

Minto And Warsaw, North Dakota

By

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In the late 19th century, Winona was the destination for thousands of Kashubian immigrants. This bustling river port offered jobs, small business opportunities, farmland, plentiful lumber to build houses, familiar geography and weather – an ideal place to build a church-centered community in a small town reminiscent of what they had left behind. However, the river and the bluffs that enhanced the attractiveness of the town ultimately limited the growth of the town. The stream of immigrants continued, but there were relatively fewer opportunities. So many moved on.

I often heard Fr. Paul Breza mention two such “spin-off” towns, Minto and Warsaw, located about 100 miles north of Fargo, ND. Years later, I decided to visit these two towns, and I was quite impressed with what I found - two thriving farming communities with friendly people eager to talk about their Polish heritage. For example, Ed Stoltman mentioned that some of his ancestors were from the same village (Wiele) and at the same time period as my Sieracki ancestors. Wally Ebertowski’s ancestors emigrated from Czersk, a village just 12 miles south of Wiele. Gary Babinski told me that his ancestors stopped in Winona before moving on to Minto.

Here is how the Warsaw Society 10th anniversary publication described the Warsaw pioneers.

The settlement of Warsaw had its beginning when a group of Polish families from Poland, Perham, Winona, Minnesota, Pine Creek and other near-by Wisconsin cities, moved into the Walsh County and Warsaw area sometime before 1880. They staked their land and applied for homesteads and tree claims. They later built houses of sod and logs and brought their families and some seed and farm implements, which usually consisted of one ox, a walking plow and a spade. . . . These families crossed the Red River at Fargo and pushed on north to a spot 30 miles north of Grand Forks. They made the trip by ox-carts and covered wagons, settling there in the wilderness of weeds, tall grass and unbroken land, which they called Pulaski. . . . There they broke a few acres of this land each year and seeded it with wheat and oats.



St. Stanislaus Church, Warsaw, ND

Members of an 1882 committee to organize St. Stanislaus Parish included familiar names (no doubt some cousins) such as Tadecki, Rogalla, Wysocki, Kiedrowski, Merchlewicz, Stoltman, Czapiewski, Slominski, Babinski, Narloch and Galewski.



Walsh County Historical Museum, formerly Minto school

Wally Ebertowski, a docent at the Museum, told me the story of his great-grandfather, Joseph Slominski, who was born June 30, 1854, in the Prussian-controlled part of Poland. Joseph was drafted and served a number of years in the Prussian army. After mustering out, he emigrated from Poland and arrived in Pine Creek WI in 1879. He married Frances Moga in Winona. He did not find a satisfactory land or job opportunity in Pine Creek or in Winona, so he moved to Minto. With the \$200 he saved while working as a farm laborer, he went to the Grand Forks Territorial Land Office and purchased land for his farm. Many Polish families found their way to Minto, Warsaw and Pulaski County because the land was fertile and available for purchase. In Wally's extended family, four farms were eventually purchased. The story of Wally's great-grandfather is a good example of the journey made by many families from the Kashubian region to Winona and then to places farther west.



Original Home of Joseph Slominski, Built in 1881

For those interested in more information about these Polish immigrants, the Walsh County Historical Society has made available on line a four-volume collection of biographical details: [A Story of Walsh County And Its Pioneers.](#) Go to walshcountyhistory.com Click on Resources and then click on Walsh Heritage Volumes.