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 permanent migrant settled in this city in 1882. He was Frank Przelor, who established a home on Summer Street after finding employment in one of the city's textile plants.

According to unofficial records and a review of Polish history, Przelor came here from Chiopepe (Mass.) where he was among the earliest settlement of Polish immigrants who left Europe seeking better economic opportunities and freedom from political oppression. Among other early Polish settlers here were the Urban brothers, John and Frank (Luke) Urban, Dufree High School coach, and the families of Wawryk and Zograf. The Wawryks also came here from Chiopepe.

The flow of Polish immigrants to Fall River, directly from Europe, reached its height in the years 1910 to 1913. The Poles today form one of the largest national groups in this country. There are about six million people of Polish birth and ancestry in the United States, many of them already in fourth and fifth generations.

The first wave to settle in America came as early as 1850. At that time, the Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower. The first Poles landed here in 1860, a year after the completion of the Pennsylvania Railroad. They penetrated the wild lands of the Middle West as surveyors, farmers, and lumberjacks. The second wave of immigration was the Poles of the Swedes, who arrived mostly in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They settled among the Swedes in New Sweden, and in the early 1840s in Pennsylvania.

Armed uprisings for freedom in Europe inspired them to make the trip to America. In spite of defeat, they refused to bow to the triple enslavement by the countries of their birth. The Poles settled in the United States, the shores of America.

The greater majority were refugees, fleeing to America from political persecution. The refugees were highly skilled and learned to be in demand in the development of American intellectual life and political ideals.

They brought their varied talents and ideals and passionate love for freedom to this country. Their hard work and effort rose the first Polish-American organizations, the first Polish banks, the first Polish newspapers, the first Polish churches, and the first Polish schools.

Polish persons sought liberty and freedom in America in greater and greater numbers in the early 20th century. At first, groups of Polish farmers headed for the States of Wisconsin, Michigan, and other parts of the central west, and transformed their virgin land into productive land.

Others settled on neglected farms in New England, where they grew crops under their own hands.

The Poles' efforts were notable in mines and factories and by the strength of their muscles and sweat of their brows. Some became one of the main ingredients of the transformation of the United States into one of the most powerful industrial nations of the world.

Because jobs were plentiful in Fall River, the Polish-American population grew rapidly under the energetic leadership of the late Rev. Raphaele T. Marciniszyk, who served this church as pastor for 49 years.

Under his reign, the present edifice on Child Street was constructed and dedicated in 1897. Under his leadership, the church acquired on Buffinton Street and a convent for the Franciscan Sisters who teach in the school, which was erected next to the church on Child Street.

Father Marciniszyk was also instrumental in acquiring land for a Sunday school building across Spring Street from the church named Polanski Park. The home of the Polish Revolutionary War hero, who has been erected on the park. The St. Patrick Parish, conducted its first services at the church in 1897.

Poland's Day, Oct. 11.

For the first time in history, it is known as Child Street in Poland, and the church name changes to St. Joseph's Polish National Parish, the largest Polish Catholic parish organization in the country.

There are approximately 24 Polish clubs in the city today. There are about 15 religious organizations in the city today.

Three Polish cultural clubs play an active part in the city, not only in assisting members of the Polish community, but in charitable and social work as well. They are the Thaddeus Kosciusko Eagles and the Czar Polish Clubs.

The Kosciusko Club is a membership society with an annual dinner and dance. The White Eagle group has its own building on Lowell Street.

Poles look on with pride as citizens' various organizations and groups contribute to every aspect of the public school system.

Fall River Polish Americans are proud of their heritage. Their race on the police force, in the fire department, post office, and other public buildings, and fields of endeavor are counted among the most diligent and efficient.

The Poles are proud of their contributions to America. They worked hard to make every citizen of the United States.

In 1949, the Polish American War Veterans and Auxiliary dedicated a monument at the intersection of South Street and Globe Street in honor of 22 Polish veterans who paid the supreme sacrifice.

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

It is generally agreed that the Polish immigrant in this city and throughout the United States made a significant contribution to the nation and is an asset to the country.
Because jobs were plentiful in the mills of a humbling 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 from the time 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 community has 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 cultural phenomenon in 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 immigrants 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 Most Holy Sts. 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. These parishes 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 Polish 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 1919.

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 the hierarchical control.

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

The Holy Cross parish was
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.