

BULLETIN OF THE

POLONUS PHILATELIC SOCIETY



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The Polish Influence in Danzig*

by James W. Shaver

A simple invitation resulted in seven hundred years of almost continuous relations in which the influence of Poland strongly affected the history of Danzig. From 1225 when the Polish Duke Conrad of Mazovia appealed to the Knights of the Teutonic Order for aid in his campaign against the Prussians until today, there has been an interesting intermingling of purposes and policies. Let it be said, parenthetically, that these Prussians were a marauding band related to the Lithuanians that has long since disappeared.

The campaign over, the Knights chose Danzig for settlement, but their claim was disputed by the King of Poland. As a result, they took the city by force in 1308, and fortified it so strongly that it was never once taken in battle. Danzig became, under their efficient tutelage, the most powerful factor in the trade of central and northern Europe. Poland desired to export grain, timber, flax, furs, ashes, resin, honey, wax, and tar—all prime necessities of life. She desired to import salt, wool, cloth, and metal goods. All these must come by sea, through the harbor of Danzig, and down the Vistula River which Danzig controlled.

Poland contributed materially to the wealth of Danzig during this period. The regulations governing trade provided that non-Danzigers could not



Poles selling wheat in Danzig
in 16th Century

sell to each other. Every transaction had to pass through the hands of a Danzig merchant. For example, a Polish merchant desiring to sell honey to a Dutch merchant must first find a Danziger who was willing to buy it from him and resell it to the foreigner.

As a member of that great trading confederation, the Hanseatic League, Danzig was in a position to protect its ability to control prices and trading conditions. The Hanseats had the only efficiently organized postal system of the period, which brought to the merchants of Danzig news of prices and supplies in all parts of the world. The producers in Central Europe could not gain this information and the Danzigers had the best of every bargain. It is said that in 1638 Danzig merchants paid the Polish growers of grain coming by way of the Vistula less than 60% of the price at

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which they resold it to foreigners in Danzig.

One may well imagine that this situation did not please the King of Poland and that he worked ceaselessly to undermine the power of the Knights of the Teutonic Order. With the aid of the native Danzigers themselves, this was finally accomplished in 1454. Danzig entered into a personal union with the King of Poland. The citizens financed a thirteen-year war for the annihilation of the Order.

At the conclusion of this conflict, the King of Poland was acknowledged lord and protector and granted certain sums of money. He received little else. He had a few honorary civic rights, such as that of appointing a "burggraf" or governor, whom he had to choose from a list of eight city councilors nominated by the Danzigers.

Danzig remained free and independent, received certain territory, retained free trade rights with Poland and Lithuania, and was guaranteed the maintenance of all the trade rights and restrictions which had existed under the Knights. She had the unrestricted management of her own foreign affairs, could declare war and conclude peace independently of Poland, and carry on the full diplomatic negotiations of a sovereign state. Neither Polish troops nor warships had the right to remain in Danzig.

The city successfully defended its rights for three hundred years. At one time, a war was waged against Stephan Bathory, King of Poland, to preserve

the city's rights. Though Danzig's flag had been modified to indicate the personal union with the kings of Poland, there was no political collaboration.

Long years of hostility between Poland and Sweden gradually weakened Danzig. The Hanseatic League eventually died. Discoveries and explorations had ended Europe's dependence upon Poland for grain and timber. The first partition of Poland in 1773 brought hard times to Danzig.

When the final partition of Poland came in 1793, the citizens decided that their only hope of continued prosperity lay in annexation. In viewing the situation, Prussia seemed to offer the best possibilities and on March 11, 1793, the city council presented a unanimous petition to Frederic the Great asking annexation.

As long as Poland was smothered as a sovereign state, Danzig also existed as a submerged political entity. It prospered as a city, but its power as a state was gone.

The reconstitution of Poland as a nation following the first World War brought with it the re-birth of Danzig as a "Free City." Danzig was the only seaport at the extremity of "the Corridor." It would have seemed natural to make the city a part of Poland, but for six hundred years the city had fought against such absorption. In 1919, they voted against being placed under Polish rule and Danzig was restored to approximately the same political status it had enjoyed one hundred twenty-five years earlier.





The ship "Pilsudski" on a
1935-36 overprinted issue
of Poland

Certain differences, however, caused difficulty.

Looking strictly at the Polish aspects, it will be readily seen that some provisions would not be accepted happily by the Free City.

By the Treaty of Versailles, Danzig and Poland formed an economic union with common laws regarding customs duties, imports, and exports. A diplomatic representative was maintained in the city by the Polish Government to act as intermediary between the two governments. The Danzig Custom House levied duties according to the Polish tariff and an agreed proportion (7.3% in 1933) was paid into the Danzig State Treasury.

The harbor of Danzig was administered by a "Commission for the Harbour and Waterways of Danzig" in accordance with the Danzig-Polish Treaty of November 9, 1920. This board was composed of five representatives from the Free City, five from Poland, and a chairman of Swiss citizenship. In order to care for the whole of Poland's sea-going trade, the commission greatly enlarged the harbor and facilities — to an annual capacity of more than 14,500,000 tons. Disagreements between the two states, however, caused Poland to develop the harbor at Gdynia to care for her trade.

The railways of the Free State belonged to the Polish State Railways. All railway stations and the entire



Belvedere Palace

railway system, though partly the property of Danzig, were under the control of the Polish State Railway Commission. A single Danzig delegate on the Polish Railway Board watched the interests of the Free City.

In accord with certain fixed principles, the foreign affairs of Danzig were administered by Poland under the Treaty of Versailles. Poland was charged with the protection of Danzig nationals living in other countries, while Danzig was given the privilege of attaching Danzig officials to the various Polish consulates.

While the Free City had her own postal, telegraph, and telephone systems, Poland was given the right to inaugurate her own postal system for the harbor and for communication with foreign countries through Danzig. This service was facilitated through the establishment of three Polish post offices and nineteen Polish letter boxes.

Quite naturally, Poland issued postage stamps for use in Danzig. Some eleven different sets appeared in the fourteen years prior to the occupation of Poland and Danzig by German forces.

Less than forty major varieties were issued, all except the 1938 set being regular Polish postal emissions overprinted "Port Gdansk" in several styles and arrangements of type.

The Polish Eagle appeared on the issues of 1925, 1928-29, and 1934-36.

The Poznan Town Hall, which appears on the 1926-27 issues, recalls the fact that Danzig's first prosperity following her annexation to Prussia came through a vast increase in trade resulting from the development of Poznan. Another design of the same issues portrays the Sigismund Monument at Warsaw. Sigismund was not at all friendly to Danzig. During the Polish-Swedish conflicts (1627), Sigismund demanded that Danzig take action at sea in order to destroy Gustavus



The Dog Cliff

Adolphus's communications with Sweden. Danzig refused to comply.

Various pictorial designs appear on the remaining varieties of the 1926-27 and of the 1935-37 issues. Marshal Pilsudski is portrayed in the 1928-29 issue, while President Moscicki appears on the 1928-29 and the 1933 issues. Henry Sienkiewicz is shown on the 1931 variety.

The issue of 1938 bore a particularly appropriate design. It shows Polish gentlemen selling wheat in Danzig in the 16th Century. This recalls the famous "guest right" regulation which forced the Poles to sell their products first to a Danziger before they could be sold to a foreigner, thus realizing fabulous profits for Danzig.

A summary of the various issues follows:

Date	Design	Polish Issue	No. in Overprinted Set
1925	Polish Eagle	1924	11
1926	Poznan-Sigismund	1925-1927	2
1926-1927	Various Pictorial	1925-1927	5
1928-1929	Pilsudski-Moscicki-Eagle	1928-1929	5
1931	Henry Sienkiewicz	1928	1
1933	President Moscicki	1928	1
1934-1936	Coat of Arms	1932-1933	3
1935-1936	Various Pictorial	1935-1936	3
1937	Various Pictorial	1937	2
1938	Polish Gentlemen Selling Wheat in Danzig in 16th Cent.	None	4

POLPEX 1945 RULES & REGULATIONS

The annual Polpex stamp Exhibition will be held Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, February 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th — 1945 at the Polish Roman Catholic Union Archives and Museum, 984 Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

- 1) The Exhibition is open for competition **ONLY** to members of the Polonus Philatelic Society whose exhibits must be their bona-fide property.
- 2) Each exhibitor must send in an entry application on the official entry blank, and no exhibit will be accepted without entry first being made. A separate application properly filled out, must be sent in for each exhibit.
- 3) Any exhibit incorrectly entered as to Title, Description, or found not to be Bona-fide property of the exhibitor, the exhibit committee and the judges reserve the right

The occupation of Danzig by Hitler in 1939 placed the Free City in a temporary eclipse. Whether she will arise Phoenix-like after the conflict to be a new independent city, it is impossible to predict. It is safe to say that neither Poland nor the Danzigers were satisfied with the arrangements provided by the Treaty of Versailles and that Poland will not wish again to be so allied.

Probably some Polish influence will be always present in this great city with so proud a history. A Polish Duke ministered at her birth, a Polish King protected her during a troublesome middle age, Polish misfortune caused her death as an independent city, and Polish need brought its "reincarnation" after World War I. Perhaps Polish generosity and sympathy will aid in freeing her from Nazi oppression.

to disqualify the exhibit from competition.

- 4) Entries close on February 8th, 1945. However in case all available space is filled before this date the exhibition committee reserve the right to close the entries without further notice. Therefore send in your entry as soon as possible.
- 5) Each exhibitor will be allotted not more than sixty album pages for any one entry.
- 6) Each exhibit should be so arranged, that the pages will group themselves in multiples of six.
- 7) The fee of **Five cents** per album page will be charged each exhibitor.
- 8) Fees must accompany all entries. Remit to Dr. M. E. Uznanski, 1530 N. Damen Ave., Chicago 22, Ill. by Money Order, Check, payable to Polpex 1945 Exhibit Committee.
- 9) Failure to exhibit after entry has been made forfeits the entry fee.
- 10) Each exhibit must be mounted on loose leaf album sheets, cards, or mats.

- 11) Exhibits of the Associate Members must be in the hands of the exhibition Committee not later than Tuesday, February 20th, 1945 and sent prepaid. Exhibits will be returned by express collect and insured for \$50.00, at the expense of the owner.
- 12) Exhibits of the Regular members must be delivered or brought personally to the Exhibition Committee at the Museum not later than Wednesday, February 21st, 1945 — 7:00 P. M.
- 13) No exhibit or part thereof may be removed prior to the close of the exhibit.
- 14) Selection of Judges shall rest wholly with The Exhibition Committee.
- 15) Decision of the Judges shall be final in all cases affecting the merits of the exhibit.
- 16) The Judges will judge the exhibits not only with respect to their relative merits of the entries but also with the respect to the exhibition as a whole.
- 17) The exhibits will be judged on the **NO CLASS SYSTEM** based on the following qualification.
 - 1) Philatelic Knowledge 30 Points
 - 2) Completeness 25 Points
 - 3) Condition 25 Points
 - 4) Presentation of Subject 20 Points
 - 5) Rarities (Bonus) 10 Points
- 18) An appropriate number of First, Second, Third awards will be placed at the disposal of the judges.
- 19) A Grand award will be presented for the exhibit judged to be the best and most outstanding in the entire competition (Exhibition).
- 20) Certificates appropriately inscribed and indorsed will be given to all exhibitors.
- 21) The Exhibition Committee has made arrangements to insure each exhibit while on exhibition and in the possession of the Committee. Arrangements also have been made to procure additional insurance if required by the entry at 25c per hundred dollars at the cost to the exhibitor.
- 22) Every precaution will be taken to safe guard exhibits against loss or damage, and guards will be on duty 24 hours a day. However no responsibility shall attach to the Polonus Philatelic Society, the Exhibition Committee, the P. R.-

C. U. Museum, nor any individual member or employee thereof, for any loss or damage etc., to exhibits arising from any cause or reason whatsoever.

- 23) The signature of the exhibitor on the entry application will indicate his or her acceptance of these rules and regulations.

EXHIBITION COMMITTEE
DR. M. E. UZNANSKI
Chairman

POLPEX AUCTION

Come on members, Let's go! For the first time we must report that the response to the appeal of the Auction Manager for material for the POLPEX Auction has been meager. Does this mean there is no material available? Does this mean that none, or rather very few of the members have duplicate material for sale?

We would much prefer to believe the members have been preoccupied and have not given the necessary attention to this matter. However, we would like to point out that in the past, at this early date, the Auction Manager could report that the POLPEX Auction would be an outstanding event.

This is YOUR auction. You can make it or break it. If you wish it to continue as one of the Society's activities, you MUST participate, both as a seller and buyer. You, the members, must make it succeed!

Lots should be in the hands of the Auction Manager not later than January 12, 1945. Send your lots to Roman Wojcicki, 1810 West 17th Street, Chicago 8, Illinois.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Pvt. Joseph Bieniecki 36918391
Co. B. 9th B'n A. R. T. C. 2nd Plat.
Fort Knox, Kentucky

John Skotnicki
2543 W. Superior St.
Chicago 22, Illinois

Rev. Blase F. Szymaszek, O. M. C.
1651 Grand Trunk Street
Montreal, Canada

M. Z. Ploski, M. D.
113 Griffing Ave.,
Riverhead, N. Y.

THIS 'n THAT

With this issue of the BULLETIN are enclosed two cards — membership information card and Entry Blank for POLPEX 1945. This issue is sent you by First Class mail so we will be certain you get it or if undeliverable it will be returned to us. Please cooperate and send us the information we request for our List of Members and the collecting activities. Also fill in the entry blank for POLPEX 1945 now!

* * *

Our Los Angeles members are doing themselves proud. They have held the First Polish Art and Philatelic Exhibition at the Polish American Civic Center in Los Angeles. From the program of the exhibition we deduce an inspiring array of Art and Philately was presented. We hope to have a complete story of this exhibition in the January issue.

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Dr. M. E. Uznanski really outdid himself in presenting his collection and talk "Christmas Seals." Members present at the last meeting were enthusiastic in their reception of the completeness of the collection and information given them. Nice job, Doc.

* * *

President Myron Steczynski, received a letter from member Sgt. Felix A. Walat, somewhere in New Hebrides and we would like to quote a few excerpts. "Please accept my grateful thanks for taking time out and going

to all of the trouble of writing to me. Ah, good old Polonus Society, its members are really "up to snuff," as the arm. men say it."

* * *

On January 12, 1945, nominations for officers for the coming year will be held. These nominations will be more important than ever before. This meeting of all meetings requires a full attendance.

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Dr. Nicholas Kalinowski will be the speaker at the January 12, 1945 meeting. His topic will be "Polish History on Stamps."

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The February 24, 1945, issue of STAMPS will be the POLPEX 1945 issue and will contain articles on the Stamps of POLAND. This issue will be edited by Myron Steczynski.

* * *

Stamps for the Wounded. Polonus is taking an active part in this most humanitarian project. Members have given generously but more is needed. Stamps, hinges, tongs, albums, magazines, etc., are needed. Give whatever you can and keep on giving. The NEED is great.

* * *

Any officer of the society or your editor will be most happy to receive your contributions to Stamps for the Wounded. Send them in. Or send your contributions to your local headquarters of Stamps for the Wounded.