

# Running Polonia's country store

**By MALCOLM ROEBOLT**  
 In a recent article on Martha Liebe, she was quoted as saying that the first storekeeper in Polonia was Joe Bischoff, a German emigrant married to a Polish lady.  
 An immediate response to this came from Joseph Formella of Stevens Point who told me that the Polish lady referred to was his mother, and that the name was not "Bischoff" but Bischoff.  
 Since Bischoff is pronounced "bish-off" in English, it is easy to understand why Mrs. Liebe and others called him Bischoff. In fact, the name appears as Bischoff on one of the early town plats of Sharon.  
 The word "bischoff" in German means bishop, although the correct spelling would be "bischof," pronounced bis'kof.  
 I went to see Mr. Formella at his home on 508 Indiana Ave. I remember he once had an orchestra which played for dances and weddings around Ellis and Rosholt. His mother, who was widowed in 1889, married John Formella and Joseph was their first born followed by Emil, Adolph, Anton and the twins, Daisy and Bernadotte.  
 I knew Emil in my youth. He had just returned from service in World War I and had taken over an old blacksmith shop straddling Flume Creek in Rosholt. I went to him for horseshoe nails which I twisted around the anvil to make finger rings for my girl friends in seventh grade.  
 Mr. Formella's mother was Magdalene Prodzinski "from home." I like this expression. It is more colorful than "what is your maiden name?" or, as it is used in Norwegian, "what is your girl name?"  
 The family of Xavier Prodzinski emigrated to the United States from Posen (Posnan in Polish) after the Civil War, and settled first around Berlin, Wis., where Magdalene, aged 13, found work as a waitress. Since there was a small settlement of Polish people around Berlin, she was probably working in a restaurant that catered to Polish patrons.  
 Later, Magdalene came on a visit to Portage County to see her sister who had married William Glizinski of the Town of Sharon. Somewhere along the terminal moraine, she met Joe Bischoff and the gleam in his eye met hers and they were later married, which was rather unusual for a Polish girl to be marrying a German youth of the first generation.  
 Joe Bischoff had a brother, August, and a sister, Mrs. Thomas Radzinski. She pioneered on a farm about a mile north of Ellis on County Trunk J.  
 Bischoff's children by Magdalene were August, no doubt named after his uncle, Helen (Mrs. John Kirsling), Clara (Mrs. Felix Woyak), and Frank. August later operated a blacksmith shop located on the south side of Highway 86 near the intersection of County Trunk J.  
 There are two account books preserved in the Formella family from the Polonia store, one that records cash income and expenditures, and a second, a ledger, which carries the charge accounts of the customers.  
 The cash book begins Aug. 13, 1877.  
 The ledger begins in late 1886 and ends inconclusively in the 1890s. Prior to 1889 the handwriting is Joe Bischoff's. After his death, others were making entries including, no doubt, Mrs. Bischoff, and in 1892 a new handwriting appears, namely that of John Formella who had married Bischoff's widow.  
 Bur Formella was more interested in farming than the store business. He moved his new family to a house that stood on the northeast corner of Highway 86 and County Trunk J (east of Ellis) where his wife operated a small store in the house for a time. This house is still standing, although remodeled by later owners.  
 There is reason to believe that the first store in Polonia was opened earlier than 1877.  
 The Sharon tax roll on personal property for 1875 lists "August & Brother, Bischoff" with a combined valuation of \$721.  
 Since this figure is much higher than most of the other names in the roll, it would suggest that their personal property included merchandise for a store, not just wagons and sleighs or cattle.  
 It also indicates that August and Joe were in business together in the beginning. August left two or three years later, it appears, and moved to Stevens Point where he ran a saloon and did much of the buying for his brother in Polonia.  
 Unfortunately for posterity, the store ledger referred to does not indicate what the customers were buying at the store, only the amounts. But the cash book makes brief mention of some items purchased from wholesalers in Stevens Point, mostly from H.D. McCulloch Co. and Krembs Hardware.

Among the items purchased were berring, flour, nails, starch, shoes, seed, crockery, lanterns, spokes, whitefish, "botter," gun shot and powder, cigars, coffee, beer and whisky.  
 In May 1882 first mention is made to "hop" which was being purchased from the Lutz Brewery in Stevens Point. Bischoff got most of his beer there as well as from Kuhl's Brewery.  
 But the source of whisky is not given, probably because most of it was manufactured locally by moonshiners.  
 All in all the range of merchandise suggests a well-stocked store, even to "notions," ready to serve the immediate needs of the farmers in the area.  
 Bischoff was also hiring people to make shingles, it appears, and he bought shingles as well which he sold. These were "shakes," often called "shave" shingles because they were shaved from cedar blocks.  
 The store attracted customers from most of Sharon Township, a few from Pike Lake, and a few from Stockton and Alban, such as the Liebe, Windorf and Simonis families.  
 It was centrally located and stood diagonally across the road from the present Polonia Branch of the State Bank of Rosholt in what is today the tavern of Henry Zywicki, although the present building is completely remodeled. Upstairs, over the store, was a dance hall where the Formellas and Schliesmanns played for wedding affairs and other occasions in the years before World War I.  
 For the sake of genealogists, the names of Bischoff's customers will be listed below, alphabetically, as they appear at the beginning of the ledger where the page number of each account is given.  
 Bischoff's spelling of Polish names is fairly good and suggests that he had a working knowledge of English by this time and as a whole there is little to quarrel with. I will make no attempt to correct the names because some Polish families to this day do not agree on the same spelling, even between cousins. This is not uncommon among other ethnic groups either.  
 Several names of customers begin with a "W." This takes a "v" sound in Polish although one would have to be born in Warsaw to be able to give this "v" its proper pronunciation.  
 I will not carry the names beyond 1889 because after that date the ledger becomes confused and accounts are filled in the pages retroactively by a later handwriting. Here, then, are the names of most of Bischoff's customers from 1887 to 1889 with spellings as used in the ledger:  
 John Akman (Eckman), Peter Brixius, Joseph Burant, Frank Bronk, Aby (Abbe) Beiker, John Blumer, Matis Blashkowski, Frank Baron, Andrew Baker, Steffan Brand, C. Barwig, Anton Bigus, J.A. Brown, Joseph Pilowski, Paul Bilawa, Adam Burant, Frank Bender, John Bigus, John Bushman, John Britzen, Peter Bunger, Agata Bronk, Michael Celman, Joseph Czech, John Cherwonka, Joseph Cpelyna, Joseph Cwiklinski, Mathias and Frank Czech, Martin Cychosh, Frank Bombenik, Teofil Bronk, Jacob Cychosh, Joseph Cysewski and Frank Baska.  
 Michael Doyle, Peter Doyle, August Dzwankowski, Albert Dalman, Martin Doyle, Frank Disher, August Dalman, August Dale, Teofil Bronk, Peter Eiden, John Eiden Jr., Albert Feltz, John Flis, Joseph Fridach, August Gershwski, Paul, Teofil and John Garski, Fred Golenbeck, Joseph Gostomski, Bartelma Gliniski, John Gladowski, Martin Gerszewski, Michael Glodowski, Frank Gilbrand, Frank Gagas, John Goytowski, Walentin Gagas, Joseph Grocholski, Math Griwacz (?), Math and Frank Gosh, Adam Gorecki, August Gliuchinski, John Henca (today probably Hintz), D. Hauk, Joseph Helminski, Charles Harris, Martin Henca, Peter Firek and John Kositz. (The last name is no doubt an abbreviation for Koziaczkowski).  
 Bernard Konopacki, August Kranski, Nick Kischewski, John Kluk, Joseph Kluk (after this name the words "Pike Lake" have been inserted), Frank Klopatek, John Konopacki, August Kniter, Paul Kokiński, Joseph Kurkowski, Frank Kluk, Albert Kulas, Christ Kniple, Nick Klemen, Michael Kotowski, Peter Krodidowski, Xavier Krizan, Peter Kotz, August Kluk, Winzent Kedeowski, Peter Kniple, John Kotowski, Andrew Kedrowicz, Martin Kisevski, John Knufel, John Konopacki, Paul Kiedrowski, Lucian Kobasuiski, Paul Kasobucki, Michael Kluk, Frank Kolinski, Joseph Kluk (of Custer), and Stefan Kuliński.  
 Simon Liewandowski, Anton Lepak, Frank Landowski, Joseph Lezczinski, Lorraine Lewinski, John Liebe, Charles



**PIONEER STORE**  
 This was Polonia's first store building. The photo was taken around 1895 after it had been converted to a saloon. The sign above the porch reads "Walter Bros. Lager" but the beer cases at left were from Stevens Point.



**COUNTRY MUSIC**  
 This was the Formella orchestra, photographed around 1913 near Ellis. From left are Edward Prodzinski, Joseph Formella, Anton Formella and Max Prodzinski.

Lepinski, Anton Lorbiecki, Frank Leshinski, Joseph Liebe, Thomas Lepinski, George Ledwerowski, John Landowski, Stefan Lubazki, Adam Lesinski, Thomas Lepinski, Thomas Lehmen, Joseph Lukowicz, Anton and Frank Nowak, Frank Nodolini, Louis Norlach, Casemier, Alex, Frank, Peter, Martin and Andrew Ostrowski, and Stefan Oka (?).  
 John, Anton and Felix Pliska, Joseph Prodzinski, Bernard and Michael Peankowski, Josephina Palberg, Stanislaus Pawelski, Math Pichowski, Frank Polchibski, Joseph Piechowski, Michael Platta, Joseph Paschelka, Walentin Polak, John Pitarski and Martin Pashelka.  
 Stefan Spiza, Thomas Badzinski, Sewester Redin (Sylvester Reading, probably), Thomas Kosik, Michael Studinski, John and Joseph Strojik, Martin Schulist, August Siwiz (?), Peter Smith, John Slesewski, Walentin Shymenski, Frank Soehcka, Mrs. John Sikorski, Frank Soikas, John Simonis, Stolz Pike Lake that is, a Stolz who lived near Pike Lake), Frank Stroik, Jacob Sychosh, Frank Schelbrachkowski, John Stenka, John Suika, John Stensal, and August Slagoski "old man" (notation).  
 John Turinski, Andrew Treczinski, Loranc Tuskowski, Paul Thomashewski, Tedodora Rozek, Joseph Treder, and Mathias Triba.  
 Jacob Wanta, Albert Wirosmielski, Joseph Wanta Jr., John Werowinski, Joseph Woyak (Pike Lake), John Wanta, Mathias Wysocki, Henry Wendorf (today Windorf), John Wendorf, Vincent Wierbsa (today Wierzba), Frank Weisberg, Fred Wendorf, Basel Wanta, Anton Woyak, August Wroblewski, Mary Wenserski, Albert Wanta, Nick Weranka, Thomas Yach, August Yenter, John Yaglia, Joseph Jelinski, John Zira, Jacob and John Zinda, John, Joseph and Walentin Zelnieski, and John and Stefan Zywicki.  
 The name of Albert Feltz is interesting because it shows that at this early date the family had already changed or shortened the name from Felkowski. The name Klopatek means "little worry," and the name Ostrowski means something fast or speedy. The name Soikas is today Soik, originally Sujecki, meaning "blue jay."  
 Mary Wenserski, who is mentioned above, was a rather well-known figure in the 1880s and 1890s in Sharon. She was the community midwife and any number of senior citizens in their 80's today, who were born

## Park's support drops 20% in Korean vote

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — President Chung Hee Park today termed the referendum endorsement of his policies "a valuable decision on the part of the people." But the voting returns showed a drop of more than 20 per cent in public support for Park's authoritarian rule.  
 The government said returns from 96 per cent of the ballots cast in Wednesday's referendum showed 9,710,569 in favor of Park's major policies, 3,328,739 opposed and 231,523 ballots invalid.  
 About 80 per cent of those eligible voted, so the total in favor of the president represented about 58 per cent of the 16.7-million electorate.  
 This was a sizable drop from the results of the 1972 referendum which endorsed Park's revision of the constitution to prolong his hold on the presidency and enlarge his powers. The vote in his favor then was 12,863,468, or more than 80 per cent of the electorate, with 1,087,965 opposed and a 90 per cent turnout.

The president's victory statement was conciliatory in tone. But a spokesman for the National Congress for the Restoration of Democracy, a coalition of political, civic and religious bodies, predicted a crackdown on opposition leaders that he said would show the "dictatorial nature" of the government.  
 Park said he would develop a "nonpartisan national political system on the basis of a national consensus . . . There must be no victors nor any losers in the referendum . . . It was the preference of the majority of the people on the basis of democratic principles."

The voters were given only one choice: to say they approved or opposed the "major policies" of the 57-year-old former general who has ruled South Korea since he led a military coup in 1961. The government viewed the referendum as a test of support for the 1972 constitution, and Park said he would quit if the vote went against him.  
 A spokesman for the largest anti-Park political party, the New Democratic, said the party would keep up its fight for a democratic constitution despite the government's victory.

## County court traffic cases

**City Traffic Cases**  
 Laddie F. Hintz, Route 4, Stevens Point, pleaded no contest to speeding, was found guilty and was fined \$60 and \$7 costs.  
 Donald H. Stremkowski, 2411 Comant St., Whiting, pleaded guilty to operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicants and was fined \$175 and \$7 costs. In lieu of license revocation, he may attend drivers safety school.  
 William G. Herz, Route 1, Bancroft, pleaded innocent to speeding, was found guilty after a trial and was fined \$100 and \$27.80 costs.  
 Robert C. McDonald, Route 1, Plover, pleaded no contest to speeding, was found guilty and was fined \$80 and \$7 costs.  
 Steven M. Ashenbrenner, Shawano, pleaded guilty to operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicants and was fined \$175 and \$7 costs. In lieu of license revocation, he may attend drivers safety school.  
 Wayne A. Slowinski, 1704 Jackson St., Plover, pleaded guilty to operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicants and was fined \$175 and \$7 costs. In lieu of license revocation, he may attend drivers safety school.  
 Robert J. Flatoff, 281 Washington Ave., pleaded guilty to operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicants and was fined \$175 and \$7 costs. In lieu of license revocation, he may attend drivers safety school.  
**County Traffic Cases**  
 Michael R. Miller, Menasha,

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**SATURDAY, FEB. 15TH**  
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