

Az itteni cikk magyar szempontból is
fontos. Én magam 1916-17 és 18-ban ebben
a Buffaloi Lengyel Központban éltem. A
leírt lengyel életmód, elkülönítés, munka
alkalmat, munkabérek a m. -ok számára
is pontosan ugyanazok voltak. Ziv-abati
egyetlen lengyel sem ismertem, a nemzetiségi
csoportos nem keveredtek. ~~Elle~~ ^{Élt} ~~Élt~~ ^{Élt}
voltam az East Buffalo m. ref. egyháznak,
templonra, a kisgyülekezetnél, ma is megvan,
de a város másik, Black Rock oldalán,
ahol az albion-i magasság része élt, egy másik,
nagyobb egyházközség létesült, ma is virágzik.
1976

Americanizing the Poles of Buffalo

1910

Americanization has normally been a complex social process for the immigrants, but gradually it was recognized that there was one basic ingredient on which all other factors depended: a higher standard of living. Learning English, getting an education, and understanding American mores were important. But the immigrants found out soon enough that the ability to earn a living successfully was the one thing more than anything else that would gain them acceptance by native-born Americans and guarantee their status as first-class citizens. In this selection, John Daniels, director of the Buffalo Social Survey, analyzed the problems of the large Polish colony in his city as they established themselves in their new homeland. [Survey, June 4, 1910: "Americanizing Eighty Thousand Poles."]

Buffalo has the largest Polish colony of any city in America except Chicago. It numbers about 80,000 people. The Poles form a sixth of the entire population. . .

a little Poland has grown up in Buffalo, only it is not so very little. It covers an entire section of East Buffalo, extending a mile and a half east from St. Stanislaus Church, and a mile north and south at its mean width. This section is

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now almost solidly Polish. There are two small outlying colonies, one to the south-east near the city line and the other at Buffalo's northwest corner. Outside these three localities Poles are extremely scarce; inside of them, extremely numerous. Geographically the Poles are cut off from the rest of the city. They are separated also by difference of language, for they still cling to Polish as the language of common use. They are in the Buffalo community, but they are not of it. They have their own churches, their own stores and business places, their own newspapers. They are content to live alone and be let alone, and the rest of the population generally knows little about them and cares less.

But at last Buffalo is undertaking to deal with the problem of how to make its Poles an active and vital part of the community. . . .

As has been said, few of these immigrants on their arrival in Buffalo have actually been penniless, but few of them have had more than enough to maintain them a few months.

In three of the four savings banks of Buffalo, according to figures furnished by these banks after a thorough inspection of their books, the Poles have today approximately \$1.5 million. In the other savings bank, the largest of the four, they have probably about \$1 million, making the total \$2.5 million.

To get at the facts as to Polish ownership of property, three of the clerks in the assessor's department were employed to go through the last tax books. This task, as well as many other parts of the inquiry, was facilitated by the fact that nearly all the Poles live by themselves in certain districts of the city, and also by the fact that most Polish names are easily recognizable as such. It was found that the Poles own



taxable property of an assessed value of \$5,505,890, and nontaxable property, consisting almost entirely of ten church holdings, of an assessed value of \$1,533,145, making a total of \$7,039,035. The market value of this property may be estimated at close to \$12 million. Of course, mortgage indebtedness must be allowed for. Most of the churches have large mortgages. Of the taxable property, about 30 percent is clear of mortgage, and the rest is mortgaged to the extent, on an average, of 50 percent of its market value.

Of this taxable property, the number of vacant lots is only 512, as compared with 4,304 built up. Over 90 percent of the property built up consists of homes. In the case of the great majority of shops and business places, the proprietors live on the premises. These figures surely bear witness to the fact that the Poles are thrifty. As soon as they come here and get work, they try to save, and if they succeed, at the earliest possible moment they make a first payment on a little home. "I find that the Polish citizen," one real estate dealer has written me, "first desires to own a home, and that he and the entire family will bend their entire energies toward the payment for that home, and that it is very, very seldom they lose their property through foreclosure proceedings."

Of shops and various business places, the Poles have about 1,000 in the city, of which nearly 800 are in the one big Polish district in East Buffalo. Most of these places are small, but a few have grown to proportions which would qualify them to compete with other establishments of the same sort in the city at large. The largest business in the city managed by a Pole is the brewery of the Schreiber Brewing Company. Anthony Schreiber, president of the company, is the highest officer of

the Polish National Alliance. A. and M. Nowak's grain and feed store and mill, M. A. Cwiklinski's wholesale and retail lumberyard and contracting plant, Stanislaus Lipowicz's wholesale grocery, and M. J. Nowak's plating works stand out prominently. Frank Ruszkiewicz is an enterprising real estate operator, who in the last three years has bought 150 lots, most of which he has already built up and sold. B. Dorasewicz, F. Gorski, and S. S. Nowicki are conspicuously successful dealers in insurance and mortgages. The progress which the Poles have made in a business way should be considered in connection with the fact that most of the immigrants were peasants in the Old Country, with no business experience or aptitude.

The Poles are industrious, thrifty, pertinacious, home-building, family-founding. So they possess many of the qualities fundamental to the best citizenship. With their homes and business places they have built up a large area of the city. These are the things which make them an asset to Buffalo.

But though there are about 5,000 Polish deposits in the savings banks, there are, say, 35,000 heads of families and self-supporting adults who might have deposits. Though there are about 4,000 homes owned, there are over 15,000 families who might be homeowners. It will appear, moreover, that ownership of a home does not necessarily mean that the owner is relieved from a struggle for existence. Though the Poles form a sixth part of the city's population, the value of their taxable property holdings is only 1.8 percent of the value of the taxable property holdings in the city. Though there are 1,000 Polish shops and business places the profits accruing from the great majority of these fall far short of putting their proprietors in the plutocrat class.

The conditions of the great mass of the Poles are sufficiently in need of amelioration.

A very thorough investigation was made concerning Polish laborers and their wages. Letters were sent to 580 of the largest industrial establishments of the city. Seventy percent of the entire number, and 90 percent of the largest, have been heard from. The number of establishments which employ Poles is 221, and the number of Poles employed 14,103, of whom 2,429 are women, and 11,609 are men. Of the women, 84 percent are in factories, and the others in hotels, laundries, junk and rag shops. Of the men, 87 percent are in manufacturing, and 12 percent are employed by railroads, lumberyards, and contractors. It is close to the facts to estimate that the Poles contribute a fifth of the entire labor supply of the city, a fourth of the labor outside of mercantile and clerical lines, and fully a third of the rough labor in manufacturing. They are in Buffalo's elemental industries, and as they are dependent upon these industries for their livelihood, so these industries are vitally dependent upon them for their operation.

The information received by means of the letters mentioned shows that of the men, the great majority of whom are at present or will soon be heads and natural supports of families, 60 percent are common laborers, 30 percent semiskilled, and .3 percent highly skilled; and that 64 percent receive in wages not over \$1.75 a day, 32 percent from \$1.75 to \$2.50, 3.7 percent from \$2.50 to \$3.50, and .4 percent more than \$3.50. The average weekly earnings of those who receive not more than \$1.75 a day are \$9.60, and of those who receive from \$1.75 to \$2.50, \$13.50. Even if these laborers were to work every weekday in the year on full time, their an-

nual earnings would be but \$499 and \$702. But there is a great deal of unemployment, and it is if anything below the facts to estimate that, on an average, these laborers are unemployed a quarter of the time. This reduces their yearly earnings to \$375 and \$525.

In 1908, under the auspices of the Russell Sage Foundation, an investigation was made in Buffalo into the question of what is a living income for a typical laboring family, consisting of wife, husband, and three children. One hundred families, of whom twenty-five were Polish, were studied. The conclusion arrived at was that an income of from \$635 to \$735 is necessary for such a family to subsist without falling upon charity.

The fact emerges, therefore, that 64 percent of Polish laborers are receiving less by \$260, and another 32 percent less by \$110 than the minimum yearly wage required for family subsistence. These figures are startling—but they are true.

It does not follow that the families of these laborers are, in consequence, starving to death. But there are certain results which do follow. It does follow that the children are taken out of school at the earliest possible moment and sent to work, and this means the cutting short of their education and the probable impairment of their physical constitution, especially in the case of the girls, who when they marry are often unable, on account of sapped vitality, to nurse their babies. It does follow that wives and mothers, except when family duties and housework absolutely prevent, are compelled to go out to work, to the neglect of home and children. It does follow that there is an excessive falling upon charity—Poles forming over a third of all those assisted by the overseers of the Poor and Charity Organization Society. It does follow that



the temptation to crime, particularly theft, is increased, as is proved by the court records, which show that in 1908, during the hard times, the convictions for stealing were three times as numerous as in the following year when good times returned. And it does follow that the families of these laborers have to huddle together in the smallest possible living space, and in a large proportion of cases have to take boarders. . . .

The measures urged as necessary to ameliorate these conditions and to bring the Poles into the life of the community and raise them up to its level—in brief, to Americanize them—are the following.

To reduce unemployment, which at present works much havoc, an active city employment bureau should be established, whose function should be to receive and register all applications for work and, by keeping in daily touch with employers, to supply work to a maximum number of applicants. As the surest means of raising wages, in the long run, and thus of effecting material betterment, industrial schools should be started. This need has been brought to the attention of the Department of Public Instruction, and Superintendent Emerson has undertaken to establish two such schools in the principal Polish district next fall, as well as another, previously arranged for, in one of the outlying Polish settlements. An efficient system of vocational training, made as practicable as possible, should be worked out, not, of course, to be confined to the Poles, but to cover the entire city, for it is needed badly enough in all quarters. To improve housing conditions, the first step to be taken is more adequate tenement inspection. At this point, too, the city has moved. It has authorized the appointment of six additional inspectors, making the total number nine. As it hap-

pens, the health commissioner, Dr. Francis E. Fronczak, is himself a Pole, or rather, a Polish-American of the best type, and he now has the opportunity to render great service both to his racial kinsmen and to his city. A sufficient number of inspectors, constantly going about through the Polish district, will not only enforce the wise provisions of the law, but more important still, will surely educate the Poles to a higher standard of living. But to supplement the good which will thus be accomplished, a general campaign of education in hygienic living should be undertaken by the city, through the Departments of Health and Public Instruction, by means of illustrated lectures, demonstrations, and related methods; by all private societies which are in a position to help; and by the Poles themselves, through their churches, schools, organizations, and newspapers.

These measures will also prove most effective in lessening lawbreaking and criminality. For this purpose, however, there should be combined with them an effort to restrict the number of saloons and, by determined enforcement of the laws, to root out some of the most vicious. Such a movement also would have to and indeed ought to apply to the entire city. Finally, with respect to educational



conditions: first of all, compulsory school attendance should be enforced, both as to children not in school at all and to those who are playing truant; second, the standard of instruction in the parochial schools must be raised, especially in the matter of instruction in English; third, all practicable pressure should be brought to bear upon Polish parents to encourage their children to speak English and keep their children in the public schools as long as they can, and public school facilities, particularly in the form of evening and vacation schools, should be extended. The new School Census Board, to the secretary of which, Charles H. Brown, Jr., the writer is indebted for much assistance, is doing effective work in putting children into school, and 50 percent of all the children put into school up to date have been Polish. Four additional truant officers, one of them a Pole, have recently been appointed, but yet there are by no means a sufficient number. It is to be hoped that steps will be taken to meet the grave needs in the educational situation.

It is a simple question in social economy which is before Buffalo and the Poles in Buffalo today. Will Buffalo make the most of the Poles, and will the Poles make the most of themselves?

