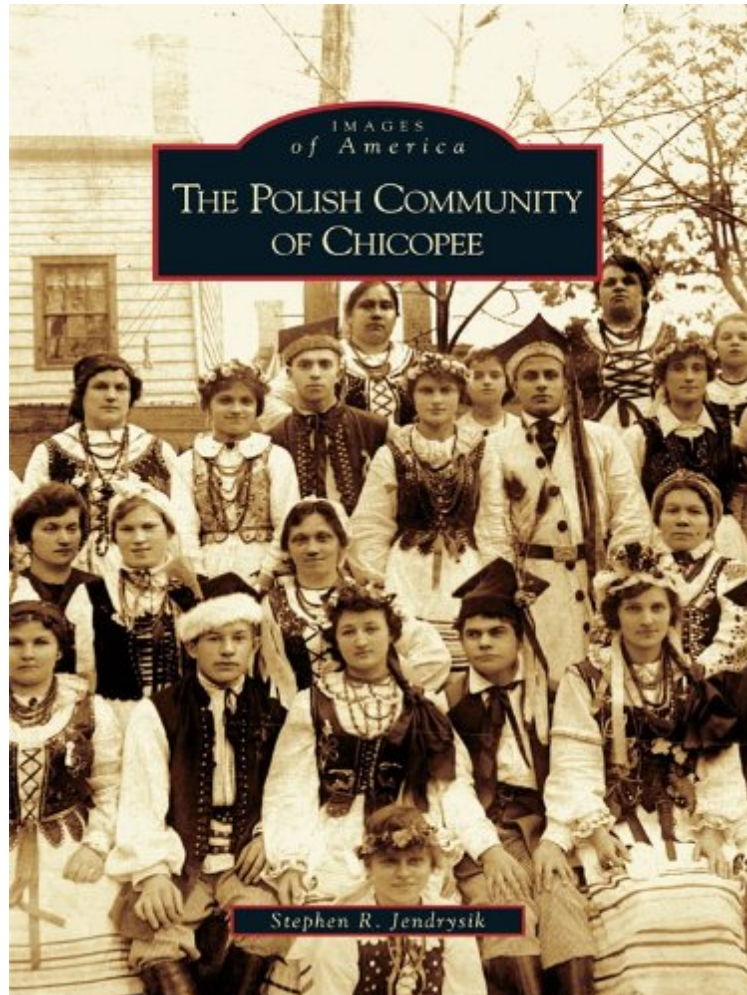


## The Polish Community of Chicopee

*Stephen R. Jendrysik*

*audiobook / \*ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#1463625 in eBooks 2005-11-02 2005-11-02 File Name: B00949QYEE | File size: 72.Mb

**Stephen R. Jendrysik : The Polish Community of Chicopee** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Polish Community of Chicopee:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An enjoyable readBy Suzanne TeczaVery informative.15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. REVIEW ORIGINALLY IN POLISH AMERICAN JOURNALBy John M. GrondelskiChicopee is a city of almost 55,000 people, located in western Massachusetts approximately 35 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut. 22.8% of its inhabitants-the single largest ethnic group-still claims Polish ancestry, according to the 2000 census. Jendrysik claims that the first Poles "accidentally" arrived in Chicopee in 1880. Chicopee, like many river valley towns in New England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, attracted immigrants to its textile mills. Mills like Dwight's wanted immigrant labor. The story of Chicopee Polonia has numerous similarities to other Polish communities deriving from the emigracja za chlebem. Immigrants from a rural and impoverished Poland (in the case of Chicopee, primarily from today's Masup3;opolskie and Podkarpackie

wojewaacute;dztwo) found jobs in industrial America. Along the way, they built a church (St. Stanislaus), experienced a schism (Holy Mother of the Rosary Church), had extraordinary priests who ministered to them (Frs. Francis Chalupka and Stanislaus Czelusniak, OFM Conv.), fought in Haller's Army (47 from Chicopee, 500 from the Holyoke area), and assimilated. But Chicopee is unique in a number of ways. About half of the immigrants who started coming in the 1880s and early 1900s were teenagers (including this reviewer's paternal grandfather). The author says they were trying to avoid Austrian conscription. The entrepreneurial spirit of these immigrants was strong, evidenced by the numerous small businesses launched by immigrants, a prudent move given the tenuous nature of a local economy dependent on a single type of industry. Poles clearly thrived in Chicopee, and the small-town nature of the place allowed them to stand out and color the larger community in ways that ethnic enclaves in metropolitan areas like Chicago or Detroit did not. Chicopee had a Polish mayor throughout the 1930s (A.J. Stonina), who apparently ousted a French-Canadian. Poles dominated the City Council. Stonina's administration supposedly was involved in some of the excesses of machine politics and, in 1939, local Franco-Americans took the mayoralty back. One lasting achievement today was a major Stonina initiative: Westover Air Force Base, in Chicopee, approved in September 1939. In keeping with the pattern of the "Images of America" series, this book tells Chicopee Polonia's story through 221 old, black-and-white pictures. Each picture is accompanied by three or four lines of text that, taken together, tells the history of Polonia Chicopee from 1880-1941. Text alone is limited to a one page introduction. The genre makes the book easy to read, telling Chicopee's story in an interesting and visually pleasing way. Written by a local, probably arm-chair historian, the book does have some quirks. Why does the book end in 1941? How did Chicopee Polonia fight World War II on the home front? What about Chicopee Polonia today? Sometimes the narrative of the picture captions seems incomplete: I had to go back and forth a few times to figure out that Holy Mother of the Rosary emerged not as Chicopee's second Roman Catholic parish but apparently spent three years in a twilight zone existence as an "independent" Catholic church before formally joining the Polish National Catholics. Sometimes the story gets confusing because the slavish chronological arrangement of the picture captions' narrative breaks the continuity of a theme (e.g., we jump from preparations for war to a house built in 1916 to the first Chicopee casualty in World War I). Those shortcomings aside, this book is a useful addition to the limited pool of literature on American Polonia in small-town America, where the dynamics were both similar to and different from those in big cities. The pool of potential research on a place like Chicopee seems large: Poles in small-town politics, the Polish-American press (Chicopee was home to *Nowa Anglia*, a Polish weekly), and economic migration (both in terms of attracting immigrants from Poland and in local migration among the mill towns of southern New England). By putting it down on paper and making sure the history of Chicopee Polonia didn't get lost (a 1973 fire in St. Stanislaus School apparently consumed lots of old artifacts), Jendrysik's made a great start.

The first group of Polish immigrants to come to Chicopee arrived in 1880. These Poles filled many of the manufacturing jobs in the city's two large textile mills. In less than 30 years from their arrival, this aggressive, self-assured group boasted more Polish-owned businesses than any other community in New England. The Polish Community of Chicopee chronicles an immigrant population that was fiercely dedicated to the ideals of free enterprise and democratic pluralism.

About the Author With a unique insiders' perspective, Stephen R. Jendrysik is able to capture the story of the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of the Polish community of Chicopee. A lifelong resident of Chicopee, he is the chairman of the Chicopee Historical Commission. He retired in 2003, completing a 40-year career in the Chicopee public schools. His grandfather, Zygmunt Jendrysik, emigrated from Galicia to Chicopee 100 years ago.