

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

MORE ABOUT SILESIA:

a) EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN UPPER SILESIA IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES.

In 1763, at the time of Frederick II, the King of Prussia, a new regulation concerning elementary education was introduced. The general regulation was obligatory for the public schools in the entire country. For the Catholic schools, the rules announced in 1765, were local and were adapted to a particular region. The new law demanded from a district (gmina) to establish and maintain an elementary school. The new regulations also introduced the mandatory age for the children to attend the school. And so, for Catholic children, the mandatory age for the participation in elementary education was 6-14, for the Protestant children 5-13/14. The curriculum for the elementary school was obligatory until 1872. In Upper Silesia, the teaching was both in Polish and in German. On April 29, 1816, the Gliwice (Gleiwitz) high school was created (gimnazjum). The total tuition was from three to nine thalers monthly. However, the students in the high school who came from the local villages and settlements where they had contact with their relatives, paid only part of the tuition. In 1848, Fr. Bernard Bogedain, became the main educator in Upper Silesia. It was Bogedain who introduced the literal Polish language as the one to be taught and used in all the elementary schools. In order to be able to have sufficient number of teachers in 1849 in Pyskowice (Peiskretscham), he created another (after Głogówek / Oberglogau) school for teachers (seminary for teachers). The instructors for the seminary were recruited from the Poznań area. There was also one vocational school in the coal mine in Tarnowskie Góry (Tarnowitz). The exceptional students who graduated from the elementary school and high school, after having passed a special exam, were able with financial help to continue their education at the university level. The closest university for Silesians was in Wrocław (Breslau). Sometimes a good student, and those with sufficient funds, continued their education at the institution of higher education in Europe.

References:

Klaussmann, Anton Oskar. **Górny Śląsk Przed Laty** [Upper Silesia Years Ago]. Muzeum Historii Katowic, Katowice, 1996, pp. 60.- 68. (Trans. by Franciszek Kurzaj and Patrycja Nosiadek).
Korzeniowska, Wiesława. **"Reformatory górnośląskiego szkolnictwa elementarnego w wieku XVIII i XIX"** in Poland. Cieszyński Almanach Pedagogiczny 1, 2012, pp 25-35. (Trans. by Franciszek Kurzaj and Patrycja Nosiadek).

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

b) WEIGHTS, MEASUREMENTS AND CURRENCY IN UPPER SILESIA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Nowhere has the German division been so visible as in weights, measures, and money. The basic money was the coin called: "silver thaler." One thaler was sufficient for one-month living. It was divided into thirty silver groschen. One groschen consisted of twelve pfennigs. In all of Silesia, the silver groschen were called: "czeski (Boehm)" because the first groschen were struck in Prague in 1300, at the time of King Vencyslaw II. The name "czeski" for the silver groschen was significant because, except for the silver one, there were also ordinary groschen in use. They were definitely good groschen written as "d.g." Those "good groschen" derived from the old division of thaler into twenty-four groschen; "a good groschen" was worth 1.25 of a silver groschen.

Gold was very seldom used. A great rarity was the appearing from time to time of the French golden coin called: "Luidor." While trading horses everything was counted into double crowns. The prices were counted according to the so called: "schneppen" i.e. "frydrychsдоры." The coins were often very old. There were also other coins in use, for example, the Saxon new groschen. The Saxon thalers were also divided into thirty groschen, and every new groschen into ten pfennigs. Except for this, there were also four- and -eight groschen coins struck a very long time ago. They were treated as inferior coins as they did not comprise sufficient silver purity. There were also silver copper Russian coins which were called: "brumer" as well as the Austrian coins, both silver and copper, which were in use. The Austrian ones were used often without thinking, especially the copper pfennigs. While people were travelling, they kept the money in pouches worn around the waist.

There was also a great confusion as far as the weights and measurements are concerned. Prussia, Saxony, Hesia, Witenburg and Baden used completely different measurements and weights. The basic measurement unit in Prussia was 'centner'. However, there are two kinds of them: the customs centner - 100 pounds (50kg), and the ordinary centner - 110 pounds (51.5 kg). The pound comprised of 50 "łuts", and one "łut" comprised of 12 "kwinteks." The length measurement was one foot. The Prussian foot was 12 inches, and the Rhine foot was divided only into 10 inches. One inch comprised of 12 lines. One Rhine inch was bigger than the Prussian one. Twelve feet was a bar which were four steps, which means 12 feet (3.76m). An elbow was used for measuring sharp goods. Long elbow, the so called "Berlin one" was two feet long, the short one, the so called: "Wrocław one" was a few centimeters shorter. The measured volume was a quart (1.15 liter). There were also divisions into half-quarts and quarter quarts. The last ones were also called a quarter ("kwaretka"). There was also another measurement of volume that was: "eimer" (a bucket). One "eimer" was 68.7 liters.

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

Grain, legume plants, fruits, and potatoes, were sold in half-bushels. The half-bushel consisted of two dishpans (szaflik). One dishpan consisted of twelve gallons. The gallon was divided into little cylinders, wooden measures of which the smallest one was called "miareczka." The adults and the children used to buy one small measure of blackberries, plums or cherries.

The unit for land measurement was one "morga." Thirty "morgas" was about 0.5 "łan" that is 8.4 ha.

References:

Klaussmann, Anton Oskar. ***Górny Śląsk Przed Laty*** (Upper Silesia Years Ago) Muzeum Historii Katowic, Katowice, 1996, pp, 23-25. (Trans. Franciszek Kurzaj and Patrycja Nosiadek).

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

c) SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE UPPER SILESIAN FAMILY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

a) Szkubanie (Plucking the feathers)

During the long winter evenings, the most important as well as the most pleasurable activity for women was "Szkubanie." When the sufficient number of geese were killed and the feathers from the geese were collected, the time came for the so called "Szkubanie," which consisted of removing down from shafts of Geese feathers. The women of the house, as well as other women in the neighborhood and their friends "szkubaczki", gathered together in the evening, and without being paid, did this particular chore. None of those women were allowed to speak, as every little breath caused the delicate down to fall from the table. Therefore, to entertain the ladies they hired a special woman who shared stories from the past, fables, and fairy tales. The telling of these stories made the children especially happy. After many evenings, sufficient down was collected and all the feathers were stripped; then a special event was prepared for the ladies. This event was called "babski comber" (feast for the ladies). The collected down was later used to make pillows and feather beds. The newly made feather beds and pillows were later used as gifts, or a dowry for one of the daughters, or a family member who was to soon get married.

b) Świniobicie (Butchering a hog)

October or November in Upper Silesia was a time for "Świniobicie." The day before this event, the families prepared mountains of pepper, salt, and other seasonings. They also cut in small pieces stale rolls and small raisins called "koryntki." A butcher and his helper showed up in the home of this event early in the morning. The hog was first knocked out by a hit to the head by a blunt of an ax. Then they cut open the front of the neck of a hog and drained the blood into a big pot. They constantly stirred the blood to prevent congealing. Later, the killed hog was put into a wooden trough. A trough (koryto) was cut from a tree trunk as one piece. The length of this trough was from 2 to 2.5 meters, and it also served on many occasions as a wash tub. The hog was scalded and the hair was removed from the skin. After that the whole animal was hung on a wooden hanger on the door called "krampulec." The hog was then cut open and the guts were removed. The meat was cut into pieces. Immediately the whole head, jaws and also kidneys, were put into a large pot to prepare it for the so called "welfeisch." Around 10 a.m., the first invited and not invited visitors turned up. They ate the fresh "welfeisch" while drinking beer and lots of vodka, in order as they say to "thin the fat" (tuste). The butcher, together with the helper, prepared the sausages. They worked on liver sausage, as well as "krupnioki" and "żymloki." "Krupnioki" contained groats (cereal grains) mixed with the hog's blood, and "żymlotki" contained pieces of stale rolls mixed with hog's blood. The "presfurst" (headcheese) was

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

prepared with different hog's meat, seasoned, and placed in the stomach. This sausage was then pressed. Around 2 or 3 p.m., the next group of visitors showed up. Each of them received a bowl of hot sausage soup and a piece of sausage fried in butter or lard. They were also served sauerkraut and potatoes. The guests would sit at home where the butchering took place until late at night – often drinking beer and all kinds of vodka. The neighbors as well as the relatives would wait at home to receive something from the świniobicie. The children from the family where the hog was killed usually took some of the sausage soup and pieces of meat to the neighbors' homes, and sometimes received a very generous monetary tip. The woman of the butchering house would preserve the bacon and meat with saltpetre, and put it into a big pot. Some of the meat was prepared to be smoked. They also smoked a liver sausage. All these would be stored in a basement, and placed on specially prepared straw.

References:

Klaussmann, Anton Oskar. **Górny Śląsk Przed Laty** [Upper Silesia Years Ago]. Muzeum Historii Katowic, Katowice, 1996, pp, 90-95. (Trans. Franciszek Kurzaj and Patrycja Nosiadek).

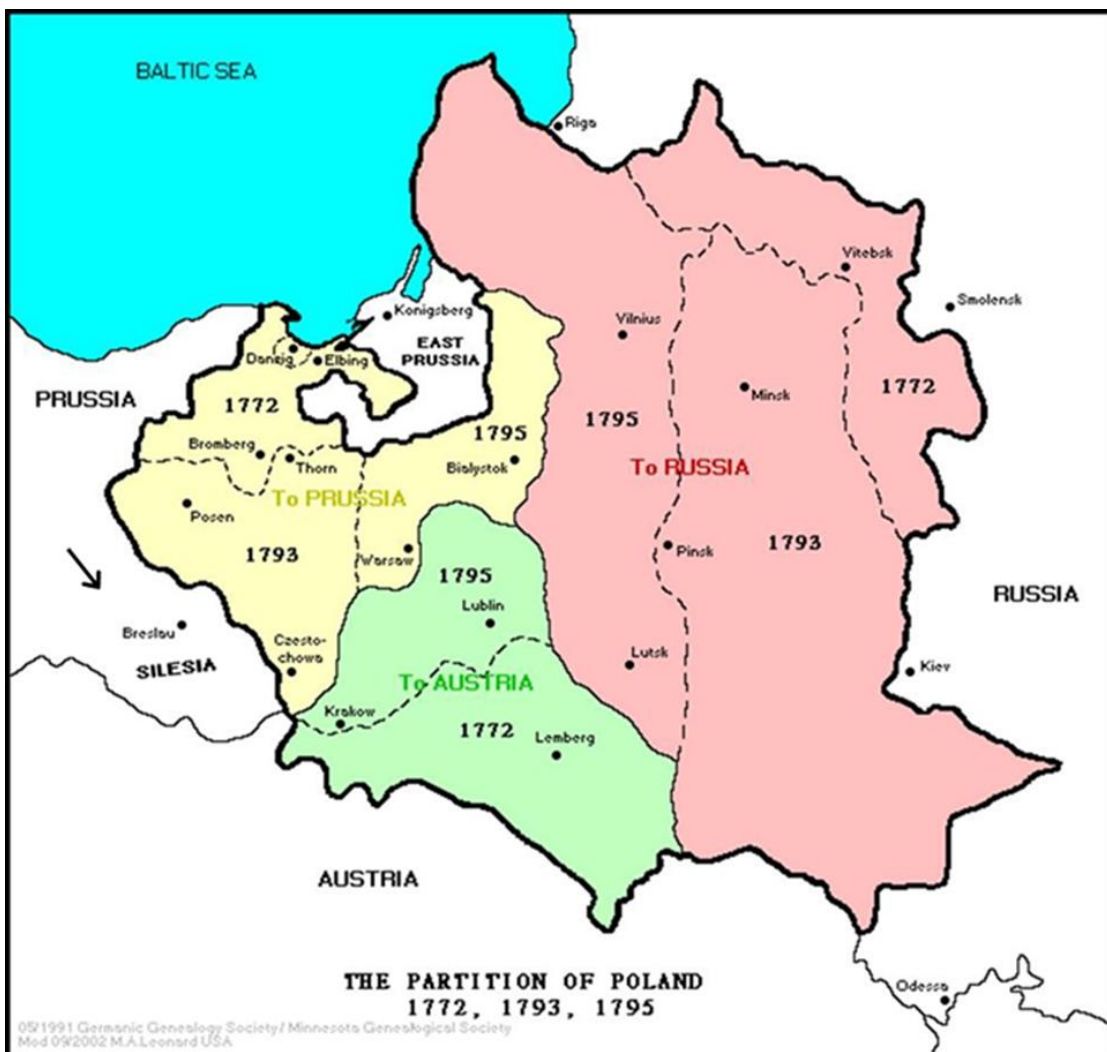
Additional information search online: a. Szkubanie pierza, b. Świniobicie

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

d) SILESIA AND THE PARTITION OF POLAND

The three partitions of the Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth that took place at the close of the 18th century, and ended the existence of the state resulting in the elimination of sovereign Poland and Lithuania for 123 years, is called by some historians The Partition of Poland. The partitions were conducted by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and Habsburg Austria. The First Partition of Poland was decided on August 5, 1772. The Second Partition was signed on January 23, 1793; Austria did not participate in the second partition. The Third Partition of Poland took place on October 24, 1795.



*As the map shows, Silesia was not a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the time of the three partitions.

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

SILESIA, an area in Europe, was politically first a part of Great Moravia and then Bohemia. In the 10th century, Mieszko I incorporated Silesia into a Polish state. It remained part of Poland until the Fragmentation of Poland in the 12th century. Afterward, Silesia was divided between Piast Dukes that descended from Władysław II the Exile. Between 1282 and 1292, Bohemian King Wenceslaus II became a superior feudal lord of some Upper Silesian Duchies. Later, the entire Silesia became part of the Bohemian Crown under the Holy Roman Empire and passed with the Crown to the Habsburg Monarchy in 1526. In 1742, most of Silesia was seized by King Frederick the Great of Prussia in the War of the Austrian succession and subsequently made the Prussian Province of Silesia. On May 18, 1742, twelve regiments of Poles, predominately from Greater Poland recruited by the King of Prussia, participated in the battle against Austria. What remained of Silesia in Habsburg Austria was known as Austrian Silesia (1742- 1918).

Therefore, it must be remembered that the 19th century migration from Silesia to Texas was not a migration from the Partitioned Poland, nor did the immigrants come from occupied region of Poland.

References:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions of Poland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions_of_Poland).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silesia>.