

DROBNE ECHA

Installment #2

From *Rolnik*, 1906-1909

Dateline: Delano

By Greg Kishel

Welcome to the second edition of this column, in which I am presenting translations of items from the Polish-language press of the early 20th century that would be of interest to genealogists with Minnesota roots.¹

This time we feature reports that I found in issues of *Rolnik*, the weekly newspaper issued in Stevens Point, Wisconsin by the Worzała Brothers publishing concern. The Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota's Andersen Library has copies of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's microfilming of *Rolnik*'s run. I was not familiar with *Rolnik*'s content before I started investigating the coverage of Minnesota's Polonia in Winona's *Wiarus* a couple of years ago. However, given the ties between the Polish immigrant communities of Stevens Point and several towns in Minnesota, I suspected that *Rolnik* had circulation and local news coverage that extended into our state. A skimming of issues around and after 1905 revealed a huge amount of correspondence from central and western Wisconsin, but also bore out my suspicion. In 1905, correspondents started reporting to *Rolnik* from several small towns in Minnesota as well as locations in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

During a more methodical review of the run from 1905 to mid-1909, I found that the frequency of reportage varied greatly with the source. The Polish-American communities in Little Falls, Minnesota and Calumet, Michigan had very zealous correspondents, who placed lengthy "town tattler" columns on a frequent basis.² Other locales had a streak or two of articles over a few months and then took their leave of *Rolnik*'s pages, for reasons largely lost by now.

¹I inaugurated the series in our Autumn, 2002/Winter 2002-2003 issue.

²It appears that a younger member of the Worzała clan settled in Little Falls, which probably explains much. Anyone with roots in Morrison County's Polonia is missing a major research source if they do not review *Rolnik* for these years!

In issues from the years 1906-1909, I was happy to find a couple of handfuls of items that seemed ripe for translation. Here's one of the groups, a half-dozen pieces datelined in Delano, in Wright County. This town was the site of one of the very first concentrated Polish settlements in Minnesota.³ The early reports in this group contained quite a few tidbits on members of the local Polish community, mentioned by name and reciting their current fortunes and misfortunes--so many that I knew they would be of interest to PGS-MN members who have roots in and around Delano.⁴ The later ones have some interesting social observations (probably not too objective) and more detail on the local Poles' agricultural pursuits. I'm reasonably sure that my opening item is *Rolnik*'s first report from there, as it opens with a simple introduction on the local history and geography.

* * * * *

From the issue of October 12, 1906:

Delano in the state of Minnesota is a purely Polish town and all of the higher government work is done by Poles--from the village administrator all the way to the mayor. Poles predominate among manufacturers, industrialists, and craftsmen as well. The local Poles descend chiefly from Śląsk/Silesia, though others descend from Kaszubia. We have two Polish churches here. The town is divided by a river, which everyone here calls the Wisła.

Last week we had a citizens' meeting on the question of an electric trolley, which they are planning to build here. This also will be a Polish undertaking, because the money will come from the Poles for the most part.

³Father Waclaw Kruszka notes that Delano had "one of the oldest Polish parishes in Minnesota," founded in 1873. *A History of the Poles in America to 1908, Part IV: Poles in the Central and Western States* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 116-118. See also Sister M. Teresa, "Polish Settlements in Minnesota 1860-1900," originally published in *Polish American Studies*, v.V, pp. 65-73 (July-Dec., 1948), currently available at www.polishroots.org/pahal/settlements_minn.htm.

⁴I've preserved the spelling on the surnames, even where it varies from issue to issue. I've followed the convention of genealogical publishing in capitalizing surnames, though--so those skimming the text for names of interest to them will have an easier time plucking them out.

The local region is agricultural, settled by Poles, through whom it has prospered. The price of land is approaching 100 dollars per acre; some of the Polish farmers own up to 500 acres of land.

Mr. WARZECHA raises bees on a larger scale and already has sent more than 2,000 pounds of honey to Minneapolis.

Mr. KLICH recently discovered a treasure. He was digging under an old linden tree and encountered a pot, which contained gold and silver coins from the year 1869.

Mr. Józef LIBOWSKI has already moved into the new store building that he owns, erected at a cost of \$1,200. Messrs. D. KITEK and GABRIEL have just finished their building for an iron goods store; it cost \$1,800.

At an auction, which was conducted at Mrs. DEMSKI's, the local butcher Mr. WANDOK purchased 30 fat swine.

A Polish firm wishes to construct a sugar-works here, in which they would manufacture sugar from beets.

Messrs. WENDT and WARZECHA have obtained a patent for a fitting for small steam boats.

Mr. MARTIN sold roots of the so-called gin seng, collected from 1/4 acre of ground, for \$1,200.

A SUBSCRIBER.

From the issue of November 23, 1906:

The recent elections came out very favorably for the Poles in the local region, since all of the Polish candidates prevailed. We can say without boasting, that if Poles everywhere held together like they do in Delano, we would have gotten an entirely different standing and would have gained a different significance in this, our adopted country.

Polish trade in our area is also spreading excellently. And thus, Mr. WANDAK, the local butcher, has renovated and repaired his butcher shop at a cost of \$4,000. Mr. LITERSKI has already finished his elegant residence house, which is costing him \$4,675. The architect SOŚNIK is erecting a new residence house for Mr. POGREBA, and the cost of the building is estimated at 6 thousand dollars; Mr. POGREBA

Great Reduction In Prices

UNTIL WE MOVE TO NEW LOCATION.

One \$10.00 Double-gear'd Lawn Mower at	\$8.00
One \$ 6.00 Double-gear'd Lawn Mower at	\$4.75
One \$ 4.50 Double-gear'd Lawn Mower at	\$3.85
One \$ 3.50 Double-gear'd Lawn Mower at	\$2.75
One \$ 6.00 Washing Machine reduced to	\$5.50
\$ 2.25 Milk Cans now at	\$1.90

ALL OTHER GOODS IN PROPORTION.

Eaves troughs Fitted on your House at Greatly Reduced Price.

We have 60 gallons Barn Paint (sells everywhere at 90c per gal.) to close out will sell at 60c per gallon—guaranteed for 5 years.

1,000-foot Hog Wire, reduced from 28c to **24c** per rod.

FOR CASH ONLY!

KITTOCK & GABRIEL,

River Street, DELANO, MINN.

Check out these prices!! This advertisement is from the *Delano Eagle*, July 26, 1906. At that time Kittock and Gabriel had not yet moved to their new location. The new building was apparently completed by October 12, 1906 when the item at left appeared in *Rolnik*.

is employed by the Great Northern Railroad as a road-master. Mr. Szymon WARZECHA, who is occupied in the cultivation of bees on a larger scale, recently completed his husbandry due to the cold frosts that will be setting in before long, and then will be transporting his harvest to the cellar and the warehouse. Mr. August BORNICKI has purchased himself a machine for the shelling of corn and paid \$600 for it. Mr. STUTKO has purchased a cow, for which he paid \$38 at auction.

A SUBSCRIBER.

From the issue of May 3, 1907:

Despite the later season, an abundant snow unexpectedly afflicted our area two days ago.

The local farmers are building a new butter-making facility of brick and granite, at a cost of 15 thousand dollars. The board of directors consists of Messrs August KLICH, president, Andrzej NIEDZIELA,

vice-president, and Szymon WARZECHA, treasurer. The architect Mr. SOSZNIK is working on the plans for the building. The Poles have the exclusive ownership of this new enterprise.

This week the well-known butcher, Mr. WANDOK, sent four thousand pounds of hides and two wagonloads of hogs to Minneapolis from here.

In a short time a factory for jams and pickles will be opening in our town.

This year's snows and cold are being a nuisance to the local farmers, contributing to the delay of the work in the fields. Some of the farmers are sowing up to six hundred acres of wheat.

A SUBSCRIBER TO *ROLNIK*.

From the issue of January 8, 1909:

This year the city of Delano will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding, and accordingly it will be a jubilee year for us.

Polish funerals, baptisms, and weddings are the daily order here: though the world outside our town very rarely inquires about our people, because they give birth, live, get married, and die peacefully and decently, without brawl and row, without coming into contact with the courts, the police, and the jail-house--as happens, unfortunately, in other Polish settlements. Thus it is an immensely rare occasion to meet a drunken person on the street among us.

Last Monday morning at the hour of 2 a.m., a fire was noticed at ADICKES's saloon and the fire marshal was quickly summoned. During the extinguishing of the fire the roar of an explosion spread; people thought that thieves had blown up the bank's safe with dynamite. The fire destroyed the saloon and the adjacent iron-goods store of Mr. LINDSLEY. Mr. ADICKES calculates his own loss at \$1,500, and was insured for \$500; the fire caused Mr. LINDSLEY a loss of \$3,200, and his insurance amounts to only \$2,100. Mr. PROBST, the owner of the building leased by LINDSLEY, also suffered a considerable loss, because his building was barely insured, for \$600.

M. WENDT.

The fire described above destroyed the Lindsley Hardware Store (See advertisement at right). Ad is from the *Delano Eagle*, June 28, 1906.

From the issue of January 29, 1909:

The agricultural institute that was held here last Tuesday turned out excellently. The weather was beautiful, the sleighing conditions the best, so that nearly eight hundred farmers and their wives assembled in our city, and thus the city hall was filled beyond capacity. The director of the institute, Mr. W.W.F. McCONNELL from Mankato, gave the most exceptionally interesting speeches, about cooperation, about the low-cost production of pork, and about agricultural husbandry in general. The audience undoubtedly will stand to benefit very much from the advice given them by these speakers, they having such an extensive knowledge of husbandry and long-standing experience. And, they were very well entertained throughout it. A Polish orchestra, consisting of eighteen persons, played with vigor, and as they played a *krakowiak* or a *mazurka* everyone was roused to their feet by something. The Polish businessmen's club offered lodging and provender for the horses of all of the visitors free of charge, and Mr. Thomas LANWAY took up the preparation of a dinner and he fed 350 people in a first-rate manner.

Our countryman Mr. WANDOK has founded a new bank here, which is very much needed because we have plenty of rich farmers in the vicinity--and the Polish farmers from Kaszubia and Szląsk/Silesia number among the wealthiest and most sensible of them. One farmer from Upper Silesia earned far more than a thousand dollars per wagonload of clover hay. Last year some farmers picked more than four thou-

J. W. & F. Q. LINDSLEY,
— DEALERS IN —
HARDWARE.

Tinware, Galvanized Iron Ware, Steel Ranges and Cook Stoves,
Barbed Fence Wire and Galvanized Wire Fencing.

SMALL FARMING TOOLS.

Minnesota Linseed Oil Co.'s Mixed Paints and Pure Linseed Oils,
Sewer Pipe and Drain Tile, Wrought Iron Pipe and Fittings,
Sewing Machines.

Hard and Soft Coal at Lowest Prices.

Your buildings fitted with Eave Troughs and Conductor Pipes on short
notice. Steam, Hot Air or Hot Water Heating and Ventilating to Order.

27 YEARS IN BUSINESS. LOWEST PRICES ON EVERYTHING.

sand quarts of strawberries from one acre. Mr. FOLCZ's new sawmill has started already to cut wood. Some workshops closed for the holidays, but they will be starting work shortly now. Recently we have had extraordinarily warm weather: for four different days the thermometer has read 35 degrees above zero.

M. WENDT.

From the issue of April 2, 1909:

Nothing so much as new has happened among us since the time of my recent correspondence. The ice on the river already has broken up under the flowing of the heat. Work is in abundance. Mr. WANDOK is making plans for the construction of a great hall, as well as a store. Mr. Piotr GALLUS is establishing a large department store. Mr. S. WARZECHA is departing for Alaska shortly, to dig for gold. And that is all of our news.

We had very much snow this winter. Nobody remembers so much snow, in one year--but now there is already none because it has melted. There also were a lot of fish in our river this winter.

The local Pole Mr. SZOŚNIK has made an invention, supposedly very significant: he invented a means that will enable cooking without fire, through the means of a lens and the sun alone. However, he does not want to disclose his method to anyone, only holding it in secret, until he has obtained a patent for his idea in Washington. One should add, that Mr. SZOŚNIK is a great architect. He has built churches in Upper Silesia, and here in America as well. He owns a box and basket factory.

A SUBSCRIBER.

From the issue of May 7, 1909:

Mr. M. WENDT has erected a grain mill here, and he will be making flour in the old country style in it, using water power.

Drunkenness is a rare enough phenomenon among us; not often does it happen that someone has gotten drunk. But now it has happened thus to one man, to his misfortune, because while he was walking on the train tracks the train cars killed him. He must have been of the age of 35, of medium height. Absolutely

LEBOVSKY'S

THE

PEOPLE'S MONEY SAVING STORE

IS OFFERING THE FOLLOWING

Specials for Fair Day!

Men's Shoes, worth from \$2.50 to \$3.00, for fair day only.....	\$2.25
Ladies' Shoes, worth from \$2.25 to \$2.75, for fair day, only.....	1.98
Small Shoes for children, an exceptional bargain for the price, only	40c

Have some good bargains for you in Dry Goods and Groceries which you should not miss.

COFFEE! COFFEE!! COFFEE!!!

We have an especially good line of Coffee, worth from 15c per pound up. They cannot be equaled anywhere for the money.

Good 20c coffee, for fair day only, will sell 6 pounds for.....	\$1.00
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Thos. S. Lebovsky

River Street, Delano, Minn.

Advertisement for Lebovsky's Market from the November 8, 1906 issue of the *Delano Eagle*.

no one here knew him, only that he had been seen in the saloons.

We have had unusual weather here for the current season of the year. For the last four days of April, snow fell without cessation. On May 1 the farmers were traveling by sleigh. The children were so ill with scarlet fever, that the schools had to be closed--certainly from such cold. But now everything is already back to normal.

Old people are dying, and young people are getting married among us. Today, on May 4, is the wedding of Miss Elżbieta PASOR to Józef OTTO, and the wedding of Agnieszka CANIK to Jakób GALLUS will take place next week. Mr. GALLUS came from Upper Silesia; in 1870 he fought in the Prussian army

THOS. S. LÉBOVSKY
 Will give some premiums with every dollar purchase at his store on Saturday.....

FAIR DAY

We will give away two pairs of horse covers, one each to the two farmers bringing us the largest and next largest number of eggs on Fair Day. Bring in your eggs before 6 o'clock.

COME IN EARLY
 and see our Great Bargain Tables. They are loaded down with articles all marked at money saving prices. Remember our

GROCERY DEPARTMENT
 is always complete with an up-to-date line of new, fresh goods.

THOS. S. LÉBOVSKY,
RIVER STREET, DELANO, MINN.

Advertisement from the August 8, 1907 issue of *The Delano Eagle*.

in France. He owns a large farm here in Delano. The wedding of the first couple took place, * * * but not in the Polish fashion. They had wished to marry in a church, but it appearing to them to be too expensive, they took their vows in the court.

Two tricksters came to our town from Minneapolis, and hoodwinked the farmers into planting cucumbers. They gave every one a contract for a certain number of acres, they promised to pay more than 40¢ and up to 50¢ per bushel, and each farmer bought seed from them. The farmers went through this and concluded contracts for hundreds of acres. If profit comes to them from this, I will announce it in this newspaper after the harvest of these cucumbers. (Editor's note: Among us in Stevens Point the farmers also made contracts for the cultivation of cucumbers last year and they were required to be paid up to 70¢ to 80¢ per bushel.)

A SUBSCRIBER.

A couple of observations about these little snapshots from nearly a century ago:

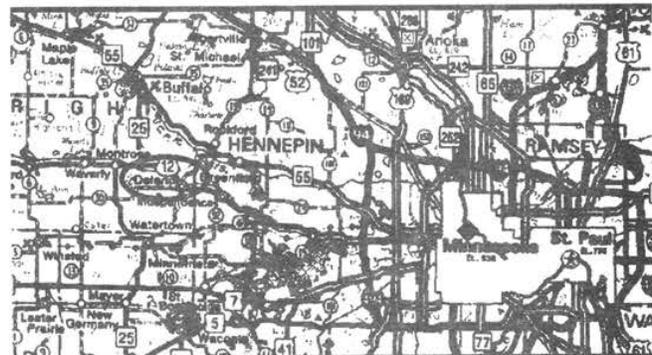
After I finished translating them, the first thing that struck me was how they depicted a mature small-town ethnic community. By the time of their publication, Polish immigrants had been settled in Delano

for thirty to thirty-five years--long enough for them and their children to have had substantial economic success, and to have insinuated themselves into the fabric of local commerce and industry. The farmers among them were participating in the regional agricultural markets, and even had a bit of statewide prominence for their town and their own musical culture, during that 1909 agricultural conclave. And, there was at least one professional person in the community, the architect SOŚNIK/SOSZNIK/SZOŚNIK, who apparently had commenced his career in the old country. But however much the locals were becoming Americans, they maintained reminders of their homeland--as here, by calling the little Crow River the Wisła.

The second thing is that, there seem to have been several Delano-based correspondents during these years; the differences in writing style and subject, as well as the "clumping" of publication in time, suggest this. After the first three "town tattler" pieces in 1906-1907, there were no reports from Delano to *Rolnik's* readers throughout 1908. Then, in early 1909, new items appeared, less focused on individual local Poles, and with a bit more generalized local boosterism. We see that Mr. WENDT, mentioned as a subject in 1907, signed off on a couple of the 1909 pieces, but the identity of the other authors is a little mystery of our Polonia's history.⁵

In a future installment of this series, I will present the other small group of Minnesota-dated reports from these years of *Rolnik*--from the lesser-known Polonian community in Lexington, in LeSueur County south of the Twin Cities.

⁵ As I review further years of *Rolnik's* run I will, of course, keep an eye out for other material from Delano.



Delano is located just west of Minneapolis in Wright County. The Polish parishes of St. Joseph's in Delano and St. Mary of Czestochowa, rural Delano, were featured in the Autumn, 1994 issue of our *Newsletter*.