

I received this story on my personal Facebook page and thought our NHS followers would enjoy this. Thank you John.

By John J. Rynkiewicz

I received this today in an email from my friend ANDRZEJ SZCZUDLO from Poland concerning his connection to the RYNKIEWICZ/RENKIEWICZ family from Krasnopol and also to the families who settled in Meriden, Conn. See attached file for a wonderful document translated by Andrzej's son Michal Szczudlo. Comments/Suggestions welcomed! I was not able to load this document here on FB and so it will be placed on my Yahoo Home page for all to view. Here is the document and you must read all the way through!

(We got it John!)

He wanted to die in Poland ...

I come from Sejny, located on the Polish – Lithuanian borderland. There are my family roots, both the father's and mother's side. As a child I had a limited awareness of the subject. Those days my knowledge of a family circle was narrowed down to a few dozen people in the area. We've had maintained a close contact only with people from the neighborhood, due to the obvious lack of transport possibilities, as well as time for celebration meetings. In the stories repeated by my mother the most recent was a story about the nobility origin of her ancestors Buchowski. After some years I decided to check it, but also throw in something about my ancestral roots from the father's side, the Szczudlo. That's how I stepped deep into genealogy. I started digging information mainly about three names in the family: Buchowski - my mother's maiden name, Szczudlo and Rynkiewicz - paternal. From the Rynkiewicz came my grandmother Marianna, my father's mother.

Family Rynkiewicz of Krasnopol always knew that they had a family members in America. No one living, however, could tell who it was, what is the actual relationship to them. Layers of memory launched my father, Zygmunt, who remembered that in the interwar period to their home in Zagowiec (name in use until 1975, after which the village was connected to the neighboring one named Gawieniance) did come packages with different goods from across the ocean. One of them he memorizes the most because it makes him smile everytime it's brought up. Some uncle from the USA sent my grandmother ointment, but in fear of eating it by the unaware people from the village wrote as he could: "Marianna, you do not need to eat that!". He probably thought that the grandmother should not eat it, but lubricate the affected area, however after several years in the USA uncle had a right not to know the words "should, shall" etc., which would better describe the meaning of his message. It came out funny, but was saved thanks to that he was the uncle from America, who did send the packages. We also know that these packages sometimes contained cigarette paper, which later Jan Szczudlo, earlier mentioned Marianna's husband and my grandfather, ritually pulled from behind the beam of his house. There was some more equipment behind the beam: special pad holder and a sharp knife for cutting tobacco as well as a bag for it. From my childhood, when I lived in Olecko and used to be on vacation with my grandfather, I remember when he took to the preparation of a cigarette. Focusing he did pull characteristically his tongue out (my father inherited this habit, also did I) and linger after the edge of the paper. Then stacked together and the cigarette was ready. Sometimes the American cigarette was not enough and then grandfather Jan was using an ordinary newspaper. It have been an awful stink and maybe that is why I have discouraged to cigarettes for a lifetime.

Grandfather left for eternity within a year after grandmother, in 1970. From my observation I gained an instructive memory: when she lived, he did argue with her to death, but when's gone, he had the courage to say that he would rather have her sick, take care of her - if only she was. It reminds a well known phrase of Father Twardowski to haste in loving people because they leave so quickly.

Since then it's been more than 40 years and now we are able to assert the truth of who was this mysterious Uncle from America. The story of a relative from overseas told me in 2007 my aunt Halina Debinska from Gdynia, the daughter of Antoni Rynkiewicz - the brother of my grandmother Marianna. She mentioned that many years ago her father, Antoni, contacted him. Some time after our meeting, my aunt sought in home archive and found documents explaining that.

Actually it is not known exactly when and under what circumstances John Rynkiewicz went to America. However, from archival documents we know that in the 20s of the twentieth century he was wanted by Ludwika Wierzbicka. December 30th, 1936, the Regional Court in Grodno Branch in Suwalki in closed session dealt with filed by above mentioned Ludwika motion for recognition John Rynkiewicz and Antonina and Wiktoria Krzywicki as missing and a motion for appointment of a guardian. As a result of the Prosecutor's of the District Court in Grodno motion to establish the guardianship for the rights and property of John Rynkiewicz aka Renkiewicz – as to the power of attorney authorizing Jozef Rynkiewicz, which was attached in the original to the motion filed on December 22nd, 1936 (duly certified by the Consulate General of the Polish Republic on June 2nd, 1936), the District Court in Suwalki on August 29th, 1923, overruled the motion in part to recognize John Rynkiewicz for missing and to appoint a guardian, dismissed Jozef Swiacki of guardian duties and redeemed further proceedings. The Court also ordered to notify Swiacki and Jozef Rynkiewicz, return the power of attorney and send a copy of this order together with the Jozef Rynkiewicz's motion to the Prosecutor of the District Court in Grodno.

The content of the power of attorney:

“I, the undersigned, Jan Renkiewicz, a former resident of the Krasnopol, from Land Suwalki in Poland and now inhabited in Meriden, New Haven County, Connecticut, North America, give these power of attorney for Jozef Rynkiewicz currently inhabited in Krasnopol, in the Land Suwalki in Poland.

By this power of attorney I authorize Jozef Rynkiewicz to manage my property and real estates in Krasnopol, in the Land Suwalki, Poland as a manager and proxy on my behalf until my arrival to Poland.

Jozef Rynkiewicz is authorized to lease for money whomever he wants. Money received from my real estates is to be used to pay taxes. The remaining part should be deposited to the bank on the name of Jan Renkiewicz.

I also authorize Jozef Rynkiewicz, giving him the overall power and authority in all matters substitution of judicial and extrajudicial also as to protect my interests regarding my real estates in front of all authorities etc.

Whereof this power of attorney complies with my will it is signed by the presence of the witnesses personally.”

Meriden, Connecticut, May 22nd, 1936

Handwritten signature: Jan Renkiewicz

Years passed, and John from America did not return. The 50s of the twentieth century came, and with them

the next official communication on the “reality (real estate – added by the author) in Krasnopol”. The letter, written on December 13th, 1956, reveals the entire genealogical puzzle concerning John. Here are its contents:

Notarial Act

“I, Jan Renkiewicz, once using the surname of Rynkiewicz, born on May 13th, 1881, the son of Franciszek and Jozefa maiden name Andruszkiewicz, residing now at 5 Main Street, New Britain, Connecticut, USA, own the plot of land with an area of 8,40 acres bordering the north to the land of Jan Kowalewski, east of Boleslaw Nosekowski, south of Kazimierz Malinowski, and on the west by Stanislaw Karlowicz, located in Krasnopol, a former district Suwalki, Bialystok province now, Poland.

The plot, under the notarized power of attorney issued by me on May 22nd, 1936, manages my cousin Jozef Rynkiewicz, and now leases it my nephew Antoni Rynkiewicz, the son of above mentioned Jozef Rynkiewicz and Stefania maiden name Stawinski.

By this Act, the above-described property with all components and appurtenances, I give to my nephew Antoni Rynkiewicz listed at the beginning of the act.

I hereby authorize Antoni Rynkiewicz to any legal and required actions to settle the above mentioned property as well as to the disclosure of this Act in the land register.”

Jan Renkiewicz

From the stories told by my aunt Halina Debinska I know that in the 60s John contacted Antoni in Poland wanting to be buried in his fatherland. He was, however, already too old and sick to take a trip across the ocean. For a long trip to the United States, in order to bring the Uncle back, Antoni did not decide. His daughter Halina wanted to go, but unfortunately she did not get a passport permission.

The epilogue of this touching story is contained in a letter of 5 September 1967. Adel Raffler from Meriden - daughter of John Renkiewicz, writes to Antoni Rynkiewicz, then living in Swinoujscie:

“Dear Uncle!

We sincerely wish to write to you that our dad John Renkiewicz deceased last week, on Thursday at eleven o'clock in the morning. Our dad has not been healthy for a few years. My dad told me to write to you and let you know when he is dead. Our dad had 8 girls and 4 boys. Our mother had died three years ago (around 1964). We thank God that my dad lived for so many years. Dad died on August 31st, 1967, at 11 o'clock in the morning.

May God give you all health, long life and blessings.”

Adel Raffler

59 Frary Ave, Meriden, Connecticut, 06450, United States

Having had a lot of news about the “American Uncle” and powerful tool as the Internet is, at the beginning of the 21st century I made the effort to locate at least one person from the families of his twelve children. Information about the Renkiewicz of Meriden and the surrounding area are on the Internet, even with email addresses, but unfortunately no one responds the messages. Certain members of the family did accept my invitation on Facebook, but did not enter a discourse.

More useful occurred to be contact made by my friend from the USA, also John Rynkiewicz, but with a different line. Several years ago I decided to help him find his family in Poland, which eventually succeeded.

Ancestors of John come from the countryside Mscichy and Zebry near Grajewo. Since that time, I was his "Help in Poland", and he is my support in the USA. John Rynkiewicz launched an online family forum, which was visited by different Rynkiewicz. Finally, there also appeared Slovak Latzo John Noel, whose mother was of our Rynkiewicz line. It was he who decided to spend \$ 2,000 on the lookout for documents. The company from Warsaw did look through Polish archives for appropriate metrics. They established one continuous history of the family Rynkiewicz, starting in 1730. The oldest revealed ancestor was Szymon Rynkiewicz, the oldest traces of whom were found in the village Wilkokuk in the parish Berzniki on Land Sejny. Then the family moved among the Zlobin, Krasnopol and widely spread in the area. Some people emigrated to America. Probably the first of them was Feliks, (born in 1845 in Zlobin, his parents: Jozef and Wiktoria Terlecki), then his brother Jozef (born in 1848), who was greatly deserved citizen for the community town of Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. Another person from the same family of Krasnopol was another Feliks (born 1879 in Krasnopol, parents: Benedykt and Franciszka Kraszewska) who married in America Michalina Cichocka (in 1900), the daughter of an emigrant from Jeziorki Male, a village located few miles from the Krasnopol. Today, their cousin Joe Cichocki from Texas effectively gathers the evidence of the family presence in America.

The main character of this text, Jan Rynkiewicz arrived in America in the beginning of the 20th Century. In 1905 he married, and in 1934 obtained American citizenship and then took the legitimate dispositions relating to his real estates in Krasnopol. It was he who has sent packages to his relatives left behind in Poland.

Detailed genealogical line is not generally available, because such a condition - I hope temporarily - has been made by the project sponsor. I'm obviously in its possession. I maintain e-mail contact with John Latzo who quite rarely use the Internet. However, I hope that soon I will meet him in person during scheduled for June this year stay in the USA.

Andrzej Szczudlo, Wschowa, Poland