

Brief History of the Czerepaniak Family of Siemuszowa

By Mike Buryk

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“Mrs. Julia Machuski (Marchowsky) of Pottsville, Pa., died Tuesday, June 20, 1972 at Rest Haven where she was a guest since January. Her first husband, Michael Buryk, died in 1924. Her second husband, Stanley Machuski (Marchowsky) died in 1964. Surviving her were two daughters, four sons, four stepchildren, twenty eight grandchildren and twenty three great grandchildren. She was buried from St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Minersville, Pa.”

The Long Road to Primrose

The road trip to visit Baba in Minersville (well actually Primrose...) was always a long one. It was difficult for a six-year-old kid to get used to the outhouse and no TV. At least Aunt Helen down the road in Cass had a TV --- even if it only had one channel! But, Baba Julia always had a quick smile for us kids when we made our infrequent visits to her home in the patch. Driving from Jersey City in New Jersey to Coal Country in the 1950's was a major expedition.

And once we finally got there, verbal communication was difficult since neither Baba nor Gigi (Stanley Marchowsky --- Pop's stepfather: “Gigi” is Ukrainian-American baby talk for grandpa) spoke any English. Baba was Ukrainian and Gigi was Polish. Baba went to St. Nick's on Sunday, while Gigi went to his own church in another part of Minersville. Pop always brought him a bottle of whiskey as a gift.

Gigi mostly kept to himself when we came for a visit. Except one time when we brought our new dog, Rusty. He insisted that the dog sleep outside in the small shed where he kept his tools. Rusty, rambunctious as he was, wouldn't have it and sometime during the night he leapt through one of the windows and broke it, cut his paw and headed for the back door of Baba's house. We all woke up in the morning to the sight of a bloody pawprint on the back door and Gigi's anger at a dog behaving badly. But, Rusty slept in the kitchen that night anyway.

The Other Side of the Big Puddle

Baba was born Julia Czerepaniak (aka Terpanek/Terpanik) in September 1891 in Siemuszowa, Poland, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the province of Galicia. She was one of seven children in the family of Sydor (Isidore) Czerepaniak and Ksenia Hirniak. The family was Greek Catholic like most in the village. Ruthenian by nationality, they strongly identified themselves with the evolving Ukrainian nationality farther East. Others in the area saw themselves as strictly Rusyn or Lemko, or if Roman Catholic, Polish. Most of the Jews in this region lived in the larger towns and not in the local villages.

Julia's father was one of the adventurous men from the village who decided at the end of

the 19th century to seek their fortunes in America. Lemkos first began traveling across the ocean in the late 1870's and started communities in the gritty cities of the northeast U.S. and in the coal and steel country of Pennsylvania. Some drifted even farther West to Chicago and elsewhere. Sydor (Isidore) first traveled to America in 1892 on a ship from the port of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He was going to New York City. Like many an Eastern European immigrant, the name of Sydor would morph at the hands of the agent who recorded his arrival: **Tudor Cherepanik**. This wouldn't be the last time that the Czerepaniak name would undergo a transformation far away from home. He would travel back and forth several times in the next few years until some unknown disease took his life in Siemuszowa in the early part of the twentieth century.

Destination: Carteret/Perth Amboy, New Jersey

As the trickle of adventurous men traveling from Siemuszowa to America swelled into a stream after 1900, most were going to the Carteret/Perth Amboy area in New Jersey. Wojnarowskis, Szpaks, Gburyks, Swajlyks and others took their turn at the rail of the big steamships heading West for the 10-day journey from Hamburg, Germany. The younger generation of Czerepaniak men were no exception.

Michal, Sydor's oldest child, made his way to Carteret where he eventually started a building supply business. He later brought his young family over with the thought of permanently settling in the U.S. At least one of his children, Olha, was born there. However, his wife Rozalia was not happy in America and just before World War I he sold his share of the business and the entire family headed back to Siemuszowa. Michal, Rozalia and some of his children would eventually migrate East into Ukraine in 1946 before Operation Vistula would scatter the rest of his family to northeastern and northwestern Poland. At least one member of his family, Maria, had voluntarily emigrated to Canada in the late 1920's where her descendants still live today. Now, the name in English of Michal's family members is **Cherepanyak**, which is a direct transliteration from the Ukrainian.

The Czerepaniak families of Siemuszowa were large and well off. There were three main branches: Michal the Mechanic's, Michal the Miller's (Sydor's son and Julia's older brother) and that of the Czerepaniaks who were fabric makers. All probably traced their lineage to Koscia Czerepaniak, who lived at house number 43 when the first Austrian census of the village was taken in 1785-1787. The bonds between the families of Michal the Mechanic and Michal the Miller were strong particularly since Sydor was godfather to Michal the Mechanic and this relationship continued in America.

Michal the Mechanic and his brother Jozef also went to the U.S., but settled at first in Philadelphia. Michal eventually went back to Siemuszowa in 1914 just before World War I broke out. He started his own family in the village, while Jozef settled down in the Carteret/Woodbridge area. Descendants of Jozef's children still live in the area and also in New York City and Massachusetts. However, the Czerepaniak name evolved here to **Terpanek** or **Tympanick** among his descendants to better accommodate the pronunciation abilities of the American tongue. Michal the mechanic's descendants now live in northwestern Poland near Szczecin having arrived there after the forced

resettlement of Ruthenians by the Polish Government in 1947. Some background on the long history of Siemuszowa might be helpful here.

Siemuszowa: six hundred years of history

Siemuszowa (pronounced Seh-mu-show-wa) has seen several masters over the course of its six- hundred-plus-year history. Located today in the Sanok (in Ukrainian, Sianik) region of southeastern Poland in the foothills of the fabled Carpathian mountains ("Karpati"), the majority of its original settlers were known as "Rusyny", "Rusnaky", "Ruthenians" and "Lemkos" (Lemkowie). They were Eastern Orthodox and later (after 1596) many became Greek Catholics whose primary language was closely related to Ukrainian. The region itself is referred to as the "Sanok lands" (the San River runs throughout the area) in original Polish civil documents from the 15th century, or "Lemkovyna" ("Lemkivshchyna") by Ukrainians and Carpatho-Rusyns. Siemuszowa is the ancestral village of the Czerepaniak families.

Early History of Sanok region

Before the 9th century AD, the lands around Sanok were sparsely settled by various Slavic tribes. There is some archaeological evidence that there were people living in this area during the period of the Roman Empire and possibly even earlier, but no written records exist which describe them. In the 8th century AD at the beginning of recorded history in Europe, the Slavs gradually began to break up into three distinct groups: West, East and South Slavs. The Poles belong to the West Slavic group and the Ukrainians are part of the East Slavs. The Poles and the Ukrainians (or their ancestors in Kievan-Rus -- its Latin name is "Ruthenia") both laid claim to the Sanok lands at various times and the non-Slavic Hungarians south of the Carpathians did so as well. In the late 10th century, Kievan-Rus finally secured the Sanok lands for itself and their inhabitants accepted Eastern Orthodox Christianity while the Poles in the West became Roman Catholic. This period left an indelible mark on the culture, social institutions and spirituality of these people and their Ruthenian character would both distinguish them and serve as an ongoing source of friction with their Polish neighbors who wanted to expand further east out of their traditional homeland. The region remained with Kievan-Rus until the middle of the 14th century when that state gradually collapsed from internal infighting and the repeated attacks of the Mongol horde from the East.

Beginning of Siemuszowa and village life

The exact date of the founding of Siemuszowa is not known. Original Polish records of the Sanok lands from the 15th century mention the village as early as 1424. It is possible that Siemuszowa existed earlier since several other villages in the area (such as nearby Tyrawa Solna) were already thriving in the 14th century. The lords of the village in the early 15th century were Spithko ("Spithcone of Semussowa") and John ("Iohannes of Semussowa"), who, apparently, were members of the local Ruthenian nobility. According to existing records, Siemuszowa developed an important relationship with the more northerly village of Dobra ("Dobra Szlachecka"), which itself received special recognition from the Polish King Wladyslaw Jagiello for the military service of its Ruthenian inhabitants who were granted the status of nobility in the Polish Kingdom in 1402 AD. Siemuszowa and the surrounding villages of the Sanok lands retained their

unique "Ruthenian" character throughout the period of Polish rule which ended in 1773-1795 with the partition of the Polish Kingdom between Prussia, Austria and Russia. Although there was a Ruthenian nobility who actively participated in the social, political and economic life of the region, the majority of local inhabitants were peasant farmers. Many of the peasants were originally invited into newly formed villages in the 14th and 15th centuries by the village owner or local administrator of the Crown to work the lands in return for a home and the right to grow food for their own families. In the 15th century, the service of serf-tenants for the local lord might only amount to 20 days per year. By the 1600's, the requirement of "weekly service" was introduced and each peasant family had to give 3-4 days of labor weekly to the lord. By the 18th century, the father and usually the oldest male member of each peasant-tenant family in a village had to work all week for the lord, while the wife and children were left to raise food for the families' consumption. Serfdom took a heavy toll on the lives of the Ruthenian peasants.

Regarding religion, many of the Ruthenians who lived in this region accepted the Greek Catholic/"Uniate" faith in the 17th century under a compromise reached between the Roman Catholic Church and some of the Eastern Orthodox Ruthenian bishops. This allowed the people to retain their Eastern Orthodox liturgy and customs while paying allegiance to the Roman Catholic Pope. Siemuszowa was an independent Greek Catholic parish until 1813 when it became a "filial" to the larger parish in Tyrawa Solna. Its wooden church ("tserkva", or Greek Catholic church) was "Epiphany of Our Lord" (built in 1841) and it was renovated in 1932 replacing the older church. It still exists today and is now used by Poles as a "kosciol" (Roman Catholic Church).

The Austrian Empire

In 1772, Siemuszowa and the Sanok lands with all of "Red Ruthenia" passed into the hands of the Austrian Empire and became known as the province of Galicia (or "Halychyna" which was the ancient name for this area). The Austrian Cadastral (census/property) Records of 1785-1787 clearly indicate that the ancestors of Mikhal Gburyk (Buryk) and his wife Julia Czerepaniak were among the inhabitants of the village. There were a total of 31 Lemko families in this village at the time with one Gburyk and one Czerepaniak family listed. Other Lemko families from the village who intermarried to form the lineage of Gburyk/Czerepaniak were Wojnarowski, Gbura and Hirniak (Horniak). The Austrian Government required that local parishes begin keeping birth, marriage and death records in the "Metryka" registers. These records are written in Latin, Polish and occasionally Ukrainian/Ruthenian and are extremely valuable as a source of local information where they are available. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) has microfilmed some of the Greek Catholic parish registers from the Sanok area, but unfortunately the village of Siemuszowa has not been filmed although the records do exist. All inquiries about Siemuszowa must be made either through the Polish Consulate in New York City (where each request for a single piece of information such as the names of a person's parents costs \$35), or by corresponding directly with the civil archives which are located now in Tyrawa Woloska. Response is slow and time consuming.

In 1785, the village lands of Siemuszowa consisted of 10.09 sq. km (6.05 sq. miles).

There were 260 Greek Catholics (Rusyny) (77%), 68 Roman Catholics (Poles) (20%) and 10 Jews (3%). The Greek Catholic population continued to grow into the 20th century despite the fact that some of the inhabitants (like Mikhal Gburyk and Julia Czerepaniak) emigrated to North America. In Lemkivshchyna as a whole about 10% of the Greek Catholic population left to cross the "great mud puddle" to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The exact number of emigrants from Siemuszowa and the Sanok lands during the late 19th and early 20th centuries is not known. By 1921, there were 728 Greek Catholics (81%) in Siemuszowa out of a total population of 892. The number of Poles (140) as a percentage of the population dropped (16%) while the Jews remained constant 31 (3%). It should be noted in this census that the 31 people listed as having the Jewish faith actually were included among the Polish nationals (171) and were not put into a separate "Jewish" nationality category. There were 165 dwellings listed in the village in the 1921 census plus one manor house with 13 people associated with it.

World Wars I and II

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 led to more upheaval for Siemuszowa and the Sanok lands. Some of the fighting actually took place in the area of the Carpathian Mountains. One result of the war was the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the revival of an independent Polish state which again included Red Ruthenia and the Sanok lands. The period between the end of World War I and World War II saw greatly increased tensions between Poles and Ukrainians and those residents of Siemuszowa who closely identified themselves with the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians had unsuccessfully attempted to secure an independent state for themselves between 1918 and 1920 and the Western Ukrainians, in particular, could not accept renewed Polish rule. It was during this time that "Ukraine" and "Ukrainian" became the commonly accepted terms for "Ruthenia" and "Ruthenian". However, some of the Carpathian Rusyny continued to view themselves as a distinct nation -- the Carpatho-Rusyns. Many of the Greek Catholic residents of Siemuszowa considered themselves Ukrainians. In 1939, Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler invaded Poland. It was agreed between Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, and Hitler that Galicia would be divided with the eastern part added to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the western part remaining in Poland. Siemuszowa and the Sanok lands remained in Poland under the administration of Nazi authorities in Sanok

"Operation Vistula" and the final solution

During the course of the war, a group of Ukrainian guerrilla fighters was formed which was known as the "Ukrainian Insurgent Army" (or "UPA"). UPA was determined to fight for an independent Ukrainian state against all sides, whether Soviet, Russian, Nazi or Polish. Much of their activity took place in the Carpathian Mountains and the Ukrainians in Lemkivshchyna found themselves in the middle of a very difficult situation. Although many were sympathetic to the idea of a free, independent Ukraine, they did not necessarily agree with a military solution to secure it. Once the war was over, both the new Polish Communist Government and Stalin agreed that the "Ukrainian problem" must be solved once and for all. Approximately 480,000 Ukrainians in Poland were "invited" to migrate to the Ukrainian SSR between 1944 and 1946 and many settled around Lviv (the capital of Western Ukraine) and Ternopil. Mikhail Czerepaniak, the oldest brother of

Julia Czerepaniak of Siemuszowa, and his family was among this group. In the Spring of 1947, "Operation Vistula" took place. It was the forced deportation of 150,000 Lemkos and Ukrainians to the far western and northern lands of Poland which had been secured from the Germans during World War II. Zofia (Sophia) Czerepaniak, an older sister of Julia Czerepaniak, left Siemuszowa with her family under this military action never to return again to her native village. Other members of the Czerepaniak family were also scattered all over Poland by Operation Vistula. The Czerepaniak family was torn from the village where its ancestors had lived for hundreds of years. Conditions were very difficult for the deportees since not only were they deprived of all their possessions and land, but they were also labeled as criminals. Some did not survive the cruel ordeal. Permanent damage was done to both the material and spiritual health of the families who were deported in this way and many still have yet to recover to this day. Some families eventually decided to leave Poland forever and made their way abroad.

Researching the Czerepaniak Family Tree and the Diaspora

Despite the ravages of World War II and the tragedy of Operation Vistula (Akcja Wisla) which violently tore most Lemkos away from their ancestral homeland in southeastern Poland, a wealth of records still exist that document the history of individual families at least back to the 18th century. In 1993, Ivan Krasovskyj published a book (in Ukrainian) in Lviv, "Surnames of Galician Lemkos in the 18th Century" that lists the names of Lemko families appearing in the first Austrian Census (Cadastre) of 1785-1788 taken after the partition of Poland when Galicia was transferred to Austria. The introduction to this key work (in English) can be found on the Internet at <http://www.lemko.org/genealogy/krasovskiy/intro.html>.

A dictionary (in English, Polish and Ukrainian) listing all Lemko names covered in Krasovskyj's book with their corresponding village names appears at <http://www.lemko.org/genealogy/krasovskiy/>. In this book, there is only one Czerepaniak family listed in the Lemko region in the 18th century out of more than two thousand in all. This is the family of Koscia (Constantine) Czerepaniak who lived in Siemuszowa at house #43. Reviewing the land holdings and crop output of this family at that time, it's obvious that they held a very strong position in the village. Also, the proximity of their house to the dwor (estate of the Pan of Siemuszowa, or nobleman) suggests that the family was well connected and positioned to play a prominent role in its development. For example, at the end of the 19th century, Sydor Czerepaniak (father of Michal the miller) inherited the village grain mill after the Pan passed away because he had worked there on the estate. This would provide the family with an important source of wealth. Another Czerepaniak, Michal the mechanic, married into the family of Maria Gemser whose father was the superintendant of the Pan's Manor House. As a result, he became the owner of key village property that was part of the Gemser holdings. All of this was possible because the Czerepaniaks were a large and well connected family within Siemuszowa.

However, as the size of the family continued to increase, there was insufficient land in the village to accomodate all its descendants. As a result, in addition to the three branches that developed within Siemuszowa, there were Czerepaniaks who moved to

nearby Tyrawa Solna, Rakowa and to the area around the important medieval town center for the region --- Sanok. Czerepaniaks and their descendants live again today in this area having returned after the ethnic cleansing of Operation Vistula. But, the majority of Czerepaniaks and their descendants now live in Ukraine (near Lviv), Russia, northeastern and northwestern Poland, Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, Canada and the United States as a result of voluntary 20th century migration as well as the forced resettlement by the Polish Government.

As the first generation of Czerepaniaks from Siemuszowa aged and then passed away far from their native village, contact between and within the various branches was almost completely lost. Only memories of the local family were preserved in each of their own geographic areas. This happened more and more from the 1960's until the late 1990's. It was the Internet and the increasing sophistication of personal genealogy tools that enabled the family to reach out to each other again around the globe and reconnect in a way that no one ever dreamed possible. The development of Web based free phone services like Skype took Internet communication to a new level where real-time family meetings are now possible with Czerepaniak family members in various countries on two continents and family history documents and photos are shared in the twinkle of an eye.

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