

Polish Americans Began To Settle Here in 1882

The Polish American colony in Fall River, numbering some 8,000 persons, is 71 years old.

The first Polish immigrant settled in this city in 1882. He was Frank Przelor, who established a home on Saucier Street after finding employment in one of the city's textile plants.

According to unofficial records gathered by Stanley Kania, student of Polish history, Przelor came here from Chicopee (Mass.) where there was already a sizeable settlement of Polish immigrants who left Europe seeking better economic conditions and freedom from political oppression.

Among other early Polish settlers here were the Urban brothers, including the late father of Louis (Luke) Urban, Durfee High School coach; and the families of Sienkowski and Zwolinski. They also came here from Chicopee.

The flow of Polish immigrants to this city directly from Europe reached its zenith in the years 1905 to 1913.

The Poles today form one of the largest groups of foreign stock in this country. There are about six million people of Polish birth and parentage in the United States, many of them already in fourth and fifth generations.

Polish people were in America long before the Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower. The first Poles landed here in 1608, a year after the establishment of Virginia, the oldest American colony.

Polish Americans were among the first settlers of New Holland and New Jersey. They settled among the Swedes in New Sweden and among the early Quakers in Pennsylvania.

They penetrated the wild lands of the Middle West as surveyors and missionaries. The renowned Sanduskis were among the first whites to penetrate into Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. They were the founders of Harrodstown.

Armed uprisings for freedom in Poland, undertaken from generation to generation, in spite of defeats, to throw off the triple enslavement by the countries that partitioned her, cast many homeless Poles to the shores of America.

The greater majority were refugees of the November, 1830 uprising, who were destined to be highly influential in the development of American intellectual life and political ideas.

They brought their varied talents, their ideals and passionate love for freedom to America. Through their effort rose the first Polish-American organizations, the first Polish books printed in America.

Polish persons sought liberty and bread in America in greater and greater numbers in the late 13th century.

At first, groups of Polish farmers headed for the States of Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska and other sections of the central-west, and transformed its virgin earth and woods into flourishing farms.

Others settled on neglected and deserted farms in New England and New York, which again yielded rich crops under their experienced hands.

Still others went into mines and city factories and by the strength of their muscles and sweat of their brows, became one of the main influencing factors in the transformation of the United States into the most powerful industrial empire on earth.

Because jobs were plentiful in

founded in 1916 to serve Polish Roman Catholics in the East end and Maplewood sections of the city. The parish prospered and grew rapidly under the energetic leadership of the late Rev. Raphael Marciniak, O.F.M.C.

Under his reign, the present edifice on Child Street was constructed and dedicated in 1927. Later, a parochial school was acquired on Buffinton Street and a convent for the Franciscan Sisters who teach in the school, was erected next to the church on Child Street.

Father Marciniak was also instrumental in having the playground located across the street from the church named Pulaski Park. A memorial tablet in honor of the Polish Revolutionary war hero has been erected on the park. Holy Cross parishioners conduct patriotic exercises at the site annually on Pulaski Day, Oct. 11.

Realizing the necessity of organization for mutual protection and benevolence, the Polish immigrants began to organize at the first opportune moment.

The first organization was founded in 1906. It was known as Children of Poland. Later the name was changed to Julius Slowacki Lodge when the unit became affiliated with the Polish National Alliance, the largest Polish fraternal organization in the country.

There are approximately 24 Polish fraternal, veteran, political and religious organizations in the city today.

In 1933, five of the leading groups formed a corporation and founded the Polish National Home on Montaup and Globe Streets which has since become the hub of Polish American activities in the community.

Three Polish political clubs play an active part in the community not only in assisting members of its race in the field of politics but in charitable and social work as well. They are the Thaddeus Kosciuszko, White Eagle and Casimir Pulaski Clubs.

The Kosciuszko Club is a member of the Polish Home corporation. The White Eagle group has its own building on Lowell Street. The Pulaski Club quarters are located at Globe and Church Streets.

Poles look on with pride upon their citizens engaged in the various professions including medicine and teaching. Two Polish dentists are practicing in the city. There are six teachers of Polish descent in the public school system.

Fall River Polish Americans are gratified to feel that members of their race on the police force, in the fire department, post office, municipal departments and other fields of endeavors are counted among the most diligent and efficient.

The Poles are proud of their contributions to American war efforts. They have shed blood in every conflict since the Revolutionary war.

In 1949, the Polish American War Veterans and Auxiliary dedicated a memorial at Plymouth Avenue and Globe Street in honor of 32 Fall Riverites who paid the supreme sacrifice in World War II.

By their diligence, industry, thrift and inherent honesty, the Polish Americans have gained for themselves respect of their fellow citizens.

It is generally agreed, that the Polish immigrant in this city and throughout the United States makes a good citizen and is an asset to the country.

Because jobs were plentiful in the mills of a humming textile center, majority of the Polish immigrants settling in Fall River found employment in the textile industry. Many of them are employed in the mills to the present day.

In spite of all difficulties Polish immigrants had to combat in a strange land, they managed to create a rich social life based on four factors: parishes, schools, organizations and the press.

Throughout the United States, the Polish Americans have contributed 800 excellently organized parishes, 500 schools of various types, more than 100 Polish language newspapers and a series of various humanitarian and cultural institutions.

Polish settlements and neighborhoods became the greatest Polish offering to the spiritual development of America. Colorful Polish folklore was preserved in these Polish neighborhoods in order to weave itself into the pattern of various influences out of which arises American culture.

In such neighborhoods, the Polish immigrant gradually became acquainted with the language, customs and institutions of a new country and became an American.

Following this pattern, the Polish immigrants in Fall River founded four parishes.

The St. Stanislaus on Rockland Street and Holy Cross on Child Street are Roman Catholic. They support their own elementary parochial schools.

The Blessed Virgin on Centre Street and Holy Trinity on Winthrop Street are Polish National Catholic. They have no schools but conduct weekend classes in the Polish language for the children of the parishes.

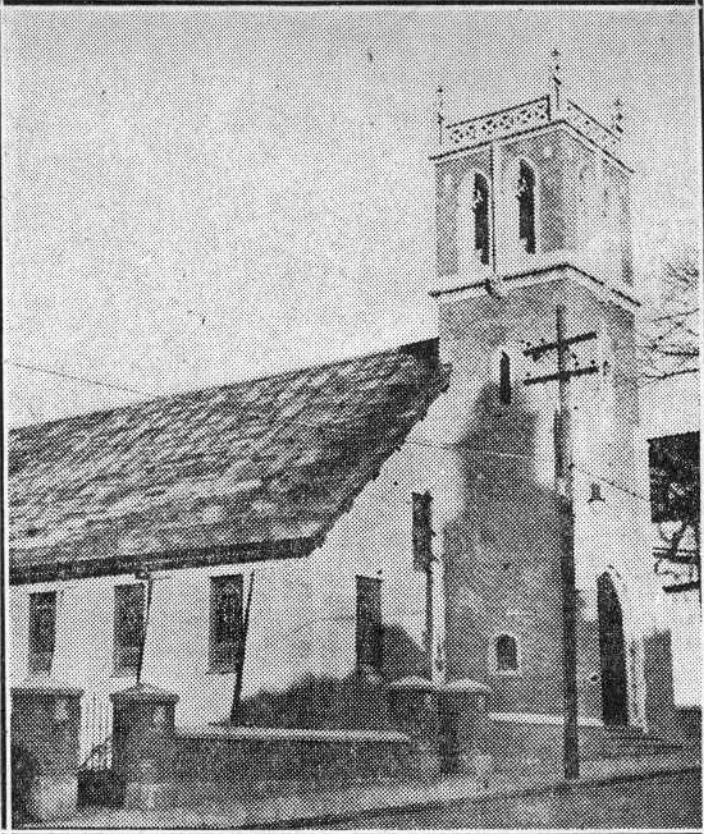
The Blessed Virgin Church founded in 1898 is the oldest Polish parish in the city.

The St. Stanislaus' parish, the largest in the community, was organized in 1899. Prior to erecting their own edifice, however, the parishioners fulfilled their religious obligations by attending St. Mary's Cathedral. Rev. Hugo Dylla has served as pastor of the parish since 1918.

The Holy Trinity parish was organized in 1911 by a group of individuals who seceded from the St. Stanislaus' Church. As an independent body, the parishioners retained the Roman Catholic ceremony and to a great extent the Catholic doctrine, but rejected Papal claims and Roman hierarchial control.

The church remained an independent body for 27 years. Upon the death of its pastor, Rev. Walter Dyniewicz, several years ago, the church became affiliated with the Polish National Catholic Order. Many of the parishioners at that time, however, returned to the Roman Catholic Church, joining either the Holy Cross or St. Stanislaus' churches.

The Holy Cross parish was



—Herald News Photo

ST. STANISLAUS' CHURCH on Rockland Street, the largest Polish parish in Fall River.



POLISH BAND: One of the first Polish musical aggregations in this city was the Polish National Band formed by Polish immigrants in the early 1900's.