

Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria

Visitor Experience, #2 in Series, 2nd printing

Main Entry Lobby

Entering through the glass doors, visitors will find themselves in an impressive 30' x 30' space with a soaring 25' ceiling. You will be greeted by a colorful mural measuring 30' x 9.'

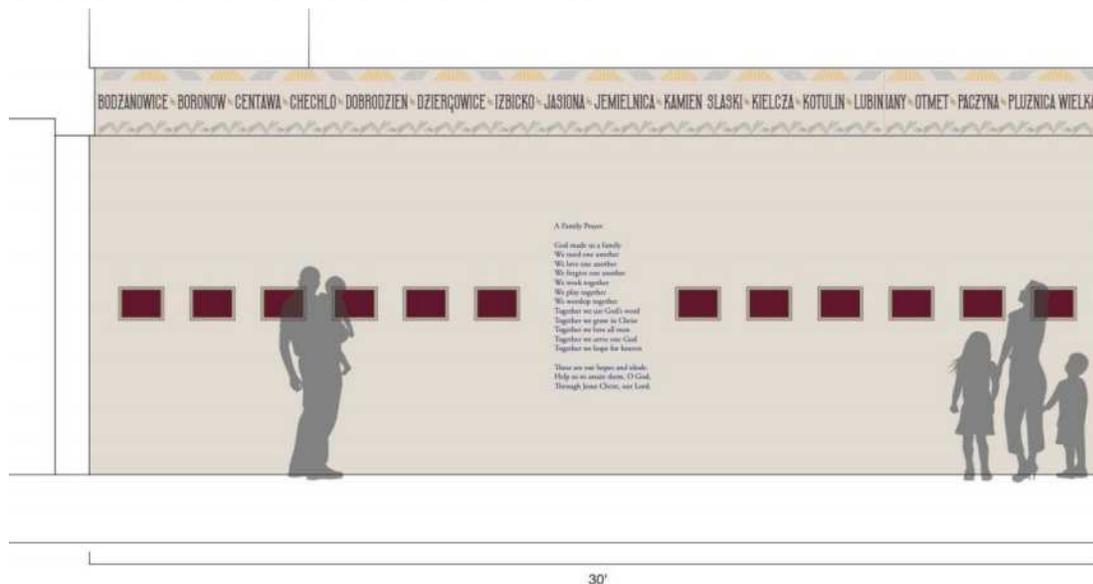


The mural depicts the arrival of the first Silesian Polish immigrants in Texas on the left and continues through history illustrating the first churches, schools, marriages, baptisms, first communions, farmers tilling the soil, men and women, families through the decades, to the first trips back to their Silesian homeland to reconnect with their history.

You will see the names, in Polish, of all of the 34 villages in Silesia from which those early immigrants left, and the 13 towns in Texas where they settled, are painted on a two-foot band, ten feet above the floor and below the mural. The band spans the entire perimeter of the room. Above the village and town names, a graphic rhythm illustrates the two gifts from God to the Silesian

farmers - the sun and rain. Below the names another graphic rhythm of the crops grown (corn, cotton, sorghum, and wheat) anchors the bottom of the band.

To the visitor's right, in the center of the wall at normal viewing height, is an interactive display composed of 24 interactive video screens. The screen displays undulating images of the Polish Flag, the United States Flag, images of Silesian Texans, the Texas parish churches, families, and images of Silesia. The visitors are welcomed to approach the display and touch the screen. With that touch the visitor will be given a choice to start in Texas or in Silesia. If they chose Texas, a map of the counties in Texas and the towns the Silesians settled appears on the screens. They now touch one of the towns and a list of the family names that settled in that town in the 1850s – 1880s will appear along with images of the town and some of the families.



When the visitor chooses to touch a family name, a map of Silesia appears on the screen and the town in Silesia where that family originated is highlighted. A touch on the town name and a list of

all of the Silesian families that traveled to Texas during that same timeframe appears along with images of the town and townspeople. The visitor now touches one of those family names and a map of Texas towns reappears, highlighting where that family settled in Texas.

Directly across from the interactive display, on the opposite wall, another lively display features 12 monitors arranged in a line. The monitors display images from families and towns, perhaps focusing on a particular family with images drawn from months of scanning in the various Texas parishes with a large number of Silesian Polish members. Family names will appear followed by a number of images, or a town name will appear and images will feature the town and family and parish activities through time. This display will be able to be programmed to welcome specific individuals and families who schedule a group visit to the Center. At the center of the wall is a typographic display of the following Family Prayer:

God made us a family

We need one another

We love one another

We forgive one another

We work together

We play together

Together we use God's word

Together we grow in Christ

Together we love all men

Together we serve one God

Together we hope for heaven

These are our ideals.

Help us to attain them, oh God

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

While in the lobby, you will be met and welcomed by a Center representative who will offer you a wand that explains in a professional manner all the exhibits and rooms of the rest of the Center. You can choose your own explanation in English, Polish, or Spanish. Children will be given a modified student version. Tour then at your own pace.

Turning to their right, the visitor passes through a threshold, past a graphic display of major donors and sponsors (Heritage Circle members) of the Panna Maria Heritage Center.

Visitors now proceed from the entry lobby to the ROTUNDA.

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We wish to thank Board of Directors member, Norman Pollok, and his son, Larry, Pollok Surveyors, Floresville, for donating all the surveyor work in conjunction with the purchase and preparation

of our 2.4 acres of land, site of our Center. Thank You and May God Bless You and Your Generosity.

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This is the second of a series that will take you through the building that will make you even more thankful for our strong-of-character ancestors and their precious legacy they have left to us!

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Please pray to our Lord and the intercession of our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and our Polish saints, for the success of our heritage (and faith) center. Our families will be strengthened.

* * *

May God Bless You and Yours,

Retired Bishop John W. Yanta, President; Panna Maria Heritage Center

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Please visit our web site, www.pannamariacenter.org, and follow the progress of the project, Panna Maria Heritage Center, on Facebook.

Next: “The Beautiful Religious Rotunda of Polish Saints”