



Polish Immigrants in the USA

Eveline Podgorski

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,3, University of Paderborn, course: From Melting Pot to Quilt, 18 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: The 'land of immigrants' or the 'melting pot' – as the United States of America are often called – where many different cultures meet and are combined with each other, is also the home for several million immigrants from East European countries, especially from Poland. Polish immigrants came to the USA in two larger immigration waves to pursue the same dreams all other immigrants had when coming to the New World, mainly to live a better life. This paper deals with Polish immigrants in the United States, their history, their original community around Chicago, and also with their identity they have kept in the foreign country until today. Firstly, I will give an overview on the American immigration issue, describing the development of immigration from the discovery of America until the beginning of the 20th century. This is followed by a short passage on the most famous entry point to the United States – Ellis Island. I will not go into further detail on immigration during and between the World Wars because this topic will be treated on the background of Polish immigration later on. However, a short overview on how the United States deals with immigration – and especially illegal immigration – in current times will be added. The two major immigration waves, which were already mentioned above, will be the topic of chapter three, in which the reasons for immigration, meaning the political and the economical context in Poland, will be described. The subsequent chapter deals with the city of Chicago, which is the place many Polish immigrants settled at and enlarged their families. In this context, I will portray the living and working conditions for Polish Immigrants in the 19th and 20th century, describe the Polish nationality and identity in the United States, and take a look at the influence political happenings in their home country had on Polish immigrants and their successors in the United States.

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