

## How the Kashubian Town of Puck got its Unusual name

by John M. Hingst

(based on the book "Preussische Landes- und Volkskunde" by August Edward Preuss, published 1835)

The old town on the Kashubian coast, famous for its fisheries and its brewery, is written in Polish as **Puck** and in German as **Putzig**. Readers unfamiliar with the Polish alphabet may be surprised to learn that the name is actually pronounced the same in both of those languages. (In English, we would pronounce it as *Putch'k*.)

The original village site was laid out around 1145 by order of Prince Sobeslaw of Pomerania-Danzig, and give the name of **Bugustin** in honor of a certain Bogislaw. We do not know for certain whether this man was Sobeslaw's kinsman Bogislaw I, duke of Pomerannia-Szczecin, or whether he was the 'locator' (developer) to whom Sobeslaw deeded the property. The adjoining shallow bay leading into the Baltic Sea became known as the **Buguswiek**. In 1348 the Teutonic Order granted minicipal rights to the village which it referred to as **Bauzig**, after the shortened and corrupted name of the bay. Over the following centuries, the town became known as **Putzig**, which is written as **Puck** in the Polish language.

The shallow bay then came to be known as the **Putziger Wiek** on German maps, and is now called the **Zatoka Pucka** on Polish maps.

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mounded earth referred to as "terps". River flooding was not treated as a major disaster although nothing could be done for several weeks or months. When the waters flooded the main floor of the buildings, all personal goods and livestock were transferred to the floor above until the flooding subsided. The Mennonites understood that thanks to the flooding, the fertile deposits would serve to enrich the soil, thus increasing their crop yields. Farmers would bequeath their farmsteads to only one of their children. In the Sartowicko-Nowskie Lowlands the villages belong to the one-row bog type. The layout consists of farmsteads that are adjacent to the road at one end, and of cultivated fields that extend beyond the farmsteads which are divided by drainage ditches from neighboring fields. The system of irrigation ditches as well as uniquely planted trees, protecting the property from the destructive influence of the spring run-off and caked ice, survived up to 1945, and consequently in many places up to contemporary times as well. Unfortunately, current examples are very scarce due to a lack of respect for historical and cultural values, which is, for example, clearly evident in the total destruction of the cemeteries. To this day, only several dozen

remain from the hundreds of post-Mennonite sites on the Lower Vistula. There was an almost universal lack of conservation of buildings. They were either dilapidated or burnt to the ground allowing new houses to be reconstructed. The best preserved site on the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship is a house with an extended roof line in Chrystkowo (administrative district of Swiecie) purchased by the Valley of the Lower Vistula Landscape Park.

The 'in situ' plan for reconstructing the complete post-Mennonite farmstead began in 1995 is, unfortunately, one of the few positive examples of this type of activity in the country. We trust that the several centuries of Dutch settlers on these lands will not only be remembered exclusively by the Vistulan landscape they had helped to shape, but also by the spiritual and material values bearing witness to their cultural uniqueness and influence in increasing the cultural diversity of the region.

More information can be found at [www.ihar.edu.pl/gene\\_bank/insitu/swiecie.html](http://www.ihar.edu.pl/gene_bank/insitu/swiecie.html)

*Although the Mennonites are not Kashubian, they have lived in the Kashubian region and exerted an influence on the development of the region, so the editor feels this information to be of interest.*