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Poland 2004

My 5th Poland genealogy vacation was short. I only had 3 and a half days to spare between my convention short courses in Munich & Singapore. I spent the time researching some genealogical loose ends.

There are no particularly exciting results. Details are below, documented mostly as my own reminder. I hope you enjoy reading some of the details. If not, here is a brief summary:

I did not visit any relatives. I was only in north Poland (mother's side), not the south (father's side).

I spent 3 days at a civil archive. On my last half day, I visited the manor house at Przystan and the parish at Szelkow.

I suppose the most interesting new tidbits are the names of my grandmother's two sisters who died in infancy: Zofia & Maryanna (Sophie & Maryann) Piszewska.

I found the marriage record of my grandfather's older brother, Jan (John) Iwanowicz. The record provides the family name of his wife, Maryanna Peryk. I found a few birth & death records that look like Jan's children, but not the birth record of his son Alexander who moved to Pittsfield (cousin of my uncle Alek).

Szelkow, the parish of my grandmother Piszewska, has complete records from 1780 to modern times. I have studied them all now, through microfilms in the US, at this civil archive, and at the parish rectory. I have well over a hundred copies of documents for the families Piszewski and Parzych. Although I have not arranged all these documents into families, I'll surely make continuous progress over the next few years adding more names of cousins of my grandmother to the family tree.

At Przystan, the manor house, now a school, is all that remains of the old estate. I spoke at length about the history of the estate with the teachers. One of them directed me to a small archive in Ostroleka, where I read a history book on Przystan. Although I found no solid facts linking this Przystan estate to my family, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence that this is the place of the Iwanowicz family legend.

End of summary. Details next:

Gasewo. Reminders: I visited north Poland, the region of my mother's ancestors, who come from Sypniewo, which is a "Gmina" or county seat in the area north of Pultusk and Warsaw. Before 1914 Sypniewo had no church; the parish was Gasewo a few miles away. My Iwanowicz grandfather Stanislaw was born in Sypniewo, but his wife Rosazlia Piszewska was born in the village of Olszewnica, parish Szelkow, which is another county seat to the south of Sypniewo. The next county seat to the south of Szelkow is Pultusk, which is a good size city.

Archiwum Panstwowe Pultusku. There is a civil archive in Pultusk. It is less than a mile from *Dom Polonii*, the old castle that has been turned into a hotel. I have stayed at Dom Polonii quite a few times, and I had briefly visited the archive. Advance permission is required to study at the archive. This year, I got the permission. My timing was quite fortunate; I was pleasantly surprised to discover in March that this year, for the first time, it is possible to apply for permission over the internet! It actually worked, although I would not say it was easy.

The microfilms that are available in the US through LDS all end in the 1880's. I knew from my previous visits to Pultusk that the archive has had a few record books from the parishes around Sypniewo from the 1880's and 1890's. Also, new this year, the holdings of Polish archives are indexed on the internet (look for "SEZAM" on Google). So I knew which towns to ask for when I filled out the advance permission request form. Again, I was very pleasantly surprised. There was even more available than listed on the internet, and I was able to study whatever I requested! From the indexing numbers, it appears the books have been shipped to Pultusk in two batches over the past decade. I guess the Polish county recorders (Gmina) have been sending record books that are more than 100 years old, in batches, to archives.

I spent 3 days of research at the Pultusk archive. I copied 88 documents. All 88 are records for people with our family names, from 1886 to 1903. All 88 are vital records, Napoleonic paragraph format. Births, marriages, deaths. These vital record books have an index for each year, so the study goes quickly.

All 88 are in Russian Cyrillic. I still cannot read much Russian, but I can spot our ancestral family names, and I can figure out given names and villages (in Polish, Cyrillic script). Dates are beyond me, but the years are marked with numbers. I guess I'll be studying these copies for a long time, although I know there are no exciting data in them (details below on what I do know, and what I expect to figure out). These are all church records.

I studied 10 parishes: Gasewo (parish that includes Sypniewo), Nowa Wies, Szelkow, Krasnosielc, Makow, Ploniawy-Bramura, Czerwonka, Rozan, Sielun, and Rzekun. These are all the parishes within 15 miles of Sypniewo, plus most of the parishes within 20 miles. Records are available for yet more parishes more than 15 miles from Sypniewo. I only had time for 10 parishes. I did not study records older than 1886 because the ones I found from 1808 to 1885 are available on microfilm in the US.

The archive has other tidbits, like papers of officials, personal papers of nobles, marriage contracts of the gentry, land transactions, wills, etc. Vital records are well indexed but those others are not. I did not figure out how to study those other kinds of documents to look for any mention of our family names. I only studied vital records. So if you want to go study in the archives, no doubt sure there is still more data to find.

The archive is a very old brick church building (deconsecrated, I am sure). The novelty of studying very old books in an old historic building was partial compensation for spending 3 beautiful sunny spring Polish days 9 AM to 3 PM sitting at a table indoors.

The staff was very helpful.

Iwanowicz. This was my priority. My primary intention was to find as many Iwanowicz records as possible. The record books for our Iwanowicz ancestors before 1860 seem to be missing. My long term plan: work out family trees for all the Iwanowicz of the region. It is clear that they moved around. I may get lucky and discover a town where they lived before 1800. I have previously studied only a few of the 1800 - 1885 microfilmed records for the towns around Sypniewo. Someday I'll study more microfilms. When I realized I would have a few days to

spare in Poland, I decided to study whatever I could find in Pultusk, which turned out to be record books from 10 towns, 1886-1903 (described above).

I found and copied 9 Iwanowicz records; 3 in Gasewo, 5 in Krasnosielc, and 1 other; details are discussed below. Actually, it is good news that I did not find many Iwanowicz, since that means they are rare, and there is a good chance they all descend from a common ancestor who moved into the area around 1800 or earlier.

I also found and copied a few Iwanowski records, since they might be a spelling variation used by the same family. I spotted a few Iwinski, but did not copy them.

Maryanna Godlewska. She was the most important person on my mind while searching for Iwanowicz records. This is my great-great grandmother, the living mother of the groom in the 1860 marriage record of my great grandfather Franciszek Iwanowicz. I found that marriage record in 1996, in the microfilms. Parish Gasewo, town Sypniewo. I really would like to find her death record, where she would be listed as Maryanna Iwanowicz. I know nothing about her family; a death record might name parents. The Gasewo death records are mostly missing for the late 1800's. She may have died while living with relatives in another town. Since her son was born in 1830, she might have been about 90 years old in 1900; more likely she died before 1900. I figured I had an unlikely but possible chance to find her death record in the Pultusk archive. I did not.

Jan Iwanowicz. I got lucky and found his marriage record, in Ploniawy-Bramura. 1891. His parents are named: Franciszek Iwanowicz and Ewa nee Pawlak. The record says Jan was born and still living in Sypniewo. That matches my information, so it is certain this is our relative born about 1867. Most of the Sypniewo birth records burned, so I do not have his birth record, but I have family oral tidbits about Jan, the older brother of my grandfather, whose son Alexander lived in Pittsfield and was well known by my family.

This record names the bride as Maryanna Peryk. Her parents are named. I found Jan's 1917 death record in 1998 at the Sypniewo rectory. Polish, not Cyrillic. My notes from his death record give his wife as "Maryanne Poprzekonanie". I entered only "Maryanna" in my genealogy charts, considering the last name too inflected for me to identify. That last name is a reasonable expectation of my attempt to copy an inflected scribbled version of the name Peryk.

I asked the librarian to verify my reading of the marriage record. I did not ask her to translate the marriage date and the age of the groom & bride, but I'll get that translated soon.

Obviously, Jan Iwanowicz met a girl from this neighboring parish, and married there. Ploniawy-Bramura is only 10.6 map miles west of Sypniewo, just beyond Krasnosielc. That's a walk of a few hours. There are no other Iwanowicz records in these 1889 - 1903 records for the parish of P.-B.

I conclude they continued to live in Sypniewo, because I had already found and copied an 1899 birth record from the parish of Gasewo, town of Sypniewo, with the presenter named as Jan Iwanowicz. The name Maryanna Peryk is in that record, in the place where the mother is usually named, so I presume a translation will verify this as a record of a child born to the same couple who married in 1891. I cannot figure the name of the child, but it is not Alexander. I do not know when Alexander was born to this couple. The Pultusk archive only has Gasewo records for 1897 - 1900, and this is the only Iwanowicz birth in those 4 years. I understand Alexander was much older than my parents, so he must have been born before 1897.

Iwanowicz in Gasewo. There are 2 Iwanowicz deaths. They died in the town of Gasewo, not Sypniewo. Bronislaw 1897 and Jan 1898. Jan Iwanowicz is a witness in the 1897 death. Might be his child. Both need translation.

Iwanowicz in Krasnosielc. I found 5 Iwanowicz records in Krasnosielc, a town that I already knew has Iwanowicz records from the 19th century. I am in no rush to fully translate those new 5 from Krasnosielc. I'll probably do that after I work out the Iwanowicz family trees from before 1880.

That finishes the details of this trip's 9 Iwanowicz records.

Sypniewo. The county recorders (Gmina) are not supposed to allow the study of documents; they will usually not even answer questions about what years they have. I know they have old church books with vital records.

This year, I stopped briefly at the county office in Sypniewo. In 1998 I got lucky and persuaded the lady to read me some information from the marriage record of my grandparents. I had since found my Iwanowicz great grandfather's death indexed at the Sypniewo rectory, but his death record, number 1 for 1915, is missing from that book. I was hoping to get details from a civil record. No luck; this year, the lady stuck to the rules. I suppose that 1915 record, if it exists, will be transferred to Pultusk after 2015. Guess I'll have to return to Pultusk in 11 or 12 years. I should have asked her to at least verify that the book exists, but I did not.

By the way, that marriage record is 1904. The lady verified my understanding that 100 year old records get transferred to archives. I mentioned that I had just finished studying the old records from Gasewo and Sypniewo. She smiled but said no when I asked if I can peek at the 1904 marriage records, which I know she has, since they are due to be transferred soon anyway. Unfortunately, at the time I did not remember that the books at the Pultusk archive for the parish of Gasewo - Sypniewo are dated 1897 - 1900. I neglected to ask her if she still has the books for 1901 - 1903, or how often transfers are made to Pultusk.

Przystan. Reminder: We have an Iwanowicz family legend about a great estate. My sister Helen remembers a discussion about this estate between our grandmother and her brother, uncle Johnnie, shortly after John returned from a trip to Poland. John visited the estate, Helen remembers. The name of the estate is not remembered by my family. Przystan is my best bet for the identification of that estate.

I visited Przystan in 1998. I visited again this year, to clear up some loose ends:

1. "German": Helen remembers uncle Johnnie saying that a German was living in the estate at the time of his visit. That would have been around 1960 or so. This year, I asked for the pamphlet history of Przystan that I had read in 1998. They still have it. The book mentions that the Germans occupied Przystan during WWII, but after WWII in the 1940's the building was turned into a school. This trip, I arrived during tea break, so I started a discussion with the half dozen teachers. One of the older ladies remembered that shortly after WWII some people lived in this building, but not as owners. I did not understand the word she used, but I'm pretty sure it meant something like "renters" or perhaps a word indicating displaced people just living there. I know the word for "owner", so I clarified that this building has had no private owners since WWII. She distinctly remembers an older gentleman who until recent years came to visit the school, because he was born and lived there earlier in the 1900's. He was definitely not German. The Bourbon family, of Spanish origin, built the current building in 1928, at which time there had been no main estate building. The Bourbon family left shortly before WWII and did not

return, I am told. I did not ask for clarification if that older gentleman was a Bourbon, or a relative, or a servant. I did ask if any German family owned any estate in the region around 1960 and everyone in the room was sure the answer was no. That older woman could only think of one German family still in the region, and she told me how to find them, although I did not try since they do not live on an estate. My tentative conclusion is that uncle Johnnie was confused or wrong about the German. Maybe he heard a comment about the German occupation, and misconstrued the history?

2. "Moat". Uncle Johnnie spoke of a moat, although it is not clear to me if that is a moat at the time the legend, or a moat that exists to this day. Uncle Chet often spoke of the moat as one that exists today, but Chet no doubt mixed and embellished stories from his father and from his uncle. The only moat I have seen is at the castle at Pultusk, where I stay, far to the south. The Pultusk estate was owned by the church during the 18th & 19th centuries, so it is definitely not of the legend.

Our family legend tells of a river. Yes, the river *Omulev* flows through the estate. The river, which winds and meanders a lot, is about 100 feet wide, deep and slow flowing, with few ripples on the surface the spring day I was there, so I suppose it looks a lot like a moat. I drove over it quite a few times along the road, it really dominates the area.

I did not take the time to check out all the estates of the region. I now have a pretty good list. Przystan & Pultusk were the only two huge estates within 25 miles of Sypniewo during the 18th & early 19th centuries, both covering more than a hundred square miles, including a score or so towns & villages each. All the other estates of the region seem to have been much smaller, belonging to minor gentry of the time, I figure.

Recently, I have made contact with Adam Pszczolkowski, a Pole who has a web site dedicated to the subject of noble estates in northern Poland. His page on the region of my ancestors is: <http://akson.sgh.waw.pl/~apszczol/rozan.htm>. Adam's page seems to verify my list, although I should study it more to make sure I'm not missing any. I suppose it would be nice to visit them all to look for a German and a moat, but I'm not planning that. I asked Adam by email if he knows of any estates owned by a German around 1960, and he said no.

3. References. I verified my memory that the nice pamphlet at Przystan did not have references. The school teacher told me about a small archive in Ostroleka that might have the source material. Sure enough, I found the place with her directions, upstairs above a drug store (Apteka) in the old town section. That archive does have one history book on Przystan. "Dwor Przystan", 1984, an original, not a print, put together by some kind of organization in Olsztyn. They offered me a desk to study the book. It does seem to be the source for the pamphlet at Przystan, with some additional information. Mostly photographs of the modern building. Only 12 typed pages of actual information. I took notes, and photographed the page from the 1940's; no German owner. Too bad I did not bother to photograph more. Darn! It seems I neglected to photograph the reference page. I remember the reference page with a dozen source references listed, many of which I recognized as Polish history reference materials that I know about. However, it is my impression that this book has everything that was found in those dozen references concerning Przystan. In fact, all the pertinent information is nicely summarized on the poster on the wall at Przystan, which I photographed in 1998. The information in the book is interesting, but incomplete, with many gaps. Not all changes of Przystan ownership have documented dates.

I do not understand the details of how large Polish estates were governed, or the details of when and how they were broken up. No doubt the large Przystan estate was broken up during the 19th century, although the book does not seem to deal with that. I gather that the village of

Przystan had been the administrative center of the estate, but I did not see a specific statement along those lines in the history. I suppose the estate could have been governed from Warsaw, or from anywhere? After all, the noble owner only needs to hire someone to collect rent.

More reminders from my 1998 findings, verified this year: The Godlewski family took over the huge estate in 1670, and owned it for about 100 years. It is tantalizing that Godlewska (mentioned above) is the maiden name of the woman who married Jan Iwanowicz, the alleged orphan prince of our family legend. It is a surprise to find a connection on the female side of the family. I suppose that is evidence that there might be something behind the legend, although perhaps not exactly what is told? Godlewski is a very common name. It could be a coincidence.

In the decades before and after 1800 the Mostowski family owned the estate. The date of transfer from Godlewski to Mostowski is not recorded. It is not clear to me if they bought it, or are somehow descendants of Godlewski. Tadeusz Mostowski (1766 - 1842) was an absentee landlord, a big-shot, busy with politics in Warsaw. He left Poland in 1830, it says, without elaboration. (We know from Polish history that in 1830, after a Polish uprising, there was a “great emigration” of gentry to France, due to a Russian purge.) That sounds like our legend, except Teddy clearly did not die; he left.

According to his marriage record, Franciszek Iwanowicz was born in 1830 in Choiniki, less than 2 miles east of Przystan. He and his father Jan Iwanowicz, the alleged orphan prince, might have worked in Przystan. Jan might have been born about 1795. 1830 and 1795 are both perfect years for our Iwanowicz legend. 1795 is my suggestion for the source of our family legend, because that is the year of the Third Partition when the last of Poland was conquered.

The Przystan history has no mention if there was a manor house that “burned to the ground” as in our legend. The history gives a count of villages, buildings, and people on the Przystan estate for the year 1827; I know that data was copied from the 1880’s Gazetteer, because I already have that Gazetteer on CD. It is not clear if the Mostowski’s even had any type of upper class residence on the site. I suppose the Godlewski’s might have lived in a building on the site in the 18th century. The history specifically says there was no main administrative building just before 1928.

Today, the locals call the place the Czartoryski estate, for the Polish family that owned it around 1900.

Nowa Wies. This is the parish to which Przystan & Choiniki belong. No microfilms are available for the parish of Nowa Wies. I had checked 20th century records at the church in previous years, no Iwanowicz in town.

This year, I checked the 1897-1901 records for Nowa Wies, at the Pultusk archive. Nice shape, continuous. It took less than an hour. No family names at all.

This is the end of the Iwanowicz discussion. Next comes Piszewski:

Piszewski Sisters. Reminder: my grandmother Rozalia Piszewska was born in the village of Olszewnica, parish of Szelkow. We have a family oral tradition of “3 sisters who died”. We have a family oral tradition that Rozalia had a twin sister who died. In 1998, I found Rozalia’s 1886 birth record; the record mentions no twin.

This year, at the Pultusk archive, I found the birth and death records of two sisters, in the record books from Szelkow parish. **Zofia (1889 - 1889).** **Maryanna (1890 - 1892).** Parents are correctly named. All 4 records name Olszewnica as the village. I’ll get the (Cyrillic) days and months translated soon.

I have now seen what look like complete records for the Szelkow parish. It is unlikely that I missed both the birth and death of a third sister, but I do not know if they always recorded stillbirths and children who died within hours of birth.

The family oral tradition implies that the sisters died in a smallpox epidemic, at which time our grandmother was bled by the local doctor. However, I see they did not die the same year. 1892, when Maryanna died, had the most deaths, 161; I did not study to see if it looked like an epidemic that year. Deaths per year, 1886 - 1902: 110, 87, 75, 114, 101, 99, **161**, 124, 80, 79, 106, 130, 126, 82, 92, 81, 79. Let's go ahead and say that 1892 was the bleeding year, at which time Babcia was about 6 years old.

Piszewski Brothers. At Szelkow in 1998, I had already seen the birth record of Franciszek Piszewski, brother of my grandmother. I entered 1888 for the birth year of the other brother, Jan (uncle Johnnie), with a comment that I had not seen the 1888+ records.

This year, I copied both their records: **Jan 1893 & Franciszek 1897**. Franciszek's record is in duplicate books, both at Pultusk and at Szelkow. Village Olszewnica.

Piszewski move. I do not know when our Piszewski family moved from Olszewnica to Sypniewo. I suppose it was after the 1904 marriage of my grandparents. The 1904 marriage record would say where the bride was living at the time, but I did not ask for that tidbit when I got the sneak peak at the record in 1998.

This year, I watched for Piszewski records in the Gasewo (Sypniewo) books, 1897 - 1900. None.

I looked for Szelkow records for our Piszewski family after 1897. None found, but none expected since we know Franciszek, born 1897, is the youngest.

Other Piszewski Families. Reminder: I had previously found other Piszewski families in the Szelkow parish, late 19th century. They all show up in Szelkow in the mid 19th century. These are not brothers of my great grandfather Antoni Piszewski, because different parents are named in the marriage records. I know I cannot yet connect all the Piszewski records into one family tree, because their marriage records say that they were all born in the parishes Czerwonka and Makow, where there are no records available for the right years.

This year, at the Pultusk archive, I made a bunch more Szelkow Piszewski copies of records, and arranged some of them into 5 contemporary families, but I have not finished the work, nor have I started to match them with my older data from the microfilms.

This year, at the Szelkow rectory, I photographed yet more Piszewski records.

I now have almost 50 Piszewski records from 1850 to 1910. I hope someday to connect at least some of them into our family tree. So far, I have not documented any siblings for Antoni Piszewski, but I have not yet carefully read all the death records to see if any of them mention Antoni's parents, whose names I have from his marriage record. A sibling death would name the parents. I have plenty follow up work to do.

Many of these may well be cousins of my great grandfather. Since I do not have the names of their grandparents, I cannot determine who are cousins, unless the right older records show up in those other parishes.

Parzych. Reminder: The mother of Rozalia Piszewska is Marcyanna Parzych, also of Olszewnica. I had previously determined that the Parzych ancestors moved to Szelkow in the early 19th century. The Szelkow Parzych family is huge. I have plenty of copies of Parzych records from microfilms. I have not finished figuring out which of these records can be fitted into our Parzych family tree. This year, I copied yet more Parzych records from the Archive at Pultusk. This year, I photographed yet more Parzych records from the record books at Szelkow. Plenty of follow up work to do. I'm sure many of this year's records are first cousins of my grandmother.

My Parzych "jig-saw puzzle" now has well over 50 pieces that need fitting. Already last year one distant Parzych cousin found me on the web. (See the 2003 Xmas report.) Surely others will find me, and we will use my data to work out our connections.

The Parzych family tree includes the families Cikacz & Banasiak. I noticed both these names in the record books this year, but I did not copy any, or even take any notes, since I have traced those families only before about 1830.

Szelkow (Piszewski & Parzych).

Reminder: The Szelkow microfilms are excellent. The records seem complete and continuous starting:

	births 1780	marriages 1797	deaths 1781
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The microfilms end at:	births 1887	marriages 1889	deaths 1885
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This year, I studied the Szelkow records at the Pultusk archives.

They start at:	births 1888	marriages 1890	deaths 1886
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In other words, Pultusk continues exactly where the microfilms end, with no break. In format they clearly look like the continuation of the same series of records. The last years are:

births 1903	marriages 1902	deaths 1902
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Reminder: In 1998 I studied the record books at the Szelkow parish rectory. They are complete and continuous from 1897 to modern times.

This year, I revisited the rectory. I verified the overlap, with duplicate records starting in 1897.

Summary: Szelkow is a genealogist's dream parish.

In 2002 I had visited the Szelkow county office, where I determined they had only 2 old Szelkow church record books. I saw the books, but was not allowed to study them. This year I did not visit this office. From my notes, I can see that the 2 books (1 marriage, 1 death) are the same years as 2 of the books that I studied at the Pultusk archive. I did not verify that these 2 books were transferred from Szelkow to Pultusk, but I suppose they were.

I was lucky again in Szelkow this year. I was unlucky in Sypniewo, so I had about 2 hours extra time before driving to the airport. I drove over to Szelkow. The rectory was empty. I waited awhile, then drove off. I noticed the Roman collar on a man walking on the sidewalk, so I stopped. Sure enough, it was Father Marzec, who kindly hosted me in 1998. He does not remember. I did not remind him that he invited me to join him for dinner in 1998, at which time we had a pleasant conversation. It's understandable that my memory of the event would be sharper than his. I am sometimes embarrassed when people remind me of a routine business dinner that I have forgotten. I drove the good priest back to the rectory and he left me alone to study his books. I could hear his choir practice music drifting over from the church next door. I left my business card and a nice donation on the desk before I went over to say goodbye.

Church Records. I have been and I remain a bit confused about “copies” vs “originals”, and about the record keeping practices in Poland during the 19th century. No doubt record keeping practices varied a lot from time to time and from parish to parish. I’ll probably get yet more confused before I figure it out, if ever.

At the Pultusk archive, I concluded that the books must be working originals, because of the handwriting variations, because of stains at the corners from licked fingers, and because of the marginal notes that are added, like births and marriages, onto some birth records. Also, the Szelkow books at the Pultusk archive take up exactly at the years where the microfilms leave off, with no gaps. The microfilms were made at the diocese archive in Plock, which I also visited in 1998, and saw the books, which look “original”.

However, at the Szelkow rectory, I found what must be originals, because there they are, sitting dog-eared on the shelf, also with marginal notes and handwriting variations. There is an overlap of years with data available both at the rectory and at Pultusk. I verified from my notes that the data are exact duplicates, record for record, same names, same record numbers. However, the page numbers are not the same, and not the same book arrangements.

Perhaps, at least at Szelkow around 1900, the pastor kept 2 books. So both books look like working copies. On the other hand, I know that dioceses required copies of vital records from the pastors of parishes. Perhaps the bishop’s staff obtained and used copy books and made their own marginal notes. I did not check to see if the same marginal notes are in both books.

I have read that the government requested copies of vital records, and I have seen these, labeled as civil copies. Some microfilms look like books that are batch copies, in uniform handwriting and obviously not used much. These circa 1900 books that I studied this year do not look like batch civil copies.

I have heard that the communist government rounded up many record books. All governments have reasons to collect information. That explains why many 50 to 100 year old church record books are today located in the county recorder offices, but that does not really tell us if a particular recorder’s book is the parish original, or if it was originally a bishop’s copy, or if it was a copy made by civil scribes.

My confusion is actually very good news: it is possible that records believed to be lost might have a copy that turns up available some day. I was certainly pleasantly surprised at how complete the 1900’s era records are.

Digital Camera. I borrowed Barb’s digital camera this year. Although photographs were not allowed at Pultusk, I used it elsewhere to snap pictures of pages in books. Today I can easily read and print the pictures.

Dom Polonii. Hotel, all 4 nights. My sister Ceil originally told me about Dom Polonii, on my first trip in 1997. I have stayed there often since, and described it in my earlier Poland Report series. The only change I noticed: the office now has broadband internet. They let me sit at someone’s desk to check my 2 email accounts. It was very fast once they showed me how to jiggle the wires for a good connection. I still cannot check my phone messages, because the phones do not make the right button tones.

Comments. This is the first time I did not gain weight in Poland. I did not visit relatives, so no one was feeding me every few hours. The Poles traditionally work without lunch, taking the main “Obiat” meal after work ends around 3 PM. Since the archive worked continuously, I did the same. Since I ate at local restaurants, my meals were excellent Polish food, but reasonably sized.

It was beautiful spring weather, but I spent most of the time indoors. Highways have improved marginally over the past few years. My car rental and other incidentals went smoothly.

TV still has lots of American fare, with the Polish language dubbed in. I try to practice listening to Polish by watching some TV. This year, I discovered Polish cartoons, which are excellent for me to practice listening to Polish, because cartoon words are very distinctly pronounced, with nice pauses, and synchronized with action. I never realized it by watching English language cartoons, but now that I noticed it in Polish, it’s quite obvious that cartoons are a great language learning tool.

Rap music seems to have mushroomed since my last trip 2 years ago. American music is still very common, both on the radio and on TV, plus very few French songs. The newest Polish music seems to be mostly Polish rap, in an American style, with skinhead performers and with the typical rap style misogynist lyrics and antics, in Polish. Surely there must be other new Polish music; perhaps my impression is skewed by watching the “MTV type” channel that was always on in some bars & restaurants that I visited.

Most of the radio stations that I found on the car radio had a mixture of Polish songs and old American songs. This year, I was surprised to again notice something very strange about which old American songs are on Polish radio stations: About 20 years ago I took up the piano again for a few years, and memorized about a dozen popular songs for my repertoire. I distinctly remember choosing the tunes not because I liked them, but because they were easy to play. Songs like Richie’s “Hello, is it me you’re looking for?”. I have not been playing the piano lately, and my songs are rarely heard in the US anymore. But I had heard them often in Poland, and my specific songs still seem to be on the Polish radio a lot more than I would expect. It’s weird. Like maybe something about my Polish background caused me to unconsciously pick the same English songs that Polish people pick for easy listening?