

HISTORY OF THE POLISH FALCONS NEST #45

ST. LOUIS, MO

1902-1929

The Polish Falcons of America, a national fraternal and physical cultural organization operating under the lodge system with a representative form of government, is a direct outgrowth of a similar organization in Poland, which in 1867 inaugurated physical education according to the Latin maxim, "mens sana in corpore sano," (sound mind in a sound body). The first Falcon Nest in America was organized in Chicago in 1887. District II of the Polish Falcons was organized in **1902** and eventually encompassed 21 Nests from Chicago, Chicago Heights, Cicero, Milwaukee, Rockford and St. Louis. The great patriot General Thaddeus Kosciuszko was selected as the Patron of the Polish Falcons because of his exemplary idealism, love of freedom and loyal service to America and Poland.

In St. Louis, through the initiative of three civic minded Poles, namely, Vincent Imbierowicz, Stan Lewandowski and Gabriel Jegierski, **Nest 45 came into being on August 15, 1905, as a subsidiary of District II.** Members were all male. The first gym classes were held at Stollers Hall, 13th and Biddle Streets.

"The purposes for which the Society was formed are": To create, establish, accumulate and maintain a fund, from monthly dues and assessments collected from its members, which fund is to be applied and used for the payment of sick, accident and death benefits and to promote, develop and maintain social and educational activities and physical culture: organize, create and establish in Pennsylvania and other States of the United States of America, Subordinate lodges or branches."

In June 1907 the opening of the Polish-American Hall, 1940 Cass Avenue was a big event in the Polish colony in which the Polish Falcon turners took part. Thereafter, Falcon gym classes, mostly calisthenics and marching, were held there, courtesy of the Polish-American Hall.

That same year several delegates and athletes attended the National Meet held in Detroit, MI. Much valuable information about the Falcon organization was obtained there.

The biggest obstacle Nest #45 had to overcome was obtaining funds for apparatus. Over a period of time these were finally purchased through voluntary contributions. The membership increased and turners participated in exercises on the double bars, the horizontal bar, horse and rings. Weight lifting, wrestling and fencing were added attractions.

1908 - A move among women was begun by Miss Marie Mielcarek and Women's Nest 104 was founded in St. Louis. St. Louis was the site for the District II Meet (zlot) held July 4-5, 1908 at Roth's Grove Park.

1909 - The men's Nest 45 and women's Nest 104 merged. For a time the name Nest #45 Grunwald was used: later the Grunwald was dropped.

Gym classes were held at the F. Obremski Hall on 10th Street between Cass and O'Fallon for several years and then back at the Polish-American Hall on Cass Avenue.



At the outbreak of World War I the men signed up to serve with the United States Armed Forces and in General Haller's Polish Army in France. Activities of the Nest were almost dissolved but six dedicated men perpetuated the nest number by sending monthly dues to Headquarters during this period. They were Julian Groszewski, Julian Pilinski, Stanley Kozlicki, Stanley Ciborowski, Frank Krupa and Frank B. Grodzki.





The spirit of Falconry (Sokols) was rekindled again in **1925** when Stanley Kolodziejczyk visited homes and persuaded parents to send their children to gym classes. These were held at the Polish-American Hall, and in **February 1926** at a big installation many new members were sworn in.





1928 - Nest #45 classes grew steadily and a large contingent of athletes participated in the National Meet held in Syracuse, NY.

Women's Gymnastic Team, Polish Falcons Lodge No. 45, St. Louis won first prize at the Chicago Polish Falcon Alliance National Meet. A total of 800 women participated