

Parisville/Paris Township

The Oldest Polish Settlement

in Michigan

(Founded 1855/1856)



Painting of St Mary's Church (1882-1974), Parisville, MI, by Marilyn Miklasz-Rutkowski

by

Charles Ciechanowski-Chinoski-Chase

The people of Poland had a tumultuous history that came to a dramatic point in the late 18th century when, through the events of three partitions, Poland disappeared from the map. It was during this time of 1772 to 1795 that Poland was totally overrun and ruled by Prussia, Russia and Austria.

In the early 19th century, the Poles lived under many restrictions that severely limited their ability to practice their Catholic faith, own land, sell their merchandise, or have their schools teach their children the Polish language and culture. This was exacerbated by the partitioning countries forcing the Poles to serve in the military of the partitioners.

By the mid-19th century, many Poles started emigrating from Poland to other countries, including the United States. A significant number of Poles left the Prussian Partition and ended up in the "Thumb" of Michigan. Living in Michigan offered significant opportunity, but the Poles of Parisville/Paris Township (in the Thumb) had to first tame a wild forested area, and then make it through two catastrophic forest fires and several epidemics.

The Poles clearly demonstrated their strength and determination, and today own some of the finest farmland in Michigan.

108 Pages



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