

## **Kashubs in North America**

by **Desmond Peplinski**, edited by **Lynne Visutskie**

I am particularly aware that our Kashub language and customs will continue to disappear with time—when I was a child in Ontario we spoke mainly Kashub, and now there are very few in North America who can converse in that language.

The book "The Saga of the Kashubs" by Father Aloysius Rekowski, CSsR, is our first and only overview of Kashub immigration to North America. In the book, the author includes many of the communities to which Kashubs came in significant numbers.

In this article I will contribute what I know about additional areas where Kashubs settled. My account is partly from memory so I hope others will add to, or correct the information I present.

I recently visited Saint Joseph's Cemetery in Gnesen township, Minnesota, where my distant Trader relatives are buried. Kashub names like Trader and Lepak each account for at least 11% of the graves in the fairly large rural cemetery. Frankoniak, Labuda and Chesniak are also common names, but I do not know if they are of Kashub origin.

The Traders (Treder) settled in the area about 1870. The first names on the Trader graves include Peter, Roman, Josephine and Barbara, which are also common names among the Traders in the Barry's Bay, Ontario, area. This is interesting because the immigrant and first generation Ontario family was not able to read and write and was therefore not in contact with their Gnesen relatives. I was given two figures by local folks for the number of children that Peter of Gnesen had, either 18 or 21. Peter of Canada had 16, and 9 survived to adulthood. (To visit the Gnesen cemetery take #4 or Rice Lake Road about 12 miles north from Duluth, then take Emmerson Road east for about 2 miles.)

Anyone wishing to obtain more information might wish to refer to the book, "The Trader Family History" by Larry Oraskovich of Faribault, Minnesota. The book has a considerable amount of information on the Gnesen settlement as well as the names of about 6,000 related Traders in the United States, Canada, their ancestors in Poland, and of course information on the folks they married.

John Trader who settled in Gnesen crossed the Atlantic on the Franz de Paul Armeson from Hamburg to Quebec city in 1868, and my great grandparents Jacob and Marianna Peplinski, who settled in Wilno, Ontario, were also on that ship—all from the parish of Lipusz. The Ontario immigrant Michael Trader was a nephew of John Trader of Gnesen and came to Ontario via Webster, Massachusetts, about 1890.

More history on migration routes of these families and where they settled is included in the following: "The Peplinski's in Canada" by Shirley Mask Connolly of Ottawa, and the "Lipusz Peplinski Book" by Jim Peplinski of Burlington, Ontario. The book has about 5,000 names. Both are very carefully researched and the information is clearly presented.

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## Congratulations—

D. Samull DSamull@aol.com wrote to tell us that

Earlier this June, **Father Stanislaw Czapiewski** of Hamtramck, Michigan, was awarded the Bishop Woznicki Award by the Priests Conference for Polish Affairs. It's given annually to a priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit for outstanding service to the Polish community.

Ed: The life and work of Father Czapiewski was featured in the last issue of the KANA newsletter.

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I also visited Calvary Polish Cemetery in Duluth, Minnesota, which has, I would guess, about five acres of headstones with Polish names. That is a lot of Poles! So, Duluth must have had a large Polish community over the years. The Kashub names that I remember seeing there are Ostroski, Lepak, Wysocki and Kuznia. Although I did not find the grave, I know that my great uncle Michael Chippior is buried there. He was born in Wilno, Ontario, and served in General Haller's U.S. Army in the 1914-18 War. He lived in the Duluth area after the war.

One area of Kashub immigration that I have not seen described is Leelanau County, particularly Isadore (Cedar), Michigan, which has quite a number of Kashub names. Another is Webster, Massachusetts, where the cemetery has about several hundred stones with Kashub names like Rekowski, Biernacki and Wysocki. I hope that others with a good knowledge of Kashub history and presence in these areas will write articles that KANA can publish to serve as a historical record of our people.

Many Kashubs came through Chicago, Milwaukee, Utica, New York, and Renfrew, Ontario. There are also quite a few in the Buffalo, New York, area. I have not seen a comprehensive account on the relevant parishes and the names of Kashubs who settled in these areas. With the internet search engines it is today easy to find concentrations of people who have unique Kashub names. One can thus find areas where people with one's name probably settled. For example, there are 28 Traders listed in Manasha, Wisconsin. I wonder if they are part of the same tribe mentioned above.

Publications like Father Rekowski's book and KANA newsletters will be the very few sources of an overview of their history for future generations of folks descended from Kashubs. If we have enough articles on the different settlements, perhaps KANA, or the Wilno Historical Society will be able to publish them in book form to add to the information in Father Rekowski's book. I hope others can write complementary articles about the areas that Father Rekowski did not cover.

*For more information about the publications mentioned in this article contact the Wilno Historical Society at [info@Wilno.org](mailto:info@Wilno.org) or Des at [d.peplinski@3web.net](mailto:d.peplinski@3web.net)*