

Francis Casimir K a j e n c k i. *Poles in the 19th Century Southwest*. (Southwest Polonia Press. El Paso, Texas) 1990 ss. XII + 273.

Whenever most people think of American Polonia their images are usually of the densely-populated, industrialized urban ghettos of places like New York, Chicago, and Detroit. Few would readily connect Poles with the deserts of Texas and New Mexico, even though the first Polish Catholic parish in the United States was erected at Panna Maria, Texas. The fact is that Poles have played a role in the history of virtually every region of the United States, and Kajencki contributes to our knowledge of Polonia's role by tracing the lives of five Poles in the mid- to late-XIX century American Southwest: Louis Geck, Martin Kozłowski, Alexander Grzelachowski, Charles Radzimiński, and Napoléon Kościałowski.

Each of these figures is traced individually, the chapters in this book having previously appeared as separate articles in journals like "Polish American Studies", "Polish Heritage", "Arizona and the West", and the "New Mexico Historical Review". The bulk of the focus on the period of the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and its aftermath (although, in the cases of Geck, Kozłowski, and Grzelachowski, their stories are traced through the rest of the 19th century). This martial focus is not surprising, since Kajencki's interests lie primarily in military history (e.g., his book, "Star on Many a Battlefield", published in 1980 by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, deals with the military contributions of another Pole, Brevet Brigadier General Joseph Kargé, during the U. S. Civil War of 1861-1865). Kajencki does not propose an overall study of Polish contributions to the American Southwest but rather limits his studies to specific aspects of the lives of each of the aforementioned individuals.

Charles Radzimiński and Napoléon Kościałowski were participants in the November Uprising in Poland and were subsequently deported to the United States. (A worthwhile article could be generated on the deportation of Poles to America following the 1830 Uprising). Both men subsequently served in the U. S. Army, as did Louis Geck. Radzimiński was part of troop movements in Oklahoma, and Texas connected with the Mexican-American War, and he also took part in subsequent security maintenance in that region. He also played an important role in the Boundary Commission which demarcated the U. S. -Mexican border after that War. Kościałowski had initially volunteered for action in the Mexican-American War but his regiment was demobilized before seeing battle. A new battalion was subsequently organized to maintain peace and order along the Santa Fé Trail, the primary wagon-train route between Missouri (i. e., the settled U. S.) and its newly-acquired New Mexico Territory. Geck served during the Mexican-American War on patrol detail along the Indian frontier and then in a march to Santa Fé.

Geck subsequently settled in New Mexico and Kajencki details his rise as a merchant in that Territory. Also noted for his entrepreneurial skills was Alexander Grzelachowski. Grzelachowski was a priest who initially was recruited for the Cincinnati Diocese but who subsequently served under Jean-Batiste Lamy when the latter

became Vicar General of New Mexico. Grzelachowski arrived in New Mexico in 1851 and performed sacerdotal services through the time of the U. S. Civil War, when he ceased functioning as a priest. Kajencki never explains how or why Grzelachowski left the priesthood, but instead discusses his rise as an important local merchant, rancher, and community leader in New Mexico until the time of his death in 1896. One important detail must be noted: Kajencki raises the question of Grzelachowski's possible role in the Civil War Battle of Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, on March 28, 1862. The Battle of Glorieta Pass, Kajencki argues, arrested the westward advance of Confederate troops, thus saving the American Southwest for the Union (the Northern, federal forces). The decisive element of the Battle was the massive destruction of confederate supply forces by Major John Chivington's troops, making it impossible for the Southerners to continue their westward movement. After destroying the Confederate supply convoys, Chivington's forces could not return to their base of operations by their previous route because that route had fallen into Confederate hands. The record speaks of a priest who volunteered to guide Chivington's forces back to base through unmarked trails over the mountains. Kajencki argues that a solid case can be made for identifying that priest as Alexander Grzelachowski.

The base of operations for the Battle of Glorieta Pass was a ranch owned by another Pole, Martin Kozłowski. Loyal to the federal government, Kozłowski made his ranch available to Union troops at the time of the Battle of Florieta Pass. Located on the Santa Fé Trail, Kozłowski's ranch had prospered as a way-station for stagecoaches travelling the Trail to New Mexico. Kozłowski's fortunes turned in 1880, however, when the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad bypassed his ranch and made the overland road obsolete.

Kajencki's book is an interesting profile of the roles five Poles played in a part of America not usually associated with Polish immigration. The reviewer must defer to professional historians to evaluate the historical merits of Kajencki's work. What impressed this reviewer, however, were several characteristics of these five Poles: 1) their loyalty to their new country (all of them had volunteered for some type of military service to the United States); 2) their enterprising spirit, demonstrated by successful businesses and relative prosperity in their situations; and 3) their ability to adapt to diverse cultures. In the American Southwest Spanish culture still plays an important role, and it certainly did in the times these five lived. Grzelachowski, for example, was fluent in Spanish and both he and Geck married Spanish women. Polish-Hispanic contacts would seem to be a useful and little investigated area worth the research of students of U. S. Polonia.

This book fills an interesting and neglected niche in the history of Polonia's presence in the United States.

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