



Polish Heritage Center

Visitor Experience #33



Image from 1864 *Federal Military Map*, courtesy of Jeff Wright, Executive Director, Victoria Preservation, Inc.

**Within the red box is a community labeled “Polander Settlement”
which would become the parish of:**

St. Joseph Church, Inez, Texas

I cannot remember if I have mentioned this, so I will do it now! One of the great enjoyments for me in writing our newsletters is what I have the chance to learn. When I was young, I would hear about this or that, I would be told different things by different people, and I would read different histories or perspectives about various other kinfolks. At least for me, I have always found this interesting and helpful. I experience a great deal of joy and satisfaction in researching our various widespread communities.

Recently, on a “*day off*,” I went to Victoria where my wife is from to join up with her and my mother-in-law. But when the “girls” were off shopping, I decided while in the area to do some research on the St. Joseph community in Inez. This was one of those outlying communities of which I was aware, but I knew precious little about it. I first actually visited the *Museum of the Coastal Bend* do some unrelated research. While there, I asked about whom I might visit in Victoria that could help me in my quest on Inez. I was directed to see **Jeff Wright**, *Executive Director, Victoria Preservation, Inc.* While there, we struck up a wonderful conversation including Inez. **Jeff** was sharing with me that although he had not had the opportunity to research Inez directly, it had crossed his path. That is where the front cover comes into play! He remembered, and pulled up, an 1864 Federal Military map of the area which showed that what would be called Inez one day, was first marked ***Polander Settlement***. This was the first mention of a group of Polish people in the area!

Eventually, I headed to Inez. There I spoke with their wonderful parish secretary, **Mary Lea Kloesel**! Once I explained the purpose of my mission, she was enthusiastic in helping me and provided me with material I had never seen, including the following article on St. Joseph Church, Inez. I also visited their cemetery and discovered to my surprise that I even have family buried there!

NOW, LET’S LEARN ABOUT INEZ!

From the history of St. Joseph Church, Inez, Texas, date unknown

In a new nation for only a short time, the early immigrant Polish settlers came by horseback, in wagons and on foot in 1858 to a small northeast Victoria County Community they called Gazeta. Gazeta or Garcitas was named for the Garcitas Creek which rises in northern Victoria County and flows southeast about 30 miles to, empty in the Lavaca Bay. The last 10 miles of the stream forms the county line between Victoria and Jackson County.¹

These Polish immigrants were again making a new home in a new land. Upper Silesia had been the homeland of the mid-nineteenth century Polish immigrants, but the conflict, economic hardship and deprivation in Poland had made them seek a better life in a free land.² They had landed at Indianola in 1855 and gone overland to Helena, Karnes County, Texas. The promise and availability of better ranching and farming land beckoned them to Victoria County.

Some of these early settlers were the **Obstas (Obstuj); Garvel, (Gawel); Golla, Adamski, Kutchka, and Yendry (Jendrejz)** families. **Jacob & Juliana Gross Obstuj** had a tiny baby, only 3 months old, whose baptism was already recorded at the church of the Immaculate Conception at Panna Maria, Karnes County, Texas.³

The Garcitas Community was located on land given in a Spanish Land Grant to, **Valentine Garcia** from **Fernando DeLeon**, dated 27 September 1834.⁴ Huge towering oaks, prairies with grazing land, fertile soil for crops, and creeks of flowing water were the promises of a better life for these early immigrants. It was also a wonderful remembrance of a faraway homeland. There was much work for these industrious people.

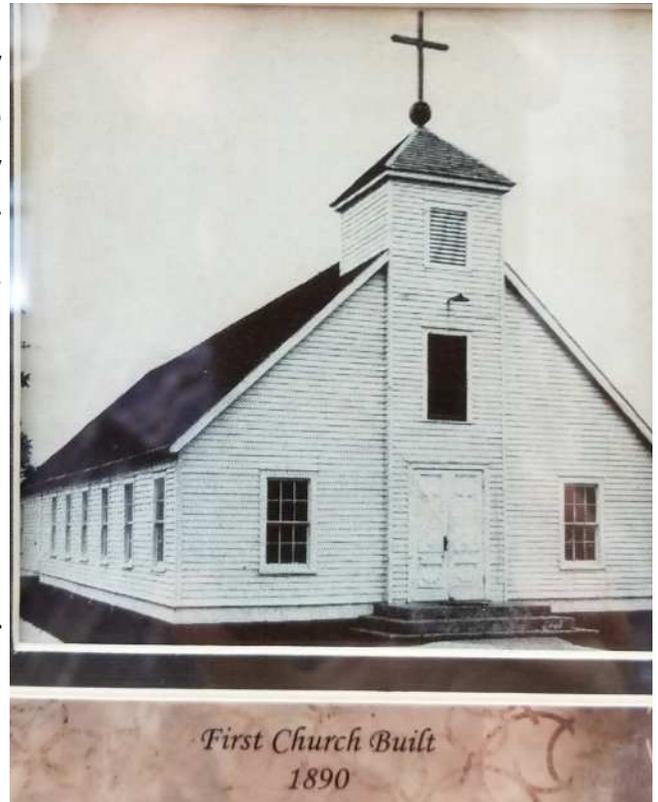


Image from St. Joseph Church, Inez



*Mass First Offered in
Garvel Home 1873*

Image from St. Joseph Church, Inez

Homes were constructed from the abundant oak tree which also provided a welcome shade from the hot Texas sun.

Teams of work horses were shared to till the soil for gardens and crops. There was the ever present thought of the church and how badly it was missed.

The Catholic faith was important in the lives of these families. Word would spread quickly among the Polish faithful when a mission priest would come to the Garcitas Community. Holy Masses were said in some of the homes. Early marriages, baptisms, and funerals were blessed by the traveling missionaries and recorded at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Victoria County, Texas.⁵

One of the marriages solemnized and blessed by the traveling priest united **Frank Garvel**, son of **Sebastian & Josepha Garvel**, a prosperous young man to **Anna Obsta**, daughter of **James & Mary Obsta**. Their new home was a favorite stopping place of the visiting priests.

On 22 February 1873, for the sum of \$1.00, **Frank Garvel** conveyed deed to the Roman Catholic Church, one acre of his land so that a church might be built. With a united effort, the church was built and dedicated to **St. Theresa**.⁶

August 4, 1886 construction of the New York-Texas & Mexican railroad by **Count Joseph Telferner** brought about the birth of the town of Inez.⁷ In its early years, Inez became a brisk and flourishing trade center. It was a major train stop that boasted a sizable hotel, Inez State Bank, U.S. Post office, and several stores. It reached its height of prosperity in the early 1890s during the big cotton boom.

A hurricane on 20 August, 1886,⁸ moved the little church off its foundation and the members realized that a major reconstruction of the church was needed.

Activity and interest in the town of Inez was growing every day, therefore, the decision was made to move the church to a new site in the township of Inez.

On the 5th day of January, 1889, lots 4, 5, and 6 in Block 10, in the town of Inez were sold to the **Reverend J. C. Neraz**, Bishop of San Antonio and successors⁹ by **J.W. McKay**, who was known as the "Bonanza King." **Mr. McKay** was instrumental in bringing **Count Telferner** to the United States, from Italy, to construct the railroad.¹⁰ **Bishop Neraz** paid \$40.00 for the three lots.

The dismantling and rebuilding of the new church was undertaken by **Henry C. Koontz Sr.**, who owned the lumber yard in Inez. The church was rebuilt under the direction of **Father Thomas Moczygemba** as administration and was dedicated to St Joseph on 1 November 1890.¹¹ While the church was in the process of reconstruction, Holy Mass was celebrated in the spacious **Koontz** home in Inez.

Visiting clergy were always welcome and sometime made their home with **Henry Clay & Mary Ann Finnegan Koontz**.

The first rectory was built in 1892 during the ministry of **Father W. G. Henderson**.¹² It was during these early prosperous years that Inez grew with new settlers of Czech, Italian, German, Mexican, Jewish, Swiss, Irish and English descent.

In 1913, a new rectory was constructed. Between 1913 and 1933, priests serving St. Joseph's lived at Inez only for short intervals of time.¹³

In 1933, **Father Henry Pensick** was appointed resident pastor of St. Joseph's with mission churches at LaSalle and Bloomington. In 1953, a new brick rectory was built.¹⁴

As the town and community of Inez grew, so did the membership of St. Joseph's. **Reverend Benton A. Thurmond**, a son of the St. Joseph's parish, was born in Inez and ordained a priest on 19 March 1946.¹⁵ An existing parish hall was enlarged to provide adequate space for religious education and dedicated on 23 June, 1963.¹⁶



Image from St. Joseph Church, Inez



Image from St. Joseph Church, Inez

One week later on 30 June, 1963, a fire completely destroyed St. Joseph's church and heavily damaged the adjoining rectory.¹⁷ Only the stone foundation and steps were left of the church. The rectory was completely rebuilt within six months and within a year, a new brick church of contemporary style was erected on the site of the former one. The structure was dedicated on 17 May 1964 by **Auxiliary Bishop Stephen A. Leven**.¹⁸

The centennial of the parish was celebrated with special solemnity on the 9th of September, 1973, with **Archbishop**

Francis J. Furey, visiting clergy members, and friends of the congregation.¹⁹

Thirty eight priests have served St. Joseph's church since its beginnings.²⁰ The earliest baptism recorded was that of **Joseph Lopez**, child of **Joseph & Minerva Harrington Lopez**, born in 1880 and baptized 20 June 1880.²¹ The earliest marriage was **Frank Kutchka & Julia Garvel**, daughter of **Frank & Anna Obsta Garvel**, on 11 March 1880.²²

The World, Inez, and St. Joseph's Church have seen changes in the last 112 years. More than the human mind could have imagined. From wagons with teams of horses to a man on the moon.

As grateful ancestors, we remember with love and thanksgiving, those proud hardworking Polish and other settlers whose love for their faith created St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Inez, Texas.

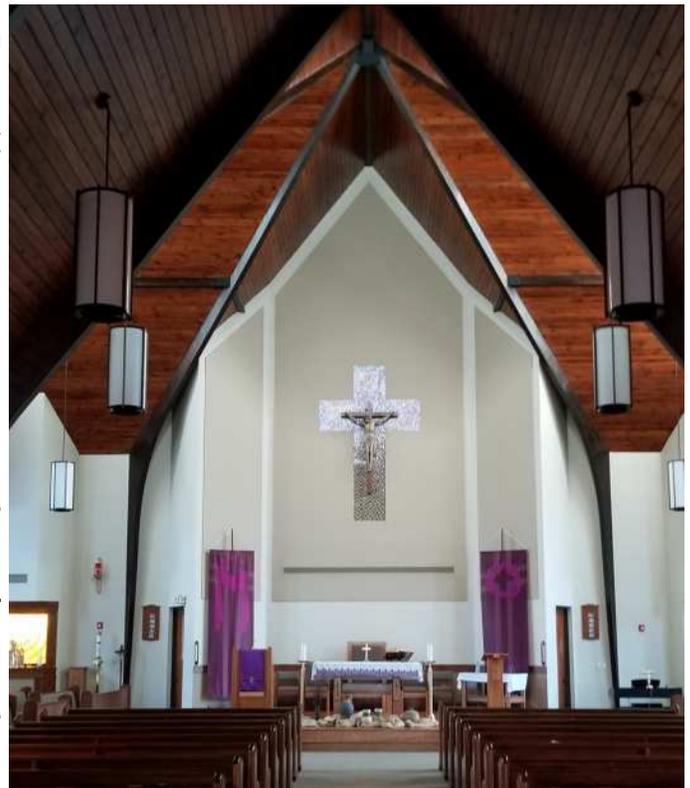


Image from St. Joseph Church, Inez

Footnotes

1. Webb, Walter Prescott, Ed. HANDBOOK OF TEXAS, Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952); Vol. 1, pg. 671.
2. Baker, T. Lindsay, THE FIRST POLISH AMERICANS, (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1979), pgs. 4-6.
3. Panna Maria, Texas: THE CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, Book 1, Entry 47, Beginning 12 January, 1856.
4. Victoria County, Texas. Grant, 27 September 1834, Vol. 66, pg. 168, Deed Records, Fernando De Leon to Valentine Garcia.
5. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH/ S PARISH 1873-1973 (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance 9 September, 1973, Booklet) pg. 22.
6. Victoria County, Texas. Deed, 5 January 1889, Vol. 25, pg. 190, J. W. McKay to Bishop Neraz.
7. Victoria County, Texas. Deed, Vol. 25, Pg. 1, J. W. McKay to New York, Texas and Mexico Railroad.
8. Malsch, K Brownson, INDIANOLA: MOTHER OF WESTERN TEXAS, (Austin, Texas, Shoal Creek Publishers, 1977), pg. 253.
9. Victoria County, Texas. Deed, 5 January 1889, Vol. 25 pg. 190, J. W. McKay to Bishop Neraz.
10. Reed S. G., A HISTORY OF TEXAS RAILROADS AND TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS UNDER SPAIN AND MEXICO, (Houston, Texas, The St. Clair Publishing Co., 1941) pgs. 264-265.
11. ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO DIAMOND JUBILEE 1874-1949, (San Antonio, Texas, Schneider Printing Co. 1949) pg. 172
12. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH 1873-1973, (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance 9 September, 1973, Booklet) pg. 21.
13. ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO DIAMOND JUBILEE 1874-1949, (San Antonio, Texas, Schneider Printing Co. 1949) pg. 172.
14. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH s PARISH 1873-1973, (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance, 9 September, 1973, Booklet) pg. 22.
15. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH s PARISH 1873-1973, (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance 9 September, 1973, Booklet) pg. 18.
16. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH s PARISH 1873-1973, (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance 9 September, 1973, Booklet) pg. 22.
17. FIRE COMPLETELY DESTROYS CATHOLIC CHURCH AT INEZ, Victoria Advocate, Victoria, Texas, 1 July 1963 pg. 1, Col. 1-3.
18. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH 1873-1973, (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance 9 September, 1973, Booklet) pg. 22.
19. Inez, Texas, CENTENNIAL ST. JOSEPH S PARISH 1873-1973, (A history prepared for the Centennial Observance 9 September, 1973) Booklet.
20. ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO, DIAMOND JUBILEE 1874-1949 (San Antonio, Texas, Schneider Printing Co., 1949), pg. 173.
21. Inez, Texas, ST. JOSEPH s CATHOLIC CHURCH, Baptism Book # 1, 20 June 1880.
22. Inez, Texas, ST. JOSEPH s CATHOLIC CHURCH, Marriage book # 1, 11 March 1880.

*Preceding, with footnotes, and the following list of pastors courtesy of
St. Joseph Church, Inez, Texas & Mary Lea Kloesel*

St. Joseph Catholic Church Priests & Pastoral Care

<i>Fr. Jean Baptiste Teitien</i>	1872 - 1874	<i>Fr. Martin S. Bringazi CSSR</i>	1928
<i>Fr. A. Gardet</i>	1874 - 1885	<i>Fr. David Buckley</i>	1928 - 1933
<i>Fr. John Hagel</i>	1885 - 1890	<i>Fr. Henry F. Pšencík</i>	1933 - 1940
<i>Fr. Thomas J. Moczygemba</i>	1890 - 1892	<i>Fr. Edward Murski</i>	1940 - 1948
<i>Fr. William G. Henderson</i>	1892 - 1895	<i>Fr. Harold Ehlinger</i>	1948 - 1951
<i>Fr. G.J. Hendricks</i>	1895	<i>Fr. Hubert Janak</i>	1951 - 1953
<i>Fr. L.P. Netardus</i>	1895	<i>Fr. Gerald Boehme</i>	1953 - 1954
<i>Fr. William E. Heffernan</i>	1896 - 1899	<i>Fr. Roman Janak</i>	1954 - 1956
<i>Fr. G.J. Hendricks</i>	1899 - 1908	<i>Fr. Maurice Breen</i>	1954 - 1956
<i>Fr. C.T. Vossenkuhl</i>	1908 - 1909	<i>Fr. Wilbert J. Leopold</i>	1956 - 1959
<i>Fr. William E. Heffernan</i>	1909 - 1910	<i>Fr. John J McDonald</i>	1959
<i>Fr. P.J. Crane</i>	1911 - 1912	<i>Fr. Bodo N. Galle</i>	1959 - 1962
<i>Fr. Joseph Klobouk</i>	1912	<i>Fr. Edward J. Jansky</i>	1962 - 1974
<i>Fr. Peter J. Schnetzer</i>	1913	<i>Fr. Oswald B Kahlich</i>	1974 - 1976
<i>Fr. T. Smyth Vaudry</i>	1913 - 1915	<i>Fr. Vaclav J. Bily</i>	1976 - 1986
<i>Fr. P.J. Kieffer</i>	1915 - 1916	<i>Fr. Clarence Korgie</i>	1986
<i>Fr. A. Wensorra</i>	1915 - 1916	<i>Fr. Bennett Fonck</i>	1986
<i>Fr. Francis Havel</i>	1916	<i>Fr. Jude Belisle</i>	1986 - 1990
<i>Fr. Peter M. Baquet</i>	1916 - 1920	<i>Fr. Benton Thurmond</i>	1990 - 2003
<i>Fr. P.J. Boivin</i>	1920 - 1921	<i>Sr. Barbara Baca, S.S.N.D.</i>	2003 - 2008
<i>Fr. D.A. Sykora</i>	1921	<i>Pastoral Care</i>	
<i>Fr. P.J. Tarradellas</i>	1921 - 1923	<i>Fr. Owusu-Boateng Johnson</i>	2003 - 2008
<i>Fr. J.P. Vervaeke</i>	1923 - 1925	<i>Priest Moderator</i>	
<i>Fr. William Jansen</i>	1925 - 1927	<i>Father Gabriel Bentil</i>	2008 - 2016
<i>Fr. D.P. Lanigan</i>	1927 - 1928	<i>Father Barnabas Kyeah</i>	2016 - Present
		<i>Deacon Steve Borowicz</i>	2018 - Present

SPONSORING OPPORTUNITIES



Gallery Exhibits Area 4: Immigrants Build their Lives in Texas

Sts. Cyril & Methodist

Brothers Cyril & Methodist, from Greece, traveled west and brought the Christian faith to the Slavic world. This sponsoring opportunity is \$750,000

Midnight Mass

After a near 3 month journey and arriving at would be Panna Maria on December 24, 1854, our ancestors celebrated their faith and gave thanks to God. This sponsoring opportunity is \$500,000

Many other opportunities!

- The Blue Sisters.....\$50,000*
 - Replica Section of the Berlin Wall.....\$50,000*
 - Polish School Posters 1 or 2.....\$25,000*
- With many others in between*

The Blue Sisters are listed because they are our only solely native order. Our immigrant group has fruitfully offered many of its daughters and sons for service of God's people. A vocation can have more than one sponsor. For information on all sponsoring opportunities, contact John Wojtasczyk at: wojtasczyk@sbcglobal.net or call/text 210-387-7472

MEMORIALIZATIONS & TRIBUTES

Anonymous Donation

Robert & Larue Newton Bashaw, III, Bandera, Texas

Marvin R & Janet M Boroski, San Antonio, Texas

Jane Dudycha, San Antonio, Texas

Jerry & Terry Dworaczyk, Kenedy, Texas

Jerry Felkins, Floresville, Texas

Karl & Stephanie Gager, Uvalde, Texas

Pat & Barbara Moczygemba Hoffmann, San Antonio, Texas

Gabe & Bertha Dworaczyk Korzekwa, Gillett, Texas

Leonard & Mary Krzywosinski, San Antonio, Texas

Gene Lysik, San Antonio, Texas

Armand F Manka, San Antonio, Texas

Elaine Moczygemba, Hobson, Texas

Al & Angela Notzon, San Antonio, Texas

Carlos & Guadalupe Ontiveros, San Antonio, Texas

John & Patricia Picacio, San Antonio, Texas

Matthew Pollak, Sugar Land, Texas

Rudy & Emily Jarzombek Pollok, San Antonio, Texas

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Dorothy Uhlig, Floresville, Texas

Lynette E Villa, Amarillo, Texas

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Weissler Family Charitable Trust, San Antonio, Texas

John & Christie Schroeder Wojtasczyk, Panna Maria, Texas

Bishop John W Yanta, San Antonio, Texas

In memory of Albina Kotara

In memory of Peter Jake & Helen Catherine Lyssy Pollok

In memory of John & Lucy Dylla

In memory of Sylvia Wrobel Wollny

In honor of Bishop John W Yanta

In memory of Leon & Frances Pieprzyca

In Memory of John August &
Suzie Katherine Bednorz Wojtasczyk

In memory of Msgr. Casimir Jarzombek

This map shows from where our support has come!

In addition, we have received donations from Canada and Poland!

Alabama
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Georgia
Illinois
Michigan
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Tennessee
Texas
Wisconsin



POLISH HERITAGE CENTER CONSTRUCTION PICS



Phase III-C is focused on the Concession and the restrooms. The top left photo is from the Concession area looking towards the connecting hall to the

Lobby. The photo right is towards the restroom which requires bracing for the



various fixtures that will be installed. The lower left photo is from the Concession area looking towards the Admin office entry.



From Bishop's Mailbag

This donation is made in memory of **John & Lucy Dylla**. They belonged to Annunciation Church in St. Hedwig. Their children were: **Anton, Rosalee, & Regina**. I am **Regina's** daughter; **John & Lucy** were my grandparents. I will continue to make donations in their name as I can. I enjoy Bishop Yanta's updates immensely and learned much about my Polish ancestry.

Lorraine M. Polonis

BISHOP'S CORNER

Our newest Heritage Circle Members: Rudy & Emily Jarzombek Pollok



Rudy & Emily Jarzombek Pollok presented Bishop John W Yanta with their gift during a recent visit.

Ongoing gift giving is what is making our Polish Heritage Center a reality. Rudy & Emily's generosity is a beautiful testimony. This type of reminder shows us that each of your gifts are both needed and very much appreciated. Now is not the time to ease back or think *someone else will step up!* Remember the old phrase: *If it is to be, it is up to me!* Remembering you in my daily prayers at Mass and have a blessed Easter season,