

## Jackoboice Family and Polish Pioneers in Grand Rapids, Michigan (1850s-60s)

By Mike Jackoboice - January, 2021

Starting in 1825, immigrants could voyage the Atlantic Ocean to New York and the new Erie Canal - then voyage the Great Lakes into Michigan Territory. The pioneer "Polanders" liked the familiar weather, seasons, rivers, farms and forests. Many Poles were experienced loggers and woodworkers, some with expertise as carpenters, wagonmakers and cabinetmakers. They knew how to select and cut down trees, how to move and float logs to sawmills. They knew how to saw lumber, build houses and make furniture.

Polish historian Eduard Skendzel said Grand Rapids was "a frontier town of native Americans, French Canadians, and Irish and German immigrants" (Dutch too) in the mid-1800s. By 1850 there were 2,686 residents in this busy logging town. In the 1850s, Polish immigrants found a growing city from Wealthy to Leonard Street and from Straight/Alpine to Eastern Avenue. They would help to build "The Furniture Capital of America." Thanks to journalists and historians (including Edward Symanski) we have the names of *most of the few* Polish immigrants in Grand Rapids in the 1850s and 1860s. Most lived on the west side of the Grand River and knew each other. The following family names appear in books and articles: Bala, Baweja, Cerklewski, Glowczynski, Gruszczynski, Jablonski, Janszewski, Mieras, Nowak, Ojrowski, Olbinski, Polgensak, Razmus, Rozmarynowski, Sucharski, Szymczak, Tloczynski, Zielinski and others. Some settled, some departed and some returned.

The old *Grand Rapids Herald* newspaper printed an extraordinary article on September 19, 1909 with photograph portraits of seven "Founders of the Polish Colony in Grand Rapids." The photo panel caption featured their names and dates of settlement in the city. The lengthy article was headlined: "Poles of Grand Rapids are very Patriotic" and subtitled, "Revere the Fatherland for the Honor of Those Who Gave Much for Liberty... Love Their Adopted Country for the Great Liberty It Has Given Them." The writer, Frank Sparks, had the best possible eyewitness source of information. He credited "data gathered by Mrs. John Lipczynski, lady commissioner of the Polish National Alliance." Valeria Lipczynski came from Poland and settled in Grand Rapids in 1869. She helped Polish immigrants find homes and served as a tutor, nurse and journalist. She was active in the Polish community as its *grande dame* until her death in 1930. Valeria knew the early immigrants and their life stories. She recorded their names for posterity.

The *Herald* article of 1909 named the "First Polish Residents" [Settlers] of the 1850s and 60s: "Among the first to come to Grand Rapids was Joseph Jackubowicz [*Jakubowicz*], who left his native home in Russian Poland and came to Grand Rapids in 1855. He with his family lived an honored life in Grand Rapids until his death in 1899. In 1864 two more came. A. Styler and Simon Dzieniszewski and a year later Valentine Pogodzinski" [and returning brother Jacob Pogodzinski. John Lipczynski came in 1869].

Reporter Frank Sparks added, "In 1869 there were in Grand Rapids the following Polish families, all hard working and industrious people, a credit to their nationality and to the city of their adoption: Andrew Popowski, Joseph Jakubowicz, Jacob Pogodzinski..." [and nine other Polish families of: Anthony Styler (*Sztyler, Stiller*), John Podlewski, Simon Dzieniszewski (*Janshefski*), Valentine Pogodzinski, Michael Pross (*Prus*), John Witkowski (*Wittkowski*), John Lipczynski, Anthony Lipczynski and Frank Szocinski]. In this article, we see the spellings Dzieniszewski, Dzienszewski and Dzeniszewski. And we see the Polish spelling variant Jakubowicz for the actual family name Jakóbowicz (later modified to Jackoboice).

*The Evening Press*, February 11, 1899, reported that 74 year-old machinist "Joseph Jackoboice was one of the oldest settlers upon the West Side, and a pioneer of the Polish citizens." The *Press* noted he was "one of the earliest of the great army of Polish emigrants to come to this part of Michigan" [1850s to 1914]. Joseph was an honorary member of the Polish National Aid Society of Grand Rapids (established 1878) and a founding member of Polish National Alliance (PNA) Lodge 57 (est. 1886). Joseph worked with iron to build machines and saws that turned logs into furniture. In the book, *History of Kent County, Michigan* (1881), author M. Leeson said Joseph made, "All kinds of steam engines, mill work and general wood working machinery" [mainly for sawmills and furniture companies]. Joseph founded the West Side Iron Works foundry/machine shop in 1880. A century later, Mike Jackoboice was the last descendant to *labor* for the West Side Iron Works - and he may be the last to research the story of its founder.

Joseph (Józef) spelled his original surname *Jakóbowicz*, pronounced "Yah-koob-o-vitch." The Polish ó = u, so journalists and historians used a correct variant: *Jakubowicz*. In the process of Anglicizing his surname, Joseph modified the suffix "owicz" (meaning "son of") through "owice" to "o-ice." Both roots, *Jakób* and *Jakub*, translate as Jacob. So most people knew Joseph as Jacob-o-ice (*Jacoboice*, 1859 to 1872). Then he added his original "k" and pronounced "o-ice" as "oyce" in *Jacko-boice* (1873 forward).

### **Who was first to arrive? Who was first to live in the city? Who was first to settle?**

In 1981 Polish historian Eduard Skendzel (1921-1999) wrote of "The First Poles in Western Michigan." He noted, "The first person of Polish ancestry who lived in the limits of the frontier town of Grand Rapids in 1855 is said to have been Joseph *Jakubowicz* who was known as *Jackoboice* through the years and who became an industrialist. After him came other families." Mr. Skendzel later questioned arrival dates and primacy of residence among the men he called "the Big-Three Polish immigrants to Grand Rapids."

In the September, 1982 issue of *The Eaglet* magazine of the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan, Mr. Skendzel asked this question: "... who really was the first Polander to settle within the corporate limits of that small frontier outpost that was Grand Rapids in the 1850s? It has been said heretofore that *Joseph Jakubowicz*... was the first Polander in the city. Some sources fix his arrival as 1855, others as 1854, and still others as 1853. He came here from New York City where he initially settled briefly upon his arrival from Germany and Kalisz, Poland.... He is unique in his origins [the Russian section of partitioned Poland] since all the pioneer Polanders... emigrated from Prussian Poland [Posen, Pomerania, Silesia]. Given the lack of primary documentation attesting to the date of *Joseph Jackoboice's* arrival, this issue of who was the first Polander in Grand Rapids itself is deserving of in-depth research. There are sources which assert that *Andrew Poposkey* (*Popowski*, *Poposki*) merits this primacy. He allegedly arrived in the city in 1850 or, at least, in 1852. He was a cabinetmaker who eventually sold his shop.... And then there was *Jacob Pogodzinski*, another craftsman and cabinetmaker. His date of arrival in Grand Rapids warrants further research since census records [in the year 1900] claim it to have been 1853. His descendants are attempting to verify this date in primary sources. It is for this reason that the question as to who was the first Polander to live in Grand Rapids is a matter presently in doubt and an issue demanding further extensive research by genealogists and ethnic historians."

Polish immigrants came to Michigan as early as 1820. Historian Eduard Skendzel, in 1986, again referred to *Andrew Poposkey*, *Jacob Pogodzinski* and *Joseph Jackoboice* as pioneer Polanders. He wrote, "One, *Joseph Jackoboice* (*Jakubowicz*), is said to have been the first Polander to settle in the city in 1854" (archived in the *Lipczynski Collection*, Grand Rapids Public Library (GRPL) Local History Dept. - Collection 179, Box 1, Folder 4, p. 3). Writer *Mike Jackoboice* found Mr. Skendzel's call to extensive research 30 years later (in 2012). By defining the words *live* and *settle*, we see three primacy issues:

1) If we wish to determine the first Pole to arrive in the city, we see Mr. Skendzel's research showing that *Andrew Poposkey* could have been first: "in 1850, or, at least, in 1852." It was also reported to be *Julian John Maciejewski*, a priest who arrived in September, 1852 and *lived outside of the city* at Pleasant (Stage Road and 8 Mile Road) while working in the Alpine-Wright "German Settlement."

2) If we wish to determine the first Pole to live in the city, *Andrew Poposkey* (*Popowski*) could merit this primacy with arrival in 1850, 1851 or 1852. *Jacob Pogodzinski's* recorded date of arrival was 1853. Another well-known Polish immigrant arrived in 1854: *Joseph Baranowski Sr.* and family *settled outside of the city* near Berlin/Marne (surname variants *Barnoski*, *Barnosky*, *Bernowski*, *Bernoski*, *Bernosky*, etc.).

3) If we wish to determine the first Pole to settle in the city, it is necessary to distinguish between living in the city (staying for a period of time)... and settling in the city (staying for the rest of one's life). *The Grand Rapids Herald* [Sunday Morning] article of 9/19/1909 showed that *Andrew Popowski* [*Poposkey*, arriving by 1852] and *Jacob Pogodzinski* [arriving in 1853] lived in the city for periods of time, departed, and returned to settle. The *Herald* newspaper article featured *Joseph Jackubowicz* [*Jackoboice*] as the first settler and founder in the photo panel of "Founders of the Polish Colony in Grand Rapids." The caption shows the date when each immigrant *settled in the city*....

"FOUNDERS OF THE POLISH COLONY IN GRAND RAPIDS. From left to right – Joseph Jackubowicz, first of the race to settle in Grand Rapids, in 1855; Anthony Styler, 1864; Simon Dzienszewski, 1864; Valentine Pogodzinski, 1865; John Lipczynski, 1869; Andrew Popowski, 1875; Jacob Pogodzinski, 1865."



*The Grand Rapids Herald* reported that Jacob Pogodzinski and Andrew Popowski were working in Grand Rapids in 1869. Jacob had already settled (1865) and Andrew was yet to settle (1875). We see that another Polander settled 10 years prior to Jacob, and 20 years prior to Andrew. Joseph Jackubowicz [Jackoboice] settled in 1855, staying until his death in 1899. So we see that through 1909, journalists and others considered Joseph to be the first Polish immigrant to settle in the city of Grand Rapids.

A document in a Jackoboice file at the GRPL Local History Department notes Joseph's arrival in 1854 (as recorded in three obituaries and in Z. Z. Lydens' 1966 book, *The Story of Grand Rapids*). The document also refers to Joseph's funeral and old friends in attendance. "The Evening Press on February 11, 1899 reported the death of undoubtedly the first Pole to settle in Grand Rapids under, 'He Was A Pioneer.'" The Press gave details: "The funeral of Joseph Jackoboice... was very largely attended by old friends and neighbors... the [pall]bearers were Andrew Poposkey... [and others]." Apparently, Joseph's old friend Andrew Poposkey (Popowski, Poposki) did not take issue with Joseph's status as the first Polish settler in the city. There is additional evidence of friendship in the Lipczynski Collection papers: a reference to Andrew, Joseph and Jacob Pogodzinski in a German-speaking church in 1857. And in 1864, good friends Joseph and Jacob drafted a petition (in Polish) that was signed by many others (protesting New York Harbor's safe haven for a Russian fleet - and a ship's execution of one of its Polish sailors).

### Joseph Jackoboice (1824-1899) and the Family Business

The 1881 book, *History of Kent County, Michigan*, stated that Joseph was born in Poland on March 16, 1824 and "learned the machinist's trade" in Kalisz from 1840-44. He then emigrated to Germany and worked as a machinist. In 1852, at age 28, he voyaged the ocean to America and lived in New York City for 2.5 years. We can deduce arrival in Grand Rapids in autumn, 1854. He first worked at rural O'Brien's Farm (hay and wheat), probably repairing iron "mowing and threshing machines." From 1855 to 1860 he worked in the city, first for Elihu Smith's lumber company and then in Ball & Butterworth's machine shop.

Joseph married Frances Rasch in 1858. As the first Polish settler on the West Side, his first known home was just north of Bridge Street at 22 (a.k.a. 420) Broadway (by 1860 Federal Census). Historians and a newspaper stated that Joseph opened his first foundry/machine shop in 1860, on Mill Street. Listed in old city directories as "machine shop," his seven successive shops were downtown on both sides of the river. In 1880, in the heart of Grand Rapids on the west side of the Grand River, Joseph acquired a permanent home for his family business. He moved tools and equipment into the former German-English Schoolhouse at 31 S. Front Street, on the southwest corner at Tremont/Bowery/Douglas Street. He converted the two-story building into a foundry/machine shop and opened the West Side Iron Works. Historian Eduard Skendzel described Joseph as "a master craftsman" and "a machinist *par excellence*." He likely employed some of the 1,000 Polish immigrants living in the city in the 1880s (a family tradition).

Joseph and son Edward Joseph (1864-1935) advertised the business and products in city directories from the 1860s through the 1890s: Steam Engines... Mill Work [*mill machinery*] and General Wood Working Machinery... Band Saws [*and Table, Rip, Cut-off saws*]... Saw Arbors... Sand Papering, Boring and Shaping Machines... Shingle Machinery... Shafting and Pulleys... and Excelsior Machines [*upright model. These upright, rotary and wheel machines (with one wheel of 20 knives) cut fine wood shavings ("excelsior") used as stuffing for furniture cushions, mattresses, shipping boxes, etc.*]. Joseph invented a lumber-recording device. Edward co-patented a sanding machine and a glue-jointing machine. And they designed over 100 fire escapes. They sold their products in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin.

City directory listings show that Joseph retired in 1895, at age 70. He rested from his labors in his second home on the West Side (1873/74 forward at 52 Broadway, near the SE corner at Second Street). Naturally, he served as a consultant on fun projects. His son Edward Joseph built a steam-propelled boat he called the *Comet* - indicating a fast boat or a good sense of humor. And he built a steam-powered automobile in 1897, said to be the fourth car in Grand Rapids. Edward drove it to Detroit in 1898, a six-day roundtrip on rough wagon roads likely sparking a desire to build road maintenance machinery.

The old traveler Joseph likely enjoyed the story of that long road trip, near the end of his own long road. According to the *Grand Rapids Democrat* newspaper of 2/10/1899, "Mr. Jackoboice was the sole owner of the West Side Iron Works, had a half interest in the Clarendon hotel [originally the Rasch Hotel, at Canal and E. Bridge], and owned considerable real estate. He was widely known among the business men of the city and had an enviable reputation for business honor, honesty and reliability." This obituary also described him as "one of the representative Polish citizens of the city," with the headline "Honest and Industrious... a Wealthy Polish Citizen is Dead" [of Bright's Disease, i.e., kidney failure, at home].

Of ten children, Edward Joseph was the only surviving son. In 1906 he married Helen Hake. During early 1900s mass production of the automobile, Edward manufactured woodworking machines for car body builders Wilson, Fisher and Briggs. As bouncing Model T car drivers began demanding better conditions on dirt and gravel roads, Edward transitioned from woodworking machines (1921) to manufacturing road grader blades with hydraulics. In 1931 his enterprising sons Edward William (1907-80) and George A. Jackoboice (1908-87) aptly named the business the Monarch Road Machinery Co.

From 1941 to 1945, during the dark days of World War II and the genocide in Poland, this *Jakóbowicz* factory built hydraulic systems - and fast brass torpedo propellers - towards victory over Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. After the war, Monarch pumps powered snowplows on war surplus jeeps and other vehicles nationwide. In 1954 the family built and moved to a larger factory at 1363 Michigan Street. Its pumps, valves and cylinders powered truck tailgates and a variety of lifts and ladders (patents online). The business shipped worldwide through 2007. Monarch Hydraulics, Inc., sold to Bucher Hydraulics, Inc.

From the 1800s forward, a long line of first sons worked at and for the West Side Iron Works: Edward Joseph, Edward William, Edward James (1935-2012) and Edward Michael Jackoboice. In 1958, James (Jim) reopened the old machine shop and revived the West Side Iron Works. In its aroma of old wood and industry, the last product was a metal, accordion-style street barricade. When Jim began working at the new Monarch office in the 1960s, he took barricade materials to its factory. There, son Mike mowed the lawn, assembled Monarch pumps and built West Side barricades (in school/college years, 1968-81).

The very modern Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum opened its doors in 1981. Next door was a very old schoolhouse built in 1866. Many people knew it as the Jackoboice factory for 75 years. Fires damaged the historic building in 1979 and 1981 and kindled nostalgic sadness. The family razed the old shop in 1982, then donated the property for the museum grounds. At President Ford's gravesite, one can walk around the iron fence to see a large boulder with an historical plaque. It marks the site of the red schoolhouse that became the very Polish, very productive West Side Iron Works.

To see one of "Jackoboice's Fire Escapes" in Grand Rapids, visit the Lemon & Wheeler Building (built in 1883) at Ionia and Weston. See an old bandsaw at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, 2nd floor, in the Furniture City section. Enjoy a profile of Joseph Jackoboice with photos, ads, city maps and newspaper clippings at [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com) (type Jackoboice, click Search). There is more at [VintageMachinery.org](http://VintageMachinery.org).

## Early Grand Rapids as Seen by the First Polish Immigrants (1850s forward)

It all began on the Grand River - actually upriver - near the future village of Ada. In the year 1821, Mr. Rix Robinson "established a trading post at the mouth of the Thornapple river, as the agent of the American Fur Company. He was the first permanent white settler in Kent County." By today's landmarks, "The trading post was near Amway's softball field. More off of Grand River Drive, between the back of the Ada Cemetery and the Grand River" (Kristen Wildes, Museum Manager, Ada Historical Society).

The opening quotation is from the centennial celebration book of 1926, entitled, *A Citizen's History of Grand Rapids, Michigan*, compiled and edited by William J. Etten (published by A.P. Johnson Company). All quotations are from this book, unless otherwise noted.

Rix Robinson's large gravestone/monument is located atop the Ada Cemetery hill, overlooking Ada and Amway headquarters. Ada was my home too, as my family lived on the Thornapple River from 1969 to 1990. My grandma Lucile is buried near Rix in the Ada Cemetery, and my remains may rest there too.

Back in the 1820s, down the Grand River at its grand rapids, a pioneer Baptist missionary and friends were the first white men to live with the Indians there. On the river's west side, in 1824, missionary Isaac McCoy "selected the site for a mission, just south of what is now the intersection of Bridge street and Front avenue." Built in 1825, the first three buildings of the Thomas Mission included a log schoolhouse. This ministry (later called the Slater Mission) continued until 1836, when it relocated to Prairieville. For colorful details of the era and region, see Isaac McCoy's book, *History of Baptist Indian Missions* (1840).

City founder "Louis Campau was the first permanent white settler in Grand Rapids. He came here in November, 1826, to trade with the Indians." In the spring of 1827 he built two log cabins on the east side of the Grand River, at the foot of the future Huron Street. After a government survey, in 1831, Louis Campau paid \$90 for 72 acres of land - which would develop into "downtown" with its sawmills and factories. Grand Rapids "became an incorporated village in 1838 and an incorporated city in 1850."

The Irish and others arrived, and, "A few German immigrants, largely from Westphalia, began to settle in and around Grand Rapids in 1840.... Many German immigrants were mechanics, skilled workmen," and "others engaged in mercantile pursuits." The first Polish immigrants arrived in Michigan as early as 1820. In the 1850s and 60s, thirty known families moved to the logging town of Grand Rapids. Many "Polanders" worked with wood and helped to build "The Furniture Capital of America." By 1888, the book, *Grand Rapids As It Is* reported a large German population of about 7,000 (including "many of the most prominent citizens of the community")... about "1,000 Polanders"... and about 16,000 "Hollanders."

According to the abovementioned William Etten, an 1845 pamphlet listed these businesses and more: "Fifteen stores, two saw mills, three flour mills, two furnaces and machine shops, two pail factories... one woolen factory... salt works, plaster mill... several blacksmiths... two printing offices, four churches...."

In the year 1850, "when the population was only 2,686, a business and professional summary was published which showed that there were then here twenty dry goods, two hardware, two clothing, four drug, two hat and cap and two book stores, twelve grocery and provision, ten boot and shoe stores, eight public houses and victualling establishments.... At that time there were also here two tanneries... five saw mills, between forty and fifty factories and mechanical shops of various kinds, three bakeries, two regular meat markets and about 100 carpenters and joiners. There were then seven churches, with eight resident ministers, twelve lawyers and six physicians.

"In 1855 there were upward of sixty stores of various kinds... thirty groceries, [12] physicians, and [23] lawyers.... The city was not altogether out of the woods, for on September 15, 1856, Simeon L. Baldwin shot a wild bear at Monroe avenue and Fulton street. And it was a big bruin, weighing 324 pounds."

For transportation, one could ride in a classic "Western" stagecoach. In Etten's book, there is an 1865 photo of a "Stage coach running between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, 1855 to 1868" (four horses).

"The Indians living in and about the rapids of Grand River were, in general, peaceful and contented. They were friendly towards the white men, providing the first comers with fish and game and with fruits and berries in season. Deer were plentiful, and they would save choice bits of venison for friends in the village. The Indians also ate raccoon and muskrat flesh.... As the white settlers increased in numbers the Indians were more inclined to "swap" game, fish, fruits, berries, furs, dressed deerskins and moccasins for flour, salt, tobacco, ammunition, sugar and blankets, as well as for other articles they desired - not forgetting the firewater. The Pottawottamies were transferred from this section to their reservation in Indiana, and later the Chippewas went to northern Michigan. Separate bands of Ottawas were transported, at different times, beyond the Mississippi. The spring of 1859 was the first in the memory of white men when there were no Indian fishermen about the rapids or the islands of Grand River. Not a tent or wigwam was seen... and the Indian sturgeon trade at the rapids was ended.

"The first sawmill in Grand Rapids was built by Gideon H. Gordon at government expense, for the Thomas Indian Mission, in 1832. It was on Indian Mill Creek - a slow, small mill with the old-fashioned upright saw and it was capable of cutting 500 to 800 feet a day when there was sufficient flow of water in the creek to keep it in motion. The second sawmill was completed in the spring of 1834 along the east channel of the river, near where the Hotel Pantlind now stands.... Soon a dozen others were built, all run by water power, and one which could turn out 4,500 feet a day was considered of large capacity. About 1853 Powers, Ball & Co. built the first steam sawmill, with a circular saw. It was north of Leonard street.

"In pioneer days there were extensive tracts of pine timber along Rouge river [*sic*, Rogue River], Flat river, Maple river, Fish creek and the other affluents of Grand river... above Grand Rapids. Soon after the first sawmills began operating in Grand Rapids the river and its tributaries were utilized to float logs to this city and to other places where there were markets for them. It is claimed that the first lumber rafts down the river were sent out in 1838 by James M. Nelson. About the same time George W. Dickinson brought down a raft of at least 30,000 feet from Flat river.... For twenty years after the lumber trade began in this vicinity the only profitable avenue for shipments to other markets was by floatage to Grand Haven, where further shipment was made by lake vessels. The business grew so rapidly that in 1855 lumber shipments from the mouth of Grand River amounted to 45,000,000 feet.... An estimate of the total yield of logs from the forests adjacent to and above Grand Rapids, which found market over the waters of Grand river, would be more than three and a half billion feet. By the year 1893 almost all the available pine timber in this immediate section of the state had been cut down and sawed up, the industry gradually declining hereabouts, and logging and sawmill activities were removed to upper Michigan."

Starting in 1836, cabinetmakers were the very first to make furniture in the future "Furniture Capital of America." "Most of the furniture was made by hand until 1848, when Deacon Haldane built a shop on Canal (Monroe) street and installed a circular saw and lathe... and began making furniture by machinery. With a force of seven men he turned out tables, bedsteads, chairs and bureaus...." William T. Powers arrived in 1847, and in 1848 he too produced furniture with machinery: a circular saw, a turning lathe and a boring machine. It was only the beginning.... By 1923 there were 34 "Foundry and machine shop" businesses employing 998 people, many building woodworking machines for the furniture industry.

In 1855 machinist Józef Jakóbowicz, 31, from Kalisz, Poland, was the first Polish immigrant *to settle in the city* of Grand Rapids. "Joseph" soon modified his family name: Jacob-o[*w*]jice. In 1858 he married Prussian immigrant Frances J. Rasch. She and a brother would lodge sawmill workers and river "log runners" in the Rasch House and later in the Rasch Hotel (renamed Clarendon, Charlevoix; site of Rowe).

Joseph "Jacoboice" was an educated, skilled machinist for 55 years. After working for others, in 1860 on Mill Street he opened his first of seven, successive foundry/machine shops. He built machinery for sawmills, furniture companies and others: steam engines... saw arbors... bandsaws and table, rip, cut-off saws... "boring, shaping and sandpapering machines"... shingle machines... excelsior machines... and over 100 iron fire escapes. In 1880 Joseph Jackóboice founded the West Side Iron Works (see details, photos and images at [www.VintageMachinery.org](http://www.VintageMachinery.org)). This family business was located a block south of Bridge Street at 31 S. Front, in a building which stood from 1866 to 1982. This old, red schoolhouse was built *on or near* the original grounds of the pioneer Baptist mission for the Indians. One can walk the grounds today and see historical markers - at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum and gravesite.

## Image Detail

### Details

**Title:** 1888 Ad -  
Manufacturers  
of Improved  
Band Saws

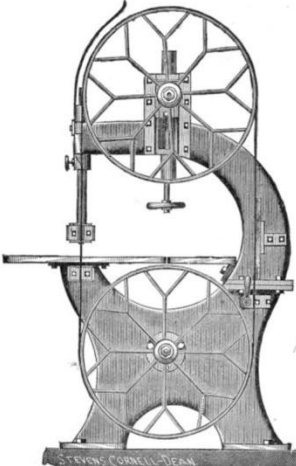
**Source:** "The Michigan  
Artisan" Vol.  
8, No. 8. Feb.  
10, 1888. Pg.  
68.

**Insert  
Date:** 4/11/2004  
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### Image

JOSEPH JACKOBOICE,  
Manufacturer of Improved  
**BAND SAWS**  
AND GENERAL WOOD-WORKING MACHINERY.

OFFICE AND WORKS  
31 and 33 South Front St.  
**GRAND  
RAPIDS,  
MICHIGAN.**



28" We manufacture the best upright  
Excelsior machine in the market.  
We have a second-hand Fay 40 inch re-  
saw in good repair, which we will sell at a  
bargain.  
Send for Illustrated Circular and Prices.

STEVEN CORNELL DEAN



Casting label from a restored band saw

## Variety of Newspaper Clippings, etc., Featuring the Jackoboice Family and Business

**YEAR 1859:** "Joseph Jackaboice [at the time, Jakobowics or Jacoboice], who was an employe [sic] of R. E. Butterworth in the year 1859, in later years started in business on his own account and constructed the first band saws for use in wood working factories...." In the *Michigan Tradesman* (Vol. 29, No. 1476) 1/3/1912, p. 31, col. 3, in section: "FIFTY YEARS AGO... Facts About People of the Long Ago."

**YEAR 1888:** This newspaper article mentions some of the locations of "Jackoboice's Fire Escapes." Headlined, "WE MUST HAVE MORE FIRE ESCAPES," we read, "At the Meeting of the City Council on Monday evening the Committee of Building Inspectors made a report that they had examined all the public buildings in the city coming within the meaning of the law in regard to fire escapes; and recommended that they be placed on quite a number of buildings that are now provided with no extra means of escape in case of fire. One of the best fire escapes now in use is made by Mr. J. Jackoboice, of 33 South Front-st. in this city. They are now used on a large number of buildings in this city, among which may be named, Sweet's Hotel, the Clarendon, D. A. Blodgett's building, Leonard & Son's store, Gardiner & Baxter's store, the Folding Chair and Table manufactory, and many others. Mr. Jacoboice is not only the manufacturer but the inventor, and is prepared to place them on all buildings needing them at a much less cost than any other fire escape made, and warrant them to give satisfaction." *Sunday Telegram-Herald*, August 5, 1888, p. 5, col. 4. Source: Library of Congress.png, Chronicling America.

**YEAR 1890:** A newspaper advertisement titled "JACKOBOICE'S FIRE ESCAPE" includes "sidebar" descriptions "SAFE AND SIMPLE... THE BEST IN THE WORLD." Ad information follows: "THE GREAT SECRET OF A GOOD FIRE ESCAPE is something that will at all times and under all circumstances, render escape from a burning building comparatively safe and easy. SUCH IS THE JACKOBOICE FIRE ESCAPE. It is simple in construction and safe in operation, and consists of a STRONG IRON LADDER running up the walls of a building, connected at each floor with a BALCONY or PLATFORM, so arranged as to facilitate the escape of all persons in the burning building. This Fire Escape with its Balconies, is a perfect safeguard against falling, and is a great help to children and the infirm in their efforts to get down on the inside of the ladder. It is handsome in design, and when properly attached to a building gives a very attractive appearance. For Price List and styles, address J. JACCOBOICE [sic], South Front Street, GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. Refer to Sweet's Hotel, Clarendon Hotel, Blodgett block, Leonard block, St. Denis [Hotel], Livingston [Hotel], Park Place, Kendall block, Gardiner & Baxter, Houseman block, Wonderly block, and officers of the fire department." *Sunday Telegram-Herald*, 4/20/1890, p. 11. Source: Library of Congress.png, Chronicling America - Historic American Newspapers (1789-1963).

**YEAR 1896:** The newspaper headline: "HAD A CLOSE CALL... EDWARD J. JACKOBOICE WAS NEARLY SCALDED TO DEATH... Plug Flew Out of a Blow Pipe and His Clothing Was Saturated With Steam and Boiling Water." The article: "Edward J. Jackoboice of the West Side Iron Works was badly scalded in the boiler room of the works at No. 31 South Front street Monday afternoon. It appears that the boiler had been cleaned and some repairs made. Jackoboice was working about the boiler, tightening the connections, when a screw plug in the blow pipe blew out, allowing the hot water and steam to escape. The unfortunate man was caught between the boiler and brick wall of the room in such a manner that he was unable to climb without assistance, and would probably have been scalded to death had not one of his associates come to his rescue. As it was, the backs of both of his hands and wrists were terribly burned, so that the skin came off. The hot water also saturated his clothing on the back of his shoulders and neck, terribly scalding them. He was assisted to his home, No. 52 Broadway, and Dr. Allright was called to attend to him. Last night the doctor stated that the patient was doing nicely and that he anticipated no serious result. Jackoboice is 22 years of age and lives with his parents." Published in *The Grand Rapids Herald*, 12/23/1896 (see online database of Grand Rapids Public Library).

**YEAR 1900:** We have Edward Joseph's passport application of April 14, 1900 to the Department of State (see AncestryLibrary.com, U.S. Passport Applications 1795-1925). He wrote: "... my father was a naturalized citizen of the United States." (Also recorded in the 1870 Federal Census, showing Joseph's claim of citizenship.) Edward Joseph listed his occupation as "Machinist." And under "Description of Applicant": Age: 36. Stature: 5 feet 6 inches. Forehead: high. Hair: dark brown. Eyes: brown.



**YEAR 1903:** A newspaper article with the headline, FIRE ESCAPES ORDERED, was subtitled "Will Soon Be Placed on Eleven Business Buildings." An excerpt: "The West Side Iron Works has been given the contract for the placing of a fire escape on the Carroll building at Nos. 101-107 Canal street, and also on the Comstock building at Newberry and Canal streets. The same concern will construct the escape on the Brown & Sehler building on West Bridge street...." In *The Grand Rapids Herald*, 12/23/1903.

**YEAR 1906:** Excerpts from a Society page article on the wedding and honeymoon trip of Edward Joseph Jackoboice and Helen M. Hake: "The bridal party entered the church to the music of the "Lohengrin" wedding march... The bride was beautifully gowned in white silk habitue over taffeta with an exquisite bertha of duchesse lace. She wore a veil... After the ceremony an informal reception was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. [William] Hake, No. 184 Ransom street, and a course dinner was served. The house was beautifully decorated with roses and smilax. On the tables were candelabras and large baskets of pink roses. About 60 guests were present.... Mr. and Mrs. Jackoboice left for New York and on June 16 will sail on the Princess Irene for Naples. They will spend the summer in Europe, visiting Italy, Switzerland, [France] and Germany." From *The Grand Rapids Herald*, June 17, 1906.

**YEAR 1909:** Edward Joseph co-patented a Glue-jointing machine (1898) and a Sand-belt machine (1909). A news brief, "Local Men's Useful Invention," announced: "During the past week a patent was issued to E. J. Jackoboice and R. M. Gleason, both of the West Side Iron Works, for a new belt sanding machine which promises to be popular with wood-working concerns. It has a number of features lacking in other machines of a similar nature, especially designed for sanding with the grain all convex, concave, round or oval mouldings, and will be useful to the furniture manufacturers in treating pieces which in the past were sanded or smoothed by hand." *The Grand Rapids Herald*, 9/19/1909, p. 3.

**YEAR 1915:** Edward Joseph had a close call, downtown, while driving his car. The news article: "It was merely a matter of moments. It took the engine of the automobile of Edward J. Jackoboice, proprietor of the West Side Iron Works, living at 135 Mt. Vernon Avenue, N.W., a very small moment to backfire as its owner was driving across Division Avenue, N., at Lyon Street, last evening. In about the same length of time a sheet of flame was enveloping the machine. In another moment the driver had stopped the car and leaped to the ground. Another like space of time and he had rushed to a fire alarm box on the corner a few feet away and had sent an alarm to the firemen. It was just a few moments more when the autoist saw the wagons from No. 4 engine house approaching. In less than 30 seconds the firemen had uncoupled chemical containers and were throwing streams of the greatest enemy known to fire upon the blazing auto. Then the smoke cleared away and in another moment Jackoboice had bent down and made an examination of the machine, an Oakland touring car. Then he stood up and reported 'no damage.' 'That was quick work, boys,' he told the firemen." *The Grand Rapids Herald*, 11/23/1915.

**YEAR 1931:** Edward Joseph's two sons, Edward William and George Adolphe, joined the family business in 1931 and renamed it as Monarch. On March 4, 1931, the publication *Michigan Tradesman* reported: "Edward W. Jackoboice, manufacturer of road machinery at 327 Front Avenue, N.W. [new street address number for the family's schoolhouse/machine shop], has merged the business into a stock company under the style of the Monarch Road Machinery Co. with a capital stock of \$25,000, \$6,000 being subscribed and paid in" (Vol. 58, No. 2476, 3/4/1931, p. 4, col. 4, under "Manufacturing Matters").

**YEARS 1941-45:** During World War II, many local companies joined the war effort. Monarch's fast brass torpedo propellers sped torpedoes towards enemy ships. Monarch's hydraulic systems were used in many ways, perhaps opening B-17 bomb bay doors. George A. Jackoboice wrote, "Hydraulic pumps and cylinders had been used on the company's underbody truck scrapers as early as 1925.... The onslaught of World War II altered established patterns of business because of material scarcities [i.e., lots of iron needed to make a grader blade], military allocations and the problems of coping with cumbersome federal alphabetical agencies from the OPA (Office of Price Administration) to the WPB (War Production Board).... The production of hydraulics was given impetus by the war urgency.... At times, orders for equipment surged beyond the capacity of facilities and personnel.... Sensing that the demand for such hydraulic systems would continue after the war, we decided that it was time once again to change the direction of the family business.... We began to concentrate more and more of Monarch's resources... on the production of hydraulic pumps and related equipment" (*Grand River Valley Review*, Fall-Winter 1981).

## Newly Discovered Notes on Family Business History, by Jim Jackoboice

*Found in old family papers by son Mike Jackoboice*

Enjoy these notes by Edward James Jackoboice, a.k.a. Ed or Jim (1935-2012). He apparently recorded these highlights near his retirement from Monarch Hydraulics in 1990. Comments and quotes follow:

\* "In 1862 Joseph Jackoboice moved his machine shop to the N.W. corner of Monroe and Michigan streets (then known as Canal and East Bridge streets). The Rasch House also occupied the site. Among its owners was Frances Rasch... [a Prussian immigrant who married Joseph in Grand Rapids in 1858]."

\* By phone, circa 2010, Ed described the interior of the old, wooden schoolhouse/machine shop known as the West Side Iron Works. Its main floor consisted of thick, wide, dark wooden planks with the aroma of industry. As a kid in the late 1930s and 1940s, Ed saw the shop's original, 1800s power source: a ceiling level, long leather belt which was 12-16" wide (many were made of western bison hide). This running belt ran the shop's machines. Ed remembered seeing lots of pulleys too. Up on the second floor there were boxes full of old nuts and bolts, etc. As the old schoolhouse had served as a community center too (1866 forward), the upstairs walls and ceiling featured old playbills for theatrical performances.

\* Related notes from son Mike: "The West Side Iron Works manufactured a variety of machines and other products. In 2017, I enjoyed searching for more West Side Iron Works fire escapes in old districts of the city. Similar to the design of "Jackoboice's Fire Escape" on the Blodgett Block's Lemon & Wheeler Building of 1883, I found two smaller fire escapes at the intersection of Division and Oakes (both sides of Division, both on Oakes). And near the intersection of Wealthy and Century, off the southwest corner, there are two buildings with spiral staircase fire escapes. The first building (Formax Mfg.) has a dark brick front, and its brick sides indicate construction in the 1860s or 1870s. On its south side is a very rusty fire escape, the oldest I've seen in the city. Next door, at 445 Century Avenue, is the huge Sligh Furniture Company building (built in 1880, now home to large antique stores) and another old fire escape."

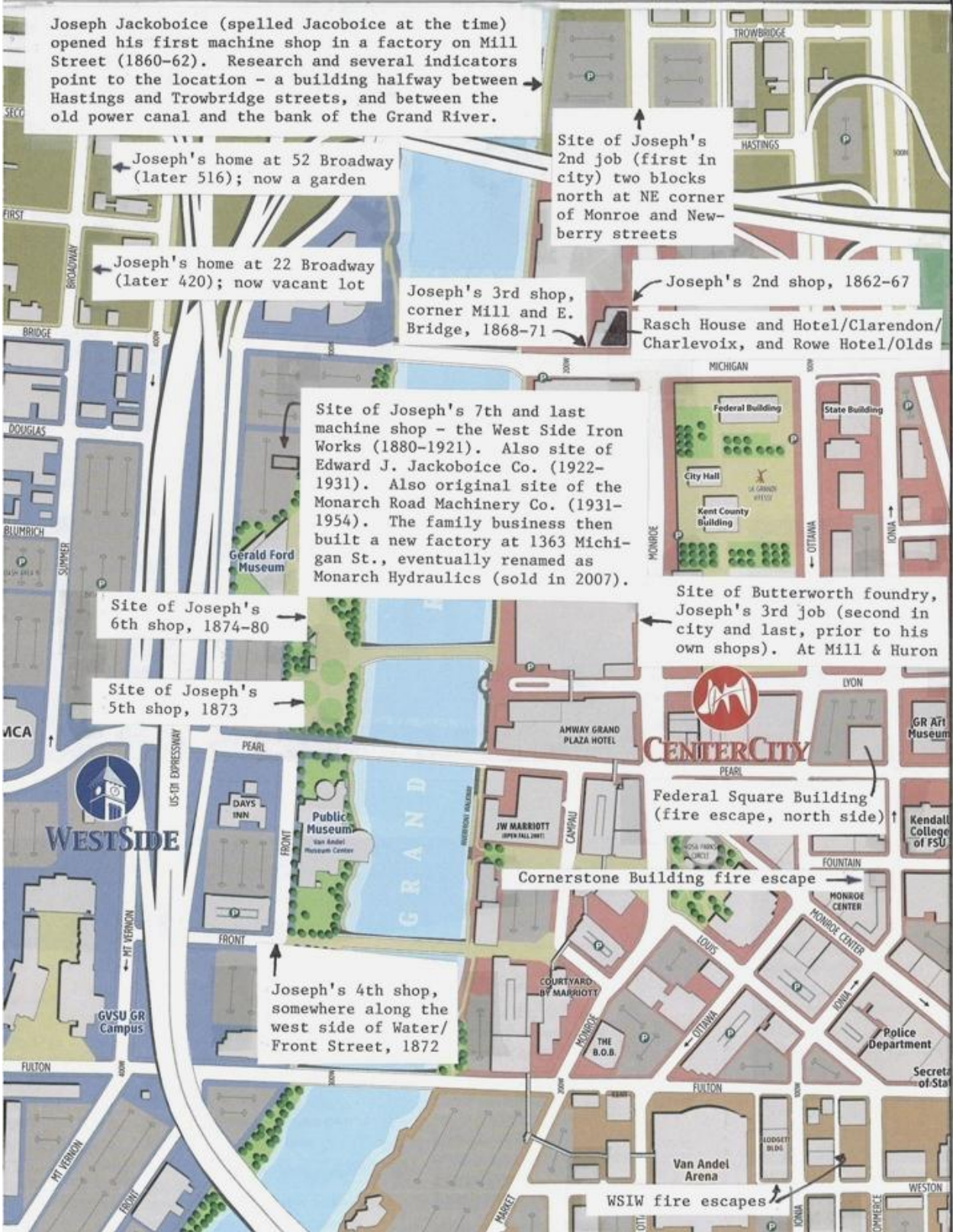
\* Ed stated that in the early 1900s his grandfather Edward Joseph Jackoboice and the West Side Iron Works staff "... considered automobile manufacturing but it was dismissed in favor of demand for woodworking machinery for the then-flourishing furniture business, and for production of wooden frames for autos. To this very hour I still receive two inquiries a year for parts for the old West Side bandsaw."

\* Ed wrote, "Edward Joseph, a pioneer of the hydraulics industry, died in 1935. The main product during this era was underbody road scrapers for the maintenance of gravel roads." After 1945, "Due to the demise of gravel roads in favor of pavement, the flavor of business turned away from gravel to snow. Thus was bred the fan belt or engine-driven hydraulic pump. At first it was designed to raise graders' road scraper blades, and then to raise small snow plows on the front of war surplus jeeps."

\* "In 1954 Monarch was relocated from Front & Douglas streets [the downtown schoolhouse] to 1363 Michigan Street where it currently occupies some 150,000 square feet. Over the years the pump product line expanded to power tailgate lifts, invalid lifts, material handling lifts and agriculture and auto haul away items - at the expense of snow plows which today account for less than 3% of our dollar volume."

\* The old schoolhouse that housed the West Side Iron Works was vacant from 1954 to 1958, when Ed/Jim opened it for production of street barricades and other "street and highway safety items." In the mid-1960s he moved production to the new Monarch factory. Prior to retirement he sold the West Side Iron Works business in 1989 "to a Grand Rapids firm, so the West Side is still in operating existence under new able management of James P. Burns of Great Lakes Triad Packaging Corporation fame."

\* Around his retirement in 1990, at age 55, Ed described Monarch: "Now officially known as Monarch Hydraulics, the company employs 185 people in Grand Rapids, 30 people in Rhenen, Netherlands, 25 in London, Ontario and lesser numbers in Toronto and Montreal. All companies today are 100% owned by the Jackoboice family. There are no shares outstanding and you won't find Monarch on any exchange."



Joseph Jackoboice (spelled Jacoboice at the time) opened his first machine shop in a factory on Mill Street (1860-62). Research and several indicators point to the location - a building halfway between Hastings and Trowbridge streets, and between the old power canal and the bank of the Grand River.

Joseph's home at 52 Broadway (later 516); now a garden

Joseph's home at 22 Broadway (later 420); now vacant lot

Joseph's 3rd shop, corner Mill and E. Bridge, 1868-71

Site of Joseph's 2nd job (first in city) two blocks north at NE corner of Monroe and Newberry streets

Joseph's 2nd shop, 1862-67

Rasch House and Hotel/Clarendon/Charlevoix, and Rowe Hotel/Olds

Site of Joseph's 7th and last machine shop - the West Side Iron Works (1880-1921). Also site of Edward J. Jackoboice Co. (1922-1931). Also original site of the Monarch Road Machinery Co. (1931-1954). The family business then built a new factory at 1363 Michigan St., eventually renamed as Monarch Hydraulics (sold in 2007).

Site of Joseph's 6th shop, 1874-80

Site of Joseph's 5th shop, 1873

Site of Butterworth foundry, Joseph's 3rd job (second in city and last, prior to his own shops). At Mill & Huron



Federal Square Building (fire escape, north side)

Cornerstone Building fire escape

Joseph's 4th shop, somewhere along the west side of Water/ Front Street, 1872

WSIW fire escapes



# J

Jacobs Mrs. Julia, 14 State  
Jacobs Joseph, shoemaker, 30 Clinton

JACOBOICE JOSEPH,

## **Machine Shop,**

On the Canal, near Bridge-st Bridge.

I hold myself in readiness to make and repair  
**Steam Engines and all kinds of Mill and Iron  
Work, also Repairing Mowing and  
Threshing Machines.**

If you want a good and cheap job give me a call.

res 22 Broadway, w s

Jarett Thomas, gardener, 19 Spring  
Jarvis A. H., 34 Jefferson Avenue  
Jarvis H. B., hatter, 72 Greenwich  
Jennings P., laborer, 12 Grandville  
Jennings Geo., wagon maker, 14 Grandville  
Jennings J., baker, 6 McConnell  
Jennings Patrick, tailor, 74 Jefferson w s



Above: City directory, 1865-66. Below: Ford Museum and West Side Iron Works, 1981

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## About the Author: Mike Jackoboice

Mike (Jakóbowicz) has devoted his life to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, inspired by His message recorded at Luke 24:45-47. A longtime fisherman, Mike has enjoyed fishing for bass, pike, grayling, trout, salmon and marlin – and for souls. While fishing, he has enjoyed “God’s country” and mountain majesty in the Alps, the Rockies, the Alaska Range, the Andes Range and the Himalayas.

Joseph Jackoboice's first g-g grandson, Mike was born in 1958 and raised in East Grand Rapids and at Ada. At Forest Hills Central High School he played football on a championship team, and he enjoyed his friends in the Class of 1977. During college years (in Wisconsin) he worked one summer in Jackson Hole, Wyoming as a ranch cowboy and rafting guide, and another summer in Washington, D.C.

Graduating as a journalist in 1981, Mike drove up the Alaska Highway to adventure. During North Slope oil exploration on Arctic Ocean ice, a stalking polar bear inspired a career change. Mike worked as a radio news director and AP affiliate in western Alaska, often by bush plane. He interviewed governors and celebrities (author James Michener on his book, *Alaska*). He interviewed legendary dog musher Norman Vaughan and other mushers on the Iditarod Trail and in the Brooks Range. During the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill cleanup he worked as a deckhand, chef and skipper of a VIP cabin cruiser.

During six months of Third World prison ministry in Asia (1988-89), Mike ranged from Kathmandu, Nepal to Kashmir, India. Returning to Alaska, he served at a Christian radio station. Continuing in radio ministry and missions, he moved to South America in 1990. In Ecuador he served as interim, international news director at HCJB World Radio. Then to Chile as a mission journalist, he was based in Santiago with SIM (Serving In Mission) for seven years. Between assignments to Peru, Bolivia and Argentina, he served in radio, rehab and prison ministries. Living in the rural town of Los Andes (1992-97), Mike opened “Biblioteca Cristiana” - a library/video/music outreach (first visitor was 5 year-old Jesús).

Moving to Las Cruces, New Mexico (1997-2021...), Mike has worked for the federal government and at the Grand Canyon. He has enjoyed jail and prison ministries in New Mexico, Texas and old Mexico. He has distributed about 500,000 Spanish and English gospel tracts - via Bible correspondence lessons too. Mike shares the biblical message of repentance, faith and salvation seen in Acts 20:21. And he always encourages others to read the New Testament, saying, “Read a page a day – and enjoy living it.”

Affiliations include Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)... the International Miners Mission (IMM)... the Pacific Garden Mission (for the homeless) in Chicago... the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids... the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (FOI)... the El Paso (Texas) Holocaust Museum... and the American Society for Yad Vashem (supporting Israel’s Holocaust museum).

With 1850s roots in Grand Rapids, Mike has enjoyed research for a Jackoboice/Jakóbowicz family history book featuring the old West Side Iron Works (1880-1921) and the Monarch Road Machinery Company (1931-2007, also known as Monarch Hydraulics, Inc.). See excerpts, photos, maps and more at [www.VintageMachinery.org](http://www.VintageMachinery.org)... [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)... and in the magazine of the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan. The old Polish/Jewish family name Jakóbowicz translates as “son of Jacob.” The genealogy website JewishGen, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., have published Mike's 40-page surname research report online: “Jakóbowicz (Jakobowicz, Jakubowicz) Surname Variants in Holocaust Records” (at [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) click Collections and type Jackoboice).

Reading the entire Bible (1984-87), Mike was the first in five generations to leave Roman Catholicism (as a *protestant*) for biblical Christianity (see John 14:6... Rev. 18:4, 5... 2 Cor. 5:17-21... 1 John 5:13). At home and overseas he has enjoyed attending Baptist and other Bible-based, Christ-centered churches.

To learn more about Christian missions and Gospel outreach in today's world, see the website of Mission Aviation Fellowship ([maf.org](http://maf.org)) and colorful photos of worldwide ministries. You can serve too, in person or with donations. Fly food, clothing, medicine, Bibles, missionaries and disaster relief supplies into remote villages - and fly villagers out for medical care. For more information, phone 1-800-359-7623.

