

BLAZOWA



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BLAZOWA'S Past and Present *News and Historical Notes*

Compiled by the Municipal and Communal Library in Blazowa



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Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey

News from Blazowa

The Parish Church of St. Martin in Błazowa is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year (1900-2025).

For over a century, it has served the

New pews and a platform for the altar, which has already been restored, will also be ordered. Additionally, the painting of the main altar, featuring Our Lady Help of Christians, will be repainted. The next step will involve purchasing and laying paving stones around the chapel, but this depends on the funds raised.

On the first Saturday in September, the Friends of Wilczak Association



Reenactment of an ancient hunt, held at Augustyn Rybka's private „Potoki” Museum.

faithful in the Błazowa parish and has also become one of the town's attractions and a source of pride.

Renovation work on the chapel in Wilczak is progressing. The interior window sills have been installed, the interior has been painted, and the flooring has been laid. The attic hatch is now in place, and insulation and cladding for the chapel are currently being installed. In the near future, we plan to install electricity and internet connections, as well as purchase and set up lighting and a sound system.

once again had the pleasure of welcoming pilgrims from Tyczyn and Hermanowa, who have been travelling to Stara Wieś for generations.

The summer months were bustling with summer camps, various projects for children, and percussion workshops held at the Music School in Błazowa. Over the years, the Integration&Groove percussion workshops have risen to become one of the most recognisable music events in the region, bringing together young rhythm enthusiasts and



experienced drummers from across Poland.

We are proud to announce that Alicja Litwin, a second-grade student at the Primary School in Błazowa since September, achieved impressive international successes last school year. She participated in the Caspian Cup mathematics olympiad in Baku, Azerbaijan, which attracted over 200 students from 15 countries. Representing Poland, Alicja won third place in the 7-year-old age category. The tasks in the competition required rapid calculations using the Japanese soroban abacus as well as the so-called „imaginary abacus.” Participants were given only a few seconds for each operation, and the difficulty of the tasks varied greatly.

Another notable achievement was Alicja's third-place finish in the mental arithmetic competition held in Bruges, Belgium. This prestigious event demanded extraordinary concentration, speed, and excellent memory. However, Alicja's most outstanding achievement last school year was her participation in an international competition in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where she earned second place.

Alicja trains under her parents' supervision, developing not only her mathematical skills but also her memory, imagination, logical thinking, and concentration. Mental arithmetic is not just about counting; it is a method that engages both hemispheres of the brain, allowing young students to perform complex calculations faster than the average calculator user. Alicja's extraordinary accomplishments are a source of pride for the entire school community. Her example demonstrates how passion and consistent effort can lead to success on an international scale.

On 2 August, the first Hunting Trophy and Hunting Club Exhibition was held, showcasing the richness of local fauna. The exhibition took place

in the Bielik Hunting Club's lodge, a renovated former school building

shaping environmental attitudes in society. Hunting clubs' educational

farmers, honouring their hard work in the fields and the gifts they brought to the altar. A highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of the harvest wreaths, which were later donated to various institutions, including our library. All wreaths participated in the „Most Beautiful Harvest Wreath” competition. In the traditional wreath category, the main prize was awarded to the Rural Women's Circle in Kąkolówka, while the main prize in the modern wreath category went to the Rural Women's Circle „Górnianki”



National Reading 2025

in Wilczak. To engage the youngest participants, a variety of educational games and activities were organised to make the natural world more accessible to them. One of the highlights was a reenactment of an ancient hunt, held at Augustyn Rybka's private „Potoki” Museum. The event also featured demonstrations of hunting dogs, a falconer, a children's area, and delicious refreshments provided by the hunting clubs. This unique meeting highlighted the importance of preserving local traditions and fostering connections with nature. Environmental education is a key element of hunting clubs' activities, aimed at building ecological awareness and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Hunting clubs, as organisations that operate in close proximity to nature, play an important role in

activities often integrate local communities around joint ecological initiatives. Organising events such as forest cleanups, creating educational trails, or planting trees engages residents and builds environmental awareness at the regional level.

On 7 September, the Municipal Harvest Festival took place at the sports stadium in Błażowa. The celebration began with a Mass dedicated to the

from Błażowa Górna. The festival also featured informational, culinary, and craft stands. Guests were entertained by artists such as the Folk Band from Futoma and the Jubilee Group of the „Hyżniacy” Folk Song and Dance Ensemble. Izabela Trojanowska was the star of the evening, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed her concert.

The National Reading Campaign has been organised by the President of the Republic of Poland since 2012. Its goal is to promote classic Polish literature and encourage reading among people of all ages. The campaign was initiated with a joint reading of „Pan Tadeusz” by Adam Mickiewicz. This year's edition of the National Reading took place at the „Ostatni Grosz” inn in the hamlet of Wilczak, Błażowa, thanks to the generosity of Augustyn Rybka.

Unfortunately, the good spirit of our National Readings, Dr Hanna Krupińska-Łyp, was unable to attend



9th Blood Drive in Błażowa.

due to health issues. However, we are



fortunate to have a wonderful teacher of Polish language and literature in Błazowa. Ms Stefania Dyło, a long-time educator with extensive know-



ledge and a passion for literature, introduced us to the works of Jan Kochanowski, who is regarded as one of the most outstanding Polish poets and one of the greatest European writers of the Renaissance.

On 3 October, we had the pleasure of hosting Anna Ziobro from Rzeszów for another meeting with the author. Her tenth novel, „Nobody's Love” („Miłość niczyja”), was recen-



Author's meeting with Anna Ziobro.

tly published. This book explores the intricacies of interpersonal relationships and immerses readers in a world where understanding others can be a daunting task.

During a conversation with Anna Heller, the author shared insights into her writing process, her sources of inspiration, and where she finds ideas for her books.



The event included a Q&A session with readers, and attendees had the

opportunity to purchase the author's latest book and have it signed.

Anna Ziobro is not only a great author but also a warm, open, and cheerful person, and meeting her

was, as always, a true pleasure.

We are currently gathering materials for the project titled „I Will Tell You About the Błazowa Land, Which No Longer Exists.” We aim to connect generations and share stories about the Bła-

żowa region of the past, reviving through oral histories the places and customs that are fading not only from our area but also from people's memories.

We have already held the first organisational meetings and engaged in discussions with young people who may be interested in participating in this journalistic adventure. We encourage everyone who would like to join our project to contact the Błazowa Library.

Stay tuned for more updates! Please follow our website and Facebook page for the latest news.

The „Działaj Lokalnie” program is an initiative of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, implemented by the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland and the “Działaj Lokalnie” Centres.

Magda Kowalska-Cheffey



25 years of Municipal Services in Błazowa.



Jakub Heller

Old photos tell their story...

We should respect memories and history. There are growing calls for appreciating and protecting the past and the people who shaped it. History helps us understand the present, shape our national identity, learn from the mistakes of our ancestors, and create a better future by avoiding the errors made by previous generations.

While successes boost our self-confidence, failures sha-



To which we can return in memory.

We chase happiness,

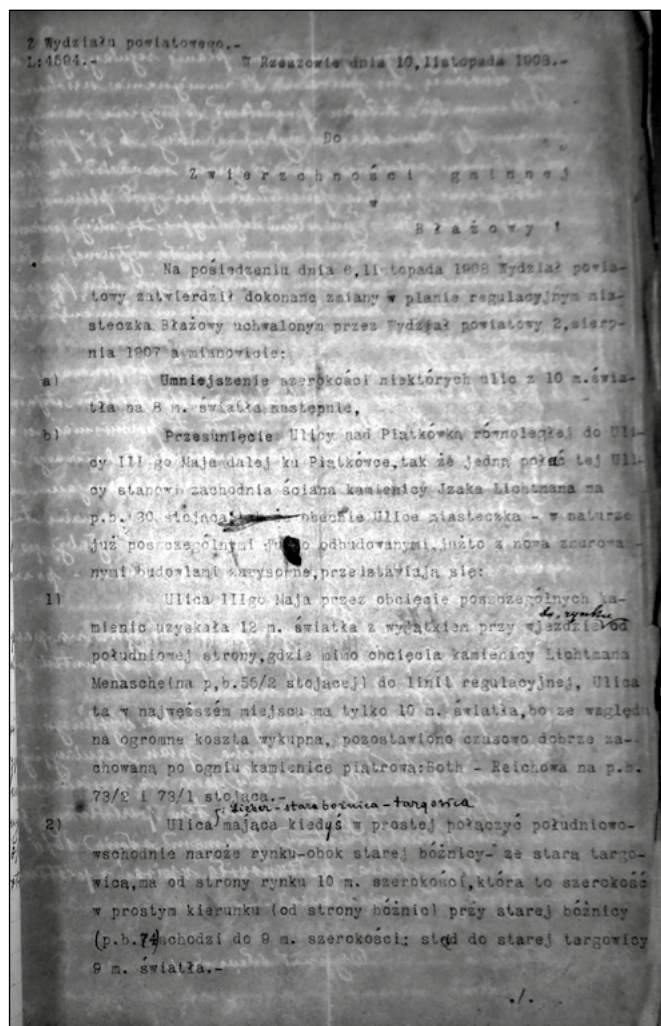
We reach for the stars,

We aspire to change the world at will.

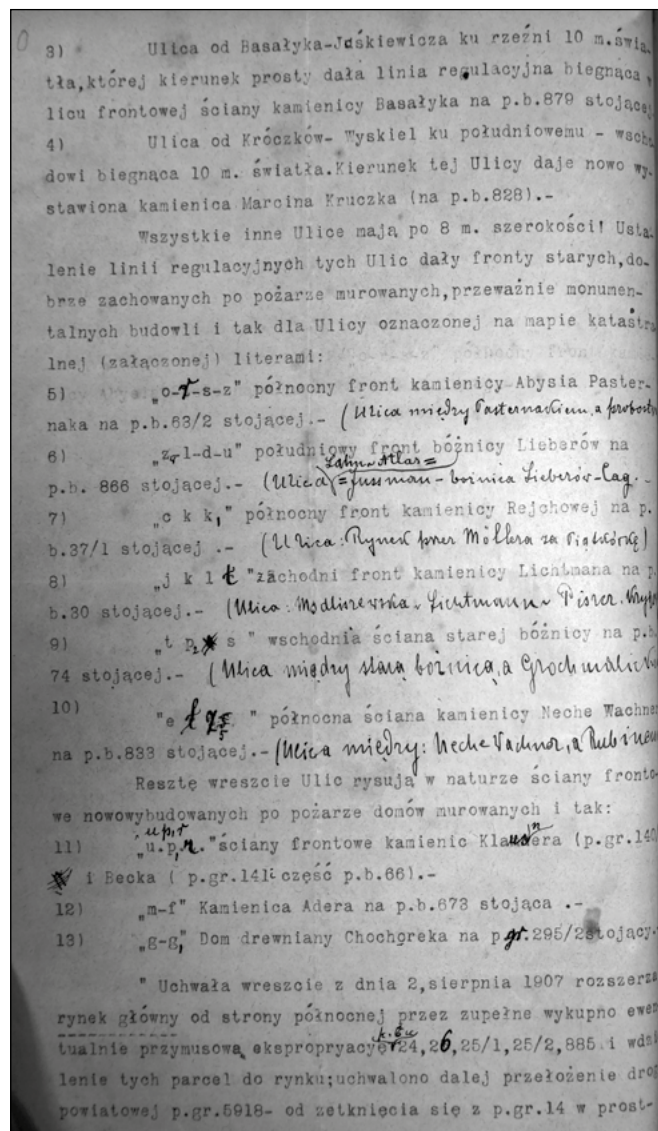
But the most important thing is

What lives somewhere within us.

Gentlemen, let's respect our memories.



Recommendations following the Błazowa fire of 1907. From the State Archives in Rzeszów.



pe our character and offer the most valuable life lessons. A wise person can learn much from them; a fool will ignore them. The lyrics of the 1977 song by Skaldowie remain very relevant today:

What has been, has been.

What can be, is.

And what will be, will be.

Yet, it's always nice to know

That we have no shortage of places

Let's respect our memories,

Let's cherish their content

And learn to value them.

Let's respect our memories,

For something is truly worth having

When our fin de siècle approaches.

[...]

We all have memories, but unfortunately, bad ones tend to stick around longer than good ones. As we grow older, these memories accumulate, and while there are some we might wish to forget, it's not that simple. Our brains can't be „formatted” like a computer.

When talking with older people about past times, customs, politics, or decisions, I make an effort to understand their perspective. As the saying goes, „point of view depends on where you sit.” It's difficult to know how one might act in a specific situation or how they would behave. Sometimes people try to judge past events without recognising that those involved experienced life in a different context.

An excellent book that portrays the lives of the former residents of Błażowa is „Pamiętnik Kazimierza Krygowskiego,” published in 2016.

I must admit that this book left a strong impression on me only recently, when I read it for the second time. During the pandemic, we read online excerpts that illustrated the story of a carpenter-artist from Błażowa. The version I picked up is the third edition of the diary, and it captures the spirit of those times exceptionally well, using the language that the residents of Błażowa spoke during that era.

The author of the diary, Kazimierz Krygowski, was born on 14 February 1878 in Futoma. From a young age, Kazimierz displayed diverse artistic talents; however, his family's poverty prevented him from completing his education. In 1903, he married Paulina Zielińska, and together they had four sons: Zbigniew, Bogumił, Marian, and Zdzisław. Throughout his busy life, Krygowski decorated many churches, including the one in Błażowa, creating altars, pulpits, baptismal fonts, stalls, portals, doors, and various smaller items. He passed away on 4 January 1949 in Błażowa.

Kazimierz founded the first theatre group in Błażowa and also served as the head of the Volunteer Fire Department. He vividly recounts the Błażowa fire of 15 May 1907, during which, according to him, nearly three hundred buildings burned down. The current layout of the town was designed in the aftermath of this tragedy. Kazimierz also highlighted the issues affecting small towns and villages, such as drunkenness and gambling. Krygowski's diary serves as a significant historical source.

Our library history group engages in various activities, including the collection and editing of old photographs and documents. We have amassed a considerable number of these and are working to make them available to you gradually. On 24 August, our Informal Historical Group „To Save from Obscurity” organised a walking tour through Błażowa, highlighting locations that are integral to our shared Polish-Jewish heritage. We began our walk at the library and concluded at the Błażowa Jewish cemetery, where our guests, Peter Buxbaum and Father Paweł Batory, offered a prayer in remembrance of all Holocaust victims. Magda Kowalska-Cheffey and Jakub Heller provided insights about the historical sites in Błażowa. You can read more about the walk later in this newsletter.

If anyone wishes to experience this unique journey through time, this walk is also available in electronic formats in Polish and English. I believe it will be an interesting tourist attraction in Błażowa.

Links to the walk:

<https://biblioteka.blazowa.net/ocalic-od-zapomnienia/blazowska-nieformalna-grupa-historyczna-ocalic-od-zapomnienia/spacer-sladami-blazowskich-zydow-przewodnik-turystyczny/>

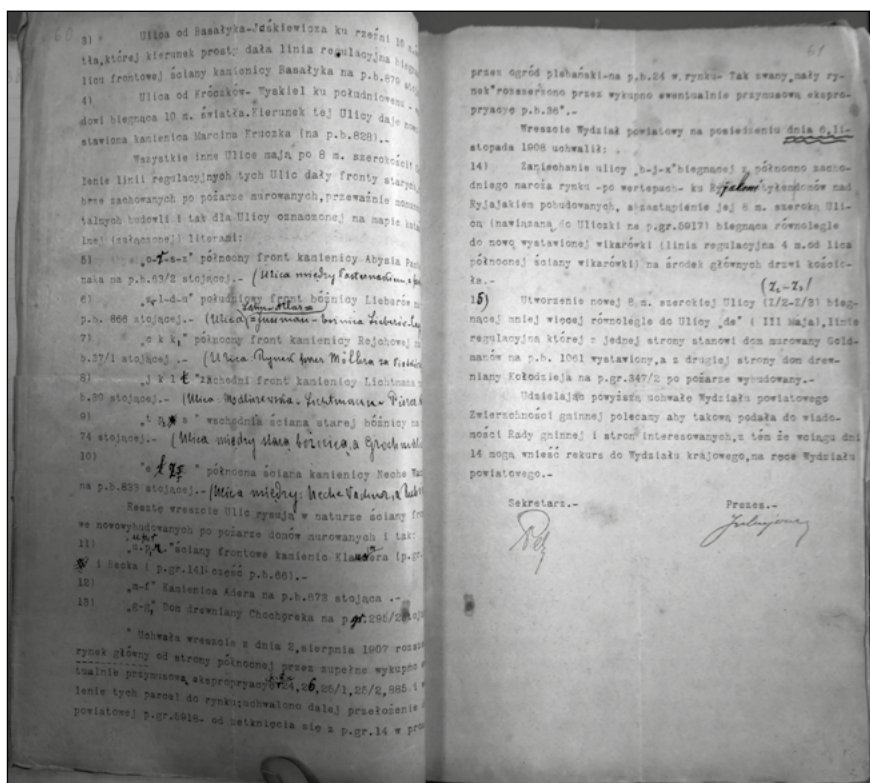
<https://biblioteka.blazowa.net/ocalic-od-zapomnienia/blazowska-nieformalna-grupa-historyczna-ocalic-od-zapomnienia/a-walk-with-the-atlas-family-turist-guide/>

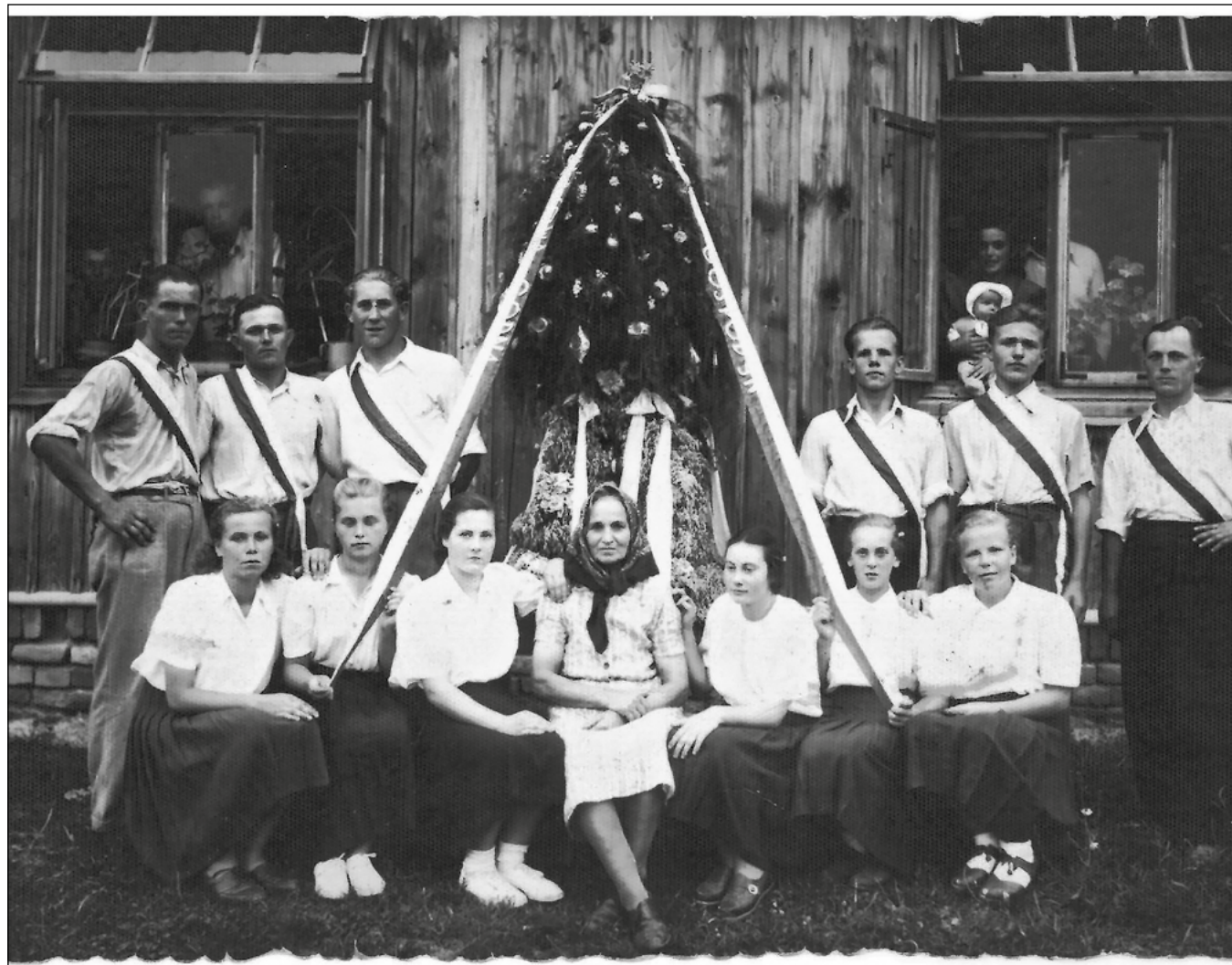
Presently, we are participating in a project titled „I'll Tell You About the Błażowa Land, Which No Longer Exists.” The goal of this project is to connect generations and share stories about historic places, people, and events. All our activities are rooted in local history, aiming to enhance our understanding of the past.

In this next instalment of historical photography, I present the Błażowa regulation plan following the fire, along with more photographs from the extensive seven-thousand-volume collection of the Błażowa library.

As always, I encourage all enthusiasts of our region's history who would like to share their memories and photographs from that time to contact the library.

Jakub Heller













In Poland, the Harvest Festival (Dożynki) has a long tradition. Photographs from the Błażowa Library collection.



Anna Heller

Wieńcowiny (harvest wreath making) – a beautiful tradition

During the annual harvest festival in the Błazowa commune, held on 7 September,

the Rural Women's Circle in Nowy Borek had the honour of presenting a commemorative wreath to the staff of the Municipal and Communal Public Library in Błazowa.

The wreath, made by the members of the Women's Circle using this year's grain, flowers, and fruit, was crafted according to Polish tradition. The process of creating this symbol to mark the conclusion of the harvest was overseen by experienced individuals, including Anna Rabczak, Krystyna Szczoczarz, and the group's chairwoman, Ewa Szpala. Other group members also contributed to the work.

Preparations for making the wreath began well in advance. In addition to conceptualising its shape and design, the grain needed thorough

preparation. It was harvested in early July and then trimmed and dried to achieve the desired colour. Afterwards, the ears of grain were attached to a previously prepared frame. Finally, the wreath was adorned with flowers and other decorative elements. The completed wreath was presented at the Parish Harvest Festival in Borek Stary as well as at the Błazowa Commune Harvest Festival.

The time spent creating the wreath, besides passing on tradition, also acts as a valuable form of intergenerational integration, which is an important aspect.

Harvest festivals are a traditional Polish custom deeply rooted in the country's culture and national identity. Harvest wreaths symbolise our connection to these traditions.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Rural Women's Circle in Nowy Borek for creating and gifting a beautiful

harvest wreath to the Municipal and Communal Public Library in Błazowa. We appreciate your incredible commitment and the care you put into crafting it by hand, rather than purchasing a ready-made one.

Thanks to your efforts, this wreath is not only a stunning decoration but also a genuine symbol of gratitude for the bounty of the harvest and the hard work of our farmers. Your dedication has helped keep this important tradition alive. Thank you!

The Błazowa Library publishes the local government magazine „Kurier Błazowski,” which aims to save from obscurity the people, events, customs, and traditions of our region. I believe that this beautiful wreath will contribute to preserving our ancestral traditions. We promise to document the entire process of creating a traditional harvest wreath next year.

Anna Heller
Library Director



Members of the Rural Women's Circle in Nowy Borek.



Stages of making a harvest wreath.



Anna Gellermann

Tales from years gone by. Part 4 – The family circle

As each day progresses towards autumn, the sun reveals its radiant face later and later in the morning. Just a few weeks ago, I would rise at dawn, and as always, upon arriving at the stable, I would expose my face to soak in its golden energy. Today, however, the sky had only just begun to lighten slightly, and the sun was not yet visible; the pale moon still hung high above the stable.

The horses were already waiting, eager to go out to pasture, with clouds of steam rising from their nostrils. The sheep followed closely behind, bleating loudly, and then I would warm my hands on the goats' warm udders as the frothy milk poured abundantly into the sapphire-enamelled bucket. As I milked, I would rest my forehead against the warm back of one of the goats, dozing off for a moment.

Last night felt incredibly long, almost stretching until midnight. During the day, my inspiration simply wouldn't come, and the websites I needed were down. I started writing, but the story just wouldn't come together into a coherent whole. This has been the case for several days now. Time felt like it was shrinking and blurring, and nothing sensible was

emerging. Some aspect of the story didn't add up, and I knew it had to be as close to the truth as possible.

I began sifting through the parish registers from Blizne, recalling that I had previously found another sister of Father Leon Kwiatkowski there, along with her family. Suddenly, amidst what seemed like meaningless information about the eldest daughter's godparents, I stumbled upon the solution to a mystery that had been puzzling me for a long time.

Next, I opened the nineteenth-century baptismal records from Błażowa. Written in Father Leon's legible handwriting, much easier to decipher than the ones from Blizne, I flicked through scan after scan, quickly searching for answers to my questions. Smiling at the sight of familiar surnames belonging to



many of you, dear readers, which have appeared in these records for centuries,



Zofia Dulęba, sister of Father Kwiatkowski.

I fished out from among your ancestors the baptismal records of children in my family. Dominus Petrus Kwiatkowski, filius Vincenti et Annae de Stafińska, together with his wife, Domina Celestina Kwiatkowska nata Prochaska, filia Francisci et Agnetis de Ostoya Solecka, had five children born in Błażowa, year after year. Each had two or three names, which made browsing through the scans much easier. Since I have not been able to find earlier baptismal records from Humniska, I am unsure whether Piotr, brother of Father Leon, and Celestyna already had children when they arrived in Błażowa around 1890 to manage the church property.

This information was entirely new to me. I had only known that Piotr and Leon's parents had helped Father Leon by managing the church property during the construction of the church in Błażowa from 1896 to 1900. I was unaware that Piotr, who was the priest's younger brother, had previously held this position. However, the parish registers indicate that he lived in Błażowa from 1890 to 1894. In 1896, the year construction of the church began, he moved to Blizne,



In the photo, from left to right, are Father Leon, Franciszek, Stanisław, and Piotr.

where he leased property from the Przemysł bishops and managed it until its parcellation in 1925. After 1896, entries started to appear in the baptismal register in Blizne regarding the baptisms of seven more children of Piotr and Celestyna.

In 1904, the family settled on their own estate in Rudawiec, a charming hamlet near Izdebki, where their last two daughters were born. In total, the family had at least fourteen children. It is said that Piotr commissioned the construction of a winding road to the church in Izdebki so that his wife could enjoy a beautiful view while travelling to Mass in her carriage. Additionally, the new church in Izdebki, built between 1911 and 1918, was designed by architect Sas Zubrzycki, who also designed the church in Błażowa. The Kwiatkowski family's wooden manor house still stands in Rudawiec today. The village residents I spoke with have fond memories of this family, which was forced to leave their land after the war. They left behind, until the death of Piotr's eldest daughter, Maria Celestyna—who was born in Błażowa—a single locked room in the attic. This room was filled with family silverware, beautiful furniture, and memorabilia.

Thanks to the current owner's courtesy, I was able to visit this mysterious space and received a photo of its past residents in front of the now-defunct old wooden church, which was displayed on the wall. This explains how the Kwiatkowski family came to the Błażowa area, despite having been settled in Humniska for centuries.

According to eighteenth-century chronicles, a dispute arose in 1704 between peasants who, while intoxicated, were accusing each other. In the presence of Marcin Kwiatkowski, a miller from Humniska, and Walenty Chlebek, a miller from Grabownica, the feuding parties reached an agreement.

In 1830, Marcin's descendant, Walenty Kwiatkowski, purchased his father's inheritance from his brothers, which was soon passed down to his son, Ludwik. Among Ludwik's five children was Leon's father, Wincenty, and my great-great-great-grandmother, Franciszka Wójcik, née Kwiatkowska. She was married to Jakub, a participant in the January Uprising and the owner of the Widacz farm in Falejówka. They educated their children, particularly the boys, as was common in those days. Wincenty's sons include Father Leon, Franciszek, who took over a farm with

two mills and two sawmills, Stanisław, who worked as a postal clerk in Kraków, and Piotr, whose family I mentioned earlier. Franciszek's descendants still live on their land in Humniska.

In the photo, from left to right, are Father Leon, Franciszek, Stanisław, and Piotr. Unfortunately, I don't have a similar picture of Father Leon's sisters. I have only found a photo of his sister Zofia Dulęba, née

Kwiatkowska, who bears a striking resemblance to him.

Wincenty's daughters included Antonina Stępkowska, the wife of Feliks, a miller from Blizne; Zofia Anna, the priest's twin sister, who died in early childhood; Zofia Dulęba; and Józefa Dobrowolska, the wife of Michał, an organist from Humniska. Their son, Adam, died young while staying with his grandparents in Błażowa and is buried with them in a common grave in the local cemetery, under the statue of the smiling Virgin Mary, near Father Leon's tomb.

History has come full circle, leading me to Błażowa, surely at the urging of my ancestors, so I could care for their graves and prevent them from being forgotten. When inspiration for writing eluded me, I would joke that it would be helpful to enter a trance and communicate with their spirits, allowing each of them to share their story. I'm not sure if it was the hop wreath hanging above my bed, but one night as I fell asleep, I found myself in an extraordinary place. I was sitting in a beautiful garden filled with flowers and trees, next to an old house. Surrounding me were many women; some I recognised from old photographs, while others were unfamiliar. I was particularly delighted to see Madzia from Humniska, whom I had recently met.

Their voices were like a gentle murmur, reminiscent of buzzing bees; an atmosphere of pleasant liveliness surrounded us as everyone chatted warmly and cheerfully. However, the dream was abruptly interrupted when one of the dogs sleeping nearby decided to bark. As a result, none of the aunts, cousins, or great-great-grandmothers gathered there could share their thoughts with me. Lacking a firsthand account, I had to present a story to you, dear readers of the *Kurier*, based on factual information from other sources, a task I undertook out of necessity and will continue in the next issue. Because, while personal stories from individuals of the past who appear in dreams would likely be much more fascinating, it's uncertain whether they are credible.

Anna Gellermann



Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Humniska.

Former pedagogues of Błażowa

Pedagogues are individuals who fulfil educational and training roles. The term „pedagogue” originates from the Greek word „paidagogos,” which means „one who leads a child.” In ancient Greece, this role was typically held by a slave who was responsible for caring for and shaping the character of a young person. In Polish history, teachers were known by various terms, including „bakałarz,” „belfer,” and „mistrz.” I would like to reflect on the educators from Błażowa who are still fondly remembered by their students. Barbara Walów-Wais, a student and graduate of Błażowa Primary School, prepared and published this text in issue 74 of „Kurier” in 2003.

THEY REMAIN IN GRATEFUL MEMORY

Stanisław Jakub Pleśniak
(26 IV 1895 – 8 IX 1975 r.)



He was born in Błażowa on 26 April 1895, into a large family. He had seven siblings, three sisters and four brothers, of whom he was the eldest. Two of his sisters received pedagogical education and were teachers: Stefania Kiersnowska and Józefa Bernatowa. Bronisława, the oldest of them, married at a very young age and became a housewife. The youngest brother, Julian, was a priest. Tadeusz took over his father's family business,

a restaurant and a butcher shop in Błażowa. After graduating from high school and obtaining his high school diploma, Kazimierz worked as a civil servant in the state administration. During World War I, Władysław, like Stanisław, enlisted in the Legions and died on the battlefield in 1917. Stanisław joined the Legions, volunteered and fought until the end of World War I, then took part in the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1919-1920. He returned home safely, and for his participation in the fighting, courage and bravery, he was awarded the *Virtuti Militari* Cross.

After obtaining his teaching qualifications, Stanisław began his professional career in Brańsk, located in the Białystok region. There, he met and married Jadwiga Kiersnowska, a fellow teacher, in 1926. Until the outbreak of World War II, both Stanisław and Jadwiga worked at a primary school in Brańsk. Stanisław was highly active in both his professional and social life, participating in the co-operative movement and co-founding the *Stefczyk Fund* in Brańsk.

In September 1939, German troops occupied Brańsk, but they soon withdrew, allowing Soviet forces to enter the area. As a legionnaire, a supporter of Piłsudski, a teacher, and an engaged community member, Stanisław's name, along with that of his family, appeared on a deportation list to Siberia. He learned about this situation in advance from a well-wisher with access to confidential documents. In March 1940, Stanisław and his family fled Brańsk, seeking refuge in German-occupied territories, specifically returning to their family home in Błażowa. The escape was planned and organised within 24 hours. Stanisław and his family left home without any luggage, taking only the clothes they were wearing at the time. They abandoned all their belongings, which were later confiscated along with the entire estate once their escape was revealed. His daughter Halina recalls

their flight across the „green border” as follows: „At night, we travelled by horse-drawn wagon to a village near the border on the Bug River. There, we waited with other escapees until the following night. After dusk, we walked several kilometres to the Bug River, guided by paid escorts. We moved through the forest in a single file, pushing through the heavy snow and following the tracks already made by the guides. We could constantly hear the rustle and whistle of skis passing by—sometimes far away, sometimes closer, and occasionally right behind us. Amidst this, we also heard single gunshots; the Soviet border guards were tracking down the fugitives. Our group consisted of about 20 people, including three or four guides. Several groups attempted to cross the border that night, but not all succeeded. One group that had crossed the border half an hour earlier was caught; the men were shot, and the women were sent to Siberia.

The most perilous part of our journey was crossing the frozen Bug River. Soviet guards on their side were cutting holes in the ice, camouflaging them with straw or branches, and then covering them with snow to make them invisible. Many escapees fell into these hidden traps.

We had to be extremely careful to follow the guides' tracks, as they were knowledgeable about the dangers we faced. However, this was challenging because the night was dark. Before stepping onto the ice, I became scared, lost my way, and fell into a snowdrift. One of the guides came back to help me and led me across the Bug River. After crossing the river, we walked another dozen kilometres to the village where we would rest.

After an all-night, tense march through waist-deep snow, we slept for 24 hours. Once we had stretched our aching bodies (we had slept on a hard dirt floor), we were taken by horse-drawn wagons to a nearby train station, where we met the Germans.

Fortunately, we managed to board a train that took us to Rzeszów, and then we continued by horse-drawn wagons to Błażowa, where my father's parents lived. This journey allowed us to avoid deportation to Siberia."

During the war, Stanisław was actively involved in the underground Home Army organisation and participated in various operations. At the beginning of the occupation, he started working as a teacher at a primary school in Lecka. He later moved to Błażowa, where he became the principal of the school, a position he held until his death. Throughout his career, he was an educator and a role model for many young people. He passed away after a long and severe illness at the age of 62, four years after we left the school.

Ignacy Wencel
(II 1915 – 26 X 1991 r.)



He was the son of Franciszka and Ignacy and worked as a teacher of Polish and history. During the 1952/53 school year, he served as the class teacher for 7a. Born in 1915 in Chwałowice near Rybnik, he was the youngest of five children. His father passed away during World War I in the same year he was born. After finishing primary school in Chwałowice, he attended the State Teachers' Seminary in Mysłowice, where he completed his secondary school leaving examination in 1935 and received his teaching diploma. He began his teaching career

at Primary School No. 22 in Chorzów. In 1936, he was called up for a year of military service. After completing this service, he continued his work as a teacher in Łyski and Niedobczyce near Rybnik.

On 31 August 1939, he reported for active service in Bielsko as per his mobilisation card. He participated in the September Campaign, fighting along the Bielsko-Kraków-Mielec-Janów Lubelski-Rawa Ruska route, and was subsequently captured by the Germans. He spent time in the Pińczów POW camp until December 1939, when he was released as he was the sole breadwinner for his widowed mother and returned to his hometown. However, instead of working as a teacher, as suggested by the German administration, he took a job as a railway worker and remained in that position from 1940 to 1943.

Born and living in Silesia, he was forcibly conscripted into the German army and spent a year serving in the 789th Coastal Defence Infantry Regiment in southern France. After the invasion in 1944, he was transferred to northern France, where he deserted to British forces in August 1944. From September 1944, under the pseudonym Jerzy Janeczko, he held the rank of sergeant cadet in the Polish Parachute Brigade in Leven, Scotland.

After returning to Poland in April 1946, he worked for a year at the Rybnik Coal Industry Association. From 1947, he taught in Zabrze, where he also began his family life by marrying Zofia Początek. In 1949, he and his wife moved to Błażowa, where he continued to teach at the primary school until his retirement in 1975. He also served as the school's volunteer deputy principal for a time. From the very beginning of his tenure in Błażowa, he devoted himself to improving the school library collection, and many books owe their extended lifespan to his diligent bookbinding efforts.

We remember him as a highly demanding teacher who did not tolerate any whispering or rustling in the classroom. He insisted on our full attention and knew how to enforce it. At

the time, we did not realise how much his strictness contributed to our learning. He passed away on 26 October 1991, at the age of 76.

Zofia Wencel
(20 IX 1914 – 2 II 1992 r.)



Cecylia and Piotr Początek's daughter was born in 1914 in Błażowa, making her the eldest of six siblings. After finishing primary school in Błażowa, she attended the Female Teachers' Seminary in Ropczyce and successfully completed her final exams in 1933. That same year, she began an unpaid internship at Primary School No. 3 in Rybnik. Following her internship, she was appointed as a temporary teacher at the Primary School in Łyski near Rybnik, and later worked in Zamyśłów until 1939.

During the occupation, she taught at a Polish school in Zwiężczyca, near Rzeszów, and later at a primary school in Błażowa. She also continued to engage in clandestine teaching. In September 1946, she moved to Silesia, settling in Zabrze, where she taught at a primary school and simultaneously completed a higher teacher training course organised in Gliwice. In 1947, she married Ignacy Wencel, a fellow teacher. In 1949, the couple moved back to Błażowa, where they both worked at a primary school until their retirement.

Zofia Wencel retired in 1960 after dedicating her career to teaching primarily grades 1-3. She was an outstanding early childhood educator and also taught Polish with great commitment. Zofia is remembered as an exceptionally cheerful and always smiling person. She passed away on 2 February 1992, just three months after the death of her husband, at the age of 78.

Barbara Walów-Wais

Kurier Błazowski, Issue 74/2003

Is a Teacher also a Pedagogue?

Today, the professions of teacher and pedagogue are often confused, but they are distinct roles that serve different purposes. A teacher instructs students in a classroom setting, imparting knowledge and skills to them. In contrast, a school counsellor (pedagog szkolny) focuses on

supporting students throughout their educational journey, helping them address personal issues and navigate challenges.

Teachers, both past and present, play a crucial role not only in education but also in shaping the younger generation. Years ago, they were regarded as authorities and role models for students, and the teaching profession was considered a prestigious field. Teachers had a significant influence on fostering positive attitudes among their students. Schools were characterised by strict discipline, and violations of these rules often led to serious consequences.

As time has passed, many of us have fond memories of our former teachers, as I certainly do. If anyone would like to share their memories from their school years and beyond, I encourage you to reach out to the Błazowa Library.

Jakub Heller



Students from the primary school in Błazowa (in the background is the school building, which has since been demolished).



Szkoła Podstawowa w Błazowej. Klasa VII a - rok szkolny 1952/1953. Wychowawca Ignacy Wencel.

W pierwszym rzędzie od lewej siedzą: Elżbieta Rybka-Kawa, Anna Synoś-Nawłoka, Zofia Pleśniak, Maria Jamiot-Synoś, Zofia Rząsa-Mucha.

W drugim rzędzie od lewej siedzą nauczyciele: Stanisława Małodobra, Rozalia Jaśkiewiczowa z córką Anną, Jadwiga Pleśniakowa, Władysław Kozubek, Bogusława Bentkowska, Stanisław Pleśniak - kierownik szkoły z wnukiem Jackiem, Helena Kaczmarkowa z córką Ewą, Zofia Wencłowa, Ignacy Wencel z synem Andrzejem, Teofil Jaśkiewicz.

W trzecim rzędzie od lewej stoją: Anna Paluch-Ludera, Joanna Wania - nauczycielka, Maria Kulasa-Opiola, Bronisława Paściak-Zyradzka, Maria Początek-Kielar, Wiesława Szeliga-Badowska, Zofia Kruczek-Szarck, Helena Osip-Kozioł, Anna Bednarz-Paluch, Helena Hajnowska-Groszek, Maria Kulasa-Rabczak - nauczycielka, Władysława Kapłon-Kalus, Anna Skubisz-Makarewicz, Helena Słowik-Synoś.

W czwartym rzędzie od lewej stoją: Leon Wielgos, Zbigniew Piszcz, Marian Wilk, Roman Bartoń, Piotr Rybka.

Zdjęcie opisano na zjeździe absolwentów Szkoły Podstawowej w Błazowej 4 października 2003 r.

Images from Błażowa's past. The trade

Many historical sources related to our families, towns, or significant events are still waiting to be uncovered. It is crucial that when we clean out our attics or basements, we carefully examine the documents we intend to discard, as hidden among the piles of seemingly unnecessary papers can be real „treasures.”



Błażowa, during the occupation. Interior of a shop in a tenement building adjacent to the Town Hall

In August 2025, Mr Piotr Pałac from Błażowa Górna donated documents to the Society of Friends of the Błażowa Land. Among these was an exciting find for historians and regionalists: two alphabetical indexes containing records of individuals and their purchases from the general store operated by Ignacy Synoś. This store was located in the tenement house of Konstanty Wyskiel on 3 Maja Street in Błażowa.

This building still stands and is located opposite the current headquarters of the Municipal Services Department. Interestingly, one of the windows and the entrance door is protected by a grate. The entrepreneur maintained detailed indexes that recorded the names of customers who, for various reasons, made purchases without paying for them at the time of sale. This practice of buying on credit was known locally as „na borg” or „na zeszyt” (meaning „the notebook”). Two thick volumes of indexes from 1938 and 1939, along with several entries from 1940, confirm that this was a common occurrence.

Among the names of the customers, we can find a cross-section of the social class of the town of Błażowa and the surrounding villages. Shopping na borg were peasants, craftsmen, teachers, officials, doctors, and even a catechist. This demonstrates that cash was not readily available, and everyone in the 1930s struggled, if not with poverty, then with temporary financial difficulties, or at least with liquidity issues, as temporary cash shortages were common. Detailed records were maintained for indivi-

Futoma, Piątkowa, and other nearby areas primarily purchased essential items such as kerosene, salt, sugar, soap, yeast, pearl barley, rolls, buttons, pots and pans, kerosene lamp glasses, potato flour, press paper, tissue paper (for cigarettes), and glue sticks. They seldom bought candy, which was usually purchased in 10-decagram quantities. They rarely included bread, butter, fat, or cheese in their purchases.

In contrast, the shopping habits of city residents frequently included items like butter, cheese, rolls, bread, eggs, apples, pears, chicory, onions, beans, groats, and fat. Additionally, they often purchased luxury goods of the



Błażowa, 1956. The Jaśkiewicz family.

dual customers, including extensive descriptions of the goods they purchased, such as quantities and weights, along with the amounts owed as of specific dates. Settlements were periodically made for fully or partially paid amounts. These lists of goods serve as an excellent historical resource, providing insight into what the region's inhabitants could afford at the time and how they lived.

What items were in the customer's shopping basket?

Analysing numerous shopping lists leads us to several conclusions and reflections. Generally, residents of Błażowa exhibited a more diverse range of products in their shopping baskets compared to those from surrounding villages. For instance, residents of Białka,

time, including lemons, tea, coffee, cocoa, powdered sugar, candy, rice, sheets of paper, and herrings, as well as gloves and other items.

Goods were sold either by weight or by volume, as indicated by the quantities specified. For example, items could be sold in amounts such as 10 or 15 decagrams of yeast, 10 decagrams of cocoa, two decagrams of paprika or pepper, a pound or kilogram of sugar, or a litre of kerosene or blueberries. Industrial products, on the other hand, were sold by the piece, as in the case of five dozen pins, one rice brush, 20 safety pins, or five sheets of paper. The amount owed on credit (na borg) was typically paid off later, either in full or through instalments, which could also

be deferred to a future repayment period.

Trade in Błażowa and average prices

In Błażowa, a weekly market took place every Wednesday, drawing residents from nearby towns who arrived on foot or by horse-drawn wagons. Some came to buy, others to sell, and many simply to observe prices and goods. On other days of the week, it was possible to purchase or order nearly any goods in town. Almost every tenement house had one or two, or even more, commercial or service premises facing the street. In contrast, the apartments typically faced the courtyard and were located on the first floor. Most businesses in Błażowa were owned by Jews, spanning both the commercial and service sectors. However, the number of businesses owned by Christians gradually increased each year, including shops, slaughterhouses, bakeries, inns, and liquor stores. Entrepreneurs sourced their goods from various suppliers, including local private wholesalers and producers. Records indicate that items like eggs and cheese were sometimes delivered by individuals who were also customers of the store.

Home delivery services were available for orders. A letter dated 8 March 1939, from Rzeszów, preserved in shop records, indicates that a customer was waiting for the delivery of 3 kg of butter and 2 kg of cheese. The customer wrote, „I don't know why you didn't send it. Please send it tomorrow, Friday, 9 March, on the noon bus. I'm waiting either on Friday or possibly Saturday. If you don't send it, please write to me so I won't have to wait.”

The town's commercial activity was well-developed and surpassed contemporary standards. Some goods were imported from distant places, possibly including Lviv or Kraków. Several bills for cigarettes and tobacco imported from Kraków have been preserved, with one bill dating back to 1940. By that time, Lviv was beyond the borders of the General Government, making Kraków, the capital of the General Government, the only viable alternative for imports.

The interwar period in Poland was marked by significant challenges, particularly unemployment, which plagued

our young nation. The global economic crisis that began with the stock market crash in New York in 1929 hit weaker countries, such as Poland, the hardest and lingered for an extended period. Poverty and a lack of prospects for a better future led to a major peasant strike in August 1937. This strike spread across most towns, including our commune, and primarily involved blocking roads and halting food deliveries to cities. Organised peasant groups took control of the roads at night to prevent the transportation of goods such as milk, butter, cheese, and others to Rzeszów.

The police intervened to disperse the protesting groups, often using weapons, which resulted in numerous casualties. Many participants were imprisoned as a consequence. The situation was dire not only in agriculture; despite the construction of the Central Industrial District—such as the WSK PZL Rzeszów plant, which was located in our region—there was still a significant shortage of jobs. Those who managed to find employment felt fortunate, as even a government job, like teaching, was considered a dream opportunity.

During that time, a regular worker could earn between 70 and 130 złoty, while teachers made between 150 and 250 złoty. In contrast, maids and those relying on odd jobs earned significantly less. In the countryside, families on small 2-3-hectare farms depended on the number of cows they owned for their food supply. The average cost of a milking cow was between 100 and 150 złoty. Although food prices were not exorbitant compared to industrial goods, few people could realistically afford them.

Here's a price list of goods from a local shop: 1 kg of sugar cost one złoty, 1 kg of cheese was priced at 35 groszy, and 1 kg of butter cost 2.8 złoty. Potatoes were sold at 10 groszy per kilogram, while rolls ranged from 8 to 10 groszy per roll. A basket could be purchased for 25 groszy, a rice brush for 35 groszy, and a one-litre pot for 90-95 groszy. A dozen pins cost 12 groszy. This shop did not sell meat; however, the price for pork or beef was around 1.5 złoty per kilogram, and a litre of milk cost approximately 25 groszy.

Men's shoes were priced at over 20 złoty, and a man's shirt made from factory fabric ranged from 8 to 10 złoty, while the daily wage for an unskilled worker was between 1 and 2 złoty. The starting wage for a maid was about 25 złoty per month.

These disparities between earnings and commodity prices illustrate why, in the 1930s, shopaholics were virtually nonexistent. Most people didn't own 10 or 15 pairs of shoes; rather, many had only one pair for the entire year, or in some cases, no shoes at all.

Historical reflections

In his publication „Memories of Błażowa,” Stanisław Koczela mentions that Ignacy Synoś operated a hardware store in partnership with Józef Kruczek. Other documents indicate that Ignacy Synoś operated a general store that sold a combination of grocery and industrial goods, similar to many other businesses in the area. While this shop may have changed later on, it likely did not last long, as the new government declared war on private trade after World War II.

Trade Minister Hilary Minc led an initiative known by historians as the Battle for Trade. Between 1947 and 1949, the government nationalised wholesalers and banned the supply of goods to private stores from these exclusively state-owned wholesalers. Additionally, state-set prices were introduced, and trade licenses became mandatory for entrepreneurs, which were no longer issued to private traders. A permit could easily be lost, for instance, if goods were traded without an invoice, such as those purchased directly from a farmer. This led to the decline of private trade, and along with it, the possibility of shopping without cash also came to an end. However, it's essential to remember that history tends to repeat itself, suggesting that certain phenomena may recur in new forms. With the fall of the Polish People's Republic and the re-establishment of a free market economy, the mechanisms of competition and the struggle for customers resurfaced. One only needs to look at our use of credit cards or deferred instalment purchases to recognise this recurring cycle.

Małgorzata Kutrzeba, PhD



Błazowa, Wednesday market.

Błażowa's „grobonet,” an internet search engine for locating graves, has been updated.

Death is an inevitable part of life, yet discussing it or even contemplating it can be challenging. Losing a loved one is among the most difficult human experiences. The number of graves in cemeteries, including ours in Błażowa, is increasing.

The Błażowa Cemetery website, www.cemetery.blazowa.net, has been updated. New PDF documents have also been created, which I believe will make it easier for anyone to locate the graves of their loved ones.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Anna Krawiec for providing the content.

Jakub Heller



The cemetery in Błażowa is organised into eighteen zones, with each grave assigned a unique number. The search field is located in the „Map and Zones” section, where you can enter the deceased's surname and first name.

Walking in the footsteps of a forgotten heritage

A WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE JEWS OF BŁAŻOWA

Heritage is a beautiful and important word that is often invoked on various occasions. But what does it truly mean? On the one hand, it refers to all the spiritual and material values that have been inherited from previous generations. On the other hand, it also signifies what we ourselves will leave behind for future generations. That is why it is so important to learn the history of our places in all their complexity, to collect stories, to reinscribe into the spaces we occupy today the names of those who were there before us. By doing so, we can help those who follow understand and respect

the past, giving them the tools they need to build a better future.

On 24 August, we held the inaugural walk to explore the Jewish heritage



of our town. This heritage belongs to all of us; it is a shared history that includes not only families such as the Atlas, Guzik, Weiss, and Steppel but also the Bator, Pleśniak, and Kustra

families. Our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents walked the same streets as their Jewish neighbours. They sat at the same school desks learning arithmetic and Polish history. While some attended the parish church and others went to the synagogue, both groups were citizens of the Serenissima Res Publica Poloniae.

They fought for the country's independence and made significant contributions to its economy and culture.

When we discuss the immense losses Poland suffered during World War II, highlighting that it had the highest number of casualties in relation to its population, when we mourn for the over 5 million lives lost due to the war,

it is important to recognise that more than 3 million of those lost were Polish Jews, including residents of Błażowa.

It was their story, embedded in our townscape, that Jakub and I shared



Fr. Paweł Batory and Peter Buxbaum.

that August afternoon. Our special guest was Peter Buxbaum, a descendant of Błażowa Jews, related to the Steppel and Guzik families. Peter was born and raised in New York. He earned degrees in political science and economics from Columbia University and a law degree from Temple University. Last year, he retired after a 30-year career as a business journalist. Throughout his career, he wrote extensively about international trade and transportation, as well as security, defence, technology, and foreign policy. His articles have been featured in several prominent publications, including

Fortune, Forbes, Chief Executive, InformationWeek, Jane's Defence Weekly, Defence Technology International, Homeland Security Magazine, and Computerworld, among others. Peter is also a family man, with three children and four grandchildren. His time spent with us in Błażowa was incredibly moving for him. He expressed profound gratitude for the warm welcome and the opportunity to explore the places connected to his ancestors.

We began our journey together in the library building, which, before the war, had served as an inn (austeria). Jewish inns were important centres of economic and social life in Poland, particularly during the Partitions and the interwar period, when many inn-

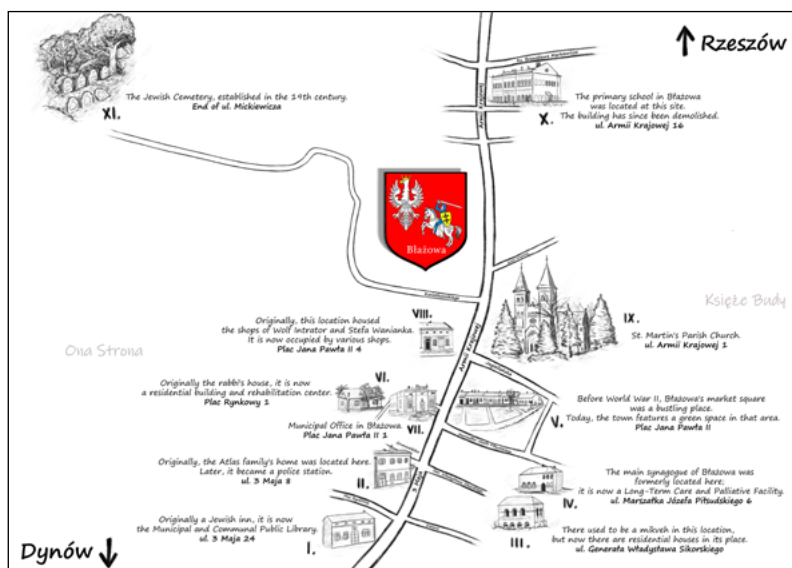
as spaces for entertainment and the resolution of local matters, including court sessions.

The Library director, Anna Heller, warmly welcomed the participants of the walk. She mentioned that while we don't know the exact date when a Jewish inn was established in „our” building, we do know that one existed here. The original cellars and parts of the walls remain. After World War II, the building served various purposes, including functioning as a grain warehouse. Today, it is home to the Municipal and Communal Public Library.

As employees, we strive to make the Library, like the old inns, an „open house” that serves as the beating heart of the local community—a meeting place and a home for stories, welcoming everyone who visits.

The Informal Historical Group „To Save from Obscurity,” which is associated with the Library and organised the walk, aims to collect, compile, and share, especially with the younger generation, the history of the Błażowa region and the people who shaped it.

In Judaism, family is at the centre of life. The primary goal of every marriage is to create a peaceful and harmonious home (Shalom Bayit). It is in such an environment that children can thrive



Participants of the walk.

and develop into good and happy individuals. The foundation of this harmonious home is built on mutual love, respect, and proper conduct between spouses, which leads to overall harmony. Wanting our walk to be primarily a story about people, we chose the Atlas family as our „guide.” We have more information about them than about other Jewish families, and we also know the exact location of their home. The former Atlas townhouse is situated on the corner of 3 Maja and Grunwaldzka Streets.

The Atlas family was one of the most prominent Jewish families in

Judenrat. Tragically, nearly the entire Atlas family perished in the Holocaust, with only Józef surviving the war.



Elżbieta Pęcka and Jadwiga Szermach.

During the war, the Atlas family's townhouse was converted into a German police station after they were forced to leave their home. After liberation, it became the headquarters of the Citizens' Militia. Once the Citizens' Militia station was closed, the building remained unused for many years,

photographs for each of our stops. His daughter, Zuzanna, skillfully „drew” them on a beautifully crafted, original map that each participant received. The old photographs, viewed alongside the modern-day town, offer a unique opportunity to envision what specific places looked like in the past, especially when no material traces of the historical sites remain. When we reached the end of Sikorskiego Street, where residential buildings now stand, it was these old photographs that helped us „see” the mikveh and synagogues that once existed there.

The mikveh, or the Jewish bathhouse, always played a significant role in the lives of religious Jews. It served as a place for ritual bathing, designed to wash away ritual impurities and purify the body. The purpose of this practice was to achieve spiritual purity rather than cleanliness in a hygienic sense.

For individuals converting to Judaism, immersion in the mikveh was a mandatory step. Women used the mikveh after menstruation and during



Jakub Heller

Błazowa. Jakub Atlas was a textile merchant who provided employment to many Polish families by buying linen produced in their homes, especially during the winter months when farm work was scarce. His wife, Deбора, took care of their household. The couple had five children: Józef, Elias, Hunas, Chena, and Isaac.

Jakub was also a shareholder in the Mutual Loan and Savings Society and served on the board of the People's Fund in Błazowa. During World War II, he became a member of the local

leading to its current state of disrepair.

We discussed this location and the people who once lived here while standing at the end of Generała Władysława Sikorskiego Street. Jakub Heller provided historical



Magdalena Kowalska-Cheffey

the postpartum period to regain their ritual purity. Additionally, men were required to visit the mikveh before

certain religious holidays. Many devout Jews chose to go every Friday before the Shabbat, and some even visited daily before morning prayer.

No material evidence of the Błażowa mikveh has survived. However, analysis of available photographs and oral histories suggests that it was located at the end of what is now Generała Władysława Sikorskiego Street.

The old synagogue may also have been situated in this area. The synagogue served as the centre of Jewish religious and social life, remaining a key place for the Jewish community. Its building was always oriented toward Jerusalem. The main room functioned as the prayer hall for men, featuring the Aron HaKodesh (the holy ark) and the bimah (a raised lectern from

Unfortunately, this synagogue was destroyed by a fire in 1907.

In the early 20th century, a newer brick synagogue was constructed at what is now 6 Marszałka Józefa Pił-

original buildings of both synagogues have not survived.

Stopping at the town green, we could envision it as a bustling market square, surrounded by the homes of affluent Jewish merchants. Typically, there was a shop on the ground floor, with a family apartment above. Most commercial establishments in Galicia, particularly in eastern Galicia, were small Jewish shops operated by the owners and their families. An example of this is Wolf Intrator's shop, which is preserved in a photograph. Interestingly, it was located next to Stefa Waniańska's Polish shop. On one corner, where the „Groszek” shop stands today, there used to be a large inn. Old photographs reveal that the former market square also included a timber yard. Today, the area that once comprised the market square has been transformed into a town green. Some of the Jewish houses were demolished, and in their place, an apartment building was constructed.

Standing in front of the current Town Hall building, which has remained in the same location since

Błażowa was rebuilt after the fire, we honoured the Jewish town councillors from before the war. Between 1907 and 1933, there were 33 Jewish councillors, including Wolf Fussman, Abraham Ringel,

Jakub Ozjasz Unger, Abraham Isaac Steppel, Abraham Pasternak, Abraham Isaac Lichtman, Chaim Kranzler, Markus Neiss, Samuel Ebert, Chaim Neiss, Naftali Kranzler, Izrael Chiel, Lejzor Heuschober, Markus Pinter,



Participants of the walk.



Julia i Wiktorja, students from the Primary School in Białka.

which the Torah and the Books of the Prophets are read). In Orthodox synagogues, women prayed in a separate area called a babiniec, which was accessible from the outside. According to Franciszek Kotula, the term synagogue was primarily used by Jewish intellectuals. Poles referred to Jewish houses of prayer as bożnice.

Błażowa likely had at least two synagogues throughout its history. The older one, most likely a wooden structure, was built in the 18th century when the town established an independent Jewish community.

sudskiego Street. During World War II, the Germans vandalised the building. Following the war, starting in the 1948/49 school year, the former synagogue housed the Public Vocational Metal School, which trained students to become agricultural machinery fitters, under the leadership of Principal Stanisław Pleśniak. The school operated until 1953.



Afterwards, the building underwent renovations and briefly served as a district hospital. For over 20 years, the site of the former synagogue has been home to the Long-Term and Palliative Care Centre. Unfortunately, the

and Natan Both. We were pleased to have Councillor Elżbieta Pęcka with us, serving as a living link between the current councillors who serve our community and those who helped build and develop it in the past.

As we walked toward the site where the primary school once stood, we paused for a moment at the parish church of St. Martin. This building is one of the few well-preserved remnants of our town's history.

We also took a moment to remember Father Leon Kwiatkowski, who served as the parish priest in Błażowa from 1884 to 1914. Our reflection was prompted by a note we found in the 16 August 1907 issue of the „Jewish Outlook” magazine, published in Denver, Colorado.



Councillor Elżbieta Pęcka led the group.

school's principal, and his wife, Anna, was also a teacher at the school. Although the Jenke family was not originally from Błażowa, they dedicated

so in the place where generations of our ancestors received their education, we remembered the last Jewish students of the Primary School in Błażowa from the 1939/1940 school year. Most of these students may have only just begun their studies, with a few having completed their first semester. Unfortunately, we do not know the fate of most of them. However, they likely perished during the Holocaust.

Thanks to preserved report card catalogues, we can not only restore the names of students but also those of their parents. Wiktoria and Julia, stu-

dents of the Primary School in Białka, approached this task with great reverence. I believe it's important to recall these names here as well:

– Renata Grünseid, age 7, daughter of Henryk and Elka, born in Błażowa. She completed only one semester of school. We don't know her fate.

– Medard Augarten, age 8, son of Natan and Sabina, born in Katowice.

13 years of their teaching careers to the community. Their daughter, Anna, was born in Błażowa and began attending the primary school in 1927. Two years later, the family moved to Jarosław.

A resident of Błażowa shares her memories.

The note mentioned a fire in the town: „A fire recently destroyed most of the Jewish houses at the Galician village known as Blazowa. The Catholic priest, Father Kwiatkowski, placed his large residence at the disposal of the homeless Jews, and did his best to console the distressed population”.

Today, at 16 Armii Krajowej Street, there is an empty square where the Błażowa primary school once stood. This school was built after a fire in the town. As a result of the state's compulsory school attendance law, it became a central place for Polish and Jewish children to meet and learn. In 1913, Walenty Jenke took over as the

We have prepared a brief commemoration to honour the names and stories of some of the students who attended this school. Between 1915 and 1939, nearly five hundred Jewish students attended the primary school in Błażowa. These students were classmates of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. It was impossible to mention them all,



Fr. Paul in Polish and Peter in Hebrew offered a prayer for the victims of the Holocaust.

He completed only one semester of school. We don't know his fate.

– Chaja Lieber, 9 years old, daughter of Benzion and Erna, born in Sanok. Recorded in the class register, she did not complete her first semester. We don't know her fate.

– Chana Schimmel, age 9, daughter of Mendel and Feiga, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, she did not complete her first semester. We don't know her fate.

– Rachela Sturm, age 9, daughter of Efraim, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, she did not complete her first semester. We don't know her fate.

– Beila Tuchner, age 13, daughter of Götzl and Kaila, born in Błażowa. Elka's older sister. Recorded in the class register, she did not complete her first semester. We don't know her fate.

– Roman Sturm, age 9, son of Maks and Syda, born in Przemyśl. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. We don't know his fate.

– Izrael Verstandig, age 10, son of Berl and Tauba, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. We don't know his fate.

– Izaak Wang, age 9, son of Samuel and Blima née Korb, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. He was murdered during the Holocaust, along with his parents, older brothers Mundeck and Hersz, and older sister Gina.

– Izrael Wang, 9 years old, son of Chaim and Łaja née Tuchner, born in Błażowa. Izaak's cousin. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. Murdered during

the Holocaust, along with his parents, older brother Lejzor, and older sister Regina. The only member of the family who survived the war was Izrael's older sister, Beti. She endured the Rzeszów ghetto and later suffered through the camps in Huta Komorowska, Płaszów, Wieliczka, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen, from which she was liberated in April 1945. It is known that she lived in Hamburg immediately after the war.

– Löwi Weiss, age 9, son of Mojżesz,

in the Bełżec extermination camp, along with his parents and siblings: his brothers Elias and Izaak, and his sister Chena. Of the entire family, only his older brother Józef survived the war.

– Wolf Goldman, age 9, son of Izrael and Chaja, born in Błażowa.

Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester.

We don't know his fate.

– Bruno Grünseid, age 9, son of Henryk and Elka, born in Błażowa.

Renata's older brother. He completed only one semester of school. We don't know his fate.

– Jakub Heuschober, age 9, son of Leib and Rozalia, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. Murdered during the Holocaust, along with his mother and older sister, Chawa.

– Markus Intrater, age 10, son of Salomon and Serka, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. We don't know his fate.

– Mojżesz Wróbel, age 9, son of Izaak and Hena, born in Barycz. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. We don't know his fate.

– Henryk Augarian, age 11, son of Natan and Sabina, born in Rzeszów.



Anna Heller thanked our guest.

born in Tyczyn. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. We don't know his fate.

– Elka Tuchner, age 12, daughter of Götzl and Kaila, born in Błażowa. Beila's younger sister. Recorded in the class register, she did not complete her first semester. We don't know her fate.

– Hunas Atlas, age 9, son of Jakub and Debora, born in Błażowa. Recorded in the class register, he did not complete his first semester. Murdered



He completed only one semester of school. We don't know his fate.

– Ryszard Grünseid, age 11, son of Henryk and Elka, older brother of



Renata and Bruno, born in Błazowa. He completed only one semester of school. We don't know his fate.

As participants walked to the Błazowa Jewish cemetery, they took time for personal reflection. They may have imagined the funeral processions from years past, likely following the same route. While we do not have specific information about when the Błazowa Jewish cemetery was founded, we can reasonably assume it existed as early as the first half of the 19th century. The oldest identified tombstone marks the grave of Perel, daughter of Menis, who died in 5609 in the Hebrew calendar, which corresponds to 1848/1849 in the Gregorian calendar. The cemetery is also listed in the Austrian cadastre of 1851 (section no. IX).

At the cemetery, we discussed Jewish funeral customs, the significance of the site, and its history. Standing among the remaining tombstones, we joined together in prayers for the

deceased. Peter Buxbaum recited El Male Rachamim in Hebrew, and Father Paweł Batory did so in Polish – a prayer dedicated to all the victims of the Holocaust. After the prayer, everyone had the opportunity to stroll through the cemetery. For some, it was their first visit to this place. Thanks to the cleanup efforts by members of the historical group, who have been caring for the cemetery for over a year, more areas are now accessible to visitors.

Walking from the cemetery back to the Library, where a table full of delicacies prepared by our editorial colleague, Czesława Szydelko, from Kuchnia Czesi – I Cook Because I Love It, awaited the participants, we stopped for a moment at



an inconspicuous-looking building located right next to Town Hall, at 1 Market Square. Today, it houses a residential building and a rehabilitation clinic. Before the war, it was a rabbi's house.

Błazowa was a prominent centre of Hasidism. Before World War I, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Szapiro, the grandson

of Tzvi Elimelech from Dynów, also known as Tzvi Latzaddik, lived in this town.

We only know the names of a few of the rabbis from Błazowa: Abraham Schiff (mid-19th century), Wilhelm Reich (1898), Ozjasz Spira (1932), and Meir Spira (1932-1942).

Meir's half-brother, Izrael, was also a rabbi. He survived the horrors of the concentration camps and, after the war, settled in New York, where he served as the rabbi of the Bluzhev Synagogue in Brooklyn. There, he taught and inspired generations for decades.

After returning to the Library, participants had the opportunity to enjoy refreshments and, more importantly, to chat and share their impressions. Jakub prepared a slideshow of old photographs that allowed us to revisit the places we had walked through and envision Błazowa's past. He also presented the Library's website (www.biblioteka.blazowa.net), where you can find an online version of the walk under the „Błazowa Informal Historical Group” tab, available in both Polish and English.

We encourage those who could not join us for the inaugural walk to utilise the information provided and embark on a journey with the Atlas family, following the footsteps of the Jews from Błazowa.

Magda Kowalska-Cheffey

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Beaver – the royal animal

As we explore our charming area, which is crisscrossed by numerous streams often winding at the foot of small hills, we can easily find traces of the presence of the extraordinary builder: the beaver (*Castor fiber*).

This species is thriving and abundant today, which makes it hard to believe that it was once threatened with extinction in the previous century. In the past, long before the concepts of ecology and environmental



protection emerged, and when Piast princes donned beaver hats and furs, this animal was highly revered and legally protected. Valued for its impressive engineering skills, its incredibly valuable pelts, and sought after for its medicinal properties, the „beaver suit”—an oily secretion from its skin glands—along with its meat, was considered a luxury good.

Beaver tails were consumed on fasting days because their scales classified their meat as fish. Beaver farming was exclusively reserved for monarchs and landowners. There was even an official office dedicated to the care of these animals, which dates back to the era of Bolesław the Brave. Poaching or even disturbing the beavers was met with severe penalties.

The beaver, which is partially protected in Poland, is the largest rodent in Europe, weighing up to 35 kg. This amphibious species is a declared vegetarian and is primarily nocturnal. On land, beavers move somewhat

clumsily; however, they are excellent swimmers, well-adapted to their aquatic environment.

A third eyelid shields the beaver's small eyes, and its ears and nose are protected by folds of skin that prevent water from entering. The toes are webbed, and the fur covering their bodies provides insulation against cold and moisture.

One of the most notable features of the beaver is its tail, often referred to as the „trowel.” This tail is flattened and covered with tough scales, serving multiple purposes: it acts as a rudder and propeller while swimming, a counterbalance when on land, and also func-



tions as a storage area for fat and a means of communication.

When a beaver feels threatened, it exhibits a loud, forceful splash with its tail on the water's surface or the ground, which serves as an alarm signal. If we accidentally disturb a beaver in a floodplain, we are likely to hear this distinctive warning sound. The beaver's primary tools are its impressive reddish-brown incisors, which are powerful enough to knock down large trees.

The beaver family leads a sedentary lifestyle, with few circumstances that compel them to leave their habitat.



They typically become active in the evening and at night. However, I have observed them moving about on several occasions during the day when the young beavers ventured ashore to find food. A typical beaver family consists of a parent pair and two subsequent generations, usually totalling 4 to 10 individuals. The young beavers are born in May and June, making the beaver lodge quite noisy during that time. In the summer, the older beavers from the previous litter often leave their parents in search of new habitats. They travel both by land and water, which can lead them to some unusual places. For instance, I once spotted one on the main road running through Biała, a part of Rzeszów.

The beaver's diet is diverse and includes approximately 200 plant species. Some examples are horsetails, calamus, sedges, nettles, clover, reeds, cattails, raspberries, and the branches and leaves of deciduous trees and shrubs. In early spring, they also consume conifers. Beavers prefer habitats that are dominated by willow trees. Additionally, they eat cultivated plants such as corn, cereals, and beets. The damage they cause to vegetation, which occurs near watercourses, often

resembles areas that have been carefully and evenly mowed by humans. During winter, their diet mainly consists of tree bark, which they store in large quantities underwater, forming what are known as „rafts” made of branches.

Beavers create various structures, including lodges, dams, burrows, and canals. Lodges contain nest chambers where the beavers live, with entrances located below the water surface. This design helps protect them from predators, and beavers work diligently to maintain a consistent water level to keep these entrances submerged.

Consequently, building dams plays a crucial role in safeguarding their homes.

Dens serve a similar purpose as lodges but are excavated in areas where the banks of streams or lakes are high and the ground is stable.

The foraging range of a beaver family typically extends about 4 kilometres along the stream and roughly 20 meters from the shoreline, although they occasionally venture farther. In wetland areas, their travel routes often develop into canals.

A notable example of this can be observed in Błażowa's Wilczak, where a reservoir was once proposed.

The pressure exerted by a beaver's incisors is several tons per square centimetre, which allows them to easily cut down hardwood species like hornbeams and oaks, even those with large trunk circumferences. This ability creates a conflict of interest between beavers and humans.

Few animals have such a significant impact on their environment and on increasing biodiversity. I believe

that the numerous sightings of marsh harriers and the possibility of hearing crane calls in the area known as Wilczak are thanks to the efforts of beavers, which transform the habitat.

In our local area, the beaver's only natural predator is the wolf. On land, beavers can become easy prey for this predator. I encourage you to observe these fascinating neighbours. If left undisturbed, you may have the opportunity to learn more about their daily activities.

Dagmara Wichłacz

From Canada to Błażowa

On 30 September, we had the pleasure of hosting Jesse Kustra and his family at the library. Jesse wrote about the fate of his ancestors in issue 205 of „Kurier Błażowski”, in the article titled „From Błażowa to Canada”:

[...] The story of how my Polish family arrived in Canada begins with Jan Kustra and his wife, Bronisława Sobczyk, nearly 100 years ago. Jan and Bronisława were born one month apart in 1900 in Błażowa. Jan was born to parents Wojciech Kustra and Antonina Szpiek, who were living at the time in Błażowa, house number 130. Bronisława was born to Jacek Sobczyk and Karolina Świdarska in Błażowa, house number 36. Both of their parents were farmers. As was customary at the time, Jan and Bronisława were baptised the day after their birth into the Roman Catholic church. Jan had an older brother, Stanisław Andrzej Kustra (b. 1897)

and a younger sister, Julia Kustra (b. 1903). It's quite possible Jan had other siblings in Błażowa, but 1903 is currently the latest year for which birth records are publicly available for the Błażowa parish [...] The full article can be found at: biblioteka.blazowa.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/KB205.pdf

Despite the unfavourable weather, we took our guests on a tour

of Błażowa, sharing the history of our town with them. We also visited the Błażowa Parish Cemetery, where members of the Kustra family are buried. Researching his family history inspired Jesse to name his newborn son Jan, in honour of his great-great-grandfather and great-great-great-grandfather, Jan Kustra.

We sincerely thank Jesse and his family for visiting us. It was a delight to have the opportunity to meet and host them in Błażowa.

Jakub Heller



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Past and Present
News and Historical Notes
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