

The Polish Army in France

Poland disappeared from the map as a nation at the end of the 18th century as it was divided and under the control of Prussia, Austria, and Russia. That did not dampen the Polish national spirit! Poles saw the opportunity to reestablish Polish independence once again during World War I. The French supported an army of Polish soldiers to fight in the war. The army was officially the Polish Army in France, but is more commonly called Haller's Army for the general who commanded it. Recruitment in the United States officially began in October of 1917. The recruitment process involved three forms. Form A was a preliminary intent to volunteer printed in Polish. Form B was a medical examination summary printed in English. Form C was a more thorough application form printed in Polish. In each step of the process, recruiters had bound books of forms A, B, or C. Each book could record data on about one hundred volunteers in triplicate. That means one original and two carbon copies were prepared for each individual. One copy remained in the book. Books of forms A, B, and C still exist. Because forms A and C are the most genealogically important forms, those books have been microfilmed.

What happened to the two other copies of each form? One of the copies of each form was combined into a set for each individual. These sets are arranged in alphabetical order by surname, then first name, city, and finally by date. This facilitates finding an individual and usually means getting all three forms at the same time (form B books have not been microfilmed). The disposition of the third copy of each form is not known.

Since forms A and C were printed in Polish, English translations of these forms have been provided.

Bibliography

Polish Genealogical Society Newsletter, Vol. X, #1, Spring 1987, pages 1, 3-4, "World War I Polish American Military Records," Joseph Hapak.

Bulletin of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, Vol. 1, #3, Summer 1993, 10-11, "Polish American Military Records Organized," James Czuchra.

Acknowledgements

Edward A. Peckwas, founder and long time president of the Polish Genealogical Society of America was well aware of the genealogical value of the Haller's Army recruitment papers. Although I was reluctant to get involved at first, we began in 1991 to alphabetize the sets of recruitment papers which at best had been organized by the first letter of the surname. Ed was instrumental in obtaining permission for the Society to handle the papers. We had help from Edward and Josephine Ronczy and John Nierodzik. A big thanks goes to Marty Mazurk for all the times he helped.

Even though the sets have been alphabetized, it may be useful to seek a better (or only) copy of a form within the recruitment books. Therefore, a master index of recruits from the

books was prepared. The Polish Genealogical Society of America (PGSA), the Polish Genealogical Society of California, the Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut, the Polish Genealogical Society of Greater Cleveland, the Polish Genealogical Society of Western New York, and the Polish Genealogical Society of Wisconsin participated in the creation of such an index. I would like to acknowledge the individuals of these societies who helped in entering the data. I extend thanks to Philip Best, Clare Gaouette, Judy A. Jankowski, Joseph F. Kryniski, Sharon A. Kryniski, Ed Mendyka, Constance Ochnio, Jacque Penstone, and Jonathan Shea. Johnathan Shea also provided the English translations of forms A and C.

To facilitate microfilming of the records, I had the help of Harry Kurek and Tadeusz Szalinski in taking apart the binding of the recruitment books so the pages would lie flat. Marty Mazurk again helped in updating the index to include those individuals whose papers were not mentioned in one of the recruitment books. He also did document preparation for microfilming.

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