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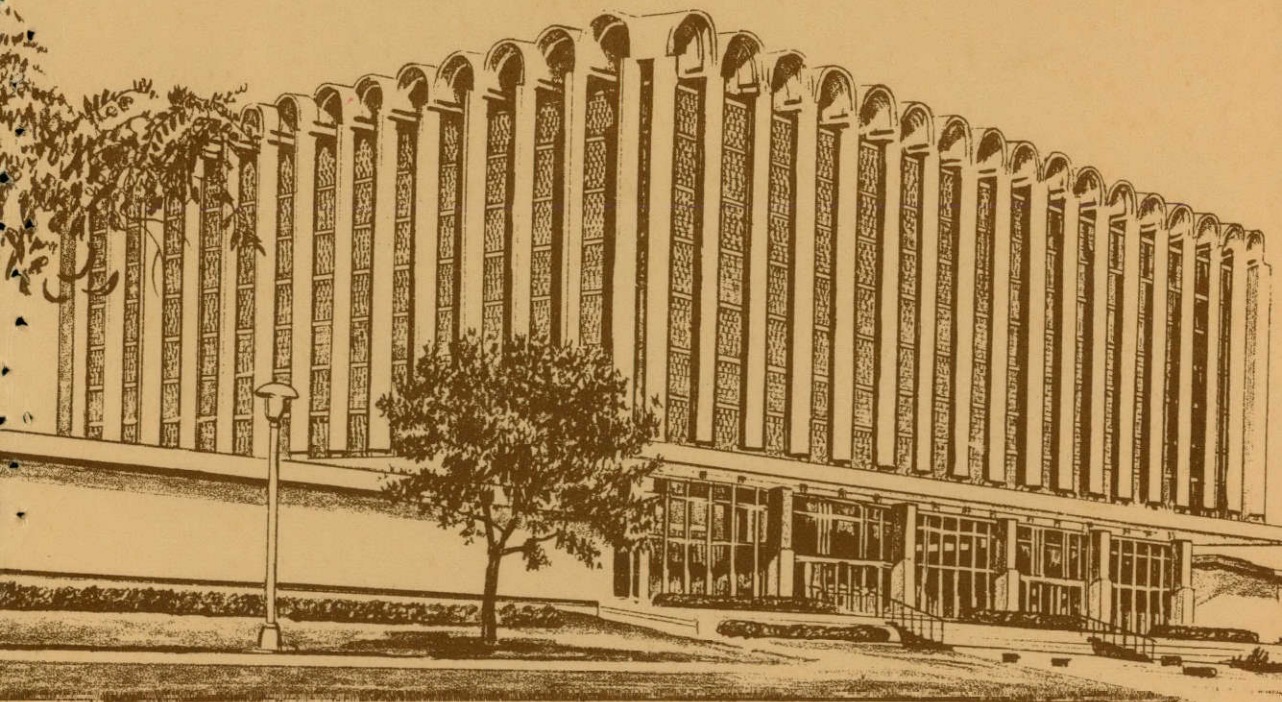
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GRADUATE STUDIES TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

The Early History of Panna Maria, Texas

T. Lindsay Baker

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THE FOUNDING OF PANNA MARIA

Panna Maria, a rural community southeast of San Antonio, Texas, has the unique distinction of being the oldest Polish colony in the United States.¹ This village, founded in 1854 by a group of Silesian peasants and their parish priest, holds two additional singular distinctions: it is the oldest Polish Catholic parish² and possesses the oldest Polish school in America.³ Of importance to regional history is the fact that Panna Maria served as the mother colony of the numerous Silesian Polish settlements in Texas.

Poland is one of the oldest countries of Europe. The most significant date in its early history is the year AD 966, when King Mieszko I introduced Roman Catholicism to his realm, giving Poland the Western orientation that it has had since that time. The Polish state grew in size and importance during the Middle Ages. By the time that the Renaissance reached it in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Poland had become an influential power in Europe.

However, Poland was disabled by difficulties within its society and government structure. An increasing distinction arose between the middle and lower classes on one hand and the land-holding nobles on the other. The greed of these nobles for individual wealth and power weakened the central government. Subsequently, by the end of the eighteenth century, the king of Poland had become little more than a life-president with very restricted powers. The parliament of Poland, which might have unified the country, served further to disable it. An individual member could veto any measure before the body or even could dissolve the entire assembly with a single vote to that effect. In such a situation, Poland was becoming a weak decentralized state while its neighbors, Prussia, Russia, and Austria, were becoming strong centralized empires.

This situation could not last indefinitely. The three powerful neighbors simply began slicing off for themselves pieces of the ailing Polish kingdom. The first such partition came in 1772 and was followed by others in 1793 and 1795. Although a puppet state called "Poland" continued to exist within the Russian Empire for

1. Andrzej Brożek, *Emigracja zamorska z Górnego Śląska w II połowie XIX wieku* [Overseas emigration from Upper Silesia in the second half of the nineteenth century] (Opole, Poland: Inst. Śląski w Opolu, 1969), 2; Andrzej Brożek, *Ślązacy w Teksasie; relacje o najstarszych osadach polskich w Ameryce* [Silesians in Texas: accounts of the oldest Polish settlements in the United States] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1972), 11-22; Edward J. Dworaczyk, *The centennial history of Panna Maria, Texas* (Privately printed, 1954), 9, 11; Edward J. Dworaczyk, *The millennium history of Panna Maria, Texas* (Privately printed, 1966), 9, 11; Mieczisław Haiman, *Polish past in America 1608-1865* (Chicago: Polish Roman Catholic Union Archives and Museum, 1939), 160-161; Joanna Ladomirska, "Z dziejów śląskiej emigracji do Ameryki Północnej" [From the history of Silesian immigration to North America], *Studia Śląskie*, new series, 10(1966):273; Christine Judy Mehan, "Polish migration to and settlement in the United States: a geographical interpretation" (M.A. thesis, Syracuse University, 1965), 47-48; Maria Starczewska, "The historical geography of the oldest Polish settlement in the United States," *Polish Review*, 12(1967): 11. All translations from Polish language sources, unless otherwise noted, are by the author with the assistance of Krystyna Baker.

2. Wacław Kruszką, *Historja polska w Ameryce* [Polish history in America], 2nd. ed. (Milwaukee: Drukiem Kuryera Polskiego, 1937), 360-361; F. Niklewicz, *Polacy w Stanach Zjednoczonych* [The Poles in the United States] (Green Bay: F. Niklewicz, 1937), 5-6.

3. Andrzej Brożek, "Najstarsza polska szkoła w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki" [The oldest Polish school in the United States of America], *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy*, 14(1971):61-63.

many years, a truly separate Poland no longer stood. The land and people of Poland simply were divided among Prussia, Russia, and Austria.⁴

However, Upper Silesia, the home of the founders of Panna Maria, was not a part of these partitioned provinces, although the partitions profoundly affected its history and the history of Panna Maria. The region had passed from Poland to Bohemia between the years 1328 and 1331. It was held by Hungarian kings and Habsburg rulers until it was acquired by Frederick the Great of Prussia in 1742. Soon Prussian noblemen carved out great landed estates in Silesia and crushed the native Poles into serfdom. Nonetheless, the Polish language, the Polish traditions, and the Catholic religion survived among the peasantry.⁵

Prussian land reform in Upper Silesia, which began in 1807 with a royal edict ending serfdom, generally hurt the peasants economically. The peasants were freed from their responsibilities to the lords of the manors, but they had to pay for this freedom. As compensation, the peasants generally had to give to the landed nobles one-third to one-half of their land and at the same time retain any mortgaged indebtedness on this land. Aggravating the situation was the additional factor that after the peasants were separated from the manors, the nobles were released from any responsibilities that they might have formerly had to their peasants as serfs. For example, lords no longer allowed the peasants to graze their animals on manoral lands. By these arrangements, although the peasants gained somewhat greater personal freedom, they often found themselves in a more difficult economic situation.⁶

The 1850's were times of increasing food prices in Upper Silesia. Already in 1852, officials of the Prussian government were reporting to Berlin that inflated food prices were causing increased poverty among the people in Upper Silesian villages and towns. Bad harvests of grain and potatoes the following year further raised the prices of these foods vital to the Polish peasant diet. The head of the Prussian administration in the Opole Regency summed up the situation in 1853 by stating that the "working class suffers the most because of the rising prices of essential foods, living on the things they can get from hand to mouth."⁷

The Crimean War, beginning in autumn of 1853, further increased the prices of food in Upper Silesia. The suddenly increased need for bread by the Russian army stopped the flow of cheap Russian grain to the European

4. For further reading on the history of Poland, the following English-language sources are suggested: Francis Dvornik, *The Slavs in European history and civilization* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962); Roman Dyboski, *Outlines of Polish history*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941); O. Halecki, *A history of Poland*, rev. ed. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1955); Herbert H. Kaplan, *The first partition of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Robert Howard Lord, *The second partition of Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915); W. F. Reddaway et al., *From Augustus II to Pilsudski (1697-1935)*, vol. 2, *The Cambridge history of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941); W. F. Reddaway et al., *From the origins to Sobieski (to 1696)*, vol. 1, *The Cambridge history of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

5. William John Rose, *The drama of Upper Silesia* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1936), 11; Reddaway et al., *From Augustus II*, 123.

6. Brożek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 3-4; Rose, *Upper Silesia*, 88-93.

7. Brożek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 7.

markets. With the subsequently shorter supply of grain for Germany, grain prices rose even more.⁸

The Times of London on 13 September 1854 characterized the region in these terms:

Silesia is the Ireland of Prussia, and constitutes with rare intermissions, an ever open sore in her body politic; the characteristics are rich land-owners contrasted with a wretched population, seldom far removed from starvation, handloom weaving, and Roman Catholicism.⁹

Poverty was the rule among the Polish peasants of Upper Silesia. Such conditions are revealed in numerous contemporary sources. In June 1855, the correspondent in Opole for the *Schlesische Zeitung* reported that great numbers of beggars were visiting the houses in that town from morning until evening.¹⁰ The same newspaper in October 1856, discussing the economic condition of the Toszek-Gliwice vicinity, contrasted the "notorious misery of Upper Silesia with the existence of a very rich minority."¹¹ The official reports of Prussian government officers in Upper Silesia also discussed the poverty of that region. Such a report for March and April 1855 stated that "in matters of living conditions, one can observe the continuous increase in poverty in the class that does not possess property."¹² A similar report in May 1856 told that "it is rare that one does not meet miserable figures who don't have the strength or will to live."¹³

One natural disaster in Upper Silesia in the 1850's particularly hurt the peasants, the great flood of the River Oder and its tributaries in August 1854. Caused by heavy rains between the 17th and 24th of that month, this flood devastated all the lowland countryside. It destroyed not only the crops in the fields, but also farm buildings and even the few industrial facilities that existed in the towns. Agriculture was hit the most severely. The flood inundated everything at a time when the grain already was ripe in the fields and the potatoes were maturing in the ground.¹⁴

Disease was one of the great fears for Upper Silesian peasants. During the 1840's terrible epidemics of typhus infected the region. These continued, mixed with cholera, into the 1850's. For these later years, the diseases were most severe in Upper Silesia during the summer and autumn of 1852 and the autumn of 1855. No peasant could be safe from these mysterious agents of death.¹⁵

A final factor to be considered in examining the conditions in Upper Silesia in the 1850's is the circumstance of social discrimination felt by the Polish peasants. They were landless workers and small farmers in a world controlled by landed German magnates, pawns in a German-dominated society.¹⁶ The later com-

8. *Ibid.*, 7.

9. *Times* (London), 13 September 1854, p. 7.

10. *Schlesische Zeitung*, 27 June 1855, p. 1294, *vide* Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, p. 7.

11. *Schlesische Zeitung*, 24 October 1856, p. 2370, *vide* Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 7.

12. Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 8.

13. *Ibid.*, 7.

14. *Ibid.*, 6; *Times* (London), 13 September 1854, p. 7, 19 September 1854, p. 8.

15. Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 5-6.

16. *Ibid.*, 8-10.

plaints about hardships in Texas by the settlers in Panna Maria could be calmed easily by reminders of the social discrimination they experienced in their motherland.

I thank you for your Prussian joys . . . and what freedom did you have? Didn't you have to work a great part only for the king? As soon as a boy grew up, they took him to the army, and for the defense of whom and what? Not your kingdom, but the Prussian one. You lost your health and lives for what purpose? And taxes? Were they small? Did you forget how you were racked? You talked among yourselves that they took holy pictures from the walls and covers from the beds of the poor. Wherever you went, you had to have the certificate from the officer of the Diet in the village.¹⁷

Into such an environment was born on 18 October 1824 a boy named Leopold Moczygemba. His parents, Leopold and Ewa nee Krawiec, were peasant folk in the village of Płużnica in the Opole Regency of Upper Silesia. Young Leopold grew up in the village, attending elementary school in the nearby towns of Gliwice and Opole. As a young man, Leopold travelled to Italy, where on 17 November 1843 he entered the Conventual Franciscan brotherhood.¹⁸

Leopold studied in Italy for several years and then travelled to Bavaria for additional study. In Italy he spent time at Osimo, Urbino, and Pesaro. It was at Pesaro, on 25 July 1847 that he was ordained a priest. From Italy, at just less than twenty-three years of age, Leopold was sent by the Franciscan Minister General to Wuerzburg, Bavaria, for additional study.

When Moczygemba was in Bavaria, a significant thing happened to change the course of his life. Bishop J. M. Odin of Texas, while traveling through Europe in search of more priests for his American diocese, visited the motherhouse of the German Conventual Franciscans at Oggersheim, Bavaria. Among the five Conventual Franciscan friars who accepted his mission call to America was Father Leopold Bonaventura Moczygemba, then not quite twenty-eight years old and only in the fifth year of his priesthood.¹⁹

In March 1852, Bishop Odin and his party of newly recruited European priests departed from Le Havre, France, for Galveston. After their arrival several weeks later, the bishop ordered the new missionaries to their posts.

Father Leopold first was directed to serve as parish priest in the German community of New Braunfels, between San Antonio and Austin, Texas. Here, in 1852, he was the first resident priest to serve this settlement. Having served at New Braunfels for two years, Moczygemba then was transferred in early 1854 to

17. Adolf Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia 1840-1863-1913* [My memoirs 1840-1863-1913], ed. Tadeusz Olejniczak (Lwów, Austrian Empire: Nakładem XX. Zmartwychwstańców, 1913), 50.

18. *Album aus Gymnasium in Oppeln 10 October 1841 ub 31 December 1878* [Album of the gymnasium in Opole, 10 October 1841 to 31 December 1878], p. 9. Burg Gymnasium Collection, Archives of the Voivodeship of Opole, Opole, Poland; Kruszka, *Historja polska*, p. 361; Parish records, St. Stanisław Church, Płużnica, Opole Voivodeship, Poland; Joseph Swastek, *Priest and pioneer, Rev. Leopold Moczygemba* (Detroit: Conventual Press, 1951), 3. The surname Moczygemba is spelled several different ways. In proper Polish it is Moczygęba. However, various members of the family also spelled it Moczigemba and Moczygemba. This latter spelling is used by most of their descendants in Texas at the present time.

19. Sister Mary Carmelita Glennon, "History of the diocese of Galveston, 1847-1874," M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1943, p. 53; Swastek, *Priest and pioneer*, 3-4.



FIG. 1.—The Rev. Leopold Bonaventura Maria Moczygmba as a young priest. From John A. Joyce, *Our Polish Pioneers*.

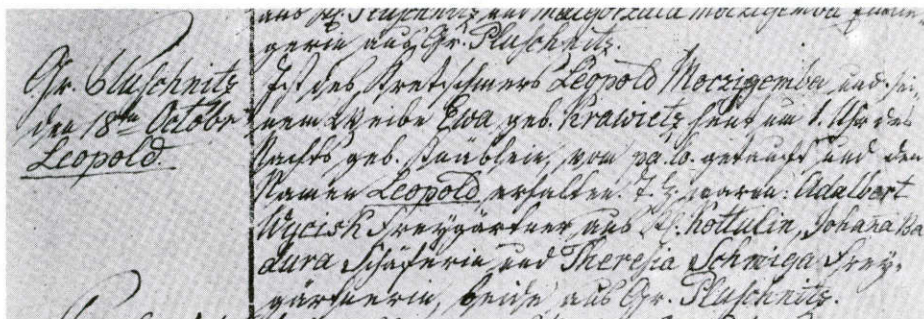


FIG. 2.—Record of the baptism of Leopold Moczygamba, the son of Leopold and Ewa (Krawietz) Moczygamba, at the village of Płużnica on 18 October 1824, in parish records of St. Stanisław Church, Płużnica, Opole Voivodeship, Poland. Photograph by the author.

the Alsatian settlement of Castroville, about twenty-five miles west of San Antonio. He served this community as pastor for about ten months.²⁰

Knowing the conditions in Upper Silesia and seeing the greatly improved material and social conditions of the Germans who had come to Texas,²¹ Father Leopold decided to encourage his family and friends in Upper Silesia to come to Texas. Although none of Moczygamba's letters from before 1855 has been found, slightly later correspondence suggests that he wrote back to Silesia about the freedom and opportunities found by European immigrants in Texas.²² The tone of such a letter, written from Texas in June 1855, gives an idea of what his letters a few months before must have been like.

I wrote to him to come here . . . because he would live better here, . . . I told him only because I wish everybody to be here . . . John of the uncles is very happy that his parents are coming because they will live here in peace.²³

Father Leopold's letters served as the catalyst that precipitated the departure of the first party of Silesians for Texas. With the increasing misery in Upper Silesia, conditions were good for the spread of stories about better life elsewhere. The tales about Texas were believed in every respect in that the more difficult circumstances had dulled the natural criticism of the peasants' normally sharp reason.²⁴ Father Leopold's letters were read with intense interest by wide groups of people. The letters contained references not merely to the addressees, but also to other people even in other towns. In the above letter, written to his family in Płużnica, the Reverend Moczygamba greeted "all of you, Franc and his wife,

20. Oscar Haas, *History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas 1844-1946* (Austin: Steck, 1968), 301; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 362; Parish records, St. Louis Church, Castroville, Texas; Parish records, SS. Peter and Paul Church, New Braunfels, Texas.

21. For a description by an American of the German settlements in Texas, including New Braunfels and Castroville, in 1853 and 1854, see Frederick Law Olmstead, *Journey through Texas* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860).

22. Brożek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 11-12; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 362-363.

23. Leop. BM. Moczygamba, Panna Maria, Texas, to Dear Fathers, [Płużnica, Regency of Opole, Prussia], 18 June 1855, in *Pierwsi Ślązacy w Ameryce, listy z Teksasu do Płużnicy z roku 1855* [The first Silesians in America: letters from Texas to Płużnica in the year 1855], by Andrzej Brożek and Henryk Borek, (Opole, Poland: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1967), 13-14.

24. For a detailed study of Polish peasant letters, see William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish peasant in Europe and America*, 5 vols. (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1918).

sisters and Wrobel, also uncles from Toszek, people from Jemielnica . . . and everybody.”²⁵

The letters were not without effect. In early 1854 plans were already under way in the Opole Regency for several families to come to Texas. Among these families was at least one that was further motivated by political reasons to leave. After the failure of the revolutions of 1848, many of the politically active Polish peasants of Upper Silesia had given up hope for any improvement in their social and political conditions in Prussia. Such an individual was Stanisław Kiołbassa, who served as a deputy to the Berlin National Parliament in 1848. The failure of the revolution caused him to return to his home in Swibie. Here he stayed for a few years, but in the autumn of 1854 Kiołbassa was a member of the party of Silesians planning to leave for Texas.²⁶

With his relatives and friends making plans to leave Silesia, Father Leopold had to prepare for their arrival in Texas. The most pressing need of the new immigrants was land on which to settle.

The Reverend Moczygamba's first thought was for the Silesians to settle about two miles south of New Braunfels in a projected town named Cracow. In June 1853 he purchased from William H. Merriwether several tracts of land in this proposed settlement. For some reason the priest later decided not to settle his fellow countrymen in this area. Several explanations have been suggested for his decision to settle them elsewhere. Considering his desire to be near the new immigrants at New Braunfels where he was parish priest, Moczygamba's transfer to Castroville in early 1854 may have forced changes in his plans for their settlement. One author has proposed that more people in Upper Silesia may have decided to come to Texas than Father Leopold had first expected. This situation could have had two consequences that might have forced changes in his plans. The more simple is that perhaps he could not get enough additional land in the Cracow township for the Polish immigrants to settle together in one colony. A second possible result of the situation is the likelihood that the influx of a large group of Poles into the predominately German area around New Braunfels could have aroused the nationalistic antipathies of the Germans against the settlement of Silesians so near them. Whatever the reasons, Father Moczygamba called off his plans for Silesian settlement near New Braunfels sometime after the middle of 1853 and was thus forced to look elsewhere for a site for the Silesian colony.²⁷

His colonization plans changed, Father Leopold Moczygamba turned for assistance to John Twohig of San Antonio. Twohig, an Irish immigrant to Texas in 1830 and a veteran of the Texas Revolution, had become a merchant and

25. Leop. BM. Moczygamba to Dear Fathers, 18 June 1855, in *Pierwsi Ślązacy*. Brozek and Borek, 14-15; Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 11-12.

26. Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 4-5; *A twentieth century history of Southwest Texas* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907), 1:189. Although secondary accounts note the Kiołbassa family as among the founders of Panna Maria, their name does not appear on the list of passengers of the ship that brought the first Polish settlers to Texas in 1854. *Galveston Zeitung* (Texas), 9 December 1854, p. 2; *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung* (Texas), 22 December 1854, p. 3.

27. Jacek Przygoda, "New light on the Poles in Texas," *Polish American Studies*, 27(1970):81-83; Jacek Przygoda, *Texas pioneers from Poland* (Waco: Texian Press, 1971), 34-35.

banker in San Antonio with large land holdings south and southeast of the city.²⁸ Twohig and Father Leopold, early in 1854, spent several days riding over lands that Twohig owned in the area of the Hernandez Grant about fifty-five miles southeast of San Antonio. After examining the land from horseback, the two men came to an agreement over the settlement of Father Leopold's Silesians on a low plateau about two miles above the confluence of the San Antonio River and Cibolo Creek in Karnes County. Although the details of the contract are unknown, the general arrangements were that Twohig would hold the land until the Silesians arrived and then would sell it over long terms to them exclusively. It is not known whether the prices to be paid for the land were discussed at this time.²⁹

By the beginning of 1854, the prospective emigrants in the Opole Regency were making earnest preparations to leave for Texas. As early as 1852 there had been agents of sailing companies circulating through Upper Silesia recruiting emigrants to fill the steerage quarters of ships traveling to America. However, up to 1854 they had recruited only Germans.³⁰

In preparation for the journey, the Silesians of the Opole Regency arranged with such an agent for their transportation from Silesia to Galveston. It is likely that the agent discussed in a letter written by Thomas Moczygemba and John Dziuk was the same one that arranged the transportation for the entire party of Silesians who came to Texas in 1854. Moczygemba and Dziuk described the agent in these terms:

First, we vouch for Mr. Sziller . . . Now we describe our journey . . . Mr. Sziller exchanged our money in Leipzig and what was left in Bremen and he went with us up to the moment when we sat on the ship . . . tell everybody to side with Mr. Sziller and everything will be all right.³¹

Having made their preparations, the first party of Silesians left the Opole Regency by train in September 1854. They traveled to the port of Bremen by way of Leipzig and Berlin. The following newspaper comment was made on their passage through Berlin:

On the 15th of September there came to Berlin about 150 Poles from Upper Silesia, and on the next day in the afternoon they left by a train of the Cologne Railway for Bremen, from which they plan to sail to Texas (to America). This fact is worth mention-

28. There is no comprehensive biography of Twohig available. All of the following sources contain pieces of his life story: Charles Merritt Barnes, *Combats and conquests of immortal heroes* (San Antonio: Guessaz & Ferlet, 1910), 196; Gussie Scott Chaney, *The breadline banker of St. Mary's Street* (San Antonio: San Antonio Public Service Company, 1937); Jimmy Combs, "John Twohig, Texan by adoption," *Junior Historian*, 6(March 1946):1-2; *Dallas Morning News*, 14 October 1891, p. 2; Vinton Lee James, *Frontier and pioneer recollections of early days in San Antonio and West Texas* (San Antonio: privately printed, 1938), 138; "Memorial to John Twohig," *Frontier Times*, 1(August 1924):27; *San Antonio Express*, 2 July 1911, pp. 9-10, 11 April 1920, p. 1A; Leonie Rummell Weyland and Houston Wade, *An early history of Fayette County* (La Grange, Texas: La Grange Journal, 1936), 329.

29. Edward J. Dworaczyk, *The first Polish colonies of America in Texas* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1936), 1; Deed records, vols. A-L, Karnes County Courthouse, Karnes City, Texas.

30. Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 13.

31. Thomas Moczygemba and Johan Dziuk, [Panna Maria, Texas], to [Friends and Relatives, Płuznica, Regency of Opole, Prussia], 1855, in *Pierwsi Ślązacy*, Brozek and Borek, 12.

ing because, as is known, Slavic people are so attached to their native land that their emigration is unusual.³²

When the Silesians reached Bremen, they boarded the bark *Weser* on which they sailed to Galveston.³³ This vessel had made numerous trips between Bremen and Galveston, making the journey at least as early as 1843.³⁴ Completing the crossing in about nine weeks, the *Weser* arrived in Galveston on 3 December 1854 docking at the Merchant's Wharf.³⁵ The founders of the first Polish colony in America had arrived in the New World.

32. *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska* (Cieszyn), 7 October 1854, p. 555, *vide* Andrzej Brozek, "Początki emigracji z Górnego Śląska w świetle współczesnej prasy polskiej na Śląsku" [The beginning of immigration from Upper Silesia to America as seen from the viewpoint of the Polish press of Silesia], *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 75(1968):5.

33. Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 5.

34. *The Civilian and Gazette* (Galveston), June [?] 1843.

35. *Galveston Weekly News*, 5 December 1854, p. 3; *Galveston Zeitung* (Texas), 9 December 1854, p. 2; Ethel Handler Geue, *New homes in a new land* (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1970), 40; *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung* (Texas), 22 December 1854, p. 3.

PANNA MARIA 1855-1861

The immediate need of the Silesians upon arrival at Galveston was to get in touch with Father Moczygamba, who was not there to meet them. His absence may have been caused by the fact that he had only recently assumed additional duties as the superior of the Conventual Franciscan missions in Texas.³⁶ Whatever the reason, the Silesians were on their own in Galveston. Their subsequent lack of an adequate interpreter may explain why Customs Collector H. Stuart at Galveston classified them as "from Germany" in his quarterly report to Washington.³⁷

The Silesians made their way toward San Antonio, where they hoped to find Father Leopold. Travelling either on foot or in hired Mexican carts, the colonists went first down the Gulf coastal plain to the town of Indianola, a port on Lavaca Bay. This first stage of their travel in Texas took about two weeks. From Indianola, the immigrants turned inland toward San Antonio.

Having travelled overland through December weather for more than three weeks, the Polish immigrants arrived in San Antonio on the 21st of that month. Father Moczygamba came from Castroville to meet them there and guide them himself to their future home fifty-five miles to the southeast.³⁸

Upon their arrival on the little plateau above the two streams named San Antonio and Cibolo, the colonists celebrated a Christmas Mass under the largest tree of a clump of oaks at the site. The Mass served not only as a rite of thanksgiving, but also as a petition to the Almighty for strength to carry on in the face of adversity.³⁹

Having travelled for nine weeks by sea and for an additional four weeks by land in an alien country, the Upper Silesians were exhausted upon their arrival at the site of their new settlement. One of the original settlers a few years later recalled the first days like this:

What we suffered here when we started! We didn't have any houses, nothing but fields. And for shelter, only bushes and trees. . . . the church we had been promised in Europe wasn't there, nor even one poor hut, nothing at all for us to live in. . . . There was tall grass everywhere, so that if anyone took a few steps, he was soon lost to sight. Every step of the way you'd meet rattlesnakes. Oh, I tell you, in those days we knew what it was to be poor! Sometimes people died of hunger. . . . If anyone took a step away he'd be driven back by hunger. And several people died of snake bites. The crying and complaining of the women and children only made the suffering worse. . . . How golden seemed our Silesia as we looked back in those days!⁴⁰

Very soon after its founding, the Poles gave their settlement a name, Panna Maria. The name translated to English means Holy Mary. There are two theories about the exact origin of the name. The first theory is that the settlers, upon hear-

36. Method C. Billy, *Historical notes on the order of Friars Minor Conventual* (Rensselaer, New York: Conventual Franciscan Publications, n.d.), 62; Swastek, *Priest and pioneer*, 6.

37. U.S., Congress, House, *Annual report of passengers arriving in the United States*, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1855, House Executive Document 77 (Washington: A. O. P. Nicholson, 1855), 34-35.

38. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 2-4; Kruszka, 365; *New-Braunfelser Zeitung* (Texas), 29 December 1854, 3.

39. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, pp. 4-5.

40. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 29.

ing of the Papal bull declaring the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, decided to build their church under the invocation of the Virgin's Immaculate Conception and to call the place Panna Maria in her honor.⁴¹ Father Moczygamba, according to the second theory, named the settlement Panna Maria after having a vision of a great light surrounding the beautiful church of St. Mary in Kraków.⁴²

Because there had been no preparation for their arrival at Panna Maria, one of the most pressing needs of the Silesians was for shelter. To construct this shelter, the peasants resorted to many techniques that had been passed down since the Middle Ages in the old country. Some of these colonists first dug holes in the ground and covered them with thatch, or in the words of one of the original settlers, "We lived in burrows covered with brush and stalks."⁴³ Others of the settlers "proceeded to build shelters for themselves of stakes and brush, using strands of grass to make the roofs."⁴⁴ Less than a year after the founding of the settlement, a visiting American found the colonists "huddled together on little patches of land living in their pole cabins & sod houses."⁴⁵

The fact that the colonists built their own cabins on their own land made a deep impression on the Silesian peasants. In May 1855, John Moczygamba, a cousin of Father Leopold, wrote back to Silesia.

You write to get the lot for a cottage. You must build on your own land, because it is not like your village, but everybody builds on his own land . . . and bricklaying is needed too. . . . And there are no cottages, and somebody who can build them is needed.⁴⁶

Before the arrival of the Silesians, Father Moczygamba had made arrangements with John Twohig for their settlement on his land. This contract worked a hardship on the peasants during their first years at the settlement because Twohig greatly overcharged them for their land.⁴⁷ Although the average price of land in Karnes County in 1858 was only \$1.47,⁴⁸ Twohig and his partner, Col. W. J. Hardee, charged the Poles between \$5.00 and \$10.80 per acre for unimproved land. The average price for the 728 acres of land Twohig and Hardee sold to the Poles in all their transactions completed before the Civil War was \$5.88 per acre.⁴⁹

41. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 366. The Papal bull declaring the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was announced on 8 December 1854. For a discussion of the doctrine and the bull proclaiming it, see Hilda Graef, *Mary: a history of doctrine and devotion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 2:79-82.

42. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 366.

43. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 29.

44. S. Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży po północnej i środkowej Ameryce* [Travel notes on northern and middle America] (Toledo: A. A. Paryski, 1909), 201.

45. Thomas Ruckman, "The census taker—a complete description of the County of Karnes—in south west Texas—June 1890." Thomas Ruckman Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin, 45.

46. Johann Moczygamba, Panna Maria, [Texas], to [Friends and Relatives, Płużnica, Regency of Opole, Prussia], 13 May 1855, in Andrzej Brozek and Henryk Borek, *Jeszcze jeden list z Teksasu do Płużnicy z 1855 roku* [One more letter sent from Texas to Płużnica in the year 1855] (Opole, Poland: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1972), 15-16. Throughout this study, a discrepancy in the spelling of John Moczygamba's first name will be noted. His signatures spell the name both Johan and Johann, whereas the Silesians in Karnes County often spelled his name Jan, as is shown on his grave marker at Panna Maria cemetery.

47. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 10; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 369; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 201.

48. *Texas almanac for 1859* (Galveston: Richardson & Co., n.d.), 216.

49. Deed records, Karnes County Courthouse, Karnes City, Texas, B:553-554, C:3-9, 31, 563-564, H:363-365.

The prices paid for land in Karnes County over the next forty years give additional perspective to the exorbitant sums the Poles were charged for their land. In 1859 the average price of land in Karnes County was only \$1.81,⁵⁰ and after the Civil War, from 1869 to 1870, unimproved land could be purchased for prices between fifty cents and a dollar.⁵¹ Even as late as 1895 unimproved land in the county was selling for as little as two dollars an acre.⁵²

When spring of 1855 arrived, the Polish peasants already were preparing their fields for the new year's crops. For the settlers that were unable to make arrangements for land directly with John Twohig, Father Moczygemba bought a block of 238 acres.⁵³ Retaining twenty-five acres for the church, Father Leopold parceled out the remainder among these needy colonists.⁵⁴

In dividing up the land, both John Twohig and Father Moczygemba cut it into long narrow strips fronting on the water. These narrow fields stretching toward the town from the San Antonio and the Cibolo are even now clearly evident to casual observers. Anywhere in Texas other than Panna Maria, for example, the Felix Mika farm would be considered unusual. It is a mile long but only six hundred feet wide.⁵⁵

Knowledge of the crops grown at Panna Maria in its first years of settlement is at best sketchy. The secondary sources barely touch upon the subject, whereas the manuscript of the Census of Agriculture for 1860 includes only eleven people who can be identified definitely as Poles. These sources, limited though they are, indicate that corn was the primary crop raised by the Karnes County Poles in the 1850's.⁵⁶ John Moczygemba's letter of May 1855 sheds further light on early agriculture at Panna Maria.

I now inform you that there is no grain like ours, but there is Turkish wheat. . . . Potatoes are of two kinds: ones like ours and others that are sweet which are called "patets." Some people took some of all kinds of grain, and it grows beautifully. . . . And when you come, take all vegetables with you, and particularly beans, so much so you could give some to me. . . . You can plant cotton, which is very expensive, and I, Johan Moczygemba, plan to grow it.⁵⁷

At the beginning of their colonization, the clothing of the Silesians set them apart from the general American population of Karnes County. The best de-

50. *Texas almanac for 1861* (Galveston: W. & D. Richardson, 1860), 204-205, 218-219.

51. U.S., Congress, House, *Special report on immigration*, by Edward Young, 42nd Cong., 1st sess., House Executive Document 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), 170.

52. Texas, Department of Agriculture, Insurance, Statistics, and History, *Ninth annual report of the Agricultural Bureau, 1895* (Austin: Ben C. Jones & Co., State Printers, 1897), 149.

53. Deed Records, Karnes County Courthouse, Karnes City, Texas, H:363-365.

54. Kruszka, *Historja polska*, 369; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 200.

55. Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 201; Robert H. Thonhoff, "A history of Karnes County" M.A. thesis, Southwest Texas State University, 1963, 113.

56. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 7; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 201; U.S., Census of 1860, Texas, manuscript agriculture schedules, Karnes County. The 1860 Census of Agriculture indicates that only corn was grown by the thirteen Poles it included. This limited amount of information may have been caused by the difficulty of the American enumerator to communicate with the Polish-speaking peasants. The thirteen persons definitely identified as Poles in the 1860 Census of Agriculture are the following (parenthetical information added by the author): F. Bela (Biela), J. Beula (Biela?), Jos Calcakha (Kałka), A. Duge (Długe or Dugi), J. Duck (Dziuk), John Gabalik (Gawlik), A. Labas (Labus), J. Mosakimber (Moczygemba), Jno. Moskimber (Moczygemba), Thos. Moskimber (Moczygemba), J. Rabstein, M. Urbangik (Urbanczyk), and Simin (Simon) Yanta.

57. Johann Moczygemba to [Friends and Relatives], 13 May 1855, in *Jeszcze jeden*, Brożek and Borek, 16-17.

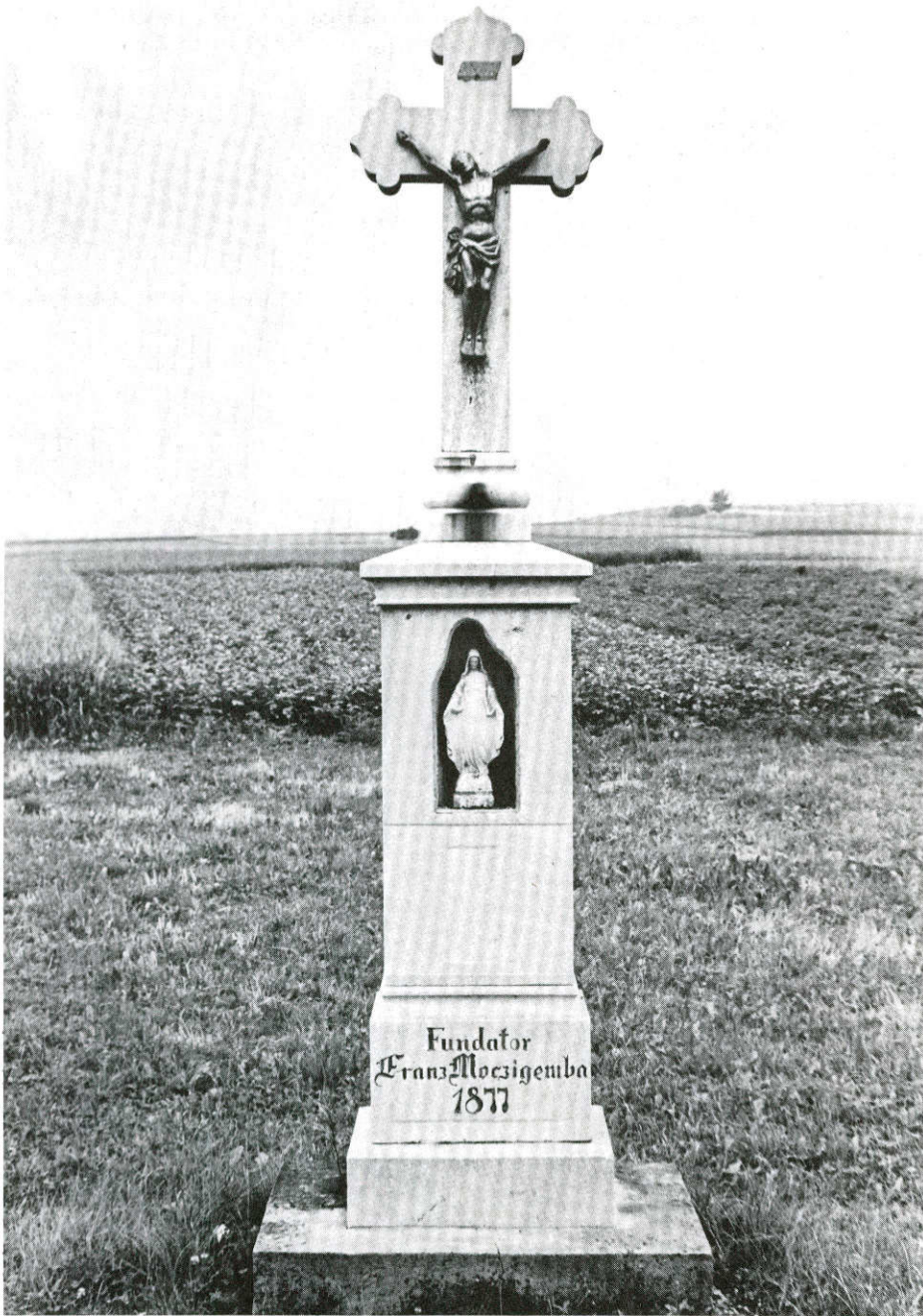


FIG. 3.—Religious shrine at the edge of the village of Płużnica, Poland, erected in 1877 by Franz Moczygemba, the one brother of the Rev. Leopold Moczygemba who did not immigrate to Texas in 1854. This brother remained in Poland, inherited the family landholdings, and became a wealthy farmer in the village. Photograph by the author.

scription of their dress at this early date comes from L. B. Russell, who moved to Helena as a young boy in 1853.⁵⁸ Russell, later in life, recalled the Silesians as wearing

the costumes of the old country, many of the women having what at that time were regarded as very short skirts, showing their limbs two or three inches above the ankles. Some had on wooden shoes, and almost without exception they had broad-brimmed, low-crowned black felt hats, . . . They also wore blue jackets of heavy woolen cloth, falling just below the waist, and gathered into folds at the back with a band of the same material.⁵⁹

The unusually short skirts of the women evidently caused some excitement among the Americans because in June 1855 Father Leopold wrote home advising, "Don't take any country dresses for Hanka, because she will not need them here, . . . Our dresses are the reason that the native people make fun of us and they cause sin."⁶⁰

The wooden shoes described by Russell were the *holzschoen* worn by Silesian peasants in the nineteenth century. Such solid wooden shoes continued to be worn in Upper Silesia into the twentieth century.⁶¹

During their first years in Texas, the settlers at Panna Maria met many difficulties. One difficulty from Europe that they were unable to escape in Texas was illness. Although there are no parish death records for the years before the Civil War,⁶² secondary accounts describe the problems of illness in the new community. The Silesians, after an exhausting trip by sea and land, were destitute upon their arrival in Karnes County. Due to their emaciated condition and changes in food and climate, they were very susceptible to various fevers and illnesses. In fact, Panna Maria's reputation as an unhealthy location caused many of its original settlers, like Stanisław Kiołbassa, to move elsewhere.⁶³

Severe weather caused the Silesians to suffer greatly during their first winter in Texas. Living in the open or in loose thatch-roofed huts, the Silesians were at the mercy of the wet, cold northers. This exposure further helps to explain why there was so much illness during the settlement's first months.⁶⁴

Poverty was another difficulty that the Silesians did not immediately overcome by moving to Texas. Father Leopold did not mince any words when he wrote home, "The parishioners are poor."⁶⁵ However, the poverty was not completely a matter of not having money. In some cases the Poles simply did not know where to buy the things that they wanted or needed. This problem was aggravated by their somewhat isolated position on the frontier. One of the peasants expressed

58. L. B. Russell, *Granddad's autobiography* (Comanche, Texas: Comanche Publishing Co., [1930]), 4.

59. *Dallas Morning News*, 24 January 1932, sec. 4, p. 1.

60. Leop. BM. Moczygomba to Dear Fathers, 18 June 1855, in *Pierwsi Ślązacy*, Brozek and Borek, 14.

61. Alma Oakes and Margot Hamilton Hill, *Rural clothing, its origin and development in western Europe and the British Isles* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970), 155; Franz Karkosz and Maria Karkosz to Thomas Lindsay Baker and Krystyna Baker, interview at Płużnica, Opole Voivodeship, Poland, 21 June 1972.

62. Edward J. Dworaczyk, *Church records of Panna Maria, Texas* (Chicago: Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, 1945), 25.

63. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 2-8; Olmstead, *Journey through Texas*, 270; *Twentieth century history*, 1:189.

64. Kruszcza, *Historja polska*, 366-367.

65. Leop. BM. Moczygomba to Dear Fathers, 18 June 1855, in *Pierwsi Ślązacy*, Brozek and Borek, 14.

his frustration in this matter saying, "we had money, but there was nothing to buy with it."⁶⁶ Another wrote home, "Don't wonder that I ask for so many things, because here there are no people and that's why no things."⁶⁷ In other cases, the Silesians clearly did not like the American counterparts of things to which they had been accustomed in Europe.

And bring a harrow for you and for me too, because they are available but only from wood and these are bad. And bring thread because they are here, but are very weak and made from cotton; also take some rope. Bring some pictures. . . .⁶⁸ Dear Brother Tom, bring two plough blades, one strong winch the same as I had.⁶⁹

Being on the Texas frontier, the settlers at Panna Maria saw themselves as being very isolated. Coming from an area with a very dense population, they were deeply impressed by a country where there were no villages and where "One cottage lies from the other 10 miles or even more."⁷⁰ Feeling almost lost in the vastness of America, one peasant wrote back to Silesia about the northern United States being "as far away as we are from you."⁷¹

Feeling this isolated, the Silesians had a real fear of Indian attacks. This fear was well founded. There were Indian raids both to the north and to the southeast of the settlement during the summer of its first year. On the night of 15 July 1855 a party of Indians raided the vicinity north of Goliad, about thirty miles southeast of Panna Maria.⁷² Then, only two weeks later, another war party raided down Cibolo Creek in the direction of the settlement. At the mouth of Martinez Creek, about thirty miles up the Cibolo, this party killed a Negro woman and a twelve-year-old white boy.⁷³ Fortunately, neither of these raids involved anyone at Panna Maria, but they did nothing to allay the fears of the Poles.⁷⁴

After a few months, spring came to Panna Maria and conditions there improved. The peasants got their crops planted, and the prospects for a good harvest were promising. All the letters that had been sent from Panna Maria back to Silesia in 1855 encouraged people there to come to Texas. The Texan conditions had proved to be hard, but not so hard as those in Silesia.⁷⁵

From the outset, the Catholic religion served as a unifying element for society in Panna Maria. Closely connected to the religious life of the community was the construction of church oriented buildings. This construction at times unified and at times fragmented the parish. Whatever its results, the work played a large part in the internal life of the community.

During the first months, when worship was not out of doors, several different buildings housed the place of worship at Panna Maria. One of these buildings

66. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 29.

67. Johann Mœzigemba to [Friends and Relatives], 13 May 1855, in *Jeszcze jeden*, Brożek and Borek, 14.

68. Here, "pictures" indicate holy pictures.

69. Johann Mœzigemba to [Friends and Relatives], 13 May 1855, in *Jeszcze jeden*, Brożek and Borek, 14, 19.

70. *Ibid.*, 14-15.

71. *Ibid.*, 16.

72. Dorman H. Winfrey, ed., *Texas Indian papers 1846-1859* (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), 230-231, 238-240.

73. *Ibid.*, 232-233.

74. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 18.

75. Brożek and Borek, *Jeszcze jeden*, 14-19; Brożek and Borek, *Pierwsi Słazacy*, 10-15.

was a so-called "Mexican shack," which had been built at the site by unknown parties before the Poles arrived in Texas.⁷⁶ Another place of worship was an old wagon shed located at the site.⁷⁷ Later, after a few months, services were held in a partitioned-off section of a stone barn built by John Twohig.⁷⁸

For the construction of the first church in Panna Maria, Father Moczygamba received a mysterious gift of three thousand dollars. There are several theories about the source of this money. In 1902, John Gawlik, a stonemason who helped to build the first church, recollected that Father Moczygamba's Franciscan superiors in Bavaria donated the money.⁷⁹ Another theory for the origin of the three thousand dollars is that Father Moczygamba and John Twohig may have split the excess money that Twohig charged the Silesians for their land.⁸⁰

Probably the most realistic theory for the origin of the money is that it was given to the parish by the Ludwig Missionsverein, a German missionary society in Bavaria. This society, basing its operations in Munich, gave thousands of dollars for the aid of German Catholics in the United States.⁸¹ It is known definitely that it did give substantial sums to the Franciscan Friars Minor Conventual, of which Moczygamba was a member, for their work among the Germans in Texas.⁸²

Father Leopold began planning for the construction of the church at Panna Maria during the first months of settlement there. On 27 March 1855 he bought the land for the church site from John Twohig,⁸³ and on the 6th of May he and his cousin, John, were already inspecting the stone for its construction.⁸⁴

Due to illness among the workers and difficulty in securing necessary building supplies, the work on the church took place in several stages. The first stage began in June 1855. Father Leopold entered into a contract at this time with Mr. Pauli, a German master mason from San Antonio, for the construction of the stonework. However, because of illness among his masons, Pauli was able to complete the walls to a height of only fifteen of their planned twenty feet. At this point work stopped for several weeks.⁸⁵

While work on the church was interrupted, a most exciting event occurred in Panna Maria. The second group of Polish immigrants who had left Upper Silesia in September 1855 arrived. When they passed the city of Wrocław, the newspaper *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska* remarked:

76. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 368.

77. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 29.

78. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 21. This barn is still standing and is occupied by Felix Snoga's store in Panna Maria.

79. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 368-369.

80. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 8-10.

81. *Ibid.*, 10; B. J. Blicd, "Ludwig Missionsverein," *New Catholic encyclopedia*, vol. 8, 1064; Theodore Roemer, "Bavaria helps America," *The Commonwealth*, 21(21 January 1935), 312-313; Swastek, *Priest and pioneer*, 9.

82. Financial accounts, unpagged, in preserved bundle of records concerning Verein assistance to the Diocese of Galveston, Texas, 1845-1859, Archives, Ludwig Missionsverein, Munich; Theodore Roemer, *The Ludwig-Missionsverein and the church in the United States (1838-1918)*, Catholic University of America Studies in American Church History, vol. 16, (Washington, D.C., 1933), 29-30, 80-81; Theodore Roemer, *Ten decades of alms* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1942), 149.

83. Deed records, Karnes County Courthouse, Karnes City, Texas, H:363-365.

84. Johann Moczygamba to [Friends and Relatives], 13 May 1855, in *Jeszcze jeden*, Brożek and Borek, 16.

85. Kruska, *Historja polska*, p. 369.

On the 26th of September, there passed through Wrocław a group of Polish peasants, the group consisting of 700 persons from Upper Silesia, who are leaving for Texas in America. The picture of these people, who are depopulating the country and leaving the land of their fathers, makes a sad impression.⁸⁶

These immigrants, travelling from Germany on two ships, the *Weser* and the *Ostend*, arrived on the Texas coast after an eight-week voyage. Instead of sailing to Galveston as the first group had done, these colonists came to Indianola, which was much closer to Panna Maria. From this point they travelled inland on ox carts that they had brought from Silesia or hired from Mexican teamsters at the coast. After two weeks of overland travel, the second group of Silesians arrived in San Antonio where most of the party turned southeast to Panna Maria, arriving there in December.⁸⁷

One member of this second immigration was John Gawlik, who was familiar with stonemasonry. Early in 1856, Father Leopold entered into an oral contract with Gawlik for the completion of the stonework on the church. Gawlik, with the assistance of several other persons, quickly finished the walls to their planned height of twenty feet.

Again construction was delayed. This time it was because lumber that had been ordered for the roof had not arrived yet at Indianola. Meanwhile, John Gawlik fell ill. When the wood did arrive, Father Moczygemba was forced by Gawlik's illness to enter into a third contract. This time the contract was with a Mr. Stark, another German from San Antonio, to build the roof. However, Stark only cut the wood for the roof, not finishing the job. With John Gawlik still ill, Father Leopold entered into a fourth contract. The carpenter bound in this contract, a Polish settler named Gerwazy Gabryś, finally was able to complete the shell of the church sometime in midsummer.

Some finishing work remained to be done on the church before it was to be consecrated. This work was done by Mr. Boden from San Antonio. He made all the frames to the doors and windows, the doors and floor in the sacristy and the room of the priest, and the stairway to the room of the priest, which was located above the sacristy. By September 1856 the church was "completed" although there was only linen over the windows and no floor, benches, or choir in the sanctuary.⁸⁸

Even as the church was nearing completion, the peasants at Panna Maria felt the need to express their religious feelings in an additional physical form. This took the shape of a large crucifix erected in front of the entrance to the then uncompleted church. John Rzeppa, one of the settlers, had brought with him from Upper Silesia a large Christ figure. He and Francis Cebula erected a large wooden cross in the churchyard and placed this figure on it. Then, on the Friday of Easter Week 1856, Father Leopold blessed the crucifix, which to the present time remains standing in front of the church in the village.⁸⁹

86. *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska* (Cieszyn), 13 October 1855, p. 334, *vide* Brozek, "Początki emigracji," 9.

87. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 370; Nesterowicz, 201.

88. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 369-371.

89. Dworaczyk, *Church records of Panna Maria*, 27.



FIG. 4.—Typical Silesian Polish cottages showing the similarity of such structures in Poland and Texas. The upper structure is in the village of Centawa, Opole Voivodeship, and the lower structure, the Gawlik house built in 1858, is in Panna Maria. Note the steeply arched roofs designed to allow snow to slip off easily in the winter. Photographs by the author.



FIG. 5.—Peasant cottages in Poland and Texas that demonstrate the typical Silesian architectural feature of rear roofs that reach very near to the ground. The upper photograph shows a house in Centawa, Opole Voivodeship, and the lower shows the Gawlik house in Panna Maria. Photographs by the author.

With the shell of the church finally completed in September 1856, Father Moczygemba consecrated it. The ceremonies took place on 29 September, the day of St. Michael, with Father Moczygemba blessing the church "for the glory of Almighty God and the Blessed Virgin Mary."⁹⁰ Thus the oldest Polish parish in the United States received its first church.

In late 1856, a third group of immigrants arrived in Panna Maria from Upper Silesia. Very little is known about this immigration of five hundred peasants.⁹¹ For example, no record has been found about their ships or ports of departure and arrival. Yet, it is clear that these settlers found more at Panna Maria than their predecessors. At least they saw farms, simple homes, a new stone church, and Polish-speaking Silesians to greet them.⁹²

The settlers at Panna Maria faced a new test in 1856 and 1857. During these years they suffered through one of the most severe droughts in Texas history. For fourteen months there was no rain at the settlement. Grass seared from the heat, and all the smaller streams dried up entirely so that livestock wandered away in search of food and water. Nothing could be planted, and what vegetation existed gradually disappeared leaving only the bare earth.⁹³ Forty miles north of Panna Maria, in the area around Seguin, the prairies became so dry that cracks in the earth were in many places more than a foot in width and thirty feet in depth.⁹⁴ Food prices soared astronomically. In Karnes County, flour sold for twenty-four dollars a barrel and corn for three dollars a bushel. The few settlers that had retained any of their savings quickly used up all they had left simply to buy food.⁹⁵ Several years later, an American who lived at Helena during the drought remarked that had it not been for the abundance of wild game in the country the Silesians "would have starved to death."⁹⁶

Due to the hardships wrought by the drought, many of the peasants were forced to leave Panna Maria in search of work. Men got jobs on the farms and ranches in the neighborhood and the women and girls sought work as servants in the surrounding towns.⁹⁷

Some of the Silesians, discouraged by the increased suffering at Panna Maria, left Texas entirely. These colonists moved north to the St. Gertrude community in Franklin County, Missouri. Settling here, they were instrumental in changing the name of the town to Krakow, the name it goes by to the present time.⁹⁸

Polish-American relations in Karnes County during the 1850's were mixed. During the first few months of settlement, both the Poles and the Americans eyed each other with curiosity. The Americans were the first to take the initiative of visiting. Occasionally Americans would ride into the settlement, sometimes

90. *Ibid.*, 30.

91. Brozek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 13.

92. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 20-21.

93. Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 2-3.

94. Theophilus Noel, *Autobiography and reminiscences of Theophilus Noel* (Chicago: Theo. Noel Company Print, 1904), 41-42.

95. Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 203.

96. Ruckman, "The census taker," 39.

97. *Ibid.*, 39; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 203.

98. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 16; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 203; John Rothensteiner, *History of the archdiocese of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Blackwell Wielandy, 1928), 2:416-417.



FIG. 6.—The large Christ figure brought from Poland by John and Tecla Rzeppa and placed on a cross in front of the uncompleted church at Panna Maria on Friday of Easter Week 1856. Photograph by the author.

completely surprised to find anyone living at the previously unoccupied site. Such was the case of Thomas Ruckman, who rode into Panna Maria in November 1855.

While on that hunting trip we came upon some dug outs not far from the Cibolo, but we found people there that couldn't understand what we said to them, . . . They might have fallen from the moon or stars for what we knew, or could find out.⁹⁹

Of such visits, one Pole recalled:

Sometimes one of the Americans would look at us; we couldn't talk with them, so they just gazed at us in wonder, smiled, and . . . went away.¹⁰⁰

During the drought of 1856-57, after they had become more accustomed to the Poles, several local Americans helped to keep the colony from falling apart. Some of these people employed individual Silesians, paying them enough to keep their families from starving. Among the neighbors helping the Poles were William Butler, who gave them cattle to butcher for food, and Andreas Coy, who gave them corn for bread and seed.¹⁰¹

However, not all Americans were so cordial to the Silesians. There are numerous accounts of the Americans taking advantage of the strange, silent foreigners. Some Americans employed the Poles on their ranches or in their homes and then, threatening them with revolvers, refused to pay them for their work. Others of the Americans sold the Silesians livestock only to return later and steal it back.¹⁰²

Although a few individual Poles continued to come from Upper Silesia after 1856, that date generally marks the close of Silesian Polish immigration to Texas. There are several reasons why the movement declined at this time. One reason clearly was that discouraging reports reached Silesia about the drought in Texas. However, improving conditions in Upper Silesia probably had more to do with the decline in immigration. Starting in 1856, Upper Silesian agriculture ceased for a while to be troubled with natural disasters. The inflated food prices decreased in 1856, after an influx of cheap Russian grain to European markets following the close of the Crimean War. A final factor greatly served to diminish migration from Upper Silesia. This factor was the growth of industrial concerns in the region in the 1850's. These establishments served to employ many people who before were considering immigration to Texas.¹⁰³

Back in Texas, the suffering and hardship of the Silesians at Panna Maria had its effect on their relationship with Father Moczygemba, who did all in his power to allay the suffering of the peasants, but he did not have what they needed. Instead of words and prayers of encouragement, they needed bread. As things grew worse and worse, the Silesians more and more turned against their priest who had brought them there. Their complaints changed into abuse and threats; some of the peasants even wanted to lynch Moczygemba. Seeing his

99. Ruckman, "The census taker," 39.

100. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 29.

101. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 18.

102. *Ibid.*, 18; Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 29; Emily Greene Balch, *Our Slavic fellow citizens* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1910), 229; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 367.

103. Brożek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 15.



FIG. 7.—The grave marker at Panna Maria Cemetery of Tecla Rzeppa, who with her husband brought the Christ figure placed on the cross erected in front of St. Mary's Church at Panna Maria in 1856. Photograph by the author.

very life in danger, Father Leopold left Panna Maria for good.¹⁰⁴ He remained at Panna Maria at least until 24 September 1856,¹⁰⁵ but by 5 October 1856 he was performing again his priestly duties at Castroville, seventy miles away.¹⁰⁶

Leaving Panna Maria, Father Moczygamba spent several months in the Castroville and San Antonio area before returning to Europe in the summer of 1858. He quickly came back to America, where, except for two more brief trips to Europe, he spent the remainder of his life as a missionary. During his later life, he served in various missionary capacities at San Antonio, Louisville, Syracuse, Springfield, Chicago, and Detroit. On 23 February 1891, Father Moczygamba died in Detroit, where he was buried.¹⁰⁷

As early as 1 November 1856, the Reverend Anthony Rossadowski assumed Father Leopold's vacant position as parish priest at Panna Maria. Father Rossadowski, of Wilno, Russian Poland, was also a Conventual Franciscan. He had served as a captain and then as a chaplain with the Polish forces in the unsuccessful insurrection of 1830 against the Russians. After the failure of the insurrection, Rossadowski fled to the Austrian controlled portion of Poland, where he was imprisoned for several months. The Habsburg government shipped Rossadowski along with over two hundred other Polish political exiles to New York in 1834, but within a short time he returned to Europe, this time to London. Yet, as early as 1852, Rossadowski was back in America laboring in the San Antonio area.¹⁰⁸

Father Anthony was best remembered at Panna Maria for the work that he did in improving the church. Primarily as a result of his encouragement, the parishioners cleaned and smoothed its inside walls, covered the floor with stone, built crude oak benches, and placed lime on its outside walls. After this work was completed, Father Anthony had the Polish carpenter, Joseph Śmiałek, to build the pulpit, altar rails, and choir.

Coming from Upper Silesia in 1858, John and Tecla Rzeppa brought a large bell for the church at Panna Maria. After some discussion over where to place it, Father Rossadowski and the parishioners decided that it would be most appropriate to mount it in a bell tower over the church. Accordingly Mr. Śmiałek was commissioned to erect a small tower over the choir at the front of the church. The bell was placed in the tower, and the tower itself was topped with a cross made by a Mr. Bronder of Panna Maria.¹⁰⁹

Father Rossadowski remained in Panna Maria until late spring 1860.¹¹⁰ Leaving Panna Maria probably in May, Father Anthony joined the Reverend Moczygamba in Syracuse, New York, where he served as the master of novices at the

104. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 367, 372; Nesterowicz, 203.

105. Dworaczyk, *Church records of Panna Maria*, 60.

106. Parish Records, St. Louis Church, Castroville, Texas.

107. F. Domanski, "Przyczyny niepowodzenia w zyciu ks. Leopolda Moczygemby" [The causes of the failure in the life of Rev. Leopold Moczygamba]. *Sodalitas*, 36(January 1955):8-16; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 372-373; Swastek, 12-30.

108. Jerzy Jan Lerski, *A Polish chapter in Jacksonian America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), 92-97; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 373-374; Edward Zalewski, "Polish emigres in the United States in 1835," *Polish American Studies*, 9(1952):98-103.

109. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 20; Kruska, 374.

110. Dworaczyk, *Church records of Panna Maria*, 45.

Conventual Franciscan seminary. Here he died on 31 March 1865 with Father Leopold, the only other Pole, serving him his last rites.¹¹¹

Arriving in Panna Maria at least as early as 3 June 1860, Father Julian Przysiecki replaced Father Rossadowski as pastor for the community. Przysiecki was born in Warsaw, Russian Poland, on 26 January 1826. It is not known when or under what circumstances he came to America, but as early as 1857 he was serving as the parish priest at Bandera, Texas. For the three years that Father Julian lived at Panna Maria, he served as a circuit riding pastor for all the Polish settlements in Texas. Fulfilling this duty required him to travel the one hundred and ten miles separating the most distant of these settlements.¹¹² It was Father Julian who lived in Panna Maria during the first two years of the Civil War, which began only eight months after he came to the village.

111. Kruszk. *Historja polska*, 375; Necrology, Immaculate Conception Province, Friars Minor Conventual, unpagec., printed card index, n.p., n.d., in Library, St. Francis Convent, Syracuse, N.Y.

112. Dworaczyk, *Church records of Panna Maria*, 45-46; Kruszk, *Historja polska*, 376-377; Parish Records, Church of the Annunciation, St. Hedwig, Texas.

PANNA MARIA IN THE CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865

For the Silesians at Panna Maria, the American Civil War began in February 1861, when Texas seceded from the Union. The four years of war were times of adversity and isolation for the colonists who remained in Karnes County and years of uncertainty and peril for those who left to fight in the two opposing armies.

Information about life in Panna Maria during the war is limited at best. The records left by the one Polish priest who served the community are sketchy and include information for only two of the four war years. No written records from the period have been found that deal specifically with life in the village during the war. Almost all information on the subject must be drawn from secondary sources.

Information about soldiers from Panna Maria is almost as limited as that about home life there. Due to the disorder that followed the defeat of the South, Confederate military records are both limited in number and scattered in location. Therefore, information on soldiers from Panna Maria is restricted to the few remaining contemporary sources that have been located and to secondary accounts.

The Civil War caused additional hard times for the Silesians at Panna Maria, as it did for all people in the South. Although the Silesians were not slave holders,¹¹³ they were as surely drawn into the conflict as any other nonslave holders in the region. The strong Unionist sentiment at Panna Maria after the war suggests that the settlement was opposed to the conflict from the outset. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that one reason the Silesians came to Texas was to prevent their sons from being conscripted into a foreign army.¹¹⁴

In Panna Maria, living conditions were hard during the war. Many of the things needed in daily living were simply not available or were too expensive for the peasants to afford. The Poles had to depend upon themselves to supply their own needs. Material conditions continued to deteriorate as the war dragged on. Not only were necessary goods increasingly difficult for the Silesians to secure, but another drought, from 1864 to 1865, made agriculture all the more difficult for them.¹¹⁵ As if the material privations were not already problems enough for the Poles, Karnes County became increasingly endangered by bands of Mexican renegades and bandits, which, according to one group of Karnes County residents in late 1863, were "alarmingly on the increase and threaten to devastate the Country."¹¹⁶

Father Julian Przysiecki served Panna Maria as priest for the first two years of the Civil War. However, he did not serve merely Panna Maria. He, like Father Rossadowski before him, served as a circuit riding priest, visiting all the Polish settlements to hear confessions and offer the sacraments. This meant that al-

113. U.S., Census of 1860, Texas, manuscript slave schedules, Karnes County, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

114. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 50.

115. Thonhoff, "Karnes County," 148-150, 157-165.

116. Petition no. 40, citizens of Karnes County ask that a company be formed for the protection of Karnes and other counties, 8 December 1863, Texas State Archives, Austin.

though his seat was in Panna Maria, he served about eight parishes. Spending much of his time on horseback, Father Julian's travels took him as far away as Bandera, one hundred and ten miles to the northwest. Yet, the Silesians of Panna Maria did feel the security of having a Polish priest for at least a few days at a time. However, this situation was not to last for the duration of the war.

On 15 November 1863, a disaster occurred for all the Poles in Texas. Father Przysiecki died of a fall from his horse near St. Hedwig, eighteen miles east of San Antonio. The death of this priest meant that there was no Polish-speaking priest in Texas for the next three years. The disastrous results of this situation were that the Poles had no one to whom they could say confession or who could give them their last rites in their native language.¹¹⁷

Although the written secondary accounts gloss over the actual death of Father Julian, Emil A. Kosub of St. Hedwig recalled stories handed down from his grandfather about the event. Przysiecki's death occurred on the farm of his grandfather, Anton Kosub, during a party that was being held there. Several men were riding horses when Father Julian asked to join them, saying, "Let me ride that horse. I'll show you how to ride." Minutes later, the young priest was killed instantly when he was knocked to the ground by a low-hanging mesquite branch, under which the horse had carried him.¹¹⁸ Two days later, the Reverend F. Amandus, pastor of the German congregation in San Antonio, came to St. Hedwig to bury his fellow priest, who had died without the last sacraments.¹¹⁹

With the death of Father Przysiecki, the three years of greatest isolation began for the Silesians at Panna Maria. There was no possibility of securing another Polish priest. The Civil War cut off all communication with Polish clergy in the North while the Polish insurrection of 1863 against the Russians effectively disrupted communication with Polish clergy in Europe. The community was served intermittently by French and German priests from San Antonio, but due to language difficulties these clerics were unable to communicate satisfactorily with the Poles. Several of the colonists died and were buried without the last sacraments, a disaster in the Polish peasant community. To keep up their faith, the people assembled in their small stone church on Sundays, even though there usually was no priest, to say the rosary, sing hymns, and read the Mass in the vernacular from their prayer books. Often such assemblies closed with bitter tears.¹²⁰

During the Civil War, a total of six companies were raised in Karnes County for service in the Confederate army.¹²¹ One of these companies was recruited in the immediate Panna Maria neighborhood by Captain Joseph A. Tivey. For this reason, the company made its name the Panna Maria Grays. However, the name is deceptive. Only four Poles were ever listed as members of the company.

117. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 58, 117; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 377-378; Parish records, Church of the Annunciation, St. Hedwig, Texas.

118. Emil A. Kosub to T. Lindsay Baker, interview at St. Hedwig, Texas, 27 November 1971.

119. Parish records, Church of the Annunciation, St. Hedwig, Texas.

120. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 31; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 481; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 23-24.

121. Thonhoff, "Karnes County," 151-152.

These four were Peter and Thomas Kiołbassa, R. T. Rzeppa, and Valentine Pollock, all of whom were listed on the company's first and second muster rolls of 9 July and 5 August 1861. By the company's third muster roll, 7 February 1862, only Valentine Pollock remained a member of the company.¹²²

The complete military service records of only two Civil War veterans, Peter Kiołbassa and Albert Lyssy, from Panna Maria have been found. Despite the fact that both these men were special cases in that they served in both Confederate and Union armies, their records may be viewed as probably typical when one considers the Unionist feelings in Panna Maria and that most of its men who served in Confederate forces were conscripts. When one takes into consideration the fact that several of the Silesians served in the Union army from the outset of the war, one is forced to wonder if perhaps more of the Panna Marians drafted in to the Confederate army might have switched sides if given the chance.

Peter Kiołbassa served first as a bugler in the Panna Maria Grays in the summer of 1861.¹²³ Then as early as 15 January 1862, he had enlisted "for 3 years or the war" as bugler in I Company, 24th Texas Cavalry.¹²⁴ By 8 August 1862, Kiołbassa was on the way to Little Rock, Arkansas, with his regiment.¹²⁵ On 28 September 1862, the regiment was ordered, along with several others, to take up defensive positions at the Arkansas Post, a fort up the Arkansas River from its mouth on the Mississippi.¹²⁶ In the meantime, the regiment had been forced by lack of forage to abandon its horses to other regiments, thus adopting the name, "Dismounted Cavalry."¹²⁷

Taking its position with other Confederate troops at the Arkansas Post, Wilke's 24th Texas Dismounted Cavalry, with Peter Kiołbassa as bugler for I Company, prepared for an expected Union attack. They waited only a few weeks before federal forces assaulted the fort on 11 January 1863 from both land and river. After a battle lasting more than four hours, the Union forces succeeded in breaching the walls at one point and forced the capitulation of the fortress. In his official report, the defeated Confederate commander described the last minutes of the fight in these words:

Most of the field pieces had been disabled, still the fire raged furiously along the entire line, and that gallant band of Texans and Arkansians having nothing to rely upon now save their muskets and bayonets, still disdained to yield to the overpowering foe . . . pressing upon them from almost every direction. Just at this moment, to my great

122. Muster roll, Capt. J. A. Tivey's company of mounted riflemen, 5 August 1861, Texas State Archives, Austin; Muster roll, Panna Maria Grays, 9 July 1861, Texas State Archives, Austin; Muster roll, Panna Maria Grays, 7 February 1862, Texas State Archives, Austin.

123. Muster roll, Capt. J. A. Tivey's company of mounted riflemen, 5 August 1861, Texas State Archives, Austin; Muster roll, Panna Maria Grays, 9 July 1861, Texas State Archives, Austin.

124. Peter Kiołbassa, compiled military service record, 24th Texas Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

125. P. O. Hebert, San Antonio, Texas, to H. H. Sibley, San Antonio, Texas, 8 August 1862, in *The War of Rebellion: a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate armies*, U.S. Department of War, ser. 1, vol. 9 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), 730.

126. Special orders no. 39, S. S. Anderson, Little Rock, Arkansas, 28 September 1862, *ibid.* (1884), ser. 1, 13:884-885.

127. R. A. Cameron, near Helena, Arkansas, to Brigadier-General Hovey, Helena, Arkansas, 29 October 1862, *ibid.*, p. 770.

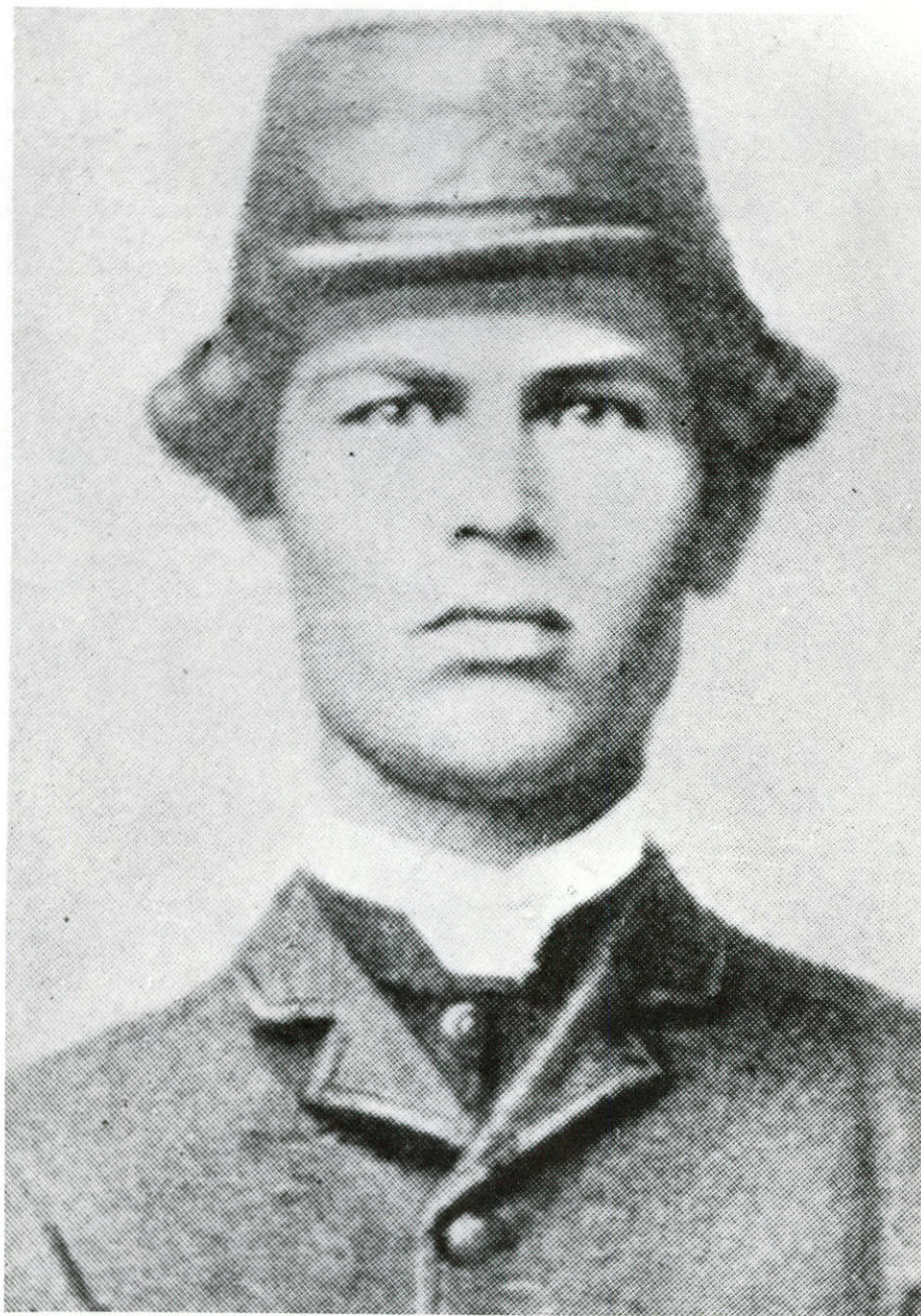


FIG. 8.—Peter Kiofbassa as a Union soldier. From Miecislau Haiman, *Polish Past in America 1608-1865*.

surprise, several white flags were displayed in the Twenty-fourth Regiment Texas Dismounted Cavalry, First Brigade, and before they could be suppressed the enemy took advantage of them, crowded upon my lines, and . . . I was forced to the humiliating necessity of surrendering the balance of the command.¹²⁸

Thus the surrender of Peter Kiołbassa's regiment effected the capitulation of the entire garrison of 5000 Confederate troops to federal forces.¹²⁹

Upon the surrender of the Arkansas Post, Peter Kiołbassa was taken prisoner by federal soldiers and transported to a prisoner of war camp at Camp Butler, Illinois.¹³⁰ Because many of the Confederate troops captured at Arkansas Post were foreign born and had been forced into the Confederate army against their will, and because the battle was the first in which most of them had participated, those prisoners who were considered to be loyal to the Union were allowed to swear allegiance to the United States and join any Union regiment that happened to be in Camp Butler at that time.¹³¹

Peter Kiołbassa was among those prisoners who were pardoned and allowed to enter Union regiments. On 9 February 1863, Peter chose to enter the 16th Illinois Cavalry, in which he served as corporal and then sergeant until 19 January 1865,¹³² and participated in the battles of Atlanta, Knoxville, and Nashville.¹³³ As the war was drawing to a close in January 1865, Kiołbassa was promoted to the rank of captain and transferred to command E Company of the 6th U.S. Colored Cavalry, where he remained until the spring of 1866.¹³⁴

Except for brief visits back to Texas, Peter Kiołbassa remained in the North. Residing in Chicago, he dealt in real estate and entered local politics. In his later years, Kiołbassa served as city alderman and city treasurer of Chicago and as representative from his district to the Illinois State Legislature, becoming the first Polish born state legislator in the United States.¹³⁵

The other Silesian from Panna Maria for whom a complete military record has been found is Albert Lyssy. As early as 29 March 1862, Lyssy was serving in the Confederate army as a private in I Company, Wilke's 24th Texas Cavalry, in which Peter Kiołbassa also served at that time. While the regiment was proceeding toward the Arkansas Post, which it was to help defend, Lyssy deserted the Confederate ranks.¹³⁶

128. T. J. Churchill, Richmond, Virginia, to S. Cooper, Richmond, Virginia, 7 May 1863, *ibid.* (1886), ser. 1, 17(1):781.

129. For other official reports and letters concerning the Battle of Arkansas Post, see above, *ibid.*, 698-796.

130. Peter Kiołbassa, compiled military service record, 24th Texas Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

131. W. F. Lynch, Camp Butler, Illinois, to [N. H. McLean], 4 February 1863; George Sawin, Headquarters, Department of the Ohio, to Adjutant-General, Department of the Ohio, 4 February 1863; H. G. Wright, Cincinnati, Ohio, to Commissary-General of Prisoners, 7 February 1863; in *War of Rebellion*, U.S. Department of war (1899), ser. 2, 5:240-241.

132. Peter Kiołbassa, compiled military service record, 16th Illinois Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

133. Helen Busyn, "Peter Kiołbassa --maker of Polish America," *Polish American Studies*, 8(1951): 70.

134. Peter Kiołbassa, compiled military service record, 6th U.S. Colored Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

135. Busyn, "Peter Kiołbassa," 71-84; Helen Busyn, "The political career of Peter Kiołbassa," *Polish American Studies*, 7(1950):8-22.

136. Albert Lyssy, compiled military service record, 24th Texas Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

On 21 May 1863, the nineteen-year-old Albert Lyssy entered the Union army when he was mustered into G Company of the 16th Illinois Cavalry at Camp Butler, Illinois. It is not known whether Lyssy had been held as a prisoner by the federals, but the fact that he was at Camp Butler suggests that he might have been interred at the prisoner of war camp located there. He served with the 16th Illinois Cavalry throughout the remainder of 1863 and the first months of 1864. On 12 May 1864, the young Pole was captured by Confederate soldiers at Tunnel Hill, near Dalton in northwestern Georgia.¹³⁷ Lyssy remained a Confederate prisoner for ten months before he was freed by the Confederates in a prisoner of war exchange only a few weeks before the close of the war. After the exchange, he travelled to Benton Barracks, Missouri, and then to Nashville, Tennessee, where he was mustered out of federal service on 19 August 1865.¹³⁸

A vignette of Civil War history is located in the muster roll of a company of frontier defense troops raised at Oakville, Texas. Here, on 23 February 1864, nineteen-year-old Joseph Moczygamba was mustered into N. Gussett's Company of Texas State Troops for service on the frontier. The young Moczygamba, however, served only twenty-four days from the time of his mustering-in until the first of June, after which date no further record of his service has been found.¹³⁹

Of his service in the Civil War, Alex Dziuk had the following recollection:

At the age of eighteen . . . I was drafted into the Confederate army and sent to Arkansas. With me, F. Moczygęba, J. Bryś, T. Kołodziejczyk and J. Lysy were also drafted.

We were badly fed, especially at the beginning, and were armed with old flintlocks. . . .

I remained in the Confederate army until the end of the war and when I got back home even my mother did not recognize me.¹⁴⁰

A number of other Silesians from Karnes County served in the Civil War, but no military service records for them have been located. Among those who fought for the Confederacy were John Moczygamba, Frank Moczygamba, John Lyssy, Jacob Lyssy, John Gawlik, Martin Dugi, Adam Skloss, Tom Jendrey, John Brysch, Frank Brysch, Anton Brysch, Charles Korzekwa, John Kolenda, Vincent Tycman, Joseph Morawietz, Julius Jurecki, Jacob Pollock, Anton Sekula, and Mathew Urbanczyk. The following men served on the Union side during the conflict: August Czyzek, Frank Dworaczyk, Leopold Biela, Theodor Kroll, John Rzeppa, Michael Gonsor, Philip Gonsor, Joseph Pollock, Julius Sowa, Joe Sowa, Ignatz Kiofbassa, Joesph Kalinowski, and Jos Długosz.¹⁴¹

137. Albert Lyssy, compiled military service record, 16th Illinois Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C. For information concerning fighting at Tunnel Hill, Georgia, on 12 May 1864, see *War of Rebellion*, U.S. Department of War (1891), ser. 1, 38(4):146-160.

138. Albert Lyssy, compiled military service record, 16th Illinois Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

139. Muster roll, N. Gussett's company, 3rd Frontier District, T.S.T., 26 March 1865, Texas State Archives, Austin.

140. Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 208-209. The only military service record found for Alex Dziuk shows that he served as a private in C Company, 31st Texas Cavalry, from 12 November 1862, to 6 August 1863. Alexander Dziuk, compiled military service record, 31st Texas Cavalry, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

141. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 27.

PANNA MARIA 1866-1870

The few years immediately following the Civil War were among the most exciting in the history of Panna Maria. The Silesian colonists faced great difficulties from the outside, experienced some of the grandest religious celebrations in the history of the settlement, and for the first time began entering into the general life of society in Karnes County.

The history of Panna Maria in these years was tied very closely to the activities of the Catholic priests who served there at the time. These priests, most especially Father Adolf Bakanowski, were instrumental in molding and holding together the colony at a time when it was as seriously threatened from the outside as at any other time in its history.

All of the priests at Panna Maria during the Reconstruction period were members of the Congregation of the Resurrection. This organization, generally called the Resurrectionists, was a Polish priestly order founded in Paris in 1836. Most of its members had participated in the unsuccessful Polish insurrection against the Russians in 1830. After the failure of the revolt, many of the insurgents fled in exile to western Europe. Among these exiles were Bogdan Jański, Peter Semencińko, and Jerome Kajsiewicz, who founded the Congregation of the Resurrection.¹⁴² According to one of the more critical historians of the order, many of the men who joined it did so in despair over the failure of the insurrection against the Russians. They thought that if Poland could not be raised again through armed revolt, it could be "resurrected" through some sort of miracle that the order might help to induce.¹⁴³

Resurrectionist priests came to Texas through the efforts of Claude-Marie Dubuis, the French-born bishop of Texas. While travelling through Europe in search of priests for his diocese, Bishop Dubuis spent several days in September 1866 at Paris talking with the Reverend Alexander Jełowicki, the superior of the Congregation of the Resurrection in that city. Dubuis, somewhat misrepresenting the number and the prosperity of the Poles in Texas, convinced Jełowicki that the Congregation should send some of its priests as missionaries to the Polish communities in Texas. With the authorization of Superior General of the Resurrectionists, Jerome Kajsiewicz, Fathers Jełowicki and Dubuis signed an agreement in Paris on 28 September 1866, which provided for the Resurrectionists to supply all necessary priests for the Polish parishes in Texas.¹⁴⁴

Even before the agreement was signed, three Resurrectionists, Fathers Adolf Bakanowski and Vincent Barzyński and Felix Żwiardowski, a seminarian, had left Rome for service in Texas. In Paris, these three were joined by three other

142. "Congregation of the Resurrection," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), 783; [Leonard Long], *For God and man 1842-1942, a short history of the Congregation of the Resurrection* ([Chicago]: Nordmann Printing, [1942]), 4-36.

143. Kruszkka, *Historja polska*, 482.

144. John Iwicki, *The first one hundred years: a study of the apostolate of the Congregation of the Resurrection in the United States 1866-1966* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1966), 24-28; Kruszkka, *Historja polska*, 483-487; Long, *God and man*, 37-38. The original French translation of the agreement between Jełowicki and Dubuis is preserved in [Bishop] C. M. Dubuis, *Letters Sent*, item nos. 39460-39461, Archives, Congregation of the Resurrection, Rome.

Polish clerics, Fathers Joseph Bilkowski and Clemens Kucharczyk and a seminarian, Felix Orzechowski. The six Polish churchmen met Bishop Dubuis and boarded ship at Le Havre for the New World. They sailed to New York and then to Galveston, where Bishop Dubuis sent them to their posts in late October 1866.

Father Bakanowski, as the superior of the mission, took charge of the parish at Panna Maria, where seminarian Felix Żwiardowski assisted him. The Reverend Barzyński, with scholastic Orzechowski, took the Polish parish in San Antonio. Father Kucharczyk travelled to Bandera while Bilkowski assumed duties at the Czech parish of Mulberry (now Praha).¹⁴⁵

The Reverend Adolf Bakanowski, the vicar-general for the Resurrectionist missions in Texas and the future pastor at Panna Maria, arrived at the Silesian colony on 1 November 1866. Before coming to Texas, he already had experienced a varied life. Born in the village of Mohylówka in Russian Poland, Bakanowski came from a good gentry family. Destined from an early age to enter the clergy, he studied at a seminary in the town of Kamieniec Podolski and then at the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg. Soon after his ordination on 24 May 1863, Bakanowski joined a division of Polish infantry that was forming to fight that year in the ill-fated insurrection against the Russians. Leaving the army, Bakanowski fled to Austrian Poland, from which he travelled to Rome. There, in 1864, he joined the Congregation of the Resurrection where he planned to carry on scholarly work in Italy.¹⁴⁶ However, as Father Jełowicki wrote in 1866, Father Bakanowski was sent to Texas because, "his study is lost time . . . he suffers headaches which will surely stop in his apostolic work." Jełowicki added that it was needless to keep Bakanowski for work in Galicia and that, "he is not good enough for Paris."¹⁴⁷ Thus the superiors of the order chose Adolf Bakanowski to head their Polish mission in Texas.

After three years without any Polish-speaking priests, the peasants at Panna Maria were overjoyed that they were to have both a priest and a student of divinity actually living in their village. Having come from Europe to what was considered to be a desolate mission, the two clerics were comforted by the great piety of the Panna Marians. For several days the missionaries' door did not close because of the large numbers of peasants who came to say confession and to partake of the Mass. One of the accounts states that the people were so joyful about the presence of the clerics that they cried with happiness.¹⁴⁸

The Resurrectionists came to Texas during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. During this time, Texas probably experienced more civil disorder than at any other time in its history. As the war ended and the Confederacy collapsed, civil administration in Texas deteriorated almost to nonexistence. Bands of deserters, freed Negroes, and assorted riffraff circulated through the state with no legal authorities to restrain them.

145. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 18-24; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 487-488.

146. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 1-17, 24, 112-115.

147. Rev. Alexander Jełowicki, Paris, to Rev. Hieronim Kajsiwicz, Rome, 4 September 1866, in *Historja polska*, Kruska, 485.

148. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 488.

By the summer of 1865, federal troops had occupied Texas and begun to restore order. A provisional government under Andrew Jackson Hamilton produced a new constitution and an election of state officials, including the conservative James W. Throckmorton as governor. But when the U.S. Congress assumed control of Reconstruction¹⁴⁹ in spring of 1867, Texas fell under military rule, and Throckmorton was replaced by Elisha M. Pease.

The vast majority of the white Texans resented the presence of Union soldiers and agents in the state. Governor Pease summarized their feelings well when he wrote:

It is true that there no longer exists here any organized resistance to the authority of the United States; but a large majority of the white population, who participated in the late rebellion, are embittered against the government by their defeat in arms and loss of their slaves, and yield to it an unwilling obedience, only because they feel that they have no means to resist its authority. None of this class have any affection for the government, and very few of them have any respect for it. They regard the legislation of Congress on the subject of reconstruction as unconstitutional and hostile to their interests, and consider the government now existing here, under the authority of the United States, as usurpation of their rights. They look upon the enfranchisement of their late slaves and the disfranchisement of a portion of their own class as an act of insult and oppression.¹⁵⁰

The resentment of the white Texans against the victorious Union government, coupled with the disorder following the war, created an ideal environment for lawlessness. As Governor Pease stated:

This state of feeling against the government and its acts by a large majority of the white population, who have heretofore exercised the political power of Texas, combined with the demoralization and impatience of restraint by civil authority that always follows the close of great civil wars, renders it extremely difficult to enforce the criminal laws in those portions of the State which are most densely occupied, and often impossible to do so in those parts of the State which are sparsely settled. A knowledge of this state of affairs induces many to redress their fancied wrongs and grievances by acts of violence.

All good citizens feel and acknowledge that there is but little security for life in Texas beyond what each man's personal character gives him.¹⁵¹

In the second half of the 1860's, Karnes County was one of the "sparcely settled" counties mentioned by Governor Pease. Along with other counties on the frontier, it became a haven for people outside the law. Such a visiting outlaw was William Preston Longley, who in 1867 fled to Karnes County for several weeks of safety after having killed three Negroes in Lee County. Another "questionable character" frequenting the county was Sally Skull, who, with her band of Mexican helpers, traded horses from Texas into Mexico.¹⁵² Helena, the county

149. Reconstruction in Texas generally followed the pattern in the rest of the South. Still the best summary of this period is found in Charles W. Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910).

150. E. M. Pease, Austin, Texas, to W. G. Mitchell, Secretary for Civil Affairs, 17 January 1868, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1868*, U.S., Congress, House, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., 1868, House Executive Document 1, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 269.

151. *Ibid.*, 269-270.

152. Thonhoff, "Karnes County," 168-169.

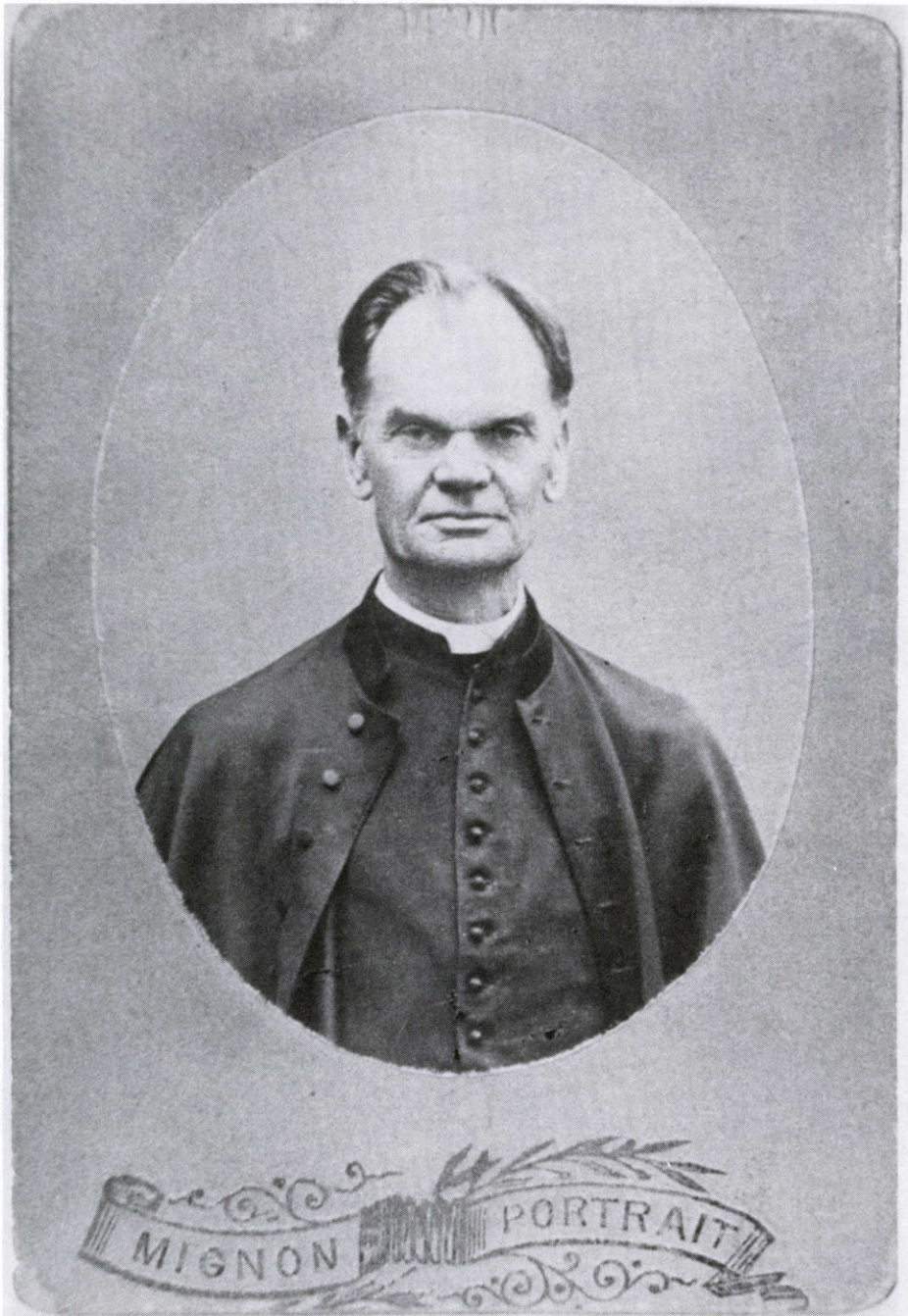


FIG. 9.—The Rev. Adolf Sykstus Bakanowski, pastor at Panna Maria from 1866 to 1870. The original photograph is preserved in Photographic Collections, Archives, Congregation of the Resurrection, Rome. Copy photograph by the author.

seat, gained a statewide reputation as a rough town.¹⁵³ Max Krueger, a German immigrant who visited the town in December 1868, stated that although the regular occupation of the residents was cattle raising, the most popular activities were stealing horses and looting the freight wagons that passed from Indianola toward inland points. He added that the "authorities had no power to check this lawlessness."¹⁵⁴

Members of the lawless element of Karnes County, resenting their defeat by the Union and being unrestricted by any legal authorities, took out their vengeance by preying on the Poles. In the words of Father Bakanowski, the pastor at Panna Maria at the time:

They knew very well that we Poles held with the side of the North, so that was why they considered us as their enemies.¹⁵⁵

The latter . . . began to make every effort to drive them [the Poles] from the country, even by force of arms. . . . When they saw a Pole without knowledge of the language, a peasant without any education, these Southerners looked upon him as they did upon the Blacks, and felt that they had the same right to deny him his human rights as they did the Blacks.¹⁵⁶

It should be noted that not all the general white population of Karnes County engaged in opposition to the Silesians. Although most of the sources on the subject make no distinction between the lawless element in the county and the general population, Stefan Nesterowicz noted the difference when he talked with some of the Silesians a number of years later. He stated clearly in his work that the Americans who opposed the Poles were "the scum of the local society" who had to "drink heavily in order to give themselves courage."¹⁵⁷ However, all the Polish sources agree that the Americans did harass the Poles knowing full well that the legal authorities would do nothing to stop them.¹⁵⁸

Accounts of many of the encounters between Poles and Americans in Karnes County suggest that the Americans were engaged in what they considered to be horseplay. However, the Poles did not interpret things that way. On numerous occasions "liquored-up" American cowboys rode into the settlement shooting at the Polish cottages and chasing the peasant children. On at least one occasion the cowboys even rode their horses into the church where they proceeded to conduct themselves in an obscene manner during the Mass. Unaccustomed to such actions, the peaceful Silesians were most upset.¹⁵⁹

153. The reputation of Helena is exemplified by the so-called Helena duel, which was practiced among the lawless element of the town. In this duel, the left hands of the duelists were bound together with deer-skin straps and a short-bladed knife was placed in the right hand of each. The two were given several quick turns and then told to begin fighting. The short blade prevented the opponents from hitting any vital places so that the fight continued until one or the other of the two duelists bled to death from the wounds inflicted by the other's knife. M. Krueger, *Pioneer life in Texas* (privately printed, n.d.), 54-55; Thonhoff, "Karnes County," 168.

154. Krueger, *Pioneer life*, 54.

155. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 63.

156. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

157. Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 205.

158. *Ibid.*, 205; Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 31, 63; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 33-34; Kruszka, *Historja polska*, 489.

159. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 63; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 33-34; Kruszka, *Historja polska*, 489; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 205.

Sometimes the forays of the Americans to the colony were of a more serious nature. On several such occasions the cowboys intentionally injured individual Silesians. On one of their visits, for example, they stabbed a woman with a knife and shot a man in the leg.¹⁶⁰

Taking all the abuse from the Americans that they could stand, the Silesians finally decided upon action. To show the Southerners that they would not continue to be harassed, the peasants, led by Father Bakanowski, rode in mass to the outskirts of Helena. Then at full gallop, they raced back and forth through the town to show the Americans that they were formidable enough to defend themselves. This show of force in Helena succeeded in giving them a few weeks of peace.¹⁶¹

However, only a short length of time passed before a group of cowboys went to Panna Maria to cause trouble. This time they started riding back and forth in front of the church shooting at the ave bell. Having seen what was happening, Father Bakanowski started from the church to the rectory to get his revolver. As he went in this direction, one of the cowboys blocked the way with his horse. Reacting in anger, Father Bakanowski tried to hit the American in the head with a wooden pole. At this moment, a party of Silesians appeared to drive the Americans out of the village. Then a group of young Poles followed the Southerners as they retreated toward Helena. Catching up with them at Cibolo Creek, the Poles opened fire on four of the cowboys as they attempted to swim across the stream, hitting two of the Americans, who "sank into the water," and allowing the other two to escape without their horses.¹⁶²

After the Cibolo Creek gunfight, several months of quiet prevailed at Panna Maria. But the peace ended abruptly one Sunday.¹⁶³ On this occasion the Americans fell upon the Silesians while they were all in the church for Mass. Together with ten carriages full of their women who had come to see the defeat of the foreigners, the Americans waited to provoke the Poles as they left the church. Understanding what was happening, Father Bakanowski ordered all the women and children to remain in the church with Father Żwiardowski while the men went with him to the school. Taking their position on its second story balcony, the Silesian men armed themselves for a final fight with the Americans.

With the Poles on the balcony, the Americans formed for battle into a single mounted rank. The carriages full of American women formed a line to one side of the action. Then the cowboys began to charge the school, taunting the Poles with threats that they would all be killed. With presence of mind, Father Bakanowski aimed his gun at them and shouted for all to hear: "Stop! Or I'll shoot." The American women began to scream and the American men stopped. Shouts of "Shoot!" repeated among the rank of mounted men. Seeing the difficulty of the situation, Bakanowski altered his strategy. Realizing that the American women were nearby, he changed the direction of the fight toward these

160. Kruska, *Historja polska*, 489; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 205.

161. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 64.

162. *Ibid.*, 64-65.

163. According to Kruska's (*Historja polska*, 490) account, this confrontation occurred on Easter Sunday, 12 April 1868.

women by shooting twice over their heads. This caused a great panic among them, all of the women and then all of the men retreating to Helena. Father Bakanowski opened the church and all the Silesians returned home in uneasy peace.¹⁶⁴

By the beginning of 1868, the lawless element in Karnes County had almost forced the Silesian colony at Panna Maria to the point of disintegration. Father Bakanowski recalled that his people "began to lose heart" and that they were "afraid that the Americans would attack from ambush."¹⁶⁵ About the same time, a sympathetic American in San Antonio wrote that the "persons & property of these industrious people are entirely at the mercy of the lawless desperadoes who inhabit this county, their colony is in danger of being broken up, and the local Civil Authorities appear to connive at their persecution."¹⁶⁶

To secure relief from the abuse of the Southerners, the Silesians petitioned various government officials for protection. Among the places they sent petitions were to Judge William W. Gamble in San Antonio,¹⁶⁷ to "the General" in San Antonio, and to Washington.¹⁶⁸ None of these petitions from the Silesians has been located, but more is known about their last petition in April 1869.

Fathers Bakanowski and Źwiardowski carried this petition from the people of Panna Maria to one of the military commanders at San Antonio. Accompanied by Father Barzyński and Bishop Dubuis, the two priests presented their petition and discussed with the general the difficulties of the Poles at Panna Maria, requesting from him the protection of federal troops. The general replied that he already knew of the problems that the Silesians faced and said that he planned to send a body of troops to the county in about a month.¹⁶⁹ Father Bakanowski argued, "In a month. . . . It could be too late because in this time they could kill all of us."¹⁷⁰ The general thought for a moment and then called in the cavalry officer who was to command the federal troops to be sent to Karnes County. He asked the young officer how soon he could be ready to leave, to which the officer replied five days.¹⁷¹

Thus it happened that the U.S. Army came to Karnes County on 10 April 1869. They established there the Post of Helena for the suppression of "insurrection, disorder, and violence."¹⁷² These were not the first federal troops to be in the county. Previously there had been occasional troop movements through the

164. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 65-66. There are several other accounts of this confrontation. However, the version used here, from Father Bakanowski's published memoirs, is probably the most accurate. Other variations of the story are found in Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 35-36; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 490-491; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 205.

165. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 66.

166. Wm. W. Gamble, San Antonio, Texas, to W. C. Phillips [sic], San Antonio, Texas, 18 February 1868, in Texas, Secretary of State, Correspondence, Texas State Archives, Austin.

167. *Ibid.*

168. Adolf Bakanowski [Texas], to [Peter] Semeńenko [Rome], 22 May 1870, in Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 182.

169. Already on 16 January 1869, orders had been given in Austin for the establishment of a military camp at Helena. However, no action had been taken for the immediate beginning of the post. U.S. Department of War, Army, Fifth Military District, State of Texas, General Orders No. 4, 16 January 1869, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

170. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 66.

171. *Ibid.*, 66-67. The cavalry officer who commanded the U.S. troops that established Post Helena was Second Lieutenant William A. Thompson.

172. General Orders No. 4: Post returns of Post Helena, Texas, 10 April to 1 May 1869, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

area and even a short-lived military encampment between 5 and 31 March 1868.¹⁷³ However, the first "permanent" camp in the county was this one established by the three officers and fifty-nine enlisted men of H Company, 4th U.S. Cavalry. These troops were not ones to be looked down upon by the natives of Karnes County. Before coming to Helena, the company had served at Fort Chadbourne and Fort Concho on the Texas frontier.¹⁷⁴ Despite the experience of its soldiers, the post at Helena was not impressive to see. It consisted merely of a collection of tents and crude barracks situated on a hill adjoining the town of Helena.¹⁷⁵

During the thirteen months that the troops stayed in Karnes County, they succeeded in ridding it of many of its outlaws and in ending the harassment of the Poles. In such operations the soldiers and the Poles cooperated closely. For example, one of the first actions by the army commander was to station a few soldiers to stand guard in Panna Maria against any possible forays by Southerners.¹⁷⁶ The soldiers did not work in vain. Only a month after they came to the county they had already arrested at least one horse thief near the Silesian colony.¹⁷⁷ The soldiers continued to patrol the area for outlaws and trouble makers. Only limited information has been found about their specific activities. However, secondary sources all agree that they were quite successful in ridding the county of its lawless element.¹⁷⁸ An example of the sort of outlaws captured by the soldiers from Post Helena is Oscar Rose. A wanted man with a three-hundred-dollar reward from McLennan County, Rose was arrested in 1869 by Lieutenant George W. Smith.¹⁷⁹

Coupled with the general problems that the Silesians faced with the Southerners were their difficulties with the "German judge." This judge, a man well liked by most of the Americans, was John Kuhnel, Justice of the Peace for Karnes County Precinct No. 2.¹⁸⁰ Kuhnel, a native of Freinsheim, Germany,¹⁸¹ was a property owner in Panna Maria as early as 1856.¹⁸² During the Civil War he served as a private in the Panna Maria Grays¹⁸³ while at the same time serving

173. Post returns of Post Helena, 5-31 March 1868, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

174. *Ibid.*, 10 April to 1 May 1869; U.S., Congress, House, *Secretary of War, 1868*, House Executive Document 1, pt. 1, 706.

175. Krueger, *Pioneer life*, 57-58; Post returns of Post Helena, 10 April to 1 May 1869, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

176. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 36.

177. Post returns of Post Helena, 1-31 May 1869, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

178. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 70, 182; Kruszka, *Historja polska*, 491; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 205.

179. W. C. Philips, Austin, Texas, to Geo. W. Smith, Helena, Texas, 13 August 1869; W. C. Philips, Austin, Texas, to Geo. W. Smith, Helena, Texas, 14 September 1869, in Texas, Secretary of State, W. C. Philips public letterbook, 23 August 1867 to 21 January 1870, pp. 435, 438, in Microcopy No. Tex. E.3, Reel 4, Records of the United States of America, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

180. Texas Secretary of State, Election register 1866-1870, Texas State Archives, Austin. It should be noted that people of non-Polish origin occasionally came to live in Panna Maria for certain lengths of time. However, these people were the exception to the general Polish population of the community and always were somewhat set apart from the Poles.

181. Mrs. Richard E. Bensmiller to Thomas Lindsay Baker, interview at Panna Maria, Texas, 27 November 1971.

182. Deed Records, Karnes County Courthouse, Karnes City, Texas A:274.

183. Muster roll, Capt. J. A. Tivey's company of mounted riflemen, 5 August 1861; Texas State Archives, Austin; Muster roll, Panna Maria Grays, 9 July 1861, *ibid.*, Muster roll, Panna Maria Greys [sic], 7 February 1862, *ibid.*

as the Confederate postmaster of the town.¹⁸⁴ Father Adolf Bakanowski noted that in Panna Maria, Kuhnel "was everything: merchant, judge, counsellor. In a word, he ruled the whole settlement."¹⁸⁵

It seems apparent that Father Bakanowski and Kuhnel had a conflict of personalities from the outset. For example, although both Bakanowski and Żwiardowski took their meals with the German when they first came to the colony, they stopped after only a few weeks because, in Bakanowski's words, "we saw what a disastrous influence he had on our trusting Poles."¹⁸⁶

After living in the same community with Kuhnel for several months, Father Bakanowski came to the conclusion that it was intolerable for the German Kuhnel to be a judge over the Polish Silesians. He started making plans with the U.S. Army officers at Post Helena to remove the German from his position. In his plans, Bakanowski had complete cooperation from these officers, who, it must be added, had been given the power to remove any local officials. Bakanowski and the officers devised a plan to create a controversy by which they could "legally" remove Kuhnel from office.

In accordance with the plan, Father Bakanowski had some laborers start building a house on what he knew full well was the German's land, which happened to adjoin that of the church. When Kuhnel protested the construction, Father Bakanowski replied that he did not know what land the church actually owned because Kuhnel had never turned over to him the map showing the property of the church. As he had done before, Kuhnel refused to release the map to the priest. After further bickering, Judge Kuhnel had the county sheriff arrest Bakanowski and take him to trial for constructing the building on his land.

The jury at the trial found Father Adolf Bakanowski guilty, but the priest was able to get away from the courtroom because a menacing crowd of Silesians had gathered to assure his release. Bakanowski went immediately on horseback to Post Helena to tell the federal officers there that their plan for the removal of Kuhnel was proceeding as expected. One of the officers joined him and the two rode off together for the courtroom where they accosted Kuhnel as he was leaving. The officer ordered the German to surrender the map showing the location of the parish property and reprimanded him for his actions against Bakanowski. In the end he added: "You're not a judge any more. Go home and prepare everything to give your office to someone else."¹⁸⁷

The officer then went with Father Bakanowski to the rectory, where the priest proposed Emanuel Rzeppa, a Pole, as the new Justice of the Peace for Panna Maria. Within a few hours the officer commanding Post Helena came to swear in the new justice. In this way it happened that on 13 May 1869 Panna Maria

184. Grover C. Ramsey, *Confederate postmasters in Texas* (Waco, Texas: W. M. Morrison, 1963), 48.

185. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 26.

186. *Ibid.*, 27.

187. *Ibid.*, 63, 67-69.



FIG. 10.—Sketch map of church property at Panna Maria, Texas, drawn by the Rev. Adolf Bakanowski in 1869. The original map is preserved in Archives, Congregation of the Resurrection, Rome, item no. 9368. Photograph by the author.

received its first Polish judge and Kuhnel's influence was broken, although he continued to operate a store in Panna Maria until his death.¹⁸⁸

In addition to these problems with people, the colonists at Panna Maria faced a severe natural disaster. This was the great flood of 1869. Situated between two streams, Panna Maria and its farms were subject to occasional inundations, but the flood of 1869 was one of the worst in the history of the settlement. The early summer of 1869 had been a particularly wet season in southwest Texas. During the last week of June and the first week of July, most of the streams in the region were running full and at times were impassable.¹⁸⁹ Then, on Saturday, 3 July, a great downpour began. The rains continued for four days, ending at midday on Tuesday, the 6th.¹⁹⁰ During these four days in San Antonio, a total of thirteen and two-thirds inches of rain fell.¹⁹¹ Flooding well over their banks,¹⁹² Cibolo Creek and San Antonio River washed away most of the Silesians' crops at Panna Maria and destroyed twelve of their homes. Recovery called for cooperation among the Poles.¹⁹³

As a matter of fact, during the years of Reconstruction, the Polish society of Panna Maria had become very close. Two outside factors caused the Silesians to make their community an entity apart from the general society around them. The first factor was obviously the language difficulties preventing the Silesians, particularly the older colonists, from communicating easily with the American population of the county, but more importantly the Poles intentionally avoided contact with the Southerners because of their abusive conduct toward the colonists. The outside opposition felt by the peasants caused them to turn inward, clinging to their customs and to Polish Catholicism. The priests advocated the growth and retention of this close society because in it they saw the key to the preservation of the uncorrupted morality and strict faith of the colonists. They were at least partially right because through their leadership the church became the center of life in Panna Maria.¹⁹⁴

A chief concern for the Silesians at Panna Maria was for education, particularly religious education, for their children. For this reason, catechism classes were held in the settlement from its beginning. However, it was not until more than ten years later that an actual school building was erected. During this interim, religious classes were held in various private houses and buildings in the community.

Soon after their arrival in Texas, the Resurrectionists started making plans for the construction of a permanent school at Panna Maria. Their idea was to build a structure that would house both school and rectory. Father Bakanowski

188. *Ibid.*, 69-70; Texas, Secretary of State, Election register 1866-1870, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. The first Polish Justice of the Peace at Panna Maria, Emanuel Rzeppa, has been called the first Polish judge in America. See Kruska, *Historja polska*, 491-493.

189. *San Antonio Express*, 6 July 1869, p. 3.

190. *Ibid.*, 7 July 1869, p. 3.

191. *Ibid.*, 8 July 1869, p. 3.

192. *Ibid.*, 7 July 1869, p. 3, 11 July 1869, p. 3.

193. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 62, 172, 177.

194. *Ibid.*, 30, 180; Dworaczek, *First Polish colonies*, 37.

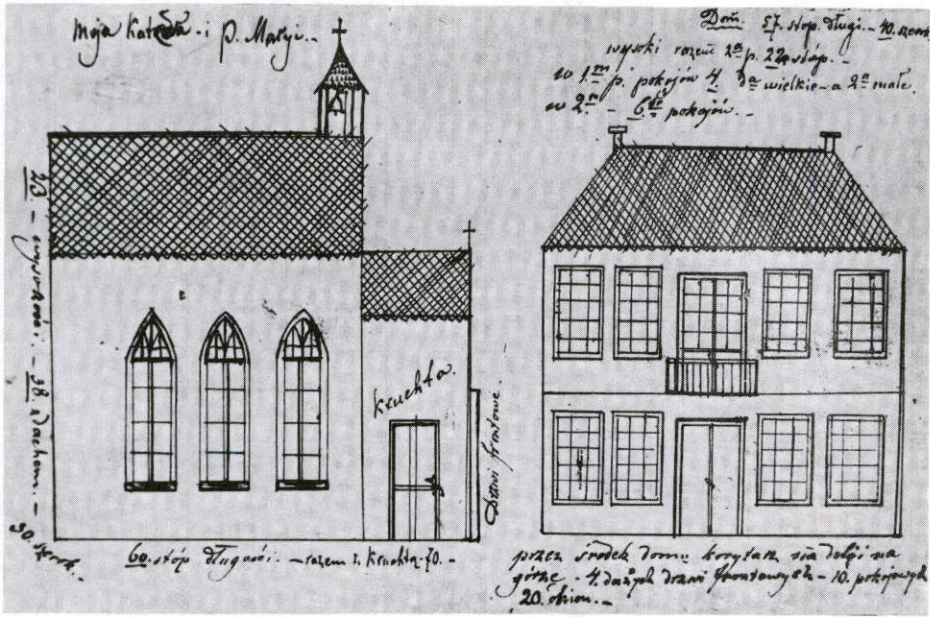


FIG. 11.—Drawing of the completed church and school at Panna Maria as they appeared in 1869. The original drawing by the Rev. Adolf Bakanowski is preserved in the Archives of the Congregation of the Resurrection, Rome, Italy, item no. 9368. Photograph by the author.

started promoting the idea of such a building during the winter he arrived in 1866.

By 27 March of the next spring, a contract had been signed for the construction of the school-rectory. However, work proceeded slowly because of the scarcity of funds. Writing back to Europe to his superiors, Father Bakanowski blamed the slow progress on both his parishioners and the bishop for not giving enough money to pay for the completion of the building. After more than fourteen months of intermittent work, finally the combined school and rectory was completed on 15 May 1868, making it the first Polish school in the United States.¹⁹⁵

One of the most important events in the religious life of Panna Maria during Reconstruction was the elevation of Felix Źwiardowski to the priesthood. Źwiardowski had come to Texas as a student of divinity with the other Resurrectionists in the autumn of 1866. During the months following his arrival in Texas he studied theology with the Reverend Bakanowski, and then in May and June of 1867 he went for further study with Bishop Dubuis in Galveston, but the young

195. Brożek, "Najstarsza polska szkoła," 59-73; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 38-43; Kruszkka, *Historia polska*, 495-497. In order for the school-rectory to be built, the original cemetery at Panna Maria had to be removed to its present location northwest of the town, which gave rise to the numerous ghost stories connected with the old school. For examples of such stories, see Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 60; Annette Fenner, "The headless ghost of Panna Maria," in *Backwoods to Border*, ed. Mody C. Boatright and Donald Day, Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society no. 18 (Austin, 1943), 140-141; Bernard Pajewski, "The headless ghost of Panna Maria," *Polish Folklore*, 4(March 1959):11-12. The 1868 school at Panna Maria now serves as the local historical museum.

priest wanted to return to Panna Maria to say his first Mass, which would conclude his elevation to the priesthood.

In Panna Maria, the celebrations for Żwiardowski's elevation were among the greatest in the history of the town. For five days there were religious devotions, retreats, and exercises. From five in the morning until seven in the evening the church was filled. All the Polish priests and many people from all the Polish settlements came to Panna Maria for the event. The first day of celebrations saw the actual elevation of Żwiardowski. About ten in the morning, a religious procession of people in holiday attire started from the rectory to the church with the young priest, dressed in the usual vestments for conducting services, bringing up the rear. Fifty little girls, wearing garlands and dressed in white, threw flowers at the young man's feet as he passed. Upon entering the church, Żwiardowski met Father Bakanowski at the altar and, after receiving his brief greeting, began his first Mass.¹⁹⁶

As the 1870's approached, the Silesians of Panna Maria for the first time began to enter into the society of the county around them. This change was most closely related to the fact that the Anglo Americans of the county stopped harassing them. By the first months of 1870, the soldiers of Post Helena had succeeded in restoring order to Karnes County, and subsequently the raids on the Poles stopped. The Silesians saw that not all the Southerners were bad, that only some of them had engaged in the abusive actions. Thus, the strained relations between the two groups began to relax.¹⁹⁷

At this time, the economic conditions of the Poles started to improve. Like the American farmers in the county, the Silesians began "large scale" cotton production. The switch to growing cotton probably did more than anything else to raise the Poles' economic level. As Stefan Nesterowicz noted, cotton "gave the colonists the cash that they wanted."¹⁹⁸

It was during the late 1860's and 1870's also that the Panna Marians entered local politics. The first Pole to hold office in Karnes County was Emanuel Rzeppa, who was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1869. In the general election held just a few months later, on 30 November and 1-3 December 1869, Rzeppa was reelected when the Silesians rode in mass to Helena to vote him back into office.¹⁹⁹ From this time on, and in increasing numbers, the Silesians of Panna Maria entered local affairs. This trend became most evident in the mid-1870's. During this time, numerous Poles served on juries, Alex Dziuk served as a

196. Bakanowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 40-41. For a humorous description of the efforts of some of the men to celebrate the elevation of Żwiardowski with a homemade cannon, see pp. 41-42.

197. *Ibid.*, 70; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 205.

198. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 28; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 206.

199. Texas, Secretary of State, Election register 1866-1870, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 492-493; Returns of an election ordered by General Orders no. 174, Headquarters, Fifth Military District, Austin, Texas, 1 October 1869, under the Reconstruction Acts of Congress, in the county of Karnes, State of Texas, for election of "Justices of the Peace" for said county, (second precinct), in U.S., Department of War, Army, Records of the Fifth Military District, Office of Civil Affairs, Manuscript returns of Texas election held 30 November, 1, 2, 3 December 1869, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

county commissioner, and Joseph Kyrish served as a member of the committee that supervised the construction of a new county courthouse.²⁰⁰

The 1870's served as a watershed in the history of Panna Maria. Before this time, the Silesians lived apart from the society around them. Afterwards, they began to live broader lives, venturing into interaction with the Americans. During this time of change, the Panna Marians effected changes in the county around them and in turn were affected by their surroundings. Through the years, the Silesians became "Americanized," but at the same time they retained important parts of their Polish culture, giving themselves and their county a mosaic culture, heterogeneus and yet harmonious.

200. Dworaczyk, *The first Polish colonies*, 46; Thonhoff, "Karnes County," 302-317.

PANNA MARIA AS A CASE STUDY IN THE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE POLISH PEASANT POPULATION OF UPPER SILESIA

The Silesians of Panna Maria present a rare case study in the Polish nationalism of Upper Silesian peasants. These people came to Texas before the forced German denationalization of the Polish population in Silesia, and, therefore demonstrate the level of Polish national consciousness characteristic of Upper Silesian peasantry before Germanization.²⁰¹

Polish nationalism is demonstrated by the Polish language, specific elements of Polish peasant culture, the Silesians' self-image, and observations by people outside Polish communities. Even before they left Europe for America, those Silesians who settled in Karnes County can be identified as Polish from contemporary European sources. Noting the passage of the first group of colonists through Berlin in September 1854, a newspaper stated that the party consisted of "Poles from Upper Silesia."²⁰² Just over a month later the Central-Auswanderungs-Verein für Schlesien, an agency dealing with emigration in Wrocław, reported that "among the Polish people in Upper Silesia one notes the growth of the inclination for immigration. The immigrants go mostly to Texas."²⁰³ Further evidence of the Polish nationality of the founders of Panna Maria comes from the Landrat of Upper Silesia. In his report to Berlin for February 1855, this Prussian official complained that the emigrants from his area could speak no language but Polish.²⁰⁴

Letters sent by the colonists in Karnes County to their relatives in Upper Silesia²⁰⁵ provide additional evidence of the colonists' Polish nationalism. Naive and full of grammatical errors though they may be, these letters show that the Silesian peasants in Texas used the Polish language rather than German or English not only in their correspondence but also in everyday conversation. Furthermore, these letters fit very closely the pattern of hundreds of Polish peasant letters studied in the early 1900's by the sociologists, Thomas and Znaniecki. This form of letter is quite different from that form originating in the realm of German culture.²⁰⁶

The Silesians of Panna Maria saw themselves as Poles. This self-image is revealed in John Moczygemba's letter of May 1855. Here, discussing the employment of an agent to arrange travel for prospective immigrants, Moczygemba subconsciously gave vent to his feeling that Upper Silesian peasants were not Germans when he made the distinction advising, "take a good German."²⁰⁷ The

201. Among the English-language sources that discuss the forced Germanization of the Polish minority in Germany are Jan F. D. Morrow, "The Prussianization of the Poles," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 15(1936-37):153-164; Richard Wonsler Tims, *Germanizing Prussian Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

202. *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska* (Cieszyn), 7 October 1854, p. 555, *vide* Brożek, "Początki emigracji," 5.

203. Report of the Central-Auswanderungs-Verein for October 1854, *vide* Brożek, *Emigracja zamorska*, 13.

204. A. Brożek, "The most Polish of the Poles in America," *Poland and Germany (East & West)*, 14(1970): 18.

205. Brożek and Borek, *Jeszcze jeden*, 14-19; Brożek and Borek, *Pierwsi Ślązacy*, 10-15.

206. Brożek, "The most Polish of the Poles," 19; Thomas and Znaniecki, *Polish peasant*, 1:303-304.

207. Brożek, "The most Polish of the Poles," 22; Brożek and Borek, *Jeszcze jeden*, 18.

national consciousness of the Karnes County Silesians as Poles was demonstrated further by their comments to census taker Thomas Ruckman. When asked where they were born, the Silesians invariably replied, "Prussian Poland," and stressed that they were not German, saying, "I dont want to be classed . . . with these Dutchmen."²⁰⁸

The Silesians of Karnes County not only saw themselves as Polish, but the people around them also identified them that way. Frederick Law Olmstead, in describing his travels through Texas during the 1850's, clearly made the distinction between the Poles of this locality and the much greater German population of Texas. He singled out Panna Maria as being a colony composed of "Silesian Poles."²⁰⁹ At another place in his work, Olmstead made the distinction a second time, writing about "the Silesian peasant" who starts "from the Polish frontier."²¹⁰

In later years, other observers continued making the distinction that the Silesians of Panna Maria were of Polish nationality. Writing in 1890, Thomas Ruckman clearly stated that these Silesians were "Polanders," adding that the spirit of Kosciusko "lurks in their blood & bones."²¹¹ Describing her visit to Panna Maria in the early 1900's, sociologist Emily Balch pictured the colony as one with Polish-speaking children having to be taught English.²¹² When Polish parochial historian Waclaw Kruszkka visited the settlement in December 1917, he noted that the children of the fourth generation greeted him in Polish with the old salutation, "Praised be Jesus Christ," and that they spoke Polish as well as, or better than, English.²¹³ Half a century later, in 1966, President Lyndon Johnson recognized Panna Maria as the oldest Polish settlement in the United States. In this recognition, he gave the community a mosaic of Our Lady of Czestochowa in commemoration of the millennium of Polish Christianity.²¹⁴ Panna Maria has continued to be a strictly Polish settlement up to the present time. Even one hundred and nineteen years after its founding, the Polish language is commonly used in everyday conversation, and Polish traditions are staunchly upheld in the community.²¹⁵

208. Thomas Ruckman papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin, p. 40.

209. Olmstead, *Journey through Texas*, 270.

210. *Ibid.*, 283.

211. Thomas Ruckman papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin, p. 40.

212. Balch, *Slavic fellow citizens*, 229.

213. Kruszkka, *Historja polska*, 367.

214. Dworaczyk, *Millennium history*, 5, 99-103.

215. For a recent linguistic study of the Polish language spoken at Panna Maria, see Franciszek Lyr, "Język polski w najstarszych osadach polskich w Stanach Zjednoczonych" [The Polish language in the oldest Polish colony in the United States], *Zaranie Śląskie*, 28(1965):562-566.

PANNA MARIA AS THE MOTHER COLONY OF THE SILESIAN POLISH SETTLEMENTS IN TEXAS

During the one hundred years that followed its founding, Panna Maria served in several ways as a mother colony for at least sixteen other Silesian Polish settlements in Texas. Incoming Silesian immigrants generally came first to Panna Maria because they knew that here they would find other Silesians who could tell them what to do in their new environment. Then, many would leave because of the high prices of land, the lack of employment, and the fear of disease in the immediate area around Panna Maria. In later years, people left the colony for another reason: the large Polish families had filled the Polish areas of Karnes County to such an extent that overpopulation forced young people to seek homes and employment elsewhere. Occasionally these young people went in groups to found additional colonies.²¹⁶

The Polish community at Bandera was the first colony established by Silesians from Panna Maria. It is located one hundred and ten miles away, in the hill country west of San Antonio. In early 1855, Charles de Montel, who owned the land at the Bandera town site, transported free of charge a group of Silesians from San Antonio first to Castroville and then to the new town of Bandera. Settling there, the Poles were joined by others from later immigrations, creating a substantial Polish community in the otherwise American town. Organized very soon after the arrival of the first Polish colonists, St. Stanislaus parish in Bandera has the distinction of being considered the second oldest Polish parish in the United States.²¹⁷

About the same time that Poles were moving from Panna Maria to Bandera, others moved only half that far, to San Antonio. Because San Antonio was a comparatively large urban center, it had job opportunities that particularly attracted the Silesians. This attraction increased in 1856-57 when severe drought threatened to break up the agricultural colony in Karnes County. Within the first year of Polish settlement in Texas, a number of Poles had moved to San Antonio, and by the time the Civil War ended there was a recognizable Polish quarter in the city. During the second half of the nineteenth century, San Antonio became one of the centers of Polish-American culture in Texas, a position that it continues to hold to the present time.²¹⁸

216. Dworaczyk, *The first Polish colonies*, 7; Kruszk, *Historja polska*, 374-375; Olmstead, *Journey through Texas*, 270.

217. "A Bandera County pioneer," *Frontier Times*, 10(December 1924):13; Amasa Gleason Clark, *Reminiscences of a centenarian* (Bandera: privately printed, 1930), 48-49; Marion Moore Coleman, "The Polish origins of Bandera, Texas," *Polish American Studies*, 20(1963):21-27; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 101-107; J. Marvin Hunter, *A brief history of Bandera County* (Baird, Texas: Baird Star, 1949), 4-5, 33-35; J. Marvin Hunter, *A brief history of Bandera County* (Bandera: *Frontier Times*, 1936), 6-7, 43-46; J. Marvin Hunter, "The founding of Bandera," *Frontier Times*, 3(July 1926):40-44; J. Marvin Hunter, *100 years in Bandera 1853-1953* ([Bandera]: privately printed, 1953), 6-7, 20, 37, 47, 52, 77, 83, 90; J. Marvin Hunter, Sr., "When the Polish people came to Bandera," *Frontier Times*, 25 (May 1948):191-195; Kruszk, 504-506, 610-614; Olmstead, *Journey through Texas*, 270; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 59-61; St. Stanislaus parish, Bandera, Texas, *Centennial history* (privately printed, [1955]); *San Antonio Light*, 26 April 1955, p. 27.

218. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 90-101; John A. Joyce, *Our Polish pioneers* (San Antonio: St. Michael's School, [1937]), 1-44; Chester Thomas Kochan, "The Polish people of San Antonio, Texas, 1900-1960: a study in social mobility," M.A. thesis, University of Texas (Austin), 1970; Kruszk, *Historja*

St. Hedwig, between Panna Maria and San Antonio, was founded by Silesians who came to Texas as members of the second immigration, in December 1855. When the group of Silesians reached San Antonio, a smaller party broke away from the larger group that went on the Panna Maria. This smaller group, about thirteen families, went instead to the area around the mouth of Martinez Creek on Cibolo Creek above the original Polish colony. There they settled in an agricultural village that they named St. Hedwig after a patron saint of Silesia.²¹⁹

Meyersville and Yorktown, two Silesian colonies in De Witt County, share a somewhat joint history. The older of the two, Meyersville, was settled in 1856 by Polish colonists from Panna Maria. However, within a few years, an increased number of German settlers came to outnumber the earlier Poles. Nationalistic antagonism grew between the two groups over language use in the church. Although most of the Poles remained in the vicinity of Meyersville, after the Civil War most of them began to attend Mass twelve miles away at the strictly Polish church at Yorktown. Silesians from Panna Maria had begun settling around Yorktown in the late 1850's. In 1867, they organized a church and soon thereafter were joined in worshipping there by the Poles from Meyersville, and Yorktown became a local center of Polish culture for people from both communities. Their descendants still maintain a Polish parish in the town.²²⁰

Czestochowa, only five miles north of Panna Maria, was occupied similarly in the 1850's by Silesians from the original colony at Panna Maria. The peasants named their new settlement after Czestochowa, Poland, the center of Polish Roman Catholicism.²²¹ The settlement has remained essentially a rural community and has retained its strong Polish character up to the present time.²²²

Kosciusko, thirteen miles north of Panna Maria, across the Wilson County line, was settled by Silesians from Czestochowa in the 1880's. These former Czestochowans founded their own Polish parish at Kosciusko in 1892, taking away parishioners from the church at Czestochowa the same way that the establishment of the Czestochowa church had done to Panna Maria only a few years before. The settlers at this new colony named it Kosciusko after Tadeusz Kosciusko, hero of both the American Revolution and the Polish insurrection of 1791-1794 against the Russians.²²³

poliska, 499-501, 608-610; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 13-16, 22-31; Sister Jan Maria Wozniak, "St. Michael's church: the Polish national Catholic church in San Antonio, Texas, 1855-1950," M.A. thesis, University of Texas (Austin), 1964.

219. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 107-117; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 501-504, 614-617; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 181-183, 200-201; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 16-19.

220. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 118-126; J. M. Gilbert, ed., *Archdiocese of San Antonio 1874-1949* (San Antonio: Schneider Printing, 1949), 79-80, 82-83; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 506, 617-618; John William Mullally, "A study of marriage patterns in a rural Polish Roman-Catholic parish from 1872 to 1959," M.A. thesis, University of Texas (Austin), 1963; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 210-214; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 55, 57.

221. Oscar Falecki, "The place of Czestochowa in Poland's millennium," *Catholic Historical Review*, 52(1967):494-508.

222. Olgierd Budrewicz, *Spotkania z Polakami* [Visits with Poles] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1969), 9-19; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 126-136; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 622-624; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 190-195; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 50-52.

223. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 136-141; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 195-197; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 52-53.

Falls City, another community composed of Silesian Poles originally from Panna Maria, is located about six miles west of Czeszochowa. The town came into existence in 1887 after the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad located a railway switch at the site. Numbers of younger Poles from Karnes County moved to the new town in hopes of economic betterment. Desiring to use the Polish language in religious services, these Silesians established in 1902 their own Polish church.²²⁴

White Deer, in the northern Texas Panhandle, was settled in the 1900's by Silesians from Karnes County. Two Poles originally from Panna Maria, Henry Czerner and Ben Urbanczyk, visited the region during the summer of 1909 to investigate the possibility of immigration there. Returning home with good reports, these men and their families, together with others from the older Polish settlements in the Karnes County area, started moving to the vicinity around White Deer in late 1909 and 1910. These Polish farmers and their descendents have remained in the immediate area of their settlement and at the present time constitute a substantial portion of the White Deer community. They are noted in west Texas for their annual sausage festivals, which draw large numbers of visitors.²²⁵

In the 1920's and 1930's a number of Polish families from Karnes and Wilson counties moved to Hidalgo County in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Farming in the area around McCook, these Silesians organized their own Polish Catholic church and became substantial members of the south Texas community.²²⁶

In addition to these settlements, Silesians founded or moved into a number of smaller communities in the San Antonio area. Among several such colonies, four are mentioned here. As early as 1870 a number of Polish colonists had settled northeast of San Antonio in the area around San Marcos. About twenty years later, some of these Silesians moved to the area around Lockhart, where in 1891 they established a community named Polonia.²²⁷ Southeast of San Antonio, near Victoria, a group of Silesians established in the early 1870's a colony they dubbed "Gazeta" at the present town of Inez.²²⁸ Likewise to the southeast, another group of Silesians founded a Polish colony at Stockdale. The Poles here organized their own church and, for a while, sent their children to the Polish parochial schools at Panna Maria and Kosciusko.²²⁹ To the south, in Atascosa County, a number of Polish families began a colony at a place called Las Gallinas. In the

224. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 141-148; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 187-190; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 53-55; Thonhoff, "Karnes County," 218, 247-249.

225. *Amarillo Sunday News-Globe* (Texas), 14 August 1938, sec. F, p. 15; Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 151-155; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 73-74; Jo Stewart Randel and Carson County Historical Survey Committee, eds., *A time to purpose: a chronicle of Carson County* (Pioneer Publishers, 1966), 1:256-270, 2:134-138, 145-152, 195-197, 328-334.

226. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 141, 155-156; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 74-75.

227. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 149-151; Nesterowicz, *Notatki z podróży*, 214-215; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 73.

228. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 151; Kruszcza, *Historja polska*, 621; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 58.

229. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 150; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 73.

1870's this community retained enough of its Polish character to require the ministrations of visiting Polish priests.²³⁰

Panna Maria clearly served as the mother colony of these Polish settlements. However, it must be noted that in Texas there are a number of other towns with large Polish populations that had only slight connection with the Silesian settlements. These communities, such as Bremond, Marlin, Anderson, and Thurber, gained large Polish populations in the last third of the nineteenth century. Such towns were peopled with immigrants from all three parts of the partitioned Polish kingdom, not merely from one region of one Prussian province as were the Texas Silesian communities.

The fact that Panna Maria is not the mother colony of these other Polish communities does not detract from its importance. Panna Maria did serve as the mother colony for about half of the Polish settlements in Texas. A large portion of the Polish population of the state can trace its lineage to the original Polish colony. In a broader sense, Panna Maria served as the drawing point for the first organized immigration of Polish peasants to the United States. These Silesian immigrants were the forerunners of the thousands of Polish peasants who started coming to America only a decade later.

230. Dworaczyk, *First Polish colonies*, 150; Kruska, *Historja polska*, 621; Przygoda, *Texas pioneers*, 73.

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