

Historical Account of Polish Families in Central MN (Mike Stodolka)

I came across the recent obituary of Mary Lies Klisch from Bowlus in the Morrison County Record. Mary's husband is Joe Klisch. The Lies name, along with the Klisch name, caught my interest. The Lies family lived next door to my great uncle Cyril Stodolka in Little Falls. This is near First Street and Seventh Avenue. Mary was the oldest of the nine Lies children. Thomas, their father died shortly after the ninth was born. There was a set of twins, namely Bill and Jim Lies, who are now both priests at Notre Dame University. I happened to meet Jim when he was an intern priest at Nativity Elementary in St. Paul.

I met Joe Klisch at a Bowlus Day festival a year ago. Joe lives just south of 4th street near Bowlus. When I mentioned to Joe that one of the early settlers south of Bowlus was Syzmon Stodolka, Joe informed me this was his farm. Syzmon and his brothers Frank and Piotr Stodolka immigrated from Falkowice, Silesia in 1872 to the Bowlus area. Piotr settled further south of Bowlus near the Stearns County line. Piotr is my great-great grandfather.

Joseph Klisch is the son of Roman and Katherine Smieja Klisch. Roman is the son of Vincent and Anna Czech Klisch. Anna is the daughter of Martyn and Mary Holewa Czech, who is included in the family of Charlotte Czech, another PGS-MN member.

Festivals and Events

PGS-MN attended several festivals this past summer to share information on Polish genealogy and to promote our organization as a resource to help people with their research. We have found that many of the organizers of the small-town summer festivals are excited to have PGS-MN participate and have waived the fees for our organization. Events attended included the Sobieski Summer Bazaar, Bowlus Fun Day, Sacred Heart Polish Festival, Royalton Platte River Day and the Annual Rice Days. This was the first time we attended the festival in Rice and found that this town was on the edge of the Silesian immigration front where from 1870-1900, a mass exodus from Silesia came to central Minnesota.



Mike Stodolka participating in face painting at the Rice festival, getting the Polish flag!