Polonia in America!

As the sixth largest ethnic group in the United States, Polish Americans remain a vibrant part of our nation’s ethnic mosaic, its tax base, and cultural well-being. If we look at what Polonia does in the Philadelphia and Southern Pennsylvania area, we see a reflection of the good Polish Americans do within local communities across the United States.

1. Polish Americans have always been an outstanding pillar in Pennsylvania’s and the nation’s tax base. The taxes Polish Americans pay include income, property, business, school, sales, inheritance and other taxes, which represent a substantial portion of the annual revenue used to support government services and continue community programs.

2. Polish Americans pride themselves in property ownership and in proper building maintenance, which in turn promotes real estate values.

3. Polish Americans regularly sponsor public events of an ethnic or patriotic nature, highlighting ethnic richness. These events promote positive publicity and goodwill for the Polish American community and the community at large.

4. Polish Americans believe in education and often choose the private and parochial systems, increasing their own financial commitments, while reducing the financial burden on education budgets.

5. Polish Americans support youth, cultural and community service organizations, church groups, and civic and patriotic activities. Their community-wide efforts are sponsored with the intent to maintain Polish history, culture and pride, now and for the future. When community organizers seek assistance from city or state services, they are simply seeking a portion of the services and appropriations which are being made possible from a portion of their own tax dollars.

More than 20 million Americans share full or partial Polish Heritage

Polish Americans are part of every aspect of life in America. They are well known for their contributions to the Arts, Music, Education, Politics, Engineering, Communications, Medicine, Religion, Travel, Sports, Research and Development, and community events. They are inventors, builders and professionals that make up the Great Mosaic of America.

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412th Anniversary of the Arrival of the First Polish Settlers in America on October 1, 1608

On October 1, 1608, the English ship Mary and Margaret arrived at Jamestown, Virginia. Aboard the ship were several persons of Polish descent who had been hired by the Virginia Company of London, at the request of Captain John Smith, leader of the Jamestown Colony. Captain Smith, who had first learned of the Polish craftsmen’s work while traveling in Eastern Europe, invited them to Jamestown for the specific purpose of helping to establish a glass industry in the colony. Upon their arrival, the Poles made a vital contribution to the survival of the colony by digging a well to provide fresh drinking water, which was seriously lacking in the colony.

The next accomplishment was the building of a furnace to produce glass products, which became the first factory in America. In addition to producing glass products, the Polish settlers also produced pitch and tar, vital building materials for expanding the new colony. Despite many hardships due to the climate and living conditions, the Poles and their fellow settlers persevered and eventually were able to produce enough glass, pitch and tar for export to England. These products became the first commercial items to be exported from America to Europe.

The arrival of the first Polish settlers in America marked a humble, yet significant event into American history. Over the years, people from Poland continued to immigrate to America. Today Poles are the sixth largest ethnic group in America, residing in all fifty states and participating in every aspect of American life. Poles comprise a significant portion of the tens of millions of immigrants who have come to America from all over the world and now proudly call this nation their home. The 412th anniversary of the first Poles in America provides an excellent opportunity for persons of all national origins to reflect on the journey of their immigrant ancestors who continue to add shape and color to the American mosaic.

On July 30, 1619, the Polish settlers accomplished another noteworthy achievement in the Jamestown colony by staging the first labor strike in America. After being denied participation in the first Virginia assembly, the Polish settlers conducted a labor walkout, not for wages or better working conditions, but for democratic rights. The newly formed House of Burgesses quickly acknowledged the vital role of the Poles in the settlement’s well being and granted them the same voting privileges as those enjoyed by the English.

For more information, visit the Polish American Cultural Center Museum, 308 Walnut Street in Historic Philadelphia, and the Museum’s Internet site at: PolishAmericanCenter.com.

In Recognition of a Major Donation to the
Polish American Cultural Center
Museum Exhibit Hall
From
Casimir Kowalski