
STUDIA POLONIJE
T. 46 LUBLIN 2025
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.18290/sp2546.48>

Footprints of Polonia: Polish Historical Sites across North America, ed. Ewa E. Barczyk, New York: Hippocrene Press 2022. Softbound, pp. xx + 320, illustrations.

Has American Polonia entered that phase where its presence and history is primarily marked by the material things – buildings, monuments, memorials – it has left behind? Arguments can be made for that thesis. The most obvious is the elimination of American Polonia’s primary institutional support structures – the Polonian parish network – the result of Catholic bishops in the United States consolidating or closing parishes while calling the process “renewal.” With Poland’s recovery of independence and subsequent politico-economic reform since 1989, the impetus (and renewing effect on Polonia) of U.S.-bound immigration has largely ended. At the same time, internal demographic changes in the United States have much dissolved the “old neighborhoods,” primarily in the Northeast and Midwest, that the *emigracja za chlebem* established more than a century ago.

If American Polonia will mostly be obvious by the artifacts of its material culture, a catalog of those artifacts would be most useful. That’s what Ewa Barczyk, formerly director of libraries at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, provides us. *Footprints* is an update of the 1992 *Polish Heritage Travel Guide to the U.S.A. and Canada*, a book now three decades out-of-date. Given the commercial focus of the American publishing market, *Footprints* is pitched more as a guidebook for Polonia-focused tourists rather than a reference book, although it is hard to imagine many vacationers whose itinerary primarily focuses on seeing remnants from American Polonia’s past. Behind that “tour book” exterior, however, stands a useful reference book cataloging select public artifacts of American Polonia.

The collection is “select” because its assembly was the result of building on the earlier *Heritage Travel Guide*, Barczyk’s own formidable travels, and the collaboration of the Polish American Historical Association (PAHA), a project parts of which was conducted during the COVID shutdown of 2020-21.

The work, nevertheless, is comprehensive. Sites are arranged by U.S. state or Canadian province. Nine pages record Polonian footprints in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

By-and-large, the book records most of the primary sites of Polonian history in brief (generally one paragraph) explanations, often with an accompanying photograph. The brevity of background (the Polish institutions at Orchard Lake, Michigan, gets two paragraphs) is dictated both by the guide-book format and the limits of space in a print book aspiring to document Polonia across North America. Using the reviewer's home state of New Jersey, for example, 21 of the nearly 40 historically Polonian Catholic parishes in the state are mentioned. Those that are include the oldest (three parishes in Jersey City, St. Joseph's Camden, and St. Stephen's Perth Amboy). The parishes not mentioned generally played later or lesser roles in the state's Polonia, although curiously one of the most still active parishes for Polish immigrants – St. Teresa in Linden – goes unmentioned. Similarly unmentioned are the Polish Salvatorian Fathers, whose house is in Verona. The brief reference to the Convent Chapel in Lodi likewise hardly scratches the surface of the provincial activities of the Felician Sisters, who conducted a boarding high school and college there.

Likewise, attention is paid to historical monuments, including the Pułaski bust in Perth Amboy, the later Katyń Memorial in Jersey City (whose removal President Andrzej Duda had a key role in preventing), and the renewed Curie-Skłodowska monument in Edison (cast by Lublin sculptor Sławomir Mieleśko). Omitted, on the other hand, is the Kopernik bust or the bas-relief saluting Polonian Medal of Honor winner Joseph Sadowski, who gave his life trying to rescue trapped colleagues from a burning tank in World War II France. Attention is given not just to historical monuments Polonia built to stress its presence and contributions but also American-installed markers recognizing Polish historical contributions, e.g., the places where Pułaski fought or Kościuszko's fort in New Jersey.

It should be emphasized that these omissions are *not* deliberate. A work of *Footprints* scope in countries as vast as the United States and Canada would require a formidable and better resourced local presence to document everything, something just not possible with a small, volunteer cadre doing its work in part during a pandemic. The omissions are mentioned only to note how much work can still be done to document Polonia's material culture.

Recognizing the *lacunae*, Barczyk and PAHA are working on its update. That update, however, is likely to take an electronic format, both for ease of

its continual renewal as well as the constraints traditional book publishing in the United States faces outset of well-worn or privileged subject niches, of which Polonia generally is not. Barczyk can be contacted at ewa@umw.edu

This book merits a place in the collection of anyone studying U.S. or Canadian Polonia.

Researchers looking for additional topics to study in the material culture of North American Polonia might also consider the value of professionally conducted “cemetery studies.” With the suppression of the Catholic ethnic parish network, parish cemeteries may be one of the last remaining vestiges of Polonia difficult to erase. James Pula’s “The Cemetery as a Polish American Communal Experience” in Amanik’s and Fletcher’s *Till Death Do Us Part* (University Press of Mississippi, 2020) is a start, but Polonian cemetery studies have barely scratched the surface.

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