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FIVE THINGS ABOUT POLISH DETROIT

By EMILIANA SANDOVAL/FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A new documentary about metro Detroit's Polish Americans will air Saturday.

HISTORY

Like a lot of people who came to the Detroit area in the mid-1800s to early 1900s, large numbers of Poles arrived because work was available.

By 1920, Polish people were 20% of Detroit's population and the area's largest ethnic group, settling in the east side, Hamtramck, Wyandotte and near Livernois and Michigan avenues on the west side.

The first Polish Catholic church in Detroit was St. Albertus, built in 1872. On the west side, the first one was St. Casimir.



2002 photo by KATHY KIELSZEWSKI/Detroit Free Press

Waitress Agnieszka Strzemecka waits on Isolde Dolney of New Baltimore and her mother-in-law, Bernice Dolney of Bay City, at Wawel, the restaurant at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy.

HAMTRAMCK

While Polish Americans live all over metro Detroit, Hamtramck is known as a historically Polish enclave. It originally was settled by the French, then Germans. After the Dodge car factory opened in 1914, many Poles came to Hamtramck to live and work. According to www.hamtramck.us, the city grew from 3,589 residents in 1910 to 46,615 in 1920.

A 2002 U.S. census report said Hamtramck had 22,976 residents, and 22.9% were Polish.

The 1998 drama "Polish Wedding" was filmed in Hamtramck. Writer and director Theresa Connelly had grown up there. The movie, about a rebellious teen (played by Claire Danes, who isn't Polish) who clashes with her mother (Lena Olin, who's Swedish), didn't get very good reviews.



ERIC SEALS/Detroit Free Press

Martha Washington Bakery in Hamtramck sells traditional raspberry-filled paczki.

FOOD AND CULTURE

For a taste of Poland, head to Wawel at the Polish center in Troy or Polonia, Under the Eagle or the Polish Village Café in Hamtramck.

Try *nalesniki* (crepes), *golabki* (stuffed cabbage), *pierogi* (dumplings), *placki* (potato pancakes) and, of course *kielbasa* (sausage).

To learn some useful Polish phrases, go to www.polish-translator.net/polish_phrases.html.

SPORTS HONORS

The National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame was founded in 1973 and is based in Hamtramck.

Inductees include Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski, football player and coach Mike Ditka and baseball player Stan Musial, its first inductee.

Check it out at www.polishsportshof.com. Some of the hall's memorabilia is at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy, www.americanpolishcenter.com.



Visionalist Entertainment

Keith Famie, right, with Bruno Nowicki, a sculptor, journalist and chess champion, during the filming of "Our Polish Story," which airs Saturday.

ON TELEVISION

"Our Polish Story" will air at 7 p.m. Saturday on WXYZ-TV (Channel 7). It was directed and produced by chef, author and "Survivor" Keith Famie, who also made "Our Italian Story."

The documentary features several Detroit Polish Americans and segments on Hamtramck and Wyandotte.

Coming in September will be "Our Arab-American Story." More information is at www.ourstoryof.com.