

POLES TO OBSERVE CONSTITUTION DAY

National Alliance to Hold a State Celebration at Wilkeson

TOOK ADVANCED STAND

Framers Went So Far for Popular Freedom That Czar Moved in and Crushed Nation

Throughout the known world Poles annually observe May 3 in honor of the memory of the adoption of the progressive constitution of May 3, 1791. The state of Washington, represented by ten lodges, will celebrate the anniversary of the constitution at Wilkeson, Wash., under the auspices of lodge No. 459 of the Polish National Alliance of America, where at the same time the unveiling of a national flag will be celebrated.

The anniversary will be celebrated by the Poles everywhere in public meetings or in family circles. Such public meetings are not tolerated in old Polish provinces now under Russian and German rule.

The Polish National Alliance is their largest patriotic and fraternal organization, and its lodges are scattered all over the country with more than 65,000 members. Its aim is to educate, uplift and otherwise aid the people of European Poland in increasing their liberties.

35,000 Poles in State

Scattered through Washington are about 35,000 Poles, according to the statement yesterday of Charles Petrovitsky, a Seattle attorney. There are about 500 Polish families in Seattle. They have here a Polish school and library, and maintain about twenty churches in the state.

The ten lodges of the National Alliance in Washington are presided over by a grand lodge, of which S. Macujewski, of Tacoma, is president; August Nowakowski, of Seattle, treasurer, and E. Smiedenhausen, of Bremerton, secretary.

The Poles were one of the first people to embrace the republican form of government and adopt a constitution.

Mr. Petrovitsky believes the average American is not aware that as far back as 1364 the University of Warsaw was founded, and that even at an earlier date at Prague, in Bohemia, a university was founded by another branch of the Slav people, both of which universities were attended by students from England, which at that time had no institution of its own of equal standing.

While it is more than a century since, by an act of spoliation, Poland was divided among three great powers, Russia, Prussia and Austria, and though a hundred years is a long time, even in the life of a nation, in spite of these powers, their vast armies and the policy of disintegration carried on by the most crafty statesmen in Europe, they have failed, says Mr. Petrovitsky, to wipe out the Polish national spirit.

The services held every year in commemoration of the constitution are always religiously attended by a gathering of the Polish people living in the vicinity.

Provided for Popular Government

On May 3, 1791, the Polish parliament in Warsaw passed almost unanimously, an act which is known in history under the name of the constitution of May 3. There were only eleven articles in it, but they removed almost all the iniquities of the old system and gave Poland a modern constitutional government. The election of the kings by the nobility was abolished and the crown became hereditary. The legislative power was to be vested in the diet with the right of the senate to postpone bills to which it did not agree to the next session of the parliament.

The king became the only executive and to him was given a cabinet of six ministers, who were to be responsible to the people. The so-called "third state"—that is, merchants, artisans and laborers in the cities—obtained the right to elect their own representatives. The peasants were put under the protection of the laws of the country, instead of being dependent on the good will of the landlords.

A section of article IV, reads: "We do proclaim complete freedom to all. Whoever shall cross the borders of Poland will become free ipso facto the moment he puts his foot on Polish soil."

The clergy and the nobility were taxed to the amount of 10 per cent. of the net revenue from their lands. Every twenty-five years the constitution was to be revised by an extraordinary session of parliament.

Russia Crushes Free State

This statute put Poland almost on equal footing with the only other four countries, which at that time enjoyed a popular system of government. It raised Poland above her nearest neighbors, Russia, Austria and various German states of Central Europe, where the despotism of emperors, kings and princes continued to flourish. Not a drop of blood was shed in this radical reversal of this state of things in a country of about 12,000,000 population.

In the beginning of the movement, which ended in the adoption of this constitution, Russia had notified the king of Poland that she would consider any attempt at changing the old system on Poland's part as *casus belli*.

The other way out of the difficulty was to destroy Poland, and this way was quickly resorted to by Russia. The next year when Poland refused to repeal the constitution, the Russians struck. The campaign was short and disastrous and the constitution was crowned in the blood of the friends of liberty.