

**Joseph Jackoboice** was born Józef Jakóbowicz in or near Kalisz, Poland on March 16, 1824. In the old book, *History of Kent County, Michigan* (1881), we see that Joseph "learned the machinist's trade" in Kalisz from 1840 to 1844. 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. In 1854 he journeyed to Grand Rapids, Michigan, around fall harvest time. He first worked at rural O'Brien's Farm (hay and wheat), likely repairing iron "mowing and threshing machines." In 1855 Joseph became the first Polish immigrant *to settle in the city* of Grand Rapids. From 1855/56 to 1860 he worked in the city for machinist Elihu Smith's lumber company, and in Ball & Butterworth's machine shop. Joseph married Prussian immigrant Frances Rasch in 1858 (and they would have ten children, most dying young).

Historians and a local newspaper stated that Joseph opened his own foundry/machine shop business in 1860, on Mill Street. Listed in city directories as "machine shop," his six successive shops were located downtown on both sides of the Grand River (including two sites in the German-speaking "Germantown" neighborhood around the intersection of Canal (later Monroe) and E. Bridge (later Michigan) streets). Joseph worked with iron to build machines that turned logs into furniture - in "The Furniture Capital of America." Polish historian Eduard Skendzel described Joseph as "a master craftsman" and as "a machinist *par excellence*." He manufactured machinery for sawmills, furniture companies and others. He was best known for his steam engines, fire escapes, bandsaws and other woodworking machines. In 1880 he acquired the German-English Schoolhouse on the west side of the river and converted it into the West Side Iron Works. He and his machinist son Edward Joseph sold their products in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin.

City directory listings show that Joseph retired in 1895, at age 70, to his longtime home at 52 Broadway on the West Side. He died of "Bright's Disease" (kidney failure) on February 8, 1899. He was an honorary member of the Polish National Aid Society of Grand Rapids (est. 1878), and a founding member of Polish National Alliance (PNA) Lodge 57 (est. 1886).

Joseph's old, red schoolhouse/machine shop served the family business until it became the Monarch Road Machinery Company in 1931 and beyond to 1954 (when the family built a modern hydraulics factory). The schoolhouse stood tall until two fires led to its razing in 1982. The family donated the property to the grounds of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, and the site is now marked with a boulder/historical plaque. There is another memorial online. To see Joseph's complete profile with photos, old city maps, old newspaper clippings and business ads, one can go to the "Find A Grave" website [here](#).