

# YONKERS HISTORY

1646 • 2001

## A YONKERS LANDMARK FOR GENERATIONS

### The First 50 Years of "The Polish"

Located in the heart of Yonkers, the Polish Community Center stands as an imposing monument to the Poles of the city. This sturdily built structure, erected in 1886, when the land cost \$4,500 and the building \$20,000, was designed as an Armory and housed Co. D, known as the 4th Separate Company, of the N.Y. National Guard.

This unique structure signifies the dreams of a handful of men, purposeful in their aims and unswerving in their desires to bring recognition to the Poles of the community. Its atmosphere contains the warmth and laughter, characteristic of Poles throughout the world, and symbolic of the tenacity of nature that makes Polish efforts successful.

The Poles in Yonkers are an inseparable fraction of the millions of American Poles. They are an inseparable part of the United States adopted by countless foreign-born as their home, and loved because it has given them an opportunity to take up life and prosper in peace. Success at the Polish Community Center is not measured in years or in personal achievement but is steeped in the devotion to an idea that is today's monument.

With this aim, a handful of men set out to unite the Poles in Yonkers. The founders of what became a successful business corporation originally formed themselves as a pleasure club, on December 20, 1917. Through expansion, reorganization, and title changes, the present Thaddeus Kosciuszko Citizen's Holding Corporation was formally incorporated on August 26, 1924.

The "humble beginning" is attributed to the ceaseless and untiring efforts of Louis Koperza, Anthony Marcio, Martin Nowak, Adam Sudol, Joseph Sudol, Michael Winckiewicz and the long-time member of the Board of Directors, the Center's Honorary President, Joseph J. Stampur.

To solidify the original group, steps were taken on February 8, 1919, to organize a more stable organization bound closer by set rules and a strong constitution based on democratic principles.

It was at this meeting that Joseph Stampur conceived the idea of a Center of today's size and nature.

Some of those who joined the original group included John Czarnecki, Walter Fila, Martin Giec, Andrew Kobos, Stanley Kordzikowski, Joseph Kucharczyk, John Lis, Andrew Mlodzinski, Joseph Mozdziak, Peter Panek, Peter Piotrowski, Frank Staron, John Wolak and Joseph Wyskida.

The first Polish Center was at 7 Myrtle Street, and the initial meeting was held there on April 5, 1919. Sparked by the steady growth of Yonkers' Polish population, this group foresaw the

This article is adapted from a history published in April 1974 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Thaddeus Kosciuszko Citizen's Holding Corporation, the owners of the Polish Community Center, known to generations of residents of Yonkers and the entire metropolitan area simply as "The Polish." The assistance of Richard Narog, Ted Ladzinski, and Peter Wendolski was invaluable in the research and writing and we are deeply grateful to them.

need for expansion and bought a new building at 423 Nepperhan Avenue. The organization later moved to 346 Nepperhan Avenue and, on February 7, 1922, to 274 Ashburton Avenue.

The aims of this fast-expanding organization were the betterment of all Poles in America and assistance to their "mother country." In June 1920, with the resurrection of the Republic of Poland after the First World War, the corporation purchased \$800 of Polish Bonds. Soon after they made a substantial contribution toward construction of a parish school at St. Casimir's.

#### ORIGIN OF THE CITIZEN'S CLUB

On April 3, 1922, work began at 46 Orchard Street. It was here that the name became Polish National Club. Plans were made for the purchase of property and eventual building of a Polish Community Center and, for \$6,000; lots on 332-334 Nepperhan Avenue were bought. The organization's name was again changed, to the Thaddeus Kosciuszko Citizen's Club. The first Board of Directors was elected on July 3, 1923, in the presence of Mr. Barlicki, the Polish Envoy to the United States, and included J. Bachan, A. Bettej, S. Duran, F. Kossakowski, J. Litwa, L. Mega, S. Oleksowicz, B. Piotrowski, M. Ptasiński, B. Solarz and J. Stampur.

On August 26, 1924, while located at 234 Nepperhan Avenue, "Holding Corporation" was added to the name and the organization was incorporated. The treasury held \$6,364, a figure that remained con-



The Polish Center in the 1930s

#### YONKERS HISTORY

Vol. 10, No. 2 • Spring 2001  
© Yonkers Historical Society 2001

#### CONTENTS

"The Polish" .....	1
Crestwood & the Parkway .....	3
Letters .....	4
The Lakers A.C. ....	6
"The Village" in '20s .....	7