

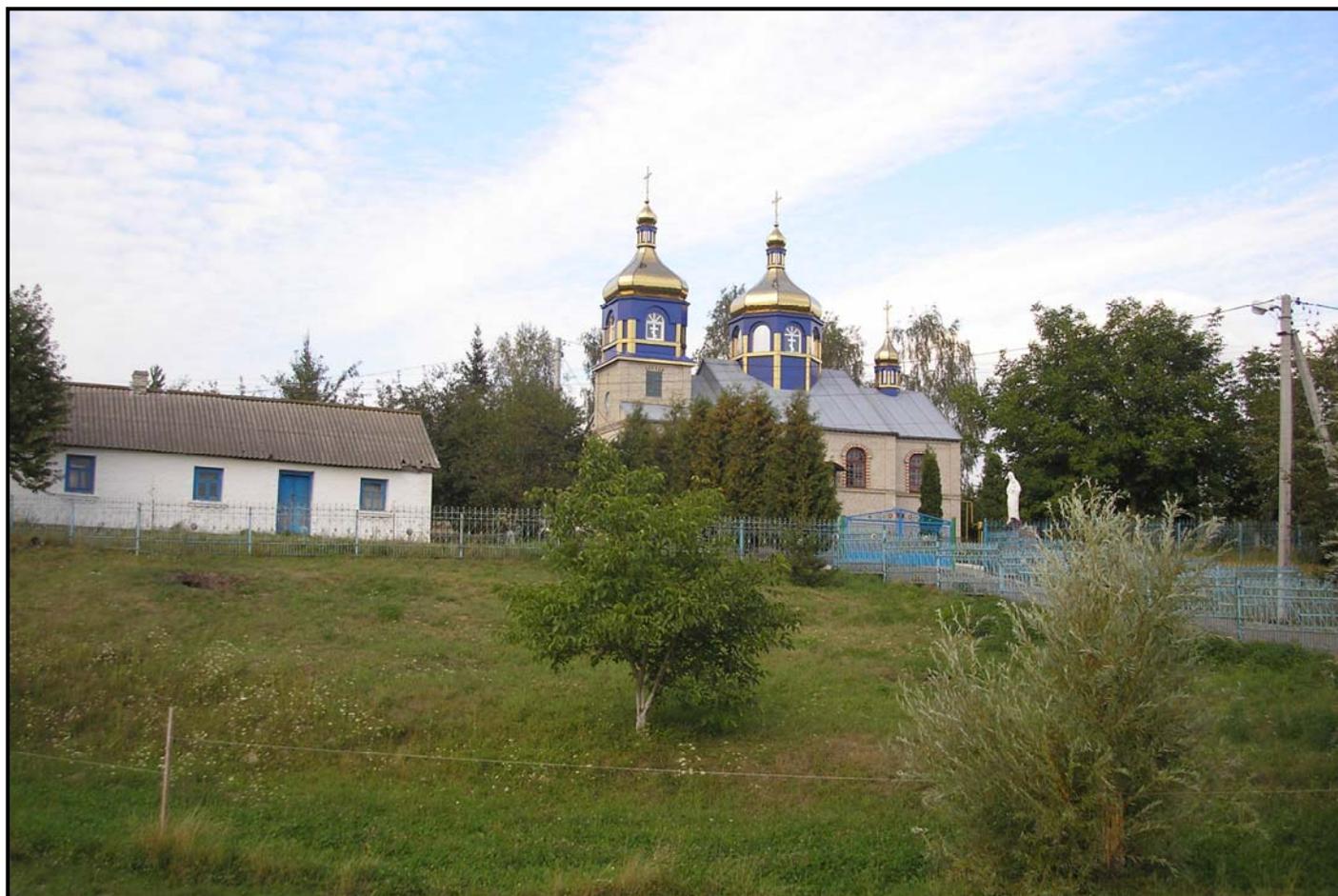
# The Journal



**THE SOCIETY  
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IN EASTERN EUROPE**

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and Volhynia”*

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*Orthodox Church in the village of Pustomyty, Ukraine*

*Photo by Dr. Mykhailo Kostiuk*

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# Never Say Never

By: *Peter von Pazatka Lipinsky*

Most people are familiar with the saying: “Never Say Never”, which can be explained as “Never Give Up”. In the world of genealogy, this is a very important understanding to follow when trying to find information on your family history. It is gratifying to know that from

time to time this saying still holds true even if it is on a small percentage of likelihood.

After many years of pursuing my own family research, I now decided that it was time to start re-searching my wife’s family. My mother-in-law had



Road Sign for the Village of Pustomyty, Ukraine



**The oldest house on the street near where there had been the German colony.**

on occasion told me many years ago that her family used to live in a place called Pustomyty, a village in Volhynia. At one time, my mother-in-law would tell me that the village of Pustomyty was in Poland but the next time when we talked about the “olden days”, the same village was located in Russia. My mother-in-law’s memory was not the greatest anymore with her having at the time just celebrated her 87th birthday . She also told me that as a young lady she was deported around 1915 by the Russian authorities to Siberia, only to be taken back some time later to Volhynia which was by that time under Polish jurisdiction and again later under the German government . Who can keep up

with all the government and border changes? Small wonder that some genealogists are getting confused with all of this. When my mother-in-law told me that her family came from the village of Pustomyty in Volhynia, district of Horochow, this was just as if she would have told me that her family came from somewhere in outer space. What did I know where these places where located?

Between spending some time reading several history book and later consulting one of my best friends, called “Google”, I learned something about a village called Pustomyty and an area called “Volhynia”, now located in the Ukraine. Now the

challenge was to obtain any available documents from my wife's family and with a bit of luck, some old photographs from the village of Pustomyty and perhaps a few pictures from the surrounding area. I left no stone unturned just to find one or maybe two pictures or old photographs from the village of Pustomyty. After searching for many years, the end result was "still no pictures". Nothing, whatsoever.

**FAST FORWARD: 15 - 20 YEARS LATER**

The year is 2016 and the 18th SGGEE conference is scheduled to take place on July 29 – 31 in the city of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The main speaker at the banquet was none other than Dr. Mykhailo Kostiuk, from the city of Lutsk, Ukraine.

I had met Dr. M. Kostiuk, his wife, Liudmyla

and Olena Grybok and her son Ivan prior to the start of the SGGEE conference in Edmonton the previous afternoon at the Trinity Lutheran church.

Here we had discussed many topics in regards to the history and the plight of the Germans living a long time ago in Volhynian. In parting we promised to pick up on the same topic in Calgary, which we did, whenever we found time during the conference to get a few minutes to ourselves.

In Calgary Dr. Kostiuk asked me where in Volhynia I was born and much to Dr. Kostiuk's surprise, I told him that I was born in Berlin, Germany. So, what was I doing at the SGGEE conference? After telling Dr. Kostiuk that my wife was born in a village called Pustomyty in Volhynia, our conversation continued on for countless hours and



Location of Pustomyty - approximately 17 kilometers (10 miles) northeast of Horochow (map courtesy of Jerry Frank)



**Farmland near the village of Pustomyty**

Dr. Kostiuk mentioned that he was born in the next village from Pustomyty and that he knew the surrounding area very well and often travelled there. Did I hear right? Yes, I did! This was just like receiving Manna from Heaven. The next bold step I had to take was to ask Dr. Kostiuk if it would be possible upon his return home to take a few pictures from the village of Pustomyty and the surrounding area.

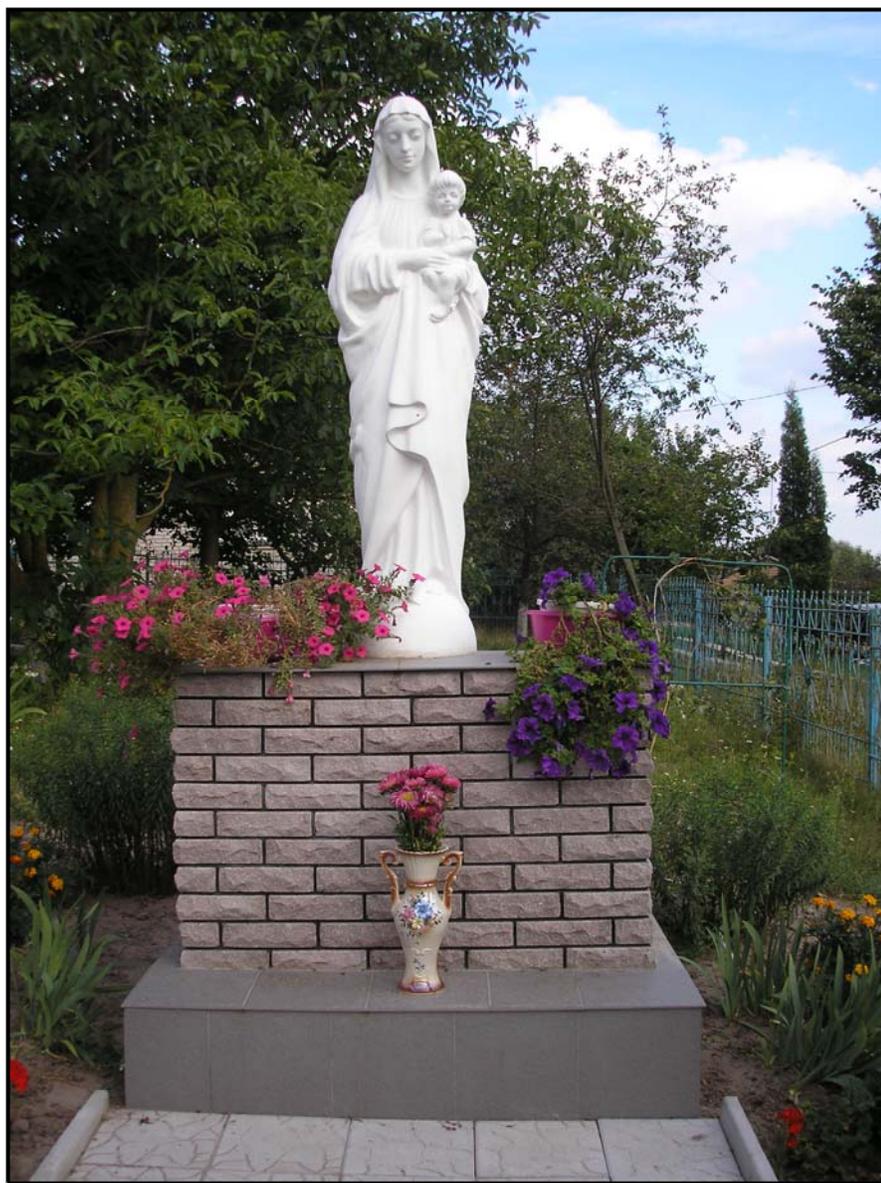
Dr. Kostiuk's reply was, Of course!

One thing I need to explain: Prior to 1945, at the time when my wife's family lived in Pustomyty, her family did not live directly in the village of Pustomyty, but in what was called Colony

Pustomyty, just a few kilometers from the main village of Pustomyty. As seen on the map, the Colony and the village were in close proximity. Each colonist living in one of the colonies also had some land and building to live in and keep livestock.

The acreage that was farmed varied from five to twenty acres. After so many years, the exact size of the farms are not really known and are only stated from hearsay.

Anyway, since 1945, the Colony disappeared on account of the German people having taken flight to escape the approaching Russian army and the few German people who stayed behind hoping for a lenient Russian occupational government



Shrine on the property of the Orthodox Church

spending most of my life in Canada working for the Hudson's Bay Co., the Northern Stores Division, right up to the Arctic. The Northern Stores Department is also known as the Fur Trade. Dr. Kostiuk speaks fairly good German and English and we conversed in both languages as Dr. Kostiuk wanted to improve his language skills.

The time went by way too quickly and before we both knew, it was time to say to say good bye. Dr. Kostiuk's parting words to me were: "Peter, don't worry, I will get you some photographs from Pustomyty and the surrounding area."

True to his parting words, about six weeks later I received several pictures as promised.

So, why am I writing this story about a village far away and the two German colonies that are not even in existence anymore???

were sadly mistaken and deported to Siberia. Many of the German people just simply starved to death.

Now back to my meeting with Dr. Kostiuk in Calgary during the SGGEE conference. Whenever we could during breaks we would exchange interesting information about the Ukraine in general but especially the area around Pustomyty and the city of Lutsk, Dr. Kostiuk's home city. Dr. Kostiuk was also very interested in my life in Canada since immigrating to Canada from Germany in 1955 and

Because I never gave up trying to find some pictures to compliment my wife's family history. I think this story is reason enough to reaffirm the saying:

"NEVER SAY NEVER" can in most cases have a successful and satisfying ending. Just don't ever give up!

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*The photos in this article were taken and provided by Dr. Mykhailo Kostiuk.*