

WOODLAWN CEMETERY: BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH
EXERCISE 4B



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1. Historical context

1.1 The Majewski-Golankiewicz family

In order to understand and contextualize the Majewski mausoleum, it is important to carry out a study of the people in it, researching the family history through various bibliographical sources and testimonies of direct relatives.

The first known member of the family is Bartholomew Golankiewicz. Bartholomew was born in Przeworsk, Podkarpackie, Poland, in 1841. With his first wife, Antonina Czadowska, he had two daughters: Sophie Majewski, in 1869 and another daughter of unknown name. With his second wife, Aniela Krogulecka, he had four sons: Josef, in 1877; Stanislaw, in 1878; Franciszec, in 1885 and the youngest of the brothers, John, in 1890.

Following the account of Judith Kapp (History Hub, 2020), a distant relative, Bartholomew was the founder of a furrier company in his hometown. The company was not very large and did not make much money. Bartholomew made the decision to take his children to the United States, probably to give them a better life. Thanks to the various documents on these trips, it has been discovered that he made two trips to take his children to New York. The first (Ancestry library, 1850-1934), in 1886, he came to Ellis Islands (Img. 1) from Hamburg, Germany. He brought his daughter Sophie, who was 16 years old, Josef, 9, Stanislaw, 8, and Franciszek, 1. On the second (Ancestry library, 1820-1957) and final trip, he brought his youngest son, John, 3 years old. After this trip Bartholomew had to return to his country since, for some unknown reason, he was banned from entering the United States. From this moment on, it is known that he was residing in numerous European locations, such as Glasgow, Hamburg, Hungary, Austria and Spain, specifically in Galicia. The reason, although it is not known with certainty, could have been due to his fur business. The year and place of his death is unknown, but in commemoration, the Majewski mausoleum has an extraordinary plaque with his face, as well as an inscription referring to his participation in the Polish army.

The person who decided to commission the mausoleum is Sophie Majewski and undoubtedly one of the most interesting family members. As previously mentioned, Sophie arrived in New York with her siblings when she was only 16 years old. Although it is not known exactly what happened during that time, it is possible that she was in charge of taking care of her siblings, bringing an entire family forward in a completely new world.

Sophie married at the age of 19 to Jan Majewski, 35 (United States Federal Census Record, 1900). Jan was born in Russia in 1885 and, like his wife, came to the Ellie Islands (Ancestry library, 1885) in search of a better life. It was ascertained that they resided at 650 E 226th St (United States Federal Census, 1900) in the Bronx. It is not known when the family moved into the house, but it is known that the couple lived there along with Sophie's siblings. The house is a relatively large single-family building, which is consistent with the number of people in the

household. According to the federal censuses, Sophie was a housewife and her husband a train engineer.

In July 1890 Sophie had her first child, Wanda. A year later her second and last child, Sigmund, was born in October 1891. With these new additions, the number of family members residing in the Bronx dwelling rose to seven. This is important to keep in mind since, with Jan's modest profession, the Majewski-Golankiewicz family was not of a high social class and, being immigrants, they had to go through difficult times.

Around 1895, Sophie took her two children to see their grandfather Bartholomew in Poland (Ancestry, 1895). According to Judith Kapp's account, Bartholomew was very ill and Sophie made the decision to say goodbye to her father, even though the trip was costly. For this very reason it is possible that Jan did not go with them, as it is not recorded in any documents.

In 1904 Sophie's husband died at the age of 51. They had been married for 16 years. Widowed at 35, Sophie had to take care of her two children, who were 13 and 14 years old. There is no record of Sophie starting work, so it is assumed that she remained a homemaker. Although it is only a theory, it is possible that Sophie's siblings helped the family financially.

As for Sophie's children, the youngest son, Sigmund, married Mary Walsh in 1914. In 1917 Sigmund was drafted to fight in World War I and sadly died after his arrival, in 1918, as a result of pneumonia (Ancestry library, 1918). The couple had no children. Sigmund is buried in the mausoleum, although his remains were possibly moved as he died before construction of the building began.

Sophie's eldest daughter, Wanda, married Joseph Golankiewicz in 1918. As they were first cousins, the Golankiewicz surname was again present in the family.

The Golankiewicz couple resided in the family home at E 226th St. Although it is not known if Wanda worked, her husband was a machinist. Thanks to the estates appraised document (Ancestry library, 1938), it is known that they had an estate valued at \$36,000, a high figure for the early 1930s, considering that they would currently have about \$767,061.

In February 1926, Sophie Majewski commissioned the construction of a family mausoleum in Woodlawn (Avery Library, 1926), specifically from the Joseph Polchinski Company (Img. 2&3). Considering that Sophie did not seem to have much money, it is possible that her daughter Wanda, who resided in the same house as her mother, would help financially to build the family monument. The bond of the family members must have been very strong, possibly because of the life they spent together, and they decided to invest in a construction that would keep the relatives together forever.

Finally, the last family members that make up the mausoleum are the children of Wanda and Joseph: Edwin, Alvin and Marion. Little Edwin died at just a few months old in 1909 and was

buried in the mausoleum, specifically beneath the floor. Brothers Alvin and Marion are in the mausoleum with their wives Irene and Audrey, respectively. The two brothers served in the U.S. Army and, thanks to the framed document in one of the mausoleum windows, are possibly the same as those in the photograph next window.

The last brother, Roman, does not appear in the mausoleum, but his wife Anna does. He is possibly in one of the tombs without a plaque.

2. About the design

The Majewski Mausoleum (Img. 4) is located in the Highlands plot if we take a panoramic view, the mausoleum is located at the edge of the area, near the road, between Ravine and Whitewood Streets, on the sides and at the back of the mausoleum are numerous single-person tombs.

Based on documents found in the Avery Library archives, the work to build the mausoleum was approved in February 1926. Sophia Majewski, as previously reported. The company that undertook the construction was Joseph Polchinski Co. Inc. and, although the company's catalog has not been found, it is known to still exist and they continue their work of designing mausoleums, single-person tombs and statuary. Nowadays, the Polchinski Memorials continue to have that characteristic style of simplicity, making small buildings with little decoration. The blue granite, the most abundant material in the mausoleum, has the following characteristics:

- Great ability to withstand extreme temperatures, fluctuations, hydrocarbons and acid rain from atmospheric pollution. Withstands the passage of time well.
- Many colors are available.
- A fairly affordable material when compared to marble.
- Can be carved in different ways.

In general the structure is quite simple and small in size. It is mainly made of granite (probably blue granite), white marble, as well as copper. The granite is found in the exterior wall, being the thickest of all; the marble in the interior, with a thinner thickness than the granite; and the copper is found in the main door and in details in the tombs, in the ceiling and in the windows.

Moving on to the interior, it is possible to appreciate a space design that perfectly complements the exterior. Although modest, the room is decorated to look cozy. From the main door one can see the twelve tombs of the family and imagine the other four, which are located beneath the floor. On the sides of the door there are two benches made of the same marble as the walls, an element that inevitably makes the room more human. The windows, which let a beautiful light into the building, are painted-stained glass windows with no recognizable author. On the cornices are various family mementos, such as framed photographs and documents. On the left side of the door hangs a large engraved figure showing the face of Bartholomew Golankiewicz.

3. About the iconography

One of the personal reasons for choosing the mausoleum was the beautiful sculpture that "protects" the entrance to the small temple. In complete harmony, the mausoleum has some precious painted stained-glass windows that represent one of the most represented iconographic themes: the Annunciation. The representation in the window follows an archetypal model, in which the Virgin Mary appears with a blue mantle inside a richly decorated interior. The companion is the angel Saint Gabriel, who bursts in from outside on a white cloud. Flying over the two figures is the white dove that symbolizes the Holy Spirit, as well as some rays of light that allude to the power of God. In the lower part is a symbol typically represented, a vase with lilies, representing the purity of the Virgin.

It is curious how the family decided to place the sculpture of, probably, the same angel St. Gabriel, guarding the doors of the Majewski family mausoleum. Although no cross is observed in the mausoleum, it is remarkable the Christian faith of the family.

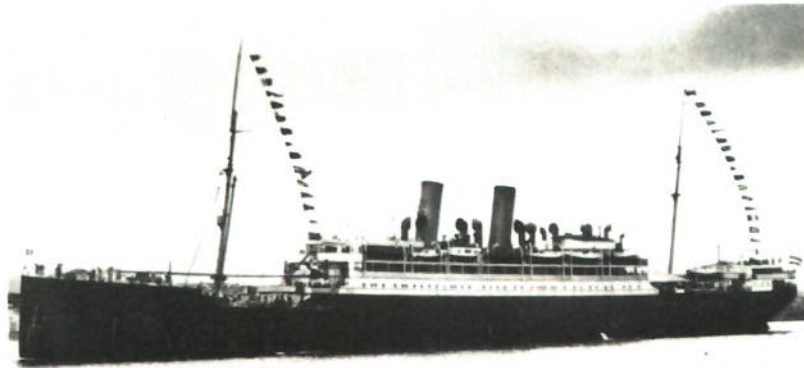
4. State of conservation

- The mausoleum. In general the building is in very good condition. The interior is really clean, concluding that they keep it in good condition, preventing it from deteriorating. One of the few existing problems is the roof of the mausoleum. A slight bowing is observed in the joints of the pieces that compose the roof. It does not seem to be a serious stability problem.
One of the most curious things is the difference in some details between the Polchinski company's plans (Img. 6 & 7) and the current structure. It is not possible to determine with certainty but probably the door was a last minute decision, as it is not similar to the one in the plans. Also, the angel sculpture (Img.8) does not appear on the plans, so it may have been a later addition by a family member other than Sophie.
- Sculpture. Although it is not known with certainty the type of stone that was used to make the sculpture, it is possible to intuit that it could be some type of slightly porous limestone or marble. The state of conservation is quite good, intuiting that it is a later addition to the construction of the mausoleum. Due to the environment (Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Español, 2002), with a climate of strong variations of temperature and humidity, some cracks and fractures of little importance are observed. Environmental pollution is the deteriorating factor responsible for the darkening of some areas of the face and yellowing by acidification in the wings and some folds of the tunic.
- Painted stained glass. Although stained glass is an incredibly attractive element, these elements often suffer from numerous conservation problems (The Getty Conservation, 1994). The most common problem due to the passage of time is the change in the original colorimetry and material faults due to the fragility of the glass. Due to the prolonged incidence of light, as well as certain variations, transparency is lost and colors become

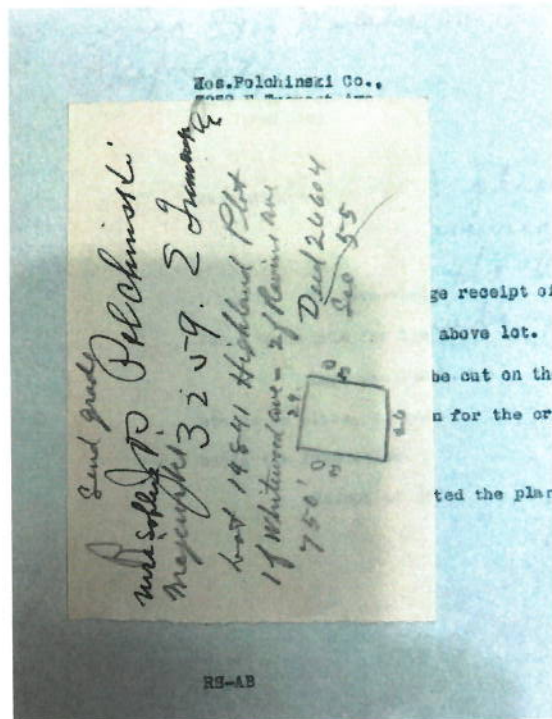
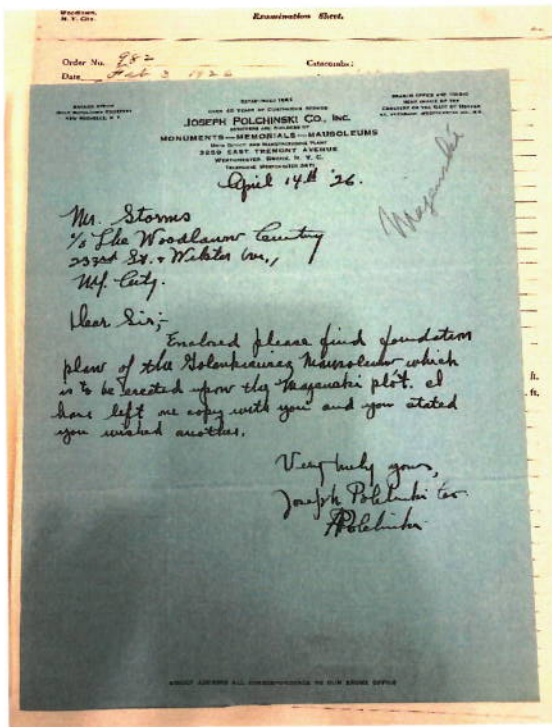
darker. In addition, depending on the color of the glass, it will vary its color in a different way. Although the state of conservation of the glass of the mausoleum is relatively good, one can sense a yellowing of the glass, as well as darkening.

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Img.1 Ship in which Bartholomew was traveling with his children during the first trip. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/imageviewer/collections/8944/images/IMUSA1858_002-002zzpld=324



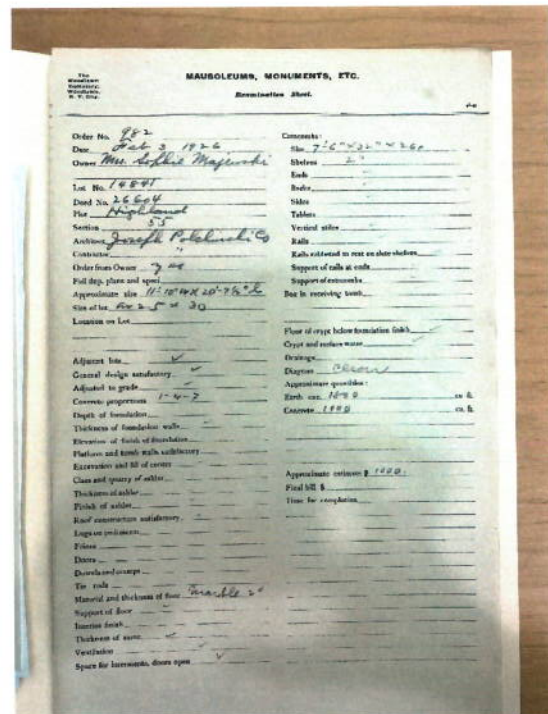
Img. 2 & 3. Documentation on the construction of the Mausoleum. Avery Library



Img. 4 Majewski's Mausoleum.



Img. 5 Rock of Ages Quarries, Barre, VT. <https://bit.ly/3T8Tp5X>



Img 6&7. Polchinski Co. Plans and technical documents. Avery Library



Img. 8 Angel Sculpture