

# Pyka

WIFE'S MAIDEN NAME: **JASZKOWITZ**

---

HUSBAND'S NAME	Johann (John) Pyka
BIRTH DATE	23 June 1821
BIRTH PLACE	Kamień Śląski, Poland
BAPTISM DATE	23 June 1821
BAPTISM PLACE	Św. Jacka (St. Hyacinth), Kamień Śląski, Poland
MARRIAGE DATE	2 October 1843
MARRIAGE PLACE	Św. Jacka (St. Hyacinth), Kamień Śląski, Poland
OCCUPATIONS	Texas: master wheelwright, carpenter, and farmer
RESIDENCES	Kamień Śląski and Daniec, Poland; Bandera, Texas
DEATH DATE	3 January 1896
DEATH PLACE	Bandera, Texas
BURIAL PLACE	St. Stanislaus Cemetery, Bandera, Texas

---

WIFE'S MAIDEN NAME	Francisca (Frances) Jaskowitz
BIRTH DATE	21 December 1821
BIRTH PLACE	Kamionek, Poland
BAPTISM DATE	22 December 1821
BAPTISM PLACE	Św. Jacka (St. Hyacinth), Kamień Śląski, Poland
RESIDENCES	Kamionek and Daniec, Poland; Bandera, Texas
DEATH DATE	20 February 1904
BURIAL PLACE	St. Stanislaus Cemetery, Bandera, Texas

---

## Sources and Additional Information

BAPTISMS	Św. Jacka, Kamień Śląski, Poland (LDS Microfilm #0922844) Husband: p. 155, entry #39    Wife: p. 165, entry #3
MARRIAGE	Św. Jacka, Kamień Śląski, Poland, p. 67, entry #11 (LDS Microfilm #0922846)
SHIP AND PORT TAX ROLLS	<i>Weser</i> arrived Galveston, Texas, on 3 December 1854. Texas: 1856 and 1857 Bandera County
LAND RECORD	Bandera County Deeds, Volume A3, p. 27, date of instrument: 13 October 1856, date filed: 10 November 1856 (bought from John James, Charles de Montel, and John Herndon)
CITIZENSHIP	Document of Dismissal: Release from Prussian citizenship, 31 July 1854, Opole, Poland; Declaration of Intention: 31 March 1858, Bandera County; Voter Registration: 16 September 1867, Bandera County (Naturalization referenced in this record)
FEDERAL CENSUS	Texas: 1860, 1870, and 1880 Bandera County
BURIAL RECORD	Wife: St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, Bandera, Texas, p. 282, third entry (LDS Microfilm #0024903)
OBITUARY	Husband: <i>Southern Messenger</i> , 9 January 1896, p. 8
TOMBSTONES	Both in St. Stanislaus Cemetery, Bandera, Texas
PROBATE	Husband: Bandera County, Volume 3, pp. 505-509, 512, 520-521, Will #138, date filed: 24 August 1896
OTHER	John's brother Anton Pyka immigrated to Texas in 1855 (see Anton Pyka profile).
VARIATIONS	Wife's maiden name spellings include: Jaskowitz, Jasichkowitz, Jaskowitz, and Jaschkowitz



**J**ohn was the son of Franz Pyka and Susanna Szczepanik. Francisca was the daughter of George Jaskowitz and Rosalia Dalla. They married in 1843 and sailed to Texas on the *Weser* with their four children in 1854.

John Pyka, a wheelwright, settled his family in Bandera County with 15 other Polish families (Bandera County Historical Commission, 1993, Volume 15, Number 2, p. 2; Bandera County History Book Committee, 1986, pp. 492-493). Each family was given one town lot by Charles de Montel, one of the founders of Bandera. In addition, John bought a 40-acre farm and built a log cabin (Hunter, 1970, p. 140). By 1870 John owned 48 acres valued at \$150, farm equipment valued at \$115, and 3 horses, 17 milk cows, 10 oxen, 33 other cattle, and 3 swine totalling \$315. He also had 200 bushels of Indian corn, 2 bushels of sweet potatoes, 50 pounds of butter, and 5 tons of hay (U.S. Agricultural Census, Bandera County, 1870, line 25). He continued to work as a wheelwright and carpenter while Francisca cooked for the men who worked for Charles de Montel (Hunter, 1970, pp. 140-141).

John fulfilled his civic duty on several occasions. In 1860 and 1861, he was one of several members of a crew who worked on the road from Bandera to San Antonio. From 1861 until 1871, John served as a grand juror six times and as a petit juror at least six times for the District Court of Bandera County (Bandera County Commissioner's Court Minutes, Volume A, pp. 40-148).

In 1888 John wrote out his last will and testament in Polish. He referred to himself as "...old man Pyka..." and apportioned his property and assets among several of his children (Institute of Texan Cultures, Library, Pyka family file).

### Baptism Records of Pyka Children

6 August 1844	Marianna	p. 296, entry #141	Św. Michała,
6 September 1846	Constantina	p. 353, entry #116	Rozmierz, Poland (LDS Microfilm #0922993)
1 November 1848	Johann	p. 28, entry #121	(LDS Microfilm #0922994)
8 December 1850	Francisca	p. 85, entry #201	
11 September 1857	Carolina	p. 73, entry #439	St. Louis Catholic Church, Castroville, Texas (LDS Microfilm #0024958)
Circa 1859	Francis	not yet found	
6 April 1864	Anton	entry #1651	San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio, Texas

Link: Constantina married John Adamietz on 10 May 1866 in Bandera County (Volume A, p. 36, entry #35; see Simon Adamietz profile).



## Remembrances of a Silesian Daughter

*“...then came the sorrow of bidding old friends goodbye...”*

*In the early 1920s, Constantina Pyka Adamietz, daughter of John and Francisca Pyka, shared her memories about the family's sojourn from Poland to Texas. Her reminiscences provide great detail about the decision to emigrate and the early days of Texas in the 1850s. In 1922 Constantina was living on the property given to her father by Charles de Montel when the Pyka family came to Texas in 1855. Her parents' original home, an old stone house, was still standing but in a dilapidated condition, and Constantina was residing in a new house with her daughter and son-in-law. Nearby log cabins remained from the early days, and many were occupied by descendants of the first colonists. Constantina remembered:*

My parents, John and Frances Pyka, were poor peasants in Poland, struggling along from year to year, enduring the hard lot of the peasants of that time. One day father heard of the opportunities for immigrants to secure homes in America, and was told that he could go with a party that was being made up to sail for the New World, the land of the free...Polish patriots turned longing eyes in this direction and rejoiced over the good fortune of their comrades who came to this country... when the opportunity presented itself for father to bring his family to America, he was quick to seize upon the chance. Preparations were hastily made and we were ready long before the starting time...then came the sorrow of bidding old friends goodbye -- friends we never expected to meet again in this life, unless they should come to America. I was just a little girl, then, only nine years old, with never a care or worry, and full of anticipation of the long journey. But when I kissed loved ones there goodbye my heart was sad and I could not keep from crying.

We started, sixteen families in all. Our family consisted of father and mother, myself, my two sisters, Frances and Caroline, and brother, John Pyka....We went aboard ship, and for nine weeks we sailed the broad ocean. Every day was just alike, and at night a stillness of death settled about us. Mother suffered a great deal from seasickness, as did many of the passengers. Three of our party died on the trip and were given a sea burial. The bodies were wrapped in canvas, weights attached, and dropped overboard. I was greatly distressed when these burials took place for I feared the fish would eat the bodies. At last we reached Galveston Bay, and there was much hurrying and scurrying about when the ship dropped anchor. Everybody began collecting their scant belongings, mothers calling their children, and the men giving directions for all to keep together. We landed at Galveston in January, 1855....We were absolutely without money, and possessed only a few effects besides our clothing. From Galveston we went to Indianola, from whence we traveled by wagon and on foot to Victoria, and then on to San Antonio, where we were met by Charles de Montel, who owned the land where Bandera is situated...He provided conveyance and took us to Castroville and Quihi....The vehicles were ox-carts with solid wooden wheels, and the yokes were fashioned to the horns of the oxen. We were overjoyed to reach the end of our long journey. Mr. [de] Montel gave to each man in our party a lot in the town of Bandera, and sold to a number of them small tracts of land in the vicinity. Father bought, on credit, 40 acres located just across the river, and it is now owned by my brother, John Pyka....Very soon a number of cabins were built, of logs and pickets....

Then, as now, this was a beautiful country, but it was a wilderness. Game was plentiful and we



*“...we look with pride on what our hands have wrought...”*

did not lack for meat. Indians were also numerous, and often we heard of the raids they made...and they soon began coming into our settlement. Then we wished we were back in Poland where no such dangers lurked, but as we were without means on which to leave we were compelled to remain here....We soon became accustomed to our new surroundings, the social life of the community became active, and we set about to make it as enjoyable and happy as our circumstances would permit. Mr. [de] Montel was a generous man, and treated our people with kind consideration. He had a sawmill here and gave our men employment at the mill and also put them to clearing land. The women helped to grub land, worked in the fields and performed any labor they could to help make the living. At the sawmill...great cypress trees were converted into lumber and shingles and hauled to San Antonio...a Mormon erected a flour mill just below the town...mill race was constructed by Polish labor, men and women digging it with spades....

Mr. [de] Montel had a small store here...Mother cooked for the men who worked for [de] Montel. Father was a wheelwright and carpenter and followed his trade. Everybody worked. We realized we had come as strangers to a strange land and we knew that the only hope for us to succeed in this new land was by dint of industry and hard work....The generations that have followed...have become thoroughly Americanized by the process of amalgamation. Pretty homes, well tilled farms, schools, refinement, religious influences that are widespread, and a happy, thrifty, contented people is what the stranger finds here today. We, the pioneers, had our part in the making of all of this, and we look with pride on what our hands have wrought....

We bought our first milk cow at Castroville, and father went down there afoot and drove her home. I have plowed in the field, picked cotton and done all kinds of farm work. I remember the first roasting ears we had to eat....

I can recall many tragedies of those times, for the Indians made frequent raids into this settlement and stole horses....Those were trying times, and the present generation in luxury cannot gain the faintest idea of the privations and hardships endured by those who blazed the way for civilization....We had no drugs or medicines and when overtaken by illness homeopathic remedies were resorted to. Every housewife knew how to “doctor” her children, and how to set and bandage fractured limbs, make poultices, dress wounds and relieve suffering. We had no furniture except home-made articles. We had no cook stoves, the open fire-place and the skillet and pots cooked our meals. We carded wool and cotton and wore homespun clothing. Every girl learned to spin and weave and many of the boys learned it too. The men had to split rails to build fences -- barbed wired was then unknown....

When the Civil War came on we remained aloof from partisanship....These were terrible times....

Three-quarters of a century have passed over my head -- years that have been full of joy and sorrow, pleasure and excitement, and now as I sit in the twilight of life's autumn and behold the wonderful changes that have taken place, I am proud to know that I have been an humble participant in Bandera's making (Hunter, 1922, pp. 136-144).