

# Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria

## Visitor Experience, #10 in Series



## MORE SUFFERING – THE CIVIL WAR!

First, the difficulties of “getting started” in a new country, not knowing English, establishing life in a completely non-developed area with no stores for groceries nor farm supplies, nor conveniences as we have them. And then the severe drought took place from 1856-1857. Then only 5 to 7 years after they arrived in 1854-1856, the Civil War began. In 1861, Texas voted to secede from the Union and joined the Confederacy and joining the war to fight for slavery. Our religious Catholic Silesian Polish ancestors had no slaves and didn’t believe in making other human beings objects of possession. And another consideration – one of the reasons they left the old country was to avoid conscription (the forced enrollment into military service). Now, all men in Texas, ages 18 – 50 had to serve. There was the great pain of leaving their grieving young families in primitive rugged conditions, without protectors and providers for the women and children.

## Drafted into Military Service

From Father Ed Dworaczyk's book in 1936 and historian T. Lindsay Baker's book, *The First Polish Americans*, we have these Polish Silesians serving in the Civil War:

"John Adamietz, M. Adamietz, Anton Anderwald, Leopold Biela, Anton Brysch, Frank Brysch, John Brysch, Joseph Cotulla, August Czyzek, Joe Dlugosz, Martin Dugi, Joseph Dupnik, Frank Dworaczyk, Alexander Dziuk, John Gawlik, Joseph Gawlik, Frank Golla, Michael Gonsor, Philip Gonsor, Valentine Gorrell, John Gregorczyk, Albert Halamuda, Anton Jarzombek, Tom Jendrzey, Julius Jurecki, Joseph Kalinowski, Ignatz Kiolbassa, Peter Kiolbassa, Frank Knapick, John Kolenda, Simon Kolodziej, Thomas Kolodziejczyk, Charles Korzekwa, Thomas Kossup/Kosub, Theodor Kroll, John Kush, Joseph Kyrish, Joseph Ledwig, Albert Lyssy, Jacob Lyssy, John Lyssy, John Michalski, Frank Moczygamba, Frank T. Moczygamba, John Moczygamba, John T. Moczygamba, Joseph Moczygamba, Joseph Morawietz, Thomas Morawietz, Joseph F. Pierdolla, Anton Ploch, Jacob Pollok, Joseph Pollok, John Rzeppa, Anton Sekula, Adam Skloss, Joe Sowa, Julius Sowa, Vincent Tycman, John Urbanczyk, Mathew Urbanczyk, Tom Urbanczyk, Stanislaw Woitena, Anton Wygladacz."

## Suffering At Home

Staple food shortages occurred (flour, sugar, salt, etc), prices skyrocketed, some profiteering occurred; a recurring dry weather cycle took place again in the Civil War years, 1861-1865. The Silesians were "given a hard time" by the local "Americans" for their perceived lack of patriotic enthusiasm for a war in which they didn't believe: the cause – slavery. They had no slaves.

### **Their Murmurings and Lamentations Against Their Leader**

Father Leopold was overloaded with his responsibilities not only as pastor of Panna Maria, but also making sure that the other Polish parishes (Bandera, San Antonio, and Martinez/St. Hedwig) were being cared for, plus supervision of the German speaking parishes in his duties as Conventual Franciscan Superior in Texas. He was saddened with his superiors in Rome who didn't or couldn't

respond (because of poor communication) positively to his repeated requests for priestly help. And the most crushing blow was his own people – they didn't understand the pressure of his responsibilities and turned against him for bringing them to this most difficult isolated place that was not as beautiful as Father Leopold had depicted in his letters of invitation. Father Leopold Moczygemba left Panna Maria in 1856 to never return, except for two short visits years later to see his family.

## **Then They Had No Priest**

T. Lindsay Baker writes in his book about the Silesian settlements in Texas:

*“This last Polish priest in Texas was killed in a riding accident near the Martinez Creek settlement on 25 November 1863.... The death of Father Przysiecki brought to the Silesians the period of greatest isolation during their life in Texas. There was no possibility of securing another Polish priest. The Civil War prevented any effective communication with possible Polish clergymen in the northern United States... During the next three years the Silesians received occasional ministrations from visiting priests, most of them French and German Benedictine fathers from San Antonio. To maintain their faith, the Poles in the rural communities frequently gathered in the churches on Sundays without priests to chant the rosary, to sing hymns, and to recite the mass in the vernacular. Because of the lack of Polish-speaking priests, the people were unable to say confessions, some of them for several years, and a number of them died without the last sacraments, a disaster in the Catholic communities.”*

## **Even My Own Mother Did Not Recognize Me**

From Father Edward Dworaczyk's book:

*“Alexander Dziuk, a native of the Silesian village of Płużnica who immigrated with his family to Karnes County. In later life he recalled the war: “At the age of eighteen...I was drafted into the Confederate Army and sent to Arkansas.... We were badly fed, especially in the Confederate Army until the end of the war and when I got back home even my own mother did not recognize me.”*

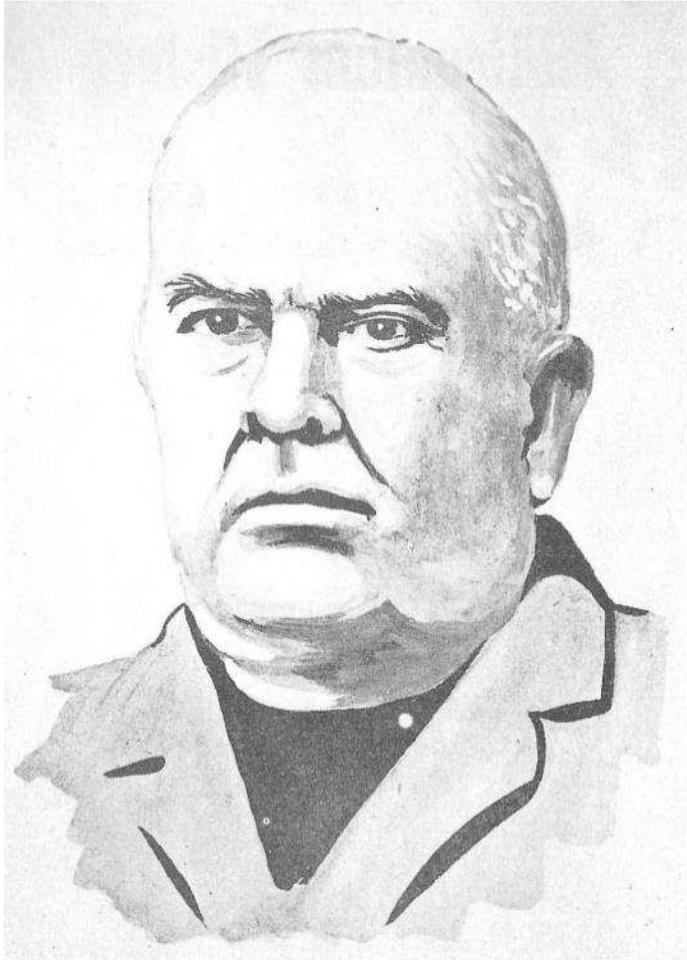
## War Ends – The Mercy of God

Also from Father Edward Dworaczyk's book:

*“When the Civil War finally ended in late spring 1865, the Silesians saw it as the act of a merciful God to relieve their long suffering. As one Pole recalled, “At last God took pity on us: The Confederacy was defeated.” The end of the fighting did not bring solutions to all the problems, but it did mean the return of most of the Polish soldiers from the battlefields to their families. That probably was the most important thing for the Silesians.”*

### Father Leopold Moczygemba's Original Plan

Father Leopold Moczygemba and three other Conventual Franciscans said “Yes” to the first Bishop of Texas in 1852 when asking for missionaries to come to Texas to care for the German speaking Catholics already in Texas. Did you know Father Leopold Moczygemba while he was pastor of the German Catholics in New Braunfels bought 27 acres of land and 3 one half acre lots in Cracow, 2 miles south of New Braunfels? Father wrote back to his family in Upper Silesia that the German immigrants were doing well in New Braunfels and invited them to do the same on the land he had already bought for them near New Braunfels and near a new Polish town, Cracow (Krakow), which he had created. Word spread quickly to other families and Silesian communities. He heard about the great number coming. He had to abandon his New Braunfels – Cracow plan and looked to a San Antonio realtor, Catholic John Twohig, for help. The two spent a few days riding on horseback sizing up a lot of land that was available. But the site near where the San Antonio River is met by the Cibolo Creek was selected. Historians recorded that the Polish Silesians paid too much – this provokes more questions. They had suffered very much from the cargo ship ride of nine weeks, the two week-long walk from the coast to San Antonio and three days back to Panna Maria, the challenges of “getting started”, and the terrible drought. All suffered, but probably no one suffered more than Father Leopold Moczygemba, their leader. Imagine the guilt he suffered as God's will unfolded. Father Moczygemba often has been likened to Moses who suffered from the murmurings of his own people in the desert (Exodus 16:3).



**Rev. Leopold Moczygemba, O.M.C.**

*“Dedicated in Loving Memory  
To The First Settlers of This  
Historic Hamlet  
Who Left Their Native Land of  
Suffering and Oppression  
To Seek Life, Liberty and The  
Pursuit of Happiness.  
In The Land of Promise,  
And Because They Faced This  
New Life With Courage,  
Patience And Fervent Trust In  
God. They Made  
Life For Their Descendants  
Worth Living.”*  
From Fr. Edward Dworaczyk’s  
book,  
The First Polish Colonies of  
America in Texas

As a young boy, I, Bishop Yanta, have a memory that made a lasting impression on me. As I was looking at the tomb stones in one of our Polish cemeteries, the back of the tomb often read: **“GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN”**. Father Edward Dworaczyk in his book in 1936, *The First Polish Colonies of America in Texas* expressed his thoughts and feelings in these appropriate words:

*“Fortunate as we were in gathering the information, we still wish we could bring the dead back to life, for with them was buried much more than will ever be recorded. But perhaps it is better that they cannot be with us because we would only have to hang our heads in shame and say: ‘Your children, with all their opportunities can no longer do what you so nobly accomplished.’”*



Week 22 of construction! 5<sup>th</sup> month payment \$83,940.27 due!

Families are getting together to memorialize their deceased parents, grandparents, or their favorite priest or nun. When this Polish Heritage Center was started in 2011, many said: "If there ever was a good time IT IS NOW!" Give only as you have been blessed! Not equal gifts but equal sacrifice. We're talking about a \$14 million first class center, second to none! Something we and future generations can be proud of, e.g. like the beautiful churches they built years ago. Already, we are half way there, with pledges and gifts of \$7 million thanks to our early supporters who invested into their legacy. We are open to all kinds of situations in giving! Please call me (Bishop John Yanta) at 210-733-1979, or my assistant, John Wojtasczyk at 210-387-7472. You can also contact any of the following: Al Notzon, Joe Yanta, Randy Pawelek, Betty Kowalik, Sam Kotara, Fr. Wieslaw Iwaniec, Pat Hoffmann, Msgr. Frank Kurzaj, Susan McKinsey, Loretta Niestroy, Cheryl Pruski, Dr. Martha Respondek, Joyce Rives, and Lambert & Rosalie Titzman.

May God Bless You and Yours!

Bishop John W. Yanta

*Witamy!*

Welcome to all our recent and new readers! If you know of anyone wishing to receive our newsletters, or if you would like back issues, please contact John Wojtasczyk at either [wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net) or 210-387-7472.