

# **My Ties to Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, St. Hedwig, Texas**

*by Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz*

On April 15, 1978, I was appointed Assistant County Agent in Guadalupe County, and my wife Kathy and I attended St. James Catholic Church in Sequin, Texas. Later, we discovered the Polish roots of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in St. Hedwig, and we attended mass in St. Hedwig on many occasions. I was interested in moving to this part of the state because I knew I had a family history in South Texas. As a fifth-generation Polish Texan, I was interested in learning more about the Polish people of South Texas, and I wanted to get to know them personally. All of my mother's side of the family originally settled in Polonia, Texas, about 5 miles south of Lockhart (Caldwell County) in about 1890, and we still have relatives living in San Antonio today. My maternal ancestral families that came to Polonia, Texas were Malinowski, Kopeć, Zawadzki, and Korpalski. They arrived at Polonia, Texas, in 1890, however, the Malinowski's arrived in 1896. Jozef Kopeć was from the village of Jacewo near Inowrocław and Franciszek Malinowski was from Elzanowo, Torun, Poland. I am not sure from where the Zawadzki and Korpalski families came from within Poland.

I did not find out until 2018 that my great grandparents Jozef and Jozefina Korpalski Kopeć were married by Father Louis Dybrowski on October 14, 1894, in Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, in St. Hedwig, Texas. Witnesses to marriage were Martin Gorlaszka & Jozef Pawłowski, two prominent members of the parish. Martin Gorlaszka was from Poznań, Poland, and his home is the oldest home standing in St. Hedwig today marked by a State of Texas seal.

The Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Polonia, Texas, was not built until 1897, and the Polish immigrants of Polonia likely attended St. Mary Catholic church in Lockhart until they erected Sacred Heart Catholic Church. I am not sure why my grandparents married in St. Hedwig, but I can only assume Jozefina Korpalski was from Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, in St. Hedwig, Texas.

My great grandparents Jozef and Jozefina Kopeć are buried at St. Stanislaus Catholic Cemetery in Chappell Hill, Texas, as well as their oldest son, Raymond Kopech (Spelled in Polish it is Kopeć). He is my maternal grandfather and he was married to Rose Malinowski, daughter of Roch Malinowski and granddaughter of Franciszek Malinowski. My grandfather Raymond's brothers and sister moved back to San Antonio when they married and they are all buried in either St. Hedwig or San Antonio. They wanted to move back to South Texas because of their childhood memories of living in Polonia and South Texas.

In addition, I have a great great uncle (Piotr Kopeć) buried at Polonia Cemetery and I have a

great uncle and aunt (Harry and Frances Kopeck) buried at Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in St. Hedwig. About 1925 due to a drought and economic conditions, the Malinowski, Kopeć, Zawadzki and Korpalski families moved to Chappell Hill and many of the remaining families stayed in the area going to church in Lockhart or moving to San Antonio and St. Hedwig.

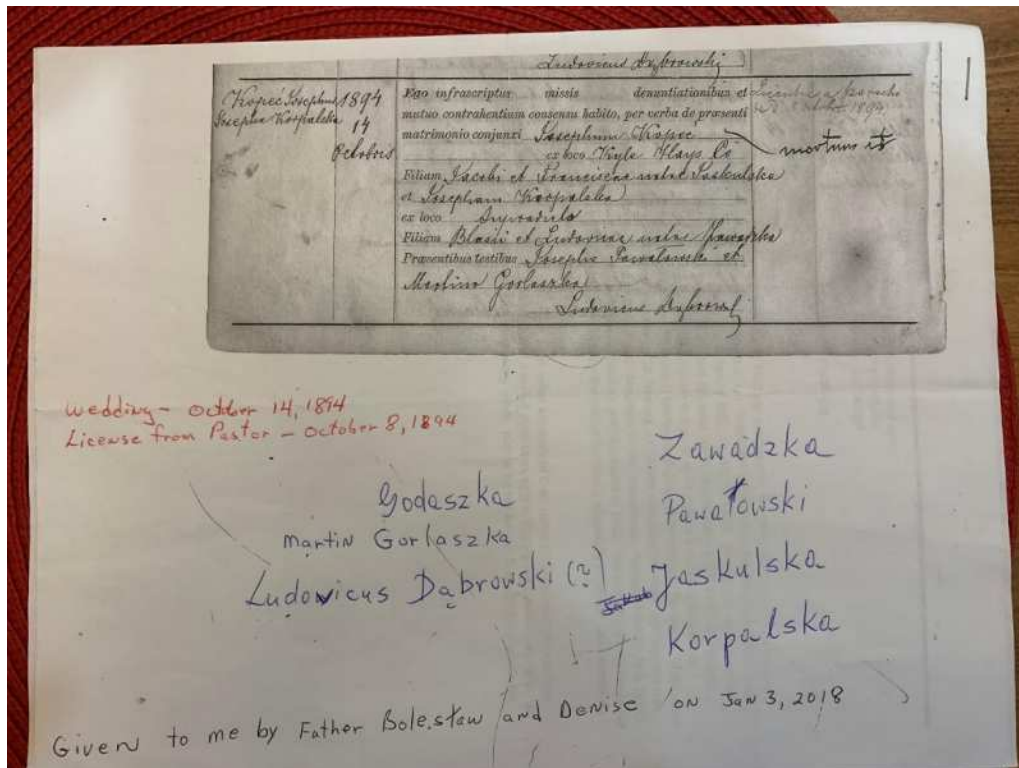
When I attended Texas A&M University, I became friends with two young men John Bellinger and Tim Jambers, both of Polish heritage. John's mother was a Kolodziej from St. Hedwig, and Tim's grandmother was from Karnes County. John, Tim, and I judged on the 1975 Texas A&M Meats Judging Team together winning many national championships. Today, John lives with his family in San Antonio and Tim lives on the ranch with his family in Three Rivers.

More recently in 2004, I met Eric Opiela when I accepted him into the Governor Dolph Briscoe Jr., Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership (TALL) Program. It was during this time, I became acquainted with Eric and learned about his Polish ancestry in Karnes County, not far from St. Hedwig. Eric now serves as Vice President of the Polish American Council of Texas and I consider him a close and dear friend.



*My Maternal Great Grandfather Jozef Kopeć. The photo was taken in 1927 at his oldest son's wedding, Raymond Kopeć, my maternal grandfather. Jozef married in St. Hedwig, Texas in 1894.*

This is the marriage record of Joseph and Josephine Kopec' (my maternal great grandparents). They married at the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in St. Hedwig, Texas on October 14, 1894. Listed are their parents and witnesses of the marriage.



This is Mr. and Mrs. Martin Gorlaszka from St. Hedwig, Texas. He was one of the two men that served as a witness to the wedding of my maternal great grandparents, Jozef and Jozefina Kopec' on October 14, 1894 in St. Hedwig. Martin Gorlaszka's house is still standing in St. Hedwig as one of the oldest homes in St. Hedwig with a state marker.

