

Blanche Krbechek

The first issue of „Przyjaciel Ludu Kaszubskiego”. (Przějńcél Lëdu Kaszëbsczégń, Friend of the Kashubian People) appeared in 1997 : The Kashubian Association of North AMerica was formally launched

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Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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In the United States, and in Canada too, many people were becoming interested in their roots, but they lacked some knowledge about history. People with origins in Pomerania were excited when they found naturalization papers telling that their ancestors renounced allegiance to the King of Prussia, so they concluded they were German. First they had to learn about the Partitions – that Poland was partitioned off the map for 124 years and, in spite of this, the people still thought of themselves as Poles. Witness the first line of the Polish National Anthem which in a rough translation says, “As long as there are Polish people, there will be a Poland.” Hurdle number one was crossed; people recognized their heritage as Polish. But it was not so easy as that. More history lessons were in order. It was time to learn about early Proto-Slavic tribes, in particular the Kaszubian tribe (and perhaps also about the Polanie tribe that gave its name to Poland), and to learn about Pomerania and the Pomeranian Princes. And it was time to realize that they were not simply ‘Polish’, but actually belonged to a special group of Poles, an ethnic minority – the Kashubs.

There was a need for an organization so the Kashubian Association of North America (KANA) was founded to promote everything Kashubian. There are many genealogical societies which were founded to help to learn about family history; however KANA’s mission is much broader although it does not neglect genealogical considerations. The mission statement reads,

The Kashubian Association of North America exists to preserve and promote Kashubian culture in North America and to provide and encourage exchange with Kashubs in Poland and world wide. In fulfilling this mission we hope to raise awareness of Kashubian ethnicity in North America, to stimulate an interest in and provide an educational exchange of everything relating to Kashubia and the Kashubs.

The newsletter, “Przyjaciel Ludu Kaszubskiego”, exists to fulfill this mission and it including articles, many translated into English from Polish or Kashubian. It aims to help descendants understand the history of the region where their ancestors at one time lived as well as to understand contemporary history, to understand life in Kashubia today and what it was like in the past, to discover about folk art and folk music, to read translations of the works of significant Kashubian authors, to learn about points of interest, special activities and travel in the area today, and lastly to provide a forum to communicate with others of similar interest, even sometimes find distant relatives or connect with another who is planning a trip to the region.

Although the quarterly newsletter is the primary activity of KANA at this time, the organization has collaborated with the Polish Genealogy Society of Minnesota, the Minnesota Genealogy Society and the Pommern Regional Group of Minnesota, among others, to provide joint presentations about Kashubia. In addition, KANA members have presented speeches in other locations in America.

The newsletter has been published in Minnesota continuously since the first issue in 1997, under the direction of the founding and present president, Blanche Krbechek or Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Kaszuba (Leśno), Poland. The editor of the first three issues was Keith Kaszubowski, who abruptly resigned. Anne Kasuboski of Green Bay, Wisconsin, took over and served as editor for approximately the following two years. Since then Renata Stachowicz of Andover, Minnesota, formerly of Kielce, Poland, has been the editor. Kamil Frymark of Gdynia, Poland, is the editor of the web page which he created. Many, too numerous to mention, have contributed articles and given support over the years.

Next year, 2011, will be the 15th year of publication as KANA continues to present material about the Kashubian region and Kashubians.

For more information: KA-NA.org or KAofNA@yahoo.com