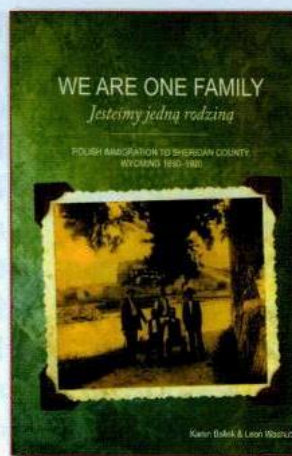


## Book Reviews

by  
Carl Hallberg



***We Are One Family/Jesteśmy jedną rodziną: Polish Immigration to Sheridan County, Wyoming, 1890–1920.*** By Karen Balleck and Leon Washut. Sheridan, Wyoming: Ochodzita Publishing, 2015. vi + 220 pages. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. Paper, \$35.00.

The settlement of Poles and other east-central Europeans in the West was limited in size and even more limited in the documentation it left behind for historians. Polish farming settlements were common enough in the Great Lakes states, Nebraska, and Texas with a few scattered locations in the Dakotas, Montana, and Washington. Poles worked in significant numbers as miners in Oklahoma, Montana, Colorado, and Arizona. Until now, the existence of a Polish settlement in Wyoming, however, has remained undocumented. The most comprehensive survey of Polish parishes and communities, F. Niklewicz's 1937 *Polacy w Stanach Zjednoczonych (Poles in the United States)* recorded no Polish settlement in Wyoming.

*We Are One Family*, a historical and genealogical work by Karen Balleck and Leon Washut, helps to document the heretofore forgotten settlement of Polish miners in Sheridan County, Wyoming. The heart of this work focuses on a select group of Polish families, covering their background, immigration experiences, and life in Wyoming. Although the title of the book suggests coverage only up through 1920, many of the families are covered well

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into the post-World War II period. Family history is the main focus of the book. The chapters on the history of Wyoming and the history of Poland are fairly basic but meant for readers to whom such subjects might be unfamiliar. Other chapters detail the stories of families from each of the three partitions of Poland, settlement in several small mining communities, and work and cultural life. The book relies heavily on first person accounts, family stories, and other documents. A fine selection of photos illustrates the work. Although written as a tribute to their own forebearers and meant for those interested in family history, the authors provide a tremendous amount of factual information that allows us to sketch a clear outline of the history of Poles in Sheridan County and place the Polish experience there in the larger context of Poles in the intermountain west.

American mines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were ethnically segmented. Coal mines drew initially on English, Welsh, and Irish laborers who were followed by Poles, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Italians, and Hungarians. Hard rock mines such as copper, gold, and silver first drew Cornishmen and some Irish followed by Swedes,

Finns, and South Slavs. These patterns which were established in mines in Pennsylvania and the Great Lakes seem to have been replicated in the West, though exceptions can be found in many spots. Many Poles in Sheridan County appear to have worked in coal mines in Pennsylvania, where Poles were a dominant force, and were drawn west by the prospect of better wages or working conditions. They may have been specifically recruited by mining companies or heard about jobs from family and friends.

Most Poles in Sheridan County were *gorale*, hailing from the mountain regions of southern Poland, though a few had German or Ruthenian roots. Like most Poles in the US, Polish identity in Wyoming was closely tied to Roman Catholicism. The only exception was a group of Sheridan County Poles who hailed from the Cieszyn region of northern Moravia where, due to a quirk of regional history, Polish identity was associated with the Lutheran church. Poles in Wyoming were never numerous enough to form their own ethnic parish, though they may have been the largest Catholic group in the state's coal mining region. Polish speaking priests were assigned to the parishes of St. Thomas

and St. Hedwig (the latter parish being named after a popular Polish saint, Jadwiga of Silesia). Significantly numerous priests assigned to these parishes spoke other languages as well as Polish and English. Given that the *gorale* dialect spoken by many of the early Polish settlers was very close to Slovak and Ruthenian, these polyglot pastors were able to minister to a wide range of ethnic miners.

*We Are One Family* is an exemplary work of local and family history that rescues from oblivion the story of a small but intriguing immigrant community in Wyoming. It deserves a place on the shelf of anyone interested in the state's history or the history of the ethnic communities that were crucial to mining in the West.

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***Money Trees: The Douglas Fir and American Forestry, 1900-1944.*** By Emily K. Brock. Corvallis: Oregon State