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Byron Janis

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connected. Further, crucibles, specialty items made of refractory clay obtainable in only a few places in Europe, were standard international exports that dominated world trade — millions were imported into Britain alone. A commodity export tool does not suggest anything about the nationality of its user. Otherwise, the Dutch, German, and Polish glass-making industries were all equally robust, so there is nothing inferable from that end.

It should be noted that some publications and internet articles on this subject reference an alleged 1625 primary source — Pamiętniki Handlowca or, alternatively, Memoriamul Commercatoris (A Merchant’s Memoir) — which asserts that the glassmakers were Polish and lists with confidence the names, hometowns, and pedigrees of the alleged Polish Jamestown pioneers, as well as detailing their many feats. Various investigations of this source strongly suggest that it is questionable, and likely a fraud.

While Smith always speaks well of the Poles, it is interesting that one of their contributions mentioned in his early reports is dropped in later versions of his history. When “Smith taketh the King of Paspheighpeiser,” in his first report (Oxford Tract 1613) he wrote: “Long they struggled in the water, from whence the King perceiving two of the Poles, upon the sandes would have Red; but the President held him by his haire and throat till the Poles came in; then seeing howe pitifully the poor Salvage begged his life, they conducted him prisoner to the fort.” Later, in his General History, the help was no longer acknowledged and Smith takes somewhat more credit unto himself: “long they struggled in the water, till the President got such a hold on this throat, he neare strangled the King; but having his fuchson to cut off his head seeing howe pitifull he begg his life, he led him prisoner to Jamestowne and put him in chains.”

The Poles were clearly capable young men who worked hard and did themselves proud, an achievement that created opportunities for other Poles who followed, and we know that Poles were actually present in Jamestown over several decades at least. The evidence and informed reasoning allows speculation that there were at least two and probably three to five Poles, their number likely including a glassmaker and an assistant. Suggestive evidence also supports the theory that the potash and naval stores men were Poles. This is what we know or can reasonably guess. — Richard J. Orli


Jan of Kolno. This fifteenth century traveler is alleged to have discovered the Strait of Anian and Labrador in 1476. Joachim Lelewel, a nineteenth century Polish historian, argued that he was Polish. Lelewel cited geographical works dating back to the sixteenth century where Johannes Scolnus, a sailor of King Christian of Denmark, was mentioned and sometimes identified as a Pole. He further interpreted Scolnus as the Latin transcription of the Polish “z Kolno” — that is, “of Kolno.” Kolno is a town in Mazovia that prospered in the fifteenth century as a trading center and was home to a number of renowned sailors. A student “Jan z Kolna” was found in the records of the Jagiellonian University from the fifteenth century. Scholars critical of Lelewel’s theory argue that “of Kolno” would have been noted as “de Colno” or “Colensis” in Latin. Some of them transcribe the name as Scolpus, Sculp, Scolumus, or Scolus and identify him as Norwegian, Danish, or Portuguese. A Polish geographer, Bolesław Olszewicz, who examined the problem carefully in 1933, shared their doubts without questioning the authenticity of the expedition of 1476. Polish artists, including novelist Stefan Żeromski and the artist Jan Matejko, trusted Lelewel and popularized Jan of Kolno as a Pole in their works. The well-known miniaturist Arthur Szyk also executed a painting memorializing Jan z Kolna as a Pole. Today, American scholars generally reject the Polish identification, most arguing a lack of substantial proof that a Pole held a prominent position in the Danish expedition of 1476. — Joanna Wojdon


Janda, Victoria (Wilktoria Duda); b. Nowy Targ, Poland, December 17, 1889; d. Hennepin County, Minnesota, April 1, 1961). Poet. After migrating to America with her family at the age of three, Janda was educated in the parochial schools in Minneapolis before earning a baccalaureate degree from the University of Minnesota and embarking on a career in social work. Active in Polish American affairs, she was a president of Group 1530 of the Polish National Alliance, president of the local Polanie Club, and a member of several other organizations. Her interest in poetry led to publication of her works in a variety of Polish newspapers and journals including Zgoda, Dziennik Związkowy, Nowy Minnoseckie, Jasłanka, Dziennik Chigacowski, Nowy Świat, and Antologia Poesji Polsko Amerykańskiej, and in the English New American Magazine, National Magazine of Poetry, and Minnesota Anthology of Verse. She is also the author of several volumes of poetry for children. — Sophie Hodrowicz Knab


Janis, Byron (Yankilevitch; Yanks; b. McKeesport, Pennsylvania, March 24, 1928; d. ). Pianist, composer. Janis is the youngest of two children of Hattie Horelick and Samuel Yankilevitch, who shortened his surname to Yanks after immigrating to the United States. He moved with his family to Pittsburgh during the Great Depression. Byron began piano lessons in 1933 after demonstrating perfect pitch in kindergarden while performing on a toy xylophone. In early 1936 he moved to New York with his mother and sister, his father remaining in Pittsburgh to operate the family store, to study with Josef and Rosina Lhevinne. After a year they assigned him to their associate Adele Marcus, who became his teacher for six years. He attended composition and harmony classes at the Chatham Square School of Music and academic classes at Columbia Grammar School. Byron Yanks made his recital debut at Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Hall in 1937, and a year later, his musical sponsor, Samuel Chorzinoff, decided that Yanks was not a suitable surname for a pianist, so he became Byron Jannes (pronounced Yannes).

When Adele Marcus accepted a teaching position in Dallas, Byron followed to continue his studies, soon after changing his surname from Jannes to Janis, since everyone pronounced the J. He made his orchestral debut in 1943 with Toscanini’s NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Frank Black. After attending a Janis performance in 1944, Vladimir Horowitz offered to take the fifteen-year-old on as his first student. Following Horowitz’s advice, Janis postponed the obligatory New York Carnegie Hall debut, and instead undertook a concert tour to build self-confidence and acquire stage presence. During the Horowitz years (1944–48), Janis made about fifty concert appearances, including a successful tour of South America. At age eighteen he also became the youngest artist signed to a contract by RCA Victor. Janis made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1948, which was
hailed by critic Olin Downes in the *New York Times*, and undertook his first European tour in 1952. Janis became front-page news in 1960 when he was invited to give ten concerts behind the Iron Curtain as part of the first U.S.-Soviet Union cultural exchange. Although this was just after the U-2 spy plane incident, the Soviet audiences' responses were overwhelmingly positive, and he was invited back for a similarly successful second tour in 1962. Janis made further musical history in 1967, when he discovered manuscripts of two Chopin waltzes in a chateau outside Paris. He then discovered two completely different versions of the same waltzes at the Yale Music Library in 1973. Janis closely identified with Chopin, and filmed a one-hour documentary for television in 1975, *Frédéric Chopin: A Voyage with Byron Janis*.

In 1973, he was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritus, which eventually caused the distal (tip) joints of nine fingers to fuse, and also caused painful stiffness in his wrists and neck. He kept his condition secret for over a decade, and adjusted his playing technique by changing his fingering and hand positioning. He continued to concertize in Europe and America despite intense pain, eventually limiting himself to solo recitals. He tried many treatments, both medical and alternative, and at times suffered from depression. Janis went public with his illness after a White House concert in 1985, and became a cultural ambassador for the National Arthritis Foundation, giving concerts on its behalf. After an operation on his thumb resulted in its shortening, he returned to songwriting, composing a stage musical, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. He subsequently composed music for television and film, as well as a second musical, *The Silver Skates*.

Among Janis's numerous honors are the Harriet Cohen International Music Award/Beethoven Medal (1962); the Grand Prix du Disque (1964); the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from the French government (1965); the Distinguished Pennsylvania Artist Award (1985); National Public Radio's "Performance Today Critics Choice Award" (1996) for his recording "Byron Janis Plays Chopin," his first commercial recording after 34 years; and an honorary doctorate from Trinity University in Hartford, Connecticut (1997).—*J. Drobnicki*

**Janowicz**

**Janowicz, Victor Felix "Vic"** (b. Elyria, Ohio, February 26, 1930; d. Columbus, Ohio, February 27, 1996). Football Player. Janowicz was a football standout for Ohio State University from 1949 to 1951. In 1950, playing tailback, he was named an All-American, and was awarded the Heisman Trophy as the country's top collegiate performer, one of few underclassmen ever so honored. Elected to attempt a career in baseball, he played for the Pittsburgh Pirates for two seasons, 1953–54, but with indifferent success. He then returned to football, joining the Washington Redskins of the National Football League. After two seasons, Janowicz seemed on the brink of stardom in the pros, but in 1956 a serious auto accident ended his days as an athlete. Following his recovery from his injuries, he embarked on a successful career as a businessman and broadcaster in Columbus, Ohio. He is a member of the College Football Hall of Fame, and was elected to the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame in 1987.—*Neal Pease*


**Janta, Aleksander** (Aleksander Janta-Polczyński; b. Poznań, Poland, December 11, 1908; d. Southampton, New York, August 19, 1974). Writer, poet, journalist. Janta's first short stories were published in 1925 in the hunting journal *Rybiak* (Hunting). Beginning in 1928 he collaborated with several Polish periodicals of different genres and political opinions including *Tygodnik Literacki* (Literary Life), *Tęcz* (Rainbow), *Dwutygodnik Literacki* (Literary fortnightly), *Kultura* (Culture), *Dziennik Poznański* (Poznań Daily News), *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary Information), and *Gazeta Polska* (Polish Gazette). He published essays and poems, but travel stories brought Janta popularity. He started with a trip to France, Great Britain, and the U.S. with his articles appearing in *Nowy Świat* (New World). In 1932 he went to the Soviet Union. Among the countries he visited later were Lithuania, Japan, Afghanistan, Burma, Thailand, China, and India where he met Mahatma Gandhi. During his trip to the U.S. he interviewed President Franklin D. Roosevelt and actor Charlie Chaplin. He traveled as a press correspondent, describing the wars in Manchuria and Ethiopia. In Paris at the outbreak of the World War II, Janta volunteered for the Polish Army in France, becoming a war correspondent. After the German attack on France he fought with the Polish First Grenadier Division commanded by Gen. Bronisław Duch. The division was dissolved when France capitulated in June, 1940, but the soldiers were ordered to reach England via unoccupied southern France. When Janta and his fellows were surrounded by German forces on their way south, he masqueraded as Rene Lapedagne, a French soldier who actually died in battle. He maintained this French disguise for the next twenty-seven months, first in camp Lorch im Remstal near Stuttgart, then in Lyon beginning in September 1942. He described his war adventures in two books, *I Lied to Live: A Year as a German Family Slave* (1944) and *Bound with Two Chains* (1945). In April 1943 he escaped through Grenoble and Spain, making his way to London in the guise of a German officer. For his actions he was awarded the first of three Crosses of Valor. In London he was assigned to the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the Polish government-in-exile. His application for the Polish Information Center in New York was accepted in March 1944.

Janta arrived in America with the task of enlivening propaganda for the Polish cause. He decided to stay in the United States after the war, but he refused to sever all connections with his homeland, visiting Poland in 1948, an act that led to him being ostracized by émigré leaders and the émigré press. He settled in Buffalo, and in 1949 took a job as a broadcaster on Lewon Wyszkak's radio program, then moved to *Dziennik dla Wszystkich* (Everybody's Daily) where he wrote 625 feature stories from October 18, 1949, to January 2, 1952. When the pierogi factory he ran went bankrupt in 1954, Janta moved to New York City as the assistant of Stephen Mizwa at the Kosciusko Foundation. At the beginning of the 1960s he joined Alexander Hertz in operating an antique bookshop which proved to be a financial success and fulfilled Janta's bibliophilic passion. Living in Elmhurst, NY, he presented the most interesting of his findings in the articles he published beginning in 1966 in a column labeled "Kupa mięci" in the **London Wiadomości** (Information). In America, he translated Russian and Japanese poetry into Polish, and wrote many of his stories and poems, most of which were published privately for a list of subscribers. He served as president of the Polish Art Club in Buffalo in 1949–52 and in this capacity enlivened the city's Polish-American cultural life by organizing exhibits, lectures, and meetings with Polish artists. He continued on the national level as president of the American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs between 1952 and 1955. After moving to New York in 1956, Janta became a director of the Paderewski Foundation, and was active in returning the Wawel treasures from Canada to Poland. As a member of the