

*We have taken the liberty to use the Polish names of the county and towns rather than the German which appear in the original text. Very many German names can be translated into Polish and vice versa using [kartenmeister.com](http://kartenmeister.com). We find much useful information including the following is often found in books discussing Pomerania (German perspective) of the Kaszubian region which, of course, is the same area.*

Excerpts from

## **Pomeranian Genealogy, Culture, and History**

by Paul Sternberg, Janice and Jerry Savage

### **Where was Pommern?**

The Province of Pommern was located in northeastern Germany on the Baltic Sea. All of the area of Pomerania east of the Odra (Oder) River was given to Poland following WWII. In former times this area was called Hinterpommern while the area west of the Odra was called Vorpommern and is still part of Germany.

At different times in history, tribes such as the Goths, Wends, Pomerani and Kaschubi have populated this land on the shores of the Baltic Sea. The Pomerani tribe name means "People of the Sea." A Slavic tribe to the south called the "Polani" meaning "People of the Plain" became the Polish.

During the 1800s many Germans came to America for various reasons. Some came because of religious differences while others came for opportunity and availability of land. Many settlers of Minnesota and Wisconsin came from the Province of Pomerania.

During those years, the Polish part of Pomerania belonged to the Prussian Partition. When taking out naturalization papers to become citizens of the United States both Polish speaking and German speaking people were obliged to renounce allegiance to the 'King of Prussia.' For some doing genealogy this has caused confusion as to whether their ancestors were actually German or Polish.

### **County/Kreis Czluchów (Schlochau)**

The history of Czluchów is tied to the fate of the Teutonic Knights. They moved into this region in 1230. They purchased the Schlochau area on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1312 from Count Nicolaus von Ponitz of Poland. Here, between 1325-1365, they built the second largest fortress of their realm. Relations with Poland continued to go downhill over the years. The knights lost the battle of Grunwald in 1410, but they kept their land. In the second Treaty of Torun/Thorn in 1466 they became a subservient state to Poland and the Czluchów area reverted to Poland.

Germans already lived there and continued to do so throughout the Polish rule. In 1792, Prussia acquired the area in the First Partitioning of Poland. At that time the county was 79% German, part of West Prussia, and remained so until 1920. In the Treaty of Versailles following WWI, the northeast fifth of Czluchów was acquired by Poland and the rest of the county was put into a non-militarized zone called 'Grenzmark Posen' Westpreussen." In 1938, the National Socialist government added Czluchów to Pomerania. During WWII Czluchow was under attack by the Red Army in the last days of February 1945. The towns that put up a resistance had their centers burned.

County Czluchów had five major towns, Biały Dwor (Baldenburg), Czarne (Hammerstein), Lędyczek (Landeck), Debrzno (Preussisch Friedland), and Czluchów (Schlochau).

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Biały Dwór received city rights in 1382. It was at the WWII front for three days and as a result the entire center of town was burned. The Catholic chapel survived but was not large enough to accommodate the new post-war population that was all Catholic. A new church was built on the Lutheran cemetery. Bunkers still exist in the woods around the town. The former courthouse by the city lake was built in the style of the Teutonic Knights.

Czarne is another town with a modern plaza in the town center. City rights were received in 1395. The Catholic Church seems very old and fragile. A peek through the keyhole reveals a very elaborately carved altar. Czarne has a castle that serves as a nursing home today.

Lędyczek is a sleepy little town on the Küddow River. It had no Catholic church, only an Evangelical church and a synagogue.

Debrzno was captured by the Russians, recaptured by the Germans and lost again. This poor city seems as if it never recovered. The bricks of the large Evangelical church were hauled away to rebuild Warsaw. The Catholic Church still stands. This city also had a sizable synagogue of which only the steps can be seen today. City rights were granted in 1354. Debrzno was on the border of Poland. It was surrounded with a city wall, some of which remains today.

### **County Bytów/Bütow**

The history of Bytów is complex because it was on the border between Poland, Pomerania and the Teutonic Order. The land was constantly traded, purchased, taken, or awarded in treaties. Even Brandenburg administered Bytów for a while.

Bytow was first mentioned in 1321 and city rights were granted in 1346. The Teutonic Knights built a fortress there between 1399-1405 that one can still visit today. The land became part of Poland in 1466. Fire struck Bytow in 1700 and plague in 1707-1709. Bytów became Prussian during the First Partition of Poland in 1772. In 1804 Bytów and Lębork (Lauenburg) were part of Pommern as one county. In 1845 they were separated and after WWII, became Polish again.

County Bytów was the smallest county in Pommern, but it had 100 lakes, many forests and rolling hills. Bytow also claims the highest point in Pommern, Wieżyca (Mount Schimritz) at 256 meters, or 840 feet, above sea level.

The city of Tuchomie (Gross Tuchen) had two churches. It did not need a Lutheran church after WWII so one of the churches fell into disrepair. Now the new young Catholic priest in Tuchomie has already used the old Lutheran church for Ecumenical services. There is a German-Polish commission that is considering the renovation of the church.

### **County Lębork/Lauenburg**

The County of Lębork was well known for its beaches, fishing, and lumber. The Teutonic Knights acquired the area in 1309 and in 1341 the city received its city rights. Lębork and Bytow were under the Pomeranian Princes from 1466-1637, under Poland 1637-57, and then Brandenburg. In 1773 Lębork and Bytów were one county in West Prussia and in 1777 they reverted back to Pommern. By 1846 they were separate counties.

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The railroad from Szczeciń/Stettin to Gdańsk/Danzig went through Lębork in 1870. The city was 45% destroyed in 1945. Slavic Kashubians who lived in the area who were Lutheran were known as Slovincians. They too, were expelled after WWII.

The other major city in Lębork is Łeba. It was destroyed by storm tides in 1558 and was rebuilt farther east in 1570. Łeba was, and still is, a popular resort. Tourists who went to Łeba could enjoy the blue water, white sand dunes and dine on the daily catch of the sea.

### **Professions and Occupations—Fishermen and Shipwrights**

The name Pomerania (Pommern) in German originates from the Slavic 'pomorze' that means on the sea. The entire northern border of Pomerania extended 222 miles along the Baltic Sea with many small harbors and 4 major harbors, Szczeciń/Stettin, Stralsund, Greifswald and Anklam. There were many small fishing and farming villages on the coast and the men were often both farmers and fishermen.

Although the fish was an important food, very little was written about those working in the fishing industry in Pomerania prior to 1945. Fishing was an unregulated cottage industry so the species and quantity of fish taken from the Baltic Sea was not recorded by the government.

Shipwrights built fishing boats in the small villages and in the larger port cities. Sea going vessels were built for transportation and a flourishing international import/export trade that followed the coast from Finland to Sicily. Information about the volume, type and quality of goods shipped between the German states, Bremen, Lubeck and the Danish territories of Schleswig-Holstein was inaccurate because the collected data did not differentiate between coastal and international traffic. It wasn't until 1872, following the unification of the German states and establishment of a national coastline, that the collecting of accurate data took place.

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**Pomeranian Genealogy, Culture and History** would be a valuable addition to any researcher's collection. With hundreds of pre-war and post-war photos and postcards, collected over five years by the Pommern Regional Group of Minnesota, the book is alphabetically organized with 43 topics from Amber to Writing Your Story. This article contains a sampling of the topics. Superb recollections of manor home life, farm life, seasons and holidays have been assembled in this work as well as useful tips for traveling in Poland and using the archives. Every Pomeranian county/kreis has a written description with photos, making this a useful guide for all Pomeranians. There are 268 pages and 733 b/w photos.

To order

Cost: Price \$20.00 US per book plus \$5.00 shipping and handling per book

Make check payable to Pommern Regional Group of MN

Address 1132 Welcome Circle, Golden Valley, Minnesota 55422

Or see <http://www.rootsweb.com/~mnprgm/PRG/Book.html>

More information can also be found on Paul Sternberg's web page:

<http://www.geocities.com/schlochau/>

