

Captain Casimir [Kazimierz] Bielawski to Dr. John Strentzel

San Francisco, 22/12, 80¹

Dr. J. Strentzel²

Dear Friend,

Your kind invitation for next Christmas, which we received the day before yesterday, is very tempting and we certainly would have come to enjoy that day in company of our friends at the Alhambra,³ if we had not already invited several of my countrymen to a Christmas dinner at home.⁴ We must therefore forego this time the pleasure of tasting the nice dishes and drops which you are preparing, but with all that we do not give up the hope of enjoying the same on another occasion.



Strentzel Muir House, Alhambra Valley (Martinez), CA

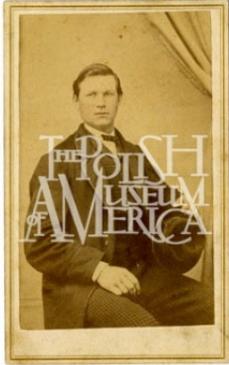
¹ December 22, 1880.

² Jan Teofil Strencel, M.D. or Johann Gottlieb Strentzel & variations: horticulturalist; see: <http://www.polishClubSF.org/Strencel.pdf>.

³ The Strentzels moved to the Alhambra Valley just south of the city of Martinez, California, in 1853.

⁴ 1615 Clay Street, San Francisco, the residence of Kazimierz Bielawski in 1880; Bielawski co-founded the Polish Society of California in 1863 in San Francisco.

Maria,⁵ who had a great wish to communicate to Mrs. Strentzel⁶ and Mrs. Muir⁷ her many dreams, the true meaning of which is a secret to such unbelievers as I am, was lately very busy with dressing dolls, and is now distributing them together with other Christmas gifts among the children of her acquaintances.



Aleksander Elgass

I am not sure that Mr. Elgass⁸ in answering your last letter mentioned something about our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the revolution of 1830.⁹ It was, considering the small number of our countrymen residing in this City, a more successful affair than we expected.



Maria Bielawska

In the morning about 30 of us attended a Mass held in memory of our fallen brethren by Rev. Nugent, in his church on Brannan St.,¹⁰ and listened to his animated sermon about

Poland's deeds and services rendered to Christianity. Thence we met at our Club-room,¹¹ where a fine address was read by Dr. Pawlicki.¹² In this address, the Veterans of that glorious uprising, now living in Galicia, show with logical force and clearness the beneficial results, which grew out from the seeds sown by that revolution for our country. The principal of these results are: the rapid advancement of our people in all branches of civilization; the continual crumbling and falling down of the old barriers which formerly divided our people in distinct and heterogeneous casts; and the assurance thereby gained, that our nationality is not [sic] longer in any danger of being absorbed by any other people, and that she will preserve her individuality in spite of all her enemies.

The Polish residents of San Francisco propose to celebrate, on the 29th inst., the fiftieth anniversary of their country's gallant struggle for independence, being the day of the year on which the revolution against the despotic power of the Czar commenced in Warsaw, half a century ago. Invitations are extended by the Polish Society of California to all the natives of Poland on this Coast, without distinction of sex or creed, to join in the celebration. A solemn mass of requiem for the victims of Russian tyranny who perished in the struggle will be celebrated at St. Rose's Church, Brannan street, near Fourth, at nine o'clock in the morning. Upon the termination of the religious exercises a meeting will be held at the rooms of the Polish Society, 1032 Market street, at one P. M., when the anniversary will be honored with suitable literary exercises. The celebration will be closed by a banquet at six o'clock P. M., at which will be present several veterans of the struggle who are now residents of this State. All those wishing to participate in the banquet are requested to send their names early to the Secretary of the Society, 1032 Market street. The following sketch, relating to the insurrection of 1830, has, at the request of the Polish Society of California, been prepared for the ALTA by Mr. Alexander Bednawski, a member of the Society and one of the veterans of that memorable uprising of the Poles in their war for independence:

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⁵ Maria Bielawska, wife of Kazimierz Bielawski.

⁶ Louisa [Louisiana] Erwin became the wife of John Strentzel on December 31, 1843 in Texas.

⁷ Louie Wanda Strentzel, daughter of John Strentzel and Louisa Erwin Strentzel; became the wife of John Muir, naturalist, on April 14, 1880 in Alhambra (Martinez), Contra Costa County, California.

⁸ Professor Aleksander Elgass from Lwów, Galicia, Poland; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Elgass.pdf>.

⁹ November Uprising of 1830: an armed rebellion in partitioned Poland against the Russian Empire; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_Uprising.

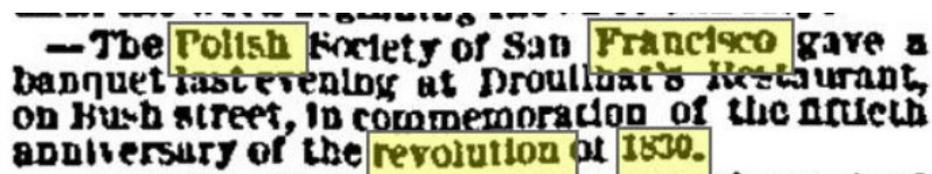
¹⁰ Reverend John F. Nugent, St. Rose's Roman Catholic Church at Brannan Street near Fourth Street, San Francisco

¹¹ 1032 Market Street, San Francisco.

¹² Władysław [Ladislaus] Pawlicki, M.D.; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Pawlicki.pdf>.

Elgass in the name of the present generation then answered to the Veterans in an improvised but effective speech, after which a few remarks were made by others, and the meeting adjourned.

I then went home and found your letter telling me that you sent some wine for the celebration. But it was not brought before I had to leave home again to go to our final gathering at the dinner prepared at a French restaurant.¹³ It lasted from 7 o'clock till 9 1/2 P.M., there were 3 Veterans, Wojciechowski,¹⁴ Bednawski¹⁵ and Piotrowski.¹⁶ The 1st presided, Piotrowski made a very good speech in answering the toast "to the Veterans of 1830," Elgass read your interesting letter, and many others contributed the small stock of their eloquence to make the repast agreeable by reminding us of our native land, and the new and vigorous life upon which it has entered.



— The Polish Society of San Francisco gave a banquet last evening at Drouilhat's Restaurant, on Bush street, in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution of 1830.

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Reaching home I found your wine, it was brought at about 6 o'clock P.M.

We had it bottled and send [sent] it to the Club room, from whence it was distributed among the married Polish ladies. Thus you must perceive that the sweet feminine tongues sweetened by your sweet wine will give it all the credit it deserves.

Please give our best respect to Mrs. Strentzel and Mr. and Mrs. Muir, and wishing you a happy Christmas and New-Year we remain,

Truly yours,

Mr. C. Bielawski

P.S. My wife is making preparations to send you back the 4 flasks.

¹³ Drouilhat's Restaurant on Bush Street, San Francisco.

¹⁴ Franciszek Michał Wojciechowski; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Franciszek%20Michal.pdf>.

¹⁵ Aleksander Bednawski; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Bednawski%20addresses.pdf>.

¹⁶ Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; see <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Piotrowski%20in%20City%20Directories.pdf>.



November Uprising, 1830

Acknowledgement: Many thanks to Susan Flynn for sharing this letter, and other Strentzel letters, from her private collection.

Research: Maureen Mroczek Morris (San Francisco) and Roman Włodek (Kraków)

See also: <http://cosmopolitanreview.com/the-korwin-letters/>