unrest, which was to result in religious schism: the immigrants' sense of ownership for the parish they had founded, and their intense identification with national heritage.¹⁴ Although Bernard McQuaid, unlike many American bishops, was liberally minded in regard to assimilation—allowing immigrants to establish ethnic parishes in his diocese—some of the Polish newcomers believed that affiliation with the American Catholic Church posed a threat to their national allegiance. Mistrustful that the diocese held legal ownership of the parish property maintained with their savings and fearful that they would lose Polish identity in America, a group of St. Stanislaus' parishioners challenged Father Szadzinski's authority, precipitating a fierce battle of wills.

These parishioners felt strongly that Father Szadzinski wielded too much control in matters of finance and represented the bishop's interests rather than their own. Their view intensified in 1893 when the pastor expelled from St. Stanislaus Parish the "Sons of the Polish Crown," a local lodge of the Polish National Alliance. Founded in Chicago to aid Polish immigrants and preserve their loyalty to their homeland, the national PNA pointedly refused to be influenced by Catholic priests' authority. Father Szadzinski's rejection of the "Sons of the Polish Crown"—the first local Polish organization formed outside of St. Stanislaus Parish—thus set the stage for angry words, skirmishes in the back of church, and saloon brawls between his opponents and supporters. The dispute gained momentum over the next decade and reached its climax in 1905 when a disturbance on parish grounds brought police to St. Stanislaus and matters to a head, ending with the arrest of a dozen parishioners on warrants sworn out by Father Szadzinski.

When appeals carried in succession to Bishop McQuaid, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, and the papal delegate to the United States won no support for their position, 150 families—25% of the parish—extended their loyalty to the Polish National Catholic Church, an independent congregation based in Scranton, Pennsylvania, whose ranks

were growing with Poles from many settlements who cited similar grievances against American Church authority. The formation of a new parish, St. Casimir's, in 1907 brought the local community relief from the bitter dispute but left sad repercussions in its wake. Many of the Polish families were torn apart by conflicting allegiances as those who remained at St. Stanislaus severed contact with those who departed to form St. Casimir's Church.

To its credit, Polonia was able to regain cohesiveness in the following years, evidence of the importance that the immigrants attached to maintaining their community. Despite the angry words and blows they had exchanged in the matter of religion, the Poles chose to live together in a settlement structured by their families, parishes, businesses, and societies. Self-enclosed and comfortable in its routines, Polish Town weathered the troubles that had shaken it and exhibited greater diversity after the formation of St. Casimir's Parish.

One sign of the settlement's expansion and broadening of view was the array of organizations that the immigrants supported: religious societies, insurance fraternals, choral groups, and nationalistic organizations like the PNA, which had six local lodges in Rochester in 1910.¹⁵ There was a baseball team named the "Hudson Stars" which won 35 of 36 games played against teams from other neighborhoods in 1903. Nest 52 of the Polish Falcons of America assembled in a Weyl Street clubhouse, offering athletic training to develop physical prowess and moral character. Farther south on Hudson Avenue, an Alliance of Polish Socialists affiliated with the workers' movement in Europe met to muster support for the restoration of a Polish homeland. By 1910, there was also a third parish: Christ Polish Baptist Church, one of only 14 Polish Baptist congregations in the country, whose small congregation gathered for services in a chapel on Hudson Avenue near Weddall Way.¹⁶

At this time, the Polish community was home to at least 3,000 people clustered in the area between Norton Street and Avenue D. The settlement caught the interest of H. Hylas Wheaton, Rochester secretary of the North American Civic League for Immigrants, who visited in 1911 to observe the Poles' living conditions.¹⁷ The community demonstrated an autonomy, Wheaton reported, that allowed its residents to be virtually independent from the rest of the city. He noted the large number of organizations, pleased to find that they offered families assistance in time of need. Surveying the Polish-owned businesses on Hudson Avenue, Wheaton counted six groceries, five meat markets, two bakeries, a hardware store, two barber shops, a shoe store and shoe repair shop, two drug stores, two dance halls, six saloons, a lumberyard, a photographer's

studio, and a steamship ticket agency.

Although he looked with disfavor on the Poles' multiple family homes and the wariness with which he felt they viewed visitors from outside their neighborhood, Wheaton was impressed with their self-sufficiency: "Business is principally transacted in Polish and almost entirely with Polish people, which taken in connection with the fact that the settlement has its own churches, schools and organizations, makes evident the practical unity of the community. Even the real estate is owned almost entirely by residents of the section. [This] is, indeed, from every point of view, a town in itself."

Beneath the Standard of the White Eagle

Although the immigrants devoted much of their energy to development of the neighborhood, a deeply held loyalty to Poland ran as an undercurrent in the activities of their churches, families, and organizations. Hylas Wheaton observed this devotion to a nation that no longer existed, deeming it an impediment to assimilation. "Practically all [of the immigrants] have an abnormally developed sense of nationality," he wrote. "Their greatest hope is some day to possess a Poland."

As Wheaton noted, the dream of liberating Poland from foreign rule survived among many emigres.¹⁸ Across Europe and North America, exiled patriots and nationalists prepared for the day when they would rally beneath the standard of the White Eagle, inspired by poets like Adam Mickiewicz who foretold a Great War that would present an opportunity for Poland's rebirth. The call to loyalty and readiness was carried in Polish American newspapers which urged those who had emigrated not to forget their *ojczyzna*, the land from which they had come. Organizations like the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Socialist Alliance amplified the theme, while the Polish Falcons actively trained young men for military service.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 represented the moment for which Poles had waited throughout the previous century. In the first days of the war, a Polish brigade of 180 men under leadership of Jozef Pilsudski marched into the Russian ruled area of Poland, marking the first offensive of an army-in-exile that would number 100,000 men before the end of the war. In the United States, the Falcons waited impatiently to recruit immigrants for the Polish forces, hampered by the American government's neutrality. As the war continued and the United States maintained its distance, the Falcons contacted the Canadian Army to discuss the possibility of forming battalions beyond the U.S. border. Early in

1917, Falcons from American nests began to cross to Canada to train for service with the "Blue Army" of Poles assembling in Europe.

Young men from Rochester were among these early recruits, drawn from a hardy unit of Falcons who had been engaging in field maneuvers since 1913.¹⁹ Brandishing ponderous carbines left over from the Spanish-American War, Nest 52's troops staged skirmishes on suburban farmland and learned the rudiments of loading and firing weapons. That the field maneuvers were not idle amusements was confirmed in an agreement signed by 24 of the Falcons: they would be ready to serve, the men pledged, as soon as the call to battle would come.

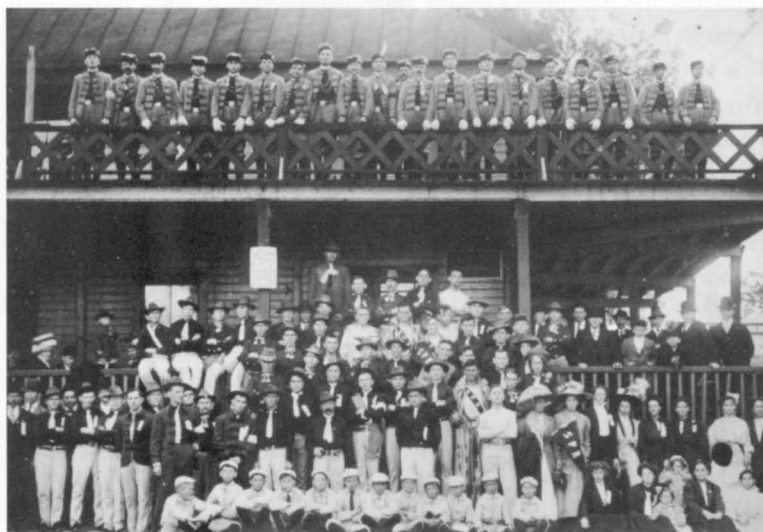
Five of the Falcons left Rochester for Canada early in 1917, on the eve of the United States' entry into the war but before the government recognized the "Blue Army." John Pospula, 23 years old, was among the local volunteers who reported for training at Camp Borden, Ontario. The daily regimen at the camp, supervised by Canadian Army officers, included lessons in military theory, field maneuvers, and practice in the use of rifles and grenades. In 1918, Pospula sailed with other recruits for France, where he donned the horizon blue uniform of the Polish forces and took up the grimmer study of trench warfare and poison gas. Soon afterward, his battalion was ordered into battle, passing as they moved eastward trains returning wounded men from the front. That sight, Pospula would recall years later, taught him more in a moment about the Great War than his months of preparation had.

In October 1917, when the United States War Department officially approved the American Falcons' mobilization efforts, local recruitment began in earnest at a station opened at Falcon Hall. "Men Going from This City to Join Polish Recruits," newspapers announced. "Will Aid Allies in France," "To Fight for Free Poland," "Will Start To-Night for Training Ground."²⁰ During the height of enlistment, the recruiting station remained open 14 hours a day to register volunteers who were not eligible for American service. The *Rochester Herald*, covering a farewell reception for one group of recruits, noted that "in the number enlisted with the Polish Army were none that were cheating the draft of Uncle Sam. Many of them were older and some were younger than those called for the National Army...Some of the men who went away last night left not only wives behind but also children." By February 1919, when the recruiting station closed, 258 local men had joined the Polish Army, in addition to at least 700 from the Polish community who entered the war in the service of the United States forces.

A number of local women, not content to remain at home, offered their services to the Polish Grey Samaritans, a corps of nurses recruited from



The Hudson Stars, first baseball team in the Polish settlement, enjoyed a winning season in 1903. Captain Frank Paprocki (standing, far left) went on to pitch for the Baltimore Orioles in the International League. (St. Stanislaus Parish)



Nest 52 of the Polish Falcons of America, 1912 (Mr. and Mrs. John B. Stenclik)

Polish American communities to minister to homeless and wounded victims of the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1920).²¹ Four of the 30 women who completed training and were ultimately selected for the “Greys” were from Rochester: Anna Badura, Antonetta Friebe, Marta Graczyk, and Leokadya Muszynska. In cooperation with the American Relief Administration, the nurses served in Polish refugee camps and villages where they supervised the distribution of food and clothing, tended to children suffering from malnutrition, and aided soldiers evacuated from battle front. The work was taxing and often gruesome, as Marta Graczyk wrote to her family: “I am telling you, people, why life lately is just full of shocks, disappointments, and surprises...What is happening to poor Poland at the present is beyond a human being’s imagination...I thought lately that I would be ‘quits’ with everything, but when one thinks of the nursery left behind we just cannot refuse to go on.”

Marta Graczyk Gedgowd, volunteer with the Grey Samaritan nurses, and her husband Tadeusz Gedgowd, volunteer with the Polish Army. (Irene Lustyk)



At home, the families who sent sons and daughters to service supported a series of fund-raisers for Polish relief, organized by the Polish Citizens Committee under leadership of Ludwik Kubiak.²² Hoping to extend its efforts beyond Polonia, the group allied itself with Rochester’s War Chest in 1918 and approached the Executive Board with a proposal: the Citizens Committee would bring Ignacy Paderewski, renowned pianist and crusader for Poland’s independence, to the Chamber of Commerce to launch a citywide drive for assistance to Poland.

Rochester attorney Adam Felerski traveled to New York City to deliver the committee's invitation personally, and arrangements were made for Paderewski to speak at the Chamber of Commerce in June 1918. "Many Eager to Hear Talk by Paderewski," the *Democrat and Chronicle* reported the day before the address, but none anticipated the crowd that would fill the chamber when the pianist arrived. The banquet hall was "stormed," the press reported, by "persons not only from this city but from many surrounding towns who filled the main floor and the balcony of the hall to overflowing." Despite an effort to seat additional guests in the galleries, hundreds who waited in the hope of being seated were turned away disappointed.



John Pospula, one of Rochester's volunteers with the Polish Army in World War I, was awarded the "Virtuti Militari," Poland's highest military decoration, for bravery in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-20. He posed for this portrait in the 1960s. (Photo by Frank Anders)

Paderewski's remarks outlined Poland's history beginning with the Partition of 1795, emphasizing his country's suffering at the hands of other nations. Flanked by an honor guard of Polish Army officers, he praised the dual patriotism of Polish Americans and appealed to those assembled to "stand behind your great President...The eyes of suffering mankind are looking at you as the last hope of civilization, right and justice." Their cause advanced by Paderewski's words, the Citizens Committee secured a donation of \$100,000 from the War Chest for the Polish National Department in Washington, D.C. Supplementing this generous contribution was an additional \$14,000 raised by the committee in the Polish community.

Like others across the country, Rochester's Polish families rejoiced heartily at news of the Armistice in November 1918. For them, the end of the war brought not only the triumph of the United States and her allies but also the restoration of their homeland. They could take pride in the contributions of sons who had served in the Polish and American forces, as well as of daughters who had volunteered for the Polish nursing corps.²³ Of the Rochester men who marched in Europe with the "Blue Army," two returned decorated for bravery in battle. Antoni Nogaj was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* from the government of France, and John Pospula received the *Virtuti Militari*, the Polish government's highest military decoration, following his regiment's stand against Budenny's Cavalry during the Polish-Soviet War.

More than 20 men from the Polish community who joined the American forces and two who served with the Polish Army gave their lives in the war. Julian Brzezinski, an immigrant from Prussian Poland, and Ludwik Koscielny, oldest son in a family of 16 children, were killed in action with the Polish forces and are buried in France. The soldiers who recovered Koscielny's body after battle in July 1918 found a tiny American flag, a gift from his sisters, sewn on his horizon blue uniform.

Supplementing its record of military service were the local community's financial contributions to Polish relief. Beyond donations which have never been tallied sent directly to relatives in Europe, Rochester's Polish families contributed at least \$15,000 to campaigns to assist their homeland.²⁴ In addition, the Polish Citizens Committee channeled \$35,000 raised locally to the Hoover Relief Commission to aid in Poland's reconstruction.

The decade after the war would be a time of local ventures, a time to invest in community projects including a Polish language newspaper and a Hudson Avenue clothing factory. Additional businesses, shops, and a fourth parish would extend the Polish neighborhood south and

west, while 700 children crowded St. Stanislaus School. Their debt to the homeland in one sense repaid, the Polish families turned their attention again to building a community in Rochester as the 1920s began.

Kathleen Urbanic is the author of Shoulder to Shoulder: Polish Americans in Rochester, NY (1890-1990). At present, she is working on an article about Leopold Lorentz's experiences in the Polish Army in World War II and is chair of the stained glass window restoration project at St. Stanislaus Church. She works as public relations director at Nazareth College.



One of Rochester's Polish immigrant families posed for this portrait taken by the F.G. Syrocki Art Studio, located at 985 Hudson Avenue, in 1912. (St. Stanislaus Parish)

END NOTES

Abbreviations:

- ASSP: Archives of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, Rochester
DC: *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, 1870-present)
HPPR: Norman Lyon, *History of the Polish People in Rochester* (Buffalo, Dziennik dla Wszystkich, 1935)
PE: *Post Express* (Rochester, 1882-1923)
RH: *Rochester Herald* (Rochester, 1879-1926)
TU: *Times-Union* (Rochester, 1918-present)
UA: *Union and Advertiser* (Rochester, 1856-1918)

1. Kaczmarek wrote his account of the experiences of Rochester's earliest Polish immigrants in 1912, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Society of St. Casimir. "Obchod 25 Letni Tow. Sw. Kazim.," May 1, 1912 (Archives of St. Casimir's Polish National Catholic Church, Rochester).
2. In addition to approximately two million Polish Catholics who immigrated to the United States before 1914, approximately two million Jews left Poland, Lithuania, and Russia for America between 1881 and 1924. See James Stuart Olson, *The Ethnic Dimension in American History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), p. 274. Polish Jews began arriving in Rochester in the 1870s and organized their first congregation, Temple Beth Israel, in 1874. See Blake McKelvey, "The Jews of Rochester," *American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 11, part 1 (Sept. 1950), and Stuart E. Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Rochester: 1843-1925* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).
3. H. Hylas Wheaton, "A Survey of Rochester's Polish-Town," *The Common Good of Civic and Social Rochester*, vol. 5, no. 11 (August 1912), p. 11. The term "Polonia" (Latin for "Poland") is used to describe individual Polish immigrant settlements, as well as the larger community of Poles living outside their homeland.
4. Kaczmarek describes the Polish families as "exiles" before the formation of St. Stanislaus Parish: "We yearned for our dear homeland. We were as homeless wanderers among strangers" (p. 1). A remark attributed to "a German Catholic citizen" in the *Union and Advertiser* supports Kaczmarek's view: "They [the Polish immigrants] are all able to speak German, but have an aversion to the language and prefer to use their mother tongue. For this reason, they prefer a church of their own, with a pastor speaking the Polish language, to attending the German churches." ("Polish Catholic Church: Organizing a New Congregation on St. Joseph Street, This City," April 4, 1888, p. 3.)
5. Kaczmarek, p. 1; "History of St. Stanislaus Church of Rochester," 1890-1960, p. 2 (ASSP); Norman T. Lyon, *History of the Polish People*

- in *Rochester* (Buffalo: *Dziennik dla Wszystkich*, 1935), pp. 22-23 (hereafter cited as *HPPR*); "Polish Catholic Church: Organizing a New Congregation on St. Joseph Street, This City," *UA*.
6. Kaczmarek, p. 1; "History of St. Stanislaus Church of Rochester," p. 2; "Nowa Kolonja Polska w Rochester," *Echo*, Buffalo, NY, Feb. 27, 1890, p. 1 (ASSP). The agreement drawn up by Block and Blauw and the notebook paper on which the Polish immigrants registered their votes are held in the archives of St. Stanislaus Parish.
 7. "St. Stanislaus Church: Polish Catholic Edifice Dedicated by Bishop McQuaid," *UA*, Nov. 17, 1890, p. 7; *The Historical Pictorial Edition of the Catholic Journal: A Historical Summary*, pub. 1914 by the Catholic Journal Publishing Co., Rochester, NY, pp. 111-115.
 8. "St. Stanislaus Church: Polish Catholic Edifice Dedicated by Bishop McQuaid," *UA*; "Liber Status Animarum," 1890-1906 (Parish Register, ASSP), p. 1.
 9. "Little Poland: Its Buildings, Customs, Amusements, Societies and Scholars," *PE*, April 24, 1893, p. 7; "Suburban Rochester: Among the Poles on Hudson Avenue," *UA*, Dec. 14, 1895, p. 39.
 10. *HPPR*, pp. 38-39; "Little Poland," *PE*; "S. Zielinski," article in a directory of Polish parishes in the northeastern US, pub. ca. 1908, p. 595 (ASSP).
 11. "Little Poland," *PE*; "Suburban Rochester," *UA*; *HPPR*, p. 31; interviews with Lillian Okolowicz (July 26, 1980), Helena Grycz (Aug. 23, 1980), Harriet Kowalski (June 1, 1982), Josephine Rafalak (June 16, 1982), Mr. and Mrs. Edward Maslanka and Olga Maslanka Riegel (June 21, 1982), Aniela Skalny and Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Stachura (June 27, 1982), and Mary Karpinski, Virginia Koscielny Kelly, Peter Zagurski, and John Zelazny (Feb. 6, 1983). (All interviews conducted in Rochester, NY.)
 12. Teofil Szadzinski, "Chronica Ecclesiae Parochialis St. Stanislai Kostkae," 1890-1909 (Chronicle of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish), entries for Aug. 26, 1896, Oct. 4, 1896, and May 9, 1897 (ASSP); "History of St. Stanislaus Church of Rochester," p. 18.
 13. "Liber Status Animarum," p. 1.
 14. For a fuller discussion of this chapter of the community's history, see "The Conflict of Convictions" in Kathleen Urbanic's *Shoulder to Shoulder* (Polonia Civic Centre, Inc., 1991), pp. 35-46.

15. For a description of the Polish community at this time, see "Fraternity and Diversity," *Shoulder to Shoulder*, pp. 47-55.
16. Regarding the formation of the Polish Baptist Church, see *Shoulder to Shoulder*, pp. 55-57.
17. H. Hylas Wheaton, "A Survey of Rochester's Polish-Town," *The Common Good of Civic and Social Rochester*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Jan. 1912), pp. 26-29, and no. 11 (Aug. 1912), pp. 11-15.
18. For information about Poles' preparations to liberate their homeland, see Joseph T. Hapak, "The Polish Military Commission, 1917-1919," *Polish American Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2 (Autumn 1981), pp. 26-38; Jan Lorys, "Before the 'Blue Army'," *Polish Heritage*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 6-7; Richard M. Watt, *Bitter Glory: Poland and Its Fate, 1918-1939* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), chapters 1 and 2; Louis J. Zake, "The National Department and the Polish American Community: 1916-1923," *Polish American Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 16-25; and Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and Their Culture* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1988), chapters 16-18.
19. *HPPR*, p. 103; "Historia Gniazda 52," History of Nest 52 of the Polish Falcons of America, Rochester, NY (40th anniversary program booklet, 1945), pp. 1-3; interviews with John Pospula, Sept. 15, Oct. 21, Oct. 28, and Nov. 4, 1984 (Rochester, NY).
20. *HPPR*, p. 116; "Those Who Went Forth to Serve," vol. 2 of *The World War Service Record of Rochester and Monroe County*, ed. Edward R. Foreman, pub. by the City of Rochester, 1928, pp. 1763-66; "Poles Leave To-Day for Camp," *PE*, Oct. 15, 1917, p. 7; "Men Going from this City to Join Polish Recruits," *DC*, Oct. 15, 1917, p. 15; "Polish Anniversary: Societies to Turn Out To-Night as Escort to Volunteers for Polish Army," *UA*, Oct. 15, 1917, p. 8; "Recruiting Station for Poles Opened in City," *PE*, Oct. 17, 1917, p. 6; "To Fight for Free Poland," *RH*, Oct. 17, 1917, p. 9; "Rochester Will Be Well Represented in Army of Poles Fighting with Allies," *DC*, Oct. 19, 1917, p. 21.
21. *HPPR*, p. 128; Robert Szymczak, "An Act of Devotion: The Polish Grey Samaritans and the American Relief Effort in Poland, 1919-1921," *Polish American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 13-36; "Enter Training for Service in Mother County," *DC*, July 11, 1918, p. 19; written memoirs of Marta Graczyk Gedgowd (ASSP); undated newspaper articles in the scrapbook of Ludwik Kubiak (property of Louis R. Kubiak, Rochester, NY); "Those Who Supported the Service," vol. 3 of *The World War Service Record*, pub. by the City of Rochester, 1930, pp. 138-39.

22. "Ignace Paderewski and Lieutenant P. Perigord to Speak Here Tomorrow," *TU*, June 11, 1918, p. 13; "Many Eager to Hear Talk by Paderewski," *DC*, June 11, 1918, p. 12; "Very Existence at Stake, Says Great Musician," *DC*, June 13, 1918, p. 19; "Victory of Allies Sure, They Assert: Paderewski and Perigord Give Message to Rochester," *RH*, June 13, 1918, p. 9; "No Doubt of Victory for Allies, Says Lieutenant Perigord, of France," *TU*, June 12, 1918, p. 8; "Huge Crowd Honors Priest and Musician: Chamber of Commerce Jammed at Luncheon," *PE*, June 12, 1918, p. 9; *HPPR*, pp. 126-27.
23. *HPPR*, pp. 118-19; interview with Virginia Koscielny Kelly, Feb. 6, 1983 (Rochester, NY); "Those Who Died for Us," vol. 1 of *The World War Service Record*, pub. by the City of Rochester, 1924, p. 232.
24. *HPPR*, p. 127.



The original church of St. Stanislaus Kostka was a modest structure built in 1890 on Salmon Street (soon renamed St. Stanislaus Street), near the corner of Hudson Avenue. (St. Stanislaus Parish)



Some of Rochester's early Polish settlers gathered for this wedding celebration at 15 Sobieski Street. Note the carpet laid on the unpaved street for the wedding attendants to sit upon. (Florence Dynski)



Members of Rochester's Polish community posed for this photo while on a picnic at the turn of the century. (St. Stanislaus Parish)



Anna Badura, one of Rochester's Grey Samaritan volunteers (Irene Lustyk)