



# SELINUS UNIVERSITY

## OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

### **17 YASENOV GENERATIONS: A BELARUSIAN LEGACY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this paper is a product of my own work effort. No part of this work has been published or presented by another person, institution, or organization. All sources of information used have been duly acknowledged as authentic by government records centers, church records, newspaper archives, university registrars, and primary sources listed in the references. This work is the culmination of 23 years of my own original research that I have conducted myself.



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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper provides a thorough evaluation of the Yassenov lineage from ancient times to the present day. Themes discussed include early Slavic migration, Slavic Ureheimat, Belarusian tribes, nobility in Jasionowa in Podlasia, ancestors from Barglow Koscielny Parish, and immigration to the United States of America.

Forty-three records have been presented in this paper as evidence for the biological relationship of the generations. Sources for these records include government records, church records, university records, newspaper records, and other primary sources such as city directories. Not all records could be pictured in this paper due to the large file size.

In addition, there are thirteen maps featured in this work for the reader's understanding of the physical location of the villages in which the Yassenov ancestors lived.

Genetic DNA information is provided for further evidence of Belarusian ancestry.

# CHAPTER 1

*“A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”*

*Sir Winston Churchill*

## Introduction

Seeking the Yasenov family's ancestry has always been a valuable endeavor to me because even though I was a Yasenov, I did not know the family well. My parents divorced when I was five years old, and they did not interact well with each other after that. Therefore, I never got to really know my father because I only saw him once a year on Christmas day. Occasionally, I would see him in the summer, but not every year. He seemed like a stranger to me, and therefore, I was quite timid around him. Unfortunately, I never got to know him better because when I was eleven years old, my father died. I never really understood why he died at the age of 40. No one talked about it, so I just knew that this unfamiliar man in my life died. The last time I saw him alive was on Christmas Day in 1978 when I was nine years old.

For these reasons, I did not have much interaction with the Yasenov side of my family until I was an adult. It was when I was in my early 20s that I formed a wonderful connection with my paternal grandmother. Being my father's mother, she had many details about his life that she was happy to share with me. She even gave me

photographs that I have included in this work. I was very intrigued by this side of my family that was removed from my world so long ago.

In 2000, when I was 31 years old, I found a five-page letter that I had received in 1980 from my 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, John Zielinski. When he was in school, he had to complete a genealogy project for his family. He had sent a copy of his findings to all the family members listed on the family tree he created. I was fortunate to have received this, and I knew it was significant even when I was eleven years old. Hence, I had kept the letter all those years. I had never spoken with John Zielinski, but that was to change...

After reading over John's letter again in my early thirties, I decided to find him and form a friendship. After some research on the internet and many wrong phone calls, I found his correct phone number and called him. He vaguely remembered the genealogy project that he completed as a teenager. In fact, he did not even have a copy of the letter he sent me all those years ago. He was still interested in genealogy though but had no time to devote to the pastime as he was busy working as a history teacher for the local high school in Lansing, Michigan.

It was at this time, that I decided to research the Yasenov family tree with records for evidence to prove the lineage for each generation back. I did not know how far I would get, but I wanted to try my best and see what records were available. Even though the research was extensive and sometimes I would hit a "wall" where I thought I would not find anything more, I just kept researching anyway.

My initial interest that started as a small hobby in 2000 quickly transformed into a significant project taking me 23 years to complete. In this dissertation are records from many United States government agencies for immigration records, social security applications, draft cards, census records, military records, vital records for birth, marriage, and death, etc. Also, I had consulted many old newspapers for obituaries and city directories on microfilm. After I found everything I could in the United States, I researched European records on microfilm at the Latter Day Saints facilities and found many baptism and marriage records along with embarkation records. Also, I researched university records for transcripts of my ancestors in 1483 and 1961.

As you can imagine, this was a very lengthy project that I completed in a professional manner, starting with myself and obtaining records to prove who my father was. Then I conducted the same procedure to prove who my father's father was. I used this same method proving each generation back to 1662 in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. When I got to this point, there were no more church records to research. It was then that I used government sources for land and tax records as well as university records along with primary sources. Living in the United States, I hired help from professional genealogists in Europe for some of this research because it could only be conducted on-site.

One question that kept reappearing in my research was the ethnicity of the Yasenov family. On some records, they would state that they were of Polish ethnicity, but the family never lived in Poland. This was curious to me, and I discovered how the Polonization of the Belarusian people was prevalent in history. Starting in 1395 with the Union of Kreva,



Belarusian nobility had to convert to declaring to being of Polish ethnicity to maintain their voting rights at the Sejm.

This polonization meant the spelling of the surname would change from the original *Yasenov* to the polonized *Jasionowski*. In addition, there were other changes to the spelling of the surname that I found throughout the years. Starting with the *Yasenov* surname being polonized to *Jasionowski* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was sometimes spelled as *Jesionowski* on records for hundreds of years. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was changed to *Jesionek*. When my great-grandfather came to America, he added the original *-ski* suffix to the surname again spelling it as *Jesionowski*. However, he must have been pronouncing the surname as *Jasionowski* because in the 1960s, my grandfather Americanized the surname to *Jason*. Therefore, when I was born, my surname was *Jason*, but my father's surname at birth was *Jesionowski*. However originally, the surname was spelled *Yasenov*.

Even though I worked on this project from the present day back to 1420 and even earlier, I am presenting it here in this paper in chronological order from the early beginnings to the present day. This dissertation is a compilation of my findings in researching the *Yasenov* family history from early Slavic history to 1420 in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania where they were part of the nobility class to the present day in the United States of America.

## CHAPTER 2

### SLAVIC ORIGINS

#### Early Slavic Origins

The Yassenov family are Slavic. The Slavs account for the largest population for an ethnic group in Europe. In fact, Slavs live even beyond Europe and prosper all the way through Asia to the Pacific Ocean. They belong to one linguistic section of the Indo-European family of languages. Slavic languages are spoken by 315 million people in Eastern and Central Europe as well as the Northern part of Asia. In addition, the Slavic languages share some similarities with Baltic languages and Armenian languages.

The Early Slavs formed three distinctly different groups: the West Slavs (Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Wends), Eastern Slavs (Russians, Belarusian, and Ukrainians), and South Slavs (Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins). Throughout history, the Southern Slavs have been culturally separated from the East and West Slavs due to their inaccessible location on the South side of the Carpathian Mountain Range.

The name *Slav* comes from the word *slava*, which means “glory” in most Slavic languages. In present day the word *slava* can also be called “celebration” and is a tradition of honoring a family’s patron saint. This tradition is remembered by South Slavs.

There are many legends about the origins of the Slavs. Legends can be true stories passed down in oral traditions from generation to generation. However, legends can also be falsified exaggerated fictional stories that were entertaining at the time and not meant to be a portrayal of historical facts. Hence, it is important to keep these facts in mind when reading about legends. If there is other evidence that corroborates the story, then perhaps it is true, but if not, it could be viewed as a fairytale. In this section I will discuss some legends and how they may fit or may not fit into the historical record of the Slavic origins.

The first two legends I chose to explore are from the country of Georgia. According to Georgian legend, Meshech, son of Noah, lived in Mtskheta and was the Father of all the Slavs. Indeed, the Moschoi Mountain range in Georgia is also attributed to the tribe of Meshech. Wilhelm Gesenius concurs with the Moschoi Mountain legend stating in his work that “the Moschi were descended from the Biblical Meshech tribe.”

Of course, when I first read both of these legends, I was skeptical as I prefer working with clear verification in my research. Hence, I started looking for evidence to prove or disprove the truth in these statements. What I found is one explanation for how these legends could theoretically work.

Mtskheta is known as the ancient capital of Georgia and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It is situated at the confluence of the Mtkvari and Aragvi rivers. This region is in a gorge that extends through the Caucasus Mountains ending at the Darial Gorge that opens onto the Pontic Caspian Steppe in Russia. This ancient roadway has been used for thousands of years and even today there is a highway

running through it. It is the most efficient way to get through the mountains without traveling to the Caspian Sea.

The next legend is not so much a legend per se, but common Slavic knowledge. This idea comes from many East European sources as well as the present-day Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture. The theory is that the Early Slavs came from the Steppes of Russia.

There is a conflicting historical account to this theory of the Early Slavs coming from the Steppes of Russia from Flavius Josephus. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, he states that “The Muski were descendants of Meshech and lived in Cappadocia in Turkey.” Cappadocia is quite a distance across the Black Sea from the Pontic Caspian Steppe. So how could this be the same group of people?

The first clue I gained to answer this question is the fact that the Moschoi Mountain range is in the Lesser Caucasus and is about 100 miles from Mtskheta. This seems like a significant distance considering it is in the mountains. Also, the Moschoi Mountain range is close to Turkey, which would make it understandable that the Slavs could easily migrate to Cappadocia from there. But many numerous primary sources indicate that the Slavs came from the Steppes of Russia.

Could the family of Meshech have quarreled and decided to migrate in two different directions? I think oftentimes, when we read about ancient ethnic groups, we get so caught up in the idyllic notion that they were always honorable individuals. But we tend to forget that they were human just like the rest of us. We get angry over things, and they

were no different. Perhaps they quarreled amongst themselves and decided to go their separate ways. This theory is especially understandable when the account of the characteristics of the Meshech tribe is considered.

According to the Psalmist when discussing the Meshech tribe, it is stated in Psalm 120 verse 7, "I am for peace, but when I speak, they (the Meshech tribe) are for war." This gives an indication of a headstrong group of people, who might not get along well with each other. This theme comes up again in history when the Slavic tribes are quarreling amongst themselves in 862 that I will discuss later in this paper.

In light of this, it seems plausible that the theory of the Meshech family deciding to migrate in two different directions is a distinct possibility. This would mean that the Early Slavs started in Georgia and migrated in opposite directions forming the Western and Eastern Slavs in the North and the Southern Slavs in the South. If it were true, then that would explain why the Southern Slavs have always been so separate from the Eastern and Western Slavs because the two groups have not been associated together even though they have the same origins.

In this theory, it is sensible to understand that the Slavs Josephus referred to could be Southern Slavs that migrated from the Moschoi Mountains taking a Southern route to Cappadocia. Settling in what is now the Southern Slavic countries of Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, and Macedonia.

Given this, the Early Slavs that were to become the Western and Eastern Slavs could have started in Mtskheta and traveled through the Caucasus Mountains and through the

Darial Gorge. When they came to the Pontic Caspian Steppe, they could have stayed in this region for a millennium or more. The Yasenov family were Eastern Slavic, so perhaps this is the route their ancestors took to their homeland.

In 6<sup>th</sup> century, Jordanes mentioned the Sclaveni and Antes in *De origine actibusque Getarum*. In this work, he described the Antes, who were the East Slavs, and Sclaveni, who were the South Slavs, as separate groups of people from the same ethnic source. It is stated that even though they are distinctly separate groups they are kin and were one ethnic group in the distant past. This would attest to the fact that the Southern Slavs and the Eastern/Western Slavs were from the same ethnic source but distinctly different from each other at the same time.

## **Genetics**

To shed more light on my own personal Slavic Origins, I decided to have the Y-chromosome of my DNA tested. I chose Family Tree DNA, which is a reputable provider for genetic analysis for genealogic purposes. Because women do not have the Y-chromosome in their DNA, I had to find a living relative to swab their cheek for this test. I contacted my uncle, who I did not remember at all, and asked him if he would be so kind as to complete this DNA testing procedure for me. He agreed to do it, and I had the test kit sent to him.

The results indicated that I was from the R1a1a haplogroup and M-458 subclade. This haplogroup originated in the Steppes of Russia according to Family Tree DNA. In fact,

the highest levels of R1a are found across the Eurasian Steppe with 50% of Belarusians having this particular gene. The Yasenov family were from the western part of Belarus in the Grodno region, confirming the DNA results by historical evidence.

Further, the R1a lineage is believed to have originated in the Eurasian Steppes North of the Black and Caspian Seas. Interestingly, this is exactly where the Darial Gorge in the Caucasus Mountains allows people to access the Steppes of Russia.

When I was researching a study of the R1a1a haplogroup with the M458 subclade in ethnic Belarusians, I found the study was conducted from six ethnographic regions within the country. The results showed this genetic frequency was in 14.5% of the population tested. The M458 marker specifically was detected in the Pripyat River and Neman River basins. The Neman River basin includes the Grodno region in the West of Belarus where the Perstun Forest is located. I was so astonished to find this because the Neman River basin is exactly where the Yasenov family lived!

There is no data on the frequency and distribution of the R1a1a (M458) haplogroup as a single known European internal branch of the dominant R1a1a (SRY1532) haplogroup in the Belarusian population. It is just known to be located in these two distinct river basins. Because the Yasenov family happens to be from the Neman River basin, therefore, I find this information to be quite accurate.

The Pripyat River basin is where the Dregovich Tribe was located. The Yasenov family were part of this tribe. Their capital city was Turov that is located in the Pripyat River basin. This genetic study concluded that the Dregovichian people migrated from the

Pripyat River basin to the Neman river basin by waterway. This coincides with the *Russian Primary Chronicle* that states how the Dregovich Tribe started in Turov and some of the tribe moved north to the Neman River basin.

Another study conducted by the journal *Khazaria: Genetics and Genetic Genealogy* demonstrated similar results. In this study, the results found the R1a1a (M458) haplogroup was found predominantly in the southwestern and western regions of Belarus. The Yasenov family lived in the western part of Belarus that I will show evidence for later in this paper. It further stated that R1a1a haplogroup is the most frequently encountered genetic haplogroup in the Belarusian population.

The study indicated that Belarusians have a relatively high level of homogeneity. Also, that the Belarusian people demonstrate the highest genetic affinity with the two other Eastern Slavic groups, the Russians and the Ukrainians, which makes sense because they are all ethnically Eastern Slavic.

I decided to research the genetic component of my ancestry a little more when I found an article in *Scientific Reports* discussing the East Eurasian Ancestry in genetic information from the Steppe nomads in the genomes of Belarusian population. This study intrigued me because it was conducted by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in Minsk. The results of this study showed the R1a1a (M458) haplogroup was found in Eastern Europe concentrated in Belarus and Poland. Although it could be found in Russia, it went no farther east than the Ural Mountains.



## Slavic Ureheimat

In line with genetic genealogy, in 2007, the National Institutes of Health conducted Y-STR variation chromosome research and published a report on how the Y-chromosome provides evidence for the Slavic homeland. The findings of this study concluded that the urheimat of the Slavs was the middle Dnieper basin, which is located in present day Ukraine. Other genetic studies, such as the one conducted by Family Tree DNA, have concluded that the Slavs originated on the Pontic Caspian Steppe North of the Black and Caspian Seas.

I agree with both perspectives because migration is a gradual process taking perhaps thousands of years. Hence, it is understandable that the Early Slavs could have started in Mtskheta and traveled through the Caucasus Mountain valley to the Darigal Gorge. From there, the Slavs could easily travel onto the Pontic Caspian Steppe where they could have lived for hundreds of years proving the genetic studies true that they originated from the Steppes of Russia.

In addition, the Early Slavs could have made a gradual migration from the Steppes of Russia to their homeland in the middle Dnieper basin in what is today Ukraine before the common era proving the National Institutes of Health results stating that the Early Slavic homeland is in the Dnieper basin in Ukraine. Therefore, I think both of these indices are true.

The middle Dnieper basin is the section of river between Kyiv and Zaporizhzhya in Ukraine. This region is a forest-steppe area with black earth known as *chernozem*. This

soil is rich in nutrients and is perfect for crop cultivation. It is understandable why the Early Slavs would like to stay in this area with plenty of fresh water, good soil for crops and a forest full of wildlife. Indeed, it must have seemed like an idyllic place!

## CHAPTER 3

### EARLY TRIBES

#### Early Slavic Tribes

The earliest written history of the Slavs by Slavic authors is *The Russian Primary Chronicle* written in 1113. It is also known as *The Tale of Bygone Years* and references events much earlier. This chronicle discusses each Slavic tribe as well as where each tribe lived.

There were twelve Slavic tribes in the region breaking off into Western and Eastern Slavic tribes sometime between 500 and 1000. This is also referred to as the Common Slavic period when the first evidence of dialects in the language appeared. They still spoke the same language, but the different dialects would pertain to specific regions.

There were three tribes that made up the Belarusian ethnos. They were the Dregovichians, Krivichians, and Radimichians. These three tribes entered the region we know as Belarus today in the fifth century. The Kryvichian tribe settled in central and northern Belarus, with their main city being Polotsk. The Radimichians settled in southeastern Belarus along a Dnieper tributary called the Soz river. Their main city was Gomel.

The Yasenov family were part of the Dregovichian tribe that settled along the southern part of Belarus along the Pripyat River in the marshlands. The name *Dregovich* means

people from the swamp lands, so perhaps the tribe got their name from this time period when they lived in the marshlands of the Pripyat.

## **Varangians**

In 862, it was evident that the Slavic tribes could not find peace from quarrelling with each other. They were unable to agree on territorial boundaries and tribal protocol. These disagreements turned into brutal fighting between the tribes. In order to resolve this situation, they decided to use an outside source to mitigate these disagreements once and for all. They knew of the Varangians (also known as Vikings) that they traded with over the years. The Slavic tribes decided to ask the Varangians for help in this situation. Hence, the tribes went overseas to the land of the Rus to see if the Varangians could restore order between the Slavic tribes.

In the famous quote from the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, the Slavic tribes asked the Varangians, “Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come reign as princes and rule over us.” The Varangians agreed to help and selected three brothers of good character for the task. The eldest was Rurik who settled in Novgorod. The second, Sineus, settled in Beloozero; and the third brother, Truvor settled in Izborsk.

The Varangians were known as the *Rus* at this time. Hence, this is how the Russian land first received its name. Incidentally the word *Rus* is Scandinavian for “men who row” indicating the Varangians traveled often by boat.

Unfortunately, within two years Sineus and his brother Truvor died, therefore, Rurik ruled the land of Rus on his own from 864 establishing the Rurik Dynasty. His warriors were known as boyars, and these boyars went out and fought many battles. Rurik ruled until his death in 882. Before he died, he proclaimed that his kinsman, Prince Oleg, would succeed him.

## **Kyivan Rus**

In 882, the tribal union of Kyivan Rus was established when Prince Oleg came into power. He moved the capital city from Novgorod to Kyiv for a more central location. Interestingly, Prince Oleg was known as Oleg the Wise. He exhibited wise character as he raised Igor, Rurik's son, and upon his death declared that Prince Igor would rule after him. Thus, the succession had been established for the Rurikids that became one of Europe's oldest royal houses that would last for centuries.

In 950, the Dregovichian tribe, who settled along the southern part of Belarus along the Pripyat River in the marshlands, gained a capital city. The city of Turov was first mentioned in the Russian Primary Chronicle in 980 as the center of the Turov Duchy. However according to legend, the city was founded much earlier in 950 by a Varangian Prince named Tur. Prince Tur ruled the Principality of Turov, which was adjacent to the Principality of Polotsk. Prince Tur's brother was Prince Rogvolod of Polotsk.

Turov was a lucrative trade center for people from the Black Sea region, Middle East, and Central Asia. Its location on the Pripyat River was integral to its success as the

Pripyat drains into the Dnieper River that empties into the Black Sea. Also, its close proximity to Poland gave it a Western cultural influence.

In 988, Prince Vladimir of Kyiv conquered Prince Rogvolod and gave the rulership of the principality to the Prince of Turov. It was at this time that some of the Dregovich tribe moved north to the Polotsk Principality.

After being Christianized into the Orthodox faith in 988, Prince Vladimir of Kyiv divided the lands to his sons so they could propagate the new religion. His son, Svyatopolk became Prince of the Turov Principality. Many in the district remembered when Turov was an independent tribe and did not appreciate having to be under Kyivan Rus rule. Prince Svyatopolk listened to the people and started going against his father's wishes. He even went so far as to take a Catholic woman for a wife, the daughter of King Boleslaw the Brave of Poland. He went against his father's wishes and became a Catholic. His new Catholic wife promised him military backing from the King of Poland if he seceded from Kyiv. Prince Svyatopolk decided to do just that when his father found out his intentions. His father, Grand Prince Vladimir, attacked Turov in 1013. Prince Svyatopolk was captured and put in prison in Kyiv.

In 1015, Grand Prince Vladimir died without any instructions for who was to succeed him. Prince Svyatopolk was released from prison, and because he was the eldest son, took the throne of his father to rule all of Kyivan Rus. His younger brothers started a battle against him. Svyatopolk gave order to have his younger brothers Boris and Gleb killed. Later in 1072, Boris and Gleb were canonized as the first Russian saints.

The Dregovichians that had moved north into the Polotsk Principality earlier established Grodno as a trading outpost of Kyivan Rus. The city was set up as a fortress and for trade with the Baltic tribes in the area known as the Yatvingians. A Russian Prince ruled over this fortified city that was established in 1127 on the Neman River.

The Neman River starts in Belarus and goes through Lithuania to the Baltic Sea. It runs 582 miles and is the fourth longest river to empty into the Baltic Sea. The river is known for having excellent perch, pike, and zander.

## **Saints**

The oldest structure in Grodno is Sts. Boris and Gleb Orthodox church that was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is the only surviving building with Ruthenian architecture. In the walls of the church are blue, green, and red colored stones to form crosses in the brick exterior walls. The building has six circular pillars on the outside. There is a choir loft in the back of the church. I imagine the Yasenov family worshipped there on many Sundays.

Also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, were two other pious souls who would be canonized after their deaths. St. Cyril of Turov was born in 1130. He was a highly educated man and brilliant writer. In fact, he wrote 60 works on poetic prayers, parables, and Christ teachings. He worked in a monastery and became Bishop of Turov. He preached on the blessedness of austerity in the Orthodox Church. This man of Turov, probably also from the Dregovich tribe, was canonized as one of the first saints of Belarus.

Euphrosyne of Polotsk was born in 1102 to the Rurik noble family. She wholeheartedly took on the Orthodox Christian faith from a young age. She refused all offers of marriage because she wanted to devote her life to Christ. She joined a monastery without her parents' permission. Her aunt was the Mother Superior at this monastery and pleaded with the girl to not forsake her princely palace and forsake all the luxury to live a life of austerity in a monastery. Euphrosyne would hear none of it and decided to stay.

Because Euphrosyne was highly educated having been a noble woman, she was able to copy books for the bishop. In 1120, the bishop granted her the task of copying library books at St. Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk. She ended up creating a workshop with bookbinders and painters to create books and sell them with the proceeds going to the poor. She established a women's monastery and church in Polotsk, which is now called St. Euphrosyne Church. She was canonized as the patron saint of Belarus.

## **Ruthenians**

*Ruthenia* was a term originally used in medieval Latin to describe Slavs in the Kyivan Rus principality. This word derived from the land of Rus, therefore, the Latin speaking people referred to the people from Rus as *Ruthenians*. Of course, this later progressed into *Russians* from Russia.

The term *White Ruthenian* was a term used to describe the region in what is now known as Belarus. It was first used in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Prince Andrey Bogolyubskiy, who conquered Kyiv. After doing so, he realized that Kyiv was not as pure to the Orthodox



faith as it once had been, hence, he did not rule from Kyiv but from Vladimir-Suzdal. In addition, he changed his title from Grand Prince of Rus to Grand Prince of White Rus because he wanted to rule over a land that kept the purity of the Orthodox faith. The term *White Ruthenia* derived from this event and took on to mean the people from the region of present-day Belarus. More specifically in a quote from Alfred Nicolas Rambaud in his book *History of Russia* states, “The name of *White Russia* is given to the provinces conquered from the 13th to the 14th century by the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. These were the ancient territories of the Kriviches, Polotchans, Dregovitches, Drevlians, Doublebes.”

## Yatvingians

The Yatvingians were a Baltic tribe located west of Grodno in Podlasia. This tribe was known for their fierce warriors in battle and were first mentioned in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* in 983. The tribe was named for a Viking called Jatvig, who conquered this land and established the tribe in the area. They came on the Neman River from the Baltic Sea and were moved westward when the Dregovich tribe established Grodno on the Neman River in 1127. At the same time, many boyars were given land in the surrounding area to defend the state from invaders such as the Yatvingian tribe.

The Yassenov family would have been living in Podlasia as part of the Grodno region at this time to establish the new system under the Russian Prince because the Yassenovs were boyars. The Russian Prince was equipped with an army of boyars by Grand Prince of Kyivan Rus, who received part of the prince’s land in exchange for defending the land

from invaders. The Yassenov family were part of this boyar class for the Grodno region. As landowners, they played a leading role in government and managing the people. There even was a Boyar's Council that advised the prince on certain matters affecting the region. It is hard to say exactly when the Yassenovs were granted land in exchange for military service to the prince as there are no records for these agreements from this time period.

Because the Yatvingians were such fierce warriors, they fought to stay in their land from the Poles, Russians, and Germans. Being that their land was west of Grodno, they knew a time of peace from the Russian boyars, but it did not last. In 1237, a new and even more fierce warrior campaign invaded. This invasion would change the Yatvingians' as well as the Dregovichians' lives forever. These warriors came to be known as the Mongols.

## **Mongols**

Kyivan Rus was doing quite well economically at the start of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Evidence for this lies in the fact that major churches were built of stone rather than wood during this time. In addition, archeological evidence shows that glazed pottery, ceramic tiles, glasswork, and jewelry were all prevalent in Kyiv and Novgorod. Nothing indicates that the towns were in decline before the Mongols invaded. In fact, Kyiv's population was larger than London's.

As all seemed well, no one noticed the danger that would so quickly overtake them. Then in 1237, it happened. Mongol horseman invaded the Kyivan Rus lands with such ferocity that entire towns were destroyed. The Mongols were being led by Ghengis Khan's grandson, Batu Khan. These mysterious raiders came to make a world empire of their own conquering lands from their home in Mongolia across the entire continent of Asia to Eastern and Central Europe. The Mongols even destroyed Kyiv in 1240 marking the end of the Kyivan Rus tribal union.

In Grodno region where the Yassenov family resided, the city and surrounding area of Podlasia were completely decimated. They most certainly would have lost their land. It is hard to know how anyone would have survived this invasion, but some people did survive, including the Yassenovs.

In Podlasia, where the Yatvingian tribe was located, the region was completely sacked and obliterated. There was nothing left in Podlasia for years. It became an abandoned wasteland.

## CHAPTER 4

### GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

#### Podlasia

From time immemorial, Podlasia has been a borderland. Zygmunt Gloger describes it as “Historic Podlasia was a territory between Mazovia and Grodno. It was sparsely populated and covered by dense forests. The Yatvingians resided near Augustow, but after the Mongol invasion of 1240s, Podlasie turned into a desert with the population having been decimated by the Asiatic hordes.”

It was at this time when the land was abandoned and without ruler, that King Mindaugas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania decided to annex Podlasia for Lithuania. Any people who happened to be surviving on the land were grateful to be protected under a new regime. In fact, King Mindaugas annexed much of the Kyivan Rus territory with no protests whatsoever. The question of ultimate survival won out over any thought of allegiance to a principality or state that did not exist anymore.

Podlasia needed to be colonized again to keep the territory safe from invaders. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had boyars from the Grodno region colonize this abandoned wasteland. These boyars would be granted land to manage in exchange for defending the border from invaders. A very similar agreement to the one under the

Kyivan Rus. The Yassenov family had been boyars under the Kyivan Rus for the Grodno region, so they were available for this task. Many Dregovichian boyars were selected to colonize Podlasia at this time.

## **Perstun Forest**

In Podlasia, to the northwest of Grodno was an ancient primeval forest. This forest had various game for hunting including the wild zubr. The forest was called Perstun and was a favorite hunting area for the Lithuanian Dukes. It is known that when the dukes would visit the region, they would visit the Orthodox church in the village to pray and light a candle before hunting the next day.

However, in the early 1380s, this beautiful forest was overrun by soldiers from Prussia called Teutonic Knights trying to take the region for themselves. It was in 1382 when Grand Duke Vytautas organized a powerful military force of boyars in the Grodno region to fight the Teutonic Knights. The Teutonic Knights asked if Vytautas would agree to be baptized a Christian and make Lithuania a Christian nation. He refused at first, but then he agreed. He planned to provide a celebration dinner with his new “friends.” After dinner, he had all of the Teutonic Knights taken as hostages.

The Yassenov men would have been part of Vytautas’ military force that was created in Grodno in 1382. The Duke appointed reliable boyar families to colonize the new annexed region called Podlasia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to govern the lands and fend off invaders like

the Teutonic Knights. These boyars would be granted land to manage for the Grand Duke in exchange for being warriors when called upon.

In the backwoods of the Perstun Forest was another hunting area for the dukes to use. It was managed by a boyar family. This family were the Yasenovs. The name Yasenov means ash tree. Hence, the family lived in the place of ash trees in the backwoods of the Perstun Forest in Podlasia. Their part of the forest was called *Yasenova*. The dukes would come to hunt on these lands that were managed by the Yasenov family. The Yasenovs made sure only the dukes were hunting on the land and provided their manor house for the dukes when they would visit on their hunting holidays.

According to Father Edward Anuszkiewicz, the *Yasenova* lands were an integral part of the Yatvingia region of Podlasia. Further stating that, "It was the backwoods of *Yasenova* in the Perstunska Forest."

## **Polonization**

In 1385, the Union of Krewa was signed between Lithuania and Poland. In this dynastic union, the Grand Duke of Lithuania agreed to marry the Polish Queen Jadwiga, thus becoming the King of Poland. Also, he agreed to convert Lithuania to Catholicism. Due to this agreement, the Lithuanian nobles (also known as boyars) were polonized – meaning they had to assimilate to Polish ethnicity by polonizing their surnames by adding a *-ski* on the end to denote their noble status; becoming Catholic because this meant a

person was Polish; and claiming to be Polish when asked to have voting rights at the Rada or Sejm.

Hence with the stroke of a pen, my family's surname of *Yasenov* changed to *Jasionowski*. They now had to attend Catholic Church because that meant they were Polish. In addition, they had to say that they are Polish when asked. They must have assimilated quite well because even today the family says they are Polish.

Polonization is the changing of a group's ethnicity by legal action against their will to assimilate to Polish ethnicity. Honestly, we know here in the digital age that this is not truly even possible. You can't just change a person's ethnicity. A person's genetics prove who they really are. However, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century things were different. The monarchs really did believe that they could change a whole population of Ruthenians to Poles. They wanted a homogenous population of Poles in their nation. I imagine the people being changed thought it was real too, especially considering that most Europeans thought the Earth was flat as well.

The other aspect of Polonization is the religion factor. Catholic was seen as Polish and Orthodox was seen as Russian. This was an important way of changing the population to the new way of thinking – the Polish way of thinking. Religion can do more to keep the masses in line than battles in some cases. This was a very effective tool in the Polish endeavor to acquire more land and people to rule over in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

All of the Russian Orthodox Churches were converted to Catholic Churches. This meant the families would attend church in the same building, but now it looked different,

and the service was different. Many of the churches in Podlasia today are Catholic churches that were once Russian Orthodox. Unfortunately, many of the original wooden Russian Orthodox Churches deteriorated and there is no memory of them any longer.

Lastly, the mandate for a noble to say he or she is Polish when asked is another vitally important way of indoctrinating the Ruthenian population. The act of saying something out loud with the words “I am” in front of it is very effective to change a person’s way of thinking. Even today, this is part of how Neurolinguistic Programming and affirmations work. The act of saying “I am” followed by a word makes a person really feel that it is true after a while.

This mandate pertained to all of the nobles in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – no exceptions. An interesting point to note is that all of the nobles in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were either Lithuanian or Ruthenian (which is Belarusian). There were no Polish nobles in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before 1395. Logically this would make sense because why would a Grand Duke in Lithuania trust a Pole to govern his lands? A Polish noble would govern lands in his own country of Poland – not another country.

The national character began to change in 1395. Eventually all nobles in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would say that they were all “of the Polish Nation” no matter what ethnicity they actually were. This propaganda continued for hundreds of years, so much so that the families really did believe this to be true of themselves after a while. By the time we get to the present day, no one knows that this happened 600 years ago. People honestly believe they are Polish because their families said they were Poles for hundreds of years now.



What makes matters even more confusing is when well-meaning people get their DNA tested and it comes up being Slavic or Eastern European. This does not distinguish between Pole and Belarusian. They are genetically very similar. I think the only way to know for certain is to find the evidence of each generation going back as far as possible to see where the family lived and compare that to the genetic DNA results.

In my case with my Yasenov family research, I found that my family were nobles in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In fact, the Yasenovs never lived in Poland at all. Another fact is that the nobility in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were either Lithuanian or Ruthenian (which is Belarusian). My DNA results indicated that I was of the R1a1a M458 haplogroup, which is Slavic not Baltic. Lithuanians are a Baltic tribe; therefore, I am Belarusian.

However, I am one of the fortunate ones. I think there are many people who think they are Polish when they are really Belarusian. Because the records for many families have been lost due to the ravages of so many wars in the region, it could be impossible for some people to ever really know the truth of their ethnicity.

## **Stanislaw, Jan, and Wacław Jasionowski**

In 1420, Stanislaw was born into the Jasionowski family. Stanislaw is my first ancestor that I have a name for. My earliest ancestor and therefore, the patriarch of all the information that follows. I am including actual images of the records in this paper for proof that I really did find evidence for each generation of my Yasenov ancestors.

To recapitulate, the Jasionowski family were nobles in the region of Podlasia in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This area of Podlasia was 15 miles northwest of Grodno, which is less than 2 hours away by horse. He lived on land in the backwoods of the Perstun Forest on the Jasionowa estate, which was known as the land of ash trees.

Just 12 years earlier in 1408, Grand Prince Vytautas started to amass a large military campaign in the Belovezhskaya Forest in Podlasia. This area was quite a bit south of Jasionowa. Understandably, Stanislaw's father would have been part of one of the Belarusian regiments. The military force was very large with 32 cannons and extensive envoys of provisions.

Then on July 15, 1408, the Battle of Grunwald ensued. There were 40 regiments of Belarusian troops, each with more than 500 soldiers. In addition to the Belarusian delegation, there were 5,000 Tartar mercenaries, one regiment of soldiers from Novgorod, and 50 regiments of Polish soldiers with 300 soldiers in each regiment. Altogether, there were more than 40,000 soldiers ready for battle against the Teutonic Knights.

The Teutonic Knights army were fewer in number, but they brought 100 cannons with them to the battle. The Belarusian cavalry started the battle! Close to 100,000 soldiers from both sides fought on the field near Grunwald until sunset. The field was covered with ailing or dead soldiers and much blood. By evening, the battle was over, and the Belarusians with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland had completely defeated the Teutonic Knights. Unfortunately, most of the Belarusian soldiers died that day. Miraculously, Stanislaw's father must have made it because Stanislaw was born in 1420.

In 1448, Stanislaw had a son named Jan, who became heir to the Jasionowa family estate in Podlasia. During this time, Grand Duke Casimir was on the Lithuanian throne. This was an interesting time of peace with no military conflicts for many years.

In 1483, Jan had a son named Waclaw. Waclaw studied at the University of Krakow, now called Jagiellonian University. He studied at this school for three years. The information that the Registrar's office of the Jagiellonian University sent me has his name correct, his father's name correct, and the village where he was from correct. Hence, it is a proven fact that Waclaw attended school there.

Attending university in the Late Middle Ages was an uncommon thing to do. Many families could not afford to send their son to school. Girls were not sent to university – if they were educated at all, it would be from a tutor. Most young men started their university studies between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Students were usually of the aristocracy, but not always.

Even though the Jasionowski family were nobles, they might not have been wealthy. Many noble families had the land they owned as their wealth and nothing more. Still, I find this uncommon situation of sending Waclaw to university very telling about the family in general. It is evident that they valued education and were willing to make a way to send Waclaw to school even if they did not have vast wealth. This action indicates that they wanted the best for Waclaw, and that he was evidently quite intelligent.

Another interesting fact about Waclaw's attending school in Krakow is that he could have met Nicolas Copernicus there. Nicolas Copernicus attended the same university during the same time. However, Nicolas was studying astronomy and science, and I am

not sure what classes Waclaw took. The registrar's office did not have that type of detailed information. Nonetheless, it is interesting to think that they might have seen each other on campus!

Krakow University is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Europe, having been established in 1364. In fact, it is the 13<sup>th</sup> oldest university in continuous operation in the world. It is highly regarded as a very prestigious institution offering degrees in medicine, science, as well as arts and culture. Many foreign students from all over Europe would travel to Krakow to study at this institution of higher learning.

Here is the Nobility listing for the Jasionowski family in 1450. It mentions how their estate was located in Podlasia. Podlasia was an area that was included in the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:

JASIONOWSKI. Piszą się z Jasionowa, na Podlasiu. Po Stanisławie syn Jan, dziedzic na Jasionowie 1450 r., miał syna Waclawa. Jerzy żonaty z Anną Uchaczówną 1520 r. (Bon.). Sebastyan, syn Sebastyana Uchacza, prowadził 1589 r. proces o sukcesyę po Janie Uchaczu - Jasionowskim (Wyr. Tryb. Lubel.).

“The Jasionowskis were from Jasionowa in Podlasia; Stanislaw, son of Jan, heir of Jasionowa in 1450, had a son Waclaw; Jerzy was married to Anna Uchacz in 1520; Sebastyan, son of Sebastyan Uchacz, initiated a lawsuit in 1589 regarding succession after Jan Uchacz-Jasionowski. This last matter was reported in the proceedings of the Tribunal in Lublin.”

*Rodzina, Herbarz Szlachty Polkiej* by Seweryn Uruski

## Jasionowa

Here is an excerpt from a 1450 map from the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. by authors depicting the exact location of the Jasionowa estate in Podlasia in the Trakai Voivodeship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



Despite its small size, the village of Jasionowa still exists on present-day maps. It is a small village located East of Lipsk one mile from the Belarusian border. It's coordinates are 53°45'44"N and 23°30'29" with an elevation 459.32 feet.

The people from this area are predominantly of Belarusian descent and don't appreciate that their land was given to Poland after the Second World War. This Belarusian minority in Poland account for 47,000 people in the 2011 census, which is less than the over 300,000 people right after the second World War. This is because many assimilated into the Polish culture and now claim to be Polish. There is an active process of polonization at work in Podlasia even today.

This region of Podlasia was never part of Poland until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to that, this part of Podlasia was a borderland that changed governments many times but was never on Polish soil.

It was in the Suwalki Guberniya of the Russian Empire when my Grandfather and Great Grandfather were born. When my Second Great Grandfather was born this same area was in the Augustow Guberniya of the Russian Empire, and with Third Great Grandfather, it was the Augustow Voivodeship of the Russian Empire. During my Fourth and Fifth Great Grandfathers' time it was located in the Trakai Voivodeship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. On my Sixth and Seventh Great Grandfather's birth records, this area was in the Podlaskie Voivodeship managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – it was under this government from 1413 to 1795. Before 1413, Podlasia was a district in the Trakai Voivodeship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Due to the many changes in government, Podlasia could be defined as a true borderland.

Being boyars, the Jasionowski family were nobility that are under the monarchs, which are princes and dukes. Even though there was a Union with Poland, they still took orders from the Grand Duke of Lithuania. In years past, it was important for them to be visible on the frontier of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to defend the border in case of invaders. However, now that same border is shared with Poland, who Lithuania was now in Union with. It did not seem so important to be ready to fight in battle during this period of time.

## Landowners

Land ownership in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was prohibited for anyone other than the nobility. Likewise, no one was allowed to use the suffix *-ski* on their surname except the nobility during this same time period. The nobles were allowed to buy, sell, and own land as they wished. In return, nobles were expected to serve the country by way of military defense as mentioned earlier. However, in addition, they could be called upon to work as a public official, scholar, priest, or a gentleman-farmer. Most nobles owned a village, manor house, and a full working farm.

The classes of nobility also evolved. There were still the ancient nobles, who were descendants of Rurik and Rogvolod, or Algirdas. These were the wealthiest and most influential of the nobles. However, the other feudal lords were minor princes and boyars, who came to be known as the gentry or nobles. They owned land and managed it for the state. In addition, the nobles were being called upon to primarily get taxes from the peasants that worked the land to give to the feudal lords along with their own taxes.

All nobles still had voting rights at the Sejm, which is the Parliament. The nobility from all districts and provinces would attend the Sejm, and they had a lot of impact in the governing of the country. For instance, the nobility elected King Zygmantas II to the throne in 1506 when the prior monarch died without any children. The nobility even created a code of Statutes or collection of laws to govern the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in regard to class rights of the gentry, land ownership laws, and the organization of the courts and judicial process. The Statutes were handwritten in the Belarusian language. It is expected that the Jasionowski nobles would have taken part in this process.

## **Jerzy Jasionowski**

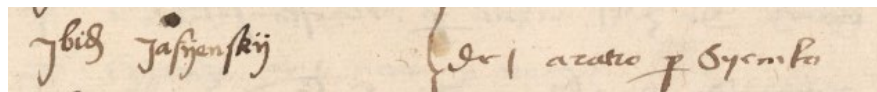
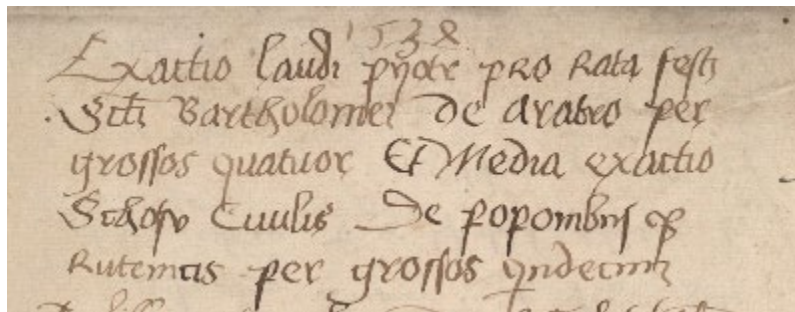
In 1520, Jerzy Jasionowski, who was married to Anna Uchaz, sold the land the family owned to his brother-in-law, Jan Uchaz. In an earlier record, it states that Jerzy and Anna were married in 1520. Therefore, it would seem that both of these events happened in the same year.

As mentioned earlier, the original family estate was in Jasionowa in Podlasia. However, the land Jerzy sold was in Brzostek in the southern part of Poland in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountain range. This village is about 80 miles from Krakow, which would be one day's travel on horseback. Perhaps years earlier, Waclaw, who studied at the university in Krakow, purchased land and stayed in the area after attending university. Or perhaps the King granted this land to the Jasionowski family for another reason as was often the case with nobility, who exhibited exemplary service to the monarch. It is not unusual for noble families to own more than one piece of land. Regardless of how the family obtained this property, this tract of Jasionowski land in Brzostek was now owned by Jan Uchaz.

Also in 1520, Francisak Skaryna, a Belarusian scholar and humanist, opened a print shop in Vilnia that produced a prayer book and Book of Psalms. In addition, he translated the Bible into medieval Belarusian and published his work in Vilnia. He was born in Polotsk and went to the University of Krakow. He was a great influence on Belarusian culture and has many statues erected to remember him in Belarus today.



The Jasionowski family paid their taxes as nobles managing Royal Forest lands for the Grand Duke. Here is one such tax record from 1538 where the Jasionowski family paid taxes in the Province of Podlasia. The two nations overlapped a lot because I got this record from the Crown Treasury Archives in Poland, who preserves records from this time period for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:

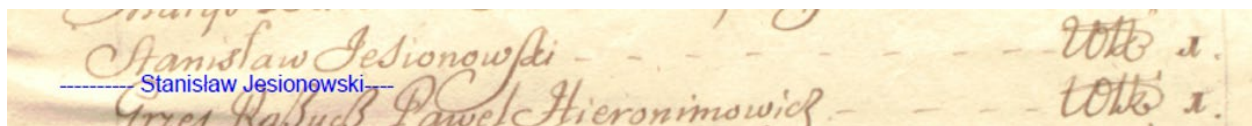
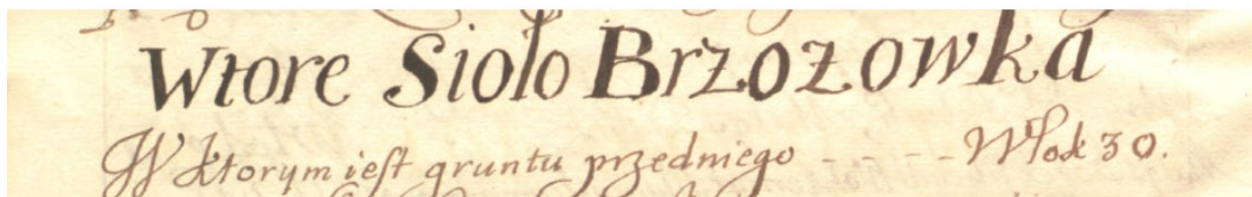
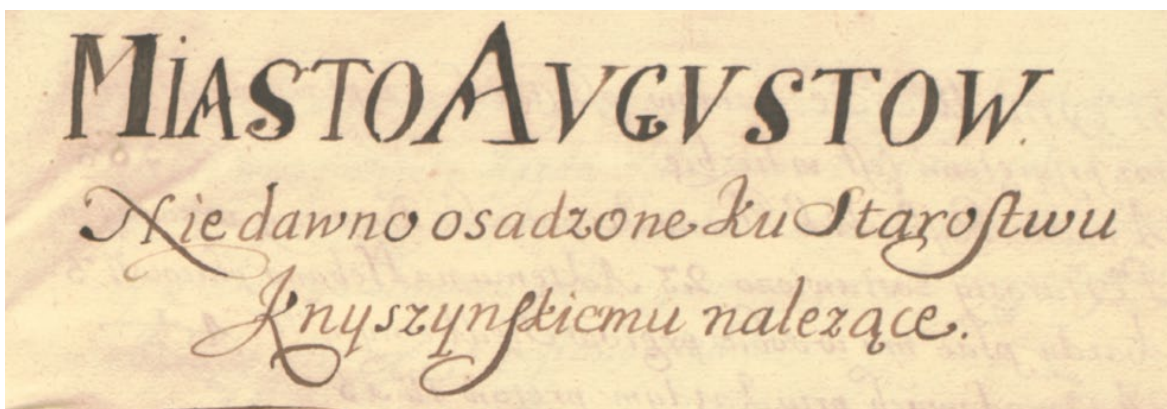


## Stanislaw Jesionowski

Evidently, the Jasionowski family were purchasing land in other areas of Podlasia as well. In 1565, there is a land record for Stanislaw Jesionowski, who owned 44 acres of land in Brzozowka in Augustow District in Podlasia. This property was about 20 miles or 4 hours away from the original Jasionowa estate by horse. As explained earlier, only the nobility could own land at this time. Stanislaw's property in Brzozowka was located in the Barglow Koscielny Parish Church in Podlasia.

An interesting item to point out is his name. Could his name Stanislaw name be a family name handed down from the Stanislaw that we started out with in 1420? It is a well-known tradition to name a child after his grandfather.

Here are excerpts from the Land Deed for Stanislaw Jesionowski in 1565 in Brzozowka, Podlasia part of the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He owned 44 acres of land and had serfs to work the land:



Interestingly, Grand Duke Zygmantas Augustus II introduced a land reform during his reign, which was 1548-1572. He allowed for more people to own land by dividing vast estates. Giving each person one valakas, which is about 49 acres of land. This is quite an innovation. Perhaps this is how Stanislaw acquired his land that he was listed as owning in 1565.

Here is a 1540 map from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by author Sebastian Munster and Claudius Ptolemy depicting the location of Brzozowka in Augustow district of Podasia, which is in the Trakai Voivodeship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



In 1569, Poland and Lithuania formed an official commonwealth federation when they signed the Union of Lublin. What started in 1395 with the Union of Krewa to unify the two states, became a reality in 1569. The two states would be ruled by one monarch with each state maintaining its own identity. The gentry class had grown closer during the time between the dynastic union in 1395 and the political union in 1569. Namely their culture became more Polish with all of the gentry being Catholic and claiming to be ethnically Polish.

The main points of the union were 1) One Polish-Lithuanian Republic, 2) One ruler, a king in Krakow, 3) One parliament for laws and diplomatic relations, and 4) Separate administrations and military. Each nation had its own Provincial Conventions of Nobility for judging local problems. There was much overlap between the two nations especially

in Podlasia because it was a borderland. For instance, even though the region was managed by Trakai in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, now court cases would be held in Lublin in Poland instead of Trakai.

## **Sebastyn Jasionowski**

In 1589, Sebastyn Jasionowski wanted the land that Jerzy had sold to Jan Uchaz in 1520 in the South of Poland. Sebastyn evidently thought this land was originally Jasionowski land, so therefore, it should stay in the Jasionowski family.

The court system in 1589 had changed significantly since the Union of Lublin in 1569. Many of the gentry had been in favor of the union because they thought they would have more rights in the court system like the Polish nobles did. Judges were selected from the local gentry. Surprisingly, these judges had little formal training, so there was no consistency among judgements from court to court. In addition, when a noble in Podlasia wanted to bring a case to court, he would go to Lublin now instead of Trakai.

Perhaps Sebastyn Jasionowski was thinking about the potential advantages of this new government court system when he decided to try to get the former Jasionowski land back into the family again. In 1589, he took his case to the court in Lublin, where nobility would bring disputes from the commonwealth. Unfortunately, to Sebastyn's great disappointment, the Tribunal in Lublin judgement stated that the land contract to sell the estate in 1520 was legal and therefore would be upheld.

Here is another reference to the Jasionowski noble family. It mentions how Sebastyn brought this case to court and was unable to get the land in 1589:

JASIONOWSCY. Jan, syn Stanisława z Jasionowa 1448 r., a Waclaw, syn Jana z Jasionowa, 1483 r. na uniwersytecie krakowskim. Anna Uchaczówna, żona Jerzego Jasionowskiego, sprzedała 1520 r. całą bliższosc swoją w wójtostwie brzosteckiem i w Woli, bratu Janowi Uchaczowi.

Wyroki lubelskie z 1598 r. wspominają o Sebastyanie Jasionowskim, synie Sebastyana (Ks. 33 f. 88 i 41 f. 29).

Translation of Polish text:

“Jan, son of Stanislaw, was born in 1448; Waclaw, son of Jan, was born in 1483 and went to the University in Krakow. In 1520, Anna Uchaz and Jerzy Jasionowski sold all the land to his brother Jan Uchaz, who lived in the Brzostek Voivodeship. It states that this was recorded in the Lublin Tribunal in 1598 with Sebastyn Jasionowski”

Unfortunately, the State Archives in Lublin does not have these litigation records any longer due to the ravages of the many wars fought in the region.

## Jesionowski Crest

During the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, noble families would use a coat of arms to put on their shields when going into battle. These heraldic crests were also sewn into surcoats and tabards. On surcoats, the crest was worn over armor to signify which side a knight was on when fighting in battle. On tabards, it was used for men to wear about town to signify what noble family they belonged to.

The Jesionowski family crest comes under the Kosciesza coat of arms, which is noted in the Lithuanian nobility record. It is a red shield indicating warriors and military strength.

The arrow symbol displays readiness to fight in battle, and the feathers denote willing obedience and serenity of mind:



Yasenov Family Crest

The Jasionowski surname is rare, especially in this sparsely populated area of Podlasia during this time. Also, the Jasionowski family were nobles, which is another unique feature that is uncommon to find. In fact, even to find their village of Jasionowa was a challenge. I consulted over ten archives and map rooms in five different countries for the location of Jasionowa. Only one Jasionowa was found in this area in 1450. Further, the villages during this time period only had 5-10 houses in them. Therefore, when there are people with the same rare surname from the same village in a sparsely populated area and they are of the same noble class, it is logical that they would be related.

In addition, it is common for the eldest son to inherit the estate, but what about the other sons? It is not generally discussed on what happens to the other sons. The truth is that they have to make their own way in life. They must acquire land on their own. Perhaps coming from a noble family, they could go to the King's court and provide a service to the monarch in exchange for land. Or in cases where the family had wealth, perhaps the father would purchase land for another son to live on.

Remember Stanislaw Jesionowski, who owned 44 acres of land in 1565 in Brzozowka in Podlasia? He was a noble with the same surname in sparsely populated Podlasia, but he was not living in Jasionowa where the family is originally from. Could it be that Stanislaw was a second son? And from this gentleman, there are many more Jesionowskis? The answer is yes.

Indeed, I found more Jesionowski ancestors, who lived in Brzozowka. The Jasionowski line that I have documented for each generation are also nobles as the Jasionowskis shown thus far, which is even more rare. These facts combined form the conclusion that this is undoubtedly the same Jasionowski line.

## **Barglow Koscielny**

The first church record for the Jasionowski family is from the Barglow Koscielny Parish where Stanislaw Jesionowski owned land in 1565. Sacraments such as baptisms and marriages started to be recorded in church books in 1688 and 1681 respectively at this

church. It is a Catholic church now and probably was established as a Catholic church due to the polonization that started in 1395.



The family attended this church from the mid-1500s to 1911. It is officially known as the Parish of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Barglow Koscielny.

It was originally located in the Podlaskie Voivodeship that was managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The original wooden structure was established about the same time the village of Barglow Koscielny was founded in 1512 by John Radziwill. The Radziwills were a powerful magnate aristocratic Belarusian-Ruthenian family who lived in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

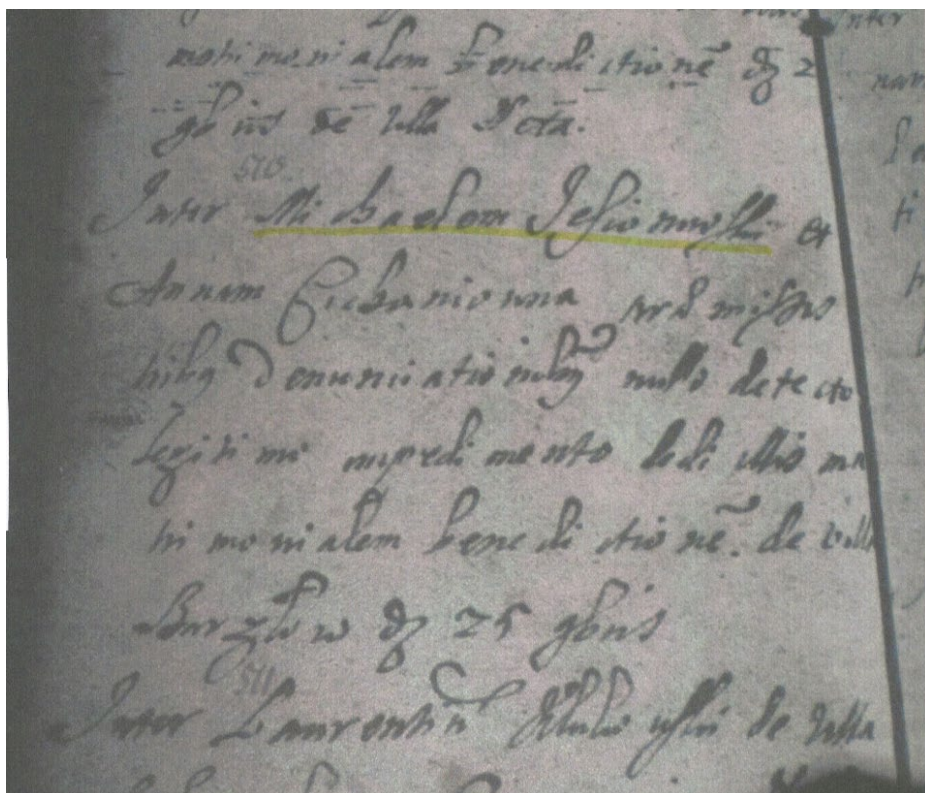
In 1569, the Union of Lublin divided the Barglow Koscielny parish between Poland and Lithuania. Consequently, some parishioners lived in Lithuania while others lived in Poland – even the church cemetery was divided between the two countries!

From 1795 to 1918 and again during World War II, this region was part of the Suwalki Guberniya in the Russian Empire or USSR. Today, it is a beautiful brick church that cost ₴50,000 rubles to build in 1839.



## Michael Jasionowski

Michael Jasionowski married Anna Cichon in 1687 in Barglow Koscielny Church in Podlaskie Voivodeship managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This means that Michael was born about c.1662:



1687 Marriage of Michael Jasionowski

Translation of Latin text into English:

“Parish Barglow Koscielny 1687. Today, the same as above, marriage between Michael Jasionowski and Anna Cichon, all legally, blessed in the village Barglow, the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month.”

Here is an excerpt from 1613 map of Lithuania from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Standord by author Willem Janszoon Blaeu and Maciej Strubicz depicting the location of Podlasia in the Trakai Voivodeshp of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



During this time, Muskovy declared war on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth two times. Once in 1632-1634 and another time 1654-1667. The Tzar wanted to annex Belarus and Ukraine back into the Russian lands. He said his grounds for war were the persecution of Orthodox believers and Orthodox sacred sites and objects. Tzar Aleksey Mikhailovich honestly thought once the Belarusians saw the Russian army that they would “rise up against the cursed Poles.” He even went so far as to promise to not rob the Belarusian nobility and offer them monetary rewards if they came over to the Russian side.

In June 1654, the Russian army entered Belarusian territory. The Russians had this active propaganda campaign prior to coming. To their great surprise, they did not receive any welcome from the Belarusian people. Instead, the Belarusian army fought. The battle raged on. Every town the Russians took, the townspeople had to swear allegiance to the Russian Tzar, and all the Catholic churches were closed immediately.

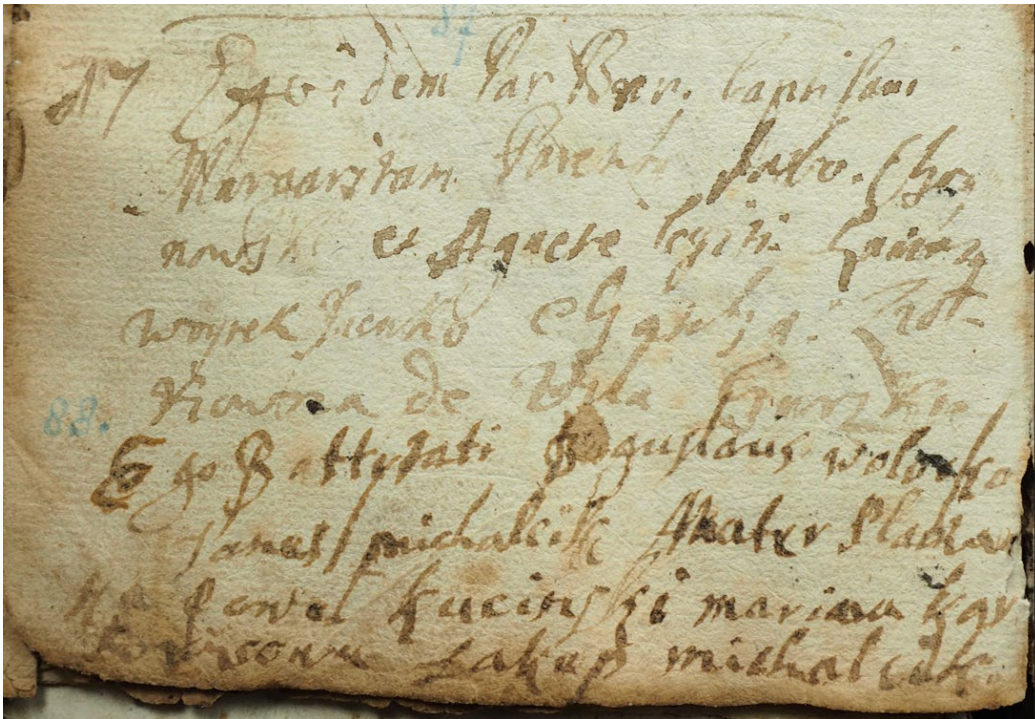
Over the next thirteen years the Russians sacked the Belarusian territory. In Minsk, only 156 people were left, and the city was in ruins. On the Radziwill estate, only 215 homes were left from 1087 prior to the invasion. The Belarusian gentry pledged their allegiance with Russia because they wanted to be Belarusian and Russian Orthodox again. This angered the Polish Crown, who wanted complete autonomy in their gentry class.

In 1661, the Polish Crown sent a diplomatic envoy to Moscow for peace negotiations. This was a long process. A peace treaty was signed in 1667. Belarus stayed with Poland and Ukraine went to Russia. Then in 1686, another peace treaty was signed. This one was called "Eternal Peace" in which the borders outlined in the previous treaty were reinforced.

The Polish gentry, who were guilty of siding with the Russians during the war, attended Catholic Churches wholeheartedly in order to get back into the good graces of the Polish Crown. Poland was the more powerful of the countries in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, so it was important to be in the good graces of the Poles for their survival.

## Michael Jasionowski

Michael Jasionowski was born in April 1689. His father's name was Michael. This proves that the Michael just mentioned was his father. The baptism was celebrated at Barglow Koscielny Parish:



Here is an excerpt of a 1636 map of Lithuania from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by author Petrus Kaerius depicting the location of Barglow Koscielny:

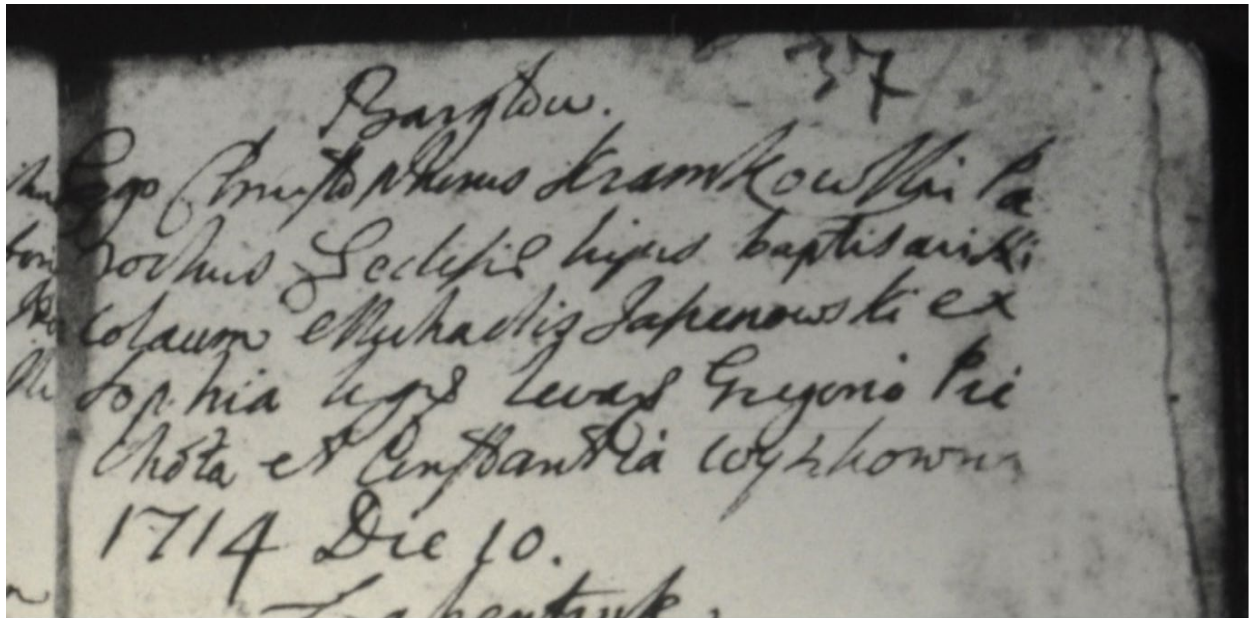


In 1689, the aftermath of the previous years of war was in the collective consciousness of the Belarusian people. So many people died in the war, that it was challenging to go on. There was a time of adjustment in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was known now that Russia was a supreme power in Europe and this balance of power among the countries was felt at all levels of society. It grew so tense in fact that King Jan Kazimierz of Poland abdicated his throne in 1668. This was the point at which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth started to decline on the political stage.

Despite the war and all its challenges, people can always find a way to adapt. People of all classes can still fall in love, get married, and have children. This was the case with Michael Jasionowski after the many years of war. He found a nice lady and married her. Then they started a family by having their first son, Michael, in 1689. This proves that even in the midst of despairing circumstances, there is always hope!

## Nicolai Jasionowski

Nicolai Jasionowski was born on December 10, 1714, in Podlaskie Voivodeship that was managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. His parents were Michael and Sophia:



Translation of Polish text into English:

“Parish Barglow Koscielny December 1714. I Krzysztof Kramkowski, priest, baptized today December 10, 1714, Nicolai son of Michael Jasionowski and Sophia, spouses. Godparents: Gregory Piechota and Constance Wyszkowna.”

During the time of Nicolai’s birth, from 1700 to 1721, the Great Northern War with Sweden took place. Poland started this war by trying to annex Estonia and Latvia for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Sweden ruled Estonia and Latvia at the time. Denmark, Russia, Saxony, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth formed an alliance

against Sweden. Now, Russia was on the same side as the Belarusians in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth declaring war on the Swedes. Belarusians and Russians were sympathetic to each other despite the fact that they were just at war with each other just a few years prior to this. Belarus was a constant battlefield at this time, so the people gathered all their food and fled into the forests.

How the Jasionowski family managed to survive and have children in the midst of all this upheaval must be quite a tale that unfortunately, we do not have the details of. Did they stay in their house on their lands or did they flee to the forest as so many others had? Perhaps this part of Belarus was spared in 1714 while military campaigns were being battled in Estonia. We can only hope this was the case for their sakes.

The answer to these questions lie in the fact that the Swedish army had moved farther south from 1709-1714. They were battling the Ottoman Empire during these years after their major defeat with Estonia and Latvia. They escaped the Russian territory by fleeing into Ottoman territory. Tzar Peter I demanded Charles XII of Sweden's eviction from the Ottomans. When he refused to give up the Swedish King to the Russian Tzar, the Russians invaded the Ottoman Empire. The Russians were defeated by the Ottomans at the Pruth River and negotiated a peace deal. The Russians left the Ottoman Empire and the King of Sweden returned back to Sweden.

The Great Northern War finally ended in 1733 with Russia being the victor. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was further weakened by the war. Estonia and Latvia were now under Russian rule. Belarus lost 700,000 people in the war.

Here is an excerpt from a 1690 map from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by authors by Nicolaes Visscher and Nicolas Sanson depicting the location of Podlaskie Voivodeship managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



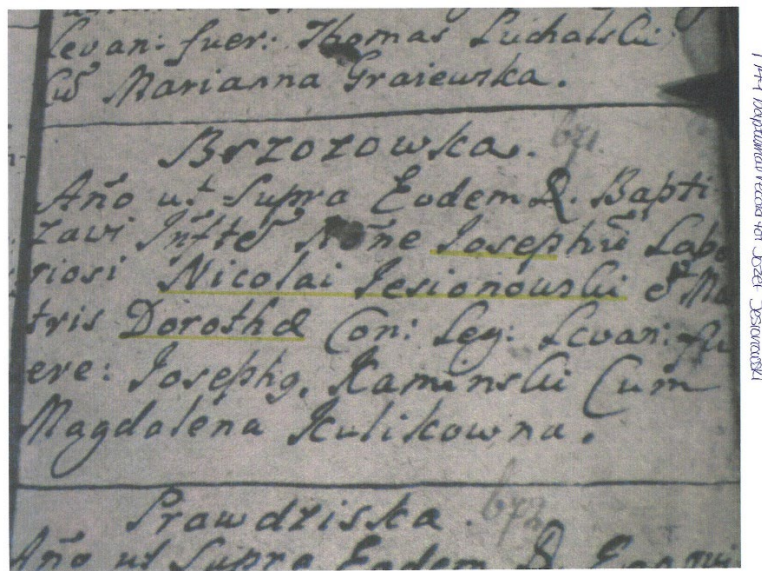
In addition, on this 1654 map from Atlas of Lithuania from Wikimedia Commons by author M.K. depicting the Administrative Divisions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Specifically notice the Trakai Voivodeship for further clarification:





## Jozef Jesionowski

Jozef Jesionowski was born in 1749 in Brzozowka, Podlaskie Voivodeship that was managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. His parents were Nicolai and Dorotha. This is the same town where Stanislaw owned property in 1565:



Translation of text into English:

“Parish Barglow 1749. Today, the same as above, I baptized the child Jozef of laborer Nicolai Jesionowski and mother Dorotha, spouses. Godparents Jozef Kaminski and Magdalena Kulik (in act Kukilowna).”

The village of Brzozowka, where Jozef was born, was the same village where Stanislaw Jesionowski owned 44 acres of land in 1565. These villages are quite small having about 5-10 households, therefore, certainly Jozef was a descendant of Stanislaw. Brzozowka is about 20 miles from Jasionowa, which is about 4 hours travel by horse.

In the record in the next section about Jozef's son, Antoni, he is referred to as "The Honorable Jozef Jesionowski." This is another indication that Jozef was a noble.

Here is an excerpt from a 1736 map from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by author Nicolas de Fer depicting the location of Brzozowka in the Podlaskie Voivodeship that was managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



The economy took a while to recover after so many wars on Belarusian soil. While other countries in Europe were thriving in the Age of Enlightenment, Belarusians were just trying to get their lives back together after the devastation they had endured. Out of the 70 years from 1648-1718, 65 of these years were in war. This left villages deserted due to so many having died in battle as well as unworked field for miles. In fact, no less than 70% of the available land for farming was abandoned.

However, by the 1750s people were trying to work the land and bring in food again for their families. It was difficult to do this for the gentry because so many serf had died in

the wars. There was literally no one to work in the fields. To off set this, the timber trade started to play a significant role for the gentry. They could sell wood and timber from their lands to anywhere in Europe. If the gentry's land was located close to a river for transporting the timber, often they chose to sell their trees. Belarusian wood made it as far as Riga, Warsaw, Berlin, and even as far as Paris.

In addition, many landowners started small industrial factories. Industries such as iron ore mines, iron production, paper mills, and the most lucrative the distillation industry. Yes, the local gentry would produce and sell vodka and beer. In order to create the distilled beverages, they would use grain from their land cultivation.

Gentry would help out the peasant class by purchasing items peasants made such as simple pieces of furniture and other household items. This way the Belarusian people would help each other and eventually get back on track again. I imagine Jozef purchased furniture and other goods made by the peasants to help them out even if he did not need the items. It was a time of helping other people where you could.

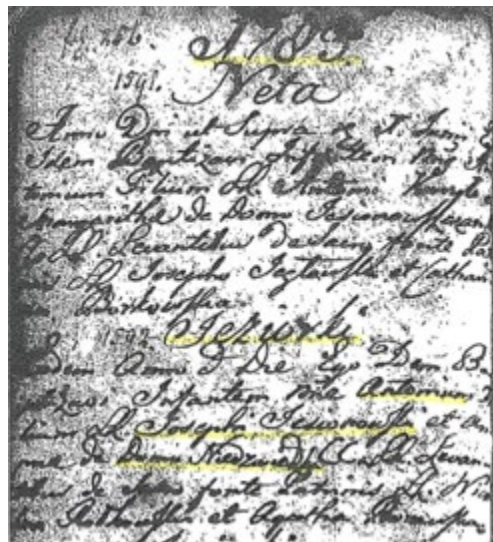
In addition to the country being affected by war, the cities were also empty. For instance, Grodno which once had a lively and prosperous trading economy, now was left in ruins. Some people remained, but it was not enough to made the city was it used to be for many years yet.

One innovative way Belarusians tried to get the economy going was to start their first production plants. They got machines and hired people to work on them. The most

lucrative plant of this period was a glassworks production facility in Minsk. They created lamps, chandeliers, and other tableware.

## Antoni Jesionowski

Antoni Jesionowski was born in 1783 in Jeziorki, Podlaskie Voivodeship that was managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. His parents were Jozef and Anna. The family were Gospodarz, which are landowners of estates that had serfs work the land:



Translation of text into English:

“Parish Barglow 1783 Jeziorki. Today, I baptized a baby boy named Antoni, son of the Honorable Jozef Jesionowski Gospodarz and Anna (maiden name Niedzwiecka) spouses. Godparents: Rolkowski and Agatha.”

In Antoni Jesionowski's birth record from 1783, it states he was born in Jeziorki, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Antoni's parents were the Honorable Jozef and Anna. The title *Honorable* was used only for a noble family.

In this excerpt from a 1781 map from David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by authors Giuliano Zuliani, Giovanni Pitteri, and Giovanni Antonio Rizzi Zannoni depicting Jeziorki in the Podlaskie Voivodeship that was managed by the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



Catherine the Great was the Tzarina of Russia during this time. She took the Belarusian cities of Gomel, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Orsha, and Mogilev for Russia in 1772. This was technically the first division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, Catherine had her eye on much more. Russia was steadily making moves to gain more Belarusian territory since that time and was in the process of gaining Grodno.

In response to this in July 1794, there was an army of Belarusian insurgents against the Russians, lead by Yacob Yasinskiy. They had 300 calvary men ready to fight, but they did not have sufficient military provisions. The Russian army had arms and were certainly

experienced in battle. Despite the odds being against them, this volunteer calvary of peasants pushed out the garrison of Russians out of Grodno. However, the Russians just moved to other areas of Belarus and ultimately Poland as well.

The Belarusian population were not all in favor of driving out the Russian troops because they were tired of war. Many people just peacefully accepted that they would now be Russians and really did not prefer Polish rule anyway. They were worn out from war and had just been making progress at getting their lives straightened out. Hence, they were not interested in more bloodshed at this time.

The Polish uprising against the Russians was led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko. After much fighting in Maciejowice, Kosciuszko was seriously wounded and taken prisoner. In fact, out of the ten thousand troops he had only two thousand were able to escape. In November, the Russians took Warsaw because no troops were there to defend it.

The defeat of Warsaw was the last event in the destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a political entity. Therefore, in October 1795, the Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian territories were split up among Austria, Prussia, and Russia. All of Belarus was given to Russia except for a small portion in the north went to Prussia. Russia took all of the Belarusian territory and over three million people.

For the Belarusians, a new period of history had begun. Unfortunately, they would find it still difficult to keep their own culture alive. Instead of Polonization, now there was Russification – another assimilation of the Belarusians and their culture.

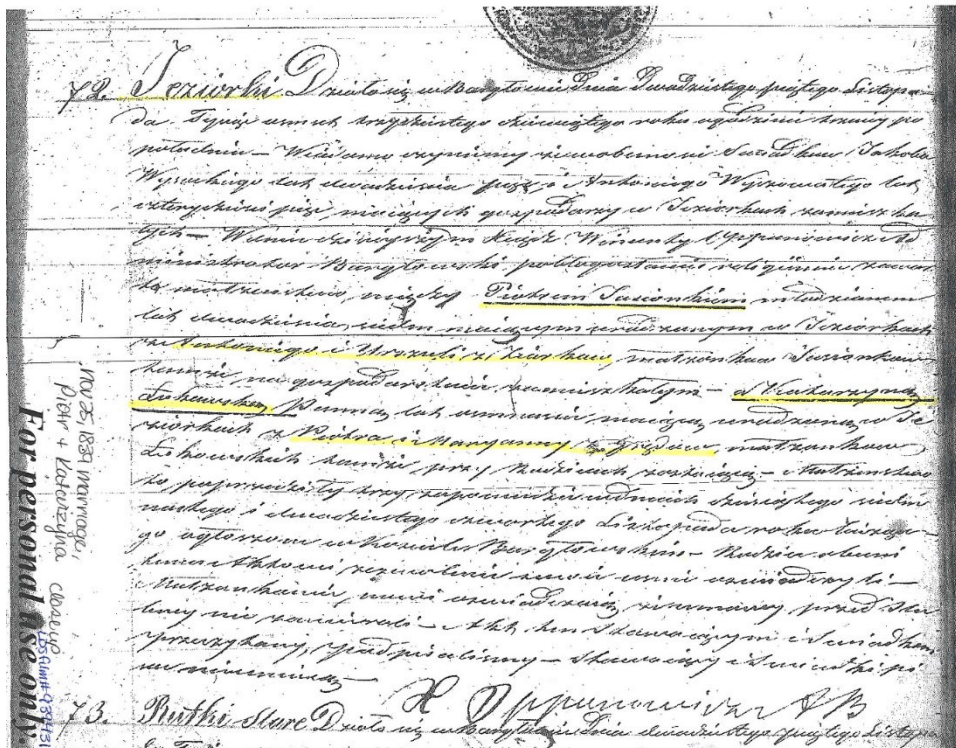
In 1795, Antoni lived in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that was now called the Russian Empire. His country and the land of his forefathers was taken over by this new regime. He was now under the Catherine the Great Tzarina of Russia and was governed by a whole new set of laws and regulations. This must have been quite challenging for the people of that time. One can only speculate on how Antoni and his father, Jozef, adapted to this new way of life.

# CHAPTER 5

## RUSSIAN EMPIRE

### Piotr Jasionowski

Here is Piotr Jasionowski's marriage record to Katarzyna Lukazewska on November 25, 1839, in Barglow Koscielny, Augustow Guberniya, Russian Empire. No birth record was found for Piotr, but this marriage record is proof that he was born in Jeziorki and his father's name Antoni Jasionowski. The family were Gospodarz, which are landowners of estates that had serfs to work the land:





Translation of text into English:

“1839 Parish Barglow. It happened: Barglow on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1839 at 3:00pm. Witnesses: Jakob Wysocki 25 years old and Antoni Wiszowaty, 45 years old, both farmers living in Jeziorki. Groom: Piotr Jasionowski, 27 years old, bachelor, born and living in Jeziorki son of Antoni gospodarz in Jeziorki and Urzula nee Ziarko. Bride: Katarzyna Lukaszewska, maiden, born in Jeziorki, daughter of Piotr host and Marianna nee Gred..., lived with her parents in Jeziorki, 18 years old. Three bans in Barglow parish Without antenuptial agreement. This document was read out to the people present and signed by us (the priest) Priest Wincenty Oppiniewicz”

In this 1801 map of Lithuania from the Library of Congress Map Room by author J. Russell depicting the Jeziorki area in Podlasia in the Trakai Voivodeship in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:



Piotr was a Gospodarz, which means Lord of the Manor. He owned a manor house and an estate in Jeziorki. Gospodarz were highly respected in the community for providing work and leading the people. Being a landowner like his fathers before him must have seemed inherent in his character. He probably intuitively knew how to handle situations that would arise when running a manor house and property with serfs.




Piotr was 27 years old in 1839 when he got married. This would make his year of birth 1812. On June 24, 1812, Napoleon's army crossed the Russian border near Grodno. Napoleon had 600,000 troops, which includes 120,000 Poles. To make matters worse, Prince Radziwill formed his own private calvary and fought on the side of Napoleon against Russia.

In Radziwill's defense, many of the gentry knew of the French army's invasion ahead of time and were not against it. Life under Russian rule was not easy, and they expected French rule would be better. In fact, many of the gentry almost welcomed Napoleon and his troops seeing them as liberators from the Russian invaders. Despite being welcomed, the French troops pillaged the villages badly and left utter destruction in their wake. In fact, in less than six months, nearly a million soldiers and civilians were killed.

This would be the reason why I could not find a baptismal record for Piotr. It was probably not possible to record sacraments in a war zone. Indeed, it is a miracle he survived at all. Thankfully, I was able to obtain his marriage record, which stated that his father was Antoni Jasionowski, Gospodarz.

This map depicts how Napoleon's army led by Prince Jozef Poniatowski marched through my family's land on their way to Grodno depicted by the light blue arrow. Poniatowski was Polish general, minister of war and army chief, who became a Marshall of French Empire during the Napoleonic Wars. He declared a French Victory in the area where the Jasionowski estate was located. Then there was a massive siege on the outskirts of Grodno indicated by the yellow dotted line. It must have been a terrible time for the infant Piotr and his parents, Antoni and Urzula:



-  Army movements/Attacks
-  Retreats
-  French/Russian Army locations

Map: "French Invasion of Russia – 1812A.D." <https://www.deviantart.com/cyowari/art/Napoleonic-Europe-1812-Invasion-of-Russia-809983853>

By July, Napoleon was in Vitebsk. He spent two weeks there plotting his next move. As he had already occupied all of Belarus, he had time to think over how to take the rest of Russia. His plan to was entice the Russian troops to Belarusian territory and then

defeat them there. He wanted to sign a peace treaty to end the war in his favor. This did not happen, however, as the Russian army retreated back into Russia. Napoleon had to advance into Russia.

Napoleon started at Smolensk and defeated the Russians. An large loss of life with 30,000 dead on both sides. He imprisoned Russian General P. Tuchkov and asked him to send a message to Tzar Aleksandr II regarding a peace treaty. However, Aleksandr never responded. Then on August 26, Napoleon invaded Borondino near Moscow. It proved to be the bloodiest battle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with both sides claiming victory – but honestly it is all a debate as to which side actually won. Both sides lost over 100,000 people in just 12 hours of battle.

After their victory, the Russians retreated and gave a surprising command to surrender Moscow to the French. When the Napoleonic armies arrived in Moscow, it was empty. All of the townspeople had abandoned the city. Curiously, once the French troops got inside the city, fires started burning. To this day, no one knows who started the fires. Napoleon stood there in utter astonishment and stated, “What kind of people are they?! They have gone and handed over all their property! Why do such a thing, and what does it mean??”

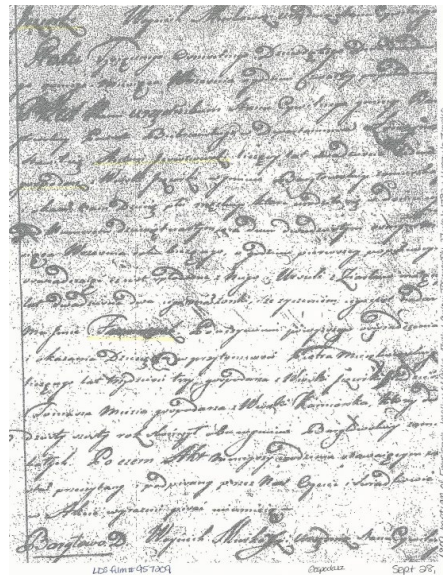
Napoleon still sent letters to Aleksandr asking for peace talks. Aleksandr still maintained his silence. Napoleon retreated from Moscow back the way he came. The winter season started early that year and the French troops were hungry. The Russian armies took this advantage and attacked the French troops. All of the Belarusian cities

of Vitebsk, Polotsk, Brest, and Minsk were all liberated from the French. Many French troops died from cold, starvation, and disease in the process.

The final defeat of Napoleon happened in Belarus when they were crossing the Berezina River on November 14-16, 1812. The French lost more than 40,000 soldier to the Russian army who was attacking them. Still to this day in France when they see an impossible situation they say, "C'est la Berezina!"

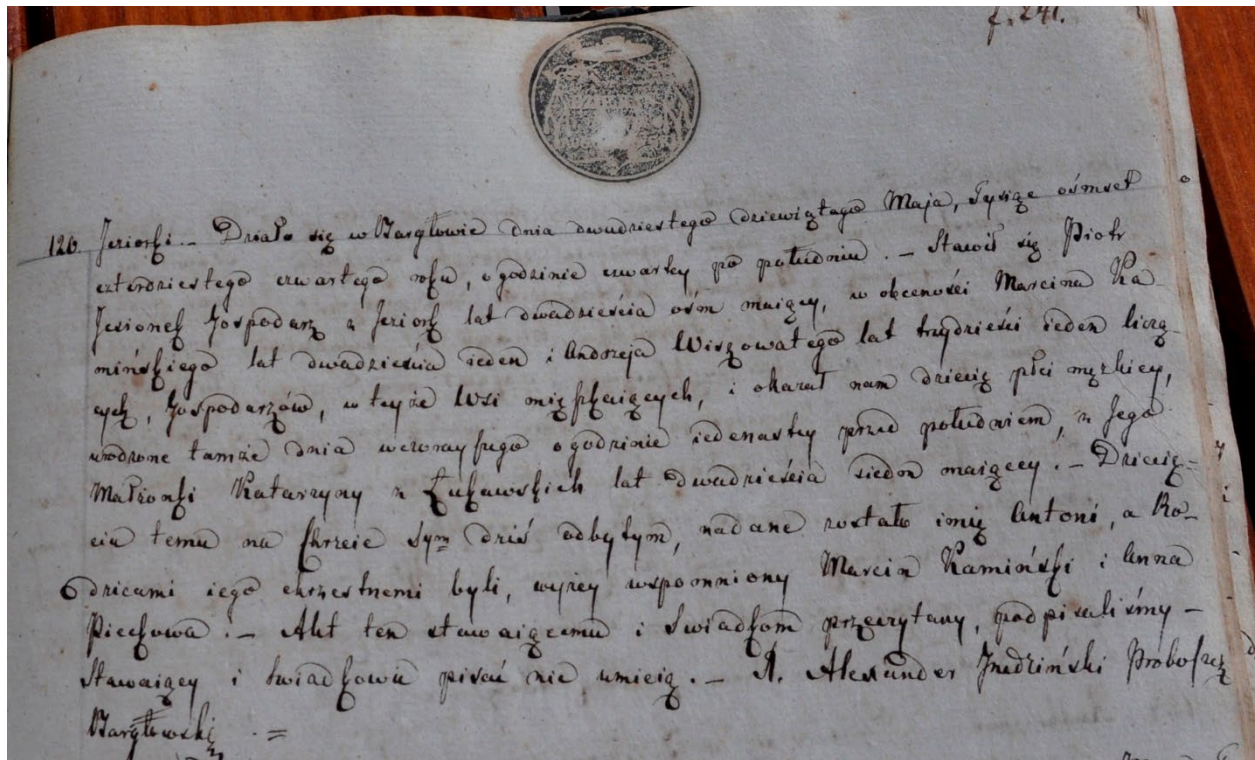
It was so bad in fact that Napoleon for all his pomposity, resorted to disguising himself as a Polish officer to get out of Belarusian territory safely. The territory of Belarus would have to build itself back up again after such a large war.

Because I was unable to get a baptismal record for Piotr due to this war, I was happy when I was able to find the baptismal record for Piotr's younger brother, Franciszek, who was born on September 28, 1809. It states his parents were Antoni Jesionowski and Urszula Ziarko:



## Antoni Jesionek

Antoni Jesionek was born on May 29, 1844, in Jeziorki, Augustow Guberniya, Russian Empire. His parents were Piotr and Katarzyna (maiden name Lukawska):



Translation of text into English:

"1844 Parish Barglow. Act of Baptism No 126 Jeziorki. It took place in Barglow on the 29 day of May 1844, at 4 p.m. Came Piotr Jesionek, host from Jeziorki, 28 years of age, and in the presence of Marcin Kaminski 21 years of age, and Andrzej Wiszowaty, 31 years of age, both hosts from this village, he shows to us a male child born here, yesterday, of his lawful wedded wife Katarzyna, maiden name Lukawska, 27 year of age. During the baptism ceremony held today, this child was given names Antoni, and the godparents were aforementioned Marcin Kaminski and Anna Piecko. This document was read out to

the people present and signed by us (the priest) Priest Aleksander Grudziński parish priest of Barglow.”

Here is an excerpt of a map from 1800 of Russia from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by authors Charles Francois` Delamarche and Jean Lattre depicting the location of Jeziorki, Augustow Guberniya in the Trakai Voivodeship (spelled as *Troki* here) in the Russian Empire:



Antoni's parents were Piotr and Katarzyna, who as I mentioned, were Gospodarz in the previous entry. In this record for Antoni, Piotr is referred to as host, which can also mean gospodarz. The term *gospodarz* refers to the Lord of the manor. Gospodarz are landowners that employ serfs to work the land. Only Gospodarz could legally own land and serfs at this time in the Russian Empire. However, there is one significant change that happened: their surname changed from *Jasionowski* in 1839 to *Jesionek* in 1844.

Only nobles can have the *-ski* at the end of their surname. Nobles are the only people who can be landowners at this time. Peasants can obtain state land to farm for their own use, but they do not own it. Therefore, something happened to have them change their name. As I mentioned the term *host* could still mean *gospodarz*. But this situation begs the question, was their land taken away from them by the state? Or did they still own their land, but the state took away their noble status for some reason? It is the only time in hundreds of years that the family did not have the noble *-ski* on the end of their name. I was determined to find out a possible answer. What I found was too coincidental to not be taken seriously as the reason for their change in status...

In 1846, a secret revolutionary society called the “Union of Free Brothers” was established. It had group branches in Grodno and Lida. Lida Castle is where nobles would meet regularly to discuss matters of the state – not far from Grodno. However, this secret society was quite clandestine because they were manufacturing weapons in an underground factory. They planned to overthrow the Russian government via an insurrection. This group wanted democratic reforms for all of Russia.

Unfortunately for the Union of Free Brothers, the Russian government was keen to secret organizations such as this. The Russian government would usually destroy them rather quickly within three to four years. In 1849 the Union of Free Brothers was discovered by the government and the revolutionaries were punished. However, who the Free Brothers were and what their punishment included is still a mystery.

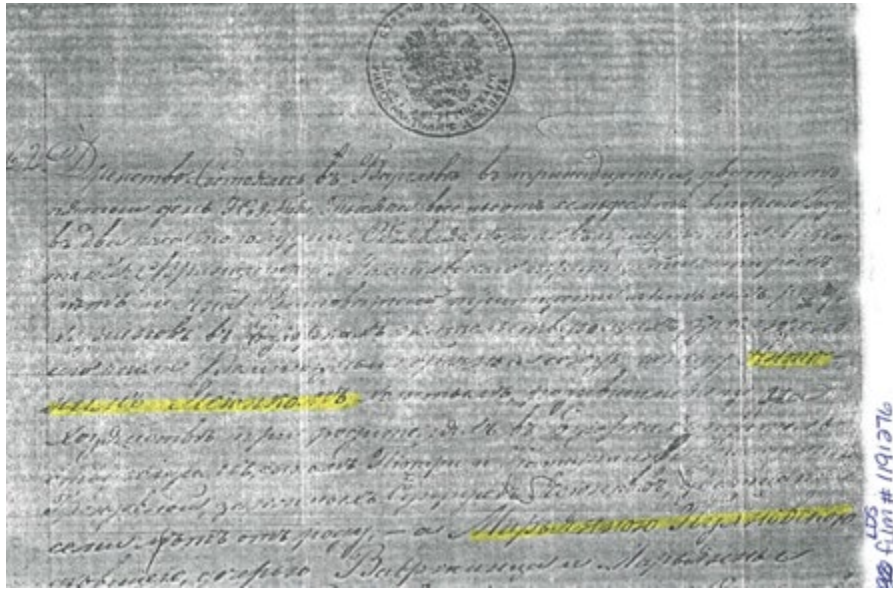
It may not be possible to find out exactly why the Jasionowski surname changed to Jesionek inside six years, but the Union of Free Brothers would be a distinct possibility.



Also, during Antoni's lifetime in 1861, Tzar Alexander II signed the Emancipation Reform to abolish serfdom in all of the Russian Empire. This helped improve the life of the peasants but left the gentry without people to work the land. I can only speculate on how Antoni's life was affected by this. His family owned serfs that were now free according to government law. He would have had to provide employment to the servants of his household and property. Did he have the funds to pay employees, or did he have to work the land himself as a farmer? This reform would have had a big impact on his life.

Then in 1881, the Tzar was assassinated. Aleksander Romanov II was Emperor of the Russian Empire from 1855 to 1881. During his reign, not only did he free the serfs, but he also supported the United States Union in the American Civil War. He even went so far as to have Russian Navy ships on the ready in the port of New York should the Union need them. Tzar Alexander II was assassinated in St. Petersburg on March 13, 1881, when a bomb exploded under his sleigh. It seems doubtful that Antoni would have ever seen the Tzar, but how would he have reacted to knowing the Tzar was assassinated? It is a curious question considering that something happened to his noble status during Tzar Aleksander Romanov's reign.

Antoni got married later in life at the ripe old age of 28. Usually, men got married before the age of 25. Here is Antoni Jesionek's marriage record to Marianna Puchnowski on November 25, 1872, in Barglow Koscielny, Suwalki Guberniya, Russian Empire:



Translation of Russian text into English:

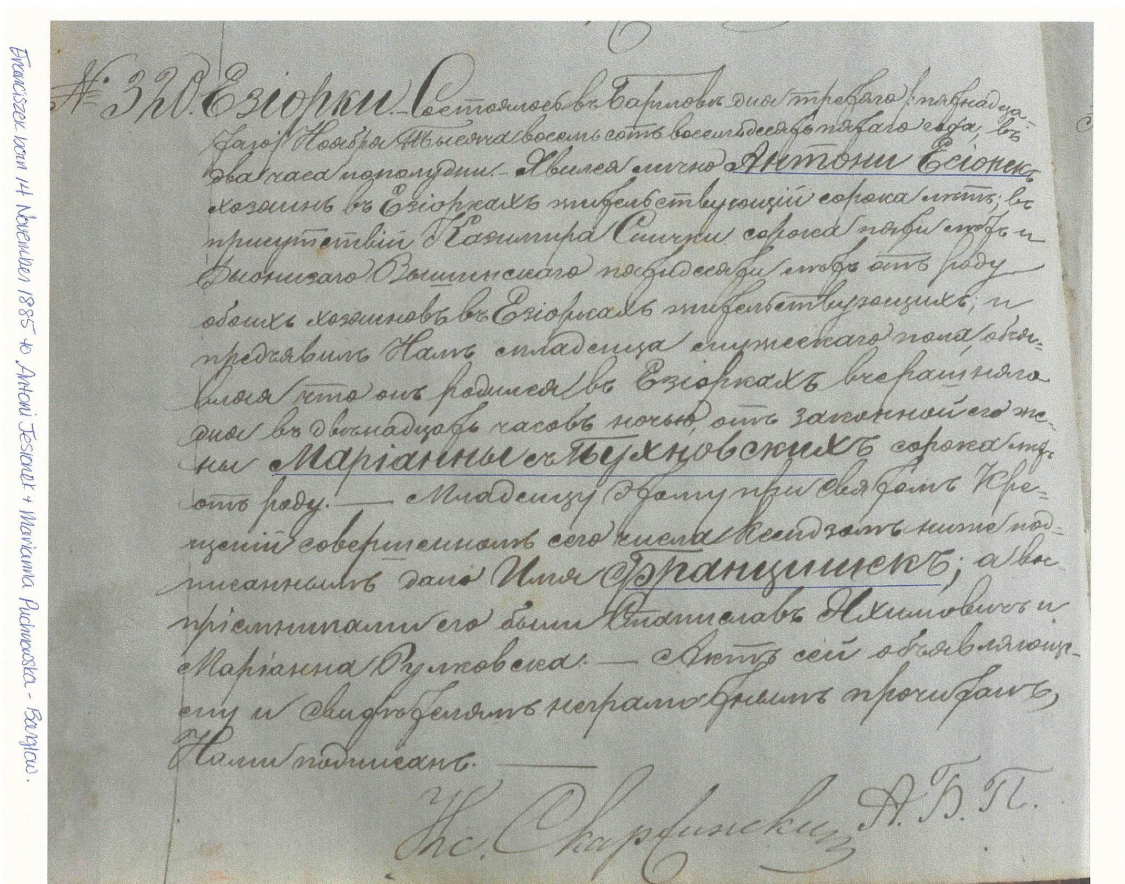
“1872 parish Barglow It happened: Barglow on 25th Nov.1872 at 2:00p.m. Witnesses: Franciszek Maliszewski 24 years old and Jan Wiszowaty, 30 years old, both farmers living in Drenstwo Groom: Antoni Jesionek, 27years old, bachelor, born and living in Jeziorki son of Piotr farmer and Katarzyna nee Gr..., Bride: Marianna Puchnowska, maiden, born in Drenstwo, daughter of Wawrzyniec host and Marianna nee Rutkowska, lived with her parents in Drenstwo, 23 years old. Three bans in Barglow parish without antenuptial agreement. This document was read out to the people present and signed by us (the priest) Priest Tadeusz Skarzynski”

## CHAPTER 6

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### Franciszek Jesionek

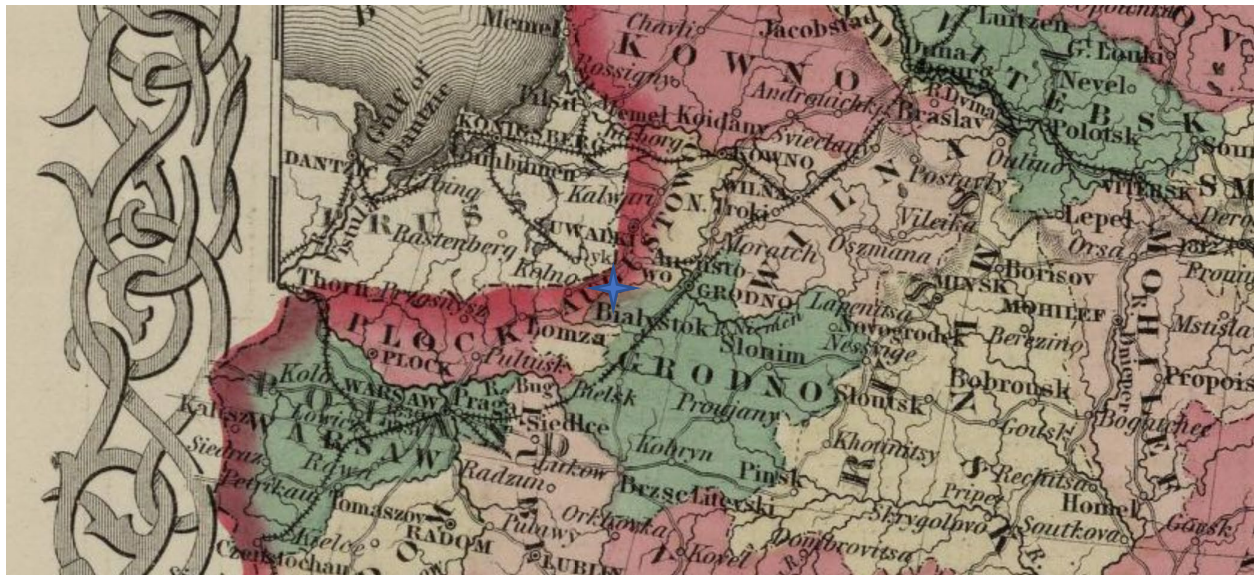
Franciszek Jesionek was born on November 14, 1885, in Jeziorki, Suwalki Guberniya, Russian Empire. His parents were Antoni and Marianna (maiden name Puchnowski). Perhaps, he was named after his Great Uncle Franciszek, who was his grandfather Piotr's brother:



The translation of Russian text into English:

“1885 Parish Barglow Act of Baptism No 320 Jeziorki. It took place in Barglow on the 15 day of November 1885. Came Antoni Jesionek, host from Jeziorki, 40 years of age, and in the presence of Kazimierz Sliczka 45 years of age, and Dionizy Wyszynski, 50 years of age, both hosts from Jesionki, he shows to us a male child born here, yesterday, at midnight of his lawful wedded wife Marianna, maiden name Puchnowska, 40 years of age. During the baptism ceremony held today, this child was given names Franciszek, and the godparents were Stanisław Jachimowicz and Marianna Rulkowska. This document was read out to the people present and signed by us (the priest) Priest Skarzynski”

A map from 1869 of Russia from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by author G. W. Colton depicting the location of Jeziorki in the Suwalki Guberniya in the Russian Empire:





Here is the translation of the Russian text into English:

“1909 Parish Rajgrad It happened: Rajrod on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1909 at 2:00pm  
Witnesses: Franciszek Dobrydnio, 30 years old, and Andrzej Czajka, 40 years old. Both farmers living in Woznawies. Groom: Franciszek Jesionek, 23 years old, bachelor, farmer both and living in Jeziorki son of Antoni and Marianna (maiden name Puchnowska). Bride: Grasylda Czajka, maiden, daughter of Franciszek and Jozefa (maiden name Milewska) lived with her parents in Woznawies, 20 years old.

Three bans in Rajgrad and Barglow Parish. Verbal acceptance of parents. Without antenuptial agreement. This document was read out to the people present and signed by me (the priest) Priest Piwiszko”

Franciszek was born with the last name *Jesionek*, so the family were not nobles at this time. He married a lady from the Podlasia area near his home. She was from Woznawies, which is a village not far from Jeziorki and Barglow Koscielny. It is interesting that just after they got married, Franciszek emigrated to the United States of America in 1910. Then Grasylda came one year later with their infant son, Aleksander.

Life in the Russian Empire had not improved. There had been many uprisings over the years against the government for various reasons such as religious freedom. Many workers would form groups to discuss government affairs and how to improve the political climate to be more favorable to the common people. The works of Karl Marx were read and distributed widely. The people had a hard life with so many government laws to keep them down that they wanted fairness. Their initial aim was to provide a good living for all

citizens where everyone was equal. In 1898, a new political group was established called the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. This political group went on to be known as the Bolshevik Communist Party and then evolved into the United Soviet Socialist Republic party. Franciszek would have been part of the common folk at this time, so he would have heard a lot of these topics being discussed. But after hearing his family tell him of so many years of hardship through the many wars, did he even want to stay and try to make it right? Perhaps he thought that it will never be resolved because the government has always been difficult.

In addition, there was a lot of talk about Belarus becoming its own independent nation at this time. The groundwork had been laid for the formation of a national consciousness such as spotlighting Belarusian artwork, wickerwork, embroidery, and weaving. As well as intellectual offerings such as Belarusian folklore, rituals, and customs that are traditions for the people. Even a series of publications on these topics were circulating to enliven the Belarusian spirit in the people.

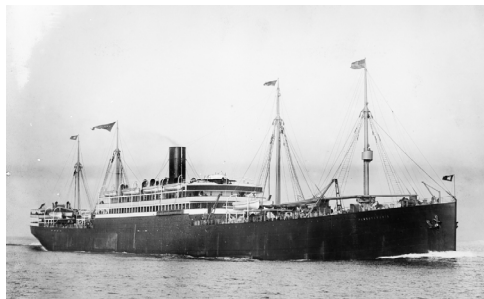
However, did Franciszek even realize that he was Belarusian? It does not look like it by the records we have for him. He thought of himself as a Pole, so the push for Belarusian nationalism would only make him feel like an outsider.

To make matters even more complicated, there was another war looming on the horizon. Furthermore, this one did not look easy to clear up. It would be World War I, and it would start just four years after Franciszek moved to America. Whatever influenced his decision to leave the Russian Empire, the choice to move halfway around the world with his new wife and infant son would change his life forever.

On Francizek Jeschonek's Embarkation record from Hamburg, Germany, he states that he was 24 years old at the time and from Russia. He embarked on his sea voyage to the United States from Hamburg on February 3, 1910.

Here is a photograph of the Steamship *Pennsylvania* that Franciszek took to immigrate to the United States from Hamburg, Germany in 1910. The ship was built in 1896 by Harlan and Wolff in Belfast, Ireland. Originally built as a passenger ship, it provided accommodations for 2741 passengers. The ship was 559 feet in length and could travel at 14 knots.

He arrived in the port of New York on February 18, 1910, and was processed through Ellis Island:



On April 6, 1917, during World War I, the United States transformed the vessel into a military ship equipping it with two 6" 40 caliber guns and two 3" 50 caliber guns for defense. The ship was renamed *Nansemond* and was used to transfer troops and supplies for the war. On one such voyage, the vessel was carrying 16 medical personnel and 148 patients suffering from shell shock when they came upon a storm. The vessel endured 40-foot-high waves in the Atlantic Ocean before arriving back to the United States 5 days late.



On the Ship Passenger Manifest for Franciszek Jesionek, it states he was leaving Hamburg for New York on February 3, 1910, and arriving at the port of New York on February 18, 1910. The fifteen-day voyage on the North Atlantic in winter would not have been pleasant. I don't think he would be lounging on the deck taking in the sea air.

On this record, Franciszek states that his ethnicity is Russian and Polish. He stated that he was married and a laborer. He was able to read and write. He was from Woznawies, Russia. His wife was Grasilda Jeschonek. His final destination was Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he will be staying with his brother Jan Jesionowski. He paid for the ticket to his final destination himself. He had \$10 in cash. He had never been to the United States before and he was in good health. He had never been to prison and was not an anarchist.

It is truly astonishing the questions immigrants were asked to come to the United States. The government wanted to be sure they were not getting any rebels or terrorists, who would cause problems in society. Obviously, he passed all the questions, and was free to enter the country to make his new life in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Declaration of Intentions was the first step in the process to becoming a United States citizen. It could be filed at a local government court office. The form was filled out in three copies: one for the Federal government, one for the local government office, and one copy for the citizen candidate. All three copies had the court's seal on them for verification of authenticity.

Frank Jesionowski's Declaration of Intention to become a United States citizen December 29, 1916. In this document, Frank states that he is a laborer and that he is 5' tall weighing 130 pounds. He said he was born on October 20, 1886, in Russia Poland. The term *Russia Poland* was the name for Belarus. He lived at 817 Front Street in Grand Rapids. He came to the United States from Hamburg, Germany, on the vessel President Lincoln. He arrived at the port of New York on March 14, 1910.

On this document, we see that Franciszek changed his name from *Franciszek Jesionek/Jeschonek* in the old country to *Frank Jesionowski* when he emigrated to the United States. This was his way of Americanizing his name.

Importantly, he "renounced forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to Nicholas II Emperor of all the Russians," of whom he was now a subject. He signed this document on December 29, 1916, at the Clerk of Superior Court in Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States.

This must have been a pivotal moment for Frank. He had decided to move halfway around the world to a new land called the United States, changed his first and last name to reflect the new culture of America, and renounced Tzar Nicholas II of Russia. There was no turning back now.

No. 2037

FOIA 2008  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
NATURALIZATION SERVICE

TRIPPLICATE  
(To be given to the court with  
the Declaration)

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## DECLARATION OF INTENTION

~~is~~ Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof.

STATE OF MICHIGAN }  
COUNTY OF KENT } ss: In the SUPERIOR Court  
of GRAND RAPIDS

I, Frank Jesionowski, aged 30 years,  
occupation Laborer do declare on oath that my personal  
description is: Color white, complexion fair, height 5 feet 0 inches,  
weight 130 pounds, color of hair Brown, color of eyes Blue  
other visible distinctive marks none

I was born in Suwalki, Russia Poland  
on the 20 day of October, anno Domini 1886; I now reside  
at 817 Front St GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN  
(Give number, street, city or town, and State.)

I emigrated to the United States of America from Hamburg Germany  
on the vessel President Lincoln; my last  
(If the alien arrived otherwise than by vessel, the character of conveyance or name of transportation company should be given.)  
foreign residence was Suwalki, Russia Poland; I am un married; the name  
of my wife is Gracilda; she was born at Russia Poland  
and now resides at 817 Front St Grand Rapids Mich

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign  
prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to Nicholas II  
Emperor of all the Russias, of whom I am now a subject;

I arrived at the port of New York, in the  
State of New York, on or about the 14 day  
of March, anno Domini 1910; I am not an anarchist; I am not a  
polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith  
to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein:

SO HELP ME GOD.

Frank Jesionowski  
(Original signature of declarant.)



Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of  
said Court this 24 day of Dec, anno Domini 1910

Alex E. Kulkoski  
Clerk of the SUPERIOR Court.

By J.M. Van der Stig Deputy Clerk.

Here on Frank Jesionowski's Petition for Naturalization in the United States of America on May 8, 1922, he said he was a tailor by trade. I imagine Frank was very good at sewing quality garments. He lived at 411 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Grand Rapids. He states that his wife is Gracilda and that they have four children: Alexander born April 8, 1910; Frank Jr. born February 18, 1912; John born October 20, 1915; and Charles born March 22, 1919.

It is interesting to note that he says in this document that he was born in 1886. However, when I got his baptismal record from Russia, it states that he was born in 1885. Also, this record states that my grandfather, Alexander, was born in Poland. There was no country of Poland in 1910, so actually Alexander was born in Russia.

Also, on this document, Frank states that he is "not a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government or a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposed to organized government. I am not a polygamist or a believer in the practice of polygamy. I am attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and it is my intention to become a citizen of the United States and to renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to The Republic of Poland of whom at this time I am a subject and it is my intention to reside permanently in the United States."

Hence, he changed his country from the Russian Empire in 1916 on his Declaration of Intention to the Republic of Poland in 1922 on his Petition for Naturalization. Hence reflecting the change in the political borders during this time.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
NATURALIZATION SERVICE

148

ORIGINAL

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION

No. 2124

To the Honorable the SUPERIOR Court of GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN in and for the County of GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

The position of Frank Jesionowski

First. My place of residence is 411 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Easton (Give number, street, city or town, and State.)

Second. My occupation is Taxider

Third. I was born on the 22 day of October anno Domini 1886, at Suwalki, Poland

Fourth. I emigrated to the United States from Hamburg, Germany on or about the 1<sup>st</sup> day of March anno Domini 1912, and arrived in the United States, at the port of New York on the 15 day of March anno Domini 1912, on the vessel unknown

Fifth. I declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States on the 19 day of March anno Domini 1916 at Grand Rapids, Michigan in the Court of Grand Rapids

Sixth. I am married. My wife's name is Gracilda and she was born on the 19 day of March anno Domini 1889 at Przemysl, Poland and now resides at 411 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Easton, Michigan

I have three children, and the name, date, and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children is as follows:

Joseph born April 8-1910 born in Poland

Joseph Jr. born Feb 18-1912 at Grand Rapids, Mich

Charles born Mar 22-1919 at Grand Rapids, Mich

all residing at Grand Rapids, Mich

Seventh. I am not a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government or a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposed to organized government. I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy. I am attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and it is my intention to become a citizen of the United States and to renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to the Republic of Poland of whom of this time I am a subject, and to my intention to reside permanently in the United States.

Eighth. I am able to speak the English language.

Ninth. I have resided continuously in the United States of America for the term of five years at least immediately preceding the date of this petition, to wit, since the

day of March anno Domini 1910, and in the State of MICHIGAN consequently next preceding the date of this petition, since the 17 day of March anno Domini 1910, being a residence within this State of at least one year next preceding the date of this petition.

Tenth. I have not heretofore made petition for citizenship to any court. (If made previous to admission to the Court of said petition was denied by the said Court for the following reasons and causes, to wit: \_\_\_\_\_ and the cause of such denial has since been removed or removed

attached hereto and made a part of this petition are my declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States and the certificate from the Department of Labor, together with my affidavit and the affidavits of the two subscribing witnesses thereto, required by law. Wherefore your petitioner prays that he may be admitted a citizen of the United States of America.

Declaration of Intention No. 2037 and Certificate of Arrival from Department of Labor filed this 24 day of May, 1922

Here to CLASS or COURT.—If petitioner arrived in the United States on or before June 30, 1908, strike out the words reading "and Certificate of Arrival from Department of Labor."

**AFFIDAVITS OF PETITIONER AND WITNESSES**

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
COUNTY OF KENT

The aforesaid petitioner being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is the petitioner in the above-entitled proceedings; that he has read the foregoing petition and knows the contents thereof; that the said petition is signed with his full, true name; that the name is true of his own knowledge, except as to matters therein stated to be alleged upon information and belief, and that as to those matters he believes it to be true.

Frank Jesionowski  
Deputy Clerk  
residing at 835 Sons Ave

Louis Spaulomb  
occupation Clothier  
residing at 301 Casswell St

Louis Chombracher  
occupation Clothier  
residing at 301 Casswell St

each being separately, duly and respectively sworn, deposes and says that he is a citizen of the United States of America; that he has personally known \_\_\_\_\_ the petitioner above mentioned, to have resided in the United States continuously immediately preceding the date of filing his petition, since the 15 day of May anno Domini 1915, and in the State in which the above-entitled petition is made continuously since the 15 day of May anno Domini 1915, and that he has personal knowledge that the said petitioner is a person of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and that the petitioner is in every way qualified, in his opinion, to be admitted a citizen of the United States.

Frank S. Jankowski  
(Citizen of witness)

Louis Chombracher  
(Citizen of witness)

Subscribed and sworn to before me by the above-named petitioner and witnesses in the office of the Clerk of said Court, this 24 day of May anno Domini 22

Joseph W. Hudson Clerk

Frank Jesionowski listed in the Grand Rapids City Directory 1919 living at 817 Front St in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was a tailor by occupation. In 1920, he is in the city directory, but he had moved to 411 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was still a tailor.

Frank is consistent in that he states on his U.S. Department of Labor Naturalization Certificate of Arrival that he arrived into the Port of New York in the United States in March 1910. However, he did not remember the name of the vessel he arrived on when filling out this form on April 18, 1922. This happened a lot for immigrants. There is so much going on in their lives that they are adapting to and learning that the name of the boat they arrived on is not important to remember for them. What was important was learning English and earning a living to support his family.

Frank Jesionowski officially became a citizen of the United States of America on September 18, 1922. On his Oath of Allegiance, Frank states, "I hereby declare, an oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to The Republic of Poland of whom I have heretofore been a subject; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and that I will bear the truth faith and allegiance to the same." He signed his name at the government court office:

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF

Filed \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_

TO BE ADMITTED A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to The Republic the \_\_\_\_\_ of Poland of whom I have heretofore been a subject; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

Frank Jasnowski

Subscribed and sworn to before me, in open Court, this 18 day of Sept, A. D. 1921

Jacob M. Van der Stal, Clerk.

NOTE—In renunciation of title of nobility, add the following to the oath of allegiance before it is executed: "I further renounce the title of (give title), an order of nobility, which I have heretofore held."

ORDER OF COURT ADMITTING PETITIONER

Upon consideration of the petition of Frank Jasnowski, and affidavits in support thereof, and further testimony taken in open Court, it is ordered that the said petitioner, who has taken the oath required by law, be, and hereby is, admitted to become a citizen of the United States of America, this 18 day of Sept, A. D. 1921.

(It is further ordered, upon consideration of the petition of the said \_\_\_\_\_, that his name be, and hereby is, changed to \_\_\_\_\_, under authority of the provisions of section 6 of the act approved June 29, 1906 (34 Stat. L., pt. 1, p. 596), as amended by the act approved March 4, 1913, entitled "An act to create a Department of Labor.")

By the Court:

Georgiadis D. Vanden

ORDER OF COURT DENYING PETITION

On Frank's Social Security Application dated November 27, 1936, he states that he lived at 754 Lyon Street in Grand Rapids. He says he worked for the Hub Clothing Company on Monroe Avenue. This must be where he was a tailor. He was sewing garments for a clothing company. Unfortunately, the Hub Clothing Company is not in existence any longer. He states that his parents were Anthony Jesionowski and Mary Puchnowski.

On Grace Jesionowski's Social Security Application dated June 9, 1972, she states that she was born on February 20, 1889, in Poland. Her maiden's name was Czajkowski and her parents were Frank Czajkowski and Josephine Milewski. She was 83 years old at the time she filled out the form. Probably she filled out the form to get Social Security benefits after Frank had died in 1961.

On the 1940 United States Census Record for Frank Jesionowski and his wife, Grace, and son, Kasimier, were living at 754 Lyon Street in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He stated that he was a tailor for his occupation. The name Kasimier is Charles in English. Charles was the youngest of their four sons. The other three were adults by this time in 1940.



Here is the Death Certificate for Frank Jesionowski September 20, 1961. He died in Grand Rapids, Michigan:

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH				MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH Vital Records Service		Local File No. 1632	
BIRTH No.				49271			
1. PLACE OF BIRTH a. COUNTY Kent		2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived, if different, residence before address) a. STATE Michigan		b. COUNTY Kent			
3. CITY (or outside corporate limits, write RURAL, and give township) Grand Rapids		4. LENGTH OF STAY (in days above) 51 yrs		5. TOWNSHIP, CITY OR VILLAGE Grand Rapids		6. Is decedent within limits of a city or incorporated village? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
7. FULL NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION St. Mary's Hospital		8. STREET ADDRESS 876 Diamond Ave. N.E.					
9. NAME OF DECEASED (Type in Print) Frank Jesionowski		10. SEX Male		11. COLOR OF HAIR White		12. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (check one) Married	
13. DATE OF DEATH 9/20/61		14. DATE OF BIRTH Oct. 20 1887		15. AGE (in years last birthday) 74		16. Add (in years last birthday) 17. under 1 year 18. 1 to 5 years 19. 6 to 10 years 20. 11 to 15 years 21. 16 to 20 years 22. 21 to 25 years 23. 26 to 30 years 24. 31 to 35 years 25. 36 to 40 years 26. 41 to 45 years 27. 46 to 50 years 28. 51 to 55 years 29. 56 to 60 years 30. 61 to 65 years 31. 66 to 70 years 32. 71 to 75 years 33. 76 to 80 years 34. 81 to 85 years 35. 86 to 90 years 36. 91 to 95 years 37. 96 to 100 years 38. 100 years and over	
39. VISUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during some of working life, even if retired) Tailor		40. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY Dept. Store		41. BIRTHPLACE (Place or foreign country) Poland Europe		42. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? U.S.A.	
43. FATHER'S NAME Unknown		44. MOTHER'S MARRIED NAME Unknown		45. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE OF DECEASED Grace			
46. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (Yes, no, or unknown) (If yes, give war or dates of service) NO NONE		47. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. 348-09-9350A		48. INFORMANT'S NAME Mrs. Grace Jesionowski		49. ADDRESS Grand Rapids	
50. CAUSE OF DEATH (Enter only one cause per line for 1a), 1b), and 1c)		51. MEDICAL CERTIFICATION				52. (General Section - Cause and Death)	
1a. DISEASE OR CONDITION DIRECTLY LEADING TO DEATH Cerebral Hemorrhage		1b. ANTECEDENT CAUSES Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease				1c. 10 Days	
* This does not mean the mode of dying, such as heart failure, asthma, etc. It means the disease, injury or complication which caused death.		Marked conditions, if any, giving rise to: (a) starting the underlying cause last. (b) due to: (c) OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS Conditions contributing to the death but not related to the disease or condition causing death.				10 years	
14a. DATE OF OPERATION None		14b. MAJOR FINDINGS OF OPERATION				53. AUTOPSY? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
21a. ACCIDENT SUICIDE HOMICIDE No		21b. PLACE OF INJURY (i.e., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office, store, etc.)		21c. CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWNSHIP (COUNTY) (STATE)			
21d. TIME (month) (day) (year) (hour) (min) None		21e. INJURY OCCURRED While at Work <input type="checkbox"/> Not While at Work <input type="checkbox"/>		21f. HOW DID INJURY OCCUR?			
22. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from October 11 1960, to Sept. 20 1961, that I last saw the deceased alive on Sept. 20 1961, and that death occurred at 11 P. M. from the causes and on the date stated above.							
23. SIGNATURE <i>Edward J. Bales</i>		23a. ADDRESS 853 Lake Dr. S.E.		23b. DATE SIGNED 9/21/61			
24a. USUAL CREMATION Burial		24b. DATE 9-29-1961		24c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY Holy Cross Cem.		24d. LOCATION (City, village, town, or county) Grand Rapids Kent Co.	
25. DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG. 9-21-61		26. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <i>R. Stanton Kipaturo</i>		27. VITAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE <i>Edward J. Bales</i>		28. ADDRESS Grand Rapids	

The newspaper obituary for Frank Jesionowski in Grand Rapids Press September 21, 1961, states that he was 74 years old when he died in 1961. At this time, he lived at 874 Diamond Avenue in Grand Rapids. He died of a "lingering illness." He was survived by his wife, Grace, and his four sons: Alex, Frank, John, and Charles. Also, he had fourteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. In addition, it mentioned that his brother, Felix, was living in Grand Rapids.



The translation of Russian text into English:

“1910 Parish Rajgrad Act of Baptism No 76 Woznawies. It took place in Rajgrad on the 17 day of April 1910. Came Franciszek Jesionek, host from Woznawies, 24 years of age, and in the presence of Antoni Kalicki 24 years of age, and Franciszek Grigkowski, 42 years of age, both hosts from Woznawies. He shows us a male child born in Woznawies on 8 day of April at 6am of his lawful wedded wife Gracylda (maiden name Czajka) 21 years of age. During the baptism ceremony held today, this child was given the name Aleksander. The godparents were Piotr Czajka and Aleksandra Milewska.

This document was read out to the people present and signed by me (the priest). Priest Tyszka”

In this map from 1909 of Russia from the David Rumsey Map Collection at Stanford by authors Eduard Iulevic Petri and Iu. M. Shokalskago depicting the location of Woznawies in the Suwalki Guberniya in the Russian Empire:



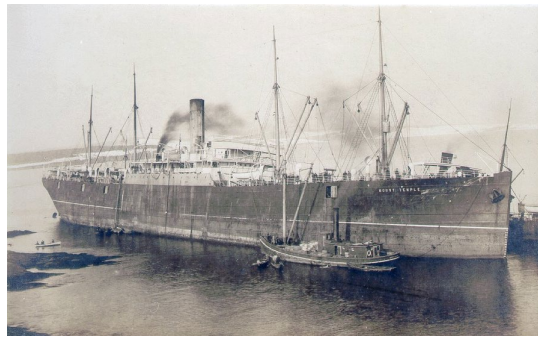
Aleksander was brought to the United States by his mother, Grasylda, when he was an infant in 1911. Grasylda and little Aleksander came to America after Franciszek found a job in Grand Rapids, Michigan as a Tailor. Grasylda was quite brave to come to America on a ship with a little baby!

On the ship passenger manifest, it states Alexander was born in Woznawies, Russia. This was strange because Alexander's census records said he was born in Poland. I decided the best way to solve it was to locate Alexander's birth record. Determined to find an answer, I started a search that would take me years of work meticulously going through many reels of microfilm tapes from the Latter-Day Saints genealogy library. The records were in the Russian language, and I had no idea where Woznawies was located. I learned Russian to do this by using Russian language CDs and watching the Russian TV news service Вести. The village of Woznawies was undoubtedly small and, therefore, not an easy place to locate. Many small villages such as this were not mentioned in the titles of the reels, hence, one must go through each one to find when Woznawies was mentioned. The people from smaller villages would attend a church in one centrally located town.

After I had accepted that I would probably never find it, I finally did. Indeed, it was a triumph when I finally saw my grandfather's 1910 birth record for the first time! It was in handwritten Russian and clearly stated Aleksander Jesionek was born on April 8, 1910, in Woznawies, Russia. His parents were Franciszek and Grasylda.

Aleksander came via ship to Canada and then onto the United States. Here is the Ship Passenger Manifest for Alexander Jesionowski on the *SS Mount Temple* from Antwerp, Belgium to Quebec, Canada. Aleksander was traveling with his mother Grasylda and they arrived in Quebec on May 18, 1911. It states that Aleksander was 9 months old at the time of the voyage and that he was born in Russia. His race is listed as Polish.

Here is a photograph of the Steamship *Mount Temple* that Aleksander and his mother, Grasylda, immigrated to the United States onboard. It was built in 1901 by Armstrong Whitworth and Company. It weighed 11 tons and was 485 feet in length. It would carry cargo as well as passengers from Antwerp, Belgium, to Quebec, Canada:



One year later on the night of April 3, 1912, the *SS Mount Temple* received a distress signal from the *Titanic*, which was sinking after hitting an iceberg. Captain Moore, who had been asleep, was awakened to the news. He instructed the crew to turn the ship around to aid the crew and passengers onboard the sinking *Titanic*. The *SS Mount Temple* was traveling at maximum speed of 11 knots. They tried to make the aging vessel go faster, but this was the top speed they could get. They got their 20 lifeboats uncovered and ready to put in the water for *Titanic* passengers.

Unfortunately, the ship encountered a field of pack ice that they had to slowly navigate through. It was slow going. They finally made it to the *Titanic's* reported position at 4:30am, but no wreckage or passengers were located. Captain Moore was saddened to not have been able to rescue people onboard the *Titanic*.

On the 1930 census record, Alexander Jesionowski as the eldest child of Frank Jesionowski. His other three brothers are listed as well. They must have had a busy house with four boys!

Alexander P. Jesionowski was 23 years old when he married Estelle Rose Zielinski on April 21, 1934, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was working as a Purchasing Agent at the time. He lived at 754 Lyon Street. His father was Frank Jesionowski, and his mother was Grace Czajkowski. Estelle was 19 years old when she married Alex. She worked in a factory and lived at 353 Ney Ave. Her parents were Albert Zielinski and Catherine Szczepanski.

I remember my grandmother being one of the most beautiful women I have ever known. She had an enchanting face, and her countenance was always so happy. Also, she had a great sense of humor that I still miss. I have never forgotten one of her anecdotes she would always say was *Better Days Ahead*. It was her way of always looking forward to a bright future no matter how bleak today may appear. Yes, my grandfather Alex did well in marrying the lovely Estelle Rose Zielinski.

No. 64

# Marriage License

1934

Kent County, Michigan 3-30

To any person legally authorized to solemnize marriage,

## Greeting:

Marriage May Be Solemnized Between

Mr. Alexander P. Jesionowski and M. Estelle R. Zielinski  
affidavit having been filed in this office, as provided by Public Act No. 128, Laws of 1887, as amended, by which it appears that said

Alexander P. Jesionowski is 23 years of age, color is white, residence is 754 Lyon St. NE G.R., and birthplace was Poland, occupation is purchasing Agt., father's name Frank Jesionowski, and mother's maiden name was Grace Czajkowaka  
has been previously married no time is; and that said Estelle R. Zielinski is 19 years of age, color is white, residence is 353 Hoy Av. SE G.R., and birthplace was Grand Rapids, occupation is factory work, father's name Albert Zielinski, and mother's maiden name was Catherine Szozeponski  
and who has been previously married no time is, and whose maiden name was \_\_\_\_\_, and whose \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's or Guardian's consent, in case she has not attained the age of eighteen years, has been filed in my office.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto attached my hand and the

seal of Kent County, Michigan, this 31 day of March, A. D. 1934

L. S.

Louis Newman  
County Clerk  
J. Asman  
deputy clerk

## Certificate of Marriage

Between Mr. Alexander P. Jesionowski and M. Estelle R. Zielinski

I hereby certify that, in accordance with the above license, the persons herein mentioned were joined in marriage by me, at Grand Rapids, County of Kent, Michigan, on the 21st day of April, A. D. 1934 in the presence

of John Jesionowski, of Grand Rapids, Mich.,  
and Anna Nowicki, of Grand Rapids, Mich.,  
as witnesses. Rev. Joseph Karas  
Name of Magistrate or Clergyman.

Pastor of Sacred Heart Church  
Official Title

This copy is to be retained by the County Clerk until the original is returned; then it is to be completed by endorsement and forwarded on the first of the following month to the Michigan Department of Health.





On Alex Peter Jesionowski's Social Security Application dated November 25, 1936, he states that he lived at 355 Hastings in Grand Rapids. He worked for the Tisch-Hine Company at 237 Pearl Street. He says his birthday is April 8, 1910, which is consistent with his baptismal record.

Alexander was the one who Americanized the surname from *Jesionowski* to *Jason* in the 1950s. He used the original Belarusian pronunciation of the surname *Yasen* or *Jason* in English. As mentioned prior, the name *Yasen* means ash tree, a hard wood tree that grows in marshlands. Despite the many different ways the surname was spelled in records through the years, all of them have derived from original surname of *Yasenov*.

On the 1940 Census of the United States, Alex P. Jesionowski states that he is the head of household with Estelle R. as his wife and two sons, Robert J. and Richard J. Richard was to become my father. They lived at 355 Hastings Street at the time.

Here is a photograph of Alexander and three of his children from the 1940s. The children's names are from left to right: Robert, Thomas, and Richard. My father was Richard, who was smiling so brightly in his sweater. It looks like a beautiful early Autumn Day:



On Alexander Peter Jesionowski's United States Draft Card dated 1940, he states that he is married to Estelle and live at 355 Hastings Street in Grand Rapids. He was working as an advertising set up man for the Wholesale Grocery Company on Buchanan Street.

SERIAL NUMBER <b>2069</b>		1. NAME (Print) <b>ALEX PETER JESIONOWSKI</b>			ORDER NUMBER <b>596</b>	
2. ADDRESS (Print) <b>355 HASTINGS ST. E Grand Rapids Kent Mich</b> <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>						
3. TELEPHONE <b>None</b>		4. AGE IN YEARS <b>30</b>		5. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>Poland</b>		6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP <b>U.S.A.</b>
DATE OF BIRTH <b>April 8 1910</b> <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) (State or country)</small>						
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS <b>Mrs Estelle Rose Jesionowski</b>					8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON <b>wife</b>	
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON <b>355 Hastings St. E. Grand Rapids Kent Mich</b> <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>						
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME <b>Grand Rapids Wholesale Grocery Co.</b>						
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS <b>Buchanan St. S.W. Grand Rapids Kent Mich</b> <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>						
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.						
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. Form 1		(over)		16-17105		<b>Alex Jesionowski</b> <small>(Registrant's signature)</small>

I remember my grandfather being very sick and bedridden. I was hesitant to go in his room to visit because I was a child. But then, after a few minutes, I was curious to know more about him! However, he did not speak much as he was very weak. On the following page is Alex P. Jason's Death Certificate. He died on May 28, 1990, of digestive issues leading to sepsis. He died at home at 1104 Short Street in Grand Rapids.

LF \_\_\_\_\_  
CF 901764



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

028833





STATE FILE NUMBER

No 0272609

1 DECEDENT'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) <b>Alex P. Jason</b>				2 SEX <b>MALE</b>	3 DATE OF DEATH (Month, Day, Year) <b>MAY 23, 1990</b>
4a AGE - Last Birthday (Years) <b>80</b>	4b UNDER 1 YEAR MONTHS: _____ DAYS: _____	4c UNDER 1 DAY HOURS: _____ MINUTES: _____	5 DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) <b>April 8, 1910</b>	6 COUNTY OF DEATH <b>Kent</b>	
7a LOCATION OF DEATH (Enter place officially pronounced dead in 7a, 7b, 7c.) HOSPITAL OR OTHER INSTITUTION - Name (If not in either, give street and number) <b>1104 Short N.E.</b>			7b IF HOSP OR INST Inpatient. Op Emer Room DOA (Specify)	7c CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWNSHIP OF DEATH <b>Grand Rapids</b>	
8 SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER <b>368-09-0780</b>		9a USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life. Do not use retired) <b>Advertising Set Up Man</b>		9b KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY <b>Grocery</b>	
10a CURRENT RESIDENCE - STATE <b>Mich.</b>	10b COUNTY <b>Kent</b>	10c LOCALITY (Check one box and specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INSIDE CITY OR VILLAGE OF <input type="checkbox"/> TWP OF <b>Grand Rapids</b>		10d STREET AND NUMBER <b>1104 Short N.E.</b>	
10e ZIP CODE <b>49503</b>	11 BIRTHPLACE (City and State or Foreign Country) <b>Poland</b>	12 MARITAL STATUS - Married, Never Married, Widowed, Divorced (Specify) <b>Married</b>	13 SURVIVING SPOUSE (If wife, give name before first married) <b>Estelle R. Zielinski</b>	14 WAS DECEDENT EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (Specify Yes or No) <b>NO</b>	
15 ANCESTRY - Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Chicano, other Hispanic, Afro-American, Arab, English, French, Finnish, etc. (Specify below) <b>Polish</b>		16 RACE - American Indian, Black, White, etc. If Asian, give nationality, e.g. Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, etc. (Specify below) <b>White</b>		17 DECEDENT'S EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed) Elementary/Secondary (0-12) <b>12</b> College (1-4 or 5+)	
18 FATHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Last) <b>Frank Jesionowski</b>			19 MOTHER'S NAME (First, Middle, Surname before first married) <b>Grace Czajkowski</b>		
20a INFORMANT'S NAME (Type, Print) <b>Estelle Jason</b>		20b MAILING ADDRESS (Street and Number or Rural Route Number, City or Village, State, ZIP Code) <b>1104 Short N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503</b>			
21 METHOD OF DISPOSITION - Burial, Cremation, Removal, Donation, Other (specify) <b>Burial</b>		22a PLACE OF DISPOSITION (Name of Cemetery, Crematory, or other place) <b>Holy Cross Cemetery</b>	22b LOCATION - City or Village, State <b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>		
23 SIGNATURE OF FUNERAL SERVICE LICENSEE <i>[Signature]</i>		24 LICENSE NUMBER (of Licensee) <b>4419</b>	25 NAME AND ADDRESS OF FACILITY <b>Arsulowicz Brothers Mortuaries, Inc. 585 Stocking Ave. NW., Grand Rapids, MI 49504</b>		
26 PART I Enter the diseases, injuries or complications that caused the death. Do NOT enter the mode of dying, such as cardiac or respiratory arrest, stroke or heart failure. List only one cause on each line. IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) a <b>SEPTICEMIA - OSSEOUS METASTASIS</b> DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF) b <b>DEGENERATIVE VASCLES</b> DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF) c <b>DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF)</b> d <b>DUE TO (OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF)</b> Sequentially list conditions, IF ANY, leading to immediate cause. Enter UNDERLYING CAUSE (Disease or injury that initiated events resulting in death) LAST				Approximate Interval Between Onset and Death <b>Hours</b> <b>Days</b>	
PART II Other significant conditions contributing to death but not resulting in the underlying cause given in Part I <b>Osseous Metastatic Disease</b>				27a WAS AN AUTOPSY PERFORMED? (Yes or No) <b>NO</b>	27b WERE AUTOPSY FINDINGS AVAILABLE PRIOR TO COMPLETION OF CAUSE OF DEATH? (Yes or No) <b>NO</b>
28 ACTUAL PLACE OF DEATH (Home, Nursing Home, Hospital, Ambulance) (Specify) <b>Home</b>		29 WAS CASE REFERRED TO MEDICAL EXAMINER? (Specify Yes or No) <b>YES</b>		31a (Check one only) <input type="checkbox"/> The case reviewed and determined not to be a medical examiner's case. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On the basis of examination and investigation, in my opinion death occurred at the time, date and place and due to the cause(s) and manner stated.	
CERTIFYING PHYSICIAN	30a To the best of my knowledge, death occurred at the time, date and place and due to the cause(s) stated. (Signature and Title) <b>Dr. Ramon B. Lang</b>		30b DATE SIGNED (Mo., Day, Yr.) <b>MAY 23 1990</b>		30c TIME OF DEATH <b>11:45 AM</b>
	30d NAME OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN IF OTHER THAN CERTIFIER (Type or Print) <b>Dr. Ramon B. Lang</b>		31b DATE SIGNED (Mo., Day, Yr.) <b>MAY 23 1990</b>		
	31d PRONOUNCED DEAD (Mo., Day, Yr.) <b>ON MAY 23, 1990</b>		31e TIME OF DEATH <b>11:45 AM</b>		
32a NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO COMPLETED CAUSE OF DEATH (ITEM 26) (Type or Print) <b>RAMON B. LANG, M.D., 21 MICHIGAN N.E., GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503</b>				32b LICENSE NUMBER <b>19915</b>	
33a ACC SURVIVE, NOM, NATURAL OR PENDING INVEST. (Specify) <b>MURDER</b>		33b DATE OF INJURY (Mo., Day, Yr.) <b>MAY 23, 1990</b>	33c TIME OF INJURY <b>11:45 AM</b>	33d DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED <b>CAUSED BY STONE</b>	
33e INJURY AT WORK (Specify Yes or No) <b>NO</b>		33f PLACE OF INJURY - At home, farm, street, factory, office building, etc. (Specify) <b>Home</b>		33g LOCATION - Street or RFD No. City, Village or Twp <b>1104 SHORT ST NE GRAND RAPIDS</b>	
34a REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <i>[Signature]</i>				34b DATE FILED (Month, Day, Year) <b>MAY 25 1990</b>	

# Richard Jesionowski

Here is the birth Record for Richard James Jesionowski born December 16, 1939, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His parents were Alexander Peter Jesionowski and Estelle Rose (maiden name Zielinski):

STATE OF MICHIGAN							
LF. <u>2701</u>				STATE OF MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH		121 - <u>141-0059567</u>	
CF. _____				CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH		State File Number	
1. CHILD'S NAME (First, Middle, Last, Suffix) Richard James Jesionowski							
2. SEX Male	3a. PLURALITY - Single, Twin, Triplet, etc. (Specify) Single	3b. IF NOT SINGLE BIRTH - First, Second, Third, etc. (Specify)	4a. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) December 16, 1939	4b. TIME OF BIRTH 7:06 am			
5a. CHILD'S BIRTHPLACE (Hospital or Address if other) St. Mary's Hospital, Grand Rapids					5b. COUNTY Kent		
6a. MOTHER'S CURRENT LEGAL NAME (First, Middle, Last) Not Recorded			6b. MOTHER'S FULL NAME BEFORE FIRST MARRIED (First, Middle, Last) Estelle Rose Zielinski				
7a. STATE OF BIRTH - Name Country if not USA Grand Rapids, Mich.	7b. DATE OF BIRTH OR AGE 24	7c. COUNTY OF RESIDENCE Kent		7g. STATE OF RESIDENCE Michigan			
8a. FATHER'S CURRENT LEGAL NAME (First, Middle, Last) Alexander Peter Jesionowski			8b. STATE OF BIRTH - Name Country if not USA Poland	8c. DATE OF BIRTH OR AGE 29			
9a. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE \\S\\ J.L. Lavan				9b. DATE FILED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR - (Month, Day, Year) December 20, 1939			
<p>I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct representation of the birth facts on file with the State of Michigan, issued from the Michigan Centralized Birth Certification System. The person named on this record is now <b>DECEASED</b>.</p>							
Certified by: <i>Glenn Copeland</i> Glenn Copeland State Registrar			Date Issued: <b>July 25, 2016</b> AFS: 3144541				
		 <span style="font-size: 24pt; color: red;">20412354</span>				<small>DCH-0950(6/12) Authority: MCL 333.2892</small>	
VOID WITHOUT WATERMARK OR IF ALTERED OR ERASED							

When my father was born, the family surname was still *Jesionowski*. My grandfather, Alex, Americanized the name to *Jason* later in the 1950s.

It is so interesting that even though I never knew my father went to Davenport for a degree in Business Administration, I happened to also go to the same university and got my bachelor's degree in the same major he was studying! On his school transcript from Davenport Institute dated September 5, 1961, it states he was studying for a degree in Business Administration. He took accounting, sales, economics, and business classes.

**OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT of CREDITS**  
**DAVENPORT INSTITUTE**  
 Grand Rapids, Michigan

September 5, 1961

Richard J. Jason entered Davenport Institute  
 as a student in Business Administration on March 10, 1958 from  
 Catholic Central High School.

He attended until March, 1960. His record is as follows:

SUBJECT	TERM HOURS	GRADE	SUBJECT	TERM HOURS	GRADE
Accounting I	4	B			
English I	4	B-			
Business Math I	4	B-			
Business Law I	4	B			
Business Law II	4	B+			
English II	4	C			
Accounting II	4	B-			
Psychology I	4	B			
Economics I	4	B-			
Sales	4	B-			
Credit and Collections	4	B-			
General Taxation	4	B-			
Word Study	4	B			
Accounting III	4	C+			
Economics II	4	B			
Comptometry	4	B			
Income Tax I	4	C-			
Business Organization	4	C+			
Business Math II	4	C-			
Income Tax II	4	C-			
Psychology II	4	C-			

Marks: A, 95-100; B, 90-94; C, 85-89; D, 80-84; below D failure.  
 A—3 Honor Points; B—2 Honor Points; C—1 Honor Point; D—No Honor Points. (For Four Term Hours Credit).

M. R. Jason is hereby  
 the course on \_\_\_\_\_ honorably dismissed at his own request.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_\_  
 Registrar.

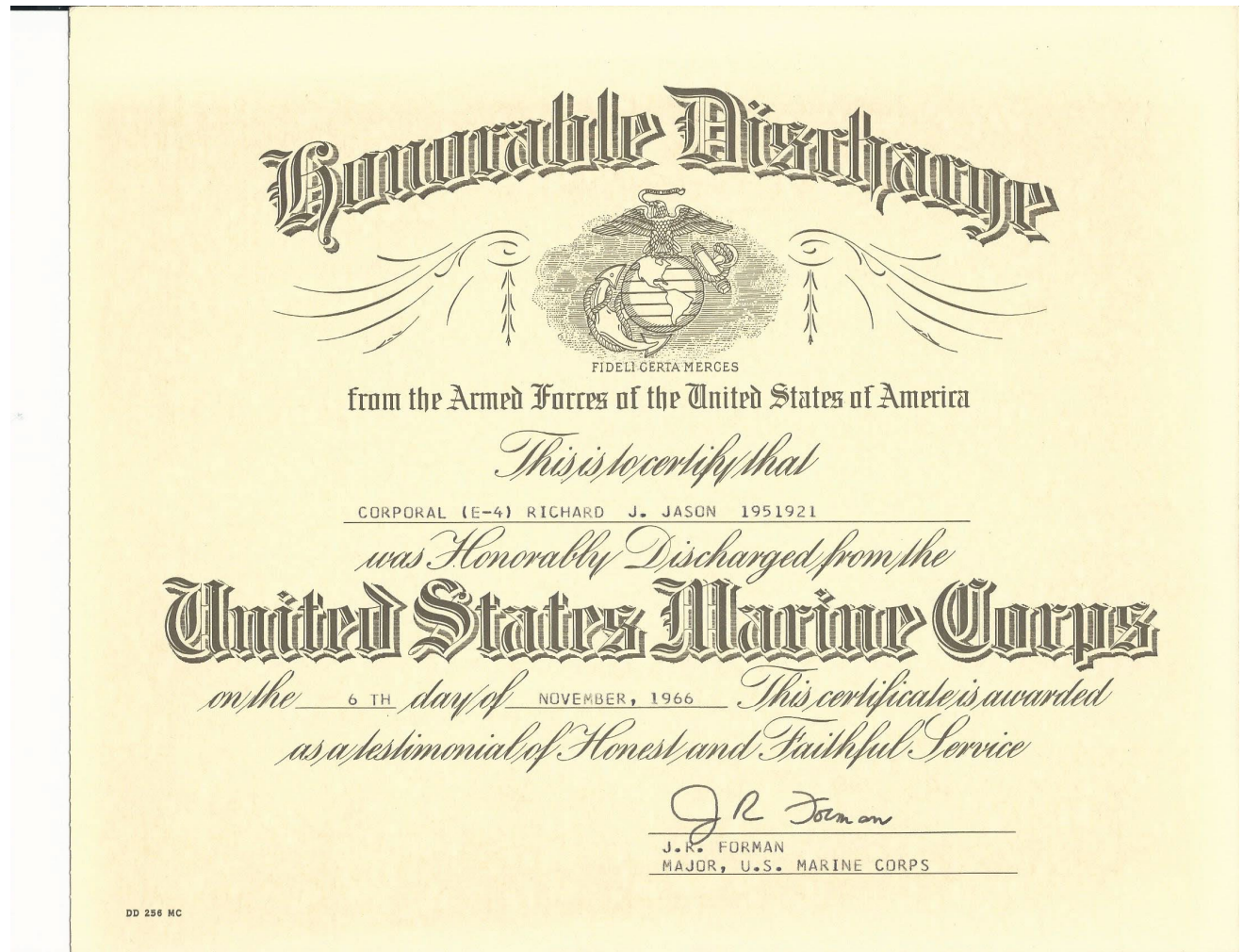
Additional transcripts \$1.00 each.

I was so proud to find that my father was a Corporal in the Marines after only 3 years in military service. I remember a coin he got from his tour in Japan in our kitchen drawer. Also, I still have his Marine dog tag – it is very special to me. Here is the United States Marine Corps Service Record for Richard James Jason May 1, 1962:

PERSONAL DATA		TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE DATA		SERVICE DATA		VA DATA		AUTHENTICATION	
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - M. <b>JASON, Richard James</b>		2. SERVICE NUMBER <b>1951921</b>		3. GRADE OR RANK <b>3d</b>		4. DATE OF RANK (Day, Month, Year) <b>1 May 1962</b>			
4. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS <b>USMC</b>		5. PLACE OF BIRTH (State or Country) <b>Grand Rapids, Michigan</b>		6. DATE OF BIRTH (Day, Month, Year) <b>10 10 39</b>		7. RACE <b>Caucasian</b>		8. SEX <b>Male</b>	
7. RACE <b>Caucasian</b>		8. SEX <b>Male</b>		9. COLOR HAIR <b>Brown</b>		10. COLOR EYES <b>Brown</b>		11. HEIGHT <b>64"</b>	
10. HIGHEST CIVILIAN EDUCATION LEVEL ATTAINED <b>College - 2</b>		11. MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD <b>Business Administration</b>		12. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		13. MARITAL ST. <b>SINGLE</b>			
11. TYPE OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE <b>Transfer to Marine Corps Reserve</b>		12. STATION OR INSTALLATION AT WHICH EFFECTED <b>Marine Corps Supply Center, Barstow, California</b>		13. REASON AND AUTHORITY <b>202 - Expiration of Enlistment. Marine Corps Personnel Manual, par 13258 &amp; MEO 1900, 2D.</b>		14. EFFECTIVE DATE <b>6 Nov 63</b>		15. TYPE OF CERTIFICATE ISSUED <b>DD 217 M</b>	
12. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND <b>HqBn, MCSC, Barstow, California</b>		13. CHARACTER OF SERVICE <b>HONORABLE</b>		14. DATE INDUCTED (Day, Month, Year) <b>NA</b>		15. SELECTIVE SERVICE NUMBER <b>20 43 39 573</b>		16. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER, CITY, COUNTY AND STATE <b>Michigan Local Board #43, Kent County, Waters Building, 2nd Floor, 159 Ottawa, N. W., Grand Rapids, Michigan</b>	
17. DISTRICT OR AREA COMMAND TO WHICH RESERVIST TRANSFERRED <b>9TH MARINE CORPS RESERVE AND RECRUITMENT DISTRICT</b>		18. TERMINAL DATE OF RESERVE OBLIGATION (Day, Month, Year) <b>6 Nov 66</b>		19. CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (First Enlistment) <input type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (Prior Service) <input type="checkbox"/> REENLISTED		20. TERM OF SERVICE (Years) <b>Three</b>		21. DATE OF ENTRY (Day, Month, Year) <b>7 Nov 60</b>	
20. PRIOR REGULAR ENLISTMENTS <b>NONE</b>		21. GRADE, RATE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE <b>Private E-1</b>		22. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE (City and State) <b>Detroit, Michigan</b>		23. HOME OF RECORD AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE (Street, RFD, City, County and State) <b>1104 Short, N. E. Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan</b>		24. STATEMENT OF SERVICE	
25. SPECIALTY NUMBER AND TITLE <b>014-Admin Man</b>		26. RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D.O.C. NUMBER <b>Chief Clerk (any ind) 0-97.13</b>		27. NET SERVICE THIS PERIOD <b>03 00 00</b>		28. OTHER SERVICE <b>00 00 00</b>		29. TOTAL (Line (1) + line (2)) <b>03 00 00</b>	
26. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED <b>RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP BADGE GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL (1stAwd)</b>		27. WOUNDS RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF ACTION WITH ENEMY FORCES (Place and date, if known) <b>NA</b>		30. CREDITABLE FOR BASIC PAY PURPOSES <b>03 00 00</b>		31. TOTAL ACTIVE SERVICE <b>03 00 00</b>		32. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE <b>01 11 24</b>	
28. SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES, COLLEGE TRAINING COURSES AND/OR POST-GRADUATE COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED		29. OTHER SERVICE TRAINING COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED		33. GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE IN FORCE <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		34. AMOUNT OF ALLOTMENT <b>NA</b>		35. MONTH ALLOTMENT DISCONTINUED <b>NA</b>	
30. VA BENEFITS PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR (Specify type) <b>NA</b>		31. VA CLAIM NUMBER <b>C NA</b>		32. REMARKS <b>Recommended for Reenlistment Good Conduct Medal period commences 7Nov63 Lump-sum leave settlement paid for 28 days No periods in an excess leave status Social Security # 375-36-1628.</b>		33. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE (Street, RFD, City, County and State) <b>1104 Short, N.E. Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan</b>		34. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING TRANSFERRED OR DISCHARGED <i>Richard J. Jason</i>	
35. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICER <b>J. D. HINES, CAPT, USMC, PERSO</b>		36. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN <i>J. D. Hines</i>		FORM 214 1 NOV 55		REPLACES EDITION OF 1 JUL 52, WHICH IS OBSOLETE.		ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE	

Honorable Discharge from United States Marine Corps for Corporal E-4 Richard J. Jason

November 6, 1966:



My father and mother were married on October 21, 1967. On their marriage record, it states that Richard was 27 years old at the time and lived at 1104 Short Street in Grand Rapids. My mother, Marie Stachowiak, was 25 years old and lived at 218 Garfield Avenue. They both worked at the post office.

When I was a child, I would see my father at Christmas time. Before Christmas Day, he would ask me to write a list of things I wanted from Santa and mail the letter to him. I remember how I would come over to his house on Christmas Day and I would be astonished to find he got me everything on my list! I only expected a couple presents, but he gave me everything I put on my Santa list plus other toys. He was quite generous indeed!

I was 11 years old when my father passed into Heaven. I wish I could have known him better before he went. On his death record, it states that he was 40 years old when he died on March 12, 1980, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He died of pancreatitis at the hospital. He had remarried Lora Jason and they lived at 5862 Verta Drive in Belmont, Michigan. I did not know that he had remarried until I saw this record.



LF \_\_\_\_\_  
 CF 668



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH 0014955  
 STATE FILE NUMBER

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH


08

DECEDENT NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST			SEX	DATE OF DEATH (Mo., Day, Yr.)	
1. Richard James Jason			2. male	1 3-12-80	
RACE (e.g., White, Black, American Indian, etc.) (Specify)		AGE - Last Birthday (Yrs.)	UNDER 1 YEAR MOS. DAYS	UNDER 1 DAY HOURS MIN.	DATE OF BIRTH (Mo., Day, Yr.)
4. White		5a. 40	5b.	5c.	6. 12-16-1939
LOCATION OF DEATH (Check one and specify)			HOSPITAL OR OTHER INSTITUTION - Name (If not in ether, give street and number)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INSIDE CITY LIMITS OF: Grand Rapids			7. Butterworth Hospital		
<input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE VILLAGE LIMITS OF:					
STATE OF BIRTH (If not in U.S.A. name country)		CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY	MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (Specify)	SURVIVING SPOUSE (If wife, give maiden name)	
8. Michigan		9. USA	10. married	11. Lora Vanden Bergh	
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER		USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired)		KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY	
13. 375-38-1628		14a. Postal Worker		14b. Post Office	
CURRENT RESIDENCE - STATE		COUNTY	LOCALITY (Check one and specify)	STREET AND NUMBER	
15a. Michigan		15b. Kent	15c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TWP. OF Plainfield Twp.	15d. 5862 Verta Dr. (Belmont)	
FATHER - NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST			MOTHER - MAIDEN NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST		
16. Alex P. Jason			17. Estelle Zielinski		
INFORMANT		MAILING ADDRESS STREET OR R.F.D. NO. CITY OR TOWN STATE ZIP			
18a. (Signature) Mrs. Lora Jason		18b. 5862 Verta Dr., N.E., Belmont, Mich. 49306			
19. IMMEDIATE CAUSE (ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE PER LINE FOR (a), (b), AND (c).)					
PART I					
(a) Hypovolemic Septic Shock					Interval between onset and death
(b) Carditis and Pseudomonas Peritonitis					Interval between onset and death
(c) Necrotizing Pancreatitis					Interval between onset and death
PART II OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS - Conditions contributing to death, but not related to cause given in PART I					
Acute Myocardial Infarction					
PLACE OF DEATH (Indicate, Nursing Home, Hospital, Ambulance) (Specify)		IF HOSP. OR INST., Indicate DOA, OP, Emer. Rm., Inpatient (Specify)		AUTOPSY (Specify Yes or No)	
22a. Hospital		22b. Inpatient		20. No 21. No	
23a. To the best of my knowledge, death occurred at the time, date and place and due to the cause(s) stated.					
(Signature and Title) Paul Bormel		DATE SIGNED (Mo., Day, Yr.)		HOUR OF DEATH	
23b. 3/17/80		23c. 11:45 PM		24c. M	
NAME OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN IF OTHER THAN CERTIFIER (Type or Print)		24b. PRONOUNCED DEAD (Mo., Day, Yr.)		24e. AT M	
23d.		24d. ON			
NAME AND ADDRESS OF CERTIFIER (PHYSICIAN OR MEDICAL EXAMINER) (Type or Print)					
25. ACC. SUICIDE, HOM., NATURAL OR PENDING INVEST (Specify)					
26a.		DATE OF INJURY (Mo., Day, Yr.)		HOUR OF INJURY	
26b.		26c.		26d.	
INJURY AT WORK (Specify Yes or No)		PLACE OF INJURY - At home, farm, street, factory, office, building, etc. (Specify)		LOCATION STREET OR R.F.D. NO. CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWNSHIP STATE	
26e.		26f.		26g.	
BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL, OTHER (Specify)		CEMETERY OR CREMATORY - NAME		LOCATION CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWNSHIP STATE	
27a. Burial		27b. Holy Cross Cemetery		27c. Grand Rapids, MI	
DATE (Mo., Day, Yr.)		ADDRESS OF FACILITY			
27d. March 15, 1980		27e. 585 Stocking Ave. N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504			
FUNERAL SERVICE LICENSEE (Signature)		REGISTRAR (Signature)		DATE RECEIVED BY REGISTRAR (Mo., Day, Yr.)	
28c. Herbert E. ...		28d. Maurice J. ...		29b. 3-14-80	

# June Jason

Here is my own birth record that states my father was Richard James Jason. I was born on December 28, 1968, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I changed my first name later in life to *Junia* and my last name to *Yasenov* when I discovered my true surname.

STATE OF MICHIGAN ) I, TERRI L. LAND, Clerk of the Circuit Court of  
 ) Kent County, do hereby certify that the microfilm  
 COUNTY OF KENT ) copy of this document is a true copy of the record  
 now on file in the office of the Clerk of said County  
 and Court.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
 my hand and official seal at the City of  
 Grand Rapids in said County this 26th  
 day of January AD-19 76  
 BY Norma I. Kicari  
 Deputy County Clerk

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
 CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH 121-

LOCAL FILE NUMBER		MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH 121-		BIRTH NUMBER	
1 CHILD NAME		FIRST	MIDDLE	LAST	DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR)
		June	Marie	Jason	12-28-68
2 SEX	3 THIS BIRTH (SPECIFY TWIN, TRIPLET, ETC.)	4b IF NOT SINGLE BIRTH—BORN FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, ETC. (SPECIFY)	5a COUNTY OF BIRTH		
			Kent		
6a CITY, VILLAGE OR TOWNSHIP OF BIRTH		6b INSIDE CITY LIMITS (YES/NO)	7a HOSPITAL—NAME (IF NOT IN HOSPITAL, GIVE STREET AND NUMBER)		
Grand Rapids, Michigan					
8a MOTHER—MAIDEN NAME		8b LAST	8c AGE AT TIME OF THIS BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR)	8d STATE OF BIRTH (IF NOT IN U.S.A., NAME COUNTRY)	
9a RESIDENCE—STATE	9b COUNTY	9c CITY, VILLAGE OR TOWNSHIP		9d STREET AND NUMBER	
10a FATHER—NAME		FIRST	MIDDLE	LAST	AGE AT TIME OF THIS BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR)
		Richard	James	Jason	
11a INFORMANT		11b RELATION TO CHILD		11c	
12a CERTIFY THAT THE WRITING NAMED CHILD WAS BORN ALIVE AT THE PLACE AND TIME AND ON THE DATE STATED ABOVE		12b DATE SIGNED (MONTH, DAY, YEAR)		12c ATTENDANT (SPECIFY M.D., MIDWIFE, OTHER)	
		1-30-76			
13a SIGNATURE OF CERTIFIER		13b MAILING ADDRESS		13c	
14a REGISTRAR—SIGNATURE		14b DATE RECEIVED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR		14c	

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FOR MEDICAL AND HEALTH USE ONLY

Here is my marriage certificate from when I married John George Papas in Detroit, Michigan, on February 6, 2022. As you can see, my name was Junia Yasenov:

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
CERTIFICATION OF VITAL RECORD  
COUNTY OF WAYNE

202203000192 FILED Cathy M. Garrett, Wayne County Clerk - 2/8/2022 8:03:17 AM

DATE CERTIFICATE FILED

**Marriage License**  
State of Michigan

To any person legally authorized to solemnize marriage, the marriage must be solemnized in the State of Michigan on or before \_\_\_\_\_

**COUPLE**

JUNIA MARIE-FELICITY YASENOV and JOHN GEORGE PAPAS  
FULL NAME (Print, Middle, Last)  MALE  FEMALE FULL NAME (Print, Middle, Last)  MALE  FEMALE

JASON  
SIGNATURE OR BIRTH CERTIFICATE NO. COUSIN

53  
RESIDENT AGE

\_\_\_\_\_  
STREET

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY AND ZIP CODE

\_\_\_\_\_  1 TIMES PREVIOUSLY MARRIED \_\_\_\_\_  1 TIMES PREVIOUSLY MARRIED

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESIDENT COUNTY

**PARENTS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
MICHIGAN

Based on the affidavit filed in this office, I hereby grant this marriage license on \_\_\_\_\_

**Certificate of Marriage**

I hereby certify that, in accordance with the above license, the persons herein mentioned were joined in marriage,  
in DETROIT City, Village, Township County of WAYNE Michigan,  
on the 6 TH day of FEBRUARY A.D. 20 22 in the presence of  
Rev. Fr. Paul Albert REV. FR. PAUL ALBERT, PRIEST  
SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAN/CERTIFIER (TYPE OR PRINT) NAME AND TITLE OF OFFICIAN/CERTIFIER (TYPE OR PRINT)

3810 GILBERT ST, DETROIT, MI 48210 / SPS. PETER & PAUL, CATHOLIC

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Yasenov family heritage has taken me 23 years to research. It has been worth all the time and effort. Everything presented here in this paper has been proven by concrete evidence so that the reader may be assured that this information is credible.

The early Slavic migration was of considerable interest to me. When I learned of the legend that the early Slavs started in the Moschoi Mountains of Georgia, I was intrigued. After careful consideration of information available on the subject, I am confident that the theory presented here of their traveling to the Steppes of Russia where even elementary books state the Slavs started from is a trustworthy tradition. Further, the Y-STR chromosome study indicated the Slavic homeland was in Ukraine, which also is sensible to think the Slavs migrated from the Steppes to Ukraine and settled there.

Understanding the connection to the 15<sup>th</sup> century nobles comes from comprehending that the rare surname in a sparsely populated area like Podlasia makes the Yasenov family unique. Also, the fact that the generations were from the same village in which there are only about five to ten homes is quite convincing in it of itself. Add to this the fact that the later generations were also nobles makes this a credible connection, as nobles are just a small percentage of the population.

The Belarusian ethnicity was proven by the DNA genetics testing showing the family is of Belarusian or Polish descent. Then also understanding that the nobility in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were either Belarusian or Lithuanian – with Lithuanian being a Baltic

tribe, therefore, not in my genes; this was a clear indicator of Belarusian ethnicity. The Polonization of the Belarusian people that started in 1395 with the Union of Kreva happened so long ago that people had long forgotten their true ethnicity. In addition, people in the 14<sup>th</sup> century were not cognizant of genetics, so they honestly thought that they had become Polish. It was an honest fallacy. The truth is, the Yasenov family never lived in Poland.

It has been my pleasure to present these facts to you in the most professional manner possible. All sources are listed in the Bibliography for your reference.

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