POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE

PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988

SEARCHERS

NO. 88 WINTER 2021 ISSUE 3



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PGSNYS - FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FOUNDED BY MICHAEL DRABIK

In May 2015, the PGSNYS became a not-for-profit corporation in New York State and also received Federal 501(c)(3) tax status

Postal Address:
PGSNYS
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

The PGSNYS meets the second Thursday of each month* at 7 PM at the Erie 1 BOCES, Bldg B, 355 Harlem Road, West Seneca, NY and/or by ZOOM. Check the website for updates.

Annual dues are $20 ($30 Canada, $35 other countries), and membership entitles you to three issues of the *Searchers* per year. New members will receive an information packet to help you get started. The expiration date of your membership is on the mailing label of the *Searchers* and coincides with the anniversary date of when you joined the Society.

Please remit your membership dues by PayPal on our website or mail a check or money order to:

PGSNYS
c/o Membership Chair
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

Please send any changes to your postal or E-mail address to PGSNYS at the above address or E-mail: membership@pgsnys.org

If you are a member, but not receiving E-mail from the PGSNYS mailing list, please send an E-mail to membership@pgsnys.org

PGSNYS website: www.pgsnys.org

2021 PGSNYS OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

PGSNYS EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: John Nowak
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Sandra Porter
Patricia Rooney
Denise Pisanczyn
Jean Vasiloff

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Library William Borucki
Media Maureen Gleason
Membership Denise Oliansky
Hospitality **vacant**
Roadshow **vacant**
Program **vacant**
***Dziennik* Project** Maureen Gleason & Charles Penasack

Webmaster: Nicole Po-

Historian: vacant



THE *SEARCHERS* NEWSLETTER

For submissions to the Searchers newsletter, deadlines are as follows:

1st issue (Spring) - due March 1st for April mailing
2nd issue (Summer) - due July 1st for August mailing
3rd issue (Winter) - due November 1st for December mailing

Submissions to the *Searchers* (articles as MS Word doc; photos as .jpg) should be sent via E-mail directly to: **denise.oliansky@gmail.com**

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PGSNYS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all our PGSNYS members, and my best wishes to all of you and your families for a peaceful and healthy holiday season.

This has been an eventful year with plans ever changing due to the continuing coronavirus pandemic. But there were some notable positives. We were able to hold an in-person meeting, which was also streamed to our out-of-town members, and a successful Genealogy Fair was held in September. Due to some additional reduced social activity, there was a lot of time spent in researching all that family history.

As I write this message, the immediate COVID picture has again become uncertain. But right now we still intend to resume 'normal' PGSNYS activities, beginning with regular in-person (and streamed) meetings in January. Until then, please stay safe and stay healthy.

Wesołych Świąt wszystkim!

Sincerely, John Nowak
president@pgsnys.org

POTPOURRI

New PGSNYS Members



Matthew	Kinal	West Seneca	NY
Peter	Sloane	Cheektowaga	NY
Julie	Koscielny	Cheektowaga	NY
Marilyn	Procaccini	Cheektowaga	NY
Timothy	Cybulski	Cincinnati	OH

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Meeting schedule: In January we start meeting by both ZOOM and in person at BOCES (assuming there are no new COVID restrictions). The schedule for meetings is: January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14.

Volunteers needed: The Society needs volunteers to serve as Committee Chairs, including Hospitality (provide coffee & refreshments at in-person meetings), Programming (gather suggestions for prospective speakers, make contact, and create a schedule of speakers for selective meeting dates in 2022), and the Road-show (transporting and setting up Society equipment at events). Email president@pgsnys.org to volunteer or information@pgsnys.org if you have questions.

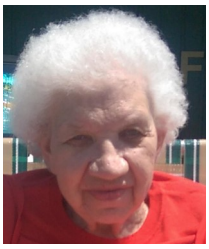
***Searchers* articles:** contributions for the *Searchers* are always needed to fill the three issues published each year. Please email denise.oliansky@gmail.com your submissions to or to discuss your idea for an article.

OPT-IN for Digital *Searchers*

Reminder: We encourage our members to OPT-IN for the electronic version of the *Searchers* to help PGSNYS save on the costs of printing and postage associated with the paper version. With the recent postage hike, it now costs $1.36 (up from $1.20) to mail each copy. The electronic version will always be sent out the same day the print version is mailed. You can receive only one version. If you choose to OPT-IN for the electronic version, please send an email to denise.oliansky@gmail.com at least a couple weeks prior to the next month of issue (April, August, December). Type SEARCHERS OPT-IN in the subject line of the email. This is important to ensure your email will not be missed. In the body of the email, type your full name and the email address you want us to use to send you the electronic version of the newsletter. Then hit send. That's all you have to do. You will receive a confirmation email from the editor so you know your OPT-IN request for the electronic *Searchers* was received. You only have to OPT-IN once, not before every issue. As long as you keep current with your membership dues, you will continue to receive the newsletter. Thank you!

In Memorium

PGSNYS remembers three former members who left us way too soon. It was always a pleasure to see Dorothy Slomczewski, Diana Kniazuk, and Audrey Scott at our meetings and events.



SLOMCZEWSKI - Dorothy A.
December 27, 2020, wife of the late Thomas B Slomczewski, beloved mother and best friend of Maria Slomczewski and Busia to Christina Slomczewski; as well as Simba and Candy. Dorothy was a life member of Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary Chapter 150 and loved traveling and spending time with her family.



KNIAZUK - Diana B.
September 13, 2020, dearest daughter of the late Alexander (late Adele) Kniazuk; sister of Ted (Janet) Kniazuk, late Elaine (Robert) Valach and the late Paul Kniazuk; cousin of Donald and the late Phyllis Bifulco; also survived by nieces and nephews. Diana was a member of American Legion Post 735 and AMVETS Post 8113 Ladies Auxiliary; also active and volunteered in other organizations.



SCOTT - Audrey T.
(nee Brodnicki)
August 15, 2021, age 82; beloved wife of William A. Scott; loving mother of Wendy Scott; dearest sister of Bronine (Donald) Roll; also survived by many nieces and nephews. Audrey was also a member of the local Home Bureau and enjoyed crafting.

T'was the Night Before…

by Richard J Kraus

T'was the night, the week, the month before Christmas, and all through the house it was time to start preparing for that festive holiday. In those times, the beginning of the Christmas season was not so early. Today we are bombarded by ads and displays before Halloween or even earlier. I still remember when we were living in Olean, Bon-Ton (formerly AM&A's) had Christmas displays up just after summer.

I always thought my mother was an early holiday decorator. No sooner was the Thanksgiving table cleared than the Christmas tree and all the baubles and bangles came out. The tree stayed with us until the Feast of the Three Kings (the traditional twelfth day of Christmas. When it came down, it was like losing an old friend or family member, it was there so long. That seems like a long time, but I hear that some other cultures start to celebrate even earlier. Our Filipino neighbor told us they start in October. Wow!!!



Under the tree was the quintessential model train. I guess I am dating myself when I say that tinsel falling off the tree and onto the train track would short it out because it was metal foil. The village beneath the tree consisted of these Plasticville houses and buildings. You snapped them together to complete the house and you had a complete structure. Some were rather simple, like the school house or post office, while others like the airport terminal were more complex. Every year we added something new to our 'village.'

The other Thanksgiving event was the Sattler's Christmas parade. This took place on Broadway and ran down to approximately Smith Street. It consisted of big, inflated balloons that were pulled along the street to the delight of all. It wasn't Macy's, but it captured the imagination of all the kids, young or old.

What Christmas season would be complete without a visit to Santa Claus? He apparently had two temporary homes in Buffalo then. One was at Sattler's and the other was AM&A's downtown. He must have traveled a lot between locations. I still have a picture of me and Santa at AM&A's. Boy, did he look real. Whoa, what am I saying? He was real. Just remember, he is watching to see if you are naughty or nice.

Christmas Eve dinner is celebrated as Wigilia. In Polish tradition it is considered the most important meal of the year. I remember it as a meatless meal, as the Catholic Church did not allow meat on Christmas Eve. What comes to mind most from this meal was the Oplatek, a large, rectangular wafer very similar in texture to the communion wafer. It had raised designs with Christmas motifs. The Oplatek was passed from person to person, each one breaking off a piece and wishing well to the recipient, who then passed it on. Christmas dinner was the traditional turkey and all the trimmings. Of course this was all accompanied by Kolędy (Polish Christmas carols) on the radio.

We also listened to Christmas carols on our record player. The Goodyear and Firestone stores sold a Christmas album collection of carols every year. They were collections of music from various artists. My favorite were the Goodyear versions. They were produced by Colombia Records and seemed to have the best quality.

Uncle Val, my Grandmother's second son, had a passion for model railroads. I can only assume this came about since he worked for the New York Central Railroad. Each year he would devote his entire living room to his train layout. It was always a treat to visit each year and see what was new.

Our current family tradition is to find a live tree to cut down about a week before Christmas. It is put up and decorated on Christmas Eve with ornaments from our past and acquired over the years. Our manger scene is an eclectic collection of people and animals. Some of the earliest go back to Hope's (my wife's) childhood. There are headless cows and wingless angels, but they all have a place in the choir of Christmas. We may even have six kings, but who's counting. Even Buddha has found a home in our Crèche, as well as a Menorah. The stable itself is made from branches of our very first Christmas tree. Every year our Crèche grows with new additions, usually barnyard animals.

As we see, Christmas is old and ancient, but also very new. We all celebrate with our own traditions and traditions borrowed from the past.

Wesolych Swiat I Szczesliwego Nowego Roku!!

(Merry Christmas and Happy New Year)

This Li'l Piggy...

by Richard J Kraus



This little piggy went to market. The Broadway Market, of course. Well not exactly, but it was time for a trek to the Broadway-Fillmore shopping district, which would include the Broadway Market. We would board the #23 Fillmore-Hertel bus at Seneca Street that would take us to Fillmore and Broadway. Departing the bus, the first thing to see were two newspaper stands, one on each side of Broadway. They stood like sentinels guarding the way to the main shopping area. Each was about the size of our modern day, oversized garden sheds. They each held a wealth of newspapers and magazines from all over as well as racing forms for the horse racing aficionados not to mention candy bars and those little bags of potato chips. If you peered over the half door you could see more magazines, some of them the naughty kind. Naughty in those days was the same reason Lucy and Ricky had to sleep in separate twin beds. Oh, how our standards have changed!

Next stop was Norban's clothing store. This is the same place where my perfectly practical First Communion suit was purchased. It saw all of one Communion service as well as the family party afterwards. Of course, my photo was taken in an angelic pose with my hands folded in prayer. Angelic?? I sure had them fooled.

Across the street was Neisner's 5 & 10 cent store. In future years it graduated from the five cent to one dollar store. With inflation I'm not sure what those prices would be today. Hello, Dollar Store! Cross Fillmore Ave and we find the Liberty Bank with its multi-faced clock on the corner of the building, which could be seen from all angles.

Right next to the bank was the Wagner's Optical Store. It was a very narrow shop, maybe fifteen feet wide. On the left as you entered were the little cubicles where your eyes were examined. Across from them was a row of tables where the Optometrist measures and adjusted your

new glasses. Each table had a little metal box to the side that contained hot sand. He would insert the temple piece of your glasses to heat them for forming them to fit you. The store had a mezzanine above where you constantly heard the high pitched screech of lenses being ground to shape. That sound still goes through me to this day like fingernails on a chalkboard.

Next stop just past the Waldorf restaurant was good old Liberty Shoes. Here is where my dollar -twenty-five cent sneakers always came from. They were black high top canvas with white laces. You picked them from the bin, tried them on and were ready to fly like the wind. It's amazing, but that same style sneaker will set you back up to a hundred times more today.

Now we pass the Deco Restaurant that always advertised "Buffalo's Best Cup of Coffee," which I think was only a nickel a cup. What a deal. It was just coffee, not a double shot café machiato espresso whatever!

Next up was Lucki Urban's, the furniture and appliance store. The Roosevelt Theater was next door. Every so often they would show a smorgasbord of cartoons and shorts like the Little Rascals and such. All this for twenty-five cents to keep us kids out of mischief for a few hours.

Cross Broadway and head back toward Fillmore, the first place we pass is the Modern Auto Store. Didn't look very modern to me and its connection to autos were two lonely gas pumps and a rickety old garage on the side. At Christmas time, though, they would bring out the Lionel trains and accessories. Boy, did my wish list get long.

Continuing on our way we would pass the *Polish Everybody's Daily* or *Dziennik* as it was known to the Polish community. My grandmother religiously read her Polish newspaper. Now we cross Fillmore, past the sentinels of the shopping district, past Norban's and make our way past G.C. Murphy's (another five and dime store) until we reach that icon of retail stores, Sattler's Department Store. It was at 998 Broadway, as the famous radio jingle would go.

Sattler's was a huge u-shaped multi-story building. If you entered the right side of the store it brought you in to the fine jewelry and fragrance departments. Past that you turned the 'U' and found various clothing areas as well as the stairway going down to the grocery and meat departments. To a certain degree this was the Walmart of its day. The first thing at the bottom of the stairs was the marvelous orange juice machine. Such a sight, sort of like the "marvelous little toy" that Peter, Paul and Mary sang about. At the top would be fresh oranges, waiting to go down the chute to be cut in half and then squeezed in to fresh, pulpy juice. I swear to this day it was the absolutely best tasting juice I ever had, except maybe for the juice my grandmother squeezed into her green glass pitcher with the dome on top for pressing out the juice.

All around the basement level were the sights, sounds, and of course the aromas of fruits, vegetables, fresh baked goods and meats of all kinds. They seemed to combine into one distinct smell all its own that I can't seem to forget. As you went around the market place you came to another set of stairs taking you back up to the main floor. This brought you to the budget clothing part of the store. Here all sorts of clothing and shoes were displayed on tables for your choosing. The better clothes were on the second floor all neatly displayed on racks with hangers. Also on these upper floors were furniture and appliances.

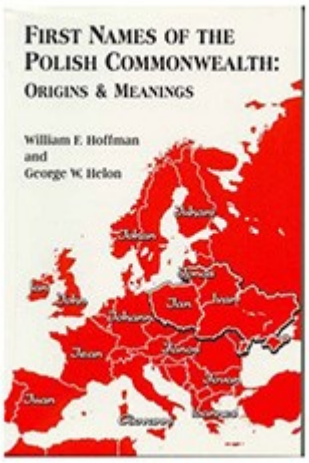
Next stop on our tour is Kobacker's, another clothing store. In later days, when it was no longer Kobacker's, it became a store devoted to selling all sorts of Christmas wares in season. My mother loved this place for all its bric-a-brac and Christmas tchotchkes.

Across from Sattler's was the Broadway Market which is a whole story unto itself. Nearby was the Western Auto and a bit further down was Spolkas Mens' Clothing store. I'm definitely leaving out a number of other stores and businesses, but I have to cut the trip short as we need to get back to Fillmore and catch our bus home. Goodbye and pleasant memory shopping to all.

Using Polish Names

by Sandra Maciejewski Porter

As much as possible, I try to use their Polish names for Polish immigrants and their children in my family history research. As language professor, author, and founding president of the Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut and the Northeast (PGSCTNE.org) Jonathan Shea explained, these are not necessarily the names found in vital records. Roman Catholic church records often use Latin names, but our ancestors did not speak Latin. Many records from the partitioned areas were in German and Russian, and although Polish people in occupied lands sometimes spoke other languages, Polish was their native tongue. When immigrants came to America, they would often use an English equivalent or Americanized versions of their names. When recording people, I look for their Polish names, the names given to them by their Polish speaking parents.



Many of our Polish immigrant ancestors came from places that were occupied by other countries before World War I. There were some boundary fluctuations, but in general, the north western parts of Poland were occupied by Germany, the central and eastern parts of Poland were occupied by Russia, and the south western part of Poland was occupied by the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Each of these occupying empires, in various ways, sought to minimize the Polish spirit and yearning for Polish independence.

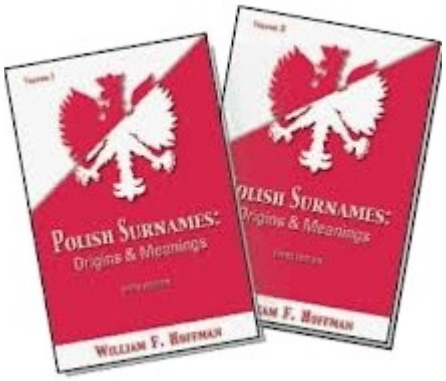
Not only did the occupying forces require official records to be kept in German or Russian, in some cases the speaking and teaching of the Polish language and culture were forbidden. Ironically, some immigrants left their native land so they and their children could be more Polish, not less.

And for a short period of time, it often worked. Polish immigrant communities, called Polonia, grew in the Americas. My own ancestors immigrated to Buffalo, New York, but as we identified through DNA matches, their relatives moved to Polish enclaves in Illinois (especially Chicago), New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Minnesota, and California. In many of these places, immigrants could prosper and successfully raise their children without ever becoming fluent in English.

Their children, however, often embraced America and American ways. Some, like my parents, decided to only speak English to their children, so in just three generations, some of our Polish culture and history was lost.

In my family history research, I work to recover and reclaim this heritage. Our Polish ancestors had and gave their children Polish names. I include the other names they used throughout their lifetimes, but in using their Polish names as primary, I honor our Polish immigrant ancestors and the sacrifices they made to try to give us, their descendants, a better life.

The bonus is that identifying original Polish names can assist in tracking our immigrant ancestors back to Europe and enable us to learn even more of our family history in the "old country."



Sources

- Hoffman, William F. and Helon, George W. First Names of the Polish Commonwealth: Origins & Meanings. Chicago, Illinois : Polish Genealogical Society of America 1998.
- Hoffman, William F. Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings. Chicago, Illinois : Polish Genealogical Society of America. 1993, Second Edition, Revised 2001. Third Edition, Revised 2012.

Świętej Pamięci – "Of Holy Memory"

by Sandra Maciejewski Porter

I am writing this in 2021, following a year of pandemic lockdowns. While most of us are doing okay, too many people we have known have been sickened, died, or suffered long-lasting effects from the novel coronavirus infection identified in 2019 and known as Covid-19.

One of the phrases heard regularly after someone has passed, especially from those who are Jewish, has been "May their memory be for a blessing." In Hebrew, it is "Zikhronah livrakha."

Polish people have their own phrase, "**Świętej Pamięci**." **Ś. P.** is usually found at the top of Polish obituaries, grave markers, epitaphs, and prayer cards, where it may be abbreviated **Śp.** Sometimes it is found with a cross between the letters, **Ś.+ P**., and specifically refers to a Catholic or Christian person who has died.

Świętej Pamięci is the genitive case, used as a noun descriptor. In this case, it describes a person. While it literally means "of holy memory," the phrase is often translated into English as "late." Perhaps that is leaving something out.

When something is described as holy, it is dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred. We ourselves were blessed to have known them. It is an invitation to carry forward our memories of them, to keep their goodness alive.

Many religious traditions have an orientation in which we recognize the divine in one another.

As family historians, we remember. As we think about and write about those who have come before, we honor them. We bring their life and their love into our presence. We hold our memories of them as valuable, as precious, as holy. **May their memory, and our research and sharing of them and their lives, be for a blessing.**

This is why I write my stories about those who came before us. **Świętej Pamięci** – "Of Holy Memory."

Source

- Edytorzy Wikipedii, "Świętej pamięci," *Wikipedia, wolna encyklopedia,* //pl.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%C5%9Awi%C4%99tej_pami%C4%99ci&oldid=63320744 (dostęp maj 26, 2021).

Member Submissions to the *Searchers*

by Denise M. Oliansky (as *Searchers* Editor)

Note: *While much of this is a new article, I have borrowed content from a similar article I wrote back in 2013 about submitting articles to the Searchers.*

As a member of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State, you have many times heard me request (and more often plead) for member-submitted articles for our *Searchers* newsletter. As the sole editor, compiler, publisher, and distributor of the newsletter, I can assure you it takes a lot of material to put out three issues every year. The only function I don't perform is the commercial printing of the paper copies that are mailed to members who prefer that form over the digital version.

My gratitude to every member who has submitted full-length articles or shorter pieces over the years knows no bounds. There wouldn't be a *Searchers* if it weren't for these member offerings. While I often include an article I have authored in an issue, it would become a very boring publication if you only had my stuff to read, without the variety of topics and writing styles of the members who generously present to you their research findings, stories about their ancestors, or memories they recall enjoying with their families while growing up. These truly are gifts from these members to the rest of the membership. They spend time developing an idea and writing the story, and then choose to generously share it with all of us through our Society's newsletter.



We have well over 200 active members, local and distant, in our Society. Only a very small percentage have contributed to the *Searchers* during my time as editor. It is my fervent wish that both new and long-time members will begin flooding my email with their family history stories. Now I know some of you are reading this and thinking, "I can't write" or "I don't have any interesting stories" or "I don't have time to do that."

Not a single one of these is thoughts is accurate, or at least should not be used as a reason to not contribute to your newsletter. If you have ever posted on Facebook, written a letter or an email, or wrote essays in English class years ago – you can write. You just may not be experienced in taking an idea that's in your head and putting it into a cohesive narrative that people might enjoy reading. If you really feel unsure of how to proceed, I am here to help you. I won't write the article for you, but I can guide you and help you get your thoughts down on paper. That is one of my roles as editor.

When deciding to write a piece, it is important to remember that the readers of the *Searchers* are genealogists, of varying levels of experience to be sure, but genealogists all the same. So the first criterion is simple, write about something having to do with genealogical research or personal family history. The following are some ideas for articles, but this is not an inclusive list by any means:



- Helpful location- or surname-specific research information;
- Tips for conducting, compiling, and presenting research;

- Information about helpful resources, online and off;
- Personal stories of genealogical discovery;
- Bits of information from your family's history, such as photos, recipes, and inspiring events or people;
- Unsolved research questions or brick walls you would like to share;
- Review of a genealogical product you have tried or book you have read;
- Announcements or reviews (after the fact) of local genealogical events or projects.



Everyone who has done even a little family research or simply grew up in a family (of any sort) has a story or, more likely, a hundred stories. With very little thought, you can come up with a humorous family anecdote, an informative description of how you solved a brick wall in your research, or a story about an ancestor who particularly piques your interest. The potential topics are infinite.

You don't have to spend hours and hours writing a 'journal article' replete with tables and references…unless you want to and have experience with how to do that correctly. The *Searchers* has always been a more casual, relaxed publication, dedicated to providing informative and enjoyable pieces to its readers. That being said, there are some standards and guidelines to follow in order to submit an appropriate article.

First and foremost, articles must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document. The article should be single spaced, and the Times New Roman font is preferred since that is what I use for publication.

Keep in mind that the ancestors you are writing about need to be identified by more than a proper noun (father, sister, grandmother) or pronoun (he/she/they). You must provide at least a SURNAME and, if they are deceased, their given name. If they are still alive, and you do not want to include a living person's given name, introduce them in the article as, for example, 'my maternal grandfather SMITH.' A reader of the *Searchers* who recognizes a surname is then able to follow up with you to determine if there is a common link between your families. And who knows – they, too, may be able to provide information you have been seeking, but unable to find. Because identifying surnames is so important from a genealogical perspective, articles which do not include surnames will not be considered as appropriate for the *Searchers*.

Although not required for inclusion in the *Searchers*, I encourage you to complement your article with some digital photos of the places, people, or objects you are writing about. We all know how much more enjoyable an article becomes when there are pictures. Pictures add a whole new dimension to the story…and, as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. A picture makes what you are writing about more 'real' to the reader.

If you are going to submit pictures, then digital pictures are necessary for a couple reasons. First of all, you can easily email them to me along with your article. Secondly, scanning a paper photo usually loses a lot of clarity, and when the *Searchers* newsletter is put into a PDF format for publication, the pictures often become distorted, making them unusable. Bottom line, submitted pictures must be digital, .jpgs preferred, and also at least 300 x 300 resolution (higher is even better) for sufficient clarity.

Naturally, as with any publication, as editor I may find it necessary to correct grammar or spelling or even re-write a sentence or two – but every effort is made to not change the writing to the

extent that it diminishes *your voice* in the article. I greatly respect and appreciate every effort made by our members to share their stories.

As researchers of family history, we benefit greatly from the work of other researchers. Often several members are interested in the same ancestors. We rely heavily on the findings of others, whether from an online source or from speaking to other members at a meeting. Sharing your research experiences and your own family history in *Searchers* articles is a way to return the favor. Please feel free to email me your ideas, send me a draft, or ask for my help if you need it (denise.oliansky@gmail.com). Keep in mind when the three issues come out each year (April, August, December), and leave plenty of time to get your article into fine form before the deadline, which is the middle of the month before. Give it a try. Share your stories.

The Process of PGSNYS Membership & Renewal

by Denise M. Oliansky (as Membership Chair)

I took over as Membership Chair at the end of October 2021. Prior to then, the PGSNYS was fortunate to have Donna Ciulis in the role for several years, and she graciously gave of her time to train me to take over for her when she decided to step down from a job very well done. In the past three years or so, the Society started using MemberPlanet as our membership database, and it has made the process of keeping track of membership information and communication with our members about their membership much easier. But as with any computerized system, unexpected issues can arise, so I want to provide a brief explanation about how it all works and where the pitfalls may be.

Let's start with new members. I receive a new membership application in person or by postal mail to our Society's P.O. Box, along with a check for membership dues. Or, alternatively, our treasurer (currently Chuck Pyrak) might receive a payment and application as an emailed receipt from PayPal, which is available through our Society's website. Chuck then forwards the emails from PayPal to me.

Regardless of how we received the new membership, I enter the relevant information from the membership application into the new member's profile, which I have set up on MemberPlanet. This includes such things as their name, their mailing and email addresses, their phone number, the date they joined, whether they want the *Searchers* newsletter by mail or by email, the surnames they are researching (if provided), and when their membership renewal will be due the next year.

I then use MemberPlanet to email the new member a welcome letter (which also serves as a receipt for their membership), the PGSNYS 'Getting Started' guide to provide tips on how to begin their family history research, and a digital copy of the most recently published *Searchers* newsletter to provide an example of what they can expect to receive three times a year — either a paper copy by postal mail or a full-color digital copy by email, whichever they chose on their application. If the new member has not specified an email address on the application, then these items, including a paper copy of the *Searchers*, are mailed to them at the

address they provided.

Now let's look at the membership renewal process. Remember I mentioned that each member's renewal date is noted in Memberplanet. This date is typically the anniversary date that the individual joined, but not always. Sometimes, over time, dues get paid months late, so a new renewal date has to be established.

On the first day of each month, MemberPlanet automatically sends out an email reminder to all the members whose renewal is coming due that month. On the 15th of that month, I also use MemberPlanet to email a second renewal reminder to those who haven't paid yet. IF you pay your membership dues by check and mail it in, or each year use PayPal or a credit card on our website to pay, these reminder emails on the 1st and 15th of the month are simply that. They give you a heads up and you can send in a check or pay online by PayPal or credit card anytime during the month. It doesn't really matter, because memberships are good until the last day of the renewal month.

HOWEVER, if you use PayPal to pay your dues AND have set it up as a RECURRING payment, this means that every year, until you tell it not to, PayPal will charge your account for dues **on the date that is listed as your renewal date in your profile**. That is all well and good, and the system works well 95% of the time, but members have to remember they have a recurring PayPal payment. When the MemberPlanet reminder goes out on the first of the month, some who do not remember are only reminded they have to pay their dues. So they make a NEW online payment using PayPal, and that is where the problem begins. For example, on November 10th they make a new PayPal dues payment, and then when their automatic PayPal renewal goes through on November 19th, they realize they have paid twice. People understandably don't like that, but they also don't realize it's because they forgot about the automatic PayPal renewal they set up in a previous year. The problem can really be compounded the next year if they set up the NEW PayPal account to also be a recurring one! At that point they need to cancel at least one of their PayPal accounts.

Because it costs the Society a lot in fees to refund money through PayPal, if someone pays twice, I simply extend their membership an extra year. We can tell when it happens by the receipts that PayPal sends our treasurer. I always contact that person by email to let them know we are aware of the second payment and will extend their membership. Some kindly choose to donate the extra dues to the Society instead.

Another problem arises when PayPal notifies the treasurer that a recurring payment was rejected. This usually has to do with the member's associated credit card or bank account being expired or frozen. PayPal attempts payment again in five days. When Chuck emails me these notices, I forward them to the member so they are aware to contact PayPal to fix the situation. If the member does nothing, then their PayPal account will suspend the recurring payment. I also let the member know when that happens. It's up to the member at that point to decide whether or not to renew their membership..

As with new members, once I have updated renewing member profiles on MemberPlanet with their next year's renewal date and confirmation of payment is uploaded into their profile documents, I use MemberPlanet to email a receipt/thank-you for their dues payment. Again, if no email address is available, I mail it out to them. No further renewal reminders are sent out if membership dues are not paid. After a lapse of one month, an individual is no longer considered an active member, and after four months, they no longer receive the *Searchers* newsletter.

MemberPlanet has really streamlined the tasks of the Membership chair. As I said, the system works well, and I hope this explanation of the process, and where issues may arise, makes it more understandable for our members as well. One thing that members can do to assist me in doing this job, is to read the emails you receive from us in order to keep current.

Which leads to my third article in this issue...

Are You Receiving PGSNYS Emails?

by Denise M. Oliansky (as Secretary)

An issue that became apparent in the past several months is that some members were evidently not receiving PGSNYS emails. This specifically has to do with emails sent out through MailChimp (a general email for meeting reminders and announcements) and MemberPlanet (for sending out dues receipts, dues reminders, and new member welcomes). Emails sent directly from one person's email to a group of members have not been an issue, only those sent through one of the two databases.

This came to my attention because I was receiving phone calls or texts from members minutes before the start of our Thursday evening membership meetings asking for the ZOOM link, even though I had sent out the meeting reminder with the link the Monday before. When asked if they received the email, I was told they did not. The same with dues reminders sent by MemberPlanet.

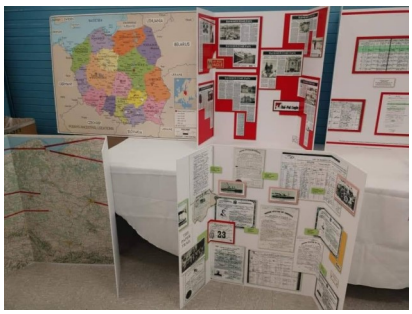
This obviously worried me. How many of our members were not receiving emails and, as a result, were missing out on meetings and other activities, or were jeopardizing their membership because they were not getting their dues renewal reminders? Obviously, a member will have no idea an email was sent, so they can't let us know there is a problem. When I send an email In MemberPlanet, I can check whether or not the email was delivered and opened. But with MailChimp, even though a 'percentage opened' statistic is provided by the system, I can't tell if a specific individual received an email.

I wasn't hearing from a lot of members that they weren't getting correspondence from us. And plenty of members were showing up at meetings and events and paying their dues, so they were getting Society emails from both sources. I thought perhaps it had to be an issue with the emails of those members who told me they were not receiving our emails.

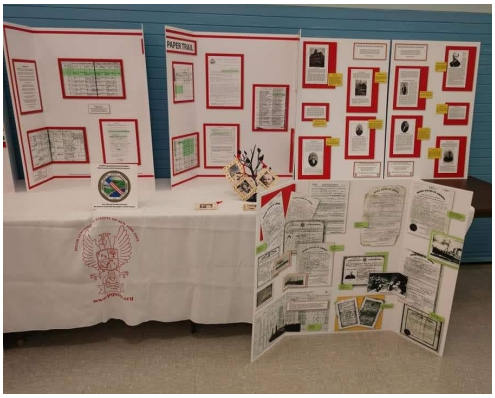
I opened up my Gmail account and started looking more closely at the setup. I noticed there were a separate folders that could collect incoming emails. On my email account, these were identified as Inbox and Personal. There was nothing in my personal folder. I contacted two of the members who were not receiving their emails and asked each one to look at the folders in their email account. They both had Primary, Social, and Promotions folders. I expect the folder names vary depending on one's email provider. Anyway, I asked them to look in each folder for emails I had recently sent through MailChimp. They both found the email, not in their Primary folder (which is where they typically looked), but in their Promotions folder. I walked them through moving the email into their Primary folder, and ever since then they have been receiving Society emails in that folder. They also now know to look in the other email folders if they are expecting something and it doesn't show up.

Which is what I am asking all active members who have not received correspondence from us to do. I always email a meeting reminder the Monday before the Thursday membership meeting, containing the link to the ZOOM meeting, details about the program, and the prior month's Minutes. If you are an active member and haven't been receiving these emails, or emails through MemberPlanet that deal with your membership, please be sure to check all the folders in your email account. If still no emails are found, contact me directly so we can figure it out!

Moments from the 2021 PGSNYS Genealogy Fair and Christmas Party







9/9/2021 Genealogy Fair









12/9/2021 Christmas Party Polish Falcons, Depew













2022 PGSNYS Board

Back row, left to right:
V. President Charles Penasack
President John Nowak
Treasurer Chuck Pyrak

Front row, left to right:
Trustee Maureen Gleason
Secretary Denise Oliansky
Trustee Denise Pisanczyn

Not in picture:
Trustee Jean Vasiloff
Trustee Sandra Porter
Trustee Julie Szczepankiewicz

(Santa is not on the Board)



SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER
POLISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

PLEASE CHECK YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE

PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ANY CHANGE OF ADDRESS