

Polish Immigration - When, Why, Where and How
By Steve Szabados
Email s-szabados@sbcglobal.net
Website: steveszabados.com

1. When

- Jamestown
- After the Partitions
- "For bread"

2. Why

- 1608 – Jamestown craftsmen
- 1790 to 1850 – nobles and merchants fleeing after losing uprisings
- 1850 to 1880 – poor from Prussian partition fleeing political oppression, bad economic conditions and losing Polish culture
- 1880 to 1914 – poor from all partitions fleeing bad economic conditions (no farm land available and lack of industrial development)
- Primarily farming areas with land going to oldest son when father died
- Slow industrial development to provide jobs for those that did not inherit the family land
- Russia – moved investment into traditional Russian lands

3. Emigration – late 1800s to early 1900s

- Push factors were forces that drove people out of their home country:
 - a. poverty
 - b. a shortage of land
 - c. the military draft
 - d. political or cultural repression
 - e. religious discrimination.
- Pull factors were:
 - a. Industrial development in United States (more labor needed to work the factories)
 - b. Cheap farmland in America and Canada (Homestead Act in United States)
 - c. Introduction of Steerage passage (1847 Bremen to New York \$15)
 - d. The magnetic pull of "chain migration."

4. Leaving Poland

- How do you pay for the passage?
 - a. Save
 - b. Sell personal property
 - c. Borrow from relatives
- What do you take?
- What do you leave?
- Saying goodbye forever

5. Ports of departure

- Bremen (Bremerhaven)
- Hamburg
- Others - Antwerp, La Harve

6. Ports of Arrival
 - New York (Castle Garden and Ellis Island)
 - Philadelphia
 - Baltimore
 - Boston
 - Galveston
 - Quebec

7. **Entry Process for steerage passengers**
 - Quick examination by doctors who noted any suspicions with a chalk mark on the right shoulder of the immigrant – doctors tried to evaluate for physical and mental problems
 - If marked, immigrants were given more thorough examinations
 - After passing medical exam, clerks check legal information
 - Once their entry was approved, the immigrant
 - a. claimed their luggage
 - b. exchanged their money for American dollars
 - c. women met husbands, brothers or uncles at kissing gate
 - d. boarded trains for their destinations in America
 - Myth of **name changing**

8. Where did they settle
 - New England - textiles
 - Pennsylvania - coal mining & steel
 - Chicago - steel, stockyards, manufacturing
 - Illinois – manufacturing & coal mining
 - Buffalo, NY - farming
 - Milwaukee - manufacturing
 - Wisconsin - farming
 - Northern Indiana - steel
 - Michigan - manufacturing
 - Ohio (Cleveland) – manufacturing
 - Karnes County, Texas - Farming

9. Polonia in America
 - “Polonia” is Latin for Poland
 - Initially used by clergy to describe Polish neighborhoods in the cities
 - Today it refers to the Polish-American community nation-wide
 - Most Poles lived in the cities and worked jobs that no one else would work
 - Some saved their factory earnings to buy their farms
 - The Polish immigrant communities centered on the churches that they built.
 - In cities, their community was the neighborhood surrounding their churches
 - They may have lived in small houses but their churches were large and ornate

What did your ancestors do?

They were part of history!!

Research and celebrate your heritage