

Polanki, Inc.

Polish Women's Cultural Club Newsletter

September [Wrzesień] 2017

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Polanki Meeting September 8

The break is over and Polanki business begins. See you on Friday, September 8, to start planning.

SPEAKER: Nancy Monfre and The Syrena Dance Ensemble will perform the Spicz Suite.

HOSTESSES:

Joyce Broderick
Laurie Ufnowski
Diane Ullstrup
Jessica Ullstrup
Dolores Winkler
Sue Zblewski

From the President's Desk

Where did the summer go? It seems like Polish Fest was only a few weeks ago, but Autumn is already upon us. Thanks to everyone who made Polish Fest a success for our organization this year. I heard many positive comments about Polish Fest's Cultural Village



and what a great job the Polanki members did putting it together. The Polanki sales booth

also had an excellent year and the attendees loved our merchandise. I hope everyone had a restful and enjoyable summer. I know I did.

Over the summer, some of Polanki's members had an opportunity to go on a tour of the Basilica as a thank you for our gift to their capital campaign. I know the members





who were able to attend the tour had an enjoyable time and learned much about the Basilica's history. They showed us the stain glass window that will be replaced using Polanki's donation. I'm always impressed by the Polish community's dedication to the Catholic Church. It is truly wonderful that Polanki is able to support the upkeep of the Basilica for future generations. Our first membership meeting after the summer hiatus is on September 8. I hope to see you.

—Denna Flemming

Aging

A friend sent me an email about aging and a couple of things seem to hit home. The first had a "bad" word and I felt I could not print it, but the second was just as good: "If things get better with age, then I must be getting close to freakin' magnificent."

Do you remember you're folks speaking Polish because they didn't want you to know what they were talking about? Here's today's version: Someday old folks will use cursive writing as a secret way of communicating. For those who have not heard, they no longer teach cursive writing in elementary school. I hate printing everything for my great nieces and nephews, but they cannot read cursive writing.

Upcoming Events

Oct. 22 Polish Soup Festival, Norway House

Nov. 17-18 Holiday Folk Fair, State Fair Park

Sept. 25 PCW, 7 p.m., Dr. James Pula "Why is Thaddeus Kosciuszko called the Hero of Two Continents?"

Oct. 12 PCW, 7 p.m., John Gurda "Milwaukee: City of Neighborhoods" \$5 per person

Community Corner

Sept. 11 Anne Gurnack will be giving a lecture: The life and significance of the Polish and American soldier and patriot—Kosciuszko—at the Hefter Center at UWM. No time given.

Sept. 22 Polish Beer & Vodka Experience 7-10 p.m. at Polish Center, \$25 per person, \$15 Non-tasting persons; commemorative glass while supply lasts.

Starting October 17 and continuing through November 21 on Tuesdays, the Polish Center will be offering a Conversational Polish Class for Beginners, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$75 per person and includes all materials. Limited to 25 people.

Our Deepest Sympathy to

Sustaining member Victor Podlaski whose brother Edmund passed away this summer; and

Active member Sandy Je T'aime whose father passed away.



9/02 Nancy Monfre
9/04 Mirosław Rogalski
9/07 Judy Chattin
9/12 Diane Ullstrup
9/13 Barbara Mueller
9/16 Joanne Barndt
9/21 Teresa Frankowski
9/29 Heddy Moskaluk
9/30 Dana Michaels

Get Well Wishes

Sustaining member Jenny Flores who had carpal tunnel surgery at the end of June; her mother active member Jean Wroblewski will have same surgery the day after the board meeting;

Active member Carol Powers was hospitalized for her leg again.

Active member Adrienne Zuber and her husband are in great need of our prayers.

Challenging Columbus

Christopher Columbus's journey to the New World transformed the globe. But many Americans are now taking a hard look at his legacy.

By Bryan Brown

Probably no single journey changed than that of Christopher Columbus. For hundreds of years, his story was the stuff of legend: how the Italian navigator sailed west from Spain in 1492, braving uncharted seas, and “discovered” America.

The Founders of the United States often cited Columbus as an inspiration for their experiment of a nation dedicated to the idea of freedom. In fact, the young country was often referred to as *Columbia* in honor of the explorer. And generations of Americans have celebrated him on the second Tuesday in October: Columbus Day.

But today, many Americans are questioning this history—and Columbus Day itself. Columbus couldn't *discover* a place where millions of people already lived, they say. Worse, honoring him ignores how he—and the waves of European settlers that arrived in his wake—forced the **indigenous** peoples of the Americas off their land.

To professor Leo Killsback of Arizona State University, Columbus Day is not a time of celebration but a reminder of “historic crimes” to Native Americans.

This point of view has inspired a growing trend. Last year, Boulder, Colorado, voted to transform Columbus Day into Indigenous Peoples' Day. “The day should not be about the people who came, but the people who were already here,” says Mayor Suzanne Jones. More than 30 other cities and the states of South Dakota and Alaska have similar celebrations. (Some continue to observe Columbus Day as well.)

Other Americans defend Columbus. They say it was his bold vision that enabled Europeans to brave the journey to a new land.

So was Columbus a villain or a hero? Some 525 years after he set sail, Americans are struggling with that question.

Columbus's Voyages

Born in the Italian city of Genoa, Columbus was a man of great ambition. In 1492, he persuaded Spain's king and queen to fund a journey to what Europeans called the Indies—China, Japan, and India.

Columbus was convinced by the ancient writings of travelers that those lands held great treasures of gold, silver, silk, and spices.

At that time, Europeans' contact with Asia was rare because getting there was so difficult. The trip—by ship around Africa and Asia or over land routes controlled by hostile armies—was long and dangerous. But Columbus proposed a bold new scheme: to reach Asia by sailing *west* through open sea.

Like other people of his time, Columbus didn't know that two continents would be in his way: the Americas. So when he landed in the Bahamas on October 12, 1492, after an 11-week journey from Spain, Columbus thought he had reached the Indies.

That December, Columbus claimed an island in the Caribbean Sea for Spain, calling it Hispaniola. (Today, the island is split into Haiti and the Dominican Republic.) The explorer praised the island's people, the Taino, for their generosity. Yet he also let his men loot and kidnap the Taino in search of their riches.

Columbus made three other journeys to the New World, as Europeans soon began calling the Americas. With each, the Taino suffered. Many were sold into slavery. Countless others died from smallpox and other European diseases to which they had no resistance. Within decades, most of them had been wiped out.

Built on Indian Lands

Yet Columbus's voyages transformed the world. European powers rushed to build settlements in the New World. When the native people got in their way, say scholars, the newcomers pushed them aside.

Later, after the U.S. was founded and began expanding west across the continent, Congress repeatedly forced treaties on Native Americans that stripped them of their ancestral homelands. America was built “on lands which Indians were essentially forbidden to keep,” says professor Ron Welburn of the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Benjamin Railton, a historian at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts, traces this treatment directly to Columbus: [Columbus saw] this place as open and available for European possession.” U.S. settlers merely continued this treatment, he says.

Columbus's Achievement

Still, many Americans continue to admire Columbus. In particular, Italian-Americans take pride in the explorer, holding Columbus Day parades in New York and other cities.

Historian William Connell of Seton Hall University in New Jersey views Columbus Day as a tribute to an important American trait: diversity. That was an explicit goal of Benjamin Harrison, who in 1892 became the first president to proclaim a celebration of Columbus.

At the time, Italian immigrants “were near the bottom rung in American society,” Connell has written. Harrison intended Columbus Day “to celebrate our land and its many peoples.”

“Columbus was definitely not a saint,” Connell says. Yet he believes it’s wrong to blame the explorer for every crime that came after his arrival. In his view, Columbus’s achievement is undeniable. His linking of the New World with the Old was “a world-changing occasion such as has rarely happened in human history.”

Bleak Conditions for Native Americans

Today, experts agree that Native Americans are suffering. According to 2014 figures from the U.S. census Bureau, 28 percent live in poverty, the highest of any race group.

Railton blames much of this on the “bleak” conditions on Indian reservations. These areas were created by the U.S. government starting in the 19th century for American Indians forced off their lands.

Railton says that reservations have kept Native Americans isolated from other Americans, many of whom see Indians only as part of a tragic past.

Two Holidays?

Confronting the present reality—and its connection to the treatment of Native Americans since Europeans arrived in the New World—is behind the push to establish Indigenous Peoples’ Day

But should Columbus Day be eliminated completely in the process? Not everyone who backs Indigenous Peoples’ Day thinks so.

In Railton’s “ideal world,” Americans would address a difficult past by holding celebrations of both Columbus *and* indigenous peoples. “These back-to-back days could allow us to think in depth about the European and Native American threads throughout the history of the Americas,” he says.

Connell has come to a similar conclusion. The “Columbus Discussion” is a good thing, he writes. “It reminds us—and our students—that history is messy.” It’s absolutely necessary “to have these discussions—to celebrate the good that has come out of [Columbus], while also pondering the bad.”

—Reprinted from the September 4, 2017, issue of Junior Scholastic.

Labor Day

The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City. In 1884 the first Monday in September was selected as the holiday. Today, Labor Day is seen as the last weekend before summer is over, but it is still a time to pay tribute to the American worker, the creator of so much of this nation’s strength, freedom, and leadership.

Dożynki (daw-shin-key)–Polish Harvest Fest

Old rural Poland celebrated after the back-breaking harvest was over for another year, and granaries and pantries were full once again. Although the major waves of Polish peasant immigrants arriving in America in the final quarter of the 19th century settled in cities, they nevertheless brought many of their old agrarian customs with them, and Dożynki was probably the most prominent.

. . . The harvesters would first take their harvest wreaths to church to be blessed. The harvest wreath (wieniec dożynkowy) consisted of sheaves of grain woven into various shapes and adorned with mountain ash berries, flowers, fruits and ribbons. It is usually mounted on two horizontal poles on which it could be carried by two to four harvesters. At times it took the form of a headpiece worn by the przodownica (head woman harvester).

After Mass, she would lead the colorful procession of peasant lads and lasses sporting their holiday finery who would ceremonially present the wreath to the lord of the manor, singing as they went. The squire would thank his harvesters for a job well done and invite them to partake of food and drink. Long tables were set up in the squire's front yard, a barrel of beer was tapped and the feasting could begin.



Pictures by Jessica Ullstrup

Letter from Laski, School for the Blind

Dear Friends!

We would like to thank you cordially for your donation in the amount of USD 1110.50 sent through Treasurer of POLANKI–Mrs. Jean Wroblewski. Your donation will be allocated to **building the House for the boys**—an investment that considerably exceeds our financial capabilities. We are very grateful for your kindness and support. Without the help of Donors we would not be able to achieve intended purposes.

In this letter Kamil, a student of the first form of Technical College talks aabout what Laski means to him:
“Laski is a very special place: full of warmth, love and a place—you can tell—with the atmosphere. There is no other place like that on Earth. Something unique resides here. Something undefined, but omnipresent. Something without which Laski, would not be really Laski. And finally, it is something that so many people put effort into to create it. There is no such time, wherein Laski would not be vibrant with life. In which everything would not change like in a crazy kaleidoscope. As my Laski is, above all, sounds. I often like to come to the chapel and listen to the quiet voices of praying nuns. It calms you down. It helps to collect your thoughts. Acquire a distance. Sometimes I like to stand on the lawn by the road and simply listen. What will I hear? First of all, the rhythmic clatter of white canes, a singing bird on a branch, cars pulling in on a nearby car park, splashing water dripping from drainpipes... It seems to me that I hear the rustle of surrounding me trees. Forest talks to me. I blend into it and you cannot tell where the forest is, and where I am. I feel unity with nature. I become a part of it. Laski is also the sounds of music. My first musical memories are associated with kindergarten. That’s when Mr. Czesław came, sat down at the piano and began to play. I remember that I burst into tears then. I instinctively hugged the musician. What he played filled you with sense of security, certainty, peace. It was then that I made up my mind to start musical education. My pianistic education lasted eight years. They were long, hard years. Full of regular exercises, etudes, minuets, preludes and sonatinas. But at the same time very joyful. When I sit down at the piano, I feel that I am in the right place. This is my world. My kingdom, where I am an absolute ruler. Here are my 88 keys. Listen to me. I control them. For me they are a means to express myself. The way to tell my own story. An attempt to answer the most important questions of life.

Without all these sounds I cannot even imagine Laski. They are an integral part of it. With all the conviction I can say that really **what is most important is invisible to the eye.”**

We are sending heartfelt greetings from Laski and assure you of our remembrance in prayer.

Yours sincerely,

Justyna Grochowska

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