

# Catholic Vital Records of Galicia/Halychyna

by Matthew R. Bielawa

Vital records are the key to our genealogical research. Although at first glance the Galician vital records seem easy enough to use (and easy enough to find due to decades of microfilming by the Family History Library and increased access to foreign archives since the fall of Communism), careful study is critical to fully understand the great value of the records. In this article I will present Catholic vital records from the region of Galicia / Halychyna as it was under control of the Austrian Empire and after the implementation of the 1784 Austrian vital records' regulations. Furthermore, the paper will include important information for both the predominately Polish and Roman Catholic western half of Galicia and the predominately Ukrainian and Greek Catholic eastern half. Before embarking on this study, it is necessary to discuss some basic terminology and background points.

## What is Galicia and Halychyna?

The term Galicia is one of the most confused geographic entities to East European genealogists. The English term "Galicia", which can be found in various North America documents such as census records, naturalization papers and passenger ship lists, refers commonly to the northern-most province of the Austrian Empire, roughly from 1772 to

1918. The official full name of the province was Galicia and Lodomeria (in German *Galizien und Lodomerien*). In Polish, the term is known as Galicja, and in Ukrainian as *Галичина/Halychyna*. The Austrian Empire was commonly called the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1867 and the *Ausgleich*, or *Compromise*, which transformed the Empire into a dual monarchy Austria and Hungary. Today, this area covers southeastern Poland and western Ukraine, roughly from Kraków in the west to Ternopil in the east.

The ethnic background of Galicia was always historically mixed, right up to the end of World War II. Roughly speaking, the western half was predominately Polish and Roman Catholic while the eastern half was predominately Ukrainian and Greek Catholic. This ethnic boundary, which was far from clear cut, was about the border between today's Poland and Ukraine. To simply state, however, that there was a predominance of any one ethnic group in either half is a poor generalization: each half had a sizeable minority of the other ethnic group. Additionally, there were Jews, Germans (including German Catholics), Slovaks, Carpatho-Rusyns, and Armenians throughout the province.

Historically the term Galicia did not start with Austria. This Austrian period is only a fragment of time in the

Fig. 1 - 19th century Galicia. Courtesy of Jonathan D. Shea



region's dynamic history. Prior to Austria's annexation, which started in 1772, Galicia referred only to what we know today as western Ukraine or what the Austrian Empire considered eastern Galicia. The historic origins of the term Galicia comes from the name of the old Ukrainian town and principality *Галич / Halych* (in Polish *Halicz*), which was first mentioned in medieval chronicles in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Galicia is a latinized form of Halych. Throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ukrainian principality was fought over by Poles, Hungarians, Lithuanians and Mongols. Finally, in 1349, King Kazimierz the Great took control for Poland, which ruled the territory up to 1772. The region was called at that time by other names, such as Red Rus (in Polish *Rus Czerwona*, in Ukrainian *Русь Червона / Rus Chervona*), and Rus Province (in Polish *Województwo ruskie*).<sup>1</sup>

In 1772 the huge Kingdom of Poland began to be chipped away by its land and power hungry neighbors of Austria, Russia, and Prussia. Austria grabbed most of Galicia in 1772, completing the annexation in 1846 with the acquisition of Kraków. Austria ruled the region up to 1918. With its defeat in World War I, the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, splintering into many new nations. Although Poland was first to seize the entire Austrian province of Galicia, the Ukrainians formed a short-lived government called the Western Ukrainian People's Republic, which attempted to control the eastern half of Galicia. After bloody fighting between the two ethnic groups, Poland was victorious and politically dominated the region. The region was commonly called by the Poles as *Małopolska*, or Little Poland. However, ethnic strife remained between the two groups up to and throughout World War II. At the end of World War II, the Allied Powers redrew the map of Eastern Europe, splitting the historical Austrian province of Galicia into two, the western half going to Poland and the eastern half becoming a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was a part of the Soviet Union. In addition, the Allied Powers called for massive population exchanges affecting millions of people. Most Poles living in the eastern half were relocated to Poland while most Ukrainians (and Carpatho-Rusyns and Lemkos) living in the western half were forcibly moved either eastward to the USSR or dispersed throughout Poland, thus essentially breaking up their community and political aspirations feared by the Soviet and Polish governments. In 1991 Ukraine became an independent country exercising full control over eastern Galicia.

This short history is imperative to the study of Galician vital records. It accounts for the format and structure of the documents over the centuries while giving logical clues as to where to find the location of these records today.

### **Galician Record Keeping and General Description**

The religious makeup of Galicia was and still is predominately Catholic, though the region was also home to

large minorities of Lutherans, Jews and Orthodox Christians before the Second World War. Two Catholic rites exist in the region, the Roman, or Western, rite and the Greek, or Eastern or Byzantine, rite. Both a part of the Catholic Church under the Pope, each rite maintains its own parish registers. This fact must always be kept in mind by the researcher. In 1563 at the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church proclaimed that its parishes were to keep written records of baptisms and marriages. Later in 1614, a directive called for death records to be maintained, as well. When the Austrians seized the area, they mandated that the Catholic priest was to be the official state registrar. In 1784, regulations were clearly defined and implemented.<sup>2</sup> The key regulations to be understood are outlined below.

### **Catholic priests were to function as civil registrars for non-Catholics**

Catholic priests kept the official vital records for other religious groups, such as Jews, Lutherans and Orthodox. These other faiths sometimes kept their own records, but the records were not state documents. Over time, each of these religious groups was granted official record keeper status by the Austrian government.

### **Records were to be kept in Latin**

It's important for the researcher to become familiar with some key Latin words and phrases. Although one may find Polish, Ukrainian and German in some of the records, (in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism began to take shape and one could see more Polish and Ukrainian in the records), by far the main language of the documents was Latin. This should be a relief for North American researchers since Latin is much more recognizable to English than Polish and Ukrainian. Note that before the 1784 regulations, Greek Catholic records were usually written in Church Slavonic, a liturgical language using the Cyrillic alphabet. Roman Catholic records before 1784 were in Latin.

One must be careful regarding names and languages found in the records. First names were usually translated into Latin. Therefore, the Catholic priest would use *Joannes* for the Polish *Jan* or for the Ukrainian *Іван / Ivan*. Some Greek Catholic priests, flexing their nationalistic aspirations, began to include Ukrainian spellings of the first names in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Last names, however, were usually written using Polish spelling. Polish, and not Ukrainian, was used because it was the more predominant political ethnic group of the two in the Galician province.

### **Records were to be kept in columnar format**

This again should be a relief for the researcher. It means that all the information is written in columns, making it very easy to read and search the records. It also means that foreign language is less of a problem so long as only a few key words are learned. Compare this to the paragraph format which requires the researcher to pick out the main information from long complicated sentences and to stumble through a larger vocabulary and complex grammar. Note

that older Galician records from before the 1784 decree were usually written in the paragraph format.

**Each type of vital record was to be kept in separate registers**

The Catholic priest was to keep three separate registers for each event: births/baptisms, marriages, and deaths. Furthermore, each village in the parish was to be listed separately. It is therefore, most important that the researcher know the parish his/her ancestor came from. If the researcher knows the village name, he/she would then have to learn to which parish the village belonged. Keep in mind that parish jurisdictions often changed so one village may have belonged to different parishes over time. This information can be found in different gazetteers. Having parish records as opposed to village records is good news to the researcher. If an ancestor moved from village to village, so long as each village was in the same parish, the vital records would be bound together. Of course, ancestors could have moved to neighboring villages belonging to a different parish. It is a good idea to become familiar with the geography of the region and learn all of the parishes in the immediate area.

Parish sizes differed from place to place. Keep in mind the regional differences within Galicia. In eastern Galicia, where a majority of the population was Greek Catholic, each village may have had its own church and served as its own parish. On the other hand, one Roman Catholic parish may have served the Roman Catholic minority of many surrounding villages. The opposite is usually the case in western Galicia, where one Greek Catholic parish may have served the Greek Catholic minority of many surrounding villages.

I must stress that Catholics were allowed to marry into different rites. Therefore, if a researcher was raised Roman Catholic but whose ancestors came from an ethnically mixed part of Galicia, this researcher should never assume that all ancestors would be found in Roman Catholic parish registers. This researcher should check the Greek Catholic parish registers, as well. In 1927, over 16% of the marriages in Eastern Galicia were of mixed Roman and Greek Catholic marriages.<sup>3</sup> The most popular practice of such mixed marriages was that sons followed the rite of their father and the daughters followed the rite of their mother. Consider the following scenario: Greek Catholic Dmytro marries Roman Catholic Jadwiga. One would most likely find in the Greek

Fig. 2 - Latin birth record from Galicia

1906		Numerus domus	Nomen	Religio			Sexus		Thori	Parentes		Patrini
Mensis	Natus			Baptisatus	Catholica	Aut alia	Puer	Puella	Legitimi	Illegitimi	Nomen et cognomen	Conditio
1	9	224	+16. VIII. 1906 Clemens Obit. Cal. Moroz Bapt. Al. Dobrobina	1	1	1		leg		Martinus Batuczynski agricola filius legitimus Be. medice et Mariæ Michalenska. Rosalia Moroz, filia legitima Clementis et Annae Klawatko.	agricola	Joannes Habera Franciscus Moroz
	9		+9. VIII. 1906 Rosalia 1: gemelli: Obit. 2. 1. In periculo mortis bapt. ex aqua.	1			1					
	6	200	Michael Obit. quae supra Bapt. Gul. Wrodawczyk Adm. l.	1			1	leg		Laurentius Kwiecien, fil. leg. Joannis et Martiae Klawatko. — Catharina Adamowicz, filia leg. Petri et Annae Batuczynska.	agricola	Jacobus Adamowicz Carolina Rodzinski

Catholic birth/baptismal registers all of the sons and in the Roman Catholic registers all of the daughters. Furthermore, one would search the Greek Catholic death registers for the deaths of the sons and the Roman Catholic parish death registers for the daughters. Please understand that this was not the rule, but the most common practice (and a practice which often continued in North America for immigrants from this region). For marriage registers, one would need to search both Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic parish registers. There was no rule that marriages could only be held in the bride's parish. And usually no notice was made in the other rite's parish.

**Copies of the records were to be made and forwarded to the Bishop**

A copy of the birth/baptismal and marriage records was to be made by the priest so that one copy could be transferred to the Bishop's Consistory (the Bishop of the particular Catholic rite). This operation was extended to death registers in 1836. This Austrian mandate was done for tax and military conscription purposes. The copy is now commonly called the Bishop's Copy. (In Ukrainian archival indexes, it's often called simply *копія / копія*.) The existence of the Bishop's Copy is an important concept for the Galician researcher. The obvious advantage is that if one copy is lost, a second one may be available. Furthermore, if one copy is at an archive that is inaccessible, another copy may be more easily attainable through another archive. If a researcher is lucky enough to be able to study both copies, there are some other advantages. If one copy has difficult handwriting, the other copy may be more legible. Also, a researcher can consult both copies to resolve an inconsistency in one copy, or find maiden or grandparents' names.

**Tutorial of the Vital Records**

The church records are easy to read due to the structure layout. However, a tutorial is still needed to properly extract all the information from the record. Sometimes a researcher is too excited about the record and misreads the record or ignores what is perceived to be unessential information at the time.

**Birth/Baptismal Records: *Liber baptisatorum, Liber natorum***

1. Serial Number, *Numerus Serialis*

Usually the first column on the left is the serial number given by the priest sequentially in chronological order for each year. With each new year the priest started the number count over with number one (1).

This procedure was done in order to keep names from being added or removed from the books. It helped ensure the validity of the record keeping. For researchers, these

numbers can be helpful in following the information, determining if any parts of the year are missing, or even in figuring out if pages are out of order (an occurrence that can sometimes happen especially during the microfilming stage). Sometimes if there is no specific column for this information, priests often still numbered each entry in the margin.

2. Date: Year, Month, and Day

The column headings are usually: *mensis*, month; *dies*, day; *nativitas*, birth; *baptisatus*, baptism; *nativitatis*, of birth; *baptisatis*, of baptism.

The researcher should record both the birth and baptism dates of the child, and not just the birth date.

*Year*

One should be careful of the year, which is not always written next to each entry or at the top of every page. Back track carefully page by page to find the correct year.

Poland adopted the Gregorian calendar (the one we use today) in 1582. The Greek Catholic church records were also kept in the Gregorian calendar. This is different than record keeping in the Russian Empire, which kept the Julian calendar until 1918. Depending on the year, there's about a 12 day difference between the two calendars.

*Month*

Months are found in Latin, which should not pose a problem to English speakers.

*Fig. 3 - Months in English and Latin*

English	Latin	Latin genitive
January	<i>Januarius</i>	<i>Januarii</i>
February	<i>Februarius</i>	<i>Februarii</i>
March	<i>Martius</i>	<i>Martii</i>
April	<i>Aprilis</i>	<i>Aprilis</i>
May	<i>Maius</i>	<i>Maii</i>
June	<i>Junius</i>	<i>Junii</i>
July	<i>Julius</i>	<i>Julii</i>
August	<i>Augustus</i>	<i>Augusti</i>
Septmeber	<i>September</i>	<i>Septembris</i>
October	<i>October</i>	<i>Octobris</i>
November	<i>November</i>	<i>Novembris</i>
December	<i>December</i>	<i>Decembris</i>

One common abbreviation must be identified and explained. Priests often used a numeric abbreviation for the last four months of the year. These abbreviations are based on the root, or meaning, of the word and NOT the numeric order of that month.

- 7 (or 7-bris or Roman numeral VII) is (of) September <not July>. *Septem* in Latin means seven
- 8 (or 8-bris or Roman numeral VIII) is (of) October <not August>. *Octo* in Latin means eight.
- 9 (or 9-bris or Roman numeral IX) is (of) November <not September>. *Novem* in Latin means nine.
- 10 (or 10-bris or Roman numeral X) is (of) December <not October>. *Decem* in Latin means ten.

in that language's alphabetical numeric system, where each number is represented by a letter of the alphabet (and not by the Arabic numeral system, e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) This is similar to the Roman numeral system. For a complete description of the Old Church Slavic numeral system, please see my website <[www.halgal.com/churchslavicdmy.html](http://www.halgal.com/churchslavicdmy.html)> or my article on the subject in the *East European Genealogist* 8(2) (Winter 1999).

### 3. House Number, *Numerus Domus*

One of the most interesting features of the Galician vital record is the house number, which was noted on vital records starting at the time of Austrian rule. Houses were numbered

1841.		Nu- me- rus do mus	N O M E N	Reli- gio				Sexus		Legitimi		PARENTES		PATRINI	
Mensis				Catholica	Ant Alia	Puer	Puella	Legitimi	Illegitimi	N O M E N	Condi- tio	N O M E N	Condi- tio		
Na- tus	Bap- tisa- tus													Thori	Thori
24	24	69.	Michat.	/	"	/	"	/	"	Dmytro Maku- roshki, Maria Snykowsky, cy.	Polni, cy.	Theodor Brye- jow, Kaptajen Pol- Balicewca. + cy.	Poln		
29	29	212.	Larasczewa.	/	"	/	"	/	"	Jozef Czechowski Katarzynski Cajacob.	Polni, cy.	Nikolaj Brye- jow, Theodor Gulkowa. + cy.	Poln cy.		
14	14	11.	Larasczewa.	/	"	/	"	/	"	Dawron Snyki, Maria Bordinska	Polni, Kocwa- Lwona.	Alexa Budy- Maria Mafa- roska.	Poln cy.		
17	17	12.	Michat.	/	"	/	"	/	"	Michat Lorey mykida, Katar- zynski, Katar- zynski, Katar- zynski	Polni, cy.	Jan Baltha + Sabina Ruda no. + cy.	Poln cy.		
22	22	61.	Darcil	/	"	/	"	/	"	Gabriel Ma- kymowicz Larasczewa Cotulskowca.	Polni, cy.	Jan Radoko + Larasczewa Makroska + Mick	Polni Mick		

Fig. 4 - Births record showing month abbreviations 8<sup>bris</sup> etc.

This will make more sense if one knows that historically the first month of the year was not January, but March. This is why September, meaning the 7th month, is so-called since historically it was the 7th month of the year.

Older Greek Catholic records written in Old Church Slavic can be trickier. Reading the months is not difficult to the researcher familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet. The names of the months in that language are based on the same roots as in Latin. However, reading dates and years in Old Church Slavic is complicated since dates and years are often written

in each village separately, usually starting with number 1 in the center of the village or nearest to the church. The numbers grew sequentially in order of location. However, as new houses were built, they were assigned the next sequential number, so house number 50 is not necessarily next door to house number 51. They could actually be at opposite ends of the village. Lower numbers though may be next to each other if the houses were next to each other at the time the numbering system for that village was originally developed.

The house number is the house where the particular event took place, e.g. birth/baptism, marriage or death. One can quickly run down this column and look for specific house numbers to easily find ancestors. Also, it's a great way to track movement of families within the village. Often, a house was occupied by several families. One can easily find other families living in the same house as your own ancestors. This clue would take you to research that other family's line back to see if there is a connection to your own family. Without seeing the house number, you might not have known to take this course of action.

There are certain misconceptions about the house number that must be mentioned. One should not jump to conclusions or overestimate the real value. Keep in mind that many births occurred at a neighbor's, relative's or even the midwife's house. Therefore, the house number that was recorded by the parish priest on the record may not necessarily be the family's home. Of course, never simply scan through the pages of an ancestral village concentrating solely on the house number.

Finally, the house numbers are very useful for other types of records, such as land and tax records. A researcher should always record the house number for every entry. Once one starts researching an ancestral village, one will find relatives going to and coming from neighboring villages. One can then sort criteria in a genealogical software program to study household movements. For example, for house number 4 in the village of Czeremosznia, use the code Czer4. For house number 102 in the village of Usznia, use the code Usz102.

#### 4. Name of the child or of the baptized

*Nomen*, name

*Nomen Baptisati*, name of baptized

As stated above, the first names are usually written in Latin. For transcription purposes, you should include both the Latin form and appropriate national form, either Polish or Ukrainian. I suggest using the resource [First Names of the Polish Commonwealth: Origins and Meanings](#) by Hoffman and Helon. The book contains an excellent list of translations and variations in several languages, including Latin, Polish, Ukrainian and English.

Sometimes a person was given two names. This was not a common custom, but can be seen occurring in the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was noted by the priest in Latin as *binominus*, or by the abbreviation *binom*. This is *not* two different children, but one child with two names.

Twins were noted by the term *gemelli*, if they were two boys or one boy and one girl. The term *gemellae* was used if both were girls.

Next to the name you may find a drawn cross. This indicates that the newborn died, usually shortly after birth. It may be the same day or even weeks later. The specific date can only be determined by studying the death records for the same village and parish. Sometimes a date was added right

next to the cross signifying the date of death. On rare occasions a conscientious priest returned to the birth/baptismal record to make such a notation for someone who had died much later in life.

#### 5. Religion, *Religio*

There is usually simply a check in either the "Catholic" column or "non-Catholic column". In Latin they are *Catholica* or *Accatholica / Aut Alia*, respectively. Sometimes one will find the Catholic rite is indicated by *romano-catholica*, or *r.l. (ritus latinus)* for Latin, or Roman, Catholic rite, or *graeco-catholica*, or *r.g. (ritus graecus)* for Greek, or Eastern, Catholic rite.

#### 6. Gender

Sexual gender in birth and baptismal records is usually indicated by one of the following terms:

*Sexus*, sex

*Puer*, boy

*Puella*, girl

*Sexus masculinus*, male sex/gender

*Sexus femininus*, female sex/gender

It may be used to help identify the sex of the child if the researcher is not familiar with the Latin variation of the name. Or if part of the handwriting of the name is not clear or if the page near the name is smudged, torn or badly microfilmed, this column may be helpful

#### 7. Status: legitimate or illegitimate

Legal status of a birth (*Thorus*) is indicated in Latin by the terms *Legitimi* or *Illegitimi*. Sometimes the word or abbreviation is not used, but rather the priest puts a check mark in the corresponding column. In the case of illegitimate births, the father's name is not listed, or it's written as *pater ignotus*, which means father unknown. Sometimes the priest simply marked the record with an X, a dash, or a circle with a line through it. Everyone in the village, including the priest, may have known who the father of the child was, but since the document is legal both in church and state law, the father of a child born out of wedlock cannot be proven.

#### 8. Parents

Parental relationship to a child is demonstrated in Latin by the following terms:

*Parentes*, parents

*Pater*, father

*Mater*, mother

*Nomen*, name

*Cognomen*, surname

Records vary greatly from year to year, parish to parish, and priest to priest. As a general rule, the older the record is, the less information is written. The priest may note only first names of the father and mother with the surname of the father. Sometimes, the priest included the mother's maiden name. And even at other times, all grandparents of the child were listed. In this last case it means one can find three generations on a single record!

As stated earlier in this article, first names are usually in Latin, whereas the surnames are usually in Polish spelling (as Polish was the dominant political force in the region). Of course, a complete description of the Latin and Polish languages, along with each of their complex grammars as well as regional and temporal spelling variations, is well beyond the scope of this article. However, I would like to provide a (very!) basic introduction.

In order to understand the facts found in this column, it is important to understand the sentence structure and grammar of both Latin and Polish. These two languages have complicated grammars in that words often take on different endings depending on the grammar or function in the sentence. And this applies to first and last names! (The linguistic term for these grammatical functions for nouns, which includes proper names, is "case".) Endings of words change according to the grammatical role the word plays in the sentence. This means that word order is not as structured as in English since the ending of a word dictates grammar and not word order.

The two most important cases used in the vital records' name columns are nominative case (or subject in the sentence) and genitive case (showing possession of a subject in the sentence).

<u>Nominative</u>	<u>Genitive</u>
Anna	Annae
Barbara	Barbarae
Gregorius	Gregorii
Joannes	Joannis
Josephus	Josephi
Maria	Mariae
Petrus	Petri

Consider these examples:

*Joannes (filius) Joannis et Mariae*, John (son) of John and Maria

In this simple example one can see who is the father and mother of who. However, with more information the sentence structure can be complicated and therefore misleading. Understanding the grammar is therefore critical. Consider this example: reading the example of the birth record (fig. 2), one finds listed under the Parents' column of the twins Clemens and Rosalia the following text:

*Martinus Bałuczyński, filius legitimus Benedicti et Mariae Michalewska. Rosalia Moroz, filia legitima Clementis et Annae Kawałko*

Using English first names, this translates as:

(father) Martin Bałuczyński, legitimate son of Benedict (Bałuczyński) and Maria Michalewska.  
(mother) Rosalia Moroz, legitimate daughter of Clement (Moroz) and Anna Kawałko

Using Polish first names, this translates as:

(father) Marcin Bałuczyński, legitimate son of Benedykt (Bałuczyński) and Maria Michalewska.  
(mother) Rozalia Moroz, legitimate daughter of Klemens (Moroz) and Anna Kawałko

Some words or expressions used to indicate a woman's maiden name are:

*de*, of, e.g. *Anna de Makarowska*  
*de domo*, of the house of, e.g. *Anna de domo Makarowska*  
*ex*, from, e.g. *Anna ex Makarowska*  
*nata*, born Anna, e.g. *nata Makarowska*

Grammar also plays a role in surnames. Understand that Polish (along with Latin and Ukrainian) has the concept of gender applied to grammar. In regards to surnames, different endings indicate whether reference is made to a man, a woman, or to a couple. Consider the following examples:

Makarowski, masculine, thus referring to a man  
Makarowska, feminine, thus referring to a woman  
Makarowscy, plural, thus referring to a couple

Again, the grammatical concept of case must be considered

<u>Nominative</u>	<u>Genitive</u>
Makarowski	Makarowskiego
Makarowska	Makarowskiej
Makarowscy	Makarowskich

Consider the following:

*Antonius filius Josephi et Annae Czosnykowskich. mater: Xenia filia Cyrili Labunskiego et Mariae Zborowskiej*

Anthony son of Joseph and Anna Czosnykowski (couple of Joseph and Anna. No mention of Anna's maiden name). mother: Ksenia daughter of Cyril Labunski and Maria Zborowska (Maria's maiden name)

One can also find additional biographical information in this column, such as the place of birth, place of residence or whether or not the parent is deceased. Here are some useful Latin phrases:

*natus in* born in  
*habitus in* residing in  
*p.d.(post delicta)* deceased

Pay particular attention to the names of the spouses. Remarriage after the death of a spouse was very popular, often due to financial, social and religious reasons. Do not blindly assume that the surname listed is correct for women. The surname listed for the woman may be her maiden name, the surname of her first husband, or the surname of her current husband. In turn, you must be careful of these names in the future. A woman may be referred to in future records of her children's and grandchildren's births, marriages, and death records with her own maiden name, the first husband's surname or current surname. A thorough study of all of the woman's ancestors, even of the entire village, is necessary in order to track this properly. Of course, as always, you must be aware of the possibility of priest error, or copy error when looking at the Bishop's Copies.

### 9. Occupation of parents

Sometimes this is listed in its own column marked in Latin as *Conditio*, sometimes the information is included in the parents' column. The occupation of the parents is listed in Latin. Very common in these records is:

*agricola* farmer  
*rolnik* (Polish) farmer (see fig. 4)

### 10. Godparents, *Patrini*

The godparents' names are listed with first names in Latin and surnames in Polish spelling. Sometimes their occupations and place of residence are included. Often one will find a cross drawn next to each name. This signifies that the person is a baptized Christian. Some children will have more than one set of godparents listed. By studying a particular village, one can see that a frequently listed godparent may mean that person was popular in the village or was active in the church or perhaps a very pious person. Sometimes for godmothers one will find the husband listed. Remember that within villages one will always find common names, including both first and last names. Therefore, it may be difficult to determine specific people as Godparents if it's a common name.

### Additional Information and Priest Notations

One may find much more interesting information included. In the column with the birth/baptized child, there is listed the name of the priest performing the baptism and the name of the midwife. Common Latin terms include:

*obstetrix* midwife  
*baptisavit* baptized  
*confirmavit* confirmed

### **Marriage records, *Liber copulatorum***

Many of the columns on the marriage records are identical to those found on the birth/baptismal records (see fig. 5 on page 44).

The first columns are serial number and date marriage. Please consult above for an explanation. The next column is house number. In some cases, one will find two house numbers listed. In such cases, the first number most likely relates to the groom's house, and the second number relates to the bride's. If only one house number is listed, it may be either the groom's or the bride's house. Careful study of the entire village's records will prove the correct house number.

### Spouses' Information

Separate columns are devoted to the groom (Latin: *sponsus*) and to the bride (Latin: *sponsa*). The column with the name of the groom sometimes lists additional biographic information, including the names of the parents and grandparents, place of birth and/or residence, previous wives, and profession. Additional columns pertaining to the groom may include religion (*religio*), age (*aetas*), and marital status at time of marriage: unmarried (Latin: *caelebs* or *virgo*) or widowed (Latin: *viduus* for males, *vidua* for females). Similar column headings and information are available for the bride.

In the religion column, one may find listed the person's rite for Catholics. This may be spelled out as *romano-catholica* or *graeco-catholica* or it may be abbreviated as *r.l.* for Latin Rite or *r.g.* for Greek Rite.

### Witnesses

The names of the witnesses, or in Latin *testes*, are provided. Sometimes, the occupation and place of residence of the witnesses are included.

### Final statement

A statement drawn up by the priest in either Latin, Polish, or Ukrainian (in the case of Greek Catholics) stresses the legal aspect of the marriage contract. Although statements vary from record to record, the contract may include the agreement to the marriage by both of the newlyweds' parents, a parent's consent to a marriage of a child under the legal age of consent, list of banns, and signatures of the parents (often just a mark, usually an X, made by the illiterate parents).

### **Death Records, *Liber mortuorum***

Death records are the simplest of the three vital records and therefore, carry the least amount of information (see fig 6 on page 45). Columns usually include, as with the other vital records described in this article, the serial number and house number. Included also are the dates of death and burial.



*Dies Mortis*      date of death  
*Dies Sepulturae*   date of burial

The final column is the cause of death, in Latin, *Morbus*. Often, priests would use generic phrases, such as *naturalis* (natural) or *ordinaria* (ordinary). A good Latin dictionary or genealogy word list is needed to translate the Latin.

Name of Deceased, *Nomen Mortui*

Death records can sometimes be tricky to use as they often do not give detailed information on the deceased. Often one will only find a first and last name. Due to the popularity of certain names depending on the village and time period, there could be many people in the village with the same first and last name. Therefore, it is sometimes a challenge to determine which person is really deceased. The house number can be used to help distinguish people. Sometimes, more detailed information is provided by the priest, such as the person's spouse or parents. Additional columns may include :

Religion      *Religio* or *Catholica/Aut Alia* or  
*Catholica/Acatholica*  
Age      *Dies Vitae* (literally Days of Life)  
Gender      *Sexus* or *Masculinus/Femininus*

**Certificates and Extract Forms**

Often when a researcher writes to an archive in Poland or Ukraine for information, one receives not a photocopy of the original church record, but a certificate or extract form. The certificate includes most or all of the information found on the original priest's record as transcribed by the archivist or office clerk. It is an official document with signature and seal.

For a more detailed tutorial of each of the three vital records, as well as information on the location of records and descriptions of archives, visit this author's website at <[www.halgal.com](http://www.halgal.com)>,or:

birth records: <[www.halgal.com/birthrecord.html](http://www.halgal.com/birthrecord.html)>  
marriage records: <[www.halgal.com/marriagerecord.html](http://www.halgal.com/marriagerecord.html)>  
for death records: <[www.halgal.com/deathrecord.html](http://www.halgal.com/deathrecord.html)>

Fig. 5 - Galician marriage record

1856 Mensis	Nrus. domus	Nomen	Religio					Nomen	Religio					Nomen	Conditio
			Catholica	Aut Alia	Aetas	Caelibs	Viduus		Catholica	Aut Alia	Aetas	Caelibs	Viduus		
9 <sup>o</sup> Novembrii	71	Josephus Mikoda agricola, filius Joannis et Theda natae Szalkowsk agricolarem Ulsz- niansium.	1	-	20	1	-	Carolina Drabczak filia Hyacinthi et Catharinae natae Dubowa agricola- rum Ulszniansis	1	-	17	1	-	Andrzej Swiderski Tadusa Ktali	agricola
<p>Matoletniom rodzonom dawciom narom Josephowi i Karolinie w przytomosci dwoch wyryj wyrazonych świadkach jako ojcowie pozwalamy z soba zawrzec skute matonstwie, na co sig znaniami przyrzec J. podpisujemy. Jan Mikoda ojciec. Jacek Drabczak ojciec.  Benedykt: Ignacius Dunajewski Curatus.</p>															
16 <sup>o</sup> Novembrii	63 92	Joannes Drabczak agricola, viduus post Annam natum Laburiska, filius p.d. Francisii et Agnetae natae Jozseph agricolarem Ulszniansium	1	-	25	-	1	Cunegunda Oleynik filia Joannis et Catharinae natae Ktali agricolarem Ulszniansium.	1	-	17	1	-	Jozef Potratycki Franciszek Bedmarczak	agricola
<p>Jako na zamyciu rodzony matoletny corki mojej Cunegundy z Janem Drabczakiem pozwalam, w przytomosci dwoch wyryj wyrazonych świadkach znanymi, znaniami przyrzec J. stawiam.  Benedykt: Ignacius Dunajewski Curatus. Jan Oleynik ojciec</p>															

Dies mortis		Nrus Domus	N O M E N M O R T U I	Religio		Sexus		Dies Vitae	MORBUS et QUALITAS MORTIS
MENSIS				Catholica	Aut alia	Masc.	Femina		
12.	14. Augusti	18.	Eva Kłodzinska nata Jan rowicz, vidua post Adalbertum agricolam.	1	-	-	1	56 annorum	Cholera
12.	24. Augusti	116.	Franciscus Baturzynski filius Mathai et Catharinae, natus, Mlak agricolam.	1	-	1	-	77 annorum	Cholera
12.	14. Augusti	116.	Rosalia Baturzynska filiis Mathai et Catharinae, natus, Mlak agricolam.	1	-	-	1	5 annorum	Cholera
14.	16. Augusti	73	Joannes Sabrylski agricola maritus Rosaliae, natus, Szarnska	1	-	1	-	31 annorum	Cholera
16.	18. Augusti	103.	Catharina Domańska filiis Mathai et Mariae, natus, Kto dzinski agricolam.	1	-	-	1	8 annorum	Cholera
24.	26. Augusti	119.	Sophia Mikoda nata Fiu malk uxor Jozefi agricolae	1	-	-	1	44 annorum	Cholera
27.	29. Augusti	125	Victoria Bojalkowska filiis Thomae et Agnatis, natus, Lu- ryth agricolam.	1	-	-	1	5 annorum	Cholera
29.	31. Augusti	126.	Thaddeus Mosciński agri- cola, maritus Rosaliae, natus, Lisi malk.	1	-	1	-	47 annorum	Cholera.

Fig. 6 - Galician death record

### Endnotes

1. Paul Robert Magocsi, Galicia: A Historical Survey and Bibliographic Guide (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), xv.
2. Jonathan D. Shea, "The Keeping of Vital Records in the Austrian Partition," East European Genealogist, 2(1) (September 1993), 7.
3. Stanislaw Skrzypek, The Problem of Eastern Galicia (London: Polish Association for the South-Eastern Provinces, 1948), 23.

Matthew R. Bielawa currently serves as vice president of the Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut and the Northeast. He earned a B.A. degree in Slavic and East European Studies from the University of Connecticut in 1989 and a M.A. degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures from New York University in 1994. His research specialization is in the region of Eastern Galicia, or Western Ukraine. He is the author of the website Genealogy of Eastern Galicia / Halychyna at <[www.halgai.com](http://www.halgai.com)>.



Fig. 7 - Galician coat of arms