

ACHIEVING THE AMERICAN DREAM

By Al Oldroyd

Josephine Nowakowski (Nowak) was born 22 Feb 1862 in Grodzisk, Poland. About 1880, while still living in Poland, she would marry Roman Smoczynski. In 1883-84, they would immigrate to America with two very young daughters. They would make their new home in Shenandoah, a thriving coal mining community in Schuylkill County. In 1889 Josephine would be naturalized a U.S. citizen. In 1890, Josephine lived on South Main Street in Shenandoah with Roman, a shoemaker, and their five daughters. In the 1893 Shoe & Leather Reporter Annual, a 780-page publication covering the entire United States, Josephine (not Roman) was listed as a shoe dealer in Shenandoah.

Parker, J. S. & Bros.	"	Roberts, A.	"
Schroyor, M. S.	Selin's Grove.	Epstein, Levi.	Sheffield.
Keck, A. B.	"	Ball, Jos.	Shenandoah.
Oaks, Gortner & Co.	"	Brown, Samuel L.	"
Schoch, F. J. & Co.	"	Coffee, J.	"
Smith, Augustus.	Sellersville.	Fahey, Wm. H.	"
Harr, David S.	"	Ferry & Christy.	"
Ellis, Wm. A.	Sewickley.	Friedman, I.	"
Hegner, Geo. H.	"	Higgins, John F.	"
Chamberlin & Boobyer.	"	Lamb, A. B. & Co.	"
McElwain, J. & Co.	"	Manning, Geo.	"
Miller, J. D. & Co.	"	McGowan, John.	"
Royers & Taylor.	Shade Gap.	Morgan, A. F.	"
Snively, Edward S.	Shady Grove.	Moyer, J. W.	"
Miller Bros.	Shamokin.	Seff, C.	"
Bennet, Mrs. Martha A.	"	Slattery, John.	"
Burd & Rogers.	"	Slattery, T. G.	"
Bobkowski, John.	"	Smoczynski, Josephine.	"
Davidson, H. J.	"	Snyder, Wm. S.	"
Erb, D. W.	"	Umbach, Martin.	"
Gable, M. L.	"	Booher & Ellenberger.	Sherrett.
Hertzog, T. B.	"	Leavenworth, F. J. & Co.	Shicksbiny.
Hoover, H. C. & Co.	"	Kingsberry, J. Y.	"
Keeler, J. O.	"	Crary, N. B.	"
Lee, Mrs. Clara	"	Cole, Geo. B.	Shippensburg.
Matten, Geo.	"	Griffin, Wm.	"

1893 Shoe & Leather Reporter

Also, in 1893, Josephine (not Roman) would purchase a 181-acre farm in Franklin Township in Columbia County. As difficult as the voyage from Poland to America would have been, the move from Shenandoah to Franklin Township was not without its challenges. In 1890, there were more than 15,000 people living in Shenandoah in an area of 1.6 square miles, more than 2000 being of Polish ancestry. There was a Polish Roman Catholic Church (St. Casimir) and a Polish newspaper (The Saule). In 1900, of the 549 people living in Franklin Township in an area of 13.5 square miles, the Smoczynskis were the only inhabitants of Polish ancestry. Within the entire Roaring Creek Valley and Catawissa, there were but three other families of Polish ancestry. Until the Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Slabtown was organized in 1914, the nearest Roman Catholic Church was St. Columba in Bloomsburg.

In 1900, Roman would repurchase the same farm (2nd mortgage). In the 1900 census, Josephine lived in Franklin Township with Roman, now a farmer, and their nine children. In 1903, Roman Smoczynski would die at the age of 47, leaving Josephine control of the farm, seven unmarried daughters, and four sons—the oldest being but 12 years of age. In 1904, Josephine would marry Alexander Januszewski (Janaski) and the following year would become the mother of another daughter. Because of Alexander's differing lifestyle and his lack of commitment to hard work, this marriage was to be short lived. In the 1910 census, Josephine lived in Franklin Township as a farm manager with nine of her twelve children, but not with Alexander. In addition to maintaining the farm and raising her twelve children, her children's education must have been very important to Josephine. She found the means to send at least four of her children to college.

Three of her daughters would graduate from Bloomsburg State Normal School with teaching certificates and one of her sons would graduate from Penn State University with a degree in dairy husbandry. Another son would receive U.S. Patent #155371 in 1917 for Blocks for Portable Machinery.

Josephine would remain active on the farm in Franklin Township until her death on 20 Jan 1926. She was survived by twelve children (unusual—not that she was the mother of twelve children, but that they all had survived to adulthood), and by 12 grandchildren. Eight more grandchildren were to be born after her death, three of whom still survive today. Four of Josephine's children (Anna, Hetty, Stanley, and Paul) would never marry, and would live out their lives on the family farm. Of the eight children that married, all would seek their fortunes away from the farm in Franklin Township. Frances Fest lived in Bloomsburg, Helen Marciniak, in Philadelphia, Anna Szalkowski in Philadelphia, Josephine Dlugokecki in Boston (MA), Edmund Smoze in Pottsville, Raymond Smozinski in Lewisburg, Martha Saunders in Danville, and Clara Haney in York. The farm would remain in the family until the youngest son died in 1979. Today, none of Josephine's many descendants carry the Smoczynski name and the Smoczynski name is nearly forgotten in Columbia County, but Josephine's commitment to the American dream produced a legacy that will live forever.