Research Report
Czmiel (Smiel) Family
May 2010

The goal of research was to find out about the ancestral Czmiel (Smiel) family in Poland, and extend the lineage back a generation. The client’s great-grandparents, Joseph Smiel (Josef or Wojciech Czmiel) and Jadwiga Ptak came from Poland to the United States. The client provided important details about the family before research began. Joseph/Wojciech Czmiel (born about 1870-1872) came to the United States first, and supposedly through Texas. Jadwiga (Ptak) Czmiel (born about 1872-1874) arrived with their three children at Ellis Island on 17 August 1912 aboard the ship Noordam from Rotterdam; their last place of residence was Sosnowitz, Piokhow, Russia. All four of them sailed under the mother’s maiden name Ptak. The client had seen a copy of the passenger manifest.

The client had also seen the 1930 census of the family. The census claimed that both Joseph and Jadwiga came to the United States in 1905. Joseph Sr., the client’s great-grandfather, died in Chicago in 1932, and Jadwiga died in Chicago in 1946.

According to family tradition, Joseph Sr. was a minor governmental official, and at the turn of the century may have spent time in prison for his activities, which may explain why he came into the U.S. through Texas. He is believed to have spoken numerous languages. He changed his name from Wojciech to Joseph when he arrived. He was a laborer in the U.S. He had the alias Joseph Pawlak. The client also suggested that relevant Catholic church records are in the parish of Pogon(?) in the Diocese of Kielce.

Passenger Arrival at Ellis Island

The two documents that the client mentioned, the 1912 passenger arrival record and the 1930 census, were examined in order to glean all possible information from these records before
continuing on to look at other records. This was an important step so as to ground the research, and not miss any details. The four Ptak passengers in 1912 were Jadwiga, age 35, Mariam, age 6, Joseph, age 3, and Bronislaw, age 15. Notes made on the passenger arrival list suggest that the three children were naturalized in 1940-1941. The family did indeed last reside (and were all born) in Sosnowitz, Piotrkow, Russia. Usually in statements like this in passenger lists of this time, Piotrkow would refer to the province of the Russian Empire in which Sosnowitz was located. The Ptak family’s nearest relative back home was Jadwiga’s mother, Julianna Winglocka of Sosnowitz. Jadwiga and her children were going to join their husband/father “Jan Ptak” in Chicago, Illinois. This was a confusing piece of information, since their father was actually called Joseph or Wojciech Czmiel. Also, Joseph Jr. having the age of three in 1912 suggests that he was born in 1908 or 1909, not 1906. These discrepancies needed explanation.

Before examining this passenger list, the name of Jadwiga Ptak’s mother was unknown, so this added a generation to the pedigree already. However, it was unclear at this point why Julianna’s surname was not listed as Ptak. Of course, Jadwiga’s maiden name Ptak was used in this record for Jadwiga, her husband, and their children. Since it may have raised questions if she gave the same surname for her mother, perhaps Jadwiga chose to also give her mother’s maiden name.

1930 U.S. Federal Census

The 1930 census of Chicago indicates that Joseph Smiel was age 60, born in Poland, married first at age 32; his wife Jadwiga was age 58, born in Poland, married first at age 30. That suggests the couple married in about 1902. That is curious since Bronislawa was born in about 1897 according to the passenger arrival list. In 1930, Josepha and Jadwiga’s daughter Marion Jankowski was living with them and listed as age 22. Marion’s husband also lived in the household. Joseph Jr. and Bronislawa were not in the household. It is possible that Bronislawa was not in fact the child of both Joseph Smiel and Jadwiga Ptak. It may be helpful to find the Smiel family in the 1920 census, and to find Bronislawa’s marriage and death records, in order to clarify when Joseph and Jadwiga married.
Sosnowiec, Poland

There are a number of places in Poland called Sosnowiec. The largest is the town of Sosnowiec now located in the Silesian Voivodeship (province) in southern Poland, near Katowice. Prior to the formation of the Silesian Voivodeship (province) in 1999, Sosnowiec was in Katowice Voivodeship. Sosnowiec became part of Prussia in 1795, and then came under the rule of Russia during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). It was ruled by Russia from 1815 until 1918 when it became part of independent Poland after the First World War. Starting in about 1867, the Russian province of Piotrków included Sosnowiec. Thus, it would make sense that in 1912 the Ptak family would give their place of origin as Sosnowitz, Piotrkow, Russia, in the passenger arrival records. It seemed clear that the correct Sosnowiec had been identified.

However, Kielce is some distance from Katowice. Between 1815 and 1918, Kielce was also under Russian rule. It was unclear how the parish of Pogon and the Diocese of Kielce were related to the family’s origins in Sosnowiec.

Social Security Death Index

According to the SSDI, Joseph Smiel Jr. was born on 19 March 1906 and died in June 1987. His last residence was in Albuquerque, New Mexico, although his Social Security Number had been issued in the state of Illinois. The SSDI introduced yet another discrepancy. If Joseph Smiel Jr. were born on 19 March 1906, he would have been six years old when he arrived at Ellis Island on 17 August 1912. However, he was listed as three years old on the passenger list.

Chicago Death Records

It was important to examine the death records of Joseph, Jadwiga, and any other Polish-born relatives. One reason is that these records could state the parents of Polish immigrants, which information could be crucial in identifying their correct birth/baptismal records in Poland. An index to Cook County, Illinois, death records showed only three Smiel death entries: Bernice,

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Jadwiga, Wojciech. All three certificates were obtained. Bernice Smiel died 6 September 1928 in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. She was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She was only 3 years old, a daughter of Polish-born Andrew Smiel and Rose Jarosz. It is not known whether Andrew Smiel was closely related to the ancestral Smiel family.

The ancestor Wojciech/Joseph’s death record specifically referred to him as “Wojciech Smiel alias Joseph Pawlak.” This is the alias to which the client had also referred. No parents or specific birthplace in Poland was given on his death record. However, a specific birth date was given: 5 April 1876. This information could be helpful in identifying Joseph’s birth/baptismal record in Poland. It may be only partially correct as was often the case with birth dates recorded for immigrants in the United States.

Jadwiga’s death record was more helpful since it gave her town of birth and date of birth in addition to both of her parents’ names! She was born on 15 October 1878 in Sosnowiec, Poland. Her father was Bartholomew Ptak, born Sosnowiec, Poland. Her mother was Julianna Wagłowski, born Sosnowiec, Poland. Winglocka (listed in the 1912 passenger arrival) and Wagłowski (listed in the 1946 death record) appear to be variations of the same name. Oddly, Jadwiga was listed as the widow of George Smiel, but this case is no stranger to inconsistent information about Jadwiga’s husband.

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Additional Records from Client

On 26 March 2010, the client’s father provided two records of Józef Czmiel’s 1906 birth: an abstract provided by the Catholic parish of Pogoń in Sosnowiec in 1921, and an abstract provided by the civil registry office in Sosnowiec in 1970. These records were carefully analyzed in order to make sense of the various place names associated with the 1906 birth. These two records show that Józef Czmiel was born in the town of Sosnowiec, district of Będzin, province of Piotrkow (1970 province of Katowice), and in the Roman Catholic Parish of Pogoń, deanery of Będzin, diocese of Kielce. This shows that the ancestral Czmiel family lived in that part of the town of Sosnowiec called Pogoń. The Roman Catholic bishop with jurisdiction over this area had his seat in Kielce. Thus, through analysis of various records, it was now clear not only that the ancestral Czmiel family came from the large town of Sosnowiec, near Katowice, but that they more specifically lived in the parish of Pogoń within Sosnowiec. The parish was in the Diocese of Kielce prior to the creation of the Diocese of Sosnowiec in 1992.

Sosnowiec Records

The question now arose as to what records were available for Pogoń and Sosnowiec in order to trace the ancestral Czmiel family, and where those records were available. Some sense of the history of these places was needed in order to know where Catholic parish records could be found.

Pogoń was referred to as early as the 1300s. However, the Catholic parish in Pogoń (which is called Parish of St. Thomas the Apostle in Sosnowiec, or Parafia św. Tomasza Apostoła w Sosnowcu) was established in 1903, just three years before Józef Czmiel’s birth. According to the parish history on the parish web site, between 1896 and 1903, Pogoń was part of the Parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sosnowiec (now the cathedral, since

7 Catholic Parish of Pogoń in Sosnowiec (Poland) [Deanery of Będzin, Diocese of Kielce, District of Będzin, Province of Piotrkow], Birth Certificate (Świadectwo Urodzenia) of Józef Czmiel, 20 March 1906 (issued by the Catholic parish of Pogoń in 1921), [copy provided by client]. Document 6.

the establishment of the Diocese of Sosnowiec in 1992).\(^9\) Between 1819 and 1896, Pogoń was part of the Parish of Saint Stanislaw in Czeladź. Prior to 1819, Pogoń belonged to the Parish of Mysłowice. The *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego*... [Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom] confirmed that in around 1880 Sosnowiec and Pogoń belonged to the Roman Catholic parish in Czeladź.\(^{10}\)

No Catholic Church records from Sosnowiec or Pogoń are available on microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Roman Catholic records of birth, marriage, and death dating 1899-1902 from Sosnowiec are held at the Polish State Archives in Katowice. It is possible that the marriage of Wojciech Czmiel is in those records, although the marriage could have taken place earlier. If the marriage took place earlier, the record could be held either at the cathedral in Sosnowiec or at the parish church in Czeladź. Due to the uncertainty of the marriage date, it would be wise to look at other U.S. records as suggested above in this report to try to clarify the marriage date before undertaking the likely time consuming task of searching Polish marriage records. Wojciech Czmiel’s marriage record may well name his parents. Other records from Sosnowiec or Pogoń probably would have to be obtained directly from the parishes, whose contact information is given in the research calendar.

Catholic Church records from Czeladź dating 1600-1854 are on microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. These records are not late enough to include the birth/baptismal records of Wojciech Czmiel or Jadwiga Ptak in the 1870s. Roman Catholic parish registers from Czeladź dating 1808-1885 are available at the Polish State Archives in Katowice. Thus, these could be searched for the birth/baptismal records of Wojciech Czmiel and Jadwiga Ptak, and for their parents’ marriage records. Alternatively, Wojciech and Jadwiga’s birth/baptismal records could be researched at the parish church of Czeladź (contact details in the research calendar).

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Gradually, some Roman Catholic parish records from Poland are being indexed online. It is worth noting that birth/baptism records from Czeladź dating from 1600-1764 are now indexed.

online. Of course, this is far too early to be relevant to the current research. Marriage records from Niwka (Sosnowiec) dating 1849-1856 are also indexed online.

Summary

American research successfully identified Jadwiga Ptak’s parents. Research also determined that the ancestral Czmiel/Ptak family came from Pogoń in Sosnowiec (now in the Silesian Voivevodship, Poland). Previously, Sosnowiec was in Piotrków province of Russian Poland. Research also determined that the records needed in Poland can be obtained at the Polish State Archives in Katowice, or at the local parishes in Sosnowiec and Czeladź. The next step is to either correspond with the archives/parishes or have a researcher visit the archives/parishes in Poland in search of family records, including the marriage and baptism/birth of Wojciech Czmiel. Hopefully, one or both of these records can be found and will name his parents.

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