

CHRISTINE KINEALY, *A Polish Count in County Mayo. Paul de Strzelecki and the Great Famine* (pp. 415-430), [in:] *Mayo: History and Society*, edited by Gerard Moran and Nollaig O Muraile, Dublin: Geography Publications 2014, pp. 944. ISBN 978-o-906602-683

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Paweł Strzelecki is best known for his 19th century explorations of Australia, including discovery of Mt. Kościuszko, but he also performed heroic voluntary humanitarian work during Ireland's Great Hunger in the 1840s. Christine Kinealy, director of the Ireland Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut (USA) contributed this chapter to the Mayo volume of "History and Society" series treating individual Irish counties.

The Great Hunger (sometimes referred to as the "Potato Famine") in late 1840s/early 1850s Ireland left a million dead and drove about an equal number into emigration, in part laying the foundation of the large Irish American community in the United States. Strzelecki's involvement with Irish relief began in 1847 and continued until 1850. From early 1847 to the third quarter of 1848, he volunteered for the British Relief Commission, where he oversaw distribution of clothing and one meal daily to 200,000 children, including more than 55,000 in hard-hit western Ireland. In 1849, he returned to Ireland to disburse "pitifully small" relief monies collected by private charity (the British Government adopted a *laissez-faire*, hands-off approach to the humanitarian crisis) as well as gave testimony before Parliament about the "'Imperial calamity' the Poor Laws could not address in Ireland. He made his last relief trip to Ireland in 1850, "seemingly ... on his own initiative." As Kinealy points out, while Britain's representative in Ireland, Sir Charles Trevelyan, received compensation and recognition for largely dragging his feet regarding the Irish humanitarian disaster Strzelecki, who labored voluntarily, eventually got some trinkets for far more effective relief work.

While British political and economic philosophy declared a hands-off approach to Irish starvation, Strzelecki did what he could on a human level to ameliorate the crisis. Starvation as a tool of political control has, unfortunately, continued in the world (see, for example, the Soviet Holodomor in 1930s Ukraine). Recognized for his efforts at the time but since forgotten, Strzelecki's memory has been revived by Kinealy, who wants

to erect a monument in Ireland honoring his labors. Her first step is this lengthy article, documenting at length Strzelecki's work to relieve starvation in the Emerald Isle.

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PHYLLIS ZYCH BUDKA, *The Maska Dramatic Circle: Polish American Theater in Schenectady, New York (1933-1942)*, Sunland, CA: Moonrise Press 2016, pp. x + 252. ISBN 978-0-9963981-4-5. Also e-Book

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Schenectady is today a city of approximately 66,000 people, located on the Mohawk River about 275 kilometers north of New York City. Polish immigrants of the *emigracja za chlebem* were attracted to the city and region because of its two major employers – General Electric and American Locomotive – as well as numerous mills along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers.

According to Robert Pascucci's "Electric City Immigrants," his 1984 doctoral dissertation studying the Polish and Italian immigrant communities of Schenectady, the city's 1920 Polonia community was 4,316, making it the fifth largest Polonian city in New York State. The dissertation is available online (<http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/pascucci/index.html>). Schenectady Polonia built two Polish parishes: St. Mary's and St. Adalbert's.

This book is the history of "Maska," an amateur theater group formed by young people – presumably first generation U.S.-born Polish Americans – that staged at least 50 Polish language plays in Schenectady in the period 1933-42. Based on a detailed scrapbook maintained by Phyllis Zych Budka's parents – themselves active in Maska – the book is a compendium of many primary (programs, tickets, photographs) and contemporaneous (clippings from the American and Polonian press) sources, providing an overview of the troupe's activities during the years of the Great Depression in the United States. The U.S. entry into World War II appears to have put an end to the group, as postwar efforts to revive Maska failed.

The author came upon her parents' scrapbook after her siblings discovered it while cleaning out their parents' home after their mother's death in 2001. Fortunately, they chose to save the artifact and use modern publishing techniques to make its content available to a worldwide audience; alas, how much of Polonia's material culture is in fact irretrievably lost when the possessions of earlier generations are posthumously discarded. This would seem to be a current threat especially to the records of the *emigracja polityczna*, the few of whom sufficiently active to have had such documents would be