

COMMUNITY • FAITH • FAMILY



POLISH
HERITAGE
CENTER USA
PANNA MARIA, TEXAS

Visitor Experience #59

They were first...

*The Poles at Jamestown, Virginia,
1609*



Image depicting the arrivals of the Poles on the English ship *Margaret and Mary*

Image from: polishamericancenter.org/FirstSettlers.html

**Join us for the Polish Heritage Center's Family Day Program,
"Celebrating Polish Easter Traditions and Heritage"**

Saturday, April 9th, 10am—4pm

Polish Heritage Center, Panna Maria, TX

**Bring your friends and family to learn about Polish Easter traditions, and
enjoy hands-on activities and educational exhibits!**

*Come learn about the various traditional Polish techniques to decorate and to
have fun creating your own traditional style Polish Easter eggs, called Pisanki,
which means 'to write' or 'to paint'. Learn about the origin of Easter eggs and their
significance for past and current Polish cultures, including their important role
in Christianity, and who traditionally created them. Bring your Easter tradition
memories, and favorite family Lent and Easter recipes to share!*



“Pisanki” Easter Eggs (polishpotterystore.com)

Many thanks to the Office of the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Houston
for their generous support of the educational program!

Visit: <https://polishheritagecentertx.org>



We Invite Everyone to a Special World-Class Musical Performance by the Polish Folk Group

“Tekla Klebetnico” from Southern Poland
On Tuesday, May 3rd at 3pm
Polish Heritage Center, Panna Maria, TX

The Polish Folk Group “Tekla Klebetnica” from southern Poland plays a variety of music from highlander music, to gypsy, to classical and regional Polish folk songs. They have played all over the world and in 2017 they won 2nd place in “Mam Talent” (Go Talent) out of over 8,000 entries. In 2013, Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, member of the PHC board of directors and president of the Polish American Council of Texas, brought them to La Vernia TX, to play at the high school auditorium. We thank Dr. Jim for the opportunity and welcome everyone to this special free world-class Polish performance for our visitors! See examples of their performances:

<https://www.facebook.com/kapelagoralska/>



Please note that in the event of performance schedule changes or cancellation visit our PHC website and Facebook pages for the latest up to date information:

<https://polishheritagecentertx.org>



First Poles in America

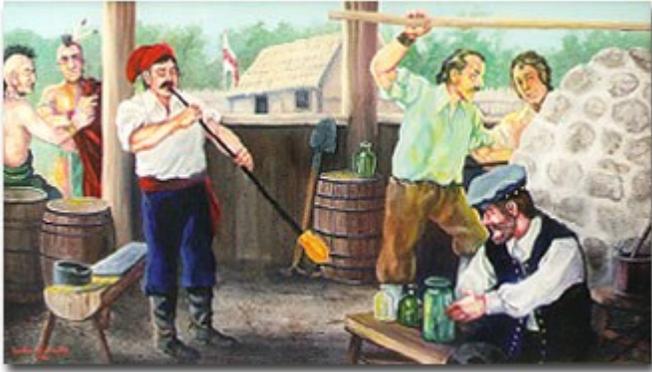


Image depicting the Polish glassblowers
Image from:
[polishamericancenter.org/
FirstSettlers.html](http://polishamericancenter.org/FirstSettlers.html)

Those who grew up listening to the radio not just for the music may remember **Paul Harvey**. A great story teller of our time, his famous tag line was *The Rest of the Story!* And you would look forward to it! Just as I too was hooked on **Paul Harvey's** invitation to learn what was next, when I began to read about the earliest

Poles in America, I discovered that I too needed to learn the rest of this story.

In a wonderful article written about the arrival of the first Poles to the New World in 1608, noted Polish-American historian, **Professor James S. Pula**, of Purdue University Northwest, set forth to help clear the air in a 2008 work in a re-print of an article that first appeared in *The Polish Review*, and now in the journal JSTOR. In his article, *Fact vs. Fiction*,ⁱ **Professor Pula** sorts out facts from the embellishments that often seem to seep into the mainstay of what is considered fact. After all is sifted out of the popular history of this watershed event, the kernels of truth remain and deserve to be celebrated. This does not mean that other truths might not be real, but at this point in time, they simply have not been verified. I often say to my relatives regarding our family genealogy that I am at the mercy of my sources! Likewise, published history is at the mercy of its sources.

Poles Present in Jamestown in 1608

Poles were indeed at the Jamestown colony in 1608.ⁱⁱ Arriving on the *Margaret and Mary*, a handful of Poles, three or four most likely, would be the first from Poland to step onto North American soil. Although certain sources will have various names listed and their home villages, this information may or may not be accurate. But in the larger sense, the important fact is that it does seem that these men were Polish born and raised. Those verifiable sources do agree on this fact. The Polish laborers who came to the New World were here for several decades on average.

Poles Possessed Needed Skills Using Pitch, Tar, Resin, Soap Ashes, and Potash

Some of the stories that describe the first days of the colony reveal the image that the first planners did not seem to plan very well! Various accounts paint an image of gentlemen explorers who seem to think that they were about finding easy gold and other precious treasures. The first colony did not take into account that what was worth more than gold was the needed material to maintain themselves and their sailing vessels. Pitch and tarⁱⁱⁱ were crucially important because this is what was used to make the wooden sailing vessels water tight. Soap ash and potash^{iv} are two base ingredients used in the making

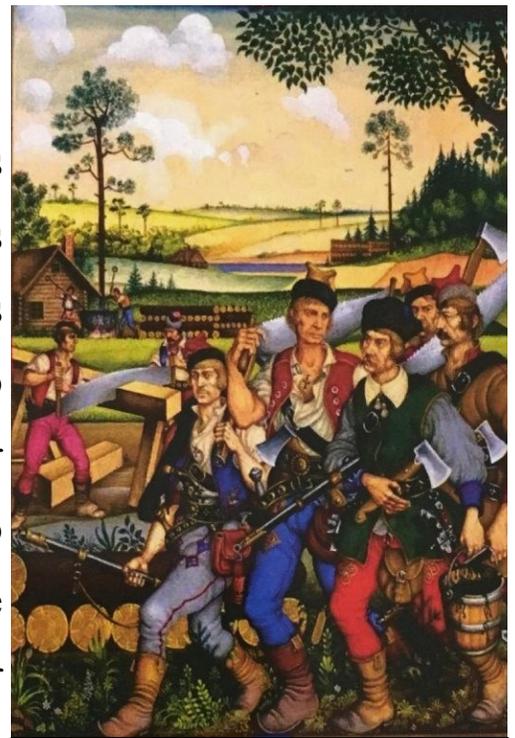


Image showing Poles with tools of their trade and pale of pitch on bottom right
Image from:
pacmi.org/significant-jamestown-anniversary/

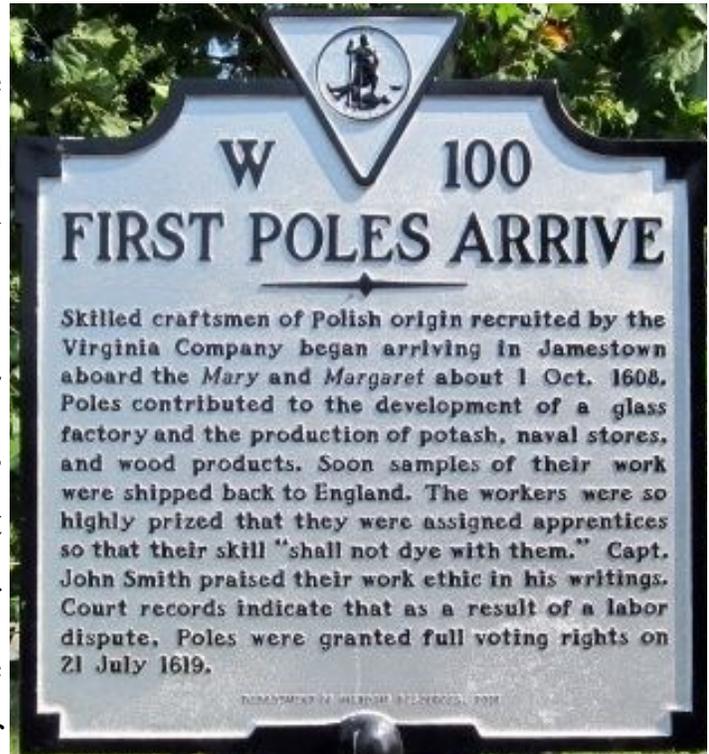
of glass. There are a number of reports that Polish artisans^v may also have been directly involved in the production of glass. Whether or not this is the fact, at the very least the Poles were integral in providing main ingredients needed in the production of glass and may have assisted in the process. Prominent also is the testimony written by **Captain John Smith** in his diary that the work ethic of the Poles far exceeded that displayed by the typical Englishman of the colony.^{vi}

Two Poles Saved the Life of Captain John Smith

Many of us grew up watching westerns either on TV or at the movies. The problem with the westerns we watched is that they were greatly exaggerated! Very seldom were those westerns anywhere close to what really happened—except maybe at Jamestown. The Native American and English cultures were as foreign and opposite as could be when they first met. After a brief period when the two cultures seemed to tolerate each other, the relationship soured. The Native Americans felt infringed upon by the English, and they began to push back. In one encounter, the Native Americans planned an ambush against **Captain John Smith**.^{vii} In his own diary, **Captain John Smith** wrote that two Poles came upon the scene to assist and save his life.^{viii} The role of the Poles in the life and defense of the colony also included noted acts of bravery. There is a recorded and attested account by four Englishman that “**Robert the Polonian**”^{ix} captured one of two Indian elders. Sadly, in a later encounter, there is a recording that “**Mathew, a Polander**”^x lost his life in an Indian attack. From the handwritten records of the colony, the contribution to the defense was well known and without a doubt.

Poles Suffered Social Injustice

Perhaps the greatest event for which the Poles in Jamestown are remembered is staging the first “workers strike” in the New World in 1619. Strike, or not, the Poles were acting against an unjust issue that *disenfranchised* the group within the colony.^{xi} In 1619, the Poles were part of a lower class that meant they did not enjoy the same status for their contribution. Recognizing this, the court records of the Virginia Company of London resolved to address this injustice and decreed that the Poles *shall be enfranchised,*



Department of Historic Resources
 Marker Number W-100
 Photograph from: HMdb.org and taken by
 Bernard Fisher

and made as free as any inhabitant there whatsoever.^{xii} There was also a secondary result of this win for the Poles. The next line of the decree instructs the colony to ensure that the craft, skill, and knowledge of the Poles would be preserved by establishing what would be recognized today as *trade schools*.^{xiii} This in itself is remarkable because it was one of the clearest examples of how important the work of these early Poles was to the colony and the New World.

<p>ⁱ Pula, James, “Fact vs. Fiction: What do We Really Know About The Polish Presence In Early Jamestown?,” <i>The Polish Review</i>, Vol 53, No 4, pp 477-493.</p> <p>ⁱⁱ Pula, 487.</p> <p>ⁱⁱⁱ Pula, 489.</p> <p>^{iv} Pula, 489.</p> <p>^v Pula, 489.</p> <p>^{vi} Pula, 489.</p> <p>^{vii} Pula, 489-490.</p> <p>^{viii} Pula, 489-490.</p>	<p>^{ix} Pula, 490.</p> <p>^x Pula, 490.</p> <p>^{xi} Pula, 490.</p> <p>^{xii} Pula, 490.</p> <p>^{xiii} Pula, 491.</p> <p>^{ix} Pula, 490.</p> <p>^x Pula, 490.</p> <p>^{xi} Pula, 490.</p> <p>^{xii} Pula, 490.</p> <p>^{xiii} Pula, 491.</p>
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4 Lenten traditions from your Polish grandma

These customs prepared the home (and heart) for the celebration of Christ's Paschal mystery.

Article by Philip Kosloski - published on 02/04/18 and

Appearing in: <https://aleteia.org/2018/02/04/4-lenten-traditions-from-your-polish-grandma/>

Lent is a beautiful season of spiritual renewal and over the centuries cultures from around the world developed traditions to help the laity embrace its spiritual character. In particular, the people of Poland have a rich set of traditions that have been passed down through the ages and are eagerly embraced in many parts of the world. Here are four such traditions that your Polish grandma was likely brought up with and whose ancestors kept with religious fervor every year.

Spring cleaning

Historically the fast for Lent was quite rigorous and in Poland the use of such things as lard, sugar, eggs and fruit were forbidden. This meant that prior to Lent, these items had to be either thrown away or consumed. Instead of tossing everything to the dogs, someone decided that many of the forbidden ingredients could be mixed together to create a type of doughnut, now called a “pączki.”

This tradition coincided with a general spring cleaning, emptying out the house and preparing the home (and heart) for the prayerful season of Lent. It was a way to end the celebratory season after Christmas and look forward to the solemn spiritual exercises that lie ahead.



Lenten lamentations

In Poland there pervaded among the people a desire to meditate on the Passion and death of Jesus. One tradition during Lent that maintained this sentiment was a weekly Lenten service called *Gorzkie Zale*. This devotion that was developed in the 18th Century in Poland is a set of hymns that focus on the Passion of Christ. It is sung every Sunday during Lent and is a constant reminder of the sadness of Christ's death.

St. John Paul II remarked that every year on Ash Wednesday he was reminded of this Polish practice and that it

Image of Christ's sorrow
Image from:
[swjerzy-poznan.net/
nabozenstwa/
gorzkie_zale/](http://swjerzy-poznan.net/nabozenstwa/gorzkie_zale/)

“remained deeply impressed in my memory.” During a homily on Ash Wednesday he even recounted a portion of the hymn from memory.

Come, bitter regret, pierce our hearts Let go, my eyes! Well up, springs of sad tears! The sun and stars recede, shrouding themselves in mourning. The angels cry sadly. Who can describe their grief? The cliffs harden; the dead arise from the earth. I ask what is it, what has happened? All creation is stunned! In the presence of the passion of Christ, We are filled with inexpressible regret! Jesus, shatter without delay the hardness of our hearts! Quench the ardor of my passions as I enter the depths of your Passion.

Stations of the Cross

Not reserved to the people of Poland, the Stations of the Cross were a very popular practice among the laity in that country. In particular, a shrine was built at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska that commemorated Jesus’ Passion. Erected on a landscape of hills the shrine was fashioned to resemble the way of the cross in Jerusalem. There are numerous chapels at the shrine whereby a pilgrim can trace Jesus’ Passion, death and resurrection.



Image of the Stations of the Cross at
Kalwaria Zebrzydowska

Photograph from:

fototeo.pl/portfolio/kalwaria-zebrzydowska-droga-krzyzowa-2014/

The Sorrowing Christ

In line with the other traditions that meditate on Christ’s passion, there developed a particular statue of Jesus that became a focus of Lenten devotion. Called *Chrystus Frasobliwy*, it depicts Christ bent over in deep contemplation and sorrow. He wears the crown of thorns and often holds a reed in his hand, a reminder us of how he was mocked by the Roman soldiers. Jesus awaits the crucifixion and emphasizes the passage from Matthew where Jesus says to his disciples, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Matthew 26:38).



Chrystus Frasobliwy figurine

Photograph from: www.uarchaniola.pl/

Calendar of Events

April 9: PHC Family Day Program -
10am to 4 pm, *Celebrating Polish
Easter Traditions & Heritage*

April 16: Easter Basket Blessing,
Our Lady of Czestochowa,
Houston, Texas

May 3: PHC Program - 3pm, Polish
Folk Group, *Tekla Klebetnica*

April 29 - May 1: Polish Festival
Houston, Our Lady of
Czestochowa, Houston, Texas



November 12: 2022 PACT ANNUAL
MEETING, Annunciation of the
BVM Catholic Parish,
St. Hedwig, Texas

Check polishheritagecentertx.org/ often for updates and changes

Historical Highlights

April 10, 2022 - Palm Sunday

April 14, 966 - Baptism of Poland

April 17, 2022 - Easter Sunday

April 19, 1943 - Warsaw Ghetto Uprising begins

April 22, 2022 - Divine Mercy Sunday

April 27, 2014 - Canonization of Pope John Paul II

May 3, 1791 - Polish Constitution Day

May 8, 1945 - World War II Ends

May 12, 1364 - Founding of Jagiellonian University

May 29, 2022 - Ascension of the Lord

Visitors Near and Far!

Since the Polish Heritage Center has been opened for only about four months, it has been wonderfully surprising to learn about the visitors who have experienced it so far. Here are the places some of them have hailed from as of March 3, 2022:

Of Course! → Panna Maria, Texas

San Antonio, Texas

Houston, Texas

*Dearborn,
Michigan*

**SPRINGFIELD,
VIRGINIA**

Lafayette, Louisiana

**POLAND:
WARSAW
BIALYSTOK
SZCZECIN
OPOLE**

Cumming, Georgia

Soldotna, Alaska

Providence, Rhode Island

Papillion, Nebraska

Pulaski, New York

*Lewisville,
Arkansas*

Chicago, Illinois

Victoria, Texas

Baltimore, Maryland

**Doylestown,
Pennsylvania**

*Nipomo,
California*

Madison, Wisconsin

STANFORD, CONNECTICUT

Hugo, Minnesota

**Greensboro,
North Carolina**

The Contributions of Fr. Piotr Skarga, S.J.



Image of Fr. Piotr Skarga from:
alchetron.com/Piotr-Skarga

Very seldom is one person able to move an entire country in his lifetime. When such a person emerges onto the scene, it appears to be a force of nature or of God! Such a person arose during the time of the Counter-Reformation in Poland – **Fr. Piotr Skarga, S.J.** In the late 1500s, this Jesuit arrived during a time of great changes in the Kingdom of Poland. Addressing the pressing issues between Catholics and Protestants, the moral laxities of the royal court in Poland, and the people’s desire to follow Christ, **Fr. Piotr Skarga, S.J.** did not shrink away from boldly proclaiming the Holy Gospel to all peoples. His first very well-known work was a series of sermons specifically addressed to the political figures of his day called the *Sejm Sermons*, and the other was his book on *the Lives of the Saints*, a book that is still popular to this day in Poland. My own Episcopal motto is very close to how **Fr. Piotr Skarga, S.J.** lived – *To Bear Witness to the Truth!* Much respect is owed to this fearless follower of Christ during this Lent and Easter Season. Fr. Piotr Skarga, pray for us, give us your courage.

May God Bless You and Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John W. Yanta". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

†John W. Yanta