

Susan Gibson Mikoś, *Poles in Wisconsin*, Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press 2012, ss. 134, ISBN 978-0-87020-422-7.

Janusz Kowalski, *Polish Parishes of the Diocese of La Crosse: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Stevens Point, WI: Point Publications 2013, ss. 276, ISBN 978-0-98372-835-1.

Wisconsin, with 9.3% of its people identifying themselves in the 2000 U.S. Census as of Polish ancestry, has the greatest proportion of Poles in its population of any American state. Wisconsin Polonia has two new books detailing its history: Susan Gibson Mikoś's general history of Poles in that state, and Janusz Kowalski's history of Polish Catholic parishes in the Diocese of LaCrosse, in southwestern Wisconsin.

Mikoś provides a general introduction to Wisconsin Polonia, one of the older Polish settlements in the United States. Like Panna Maria in Texas and Parisville in Michigan, the first Poles in Wisconsin came from the Prussian Partition and, as characteristic of that immigrant pool, settled near the very large German community in Wisconsin. The core of Wisconsin Polonia, like American Polonia in general, originated in the 19th century as a result of the great *emigracja za chlebem*.

Wisconsin Polonia differs in some respects from most of the *emigracja za chlebem* in that a large part of the Poles who went to that state settled on farms and in rural areas. (Most of that *emigracja* settled in large cities to undertake industrial work: in Wisconsin, that meant Milwaukee). Many Poles who came to Wisconsin settled into farming in the central and northern parts of the state. Mikoś's book examines these two aspects of Wisconsin Polonia in its two main parts: Part I looks at Poles outside of Milwaukee, Part II at Milwaukee.

In western and northern Wisconsin, the railroads often owned extra land of which they wanted to divest themselves. The land was not always of the best quality, and often required significant deforestation to be suitable for farming. Furthermore, Wisconsin's climate can be harsh. Still, Poles settled in northern Wisconsin around Green Bay and the central Wisconsin city of Stevens Point, the latter having a profound influence on national U.S. Polonia because of the Worzalla Publishers and the now century-old newspaper, *Gwiazda Polarna*.

Part II of Mikoś's book focuses specifically on Milwaukee where, like in other American urban centers, Poles immigrated to find industrial work. Mikoś's study focuses on the progressive development and expansion of Milwaukee Polonia, coupled with the growing numbers of churches that they built.

Indeed, the book details the usual church building activities of Catholic Poles, both in Milwaukee and environs as well as throughout the state. Mention is made of the ethnic consciousness that drove church construction, as well as noting the history of Father Joseph Dąbrowski, eventual founder of the Polish Seminary in

Detroit whose work in the United States (and that of the Felician Sisters he imported) started in Wisconsin. But Mikoś does not limit herself to Polish Catholics in Wisconsin alone; she notes the religious diversity of Wisconsin Polonia, a fact deriving in part from its origins in Prussian Poland where, because of German influence, there was greater contact with churches of the Reformation. She remarks, for example, that the Poles of „Pound in Marinette County became a center of Polish Baptists in America” (p. 19). Milwaukee also hosted a Polish Methodist community, while Polish Jews were the backbone of the city's Congregation Agudas Achim.

Part III of the book is an interesting primary source: the hitherto unpublished memoir of Maciej Wojda, an immigrant who came to America at age 15 in 1868 and wrote his life story as a 75-year old in 1928. The memoir is intended to let a representative immigrant of the time express his life experience in his own words. Wojda's reflections blend the tragic [„On our ship, fifty-four people died ... (p. 111)] with a sense of irony [speaking of how his brother escaped Prussian conscription by sailing for America, Wojda writes his „ship was already too far out at sea, so they had to leave him in peace, thanks be to God, because on account of this, Willy [King Wilhelm I of Prussia-original] had one less Polish soldier in the war” (p. 103)]. Reading the memoir of this common worker carefully, one soon discovers that these people were often hardly just „dumb Polack” laborers: „I can speak, not badly, four languages, that is: Polish, English, German, and, as they say, Low Dutch ...” (p. 108).

Poles in Wisconsin continues a trend, already begun by state historical societies in Michigan and Minnesota and soon to be followed in Illinois, to publish a series about the various ethnic groups making up those states. The general format of the series probably imposes limitations on the individual books. The most basic criticism the reviewer has about this book is that it is weaker when it comes to recent history and current trends in Wisconsin Polonia. Although the golden years of Wisconsin Polonia—the formative years during and after the *emigracja za chlebem*—the history of Wisconsin Polonia since World War II seems a little thin. Was there a postwar *emigracja polityczna* in Wisconsin? How strong have Polish courses and subjects been represented in the state's institutions of higher education? What has happened to the ethnic parishes built by the *emigracja za chlebem*, especially when large dioceses like the Archdiocese of Milwaukee undertook programs of parish consolidation and closure? Those limitations aside, this book serves as a good, basic introduction to this important local Polonia.

Fr. Janusz Kowalski's *Polish Parishes* is a much more specialized study of church history in the Diocese of LaCrosse. Because a number of other dioceses were subsequently erected from the original territory of the LaCrosse Diocese, his study of 37 parishes encompasses a considerable swath of the state's Catholic Polonia outside Milwaukee.

For each of these parishes, Kowalski provides a capsule history, often a list (albeit seemingly incomplete) of pastors, and usually some photographs. Those histories tend to focus on the foundation and early years of the parish, with some attention to subsequent renovations at the church. Separate chapters also study the presence of parochial schools connected with these parishes, Polish religious orders in

Wisconsin, and some of the customs and traditions associated with Polish Catholics in Wisconsin.

Kowalski's work is valuable because there is insufficient documentation about Polonia outside major metropolises like Chicago and Detroit and a real dearth of information about America's Polish parishes, an impressive religious and cultural achievement built on the sacrifices of poor immigrants and now significantly under assault from local bishops intent on consolidating or even closing parishes. One has the impression that this book may have originally been research as part of the author's studies in history at the University of Rzeszów.

The book's major problem is that it is sometimes incomplete. Tables of pastors are not always complete, and some parishes have them, others do not. There is no discussion of the degree to which these parishes remain Polish in identity. The history of the Polish National Catholic Church is passed over practically in silence (roughly two pages), even though the struggle over national parishes was particularly strong in Wisconsin.¹

Still, as American Polonia's parishes disappear, the necessity of their documentation is ever more pressing, especially outside major urban centers. Kowalski contributes to this task by recording their history in central and northern Wisconsin.

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Felicia W i l c z e n s k i, Emily M u r p h y, *The Polish Community of Salem*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia 2012, ss. 128, ISBN 978-0-73857-563-6.

Wojciech S i e m a s z k i e w i c z, Marta M e s t r o v i ć D e y r u p, *Wallington's Polish Community*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing 2013, ss. 127, ISBN 978-0-73859-901-4.

Arcadia Publishing Company specializes in picture-book histories of individual American towns and cities and local communities within those places, written by amateur historians. Their format is standard: books run about 128 pages, include approximately 180-200 black-and-white photographs, and have text limited to a maximum of three to four sentences captioning each photograph. In general, photographs are mostly at least 30 years old, usually much older.

¹ See A. K u z n i e w s k i, *Faith and Fatherland: The Polish Church War in Wisconsin, 1896-1918*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1980.