

OBODZIŃSKI – LEOKADIA

Requested by John Rinne.

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In Polish **Obodziński** is pronounced roughly “oh-bo-JEEN-skee.” It is the masculine version of the name, which is regarded as the standard form. The traditional feminine version is **Obodzińska**, pronounced roughly “oh-bo-JEEN-skah.”

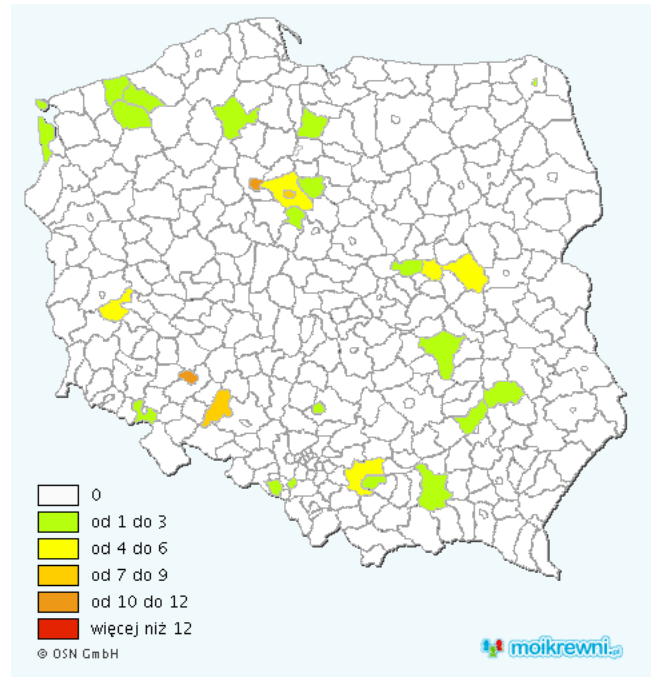
The data available at the Moikrewni Web site for the masculine version (<http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/kompletny/obodzi%25C5%2584ski.html>) shows that as of 2002 there were 93 Polish citizens who went by this name. As the map at right shows, they were scattered in small numbers all over, with the largest numbers in the counties of Wrocław (11) and Bydgoszcz (10). There were 112 who bore the feminine version, *Obodzińska*. As you’d expect, the numbers and distribution are similar to those for the masculine form, and that’s why I didn’t paste in that map. If you’d like to see it, go to <http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/kompletny/obodzi%25C5%2584ska.html>.

Professor Rymut mentions this name in his book *Nazwiska Polaków* [The Surnames of Poles]. He doesn’t give a date for a first known appearance of *Obodziński* in Polish records, but says a slightly different spelling, **Obodzięński**, appears in Polish records as early as 1502. These are just two versions of the same name. *Obodzięński* would sound like “oh-bo-JENN-skee”—a subtle difference. Neither *Obodzięński* nor *Obodzięńska* appears in the data used by Moikrewni. I think it’s safe to say that’s an older spelling variation, and that these days the version without the *-e-* is the standard form.

Rymut lists both versions under surnames deriving from the *oboda* or *obód*, which he defines as “the circumference of a wheel from a single bent piece of wood.” I checked in a massive dictionary he recommended as good for explaining rare and archaic terms, and it explained that an *obód* was a term used mainly for a piece of wood bent to make part of a wheel for a cart. Presumably this started as a nickname for an ancestor who helped make wheels for carts, or perhaps one whose body was crippled so that he looked almost like a circle. I think more likely, though, he was a wheelwright.

Ultimately, that word may be what the surname derives from. But surnames in the form *X-iński* or *X-yński* mean basically “of the _ of X,” where you fill in the blank with something so obvious it didn’t need to be spelled out—usually either “kin” or “place.” So as I just said, the surname *Obodziński* could have started out meaning “of the kin of Oboda,” referring to an ancestor who was nicknamed *Oboda* or *Obód*. But it could also mean “one from the place of Oboda/Obód.” Often we find such names refer to a place that actually had a name beginning with the X part.

I tried looking in the massive gazetteer *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego* for places with names



that might fit, and found two (Vol. VII, page 333). One was called *Obodne*, a village in Bratslav county of Podolia, now in Ukraine. Another was called *Obodno*, and there was a cross-reference to *Obudno*, on page 359 of that same volume. The entry for *Obudno* confirms that this estate was sometimes called *Obodno*. At the time the SGKP was compiled (the late 19th century), Obudno was in Szubin county and was served by the Roman Catholic parish in Chomiąża. This place still exists, a village of some 360 people in Żnin county of Kujawsko-Pomorskie province in northwestern Poland; you can see a map on the site <http://mapa.szukacz.pl/>.

This may be relevant because an index of surnames seen in the SGKP mentioned an Obodziński on page 713 of Vol. VII. There, in an entry on Ostrówce, a settlement and manorial farmstead in Szubin county (back then, that is), parish of Szczepanowo, administered from an estate in Obudno. It says the noble who owned the estate in the early 16th century was Jan Obodziński. This establishes that there was a noble family named Obodziński which apparently took its name from Obodno/Obudno. (Ostrówce also appears on the maps at the site <http://mapa.szukacz.pl/>—it, too, is in Żnin county of Kujawsko-Pomorskie province.

Of course, all this doesn't necessarily mean your ancestors were noble, or that your family is related to that family. It may be your Obodzińskis took their name from an ancestor called Oboda or Obód, and had nothing to do with Obudno. Or maybe they took their name from the village Obodne in Podolia. From the surname alone, there's no way to tell for sure. Still, I thought this was worth mentioning, because the name is not very common, and it could well be you're related to this noble family. If so, it's good news; records on nobles tend to go back farther than those for peasants. You might want to focus on Obudno and see if there is a family connection.

As for *Leokadia*, it is pronounced roughly “leh-oh-COD-yah.” It is a moderately common feminine first name in Europe, one of many that, for some reason, never seemed to catch on among English speakers. It developed as a feminine form of a Greek name, *Leokades*, which meant “one who cares about the people.” The Romans used the name in the form *Leocadius*. From the Romans it came into use among Europeans, but the masculine version is rare; it was the feminine version *Leocadia* or *Laocadia* that caught on in such forms as French *Léocadie*. It does appear occasionally in English as *Leocadia* or *Laocadia*, but it's pretty rare. Jan Grzenia's book on Polish first names, *Słownik imion*, says Poles began using it in the 19th century, and it became a fairly popular name for a while, though these days it's regarded as kind of old-fashioned. As of 2004 there were still some 91,410 Polish females whose first name was *Leokadia*.

In America, Polish women by this name often decided it sounded “too foreign” and chose to go by some other, more popular American name. Some chose *Lydia*; I think I've heard that some went by *Lucy*. There were no rules to this game, so a Polish-American woman was free to go by whatever name she liked, especially since there was no true equivalent name in English.