

• *Geographical Dictionary of 19th Century Poland now on CD-ROM!!*

by Fred Zimnoch, Editor PGSMA newsletter - from the Biuletyn Korzenie March 2004

An invaluable and remarkable resource for the researcher who has located an ancestral home is the *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich* (*The Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic Lands*). This publication is composed of 14 volumes and 2 supplementary volumes of almost 15,000 pages that give a historical and physical description of almost all cities, towns, villages and hamlets in Poland and nearby Slavic countries along with mention of historically important events, buildings such as churches and personages. Most important is the fact that the descriptions are circa 1880 to 1902, or about the time when most Poles were starting to leave Poland, and hence very close to what your ancestors experienced before they left.

Now this remarkable gazetteer is available from the Polish Genealogical Society of America on CD-ROM for Windows, Power Macintosh, Solaris, Linux and Unix at a cost of \$35 plus S&H. This digital edition of the Polish language geographical dictionary was prepared by Dr. Rafel T. Prinke, with a forward by William Fred Hoffman. Now you can peruse it in your home and at your leisure.

The descriptions are in Polish so they will need to be translated. But the descriptions are usually fairly simple and can be easily rendered with a dictionary. However, the editors used many abbreviations, and you will need to look at the two pages of *Objaśnienie Skróceń*, or abbreviations located at the beginning of the volumes. Some of the terms are dated or foreign such as the *tithe* which is not too often encountered or *verst* which is a Russian unit of distance about equal to a kilometer (0.6 US miles) and the *mórg* which is about 1.4 US acres, so a good English dictionary may also come in handy. In this instance the previous edition of the Kosciuszko Foundation Polish-English and English-Polish dictionary is a blessing.

Fortunately, over the years the Polish Genealogical Society of America has been translating entries from the *Słownik*. Understandably the amount completed is only a small percentage of the total entries. You'll find them on their WEB site (www.pgasa.org/townindx.htm) along with an index to these translations by towns/villages, counties, and parishes along with a glossary of unfamiliar terms and a section on interpreting *Słownik* entries.

Installing the *Słownik* is simple and the directions are clear and easy to follow. A few additional points are missing and worth mentioning. The *Słownik* user interface can be toggled between Polish and English. This could have been anticipated since the Polish version of the CD has been available in Poland for at least a year.

The software will work on most versions of Windows including Windows XP however with screen resolution less than 1024x768 the menu function **TOOL** to page down/up or jump to start/end of a section is minimized and the menu function **TOOL** for page selection **Select/Go to Page** is **MISSING**. The former can be obtained by clicking on the appropriate maximize arrow in the upper menu bar but the latter, at least for me, is unavailable at low resolution which means that for a document composed of sections containing 960 pages the DjVu viewer is useless.

Careful users of this splendid electronic edition may want to know that Merriam-Webster writes that the word *colophon* is an inscription placed at the end of a book or manuscript usually with facts relative to its production, or an identifying device used by a printer or a publisher.

For those that do not purchase this extraordinary work the fine set of books were distributed by the PGSMA and are available on microfiche (MF 929.1 S634s) at the CT Valley Historical

Museum at the Library Quadrangle in Springfield and also on microfiche at W. E. Dubois Library at University of Massachusetts in Amherst in the UM/Microfiche collection with call #831.

A very valuable tool when using the Słownik is an index of names that occur in its volumes. Such a resource is available with the publication of *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich. Indeks nazwisk, (Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic Lands. Index to Surnames¹)*. This publication was started by Szymon Konarski (1894-1981) who published numerous works concerning Polish nobility, heraldry and genealogy during the first half of the last century. Probably most notable for his *Armorial de la noblesse polonaise² (Armorial of the Titled Polish Nobility)* préf. Marcel Orbec. Published: Paris, 1958. Then the book was recently completed by Sławomir Gorzynski the Editor-in-Chief of DiG, a historian, author of genealogical works and Polish genealogist of international standing. Details of this book were discussed in our *Biuletyn Korzenie* on page 14 of Volume 11 number 1 (March 2000). The PGSMA now has a copy of this CD for our library.

¹ Available from Wydawnictwo DiG Sp.j., Aleja Wojska Polskiego 4, 01-524 Warszawa, tel./fax: (+48 22) 839 0 838, E-mail: biuro@dig.com.pl.

² Description: 478 p. illus., ports., coats of arms. 20 cm. Bibliography: p. 433-457.