

EXPLORING POLISH CULTURE AND TRADITION

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IMMIGRATION

Polish immigrants came to America as early as the early 1600's to Jamestown, to help with the building of colonies. They were known as hard workers and were even invited into the colony of Jamestown. A large amount of Polish immigrants came around 1776, to fight in the American Revolution. They really supported the idea of self-government and religious freedom. (Reisner). The most significant immigration wave came in the late 19th century to World War I. It is estimated that around 2.5 million Poles came to America during this time, being “za chlebem” or “for bread” (Jones).



Krakow, Poland.

My great grandfather, grandfather, great aunt and great great grandparents.



FAMILY

A big shaping factor in the Polish culture was World War II. Over six million Poles died throughout the duration of the war, and it is hard to find a family that didn't lose someone. My great grandfather was a government worker in my father's hometown of Lublin and was held prisoner by the Germans for a year. That was until Hitler ordered a mass execution of all Polish government workers, professors and writers. (Maciej Rachon, personal communication, February 21, 2015).

CHRISTMAS EVE

The most important holiday in the culture:

- No meat served, only the next morning.
- Strictly formal attire.
- Everyone carries a piece of sacramental bread, breaking off pieces of each others as they walk around wishing everyone good luck in the coming year.
- Extra seat at the table is set just in case a stranger comes by and needs shelter and food.
- Presents are opened at midnight.
- Church service is attended afterwards.



Children dressed in traditional Polish clothing.

CONCLUSIONS

I feel that if you do not know where you came from, you do not know where you are going. Getting to know more about my ethnicity and the history helped me get a better grip on my family as well as myself. As we carry this ethnic torch throughout our lives, we are able to spread the knowledge and wealth that our ancestors have in the past. It is with this torch that we shine light on the history that brought us to where we currently are, and it is with that same torch that we light the torches of the generations to come.

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