

## Meyersville, Texas, and Its Early Catholic Churches

by Mary Ann Moczygemba Watson

In 1846, Adolph Meyer with his family settled near the Twelve Mile Coleta Creek, and in 1847, the community was named Meyersville. The colony is located about 14 miles from Cuero which is the county seat for DeWitt County. Until a store was established, supplies had to be brought from Victoria requiring a three-day trip. In 1851, a post office was established in Adolph Meyer's home on the Clinton-Goliad road.

At first the settlement comprised a dominant German population. Peter Bluntzer, a Catholic from Alsace, donated 15 acres of land for the first church, but until the project was accomplished, Mass was observed in the Bluntzer home. Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Meyersville was completed in 1859, and the first Mass in the new church was celebrated on November 4th by Rev. John Koenig. The church was dedicated on January 1, 1860. In 1876, a Catholic cemetery was established near the Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church.

Following the 1854 settlers to Panna Maria, a second group emigrated in 1855 from the region of Upper Silesia in present-day Poland, purchased land, and made their homes in the Meyersville area. Because of language and cultural differences between the original colonists, the Silesians formed their own place of worship, a mission church of Panna Maria.

The devoted parishioners built their church in 1902 on the Yorktown-Meyersville road two miles northwest of Meyersville and named it in honor of St. Joseph. The members instituted their own burial grounds, the St. Joseph Cemetery.

Throughout history though, perhaps to distinguish the parishes, the two houses of worship were referred to as the "German church" and the "Polish church."



St. Joseph Catholic Church, Meyersville, Texas  
Photograph from: *Travel Notes*, page 129

The earliest known sacramental archives begin in 1867, and it appears that both the German and Polish churches recorded their documents in the Sts. Peter and Paul register. Interspersed with German names, familiar Silesian surnames such as Bednorz, Bomba, Długi, Gregorczyk, Jendry, Kolodziej, Kolodziejczyk, Korcz, Kozielski, Ledwick, Olejnik, Prukop, Richter, Scheffler, Sklorz, Tam, Warzecka, Winkler, Zając, and Zowada are obvious.

St. Joseph Catholic Church was at first ministered by Rev. Anthony Rossadowski and Rev. Julian Przysiecki. Later the Benedictine Fathers and Resurrectionist Fathers took charge of these Catholic worshipers who never had a resident pastor. From 1892-1898, Rev. Henry Gerlach served the parish, but he did not speak Polish. It was during his tenure that Fr. Gerlach directed the building of a school in early 1892 and employed a Sister to teach in the Polish language.



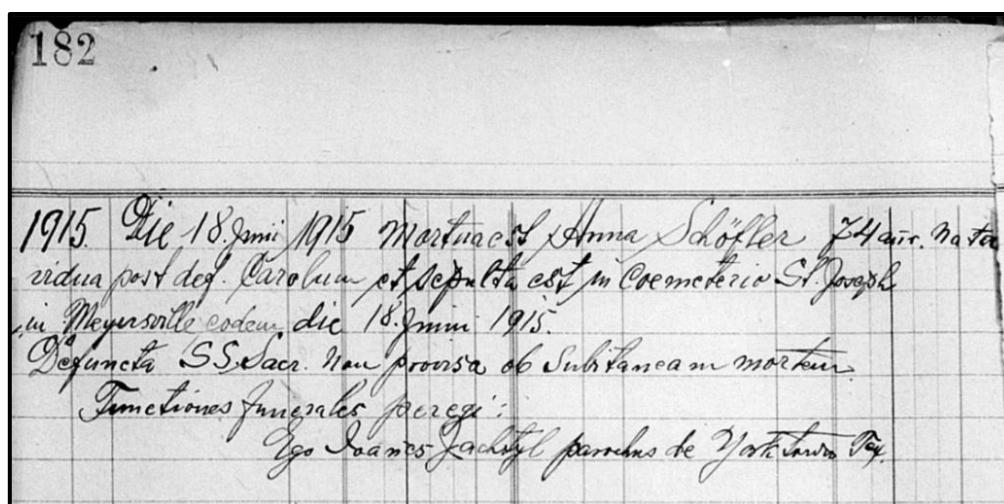
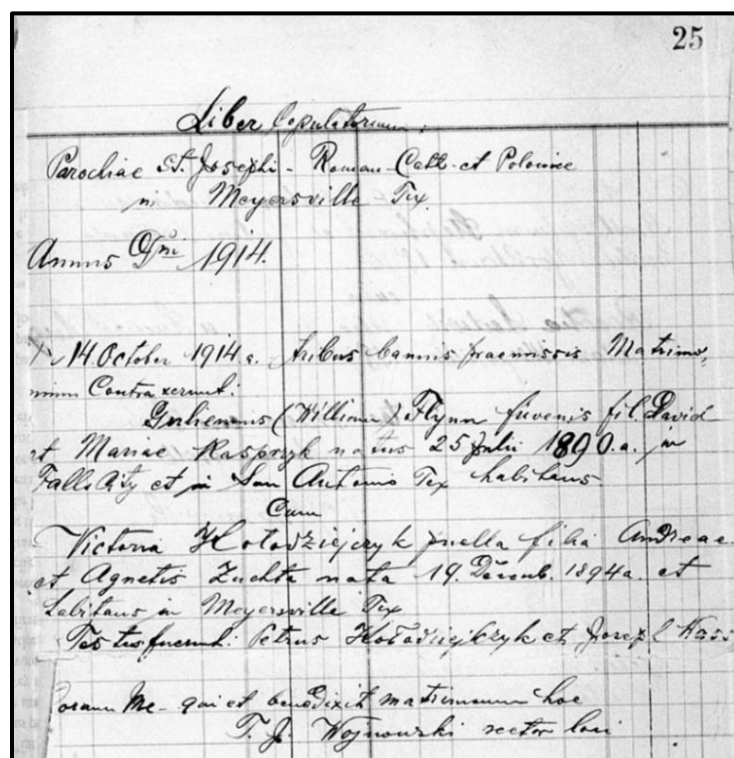
*Faculty and students of St. Joseph's School, Meyersville, about 1898*

*Photograph courtesy of: Doris Fischer Obsta, Victoria, Texas  
Published in: The Polish Texans, page 87*

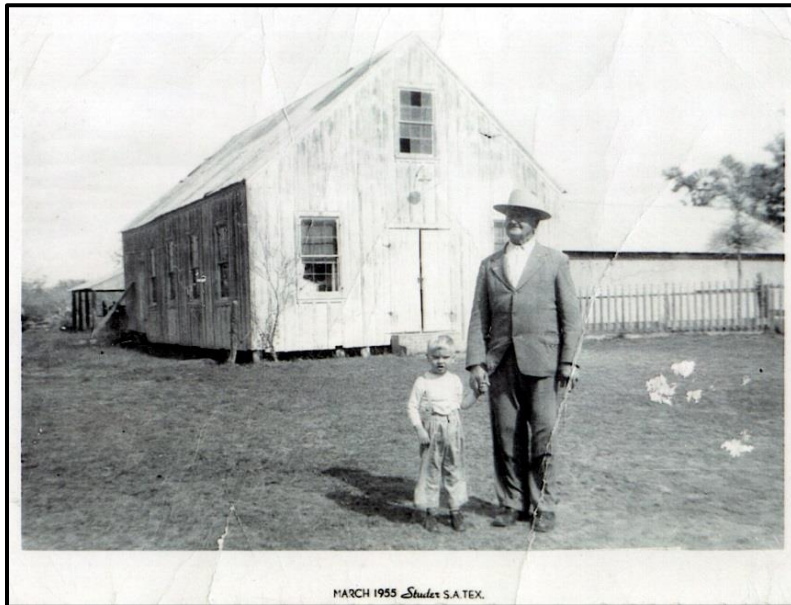


In the early 1900s, Rev. Thomas J. Moczygemba served the “Polish church” and was followed by Rev. Emanuel J. Wrobel from 1907-1909. Rarely ever did the sacramental recordings designate which of the two churches the parishioner was a member. Here are two exceptions:

The priest, Rev. T. J. Wojnowski, noted at the top of the page, St. Joseph Roman Catholic Parish est Poloniae in Meyersville, Texas, where the marriage took place on 14 October 1914. The groom was William Flynn, son of David and Marie Kasprzyk. The bride Victoria was the daughter of Andreas Kolodziejczyk and Agnes Zuchta (p. 25, first entry).



Anna Schöfler [Scheffler], age 74, widow of Carol Scheffler, died on 18 June 1915 and was buried the same day in *caemeterio St. Joseph in Meyersville*. The priest signed his name: Joanes Jachtyl, parish of Yorktown, Texas (p. 182, first entry).



In 1955, John B. Scheffler (1879-1963) took his grandson Marvin to Meyersville to show him the schoolhouse where he had attended as a young student.

*Photograph courtesy of: Anton C. Scheffler (1921-2007)*



The parochial school was closed in 1902, but the community preserved the original building by restoring and adding to the structure creating a church communal hall for the Sts. Peter and Paul parish.

*Photograph courtesy of: Geraldine Moczygemba Wilder, Portland, Texas*

In 1911, according to an article in the *San Antonio Express*, Rev. A. Stroebele had been assigned to oversee two Catholic churches in Goliad “and the St. Joseph (Polish) Church at Meyersville” (20 March 1911, p. 7).

Though the Sts. Peter and Paul parish persevered, it suffered many trials. The present building is the fourth to be constructed. After the first, dedicated in 1860, a second and larger church was completed in 1880. A hurricane demolished this structure, and a third was built, along with a rectory, but this third building was destroyed by fire in 1938. “Adam Jendry, here from Meyersville Saturday to renew for the paper, said that the destruction of the Meyersville

Catholic Church and rectory was a huge loss. The loss was covered with about \$4,000 insurance... The congregation has decided to make use of the old St. Joseph's Church, a few miles this side of Upper Meyersville, until arrangements can be made to build a new edifice. The grounds and building of St. Joseph's Church are being reconditioned, and services will be held there for the present, Mr. Jendry said" (*Victoria Advocate*, 2 December 1938, p. 4).

Again the worshipers rebuilt, and the Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church continues to be an active parish reporting to the Diocese of Victoria.



Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Meyersville, Texas  
*Photograph courtesy of: Janet Jones, editor, The Catholic Lighthouse*



In the earlier years, the south side of Meyersville was called "Upper Meyersville," and the settlement on the north side became "Lower Meyersville." This distinction which separated the two areas was dropped when the population began to decrease and was referred afterward to its original name of Meyersville.

By 1940, some from the "Polish Church" had returned to the Sts. Peter and Paul Church, but most began worshipping with the Silesian community in Yorktown twelve miles away. The Meyersville St. Joseph Church was demolished in 1946, and the lumber was used for building the new Yorktown school.

The St. Joseph Cemetery still remains on FM 237 as a testament to the early settlers whose names are carved on the tombstones.



*Photograph courtesy of: Geraldine Moczygemba Wilder, Portland, Texas*



The Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, 11220 FM 237, Meyersville, Texas. Pictured on the left is the church as it existed in the 1940s. The photograph on the right is a current depiction.

Photograph on left from: *Archdiocese of San Antonio Diamond Jubilee 1874-1949*, page 79

Photograph on right from: [www.victoriadiocese.org](http://www.victoriadiocese.org)

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