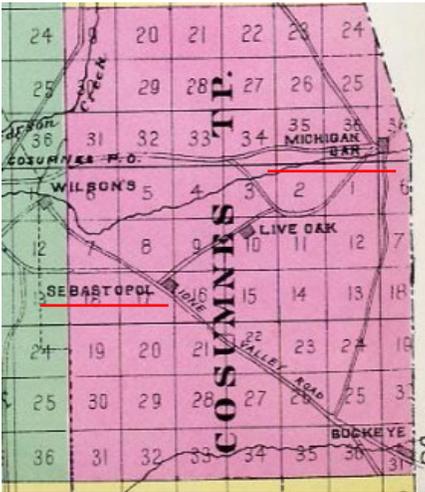


Sebastopol
1 April 1877

Exiles, Adventurers, Artists: Letters from Polish California, 1836-1901
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Henryk Sienkiewicz¹ to Julian Horain²



Sebastopol and Michigan Bar were in Sacramento County, East of the City of Sacramento

The day before yesterday³ we arrived in Sebastopol.⁴ Pan⁵ Franciszek⁶ has a very bad fever. The water in the reservoirs has dried up, anyway it's windy, overcast and gloomy. If I had a talent for drawing, I would sketch you Sebastopol: a peasant cottage, behind it a dry pond, then a hill, then another hill, and the next hill, and all bald, dug up, scratched[;] glowing shameless destitution [with] stones, debris and yellow weeds. Then there are two other captains:⁷ one's in love, the other one is trembling, because he's cold. Apart from this there is a Frenchman,⁸ and for this reason Miss [Watson]⁹ has not been here for half a year or more already.

Watson, whom in any case we've spoken of more than once, was worth our while. This is all quite jolly, and there's no lack of company, for Hamilton¹⁰ lives two hundred paces from here, and amidst the hills pastors graze their sheep, while there are no wolves, so the sheep [are left] unto themselves, and the shepherds are with us.¹¹ Of course I will write an idyll.

Hamilton James H., farmer, native, Sebastopol.

¹ Polish journalist and author; awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1905; see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/henryk-sienkiewicz>.

² Julian Florian Horain, Polish journalist. See: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Horain.pdf>.

³ 30 March 1877.

⁴ Sebastopol was a gold mining town in Sacramento County, California; the town no longer exists.

⁵ Pan and Pani are Polish titles of respect, and are roughly equivalent to Sir and Ma'am.

⁶ Captain Franciszek Michał Wojciechowski, also known as Francis Mitchel or Francis Michael or Captain Francis or Francis Michel; he owned property in Sebastopol for many years and worked there as a rancher and merchant for the bulk of his life as an immigrant in California; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Franciszek%20Michal.pdf>.

⁷ "Captain Francis" and Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski.

Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; co-founder in 1863 of the Polish Society of California in San Francisco (with Kazimierz Bielawski); see: <http://www.PolishClubSF.org/150%20Years%20Polish%20Society%20of%20California.pdf>; and <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Piotrowski%20in%20City%20Directories.pdf>.

Polish-born Piotrowski lived in Sebastopol, Sacramento County and in San Francisco; served as Commissioner of Immigration.

⁸ Perhaps Michael de Fremont, from France, who lived with R. Korwin Piotrowski in 1860 – perhaps the same person who was the French servant of Wojciechowski mentioned in the clip at the end of this file.

⁹ Sacramento newspapers in the 1870s mention a "Miss Watson" who worked in the Sacramento school system (Miss Mary J. Watson); perhaps a relative of Henry Clay Watson, editor of the *Sacramento Union*. "Ramsdale Buoy," a pseudonym for Rudolph Korwin Piotrowski in a travel piece by Henry C. Watson, boasts, "I am the best historian in the mountains." *Newton Booth of California: His Speeches and Addresses*. Lauren Crane, ed. Sacramento: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894. Online: Google Ebook, pp. 504-505. See "Winkle Jenkins" (Henry Clay Watson). "A Cruise on a Mountain Sea." *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 28, 1866. p. 1. Republication: "A Holiday Excursion with H.C. Watson." (No byline.) *Sacramento Daily Union*. Jan. 1, 1873. p. 1

¹⁰ James H. Hamilton, the 46-year-old owner of the Hamilton Hotel in Sebastopol (opened in 1857; formerly the Ohio House and the Cummings House; see *History of Sacramento County* by William Ladd Willis) to whom Horain dedicated an amusing column in the *Polish Gazette* 1878 (numbers 95, 96), describing an attack on his home, which unexpectedly ended in a wedding feast. See end of this file for other clippings about Hamilton.

¹¹ Sienkiewicz finds Sebastopol very boring; not even wolves worry the sheep; the shepherds (so bored themselves) sit down with Sienkiewicz and company.

36	31	29	Amos Amariah	53	41	Mr	Messingman	320	320	Slack
37			Michael Francis	62	44	W	Merschund	320	200	Poland
38			Amos Everett	28	44	Mr				Mass
39	32	30	Hanselton James	39	44	Mr		300	800	Pa
40			Rebecca	35	4	Mr				Prussian

No. of dwellings. * 9 No. of white females 11 No. of males foreign born 12 2032nd 1880
 1870 Census, Cosumnes Township, Sacramento County, California
 Francis Michel (Franciszek Michał Wojciechowski) and James Hamilton

I repeat that I [am] more or less healthy in body and mind -- on purpose and voluntarily I left San Francisco for this idyll.¹² Now it occurs to me that for a month these delights have been too few; I'll take a second [month]. You'll easily understand that the longer I stay here, the less I'll remember San Francisco. A man in bliss becomes selfish. Will I change? Surely! I will be suntanned, and I might also get calluses, because there are a lot of stones here. I forgot about hunting; when I write, the flies walk on my nose, eyes, forehead, mouth, and behind my collar, so I have to hunt, even if I don't want to. There's a few fleas too, so animals do not lack [them]. Even if you paid me, I would not go back. A man in the lap of nature is closer to God. I do so love nature and an idyll! I repeat again that I really like it here.¹³ I'll develop my feverish, artistic activity, and I'm going to write a plagiarism under the title *Lost Moments*.¹⁴ I can't tell you how much I like it here. I'd even stay here for keeps, were I certain that I have a soul.¹⁵ And if not, then probably [I'd stay] just because Pan Franciszek's cow got stolen, so there wouldn't be buttermilk. Amen. The peace of my soul I misplaced somewhere. I write too much about myself, but I don't know if you'll be interested [to know] that Pan Franciszek's and Mr. Hamilton's dogs got into a fight. There is no other news.

Today is the first day of Easter. I send you best wishes, to all of you in San Francisco. Be healthy, happy, rich, and if it's no trouble think of me. Keep me in your hearts, but you've no need to ask the same of me, for even if I wanted to forget you, I could not. This sentimentality comes from toothaches. They hurt because they hurt. I even have fun with this, when I think how good it would be if they didn't hurt. There is nothing else to write about. From you, well, from you I am waiting to hear what's new. What's happening? Who got married? Who is quarreling? Who's made up? Who has dug a pit under whom? Who's backbiting whom, etc.? Above all, though, inform me of your health, and that of others, and give my best to our acquaintances. You have something to write about, if you only wish to. I don't.

How is Pani Helena's¹⁶ health? Tell me of everything in detail.

Good-bye

H. Sienkiewicz

Concerning Pan Franciszek's fever, has Pani Helena had more spasms or not?

¹² Ironic.

¹³ Ironic.

¹⁴ An allusion to Horain's book, *Lost Moments* [*Chwile stracone*], published in Wilno, 1850; paraphrases the title of his own series of columns, *The Present Moment* [*Chwila obecna*], printed in the "The Polish Gazette" from 1875.

¹⁵ It's so awful that he's lost his soul.

¹⁶ Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska) Chłapowska; see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/helena-modrzejewska-modjeska>; renowned stage actress.



Near Sloughouse on Lone Road, close to the former site of Sebastopol

Central Pacific Railroad Company et al. to R. K. Piotrowski—West half of southeast quarter and southwest quarter of section 17, township 7 north, range 8 east, 240 acres; \$600.

The property of Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski was purchased in 1875 from the Central Pacific Railroad Company and later sold to Wojciechowski by Piotrowski's married daughter in France

SOURCE:

Letter #13. Henryk Sienkiewicz. *Listy*, Tom 1, Cześć 2. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1977. Online: <http://www.henryk-sienkiewicz.pl/index.php?d=dzial&id=listy>.

NOTE: The editors of this English translation have revised and augmented some of the original footnotes by Maria Bokszczanin. Some footnotes are our own.

Translated from Polish to English by **Bob Lamming**, with **Elżbieta Kieszczyńska** (Clifton, New Jersey) and edited by **Maureen Mroczek Morris** (San Francisco) with **Roman Włodek** (Kraków) and **Lynn Ludlow** (San Francisco). Invaluable research assistance was generously provided by our dedicated collaborator in Kraków, **Roman Włodek**. Translation commissioned by Maureen Mroczek Morris.

first twins born in the township. The Wilbur hotel, built by T. S. Wilbur in 1850, and sold to Larkin Lamb in 1851, was closed by him in 1858. The Ohio House, built by a company from Ohio, was sold in 1856 or 1857 to James Cummings, who changed its name to the Cummings House. It was located at Sebastopol and burned down in 1864 and was never rebuilt. The Hamilton hotel was opened at Sebastopol by J. H. Hamilton in 1857. The Prairie Cottage, about a mile and a half above Sebastopol, on the Lone road, was built in 1851 and closed in 1864. The Blue Tent House, on the Buckeye ranch, built in 1849 by Sage & Co., closed as a hotel in 1870. The Niagara House was

History of Sacramento County by William Ladd Willis

Sacramento Daily Union, Volume 14, Number 2149, 15 February 1858

Henryk Sienkiewicz - 1959 - Snippet view - [More editions](#)

“Houses and stores lined its streets, mail coaches stopped there, its inhabitants numbered several thousand — and now its population consists of the aged Captain Wojciechowski and his French servant.”

DEATH OF HENRY C. WATSON.

A brief paragraph in the ALTA of yesterday announced the death of Henry C. Watson, one of the most brilliant journalists of the country, lately editor of the Sacramento *Union*. This sudden death will deprive the journalistic profession of one of its brightest ornaments; and those who knew the writer whose pen is now laid down forever, will respond sympathetically to the kindly and appreciative spirit which is breathed in the following lines from the *Union*:

Henry C. Watson, editor of the Sacramento *Union*, is dead. The announcement will come as a personal sorrow to the readers of this paper, and his death will be mourned as a loss in every household where the *Union* is a guest. To us, his collaborators, this calamity comes with awful suddenness, and his vacant chair before us suggests a void that will not easily be filled. We have neither time nor inclination now for a critical or biographical sketch. The life of a newspaper editor is so impersonal, his thoughts form and are blended with public opinion so imperceptibly, that his individuality is scarcely realized by those in daily communion with him until his labors have ceased. He is better known by the vacuum he leaves than the place he filled. Mr. Watson was a native of Maryland, and died in his thirty-seventh year. Few men served a more thorough apprenticeship in his profession than he. He was connected with the Philadelphia press from his boyhood. He grew up and was educated in a newspaper office. He was a practical printer and thoroughly familiar with every department of editorial duty. Writing became a habit; it was easier than talking, and he thought best pen in hand. Of quick perceptions, his art criticisms were kindly and appreciative. As a reviewer, he seemed to tell the literary quality of a book by turning over its leaves, or he would cut into the heart of its subject and seize upon its central thought with unerring force. As a news-editor, he limned the outline of passing events with great accuracy. The world told him its story from day to day, and he intuitively separated the little from the great, the permanent from the passing away. But it was as a political writer that he was best known and will be longest remembered. He came to California as one of the *Union* staff, late in 1861. Before, he had been a journalist by profession, writing with ease and grace upon any subject his editorial duties required; but the great events then rising in the political horizon, stirred all the manhood within him, and aroused him to the highest expression of his best thought; journalism became more than a profession—it was a means to reach the public heart, to lead popular feeling, to educate the public mind, form public opinion and incite to right action. Who will forget, during the long and doubtful struggle, how hopeful he was, how firm in the faith that right would triumph; yet withal how intolerant of shams, how impatient with weakness, how relentless in his denunciation of the wrong! How often in the dark hours, from behind the thin veil of his impersonality, has his war-cry rung out, stirring the blood like the blast of a trumpet! When the physical contest was over he realized that the moral battle—the battle where men of thought are the silent, unknown heroes—had only begun; he took his place in the line, measured his strength for the contest; he knew that the questions of peace were difficult and dangerous as the problems of war, and he would be content with no other solution than the recognition of the manhood of man and the policy of freedom.

"The throbbing brain will throb no more—
No longer toil the toiling breast—a hero of the
pen has fallen!"