

St. Joseph Parish and Church, New Waverly, Texas

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St. Joseph Catholic Parish, New Waverly, Texas, was organized in 1869 by Rev. Felix Orzechowski who two years earlier had come upon some forty Polish families who had emigrated as members of the Waverly Emigration Society established to procure foreign agricultural workers. This led to such a great influx of Polish immigrants that one historian wrote that New Waverly is the cradle of Polish immigration in Southeast Texas. Mass was celebrated on farms as no church was built until 1877 by Rev. Victor Linicki. In 1890 Rev. Theodore Jaron had this church replaced with a larger one and the original building became a school. With the continued growth of the parish, the third and present church was built on the same site as the two earlier ones. Influential and energetic pastor Rev. Thomas A. Bily stated it was to be built in Thanksgiving and this magnificent church was dedicated in 1906. Until recent years, St. Joseph's was a Polish parish, but with the area's increased growth, parish diversity has overshadowed its Polish identity. In December 2019 St. Joseph's Parish celebrated its sesquicentennial with Polish participants and overtones that have revitalized interest in Polish heritage.

