

Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria

Visitor Experience, #16 in Series

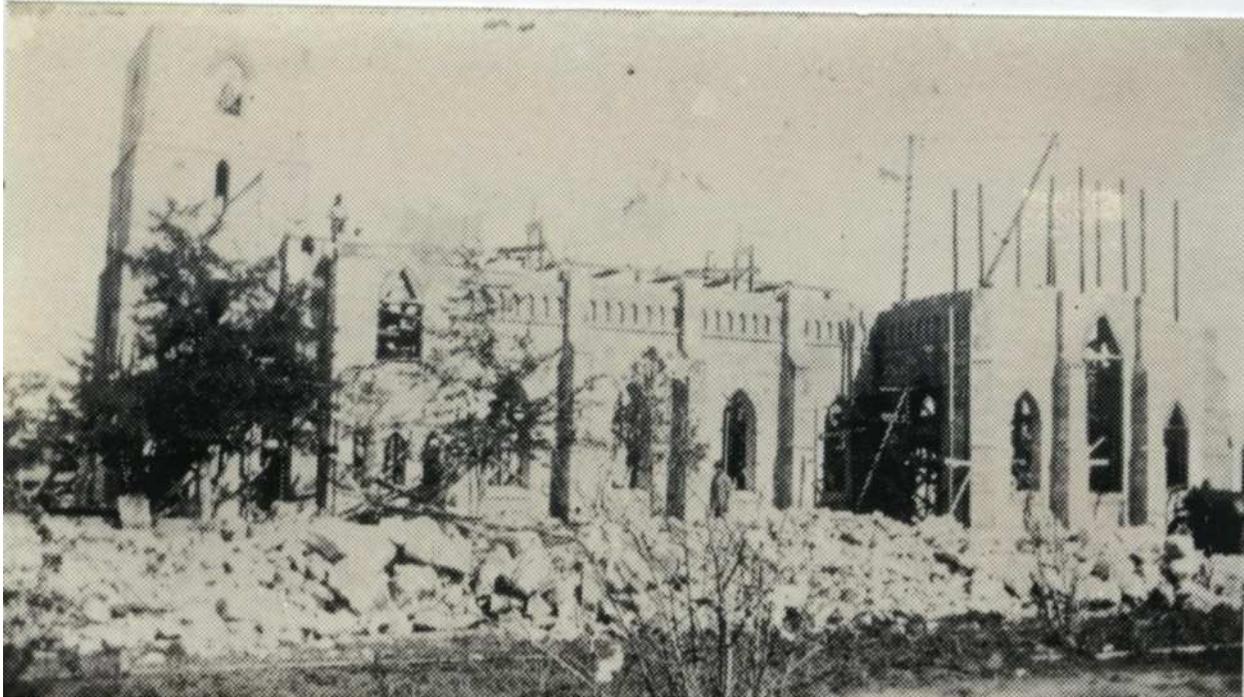
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Cestohowa, Texas

Brochure article written by Rosalie Titzman

The community of Cestohowa is located in Karnes County on the banks of the Cibolo Creek. Cestohowa is approximately 50 miles southwest of San Antonio, Texas at the junction of State Highway 123 and Farm Road 3191. The community was named St. Joe until the church was built in 1878. Panna Maria, the first polish settlement in the United States, was established in 1854. It is located five miles south of Cestohowa. The name Cestohowa, was Americanized from Czestochowa, a town in Poland, from

which some of the ancestors immigrated.

“Our Lady of Czestochowa” is a shrine in Poland dating back to the 14th century. The original painting of Our Lady of Czestochowa was displayed in a church which was destroyed by fire. Although the



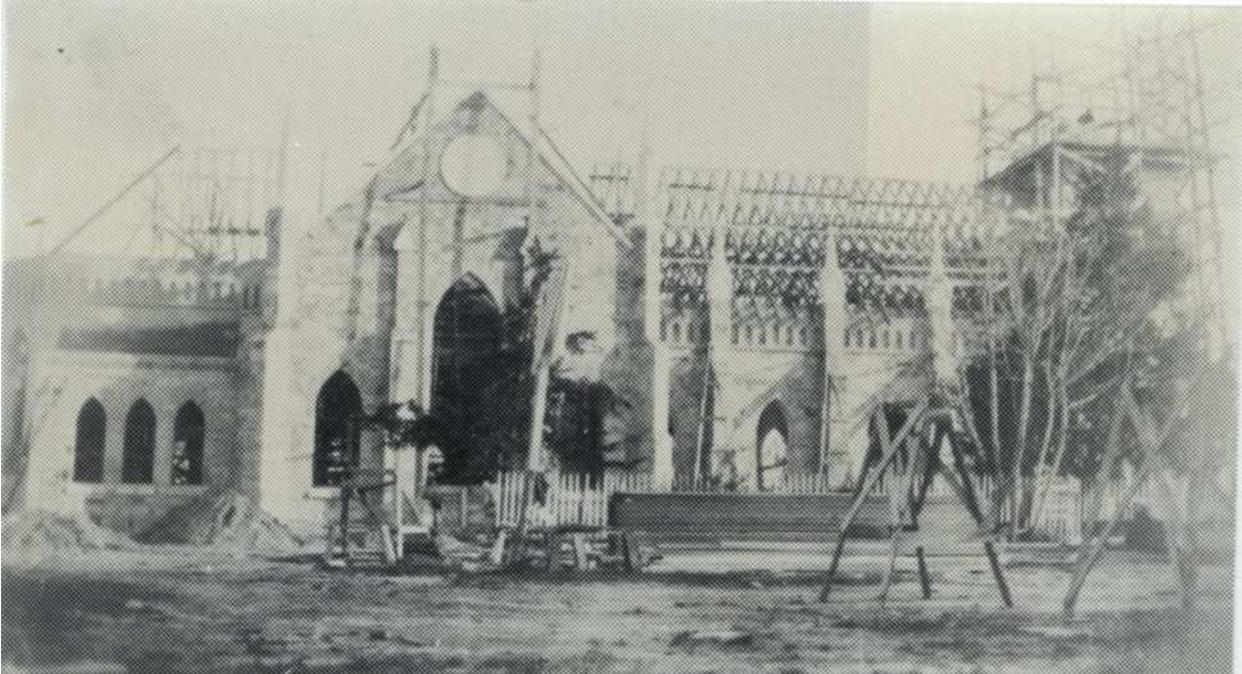
1931 Remodeling and expansion of Church

painting was darkened, it was the only item that survived. Since then, it is known as the “Black Madonna.”

In the early 1900’s, Cestohowa was a booming town consisting of a post office (1883-1918), saloon, jail, cotton gin, grocery, furniture store, meat market, ice house, blacksmith, shoe and barber shops. All business in the area was transacted in the Polish language until about the 1980’s.

Cestohowa’s prosperity began to decline. The town was by-passed by the construction of the railroad through Falls City in the early 1900’s and State Highway 123 in 1939. Factors relating to World War II and the 1950’s drought contributed to many people moving to larger cities in search of jobs.

The community hall built in 1938 was recently enlarged and air-conditioned. A committee is elected to manage the hall.



1931 Remodeling and expansion of Church

The St. Joseph's school – chapel built in the early 1870's now serves as the Parish Hall. The present rectory was built in 1960.

Today's economy is based on ranching, farming, and oil and gas production. Living in the peaceful community and commuting to larger cities for jobs is becoming very popular.

Catholic Church

A book with minutes written in Polish of the first meeting in 1869 states the persons who voted to build a school. St. Joseph's school, as it was called, also served as an early chapel.

In 1873, the parish started under the patronage of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Honor of the Virgin Mary's birthday. The center section of the existing church (40 x 80) was built in 1878.



1931 Remodeling and expansion of Church

In 1898, families from Kosciusko built their own church. The people of Falls City also built a church in 1902 which decreased the parish population. Beginning in 1924, a pledge drive was started to fund the enlargement of the original church. The project included raising the ceiling and roof, adding the side wings and increasing the height of the steeple. The remodeling was completed in 1931 at the cost of \$30,000.00 with free labor by the parishioners. The church seats approximately

500. The church was repaired and repainted for the centennial celebration in 1973.

In 1992, outside lighting was installed which illuminates the church for miles. A metal roof was placed in 1995 to imitate the original state. The church was repaired, plastered and repainted for the 125th anniversary in 1998.

The parish has approximately 380 members. A Texas Historical Marker depicting the church is located on the grounds.

1896 NBVM PARISHIONERS LIST

This is the earliest list recovered. The names were copied as listed.

Brys', Antoni	Felux, Jan
Brys', Jan Sr.	Gawlik, Franciszek
Brys', Jan Jr.	Gawlik, Jan Sr.
Brys', Jozef	Gawlik, Jan Jr.
Biela, Jacek	Gawlik, Jozef
Bronder, Felicyan	Gawlik, T.S.
Bronder, Fran. (wdowa)	Gorzek, Teodor
Bronder, Franciszek	Gabrys', Alesy
Bronder, Jozef	Gabrys', Felicyan
Bronder, Konstanty	Gabrys', Gerwazy
Bronder, Srymon	Gabrys', Jozef
Broll, Ignacy	Gryjer, Robert
Bottur, Robert	Homin, (wdowa)
Carabojel, Aurelio	Jarzabek, Antoni
Celmer, Michal	Jarzabek, Igancy
Dworacryk, Antoni	Jarzabek, Piotr
Dworacryk, Jacob	Jendrus', Antoni
Dworacryk, Michal	Jendrus', Franciszek
Dugi, Marcin	Jendrus', Julia (wdowa)
Dugi, Mikolaj	Jaskinia, Franciszek
Dziuk, Karol	Jaskinia, Jozef
Dziuk, Stanislaw	Josko, Georgs
Dzrymala, Franciszeka (wdowa)	Josko, Piotr
Esparza, Emanuel	Kolodziej, Jozef
Fenski, Tomasz	Kolodziej, Piotr

Kolodziej, Stanislaw
Kolodziej, Walenty
Kirys', Jozef Sr.
Kirys', Jozef Jr.
Kirys', Romuoild
Kotara, Franciszek
Kotara, Janis (wdowa)
Kotara, Piotr
Kotara, Rychard
Kotara, Teodor
Korrekwa, Franciszek
Korrekwa, Karol
Korrekwa, Pawel
Kocur, Franciszek Sr.
Kocur, Franciszek Jr.
Kocur, Jan
Kocur, Urban
Krawiec, Antoni
Krawiec, Jan
Krawiec, Rychard
Kniejski, Teodor
Kasprzyk, Jozef Sr.
Kasprzyk, Jozef Jr.
Karprzyk, Piotr
Kasprzyk, (wdowa)
Keller, Alexander
Keller, Dominika
Keller, Jozef
Krol, Jozef

Kowalik, Alexander
Kowalik, Filip
Kopecka, (wdowa)
Lisy, Eva (wdowa)
Lisy, Franciszek (wdowa)
Lisy, Jozef E.
Lisy, Jozef Sr.
Lisy, Jozef Jr.
Lisy, Ludwik
Lisy, Piotr
Lisy, Wojciech
Laskowski, Antoni
Laskowski, Konstanty
Moj, Franciszek
Moj, Jan
Moj, Jozef
Moj, Walenty
Muc, Jan
Muc, Igancy
Muc, Wawrzeniec
Moczygemba, Adolf
Moczygemba, Alexander
Moczygemba, Franciszek
Moczygemba, Jan Jr.
Moczygemba, Jozef Jr.
Moczygemba, Kasper
Mzyk, Franciszek
Niemiec, Jan
Niemiec, Franciszek

Niestroj, Agnieszka (wdowa)
Niestroj, Jan
Niestroj, Leopold
Nieswiec, Franciszek
Nocon, Jan
Opiela, Melchior
Olejniki, Franciszek
Olejniki, (wdowa)
Olejniki, Jan
Palica, Jan
Pawelek, Albert Jr.
Pawelek, Franciszek
Pawelek, Maciej
Pawlik, Jan
Pawlik, Piotr
Pietrucha, Walenty
Ploch, Jan
Polak, Marcyan
Polak, Pawel
Polak, Walenty
Polak, Wilhelm
Pruski, Robert
Pruski, Szczepan
Pruski, Tomass
Przybysz, Filip
Rabsztain, Hieronim
Rabsztain, Piotr
Rabsztain, Walenty
Rutkowski, Jozef

Ruthowski, Nikodem
Ruthowski, Michol (wdowa)
Rychter, Henryk
Sekula, Antoni
Sekula, August
Sekula, Jan
Sekula, Piotr
Skolzz, Antoni
Skolzz, Jan
Skolzz, Lorenz
Skolzz, Piotr
Snoga, Antoni
Snoga, Jan
Snoga, Leopold
Swierc, Jozef
Swierc, Lorenc
Szczepanik Jan
Szczepanik, Marcyan
Tycman, Jozef
Tycman, Szcrepan
Wiatrek, Franciszek
Wiatrek, Jan
Wiatrek, Jozef
Wiatrek, Robert
Wiatrek, Wincenty
Waclawczyk, Franciszek
Zajontz, August

(Wdowa) widow in Polish

Present Church today



Schools

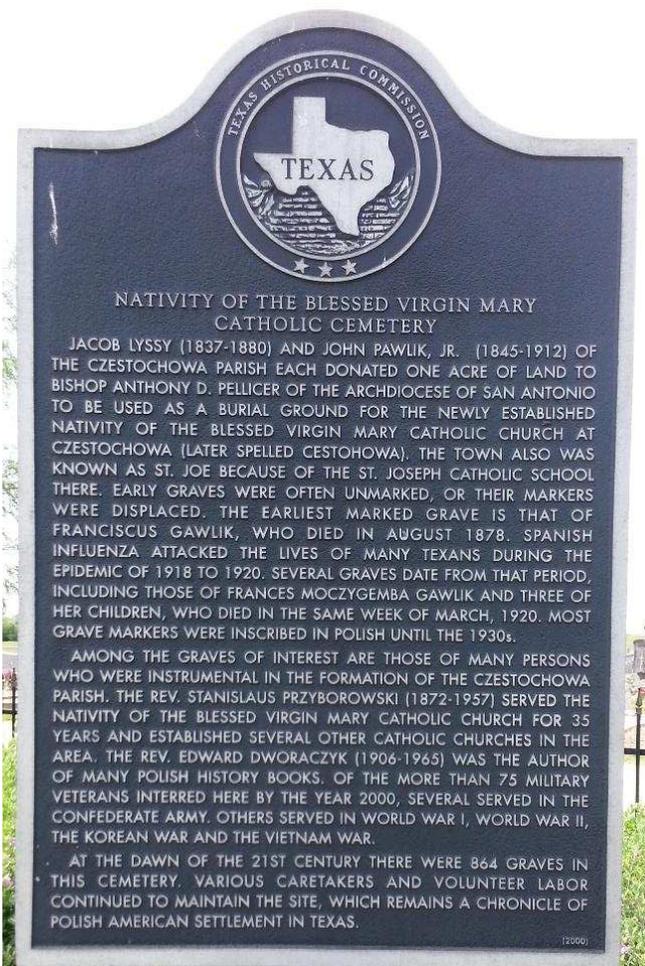
St. Joseph's school taught Polish until the 1950's. A public school named Bartole near present Pawelekville closed in the 1930's. Bartole derives its name from the Rancho De San Bartole, the spot of the first private ranch in Texas. A third area school, St. Peter's, in an old Pulaski community, located about three miles northwest of Cestohowa was closed in 1963. The structure still exists. The modern Cestohowa Elementary School was finally closed in 1986 due to lack of students. The children now attend Falls City, Poth or Karnes City schools. A new sister's convent was dedicated on December 16, 1949.

Grotto

The grotto of “Our Lady of Lourdes” located near the church, was a dream of a former pastor, Rev. Stanislaus Przyborowski. Under the direction of the succeeding pastor, Rev. Julius Dworaczyk, the grotto



was built in 1959, funded by Rev. Przyborowski’s estate and the free labor of the parish committee. The inner structure of the grotto was incorporated from the original town jail.



Cemetery

The NBVM cemetery was established in 1878 which is located south of the Cestohowa Community hall. Some tombstones are written in Polish and many interesting facts are also mentioned on the Texas Historical Marker which is located by the front gates of the cemetery.

List of Donors since January 17th, 2017

Special gratitude for the \$150,000 by Frank & Mary Felux Kruciak in memory of: Anton & Florence Kolodziej Kruciak; Henry & Julia Moczygemba Dziuk; Ben & Angela Dziuk Kruciak.

We are thankful to God for all those who are helping this worthwhile project to come to fruition. In a very special way, we want to acknowledge those who are our most recent benefactors and contributors to the building of the Polish Heritage Center. They are:

Mrs. Howard Beddingfield, Benedictine Sisters of San Antonio, Mr & Mrs William J Bonewitz, Mary Louise Bukowski, James & Elizabeth Caldwell Jr, Julie Dale, Edwin & Theresa Dzuik, Wayne & Betty Ferrill, Jacob & Frances Gaona, Henry F Geneczko, Mary Lee & Walter Golla, Rev Msgr Casimir Jarzombek, Magdalen Jarzombek, William & Beatrice Jarzombek, Alfred J Sr & A J Jonietz, Leonard & Mary Krzywosinski, Leon & Aline Kundrotas, James F Kyrish, Dennis C & Vivian Mika, Joe & Amanda Mika, Col Walter V & Carol A Mika, Dwight & Pamela Mitchell, Richard & Denise Moczygemba, Joan Mika & Frank P Noland, Roger & Liz Opiela, Dorothy P Pawelek, Gilbert & Valerie Pawelek, Felicia Jemionek & Jozef Rzeznik,

James E & Merrilyn M Pruske, Martha A Respondek, Betty & Rudy Lind, Ruth & Jeff Bullock, Florence & Charles Schendel, Rose Y Respondek, Mary Lou Schroeder, Janice & James Shadrock, Rev Jozef Musiol, Ronnie & Elaine Stephens, Donna M & John M Titzman, Edmund, Ken & Jeanette Urbansky, Mr & Mrs Wilfred Urbanczyk, Raymond & Patricia Hannigan, Kocurek Charitable Foundation, Tony & Loretta Urbanczyk, Edwin L Yanta Farm Account, James & Elizabeth Caldwell Jr, Mary Lee & Walter Golla, Leon & Aline Kundrotas, Mr & Mrs James Prukop, Janice & James Shadrock, Marjorie L & Russell Alan Beck, Everett & Susan Clyne, Paul A Yanta & Gay Lynne Osburn

Bishop John Yanta update:

It is a wonderful testament that **SO** many are continually asking how Bishop Yanta is doing, and not only wishing him well but also constantly praying for God's grace to heal and restore him. All of your prayers are so gratefully appreciated. The doctors continue to be optimistic although there was a "hiccup" recently. It was thought that Bishop Yanta *might* be coming down with a bout of pneumonia. In response, he was taken to Methodist Main in the Medical Center for observation and treatment. This second stay was only six days! He responded well and was returned to The Rio for his continued care. Since his return, he has done very well with his weaning off the ventilator and all his therapies. The doctor now has him off for seven hours once a day, soon to increase it to eight hours once a day. *It must be noted that when Bishop Yanta is off the ventilator, he has a speaking valve that allows him to speak with his own voice!* The doctor wants to reach eight hours off the ventilator a day doing well to be the threshold of Bishop Yanta being able to return home! He is getting close! And with your continued prayers and support, this can be a reality.

Picture of Bishop Yanta standing on April 5th, 2017



53RD WEEK OF CONSTRUCTION



CONSTRUCTION AS OF APRIL 19, 2017

Summary: Phase II – Construction of Exterior

Bid awarded to Boyle Construction:	\$3,373,000.00
11 th Month completed Construction Cost (April '16 – March '17):	\$1,529,884.59
5 Months payment by Polish Heritage Center:	\$655,799.30
6 Months payment by Falls City National Bank Loan:	\$874,085.29
Interest Payments paid to Falls City National Bank for loan:	\$12,920.42
Construction cost for first 12 months (including payment #12):	\$1,724,264.36
12 th Month payment of due May 11 th , 2017:	\$194,379.77
Remaining Construction cost after 12 months paid:	\$1,648,735.64
