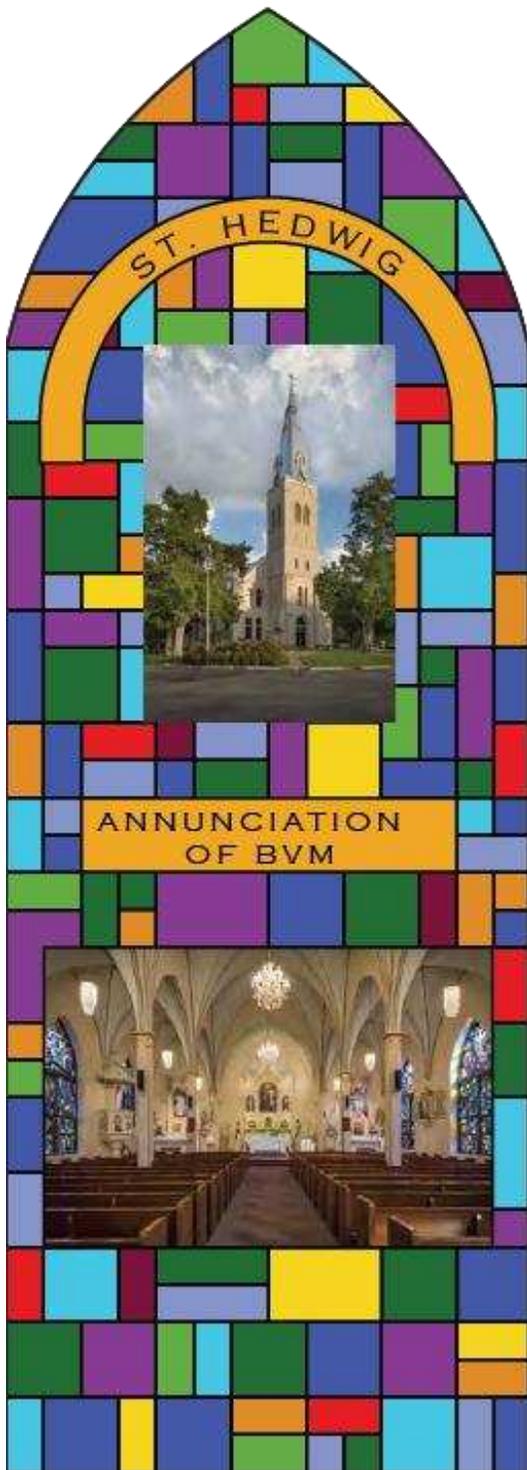


Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria

Visitor Experience, #9 in Series

St. Hedwig, Texas, Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish

By Regina and Allen Kosub



Some Silesian immigrants coming to Texas in December 1854 chose places other than Panna Maria in Karnes County to settle. Martin Pierdolla and Joseph Mihalski were drawn to San Antonio where, with a growing number of fellow immigrants, they searched for other opportunities. While some would travel to the newly created village of Bandera, others would stay in San Antonio and create what would become the Polish Quarter.

Martin and Joseph searched for farmland near the markets of San Antonio. Their search continued through 1855 as other immigrants, still in Silesia, prepared to leave for Texas. Among the resources available to assist the newly arrived Polish immigrants was a Polish expatriate living in East Bexar

County, Joseph N. Dornstin. With Dornstin's help, they found a location in East

Bexar County near the confluence of the Martinez and Cibolo Creeks eighteen miles from San Antonio. A wagon trip to San Antonio took less than a half-day. The land was well drained, grass and wildlife were abundant, and giant post-oak trees covered the area. Two miles south of the location, the village of Cottage Hill, with a stage stop, already existed.

Throughout 1855, the immigrants who would settle on Martinez Creek continued to arrive in Texas. The largest group arrived in December bringing with them substantial resources including wagons, farm tools, and gold. The seven hundred acre site in East Bexar County was purchased for two dollars per acre in gold from Charles G. Napier, a southern planter living on the Martinez.

Fr. Leopold Moczygamba, who chose the site of the Karnes County location, did not approve of the settlement on Martinez Creek. His comments were reported in several European newspapers, "...because of the lack of water there are no good prospects for the future".

During 1855, Ludwig and Jacob Zajac (Ziaontz), Stanislaus Woitena, Lawrence Ploch and Felix Tudyk had arrived with their families. On 1 October 1855 the Schuler Agency recorded a list of passengers departing the Port of Bremen in Prussia for Galveston, Texas. Among the passengers were Adam Pierdolla and his wife Mariana and their family. Also on board with their children were Franz and Mary Kozub, Anton and Mary Kozub, Thomas and Agnes Krawietz, Albert and Cecilia Stanush, Valentine and Josepha Aniol, Johann and Josepha Golla, Sebastian and Marie Roswadowski, Johann and Josepha Sczodrak, Stanislaus and Franciska Palica, and Isador and Lucia Zizik, and Paul Katzmarek traveled unaccompanied. Arriving at approximately the same time on various ships were Paul Prudl (Prudlo), Valentine Mroz, Franz Dylla, Jacob Lubinsky, Martin Cibis, and Casper Miosga.

The Martinez Creek site was a primitive frontier. In August of 1855, an Indian raiding party killed two settlers in nearby Post Oak (now La Vernia). Undeterred and while living in temporary lean-tos, the Silesians began to clear land and

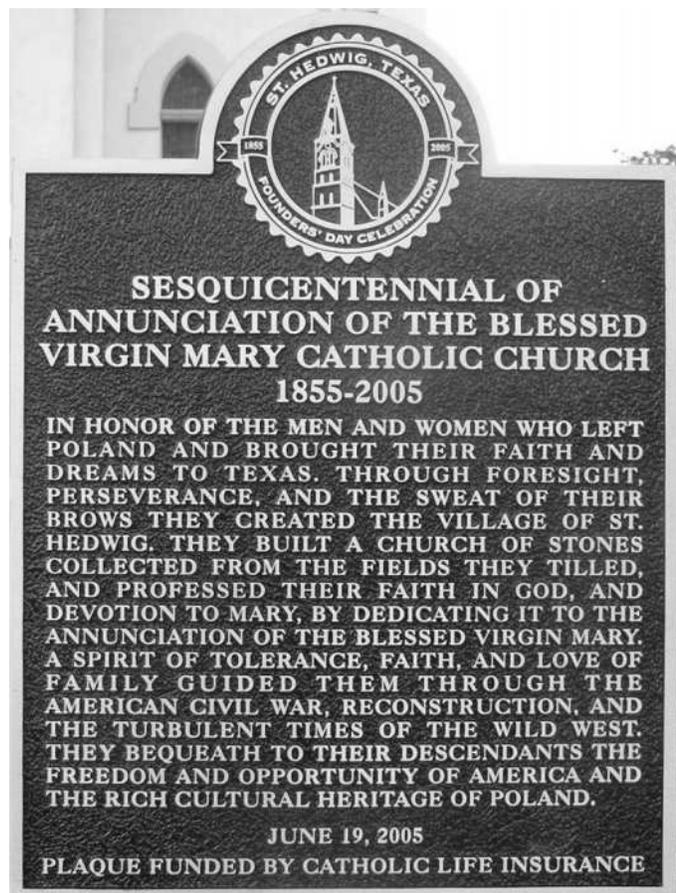
construct their log cabin houses. They called their settlement “Martinez,” their neighbors called it “Polanderville.”

The Silesians settlers were practical Roman Catholics and with the closest church located in San Antonio, chose to build their own chapel. Jacob Zaiontz provided a plot of land. From 1856 through 1868, the log cabin chapel provided a place of worship and was served by missionary priests from San Antonio and Panna Maria. The community’s first cemetery was located adjacent to the chapel.

During that period, the church parish was referred to by several names. The first entry in parish records is the baptism of Franz Pierdolla on February 2, 1857. The entry, by Fr. Julian Przysiecki, is written in Spanish and refers to the location as: “Iglesia de Nuestra Virgin Maria en el Candado Bexar, Tejas, villa Martinez” or “The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the County of Bexar, Texas, the village of Martinez”. The earliest reference to “St. Hedwig” appears in church records as the entry, in Latin, by Fr. Felix Zwiardowski recording the baptism of Julianna Ploch on June 29, 1867 at the “Church of St. Hedwig” in “Martinez”.

From the beginning the community prospered. However, in 1861, its neighbors, slaveholding planters, would draw the community into the American Civil War. From a community of fewer than twenty-five families, seventeen Martinez men were conscripted into service.

In 1863, during the Civil War, Father Julian Przysiecki was killed in a riding accident at Martinez and was buried in the chapel cemetery. His



death left the Texas Silesians without a Polish-Speaking priest.

After the Civil War, the Martinez community benefitted from the abandonment of the surrounding plantations. The freed African slaves moved into the community and taught the Silesians cotton culture. And the Silesians were able to buy the plantation lands at very favorable prices. The community continued to prosper with cotton its major cash crop.

In 1866 missionaries from the Congregation of the Resurrection came to Texas. The community responded by creating committees to build a church, school and charter a new cemetery. Precise records were maintained of donations of money, material and labor.

In 1868 the list of subscribers contributing money, materials and labor to the church included 34 heads of household. They were: Valentine Aniol, Martin Cibis, Franz Dylla, Franz Dudek, John Demmer, John Glowacki, Anton Golla, Franz Gorzell, Paul Katzmarek, Franz Kosub, Anton Kosub, Thomas Kosub, Joseph Kosub, Simon Kosub, Anton Kolonko, Thomas Krawitz, Casper Miosga, Joseph Mihalski, Michael Mihalski, John Mihalski, Valentine Mroz, Charles Mergele, Joseph Pierdolla, Martin Pierdolla, Lawrence Ploch, Casper Ploch, Anton Ploch, Ignatz Piosek, Albert Stanush, Anton Tudyk, Nicholas Tudyk, Joseph Tudyk, Carl Winkler, Carl Zigmont, Ludwig Zaiontz, and Barzynski (Vincent or Frank). From 1872 through 1879 additional contributors were: Theodore Felix, Peter Piosek, John Sowa, Sobek Rozwadowski, Alex Sowa, Bartek Stanus, Franz Rozwadowsky, Ignatz Kiolbassa, Franz Felix, Ben Kiolbassa, Frank Kiolbassa, Franciska Shadrock, Dudek Skweirz, Mike Rakowski, Max Ramdzinski, (The Widow) Panek, Maciek Dyrsch, John Golla, Franz Stanush, Valek Szoltysik, John Shadrock, C. Dobrowolski, Franz Latka, Joseph Ramdzinski, John Dudek, Simon Krawitz, Florian Musiol, Frank Knapik, John Ziaontz, Thomas Kiolbassa, Morawietz, J. Sanger, Franz Kwiolkowski, Alex Sowa, Stanislaus Palica, Thomas Dziuron, (Simon) Lipok, Albin Rakowitz, Telesfor Ramdzinski, August Dubiel, Leon Rakowitz, John Kusmierz, Anton Stanush, Anton Kosielski, Matthew Machula, Jacob Lyro, M. Litkowski, Anton Rakowitz, Stanley Rakowitz, E. Sacherer.

In 1871, Martin and Franciska Pierdolla, Thomas and Agnes Kravitz, Joseph and Franciska Mihalski and Anton and Marya Tudyk donated the land for the church.

The church and school were built of sandstone gathered from the nearby farms. Mortar was created from limestone quarried in San Antonio. The remains of those buried at the log cabin chapel were moved to the new cemetery. A newly founded order of nuns the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, with distinctive blue habits, taught at the school.

On April 25 1868, Fr. Felix Zwiardowski recorded the blessing of the cornerstone of the new church placing it under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and signing the entry as Missionary Administrator of "St. Hedwig's Church at Martinez." Eventually, the church parish came to be called the Annunciation of the BVM Catholic Church. The community came to be called St. Hedwig.



Steepleless Church 1905

In 1873, before he left for Chicago, Fr. Vincent Barzynski was required to write a receipt to each of the 34 heads of household for their contribution to the

construction of the church and school (at least one of these receipts still exists). Father Barzynski commented about the accounting process “for such is the custom at this place.”

In 1880, when the community celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary it consisted of over five hundred souls. The violence associated with Frontier Texas and Reconstruction visited the area with incidents of assault and murder reported in the community and Church

After 1880, a new wave of immigrants from other parts of Poland came to St. Hedwig. Many first arrived on the east coast of the United States and then traveled to Texas. By 1900, the church built of native sandstone could no longer



Present church in the snow of 1985

accommodate the congregation. The Parish engaged architect Leo M.J. Dielmann to design a new church. Among the many structures designed by Dielmann were the Joske’s Store and Fairmount Hotel in San Antonio. The Parish accepted Dielmann’s design, with minor modifications, and built the structure that currently stands in St. Hedwig. The base of the steeple and the western half of the structure, were built as an attachment to the original 1868 stone church. In 1910, the steeple was mounted on its base. About 1920, the old stone church was demolished and the eastern portion of the church constructed. On January 11,

1925, Bishop Arthur J. Drossaerts and 5,000 visitors celebrated the completion of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in St. Hedwig, Texas.

Through the 20th century the Church served as the center of community life and was treasured for its cultural and religious significance to the community. In the 1940s, electricity was installed in the structure. During the last half of the 20th century the structure has been remodeled and modern conveniences installed. Its schools were expanded and continued to serve the community through the 1970s.

The Parish constructed its St. Pope John Paul II, Community Center which was dedicated and blessed October 15, 2006 by Bishops Patrick Zurek and John Yanta. The library contains plenty of material about St. Pope John Paul II.

Silesian settlers created a unique community, in far eastern Bexar County, Texas. Their spirit of tolerance, faith and love of family guided them through the American Civil War, Reconstruction, and the turbulent times of the Wild West. They bequeath to their descendants the freedom and opportunity of America and the rich cultural heritage of Polish Silesia.



City Seal adopted by the St. Hedwig City Council on November 5, 2015 reflecting its rich heritage



Thank you to Allen & Regina Kosub for the St. Hedwig story you have just read. Now some more about the parish: from the Historic Texas Cemetery marker located at the parish cemetery:

In 1872, Church members chartered a new cemetery at this site, reinterring burials from the original site. Residents changed the settlement's name to St. Hedwig in honor of Silesia's patron saint. Today, gravestones indicate the ethnic heritage of the community, which included residents of Polish descent as well as those with German, Hispanic, Irish, Alsatian and other surnames.

The parish cemetery had over 3,000 burials already in 2003.

Priests In Service To Annunciation Church from the 125th Anniversary Book

Fr. Julian Pzysiecki: 1857-1863, Benedictine Fathers: 1863-1866, Fr. Felix Orzechowski: 1866-1867, Fr. Felix Zwiardowski: 1867-1869 & 1874-1877, Fr. Theofil Bralewski: 1869, Fr. Henry Cichowski: 1877, Fr. Ladislaus Tyszkiewicz: 1877-1881, Fr. Stanislaus Wojciechowski: 1878, Fr. Adalbertus Pelczar: 1881-1884, Fr. Mathaus Snigurski: 1884-1887, Fr. Ludovicus Dąbrowski: 1887-1897, Fr. Thomas Moczygamba: 1897, Fr. F. Wlaslowski: 1897-1898, Fr. Theodore Jaron: 1898-1905, Fr. Stephen Urbanowski: 1905, Fr. Paul Mosler: 1905-1909, Fr. John Jachtyl: 1910-1912, Fr. John Kromolicki: 1910-1912, Fr. Stanislaus Przyborowski: 1914-1933, Fr. P.A. Vaitonis: 1933, Fr. Vincent Kloseek: 1933-1941, Fr. E. Doronza: 1941, Fr. Francis J. Ledwig: 1942-1943, Fr. Leo S. Moczygamba: 1943-1944, Fr. E.J. Kostorz: 1945-1949, Fr. Benedict Pruski: 1949, Fr. Edmond Dragon: 1949-1953, Fr. Robert Schmidt: 1953-1955, Fr. Michael McManus: 1955-1959, Fr. Benedict Pruski: 1959-1968, Fr. Frank J. Foster: 1969-1988, Fr. Bill Zadora, SDS: 1988-2000; Fr. Damian Tomiczek, SDS: 2000-2003, Fr. Bill Zadora, SDS: 2003-present.



Vocations from the community:

Vocations to the Priesthood:

Fr. Brian Plate, ordained May 25, 1996, for the Military Ordinariate at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Newark, NJ.

Vocations of Religious Women:

The 125th Anniversary Book records:

The deep religious faith of the community of St. Hedwig has produced a number of vocations to the religious life. Joseph Dorstyn's daughter, Faustyna joined the Immaculate Conception Order of Sisters at Panna Maria. In 1871, Anastasia Krawietz (Sr. Joseph) was a member of the first novitiate class in San Antonio of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. Sr. Mary Ellen Sturm, a present-day Felician, is the great-granddaughter of John Demmer.

Those who also served were: Emelia Lyro (Sr. Mary Lucilla), Anna Stanushx (Sr. M. Clotilda), Eva Stanush (Sr. M. Incarnation), Clara Stanush (Sr. M. Dominic), Julia Golla (Sr. Mt. Carmel), Anna Kulesza (Sr. M. Caroline), Matilda Krawietz (Sr. Margaret Alacoque), Balbina Krawietz (Sr. M. Elizabeth), Elizabeth Winkler (Sr. M. Dominic), Dorothy Franckowiak (Sr. M. Wenceslaus), Barbar Rakowitz (Sr. John Nepomucene), Sr. Mary Clementia Zigmund, Sr. Dorothy Young, Virginia Padalecki (Sr. Eunice), and Loredine Padalecki (Sr. Ronalda).

Next Polish historic parish to be featured in our newsletter will be Holy Cross, Yorktown, and then Falls City.



The mother of Msgr. Frank Kurzaj,

Age 90, died July 28 in Poland. Providentially, by God’s design, Father Frank was in Poland at the time leading a group of 80 Texans attending the World Youth Day in Krakow. He had the grace of God to make visits to his mother over and then preside over the Funeral Mass August 1st. In attendance was retired Bishop Alfons Nossol of Opole, Bishop Wieczarek of Gliwice, 40 priests including Father Dennis Jarzombek (Stockdale) and Father Christopher Bytomski (Fredericksburg), the WYD youths & pilgrims accompanying Father Frank, local people in native Silesian costumes, a band, and a big church full of people.



Golden Jubilee of the Panna Maria Historical Society

The Panna Maria Historical Society noted their 50th anniversary August 6th. They have given great faithful service for all of us in preserving the “first nest” in the USA (St. John Paul II’s words about Panna Maria) the riches of faith, family, and community which we have inherited to cherish and preserve. To learn more or to become involved, call the Visitor Center at 830-780-4471!



A wonderful Gift!

I received a fine phone call from Stephanie Raisch recently about something she bought at an auction in Castroville. She contacted the Archdiocese who referred her to me. So, my assistant, John Wojtasczyk went to her home here in San Antonio and found it was a beautiful hand crafted ordination gift to Father Edmond Dragon in 1930. There were two other priestly vocations from Panna Maria in 1930; Msgr. Peter Foegelle and Msgr. Theodore Janysek. This is a welcomed discovery and will be given or shared with the Panna Maria Historical Society for the museum!

Irish Sisters Support Us!

I, Bishop Yanta, live here in San Antonio in St. Paul's Parish where the parish elementary school had been administered by the Irish Brigidine Sisters from 1954-1995. I just received in today's mail their letter:

"Enclosed is a small donation to help with the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria. I know it will be beautiful and a great tribute to all the Polish people who helped the Church in San Antonio. Every blessing on your work. The Brigidine Sisters"



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE!



Week 13, columns being formed!

PAYMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION

Construction completed for month 4 was \$93,425.58 – the smallest construction bill so far in these 4 months! We have 6 more months to finish the first of the two phases of construction. Phase I is to complete the shell and all the exterior of our building; Phase II will be to finish all the interior with all its details that makes up the heart of our heritage center. Then the landscaping and finally we can celebrate our Grand Opening. The next 6 months of construction will average out to \$452,683 per month! We are paying this month's bill out of our checking account which is getting low. We haven't borrowed any money from the bank yet. **PLEASE** help us as God has blessed you!

PLEASE CONSIDER!

Either memorializing your deceased parents or family, or adopt one of the Naming Opportunities. In either case you may make your payments over time as your financial circumstances permit.

You may become a Heritage Circle Donor with name in the lobby (\$100,000) or select a Naming Opportunity (66 available from \$25,000 to \$200,000) with your name on location. For example, some Naming Opportunities still available are:

- 1) St. Hedwig, an iconic painting in a niche in the rotunda, \$500,000
- 2) Silesia, the Homeland Left Behind, \$200,000
- 3) St. Hedwig, 6'x3' electronically illumined graphic appearing to be stained glass window - \$75,000.

For more information, please contact my assistant, John Wojtasczyk at either 210-387-7472 or wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net or call the Panna Maria Heritage Foundation at 210-263-7270.



WE WANT YOU TO KEEP RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER!

But to do so, we need your correct current address! If you have moved recently and are having your mail forwarded to you, please drop us a line and pass along your correct current address. We are getting mail returned indicating that the forwarding time has expired. Sometimes the new address is on that label, sometimes not. And believe me; you DO NOT want to miss this important and informative newsletter. You can reach me, John Wojtasczyk at either: wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net and call or text at 210-387-7472.



King David's Prayer

King David in his last years as King of the Jews wanted very much to build a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. But God spoke through the prophet Nathan saying: "Tell David he won't build it but your son (Solomon) will." So when King Solomon began to reign as king, his father King David said to Him: *"Now, my son, the Lord be with you, and may you succeed in building the house of the Lord your God, as he has said you shall. May the Lord give you prudence and discernment when he brings you to rule over Israel, so that you keep the law of the Lord, your God. Only then shall you succeed, if you are careful to observe the precepts and decrees which the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be brave and steadfast; do not fear or lose heart"* (1 Chronicles 22:11-13).

I pray this Bible wisdom every morning for the success of our Polish Heritage Center, for you and our deceased ancestors, and how our Polish Heritage Center will strengthen the faith of each of us and all of us for many generations to come.



St. Hedwig (born 1174 – died 1243) was married to Duke Henry of Silesia, mother of 7 children; as Duchess she helped her husband establish a Cistercian convent, hospitals, and monasteries. She herself was dedicated to the poor, sick, and elderly. When widowed, she became a Cistercian nun. Her Feast Day is October 16th, the same date Cardinal Wojtyła became Pope John Paul II.

O, St. Hedwig, Patroness of Silesia, pray for us and our Polish Heritage Center!
May God Bless You and Yours!

Bishop John W. Yanta