

Poland 2002

I found no significant genealogy facts this year, so there will not be a series of Poland emails. Just this one report with a few pages of tidbits:

Again, the visit to Poland was sandwiched between short course business at the SEMI conventions in Munich and in Singapore. I was in Poland 21 - 30 April.

My son Joseph joined me 21 - 27 April. I took Joe to visit all 4 of my grandparent ancestral sites. In Mielec, we visited another Joseph Gwozdz. We took 2 rolls of pictures, and I took another half roll after Joe returned to the US. Joe learned how to buy a few things in Polish, but it took a few tries to get bottled water without gas and without added minerals.

Joe was also with me 16 - 21 April in Munich.

30 April - 3 May I visited Rome. No particular reason, except I have never been there and my "round the world ticket" allows extra cities with no extra charge. I brought back a booklet about the Vatican and a half a roll of pictures of monuments and ruins. Most of the time I rested in sidewalk cafes.

Singapore was 3 - 9 May for me, then back home.

Banas ancestral cottage. Wisniowa. The central beam, per tradition, has the construction year. We have had 1889, as reported in my genealogy book. I am sure I read that more than once, and Joseph Armata reports the same date from his 1980 visit. I remember the 1889 as being barely legible as a groove on a painted surface. The beam now reads 1876. The beam is now bare wood at that spot. They sanded away all the paint in the region of the date. The grooves for the date are a few millimeters deep and very legible. Apparently, someone had rewritten the date by carving into old paint, and misread the date. Or perhaps someone changed the date in the paint for a reason, like maybe the beam was placed in 1876 but the construction not finished until 1889, or maybe a paint job in 1889? Babcia Bronislawa was born in 1886.

The Grela family provided materials for me to make a copy by rubbing a soft pencil on a paper placed on the beam. My rubbing is not as legible as the actual wood, because the wood grain shows on the rubbing, but the wood grain grooves are actually much shallower than the date grooves. To the left are the initials "F B". Those initials were definitely not visible when I last visited 4 years ago due to the many layers of paint.

I am probably the first person to read those initials in over a century, because the script is very fancy. The "B" is plain enough, but I would not have recognized the very fancy stylized "F" as quickly had I not known that Franciszek Banas is the builder. The Grela family thought that their grandfather John was the builder (because they had not checked their copy of my book, where John's birth date is 1875, too young to build a house).

Iwanowicz. We visited a Stanislaw Iwanowicz family in Mamino, which is a very small village only about 5 miles north of Sypniewo, our Iwanowicz ancestral home. I had heard back in 1998 that an Iwanowicz family lives there. Now I am searching for possible 2nd cousins, children of a John Iwanowicz who visited his cousin, my mother, about 1920. I do not know if that John had any children. Just checking. So Joe and I drove to Mamino. The first person I asked pointed out the house. The pregnant daughter (I forget her name) was visiting her parents. We met in the barnyard. She immediately invited us in when I said my Iwanowicz grandfather was born in Sypniewo. Her brother and father Stanislaw arrived on the tractor 10 minutes later. They joined us after securing the equipment for the night and washing up.

Stanislaw's father was Waclaw, and his grandfather Wojciech, so this is not a family I can connect to our Iwanowicz. No doubt we are distant relatives. Maybe someday I'll work out one more generation of Iwanowicz and connect us as 3rd or 4th cousins. They insisted we stay for tea and cookies. Although I only translated a few parts of our conversation to Joseph, it was a good experience for him to observe the life style of typical poor Polish farm family. The Banas, Gwozdz, and Piszewski families that we visited are relatively better off.

Apparently, all families in that Mamino village of about 30 houses are related except for this Iwanowicz family. Stan's grandfather Wojciech had a half brother named John who moved to America and lost touch. This cannot be my mother's cousin John, whose mother Jozefa (Josephine) Iwanowicz was unmarried.

After Joe left Poland to go home, I continued the Iwanowicz search. Four cemeteries checked for Iwanowicz. Phone calls to 3 Iwanowicz families in Ostroleka. No luck. My page from the Warsaw phone book for future follow up has 14 Iwanowicz listed. Those cemeteries have stones with other family names, so I took a few pages of notes, but nothing worth discussion.

Record Books. Nothing to report. I checked out several churches and government offices where I figured there would be books worth checking for clues on my list of unanswered details about family history. I expanded my reference lists of which books for which years are located where. Lots of interesting leads, but nothing worthy of discussion at this time.

Politechnika Warszawska. Professor Romuald Beck noticed my web stuff at SemiZone.com. He followed the clicks to my "NSF Manual" pages, where I documented the results of my faculty workshops 10 years ago, with tips on how to do inexpensive student experiments in an IC fabrication laboratory. Although this Politechnika university is sort of the Poland equivalent of MIT, budgets are very limited in Poland. Romuald appreciated my web descriptions of experiments that can be done with a limited budget. He sent me a thank you email last March. In the email, he said my name sure looks Polish, so if I am Polish and in Warsaw I should visit. I emailed back that I would be in Poland in a few weeks and I'd love to visit his lab. He asked me to give a talk. I visited on 29 April, after Joe had returned. Beck's lab is much smaller than mine at SJSU, but he has the best technology students available in Poland. They make some very impressive devices for research. About 30 students and faculty showed up for my talk, which was an introduction to the "ITRS International Technology Roadmap for Semiconductors". A little over an hour. I lectured in English, so I bet many of the students and some of the faculty probably missed a lot; I could not judge from the very little feedback discussion if my talk was too advanced for the students or too simple for the faculty. Anyway, it was a pleasant experience. Of course there was no payment involved; the division head, Andrzej Jakubowski, gave me a university T shirt. Andrzej also gave me a formal letter of

invitation to speak at a conference he is organizing for June 2003, but I doubt I'll attend that one. Andrzej's English is weak so he arranged a translator so we could have a chat, but he wanted to talk about genealogy, and I am able to do that in Polish. Romuald's English is excellent, so he and I talked Polish politics over dinner.

Language. One of my 2nd cousins, Andrzej Zygmuntowicz, a Piszewski relative in Rozan, said that my Polish skills have deteriorated since my last visit 4 years ago. That surprised me, since I think I'm getting better all the time. I thought about it and figured out the explanation for him: My first visit to his house 4 years ago was very brief, and I was researching genealogy, so we talked genealogy. I know a lot of Polish words in the subject of genealogy, and I had interviewed about 10 families before him, so the conversation went smoothly that first time. This year, my short visit was just to say hello; I have very few genealogy questions for him. So this year the conversation was about Polish politics, September 11, his son's diabetes, and various other wide open topics, so of course I had lots of difficulty understanding everything.

Back in Pultusk, when Joe was still with me, we visited Andrzej's sister Halina and her husband Adam Napiorkowski. Their son Pawel, 19, has two passions in life: computers and English. Pawel served as interpreter. This made the conversation much smoother, and of course it made his parents proud.

Szary Wilk. Our first night in Poland was on the road south of Warsaw. The flight arrived at 4:30 PM so there was not enough time to get to Wisniowa. I did not want to drive in the dark, because Joe would miss the scenery. Besides, I remembered that the south of Poland is very interesting early in the morning, with some farmers delivering milk using horse drawn farm carts. I hoped to find a Polish style small hotel with a restaurant. Joe was willing to take the chance and just drive till sunset without reservations. The gamble paid off. Two hours south of Warsaw, a little south of the city of Radom, in the village of Lubiena, we saw the sign on the left "Szary Wilk", which means "Grey Wolf". It's a small restaurant with a banquet room. There was a wedding "wesele" going on. It was Sunday, but 2-day weddings are common in Poland. I inquired. Yes, we can eat "kolacja" supper in the side room. Yes, they have rooms to let. Concerned, I asked to see a couple rooms. Only 6 rooms for sleeping in the building. Joe came along and we picked a large one with 2 beds and a bathroom. No problem; this building is new, and the facilities clean. The layout of our room is unusual for American taste, but it is the equivalent of an inexpensive American motel (this is middle class in Poland). Joe and I enjoyed the experience of eating while a wedding party was going on. A few groups of local young adults were also using the side room for beers and socializing. Joe went to bed early, but there was no sleeping until the band quit at 11 PM. We got back on the road at 7:30 AM; the drive was as interesting as I remember from 4 years ago.

The stop for breakfast an hour later was not that rewarding: again, a roadside restaurant. I asked what the special is. "Flaki". Somehow, I thought I heard "Placki", which are potato pancakes. I ordered for 2. Joe did not find strongly seasoned tripe to be an appropriate breakfast meal.

Castles. Aaron asked for pictures of castles, so Joe and I found a few to photograph.