

PROJECT TO DISCOVER
SCHENECTADY **COUNTY'S** EASTERN EUROPEAN ROOTS
NEWSLETTER

January 2019 Vol. 6 No. 1
Our Sixth Year!

Our objective continues to be to discover, document and digitally preserve genealogy, stories, and pictures of Schenectady County's Eastern European immigrants.

Please share your family history, help pass on the (electronic) word. The next deadlines are April 1st and July 1st. To submit your family story, pictures, etc., e-mail Phyllis Zych Budka: abudka@nycap.rr.com. Without your stories, there can be no newsletter. To be added to the newsletter e-mail list, contact Phyllis.

The Schenectady Digital History Archive To find our newsletters on-line:
<http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/eer/>

Facebook: Schenectady Polish Heritage Facebook Group

Thanks to Brianna Jolie (Guckemus) for starting this Facebook group. It's described as a "closed group" which only means that you can request membership and an "administrator" will give you permission.

Carole McCarthy is keeping a running list of "Surnames of Polish Ancestors Being Researched in Schenectady County" on the Facebook site.

Brianna Jolie has uploaded several hundred St. Mary's Cemetery gravesites to findagrave.com.

Polish Genealogical Society of America (PGSA)

Thanks to William F. Hoffman, PGSA newsletter editor, for printing our Table of Contents and contact information in "Rodziny" the PGSA newsletter. PGSA Home Page is found at <http://pgsa.org/>

Polish Origins –

<https://polishorigins.com/>

Website allows one to enter surnames and places of interest; a good website.

Thanks to Bernice Izzo, Carole McCarthy and Martin Byster for help in editing this newsletter!

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Union College's Academy of Lifelong Learning (UCALL) Phyllis Zych Budka

Union College's Academy of Lifelong Learning (UCALL) inaugurates its first Winter Term on January 29th - link below.

<https://www.union.edu/files/ucall/201812/ucall-winter-2019-v3.pdf>

UCALL's Spring Term begins the first week in April and will include the 5 session course "Eastern Europe Today," with a variety of current topics, including a video conference with two Jagellonian University professors in Krakow.

I will do a talk on the Schenectady Polish Community of the past in UCALL's "Food for Thought" course.

Consult the UCALL website in the near future for the Spring Course Brochure.

Polish Genealogical Society of America
Trips to Poland

The PGSA is pleased to offer several genealogy themed tours to Poland in 2019. Based upon a survey, the top requests are for the Austro-Hungarian Partition of Galicia in the south, and the Prussian Partition in the west.

See the PGSA website for itineraries and to sign up at:
<https://pgsa.org/pgsa-2019-genealogy-tours-to-poland/>

Prussian Partition Tours

Prussian Circle 12 days May 11-12, 2019
Prussian Circle 12 days September 7-18, 2019
Prussian Head to Toe 13 days September 9-21, 2019
Prussian Poland 11 days September 14-24, 2019

Galician Partition Tours

Galician Circle 10 days June 5-14, 2019
Galician Circle 10 days September 18-27, 2019
Galicia 12 days June 9-20, 2019
Galicia 12 days Sept. 22 - Oct. 3, 2019

Phyllis's note: I've signed up for the Galicia tour, Sept. 22 – Oct. 3. Come join me!

My Grandfather, Joseph Tys, vs Western Steel Carole McCarthy

Many years ago, I found the record of my grandfather, Joseph Tys, on a 1906 ship's manifest coming from Bremen, Germany. He listed his last residence as Witkowice, Poland, and gave his destination as Hegewisch, Chicago Illinois¹. Hegewisch is a small town in the southern-most part of the Chicago City limits, on the border with Indiana. It is in an area which was a mecca for steel mills from the 1920s to the 1960s. When my grandfather came in 1906, there were several companies in Hegewisch making passenger cars for the railroad. I have been to Hegewisch several times and found the house that my grandfather lived in, based on the address of the person that was his 'destination' on the ship's manifest. He lived within walking distance of a company called Western Steel Car & Foundry Company. I always imagined him working there since it was within walking distance from where he lived and also just a few blocks from St. Florian, the local Polish Parish. However, it bothered me that I did not have more substantiated evidence that he indeed lived in Hegewisch. I thought, just because he said he was going to Hegewisch, doesn't mean he actually ended up there. However, I did have another piece of evidence, his ship's manifest from when he came to Schenectady in 1910 (he had gone back to visit his parents in Poland for a few years). At that time, one of the questions on the manifest was whether he was ever in the US before. He said "YES, 1905 -1907, Hegewisch Chicago Illinois". Although he was off by a year on his initial entry into the US, it did give me another data point that said he had lived in Hegewisch.

Hegewisch is about an hour and a half drive from Notre Dame University, which is in IN. My husband and I go there for football games and to visit friends and while there stop by Hegewisch. In planning our trip for the fall of 2018, I emailed the Southeast Chicago Historical Society to let them know I was coming and what I was interested in researching. Well, the VP of the society did a lot of research for me before I came. One of the things he found was a mention of my grandfather in the 17 March 1908 Chicago Tribune. It said the following:

"Joseph Tys, etc., vs. Western Steel Car and Fdry. Co.; judgt. on verdt. for \$900, and satisfied."

As you can imagine, I was very excited about the prospects of learning more about my grandfather. At this point I didn't even know if this Joseph Tys was my grandfather or not, however Tys is not a common name in the US. It wasn't easy to find the right places to call to obtain the folder on his court case but through the internet I got the number for the Archival Storage of the Circuit Court of Cook County and put in a request for the information in storage. It took 2 weeks for them to find it, then I had to send in a \$5 check before they would send it to me. In all, a total of about a month.

¹ It took many years to decipher the handwriting on the manifest to determine that his destination was Hegewisch. I wrote an article in the first edition of this newsletter in 2014, about that process.
<http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/eer/eer-2014-02.pdf>

My Grandfather, Joseph Tys, vs Western Steel Carole McCarthy

I received eight pages in the mail and this is what it told me. My grandfather was 20 years old when he was working for the Western Steel Car & Fdry Co in 1907. That would be

correct since he was born July 1887, so I knew it must, indeed, be my grandfather. Plus, he was working for the company located about 5 blocks from where he was living! The record said that while he was working with a portable riveter, the supports for the machine failed and the machine fell on my grandfather and fractured his leg. He was suing the company through his lawyers. It appears that it was a jury case that he won because of negligence on the company's part, and he was awarded \$900. So indeed, he worked for Western Steel, the company he could walk to each day. But did he actually receive the \$900 which in today's money would be about \$25K? There was no receipt in the file that actually proved he was given the money. He also had to pay his lawyers and he had to have a friend, Paul Dudzienski, stand in for him at the hearing since he was under 21, and so a minor, when the accident occurred. My guess is that he at least got some of the money because family stories say he went back to Poland, after saving enough money, to buy land and become a Baron. However, when he was back in Poland, he found out that although he could buy land, there was no farm equipment available to buy. At that time, that part of Poland was under the Austrian partition. So eventually he gave all the money to his parents and in 1910 came back to America, This time he came to Schenectady, where he worked in the Boiler Dept. of American Locomotive Company (ALCO) and married a local Polish girl, my Grandmother, Mary Giniecki, in 1916. By 1920 he was a 'Timekeeper' at ALCO, became a US citizen in 1923 and bought a 50 acre farm on Consaul Road, Niskayuna, in 1925. He was now the large land owner he dreamt about and was able to purchase all the plows, cultivators, hay rakes and seeders along with tractors, wagons and trucks needed to run a successful 50 acre farm.



My Grandfather, Joseph Tys, vs Western Steel Carole McCarthy

Aug. 16, 1916 Marriage of Joseph Tys
and Mary Giniecki



Grandpa Tys demonstrating the McCormick
in 1945 International Seeder to
Grandson Richard Tys – In the 1950s

Joseph Tys with cultivator



Joseph Tys demonstrating new tractor

In Memory – Walter Budka Phyllis Zych Budka

The smallish box had gathered dust on the top closet shelf. Inside were a thin brown book and 3 medallions, shown below. The “book” is the record of those attending Walter Budka’s wake at the Kazyaka Funeral Home in August 1951. In my 4/16 newsletter piece “The Budka Trumpeters,”* I outlined Walter’s avocation as a musician.

Strange to think, but such a wake visitation log can provide insights into our local history. First, it is a record of who was living in the area or came to visit at a particular point in time – therefore, a help to genealogists. Since I counted more than 400 names in the book, I resisted the thought of making such a list for the newsletter. However, from this log I was interested to learn there was a “Polish Musicians Club,” an indication of the cultural life of the Polish American community in Schenectady.

*April 2016 Vol 3 No 2

Members of the Polish Musicians Club are below. I am quite sure that some names will be familiar to some Readers.

Members of the Polish Musicians Club

Stanley Slawienski, President
Robert Anderson
Arthur Bogatka, Rec. Sec.
Joseph Budka
Edward Chotkowski
Myron Chupka
Stanley Dule
John Krempa
Chester Lubrant

Ray Maul
Al Motala
Don Nikolski
John Potkanowicz
Mathew Rozen Vice President
Richard Rozen
Chester Stanek Treasurer
John Vance

In Memory – Walter Budka Phyllis Zych Budka

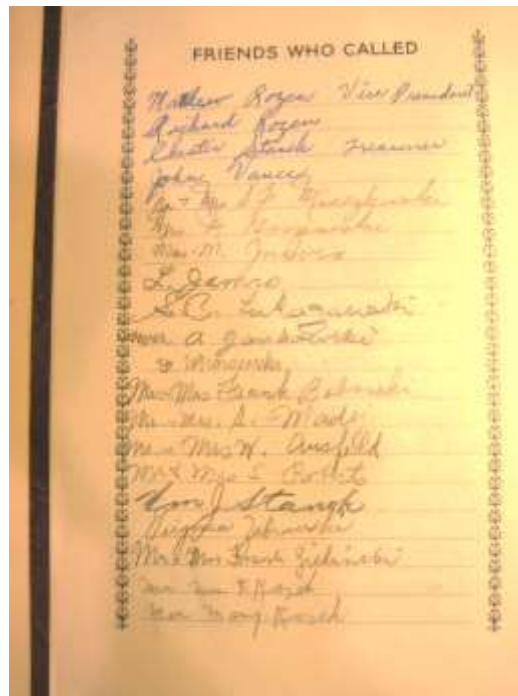
The Membership Medallions

Religious and insurance societies were an important part of the Schenectady Polish American community. I recall processions and parades with people carrying banners, wearing the membership medallions. Walter Budka was apparently a member of these 3 organizations. The word “członek” on the first medallion means “member.”

If anyone has more information about these societies, please share with us.



Fig. 1 “Friends who called” Walter Budka’s wake, August 1951



In Memory – Walter Budka Phyllis Zych Budka

Fig. 2 Membership Medallions



Member
Voice over the Podhale
Group 1649
Organized October
6, 1913
Schenectady, N.Y.

Society of St. John
the Baptist
Group 203
Organized January 29, 1911
Schenectady, N.Y.

Society (Nest) Home
Podtatrzenska
Group No.1
Organized August 16, 1913
Schenectady, N.Y.

Genealogy Connections Craig Siulinski

[Phyllis's Note: Craig Siulinski was recently elected to the Polish Genealogical Society's Board of Trustees.]

The research trip I made to Schenectady during the warm days of June 2013 came about with a bit of preparation before I left my home in Auburn, Massachusetts. Through a series of blind calls, I was able to connect with a descendant of my grandfather's brother (Fig. 1) who turned out to be my second cousin. This opportune phone conversation led to a meeting at a restaurant during my research trip, and now, she and her sisters are my newest family members!



Fig. 1 My grandfather's brother, Walter Szulinski and his wife, Anna, taken in Atlantic City in June 1943



Fig. 2 St. Mary's Cemetery Schenectady, NY

Another connection I made before I left Auburn came about from an effort to find a local genealogist that I could meet with in person when I was there in Schenectady. To that end, I called the Schenectady County Historical Society and they provided a name of a local expert in Polish Genealogy. I was so fortunate that Phyllis Budka answered her phone that day. Phyllis was so kind to meet me at the cemetery of my ancestors (St. Mary's Cemetery) and helped me locate the Szulinski family stone. We shared stories on that hot summer day under the shade of one of the trees. It was not long after that

Genealogy Connections Craig Siulinski

Phyllis started this newsletter we are all so fortunate to have arrive in our email four times a year.

Website: sharinglegacies.com

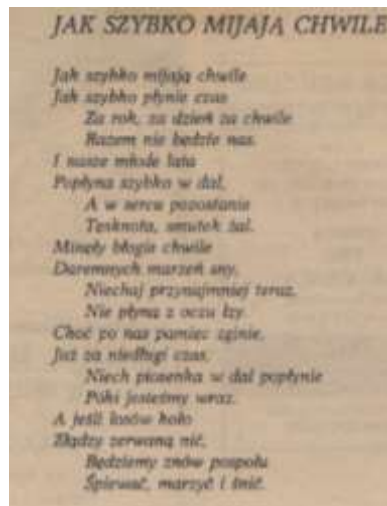
Email: sharinglegacies@gmail.com

Genealogy and Oral History Blogs:

<http://augustlegacy.blogspot.com/>

<http://jackandpauline.blogspot.com/>

PANI KATARZYNA KORNACKA
Part 14 – The Forties (a Neighborhood)
Martin Byster



“How quickly passing [our] moments,
How swiftly flows [our] time.”

Neighborhood

In the Forties, Pani Katarzyna Kornacka, Mrs. Feliks Kornacki, ...Katie, continued to maintain her household in the same neighborhood, in the same house where she first arrived from Poland and boarded with her cousins' families at 18 River Street, Schenectady, New York. Her neighborhood (Fig. 1) stretched south from a boat landing (Fig. 2) at the bank of the Mohawk River to Saint Mary's Church at the top of the hill, on Eastern Avenue, where she married Feliks; east to her sister at 416 Alexander Street, west up the north channel of the river to a vegetable garden on Hog² Island just east of the Western Gateway Bridge where it crossed to Scotia. Big changes were on the way.

As the Forties merged into a decade, the American Locomotive Company (ALCO) completed a levee along the south bank of the Mohawk which, together with additional protection for company facilities within the plant, prevented river floods inundating River Street³.

The landing on the river side of this levee⁴ where the Kornackis kept their boat remains there today, a small beach where River Street once ended at the river, say twenty-five feet at the water's edge, of sand and small pieces of slag reminiscent of the foundry at the locomotive works, between a pile of large limestone blocks at each end there

² NOTE: Now, “Cayugas”

³ NOTE: River Street was again inundated on August 29, 2011 by muddy flood waters of the Mohawk River draining precipitation brought by hurricane Irene which reached 3 feet above the first floor after parts of the ALCO plant had been dismantled and demolished.

⁴ NOTE: With the development of the former ALCO site after 2011 flood this levee, with an added bike path which replaced the railway, was effectively extended to high ground just west of Freeman's Bridge at an elevation which prevents flood waters at elevation less than 228 feet from inundating River Street and the East Front Street neighborhood.

PANI KATARZYNA KORNACKA

Part 14 – The Forties (a Neighborhood)

Martin Byster

protecting the river bank, the blocks perhaps remnants from among those which once lined the Erie Canal or raised the piers holding the Old Scotia Covered Bridge⁵ which between 1808 and 1873 crossed the river at Washington Avenue.

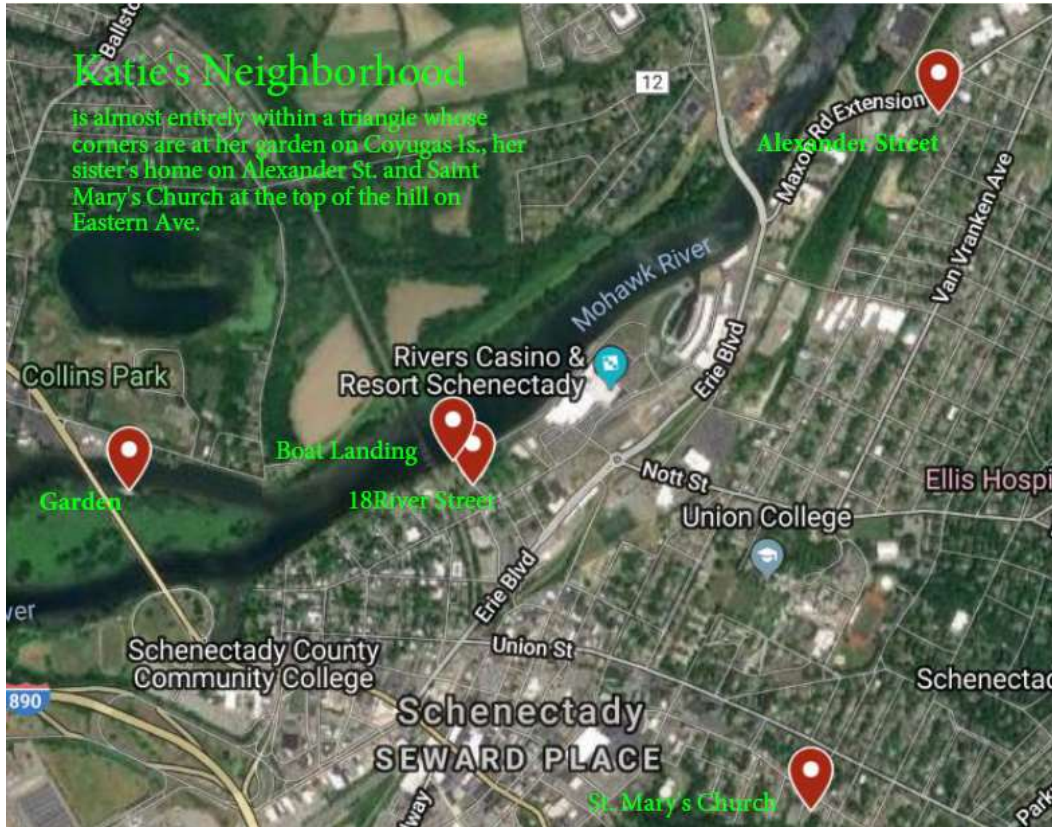


Fig.1: Katie's Neighborhood

River Street (Fig.2)⁶ reaches southeast from the boat landing and levee to Front Street in what today is the East Front Street Neighborhood. The levee occupies property for what was once ten street addresses, #29-#38, which included the James Diment and Co., that sold supplies including stoves and stove pipes, and the Henry Whitmyer, Broom Factory which was destroyed by fire in 1921⁷. Street addresses #29-#38 are not in the 1930 census, all gone before the levee was built; #26 and #28 are not in the 1940 census and may have been removed to accommodate the levee. The first building, #25, on the right in the photo (Fig. 8) was formerly with the J.G. Daly Wisk Broom Factory⁸.

⁵ *Old Schenectady*, from the collection of John P. Papp; Photo Credits: Schenectady Historical Society, Albert Gayer, Joseph Hayden, Francis Spoonogle, Larry Hart

⁶ The base map for both Figures 1 and 2 is a current Google Map with markers at locations representing locations from the period 1940 thru 1949.

⁷ 1921; *Brooms, Brushes & Handles*, Volume 24, p.62; <https://books.google.com/books?id=HIBOQAAMA AJ>

⁸ Part 5, PANI KATARZYNA KORNACKA, "The Kornackis a Destiny"; pp.2-3, Fig.2, 3a, and 3b

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Part 14 – The Forties (a Neighborhood)
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Fig. 2: Katie's Neighborhood, River Street (marker overlay 1940c.)

By 1941, the levee was completed; the landing (Fig. 2) survived about where it always was. On the west side of River Street north to the levee from #18, was a garden #20 (Fig. 3), two homes, #22 & #24 (Fig.4), then the levee and beyond that the landing (Figs. 4-8). On the east side of the street south from the levee were more homes #27 & #25 (Fig. 8) then the fence with several gardens, #23-#15 (Figs. 8 & 9).

ALCO, from 1941 thru 1945 during WWII, in addition to both steam and diesel-powered locomotives, manufactured Lee, Grant, Sherman, and Priest tanks for the US Army Ordnance Department together with motorized gun carriages and the M36 tank destroyer. In 1942 the Schenectady plant was awarded the Army/Navy "E" in recognition for the work it was doing⁹. Feliks was among 2000 other ALCO employees each of whom received a sterling silver pin with an embossed "E".



⁹ <http://preservedtanks.com/Locations.aspx?LocationCategoryId=82800>

PANI KATARZYNA KORNACKA
Part 14 – The Forties (a Neighborhood)
Martin Byster
Panorama: Northern (lower) River Street¹⁰



Fig. 3: Garden, Marty, #22



Fig. 4: #20, Marty, #22, #42, Levee



Fig. 5: Gert, Vicky, Levee



Fig. 6: Landing, Gert, Janet



Fig. 7: Landing, Janet



Fig. 8: Levee, #27, #25, Fence



Fig. 9: Fence, Gate, Gardens

¹⁰ NOTE: Believe all the pictures, Figures 3-9, in this panorama were taken in 1942 or 1943

PANI KATARZYNA KORNACKA

Part 14 – The Forties (a Neighborhood)

Martin Byster

In 1947, with the end of WWII, ALCO stopped production on steam locomotives (Fig. 10) for the Soviet Union and in 1948 released the last steam locomotive (Fig. 11) from the Schenectady plant.



Fig. 10: ALCO No. 75214¹¹



Fig. 11: ALCO' No. 9406^{12,13}

Production of steam locomotives ended but ALCO continued with diesel locomotives. Diesel locomotives were frequently tested along a rail line on top the levee. My friends and I, with luck, occasionally hitched a short ride in the cab.

On June 27th, 1950 President Truman, in defense of South Korea, committed to what became the Korean Conflict. Early in the next decade at River Street addresses from #13 and #18, north to the levee, homes, gardens were all gone, demolished and filled to accommodate parking for ALCO employees making army tanks, which included the Patton tank for service in Korea.

#18

As the nature of neighborhood addresses do change over a decade, so did #18, Katie's place. The back shed was the first to go; the shutters next, the back porch finished, the front porch replaced. The old shed (Fig. 12a) was demolished for fire wood, the new shed (12b)¹⁴ attached to the rear of the garage. Shutters on the south side were removed, the back-porch refitted with new siding and windows (Figs. 12c, 12d, & 12e). The front porch (Figs. 12f & 12g) was rebuilt by Victoria's husband Joseph Zakriski.

¹¹ NOTE: Decapod No. 75214 is similar in design to those manufactured and shipped to Russia during WW1.

¹² NOTE: Second from the left among those who worked on Berkshires No.9406 is Jan (John) Byster, my paternal grandfather.

¹³ NOTE: ALCO milestones: 1941 - World's largest locomotive, the "Big Boy" - built for the Union Pacific. Weighing more than 1.2 million pounds, these locomotives had 16 huge drive wheels, and the unit developed 7,000 horsepower - enough to haul a mile-long freight train at a mile a minute. 1944 - Steam age reached a peak when 1,354 locomotives were built in the United States. 1948 - Alco had built more than 75,000 steamers. <http://preservedtanks.com/>,

¹⁴ NOTE: Wood salvaged from wooden crates believed used to ship crankshafts to ALCO for military vehicles was nailed as siding to the new shed.

PANI KATARZYNA KORNACKA
Part 14 – The Forties (a Neighborhood)
Martin Byster



Fig.12a: Old Shed (1938c.)¹⁵



Fig.12b: New Shed (1960c.)



Fig. 12c: #18 Back (1940c.)



Fig. 12d. #18 (1931c.)¹⁶



Fig.12e: #18 (1948)¹⁷



Fig. 12f: #18 Front (1948)



Fig. 12g: #18 Front (1951)¹⁸

(next: the **Neighbors**)

¹⁵ 12a- Gertrude standing in front of the old shed

¹⁶ 12d- Victoria holding Gertrude on the steps of the old back porch

¹⁷ 12e- Ben and Hedy Wheat w/ Ben & Paul Byster at the steps of the new back porch

¹⁸ 12g- Feliks Kornacki w/Genevieve departing from the new front porch