

Pathways: A Story of Trails and Men (1968), by John W. Bingaman

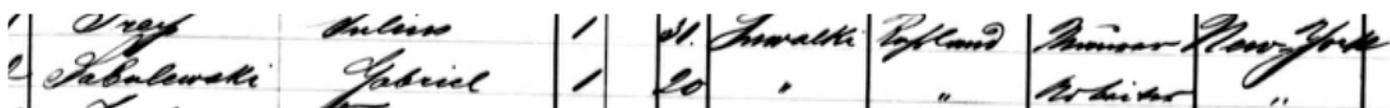
CHAPTER VIII

Gabriel Sovulewski, Dean of Trail Builders

It is only fitting and proper to give Mr. Sovulewski posthumously the praise, honor, and fame due him.

Gabriel Sowulewski [SOBOLEWSKI] was born August 12, 1866, in Suwalki, Poland.

Name: Gabriel Sabolewski
Departure Date: 16 Apr 1885
Destination: New York
Birth Date: abt 1865
Age: 20
Gender: männlich (Male)
Residence: Suwalki, Russland (Russia)
Occupation: Arbeiter



A handwritten passenger list entry on a grid. The first row contains the name 'Gabriel Sabalersaki' in the first column, '1' in the second, '20' in the third, 'Suwalki, Poland' in the fourth, 'Whites' in the fifth, and 'New York' in the sixth. The second row contains 'Sabalewski' in the first column, 'Gabriel' in the second, '1' in the third, '20' in the fourth, 'Suwalki, Poland' in the fifth, and 'New York' in the sixth.

Name: Gabriel Sabalersaki
Arrival Date: 6 May 1885
Birth Date: abt 1865
Age: 20
Gender: Male
Ethnicity/ Nationality: Russian
Place of Origin: Russia
Port of Departure: Glasgow, Scotland and Moville, Ireland
Destination: United States of America
Port of Arrival: New York, New York
Ship Name: Ethiopia



A handwritten passenger list entry on a grid. The first row contains the name 'Gabriel Sabalersaki' in the first column, '1' in the second, '20' in the third, 'Suwalki, Poland' in the fourth, 'Whites' in the fifth, and 'New York' in the sixth. The second row contains 'Sabalewski' in the first column, 'Gabriel' in the second, '1' in the third, '20' in the fourth, 'Suwalki, Poland' in the fifth, and 'New York' in the sixth.

He **enlisted in the U.S. Army November 19, 1888**, and advanced to quartermaster sergeant. In 1891-1892 he was placed in charge of the General Grant National Park, which was then under military rule. He was in Yosemite with the U.S. Troops 1895-1896-1897. During the Spanish American War he was **in the Philippines, 1899**. He returned to Yosemite with the troops as packer and guide.

Sovulewski was supervisor of Yosemite National Park from August 12, 1906, to March 4, 1916, when he became special ranger and acting superintendent. He served as general foreman, administrative, from July 1, 1917 to April 30, 1920 on which date he was appointed park supervisor, the position he held until his retirement, August 31, 1936.

During Mr. Sovulewski's many years of service in Yosemite National Park, most of the trails were laid out and improved under his direction. Deeply imbued with the spirit of public service, he worked unceasingly to make accessible the marvelous beauties of Yosemite high country. Long hours in the saddle were his to the day of his retirement.

To build and maintain the trail system, the Department of Interior hired 75 to 80 horses and mules per month each season, in addition to the 27 head owned by the department. The cost was \$9.50 per month for draft animals, and \$7.50 for driving, saddle, and pack animals. Common labor was .50 to .75 cents per hour.

Many trails beyond the rim of Yosemite Valley were nothing more than cattle and sheep trails. In some cases the first trails have been entirely abandoned and rebuilt, and in almost all cases they have been improved, as far as maintainance funds permitted. So in 1914, Mr. Sovulewski continued with construction and maintainance of the existing trails and built new ones as trail money was appropriated by the Interior Department.

When the troops withdrew from the park each fall, Mr. Sovulewski was left in charge. Something of the confidence felt by the Army officers during the periods of his responsibilities may be recognized in the following quotations from a letter addressed to Mrs. Sovulewski, in December 1908, by Major Benson, 5th Cavalry. "I found Yosemite far ahead of any other place in the world. I am more happy, however, to have it left in the care of such capable true men, as Mr. Sovulewski. I have known him for twenty years now, and he has shown himself to be a man of sterling character, of great capabilities, honest, and true in all things."

In a letter Mr. Sovulewski remarked on trail building, "Trail building is a very important work in the National Parks, when we consider the object for which the parks were created, and on that account any official in charge of a particular park who will delegate trail construction to anyone not in sympathy with this object or who does not fully understand the meaning and intention of park creation, without personal inspection and satisfaction will be liable to make a serious mistake."

He claimed, "There are six parts to remember in trail construction, It requires strength, determination, a natural instinct for direction, love for the work, love of nature, and an ability to forget everything for the time except the object in view, and to be able to sit in the saddle for 12 or 14 hours, or walk the same number of hours if required in order to find the best possible way.

"The party of workmen varies according to the location and amount of work to be done, and the tools and materials for the different kinds of work. The gang should not, as a rule exceed nine men, including the foreman, packer and cook.

"The foreman should be a practical trail builder, have experience in wood craft, know how to handle tools, and to know and take charge of explosives. He should be able to take full charge in all trail construction.

"In construction of trails under favorable circumstances, ascending long, steep hills, the grades should not be lower than 15 percent, and not exceeding 30 percent. The width of the trail will depend, as stated, on the importance of the trail, averages about 4 feet is sufficient, in passing dangerous points 6 feet is safer. Of course this brings the cost up, and in some cases a two foot trail in some places is safe enough, and comfortable to travel in single file.

"The trail should be well brushed along its course in order that the traveler riding along will not be annoyed with overhanging limbs or undergrowth on the sides.

"The cost of construction is of local consideration, depending on conditions as to layout of 'trail, cost of labor and materials, distance from supplies, etc. The cost of trail construction in the Yosemite National Park varies from \$25.00

to \$2,500 per mile, that was in the days of low labor cost, in later d'ay of high costs it could exceed up to \$10,000 per mile."

Much has been said and written about construction of trails, also bridges across creeks. Mr. Sovulewski was most successful in building and maintaining trails and accomplished more than any one man in this work.

1893

15 Sadler, William R. " 8
16 Sovulewski, Gabryel " 21 Suwalki Russia 27² " D. " Dusk 57⁹

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Sovulewski, Gabriel</i> (2-3-9)				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow,</i>				
<i>Minor,</i>				
SERVICE: <i>K. 4 U.S. Cav.</i>				
DATE OF FILING.	CLASS.	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
<i>1927 April 27</i>	<i>Invalid</i>	<i>15788570</i>	<i>12-3-27</i>	<i>Calif.</i>
ATTORNEY:				
REMARKS: <i>27300129</i>				

1897

Name: Gabriel Soulewski
 Event Type: Marriage
 Event Date: 19 Oct 1897
 Event Place: Fresno, California, United States
 Gender: Male
 Age: 31
 Birth Year (Estimated): 1866
 Father's Name:
 Mother's Name:
 Spouse's Name: [Rose Inez Rider](#)
 Spouse's Age: 23
 Spouse's Gender: Female
 Spouse's Birth Year (Estimated): 1874
 Spouse's Father's Name:
 Spouse's Mother's Name:
 Page:
 GS Film number: 1548474
 Digital Folder Number: 004666550
 Image Number: 00502

1899

Name: Gabryel Souvelerski
Birth Place: Poland
Residence Date: 1 Jul 1899
Station or Residence Place: Presidio of San Francisco, California, USA
Year: 1899

1900

Sovulewski Gabriel	Head	M	Aug 1866	33	M	3		Poland	Poland
Sovulewski Rose J	Wife	F	July 1874	26	M	8	1 1	New York	New York
Sovulewski Grace G	Daughter	F	June 1898	1	8			California	New York

1901

Name: Gabryel Souvelevski

Birth Place: Poland

Residence Date: 1 Jul 1901

Station or Residence Place: Presidio of San Francisco, California, USA

Year: 1901

1903

Gabriel **Sovulewski**, a gripman on the McAllister street line, testified that he was married and the father of three children. His rent was raised recently from \$13 to \$16 a month. He said all groceries had risen in price and that milk and essential items in rearing his three children now cost \$5 a month, where a year ago he

only paid \$2 75 for it. When he started to work for the streetcar company, he found that the expense of doing so would be \$80. He borrowed the money and had paid nearly all of this amount off. His wife was sick recently and that cost him \$55, and he has been obliged to cut down on meat and eat it only once a day so as to economize. He was formerly a soldier in the United States army and has an honorable discharge.

Cross-examined by Attorney Moore, Sovulewski said he earned \$70 a month and that he worked nine hours and thirty-three minutes a day to make this amount. He said that he had not bought a suit of clothes for five years, and that his wife was unable to buy any clothes, and she felt she could not afford any.

1904

Det Taylor and Jones, tel FOIK 2041
Sovulewski Gabriel, gripman United RR,
r 211 1/2, 6th Av

1910

Sovulewski Gabriel	Head	M	W 43	M 13			Russ Polish	Russ Polish
— Rose J	Wife	F	W 35	M 13	5 5		New York	New York
— Grace G	Daughter	F	W 11	S			California	Russ Polish
— Lawrence G	Son	M	W 9	S			California	Russ Polish
— Mildred G	Daughter	F	W 8	S			California	Russ Polish
— Gabrielle	Daughter	F	W 5	S			California	Russ Polish
— Robert R	Son	M	W 1 1/2	S			California	Russ Polish

1920

Sorulewski Gabriel	Head	1 R	M	W	53	M	1876	Mar	1880	Yes	Yes	Poland
Rose	Wife		F	W	43	M				Yes	Yes	New York
Lawrence	son		M	W	19	S				Yes	Yes	California
Mitchell	daughter		F	W	18	S				Yes	Yes	California
Gabriele	daughter		F	W	15	S				Yes	Yes	California
Robert R	son		M	W	11	S				Yes	Yes	California
Joseph R	son		M	W	9	S				Yes	Yes	California
Thomas E	son		M	W	7	S				Yes	Yes	California

1930

Name: Gabriel Sorrelewski
Birth Year: abt 1867
Gender: Male
Race: White
Birthplace: Poland
Marital Status: Widowed
Relation to Head of House: Lodger
Home in 1930: Long Beach, Los Angeles, California
Map of Home: [View Map](#)
Street address: Ocean Avenue
Institution: Seaside Hospitla - 16

Sorrelewski, Gabriel	Lodger		M	W	63	W	1867	Mar	1880	Yes	Yes	Poland
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Gabriel **died November 29, 1938**. Both Mr. and Mrs. Sovulewski are buried in the [Yosemite Pioneer Cemetery](#).

SEE NEXT PAGE

NAME: **Gabriel Sovulewski**
RESIDENCE: 1898 - San Francisco, California,
USA

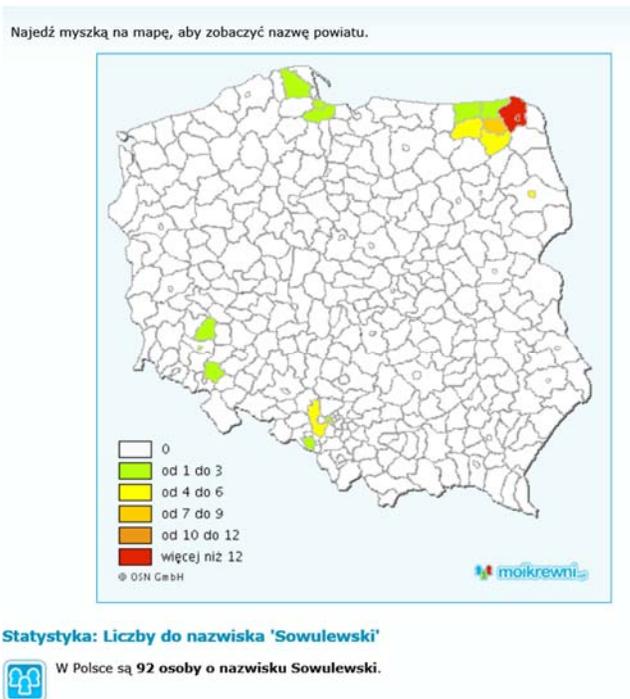
NAME: **Gabriel Sovulewski**
RESIDENCE: 1903 - San Francisco, California,
USA

NAME: **Gabriel Sovulewski**
RESIDENCE: 1904 - San Francisco, California,
USA

NAME: **Gabriel Sovulewski**
RESIDENCE: 1905 - San Francisco, California,
USA



Gabriel Sowulewski



After its creation on Oct 1, 1890 as a national park, cavalry troops patrolled Yosemite. They were the first park rangers. The Army officer in charge was the defacto superintendent of the park.

Sergeant Gabriel Sovulewski arrived in 1895. His job was to control the sheep and cattle grazing in protected areas. In 1906, he was assigned the back breaking job of trail building. In just two years he became the Army Superintendent of the Park. After he left the Army, in 1920, he was appointed the civilian Park Supervisor in the recently created National Park Service (1916.)

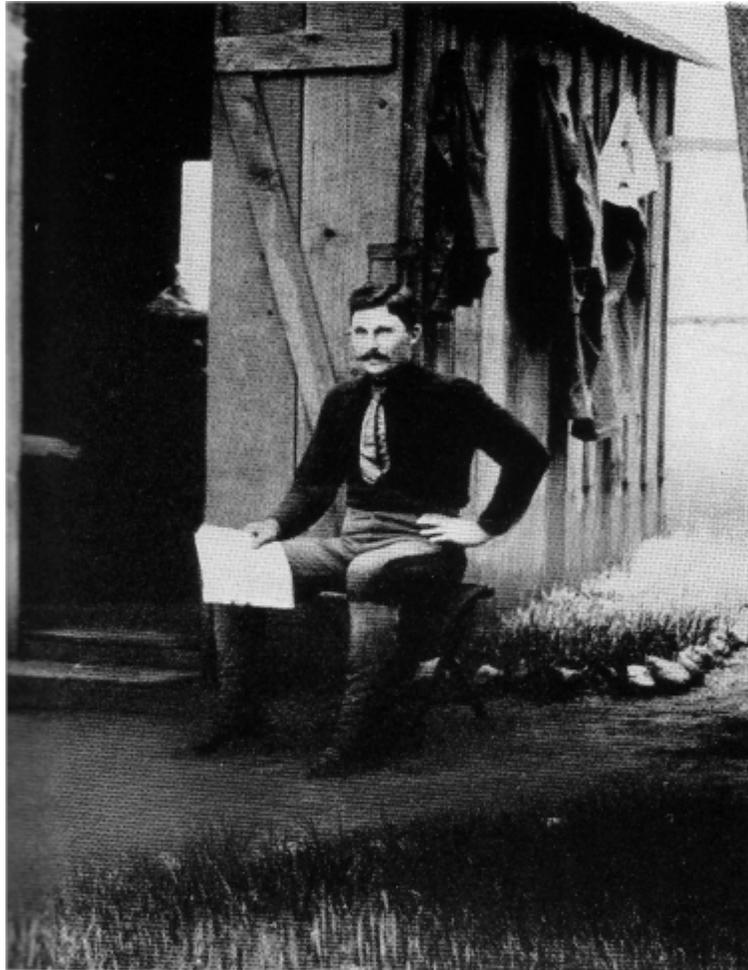
Over 35 years, he was responsible for the construction, improvement and relocation of 400 miles of trail, with an emphasis on taking those trails to scenic viewpoints. One ground rule was that no trail grade exceed 30 percent. In the Nevada Fall corridor he was responsible for the stone retaining walls below Clark Point, the Rock Cut between Clark Point and Nevada Fall (1931), the comfort station at the Vernal Fall footbridge (1934) and rebuilding two miles of the Half Dome trail. It was said of Sovulewski "*He didn't care whether they put a monument over his grave after he was gone: His monument was on the mountains and the trails that lead into the High Sierras.*"

Gabriel Sovulewski was buried in the Yosemite Pioneer Cemetery – which he had earlier outlined with Incense Cedars.

Name: [Frank Bayley Ewing](#)
Event Type: Marriage
Event Date: 04 Apr 1917
Event Place: San Joaquin, California, United States
Gender: Male
Age: 32
Birth Year (Estimated): 1885
Father's Name: [Harry Carol Ewing](#)
Mother's Name: [Ida M Bayley](#)
Spouse's Name: [Grace Charlotte Sovulewski](#)
Spouse's Age: 18
Spouse's Gender: Female
Spouse's Birth Year (Estimated): 1899
Spouse's Father's Name: Gabriel Sovulewski
Spouse's Mother's Name: [Rose I Rider](#)
Page: 393
GS Film number: 1841863
Digital Folder Number: 004279421
Image Number: 00700

Name: [Lowrence Barton Taylor](#)
Event Type: Marriage
Event Date: 11 Jan 1922
Event Place: San Joaquin, California, United States
Gender: Male
Age: 24
Birth Year (Estimated): 1898
Father's Name: [Chas A Taylor](#)
Mother's Name: [Margaet Kern](#)
Spouse's Name: [Mildred Florence Spvalewski](#)
Spouse's Age: 20
Spouse's Gender: Female
Spouse's Birth Year (Estimated): 1902
Spouse's Father's Name: Gabriel Spvalewski
Spouse's Mother's Name: [Rose Rider](#)
Page: 219
GS Film number: 1841867
Digital Folder Number: 005706886
Image Number: 00888

Name: [George W Goldsworthy](#)
Event Type: Marriage
Event Date: 06 Dec 1927
Event Place: Los Angeles, California, United States
Gender: Male
Age: 24
Birth Year (Estimated): 1903
Father's Name: [W S Goldsworthy](#)
Mother's Name: [Clara Hoffman](#)
Spouse's Name: [Gabrielle Sovulewski](#)
Spouse's Age: 22
Spouse's Gender: Female
Spouse's Birth Year (Estimated): 1905
Spouse's Father's Name: [Gabriel Sovulewski](#)
Spouse's Mother's Name: [Rose Rider](#)
Page: 138
GS Film number: 2074709
Digital Folder Number: 005698461
Image Number: 02295



Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**

**GABRIEL SOVULEWSKI
THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
YOSEMITE'S
MASTER TRAIL BUILDER**



FERNANDO PEÑALOSA