



Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon, PHC Chairman and President

It is so gratifying to listen to the comments from those who have toured the Polish Heritage Center and experienced the quality of the audio-visuals, the movies, the exhibits, and stories of the people who made the difficult journey to establish the oldest permanent Polish settlement in the United States. Please read the article by Board Secretary Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey in this newsletter to learn more.

Our major focus at this time is finding the right Executive Director for the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria. We need someone with the management skills, but also with a deep appreciation of the Polish immigration to Texas in the mid-19th century and of Bishop Yanta's vision. We are asking for your help. Please get the word out to possible candidates to review our website for the job listing of qualifications.

The PHC's virtual programs continue to be outstanding. On May 2, Dr. Piotr Przybylski's presentation on the Silesian Uprisings following World War I traced the role of Wojciech Korfanty in reaction to the Germanization of Silesia and how Poles were treated. Our thanks to the Polish Consulate in Houston as well as the Polish American Council of Texas for their sponsorship.

Panna Maria is the oldest permanent Polish settlement in America, but Poles have been in America long before our nationhood. Dr. Raymond Glembocki, President of the American Council on Polish Culture, was featured on May 31 with an excellent presentation about the Poles in Jamestown in 1608.

Both programs are available for viewing at the PHC Website, polishheritagecentertx.org. As always, we gratefully thank our wonderful donors for building the Center and sustaining it through your gifts.



Cestohowa is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. We got a preview of future exhibits and events at the May picnic.



Board member Sam Kotara is quizzed by our visitors from the Village at the University of the Incarnate Word.

Welcome Back

By: Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey, Board Secretary

School's out, graduations are about done and we hope you have some free time facing you this summer. With that in mind, please put the Polish Heritage Center and Panna Maria on your list of places to visit.

I talk to folks every week who tell me they've been to the Center, but "it's been awhile." "The family came by just before it opened" or "We were there with all the people for the grand opening." That's wonderful, you know where we are. Now we're inviting you to come back, take your time and take in what you probably missed.

There is so much to see, hear and learn as you go through the exhibits. We try to give you a flavor each month in this publication, but there's nothing like spending time in each area, using your audio wand to listen to the stories. You can do so in English, Polish or Spanish. There's also a youth version for youngsters and the young at heart.

| Welcome Back Continued...

My late brother Bobby would try to come in every few days and absorb some section, just reading and listening. Staff told him he would probably be named our head docent. He would just smile at that and keep reading.

Since its opening in October 2021, the Center has hosted some wonderful Family Days and musical events. A truly spectacular exhibit celebrating generations of Polish women from the area adorned the hallways beyond the Rotunda for many months. It will soon be replaced with a tribute to Cestohowa as our neighboring heritage parish celebrates its 150th anniversary. We're also preparing for the dedication of our multi-purpose room as the Bishop John W. Yanta Room sometimes this fall. Bishop loved a good party so it's only fitting that he be a part of all future festivities.

It's our goal to keep the Center alive and vibrant. This is not a static museum. This is a heritage center and we want to make sure that with every visit you find something new and/or something that may surprise you about your history and your ancestors. Our friends at the Panna Maria Historical Society are also available Thursdays and Saturdays to take people through the Immaculate Conception Church, the historic St. Joseph School building and the Visitor Center. It's the full village experience!

When she was leaving any place, my Grandma Moczygemba would always say "we gotta go now so we can come back." So our invitation to you is to come back and visit. We're open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The welcome mat is out and waiting for you.

Center: Bogdan and Kasia Ogórek tour exhibits with Board member John Cebrowski. Bogdan is on the board of the Polish Museum in Chicago.

Right: Board chair Aloys Notzon tours a group from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation division. Twenty conservationists had two days of meetings at the PHC and around Panna Maria.



| Sobieski and the Winged Hussars

By: Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey, Board Secretary

A gentleman from Minnesota was going through the PHC donor galleries recently when he came across the King Jan Sobieski Society. "Hey, Sobieski is the name of my hometown! Who was he?" he asked. So I took him to the exhibit featuring the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth where he learned a lot more than he had known about this Polish king and his military exploits.

Jan III Sobieski ruled as the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1674 until his death in 1696. He spent much of his military career fighting the ceaseless forays of the Ottoman Empire of Turkey against the Christian Commonwealth.

Sobieski's defining battle occurred in September, 1683, following a two-month siege of Vienna. He led a force of 100,000 soldiers, primarily Poles, Austrians, and Germans, against a force of 150,000 Ottoman Turks commanded by the Grand Vizier Mustafa.

The Battle of Vienna featured the largest known calvary charge in history, with 18,000 Christian calvary galloping down the hillsides, led by 3000 Polish hussars. The hussars were elite mounted fighters, remembered in

military lore as the "winged hussars" because of their unusual large wooden wings decorated with raptor feathers.

Polish historian Jędrzej Kitowicz (1728-1804) described these fighters: "...the husaria men wore wooden arcs attached to their armour at the back and raising over their heads. These arcs, together with bristling feathers sticking out of them, were dyed in various colours in imitation of laurel branches or palm leaves and were a strangely beautiful sight to behold."

The wings in motion also made a loud rattling noise, which altogether was intended to demoralize the enemy during the charge. It worked brilliantly, and the smaller yet superior force routed the Turks. It is widely argued that the victory at Vienna, led by King Sobieski, saved Western civilization.

Much of the information you have just read comes courtesy of the stanchion text found next to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth exhibit in the Polish Heritage Center. We always encourage our visitors to read the text or listen to the information via audio wands. And we always welcome our friends from Sobieski, Minnesota to the PHC in Panna Maria.

“These arcs, together with bristling feathers sticking out of them, were dyed in various colours in imitation of laurel branches or palm leaves and were a strangely beautiful sight to behold.”

– Polish historian Jędrzej Kitowicz

Artwork found in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth exhibit at the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria.





**THE
POLISH HERITAGE CENTER
AT PANNA MARIA**

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One of Our Own to be Ordained

We wanted to share this special letter sent recently to the PHC:

Dear Polish Heritage Center staff:

June 17, 2023 is the ordination date of Thomas Edward Swierc. Thomas is a descendant of Moczygemba, Swierc, Pruski, Lyssy, Keller and Wiatrek families; he is a distant cousin to Bishop Yanta. As Thomas' parents, we are overjoyed to see Thomas join the priestly brotherhood of so many of his relatives living and deceased.

We are hoping you will post an invitation/announcement of the upcoming ordination. So many of our family members pray constantly for an increase in vocations; we would like to share our joy with them for answered prayers.

Ordination Mass will be livestreamed to the Diocese of Corpus Christi's YouTube page. The link is www.youtube.com/@DioceseofCorpusChristi/streams.

Sincerely,

Thomas (Tommy Joe) and Deanne Swierc
College Station, TX

Blessings for you and your family, Father Thomas Swierc!