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Lesinski-Rusin Family Collection

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ca.1906-1925
2 boxes (1 linear foot)
Call no.: MS 131



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Polish immigrants Jan Lesinski and his wife Weronika (Rusin) settled in Easthampton, Massachusetts, in 1909 and worked in the textile mills there for decades. Married in 1922, the couple raised a son and daughter in their home on Franklin Street. Weronika Lesinski died in Northampton in 1961, her husband following twelve years later.

The Lesinski and Rusin family collection reflect the lives of an average working-class Polish family from Easthampton, Mass., during the early twentieth century. Numerous family photographs document important occasions for the families, such as baptisms, first communions, and weddings, and the photographic postcards and commercial postcards document their relationships, interests, and travel.

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Background on Lesinski family



Nun and two girls at first communion

Born in Jednorozec, Poland, on June 21, 1887, the son of Franciszka and Maryan Lesinski, Jan Lesinski emigrated to the United States in April 1909. After a short stay in Northampton, he relocated southward to the New City district of Easthampton and then to the adjacent mill district south of the Lower Mill Pond, working in the city's textile mills as a weaver or braider and spending many years at United Elastic.

In 1922, Lesinski married Weronika Rusin (1889-1961), the daughter of Ignacy and Anna (Winiarz) Rusin from Tuszyna, a village that was then part of Austro-Hungarian Galicia. Like Jan, Weronika arrived in Easthampton in 1909, although an older sister, Apolonia, had emigrated there three years previously and was already working as an operative in the mills. Apolonia married a textile weaver, Joseph Szweczyk, in 1911, raising a large family.

By the end of the 1920s, Jan and Weronika were living at 45 Franklin Street in the heart of one of Easthampton's Polish American neighborhoods, situated directly across the street from the school for Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish. They occasionally Americanized their names to John and Veronica; Apolonia appears to have gone by the name Victoria. Weronika Lesinski died in Northampton in 1961, aged 71; John died in Williamsburg in November 1973.

Scope of collection

The Lesinski and Rusin family collection reflects the lives of an average working-class Polish family from Easthampton, Mass., during the early twentieth century. Although primarily studio portraits, the photographs document important moments in the lives of the Lesinski and Rusin families, from first communions to weddings, and the photographic and commercial postcards document their relationships, interests, and travel. The collection also includes a handful of Polish-language publications, including a Polish-English dictionary, arithmetic book, child's reader, and a copy of the Constitution of the St. Kazimierz benevolent society in Turners Falls.

Most of the postcards in the collection were addressed to Weronika Rusin prior to her marriage, with only a handful from later years. Weronika's most frequent correspondents included her sister Sophie (also spelled Zofia and Sofie) -- who did not emigrate and who wrote both in Polish and German from Bucharest, Krakow, Tarnow, and other locations -- and a friend Ignacy Skarpetowski, who served in Maine in the Coast Artillery Corps during the First World War.

Inventory

Photographs
ca.1906-1935

[Communion photographs](#)

ca.1910-1915
3 mounted silver prints
Box 1: 1
[Girls receiving instruction from a nun](#)
ca.1915
1 toned silver print
Box 1: 2
[Lesinki and Deptula portraits](#)
ca.1915-1935
3 gelatin silver prints
Box 1: 3
[Niemic, M. \(photographer\). Studio portrait of woman](#)
ca.1920
1 gelatin silver print
Box 1: 4
[Niedzieta Studio \(photographer\). Wedding party](#)
ca.1915
1 mounted silver print
Box 1: 5
Unidentified studio portraits
ca.1905-1920
3 mounted silver prints
Box 1: 6
[Unidentified wedding portraits](#)
ca.1910-1920
4 mounted silver prints
Box 1: 7
[Wanda Szewczyk Cialek and brother John](#)
1916
1 mounted silver print
Box 1: 8
[W. J. Cady \(photographer\). Family portrait, with man in military uniform](#)
ca.1915
1 mounted silver print
Box 1: 9
[W. J. Cady \(photographer\). Wedding portraits](#)
ca.1920
4 mounted silver prints
Box 1: 10
Real photo postcards
ca.1910-1925
[Double portraits](#)
ca.1915-1925
13 real photo postcards
Box 1: 11
[Double portraits, weddings](#)
ca.1915-1925
15 real photo postcards
Box 1: 12
[Group portraits](#)
ca.1915-1925
14 real photo postcards
Box 1: 13
[Group portraits](#)
ca.1915-1925
8 real photo postcards
Box 1: 14
Portraits of men
ca.1915-1925
8 real photo postcards
Box 1: 15
[Portraits of men](#)
ca.1910-1925
9 real photo postcards
Box 1: 16
[Portraits of women](#)
ca.1915-1925
15 real photo postcards
Box 1: 17
[Portraits of children](#)
ca.1915-1925
3 real photo postcards
Box 1: 18
[World War I](#)
ca.1916-1918
9 real photo postcards
Box 1: 19
Commercial postcards
ca.1906-1923
[Birthdays](#)
1911-1923
17 items
Box 2: 1
[Christmas](#)
1908-1921
38 items
Box 2: 2
[Courting and gag](#)
1911-1916
17 items
Box 2: 3
[Easter](#)
1911-1921
24 items
Box 2: 4
Greetings
1910-1922
19 items
Box 2: 5
[Miscellaneous](#)
1908-1918
13 items
Box 2: 6

[Religious and holidays](#)

1912-1916

17 items

Box 2: 7

[Views, European](#)

1911-1921

16 items

Box 2: 8

[Views, United States](#)

1914-1923

19 items

Box 2: 9

Other material

ca.1908-1923

Documents (copies): including birth certificate and passport for Jan Lesinski

1887-1909

5 items

Box 2: 10

Cyryla, S. M.: Moja pierwsza ksiazeczka. Niles, Ill. : St. Hedwig's Printer

1940

Box 1

Konstytucja Towarzystwa Sw. Kazimierza Grupa 1625 Z.N.P., Turners Falls, Mass.. Adams, Mass. : White Eagle Printing Co.

1931

Box 1

Najpraktyczniejszy nauczyciel polsko-angielski. Chicago : Wydane Nakladem

ca.1915

Box 1

Ownership inscription on ffep: "Mr. John Lesinski, 1916."

Szwajkarta, Stanisława: Arytmetyka. Chicago

1914

Box 1

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Mary Ryan, June 1990.

Digitized content

Selected images have been digitized and are available to [view online through Credo](#).

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, July 2017.

Languages:

English, Polish

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Cite as: Lesinski-Rusin Family Collection (MS 131). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

- Easthampton (Mass.)--Photographs
- Lesinski, Jan
- Lesinski, Weronika Rusin
- Polish Americans--Massachusetts--Easthampton--Photographs
- Rusin, Sophie
- Skarpetowski, Ignacy
- World War, 1914-1918--Photographs

Contributors

- Lesinski family [main entry]

Genres and formats

- Photographic postcards
- Photographs
- Postcards

Link to similar SCUA collections

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