

### ***Short history of Kashubes in the United States***

The bulk of Kashubian immigrants came to America between 1840 and 1900, first from the highlands around Konitz/Chojnice, then the Baltic coastline west of Danzig/Gdansk, and finally the forest/agricultural lands around and south of Neustadt/Wejherowo. Germans (Kingdom of Prussia, Second Reich) ruled this region until World War I, when it was transferred to the newly independent Poland.

The experience of Kashubes in the United States has been little studied because they did not establish a permanent immigrant identity. (They did not organize ethnic but only parish societies.) Some identified themselves as Germans, because Polish immigrants who settled near Kashubes viewed them as ignorant, pious peasants who spoke Polish incorrectly. To avoid the stigma of being a Kashube, many began to call themselves German Poles or assimilated into Poles, especially when dealing with their American neighbors.

Early Kashubes formed small settlements on the American frontier in Michigan (Parisville and Posen), Wisconsin (Portage County), and Minnesota (around Winona). Fisherman settled on Jones Island along Lake Michigan in Milwaukee in the 1850s. Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some continued to settle in South Dakota, Missouri, and Nebraska. With the rise of industrialization in the American Midwest, Kashubes and natives of Posen/Poznan took the hot and heavy foundry and factory jobs in cities like Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. In 1900 the number of Kashubes in the United States was estimated around 100,000.

The rise of interest in genealogy after the 1970s has resulted in reference and academic studies in immigrant history. The most important popular work on Kashubes is found in the Kashubian Association of North America quarterly newsletter, first published in 1997.

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