



Polish Heritage Center

Visitor Experience,
#28 in Series



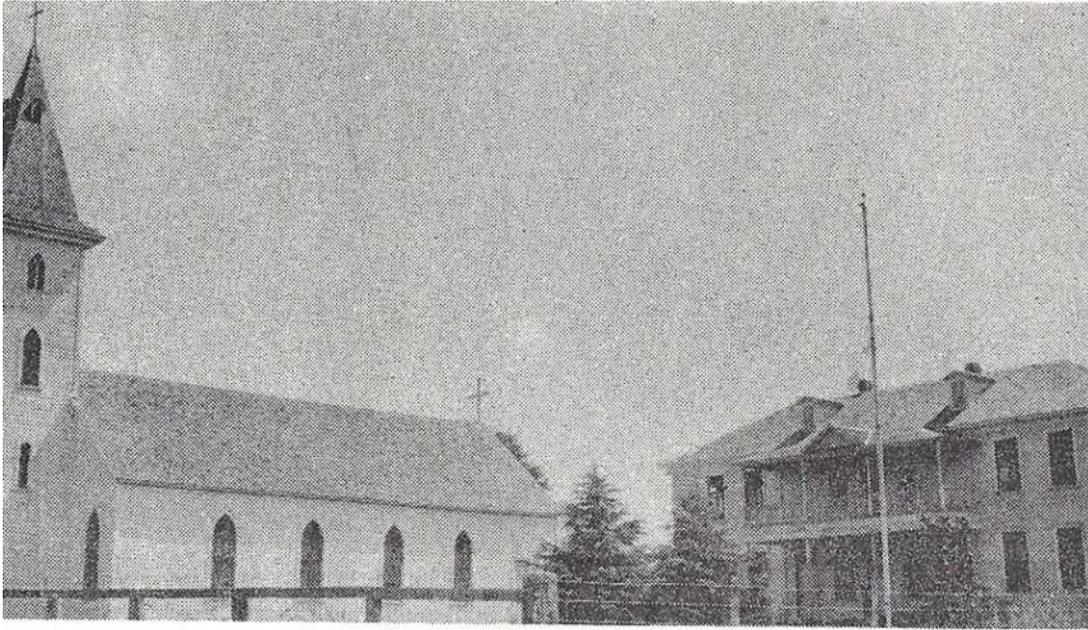
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Las Gallinas, Texas

By Katherine Korus Beard



Sophia Hoffman Skwartz, 1825 – 1906

Photograph courtesy of: Sr. Jule Adele Espey, C.D.P.



ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
LAS GALLINAS, TEXAS, 1920

Photograph from *St. Joseph's Church Las Gallinas, Texas, 1876 - 1976*

The Hispanic people living near Gallinas Creek, south of San Antonio in northeastern Atascosa County, called the area Las Gallinas. The Silesian-Poles who settled there near present-day Leming in the 1860s often called the community Gaina.

As early as 1860, several Silesian-Polish families were documented in Atascosa County: **Franz** and **Francisca Zienc** and Francisca's brother, **Simon Lipok**, were enumerated on the 1860 federal census; **Mrs. Sophia Hoffman Skwortz** and **Anton Wyglądacz** bought land in the area in 1860. **Mrs. Skwortz**, her niece and nephew, **Mary and Joseph Kotulla**, and **Mr. Wyglądacz** registered brands in Atascosa County by 1865. **Joseph** and **Sophia Skwortz** and **Joseph Kotulla (later spelled Cotulla)** were listed on the 1870 census. Other Silesian-Polish families arrived after the Civil War and were also on the census in 1870: **John** and **Marianna Strzelczyk Korus** from Panna Maria; **Casper** and **Marianna Kolibaba Kalka** and **Thomas** and **Rosalia Hoffman Haiduk** from Bandera. **Anna Salzman**, whose birthplace was documented as "Slasia" on the 1880 census, and her family were living in Atascosa County by 1860.

Claud Jaillet, the priest from St. Mary Catholic Church in Somerset, ministered to the Polish families on Gallinas Creek as early as February 14, 1872; he was also in charge of "nearly the whole Atascosa Cty," Graytown, and "the whole Wilson Cty" (St. Mary Catholic Church Records, p. 29). "Gallinos creek up 8 miles from here" was recorded as a Mission of Atascosa County in 1876 with "Poland place American 18 families" as an entry in the Somerset church register on page 168.

Mission of Atascosa County in 1876
 by number of families in every place, according
 church of assumption here: at 2 or 3 miles 12 families
 Atascosa creek Down place Nijo, 10 miles from here 7 "
 " " " " place Tom American 6 "
 La Paruta creek place J. Palacio 22 miles from here 14 "
 The Emerald Bob Ingle place 18 miles from here up 2 1/2 "
 Atascosa Up. Novatos. 18 miles. and 25 miles 7 5 "
 The Palo Alto creek Miguel Roche place 18 miles 8 "
 → Gallinas creek Up 8 miles from here Poland place American 8 "
 Lucas spring Hayden place American 7 "
 Lucas Down J. Leal } 12 "
 Cañada de Encino, Del Gato, Del Terci } 18 1/2 families
 Olanston 3 or 4 families } 6 "
 Chittipin creek 40 miles from here 6 "
 and about 10 on creek San Miguel and Lagunas 10
 205

Atascosa County Missions of St. Mary Catholic Church, Somerset, Texas, 1876

According to tradition, St. Joseph Catholic Church was organized by eight families in 1876: **Casper Kalka, Joseph Kindla, John Korus, Sophia Skwortz, Anna Salzman, Wilfred and Sophia Salzman Toudouze, Victor and Philomena Salzman Hug, and Frank and Mary Jarzombek Keenas [Kinas]**. Silesian-Poles **Joseph and Anastasia Korus Kindla** had previously lived in Bandera. Before a church was built and when it was not possible to celebrate Sunday Mass due to the lack of a priest, the families gathered at the home of **Casper Kalka** to recite the Rosary and the Litany of the Saints.

In 1881 **Casper and Marianna Kalka, John and Marianna Korus, and Charles and Anna Salzman** donated land for a place of public worship. The **Kalkas** also donated land for the parish cemetery; they and the **Koruses** provided land for a road to the cemetery. A total of 10.7 acres were conveyed by the three couples to **Father A. D. Pellicer** and his successors (Atascosa County Deed Records, Volume H, pp. 375-376).



Community of Las Gallinas, before 1900
Photo courtesy of: Leo H. Korus (1906 – 1986)

According to **Louis Hug** and his daughter **Rose**, as reported in *The Alamo Register* in 1946, the first church was a box-type building composed of 1x12 lumber used for sidings brought from Cuero with wagon and team by **John Kalka** and floor sills and shingles hewn from post oak trees from the nearby **Victor Hug** ranch. Pews were benches without backs. The parishioners donated all labor for the building of their sanctuary.

In addition to **Father Chapolard**, who was stationed at Graytown and organized the parish, early priests were **Fathers H. L. Penard, G. B. Rigvad, Joseph Moulin, Lig. Darsche, and D. Vento**, who came with horse and buggy or on horseback to serve the parish. **John Korus** was host to the priests and cared for their horses.

Reverend Moulin reported in 1892 that there were ten churches or missionary stations under his charge: San Agustin, Lucas, Gallinas, Tilden, Leal, Campbellton, T. A. Rodriguez, Chilipetin, Laporita, and Pedro Flores. Gallinas was one of three places that he attended once a month; he was able to go only every other month to the other seven. The following year, he had four additional missionary stations under his charge for a total of five churches and nine missions.

A new church structure was completed in 1896 with **Father Troncy**, stationed at St. Augustine, in charge. Parishioners **Ben Arnold** and **Fritz Herr** built the church and the altar, and **Max Schuritz** built a tall steeple and the pews.

St. Joseph's Altar Society was organized about 1910. Several parishioners made donations to their church: A statue of the Blessed Mother and Child by **Mrs. Justine Stanush**; a big bell by **Joseph Kindla** about 1918 using his Civil War pension; a baptismal font, hanging sanctuary lamp, and padding on the kneelers by **Julius** and **Adeline Skwortz Espey**; the holy water font by **Mrs. Anna Haiduk**; and a large cemetery cross by **Thomas [L.] Haiduk** in 1922.



L-R Frank, Louis, Mary, Rosie, Kasper, Josephine Kalka Adamitz, and Marianna Kolibaba Kalka seated next to Willie Adamitz, circa 1904, Las Gallinas
Photograph courtesy of: Viola Young Adamitz (1912 – 2000)

When **Joseph Kindla** donated the big bell, there were twenty-five sponsors for the occasion, and each sponsor held a ribbon streamer during the ceremony for the blessing of the bell. “**Mr. Kindla** was at Mass every Sunday morning to ring the bells at fifteen minutes before Mass. When **Father Drees** was called to his dying bedside, the bells – the pride and joy of his life, were tolled as his dear soul left this world” (*St. Joseph’s Church Las Gallinas, Texas 1876 – 1976*). **Joseph Hug** was the church organist for 49 years.

In 1919 **William** and **Justine Drzymala Stanush** donated 1.25 acres adjacent to the church for a school (Atascosa County Deed Records, Volume 79, pp. 585-586). A group of eight Benedictine Sisters headed by **Mother Lidwina Weber** left the Isle of Pines in Cuba and relocated in South Texas. On October 6, 1919, the new Motherhouse, St. Joseph Convent, a two-story structure built southeast of the church, was completed, and the Benedictine Community of Nuns of Texas took possession. Thirteen days later, St. Joseph School opened (Sisters Record Book I, from Dec. 1911 - Nov. 30, 1922, pp. 18-19).

The Benedictines served as educators in Las Gallinas, neighboring Loire and Leming, and Rockne. Eight years later, although they had already moved unofficially to San Antonio due to drought and crop failures, the Benedictine Sisters received written permission from **Archbishop Drossaerts** to transfer their Motherhouse and Novitiate from St. Joseph, Las Gallinas, to San Antonio. Within two weeks, in October 1927, their goods were moved to San Antonio (Sisters Record Book II, from Nov. 30, 1922 - 1959, p. 13). While the Benedictines were in Las Gallinas, three local girls joined the convent, **Katherine Hug [Sister Mary Benedicta]**, **Mary Stanush [Sister Mary Christina]**, and **Cecilia Hug [Sister Mary Mildred]**.



SISTER MARY BENEDICTA
O.S.B., Daughter of Mr. and
Mrs. Louis Hug.



SISTER MARY CHRISTINA
O.S.B., Daughter of Mr.
and Mrs. William Stanush.



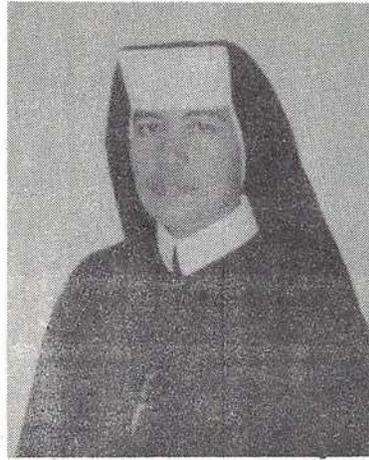
SISTER MARY MILDRED
O.S.B., Daughter of
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hug

Photographs from *St. Joseph's Church Las Gallinas, Texas, 1876 - 1976*

In 1921 **Jacob** and **Hedwig Kaczmarek Korus** sold an acre of land next to the Gallinas Church for the benefit of the Gallinas Common School District. In 1936, having served as a school lot for fifteen years, the property was sold back to the **Koruses** by the trustees of the Gallinas Common School District, **Joe Hug**, **Louis K. Adamitz**, and **Charles Korus**. It was then deeded to **Rev. John Gerbermann** and the Trustees of the Young Folks Club of Las Gallinas, Texas, **Louis Hug**, **Joe Korus**, **William Stanush**, and **Jerome F. Arnold**. The Young Folks Club included both men and women and was chaperoned by **Aloys** and **Josephine Mahula**. Finally, in 1962 the Trustees of the Young Folks Club, **Rev. Robert Walden**, **Adolph Arnold**, **Joe Hug**, **Jerome Korus**, and **Wallace F. Slomchinski**, deeded the acre, the old Las Gallinas public school property, to **Rt. Reverend Robert E. Lucey, Archbishop of the San Antonio** Diocese (Atascosa County Deed Records, Volume 88, pp. 624-625; Volume 136, pp. 456-458; and Volume 284, pp. 527-529).



REV. HENRY VICTOR HUG
Son of
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hug



SISTER JOAN ELISE C.D.P.
Daughter of Mr. and Mrs.
Eugenio Rodriguez



SISTER JULE ADELE C.D.P.
Daughter of Mr. and Mrs.
Julius Espey

Photographs from St. Joseph's Church Las Gallinas, Texas, 1876 - 1976

The only seminarian from the parish was **Henry V. Hug**, who entered St. John's Seminary and was ordained in 1932. A movie short produced in the mid-1940s, *Lone Star Padre*, was built around **Father Henry**. Two local girls joined the Congregation of Divine Providence: **Mary Espey [Sister Jule Adele]** and **Cecilia Rodriguez [Sister Joan Elise]**.



Golden Jubilee of St. Joseph Church, Las Gallinas, October 6, 1946
Photograph courtesy of: Katherine Korus Beard



First Communion of **Betty Arnold, Larry Knappick, and Katherine Korus**, descendants of St. Joseph founders, **John and Marianna Korus**, Las Gallinas, July, 1958

*Photograph courtesy of: **Katherine Korus Beard***

The Golden Jubilee of the church was celebrated on October 6, 1946, with the Liederkrantz Choir of San Antonio singing at the Mass and an all-day celebration held on the church's picnic grounds. *The Alamo Register* reported, "Barbecued beef, goat, and sheep, and country sausage with all the trimmings will be served for dinner at 11:30 a.m. and again for supper at 5 p.m. The charge for adults will be 75 cents, and for children, 50 cents. Refreshments and entertainments are planned. **Jake Arrott** and the **Rhythm Ranchers** will furnish the music throughout the day and night."

The Diamond Jubilee celebrating 75 years since the founding of the parish in 1876 was held on August 19, 1951.

A Centennial Mass on June 13, 1976, celebrated by **Auxiliary Bishop Flores**, concelebrated by former pastors and associate pastors, and with the Liederkrantz Choir, again honored the founding of St. Joseph, Las Gallinas.

St. Joseph lost its tall steeple during a hurricane in August 1942, and a shorter one was built in its place. The church was closed in 1981, and the historic nineteenth-century church building burned to the ground two years later.

Although descendants of the Silesian-Polish founders still reside in the Las Gallinas area, no longer having a church caused the St. Joseph parish community to lose its Silesian-Polish identity. The last physical evidence of the influence of Silesian-Polish Catholics in the area is St. Joseph Cemetery on U.S. 281, one-half mile west of where the church once stood. The historic cemetery is maintained by **Edwin Espey**, a descendant of founder **Sophia Skwortz**.

SOURCES:

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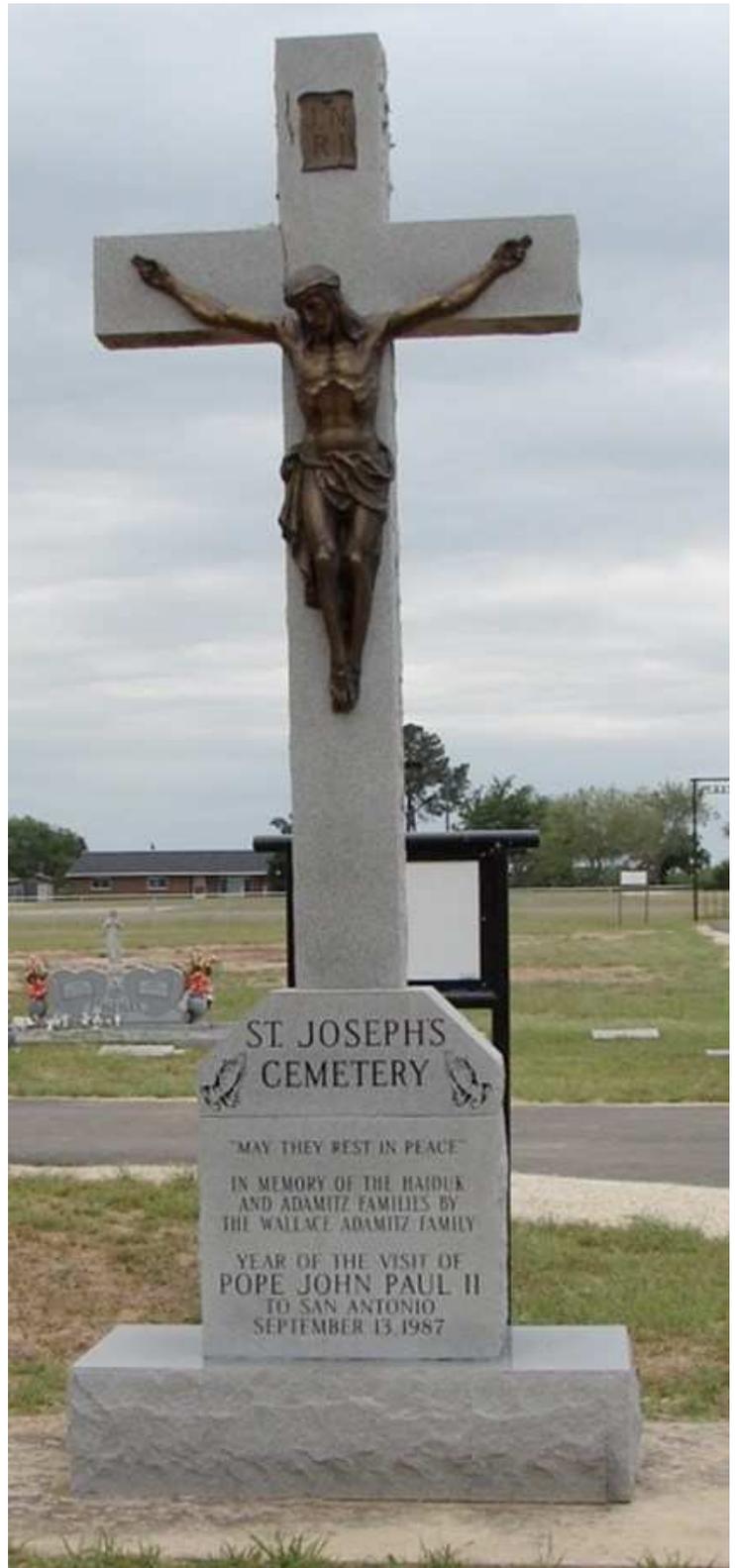
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Las Gallinas, Texas. Baptism, Marriage, and Burial Records, 1881-1956. LDS Microfilm #0025278.

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St. Mary Catholic Church, Somerset, Texas. Book 1. LDS Microfilm #0025496.

San Antonio Light [San Antonio, Texas]. "The death of a country church; Community feels lost after the closing of its meeting place." 4 October 1981. pp. 1A and 2A.

The Alamo Register [San Antonio, Texas]. "GOLDEN JUBILEE; Archbishop to Attend Solemn Mass Sung by Parish's First Priest; All-Day Celebration Slated on St. Joseph's Grounds; History of Region Provides Interesting Story of Expansion." 1946. pp. 1 and 2. Clipping from files of **Hedwig Rakowitz Korus** (1879 – 1962).



Cemetery of St. Joseph Las Gallinas
 Photograph courtesy of: **John Warren Beard**

The Polish Heritage of Bremond, Texas

By Dwight Mitchell



John C Roberts

Bremond, Texas is a small town with a robust Polish heritage. It is located just off of state highway 6 on state highway 14, about half way (plus or minus about 50 to 75 feet) between Waco, Texas and College Station, Texas. Bremond gets its name from **Paul Bremond**, a railroad entrepreneur who brought the Houston, East and West Texas Railroad through the area. Paul's daughter **Margaret** married cotton baron, **William Marsh Rice**. At **Margaret's** encouragement, **Rice** had the town surveyed, and Bremond was incorporated in 1870.

Bremond, Texas owes its Polish heritage to **John Roberts** (1831-1908). **John Roberts** came to Texas in 1853 and became a significant land holder in the Bremond area. As a captain in the Texas Brigade during the Civil War, he lost an arm during the Gaines Mill Battle in June 1862. His handicap made it difficult for him to work his farm. Looking to recruit help to work his farm, John met with **Joseph Bartula**, offering him the opportunity to sharecrop on the Roberts farm.



Joseph Bartula, wife **Katherine** and son **Frank**. Picture circa 1900.

Joseph Bartula (1840-1919) was born in Nowy Żmigród, Poland (about 75 miles southeast of Kraków), on February 18, 1840. On May 16, 1873, he, his wife **Katherine**, five sons, and their maid left Poland bound for the United States. They boarded the *S. S. Hermann* in Bremen, Germany, and arrived in New York on June 9, 1873. Theirs was an arduous and tragic journey. Somewhere along the way to their initial destination of New Waverly, Joseph lost all his possessions. The maid and two of the **Bartula** sons died in the New Waverly area. Before the end of 1873, the **Bartulas** moved to the vicinity of Calvert, Texas, where a third son died.

After meeting with **John Roberts** in 1875, the **Bartula** family took up tenant residence on the **Roberts'** land and became the first Polish family in Bremond and Robertson County. Joseph sharecropped for a couple of years and then acquired his own 100 acres to farm. Joseph wrote glowing letters to friends and family in Poland, urging them to come to Texas. Joseph returned to Poland in 1877 to encourage Poles to come to Texas, initiating a wave of Polish immigration to Texas. Soon, **Bartula** had recruited over 100 families from Poland to the nearby community of Marlin.

At that time, most Polish immigrants were Catholic, but Bremond did not have a church to provide for their needs. Early on, a priest from the Waco vicinity performed services in Bremond about four times a year. At that time, services were held in the homes of local families. Some services were held in the **John Roberts’** home; **Joseph Bartula’s** son **Joseph** was baptized in the **Roberts’** home. As the Polish population grew, so grew the religious needs. In 1877, a priest, **Father Mosiewicz** from Marlin, Texas, was holding services every second Sunday. In 1878, he built Bremond’s first Catholic church. Donations were collected to pay for the \$1,200 church. The Polish people were poor and were not able to contribute very much; most of the funds were contributed by Bremond’s Protestant community. In 1909, the wooden church was replaced with a massive Gothic, brick structure that was more than twice the size of the first church. Bremond’s current Catholic church, a modern architecture, was dedicated in 1971.



First St. Mary's Church (1878 - 1909)

It must be noted that at the time of the Polish immigration to Texas, Poland was a fragmented country, actually not a country in-and-of itself. It was divided into a number of regions claimed and ruled by Russia, the Austria-Hungarian Empire, and Prussia. Poland did not regain its identity until after World War I. During the time “Poland” was torn by political turmoil, poor economy and ill health. This environment provided much of the motivation for Poles to leave the country. So when people like **James Meyer Levy** and **Joseph Bartula** wrote letters that began with “Praise be to Jesus Christ” and extolled the opportunities available, it is no wonder that Poles began to flock to Texas.

Levy initiated the Polish immigration wave to Texas in 1867 when he and the Waverley Emigration Society sponsored 29 families from Prussia Poland to live and work in the Waverley area. The second wave was brought about with **Joseph Bartula’s** letter writing campaign extolling the many opportunities.

While railroad work may have gotten Bremond its initial start, it was the farmers, including the Polish farmers, that made the economy go. They came in to sharecrop the cotton farms in the area. Like **Joseph Bartula**, many were able to save enough money to start their own farms. But the Poles became more than just farmers. In the early 1900s, most of the Bremond businesses were Polish-owned. The first grocery store was opened in 1884 by

Ian Lewandowski. Other Polish businesses included a pharmacy, a fabric store, a butcher shop, a hotel, and others. Industry was not left out; **Stanislaw Bartkowiak** owned one of the local cotton gins. In 1885, Bremond, with its 345 Polish families, had the largest Polish population of any Polish community in Texas.

Bremond continues to recognize its Polish heritage with an annual celebration in June called *Polski Dzień* (Polish Day). A highlight event of the celebration is the Pickle Run, a 5K run around the community. Over the years, the event has grown from just a few runners to over 800 runners. Top runners in a variety of classes (men, women, children, etc.) win a jar of locally made Polish pickles. While vendors from all over the state come in to market their wares, Polish tradition, food and music bring in the crowds. During the Christmas season, a few Polish descendants conduct the *Kolędy*, regaling several Bremond households with Polish Christmas carols. During the season of Lent, a few St. Mary's parishioners remain after services and recite the *Gorzkie Żale*, a devotion to the Passions of Christ and the sorrows of the Blessed Mother.

The Bremond Historical Society and Museum would like to thank **Bishop John W. Yanta** and the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria for giving us the opportunity to tell a little bit about the Polish community of **Bremond, Texas**.

All photos courtesy of **Dwight Mitchell**

The first picture is **John C Roberts**. https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/15967691/person/328211727/media/b06fe8ec-b1d9-4f49-a01d-77d8e74ddb0f?_phsrc=Bfx82&_phstart=successSource

The second picture is **Joseph Bartula**, wife **Katherine** and son **Frank**. Picture taken around 1900. <http://www.polish-texans.com/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I4158&tree=PT>

The third picture is of the first St. Mary's Church (1878 – 1909). <http://www.polish-texans.com/category/polish-texans-photo-gallery/texas-polish-churches/>

Sources:

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"History of St Mary Catholic Church – Bremond, Texas", <http://www.polish-texans.com/200706/history-of-st-mary-catholic-church-bremond-texas/>

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"Kubiak Family Roots", <http://fortumbleweed.net/kubiak.html>

Joseph Bartula Texas State Historical Marker, St Mary's Cemetery, Bremond, TEXAS

Travel Notes Visiting Polish Settlements in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, a Translation of Notatki z podróży by **Stefan Nesterowicz**, 1910

The First Polish Americans Silesian Settlements in Texas, **T. Lindsay Baker**, 1979

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October 8, 2018



100th Anniversary of Poland Gaining Independence excerpts from the Polish US Embassy in Washington DC

In 2018, Poland marks 100 years since it regained independence after 123 years of partitions. It is a time to celebrate all that is best about our country and to commemorate the people and events that shaped it.

The stability of Polish democracy – one of the oldest in the world – derives to a large extent from Polish democratic, libertarian and parliamentary traditions that date back to the fifteenth century and the Jagiellonian dynasty. However, after experiencing numerous wars and a crisis in the political system, the country was invaded and partitioned at the end of eighteenth century, disappearing from the map of Europe for 123 years.

It was then, on 11 November 1918, that Józef Piłsudski, leader of the clandestine Polish Military Organization, returned to Warsaw from a German prison to become Chief of State, proclaiming the Second Polish Republic.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, starting the deadliest armed conflict in history. Sixteen days later the Soviet Union attacked the country from the east. Despite the Polish army heroically fighting from the first until the last day, the war brought heavy casualties: six million Polish citizens, including three million Polish Jews, died, many towns and cities were destroyed and our country fell under Soviet communist rule for 45 years.

Yet again, the yearning for freedom saw our compatriots oppose the occupier, with numerous protests taking place. The election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II brought about hope for the nation, while the emergence of *Solidarity* – the first independent trade union in a Warsaw Pact country – sparked a chain of events that led to the fall of the Polish People's Republic and the creation of a sovereign, democratic Polish state in 1989.

Modern Poland, then, has only really enjoyed independence for just under 30 years. Even so, since 1989 we have undergone serious structural changes which have given us free, democratic parliamentary and presidential elections, a new constitution, economic prosperity, memberships of NATO and the EU, and the chance to be leaders in industries including digitization, fin-tech, astronomy, food production, business outsourcing, furniture and production.

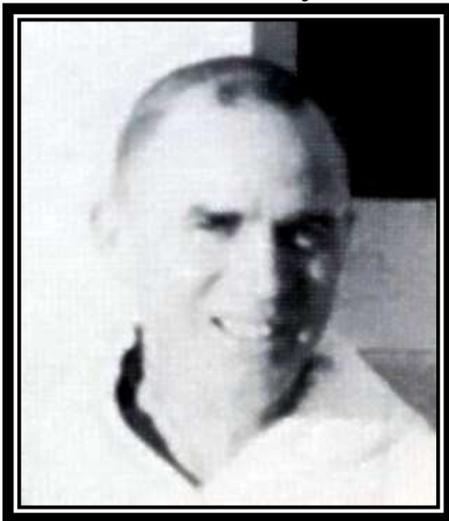
Thomas Joseph Swierc: Father Lawrence Swartz

1907 – 2005

By Janet Dawson Ebrom

When **Joseph Swierc** and his wife, **Salomea Kyryś**, of Falls City, Texas, welcomed their sixth child, little did they know what a spiritually remarkable life he would choose. **Thomas Joseph Swierc** was born on April 30, 1907, and he was baptized in Holy Trinity Catholic Church on May 5th by **Rev. J. Klonowski**. The infant's godparents were **John Gawlik** and **Katarzina Kyryś** (p. 8, 2nd entry). The baby was the namesake of his father **Joseph** and his grandfather, **Thomas Schwierz / Swiercz**, who left Europe in 1855 with his wife, **Maria Wiatrek**. Both the **Schwierz** and **Wiatrek** families were from Boronów, Upper Silesia, in present-day Poland (*Silesian Profiles II*, pages 196-199).

Young **Thomas** attended parochial school in Falls City followed by four years in the local public school. In September of 1920, he entered St. John's Seminary in San Antonio, Texas, where he studied for two years (Dworaczyk, page 147). **Thomas** recalled a specific incident while in the seminary, "It was 1922, and I was 14 at the time. There was a very talkative boy



in the class, so **Fr. Sullivan**—jocose or not—brought up the silence observed by the Trappists. Of course, questions were asked, 'Who are the Trappists?' **Father Sullivan** gave a somber and, perhaps, an exaggerated picture of the Trappists. They do not speak but three words: penance, penance, penance. I thought they were strange and gave them no other thought till my late teens. Then it was time to decide what I will do with my life. The Trappists came to mind" (*Monastery of the Holy Spirit E-News*, September 29, 2005).

Photograph from *Priest Forever: History of St. John's Seminary, San Antonio, Texas 1915-1965*, page 78

Upon leaving St. John's Seminary, **Thomas** spent three years at St. Mary's University in San Antonio. His plan was to enter the Novitiate at Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky, but he would later explain his initial reservations, "I wrote a letter about vocation at 17 and went to the post office with it. I did not have the nerve to mail it for a year and a half. Finally, I mailed it and received a favorable response, and I kept putting it off for six months.

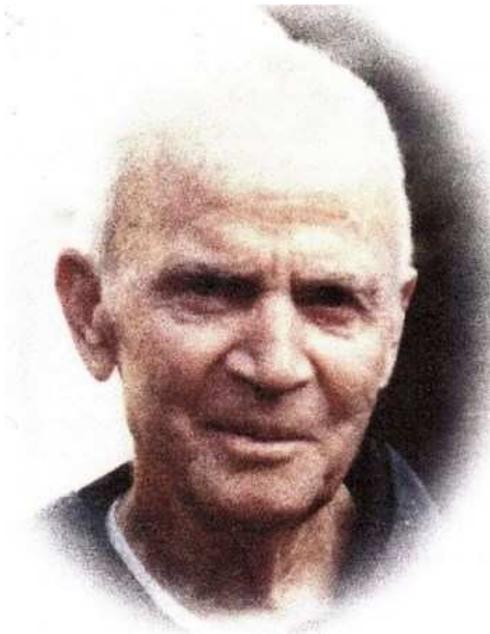
I started out, got as far as St. Louis, Missouri, got cold feet and came back. And I reached home. I said that's a defeat. I'll try it again. Next morning, I took another train, and made it" (*Monastery of the Holy Spirit E-News*, September 29, 2005). On July 28, 1926, **Thomas** entered the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, also known as Trappists, which is a Roman Catholic contemplative religious order.

When a census taker visited the Abbey of Gethsemani in Nelson County, Kentucky, to enumerate the residents in the spring of 1930, he listed 31 names of priests, brothers, and students. The ninth name on the list was **Lawrence Swierc**, a 23-year-old student from Texas (sheet no. 1B). **Thomas Joseph** had taken the name **Lawrence** after **Saint Lawrence** who had suffered martyrdom in Rome in 258. **Lawrence Swierc** made his solemn profession on December 8, 1931, and was ordained on February 24, 1934. **Father Lawrence** remained in Kentucky for nineteen years where monastic life was highly structured with prayer and work. In addition to farming and gardening, he later recalled other labor, "We were building an enclosure wall, it was a mile long. We did every bit of it, even the looking for the stones and digging the foundations and everything. It took about three years. I was there from beginning to end" (Kramer, page 287). He eventually became submaster of novices and oriented the newcomers, including **Thomas Merton**, about the monastic life.

In August of 1945, **Father Lawrence** transferred to the recently founded Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Monastery in Georgia. The monks lived in a temporary monastery until 1960 as it was necessary for them to build a permanent structure. He later reminisced, "Such a cheerful spirit, and everybody helping just where needed, and I thought I was in Heaven" (Kramer, page 290). In addition to helping with construction, **Father Lawrence** was novice master. He also worked in the bakery and the green house after the new monastery was completed. His prayer life was exemplary, revolving around the Divine Office, and he expressed concern that the chanting of Psalms be done correctly (*Monastery of the Holy Spirit E-News*, September 29, 2005). In 1963, Father Lawrence changed his surname from Swierc to Swartz.

When he was celebrating 65 years as a Trappist in 1991, he spoke to the guests about living a long life. Known for his keen sense of humor, he remarked that everyone always asks older people the secret to living a long life. "The *sine qua non*," he quipped, "is don't die too soon." He continued, "There'll be peaks and valleys, bright, sunny days and dark, gloomy days. Temptations, they're sure to come."

He further said that one long retreat decades ago, "did me a lifetime of good." The retreat master declared, "Saints, we need saints in the monastery," he recalled.



He went on to say that despite what outsiders may naively think, “Stepping into a monastery doesn’t make you a saint any more than stepping into a garage makes you an automobile” (Keiser, 1991).

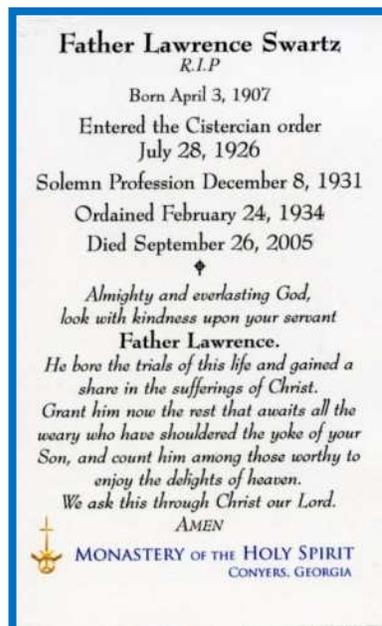
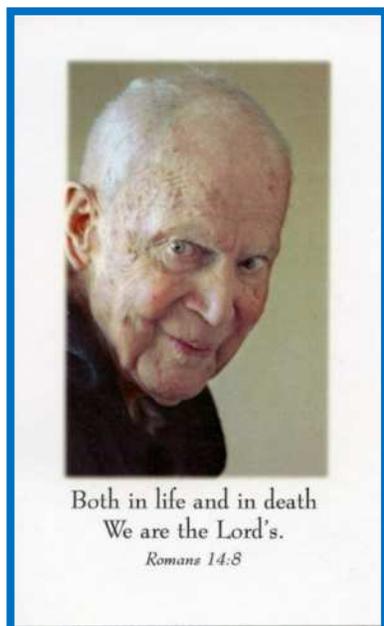
On July 28, 2011, in honor of **Father Lawrence’s** 75th anniversary of monastic life, the Abbot, **Dom M. Basil Pennington**, concelebrated Mass with **Bishop John Yanta**, and **Archbishop John Francis Donoghue** gave the homily.

Photograph courtesy of Br. Chaminade Crabtree, OSCO



Photograph courtesy of Lorraine Manka Ponish, Uvalde, Texas

As his years of contemplative monastic life continued, **Father Lawrence** “was quietly toiling in the Monastery of the Holy Spirit’s bonsai greenhouse when two visitors asked him how long he had been a monk. His answer: ‘One day.’ That exchange—both baffling and profound—exemplified the single-minded devotion...In truth, his ‘one day’ of monastic life amounted to 79 prayerful years” (Crenshaw).



Funeral Card courtesy of Lorraine Manka Ponish, Uvalde, Texas

Father Lawrence Swartz, age 98, died on September 26, 2005, in Conyers, Georgia. His funeral Mass was offered three days later at the monastery with many sharing memories of the “tall, austere, rugged Texan priest.” **Father Lawrence’s** own words echoed, “If upon reaching eternity I learn that my prayers saved one soul, or obtained one zealous worker for the vineyard of the Lord, or prevented one mortal sin, I will rejoice forever.”

Sources:

Crenshaw, Holly. “Father Lawrence Swartz, 98, oldest monk of Conyers monastery, dies.” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 28, 2005.

Dworaczyk, Edward J. *The First Polish Colonies of America in Texas*. San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1936.

Keiser, Gretchen. “Conyers Jubilarians Celebrate Life.” *The Georgia Bulletin*, 1991.

Kramer, Drs. Dewey and Victor, *An Oral History of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Monastery* (unpublished, copyright 1985); interview of Fr. Lawrence on March 5, 1983.

Monastery of the Holy Spirit E-News. “Father Lawrence Swartz dies at age 98.” September 29, 2005.

Silesian Profiles Committee. *Silesian Profiles II: Polish Immigration to Texas, 1850s – 1870s*. Panna Maria, Texas: Panna Maria Historical Society, 2004.

The legacy of Father Lawrence Swartz has already been honored by having him memorialized in the Polish Heritage Center by: Howard and Lorraine Manka Ponish, Uvalde, Texas. Each departed religious vocation from our immigrant families can be recognized. If you would like to memorialize a nun, priest, monk, or religious brother for a \$10,000 donation, please contact John Wojtasczyk at 210-387-7472.

Donations & Memorials

Amy Shelton McNutt Charitable Trust	San Antonio, Texas	In memory of Sam P. Moy
James H & Barbara J Kiolbassa Britton	San Antonio, Texas	
Velmon & Peggy Buehring	Karnes City, Texas	In memory of Susie Yanta
Sharon Woytaszyk Cumberland	Rockport, Texas	
Jesse, Susie, Annette, & Jeannette Estrada	San Antonio, Texas	
Medvin Glover	APO AP, California	In memory of Sylvia Gawlik Griffith
Miriam Hawkins	Los Ranchos, New Mexico	In memory of Edna Pawelek
Kathy Keller	Kirby, Texas	In memory of Edwin Keller
Alphonse & Elaine Kolodziej	Floresville, Texas	
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Julie L Nichols	Karnes City, Texas	In memory of Edna Pawelek
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David D & Cora S Pawelek	Luling, Texas	In memory of Edna Pawelek
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Nick J & Angela Richter	San Antonio, Texas	In memory of Edwin Keller
St. Jerome Mens Club	San Antonio, Texas	In memory of Annie F. Pruski
David L Seale	San Antonio, Texas	In memory of Edna Pawelek
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Rosemarie Weaver	Port Lavaca, Texas	
Joe Yanta	San Antonio, Texas	
Paul A Yanta / Gaye Lynne Osburn	Runge, Texas	
John A & Mary Pollok Yanta Memorial Trust	San Antonio, Texas	

As The End of the Year Approaches...

We are thankful to our many friends who have helped us make the Polish Heritage Center a reality. Of course, we are not finished yet – but as you can see, the project is taking shape and new developments occur almost every day!

If you have upcoming payments to make on your pledge, please consider doing so as soon as possible. If you have been thinking about a gift, you may wish to consider making a donation before December 31st, as charitable contributions to qualified organizations such as the Polish Heritage Center can help reduce your tax liability for 2018.

Of course, each person's circumstances are different, so discuss your charitable giving with your tax advisor before the end of the year!

Progress of Phase III-A



Come by and check us out during the Panna Maria Turkey Dinner on Sunday, October 14! We will be doing presentations and answering your questions!

Let's Finish What We've Started!



Bishop Yanta taking a look at the progress of construction during his visit on Sunday, September 23 to the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria.

In the name of God, our Blessed Mother, and all our Polish ancestors; I ask all of you to make a generous gift so that we can finish the interior of our building. This first phase of construction by Keller-Martin Construction will cost \$424,572.00. Thanks to your generosity, we have that money in the bank to pay for the construction costs immediately. Perhaps, you would like to sponsor one of the three offices, the genealogical/research/library room, or conference room for a pledge or donation of \$100,000.00. Many of you can because God has blessed you abundantly. Thank you for being good stewards of His Blessings.

May God Bless You and Yours,

+Bishop John W. Yanta