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Review of *The Poles in Oklahoma* By Richard M. Bernard

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The Poles in Oklahoma. By Richard M. Bernard. Newcomers in a New Land. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. Maps, illustrations, bibliographical essay. 90 pp. \$2.95.

Richard M. Bernard has undertaken the challenging task of writing a history of Polish migration to Oklahoma. As he states in the preface, "The Poles of Oklahoma have not left a very easy trail to follow. They were never more than 4,000 in number according to U.S. census counts. And most Poles who lived in the state at one time or another eventually departed, leaving behind few traces of their sojourn in the area."

The author recaptures the Polish experience in Oklahoma by utilizing bits of information scattered through archives and libraries throughout the state and by relying on oral accounts, private collections of letters, and family memorabilia. What emerge from his efforts are dramatic stories—for example, of Polish coal miners in the McAlester district, Polish farmers of Harrah, and Polish smelter workers in Bartlesville. He describes long hours in unsafe coal mines where, more often than not, individual Poles began work as boys who accompanied their fathers into the subterranean shafts. Life on farms was no less difficult. Some newcomers lived in covered wagons and others in dugouts until they could erect more permanent structures. Most Poles engaged in hard menial labor as they struggled to survive in Oklahoma's expanding, competitive economy. Later, by the time of World War II, most second- and third-generation Poles escaped the coal mines, zinc smelters, and farms and became part of the general occupational structure of modern Oklahoma.

The last chapter describes how refugee Polish priests, most of them survivors of Nazi concentration camps, came to Oklahoma in the post-World War II era. Here the author takes the reader to Dachau and Auschwitz and to the battle at Monte Casino. The experiences of many priests are reported, including those of Father Krutkowski, who was rescued from Dachau by the 45th Division from Oklahoma.

Although Bernard has produced a well-written and engaging history, he fails to interpret or "de-anglicize" Polish names in the text. Instead of clarifying this problem in the pref-

ace, he treats it only in a footnote (p. 85), where he shows how "Ignacy" became "Ignatz" in English orthography and "Ike" in common speech. Moreover, he should have explained, for example, that "Mikolajyagck" (p. 7) is most likely "Mikolajczyk" in Polish. There are also spelling errors of Polish words in the text, for example, "Polske" (p. 38) should be "Polski" and "PrzeChodniu Powiedze Polshe" (p. 80) should be "Przechodniu Powiedz Polsce." Despite these problems, this brief work is a valuable contribution to ethnic history.

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