ST. STANISLAUS B. & M. PARISH
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT

A CENTURY OF CONNECTICUT POLONIA:1891-1991

Stanislaus A. Blejwas

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BY

Stanislaus A. Blejwas

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and

St. Stanislaus Parish Council
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

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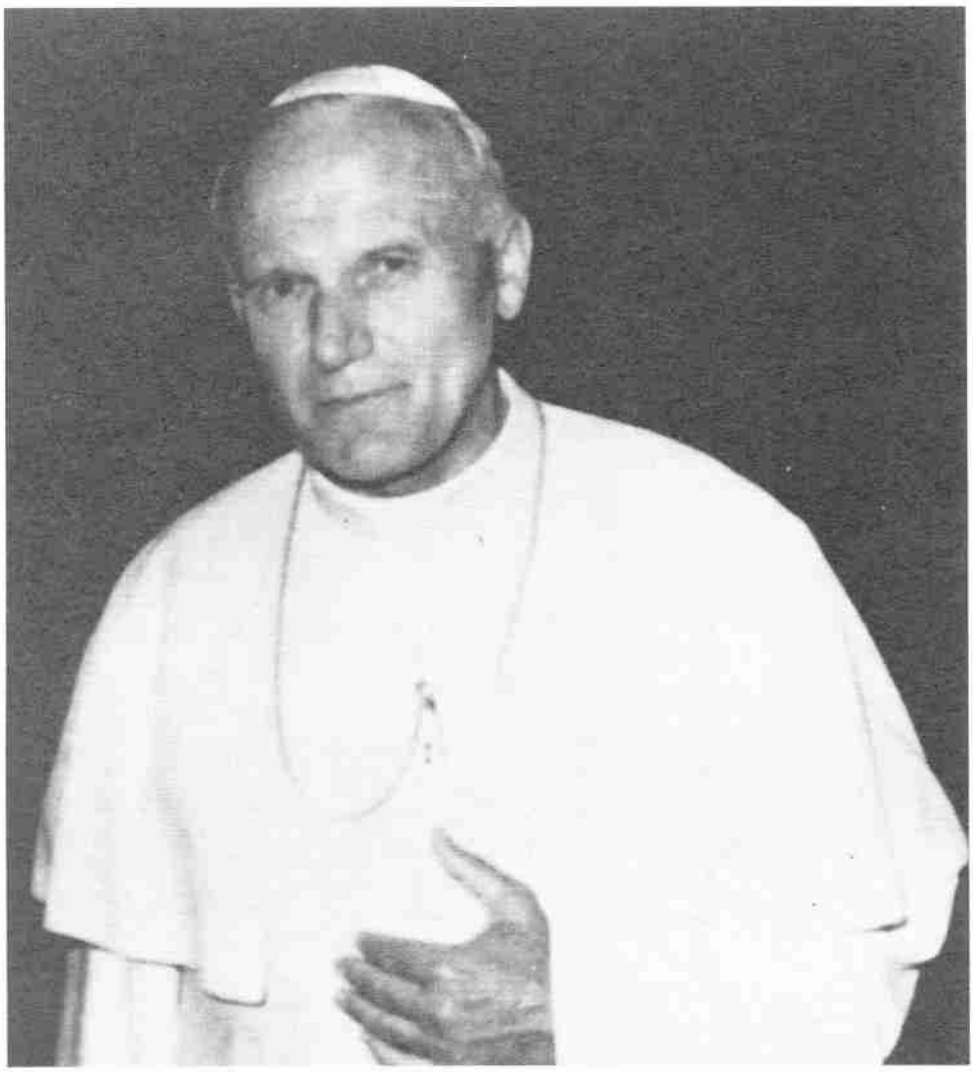

His Holiness,
Pope John Paul II

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

FIRST SECTION - GENERAL AFFAIRS
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FROM THE VATICAN, April 22, 1991

Dear Archbishop Whealon,

It was with great pleasure that the Holy Father learned that St. Stanislaus parish in Meriden is celebrating the Hundredth Anniversary of its founding.

On this happy occasion His Holiness is spiritually close to all the members of the community. He offers praise and thanksgiving to God, who over the past century has been present among his people, leading them in the way of justice and holiness of life. Through the proclamation of the word of God, which reaches its summit in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the faithful have attained fellowship with Christ and, through him, union with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Father prays that this joyful observance will be for the whole Diocese an incentive for renewed generosity in embracing the word of God in its daily applications and in all its challenging demands. He also prays that everyone will believe ever more firmly in the saving and sanctifying power of the Lord Jesus.

With these sentiments His Holiness cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing to all assembled for this celebration.

With every personal good wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+G. B. Re
Substitute

The Most Reverend John F. Whealon
Archbishop of Hartford
134 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105

His Excellency
Most Reverend John F. Whealon, D.D.
Archbishop of Hartford

ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT
06105

OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

March 18, 1991

The Reverend Zigford Kriss, Pastor
Saint Stanislaus Parish
82 Akron Street
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

Beloved Clergy, Religious and Laity of Saint Stanislaus Parish, Meriden, Connecticut:

Beloved in Christ with all members of the Parish family -- indeed, with all Catholics of Polish descent in Connecticut -- I join in thanking Almighty God for the treasures of Catholic faith and spiritual graces bestowed through a full century of history of Saint Stanislaus Parish in Meriden.

At this Anniversary Celebration, we congratulate the entire parish -- for the impressive accomplishments of a more remote and orderly past, and even more for the witness to spiritual values and faith courageously demonstrated in continuing this heritage into modern times.

It is appropriate for the parish to pause today, to be mindful of those who in the Faith have gone before us into death and who have bequeathed so many evidences of their sacrifices. Today in the bonds of Christian charity we offer prayers to God that they may be a Parish beachhead on the eternal shores.

St. Stanislaus Parish, at this 100th milestone in its history, can look back on ten full decades of organized Catholic life -- to the first Sunday masses at St. Rose Parish and then St. Laurent Parish, to the purchase of land on Jefferson Street and the appointment of a pastor, to the construction of a wooden church with three classrooms in the back, in 1893, to the dedication of its new church in 1908, and the subsequent development of the parish school, convent, and rectory on the Akron Street property. Not to be overlooked in that history are the lengthy pastorate of Monsignor John Ceppa, the service of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis for over three-quarters of a century, and the service of so many parish societies across the decades.

My prayerful hope is that this Centennial will bring to this remarkable, historical parish a further encouragement towards sustaining a vigorous parish life and its many Polish traditions. May Saint Stanislaus Parish, in the spirit of Psalm 1, remain strong through the decades ahead as it continues into a second centenary. Such are my hope and prayer.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

+John F. Whealon

Most Reverend John F. Whealon
Archbishop of Hartford

President and Mrs. George Bush

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 28, 1991

Dear Friends:

Barbara and I are delighted to send our congratulations as you celebrate the 100th anniversary of Saint Stanislaus Parish.

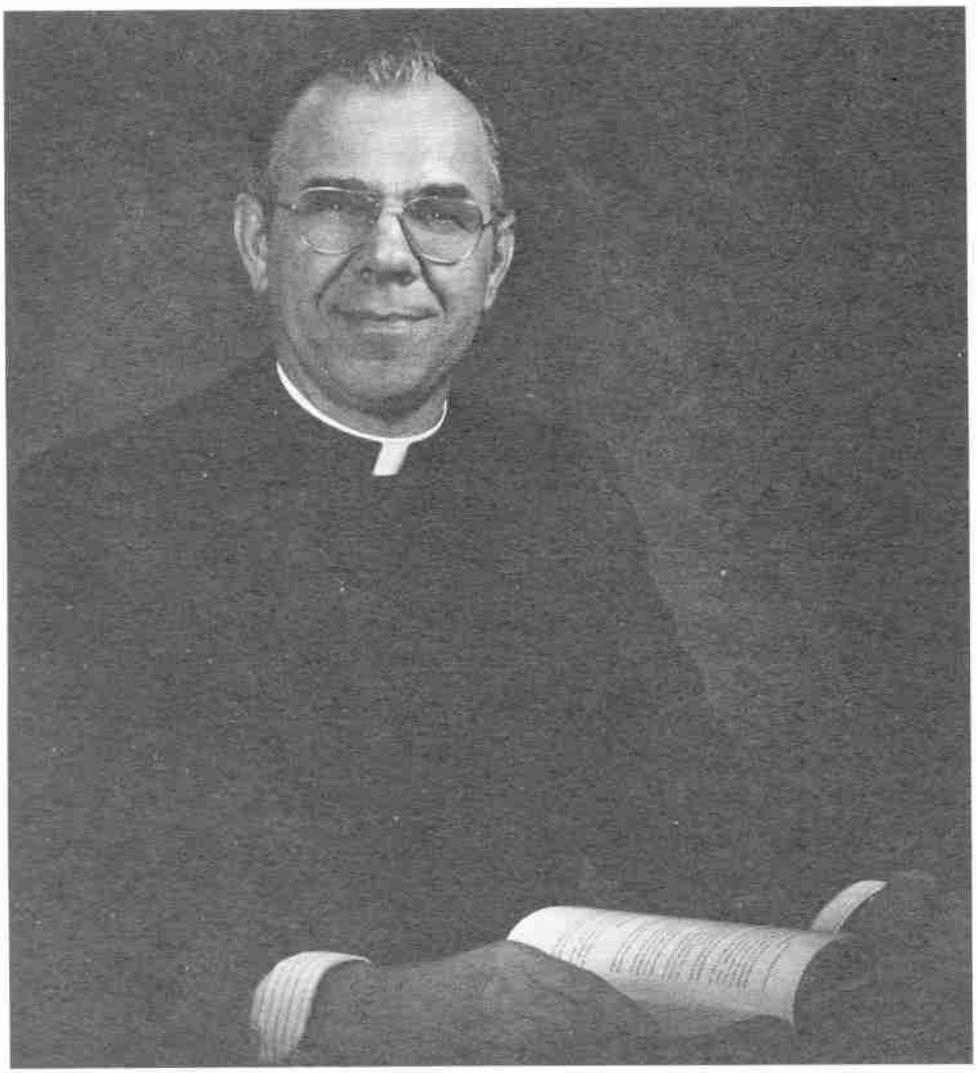
We can all rejoice in what your house of worship has meant to its members. A place of prayer, fellowship, reflection, and renewal, it has also been the focal point for many acts of generosity and service to others. Indeed, because the faith and values nurtured within its walls are the foundation of strong families and communities, your church has been a source of strength for our entire country.

You have our best wishes for a joyous celebration.

Sincerely,

George Bush

Members of Saint Stanislaus
Parish
Meriden, Connecticut



Reverend Zigford Kriss
Pastor, 1979-

Saint Stanislaus Rectory
82 Akron Street
Meriden, Connecticut 06450
Telephone 203-235-6341

Dear Parish Family of St. Stanislaus,

What a privilege it is to celebrate this Centennial.

An opportunity has been given us to look back to our roots and heritage, to enjoy and celebrate the legacy entrusted to this Parish Family, and to have a vision to the future. Our vision should be wise, prudent and Faith-filled because we want those who follow to enjoy the benefits we have today and to hand it down to their children as well.

Let us look back with pride and grateful hearts for the Catholic Faith and Polish heritage preserved and entrusted to us. The sacrifice of our fore-fathers to build a complete parish plant under difficult economic conditions requiring dedication and determination, made it possible for us to enjoy this present day.

For us to have this vision, we must live the Faith with which we have been embued. Our vision gives us the responsibility to preserve this legacy and make our tradition and heritage relevent. Our task is threefold: To create meaningful liturgies, to enjoy and continue our Polish culture as a Parish Family, and to enrich the academic excellence of our school, guided with gospel values.

Because we are proud of our ancestors and the legacy they left us, we can celebrate today. May our vision, dedication and sacrifice make future generations as proud of us as we are of our fore-fathers.

Sto lat!

Rev. Zigford Kriss

Rev. Zigford Kriss

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

AAH	Archives of the Archdiocese of Hartford
APZJ	*Album Pamiatkowy Zlotego Jubileuszu Parafii Sw.Stanislawa B.M. w Meriden, Connecticut w niedziele, 6-go wrzesnia, 1942. Meriden, Connecticut: 1942.*
CPAAMC	Connecticut Polish American Archives and Manuscript Collection, Central Connecticut State University
MDJ	*Meriden Daily Journal*
MDR	*Meriden Daily Republican*
MMR	*Meriden Morning Record*
MR&J	*Meriden Record and Journal*
MWR	*Meriden Weekly Republican*
PK	*Przewodnik Katolicki*
PPDP	*Pamietnik Poswiecenia Domu Polskiego Przy Parafji Sw. Stanislawa Biskupa i Meczennika w Meriden, Conn. w niedziele dnia 25-go Kwietnia r. p. 1937.*

Introduction

A centennial is a singular occasion in the life of a community. It is a time both for congratulations and to celebrate past successes. It is also a time for reflection, to consider how far one has come and what difficulties and failures were overcome during the journey. Finally, it is a time to look to the future.

The centennial of St. Stanislaus B. & M. Parish in Meriden, Connecticut is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Polish immigrants who arrived more than a century ago. They organized Connecticut's first Polish parish, and, over time, these immigrants and their descendants made the long, long journey from being immigrants to becoming Americans of Polish origin. Theirs is the story of the evolution of the immigrant into an ethnic American. The story of this transformation is very much the story of St. Stanislaus Parish, for years the heart of Meriden's Polish community.

To fully appreciate this story, one must also understand the development of both Connecticut and American Polonia. The story of St. Stanislaus is not only the history of this Roman Catholic congregation; it is part of the larger story of Polish immigration and settlement in New England and America and, by extension, another strand in the fabric of American history.

The history of American Polonia is marked with successes, but also with controversy and turmoil. Some scholars, in judgements bordering upon stereotyping, suggest that contentiousness is a peculiar Polish trait because of the frequent battles in the early immigrant parishes, and because of recent conflicts. Such judgements do not fully appreciate either the role of the immigrant pastor and parish in the organization and development of the immigrant community or the impact of the American democratic environment upon immigrant behavior. If Polish immigrants battled over their parishes, it was because of their attachment to their native faith and national traditions. The immigrants, because they paid for the parish themselves, also developed strong proprietary feelings about their parish. While at times this brought them into conflict with their bishops and pastors, with themselves, or sometimes led them into schism, it is essential to understand the factors behind such conflicts.

The successes, triumphs, and, on occasion, the turmoil of Polish American history are found in St. Stanislaus' history. The parish plant is one of the most impressive of all the Polish parishes in New England, a continuing testimony to the parishioners' generosity to their church. The parishioners, over time, have successfully integrated themselves into American society, through both their jobs and politics. The parish, however, was also tested by controversy in its early years and forged by serious crisis and conflict in the early 1970s. From the perspective of time, it is clear that the parish survived and emerged in both instances with renewed strength, a testimonial to the faith and charity of the parishioners and their clergy.

St. Stanislaus is no longer the immigrant parish of a century ago. It is now an ethnic parish whose ethnic profile has undergone considerable change, especially in the years following World Wars I and II. However, the fact that St. Stanislaus survives as an ethnic parish for a century, albeit with a weakened ethnic profile and when other urban-ethnic parishes have closed, suggests the need to re-examine our conceptions about the persistence of ethnicity in American life and

about the relationship between religion and ethnicity. It has been argued that what the immigrant generation brought with them, the children of second generation try to forget, while the grandchildren of the third generation try to recover part of the family heritage. What, however, will the fourth and succeeding generations do with that heritage? Can it be preserved, and if so, how? This prompts one to ask whether the ethnic parish is still able to offer something unique to counter the homogenization of an ever blander American culture. Can a modern Catholic parish, incorporating both the changes of Vatican II and a specific cultural tradition touch our souls more effectively than a non-ethnic parish?

The answer, of course, is an individual one. Nevertheless, the survival of St. Stanislaus for a century as a parish with a specific ethnic tradition suggests that the future of American ethnic parishes merits further reflection by the descendants of the immigrants, by the recent arrivals from Poland, and by the parishioners of non-Polish descent.

There were several difficulties encountered during the preparation of this work. The parish sacramental records are nearly complete, and it was possible to amass a good collection of parish and society souvenir booklets. However, weekly parish announcements have been saved only since 1976. Therefore, the recovery of eighty-five years of history was a serious challenge. The Archives of the Archdiocese of Hartford contained a number of valuable documents relating to the early history of St. Stanislaus, as well as the Parish's *Annual Reports*. The Meriden press, which is available on microfilm at either the Meriden Public Library or at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford and the Catholic weekly press of Connecticut which is available at the State Library, were valuable research sources. The New Britain Polish-language weekly, *Przewodnik Katolicki*, available only in an incomplete run, was occasionally helpful, as were other Polish newspapers, many of which are available at the Connecticut Polish American Archives and Manuscript Collection at Central Connecticut State University. Oral interviews with parishioners whose roots go back to the period before World War II were most informative, and helped in grasping a feel for the texture of parish life

Those familiar with Polish will recognize that Polish accents and diacritical marks are not used. Nevertheless the names of organizations, titles of publications, and customs are included where appropriate. The use of Polish names presented a dilemma. Newspapers and other early sources often brutalized the correct spelling. And with the passage of time, the use of the language declined and names were changed. The Polish version of given names tends to predominate in the early chapters (except when drawn from official documents and English-language newspapers), and the English version in later chapters. Surnames, where there is a question or a change, are rendered in both versions.

It is an honor to have been invited to write the history of St. Stanislaus' first centennial. I express my appreciation to the Parish Council and to the Pastor, Rev. Zigford Kriss, for presenting this challenge. I thank the parishioners who brought out from their closets parish memorabilia, photos, and souvenir publications. My appreciation is also extended to the priests and parishioners who have shared their memories and their views with me, and to the members of the Publication Committee who took the time to review the manuscript and to fill me in on the finer points of parish history. I also express my gratitude to Ewa Wolynska of the Connecticut Polish American Archives and Manuscript Collection at Central Connecticut State University and to the staff at the University Library, the staff of Connecticut State

Library, the Meriden Public Library and the Meriden Historical Society, and to the archivists at the Archives of Archdiocese of Hartford, Sisters Mary Jaskel, O.S.F., and Sister Theresa Mc Queeney, SND, PhD, for their assistance during my research, and to Bruce Fraser of the Connecticut Humanities Council, who shared his dissertation ("Yankees at War. Social Mobilization on the Connecticut Homefront 1917-1918") with me. A special word of appreciation is extended to Msgr. John P. Wodarski, who shared his valuable insights and extensive knowledge of Connecticut's Polish community. I wish to acknowledge the stimulating support of friends and colleagues in the Polish American Historical Association, including among others Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, Daniel S. Buczek, John J. Bukowczyk, Mary Cygan, Thaddeus Gromada, Anthony Kuzniewski, Thomas J. Napierkowski, Thaddeus Radzilowski, Dominic Pacyga, Donald E. Pienkos, James S. Pula, Robert Szymczak, and Joseph Wieczerzak. Their dedication to recovery and the study of the Polish past in America, and the results of their scholarly labors, are a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. Similarly, the work of Rev. William Wolkovich-Valkavicius in Lithuanian American history, helped me to understand the processes of immigration history in New England. In the end, of course, I assume responsibility for the text and for errors which may have slipped into the history.

Finally, I wish to thank my family, my wife Lucy and our two children, Carol Ann and Andrzej, for their love and patience during the course of this project. Without their support the project would never have been completed. This work is for Lucy, Carol Ann, and Andrzej.

Stanislaus A. Blejwas

Chapter One

"A Polish Church and Polish Music"

In 1797 the Polish writer and patriot Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz visited Connecticut. He was impressed by the "bold spirit" of its traders, the citizens' simplicity of habits, their industry and hard work, and the true freedom and equality found here". He admired the self made American. Noting that in Europe it was a reproach to rise from nothing", he found that in Connecticut to be the architect of your own fortune is honorable." Offering a partial explanation for this pacific and idealistic state of affairs, Niemcewicz wrote: "The maintenance of this simplicity, equality and uniformity of habits owes a great deal to the fact that there are no immigrants among the inhabitants; there is no mixing of nations as there is elsewhere; everyone is from one stock, everyone is descendant of the English."[1]

Within a century after Niemcewicz's visit, however, the homogeneous Yankee character of Connecticut changed dramatically. By 1900 Connecticut was no longer a Yankee stronghold from "one stock", but an urban industrial state where only 41% of the population was native-born. In the intervening century, immigrants, first from Ireland and Germany, and then from French Canada and Scandinavia, swelled the state's population. Beginning around 1890, they were joined by tens of thousands from Italy, Hungary, Russia, and partitioned Poland, reducing the native-born, old time Yankee residents to 35.5% of the Connecticut's population in 1910. Connecticut was no longer an exclusive home of the Pilgrim and the Yankee.

What attracted these immigrants was the availability of jobs. In the course of the Nineteenth Century, Connecticut's economy shifted from one based largely on agriculture and commerce to one dependent upon the manufacturing genius of Yankee ingenuity, industry, and hard work, basic values that did not change. By 1880 there were 4,488 manufacturing establishments of all sizes, diversified into 243 industries, ranking Connecticut, the nation's third smallest state, sixth in the number of manufacturing establishments. The four largest industries were textiles, hardware, brass and copper, and sewing machines. The remarkable maturing of Connecticut industry was the result of several factors: the availability of power, first water and later steam; the development of roads and railroads; a supply of investment capital; and a large reserve of skilled and unskilled labor, to which immigrants made an inordinate contribution.[2]

Immigration not only changed the complexion of the state's population: it also hastened Connecticut's evolution into an urban state. The rural population was only 114,917 in 1910, while the urban population was just under one million. While a number of the immigrants did find their way into agriculture, the overwhelming majority gravitated to Connecticut's cities and towns, where its mills and factories were to be found. New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, Waterbury, Ansonia, Danbury, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New London, Norwich, Stamford, Torrington, and Willimantic by the end of the first decade of the Twentieth Century contained 56.6% of the state's population.[3]

The dramatic nineteenth-century economic and social changes which forever altered Connecticut's face are reflected in the history of Meriden. The city is located at the sharp northeast point of New Haven County, and nestled in a pleasant valley between West Peak and Mount Lamentation. Seventeenth-century English colonists settled the region as farmers. A part of Wallingford until 1806, Meriden remained a bucolic collection of villages until the early Nineteenth Century. In 1810, Meriden's population was only 1,249 souls. By 1870, however, the number increased to 10,495. That figure more than doubled by 1890 to 25,423, and by 1900 the census was 28,696.

Meriden's population growth is an index of the importance of the city's manufacturing and industrial development in the Nineteenth Century. While the railroad did not arrive until 1840, manufacturing had commenced much earlier, and by 1910 there were 120 manufacturing enterprises in the town with a labor force totaling 7,845 employes. Meriden, of course, was renowned as "The Silver City". It was the home of the Meriden Britannia Company, which began manufacturing plate ware (originally without silver) in 1804, and which was later merged with the International Silver Company. Meriden was also home to the William Rogers Manufacturing Company, Barbour Silver Company, the Forbes Silver Company, and the Wilcox Silver Plate Company.[4]

Meriden, however, represented the diversity of Yankee ingenuity. Its factories produced lamps, lanterns, chandeliers, and gas and electric fixtures (Edward Miller Company, Bradley and Hubbard Manufacturing Company), guns (Parker Brothers), silver plated novelties and silver jewelry (Manning Bowman & Company, A. H. Jones & Company, Wilber B. Hall and the Frank Tilling Silver Company), cutlery (The Meriden Cutlery Company and Miller Brothers Cutlery Company), cabinet organs (Wilcox & White) and player pianos (The Aeolian Company), cut glass (seven firms, including the J.D. Bergan Company), hardware products (nine plants, including Foster, Merriam & Company), caskets (International Casket Hardware Company), car parts (Connecticut Shock Absorber Company), building materials, and printing and paper products. Finally, Meriden was home to one of Connecticut's major construction firms, the H. Wales Lines Company. In 1910 these enterprises produced goods valued at $16,317,000 and paid wages and salaries of $5,429,000.[5]

Meriden's indigenous population could not have sustained this remarkable transformation of a rural village into an urban manufacturing center. Yankee ingenuity required a pool of skilled and unskilled labor, to which immigration would contribute. Meriden's early residents were of English stock, and worshipped at the First Congregational Church (1729) and Center Congregational Church (1848), First Baptist (1786), St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church (1789), and First Methodist Church (1844). Meriden's ethnic and relative religious

homogeneity, however, would change dramatically within the next six decades. According to a 1913 religious survey, Meriden's citizens now represented 30 different ethnic groups, belonged to 21 different religious sects, and more than half of Meriden was Catholic. Catholics accounted for 17,094 of the town's 33,783 citizens, with the Lutherans (who were both German and Swedish) next with 3,032, while the original Congregationalists now numbered 2,865.[6]

The establishment of St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church in 1849 signalled the beginning of these dramatic changes. St. Rose's was founded to meet the needs of Irish immigrants, who numbered about 27,000 in Connecticut in 1850, and whose statewide number jumped to more than 55,000 a decade later. The Germans also began to arrive in large numbers to Connecticut, and in 1865 in Meriden St. John's German Lutheran Church was established. French Canadians likewise settled in Meriden, and in 1880 they erected St. Laurent's Roman Catholic Church. The waves continued, bringing to Meriden, among others, Italians, Russians, Jews, Swedes, Greeks, Austrians, Lithuanians, and, the subject of our story, Poles.

In 1880, the US Census reported that 225 Poles resided in Connecticut.[7] That very same year, according to popular wisdom, Polish immigrants first settled in Meriden. Michal Kloc and Franciszek Szumny are believed to have arrived in the town together with eight other families.[8] Others who are reported to have arrived in 1880 include Jozef Haras, Jan Kania, Michal Ferenc, Jozef Kaczmarski, Jozef Pinarczyk (Slovak), and Andrzej Bobonek.[9] While Kloc, a laborer, and Szumny, a mechanic, appear in the *Meriden Directory* for the first time in 1882, five Polish-sounding, sometimes anglicized, names are already listed in 1880, including Adam Olefski, Thomas Ostrowski [the first Pole to settle in New Britain], Charles Seminski, Vincent Zaglaracsky, and Charles La Vandoskie, who are described mostly as laborers and employees.[10] The number of Polish-sounding names jumped to approximately 25 in 1882, and between 1884 and 1895 Poles arrived at the rate of 100 a year. They were seeking work and drew their families, relatives, and friends after them. Until approximately 1890, the majority of Meriden's Poles hailed from Prussian Poland, specifically Silesia, but after this date the overwhelming majority were to come from Austrian Poland, also known as Galicia, followed by those from Russian Poland. This was the beginning of the Polish colony which would eventually erect Connecticut's first Polish Roman Catholic Church, and the third such in New England.[11]

Prior to this time, Polish contact with Connecticut was limited. The few Poles who had arrived in America left only faint traces. There is an uncertain report of a Pole purchasing land in New London in the Eighteenth Century, and a reference to the missionary activity of a Polish Moravian Brethren.[12] During the American Revolution, Polish contact with Connecticut assumed a more significant character, primarily due to the activities of Gen. Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the Polish patriot who distinguished himself in the colonial cause. Kosciuszko planned the fortifications for the Battle of Saratoga (1777) and at West Point, where it is known that some Connecticut men served under him. And on Kosciuszko's voyage back to Europe in 1784, he became good friends with Gen. David Humphreys of Derby, the newly-appointed American minister to Portugal.[13] Count Kazimierz Pulaski, who likewise distinguished himself in the American Revolution, also had a Connecticut link. He applied for service in the colonists' struggle to Connecticut's Silas Deane, who served with Benjamin Franklin as American Commissioner to France. Deane

wrote favorably about Pulaski to Washington, and advanced Pulaski the money for his voyage to America.[14]

Kosciuszko's and Pulaski's contacts with Connecticut were meager, and they are basically examples of antiquarian local history. However, in a broader context, they demonstrate the young nation's affection and gratitude for those foreigners who fought for American independence. In a letter to Kosciuszko in 1791, Gen. Humphreys not only penned a poem praising Poland's King, Stanislaw Poniatowski, for embracing a reformed constitution, but he also told the Polish patriot: "Your acquaintances and friends in America all remember you with great affection. And the more as from the honorable agency you had in assisting to establish the independence of that Country - a Country which now really begins to enjoy the fruits of its Revolution."[15] Poland's own struggle for independence aroused the sympathies of Connecticut natives. After the unsuccessful Kosciuszko Insurrection in 1794 and the third and final partition of Poland in 1795, the American lexicographer Noah Webster bemoaned the Partitions, declaring: "the most hideous outcry was raised by all lovers of freedom, and justly."[16]

The American image of Poland, until the arrival of the peasant immigration, was that of a brave, blood-drenched, exotic land of idealists like Kosciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski battling for their country's freedom and independence. One notable outburst of pro-Polish enthusiasm occurred when news of the November 1830 Polish Insurrection against Russian rule reached America. Committees to aid Poland were formed; young men volunteered to fight; and the Boston Young Men's Association sent to the fighting Poles two banners symbolizing solidarity with the insurgents and an identity of Polish and American interests, as well as the memory of the debt owed to Poland for the service of Kosciuszko and Pulaski.[17] There was also an outpouring of pro-Polish editorials, such as in New Haven,[18] as well as a rush of verse identifying Poles with liberty and the unhappy fate of exile. The most prominent was *The Polish Boy, a* popular melodramatic poem by Ann S. Stephens of Connecticut celebrating a young insurgent who committed suicide rather than enter the slavery of a tsarist exile, dying before the eyes of his jailer and his mother.[19] Finally, on March 12, 1842, the Connecticut legislature, "echoing the feelings of the whole American people," resolved: "that in all conflicts between the tyrant and the oppressed, our best wishes are due to the latter, and are especially extended to the Polish nation, whose history is bright with examples of heroism, and whose noblest warriors have fought by the side of our Fathers, in the great cause of American freedom."[20]

This positive image of Poles as heroic participants in the common struggle against despotism and in the battle for the right of every nation to freedom and independence was sporadic and rather faintly imprinted upon the American consciousness. Because this sympathy was for Poland in Europe, and because there were so few Polish political emigres reaching the United States prior to the 1870's, the Poles were not a particular object of concern during the early stirrings of American nativism. However, the massive arrival of Polish peasant villagers driven basically by economic causes into emigration, would change the Polish image in America.

The Poles who reached Connecticut after 1870 were part of a larger Polish economic immigration. The 1870 U.S. Census reported just 14,436 Poles in the United States, 347 of whom resided in New England (Massachusetts 272, Connecticut 83, Rhode Island 13, Maine 6, New Hampshire 2, and Vermont 1).[21] By 1930 the Polish population of the United States was 3,342,198, nearly 10% of whom resided

in New England, with nearly five-sixths in Massachusetts (187,063) and Connecticut (133,813) while the remainder were scattered in Rhode Island (22,381), New Hampshire (10,506), Vermont (4,590), and Maine (3,932).[22] This great economic immigration to the New World, which consisted primarily of peasant villagers, began in 1854 with the arrival of a group of 150 Silesian villagers who established the first Polish settlement in the United States at Panna Maria, Texas.[23] The first Poles to reach New England during and after the Civil War arrived around 1862 in Webster, Massachusetts, in Boston in 1867, and, in the 1870's, in Hartford, Derby, and New Haven. It is probable that some of these post-Civil War immigrants were political emigres fleeing Poland after the unsuccessful January 1863 Insurrection against Russian rule; and some were from Prussian-controlled Poland. They were, however, rapidly assimilated in all but name by the turn of the Century. During the final decades of the Nineteenth Century, they were succeeded and overwhelmed by the larger peasant immigration, coming, as Henryk Sienkiewicz, the later Nobel Laureate in Literature, noted already in 1878, "in search of bread and freedom,"[24] and originating primarily from Austrian and Russian Poland.[25]

Various factors pushed the peasant villager across the ocean. Emancipation from serfdom provided the peasantry with freedom of movement. The peasant's desire to acquire his own holding, the unequal distribution of land between the nobility and the peasantry, and a growing rural population, combined to drive the peasant from his home village in search of economic opportunities to improve his position. There were also those who left to evade long tours of military service in the armies of Poland's partitioners, Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Migration was a drastic step for a peasant rooted in the same village for centuries, and the first step in the evolution of the Polish peasant immigrant into an American of Polish origin, a long and difficult transformation. In the process both the native language and the traditional values and customs of a rural, agrarian society were to be modified by the novel environment of urban, industrial American. The experience was not always pleasant, and the newcomers endured economic hardship and social discrimination, emerging with psychological scars. Children born in the New World would be forced to decide between their parents' cultural heritage and American values in their own search for self-identity.

Peasant immigrants left their ancestral villages expecting to radically change their lives. They expected to find work, and settled near places of employment with little thought of establishing ethnic communities. Economic hardship and a feeling of cultural isolation, however, stimulated the initiative to organize. The Polish peasant migrated from tightly-structured rural village societies where tradition and material wealth defined social status. Although such an environment could be stifling, it also afforded the villagers familiar cultural surroundings, psychological security, and a definite position in the local social hierarchy. Unable to find similar amenities as new arrivals within American society, the immigrants organized their own communities as their numbers grew.

Unlike the much less numerous political emigres who preceded them, the Polish peasant villagers who reached New England stamped their presence into the landscape. New England communities, like those of Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, or other major centers of Polish settlement, organized around a parish church, the parochial school, insurance fraternals, and Polish language media, supplementing these with a host of other cultural, social, athletic, and political organizations.[26]

For the uprooted rural immigrant, adjusting to life in urban industrial

America was difficult.[27] Drinking, immorality, abandonment, and a drifting away from religious observances were common problems reported in Polish (as well as in other) immigrant communities.[28] The creation of a parish was necessary to unify the Polish immigrants, to forge them into a social entity with expected standards of behavior, and to prevent them from disappearing into the New World without a trace.[29] The parish, therefore, became the most important organization in the community. Its establishment assured a colony's social cohesion and brought it extraordinary prestige and security. The parish became more than a religious association for devout Roman Catholic Polish peasants; it was the "old primary community, reorganized and concentrated." The parish, with all its organizations, became a community's center, fulfilling the immigrants' need for social recognition as well as spiritual comfort. It was the chief instrument in the unification and organization of America's Polish communities.[30]

Polish immigrants, in a remarkable example of self-help and initiative, established, in nearly every settlement, their own societies for the specific purpose of raising funds for the erection of a Polish parish. As the minutes of the first meeting of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society of Bristol, Connecticut state, the priestless immigrants established the society "for the purpose of organizing a Polish Roman Catholic parish."[31] It was upon this tradition of immigrant initiative and self-organization that a network of Polish parishes was built. Between 1887, when St. Joseph Church was ecclesiastically erected in Webster, Massachusetts, and 1963, when, to accommodate the new post-World War II political immigration, St. Andrew Bobola Parish was erected in nearby Dudley, Polish immigrants would establish 82 Roman Catholic Parishes in Puritan New England. Nearly 10% of all the 831 Polish Roman Catholic parishes in the United States were located in the six northeastern states.[32] In a new, unknown, and alien environment, the parish for the immigrant was not only his place of worship; it was his social center and point of reference. As Francis Prylewski wrote in trying to persuade his wife to join him in his new life in Webster, Massachusetts: "When you alone will come, then I will be very happy and I will arrange for a silver wedding. Here where I am it is very joyous because there is a Polish church and Polish music."[33] And for the Polish immigrants who settled in Meriden, Connecticut, there would also be a Polish church and Polish music as they would begin the long process of integrating themselves into a multi-ethnic American society.

[1] Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Under the Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through Americain 1797-1799, 1805 With Some Further Account of Life in New Jersey* (Elizabeth, New Jersey: Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society at Newark: XIV, 1965, ed Metchie J. Butka), pp. 133-35.

[2] See Ruth O. M. Anderson, *From Yankee to American: Connecticut 1865-1914* (Chester, Connecticut: The Pequot Press, 1975), pp. 34-46. See Albert E. Van Dusen, *Connecticut* (New York: Random House, 1961). For a more readable work reflecting recent scholarship see David M. Roth, Connecticut: *A Bicentennial History* (New York: Norton, 1979).

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[4] See Earl Chapin May, *Century of Silver, 1847-1947. Connecticut Yankees and a Noble Metal* (New York: Robert M. Mc Bride & Company, 1947).

[5] See Everett G. Hill, *A Modern History of New Haven and Eastern New Haven County*, (New York: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918), pp. 284-307.

[6] "Meriden Peoples' Religious Choice," *Meriden Weekly Republican*, June 19, 1913. Hereafter *MWR*.

[7] US Bureau of Census. *Census of Population: 1950. II. Characteristics of the Population Part 7. Connecticut* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 7-33.

[8] Ks. L.[ucian]. B.[ojnowski]., *Historya Zalozenia i Rozwoju Rzymsko-Katolickiej Parafii Polskiej pod wezwaniem Sw. Stanislawa B. i M.*, (New Britain, Conn.: Przewodnik Katolicki, IX/7/1908), p. 3. This is repeated by Ks. Stanislaw A. Iciek, "Historia Polonii i Parafii Sw. Stanislawa B. M. w Meriden, Conn." in *Album Pamiatkowy Zlotego Jubileuszu Parafii Sw. Stanislawa B. M. w Meriden, Connecticut w niedziele, 6-go wrzesnia, 1942* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1942), p. 25 [hereafter [APZJ]; and Penny Blank, "Church still heartbeat of Polish community," *The Morning Record and Journal* [Meriden, Ct.], August 15, 1977. Hereafter *MR&J*.

[9] *Album i Przewodnik Handlowo-Przemyslowy Osady Polskiej w Buffalo. II* (Buffalo, New York: W. Smolczynski and Sons, 1909.), p. 752.

[10] *Meriden Directory for 1880* (New Haven, Connecticut: Price, Lee & Co., 1880). See also the years 1881 and 1882. Caution must be used in listing someone as a Pole or as a German. There were cases of Germans with Polish names, and of Poles with German names. The fact that Meriden's first Poles emigrated from Silesia, an area with a mixed population, and then under German rule, complicated the problem.

[11] One source claims there were 4 Polish families in Meriden in 1882. U.S. Immigration Commission, *Immigrants in Industries. Part 21: Diversified Industries. I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911. Volume 17.), p. 132. This was part of the report of the Congressional Commission headed by Sen. Dillingham.

[12] Miecislaus (Mieczyslaw) Haiman, *Polish Past in America 1608-1865* (Chicago: Polish Museum of America, 1975. Orig. ed. 1939), p. 23 refers to Roderick Makowski (Machowsky) purchasing land. He concludes that Machowsky was Polish because of a Polish sounding name, a risky assumption lacking further evidence. Joseph A. Wytrwal, *Poles in American History and Tradition* (Detroit: Endurance Press, 1969), p. 28 cites the activities of Rev. Christian Post. Wytrwal's work, while containing considerable factual information, is highly fileopietistic.

[13] Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "Researching Ethnic History in Connecticut: The Polish Question," *Connecticut History*, XXII (January, 1981), p.32.

[14] Wytrwal, pp. 61-2; Wladyslaw Konopczynski, *Kazimierz Pulaski. Zyciorys* (Krakow, Poland: Polska Akademji Umiejetnosci, 1931), pp. 363-71; and *Meriden Daily Journal*, October 6, 1934.

[15] Cited in Blejwas, pp. 32-3.

[16] Cited by Haiman, p. 51.

[17] On this episode see Jerzy Jan Lerski, *A Polish Chapter in Jacksonian America: The United States and the Polish Exiles of 1831* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), pp. 14-33.

[18] Arthur Prudden Coleman, *A New England City and the November Uprising: A Study of the Editorial Opinion in New Haven, Conn., concerning the Polish Insurrection of 1830-1831* (Chicago: Annals of the Polish Roman Catholic Union Archives and Museum, IV (1939).

[19] This melodramatic lyric was rather influential in shaping the early nineteenth-century Polish image in America as it appeared in about 300 readers and in numerous magazines and periodicals. Arthur Prudden Coleman and Marion Moore Coleman, "Polonica in Connecticut," *Polish American Studies*, IV, Nos. 1-2 (1947), pp. 1-2, 6-15.

[20] Cited in Haiman, p. 83.

[21] Cited by Haiman. Haiman believed that the total figure was at least 4 times higher. Haiman, pp. 157-58.

[22] *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population. III* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1932), Part 1, pp. 350, 1022, and 1080, and Part 2, pp. 160, 762, and 1124.

[23] See Andrzej Brozek, *Slazacy w Teksasie. Relacje o najstarszych polskich osadach w Stanach Zjednoczonych* (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1972), and T. Lindsay Baker, *The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas* (Texan A and & M Press, 1979).

[24] Charles Morley, ed. and trans., *Portrait of America: Letters of Henry Sienkiewicz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 26.

[25] X. Waclaw Kruszka, *Historya Polska w Ameryce, XIII* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Spolka Wydawnicza Kuryera, 1908), pp. 115-7.

[26] Stanislaus A. Blejwas, *A Polish Community in Transition: The Origins and Evolution of Holy Cross Parish, New Britain, Connecticut* (Reprinted from *Polish American Studies*, XXXIV, No. 1, and XXXV, Nos. 1-2, 1977 and 1978), pp. 6-7.

[27] See Laura Anker, "Women, Work & Family: Polish, Italian and East European Immigrants in Industrial Connecticut, 1890-1940," *Polish American Studies*, XLV, No. 2 (1988 Autumn), pp. 23-49.

[28] See Ludwik Grzebien, S.J., *Burzliwe Lata Polonii Amerykanskie. Wspomnienia i Listy Misjonarzy Jezuickich, 1864-1913* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1983), especially pp. 180-84, 203, 220-23, and 247 for Poles in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

[29] While concerned that the Polish immigrant community was becoming the Catholic parish, which in effect excluded non-Catholic Poles, Sienkiewicz still recognized the Church and the Polish priest as the main force which maintains some degree of moral unity among the Poles. *Portrait of America*, pp. 282, 284. Sienkiewicz was writing at the dawn of the massive Polish immigration, but his initial observations were amply confirmed.

[30] See the classic work by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958 ed.; originally published in 1918-20), II, 1523 ff. In Polish see Krystyna Duda-Dziewierz, *Wies Malopolska a Emigracja Amerykanska: Studium Wsi Babica Powiatu Rzeszowskiego* (Warsaw-Poznan: Biblioteka Socjologiczna, III, 1939).

[31] Ksziaszka Protokolowa Parafy [sic] *Swietego Stanislawa Kostki w Bristol, Conn.*, July 28, 1912. In the Connecticut Polish American Archives and Manuscript Collection (hereafter CPAAMC) at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT.

[32] Ks. Stanislaw Targosz, *Polonia Katolicka w Stanach Zjednoczonych w Przekroju* Detroit, Michigan: Author's imprint, 1943), pp. 3-5.

[33] Francis Prylewski to Hedwig, December 6, 1890. Reprinted in Josephine Wtulich, ed. and trans. Witold Kula, Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, and Marcin Kula, *Writing Home: Immigrants in Brazil and the United States 1890-1891* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, CCX, 1986), p. 384.

Chapter Two
"The Polish Catholics of Meriden Mean Business"

The initiative for organizing St. Stanislaus Parish, as was the case with most Polish Roman Catholic parishes in the United States, came from the immigrants themselves and not the Catholic Church hierarchy. Within a decade of the reported arrival of the first Poles in Meriden, they established under the leadership of Jan Damach on January 1, 1889 the Society of St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr and Patron of Poland.[1] This was Meriden's first Polish society, following by two years the St. Stanislaus B. & M. Society of Bridgeport (1887), but antedating the St. Michael's Mutual Aid Society of New Britain (1889).[2] While the Society's records have not survived, it may be assumed that it was organized for the purpose of erecting a Polish parish for the new immigrants. It is known that in the Spring of 1891 that Bishop Lawrence S. McMahon visited St. Rose's Church to meet with the Poles, who were now "so numerous as to be able to form a congregation." At the meeting in the basement of St. Rose's, which was allocated "to their use for divine worship", the new congregation was formally organized "into a parish."[3] According to the Meriden Land Records, Joseph Skladzien, a Polish immigrant, deeded on June 22, 1891 to Frank Szumny and Anthony Zuchowski, members of the St. Stanislaus Society, a piece of property "for the use and benefit of the St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic Church."[4] Furthermore when plans were finally undertaken to build a Polish church, the *Meriden Weekly Republican*, informed its readers that: "The Polish residents of Meriden have for some time wanted a church of their own, and a pastor to look after their spiritual welfare."[5] And when the cornerstone for the first church was laid on October 30, 1892, the St. Stanislaus Society "had general charge of the arrangements which were successfully carried out to the minutest detail."[6]

Our knowledge of the Society's early years and of the life of Poles in Meriden is very scant. Those who arrived before the Society's establishment most likely worshipped at St. Rose's Church. Subsequently, and probably in June, 1880, they were placed under the care of the new St. Laurent's French Canadian Parish, where many remained until the erection of their own. St. Laurent's was a unique, multi-ethnic parish, serving both Germans and Poles in addition to the French majority. The first Polish child to be baptised at St. Laurent's (and probably the first

in Meriden), appears to have been Franciscu Paulus Kosowski on May 4, 1881, while the first marriage united Francuscum Patskowski and Anna Karraski on October 8, 1882. Poles and Germans received Confirmation on June 11, 1882 for the first time at St. Laurent's, while on June 23, 1882 several Polish children received First Communion.[7]

Multi-ethnic parishes, however, were, in most cases, unsuccessful during the immigrant years of American Catholicism. Irish-German, Polish-German, Irish-Polish, Lithuanian-Polish, or other ethnic combinations did not fully satisfy immigrant needs, especially the needs of rural immigrants who were deeply attached to their faith, often convinced that God only understood prayers in their language. While multi-ethnic parishes were truly "Catholic", the language, customs and hymns, and calendar of services, were unfamiliar to Polish immigrants, while the pastor often could not hear the immigrant's confession. National tensions carried over from Europe, especially between Germans and Poles and Lithuanians and Poles, often accompanied cultural tensions.[8] There were also conflicts over parish administration. Where the Poles were the minority, they objected to their limited representation in parish councils; believed that they were shouldering a disproportionate share of parish costs; raised questions about ownership of parish property; or demanded the use of Polish for religious services. Finally, as the population of the minority group increased, and as the immigrants organized themselves, the pressure to leave multi-ethnic parishes grew.[9]

While no evidence of ethnic tensions among the foreign parishioners of St. Laurent's has been found, after 1892 and the arrival of the first Polish pastor, Polish names disappear from the parish records.[10] There is, however, a suggestion of dissatisfaction in St. Rose's, where the Poles began to worship in the late 1880s. According to one source, Franciszek Szumny, Antoni Nowakowski, and Antoni Zuchowski at Polish meetings in the French hall on Pratt Street and in a private home on Willow Street agitated for a Polish church and school. The Poles established a Polish parish in order "not to attend [services] in the lower part of the Irish church."[11] It appears that the Poles did not enjoying worshipping in the basement. Beyond that, strong cultural differences, as well as growing numbers of Poles and Germans, were reasons enough for the Germans and the Poles to establish St. Mary's German (1890) and St. Stanislaus' Polish (1891) parishes. These two events typified developments in the American Catholic Church, where, to meet the growing immigrant tide, the American bishops, committed to the Americanization of the immigrants, agreed to the erection of nationality parishes.

The period between the founding of the St. Stanislaus Society and the erection of the parish were crucial in determining the parish's early history. There were no Polish priests available, so, of necessity, lay persons played a major, even dominant role in the organization of the parish congregation, which in turn voluntarily supported the efforts to erect a Polish church. Laymen organized the St. Stanislaus Society. In this respect, a Polish parish like St. Stanislaus in the New World differed from its Old World, rural counterpart. In Europe, the state or the local nobility built the church. In the New World, the parish was the result of the immigrants' joint efforts and contributions. According to Rev. Waclaw Kruszka, "the people are the patrons", imitating the landed gentry that they knew from their native village.[12] The Poles in Meriden, as in numerous Polish communities in America, having acquired organizational experience through the formation of their own church society, wanted, as patrons, to have a say in the running of the parish. The

immigrants' "patron consciousness" was heightened by the fact that they had not only initiated the organization of a congregation, but had, as mentioned above, collected the funds and initiated the purchase of property to be used for the future church. And, according to one source, the St. Stanislaus Society also located a Polish priest to minister to their needs.[13] It was this atmosphere of lay initiative and democratic participation which contained the seeds of the conflict that characterized the early years of St. Stanislaus Church.[14]

The records of the discussions between the St. Stanislaus Society, which in 1891 counted 61 members,[15] and McMahon leading to the establishment of St. Stanislaus Church and to the appointment of its first pastor, Rev. Anthony Klawiter, have not survived. Nevertheless, the choice for the first pastor, who initially resided at St. Rose's, was a curious one.

Klawiter, who was born in 1836 in Prussian Poland and ordained in 1859, was highly educated and deeply patriotic. He participated in the January, 1863 Insurrection in Russian ruled Poland, and only immigrated to the United States in 1873 or 1874. Prior to his Meriden assignment, Klawiter had held at least 16 assignments in Polish colonies throughout the United States. He acquired a reputation for hyperactivism and a self-willed manner, which combined with his strong sense of Polish patriotism. There were also a number of generally unsubstantiated accusations of financial impropriety. Klawiter, furthermore, brought with him from Europe a hierarchal view of both pastor and parishioner relations which, when combined with his admixture of clericalist and nationalist sympathies, impeded his ability to solve fratricidal parish disputes revolving around these two opposing camps.[16] Klawiter's assignment may have been due to his reputation as a parish organizer. According to the *Meriden Weekly Republican*: "Father Claviter [sic] started and finished a church in Buffalo, N. Y.,on the same plan adopted here, and it has a large membership and is in a flourishing condition."[17] The assignment might also be attributable to the severe shortage of qualified Polish priests. Nevertheless, the arrival of the highly gifted but strong-willed and peripatetic Klawiter did not necessarily bode well for the new parish.

Klawiter initially met with gratifying success. He relocated to Meriden on Sunday,October 23, 1892 when he met with about 500 Poles in the basement of St. Rose's, whose pastor, Rev. Paul F. Mc Alenney, helped to midwife the Polish parish.[18] It was at this meeting that the decision was taken to erect a church on the corner of Oak and Jefferson streets, with 159 Poles (51 couples, 51 single males, and 6 single females) signing as charter members of the new parish.[19] Work began on October 28 with "About one hundred of the Polish people ... digging for the foundation" and helping out "in every other way possible."[20] That Sunday, October 30, the Church was already half-erected as the Poles and other nationalities gathered for the cornerstone laying. The *Meriden Daily Journal* was prompted to comment "That the Polish Catholics of Meriden mean business in their new church project" and that the work done within the space of a week "speaks volumes for the devotion of the Polish Catholics and the enterprise of their new spiritual advisor, Rev. Father Klawiter and their school teacher, W. Pociechowski."[21]

October 30, 1892 was a landmark for Meriden Poles. Fr. Klawiter, in the basement of St. Rose's, became the first Polish priest to celebrate Mass in Meriden. Afterwards, in the style typical of late nineteenth-century America, a colorful procession led by the city band was organized to march to the cornerstone laying, where Fr. Mc Alenney presided. The procession formed at the St. Jean de Baptiste

Hall at Pratt Street, proceeded to St. Rose's to escort Frs. Mc Alenney, Broderick, Degnan, and Hurley, and then moved on to the construction site. Klawiter spoke in Polish and, according to the newspaper accounts, "that nationality paid close attention." Rev. Mc Alenney in turn praised the St. Stanislaus Society for its energy and public spirit in erecting the church and hoped that the same would spread many blessings upon the city. Fr. Mc Alenney then blessed the stone which read:

Ecclisiae Catholicae
Parochiae Polonorum
St. Stanislaus E.M.
Erecta Die 30, Oct. A.D. 1892
"Pro Gloria Dei"
In Meriden

At the end of the ceremonies, which were attended by other nationalities as well as by a large number of Poles, a generous collection was taken up to assist the Poles, "who were not very rich", in their new undertaking.[22]

Klawiter's early success was crowned on Sunday, January 8, 1893 when Bishop Mc Mahon travelled to Meriden to dedicate the completed church (40' x 90', with a small wing for classes) and its new 1,000 pound bell. Once again a grand parade was organized. Significantly, a ninety-person delegation of the St. Michael's Polish Society of New Britain, "arrayed in their handsome and attractive new regalias", participated in events, an indication of Connecticut's budding Polish community. While the remarks of the Polish speakers have not been preserved, Bishop Mc Mahon's were. The leader of Connecticut's Catholics, who advanced $1,400 for the construction of the new church,[23] expressed his pleasure to participate in this "great event", and hoped, with almost prophetic words, that in future years "we may see other Polish churches in this part of the country." He expressed his pleasure at the opening of a Polish school. Noting Meriden's increasingly diverse ethnic composition, he emphasized the loyalty of each group to the Catholic Church.

McMahon went out of his way to praise and woo the Poles. He was proud, as someone with Irish blood, "to love Poles" and compared the fate of the Irish with that of the Poles. Both struggled for freedom in their native land, and both were persecuted for their faith. The thrust of Mc Mahon's remarks, however, was to warn the Poles to remain faithful to their Catholic faith, going so far as to invoke Kosciuszko's name in this regard. Mc Mahon urged the Poles to be united in their faith "and united to your clergy," and to avoid dissensions and quarrels among themselves, lest God take His blessings away from them.[24]

The words of welcome and warning from the Hartford Ordinary suggest that he was conscious of the growing threat of independentism among Polish immigrant Catholics.

The establishment of Catholic parishes independent of the jurisdiction of the local Catholic bishop was a problem for the nineteenth-century American Church. The causes of such disputes among the Irish, French, and Germans were battles for control over parish finances, the desire for bishops from one's own group, or the wish to maintain native language and customs. These disputes were resolved when the parishes eventually submitted to the local ordinary, or by the subsequent isolation and demise of a dissenting parish. Similar disputes erupted among the Lithuanians, Italians, Slovaks, and Poles. Among the Poles "independentism" first emerged in Polonia, Wisconsin in 1873-1875. By the 1890s there were independent parishes in Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Chicago, Milwaukee, and in

numerous smaller settlements. In 1904 an effort was launched to unify these parishes with the calling of the First Synod of what became the Polish National Catholic Church. Schism was transformed into heresy and the independent parish into an autonomous religious movement.[25]

The causes of Polish "independentism" varied. Among the most common were disputes between the congregation and the pastor over control of parish finances and disputes between the parishioners and the bishops over the ownership of parish property and the Church requirement that parish property - which the immigrants had purchased with their own collected funds - be deeded to the local bishop. There were also arguments between the immigrants and the bishops over the selection of pastors; disputes between autocratic pastors with Old World models of pastor-parishioner relations and the Americanizing immigrants; and regional differences within a parish, where conflicts would erupt between parishioners from different sections of partitioned Poland.[26] Finally, many Poles came to believe that the American bishops discriminated against them,the proof being the bishops' desire to Americanize them and the absence of Polish bishops in the American Roman Catholic hierarchy (the first Polish bishop was appointed only in 1908). The independents were, to a considerable degree, influenced by American rules of social behavior, especially those of Protestant communities, where election and self-government were underlying principles. It was not unusual, therefore, for Polish immigrants, who had acquired experience in the organization of parish committees and who had acquired themselves title of ownership of parish land and buildings, to begin to resist autocratic efforts of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to impose a model of parish management.[27]

It is against this broader background that the events of 1893 in St. Stanislaus must be examined.

On January 24, after the dedication of the wooden church, Klawiter performed the parish's first recorded wedding, uniting Michael Winiec and Magdalena Chalibozek, both of whom were born in Galicia.[28] Following upon this milestone, the pastor tried to bring the St. Stanislaus Society under his control. He requested that the Society hold its meetings in the parish school hall at the rear of the Church, and apprise him of their rules and regulations.[29] Klawiter, furthermore, also tried to bring parish funds under his control. In a report to Mc Mahon he belittled the account books of Francis Szumny and Anthony Zuchowski, "neither of whom," according to Klawiter, "writes and ciphers intelligently." The Pastor charged that their accounting for the funds collected between May 1, 1891 and December 13, 1892, were in disarray and showed a $600 deficit. Accordingly, Szumny and Zuchowski were replaced at a parish meeting with Vaclav Petrycki.[30] Klawiter, furthermore, arranged for the parishioners faithful to him to elect two parish trustees, as was required by diocesan regulations, at a meeting on April 9, 1893.[31]

The St. Stanislaus Society balked at what appeared to be an intrusion into its hitherto autonomous existence, and at the incorporation of the parish as a diocesan institution. Klawiter's actions, in effect, provoked a split within the parish. The Society's leaders, formerly in charge of collecting funds for the church, constituted themselves as a new committee and continued to collect funds despite a demand from Klawiter that they "deliver up all books, accounts, out-standing moneys, collections made in the parishioners' houses, also whatever was collected in church and carried off by them to their own domiciles, further all money collected for the 'church fair'."[32] What was at stake was control over parish finances

and, ultimately, control of the parish.

On the one side were a group of individuals belonging to the St. Stanislaus Society, including, besides Zuchowski and Szumny: Michael Blazejowski, Anthony Nowakowski, Jacob Smietana, Anthony Murawski, Boleslaus Markowski, Bronislaus Markowski, Francis Kwasniewski, John Bober, and Peter Wojcik. They were painted by Klawiter as challengers to episcopal authority and administration who "despise the authority of His Lordship the Bishop." Klawiter described his enemies as "some sort of unduly americanized old Polish patriots" who rejected diocesan incorporation, who wanted to expel Klawiter, and "have a priest of their own for their own money!!" According to Klawiter, his opponents entertained such "foolish pretensions" as to "declare that the church is their property." To discredit his opponents further in the Bishop's eyes, Klawiter also noted that they "had not been to confession for the last five months", were considered "anarchists" by the rest of the parishioners, and in "their low dives", in "their Jewish-Polish saloons" conspired against "my spiritual authority."[33]

This tense situation erupted at Sunday Mass on April 17, 1893. Klawiter's opponents, who were still handling the collection, were challenged by the pastor's supporters when they refused to turn the collection over, putting it instead into their own pockets. Anticipating problems because of a disturbance the previous Sunday, Klawiter had arranged for a special duty police officer to be present in church. Officer Duis seized the disputed collection in order to turn it over to the Justice of the Peace until the matter was settled. And when Klawiter tried to proceed with his sermon, his opponents caused another ruckus by engaging in a shouting match. Later that same day, during vespers, "the war was renewed" as it was reported on the front page of the Meriden press "that pistols and knives were flourished."[34] While this was subsequently denied,[35] the matter was serious enough to bring Bishop Mc Mahon to Meriden to meet with both sides, prompting rumors to the effect that the parish would be closed "if the members and pastor cannot get along."[36]

The records of these meetings have not been found, although there is some indication that the Bishop did not exclude the St. Stanislaus Society from participation in parish governance.[37] The St. Stanislaus Society was not vanquished, and judging by subsequent actions, the Bishop's intervention did not bring immediate peace. Collectors supporting Klawiter, including Laurent Rogosz, Mathias Brys, Stanislaus Kania, Mary Kocon, and Apolonia Zurek, after a meeting of some 300 parishioners, issued a statement in his defense and in defense of Church regulations. In their statement, which appears to have been authored by Klawiter, they accused the "Jewish Committee" of being the only ones dissatisfied with the Church regulations and Zuchowski of pocketing some of the collection for the previous Sunday; denied that they had brought weapons into church; criticized Klawiter's opponents for continuing to intimidate people against giving to the church, and, thereby, causing a serious financial crisis that could lead to the church's closing; and expressed their loyalty to the Catholic Church.[38] A second statement revealed the depth of bitterness to which the dispute had fallen. Probably authored by Klawiter, it asked the Bishop to provide a statement "that could be read from the pulpit to the faithful on Sunday in order that they may know to whom in Meriden they should be obedient. Then, the statment went on, "peace shall prevail and those twelve members will hang themselves as traitors and we faithful members will joyously worship our Creator in church and do all we can towards the support of the same."[39]

The second statement also included a post-script, which defined the accepted

norms of behavior in a Polish Roman Catholic parish. The signers challenged the 70 members of the St. Stanislaus Society, "if they wished to be considered as Catholics", to demonstrate their fealty to the church by attending Mass as a body on the Feast of St. Stanislaus [May 8] "in their regalia", and fulfill their Easter duty "Such as in every church society the world over." Failure to do so would indicate "that the only aim of the ... society is to rule the parish, to domineer over the lawful Rector, to neglect their religious duties and consequently their obligations as parish members." Furthermore, the St. Stanislaus Society, now described as being composed of "disturbers of peace and harmony", "spurious", and with a "self-constituted usurping title", was threatened with the establishment of a new parish society to be titled *Sanctissimi Cordis Jesus*.[40]

These statements were intended to isolate and discourage Klawiter's opponents. They did not. There was another dispute in church on Sunday, May 14, and on June 15 it was announced that "The big row which has been going on at St. Stanislaus Polish church ... between the pastor, Rev. Father Klawiter, and his people, has been brought to an end by an order from the bishop removing Father Klawiter."[41]

Mc Mahon's decision was a stunning victory for Klawiter's opponents, especially in view of the extent to which Klawiter went to paint his opponents as challengers to Church and episcopal authority. While the reasons for the Bishop's decision are not known, it is fair to speculate that he may have concluded that the imperious Klawiter was not the appropriate choice for the Meriden Poles, who had acquired a modicum of experience in self-organization and self-management. These were no longer simple peasants who could be ordered about. The Bishop, furthermore, had dealt with the St. Stanislaus Society prior to Klawiter's arrival, a fact which may have gained the society credibility in the Bishop's eyes. Finally, it is very likely that Mc Mahon was aware of the growing threat of independentism among Polish immigrants elsewhere in the United States, and sought, therefore, to defuse the crisis at St. Stanislaus' in the quickest and most efficient manner.[42]

Following Klawiter's departure, St. Stanislaus was placed temporarily under Rev. Francis P. Havey, an assistant at St. Joseph's Cathedral. His brief tenure, from June 17, 1893 to July, 1894, was apparently free of controversy. The St. Stanislaus Society continued to play a prominent role in parish life. In the week prior to Klawiter's departure, the Society, together with Meriden's Irish, German, French, and Italian Catholics, participated, as did Klawiter, in the dedication of the new Catholic cemetery, Sacred Heart, which was concecrated by Bishop Mc Mahon.[43] It also contributed financially to the parish, as Havey noted in his annual report. The parish continued to grow, and during Havey's tenure there were 34 baptisms and 11 marriages while the parish debt was reduced by $1,040.08 to $3,012.15.[44] Havey "took so kindly to his work" that his confreres dubbed him "Haveski."[45] Havey, however, could not substitute entirely for a Polish-speaking priest, and on July 4, 1894 the Rev. Tomasz Misicki was named pastor.

Misicki was born in Przeworsk, Poland on December 31, 1866, the son of a weaver. Ordained on May 19, 1889 in the *Zgromadzenie Misji*, he pursued further studies in Christian philosophy and classical languages at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, where he received a doctorate in theology in 1892. For unexplained reasons, he left the Order and came to the United States. Between 1893 and 1901, and likely beyond that date, Misicki changed pastoral assignments several times. His immediate assignments prior to Meriden were Polish parishes in Winona, Minnesota (St. Stanislaus) and Berea, Ohio (St Adalbert's), where he toiled for a

year. Misicki was apparently recruited specifically for the Poles, and was recommended to Tierney by Ignatius F. Hortsmann, Bishop of Cleveland as "a talented and exemplary priest who has worked hard."[46] It was predicted that under the leadership of this scholarly young clergyman "the Polish Church in this city has a brilliant future."[47]

Misicki arrived in Meriden in July, 1894, coming to Connecticut at a time when the State's Polish community was expanding, and when he was the only Polish priest in the State. Within months of his arrival, Misicki received requests, either from local pastors or directly from Polish immigrants, to minister to Poles in East Berlin, Norwich, Middletown, Moodus, Hartford, Rockville, Derby, Ansonia, and New Milford. As Misicki worriedly noted in a letter to the Diocese, he was receiving letters from Poles who have not made their Easter duty. There were cases, as, for example, with Rev. Jeremiah J. Curtin in New Milford, where 80 male immigrants lived, when the local pastor refused Misicki's request to minister to them. Willing to minister to Moodus' Poles three or four times a year "if the Polish people want to make their confession or hear the word of God in [the] Polish language", Misicki feared the consequences if these souls were to be neglected. Misicki understood the threat of social disorganization that immigration posed, and argued that the Church had to minister to the immigrants' social and cultural needs in their own tongue. "There can be no wonder," he wrote, "that otherwise the Polish people are becoming wild, if they are living and must live without confession and exhortations. If I had Spanish people in my congregation, I were [sic] very much obliged to a priest of that nation for coming to me every month."[48] In trying to persuade the Bishop to persuade Rev. Curtin, who he thought "a little too proud and unkind", to allow Poles to confess "in the language they understand", Misicki asserted: "I don't care for myself. I do for the people."[49]

The shortage of priests to serve the immigrant community compelled improvisation. The Poles and Lithuanians of New Britain, for example, were placed under Misicki's care. In New Britain, as was the case in Meriden, the immigrants had organized a mutual aid society for the purpose of establishing a Polish Roman Catholic parish. Established in September, 1889, the Society of Michael the Archangel appealed to the Bishop of Hartford for a priest to come to New Britain to say Mass and help them organize a parish, and Misicki was assigned the task. A parish, under the patronage of St. Casimir, was organized in November, 1894, and the St. Michael's Society rented old St. Mary's church for services. However, the community became seriously divided over the proposed location for the new church, and one faction established a short-lived independent parish under one Stanislaus Kaminski, who claimed to be a missionary priest under a Wisconsin bishop. As Misicki wrote to Bishop Tierney: "Mr. Kaminski's greatest argument is: 'Don't care for pope, Bishop and Misicki, they're cheating you.'" Kaminski told his followers that for the $500 it cost to rent St. Mary's they could have their own church where "You govern the things."[50]

Misicki pleaded with Tierney to "have pity with my New Britain people" who Kaminski seduced. Misicki also recognized that with the growing community "The only means to stop ... [Kaminski] ... is to ... arrange the matter so that a Polish priest be stationed there right away and the Church be built at once on Grove St."[51] The disputes with the community, as well as its ever increasing numbers of immigrants, required a full-time pastor to organize a new parish. Responding with dispatch, Tierney sent Misicki's former assistant in Meriden, the recently-ordained

Lucyan Bojnowski, who had served brief assignments in Meriden and Bridgeport, to New Britain on September 10, 1895 to organize Connecticut's second Polish parish.[52] At the same time, Misicki was also relieved of his responsibility for New Britain's growing Lithuanian community, which was assigned a Lithuanian priest.[53]

Misicki was an energetic, and ambitious individual. He was remembered as being a distinguished person as far as his personal needs were concerned, possessing "a pair of beautiful steeds" and travelling from place to place "in a magnificent carriage, which today would correspond, at the least, to a Packard or Cadillac." And as "a person of great erudition" he was rather more "suitable for some kind of an academic chair than for a relatively modest pastorship."[54] The evidence tends to confirm this opinion given nearly five decades later. In his first annual report to the Bishop, Misicki criticized the parish's condition. He told Tierney: "I found nothing, but a miserable church building. The most necessary things failed." Complaining of an absence of liturgical vestments and vessels, a rectory, and furniture, Misicki volunteered: "I would have rather liked to start a new parish than to go ahead here."[55]

Despite such objections, the pastor did much to decorate the new church and improve parish property. A canvas of Our Lady of Czestochowa by artist Jan Tabinski from Rzeszow was installed above the altar, and the church refurbished.[56] The parish also grew, as Misicki married 28 couples and baptized 62 children.[57] The pastor purchased property on Oak and Jefferson streets for a rectory, and by his own account he started "the school for the Polish children". The cultured pastor also found time in December, 1895 to attend a New Haven concert by the great Polish pianist, Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Yet, by the end of December, after an energetic and active year and a half ministering to the Poles of Meriden, as well as to those in other towns, Misicki was gone.

The early accounts of the parish do not even hint at the reason for Misicki's abrupt departure.[58] There is evidence to suggest, however, that parishioner-pastor conflict was the cause. On December 1, 1895 at the monthly meeting of the St. Stanislaus Society, a verbal altercation erupted between Misicki and Leo Kowaski [sic], who Misicki hailed into court. It appeared that at the meeting Misicki charged several present, including Kowaski, with not going to confession nor paying their dues, and should, therefore, be expelled from the Society. At this point Kowaski was reported to have remarked that Misicki "is keeping bad girls in his parish house", upon which the meeting broke up in an uproar, with the exchange of further insults. Misicki accused Kowaski's brother of being a thief and told Kowaski "You are too low for me to go to court with". In court, Kowaski denied making the remarks attributed to him, but he did question Misicki's right to be present at the meeting since he was not a Society member, and seemed to resent what might be interpreted as Misicki's public denunciation of Society members. Misicki admitted that he did not belong to the Society, but told the judge that the bishop instructed him to attend its meetings. The judge found Kowaski innocent of disturbing the peace, but guilty of traducing Misicki's character and fined him $25.[59]

The dispute, described in the *Meriden Daily Republican* as "Polish day in the police court", must have embarrassed both pastor and parishioners alike. At the same time, it provides a possible explanation for Misicki's subsequent abrupt departure from Meriden. Misicki's language and manner suggests that the well-educated pastor may have been uncomfortable among peasant immigrants, espe-

cially those who challenged clerical authority. In turn, the imperious manner in which he demanded that those who had not been to confession or who were in arrears in their dues be expelled, was undoubtedly resented. While Misicki was zealous and tireless in ministering to the Poles of Meriden and elsewhere, he was also, as the astute Rev. Stanislaw Iciek noted: "more suited to some kind of an academic chair than to a relatively modest pastorship."[60]

For the second time within the space of slightly more than three years, St. Stanislaus Parish was without a pastor. Bishop Tierney, therefore, assigned the first Polish priest to be ordained from the Hartford Diocese, Lucyan Bojnowski, to assume responsibility for the difficult parish, which he did until the arrival on February 7, 1896 of Rev. Kazimierz Kucharski.

St. Stanislaus' first five years were turbulent. At the root of the tensions was the increasing self-confidence of the peasant immigrants who believed that they held a proprietary right to the parish. Poles in Meriden, and those in New Britain, evinced clear tendencies towards independentism, which was posing a serious challenge to Roman Catholic episcopal authority elsewhere in the country. While permanent breaks did not develop in either Meriden or New Britain, the events between 1891 and 1895 showed that the seeds of independentism were there. There were Polish immigrants prepared to resist autocratic clerics and to question episcopal control over "their" parish and church. The American bishops, including Tierney, vigorously opposed independentism as destructive of "all order and all ecclesiastical authority." When the Vatican excommunicated Antoni Kozlowski, a Polish cleric who declared himself bishop of an independent church, *The Catholic Transcript* published the excommunication decree criticizing Kozlowski for leading others "into rebellion", for it recognized the attractiveness of independentism "among classes in this [immigrant] community".[61]Some critics frowned upon immigrant assertiveness.[62] However, the passion with which the immigrants fought for "their" parish demonstrates the parish's importance in their lives. Furthermore, it suggests that some immigrants were also beginning to assimilate some American rules of social behavior, especially the Protestant model of congregation control.

Experiments with independentism in the Polish American communities would increase in the following years. While such experiments had their local causes, including the failure or the delay in appointing Polish priests to Polish parish communities, they often reflected broader issues. The American bishops' pressure to rapidly Americanize immigrants in language and culture, and the difficult struggle to obtain the appointment of a single Polish bishop among the Irish-dominated hierarchy, encouraged such experiments. Independentism, and the establishment of the schismatic Polish National Catholic Church, was the extreme response to what was viewed as the insensitivity of the Irish-dominated American hierarchy to the needs and wishes of Polish immigrants. The second response, articulated by the Rev. Waclaw Kruszka of Wisconsin, was to conduct an active campaign within the Roman Catholic Church for "*rownouprawnienie*", that is for equality for Poles within the American Church. The third option, articulated by Rev. Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain, was peaceful, loyal opposition within the Church and the organization of a stable immigrant community around the parish in a bid to secure Polish parishes and Polish priests to satisfy the needs of a growing immigrant population and to secure a place for Polish immigrants within the Roman Catholic Church.[63] These were the options that lay before Connecticut's Polish immigrants as their communities grew in size and multiplied.

[1] Ks. L.B., Historya ..., p. 9. On St. Stanislaus see Appendix A.

[2] According to one report, The St. Stanislaus Society carried a banner with the following inscription: "Tow. S. W. Stanisława B. i M. Patrona Polskiego za[ło]żone]go Stycznia, R.P. 1883, Meriden, Conn." "The New Polish Church," *The* [Meriden, Connecticut] *Morning Record*, January 9, 1893. Cited hereafter as *MMR*. *Pamietnik Poswiecenia Domu Polskiego przy Parafii Sw. Stanislaw Biskupa i Meczennika w Meriden, Conn (25-go Kwietnia, 1937)* list the founding date as January 1, 1889. Hereafter PPDP. On the other parishes see Ks. L[ucian] Bojnowski, *Historja Parafji Polskich w Djecezji Hartfordskie w Stanie Connecticut* (New Britain, Connecticut: Przewodnik Katolicki, 1939), pp. 27 and 189.

[3] *Historical Data of St. Rose's Church, Meriden Conn. Golden Jubilee of St. Rose's Church, 1848-1898* (Meriden, Connecticut: The Journal Publishing Company, 1899), p. 70

[4] *Meriden Land Records*, Vol. 83, p. 469. Skladzien appears as Skladen on the deed. The transfer was only recorded on November 2, 1892, after Mc Mahon agreed to the creation of a Polish parish and assigned a priest. The property was subsequently deeded to the Diocese on November 18, 1892. *Meriden Land Records*, Vol. 83, p. 487. Another source notes that the parish records report that the St. Stanislaus Society purchased land for a church in May, 1892. *Pamietnik wydany z okazji spalenia hipoteki parafialnej oraz 40-lecie probostwa Przewiel. Ks. Prałata Jana. L. Ceppy w parafii Sw. Stanisława B. i M. w Meriden, Conn. Dnia 8-go Wrzesnia, 1946 roku.* These records have not been found. However, an article in the diocesan newspaper indicated that the Poles "were not organized into a separate parish until 1891". "To Bless St. Stanislaus Church, Meriden", *The Catholic Transcript*, September 3, 1908. Also October 3, 1907.

[5] "Poles to Have a Church," *MWR*, October 27, 1892.

[6] *MMR*, October 31, 1892.

[7] St. Laurent's Church, *Liber Baptizatorum & Matrimoniorum: 1890-1919*. It is not always clear according to the names if those receiving the sacraments were Polish or German. An educated count shows 152 Baptisms of children with Polish or Slavic names and 54 marriages. Under the rubric "Germani, Poloni, e alii", there were 174 individuals who received Confirmation.

[8] In the history of St. Mary's German Parish, the author wrote: "Since the French outnumbered the Germans about three to one, it was understood from the beginning that the union of both in one Parish was not to be the final arrangement". *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of St. Mary's Church, Meriden Connecticut. December 7, 1941*. While this statement does not necessarily suggest tension, it indicates the immigrants' attachment to their ethnic forms of worship.

[9] For an example of conflict in a bi-ethnic parish see William Wolkovich-Valkavicius, *Lithuanians of Norwood, Massachusetts: A Social Portrait of a Multi-ethnic Town* (Norwood, Massachusetts: Author's imprint, 1988), pp. 29-31 and 37-43.

[10] St. Laurent's Church. *Liber Baptizatorum & Matrimoniorum: 1880-1919*.

[11] *Album i Przewodnik Handlowo-Przemysłowy, II*, p. 752.

[12] Cited in Andrzej Brozek, *Polish Americans 1854-1939* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1985) p. 46.

[13] Dolores Ann Liptak, *European Immigrants and the Catholic Church of Connecticut , 1870-1920* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1987), p. 44.

[14] On the consequence of immigrant self-organization see William J. Galush, "Faith and Fatherland. Dimensions of Polish-American Ethnoreligion 1875-1975", in Randall M. Miller and Thomas D. Marzik, *Immigrants and Religion in Urban America* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1977), pp. 84-90. Liptak overlooks entirely the rural culture from which Polish immigrants came as well as the impact of the American environment upon them in a tendentious discussion of the origins of St. Stanislaus. See Liptak, pp. 122-24.

[15] The Society participated in the dedication of St. Mary's Church. *Meriden Daily Journal* December 7, 1891. Hereafter *MDJ*. *The Connecticut Catholic* gives the number as 75. Commenting upon the numerous ethnic groups participating, the paper wrote: "the Catholics of Meriden, irrespective of nationality, helped the work not only by their presence on the occassion, but by their contributions." *The Connecticut Catholic*, December 12, 1891. This suggests the Catholic solidarity sought by American Catholic bishops.

[16] Stanley L. Cuba, "Rev. Anthony Klawiter: Polish Roman and National Catholic Builder-Priest," *Polish American Studies*, XL, No. 2 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 58-74.

[17] MWR, October 27, 1892.

[18] Rev. Thomas S. Duggan, *The Catholic Church in Connecticut* (New York, NY: The States History Company, 1930), p. 367, erroneously places Klawiter's arrival in Meriden as April, 1892.

[19] See Appendix B

[20] *MWR*, October 27, 1892

[21] *MDJ*, October 31, 1892

[22] *MDJ*, October 31, 1892; *MMR*, October 31, 1892; and *MDR*, October 31, 1892

[23] One author claims that the bishops frequently assisted new parishes with loans or by guaranteeing loans, and were not, therefore, "enemies" of the Polish immigrants. Ks. Stanislaw A. Iciek, "Historia Polonii i Parafii Sw. Stanislawa B.M. w Meriden, Conn." in *APZJ*, p. 25.

[24] *MMR*, January 9, 1893; and *MDJ*, January 9, 1893.

[25] Hieronim Kubiak, *The Polish National Catholic Church in the United States of America from 1897 to 1980* (Krakow: Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego, DCLIV, Prace Polonijne, 6, 1982), pp. 85-114; and Brozek, pp. 97-110.

[26] There is some evidence of tensions between immigrants from Prussian and Austrian Poland in Meriden. *MDJ* , December 19, 1891.

[27] Kubiak, pp. 91-2.

[28] *Liber matrimoniorum paroch Sti. Stanislai E.M., Meriden, Ct. 1-24-1893 - XI-24-1895.*

[29] Second Statement and Appeal to His Lordship, the Bishop of Hartford, Conn. 6.5.89. St. Stanislaus File. Archives of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Hereafter AAH:SSF.

[30] Report of parish fund accounts kept at St. Stanislaus Church, Meriden, CT. April 7, 1983. AAH:SSF.

[31] Klawiter to Mc Mahon, April 13, 1893. AAH:SSF.

[32] Ks. A. Klawiter, Zawiadomenie, April 14, 1893, AAH:SSF.

[33] Report... April 7, 1893; and Klawiter to Mc Mahon, April 13, 1893. AAH:SSF

[34] *MDJ*, April 17, 1893; and *MDR*, April 17, 1893.

[35] *MMR*, April 18, 1893. Alexander Laski, described as a St. Stanislaus official, issued the denial. He also explained that Klawiter's opponents had been allowed to continue taking the collection "because no disturbance was wanted in the church." According to Laski, "the two men simply held the church in terror for a while, like unto robbers going through a car, but at last the patience of the parishioners was exhausted and an officer was called in" with instructions to seize the money if it went into the pockets of the opposition.

[36] *MDR*, April 21, 1893.

[37] In a statement most likely authored by Klawiter, the signers complained: "They [i.e., St. Stanislaus Society] further resolved to have His Lordship's letter authorizing the St. Stanislaus society members to take part in governing the church to be made public to the members..." Second Statement and Appeal to His Lordship, The Bishop of Hartford, Conn. 6.5.1893. AAH:SSF

[38] Statement and Appeal. April 24, 2893. AAH:SSF.

[39] Second Statement and Appeal to His Lordship, the Bishop of Hartford, Conn. May 6, 1893. AAH:SSF. The signers included: Waclaw Petrycki, Alexander Laske, John Sargalski, Laurent Rogosz, Mathias Brys, Julian Smialowski, John Zurek, Stanislaus Brys, Constantin Krajewski, Herman Nowak, Wojciech Wojcik, and [?] Brys.

[40] Second Statement and Appeal to His Lordship, the Bishop of Hartford, Conn. 6.5.1983. AAH:SSF

[41] *MDR*, June 15, 1893. Avoiding the controversy, the first historian of the Hartford Diocese simply states that "Klawiter was seized with an attack of wanderlust." Duggan, p. 367. While it is true that Klawiter was something of a circuit riding cleric, the causes for his departure from Meriden were much more complex.

[42] Klawiter, ironically enough, eventually joined the Polish National Catholic Church and was instrumental in establishing a half dozen PNCC parishes. It appears that he was reconciled with the Roman Catholic Church before his death in 1913. See Cuba, pp. 76-92.

[43] *MDJ*, June 12, 1893. John Markowski was the Society's aid to the parade marshal; and *The Connecticut Catholic*, June 17, 1893.

[44] Francis P. Havey, "Financial Report of St. Stanislaus Parish, Meriden, Conn. from June 17,'93 to May 3, '94", AAH:SSF. The earliest recorded parish Baptism was that of Stanislaw Rogusz, son of Wojciech and Jozefa (Blazejowska) on July 9, 1893. *Baptismal Registry, July 8, 1894 - December 26, 1895.* The Baptism of Rogusz, who was born on July 8, was listed as an addendum. Klawiter must have baptized children, but there is no record.

[45] Duggan, p. 367

[46] Ignatius F. Hortsmann to Michael Tierney, June 28, 1894. AAH. After Meriden Misicki served in parishes in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He finally settled in Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Williamsport, PA. He was a prolific writer on literary and religious themes, and published his sermons. He was widely known his missions and recollections, and for his speechs at patriotic and religious celebrations. He died in Williamsport on October 31, 1935. For more on Misicki see his entry in *Polski Slownik Biograficzny*, XXI, No. 2, p. 361

[47] *The Meriden Daily Journal. Souvenir Edition Illustrating the City of Meriden, Connecticut in the Year 1895.* (Meriden, Connecticut: Journal Publishing Company, *1895*).

[48] Thomas Misicki to [Bishop Michael Tierney], September 19, 1894. AAH:SSF.

[49] Misicki to Tierney, March 13, 1895. AAH:SSF. Misicki also wrote that Curtin "thinks Hungarian, Polish, Bohemian etc are the same languages and is ignorant and wrong."

[50] Misicki to Tierney, September 5, 1894. AAH:SSF. Kaminski's name is given as Stefan by Bojnowski, p. 29, and he may be the same Kaminski who became an independent bishop of a Polish National Church in Buffalo. See Daniel S. Buczek, *Immigrant Pastor. The Life of the Right Rev. Msgr. Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain, Conn.* (Waterbury, Connecticut: Heminway Corporation, 1974), pp. 7-8 and 153, n. 5.

[51] Misicki to Tierney, September 5, 1894. AAH:SSF.

[52] On Bojnowski's distinguished and controversial 65 year pastorate see Buczek, and Blejwas, *A Polish Community in Transition*, , pp. 4-34.

[53] William Wolkovich-Valkavicius, *Lithuanian Pioneer Priest of New England. The Life, Struggles and Tragic Death of Reverend Joseph Zebris, 1860-1915*. (Brooklyn, New York: Franciscan Press, 1980), pp. 133-35.

[54] Iciek, p. 26.

[55] Misicki to Tierney, February 16, 1895. AAH:SSF.

[56] This picture would be moved to the new church in 1908, only to be removed in 1966

[57] *Liber Matrimoniorum paroch. Sti. Stanislai E. M., Meriden, CT. January 24, 1893 - November 24, 1895; and Baptismal Registry, July 8, 1894 - December 26, 1895*, rOne marriage was performed by Rev. L. Bojnowski.

[58] See Bojnowski, *Historji...*, p. 187, and *APZJ*, p. 26.

[59] *MDJ*, December 3, 1895, and *MDR*, December 3, 1895.

[60] *APZJ* , p. 26. It might also be speculated that Misicki simply felt the need to move on; was tired; or resentful of difficulties encountered with non-Polish priests, some of whom, including Fr. Mc Alenney according to Misicki's account, reported on him to the Bishop. See Misicki to Tierney, September 25, 1895. AAH:SSF.

[61] *The Catholic Transcript*, June 17, 1898. See also September 18 and November 13, 1902.

[62] See Liptak, pp. 104-31

[63] See Buczek for a more extensive discussion of these issues. Buczek, pp. 7-38; and Anthony J. Kuzniewski, *Faith & Fatherland. The Polish Church War in Wisconsin, 1896-1918* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980.

Chapter Three
The "Polanders" Organize

The decade from 1896 to 1906 was one of vigorous growth for Connecticut's Polish community. Ten national parishes sprouted like mushrooms after the rain in Bridgeport (St. Michael's, 1899), New Haven (St. Stanislaus, 1902), Hartford (Ss. Cyril and Methodius, 1902), Middletown (St. Mary of Czestochowa, 1903), Stamford (Holy Name of Jesus, 1904), Norwich (St. Joseph's, 1904), Rockville (St. Joseph's, 1904), Derby (St. Michael's, 1905), Union City (St. Hedwig's, 1906), and Terryville (St. Casimir's, 1906). In each of these towns, with the exception of Terryville, parish schools would be organized, thereby adding to the complexity of the community's organizational infrastructure. Additionally, there were already significant Polish settlements in Southington, New London, Suffield, Torrington, Bristol, Danbury, Wallingford, Ansonia, Fairfield, Willimantic, and Thompsonville.

While parishes multiplied, so did the number of Polish religious societies and secular organizations, many of which were branches of national ethnic insurance fraternals, such as the Polish Roman Catholic Union (1873), the Polish National Alliance (1880), and the Polish Women's Alliance (1898). Insurance fraternals, loosely similar to the cooperative institutions emerging in the Polish countryside in the late Nineteenth Century, initially emerged as local benefit societies. A form of immigrant capitalism, their standard program was to protect their members, who paid modest monthly dues, from temporary unemployment due to sickness or, in an age when death was a major community event, to help families meet the costs of funerals and burials. These local societies ultimately associated with national federations, which provided greater economic resources and a national ideology. The PNA argued that the cause of Polish independence would be best served through the immigrant's education, social and economic progress, unification, and integration into American life. The clerical-oriented PRCU sought to shelter the immigrant's Catholicism and Polish identity within the national parish, and in the last two decades of the 19th Century and the early years of the 20th Century, a fierce polemic between the secular PNA and the clerical PRCU stormed through the Polish community as each tried to assert leadership over the immigrants.[1] The PWA, which would develop into the third major Polish fraternal, wanted to serve the cause of

Polish independence, at the same time advancing immigrant feminism.[2] In Connecticut, the first PNA group, Lodge 233, the Matejko Society, was organized in New Haven in 1894, and by 1904 there were an additional 11 lodges. The first PRCU society appeared in 1898: by 1907 there were 5 state groups, and in 1929 15. And in 1900 the St. Jadwiga Society of the PWA (Group 9) was organized in Hartford.[3]

The organization of immigrant life took varied forms. In 1904 in Bridgeport Nest 36 of the Polish Falcons was organized, and the next year Nest 36 organized Falcon District V for New England. The Polish Falcons, modeled on the Czech and German Turners, were a paramilitary gymnastic organization committed to physical education and the development among its members of patriotic commitment to the cause of Polish independence. As the organizers of District V asserted, they wanted "to arouse and to steel Polish society" through the slogans "A healthy body, a healthy mind" and "Not for gain nor fame, but for the Polish fatherland" (*Nie dla zysku ani sławy, ale dla Ojczyzny polskiej sprawy*). [4]

The reasons for organizing the immigrants were many. There was a need to combat the social disorganization caused by immigration and adjustment from a rural environment to the alien world of industrial, urban America. Excessive drinking and alcoholism, broken marriages, adultery, desertion, and poverty were to be found in every immigrant community. There were also patriotic motivations. Early community leaders wanted the immigrants to remain attached to their homeland, and support its liberation. Finally, the immigrant clergy did not want to lose their flock to other religions or to secular forces. These conflicting motivations help to understand not only the multitude of organizations, but the competition to organize a community, particularly the competition between the clergy and the secular leaders.

On September 3 and 4, 1899, thirty-three delegates representing Polish church, military, and worker societies from Waterbury, Meriden, New Britain, Ansonia, Hartford, Naugatuck, Collinsville, Union City, Bridgeport, and New Haven met in Meriden to form "a state association for protective and benevolent purposes". The Polish Commune of Connecticut (*Gmina Polska w Connecticut*) was the first state-wide effort to organize and to unite Connecticut's Poles. The new society's object was the "education of the Polish people in general" because the founders believed that although Poles will gain independence, "we will not know how to make the best use of it without education." The Commune would organize the celebration of national commemorations and "nurse the speech and customs of the fatherland". It was also to have a "beneficiary branch and an employment bureau." Very importantly, the Commune was open to every Pole without regard for religious or political convictions, although members were expected to respect religion and education. The initiation fee was 10 cents and monthly dues 5 cents, and membership was expected to reach 1,200 within a year.[5]

For the organizers, their success was proof: "the Polish nation could achieve much for the common good in harmony and unity, and thus achieve independent existence." Poles would thus be able to advance "on the same level of civilization with other nations."[6]

The organizers of the Polish Commune were in fact activists of the Polish National Alliance, committed to advancing Polish independence through the immigrant's educational and socio-economic advancement. They organized a secular organization independent of clerical control. Eight Polish priests were reported to be among the delegates to the Commune's organizational meeting, and Fr. Kazimierz Kucharski, the pastor at St. Stanislaus, addressed the gathering on

"Love and Harmony" (*Milosc i Zgoda*) with words that acted like a "balm on the wretched soul."Significantly, however, the officers of the state-wide society did not include priests.[7] The Rev. Lucyan Bojnowski of New Britain, sensing a challenge to clerical authority within the local Polish immigrant communities, on October 12, issued his own appeal to the Poles to organize themselves. Thus the dispute between the PNA and the PRCU which shook the Polish community at the national level found its echo in Connecticut.

Bojnowski was an outspoken opponent of independentism, socialists, secular groups, and, in general, of those who did not agree with him.[8] He had, in addition to his duties in New Britain, travelled Connecticut and Massachusetts advising Polish settlers how to organize and to obtain approval for the establishment of Polish parishes. He was committed to organizing Polish immigrants under Catholic auspices, and at the meetings on November 30 proposed to the Catholic delegates assembled in New Britain the creation of a "Roman Catholic Union", which was finally established under clerical auspices on May 28, 1900.[9]

For Bojnowski, organization was the immigrants' path to well-being and influence in the New World. "Look at the Irish, the Germans, the French, etc., in Connecticut. All are organized and hold their Catholic meetings to improve their welfare. Only we lack greater unity, and though we labor zealously ... like ants, each one labors in his own nest. Therefore that labor yields little because there is no unity and mutual aid and a desired result is not obtained."[10] Organization meant political power. Furthermore, organization under Catholic auspices was a means of resisting independentism, while at the same time pressuring the local bishop to be more forthcoming in satisfying the demands of Polish immigrants for Polish priests and for permission to erect Polish parishes. Bojnowski opposed the bishops' Americanization policies. He recognized that rapid denationalization, before the immigrants had had time to acclimate themselves to the their new environment, could produce a host of social evils. For Bojnowski, the national parish was essential for the immigrants' transition to life in America. Finally, a well-organized Polish Catholic community was another lever in the struggle for "equality of rights" (*rownouprawnienie*) and the naming of Polish priests to the American Catholic hierarchy.[11]

In pushing their demands for the quicker approval of new Polish parishes, for Polish priests to serve these congregations and for the education of Polish seminarians in Polish seminaries, and for *rownouprawnienie*, Connecticut's Polish immigrants and clergy, like their counterparts elsewhere, appealed to the local bishop, to the Apostolic Delegate, and even to Rome.[12] In 1903 a Polish Catholic Congress was held in Union City to argue their case, while in September, 1905, and with much ceremony, Connecticut's Poles gathered in New Britain to greet Archbishop Albin Symon, who had been dispatched by the Vatican to investigate the conditions of Polish Catholics throughout the United States.[13]

New Britain's Lucyan Bojnowski, an autocratic cleric who was not without his critics, was emerging as the dominant religious figure among Connecticut's fledgling Polish Catholics. His response to independentism was the organization of the immigrant community at both the state and local level, and in organizing national parishes, loyally push for a place for Polish Catholics within American Catholicism, as well as within American society. His own parish, Sacred Heart, would eventually include a handsome stone church, a school, a Polish-Language weekly, an orphanage, a home for the aged, a host of parish societies, and a cemetery; a nearly self-

contained community where Polish immigrants could make a relatively stable transition into the New World. It was the Bojnowski option which influenced the subsequent development of Connecticut's Polish Roman Catholic ethnic parishes, including the senior St. Stanislaus.

In Meriden's Polish community, as in others, social problems often associated with the difficulties of immigration and re-adjustment existed. While the extent of these problems should not be overestimated, there were reports in the local press about alcoholism, drunkenness, fights and physical assaults, an occasional brawl at a Polish wedding, adultery, abandonment, theft, and mental derangement among, to use a term then current, the "Polanders", also called "Polocks".[14] There were over 90 saloons in Meriden in 1899, and Polish-owned saloons were competitors for the immigrant's free time and spare money. The daughter of one of the early trustees, Frank Swabski, recalled that her father used to go around to the saloons to try to enroll its patrons in the parish.[15] A visiting Jesuit missionary, Rev. Alozy Warol, commented about Meriden's Poles in 1903:

> Of course, its not bad for Polish saloons. They drink in the saloons without moderation, and even indolent women manage to keep men's company by the glasses. Of course here, as rarely elsewhere, the female element shows a greater susceptibility to the glass. Thus our whiteheaded [old ladies] often have faces with cheeks as red as beets - and noses flashing red like roosters' combs in the distance. Therefore, one could conclude that we only took drunkenness as a topic for our sermons. It was evident that God's word did not fall on the rocks. The gossips repented, even renouncing by vigorously raising their right hands as a sign of complete abstinence. Nearly 1,000 confessions were heard.[16]

The threat of social disorganization was not to be taken lightly, and underscored the need for a well-organized parish community. It was also indicative of the fact that the New World parish would fulfill functions that it had not been called upon to do in the Old World.

The parish during this decade was led by a succession of three pastors: Rev. Kazimierz Kucharski, Rev. Michal Miklaszewski, and Rev. Jozef Culkowski.

Kucharski, born on December 22, 1862 in Plock Diocese in Russian Poland, where he was ordained in 1885, reportedly came from a wealthy family. He arrived in American around 1890, and served in the Newark Diocese until transferred to St. Stanislaus on February 22, 1896. He is reported to have endeared himself "to every member of his congregation" and to have "brought a number of his people back to the church who had given up up their membership." During Kucharski's pastorship the parish's incorporation papers were signed and filed.[17] Unfortunately, the dedicated pastor died prematurely from consumption at the age of 39 on September 8, 1901.[18]

He was buried from his parish at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Tierney. Numerous Polish, as well as Lithuanian and Irish priests attended, while the St. Stanislaus Society provided the pall-bearers.[19] Miklaszewski, who succeeded Kucharski on September 13, had arrived in Connecticut after unsuccessful colonization attempts in Idaho and Utah. Born on September 27, 1850, in Sanok, Galicia, he was ordained in Przemysl on June 13, 1877. His tenure in Meriden lasted only to March 13, 1902, when he is reported to have departed for Guatemala.[20] He, in turn, was succeeded by the popular Culkowski, a native of Rogozna in the Poznan

Province where he was born on February 5, 1875. Culkowski emigrated in 1881, and was ordained at Ss. Cyril & Methodius Seminary in Detroit on July 2, 1899. He was first assigned to Sacred Heart in New Britain, and next to Meriden, where he remained from March 13, 1902 until he was transferred back to New Britain on August 13, 1906 because of "weakened" health.[21]

The frequent change of pastors undoubtedly made the parish's smooth development more difficult, but it did not retard it. The parish population, reflecting the continuing emigration from Poland, grew from an estimated 650 in 1896 to 1,800 by 1906.[22] The number of Baptisms rose from 49 in 1896 to 138 in 1906, while the Marriages increased from 13 to 51. Kucharski, by one account, organized the first permanent parish school, and employed the local organist, A. Korpanty, to teach the children to read and write in Polish, while he taught religion. In 1905, Culkowski hired a certified teacher, Teresa Havens, who taught the necessary subjects in English, while Wojciech Pryba, a talented organist and "hard Pole", taught the children Polish and Polish songs.[23] Enrollment in the parish school also increased, from 52 in 1897 to 125 in 1906, and there was a confirmation class of 74 in 1899, and in 1904 a class of 161.[24]

As the number of parishioners increased, the parish's financial condition improved, through weekly donations and fund raisers.[25] Father Kucharski did go into debt for repairs on the church and renovations for the rectory, but Father Culkowski, within the first 18 months of his arrival, managed to pay off $8,000 on the parish's debt. Father Culkowski also began thinking about a new church because "The congregation has grown too large for the present house of worship and we must have another."[26] Culkowski initiated a building fund, which, at the time of his departure, amounted to $8,872.35.[27]

The establishment of new societies accompanied the parish's development. Some societies were parish satellites, while others were secular and autonomous. In addition to the St. Stanislaus Society, founded in 1889, and the Rosary Society founded by Rev. Misicki, the White Eagle Society (*Towarzystwo Bialego Orla*), a lodge of the Polish National Alliance, was formed on November 15, 1896, organized by Konstanty Krajewski. On May 22, 1902, Rev. Culkowski initiated the Children of Mary (*Towarzystwo Panien Dzieci Maryi*) with an initial enrollment of 38 members, while in the following year A. Nowak and Jan Zytkiewicz organized the Knights of Our Lady of Czestochowa (*Rycerzy Matki Boskie Czestochowskiej*) with 29 members. The Knights would affiliate as Lodge 1194 of the PNA in 1910, following in the footsteps of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society (*Towarzystwo Sw. Stanislawa Kostki*), which was founded as Lodge 655 of the PNA on January 15, 1904. The founding of a Polish brass marching band, which was organized around 1898 and sometimes mentioned in the local press as the Kosciuszko Band, was an outlet for leisure time activities,[28] as was the Pulaski Society Drum Corps. The organization of leisure time extended even further in 1906 with the founding of Polish Falcon Nest 68. A church-centered immigrant enclave was evolving into an immigrant community.[29]

The pastors's primary concerns were with ministering to the needs of Polish immigrants.[30] Misicki had stressed the importance of making "the word of God" available in the "Polish language" in order to stem social disorganization among the immigrants.[31] Bojnowski labored throughout Connecticut and Massachusetts to organize the immigrants into national parishes under Catholic auspices, and in various ways Kucharski and Culkowski supported their confrere. Kucharski partici-

pated in the blessing of the cornerstone for Sacred Heart's first church on July 19, 1896 (as did the St. Stanislaus Society), and delivered the sermon telling the faithful that one cannot be a good Pole if one is an unbeliever or if one does not fulfill one's obligations as a Roman Catholic.[32] Kucharski also endorsed Bojnowski's efforts to organize a Polish "Roman Catholic Union."[33] Culkowski likewise supported Bojnowski, participating in various church celebrations organized by his New Britain colleague. Meriden's Polish Catholics demonstrated their solidarity with concerns of their clerical leadership when several travelled to New Britain in September, 1905 to participate in the visit of Archbishop Symon, who was on his fact-finding mission to study the conditions of Polish Catholics in the United States.[34]

Contacts between the various Polish communities in the State were strong. Sharing the common problems of immigration and adjustment, as well as a common language, culture, and religion, undoubtedly strengthened these ties which were both religious, as in the case of the Polish "Roman Catholic Union", and patriotic and secular, as in the unsuccessful effort in 1899 to organize a state-wide association. Patriotic anniversaries were an occasion to celebrate with fellow Poles from neighboring towns. In September, 1903, delegations from Middletown, Southington, and Wallingford "celebrated in the most enjoyable manner the 400th [sic] anniversary of the defeat of the Turks by John Sobieski", opening the event with a parade with "400 men in line."[35] In May, 1906, the anniversary of the Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791 was celebrated with a large parade in Meriden with Polish societies from Hartford, New Britain, Waterbury, Naugatuck, Union City, Southington, Wallingford, New Haven, and Bridgeport.[36] In September, 1906, District V of the Polish Falcons held its convention in Meriden.[37] Such activities, which were invariably opened with the celebration of Mass by the local pastor, reinforced the immigrant's identity as both a Catholic and a Pole. Furthermore, they gave the immigrants an awareness of a larger community extending beyond the immediate boundaries of their place of settlement, implanting the idea of a Connecticut Polish community.

Confidence accompanied the immigrant's growing consciousness of their own presence, and they began demanding that their presence be acknowledged by the host society in which they found themselves. Meriden's Polish immigrant leaders quickly realized the importance of politics, and began to organize themselves accordingly. Already in the 1890s some immigrants began to take American citizenship, and to enroll as voters.[38] There were apparently sufficient numbers to organize Meriden's first Polish political club in August, 1900. The new club's purpose was "to secure recognition of the Polish voters of the city and state," and it was expected that it would shortly be a statewide organization. The organizers were John Wanat, Leon Kowalski and A.W. Zaleski, and the first officers were Wanat (President), John Karasiewicz (Vice President), Kowalski (Secretary), Waclaw Malik (Treasurer), and Felix Ciszowski (in charge of literature distribution).[39]

Polish statewide political organizations did not emerge until 1915 and 1931, but fledgling efforts such as in Meriden were the first steps in this direction. Within a month the new group affiliated with the Republican Party, which swept the town elections that October, a fact which may account for the appointment of Frank Swabski as a special constable that same year.[40] The club functioned for several years, and by 1904 numbered some 150 members and organized enthusiastic political rallies addressed by the local congressmen and city politicians.[41] A Polish

Citizens' Club was also organized, but was inactive for some period until 1904, when it reorganized itself with 170 members. Under the leadership of John Kurcon (President), W. Kwasniewski (Secretary), and Frank P. Swabski, Mike Kurcon, and S. Dybiec (trustees), the Club, as did hundreds of other similar groups, worked on assisting immigrants to obtain citizenship papers.[42]

The initial political objectives were, of course, relatively modest, limited to the positions on the Police Force, where all the ethnic groups in Meriden felt entitled to representation.[43] Nevertheless, a new presence was making itself felt in Meriden politics.

The presence of Meriden's Polish community was demonstrated in other ways reflecting the initial adaptation and first tentative steps in the direction of assimilation and acceptance. The Kosciuszko Band, together with various parish and the secular Polish societies, participated in numerous non-Polish activities. The band and a group called the Polish American Club marched in Meriden's commemoration of the assassination of President William McKinley by a Polish American Anarchist, Leon Czolgosz, and participated in the important celebrations of other parishes.[44] The most important event in which these groups participated, however, had to be the civic parade marking Meriden's Centennial in 1906. The parade, over four miles long, was "the biggest, grandest, longest procession Meriden" had "in many a day,"[45] and the decision of the Polish organizations to participate rated a separate newspaper story.[46] The Kosciuszko Band (20 men), the two St. Stanislaus Societies (50 and 85), the White Eagle Society (120), the Knights of Our Lady of Czestochowa (60), the Polish Falcons (40), the Pulaski Drum Corps (20), and the Ss. Peter and Paul Society (24), marched together as the united Polish societies, proudly manifesting their presence in Meriden, while at the same time being accorded a modest official recognition as part of Meriden.[47]

By 1906 St. Stanislaus Parish had been in existence 15 years. During that time the parish population had doubled, from an estimated 650 in 1896 to 1,200 in 1905, while 254 marriages were performed between 1896 and 1906. Those fulfilling their Easter Duty during that same period also doubled from 436 to 936.[48] The finances were improved (especially under Culkowski), and, around the parish, an immigrant community organized itself. This was a Polish community, for all of the marriages were between first-generation, Polish-born immigrants. Nevertheless, this was a community already taking its first tentative steps in the broader society. The community could anticipate further prosperous growth, without the turmoil that accompanied the tenure of the first two pastors, Klawiter and Misicki. The transition, however, would not be entirely smooth, for it was unexpectedly announced on August 26, that the very popular Father Culkowski was being returned to Sacred Heart in New Britain and replaced by Rev. Jan Ceppa from that parish. The sudden and unexpected move, which most likely was the result of Culkowski's "weakened" health,[49] angered parishioners. A parish committee waited upon Culkowski in New Britain, but the pastor refused to discuss the matter, referring the committee to Bishop Tierney. It was reported that the congregation was "almost unanimous" in wanting Father Culkowski's return, and it was feared that the matter would split the parish.[50] With St. Stanislaus once again in turmoil, the young curate assumed his new pastorate.

[1] See Victor Greene, *For God and Country. The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America* (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1975)

[2] Frank Renkiewicz, "An Economy of Self-Help: Fraternal Capitalism and the Evolution of Polish America", in Charles A. Ward, Philip Shashko, and Donald E. Pienkos, eds., *Studies in Ethnicity: The East European Experience in America* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, LXXIII, 1980), pp. 74-9; and Thaddeus C. Radzialowski, "Immigrant Nationalism and Feminism: Glos Polek and the Polish Women's Alliance in America, 1899-1917", in *Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science*, II, No. 2, pp. 183-302.

[3] St. Osada, *Historia Zwiazku Narodowego Polskiego, I. 1880-1905. Rozwoj Ruchu Narodowego w Ameryce Polnocnej* (Chicago, Illinois: Zwiazek Narodowy Polski, 1905), p. 671; Mieczyslaw Haiman, *Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katholickie w Ameryce 1873-1948* (Chicago: Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie w Ameryce, 1948.), pp. 542-43; Jadwiga Karlowiczowa, *Historia Zwiazku Polek w Ameryce. Przyczynki do pozania Duszy Wychodztwa Polskiego w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki Polnocnej* (Chicago: Zwiazek Polek w Ameryce, 1938, pp. 319-30; and *80-Lecia Zjednoczenia Polsko Rzymsko Katolickiego 1873-1953. Meriden, Connecticut: April 25, 1953.* This last item claims that the first PRCU group was established only around 1905. Bojnowski was the moving spirit behind the PRCU in Connecticut.

[4] A. Szczepanik, "Historya Okregu V-ego Sokolstwa Polskiego" in *Pamietnik Dwudziestopieciolecia Okregu V-go Sokolstwa Polskiego w Ameryce, 1905-1930* (New Britain, Connecticut: The Resident Printing Corp., 1930), p. 7.

[5] *Zgoda*, September 28, 1899, and *MMR*, September 4 and 5, 1899.

[6] *Zgoda*, September 28, 1899.

[7] The officers were President - K. Krajewski, Meriden; Vice-President, P. Buczkowski, New Britain; General Secretary - A. Kuzminski, Waterbury; Financial Secretary - A. Krzyzanski, Union City; and from New Haven, Treasurer - St. Wasik, and Marshal - K. Lazkowski. *Zgoda*, September 28, 1899; and *MMR*, September 4 and 5, 1899.

[8] It is interesting that the organizers complained that they were being attacked in Polish newspapers for obstructing the PNA [sic!] and being against the Roman Catholic Church. *Zgoda*, December 4, 1889. The later charge is the kind that Bojnowski would make in his own paper, *Przewodnik Katolicki*, which began publication in 1907. The PNA was also attacked by a Polish priest in Hartford assigned to minister to the Poles in the Irish parish of St. Peter's. *Zgoda*, November 23, 1899.

[9] Ks. L. Bojnowski, *Historja Parafji polskich w Djecezji Hartfordskiej*, pp. 50, and, for the original appeal, pp. 177-82.

[10] *Ibid*, p. 180.

[11] For a more extensive discussion see Buczek, pp. 19-38.

[12] Bishop Tierney had sent some Irish Americans to Polish seminaries for their priestly training. To some Poles, while they welcomed priests who could speak their language, the gesture was still viewed with suspicion. See Liptak, pp. 50, 56; Buczek, pp. 35-6.

[13] The petitions of the Polish Catholic Congress were, for some unexplained reason, not forwarded until 1905. See Buczek, pp. 35-8.

[14] *MDJ*, January 12, 1892, April 18, 1892, March 13, 1893, November 2, 1899, October 1, 1901; *MWR*, July 20, 1893, April, 20, 1899, September 7, 1899, November 14, 1899, October 1, 1900, September 5, 1901, January 18, 1904; *MMR*, September 26, 1905, October 2, 1905.

[15] Interview with Mrs. Lucy (Szwabski) Mackiewicz, July 18, 1989.

[16] Grzebien, p. 183.

[17] Papers of Incorporation, January 27, 1901. The signatories were Bishop Michael Tierney, John Synott (Vicar General), Kucharski, and Michael Kurcon and Frank P. Swabski [Szwabski]. The papers were filed February 15, 1901, AAH.

[18] *MMR*, September 9, 1901. Between June 6, 1910 and Kucharski's death in September, Rev. Laurence Guinan of St. Rose's was in charge of the parish.

[19] *The Catholic Transcript*, September 12, 1901.

[20] Bojnowski, *Historja Parafji Polskich w Djecezji Hartfordskiej*, p. 187, reports that Miklaszewski departed because of instructions of the Bishop. When he died is uncertain.

[21] Ks. L.B., *Historya*, p. 11. Culkowski subsequently served in Rockville and died at his sister's in Buffalo. *MWR*, September 2, 1909.

[22] This increase occurred while there was considerable travelling back and forth between Meriden and Galicia. One immigrant was reported by a Jesuit missionary to have made the journey already 8 times by 1903. Grzbien, p. 183. See also *MWR*, July 9, 1908.

[23] Iciek commented on the parish's fiftieth anniversary: "That is why Meridenites until today still sing so beautifully, perhaps more so than in any other parish." APZJ, p. 28.

[24] *Statistical Returns of the Parish of St. Stanislaus. [Annual Reports] 1896-1906*. AAH.

[25] There is no early record of parish fund raisers, but they are mentioned occasionally in the press. See *MMR*, November 9, 1889, and MWR, November 22, 1900.

[26] *MWR*, September 12, 1903.

[27] *MWR*, September 9, 1909, and a receipt signed by Rev. John Ceppa and parish trustees Peter

Olschefski and Frank Zaborowski, September 27, 1906. AAH.

[28] *MWR*, May 18, 1899, August 16, 1900, September 26, 1901.

[29] For a list of parish and community societies see Appendix M.

[30] Slovaks also worshipped at St. Stanislaus, and appear to have had their own parish association, the Ss. Peter and Paul Society, Lodge 491 [Slovak Catholic League of America ?], whose president, Jozeph Pinarczyk, was active in both Slovak and Polish societies.

[31] Misicki to Tierney, September 19, 1984. AAH:SSF.

[32] Bojnowski, *Historja Parafji Polskich w Djecezji Hartfordskiej*, pp. 33-6.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[34] *MDJ*, September 14, 1905.

[35] *MWR*, September 10, 1903. It was the 430th anniversary.

[36] *MWR*, May 24, 1906.

[37] MMR, August 29 and September 3, 1906; and *MWR*, August 30, 1906.

[38] See, for example, MWR, October 27, 1898 and October 25, 1900.

[39] *MMR*, August 31, 1900 and *MWR*, September 6, 1900. There was an odd story denying that such a club had been formed, asserting that "The Polish people say they have received all the recognition they desire or are entitled to politically". *MDJ* , September 6, 1900.

[40] *MDJ* and *MMR*, September 19, 1900; *MDJ*, October 2, 1900; and *Meriden Directory, 1900*, Swabski held the position till 1902.

[41] *MWR*, October 6, 1904.

[42] *MWR*, July 21 and August 4, 1904. Swabski also appears as Szwabski.

[43] *MWR*, February 22, 1906. The *MWR* editorially supported nationality representation on the police force. *MWR*, March 1, 1906.

[44] *MWR*, September 26, 1901, and *MMR*, September 20, 1901; *MWR*, October 10, 1902.

[45] [George Munson Curtin], *Centennial of Meriden, June 10-16, 1906, Report* (Meriden, Connecticut: Journal Publishing Co., 1906), p. 90

[46] *MWR*, May 31, 1906.

[47] This recognition was modest. The official centennial report only lists the Polish division in the Civic Parade, and includes no history of their arrival and development in Meriden, and no history of St. Stanislaus parish, although other churches are described in great detail.

[48] *Annual Reports, 1896-1906*. The *Annual Reports* for this period are not complete, especially for 1906.

[49] For some time there had been whispers about the pastor's health. *MWR*, August 18, 1904, and *MDJ*, September 14, 1905. According to a Jesuit who conducted a mission in the parish, Culkowski had a drinking problem which interfered with the performance of his clerical duties. Grzebien, p. 76.

[50] *MMR*, August 27, 1906. Culkowski served in Bridgeport, Norwich, New Britain, Meriden and Rockville before moving to his family in Buffalo. He succumbed "to the ravages of white plague", tuberculosis. He was considered amiable, well-educated, speaking Polish and English with equal fluency, and an effective worker "among the faithful of his own race". The diocesan weekly reported that his death, "at a time when the Polish people are coming to us in such numbers, is a very grave loss". *The Catholic Transcript*, September 9, 1909.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Misicki
Pastor, 1894-1895

Rev. Kazimierz Kucharski
Pastor, 1896-1901

Rev. Jozef Culkowski
Pastor, 1902-1906

MERIDEN, CONN., MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1892.

POLES TO HAVE A CHURCH

Bishop McMahon Sends a Priest to Start the Work.

TO BUILD CORNER OAK AND SUMMIT STREETS.

The Land Was Purchased This Morning and the Work Will Begin Right Away—Big Meeting of Polish Residents Sunday.

The Polish residents of Meriden have for some time past wanted a church of their own, and a pastor to look after their spiritual welfare. Bishop McMahon has been seen about the matter, and the result is that he has sent Rev. Father Claviter to this city to start the work.

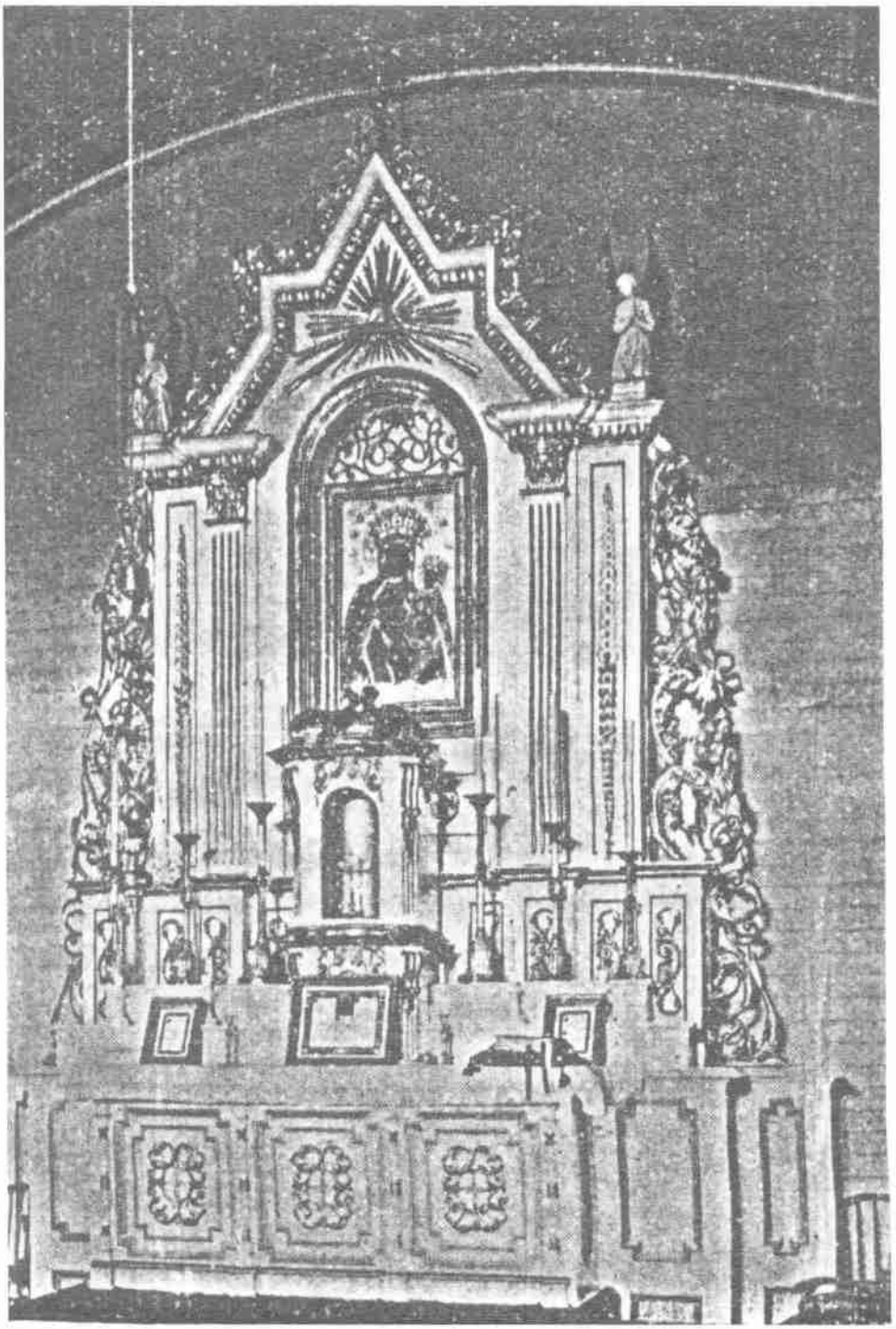
Sunday morning Father Claviter had about 500 Polish people in the basement of St. Rose's church and, after discussing the matter pro and con, it was decided to build a church on the corner of Oak and Summit streets. The land was purchased this morning, and the work of building will be started to-morrow morning. About one hundred of the Polish people are to begin work digging for the foundation and help out in every other way possible. Father Claviter will have full direction of the work.

There is but one Polish church in the state and that is located in Bridgeport. The church in this city will be for the use of Meriden, Waterbury, Hartford, Wallingford, and New Haven Polish people. Father Claviter started and finished a church in Buffalo, N. Y., on the same plan adopted here, and it has a large membership and is in a flourishing condition.

The newspaper article from the October 24, 1892 edition of the Meriden Daily Republican announcing commencement of construction of the first St. Stanislaus Church on Jefferson Street

The original church on Jefferson Street built in 1892. The site is now occupied by the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Kaczmarczyk

The original rectory at the corner of Oak and Jefferson Streets. The home is now owned by Mrs. Mary Kronenberger



This photograph is the only known picture of the interior of the first church on Jefferson Street. Taken from a souvenir edition of a local newspaper published in 1895.

Chapter Four
Jan Ludwik Ceppa

Jan Ludwik Ceppa, the young priest who would leave a lasting mark upon Connecticut's first Polish parish, was just 26 years old when he arrived to assume the duties as pastor. He was born on November 24, 1880 in Biskupice in Upper Silesia in the Prussian section of partitioned Poland into a well-to-do and honest mining family. His parents, Jan and Franciszka (Cholewy) Ceppa, instilled in their son Christian piety and civic responsibility, and at home educated him in an atmosphere of faith and family virtue. Ceppa completed elementary school in Biskupice, and at a young age felt that he had a priestly calling. Because there were no adequate schools in the Prussian partition, Ceppa, at 14, was sent to an academy run by the Salesian Fathers in Turin, Italy, which he completed with distinction. He then entered the Catholic University at Fribourg, Switzerland, and, after six years of study, was ordained on July 2, 1905.[1] Ceppa returned home to Poland to celebrate his first Mass, but in October, 1905, at the request of Bishop Michael Tierney of Hartford, he came to America and was assigned as curate at Sacred Heart Parish in New Britain under Rev. Lucyan Bojnowski. Ten months later, on September 23, 1906, he arrived in Meriden as St. Stanislaus' new pastor.

Ceppa assumed his new assignment under difficult circumstances. The parishioners were "much attached" to Culkowski, and had delegated a committee of 12 to meet with Bishop Tierney to "see if some means could not be found whereby Father Culkowski could be restored to St. Stanislaus."[2] Additionally, Ceppa was coming into a parish with a history of early difficulties, and where five different pastors served during the first fifteen years. Finally, there were within the Meriden Polish community some individuals with socialist and anti-clerical leanings.[3]

Ceppa responded to his new assignment by moving quickly and mobilizing the parishioners to commit themselves to the erection of a new church. Culkowski had raised the idea as early as 1903, and left his successor with a substantial amount of cash on hand. The "hustling" Ceppa announced the parish's decision in January, 1907. The rapidity with which Ceppa moved was admirable, and it produced the desired effect. The *Meriden Weekly Republican* wrote that the new pastor is "young, energetic and capable, and the people of St. Stanislaus parish are looking forward to great things under his leadership."[4] By February a plot of land on the corner of

Pleasant and Olive Streets, with a beautiful view of the city and the western hills, was purchased after Bishop Tierney, who Ceppa kept informed on developments, approved the cite and the purchase.[5] On October 6th, Tierney, in the presence of 6,000 guests and spectators, laid the cornerstone for the new church. And in a deft gesture by Ceppa, Culkowski was invited to deliver an address.[6]

The impressive ceremonies for the laying of the cornerstone were matched, if not exceeded by the dedication of the new church on Labor Day, September 7, 1908. Bishop Tierney presided over the ceremonies. High Mass was celebrated by Rev. Stanislaw Musiel of Middletown, assisted by Culkowski and Fathers Paul Klich Ensley, and John J. Murray. The choir, directed by Joseph Przewozniak, sang Gonoud's Mass, with Miss M. Moczadlo as soloist, and the Rev. Stanislaw Lozowski of Hartford delivered the sermon. As was the custom, an impressive parade with over 1,100 uniformed men in the line was organized, with five times as many spectators on hand, including representatives of Meriden's various nationalities, and, in a common demonstration of national solidarity and of "the religious feelings of the Polish nation", Poles from throughout the state and Polish priests from every Polish parish.[7] The color of the occasion was brightened by the Polish societies from Meriden, Hartford, Seymour, New Haven, Southington, Plantsville, Union City, and New Britain, each of which paraded with their own marching band. With justice a Meriden reporter wrote that the dedication was "One of the most impressive civic and religious ceremonies that Meriden has ever seen."[8] The day concluded with vespers in the evening celebrated by Rev. Ignacy Maciejewski of Union City, while the Rev. Jan Mard of New Britain preached.

The new church's dedication was the occasion for the publication of St. Stanislaus' first formal history. New Britain's Lucyan Bojnowski authored the commemorative pamphlet in language characteristic of the stern "immigrant pastor", who utilized his sacerdotal authority to influence the social behavior of Polish immigrants. Bojnowski described the new church, erected "through God's help", as "a new and beautiful temple where the poor and pious Polish people could praise their Lord God, where they could open their hearts before Him, thank Him for His blessings and ask for new ones, and, finally, ask forgiveness for their failings and faults." For the exclusive-minded Bojnowski, Roman Catholicism was the fundamental element of Polish national identity. Therefore, the new church was "a new watch-tower, a new fortress of [the Polish people's] nationality and language." Bojnowski exhorted the faithful to visit the Polish church frequently so that the religious lessons of the sermons "in our beloved Polish language will penetrate to your hearts more easily and embed themselves more deeply into your memories. And never forget the language of your Fathers."[9]

The new church, which cost approximately $50,000, was an indication that Meriden's Polish community was a prospering urban village centered around the Polish immigrant parish. The parish census in 1907 counted 2,180 Poles and 56 Slovaks, figures which increased to 3,500 and 80 in 1914. In the case of the Polish parishioners, nearly all of Meriden's Pole's, who numbered 3,581 in 1913, belonged to the parish.[10] By the celebration of the parish's silver jubilee in 1917, there were an estimated 4,000 Poles and 100 Slovaks worshipping at St. Stanislaus.[11] There were between 1907 and 1917, 484 Marriages (nearly 44 per year), 2,158 children's Baptisms (an annual average of 196), and 483 funerals (an annual average of 44). And according to the annual reports, the number of parishioners making their Easter duty rose from 1,486 in 1907 to 2,580 in 1917.[12] The parish's growth justified

the assignment of an assistant pastor, and in August, 1915, Rev. Stanislaus Blazejowski was appointed.[13] Blazejowski, in turn, was followed by Rev. George Bartlewski, a New Britain native, who would serve from March 8, 1916 to April 22, 1919, until being appointed to head the newly organized Polish parish of St. Stanislaus in Bristol.[14]

The parish's impressive demographic growth was reflected in the increase in the number of parish societies. The St. Cecilia Society, the parish choir, was founded on September 21, 1906, and the Sacred Heart League (*Towarzystwo Ligi Najslodszego Serca Pana Jezusa*), a women's society, in 1907. The Guardian Angels Society (*SS. Aniolow Strozow*) for the parish children was established in 1908. In 1909, Ceppa, Jozef Przwozniak, Antoni Kotczube, and Wladyslaw Glazewski initiated the St. Casimir's Society (*Towarzystwo Sw. Kazimierza Krol*), Lodge Nr. 389 of the Polish Roman Catholic Union. Organized under the slogan of "God and Fatherland", the Society's objective was the benefit and well being of parishioners, clergy, and of Meriden's entire Polish community, as well as its own well-being, and was, in its early years, a typical immigrant self-help association.[15] Organizations similar in character included the Mutual Aid Society (*Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy*) organized in 1911, and the St. Jadwiga Society under the Protection of the Divine Heart of Jesus Society (*Towarzystwo Sw. Jadwigi*) was formed on September 3, 1912. The parish annual reports from 1913 listed the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a ladies group, while in the same year a Scapular Society, to which "almost the whole parish" belonged, was also listed. In May, 1914 the Men's Rosary Society (*Towarzystwo Mezow Rozancowych*) came into being.[16]

During this period the parish's financial resources steadily increased, enabling the parish to initiate two important undertakings. In May, 1911 a new, much needed and wanted organ was installed, with most of the costs raised during a four-day bazaar in which the parish and the secular organizations participated. The successful fund raising was, in the words of one observer, beautiful proof of "the zeal of Meriden Polonia for its church."[17]

The parish, however, had an even more pressing need, and that was the education of the parish children. The first permanent parish school had been inaugurated by Fr. Kucharski, and the children were taught in the rear of the wooden church on Jefferson Street. When the new church was dedicated, the old church was converted into a parish school in which three rooms served seven grades.[18] Between 1908 and 1914 enrollment increased from 216 to 371, while it was estimated that there were over 700 school aged children in the parish.[19] The pastor taught catechism, while other subjects, including Polish, were covered by lay teachers.[20] At the request of the parishioners, Ceppa sought to find nuns to instruct the children, and in 1914 six Sisters of St. Joseph from Stevens Point, Wisconsin arrived in Meriden.[21] The growing student population necessitated the construction of a new and larger school. Pressure for a new school surfaced in 1913, on the one hand stimulated by the pastor, who, on the other hand, was reluctant to undertake the project until more of the parish debt was retired.[22] Finally, according to one source, Ceppa "decided to construct a proper facility for his little 'Lollypopsow', for the little children of the parish."[23]

Although the parish was prospering, the decision did not meet with unanimous approval. While the decision was taken in consultation with the parishioners during a series of meetings in 1914, a small group felt that the school being planned, while needed, was too expensive. Unable to change Ceppa's mind, or the opinion of the overwhelming majority of parishioners, the dissidents circulated a petition to the

Bishop that collected 74 signatures (26 of whom were non-parishioners) asking for Ceppa's recall! The dissidents were described by Ceppa's supporters as younger parishioners, many of whom did not have school age children. A counter-petition was also circulated, but this proved to be unnecessary as the Chancellery paid no heed to the dissidents' petition.[24]

This incident quickly faded from memory, but it is noteworthy as a rare instance of opposition to Ceppa during his career at St. Stanislaus.[25] It did not however, delay the construction and the opening of the new school. Construction was begun on April 5, 1915 and on November 21, amidst pomp and circumstance, the new St. Stanislaus School, which cost $66,333.50 to construct, was dedicated by Bishop John J. Nilan.

The ceremonies were a manifestation of immigrant Catholic solidarity and Polish immigrant national pride. The parade, which began at 1 p.m., and included the various Polish societies, first proceeded to St. Rose's and St. Joseph's parishes to pay respects to the priests and parishioners. The procession, which included Mayor Daniel J. Donovan and Councilman Thaddeus S. Skladzien (a parishioner), then returned to the school. Bishop Nilan, in the company of his priests, emerged from the rectory and proceeded to the school to bless it, from whence those assembled proceeded to solemn high Mass in the church, which they entered to the hymn *Veni Creator*. The Bishop in his sermon praised the parishioners for providing their children with a place "where they be taught not only what is needed in the present life, but what is necessary for the life hereafter." The Bishop also, in an oblique reference to the protest against Ceppa, and possibly to the emergence of an independent Polish national parish in nearby Wallingford, urged the parishioners to remain in union with their pastor.[26]

Immigrant parochial schools were, after the parish, the most influential element in the institutional infrastructure of the Polish American community. By 1910 over 300 such schools existed, a figure which reached 585 in 1946. They were intended to maintain and cultivate the native language and traditions, to support family values, and to provide religious instruction and protect the children from what were perceived as the negative aspects of American society.[27] Like the parish, the school was a culture-preserving institution. At the same time, it was also a transition zone to American society, because the schools provided English language training. While the American Catholic bishops and others in the host society viewed the schools as instruments for the immigrants' Americanization, the immigrants saw them as preservers and cultivators of native language and tradition.

The immigrants' point of view was echoed in the Polish sermon of Rev. Antoni Mazurkiewicz of St. Stanislaus in New Haven. He hoped that the newly established school would unite the faithful in mutual assistance and the defense of national and religious issues. The school, after the Polish parish, was a bastion of Polishness, and it was obligatory to send children to Polish school. Those who did not were, in effect, ostracized by Mazurkiewicz, who declared that they had nothing in common with the goals of the Polish nation - the freedom and independence of the Fatherland. And such individuals were only Poles because they could not measure up to foreigners.[28]

The dedication ceremonies were in fact a celebration of Polish immigrant solidarity. Eleven Polish pastors and curates attended, and the concluding hymn was the popular *Serdeczna Matko*.[29]

The opening of St. Stanislaus School on November 29, 1915 marked, in a

certain sense, the end of the first phase of Ceppa's pastorate. It occurred just two years before the parish's silver jubilee, which was itself marked on November 4, 1917. Fr. Ceppa celebrated with High Mass , and Fr. Bojnowski from New Britain led evening vespers to mark the occasion. The entire congregation was reported to be present, together with priests from other Connecticut Polish settlements. The sub-deacon at both services was Rev. Peter Karsmarski, who the previous spring became the first parishioner to be ordained a priest.[30] The front rows were reserved for parish service men stationed at Ft. Devens and for the parish societies. The church was presented with testimonies of faith. The entire parish community offered a chandelier of "eighty electric lights" costing $450, while the Rosary Society presented a statue of the the Holy Rosary with "an electric illuminated lettering in arch form" in Polish reading "Queen of the Holy Rosary Pray for Us." The Sacred Heart League presented a similar statue of the Sacred Heart with the words "Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us." Finally, the St. Cecilia Society gave two vases for the altar.[31]

Within the first quarter of a century a physical plant had been erected. When Ceppa arrived the parish's property was a wooden church and rectory. With justification Ceppa was compared to the fourteenth-century Polish king, Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great), who found Poland a country of wood and left it one of stone castles and fortifications. Ceppa found St. Stanislaus a parish with wooden structures and a history of turmoil, and by 1917 transformed it into one with impressive brick structures and domestic tranquility.

Ceppa exemplified the brick and mortar priest of the immigrant phase of American Catholicism. He was an organizer and a builder, and also a priest-patriot, identifying, as did Bojnowski and many other clerics, Polishness with Catholicism. Like his fellow Polish confreres, Ceppa was pleased with the elevation of Chicago's Paul Rhode as the first American bishop of Polish origin in 1908. In 1909 Ceppa participated in Confirmation administered by Rhode at St. Stanislaus Church in New Haven. At that time the new Bishop exhorted the congregation to preserve the faith, Polishness, and good Polish customs. He was disturbed that in America there were Poles who were either "pagans" or "unbelievers", for they did not belong to Polish organizations. He urged his listeners, "as Poles and Catholics", to join Polish organizations because "the Holy Spirit, who is descending upon you today, demands this of us". Finally, speaking, as it were as bishop for all the American Poles, Rhode called upon those present to join the Polish Roman Catholic Union, and, together with their priests, unite "in one Catholic chair in all America."[32]

Rhode's influence was evident in Meriden and in Connecticut. Ceppa, as mentioned earlier, was involved in the oganization of a PRCU lodge at St. Stanislaus (St. Casimir Society). In Connecticut, between 1909 and 1915 the number of PRCU lodges rose from 9 to 28.[33] Equally significant are Ceppa's own thoughts. In a sermon delivered at the laying of the cornerstone of St. Stanislaus Church in New Haven, Ceppa told the congregation that only in Polish Catholic churches could Poles "praise the Almighty God with all our heart and in our own language." In this regard Catholic churchs "held us Poles together - exiles among foreign peoples - through the Catholic faith, and defending us from denationalization."[34]

The church helped to inculcate a strong Polish national identity among Meriden's Polish immigrants, and cooperated with other Polish organizations in patriotic manifestations. In 1910, when Poles throughout the world were commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Polish victory over the Teutonic Knights

at the Battle of Grunwald. New England observances were held in Chicopee, Boston, New Britain, Stamford, Norwich, and Meriden, prompting one reporter to write: "It is clear that the Poles are not sleeping but working for the patriotic good with the greatest benefit." The Meriden commemoration, which opened with Mass celebrated by Ceppa, drew "several hundred Polish patriots" from Union City, Glastonbury, Hartford, Ansonia, New Haven, New Britain, Danbury, and Waterbury. As reported in the press: " Everyone was in gala attire and wore the colors of the fatherland as a mark of respect."[35]

While Ceppa was an organizer, builder, and patriot like Bojnowski and other outstanding pioneering immigrant pastors, he was not as controversial as some of them, nor did he acquire, as did Bojnowski, the reputation, both within and beyond his community as "both Czar and Pope."[36] Bojnowski tried to direct every aspect of the life of New Britain's Polish immigrants in his early years, and was openly antagonistic toward secular organizations, such as the Polish Club No. 1, Polish National Alliance Lodges, and the Falcons, which did not accept his leadership in temporal, as well as spiritual matters. The pastor, furthermore, opposed efforts to create territorial centers apart from the parish, such as the erection of a Polish national home, a socio-cultural hall and meeting place for all Polish groups in a given area. He also resisted the creation of a *centrala* (an umbrella organization for the "united Polish societies" in a given locale).[37] Such buildings and organizations, however, enhanced the immigrant community's organizational infrastructure, and were indicative of the community's evolving socio-economic maturity. And Ceppa, unlike Bojnowski, appears to have adopted a conciliatory, if not supportive approach in dealing with similar groups in Meriden.

A measure of the maturity of an immigrant group was its presence in local politics. Political clubs were the first step. Meriden's first Polish political club had been organized in 1900. It was followed by the non-partisan Polish Citizen's Club, subsequently known as the Polish American Political Club, Inc., which counted 250 members in 1914 and was described as "one of the largest and most successful permanent political clubs in the city."[38]

Meriden politics were heavily ethnic, and the early Polish achievements were modest. In 1908, there was considerable pressure from the "Polanders" to appoint John Karsmarski a regular patrolman. The Police Commissioners were reluctant do so because Karsmarski was not as big as they desired. As reported in the press: "There are people who think that the Polish people can trot out a six footer." Nevertheless, the Commissioners, overcoming their initial reluctance, appointed Karsmarski, the second Pole after Frank Swabski to be named a special patrolman (1906), a regular patrolman "to give the Polish people representation on the force."[39] In 1909 two additional candidates were supported by the Poles, who, together with the German, French, Irish, and Swedes, were also lobbying for the appointment of one of their own as Police Commissioner.[40] Karsmarski was dismissed from the Force in 1911, and the next Polish officer was Walter Kurcon a second-generation Polish-American born in Meriden in 1890. Besides being Polish, he was considered a good prospect for an outfield position on the police baseball team![41] Finally, in these years, the Fire Department and the Post Office remained the domains of other ethnic groups.

More substantial successes followed. In 1915 Dr. Thaddeus S. Skladzien was elected Councilman, a post that he would hold until 1918, indicating that the Polish community was a new factor in local politics.[42] Earlier, in the 1912

presidential campaign, the Democrats everywhere were particularly worried about the immigrant vote because their candidate, Woodrow Wilson, had made disparaging remarks about Polish, Hungarian, and Italian immigrants in the last volume of his *History of the American People*. The issue provoked an angry reaction in the Polish press.[43] In Meriden, the controversy prompted the local Democrats to import two Polish speakers to address the "misrepresentation of Governor Wilson."[44] Overall, Wilson, while barely winning, lost much of the Polish vote, indicating the sensitivity of Polish voters to their image and an awareness of a certain political importance.

The community's confidence in itself was reflected in other activities and organizations. Nest 68 of the Polish Falcons prospered with its emphasis on physical education and patriotic activities on behalf of Polish independence. Its members played an active role in the District V of the Falcons, which initially covered New England, hosting the first District convention on September 2 and 3, 1906, and helping organize Falcon nests in other Connecticut and Massachusetts Polish settlements. Meriden served as the headquarters for District V from 1908 to 1913, by which time there were 39 nests in Connecticut and southern Massachusetts with 1,228 male and female members.[45]

Nest 68 members played important roles in early Falcon history. Between 1906 and 1912 the Falcons were merged with the Polish National Alliance. The PNA viewed American Polonia as the "fourth partition" of the Polish nation, equal to the other three partitions, and divided only by distance. Tomasz Siemiradzki, editor of the PNA paper, *Zgoda*, looked to the PNA as Polonia's "government" and to the Falcon's as its potential "army". The merger, however, was opposed by various Falcon members, some of whom feared that the Falcons would lose their identity. Others, like Jozef Wlodarczyk, an emigre from Russian Poland active in Nest 68, wanted to transform every Falcon nest into a "fighting organization" for use in the Polish struggle for independence. He broke away from Nest 68, the PNA-Falcons, and organized the break-away Union of Polish Falcons in America (*Zjednoczenie Sokolow Polskich w Ameryce*).[46] The majority of Nest 68, however, followed the policies of their national headquarters, supporting the association with the PNA until the Falcons were reorganized as an independent group in 1912, and reunited.[47]

The association between the PNA and the Falcons was mutually beneficial, stimulating increased membership for both groups. In Meriden, the groups cooperated in fund raisers, and when Nest 68 celebrated its fifth anniversary in January, 1911, Siemiradzki was the main speaker.[48] Meriden was also represented by Falcon Stanislaw Iwanicki at the Polish National Congress in Washington, D.C. on May 11-13, 1910, an idea long promoted by the PNA. The Congress coincided with the dedication of the statues of Kosciuszko (in Lafayette Park) and Pulaski (on Pennsylvania Avenue), and represented the nationalist wing of Polonia, the PNA, their Falcon allies, and the Polish Women Alliance. The Congress asserted the right of Poles to exist as an independent nation, and expressed the belief that "it is our sacred duty to strive for the political independence of our fatherland, Poland."[49]

The Falcons were among the most active of Meriden's Polish organizations in the years prior to World War I. Their vitality was evident in the organization of Ladies Falcon Nest 444 on October 27, 1912, and in the erection of their own club house on Grant and Olive Streets, which was dedicated on November 28, 1912. The new Falcon Hall was a building territorially independent of the parish, and, theoretically, a threat to the authority of the pastor as community leader. While

Bojnowski waged a running war with the New Britain Falcons, in Meriden, the Falcons, most likely as a consequence of Ceppa's diplomatic skill, actively cooperated with the parish and other Polish organizations. The opening ceremonies for the dedication began, as was the custom, with Mass at St. Stanislaus.[50]

Ceppa did not appear threatened by initiative beyond his direct control. In September, 1913, the church societies of St. Stanislaus formed a United Polish Societies (*Centrala*), with an estimated membership of 600.[51] Within the year the *Centrala* joined together in the Casimir Pulaski Co. and collected $16,000 to erect Pulaski Hall to cater to the community's social, athletic, cultural, and educational demands, including the Amateur Drama Circle "Wanda".[52] The opening ceremonies began with Mass at St. Stanislaus, followed by a parade to the new hall, which was second in size after the state armory. Fr. Ceppa, Dr. Skladzien, Mayor Donovan, and Judge D. T. O'Brien spoke at the dedication exercises, and the Chopin Band and the Silver City Drum Corps entertained. This community center was in fact Meriden's first Polish National Home, which secular organizations also joined, and was headed by John Markowski.[53]

Finally, while most Meriden Poles worked in the local factories, there were the first faint signs of a typical immigrant middle class, one located in the urban village and dependent upon local business. In 1911 the Business Directory of the *Meriden Directory* carried listings for six saloons (Joseph Carnecki [Czarnecki], Stanislaus Dybiec, S.B. Dziadosz, all on Veteran Street; and J. Pichnarcik, George Solek, and George Wanak, all on Pratt Street); eight grocers (Joseph Billings, Franciszek Grabowski and Wladyslaw Kwasniewski on Pratt Street; and Andro [Andrzej] Przybylo and J. Rajewsky [Rajewski] on Veteran Street; Louis Skrzypiec on Oak Street; and Alex Nosenski on Mechanic Street); and four meat markets (Billings, Przybylo, and Stanislaus Filipek on Veteran Street and Joseph Juralewicz on Willow Street). Poles were also listed as barbers (John Czyewski and Thomas Rodenski), booksellers and steamship ticket agents (Zawisza and Kapalka), and there was also a music teacher (Matthew Jablonski), baker (William Tomkeavecz [Tomkiewicz]), blacksmith and carriage maker and repairer (Juralewicz), nurse (i.e., midwife, Emilia Panski), tailor (Jozef Babiarz), a milk and cream distributor (Martin Rekofski), and a teamster (Louis Koubeck).[54]

By the eve of World War I, Meriden's Polish community possessed a stable and diverse organizational infrastructure consisting of religious and secular organizations, and an emerging immigrant middle class. The Polish parish remained the heart of this immigrant urban village.

[1] *Pamietnik Bankietu Jubileuszowego z okazji 30-to Letniej Rocznicy Kaplanstwa oraz Powrotu z Polski Wiel. Ks. Jana Ceppy (29-go Wrzesnia i 6-go Pazdiernik, 1935) w Sali Parafjalnej Sw. Stanislawa B. M. w Meriden Conn.* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1935.).

[2] *MWR*, August 30, 1906. No further material has been found about this meeting.

[3] On January 7, 1899 a group of PNA members from Meriden (Krajewski, Blazejowski, Markowski, and others) joined an anti-clerical group in New Britain and made a disturbance during Mass at Sacred Heart Church. Bojnowski, *Historja...*, p. 71.

[4] *MWR*, January 17, 1907.

[5] Ceppa to Tierney, February 16, March 18, and June 24, 1907. AAH.

[6] *MWR*, February 21, April 16, September 19, and October 10, 1907; *MMR*, October 4 and 7, 1907; and *MDJ*, October 7, 1907. The metal box placed in the cornerstone included scriptural inscriptions, the program of the event, copies of the *MMR* and the *MDJ*, several Polish publications, and US coins and certificates. See also *The Cathlic Transcript*, October 3 and 10, 1907.

[7] *Przewodnik Katolicki*, September 4, 1908. Hereafter *PK*

[8] *MDJ*, September 7, 1908. Also *MMR*, September 4 and 7, 1908, and *The Catholic Transcript*,

September 3 and 10, 1908 reports the presence of Polish Catholic societies from Middletown, Terryville, Waterbury, Wallingford, and Derby.

[9] Ks. L. B., *Historya*, p. 26. The proceeds from the brochure were designated for Bojnowski's Polish Orphanage in New Britain.

[10] *MWR*, June 19, 1913.

[11] There were efforts to establish a Slovak (also called in the press Slavonian) church. In 1913 there were an estimated 200 Slovaks in Meriden, many of whom worshipped at St. Stanislaus. The Slovaks wanted "a church of their own ... rather than [having to worship] in a church belonging to a different nationality." *MWR*, April 7, 1913. A church fund was started on January 12, 1913, and the Ss. Peter and Paul Society numbered two hundred members. Among the leaders were Albert Zibura and J. B. Pichnarcik. The active Slovak pastor, Rev. Gaspar Panik of Torrington, addressed one of their fund raisers. *MWR*, February 5, 1914. Prior to the erection of the new church, Lithuanians worshipped at St. Stanislaus, where the active Lithuanian priest, Rev. Joseph Zebris, held services for them. The Church was regularly attended by the Lithuanians. Zebris attended the dedication of the new church, and when Zebris was murdered, Ceppa remembered him as a good and kind-hearted man. *MMR*, February 10, 1915. On Zebris see Wolkovich-Valkavicius.

[12] *Statistical Returns of the Parish of St. Stanislaus [Annual Reports] 1907-1917*. AAH. Cited hereafter as *Annual Reports*.

[13] *MMR*, August 7, 1915. The name was given as Blazewski in the media. The parish's 50th anniversary history lists Rev. George (Grzegorz) Bartlewski as the first curate. *APZJ*, p. 57. Blazejowski, a graduate of the Polish seminary at Orchard Lake, was born on August 29, 1891 in Nowa Wies, Galicia. He completed the gymnasium at Rzeszow, and then sailed for America. He studied at the Polish Seminary at Orchard Lake, MI, and was ordained in Hartford on June 28, 1915, and died on March 5, 1946.

[14] Bartlewski was born in Poland on February 13, 1892, and raised in New Britain. He was ordained in Fribourg on August 1, 1915, and was raised to the rank of Domestic Prelate in 1963, and in 1990 celebrated the 75th anniversary of his ordination in Bristol, where he spent his entire priestly career after leaving Meriden. Blazejowski was named to succeed Bartlewski in Meriden in 1919. *MMR*, April 19, 1919. For a complete list of St. Stanislaus curates see Appendix G.

[15] The silver jubilee history noted aid to members ($10,000), flood victims in Galicia ($1,400), for Poland during World War I ($1,700), for the Silesian Plebiscite ($600), and the African missions ($700), boasting that the the Society cares for all Meriden Polonia. *Pamietnik Jubileuszowy na Uroczystose 25-Letniej Rocznicy Zalozenia Tow. Sw. Kazimierza Krol. Dnia 14go Marca Roku 1909*.

[16] Information on the societies comes from *PPMP* and *Annual Reports, 1907-1918*. AAH

[17] *PK*, May 15, 1911. Also *PK*, February 17, March 10, and May 15, 1911; *MWR*, February 8 and March 23, 1911. The bazaar committee included Stanley Koztara [Koziara], Joseph Terlikowski, Leo Sobolewski, Stanley Lenik, Stanley Kaduk, and Frank Zaborowski.

[18] *MWR*, August 27, 1908. Just when the instruction of the children in religion and Polish became a full-fledged school is uncertain. A St. Stanislaus School appears in the *Meriden Directory* for the first time in 1914.

[19] *Annual Reports, 1907-1914*. AAH.

[20] The teachers included Misses Stanley and Burke, Misses Swiderska and Midura who taught Polish and English courses, and Professor Kowaleski and Wojciech Pryba who taught Polish and music. *History of St. Stanislaus School* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1976), p. 2.

[21] The sisters were: M. Benedict Skonieczna, M. Avila Przykucka, M. Christine Pogorzelski, M. Liberate Dubiel, and M. Vincenta Gubala. *Ibid*. The nuns were housed in the old rectory, and a new rectory was purchased on Akron Street for $8,100. *APZJ*, p. 30.

[22] *MWR*, January 2, 1913 and *MMR*, January 16, 1913.

[23] *History of St. Stanislaus School*, p. 2.

[24] *MDJ*, February 24, 1915 and *MMR*, February 25, 1915.

[25] It is not mentioned in any of the parish and school souvenir books and histories.

[26] *MMR*, November 22, 1915; and *MDJ*, November 20 and 22, 1915. See Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "The Wallingford Schism: The Origins of St. Casimir's Polish National Catholic Church in Wallingford, Connecticut", forthcoming in *PNCC Studies*

[27] Rev. Francis Bolek, *The Polish American School System* (New York: 1948); and Jozef Miaso, *The History of the Education of the Polish Immigrants in the United States* (New York and Warsaw: The Kosciuszko Foundation and PWN, 1970).

[28] *PK*, November 26, 1915.

[29] S. Musiel (Middletown), J. Kowalski (Hartford), L. Bojnowski (New Britain), Paul Piechocki (Union City), T. Zimmerman (Waterbury), P. Waszko (Derby), M. Soltysek (Rockville), Z. Woroniecki (Southington), S. Federkiewicz (Thompsonville) and A. Grochol (New Britain). *MMR*, November 22, 1915 and *PK* November 26, 1915. Piechocki, a native of Meriden, had been ordained on July 29, 1907 at Tarnow in Galicia in Austrian Poland. He studied with John A. Sullivan, Philip J. Mooney, and Frank J. Kuster as part of an effort by Bishop Tierney to train seminarians in the language and customs [in this case Polish] of his immigrant flock. Liptak, pp. 49-50. Liptak erroneously identifies Piechocki as "Polish". Piechocki was born in Meriden on September 7, 1884 in

Meriden of a German mother and a Polish father. The family belonged to St. Mary's German Church, where he celebrated his first Mass, and in the early years of his priesthood, Piechocki served German Catholics. *MWR*, July 4 and August 22, 1907. Piechocki, who spoke good Polish, later served in Polish parishes.

[30] Karsmarski [Kaczmarski] was born in Meriden on January 4, 1892. An outstanding student, he was sent to Germany for his seminary training, where he was when World War I began. *MWR*, September 10, 1914. He returned and was ordained on June 9, 1917. He died on May 28, 1932.

[31] *MMR*, November 5, 1917.

[32] *PK*, July 30, 1909. *PK* reported that during this trip Rhode briefly visited New Britain and Meriden. The Meriden press does not mention this.

[33] Bojnowski was a major promoter of the PRCU in Connecticut, and praised the Meriden Poles who joined. Every Pole, according to Bojnowski, ought to join the PRCU "which, in the event of death, pays a $1,000 premium, and, besides, this assures that a member, at the hour of death, is united with God." *PK*, March 5, 1909. For numbers of lodges in New England see Haiman, *Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Kathlickie W. Ameryce*, p. 542-48.

[34] *PK*, May 31, 1912.

[35] *MMR*, July 18, 1910. Also *MMR*, July 1 and July 16, 1910, and *PK*, July 8, 1910.

[36] Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), p. 211, cited in Blejwas, *A Polish Community in Transition*, p. 11.

[37] *Ibid*, pp. 11-4.

[38] The officers were Joseph Billings [Bielianski] (President), Thomas Rodenski (Vice-president), Ignacy Marianski (Secretary), H. Kwasniewski (Recording Secretary), Joseph Sklagen [sic - Skladzien] (Treasurer), George Pelczynski (Marshal), and Joseph Becker, John Chudy, and F. Lysk (Trustees). *MWR*, January 1, 1914.

[39] *MWR*, February 6 and 27; March 3, 1908; and November 25, 1909.

[40] *MWR*, March 18 and September 2, 1909. This competing ethnic pressure put Mayor Reilly in a quandry as to who to appoint.

[41] On Karsmarski see *MWR* April 29, 1909; March 16, August 3, and December 14, 1911; and July 24, 1913. Other special policemen included Frank L. Karsmarski, Jacob J. Pichnarcik, Frank Sargalski, Stanley Valechko, Stanley Mrozowski, Paul M. Dombrowski, Edward T. Tyczkowski, Frank Belczyk, and Stanley Glaszewski. Two names which might be Polish or German are John A. Kopiski and Charles E. Konopatski. Frank Karsmarski appears as a regular patrolman in 1923. *Meriden Directory, 1906-1925*.

[42] Skladzien was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph S. Skladzien, who came to Meriden when there were only five Polish families. Thaddeus, the eldest was the eldest of 13 children, was born in Meriden on November 13, 1888, and baptized at St. Laurent's. He attended St. Stanislaus School, Meriden High School, and the New York Homeopathic Medical School. He became active in Republican politics. He died unexpectedly on July 24, 1933. Among his brothers and sisters there were four lawyers, a doctor and a dentist. *MDJ*, July 25, 26, and 27, 1933, and *MMR*, July 25, 26, 27, and 28, 1933.

[43] For a fuller discussion see Edward R. Kantowicz, *Polish-American Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 104-09.

[44] The speakers at this mass rally were Roman L. Modrakowski and Dr. A. N. Morawski, as well as local Congressman Thomas L. Reilly. *MWR*, October 10, 1912.

[45] In 1911 District V was divided. Connecticut, New York, and southern Massachusetts remained in the District, while northern Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island formed a new district, District XV (later District VIII). This division was confirmed in October, 1913. A. Szczepanik, "Historya Okregu V-go Sokolstwa Polskiego", pp. 7-16.

[46] Donald E. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, No. CCXXXI, 1987), pp. 55-6.

[47] Szczepanik, pp. 9, 16.

[48] *MWR* , November 25, 1909, and January 11, 1911.

[49] Cited in Pienkos, p. 63.

[50] *MWR*, November 28, 1912. See also "Krotki Zarys Historji Gn. 68 Sokolstwa Pol. w Ameryce w Meriden, Conn." in *Golden Anniversary, 1906-1956, Polish Falcons of America, Nest 68, Meriden, Connecticut, Sunday, January 22, 1956* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1956). Ceppa, however, is remembered as occasionally referring to "the accursed Falcons" (*przeklete Sokoly*), a hint that relations between pastor and the Falcons was not always smooth. Parishioners Interview, April 17, 1991.

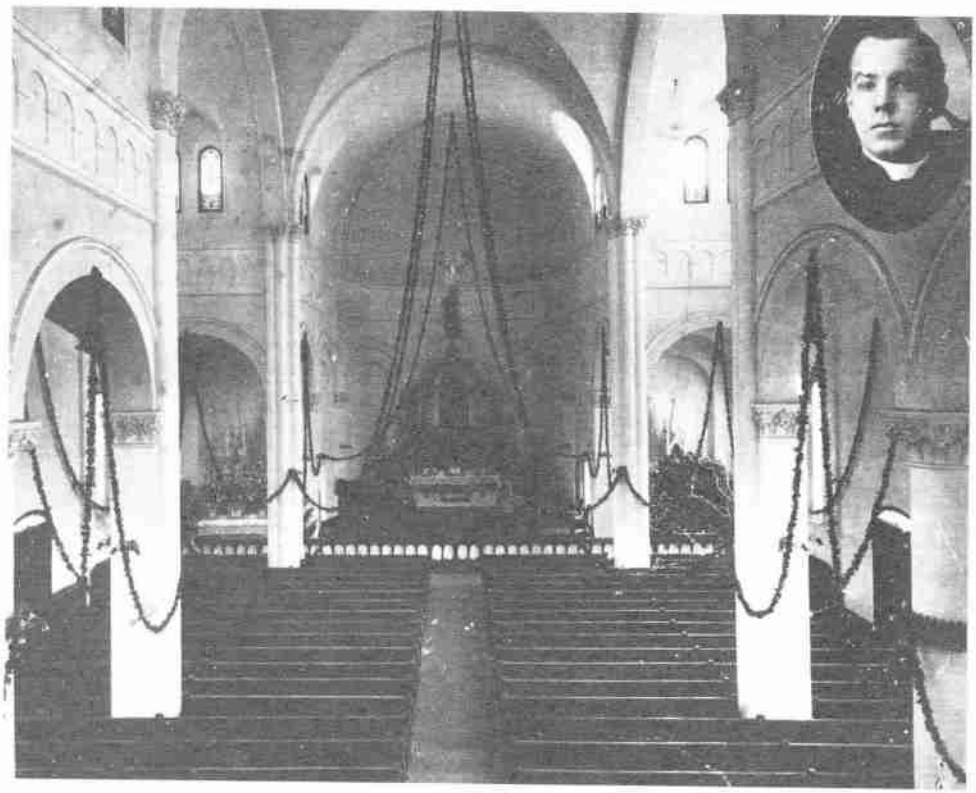
[51] *MWR*, November 11, 1913.

[52] On the Drama Circle see *MMR*, January 14, 1916. It is not clear when the Circle was established, but it played in Pulaski Hall.

[53] *MMR*, October 15 and November 26, 1914; and, *MWR*, December 3, 1914.

[54] *Meriden Directory, 1911*. The names are given as in the Directory.

The new church at the corner of Olive and Pleasant Streets. Dedicated September 7, 1908.



The earliest known photo of the interior of the new church. Taken at Christmas time this picture shows the church before the beautiful murals and other decorations were added. Note the absence of electrical fixtures. This photo was taken shortly after the church opened in 1908. The insert in the upper right is of Msgr. Ceppa.

St. Stanislaus Rectory
Built in 1924

St. Stanislaus School
Dedicated November 21, 1915

Chapter Five
"New" Immigrants and Their Hosts

To grasp the intensity with which Meriden's Polish immigrants created their urban villages, it is necessary to understand the host society's reaction to the immigrants, especially towards those from Eastern and Southern Europe, and the immmigrant's social and economic position.

The early image of Poles in Connecticut and New England was that of heroic participants in the common struggle for freedom and independence against despotism. This was a sympathy for noble, European Poland, and preceeded the arrival of the waves of Southern and Eastern European peasant immigrants after the Civil War.[1] The massive influx of peasant villagers, most without craft skills, turned the previously positive image of the Poles into a stereotype that was often negative. Such stereotypes sprang from American contact with a new culture, and when the difference in social origin was connected with language and religion. Additionally, Americans feared that the immigrants would have a negative impact on the job market, as well as on American culture and politics. Thus the term "peasant" became synonymous with the lowest social strata, and the immigrant's peasant origin a fundamental element in the creation of a negative stereotype, which presented Poles as self-satisfied, intellectually lame, and as a people for whom physical work substituted for a lack of intellectual ability.[2]

There were also factors specific to the New England environment which contributed to this process. Immigration, urbanization, industrialization, and social strife in the 1880s and 1890s created an intellectual and moral crisis for New Englanders. Ralph Waldo Emerson earlier in the 19th Century saw immigration as an integral part in the erection of a democratic civilization, and optimistically spoke of "smelting pot" America which would forge from the Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, Cossacks, and others a "new race, a new religion, a new state, and a new literature."[3] However, by Century's end this confident faith and bucolic vision of New England society was gone. New Englanders, fearful of being overwhelmed by the immigrant tide, lost confidence in their ability to assimilate the newcomers, came to believe that the old New England stock was in decline, and took refuge in Anglo-Saxon cultural nationalism.[4] Anglo-Saxon nationalism asserted the superiority of English culture and ways, and it evolved into a sophisticated racial

nativism, which was a corollary of anti-Catholic and anti-radical sentiment. Anglo-Saxon racism distinguished between the superior "old" immigration (English, Scandinavian, German, and, even Irish) and the unassimilable and undesirable so-called "new" immigration (southern Italians, Poles, Jews, and Russians), "the lowest degradation of human nature", who, according to the president of MIT, were responsible for lowering the New Englander's standard of living.[5] Such sentiment lay behind the establishment in 1894 of the Immigration Restriction League in Boston, whose ultimate aim was to assure the future of the descendants of the Puritans by ending free immigration to the United States.

To justify immigration restriction, it was necessary to study the impact of immigration on American society in order to demonstrate the inferiority of the "new" immigrants. In 1907 Congress created the U.S. Immigration Commission, which undertook a national study of what many felt was a growing national problem, and which was chaired by Vermont Republican Senator William P. Dillingham. The Commission also included Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, an ardent supporter of immigration restriction. In a three year period the Commission gathered a mass of data and conclusions, with its report running 42 volumes. The information was collected to present a grim socio-economic picture of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, thereby "documenting" their undesirablity; to blame the immigrants for their condition; and to support the end of unrestricted immigration to the United States. The Commission's researchers bent their information to fit preconceived positions, and its conclusions broadcast ethnic stereotyping, ultimately leading in 1921 and 1924 to the adoption of legislation restricting immigration to the United States.[6] Nevertheless, the Dillingham Commission included Meriden in its study, collecting information that provides a partial socio-economic profile of the city's Poles.[7]

The Dillingham Commission surveyed 92 Polish households counting 498 individuals (22.4% of the entire study group), approximately a quarter of Meriden's Polish population in 1909. Prior to immigration, most Poles were farm laborers, while only a small percentage worked in hand trades, mines, and in factories. The labor experience of the women who accompanied them to America was limited to running the peasant household, while some 16.4% arrived with experience as domestics. In Meriden, 4.3% of those surveyed found employment in the hardware and cutlery firms, 79.1% in other metal manufacturing concerns, while 16.5% were otherwise employed. Among the women, 94.5% remained at home. In the industries where they found employment, the Polish men, together with the Slovaks and Lithuanians, took up the "unskilled work of the foundaries and the firearms and lamp industries."[8] In 1908 there were only a handful of Poles in business (2 bakers and barbers, 1 blacksmith, 1 boot and shoe dealer, 4 grocers and 1 wholesale grocer, 4 butcher shops, and 5 saloons), and only one member of the community, the pastor, was counted as a professional.[9] The literacy rate among Polish residents 10 years of age or over who read and who could read and write was 81% and 77.5% respectively, higher percentages than the southern Italians, but lower than all groups surveyed.[10]

Considering the Poles' relatively late arrival, their position in the job market, and their literacy rate, it is not surprising that the annual wages of Polish heads of household at $409 was below the average for all groups surveyed, which was $586. And when Polish single males were factored in, the figure fell to $401. The annual family income was $505, while the Meriden average was $754. No Pole was reported to be making over $1,500, while 95% of Polish wage earners were

making under $600 annually. Considering the immigrants' economic resources, it was not surprising that Poles, whose thrift was acknowledged, paid the lowest monthly rents for apartments($7.14) and rooms ($2.10), and rented the smallest apartments (3.53 rooms), with no Pole living in an apartment with five rooms or more. They had, however, the largest households (5.41 persons), and thus the highest residential density per apartment (5.41 persons), per room (1.53 persons), and the highest number of individuals per sleeping room (2.39). This high residential density was exacerbated by the custom of taking in borders to help cover costs and to earn supplemental capital, a custom commonly practiced among other immigrant groups. The Poles, however, took in a higher number, and 35% of Polish households kept borders and lodgers.[11]

While the Commission found that the crimes committed by the immigrants were also the same kind committed by the natives, it did note a high incidence of drunkenness and crimes resulting from drink among the Poles, and, in general, found that this problem was one of the negative problems brought by the "new" immigration.[12]

The report reveals that the host society was developing an ambiguous, bifurcated view of their new neighbors. While it was admitted that the Poles, as well as the other "new" immigrants who began arriving after 1880 (Southern Italians, Slovaks, Lithuanians) "have played an important part in supplying the demand for unskilled labor in certain establishments", they "have affected local industries but little as they have been employed only in the lower occupations."[13] Poles were basically appreciated for their value as hard working laborers, although their arrival also meant that Meriden was "forced to pay for the support of immigrants who have become unfit for work and unable to support themselves." Thus in fiscal 1908 the city expended $2,308.49 on charity for the Irish, and $1,449.03 for the Poles and other Slavs.[14] Another negative aspect of Polish immigration was the willingness of some (Polish women in the lamp factories) to work for lower wages (as little as 70 cents a day), thereby driving wages down and natives out of certain industries. Poles were found more willing to put up with fewer conveniences than the native population, while real estate agents reported that they were more destructive of property than other groups. Poles did not maintain their homes as well as others in a similar employment category. On the other hand, they paid their rent promptly, and most had bank accounts.

One of the frequent complaints about the Poles, as well as the southern Italians, was that they were clannish (especially the Poles), little assimilated, and congregated among their own. As the report explained, both groups wanted to be near their respective churches. However, in view of the very ambiguous images of these groups, both the Poles and the Italians encountered serious difficulties in finding quarters in other parts of Meriden than where they congregated. To quote the report: "They are practically forced to take up residence in Polish and Italian quarters, a thing which they are usually willing to do!"[15]

What the report said, in so many words, was that the Poles, as well as the southern Italians, were discriminated against in housing. The host society helped to create a situation where there was no other choice for the Poles and the southern Italians than to congregate in certain neighborhoods, and around their churches! They were, furthermore, discriminated against by the skilled trade unions, which generally did not admit "uskilled laborers" into "the ranks of unionism."[16] And as the report also indicates, while "the barriers of race have been removed [in trade], ...

socially they are still upheld."[17] Thus while the Commission asserted that "there seems to be little prejudice against the immigrants of any race" because business, industry, and politics are in "the hands of the natives or their descendants" and no one race is able to override the others,[18] it did in fact exist, contributing to the emergence of Meriden's immigrant urban villages. And prejudice extended to the Polish children who attended public schools, for they were considered as "plodders", a semi-positive trait, but "dull."[19]

The often stereotypic conclusions of the Dillingham Report were reached to justify restricting immigration to the United States. Many older Americans believed that the country was being overrun with Catholic immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, who somehow were racially inferior to the "old" immigrants from England, Germany, Scandinavia, and Ireland. It is not surprising, therefore, that the report concluded that in Meriden the English-speaking races, the Germans, and the Scandinavians among the foreign born make the most desirable citizens, for the reasons that they are most easily assimilated. The Italians and the French Canadians who settled permanently also made desirable citizens. However, of all the foreign groups in Meriden,

> The Slavic races ... make the lease desirable citizens in the opinions of those in authority for the reason that they are the most likely to become a burden on the city. Their record of drunkenness is high, and they are a difficult people to assimilate. They are slow to adopt American customs and tend strongly toward segregating themselves from other races. On the other hand, although dull, the Slavic races make fairly good workers.[20]

Thus the Commission blamed the immigrants for their clannishness, for isolating themselves in segregated neighborhoods and hindering the process of Americanization.

The pressure was upon the immigrants to assimilate and to Americanize, yet, according to criteria used by the Commission to judge Americanization, the Poles did not rank high. The total value of the property that they owned ranked the lowest of all groups surveyed. Furthermore, it was believed that the opportunity of the public schools to Americanize them was limited in that the children of all immigrants tended to send their children to the factories and shops when they reached 14 years.[21] Poles also ranked low on the number of fully naturalized citizens (22%), although they ranked first in the number of those having first papers (38%).[22] Yet although the Poles and other immigrant groups were showing some interest in acquiring the franchise, their motives were not considered altruistic, and they were described as having no interest in civic affairs.[23] As for the ability of the Poles to speak English, only 61.1% of those over 14 years could do so. There was, however, hope in the second generation, for 100% of all Polish children under 14 already spoke English.[24] Education in the public schools was seen as essential to Americanization, but as the commission noted, there were six ethnic parochial schools in Meriden. Among the Poles, 216 children attended St. Stanislaus School, while 108 attended public schools, figures suggesting a slower rate of Americanization and assimilation among Polish children.[25] Thus, when one factors in the social isolation existing between the host society and immigrant groups like the Poles, it was not surprising that the Commission could conclude that the immigrant "has not felt the broadening influence of Americanization which those of other races not segregated have felt."[26]

Polish immigrants may have ranked low on the Commission's scale of Americanization, but it is also clear that the Commission did not understand what was occurring in the immigrant community. In one of the most remarkable and ironic statements in the Commission's report, it was asserted: "No special work is done by the Catholic church among the immigrants."[27] Yet, as seen in the previous chapter, it was the church that served as the organizational focus around which an ethnic community and an urban immigrant village were erected, providing stability, a sense of community, and standards of moral and social behavior for the Polish immigrants. The immigrants gravitated, or were driven, to the parish because it was a familiar world in, as amply documented by the Dillingham Commission, an environment unfriendly to Southern and Eastern European immigrants. The parish was indeed "a fortress of [the Polish people's] nationality and language,"[28] and it was needed by the immigrant to help his transition into the New World. The parish, in view of the immigrants' socio-economic situation and in view of the attitude of the host society could be nothing less than a culture preserving institution. It would also prove to be, in the long run, an Americanizing institution.[29]

The views of the Dillingham Commission were not the only opinions on the immigration question, which, before World War I, was considered a national issue. In Meriden, there was evidence of Anglo-Saxon nativism.[30] On the other hand, there were voices challenging the hostility towards the new arrivals and rejecting immigration restriction. The *Meriden Weekly Republican* reminded its readers that the immigrants gave to America as well as took from it, and found something of the "old pioneer spirit" in those who bring their dreams and ideals about America and its institutions, and who "want their children to have a better start in life than they have had."[31] The Baptist Pastor, Mr. Harris, argued that the Republic's future did not lay in restricting immigration, but "in evangelization which will make them good Americans and desirable successors to those of us who love the Republic, its institutions, and its future."[32] Even those who worried that "New England has lost much of the noble blood of earlier days", recognized, albeit condescendingly, a biological potential. As one newspaper article put it: "In spite of the poverty and ignorance of the foreigners from Southern Europe, and too often of those from Central and Northern Europe, there has commenced an assimilation of their children with native stock, and among themselves, that, whether we like it or not, is producing a race among us of heightened vitality, of vigorous mentality and of sturdy and wholesome traits of character."[33]

While inter-marriage was one perceived solution to the immigration problem, and a step in the process of Americanization, it would not occur overnight. As a group of Congregationlists heard from a Yale professor, the immigration question will not be settled in a generation. Nevertheless, it was obligatory to help Americanize the immigrant and to improve his living standards. Prof. Bailey thought that each church in a community could "reach one nationality at a time." While such views differed dramatically from those of the Dillingham Commission, it was, at the same time, very clear, that the immigrant had no other option. As Bailey commented: "The foreigner Americanized is a great asset to this country; the foreigner not Americanized is a great menace."[34]

Thus, Meriden's Polish immigrants, as well as others from Southern and Eastern Europe, were in a bind. Their lives were organized around ethnic institutions which preserved their cultural heritage and identity, while voices in the host society demanded the immigrant's Americanization. These tensions intensified with the outbreak of World War I.

[1] See Chapter 1, pp. 7-11.

[2] Andrzej Kapiszewski, *Stereotyp amerykanow polskiego pochodzenia* (Wroclaw: Ossolineum, 1977), p. 79. See also Karol D. Bicha, "Hunkies: Stereotyping the Slavic Immigrant, 1890-1920," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, II, No. 1 (Fall, 1982), pp.16-32.

[3] Quoted in Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 6.

[4] On the theme of the decline of New England stock see "The Decadence of New England", *MMR*, January 5, 1914, and *MWR*, January 8, 1914.

[5] Francis A. Walker, "Immigration and Degradation," *Forum*, XI (August, 1981), 640-41 and 643-44. For a local expression of this sense of racial Anglo-Saxon racial superiority over the newcomers, but with a call for intermingling with the immigrants see "Charles W. Zubelin on Race Reciprocity", *MMR*, January 9, 1915.

[6] James S. Pula, "American Immigration Policy and the Dillingham Commission", *Polish American Studies*, XXXVII, No. 1 (1980 Spring), pp. 5-31.

[7] In the Commission's report on diversified industries, Meriden is listed as Representative Community B. *U.S. Immigration Commission. . .Immigrants in Industries, Part 21: Diversified Industries*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911. Vol. 17.).

[8] *Ibid*, p. 145.

[9] *Ibid*, pp. 187-90.

[10] *Ibid*, pp. 175-76.

[11] *Ibid*, pp. 145-49, 161-72.

[12] *Ibid*, pp. 182-85.

[13] *Ibid*, pp. 159-60.

[14] *Ibid*, p. 182.

[15] *Ibid*, p. 173.

[16] *Ibid*, p. 157. Of the Poles working for wages, 21.1% belonged to unions, while the figure was 1.8% for southern Italians. The Irish (38.9%) were the most highly unionized.

[17] *Ibid*, p. 160.

[18] *Ibid*, p. 158.

[19] *Ibid*, p. 195.

[20] *Ibid*, p. 200.

[21] Yet the Commission found that only 7.1% of the Polish children under 16 were at work, while 8.2% were at home and 84.7% in school! The percentage of children at work was higher among the Southern Italians and the Germans. *Ibid*, pp. 198-97.

[22] The figures were for males who had resided in the US for 5 or more years, or who were 21 years or over when they arrived. , *Ibid*, p. 198.

[23] *Ibid*, p. 200.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 203.

[25] *Ibid*, pp. 194-95.

[26] *Ibid*, p. 207.

[27] *Ibid*, p. 204.

[28] Ks. L.B., *Historya*... p. 26.

[29] Thomas I. Monzell, "The Catholic Church and the Americanization of the Polish Immigrant", *Polish American Studies*, XXVI, No. 1 (January-June, 1969), pp. 1-15.

[30] See, for example, *MWR*, January 8, 1914, and *MMR*, January 9, 1915.

[31] "Immigrants Give and Take", *MWR*, December 17, 1908.

[32] "Rev. Harris on Our Duty to The Alien", *MWR*, November 7, 1907.

[33] "The Decadence of New England", *MMR*, January 5, 1914.

[34] *MWR*, March 21, 1912.

Chapter Six

World War I: "Filled to the Brim with Patriotism"

While immigration was considered a national problem, and while there were calls for the immigrant's Americanization, there was, in Connecticut, little activity in this area prior to World War I, and right up until the American entry in 1917.[1] Immigrants, therefore, were not under intense public pressure to assimilate and Americanize. There was no need to choose between loyalty to the United States and loyalty to their ancestral homeland. This was especially the case for the Poles, whose native country still lay partitioned between Russia, Germany, and Austria. However, the outbreak of war in 1914 raised the seemingly distant possibility of the restoration of Polish independence. For some time Polish immigrants had rested their hopes for an independent Poland on a war between the partitioning powers. And now, in 1914, they were at war. Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Central Powers, stood arrayed against the Triple Entente of Britain, France, and Russia. However, while these circumstances suggested that Poland would once again become a matter of international concern, they also confronted Poles with the necessity of deciding which camp they should support. Finally, events would compel immigrants to reflect upon their place in American society.

Well before World War I, the political consciousness of American Polonia was maturing. This was due to political unrest related to the 1905 Revolution, and to the arrival of its participants in America. At the same time, the influence of American Polonia in Poland also grew, as did its political confidence. When the monuments to Kosciuszko and Pulaski were unveiled in Washington in 1910, combined with a congress of Polish immigrants in America, the representatives of American Polonia adopted a resolution asserting: "We, Poles, have a right to independent, national existence and we consider it our sacred duty to pursue political independence for our Motherland."[2]

American Polonia sensed the growing tensions in Europe, and prepared for the eventuality of a European war. In December, 1912, under the auspices of the Polish Falcons and the Polish National Alliance, a Committee of National Defense *(Komitet Obrony Narodowej - KON)* was organized in Pittsburgh, including socialists and radicals (the Polish National Catholic Church), traditional nationalists (Polish National Alliance), and Catholics (Polish Roman Catholic Union). KON supported

the Provincial Commission of Confederated Independent Parties dominated by Jozef Pilsudski in Austrian Poland, and was decidedly anti-Russian. KON's pro-German orientation, and the deep political divisions within KON, led the Catholic faction to secede in June, 1913 and establish the Polish National Council, whose honorary chairman was Bishop Paul Rhode. A year later the PNA also seceded, and joined the PNC. Thus, American Polonia was divided into two camps, which differed over the question as to which side - the Central Powers or the Triple Entente - Poles should support as World War I began.

After war broke out, the PNC attempted to unify American Polonia, and in October, 1914 organized the Polish Central Relief Committee, emphasizing charitable and social assistance to their homeland because of American neutrality. In August, 1916, as German hostilities at sea were intensifying, the PCRC transformed its central organ into the National Department *(Wydzial Narodowy)* which became the dominant Polish American organization for the remainder of the war. The prestige of the pro-Entente PCRC, and later its National Department, was enhanced by the arrival of the famed pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski, an eloquent spokesman for Polish relief who befriended President Woodrow Wilson. The position of Polonia's pro-Entente camp was confirmed when the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917; later when the American administration agreed to permit recruitment in America for a Polish Army; and when Wilson on January 8, 1918 issued the Fourteen Points, of which Point XIII read: "An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."[3] When the armistice was declared on November 11, 1918, Pilsudski in Warsaw announced the restoration of an independent Polish state, realizing the dreams of generations of Poles and Polish exiles, emigres, and immigrants.

American Polonia participated significantly in the effort to regain Polish independence. Poles contributed perhaps a million dollars to various Polish relief efforts, lobbied their politicians, brought their cause to the attention of the American public, and provided volunteer soldiers for Polish service. The Falcons were the first to express their readiness to fight in 1914, but, because of American neutrality, had to "stand and wait". With the approaching American entry into the War in April, 1917, the Falcons at an extraordinary congress in Pittsburgh, and in response to an electrifying speech by Paderewski, offered a 100,000 strong "Kosciuszko army" to President Wilson. Washington did not act on this proposal, but the French Government, now that Russia was torn by revolution, in June decreed the formation of an autonomous Polish Army in France. The United States agreed to allow recruiting among Polish immigrants ineligible for the American draft, and some 20,000 volunteers, many of whom were Falcons, actually made their way to France, and, ultimately, to Poland.[4]

The enthusiasm of Connecticut's Polish immigrants for war during these four years differed at various times from that of American society. On the eve of World War I, Connecticut Yankees were anxious about the survival of New England standards, values, and ideals. This anxiety was rooted in the rapid diversification of the State's population caused by the arrival after 1880 of large numbers of Irish, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, and Lithuanian immigrants. These immigrants clung to their native languages, Catholic or Jewish religions, and distinct cultures that sustained their ethnic identities. Immigrants were identified with an increasingly

aggressive union movement, while prohibitionists identified saloons with immigrants. For Connecticut's Yankee leadership, uneasy about the State's economic stratification and cultural diversity, the new war presented an opportunity to construct a new sense of community and to promote patriotism and Americanization.[5]

The initial impact of the war upon Connecticut between 1913 and 1917 was economic, as Britain and France placed huge munitions orders with the State's arms manufacturers. The economy snapped out of a slump that had been continuing since 1913, and war profits poured in. As the *Meriden Morning Record* asked: "Are you ready for the prosperity?", touting the European war as "the greatest boom times we have known in a generation."[6] For the *Meriden Weekly Republican* "War is America's opportunity - get busy!"[7] The war economy of 1915 and 1916 created thousands of new jobs statewide, and labor shared in this instant affluence. As the war continued, the question of preparedness assumed increasing importance in public debate, although it was the crisis with Mexico in 1916 which brought Connecticut's patriotic ardor to a peak. When President Wilson summoned the National Guard, Connecticut responded enthusiastically, and Connecticut units served in the campaign. The growing tensions with Germany, which in January, 1917, announced that its submarines would sink all shipping in the North Atlantic and in the eastern Mediterranean without warning, increased Connecticut's belligerency. In February a special session of the General Assembly authorized a military census, while in March the legislature authorized the formation of a Home Guard, which was dominated by the Yankee elite. When Congress declared war on April 3, 1917, Connecticut was already mobilized.[8]

The direction of Connecticut's war effort was placed in the hands of a State Council of Defense, which used every form of communication to promote enthusiasm for the war within the immigrant communities. Governor Marcus Holcomb preached the gospel of unity, and the State Council established an Americanizing Committee to transform aliens into patriotic citizens through education. Holcomb's super patriotism went so far as to lead the Governor in April, 1918 to ban teaching in languages other than English in public and parochial schools, except for religion.[9] Whispers of dissent were suppressed by the US Department of Justice, assisted by groups like the American Protective League.[10] It was within the context of heightened wartime profits and patriotism that Meriden's Polish immigrants and their children reflected upon their identity and loyalties.

Segments of Meriden Polonia enthusiastically anticipated a European war. Frank Dziob, a highly qualified physical education instructor for District V of the Polish Falcons, participated in Falcon organized para-military training with some 60 other volunteers at the Polish National Alliance School at Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania in the Spring of 1914, "a preliminary way for service in the army when the time comes."[11] And when war came, the Falcons announced that 50 of their members were awaiting orders from their national headquarters in order "to play a part in securing the liberation of their mother country."[12] At a mass meeting on August 16, 1914, more than a thousand Poles, "filled to the brim with patriotism," gathered at Falcon Hall. The assembled promised to observe American neutrality laws, but hoped that the US Government would allow them to return to Poland for anticipated mobilization. After all, Poles had helped America win its independence during the Revolutionary War. Meriden's Poles promised to send financial and material aid to Poland, and the various Polish societies united into a temporary national defense committee.[13] And during the last two weeks of September, Dziob

conducted para-military training for 35 Falcons from throughout Connecticut who "were on duty in Meriden", dressed in khaki and equipped with Springfield rifles. "Maneuvers", in which some 400 Falcons participated, closed the bivouac, which local militia officers observed.[14]

Enthusiasm for the war was not limited to Meriden Polonia. In September a rally in New Britain drew 1,300, who signed a petition appealing to Britain, France, and the United States to remember that "there can not be a permanent peace without the establishment of an independent Poland and without the freeing of all subjected nations." However, while Connecticut's Polish communities supported the restoration of independence for their homeland, there were sharp internal political differences. New Britain, under Bojnowski's leadership, supported the Polish National Council, while there were in Hartford and Meriden, KON partisans, described by Bojnowski as "the supporters of Jewish-German socialism."[15] In 1916 Falcon District V split over the question of whether or not to support KON, with Hartford leading a breakaway group supporting KON.[16] While the national conflicts within the Polish American community echoed at the local level, so did the efforts to raise funds and to provide moral assistance to Poland. In fact, until the American entry into World War I, assistance to Poland was limited to economic assistance and morale boosting.

The local press treated Polish independence and assistance to war-torn Poland with sympathy. News from the eastern front was reported extensively. Poland's tragic geographical position between Germany and Russia was commented upon, as were the cynical political efforts of both powers to exploit their Polish populations. However, particular attention was paid to the human and material suffering caused by Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian troops battling on Polish territories.[17] There were editorial appeals to do something to ease "the superlative tragedy of Poland" and calls for assistance to save her human population, sometimes asking why the American humanitarian response to Belgium has not been matched in Poland's case.[18] A Committee headed by Councilman Dr. T. Skladzien, in cooperation with the Polish National Alliance, on January 26, 1915 collected funds on behalf of the Central Polish Aid Committee in Chicago.[19] At nearly every patriotic event there were collections for war-torn Poland.[20] The New Britain Drama Circle put on the patriotic play, "Kosciuszko at Raclawice" to raise funds for relief, while Fr. Ceppa arranged a showing of the "moving picture" *Polska w zgliszczach* (Poland in Ashes), which brought $302 for the Central Polish Relief Committee in Switzerland, giving "a piece of bread to several of [our] starving brothers."[21] Throughout the war, and thanks to Fr. Ceppa's leadership, a total of $25,160.09 was sent to the Central Polish Relief Committee.[22]

Until America entered the war in 1917, the immigrant's loyalty was not a pressing consideration. It was assumed, however, that the immigrants, reflecting upon both the European tragedy and their opportunities in America, in fact appreciated America's advantages.[23] By 1916, when American entry into the war was more of a possibility, interest in American preparedness increased, focusing attention upon groups like the Falcons. The Falcons were prepared to battle for Poland already in 1914, and members of District V described its 4,000 members as "men trained for army service."[24] However, for two years they in fact "stood and waited", engaging in both para-military schooling and sport field days, one of which featured the famous wrestler, Zbyszko (Stanislaw Cyganiewicz).[25] In January, 1916 the Meriden Falcons marked their tenth anniversary with festivities organized by Joseph S. Billings, and attended by Dr. T. A. Starzynski, national

Falcon commander, and by Kazimierz Zychlinski, national president of the Polish National Alliance.[26] Articles and editorials in the Meriden press praised the Falcons as a gymnastic organization and as a civilian military company, and commended them for their superb conditioning. It was emphasized, however, that "Most of these men are now naturalized citizens" and "strong adherents of the freedom which they enjoy here. There are practically no 'hyphens' among them, and what few there were have gone back to fight."[27] Thus the host society viewed the Falcons as militia units available for American service, while the Falcons were schooling themselves to do battle for Polish independence, a divergence of priorities.

The Falcons, in fact, wanted to prove their loyalty to the United States while serving their own interests, and when the Mexican conflict erupted, their national leadership offered to place its members at Wilson's disposal, an offer that was politely declined. The reaction of Meriden Poles to the Mexican crisis, however, foreshadowed the community's growing Americanization. Despite the strong Polish identity of Fr. Ceppa and the Falcon's intense Polish patriotic activities, over 40 Polish residents served with the Connecticut militia units assigned to Mexico,[28] a fact suggesting that their primary loyalty was already American, as the host society expected.

This expectation was made clear in the Spring of 1917 as Connecticut began to mobilize for war. Apart from the military census, in which 798 Meriden Poles were registered, an almost hysterical fear of sabotage, incendiarism, and foreign-born disloyalty accompanied the approach of war.[29] In Connecticut, Gov. Holcomb responded by the creation of the Home Guard, created in part because of fear of alien uprisings. There was a proliferation of defense groups across the state. While most of these groups were tied to either the state or its cities, there were those like the Falcons, whose activities sometimes aroused suspicion. When Gov. Holcomb spoke of "traitors working here giving the impression [that] they were true Americans", he elaborated and alarmed the state with a reference to Polish groups in Ansonia and Derby, which were reportedly approached by German agents.[30]

Holcomb most likely was reacting to information about the split in the Polish community between the supporters of KON and the adherents of the National Department, but his remarks stung Falcon leaders. Concerned about being accused of pro-German and of harboring divided loyalties, District V at a meeting in Bridgeport on March 24 passed a resolution declaring "our loyalty to the United States government." While thanking President Wilson for his support for the re-establishment of an independent Poland, which "will be fundamental for the world's peace", Connecticut's Falcons were prepared "to unite under the Stars and Stripes against our common enemy, the German militarism, the German government, the barbarian of the present day."[31] To underscore their loyalty, Meriden Poles arranged for the publication of an editorial from the *Polish Union* (New York, NY) in both the *Morning Record* and the *Weekly Republican* which declared: "there is no doubt that the Pole, as a rule, is law abiding and peaceful - he is patriotic to a high degree and always faithful to his adopted country, America." It was made clear that Poles looked to Washington for justice for Poland, and disassociated themselves from radical "pacifist" organizations like the I.W.W. The editorial warned Poles not to bring suspicion upon themselves by associating with "paid agitators." With a patriotic flourish, the editor asserted: "Americanism is synonymous with liberty - freedom", principles America, God willing, would not abandon. Poles were reminded: "Remember, America's cause is the cause of freedom, and freedom is the cause of Poland."[32]

Connecticut's Falcons received support from their national president, Dr. T. A. Starzynski, who wrote to Gov. Holcomb denying the charges made against the Falcons, and defending their loyalty. The Falcons' purpose was "to train our youth physically and intellectually so that they may become good and loyal United States citizens, not disregarding, however, our own national sentiments."[33] The Falcons further emphasized their loyalty to the United States at a special national convention in April, which met on the eve of Wilson's request to Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. The Falcons, who were still providing para-military training for their members at the Polish National Alliance school in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, offered to place their members, in the event of war, at President Wilson's disposal.[34] This was followed by Paderewski's proposal, made at the same convention, that the Falcons take the lead in creating a 100,000 man Kosciuszko Army to be placed at America's disposal.[35]

Paderewski's grandiose offer was eventually declined. However, the Wilson administration granted qualified permission to recruit for a Polish Army being organized in France. This decision suggested that there was not a fundamental conflict between American and Polish interests and loyalties, and that Polish Americans were not to be suspected of divided loyalties. Still, the suspicion never disappeared entirely, and subsequent actions of Meriden's Polish community suggest the dichotomy existing in the minds of many immigrants and their children.

The Falcons played a significant role in recruiting for this army, which would eventually serve under the command of Gen. Jozef Haller. Already in July four Meriden Poles, W. Skotnicki, F. Grubowski, J. Kopacz, and F. Belczyk, were receiving officer training in Cambridge Springs together with Frank Dziob, who by now had departed Connecticut and was training Polish American volunteers for a future Polish army.[36] Once American permission to recruit for a Polish Army in France was granted, Polish American communities across the nation organized for this purpose, and recruiting was particularly active in cities like New Britain, Bridgeport, Hartford, and Meriden. A recruiting office opened in Meriden on October 12, 1917 in Falcon Hall, with Ignacy Marianski as the recruiting officer, and Dr. T. Skladzien as the examining surgeon. Recruits were reported eager for service, and plans were rapidly made to give a rousing send off to the first group to be dispatched to Camp Niagara-on-the-Lake, just across the border in Ontario, Canada.[37] On November 18 there was a patriotic rally in honor of Kosciuszko, organized by a committee composed of Fr. Ceppa, Hipolite Kwasniewski, Frank Sztukowski, Frank Jagielski, and Marianski. The volunteers marched to a local monument, and laid a wreath with the famous slogan of nineteenth-century Polish insurrectionists, "For your freedom and ours!"[38] The recruiting continued for more than a year, punctuated by patriotic rallies at which Fr. Ceppa was a frequent speaker.[39] An estimated 2,000 Polish immigrants from New England enlisted in Haller's Blue Army, including 90 volunteers from Meriden, ten of whom gave their lives.[40]

Enthusiasm for the war was intense. In April, 1918, the Meriden Falcons unanimously voted to drop any member of draft age who did not immediately enlist in either the American or Polish armies. At the same time they obligated those who remained at home to help the war effort by purchasing Liberty Bonds, War Savings Stamps, and aiding in munitions production.[41] An editorial in the *Morning Record* praised this "brand of patriotism which makes one hope that Poland may some time come into its own and enjoy the liberty its people deserve." At the same time, the editors held up the Falcon action as a model for other organizations, and as an

appropriate response to pro-German and pacifist sympathies. Because of the war America needed "ONENESS", and "Everybody must be animated by the spirit which apparently actuated the Falcon club officers in their edict to members to 'come up or get out'."[42]

The editorial response to the Falcon action reflected Connecticut's intensifying Americanization mood and, paradoxically, the host society's persistent suspicions about immigrant loyalty.[43] Only immigrants who convincingly demonstrated their loyalty might be trusted. The immigrants realized that they were on trial. With the American entry into the war, the number of applications for citizenship jumped in Connecticut as immigrants sensed a growing hostility toward aliens. Another loyalty test was enlistment in the American Army, which the *Morning Record* considered "The Military Melting Pot" where class distinctions, racial divisions, and foreign separateness are broken down, giving "us the new America ... a better appreciation of our mutual dependence."[44] Additionally, immigrants could demonstrate their loyalty by supporting the domestic war effort through such actions as the purchase of Liberty Bonds.

While Polish immigrants enjoyed the luxury of identifying Poland's cause with America's, and having that recognized by the host society, they also felt the need to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States. Thus, while they volunteered for Haller's Army, they also enlisted in the American Army. In Meriden, 123 Polish immigrants of draft age, who were ineligible for Haller's Army, served in the American Armed Forces.[45] Meriden Polonia also manifested its loyalty, under Fr. Ceppa's leadership, on the home front. During the war they engaged in the home gardening movement. As Joseph Billings of the Falcons noted, referring to the peasant background of Polish immigrants: "Nearly all the Polish speaking people are farmers."[46] To save on coal, St. Stanislaus School, together with other parochial schools, agreed to shorten school hours in January, 1918. The Poles participated in local war rallies, including one in which the American wife of a Polish aristocrat, Countess Laura de Gozdawa Turczynowicz, spoke of Poland's suffering.[47] Poles and Polish societies also participated in Meriden's Fourth of July celebrations, while letters from St. Stanislaus parishioners serving with the American forces in France were published in the local press.[48] Finally, St. Stanislaus parishioners purchased $125,000 worth of Liberty Bonds, surpassing in many cases Yankee groups and churches.[49]

These demonstrations of the loyalty of Meriden's Polish immigrants prompted the *Morning Record* to declare "Hats off to Polish Patriots." The editorial praised Fr. Ceppa and leading Polish citizens for informing Polish citizens about the various war drives and found that "the Polish people as a whole have been found to be willing helpers desirous of giving practical evidence of their appreciation of the privileges accorded them by the land of their adoption". They "enjoy the liberty and opportunity which have been given them in this country ... [and] are willing to pay for it with the dearest thing in their possession, their lives."[50] The Poles, as did other immigrant groups, had to earn their right to America, a fact which they recognized. When St. Stanislaus marked its 50th Anniversary and recalled its parishioners' sacrifices during World War I, the chronicler proudly noted the service of those who served in both the Polish Army and those "who under the Stars and Stripes sealed with their blood ... the love for the United States and Poland under the slogan - For Your Freedom and Ours."[51]

When Meriden erupted on November 11, 1918 to celebrate the armistice

ending World War I, men carrying Polish flags and the Silver City Drum Corps were among the merrymakers.[52] For Meriden's Poles, the end of the war was cause for a dual celebration. America was victorious, and the United Polish Societies participated in Meriden's enormous, multi-ethnic victory parade welcoming back the city's veterans from the American Armed Forces.[53] Equally significant was that Poland again was to be found on Europe's map as a free and independent country. That struggle, however, did not end on November 11. For the next five years Poland's diplomats and armies struggled to define and to win recognition for her borders. In 1919 and 1920 Poland and the newly established Soviet state engaged in a gripping war, at the height of which in August, 1920, Soviet troops were at the gates of Warsaw. It was only Pilsudski's masterful rout of the Soviets which opened the way for the settlement of Poland's eastern frontier with the signing of the Treaty of Riga in 1921.

Meriden's Poles, like those elsewhere in the United States, followed with anxiety the fate of their newly independent homeland and rallied to its cause. A national campaign was organized to subscribe $50,000,000 in Polish Bonds. The Connecticut campaign, with an assigned quota of $2,000,000, was led by Dr. B. L. Smykowski of Bridgeport. Fr. Ceppa and Atty. Zygmunt J. Czubak, assisted by the Falcons, led the drive to purchase Polish Bonds, raising at least $63,950 of Meriden's quota of $100,000.[54] St. Stanislaus also collected for humanitarian and charitable purposes. In 1919 $649.60 was sent for Children's Relief to Poland, and in 1921, $814 for Polish orphans.[55] Poland's political difficulties concerned others. Meriden Ukrainians, who supported efforts to establish an independent Ukraine on territories claimed by both Poland and Ukraine, opposed Polish claims.[56] Meriden's Poles, like Poles elsewhere, also challenged charges of widespread pogroms in Eastern Poland in 1919 and 1920.[57]

The greatest threat, however, was the advance of the Bolshevik armies on Warsaw in the summer of 1920. Polish Americans throughout the United States rallied to demand that Washington help their threatened homeland. In Connecticut there were rallies attended by thousands in Waterbury, New Britain, New London, Stamford, and Meriden, and petitions addressed to Gov. Holcomb, who assured his Polish citizens of his sympathy for Poland's cause against Bolshevism, which he branded the common enemy of organized government.[58] Meriden's rally was chaired by Fr. Ceppa, and Atty. Czubak was selected to participate in a Polish delegation sent to wait on President Wilson in Washington. Invoking the loyalty and the sacrifices that Polish Americans made for the United States during World War I, Meriden Polonia demanded that the United States extend "further moral and such immediate material aid as will strengthen the position of the Polish government." At the same time, it assured Poland "in its hour of agony and distress our sincere sympathy and our heartfelt support to the end that the republic of Poland may once more stand forth as the victor for the civilization and democracy against the disorders of the east."[59]

The Soviet threat to Poland was acutely felt by Polish Americans because the volunteers for Haller's Army had been transferred to Poland in 1919. Their partial demobilization began only in the Spring of 1920. Slowly Meriden's Haller volunteers, some of whom had been gassed, and most who had seen combat against Austrians, Germans, and Bolsheviks, returned.[60] However, demobilization was not completed until the following year. Thus the First World War I for Polish Americans only ended in 1921, when Poland's frontiers were secure, and after the Polish American volunteers returned. And among those who returned after the war

was Meriden-born Rev. Francis Tyczkowski, a chaplain in the regular Polish Army.[61]

During the war the Poles were able to remain faithful to their national sentiments and, in a foreign country, work on behalf of Poland's independence. They had remained faithful to "God and Country" *(Bog i Ojczyzna)*.[62] Unlike German immigrants, the Poles were fortunate that Poland's struggle for independence was identified with American wartime interest and objectives. At the same time, however, they came to realize in a very immediate way that the host society also demanded demonstrations of loyalty to their new homeland. In responding to these pressures, Meriden's Polish immigrants and their children were being forced to reflect upon their own identities, and where their primary loyalties lay. This dilemma would deepen in the following years. Now, with Poland independent, the community could reflect upon its future in America. In doing so, it would come to realize that the United States was its new "Ojczyzna."

[1] See Bruce Fraser, "Yankees at War: Social Mobilization of the Connecticut Homefront 1917-1918" (Columbia University: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 1976), pp. 55-91.

[2] Cited in Brozek, *Polish Americans*, p. 135.

[3] Cited *ibid.*, pp. 142-43.

[4] On America and the rebirth of Poland see Piotr S. Wandycz, *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 104-69; Brozek, pp. 127-46; and Donald E. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1987), pp. 67-112.

[5] Herbert F. Janick, Jr., *A Diverse People: Connecticut 1914 to the Present* (Chester, Connecticut: The Pequot Press, 1975), pp. 1-2.

[6] *MMR*, October 1, 1914.

[7] *MWR*, September 17, 1914.

[8] Janick, p. 9; and Fraser, pp. 92-118.

[9] *Kuryer Bostonski*, April 26, 1918. The ban also included the hiring of foreign teachers. *Kuryer Bostonski*, worried about the impact of the ban on children studying Polish language and history, urged the directors of Connecticut's Polish schools to try to persuade the Governor to modify his ban.

[10] Janick, pp. 10-11; and Fraser, pp. 144-339.

[11] *MMR*, April 24, 1914 and *MWR*, June 9, 1914. Dziob was one of 6 participants from District V. Szczepanik, p. 16. Dziob [1890-1983] was from Galicia. He arrived in Meriden around 1907, and immediately became active in the Falcons. He left Connecticut during World War I and became a national Falcon instructor. After World War II he worked in the Chicago office of the Polish American Congress.

[12] *MWR*, August 6, 1914.

[13] *MMR*, August 17, 1914.

[14] *MWR*, September 17, September 24, and October 1, 1914.

[15] *PK*, September 18, 1914. There were similar rallies in other Connecticut Polish American communities.

[16] Szczepanik, pp. 16-7. See also Witold H. Trawinski, *Odyseja Polskiej Armii Blekitnej* (Wroclaw, Poland: Ossolineum, 1989), pp. 59-70.

[17] See, for example, the *MMR*, September 2, October 17, November 21, and December 22 and 28, 1914, April 23, 1915, and November 8, 1916; and June 27, 1918. Also, *MWR*, December 3, 1914.

[18] *MMR*, "The Superlative Tragedy of Poland", January 24, 1916, and "No Babies Left!", November 8, 1916.

[19] *MMR*, January 26, 1915.

[20] *MMR*, January 26, February 22, and May 3, 1915.

[21] *MMR*, June 5, 1915, and *PK*, May 26, 1916.

[22] *APZJ*, p. 73.

[23] "No Foreign War in Meriden", *MMR*, August 13, 1914.

[24] *MMR*, June 9, 1916.

[25] *MMR*, September 6 and 7, 1915.

[26] *MMR*, January 27 and 31, 1916.

[27] *MMR*, "The Falcons in the United States", *MMR*, April 24, 1916. Also, *MMR*, April 7, 1914.

[28] *MMR*, October 27 and 30, 1916.

[29] Connecticut State Council of National Defense. Connecticut State Archives [hereafter CSA], R.G. 30, Box 172 for the entire list.

[30] *The* [Ansonia] *Evening Sentinel*, March 23, 24, and 26, 1917. Fraser, pp. 92-129.

[31] *MMR*, March 26, 1917, and *MWR*, March 29, 1917. One story suggested that the question was whether the Falcons would join the Home Guard. *MMR*, March 24, 1917. The Poles of Ansonia and Derby, and the Falcon nest in Derby, reaffirmed their loyalty to America, asserted their anti-German convictions, and their desire to free Poland, and were supported editorially. *The* [Ansonia] *Evening Sentinel*, March 24 and 26, 1917. The original of the Bridgeport protest to Holcomb is in the Gov. Marcus Holcomb Papers, CSA: R.G. 5, Box 265, file 231.

[32] *MMR*, March 27, 1917, and *MWR*, March 29, 1917.

[33] Printed in *MWR*, April 3, 1917. Also signed by Falcon Treasurer, F. Smulski. For the original see the Holcomb Papers, CSA: R.G. 5, Box 265, file 213.

[34] *MMR*, April 1, 1917.

[35] Pienkos, p. 95.

[36] *MMR*, July 4, 1917; Pienkos, 94-6; and Trawinski, pp. 65-6, 68, 81-2, 95-7.

[37] *MMR*, October 12, 22, 23, 24, and 31, 1917; November 10 and 21, 1917; and December 18, 1917. There were similar activities in Wallingford, *MMR*, November 7 and 9, 1917. Meriden was the recruiting center for Wallingford and Middletown.

[38] *MMR*, November 19, 1917.

[39] *MMR*, January 3, February 19, 22, May 5, June 24, October 5, 1918. Approximately 800 Meriden Poles attended a massive recruiting rally in Hartford on April 14, a rally also attended by members of the Connecticut State Council of Defense. *MMR*, April 15, 1918. See also *Kuryer Bostonski*, April 20, 1918. For Wallingford see *MMR*, February 14, March 21 and 22, April 20, June 3, 6, and 7, July 29, September 16, October 7, 1918

[40] See Appendix C. At least 11 Polish women enlisted as nurses, but their names were not carried in the Parish's 50th anniversary history. *APZJ*, p. 75. New Britain sent 390 men to Haller's Army, and Bridgeport 500.

[41] *MMR*, April 6, 1918, and *Kuryer Bostonski*, April 15, 1918.

[42] *MMR*, April 8, 1918.

[43] The Connecticut State Council of Defense, and its Committee on Foreign-Born Population, never abandoned its suspicions of aliens. See Fraser, pp. 334-36.

[44] *MMR*, January 18, 1918.

[45] See Appendix D for the complete list. While none apparently were killed, several were wounded, including Cpl. Thaddeus Blazejowski, Meriden's first casualty, and Pvt. Paul Dombrowski, who was gassed. *MMR*, February 26 and August 19, 1918, and May 14, 1918.

[46] *MMR*, April 19, 1917, and *MWR*, April 26, 1917.

[47] *MMR*, May 17, 1918. The Countess published her experiences in German occupied Poland, *When the Prussians Came to Poland. The Experience of an American Woman during the German Invasion.* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1916).

[48] *MMR*, February 20, June 18, and August 19, 1918.

[49] *APZJ*, p. 73; *MMR*, April 10 and October 8, 1918. Local PNA members let it be know that their national organization was also purchasing Liberty Bonds. *MMR*, September 25, 1918.

[50] *MMR*, November 20, 1918. For the similar activities of another patriot priest see Buczek, pp. 39-53.

[51] *APZJ*, p. 73.

[52] *MMR*, November 12, 1918.

[53] *MMR*, March 24, May 29, and 31, 1919.

[54] The bonds were handled by the Meriden National Bank and the Home National Bank. *MMR*, June 5 and July 5, 1920. See the ad, *MMR*, July 2, 1920. As early as 1922, parish income listed interest from Polish bonds. It appears that the Parish itself purchased only one $100 bond and was receiving $9 a year. See *Annual Reports, 1922-1933*. AAH. Wallingford raised at least $3,450. *MMR*, May 24, 1920.

[55] *Annual Reports, 1919 and 1920* AAH.

[56] *PK*, January 10, 1919; and *MMR*, July 16, 1919, and January 5 and 26, and June 16, 1920. Tensions with local Ukrainians were not new. See *PK*, September 16, 1910.

[57] *MMR*, June 14, 1919. On this controversial topic see Wandycz, pp. 157-69; and Tadeusz Radzik, *Stosunki Polsko-Zydowskie w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki w Latach 1918-1921* (Lublin, Poland: Wydawnictwo Polonia, 1988).

[58] For some of the petitions, and for correspondence between Gov. Holcomb and Msgr. Bojnowski of New Britain, see the Holcomb Papers, CSA: R.G. 5, Box 265, file 213. See also *New Haven Journal Courier*, August 16, 17, 18, and 19, 1920; and *New Haven Register*, August 15, 1920.

[59] *MMR*, August 17, 1920.

[60] *MMR*, May 5, 1920.

[61] Born in Meriden October 10, 1883 to Mr and Mrs Jozef Tyczkowski, who still resided in Meriden. Tyczkowski was educated at St. Stanislaus School. He attended high school and seminary in Poland, where he was ordained in 1917 in Kowno. He joined the Polish Army in 1918, and his units saw heavy action. He himself was decorated for bravery. *MMR*, April 1, 1919; June 11 and August 3, 1921. After World War II and further service in the Polish Army, Tyczkowski went into "exile" and settled in the United States.

[62] *APZJ*, p. 73.

Dr. Thaddeus Skladzien

John P. Kreminski

The Falcon Hall on Olive Street. Home to Falcon Nest 68 and Ladies Nest 444.

The Polish Knight's Club on Willow Street

Chapter Seven
A Golden Age

In 1918, the final year of World War I, American Polonia, as an ethnic group, possessed a remarkably complete institutional structure, with its networks of parishes, schools, insurance fraternals, media, political groups, and patriotic sport groups like the Falcons. It also possessed, in the Haller volunteers, an "army", and throughout the war had been guided by and large by the National Department. In 1918 the National Department elaborated this structure by calling the first of a series of immigration congresses. The 940 delegates gathered at Detroit expressed their loyalty and faithfulness to America, but also declared "we do not have the right to forget about the Fatherland." The delegates vowed to immediately raise $10,000,000, and exhorted the entire Immigration "to dignified work, to great sacrifice, to great deeds for the glory of the Fatherland and for its own good."[1] With some justification, the immigration could view itself as "the fourth district of Poland." However, by 1925 when the fifth immigration congress met in Detroit, the delegates gathered under the slogan "The Immigration for the Immigration". They concluded that the concept of the immigration as the "fourth district" of Poland was no longer applicable and that "the sphere of our affairs in this country must not have its center of gravity in Poland, precisely because Poland has regained its independence." As *Dziennik Chicagoski* put it: "We have the civil courage to say to ourselves that Poland today lives for itself, and not for the Immigration. Consequently, we ought to also think of ourselves."[2] The journalist Karol Wachtl stated the issue dramatically: "It should be clearly recognized that we here must be officially first of all Americans - of Polish origins and with sincere Polish sympathies, but Americans; and this excludes any politics which are not purely American."[3]

The consequences of World War I explain this dramatic and rapid transformation of Polonia's national consciousness. The independent Polish state was, theoretically, the "Promised Land" which Polish emigres and emigrants had dreamed of since 1795. Now was the moment to return and make Poland "a new America", a prosperous and democratic fatherland.[4] Those believing that they would not have emigrated had Poland not been partitioned, whose activity was directed to-

wards independence, now faced a choice - whether or not to return. Poland, however, proved to be: "somehow not quite like we want her to be, like we understood her and imagined her."[5] Of the 96,000 who re-emigrated between 1920 and 1925, many returned disillusioned. Re-immigrants felt that they were valued only for their dollars, most of which were lost in the difficult post-war economic reconstruction. Those who did not return, but invested in Polish joint stock companies and corporations also lost heavily. The injection of fractious Polish partisan politics into Polonia likewise disillusioned American Poles. Finally, the return of the Haller Army veterans, who were discharged as the Polish-Soviet war was reaching its climax, and without adequate thanks or benefits from the Polish government, added to the pain.[6]

The immigration fought and sacrificed for Polish independence, but independent Poland disappointed it. The Polish Government tried to improve relations with America Polonia, but also impose its direction and control over Poles abroad. In 1934 it patronized the creation of a World Union of Poles from Abroad (*Swiatpol*) to maintain cultural-economic contact and to subordinate the activities of the Polish Diaspora to Polish interests. Swiatpol was concerned about young Polonia, the generation "which in the future has to accept from our hands the care for maintaining the national life of the broad masses of Poles abroad."[7] To the displeasure of their hosts, the American delegation, including Professor Francis X. Swietlik of Milwaukee and Dr. Bronislaw L. Smykowski of Bridgeport, who represented respectively the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union, rejected formal accession to *Swiatpol*. The delegates emphasized that they did not come to Warsaw as Poles living abroad, but as "an inseparable component part of the great American nation."[8] The delegates could not, therefore, subordinate their organizations to a foreign group, an act which might bring their loyalty as American citizens under question and serve as the basis for a "chauvinistic campaign in American."[9] In his report about the Congress, Swietlik wrote: "Polonia in America is neither a Polish colony nor a national minority, but a component part of the great American nation, proud, however, of its Polish origin and careful to implant in the hearts of the younger generation a love for all that is Polish."[10]

The American statement in Warsaw in 1934, which one historian termed the Polish American Declaration of Independence, confirmed the fact that only a marginal portion of American Polonia cultivated the myth of Polish national consciousness, while the community majority was far along the road to assimilation, acculturation, and Americanization.[11] The Polish immigrant was becoming a Polish American, or, an American of Polish origin.

The Polish American accent manifested itself in the 1920s and 1930s. Polish Americans campaigned hard for Pulaski and Kosciuszko monuments, bridges, and streets, and lobbied for national recognition of a Pulaski Day. Such action was a way of telling the host society that we also helped build America and have a right to live here. The numbers of Polish American citizen clubs increased, as did Polish Democratic and Republican clubs. As Polish American voter registration increased, so did their share of municipal and state offices, and they were rewarded with nominations for congressional seats. With the onset of the Depression, large numbers of Polish Americans joined Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Coalition; they also played a prominent role in union organizing. Second-generation Polish Americans, seeking new forms of organizational life, helped to broaden the community's infrastructure. Associations of Polish doctors, lawyers, and

businessmen came into being. Polish university clubs, whose membership consisted of college graduates, and Polish junior leagues, social service groups for Polish American women, appeared, as did new educational and cultural organizations. In 1925 the Kosciuszko Foundation was founded to promote Polish-American cultural exchanges, while in 1926 the Polish Arts Club of Chicago, a model for similar groups, was organized. In 1935 the Polish Museum and Archive in America opened at the headquarters of the Polish Roman Catholic Union in Chicago. Such institutions indicated the emergence of an American-educated and English-speaking second and third generation for whom their parents' rural, folk culture was psychologically inadequate in urban, industrial America. Furthermore, these educational and cultural efforts of an educated-elite were not undertaken to preserve a Polish national culture in America. This elite was "interested in its cultural heritage as a sort of credential proving its worth to the American society at large."[12]

The 1920s and 1930s were the Golden Age of American Polonia, whose first and second generation population totalled 3,342,198 in 1930.[13] These changes that the community was experiencing, however, paralleled and reflected those of post-war America.

When Warren G. Harding was elected President in 1920, America was becoming increasingly isolationist, wishing to forget Europe's problems. Harding caught the nation's mood when promising a return to "normalcy". Normalcy to the immigrant and his children, however, was peculiar and difficult to contend with in the jazz age and in the subsequent depression. Frivolity roared in the twenties. Movie stars, sports heroes, musicians and flappers became national idols. New hairdos and dance styles, rising hemlines, sensational trials, female suffrage and women smoking in public, the use of cosmetics, Freud, and prohibition, were on people's minds. Home life was altered as the telephone, washing machines, the electric iron and the vacuum cleaner made their way into more homes. Motoring opened up new vistas, and the radio brought the exploits of Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey and the chaotic excitement of presidential conventions to millions. The isolation and innocence of an earlier rural America passed as society's mobility was reinforced by prosperity and an apparently perpetual "bull" market, encouraging supreme confidence in the businessman, efficiency, and the future.

The immigrant, however, continued to look upon American life with the cautious reserve of an outsider testing the waters. Anti-immigrant sentiment intensified during and after the War. The emotional patriotism mobilized to support the war effort escalated the demands of various patriotic groups for a more closely knit nation. Fearing aliens as divisive and potentially disloyal, the National Americanization Committee pressured immigrants to learn English, take out citizenship, and to revere American traditions as a demonstration of their 100 percent Americanism and rejection of Old World loyalties.[14]

The post-war disillusionment undermined confidence in America's ability to absorb and Americanize the immigrants and to create a unified country. In 1918 and 1919 a wave of strikes caused by post-war unemployment and fear of Bolshevism produced the Red Scare. US Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer illegally jailed thousands as he moved ruthlessly against radicals - real or imagined, often without distinguishing between radicals and immigrants. Judge George Wheeler of Bridgeport claimed that the outbreak of radicalism in Connecticut proved that "some elements in the pot of Connecticut have not melted."[15]

The demand to conform expressed itself in ways bound to either frighten or

to make the immigrant uncomfortable and unwelcome. When immigration resumed after the War, American nativists sounded the tocsin anew. Racial nativism, which in pseudo-scientific language proclaimed the superiority of the Nordic peoples (the Old Immigrants) over supposedly inferior Mediterranean and Alpine types (the New Immigrants), was trumpeted by the disciples of Madison Grant, author of *The Passing of the Great Race*.[16] Such sentiments found their cruder expression in the reborn Ku Klux Klan, which saw Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and Blacks threatening the mongrelization of the White Race. They culminated in the passage of the Dillingham (1921) and Johnson-Reed (1924) acts, federal legislation introducing a discriminatory "national origin" quota system designed to exclude immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

Nativism intensified in post-war Connecticut. Already in 1918, a state-wide Americanization Committee was established. Governor Marcus Holcomb in his 1919 legislative address devoted an entire passage to the immigrants' Americanization, arguing that "Industrially this unabsorbed alien class constitutes a menace."[17] The State Council of Defense organized Americanization programs throughout the state. The Meriden committee was organized in January, 1919 "to instruct the foreigners in Meriden, and those who will arrive here in the future, not only in order that they may become citizens, but in order that they may become good citizens." Mayor King, astounded by the large numbers of aliens registered in Meriden during the war, believed that such a committee was needed, and offered his assistance.[18] H.H. Wheaton of the State Council of Defense addressed the Meriden Chamber of Commerce, describing "Americanization as the leading problem" of post-war reconstruction. Speaking ine racist language, Wheaton described the "New Immigrants" as having "a different attitude toward democratic form of government" than those of Anglo-Saxon stock and as "less capable of assimilation into the commonwealth." Claiming that there were 85,000 men of military age in Connecticut who "are still aliens" and a very high native-language and English-language illiteracy rate among aliens, Wheaton appealed to his business audience to support the work of Americanization. Reflecting anti-Catholic sentiment, he noted that the State Chamber of Commerce had appealed in particular to the Catholic Church for its support. The Meriden Chamber unanimously passed a resolution endorsing Americanization.[19] Thus when the Americanization Committee announced the beginning of its courses for immigrants, the *Morning Record* wrote: "All aliens of whatever nationality are expected to appear and register for the classes."[20] The Committee believed that the aliens constitute a "menace to the prosperity and security of the country" and are easy prey for anarchist and other radicals. Therefore: "The alien must be either Americanized or deported."[21]

As a corollary of Americanization, the teaching of a language other than English was limited to one hour a day in 1923 by the General Assembly. Similarly, instruction in the responsibilities of United States citizenship was all made obligatory in eight grade.[22]

In another expression of Americanization, the *Morning Record* supported immigration restriction, accepting the racist view that the immigrants from Northern and Eastern Europe are "the weakest and poorest man material in Europe ... the defeated, the incompetent and unsuccessful - the very lowest layer of European society ... paupers by circumstances and too often parasites by training and inclination". Immigration restriction was necessary to allow society time to "digest and assimilate the foreign-born already here."[23] However, the Meriden media did recognize

that Americanization had to be "real" and of the right kind. Americanization was not simply the technical acquisition of citizenship or the mastery of English; it also required the good will and interest of Americans to convince the immigrant "that they regard him as flesh and blood, rather than a mere beast of burden."[24] The editorial writers sensed that some of the blame for the slow progress of Americanization rested with Americans, who were ignorant about the immigrant's country and culture. As the editors of the *Morning Record* complained: "The term 'waps,' [sic] 'dagos,' 'polocks', 'square heads' ... have been sometimes used to describe individuals of more culture and learning than the one who used them could attain in a lifetime."[25] In effect, the editors were warning their readers that Americanization would only alienate the immigrants if approached insensitively. In its own convoluted way, the *Morning Record* was asking the teachers in the evening citizenship classes and employers to treat the immigrants as humans. To quote a *Morning Record* editorial: "The sooner we get out of the 'Polack-Dago' state of mind the better."[26]

It was in this intimidating, but seemingly ambiguous atmosphere that Connecticut's Polish immigrants and their children became Polish Americans.

In 1930 there were 133,813 first and second generation Polish Americans in Connecticut, approximately 8% of the State's 1,606,903 citizens, and 12.9% of the State foreign white stock.[27] During the years between World Wars I and II the community's organizational infrastructure matured and expanded. When Fr. Ceppa assumed the pastorship of St. Stanislaus in 1906, there were twelve Polish Roman Catholic parishes in the state. Between 1912 and 1916 new parishes arose in Waterbury (St. Stanislaus Kostka), Thompsonville (St. Adalbert's), Southington (Immaculate Conception), New London (Our Lady of Perpetual Help), and Suffield (St. Joseph's). Between 1919 and 1927 five additional Polish parishes were erected, including St. Mary's in Torrington, St. Stanislaus B. and M. in Bristol, Sacred Heart of Jesus in Danbury, Ss. Peter and Paul in nearby Wallingford, St. Joseph's in Ansonia, and Holy Cross in New Britain. All, except St. Mary's, erected schools.[28] As parishes increased, so did the fraternal insurance societies. The Polish Roman Catholic Union grew from 5 lodges with 270 members in 1905, to 32 lodges with 3,986 members in 1919. By 1937 the figures had increased to 45 lodges with 6,774 members. There were 10 lodges of the Polish Women's Alliance in 1917, a figure that grew to 29 by 1938 with a total membership of 2,694. And by 1944, the Polish National Alliance counted approximately 10,675 members in 58 lodges.[29]

District V of the Falcons also prospered. Following the lead of the national organization, which now emphasized sports activity among the young rather than paramilitary activity in order to preserve their "Polishness", District V at its 1920 Rally (*zlot*) in New Haven, urged member nests to organize all kinds of sports teams, and to install swimming pools and showers in all their facilities. The Rally in 1925 directed the local Falcons to cooperate with their municipal united Polish societies (*Centrala*) and to introduce gymnastics for elementary school children. The 1927 Rally in Derby, visibly concerned about maintaining "Polishness", created an Educational Commission to introduce lectures on Polish history for both young and old, and voted "not to engage foreigners [*obconarodowcy*], but only their own" for teams sponsored by the nests. The Falcons actively participated in various local and state commemorations in 1929 marking the 150 anniversary of the death of Casimir Pulaski. By the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1930, District V counted 22 nests with 1,895 male and female members.[30]

New forms of organizational life also emerged. Veterans of Gen. Haller's

army organized into independent posts in Southington, New Britain, Terryville, and Meriden, ultimately uniting as the Fourth District of the Polish Army Veterans Association with 15 posts and over 650 members, not including the Ladies Auxiliaries.[31] Second-generation organizations also appeared. In 1926 a Polish Junior League of Connecticut, a service club for second generation Polish American women, was organized, later paralleled by the formation of a male counterpart, the Polish University Club of Connecticut. There was also a Polish Medical and Dental Association of Connecticut, a sign of a nascent second-generation middle class. On May 3, 1939 Edmund Liszka initiated the first Polish language radio program, Program Polonia, which began transmitting on WHTH in Hartford.

Polish Americans also began to achieve limited prominence in State politics. Already in 1915 a state-wide Polish American Political Organization, a federation of Polish American Republican clubs, was organized, while the Federation of Pulaski Democratic Clubs came into existence in 1931. The symbolic high point of Polish American integration into American society and recognition was the nomination and election in 1938 of Boleslaus Monkiewicz of New Britain as Congressman-at-Large, the first New England Pole to reach elective federal office, and a visible confirmation of the progressing evolution of the Polish immigrant into a Polish American.[32]

For Meriden Polonia, the years between the Wars were a period of further growth, increasing acculturation and assimilation, and yet a continuing effort to preserve a Polish identity. During these two decades, the membership in the parish rose from 4,000 (including 100 Slovaks) in 1918 to an estimated 5,000 in 1930 and 6,000 in 1939. Over 80% of all of the 6,071 first (2,005) and second-generation (4,067) Meriden Poles counted in the 1930 US Census belonged to St. Stanislaus Parish.[33] Between 1918 and 1928 there were 371 Marriages, for an annual average of 34, while the figures were 492 and 45 for the years 1929 to 1939. Correspondingly, there were 1,892 Baptisms during 1918 and 1928, for a yearly average of 172. During the next period, however, the number of Baptisms dropped to 931, for a still high yearly average of 85. In this period there was not a single year with more than a 100 Baptisms, and that figure would not in fact be reached again until after World War II. Nevertheless, the birth rate was well in excess of deaths. Between 1918 and 1928 there were 480 funerals (the high was 99 in 1918, the year of the influenza epidemic), for a yearly average of 44, while between 1929 and 1939 the figures were 470 and 43 respectively. The increase of the birth rate and its subsequent decline were reflected in school enrollment, which climbed from 853 in 1919 to a high of 1,279 in 1926. There was, thereafter, a steady decline to 740 in 1939. From 1919 to 1928, 10,756 students enrolled in St. Stanislaus School for a yearly average of 1,076, while between 1929 and 1939 the figure was 10,372, for a yearly average of 942. School enrollment dipped below 1,000 for the first time since 1923 in 1933. This reflected the declining birth rate, but might also be attributed to the Depression.[34]

By all accounts, St. Stanislaus Parish was noted for the piety of its congregation. According to Rev. Stanislaw Iciek, in no other parish did parishioners, individually and with their societies, confess and receive Communion in such numbers.[35] Between 1918 and 1928 32,474 parishioners made their Easter duty, for a yearly average of 2,952: in the next eleven years, the figures increased to 46,716 and 4,247![36] First Communions were nearly even: 1,592 for the period

1918 to 1928, for a yearly average of 145, and 1,602 for the next eleven years, for an average of 146. There were seven Confirmation classes totalling 3,042, for a class average of 435 confirmees.[37] These figures attest to the parishioners' active spiritual lives, and suggest as well that there existed a strong sense of discipline within the community. This is, as it were, confirmed by the numbers of religious vocations from the parish. Between 1917 and 1942, when St. Stanislaus marked its Golden Jubilee, ten parishioners were ordained to the priesthood (Peter Karsmarski [Kaczmarski], Franciszek Tyczkowski, Wladyslaw Nowakowski, Boleslaw Topor, Jan Balasa, Wladyslaw Sieracki, Jan Sobolewski, Jan Kolek, Feliks Papciak, and Jan Wanat), while 47 women entered the religious life.[38]

If St. Stanislaus prospered spiritually, it also prospered economically, testifying to the parishioners' hard work, thrift, and generosity to the Church. In the twenty-two years between 1918 and 1939, parish income rose steadily, and was $44,083 in 1929. With the onset of the Depression, however, income declined, reaching a dramatic low of $28,898 in 1932. By the eve of World War II, however, parish income rose to new records, reaching $62,194 in 1939.[39]

The continued growth of immigrant/ethnic class of small business and professional people reflected the community's economy development. In 1920 the Business Directory section of the *Meriden Directory* listed 72 small businesses and services. While grocers (19), butchers (10), beverage dealers (8), nurses (i.e., midwives - 4), restaurants (4), shoe dealers and makers (4), bakers (2) and barbers (2) were the most numerous, there was also a doctor (T. Skladzien), a real estate agent (George Pelczynski), a violin repairer (R.A. Worzina), and an undertaker (Joseph Woroniecki). By 1930, the total leaped to 96. There were now 24 grocers, 13 butchers, 7 barbers, 4 midwives, and 3 bakers, but there was also a diversification of business interests, some mirroring the changing times. While taverns officially "dried up" during prohibition, there were now three billiard parlors, a building contractor, electricians (3), an engineer, an architect, an auto parts dealer, an auto repairer and gas station operators, systematizers (CPAs - 2), a beautician, a dentist, and dry goods merchants.[40] The most prominent member of Meriden's Polish middle class was undoubtedly the well-known Dr. Thaddeus Skladzien, who was elected a Director of the Meriden Savings Bank, and who belonged to the Meriden Lodge of Elks as well as to Polish organizations.[41]

Five years later in 1935 on the thirtieth anniversary of Ceppa's ordination, the parish assessed its achievements. Besides the 10 priestly and 68 sisterly vocations from St. Stanislaus School, the school also boasted 4 doctors, 2 lawyers, 2 dentists, 2 engineers, 7 pharmacists (*chemik*), 6 elementary and high school teachers, and 15 nurses among its local alumni, as well as a West Point graduate in the Army. Two parishioners were serving with the Federal Government, 2 with the State, 4 in Meriden's municipal administration, while 8 "Polish policemen were diligently maintaining public order." Finally, and perhaps reflecting the impact of the Depression there were approximately 60 Poles involved in local industry and commerce, a decline from the high of 92 in 1930.[42]

Some Meriden Poles were reaching the economic rewards that hard work in the New World promised. However, those involved in small businesses and services were essentially engaged in neighborhood businesses. They were not establishing manufacturing concerns which created large numbers of jobs and which led to the accumulation of significant capital. Their success and survival were linked to the blue-collar neighborhood economy. Most Meriden Poles worked for someone else.

The largest employers of Poles at the end of the inter-war era was the New Departure Divisions of General Motors, The International Silver Company, The William Rogers Manufacturing Company, the Miller Company, the Bradley & Hubbard Manufacturing Company, the Charles Parker Company, and, reflecting the impact of the Depression, the Works Progress Administration. Furthermore, Poles most often held semi-skilled and skilled positions (machine operator, buffer, clerks of various sorts, inspector, molder, grinder, press operator, packer, polisher, assembler, plater, nurse, toolmaker, machinist, teacher, trucker, sales, secretary, mechanic, box maker, solderer, caster, foundryman, and farmhand or farmer), while few held supervisory positions (foreman, supervisor, manager) or were classified as craftsman (ex. silversmith or tinsmith).[43] Prosperity, therefore, was unevenly distributed, while most everyone felt the consequences of an economic downturn like the Depression, which put people out of work and cost them their homes. This, in turn, reinforced life in the ethnic parish and in ethnic organizations, for people's social mobility was cut short.[44]

Inter-war growth and development were not always smooth. At the beginning of the period, the community sustained serious losses. The influenza epidemic of the Winter of 1918-1919 took its toll in human life, while on April 18, 1919, a fire destroyed Pulaski Hall (sometimes called Lenox Hall), together with the record books, equipment, flags and uniforms of the Polish societies.[45] These losses temporarily strained Polonia's human and material resources, but community life went on. In October, 1920, 25 acres were purchased on Yale Avenue for a parish cemetery, which was dedicated by Auxiliary Bishop John J. Murray in the presence of eight priests from other Polish parishes and before 2,000 people.[46] That same year student enrollments reached a new high of 911. To relieve the growing congestion in the school, where the 16 sisters resided on the third floor, the parish purchased the Sawyer home at 115 Elm Street to serve as a convent.[47]

Building continued. The growth of the parish, the high frequency of Confession and Communion, and the large number of visiting priests who participated in national and religious celebrations, necessitated a new rectory. Ground was broken for a new rectory on Akron Street in 1924, and in February, 1925, the present rectory was occupied. Construction was begun only after consultation with parishioners. However, while the church and the school were brick, the rectory, as a priest-historian noted, was "for the sake of savings", wooden.[48] Nevertheless, three ladies' societies helped furnish the new rectory.[49]

The Polish parish was the heart of the Polish urban village, and its influence extended beyond religious and national activities. As the number of children increased, it was not only necessary to provide schooling for them, but also recreation. St. Stanislaus, as Polish parishes elsewhere, was extremely influential in the institutionalization of the parishioners' leisure time. Various parish groups, as well as the Falcons who ran an extensive sports program, sponsored athletic teams. The second generation was strongly drawn to such American pastimes as baseball, football, basketball, bowling, and tennis, and soccer as well. Baseball (*pilka metowa*) was particularly popular, and when the 1919 St. Stanislaus nine was scheduled to play the Ramblers at Anchor field, they let the Ramblers know in the press "that if any sidebets are desired they may be obtained, as the St. Stanislaus backers have the money to place on their team."[50]

Reflecting the strong parish interest in sports, the St. Casimir's Society sponsored the St. Casimir's Athletic Association. In 1925, however, with the

encouragement of Fr. Ceppa, the St. Casimir's A.A. became the St. Stanislaus A.A. This was done, as Fr. Ceppa explained, so that the parish sport's association may enjoy the support of the entire parish, instead of only one organization. This velvet-gloved centralization by the tactful Ceppa was in fact a prelude to the acquisition of the old Y.M.C.A. field on Harrison Street. The purchase, to which organizations like the Falcons contributed, expanded the community's recreational resources.[51] The new facility provided "the Saints", for more than two years a "gypsy team", with a permanent home field.[52] St. Stanislaus Stadium, as the new facility was popularly known, could seat a couple of thousand spectators. It was not unknown for Fr. Ceppa to be invited to throw out the first ball on opening day, and the Stadium remained a popular Meriden sports facility for many years.[53]

The interest in sports, as well as the growing prominence of St. Stanislaus sports teams, reflected the parish's second-generation character. The majority of parishioners were American-born, and young, and taxing the school's limited recreational space for Fall and Winter activity. There was a need for a larger recreational facility for the parish youth. The Depression prevented serious consideration of such a project. It was not until 1936, when work at the factories increased, that the idea was pursued. Both young and old argued that the parish, to survive, had to work with the youth in order to keep them in the parish. Thus at a parish meeting on March 8, 1936 the decision was taken to erect a new community center adjacent to the school.[54] Fr. Ceppa's curate, Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski, a sports enthusiast who came to Meriden on October 25, 1930, spearheaded the campaign.[55]

Designed in the Lombard architectural style of the Church, the new center, a steel and brick structure included a large auditorium with a 1,300 person capacity and stage on the main floor. The first floor was entirely for recreational and social purposes, and included six bowling alleys equipped by Brunswick and seating capacity for several hundred viewers.[56]

The dedication of the St. Stanislaus Recreation Community Center, or the *Dom Polski* (Polish Home), was another landmark for the parish, and yet another testimony to Fr. Ceppa's leadership. The pastor had just completed thirty years of service in Meriden, during which time he oversaw the construction of a new church, school, and community center, all of brick; the acquisition of a parish cemetery, a new rectory, and new quarters for the sisters. It is small wonder that the *Morning Record* praised "the pastor of this progressive parish" for developing "one of the largest and best-equipped Catholic parishes in the state."[57] Without the controversy of New Britain's Lucyan Bojnowski, Ceppa established himself as one of Connecticut's premier "brick and mortar" immigrant pastors. In just over three decades, the energetic Ceppa transformed and expanded a parish of wooden structures into one of brick.

The dedication ceremonies demonstrated the popular respect and esteem for Ceppa. Sunday, April 25, 1937 began with Bishop Maurice F. McAuliffe administering Confirmation to 340 parish children. The all-day religious and social ceremony was followed by the dedication of the Center before 4,000 persons. McAuliffe, recounting Ceppa's achievements, congratulated the pastor for his foresight in providing for the youth, noting: "it is another integral part of the church to lead the youth in the way of prosperity and happiness." The building was also a "triumph for St. Stanislaus' parish", where "God has blessed our Polish people" with "large and noble families." Reflecting upon the United States, the Bishop

reminded his listeners that America had opened its doors to the oppressed of many lands, and pleaded for loyalty to the land of freedom.[58]

This impressive bestowal of praise testified not only to Ceppa's accomplishments, but also to his influence. McAuliffe spoke in the presence of US Senator Francis Maloney, a Meriden native; Mayor Stephen L. Smith [who delighted the assembled by making his remarks in Polish]; Dr. Bronislaw Smykowski of Bridgeport, a national leader of the Polish Roman Catholic Union; and Dr. Mieczyslaw S. Szymczak, a Roosevelt appointee to the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, the highest federal appointment held by a Polish American until that time. And at the evening banquet, which, in the thrifty fashion characteristic on such occasions, was served by women of the parish, 1,700 individuals attended.[59]

The dedication of the Community Center brought to a close the physical construction of Meriden's Polish urban village. It was as well an acknowledgement that St. Stanislaus Parish was an integral part of Meriden life and society. Integration was an evolutionary and complex process. It meant a softening, but not a rejection or abandonment of the parish's Polish identity and ethnic profile. In the years immediately following the World War, the parish's ethnic identity seemed as strong as before the conflict. Polish Bonds were purchased; concern voiced about the Soviet threat to Warsaw in 1920; and, after the Polish-Soviet War, Post 73 of the veterans of the Polish Army organized. Meriden's Polish community, under Fr. Ceppa's leadership arranged an impressive community and municipal reception for Gen. Jozef Haller when he visited Meriden on December 13, 1923 as part of his American tour, having the town welcome their hero with the blowing of factory whistles.[60] There was also a large reception on January 27, 1927 for Archbishop Jan Cieplak, who was famous for having been a Soviet prisoner. Cieplak, while speaking of the progressiveness of America, and expressing satisfaction that the Poles were progressing and happy with her, exhorted the Meriden's Poles to remain true to their faith and to their country.[61]

St. Stanislaus and its parishioners remained an ethnic community conscious of its own interests. The liturgy was in Polish, and organizations like the Polish Roman Catholic Union, the Polish National Alliance, and the Falcons were influential enough to host the state-wide and national meetings of their associations in Meriden, and numerous enough to send delegates to national conventions.[62] There was Post 73 of the Polish Army Veterans, and branches of the Polish Scouts sponsored by the PNA.[63] In 1925 Frank Dziob, who returned briefly, attempted to launch another Connecticut Polish-language newspaper, "The Polish Gazette."[64] In 1935 Fr. Bartlewski organized a commemoration in honor of Poland's just-deceased Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, during which soil from the graves of Meriden's first Polish settlers were gathered in bronze urns, which Fr. Ceppa personally scattered on the mound (*kopiec*) erected to honor Pilsudski outside of Cracow.[65] And in another reflection of the community's Polishness, it successfully lobbied in 1936 and 1937 to have a teacher of Polish language hired at Meriden High School.[66] The community's influence and awareness of its interests was reflected in 1938 with the organization of a new *centrala* (Polish Central Union), which combined more than thirty organizations affiliated with St. Stanislaus to coordinate patriotic celebrations and other similar activities.

This was a vibrant Polish community, but its ethnic profile and loyalty was changing.

When the Johnson Immigration Bill of 1924 was proposed, Polish com-

munities throughout the United States realized that the Bill's discriminatory quotas would result in a drastic reduction of Polish immigration to the United States. At a mass meeting in the parish, Meriden's Polonia protested the proposed quota, justifying their complains by citing the numbers of Polish American citizens who fought in the World War in the American Forces, those who fought with General Haller, the 13% casualty rate for these soldiers, and $2,000,000 worth of Liberty Bonds purchased by Chicago's Poles in a single day.[67] Basically, the protestors were arguing that Poles had not only earned the right to reside in the United States, but also the right to immigrate here. The Poles realized that the future of their communities was at stake. Without new immigrants, it would be difficult to maintain their urban villages as Americanization, assimilation, and acculturation advanced.

Americanization, however, was already making extensive inroads among Meriden's Poles, and could in fact be traced back to the years preceding the World War. The earliest examples of Americanization and acculturation occurred in politics with the formation of political clubs. The emergence of the immigrant political clubs reflected an awareness of the political process, and of the need, for the sake of the community, to become involved in the process. The Meriden Polish political club was organized in 1900 "to secure recognition of the Polish voters of the city and state."[68] Voting strength, however, required the acquisition of American citizenship. Assisting immigrants became on e of the primary activities of every immigrant political club.[69] A few Meriden Poles began to acquire citizenship before the end of the Nineteenth Century, and as the number of Polish voters increased, so did appointments and election to local office.[70]

While Polish was still universally spoken in the community, behavior suggested further acculturation. The parish school taught English as well as Polish,[71] and there were children attending the public rather than the parish school.[72] Parishioners played American sports. Announcements of weddings at St. Stanislaus, bridal showers, and socials, began appearing in the local press.[73] Prior to the World War, Polish societies participated, as a separate division, in Meriden civic and patriotic events, including the Town's Centennial in 1906 and in the grand and colorful Fourth of July parades so characteristic of pre-war America.[74] Illustration of the community's evolving profile occurred during the World War. While the parishioners donated $25,160.90 to the Fundusz Ratunkowy, and purchased $75,000 in Polish Bonds, it also purchased $125,000 in Liberty Bonds. Similarly, 90 Meriden Poles volunteered for Haller's Army, while 123 served with the American Forces. For a significant portion of younger parishioners, America commanded their first loyalty.

The acculturation and assimilation of Meriden's Poles advanced in the years after the World War, as indicated by the participation in annual Red Cross roll call and the listing of Polish weddings on the society page of the local press. Involvement in American sports expanded, helping to further integrate Meriden's Poles into American culture. The St. Stanislaus A.A. sponsored amateur boxing nights.[75] The Falcons sponsored a semi-pro football team, and one parishioner, Al Niemiec, reached the acme of American sports, the Major League, where he played for the Boston Red Sox (1934) and the Philadelphia Athletics (1936).[76]

The wedding statistics for the years 1918-1940 confirm the inroads of assimilation. Prior to 1918, 98.9% [758] of all parish Marriages [766] were between first and second generation immigrants, with 91% [694] between first-generation, Polish-born immigrants. In the last year of World War I, 69% [20] of all Marriages

[29] of all Marriages [29] were between first generation immigrants, 13.7% [4] between first and second generation, and 3% [1] between second generation Polish Americans. At the end of 1930, only 35% [155] of all marriages [441] for the years 1918-1930 were between first generation partners; 17% [75] were between first and second generation partners, and 24% [108] between Polish Americans. By the end of the decade 1931-1940, these figures shifted even more dramatically to 3% [20], 5.55% [29] and 54% [280]. Similarly, family names were Americanized, and fewer Polish and Slavic given names appeared on the baptismal records. It was during the 1920s and 1930s that the parish's second generation came into its inheritance.[77]

The parish's ethnic profile also changed as the second generation ventured out into the larger community and inter-married with non-Poles. For the years 1918-1940 76.7% [338] of all marriages [441] were between first and second generation Poles, while 23,3% [103] were between most second generation Polish Americans and other ethnic Americans (Italian, Irish, Germans, French Canadians, Russian, English, Scots, Slovak, Lithuanians, and Russians). Between 1931 and 1940, these figures were respectively 63.6% [329] and 36.6% [109]. St. Stanislaus remained a Polish parish, for in every marriage at least one partner was a first, but in most cases, second generation Polish American. However, there was evidence that the melting pot was at work, fusing some parishioners into a broader identification as Catholic Americans.[78]

It is possible that the transformation of Polish immigrants into Polish Americans might have proceeded more rapidly were it not for the economic consequences of the great Depression, which forced people to reduce their living standard, dramatically cut back their economic gains and social mobility, and compelled individuals to fall back upon existing ethnic institutions and organizations for security and entertainment. In a blue collar community like St. Stanislaus, the parish, the community center, and all the attendant religious, social and athletic activities became a more, and not less, important factor as people battled to get through the Depression, thus helping to forge, as Bukowczyk notes, a distinct Polish American ethnic and working class culture and behavior around the parish, polkas, taverns and American sports.

Politics were also emblematic of the further integration of Meriden's Polish community into American society. Polish Democrats and Republicans participated, as before the World War, in municipal politics. In the 1920s Dr. Skladzien, James Panski, Leo T. Wrobel, and Peter Zima served as aldermen from the 4th Ward, while other Poles held minor municipal offices (Poundkeeper and Dogwarden - John Chudy and Stanley Kogut; constable - Charles Brys). In the 1930s, Frank T. Sieracki began a long career as a Selectman (1933-1947), while Benjamin Brysh, J. Olschefski, Raymond Glazewski, and A. J. Olschefski served as aldermen. In 1939, John J. Awdziewicz was Assistant Comptroller. Among those holding appointive positions were Stanley J. Zajac (Board of Relief), John Markowski (Probation Officer), and John Kreminski (Probation Officer - City and Police Court). Polish names on the Police and Fire Departments increased, and Walter Kurcon was now Captain of Detectives.[79]

Meriden's Poles, like Poles elsewhere in Connecticut, began to reach for state office, and were active in their respective Republican and Democratic state-wide federations. In 1933 Dr. Skladzien was president of the Republican Polish-American Political Organization, and in 1934 the Republican John Kreminski, only a second-year law student, made an unsuccessful bid for the State Senate. Two years

later, as part of a surge of Polish victories, Polish-born Theodore (Teddy) Brysh became the fist Pole elected a representative from Meriden to the State House, a victory he repeated two years later.[80] Poles were becoming political insiders at several levels.

The dedication of the Pulaski Memorial on October 7, 1934 symbolized the Polish immigrants' commitment to Meriden, Connecticut, and to America, and was a graphic indication that they were now Polish Americans. The gift of approximately 30 societies associated with St. Stanislaus Parish, the Memorial "was conceived in the minds and hearts of the citizens of Polish extraction to forever impress indelibly upon the present and future generations of Polish Americans the important part played by their distinguished countryman, who gave his all that America could be free." The words of Peter J. Coombs [Grzebien], the General Chairman, are a telling recognition of the community's evolution. He spoke not of immigrants, but of "citizens of Polish extraction," and of "future generations of Polish Americans."[81]

The Memorial itself and the ceremonies surrounding its dedication underscored this shift in identity and priority of loyalty, and graciously, but decidedly, asserted Polonia's entitlement to residence in America and in Meriden. The Memorial, located on Broad Street, is a six foot bronze statue by Julius T. Gutzwa of Pulaski, who stands on a foundation of 10 tons of concrete stone and Vermont Barry granite. The base is decorated with American and Polish emblems and a bronze American eagle. The lettering on the plinth reads "Polonia Meriden." A bronze tablet summarizes Pulaski's achievements in America, while the north tablet reads:

CASIMIR PULASKI
Polish-American
Patriot
Aided The Colonists
In Their Fight
For Liberty
Dying Gloriously
In Action[82]

The symbolism of the statue's location was not lost upon observers. It was located in front of the old Revolutionary War cemetery on Broad Street where one hundred Meriden soldiers rested, some of whom were reported to have served under Pulaski.[83] In a very graphic way, Meriden's Poles were, through the exploits of their heroic predecessor, laying claim to their American birthright.

The dedication ceremonies celebrated American patriotism. The Arrangements Committee included Polish and American veteran groups, and the local chapters of the patriotic Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution. The veterans, and local militia units, including the Governor's Foot Guard, marched in a parade 5,000 strong before an estimated 20,000 spectators. Trying to underscore an identity of American and Polish values and interests, the floats included the Liberty Bell, Columbia, Pulaski receiving his commission, and the 1920 Battle of Warsaw, when Poland repulsed the Red Tide of Bolshevism. This float included a member of the Kosciuszko Escadrille, whose pilots were described as repaying in a small way in 1920 America's debt for the gallant service of Kosciuszko and Pulaski during the American Revolution.[84]

The main speakers, around whom 10,000 listeners gathered, also celebrated the American patriotism and loyalty of Meriden's Poles. The American orators,

whose presence was a recognition of growing Polish influence in Connecticut life and politics, included Governor Wilbur Cross, Mayor Stephen Smith, Congressman Francis T. Maloney, Bishop Maurice F. McAuliffe, and Lt. Gov. Roy C. Wilcox. They praised the contributions of the Poles to the United States. Cross expressed his satisfaction that the General Assembly, following the examples of other state legislatures, named October 11 as Pulaski Memorial Day, and that he was the first Connecticut governor to issue the necessary proclamation. Mayor Smith singled out the Poles who fought for their adopted country during the World War, and stated: "That a Polish boy shed the first Meriden blood in France likewise is another glorious chapter of your patriotism."[85] And the *Daily Journal* editorialized that the monument was "a striking reminder of the loyalty and progressiveness of our Polish residents, who fully appreciate the freedom and opportunity of this land."[86]

The Polish speakers responded in kind. The Polish Consul General form New York, Mieczyslaw Marchlewski, praised the Polish Americans as the "most loyal citizens of the Untied States." Dr. Symkowski of Bridgeport, lauded the Poles for their courage and devotion to the native country of their adoption. And Fr. Ceppa confirmed these sentiments when he spoke:

> Our pride in the sacrifice of Pulaski would be in vain if it did not include a pledge - that we love this country as he did, and that our people always stand as they have stood in later wars, willing to give their lives to defend it. Such a pledge is renewed and strengthened as we join in dedicating this memorial.[87]

Fr. Ceppa's words were a local confirmation of the dramatic changes in identity and loyalty occurring in the inter-war Polish American community. It was not without reason that the American delegates to the Swiatpol meeting in Warsaw in the very same year asserted that they came to Poland not as Poles living abroad, but as "an inseparable part of the great American nation." American Polonia, while proud of its origins and careful to cultivate a love for things Polish, was not a Polish colony nor a national minority, but indeed "a component part of the great American nation."[88]

World War II would reaffirm the reality of this transformation.

[1] Quoted in Stanislaw Osada. *Jak sie ksztaltowala polska diuzga Wychodztwa w Ameryce* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Sokol Polski, 1930), pp. 131-32. By December 17, 1918, Connecticut contributed $46,870.40 of its $300,000 quota. Document 219 in Marian M. Drozdowski and Eugene Kusielewicz, eds., *Polonia Stanow Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1910-1918. Wybor dokumentow*. (Warsaw: Ludowa Spoldzielnia Wydawnicza, 1989), p. 422.

[2] Cited *ibid*, p. 213.

[3] Cited in Frank Renkiewicz, *The Poles in America 1608-1972. A Chronology & Fact Book*. (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, 1973), p. 86.

[4] Karol Wachtl, *Polonja w Ameryce* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Author's Imprint, 1944), p. 364.

[5] Quoted by Brozek, p. 182.

[6] Brozek, pp. 182-83; Wachtl, pp. 364-68; and Osada, pp. 161, 174-82.

[7] Quoted in Bronislaw Helczynski, "Swiatowy Zwiazek dawniej i dzis" in *Polonia Zagraniczna 1929-1954, Ksiega Pamiatkowa w 25-lecie istnienia Swiatowego Zwiazku Polakow z Zagranicy*, cited by Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "Old and New Polonias: Tensions in an Ethnic Community", *Polish American Studies*, XXXVIII, No. 2 (Autumn, 1981), p.55.

[8] Quoted in Brozek, p. 190.

[9] Mieczyslaw Haiman, as cited *ibid*, p. 191.

[10] Quoted in Wachtl, p. 396.

[11] See Brozek, p. 190.

[12] Konstantyn Symmons-Symonolewicz, "The Polish American Community - Half a Century after 'The Polish Peasant'," *The Polish Review*, XI, No. 3 (Summer, 1966), p. 72. See also John J. Bukowczyk, *And My Children*

Did Not Know Me. A History of the Polish-Americans (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 65-84.

[13] Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population. III. pt. 1* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), pp. 20.

[14] See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), chps. 8-9.

[15] Quoted in Janick, p. 15.

[16] See Chapter 5.

[17] *MMR*, January 9, 1919.

[18] *MMR*, January 4, 1919.

[19] *MMR*, January 22, 1919.

[20] *MMR*, January 29, 1919. For a similar attitude in Wallingford see *MMR*, February 6, 1919.

[21] *MMR*, December 1, 1919.

[22] In support of the language bill, the American Legion declared: "One hour a day of instruction in a foreign language does not hinder in any way, the development of children as 100 per cent Americans". Cited in *Sister Mary Paul Mason, Church-State Relationships in Education In Connecticut, 1633-1953* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1953. Educational Research Monograph, XVII, October 1, 1953, Nr. 6), pp. 239-41.

[23] "Immigration Theories and Facts", *MMR*, May 24, 1921.

[24] Real Americanization", *MMR*, May 27, 1919.

[25] "Real and Bogus Americanization", *MMR*, January 15, 1920.

[26] "Some Americans Need Americanization", *MMR*, October 18, 1921. See also "Immigration and Americanization", *MMR*, January 24, 1920.

[27] *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population. III*, pt. 1, p. 350.

[28] During 1917 and 1942, eight PNCC parishes were also erected.

[29] Haiman, *Zjednoczenia Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie w Ameryce*, pp. 543-43; Karłowiczowa, *Historia Związku Polek w Ameryce*, pp. 319-30; and Donald E. Pienkos, *P.N.A. Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance of North America* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, CLXVIII, 1984), p. 338.

[30] Szczepanik, "Historya Okregu V-go Sokolstwa Polskiego", pp. 19-23. There were 20,789 Falcons in America in 1930. See Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, pp. 113-27.

[31] Mieczyslaw Kierklo and Jan Wojcik, *Polonia w Connecticut/Polonia in Connecticut* (Hartford, Connecticut: Komitet Obchodow Tysiaclecia Polski Chrzescijanskiej na Stan Connecticut, 1966), pp. 160-61.

[32] Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "The 'Polish Tradition' in Connecticut Politics", forthcoming in *Connecticut History*.

[33] The parish *Annual Reports* during this period list only approximate membership figures, except for 1926 [4482], 1927 [4762 plus 32 Slovaks], and 1932 [4,830]. *Annual Reports, 1918-1939*. AAH. See also *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population. III. Part 1*, p. 353.

[34] *Annual Reports, 1918-1939*, AAH.

[35] *APZJ*, p. 33.

[36] The figures reported for 1935, 1936, and 1938 and 1939 are approximations. *Annual Reports 1918-1939*, AAH.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *APZJ*, pp. 59-61. It is perhaps typical of another age that the Album gives a brief biography of each priest from the parish, but only lists the names of the sisters. For lists of male and female vocations from the parish see Appendices I and J.

[39] *Annual Reports, 1918-1939*, AAH.

[40] *Meriden Directory, 1920* and *1930*

[41] Skladzien was elected to the Bank Board on August 19, 1929.

[42] *Pamietnik Bankietu Jubileuszowego z okazji 30-to letniej rocznicy kaplanstwa oraz powrotu z Polski Wiel. Ks. Jana Ceppy, w Niedziele 29-go wrzesnia 1935 oraz z Niedziele 6-go Pazdiernika 1935 w sale parafjalnej Sw. Stanislawa B. M. w Meriden, Conn.*

[43] These conclusions are based on a survey of the *Meriden Directory - 1940*. A total of 4,296 possible Polish names were identified, and 1,169 were employed by the companies listed. Of the 4,296 names surveyed, 388 males were not listed with an occupation; another 391 were simply described as employed; and just over 600 females were listed as holding specific jobs. Those listed as teachers include the nuns at St. Stanislaus School. There were also 37 individuals listed as student, and 30 in the US Armed Forces

[44] For the impact of the Depression in Meriden see Wendover, et al., *150 Years of Meriden*, pp. 148-51. For an important discussion of inter-war, second-generation East European ethnics and the impact of the Depression upon their lives see Ewa Morawska, *For Bread and Butter. Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chps. 5-8.

[45] Also lost were a piano, two bowling allies, and two pool tables. *MMR*, April 19, 1919.

[46] *MMR*, April 14 and 18, 1921. Priest from Meriden's other parishes were expected, but only Fr.

Domenico Ricci from Mt. Carmel participated. It was reported that some of the Polish dead, who were in Sacred Heart and St. Patrick cemeteries, would be exhumed and reburied.

47 *MMR*, June 21, 1921.

48 *APZJ*, p. 33. The rectory was built by Piotr Zima, a Polish builder. The rectory was constructed as a three story structure with the thought that it would become a convent after erection of another rectory closer to the church.

49 *MMR*, February 23, 1925.

50 *MMR*, August 22, 1919.

51 The Falcons in their 50th anniversary booklet asserted that they "always tried to cooperate with the local Polish parish." *Polish Falcons of America, Nest 68, Golden Anniversary 1906-1956, Meriden Connecticut, Sunday January 22, 1956.*

52 *MMR*, February 3 and 23, and March 9, 1925. The property was purchased from Stanley Gromala, who also served on the committee with Dr. T. S. Składzien, Peter Olchefski [Olschefski], Joseph Niemec [Niemiec], Joseph Kusha, Mr. and Mrs Theodore Olchefski [Olschefski], Mrs. M. Jakubiak, Miss Anna Krezminski [Kreminski], and Miss Alvina Mierzejewski to raise funds to develop the facility. The corporation consisted of Ceppa, Anthony Wojcieszczuk, Frank Zaborowski, and Joseph Niemec [Niemiec].

53 *MMR*, May 8, 1937; and *APZJ*, p. 34-5.

54 *PPDP* np. The awarding of the contracts was an example of intertwining local economic interests. The architect was Joseph A. Jackson from New Haven. The construction contract went to the H. Wales Lines Co. of Meriden, while the plumbing and heating went to C.N. Flagg & Co., also of Meriden. The furnaces were contracted to Harry E. Glock of East Hartford. The electrical wiring went to Tomasz Zacharewicz of Meriden, and the lighting to Bradley & Hubbard of Meriden. The H. Wales Lines Co. subcontracted the painting to parishioner Jakub Kawiak.

55 Other members of the Building Committee were Maciej Brys, Joseph Niemiec, Peter Grzebien-Coombs, Edward Kawiak, Benjamin Lewoc, Stanislaw Nowakowski, John Awdziewicz, Joseph Staszewski, John Krzemienski [Kreminski], and Juljan Gutzwa.

56 *Ibid.*, and *MMR*, October 1, 1936.

57 "Congratulations", *MMR*, April 26, 1937.

58 *MMR*, April 26, 1937.

59 *MMR*, April 26, 1937. A picture and the names of the women who served the banquet appeared in *MMR*, April 24, 1937.

60 *MMR*, December 10, 12, and 14, 1923.

61 *MMR*, January 27 and 28, 1927.

62 *MMR*, September 23, 1921; January 29, 1924; September 21, 1936; May 17, 1917; and Szczepanik, "Historya Okregu V-go Sokolstwa Polskiego", pp. 19-20.

63 One of the first celebrations organized by the Haller veterans was a commemoration marking the battle of Chateau Thierry, when the Polish Army in France received its baptism of fire. *MMR* July 18, 1921.

64 *MMR*, May 22, 1925.

65 *PPDP*

66 *MMR*, September 21, 1936 and May 18, 1937. The teacher was Regina M. Okleyewicz of Bridgeport. A graduate of the New Haven Normal School, she studied at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, at the University of Grenoble in France, and received her BS degree from Columbia in 1936.

67 *MMR*, February 18, 1924. The petitioners wanted the 1920, and not the 1890 Census which counted fewer Poles in the US, to be used as the basis for establishing quotas.

68 *MMR*, August 31 and September 6, 1900.

69 On Polish immigrants and politics see Blejwas, "The 'Polish Tradition' in Connecticut Politics."

70 See Chapters 3 and 4.

71 *MWR*, August 27, 1908.

72 See the pupil lists in *MWR*, June 26, 1913.

73 See, for example, *MWR*, May 11, 1911; April 17 and June 26, 1913; and February 19 and September 17, 1914.

74 *MMR*, May 31, 1906; July 10, 1913; July 2, 1914.

75 *MDJ*, July 27, 1933.

76 Niemiec logged 235 at bats in 78 games, and hit for a .200 average. Dwight S. Neft and Richard M. Cohen, *The Sports Encylopedia Baseball* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, 6th ed.). Niemiec is not mentioned in Meriden's sesquicentennial history. See Wendover, et al., *150 Years of Meriden*, pp. 134-37. Also not mentioned is Tom Rychlec, who played end in the National Football League for the Detroit Lions (1958), and in the American Football League for the Buffalo Bills (1960-1962) and the Denver Bronocs (1963). Roger Treat, *The Official Encylopedia of Football* (South Brunswick, New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1971, 9th rev. ed.), p. 457. Another Connecticut Pole who made it to Major League Baseball during this period was Terryville's Pete Jablonowski (1904-1974), who pitched with Cincinnati, Boston (A), New York (A), Washington, Chicago (A), and

St. Louis (A), compiling a record of 57 wins and 66 losses with an e.r.a. of 4.30. After 1933, Jablonowski went by the name of Appleton, a telling change. Neft and Cohen, p. 250.

[77] *Annual Reports, 1896-1940. AAH; Liber matrimoniorum paroch. Sti. Stanislai E. M. Meriden, Ct., January 24, 1893 - November 2, 1895; Matrimoniorum Registrum, February 16, 1896 - February 11, 1908; and Matrimoniorum Registrum, 1908 -1948.*

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] *Meriden Directory, 1918-1940.*

[80] Brysh was born in Poland on April 10, 1900, and came to the United States with his parents, Andrzej and Katarzyna, in 1901. He attended St. Stanislaus School and West Grammar School. At 14 he went to work in Factory E of the International Silver Company, where he remained for 16 years. He then became associated with the local Hampden Bottling Works. He was a parishioner, and a member of various Polish societies. *PPDP*. Brysh was elected to the State House together with three other Poles. Blejwas, "The 'Polish Tradition' in Connecticut Politics."

[81] *Pulaski Memorial Dedication Program, Oct. 7, 1934* (Meriden, Connecticut: The Journal Press, 1934), p.30. In addition to the Program, there was extensive media coverage, including issues of the *MDJ* and the *MMR*, October 6, 1934, with several pages of feature stories and special advertisements.

[82] The statue and the other bronze elements were cast in the works of Bradley & Hubbard, Mfg. Co. of Meriden. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[83] *MDJ*, October 6, 1934.

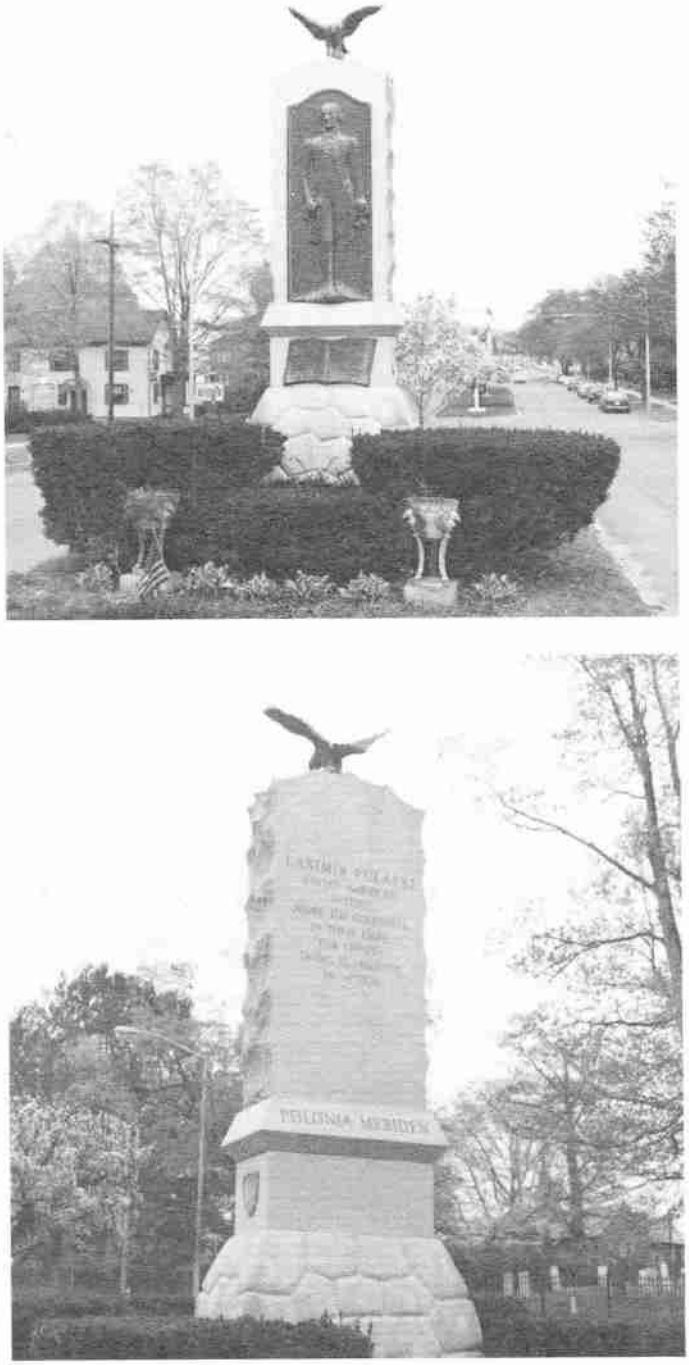
[84] *MDJ*, October 8, 1934.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] *MDJ*, October 6, 1934.

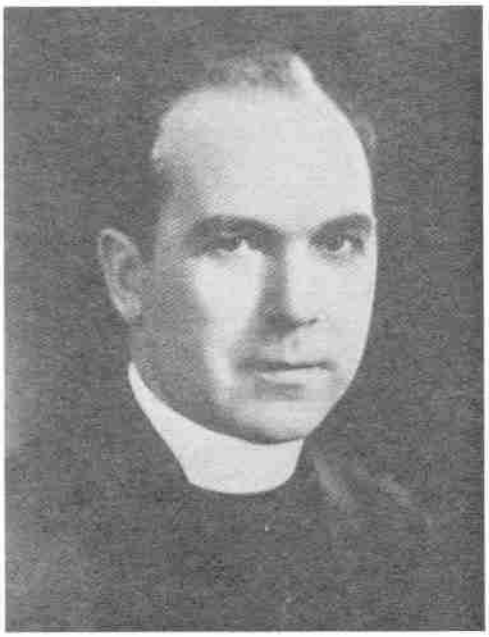
[87] *Ibid.*

[88] See Blejwas, "Old and New Polonias," pp. 56-7.



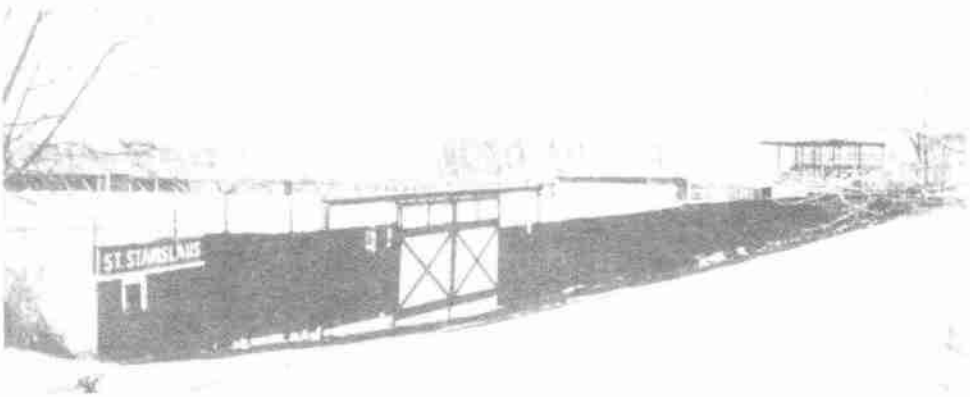
The stately Pulaski Monument on Memorial Boulevard. Dedicated and presented to the City by Meriden Polonia on October 7, 1934.

The main altar magnificently decorated for Easter, 1935.



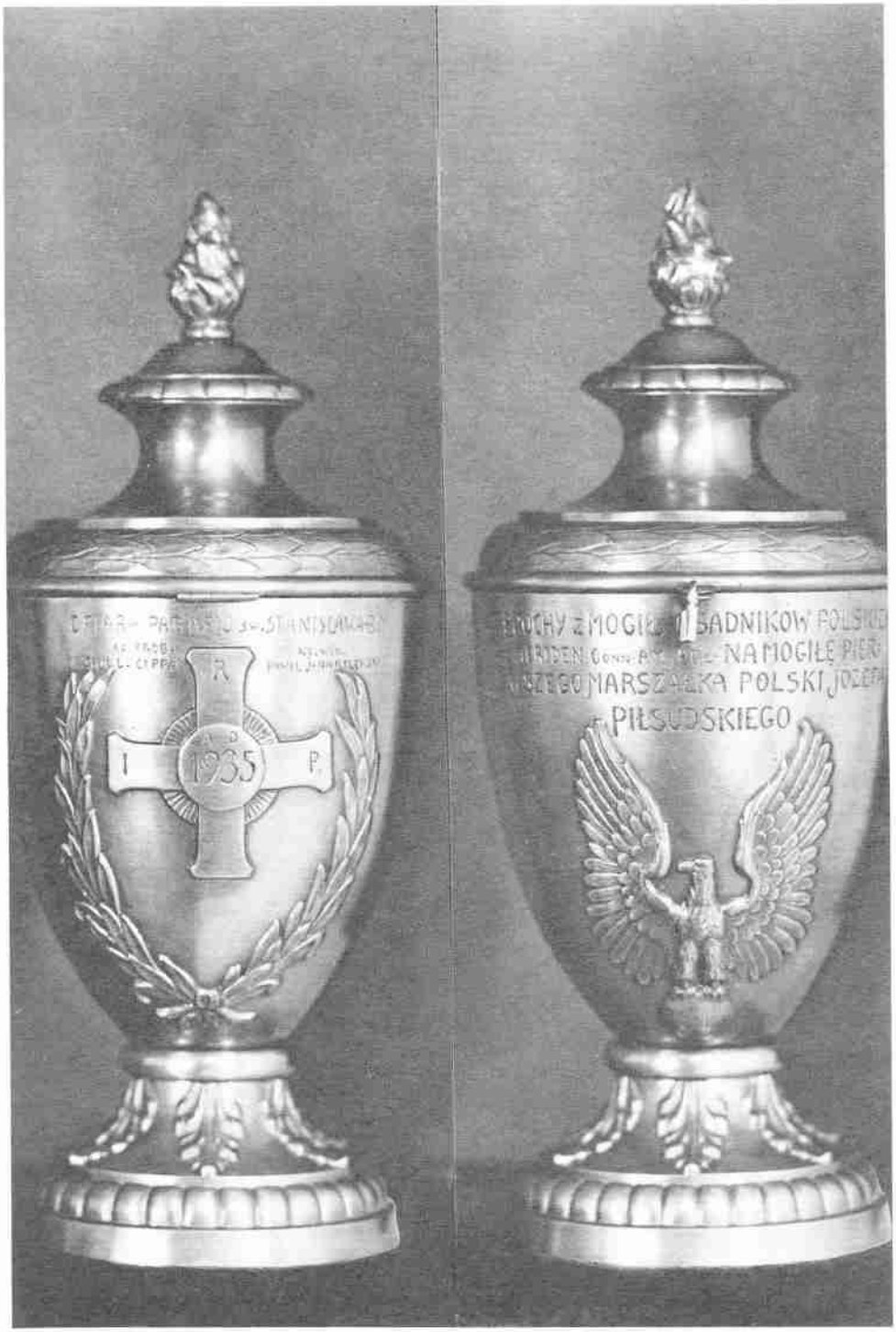
Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski
One of the most beloved priests to serve at St. Stanislaus. Father Paul was instrumental in the effort to build the community center.

Senator Theodore Brysh
First Pole to serve in the Connecticut Senate. Elected in 1940.



St. Stanislaus Stadium in 1935.

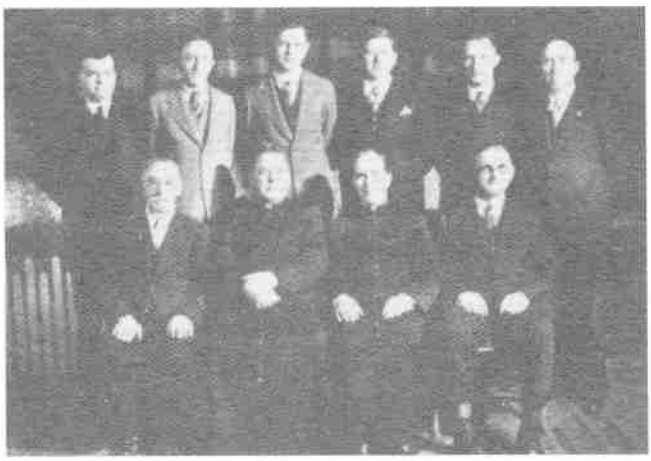
St. Stanislaus Cemetery in 1937.



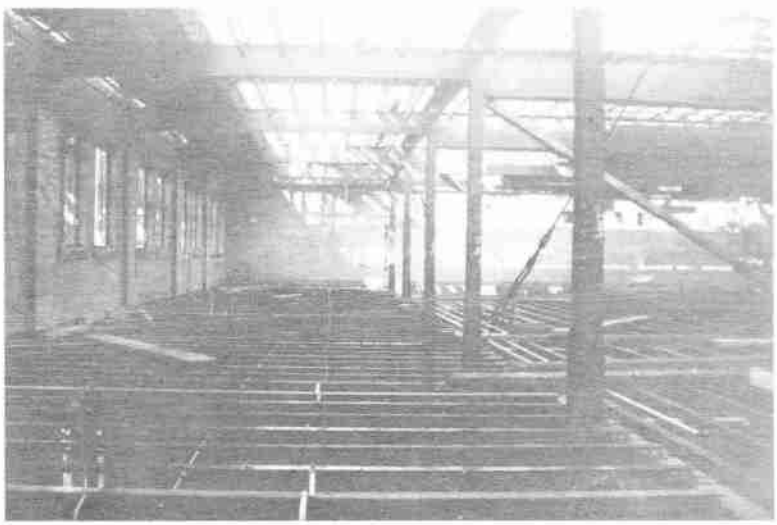
Bronze urns in which soil from the graves of Meriden's first Polish settlers was gathered by Msgr. Ceppa in 1935. Father Ceppa personally scattered the soil on the mound erected to honor Joseph Pilsudski outside of Cracow, Poland.

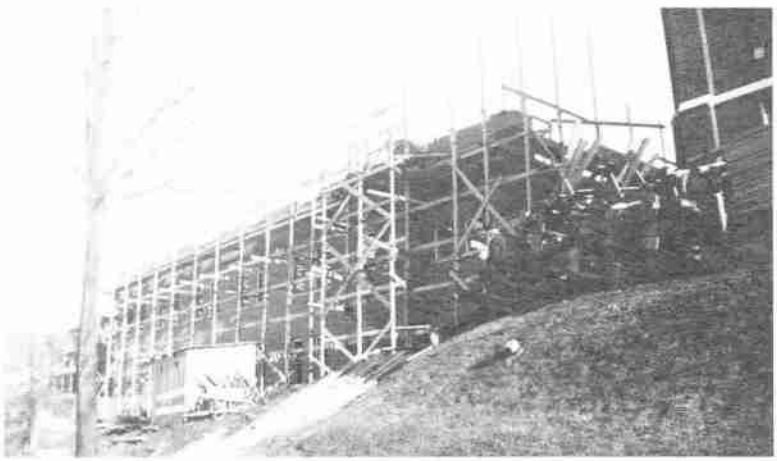
St. Stanislaus Community Center
Dedicated April 25, 1937.

Members of the Building Committeeof the Community Center. ***Seated,*** *left to right, Martin Brys, Msgr. John Ceppa, Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski, and Joseph Niemiec.* ***Standing,*** *left to right, Peter Coombs, Edward Kawiak, Benjamin Lewoc, Stanley Nowakowski, John Awdziewicz and Joseph Staszewski.*



St. Stanislaus Community Center under construction.





Ticket to the Dedication and Banquet marking the opening of the Community Center April 25, 1937. The price of the banquet ticket was $1.50.

In 1941 St Stanislaus Stadium was sold to the City of Meriden for municipal recreation use. This photo, in October 1941, was taken to mark the renaming of the stadium to "Ceppa Field" in honor of Msgr. John Ceppa.

Chapter Eight
Crisis, Celebration, and Mourning

The Nazi and the Soviet invasions of Poland in September, 1939 launched World War II, and a new trial by fire for the Polish nation. While partitioned Poland resisted cultural extermination in the Nineteenth Century, during World War II physical extermination threatened the nation. Poland would endure six years of brutal occupation, and lose 6,028,000 citizens (both Polish Jews and Polish Gentiles), an estimated 22% of her pre-war citizens. Only 10% of Poland's dead perished as a result of military action. The remainder, perished in death or concentration camps, in executions, as a result of deportations, or as a result of the general deterioration of living conditions brought on by the war, and only because Nazi racial policies considered Jews, Slavs, and Gypsies as "sub-humans". The pain of the war's extraordinarily high human costs was compounded by the bitter political consequences, the loss of sovereignty and independence. As a result of war-time political, diplomatic, and military developments, post-war Poland found itself saddled with a government of Polish communists installed by Red Army bayonets and the Soviet security apparatus. For most Poles, the war amounted to nothing more than the replacement of one cruel, totalitarian regime - the Nazi racist occupational administration - with another - Stalin's Polish communists.

For the first two years of the war, Poland lay partitioned between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, both of which forcibly incorporated seized Polish territories into their empires. The Poles, refusing to fold, formed a Government-in-Exile, which in 1940 moved to London; an army-in-exile; and a civilian and military underground resistance in Poland. Poland was a member of the Allied coalition, a signatory of the Atlantic Charter, and declared eligible for Lend-Lease assistance. Until Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June, 1941, Poland's position in the Allied camp was clear. She was the innocent victim of aggression for whom Britain and France had gone to war. When the war was over, Poland expected to regain her independence, recover her pre-war territories, and be compensated for German aggression.

Poland's situation changed dramatically in June, 1941. Churchill immediately welcomed the Soviet Union as a common ally against Nazi Germany, seriously weakening Poland's position within the allied camp. It was increasingly clear that

the Soviet Union would exercise a prominent voice in deciding the fate of post-war Poland and Eastern Europe. In the Spring of 1943, the Soviet Union broke relations with the Polish Government over the question of Soviet responsibility for the massacre of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest in the Spring of 1940. Shortly thereafter Moscow announced the creation of its "Polish" army in the USSR and the formation of the pro-Soviet Union of Polish Patriots. Stalin was signalling his intention not only to keep pre-war eastern Polish territory seized in 1939: he was also creating the nucleus of a Soviet dominated government for post-war Poland.

In the Fall of 1943 at the Big Three Conference in Teheran, Churchill and Roosevelt, without consulting with the Polish Government, agreed to the Soviet acquisition of pre-war Eastern Poland, with Poland to be compensated with German lands. At the Yalta conference in 1945, the Big Three, again without consulting the Poles, agreed to withdraw recognition from the Polish Government-in-Exile, which fought as an ally for six continuous years, and to recognize a new Polish provisional government of Polish communists and a handful of Poles from abroad, and which was to hold "free and unfettered" elections as soon as possible. Thus on July 5, 1945 the United States and Great Britain recognized the new Polish regime, which represented a Poland that was territorially smaller than the pre-war country, whose boundaries were moved westwards, and which was now under communist rule.[1]

Almost immediately after the defeat of Germany, the Soviet Union began to impose and tighten its grip upon Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe. The "free and unfettered" elections that the Polish communist regime was committed to hold took place in January, 1947 amid wide-spread voter fraud, and preceded by the murder and physical intimidation of the anti-communist political parties. The communist electoral "victory" was but one of many events that led to the deterioration of East-West relations. By 1948 Eastern Europe found itself behind the Iron Curtain as the Cold War set in.

For Polish Americans, the outbreak of World War II provoked personal anguish as people worried about the fate of family, relatives and friends in Poland. There was also the concern for Poland's survival, which manifested itself in parades and speeches. The Polish American media deplored Poland's dismemberment and pleaded for relief and for Poland's rescue. Polonia organizations in the Fall of 1939 formed the Polish American Council (*Rada Polonji*) to coordinate its relief efforts and to lend its support for the Polish Government-in-Exile headed by Gen. Wladyslaw Sikorski. When the United States entered the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, Poland's cause received official American sanction as well.

The community's initial outburst of activity was reminiscent of patriotic fervor which gripped Polish American communities in 1917 and 1918, when more than 20,000 Polish immigrants volunteered to serve in Gen. Haller's Army. However, after the passage of two decades, the intensity of the attachment to Poland had weakened as an older generation gave way to its successor. When the Polish Government-in-Exile sent a recruiting mission to the United States, less than a thousand answered the call, confirming the continuing assimilation of the Polish immigrant and his descendants. Until the last years of the war, Polish Americans were content to express their support for Poland by donating to the Polish American Council, or to the Catholic League for Religious Assistance to Poland, which was founded in 1943.[2] Only as the war advanced, however, and as a Soviet takeover of

post-war Poland became an ever more likely possibility, did prominent Polish American leaders re-mobilize the community for political action on behalf of their ancestral homeland. They wished, in part, to combat the small, but active pro-Soviet groups like the American Slav Congress and the Kosciuszko Patriotic League organized by Rev. Stanislaus Orlemanski of Springfield, Massachusetts and University of Chicago economist, Oskar Lange. At an impressive gathering of over 2,500 nation-wide delegates at Buffalo in May, 1944, the Polish American Congress was organized.[3]

The formation of the PAC was a landmark event in the community's history. For the first time Polonia was unified in a prominent, nationwide association that would become "the chief organization voicing the political interests of Americans of Polish descent in the United States."[4] The PAC's purposes were to cooperate with the American government in bringing the war to a successful conclusion and to ensure American government support for a free and independent post-war Poland. As an American political interest group, the PAC was also dedicated to the socio-economic and political advancement of Americans of Polish origin.

The PAC did not affect the policy of the Roosevelt administration towards Poland, and it became one of the first critics of the Yalta accords, which PAC President Charles Rozmarek described as a "tragic historical blunder." Unable to prevent a Soviet takeover, the PAC became one of the most vociferous and consistent voices of American anti-communism as Polish Americans became the "shock troops of democracy" in the incipient Cold War.[5] The PAC also turned its attention in the immediate post-war years to the hundreds of thousands of Polish displaced persons stranded in Western Europe and unwilling to return to a communist Poland. The PAC supported assorted refugee legislation and presidential directives which would enable 151,978 Polish displaced persons and former Polish servicemen to emigrate to the United States between 1945 and 1953. American Polonia would absorb a new generation of political emigres, one which would exert a profound influence on its leadership, ideology, and social composition.[6]

The parishioners of St. Stanislaus were proud of the development of independent, interwar Poland despite its shortcomings. Thus the news of the Nazi and Soviet invasions struck like a thunderbolt. Sharing views popular among Polish Americans, the parishioners considered Hitler the anti-Christ of the Twentieth Century, whose dirty work was assisted by the Bolsheviks' stab in the back. These events plunged the entire civilized and democratic world into mourning, while "for us Poles the despair and pain was all the greater."[7]

The parishioners' immediate responses were to pray, and to raise funds for Poland's defense and for humanitarian assistance. Through Ceppa's initiative, a Polish War Relief Committee was organized in the Fall of 1939, chaired by Jozef Wolkowicz, and including: Wincenty Skotnicki, Vice-chairman; Edwin Wolkowicz, Financial Secretary; Stanislaw Gromala, Treasurer; Wincenty Slusarczyk, Secretary; and Rejmond Glazewski and Stanislaw Awdziewicz, the parish trustees.[8] In April, 1940, the Committee arranged for the screening of Julian Bryan's famous documentary of the Nazi air attacks against Warsaw, "Siege", and organized a local honorary committee to support its collection efforts.[9] In May, 1940, the Committee participated in a state-side Polish Tag Day, for which Gov. Raymond Baldwin issued a proclamation urging "all liberty loving people in Connecticut to sustain the Poles in this hour of travail." Meriden achieved "the splendid result" of $631.94.[10] By war's end the Committee

raised in excess of $15,000, and sent, as well, thanks to the parish women who knitted and repaired clothing, thousands of packages of clothing and supplies overseas during the course of the war.[11] A parish branch of the American Red Cross and of the Junior Red Cross were also organized, headed by the indefatigable Mrs. Louise Klenk.[12] Later in the War, after the United States was involved, the Polish War Relief Committee became associated with the city-wide Community and War Chest campaigns, and was represented by John P. Kreminski, who volunteered that Meriden's Poles would consider their participation in the 1943 drive "a sacred trust."[13] All Polish and American initiatives were supported and encouraged by Fr. Ceppa, who permitted numerous special collections for Polish relief during the war, and by his administrator, Rev. John Sobolewski, both of whom were also ardent advocates of the Red Cross.

Conscious of their position as American citizens, Polish Americans during World War II invested their energies primarily in relief activity for their ancestral homeland. Nevertheless, they expected and wanted the restoration of an independent Polish state after the war. At the organizational meeting of the national Polish American Council, at which Connecticut was represented, the delegates condemned the Nazi and Soviet invasions and the human suffering that they caused. They affirmed their faith in the "second resurrection" of Poland, and expressed their gratitude to President Roosevelt for refusing to recognize the conquest of Poland, and for recognizing the Polish Government-in-Exile as the legitimate representative of the Polish nation.[14] At Meriden's annual Pulaski Day commemoration, attended by Mayor Francis Danaher and Rev. Ladislaus Nowakowski from Ss. Peter and Paul in Wallingford, Fr. Ceppa encouraged the audience to take inspiration from Pulaski's faithfulness, his courage, and his love of freedom. Maintaining an optimistic tone, Henry Kolakowski, a former commander of the Polish veterans of World War I and the President of the District V of the Polish Falcons, asserted that Poland, as she had in the past, will arise again to resume her place among the nations of Europe.[15]

Rhetoric, however, was not matched by political action. Polish Americans remained acutely conscious of their status as newcomers in America, and felt a compulsion to prove their loyalty. The outbreak of a new war, as had been the case in World War I, renewed suspicions about the loyalty of immigrants and their children to the United States. It was these suspicions which help explain the compulsiveness with which immigrants and their children acted to demonstrate their loyalty to America first. At the annual outing of the state federation of Polish American Republican clubs at Gehrmann's grove on Broad Street just two days after the outbreak of war, Congressman William Miller of Hartford promised to do all that he could to keep America out of the war. At the same time he reminded his listeners that "Polish Americans in times of peace and war will be loyal to the United States first, last and always." Congressman-at-large William Monkiewicz of New Britain, Connecticut's first Polish American congressman, did not respond with an appeal for American support and assistance for Poland. Rather, he contented himself with a cautious reference to the American people's concern about the possible consequences of another European war, and invoked divine guidance "to do the honest thing" if a special session of Congress were to be called.[16] A year later, at the third annual picnic of the Meriden Polish American Republican Club, Monkiewicz again, while condemning the consequences of Axis military aggression, appealed for calm in the face of the grave European situation which threatened to spread to the

United States.[17]

Polish Democrats, while America was still neutral, were less isolationist-minded, and supported American assistance to Britain, which it was believed would ultimately lead to Hitler's defeat and the restoration of independent Poland, Norway, France, Holland, and Belgium.[18] Nevertheless, as on the national level, the political mobilization of Connecticut's Polish American community for Polish independence would not occur until after the American entry into World War II, and only when the Soviet threat to Poland's sovereignty was clear. Thus, when the Polish American Congress was created in Buffalo in May, 1944, Connecticut was represented by a 103-person delegation, which included from Meriden: Fr. Ceppa, his administrator, Fr. Sobolewski, John S. Chudy, and Henry Kolakowski.[19] And when the Connecticut Division of the PAC was organized in the Fall of 1944, Meriden's representatives were also present.[20]

The involvement of prominent members of St. Stanislaus Parish in the PAC reflected the strength of the community's attachment to Poland. An indication of this attachment was the publication of an English-language periodical, *The Sentinel*, which sought to present Poland's case to the public.[21] This attachment, however, must be understood. The PAC was an American political interest group organized by American citizens of Polish origin. They believed that Poland's cause should be America's, but there was no question in their mind that they were first and foremost Americans, a point demonstrated by a number of developments during the war. When the Polish Government-in-Exile tried to recruit for the Polish Army-in-Exile, an idea which enjoyed the sympathy of the Meriden press, there was only one Falcon volunteer from Meriden, which in World War I had sent 90 volunteers to Haller's Army.[22] Yet an estimated 1,100 parish members [including 125 Falcons], graduates of St. Stanislaus School, served in the American Armed Forces during World War II.[23] Meriden's first casualty of the war was Stanley Orzech, a parishioner who was killed on the USS Arizona during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Other events underscored this stunning shift in loyalties.[24] The parishioners subscribed heavily to the various American war bond drives, with reports of some families purchasing as much as $25,000 worth of these bonds. The parish school children were awarded the highest U.S. Treasury citation in recognition for purchasing the largest amount of U.S. War Saving Stamps and Bonds in the State of Connecticut for the period.[25] It was no wonder, therefore, that the parishioners believed "World War II demonstrated without doubt the loyalty of Polish speaking Americans to the United States", and that "The Americans of Polish extraction are among the most loyal and most desirable of our citizens."[26]

The shift in emphasis from Polish to American in the parishioners individual identity was reflected by Polish community groups involved in various war-time home front activities, especially after America entered the war. The Falcons donated to the Polish Relief Fund ($1,250), the Polish YMCA ($285), and provided prizes for St. Stanislaus children and for the outstanding students of Polish language at Meriden High School. However, their members participated in all the local Civil Defense committees, and volunteered as Air Raid Wardens and Aircraft Spotters. The Falcons raised a servicemen's fund of $17,258.67, which paid for farewell and welcome home parties for its members in the Armed Forces, who all received a financial gift before departing, and whose families, if they required assistance, received it. The Falcons also donated to a host of civic drives, including the Community and War Chest ($775), March of Dimes ($400), and the American Red

Cross ($1,000), and spent considerable sums for gym classes and summer camp ($20,505.50), for its Fife, Drum and Bugle Corps ($21,307.76), and for sick benefits for its members ($33,120.67).[27]

While the war absorbed the parishioners' attention, the rituals and routines of parish and community life continued. Weddings and baptisms initially increased, but the numbers making their Easter duty declined temporarily from 1943 to 1945, when so many young parishioners were serving in the Armed Forces. Community groups like the Falcons and the Polish Roman Catholic Union (St. Casimir Society and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Society) marked their anniversaries and annual installation of new officers, often in the presence of their national officers like Dr. T. A. Starzynski of the Falcons or John Zielinski of the PRCU.[28] Falcon sporting events and games in the Polish State Basketball League were covered regularly on the sport pages of the Meriden press. In 1941 St. Stanislaus Field was acquired by the City of Meriden, which was needed as a playground for the Fourth Ward, and which was renamed Ceppa Field.[29] There were, as well, the annual Pulaski Day Parades.

In politics, Polish Democrats and Republicans were active at the state and local level. They held their annual political picnics, often hosting the competing Polish candidates for Congressman-at-large, Republican Boleslaus Monkiewicz and Democrat Lucien Maciora. They participated in their respective statewide federations of Polish Democratic and Republican political clubs, and John Kreminski was chosen to head the Republican federation in 1940. Parishioners scored major successes. In 1940, Polish-born Rep. Theodore B. Brysh became the first Pole to be elected to the Connecticut Senate, succeeded two years later to the same seat by Kreminski.[30] In 1944, Sophie C. Kline established a precedent in Meriden politics, becoming the first woman from the city elected to Connecticut's General Assembly.[31] At the municipal level during the war, Polish Americans served as Assistant Comptroller (John J. Awdziewicz) and Selectman (Frank T. Sieracki), on the Board of Tax Review (Zygmont Gonglewski), and as aldermen on the Court of Common Council (Edward Peczynski and Edward J. Smitana). In 1940, New Britain Attorney Joseph Bogdanski, opened his practice in Meriden, and in 1942 became the first Polish (associate) judge on the City and Police Court.

The war did not rob Meriden's Polish community of its vitality, nor did it diminish the parish's role as the center of community life. Fr. Ceppa, however, was getting on in years. In 1941 he underwent surgery at Robert Brigham Hospital in Boston, and was absent from the parish for several months. Upon his return, 2,000 parishioners tendered him a dinner with "rousing cheers" and "a splendid present", marking his 35th anniversary as pastor.[32] This was, however, but a prelude to St. Stanislaus' golden jubilee, which was celebrated the following year. This major landmark in the parish's life saw the publication of the parish's jubilee history, authored by Rev. Stanislaw Iciek, and the renovation of the Church, at the cost of $20,000.[33] Parishioners thronged the solemn high Mass presided over by Bishop Maurice McAuliffe, and celebrated by Msgr. Stanislaw Musiel of Hartford, who was assisted by Fr. Nowakowski from Wallingford, Rev. John Balasa from St. Stanislaus in Waterbury, and Rev. John Kolek of St. Mary's in Middletown. The assembled congregation heard Fr. Iciek praise "St. Stanislaus as a good tree" producing "good fruit for half a century." Fr. Iciek praised the parish's physical plant, but also celebrated its spiritual fruits, the ten parishioners ordained to the priesthood and the more than 50 sisters from the parish. The homilist also lauded the

parishioners' loyalty to both Poland and America, and congratulated the pastor and the parishioners for their accomplishments.[34]

Over 2,000 attended the evening banquet, which necessitated three sittings, and heard several dignitaries, including Mayor Danaher, Sen. Brysh, Judge Denis T. O'Brien, State Athletic Commissioner, Frank Coskey (a former parishioner), Atty. Bogdanski, Fr. Nowakowski, and Fr. Iciek.[35]

The jubilee was an occasion for Fr. Ceppa to share his thoughts with his congregation. He recalled the difficulties of the early days, and expressed his pride and joy at the parish's achievements. The parishioners were always willing to help in religious, social, and national matters. They gave money and their sons and daughters to help Poland, but did not forget about the United States, "the country which embraced our poor and our immigrants to itself." The parishioners responded in both wars by giving their sons to the American Armed Forces, and, in Ceppa's words, "you fulfilled your obligation toward God and Country honestly, generously, and conscientiously." The pastor recalled how he shared the parishioners joys and sorrows, and asked them to look at "the great and magnificent work" that they had achieved together. He asked that the parish pioneers who had passed on be remembered. His people were "good parishioners" and "good Catholics", and the pastor cared for them. "You were and are for me not just a parish, but an attentive and sincere family" whom Ceppa hoped to serve until "the Good Pastor" called him.[36]

Both pastor and parishioners could take satisfaction with their accomplishments, and it was especially satisfying for all that during the 50th Anniversary Mass it was announced that Fr. Ceppa was to be elevated to the rank of domestic prelate. The newly nominated Monsignor was honored for the impressive parish plant, and for his spiritual achievements.[37] The respect and influence that Ceppa had accumulated was reflected in the list of dignitaries who attended his investiture on February 14, 1943: Gov. Raymond E. Baldwin, US Senator Francis T. Maloney, Congressman-at-large Monkiewicz, Mayor Danaher, State Senator Kreminski, Dr. Smykowski of the PRCU and a colonel of the Governor's Military Staff, and dozens of priests and nuns, both Polish and non-Polish. The parishioners, with respect and affection for their long-time pastor, presented the new Monsignor an oil portrait of himself in his red robes painted by Ignacio La Russo, the artist who redecorated the church the previous year.[38]

The celebrations of 1942 and 1943 occurred during the most terrible of modern wars. When it was over, Poland was not free. Polish Americans, however, also worried about their lives in post-war America. As the veterans returned to Meriden and to St. Stanislaus, there were indications of a prosperous new period for the parish. There was a record-setting 102 marriages in 1946, a figure which dropped to 80 and 79 in the next two years before returning to a level approximating the pre-war years. While 59% of these marriages were between second generation parishioners, 33% were between second-generation parishioners and individuals with no Polish background. There was also the suggestion of an new trend and a slightly further erosion of the Parish's ethnic profile as 5% of the marriages [12] were exclusively between individuals not of Polish background.[39]

The number of Baptisms subsequently increased, and in 1947 there were 203, the first time since 1920 that there were more than 200 in a single year. School enrollment which had dropped during the war to under 600 in 1944, 1945, and 1946, also rose, as did the number making their Easter duty.[40] The returning veterans accounted for this population infusion and for a renewed surge of activity in parish

and community life. In February, 1946, with the encouragement of Frs. Ceppa and Sobolewski, a Polish Veterans Club was organized, and money that the parishioners had contributed as a gift ($3,700) for the returning veterans, turned over to the group the next year.[41] The parish in fact was experiencing the first of many post-war changes and adjustments. Declining membership in older parish societies dictated the merger in April, 1944 of the St. Stanislaus Kostki Society with the Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This merger was followed in February, 1946 with the merger of the mother of parish organizations, the St. Stanislaus B. & M. Society, with the Knights.[42] The parish's profile was changing, but it was not immediate cause for concern. The parish was on the verge of an active new era, as symbolized by the burning, in the presence of 28 of the original organizers, of the parish mortgage on September 8, 1946, a date which also marked Ceppa's 40th Anniversary at St. Stanislaus.[43] But as this new era opened, St. Stanislaus shortly faced a major milestone, for on May 3, 1948, ironically, the traditional anniversary of the Polish Constitution, Msgr. Ceppa was called by "the Good Pastor."

Msgr. Ceppa's death, only six years after the parish's golden jubilee, was an appropriate occasion to reflect upon his accomplishments and to assess the parish's first half-century.

Ceppa arrived in Meriden 16 years after the organization of St. Stanislaus. He found a parish whose early history was marked by the pastor-parishioner conflict not unknown in the early years of the Polish immigration in America. The turnover of pastors was high, and the parish possessed only a small wooden church. Over the next 42 years, Ceppa, through intelligent leadership, managed the creation of an impressive parish plant, prompting Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski, his former curate, to compare the pastor to the Polish king, Casimir the Great, in his eulogy. While Casimir found Poland in the Fourteenth Century a country of wood and left it one of stone buildings and fortifications, Ceppa likewise found St. Stanislaus with a single wooden structure, which he left with a complex of three fine brick structures, as well as a convent, rectory, and parish cemetery.[44] Ceppa was a builder and an organizer. He stemmed the nascent independentism among Meriden's Polish immigrants, and when he was buried, the representatives of the twenty Meriden Polish societies were in the line of march. The pastor was gifted with the ability to manage people without the controversy that his distinguished New Britain confrere, Lucyan Bojnowski, provoked. However, the accomplishments of both pastors are legendary in the history of Connecticut's Polish American community. With ample justification, Bartlewski recalled Ceppa's service to his people, reminding them that their pastor "was always a priestly priest, a true messenger of Christ."[45]

The parish complex developed under Ceppa's leadership was critically important as a place for Meriden's Polish immigrants to stabilize themselves and to adapt to the New World. St. Stanislaus, like thousands of immigrant parishes in America, was both a culture-preserving and an Americanizing institution. Its members could pray in their own language and preserve Polish values, language and customs. At the same time the parish was a place from which the immigrants could begin to define and take their place in American society. Both processes were at work during Ceppa's tenure, but it was the latter, inevitable function which corresponded with the wishes of the American Catholic hierarchy, with those of the host society, and with those of the second generation immigrant children. And it was as a leader in the Americanization of his congregation that Ceppa was seen and remembered by the host society.

In 1946 the *Meriden Record* editorialized about typical Americans. Proclaiming the "melting pot", the paper asserted "The richness of America derives from the multiplicity of cultures and backgrounds fused into this one of the New World. Loyalties, ideas, traditions, and even customs from the Old World have combined into the making of a full complement which is now the American Way." And for the editors, nothing was more "typically American than the history of Meriden's St. Stanislaus Parish combined with the saga of Monsignor Ceppa's career." Praising the parishioners who integrated themselves into "every branch of our social and economic structure", the editors, in perhaps the clearest acknowledgement of the acceptance and the place of Meriden's Poles, asserted that "Polish Americans are considered to be one of the finest grafts, strengthening and fortifying the parent tree until the two are as one."[46]

For Meriden's establishment, and for many of his own parishioners, Msgr. Ceppa embodied the mythical "melting pot". In an editorial "Farewell To A Good American", the same *Meriden Record* extolled Ceppa for identifying "himself as a citizen with the aims and theories fundamental to our national life." Ceppa was not only a spiritual leader, but an individual identified with "community betterment, integrating parish interests with general welfare by his wisdom and vision." Celebrating America through Ceppa, the editors concluded: "His influence is a paying lode typical of the riches in the 'Melting Pot' which has made the United States a nation unique in history. We are grateful to have been blessed with the years of his 'good citizenship' which have helped to make Meriden, even as it made him an American."[47]

Under Ceppa's leadership, Meriden's Polish immigrants and their children found a home for themselves in the New World. Formerly outsiders, they had proven themselves through hard work, and, most importantly, their willingness to sacrifice their children in the two world wars. They had embraced America, and it was now embracing them without reservation. Historical processes, of course, occur over years. The Americanization, acculturation, assimilation, and integration of an immigrant takes place over decades. Ceppa's death did not mean that the process was now suddenly completed. It symbolized, however, how far the process had advanced.

[1] For a concise overview of Poland during World War II see Jozef Garlinski, *Poland in The Second World War* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985).

[2] See Bukowczyk, pp. 86-7; and Karol Wachtl, *Polonja w Ameryce* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Author's Imprint, 1944), pp. 398-436.

[3] On the PAC see Richard C. Lukas, *The Strange Allies: The United States and Poland, 1941-1945* (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1978), pp. 106-27.

[4] Donald E. Pienkos, "The Polish American Congress - An Appraisal", *Polish American Studies* XXXVI, No. 2 (1979), pp. 5-43.

[5] Cited from Bukowczyk, p. 92.

[6] *Ibid*, p. 93.

[7] *APZJ*, p. 76.

[8] Once the United States declared its neutrality, Polish Americans could not collect for Poland's defense. Therefore their initial efforts were delayed until the US Government certified the Polish Red Cross to collect in America. *MMR*, September 21, 1939.

[9] *MMR*, April 19, 1940.

[10] The state-wide Honorary Committee included Baldwin, Bishop Maurice McAuliffe, Rt. Rev. Frederick G. Budlong, former governor Wilbur Cross, and Congressman Monkiewicz. The local committee included Mayor Danaher, H. Millens Taft, Clarence S. Powers, Irving J. Meiklem, Judge Edward M. Rosenthal, Joseph P. Mercaldi, and doctors Joseph A. Mekrut, Joseph F. Misuk, Peter W. Skladzien, Stephen A. Skladzien, Stanislaus Wrobel, and Harry S. Rosenberg. *MMR*, April 6 and May 3 and 9, 1940.

[11] Among the women workers were Bronislawa Wolkiewicz, Stanislawa Zaorska, Wiktoria

Mierzejewska, Maryanna Niemiec, Jozefa Skotnicka, Zofia Bednarz, Weronika Kuta, J. Gromala, Zofia Sokol, and the following ladies identified only by their last names - Mudry, Hara, Gosztyla, Cwiekowska, Nalewajek, Peczynska, Maczkiewicz, Kiewlen, Uznanska, Baran, Czapiga, Glen, Dyrek, Zakrzewska, Marek, Dmochowska, Gubala, Gonet, Turek, Wiktor, Zawrocka, and Gorecka. *APZJ*, p. 77.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 78, for a list of the members. The school children also contributed to the Red Cross. *MMR*, March 23, 1943.

13 *MMR*, January 19, 1943. See also January 20, 1943. On Meriden and World War II see Wendover, et al., *150 Years of Meriden* pp. 183-92.

14 *MMR*, November 6, 1939. Connecticut was represented by Stella L. Stecewicz of Norwich, and a member of the Polish Women's Alliance.

15 *MMR*, October 9, 1939.

16 *MMR*, September 4, 1939.

17 *MMR*, July 8, 1940.

18 *MMR*, November 4, 1940. Msgr. Bojnowski of New Britain favored repealing the American arms embargo, and praised Meriden's US Senator Francis Maloney for his position on the issue. *MMR*, October 24, 1939.

19 Zygmunt Stefanowicz, ed., *Protokol Kongresu Polonii Amerykanskiej odbytego w dniach 28, 29, 30 maja 1944 roku* (Chicago, Illinois: 1944), pp. 112-13.

20 On the Connecticut PAC see Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "The Local Ethnic Lobby. The Polish American Congress in Connecticut, 1944-74", in Frank Renkiewicz, ed., *The Polish Presence in Canada and America* (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Toronto, 1982), pp. 305-25.

21 The monthly *Sentinel: Mirror of Polish-American Life*, was edited by Walter Wojtowicz, and apparently first appeared in 1939. In local politics, the journal supported Republicans, especially Congressman-at-large B.J. Monkiewicz. *The Sentinel* attracted advertisers from throughout the State. Scattered issues are available at the CPAAMC.

22 *MMR*, August 27, 1941.

23 See Appendix E.

24 See Appendix F.

25 *Pamietnik wydany z okazji spalenia hipoteki parafialnej oraz 40-lecia probostwa Przewiel. Ks. Pralata Jana L. Ceppy w Parafii Sw. Stanislawa B. i M. w Meriden, Conn. Dnia 8-go Wrzesnia, 1946 Roku.* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1944). Unpaginated.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Polish Falcons of America, Nest 68, Golden Anniversary 1906-1956. Meriden, Connecticut. Sunday January 22, 1956.*

28 *MMR*, January 15, 1940 and January 25, 1941.

29 *MMR*, June 27 and October 18, 1941.

30 *The Sentinel*, IV No. 12 (December, 1942), p. 12.

31 There were 39 women in the Assembly, a direct consequence of the war. This included three other Polish Americans: Sophie Liss [New Britain], Stephanie R. Kamenski [Berlin], and Helen W. Zbikowski [Bristol].

32 *MMR*, September 15, 1941.

33 *APZJ*. Iciek, born on October 30, 1882 in Dorr, Michigan, trained at the Polish seminary at Orchard Lake, and was ordained in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1905 by Archbishop John Ireland. During World War I he served in the Polish Army in France, and interviewed figures like Paderewski and Pilsudski. He returned to the Duluth Diocese, but then undertook a nationwide campaign to sell Polish Bonds at the request of the Polish Government. He participated in the European Relief Council under Herbert Hoover; served as editor of New Britain's *Przewodnik Katolicki*; and was appointed to organize the parish of Ss. Peter and Paul in Wallingford. In January, 1925 he was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's in Norwich. He loved to travel, and was a popular and readable writer, publishing weekly columns in *Pittsburczanin* (The Pittsburgan), and editing *Kazalnica*, a homiletic review. He died in March, 1944. *The Catholic Transcript*, March 22, 1944.

34 *The Catholic Transcript*, September 10, 1942. See also August 18, 1942.

35 *MMR*, September 3 and 7, 1942.

36 "Introduction", *APZJ*, p. 3.

37 The nomination was announced, but, because of wartime difficulties, not officially made until December. *MMR*, September 8, 1942, and *The Catholic Transcript*, December 3, 1943.

38 *MMR*, February 14, 1943.

39 *Annual Reports, 1940-1950*., AAH; and *Matrimoniorum Registrum, 1908-1948*.

40 *Annual Reports, 1940-1950*, AAH.

41 *Dedication of Polish American Veterans New Home, 189 East Main Street, Meriden, Connecticut. Sunday, May 27, 1951.*

42 *Golden Anniversary (1903-1953), Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary, June 20, 1953.*

43 *Pamietnik wydany z okazji spalenia hipoteki parafialnej oraz 40-lecia Probostwa Przewiel. Ks.*

Prałata Jana L. Ceppy w Parafii Sw. Stanislawa B. i M. w Meriden, Conn. Dnia 8-go Września, 1946 Roku (Meriden, Connecticut: 1946). The original organizers present were Mr. and Mrs. George Curylo, Andrew Borek, Matthew Brys, Mr. and Mrs Buc (?), Mr. and Mrs. John Walewski, Mrs. Ewa Nowakowski, Mr. and Mrs. Stanislaw Kania, Mrs. Teresa Kusza, Mr. Jastrzemski, Peter Olszewski, Mrs. Katherine Brys, Joseph Wanat, Mr. and Mrs John Butz, Mr. John Jarzemski, Mrs Sophie Karpinski, Mr. and Mrs John Zryuzy (?), and Mrs. Anna Filipek. *MMR*, September 9, 1946. Not all of these names appear on the list of founders published in the golden jubilee history. See Appendix A.

[44] For the text see *The Catholic Transcript*, May 18, 1948 and *MMR*, May 8, 1948.

[45] *Ibid.* On Bartlewski's distinguished career after leaving St. Stanislaus, see John J. Gwozdz, *A Place of Their Own. A History of St. Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut 1915-1990* (Manchester, Connecticut: Cross Media Publications, 1990).

[46] *MMR*, August 3, 1946.

[47] *MMR*, May 8, 1948. For other articles on Ceppa's passing see *MMR*, May 4, 6, and 8, 1948, and *The Catholic Transcript*, May 6 and 18, 1948.

Rt. Rev. Msgr. John L. Ceppa
Rector, 1906-1948

This photograph of the church interior was taken in 1942 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the parish.

Bishop Attends St. Stanislaus' Celebration

Review Photo by Chester Swolski

The Most Rev. Henry J. O'Brien, bishop of Hartford, is shown in the procession from St. Stanislaus' Rectory Sunday morning to the church where a special high mass was celebrated in honor of the parish being freed from debt. The parish also celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Rt. Rev. Mgr. John L. Cepps, pastor. Those in the picture are:

First row—Rt. Rev. Mgr. Stanislaus Mastej, of Hartford; Monsignor Cepps, Rt. Rev. Mgr. Lucian Bojnowski, of New Britain. Second row—Rev. John Baissa, of Waterbury, and Rev. John Hackett, assistant chancellor and secretary to the bishop of Hartford. Third r —Rev. Joseph Kolek, of New B tain, Rev. Theodore F. Gubala, Putnam. Fourth row—Rev. Wa er J. Leddy, of Meriden, Bish O'Brien and Rev. Anthony Kaichas

Burning The Mortgage At St. Stanislaus'

Record Photo by Charles Iwanicki

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. John L. Cap- ... for 40 years pastor of St. Stanislaus Church, is shown surrounded by veteran parishioners Sunday ... when the mortgage on ... was burned to ... the retirement of all in-

Those in the picture, reading from left to right, are Mrs. Anna Filipek, George Curyto, John Jaroszek, Mrs. Anna Curyto, Joseph Grant, Mrs. Sophie Karpinski, Maciej Brya, John Bryzay, Joseph Stanisz, trustee; Mrs. Alexandra Catherine Brya, of Pratt street, Stanley Nowakowski, trustee; Mrs. Catherine Brya, of Prospect street, Mrs. Eva Nowakowski, Peter Olschefski, Mrs. Teresa Kosse, Mrs. Victoria Buc, John Buc, Mrs. Mary Walewska, Stanley Hanik and An-

parishioners of the church who were unable to attend the ceremonies Sunday night were John Niemiec, John Krol and Charles Szymanski.

A picture of members of the clergy who attended the celebra-

Seaman Second Class Stanley Orzech was Meriden's first fatality in World War II. He was offically listed as dead on May 4, 1942. He and one thousand of his comrades are entombed in the U.S.S. Arizona which rests on the bottom of Pearl Harbor. Seaman Orzech was a son of Louis and Francis Orzech.

This photo was taken in the choir loft at a wedding ceremony on September 2, 1946. Pictured from left to right are Raymond Kunicki-Violinist, Sophie Kline-soloist, and Stanley Klenk-church organist for many years.

First Holy Communion April 25, 1948.

Chapter Nine
New Pastors

In the two and a half decades after World War II, profound changes recast Polish America. American Polonia absorbed a new generation of political emigres, who significantly determined Polonia's anti-communist international and domestic political agenda during the Cold War. Polonia also absorbed a substantial number of "displaced persons", whose primary objective was to rebuild their disrupted lives. This "*nowa Polonia*" (New Polonia), which was largely urban, educated in independent Poland, middle class, and aspiring to continue the struggle for their country's independence, contrasted sharply with the surviving immigrants and the descendants of the peasant economic immigration, who were collectively lumped under the term "*stara Polonia* "(Old Polonia). While the arrival of New Polonia reinvigorated community organizational life, it also resulted in sharp tensions arising from different social, economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. These conflicts helped to confirm the American identity of many members of Old Polonia, who nevertheless shared the anti-communism of the new arrivals, and who still retained sentimental ties to Poland.[1] The war and its consequences, however, touched the lives of first and second generation Polish Americans in other and more fundamental ways.

When veterans came back home, they returned to the Polish enclaves where they had been raised, and where, because of the Depression, they had been confined.[2] They would not, however, remain. Over the next four decades the populations of the old neighborhoods began to disperse, and the neighborhoods themselves decline. This was one consequence of war, which wrenched up an entire generation, some 900,000 Polish Americans service men and women, and which showed them the world beyond their ethnic neighborhoods. The veterans were no longer "the same people who had left", for they returned examining their old haunts "through different eyes."[3]

Home and community were altered. Because of wartime labor demands, women were now in the work force in greater numbers than before. Returning GIs could also take advantage of the GI Bill to improve their educational qualifications and thereby move into white collar positions, positions that most of their fathers could only dream of. As Bukowczyk notes, by 1969 24.4% of employable Polish-

American males (of all ages) were craftsmen and foremen; 19.6% were operatives; 15.2% were managers, officers, or proprietors; and 14.5% were professional or technical workers.[4] Better educated, and able to take advantage of FHA and GI mortgages, the second and third generation Polish American, disenchanted with the old neighborhoods, which frequently consisted of tired housing stock on the wrong side of the tracks, began leaving for new neighborhoods and for a place of their own. And for some, it was also an opportunity not only to relocate, but to leave what they considered an embarrassing hyphenate past behind. This flight from the inner cities was facilitated by branching out a network of federal defense highways, and accelerated by the decline of manufacturing as industries fled South and West. This exodus contributed to falling property values and a serious erosion of the "Polishness" of older neighborhoods.[5] Economic and population decline and unscrupulous real estate agents set the stage for "urban renewal" in cities with large immigrant populations. The destruction of housing stock and the forced resettlement of residents robbed urban parishes and small ethnic businesses of the critical population mass necessary for survival. Ethnic businesses were further undercut by chain-stores and shopping malls. Finally, as earlier groups began to leave, they were succeeded by a new generation of urban immigrants, Hispanics, mainly from Puerto Rico, and Blacks from the South.[6] The immigrant urban village was under severe stress.

The stress upon ethnic Americans was exacerbated by the turbulence that American society went through in the 1960s and early 1970s. The civil rights struggle, the rise of Black militancy and the violent summer of 1967, the assassinations of the Kennedy Brothers and of Martin Luther King, the Vietnam War, the Beetles and the flower children, "grass", Jesus freaks, environmental alarm, the white ethnic renaissance, a sexual revolution, and Watergate, all crowded a dramatic period of intense social, racial, political and cultural crisis. American Catholics, who were not immune from these issues, also faced a revolution within their own Church. The changes generated by John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council (1962-1966), stirred and provoked Catholics seeking their place in the world. Papal authority, once so fundamental and reassuring, was challenged and often ignored. Vocations, church attendance and confession declined, and the parochial school system, once the pride of American Catholicism, was now the object of devastating criticism by Catholics themselves. Furthermore, the issues of abortion, clerical celibacy, and artificial birth control exacerbated divisions among American Catholics. A Church on the verge of maturity and acceptance - a status symbolized by the election of John F. Kennedy, the Americanized descendant of Irish immigrants - now confronted the increasing secularization of American society. And the members of ethnic parishes, no less than other members of society, had to contend with this bewildering array of problems.

By the end of World War II, first and second-generation Polish Americans had already, in the process of defining their place in American society and their personal loyalties, travelled the long road from being a Polish immigrant to a Polish American, with the decided emphasis upon American. After War World II, they, and the third and fourth generations, would grapple with the meaning of being a Polish American in the post-war world. As the melting pot continued the amalgamation of immigrants and their descendants, would Polish Americans and their institutions, like other ethnic Americans and organizations, become an endangered species?

The 1930 US Census counted 3,342,198 first and second generation Polish Americans. The 1950 Census counted 861,184 individuals born in Poland and 1,925,015 with one or both parents born in Poland for a figure of 2,786,199, while the 1960 US Census found only 2,780,026. This decline, plus the gradual dispersion of Polish Americans from the industrial Northeast and North Central states to the South and West, suggested that while the group was not immediately disappearing from the social landscape, that it was fading. There were other trends indicating that traditional ethnicity was eroding, and that ethnic identity would take on new meaning for third and fourth-generation Polish Americans. The use of the language declined. A 1969 government study which estimated that there were 4,012,000 Americans who were ethnically Polish, found that 60.2% claimed Polish as their mother tongue, but 92.6% usually spoke English.[7] Name changing also increased. Furthermore, as a result of World War II, the cultural and social homogenization of Polish Americans into American society accelerated. Bringing Polish Americans out of their ethnic enclaves and into contact with others, either through service in the Armed Forces or in the defense industries, contributed to a surge of inter-marriages. Polish Americans also became participants in the post-war consumer society. In addition to washing machines, refrigerators and other appliances, they also purchased televisions, the single most important homogenizing force in the creation of a mass culture. As Bukowczyk astutely commented: "Americanized by Madison Avenue and Hollywood, Poles assimilated by becoming mass consumers."[8]

While Polish Americans continued to assimilate and acculturate, they had to wonder, despite their wartime proof of their loyalty, whether they were being fully integrated into post-war American society. While 34% of third-generation Polish American males achieved white collar jobs by the 1960s, compared to 12% for their immediate predecessors, both generations remained heavily blue collar - 65% and 77% respectively. Furthermore, their median family income in 1970, $11,619, while it compared favorably with Italian, Irish, and German Americans, was well below that of Jewish Americans ($19,259). Polish Americans, for reasons of security as well as job discrimination, tended to hang on to industrial jobs, reducing their representation in the upper reaches of the occupational hierarchy. They were barely represented on corporate boards and in executive positions. Even in the Roman Catholic Church, where in 1968 they accounted for 1 out of 6 Catholics, they formed less than 3% of the Church's cardinals, archbishops, and bishops.[9] It was only in 1961 with the elevation of John Krol to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, that a Polish American was entrusted with a major Roman Catholic diocese in America. And it was another 8 years before Krol became the first Polish American awarded a cardinal's hat.

If Polish Americans were not as structurally integrated into the economy as they might be, they also had to question their place in society. Studies indicated that society held strong, negative, racists stereotypes of Polish Americans, stereotypes that recalled the images popular before World War I.[10] These stereotypes were used by social scientists to justify both urban renewal and the compulsory integration of old, established ethnic neighborhoods, particularly as the civil rights movement enveloped America in the 1960s. The resistance to forced integration of old Polish neighborhoods in major metropolises like Chicago and Milwaukee was perceived as blocking Black aspirations and racist. Only a few social scientists bothered to understand the cohesion of ethnic neighborhoods or the attachment of even third and

fourth generation ethnic Americans to their neighborhoods, which were identified with a deeply rooted way of life. Studies, in fact, indicated that Polish Americans were no more or less prejudiced than other ethnic groups.[11] Nevertheless, stereotypes were perpetuated and reinforced in the movies and on the television airwaves, which in the late 1960s and early 1970s erupted in a veritable feeding frenzy of "Polish jokes". Thus while the theory of cultural pluralism, which acknowledged and accepted America's ethnic diversity, replaced the melting pot ideology in the 1950s and 1960s, it was not clear that ethnic diversity, in the popular mind, amounted to anything more than a collection of group stereotypes rather than a recognition of a group's contributions to American society.

A palpable feeling of alienation took hold among Polish Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly among the third and fourth generations. Angry and confused at the decline and the assault upon old urban neighborhoods; confused by the attack on the values that their grandparents and parents had inculcated into them - family, home, neighborhood, work, the American flag, and patriotism - all of whom they had sacrificed for during both World Wars; Polish Americans, as did other ethnic Americans, began to challenge the anti-ethnic and anti-working class picture that the American elite and mass culture painted of them.[12] Stimulated by writers like the Slovak-American, Michael Novak, the author of *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*, Polish Americans began to talk of a new ethnicity and an ethnic revival more than a quarter of a century after the end of World War II. Like other Americans who were also angry and alienated by the turmoil of the 1960s and the homogeneity of America's mass culture, they began to return to their roots as an anecdote to their feelings of marginality, disappointment, and helplessness. They could not reverse time and recreate the immigrant urban village that their grandparents erected, for that was passing before their eyes. They could, however, recover their past and their roots, and make themselves whole, breaking the anonymity imposed by a mass culture.[13] And in these changing times, the ethnic parish would manage to retain a hold upon the immigrants and their descendants, even if they were now living in the suburbs, for these parishes preserved an ethnic heritage and religious values.

The recasting of Polish America that occurred in the years after World War II was only slowly apparent at St. Stanislaus. Very few Polish Army veterans or displaced persons settled in Meriden, most going to larger towns, such as New Britain, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport. If anything, life, as the American veterans came back, appeared to return to normal. While Ceppa's death itself marked the end of an era, and while it would be difficult for anyone to succeed him, the appointment of his successor, Rev. Stanislaus F. Nalewajk, on June 10, 1948, promised a smooth transition. Born in Poland on March 9, 1897, he came to America as a child to Bridgeport, where he attended parochial and public schools. He subsequently attended the Polish Seminary at Orchard Lake, Michigan, St. Bernard's in Rochester, New York, and St. Thomas' in Hartford. Ordained on January 1, 1921 by Bishop Nilan, he was assigned to Holy Trinity in nearby Wallingford, where he helped organize the Polish parish of Ss. Peter and Paul. Nalewajk subsequently served in a succession of Polish parishes, and on September 22, 1936 had assumed the pastorate of St. Hedwig's in Union City.[14] He was a priest of the immigrant generation who recognized his obligation to preserve and to enlarge upon the work of the pioneer immigrant priests and parishioners.[15]

During Nalewajk's tenure, parish membership held steady, averaging over

11 years 6,779 members annually, 4,750 of whom made their Easter Duty. Baptisms, reflecting the impact of the returning veterans, averaged 150 annually, while funerals annually averaged 53. The parish was sustaining and replenishing its membership. The school population rose from 624 to a high of 732, averaging 674 per year, indicative of a strong population base. The arrival of the baby boomers was particularly noticeable between 1953 and 1957, when enrollments were 681, 700, 703, 732, and 727. The annual averages for those making their First Communion and receiving Confirmation were 112 and 126 respectively. Marriages, again reflecting the return of veterans, averaged 65 per year during the first four years of Nalewajk's pastorate. However, this figure dropped dramatically to a yearly average of 39 over the last seven years of the pastor's tenure, hinting at changes to come.[16]

Parish organizational life was vigorous. Older organizations celebrated half-century milestones, including the Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1953) and the Falcons (1956), while all the Connecticut branches of the Polish Roman Catholic Union met in Meriden in 1953 to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the parent body. There were, however, newer organizations. The Polish Veterans Club was particularly numerous and active under the leadership of commanders Atty. Joseph W. Bogdanski (1947), Stanley G. Nessing (1948), Atty. Andrew Pulaski (1949), and Joseph S. Klinski (1950-51). The veterans were represented at all funerals and at the various sports activities in which their members participated, and a women's auxiliary was organized in 1950. That same year the Club voted to affiliate with the Polish Legion of American Veterans, a national Polish American organization with several posts in Connecticut, while the next year the veterans opened their own club house.[17] Another new organization was the Home and School Association, which, with Fr. Nalewajk's encouragement, was established in 1953. The Association would be particularly important as the cost of parochial education rose.

Concern for education and for the teachers is characteristic of St. Stanislaus' parishioners. Despite Ceppa's building program, there remained a need for a new convent. When the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis first arrived, they had resided in the old rectory on Oak Street. They subsequently occupied the upper wing of the new school as a convent, and in 1921 moved into a hilltop residence on Elm Street. The residence had outlived its usefulness, and a campaign was conducted in 1955 and 1956 to purchase property at 66 Akron Street, adjacent to the rectory, for a new convent. The drive succeeded, and on May 26, 1957, at a cost of $266,500 (plus $20,000 for the property), a handsome brick, Georgian-style convent capable of accommodating 22 nuns was dedicated.[18] Clearly the parishioners were looking optimistically to the future.

Meriden in 1950 counted 43,748 citizens, of which the parishioners of St. Stanislaus accounted for 6,977, 15.9% of the city's population. Politics and city jobs reflected the community's integration into Meriden life. On the state level, Democrat Sophie Kline was elected to a second term in the General Assembly in 1948, succeeding Republican Benjamin J. Kopacz, who had unseated her in 1946. Kline, in turn was succeeded by Democrat Alfred J. Ring (Renkiewicz), who served in 1951 and from 1955 to 1967. Ring was then followed by fellow Democrat Edward L. Iwanicki, a factory worker, who won the seat in the General Assembly. Meriden's Poles also ran for federal office. Democrat Joseph Bogdanski ran unsuccessfully in 1950 against Republican Antoni Sadlak for Congressman-at-Large, while in 1958

Frank Kowalski, recently retired from the military, defeated Sadlak and won re-election two years later.[19] In municipal government, the Poles held a lock on the comptrollers office (John J. Awdziewicz [1948-1951], Matthew Kuta [1952-1959], and Henry Zagorski [1960-1963]), and continued to be represented by their selectmen (Alphonse S. Urbanski [1955-1965], Walter Swabski [1967]) and aldermen on the Court of Common Council (Edward Peczynski, Edward J. Smitana, Joseph A. Mordarski, Edward Iwanicki, Raymond C. Staszewski, John L. Tenerow, John T. Janeczek, Edward Stempien, Jr., Stanley Zajac, Anthony Zemetis, Louis W. Markiewicz, Frank J. Kogut, and Ronald J. Stempien). Two members of the community held the position of mayor pro-tem (R.C. Staszewski - 1967 and Louis Markiewicz - 1968). Their integration into municipal affairs was also reflected in the variety of city boards and appointed offices in which they served (boards of Tax Review, Apportionment and Taxation, Compensation, Public Safety, Public Works; Superintendent of Welfare, Corporation Counsel, Tax Collector, Sanitarian, Tree Warden, City Clerk, City Sheriff, Constable, and Judge, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, and Probation Officer in the City and Police Court).

The Poles successfully used politics and municipal jobs to integrate themselves into the system and become insiders. Perhaps the most prominent success of the Meriden Poles was the nomination of Judge Joseph Bogdanski in 1955 to the Court of Common Pleas, in 1958 to the Superior Court, and in 1972 to the Connecticut Supreme Court, where he rose to the position of Chief Justice. There were, however, other achievements indicative of a broader integration. What is particularly striking in the nearly quarter of a century after World War II was the increase of the number of Poles holding jobs in the Police and Fire Departments. When the Poles first began to push for jobs in these areas in the first decade of the century, the departments were dominated by Germans and the Irish, and the appointment of a "Polander" to either force in order to give the group representation was a newsworthy event.[20] By the 1950s and 1960s, however, Polish names figured prominently in the command structure as well as in the rank and files of both departments as a matter of course, and in 1961 Henry J. Maguder was named Chief of Police.[21]

The further integration into the host society paralleled subtle but fundamental changes in popular attitudes following World War II. Prior to the War, the parishioners by and large resided in the urban-ethnic village. Mentally, as well as physically, they lived in an enclosed immigrant-ethnic enclave, a world both colorful and rigidly traditionalistic. There was an extraordinary sense of community, for the parish, together with the Community Center, was "a second home". Life revolved around religious services and celebrations and community center activities marking the cycle of the seasons.

The organist earned a purse at Christmas by going around to distribute *oplatek*, the thin wafer that Poles share among their families and friends at the traditional *wigilia*, or Christmas Eve meal. The Christmas season began with the *Pasterka* (Shepherd's Mass), which opened with the moving *koleda* (carol), "*W zlobie lezy*" (He lays in the Manger). And the crowd was so great that "you couldn't stick a toothpick into the church." For Epiphany the parishioners made offerings for chalk and incense, which they used to inscribe the initials of the Three Kings (+K+M+B plus the current year) over the doors of their homes to invoke God's blessing upon their households. During Lent, *Gorzkie Zale* (Bitter Lamentations) were sung. Holy Week, which opened with Palm Sunday services, was a time when the school children attended Mass as a group. After the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, the children

(altar boys, Boy Scouts, Children of Mary) took turns "standing guard" in front of a replica of Christ's tomb in a church draped in purple cloth. On Holy Saturday, the pastor and priests went from 8am to 9pm to homes to bless the Easter food (*Swieconka*), and then conducted Easter services the next day.

Forty Hours, a popular devotion in all Polish parishes, usually occurred at St. Stanislaus in the Spring, beginning on Sunday and running through until Tuesday. In May, the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was crowned, and the Rosary recited. This was a world of color and processions. For Corpus Christi, a fourth altar was set up in church, and the priest, with the monstrance, processed to all the altars, preceded by altar boys with incense and the *Anioly Stroz* (Guardian Angels). The priest bearing the monstrance processed under a glittering silk canopy borne by four male parishioners. The presidents of all the parish societies marched in the procession bearing their societies' gold and silver embroidered, tassel-trimmed, banners which swayed down the aisles. The church was always crowded on holidays, and the lines for Confession long.

Ceppa infused the parish with his religiosity. "Religion was number one ... what held everything together." And religion was linked with Polishness. Not only were school plays about Polish kings and saints in Polish; the children were taught the language and their religious preparation for First Communion, especially the Act of Contrition (*Akt Zalu*), in Polish. Ceppa, as did other immigrant pastors, wanted to keep his people together, and conveyed the impression to young parishioners that they were expected to marry other Poles. Religion and the activities at the Community Center, which laid the foundation for a good parish and kept the younger generation interested, were ways in which people not only entertained themselves, but also formed and reinforced community standards of behavior.

Fear was also used to maintain standards. Parishioners were put on guard and told that unless they behaved "You're going to Hell!" Thus the greeting of priests and nuns with the traditional "*Niech Bedzie Pochwalony Jezu Chrystus*!" (Let Jesus Christ Be Praised!), the kissing of the priest's hand, and men tipping their hat as they passed the church, were not only traditional old-world customs of respect for the Church and the clergy, but practices symbolizing a specific immigrant Catholicism which was to an extent "religion by fear". As one parishioner commented upon the visiting priests who annually came to conduct missions for the children and the male and female parishioners: "They always made you feel guilty", that "you were condemned."[22] And the role of the church, the priests, and the nuns was further reinforced by parents, who made it clear to their children that behavioral problems at church or school would also be disciplined at home.

This defensive and enclosed world began to crumble during World War II, and change accelerated after the War. Parishioners were involved in war-time production, which affected some religious devotions. Forty Hours, previously held on Sunday through Tuesday, now ran Friday to Sunday so as to better accommodate production. Other changes, however, were more fundamental. Some 1,200 parishioners served in the American Armed Forces. Veterans returned having been exposed to non-Polish Americans and to non-Catholics as never before possible. For young men raised in a world believing that if you were not Catholic "you did not belong in this world" and that only Catholics would be saved, the experience of combat infantry was quite sobering. Some realized "we're all the same, we're all going to die", Catholic, Protestant, or Jew. For others it was the simple experience of having to figure out for the first time how to confess in English. Those

in service "started thinking" and returned changed. The feeling was no longer that Polish. "You [previously] had been Polish; you couldn't marry anyone but Polish." However, after the War, the veterans began to socialize more with other ethnics. In the words of one parishioner: "This is what the Second War brought on. It sort of broke up that ethnic feeling. It's not just ethnic; it's not [just] Polish. It's not Italian, German, or French. You're a person, and you worked as a person. You're an American. You were a soldier. He asked for help and you helped him. You didn't ask his nationality."[23] The defensive mentality of immigrant Catholicism was breaking down.

This altered mental framework was the foundation for post-war changes. Preparation for First Communion in Polish disappeared after the War. The first Sunday English language Mass was introduced at 9:30 a.m. in the Community Center, and attendance increased so that the Mass was transferred to the Church. As the number of English language Masses increased, the Polish Masses decreased. Intermarrying continued, and as parishioners prospered, people in the Polish neighborhoods began moving out. Ties with the parish remained strong. People retained their membership in St. Stanislaus, returning for Sunday services, even though they now also belonged to a parish closer to their new home. It was impossible, however, to return every Sunday, and a drop in Mass attendance reflected these changes. This was a new generation which wanted their own homes, or, as one parishioner remembers: "Everyone was going to something a little better."[24]

These changes occurred over time, and extended beyond the last years of Ceppa's tenure and the pastorate of Fr. Nalewajk's, who died suddenly on February 23, 1959 while on vacation in Miami, Florida. His funeral Mass was celebrated on February 27 by Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien. Former assistant pastor, Rev. John Sobolewski eulogized Nalewajk's "unconquerable energy and zealous earnestness", his "pure self-sacrificing zeal." He was a man who "literally spent himself for the people under his care" for unknown to many parishioners, he suffered from a heart ailment. Nalewajk was a good priest and a faithful pastor.[25] Nalewajk was also remembered for his pride in the parish school - "the most beautiful school in the city" - which he refurbished, and for the delight that he took in ushering the children into their pews at their Sunday Mass. Finally, he was remembered as a pastor who gloried in his community's expansion, and as a true man of the cloth.[26]

Many of the parish's sons who were now priests attended the funeral, including Fr. William J. Topor, who became pastor two months later on April 9, 1959. While born in Norwich on November 24, 1899, Topor was a native of St. Stanislaus parish and a graduate of the parish school and Meriden High School. He attended St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester and St. Thomas' in Hartford, and was ordained on April 13, 1925. Topor was the first American-born and parish native to be pastor at St. Stanislaus. He arrived in Meriden with twenty-one years experience as a pastor, having served in that position at St. Paul's in Glenville, and then following Nalewajk's at St. Hedwig's in Union City in 1948.[27]

Topor assumed his new post while change was already afoot, and at the beginning of a tumultuous American decade.[28] During his tenure the impact of the post-war demographic shifts upon the parish and neighborhood became more apparent, while the parishioners would also be exposed to Vatican II.

The broader changes occurring in Meriden affected the parishioners of St. Stanislaus. After World War II the number of workers holding manufacturing jobs

contracted. This was part of a larger trend in central cities linked to the decline of manufacturing employment. In Meriden between 1947 and 1958 manufacturing employment fell by a third, particularly in machinery and a miscellaneous group composed almost entirely of silver workers, where the cut backs amounted to almost 4,200 jobs. To some extent jobs in aircraft manufacturing, construction, wholesale trade, finance, insurance and real estate, and services picked up the slack. Nevertheless, urban prognosticators suggested a good future for the City in retailing, and that there would also be growth in construction and finance. Conversely, manufacturing jobs in machinery (non-electrical) and silver, where Poles were represented, and which accounted for almost two-thirds of all workers in 1958, would in 1980 account for only half of the manufacturing workers.[29]

In addition to these economic developments, Meriden's population was also changing. The number and percentage of those under 10 and over 50 grew, suggesting the need for appropriate community services and facilities. Furthermore, thanks to the automobile, there was a population outmigration from the center city areas, which in turn reduced household sizes in central areas. It was predicted that the South Central Neighborhood, which is where St. Stanislaus is located, would decline in population from 6,200 in 1958 to 6,000 in 1980.[30] Finally, a survey of Meriden's building and housing stock found a need for the redevelopment and rehabilitation of a considerable portion of the City's central district. In the South Central Neighborhood it was found that 73% of the residential structures were in fair condition, although a substantial number of structures (195) needed minor repairs, while almost 100 structures required major repairs. These were located in the blocks west of Willow Street and North of Olive Street, and this area was included in the Urban Renewal District for rehabilitation.[31]

In the 1960s, the Polish neighborhood, the area stretching south of East Main Street from South Colony up to Broad Street, underwent federally-sponsored urban renewal. The "Polish Alps" changed drastically. Numerous stores and homes in the Veteran and Willow street area were determined to be in such a deteriorated state as to be beyond rehabilitation. Others, in good shape, found themselves between those scheduled for destruction, and also fell to the wrecking crane. Meriden's urban planners, like others elsewhere, and without reference to the social and ethnic strengths of neighborhoods, pointed to deteriorating house stock and shifting population and traffic patterns to justify the irrevocable alteration or destruction of thriving old neighborhoods bound together by strong ethnic and family bonds.[32] Their justifications, however, did not ease the pain nor the sense of loss for those whose lives were forever altered. According to Frank Klinski, the owner of a local package store, "There was quite a bit of hard feelings" and the sheriff had to serve some people 8 or 10 times before they would move.[33]

However, Meriden and its neighborhoods were changing. International Silver had closed its downtown plants and relocated them elsewhere, while malls were rising on the west and the east sides. Shoppers and professional offices relocated, and banks diversified and branched out. In effect, the area was deprived of people, while at the same time there had been an outmigration from the old Polish neighborhood, and a rise in rental occupied properties. Finally, and without much ado, the area was integrated. Spanish was now heard along with the Polish spoken by a decreasing number of older parishioners, and several of the small neighborhood businesses changed ownership.[34]

Parish statistics reflected these changes. During Topor's tenure his assis-

tant, Rev. Stanley Kwasnik, helped organized two new societies in 1960, the Holy Name Society and the Ladies Guild. However, parish membership declined by almost 2,000 from 6,768 in 1959 to 4,900 in 1971. Baptisms declined from a yearly average of 150 under Nalewajk to an average of 91 under Topor. The annual average for marriages similarly declined from 48 to 35, while that for funerals rose from 58 to 65, with a high of 92 in 1970. The only area in which there was an increase was in Confirmations (from 112 to 117 per annum). However, the school population, which remained over 700 until 1965, in the next six years dropped dramatically to 439. It was during the last five years of Topor's pastorate that it became painfully apparent that St. Stanislaus was an aging parish.[35]

Vatican II added to the stress. The changes promulgated by the Council Fathers were intended to renew faith and activate broader participation in the liturgy and in the life of the Church. American Catholics were not ill-disposed to innovation, but the abruptness and the arbitrary manner with which change was introduced into the American Church contradicted the Council's spirit. An English language liturgy was not phased in; rather, Latin was discarded overnight without regard for those whose attachment to tradition would require time to make the transition to the new Church. Churches had to be renovated to accommodate the new liturgy, but the results were not always felicitous.

At St. Stanislaus, it fell to Topor to oversee the changes at a time (1966-1967) when the parish was marking its seventy-fifth anniversary and participating in the state-wide celebration of the Millennium of the Christianization of Poland (1966). Mass was changed from Latin to English and Polish. Topor also arranged to have the church exterior sandblasted and beautified, and then the church was closed for interior renovations while an auxiliary chapel was used for Sunday Mass. The pastor, however, who some perceived as being distant from the congregation, acted on his own, a fact which contributed to the popularity of the approachable Fr. Stephen Ptaszynski, his curate until 1968. Topor reportedly asserted that he had renovated a couple of churches already, and that no one was going to tell him what to do or how to do it.[36] Such an approach to a pastoral ministry did not help to prepare the congregation for the changes that confronted them when the church was reopened. The familiar altar, the painting of Our Lady of Czestochowa, shrines, votive candles, and statues were gone, the latter reportedly buried in the parish cemetery and the altar burned. One commentator remarked that few would say that the redecorated church was not beautiful, but just that it was so different![37] The fact was, however, that there was very considerable shock, anger, and dissatisfaction, all of which did not endear the pastor to his congregation. People had donated money for the statues and the Stations of the Cross, which "meant something to them." Now you could not even tell whether what had been substituted was "a statue or not." In the words of one parishioner: "They've taken the beauty of the ethnic ways that we had before; they've taken the beauty away and they've given us the simple ways. And is that the answer that the old folks want: they don't." Another parishioner commented: "We lost that close feeling [that] you're Polish; [and that] this is our church."[38]

There were other reasons for tension. Fr. Topor dramatically reduced the use of the popular Community Center, justifying the decision on the need to save on heat and maintenance. Finally, and contrary to the dictates of Vatican II, a parish council was formed but never met, creating an issue that began to simmer.[39]

The shock caused by the renovations and changes (some associated with

Vatican II) would subside, but resentment lingered because people had been hurt, and needlessly so. Topor, however, carried on his ministry until his unexpected death while on vacation in Florida on February 19, 1972, the 46th year of his priesthood.

The Rev. Anthony Bomboliski of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartford delivered the eulogy at Topor's funeral. It was a spirited defense of his confrere, an assertion of clerical authority and service, a response to the pastor's critics, and, thereby, a confirmation of the tensions. The eulogist praised Topor as a priest who gloried in the designation "servant of the Lord" and who was meticulous in administration. The deceased pastor was also described as himself dismayed at some aspects of the renewal of the Church. At the same time "his dismay and distress were not of major or arbitrary proportions" a fact attested to by the renovation of the church "so tastefully and gracefully achieved, initiated and supervised by him." In concluding, Bomboliski remembered Topor as "a law-observer more than a law-giver," for he brought God's law to his congregation by word and example.[40]

In an interview in 1968, Topor reflected upon the history and development of Meriden's Polish community, concluding: "I'd say the Polish people have done very well."[41] The community had in fact done well, and the parishioners continued to be generous to their church. However, the post-war changes, especially those of the 1960s, were taking their toll upon both parish and community as St. Stanislaus ended its eighth decade.

[1] See Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "Old and New Polonias: Tensions Within an Ethnic Community", *Polish American Studies*, XXXVIII, No. 2 (1981 Autumn), 55-83; and Bukowczyk, pp. 94-6.

[2] See Morawska, chps. 5-8.

[3] Bukowczyk, p. 96.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 97; *et passim*.

[5] James S. Pula, "The Poles in America", Chapter 7. Forthcoming.

[6] For discussion of these issues as they affected Connecticut, see Janick, pp. 73-103; Roth, pp. 205-14; and Van Dusen, pp. 397-400.

[7] Pula, Chapter 7.

[8] Bukowczyk, p. 109.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

[10] See Chapter Five.

[11] See Pula, Chapter 7.

[12] Bukowczyk, pp. 117-18.

[13] Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics. Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971). See also Andrew M. Greeley, *Why Can't They Be Like Us? America's White Ethnic Groups* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975).

[14] *The Catholic Transcript*, February 26, 1959 and *MMR*, February 25, 1959.

[15] Jaksina, p. 9. In the interim between Ceppa's death and Nalewajk's appointment, the parish was administered by the curate, Rev. John J. Sobolewski. Nalewajk, after Holy Cross, served in Holy Name in Stamford, Sacred Heart in New Britain, Ss. Cyril & Methodius in Hartford, St. Casimir's in Terryville, Holy Cross in New Britain, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New London.

[16] *Annual Reports, 1948-1958*. AAH.

[17] The affiliation was made after giving consideration to the American Legion, the Catholic War Veterans, and the American Veterans group. *Dedication of Polish American Veterans New Home, 189 East Main Street, Meriden, Connecticut. Sunday, May 27, 1951*. There were also posts in Terryville, Wallingford, New Britain, and Torrington. The PLAV was organized in 1923, and may be considered a second-generation organization.

[18] The building contained a shrine built into the front entry so as to be accessible from the street. The limestone carvings on the face depicted symbols of St. Joseph, the Holy Trinity, and the Blessed Virgin. *MMR*, May 25, 1957.

[19] See Blejwas, "The 'Polish Tradition' in Connecticut Politics".

[20] See Chapter Three.

[21] See *Meriden Directory, 1940-1970*.

[22] Parishioners' Interview, April 17, 1991.

[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *The Catholic Transcript*, March 5, 1959.
[26] *MMR*, February 25, 1959.
[27] Topor also served at Sacred Heart Orphanage in New Britain, St. Joseph's in Norwich, and at Holy Cross in New Britain. *MMR*, February 21, 1972.
[28] See above.
[29] Meriden City Planning Board, *General Development Plan*. (Meriden, Connecticut: March, 1959), pp. 3-9.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp 13-5.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
[32] The exclusively technical nature of the 1958 urban renewal study is striking. See *ibid.*
[33] *The Meriden Morning Record and Journal*, August 20, 1977. This was part of a series authored by Penny Blank.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Annual Reports, 1948-1971*, AAH.
[36] Parishioners' Interview, April 17, 1991, and May 10, 1991.
[37] Jaksina, p. 11.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Parishioner Interviews, May 10, 1991.
[40] *MMR*, February 24, 1972.
[41] *MMR*, August 7, 1968.

Rev. Stanislaus Nalewajk
Pastor 1948-1959

Msgr. Henry Dziadosz, a native of St. Stanislaus Parish prepares to celebrate his first Mass. This photo was taken in 1949.

The Guardian Angel Society "Aniol Strozow" march in procession. This photo was taken in 1950.

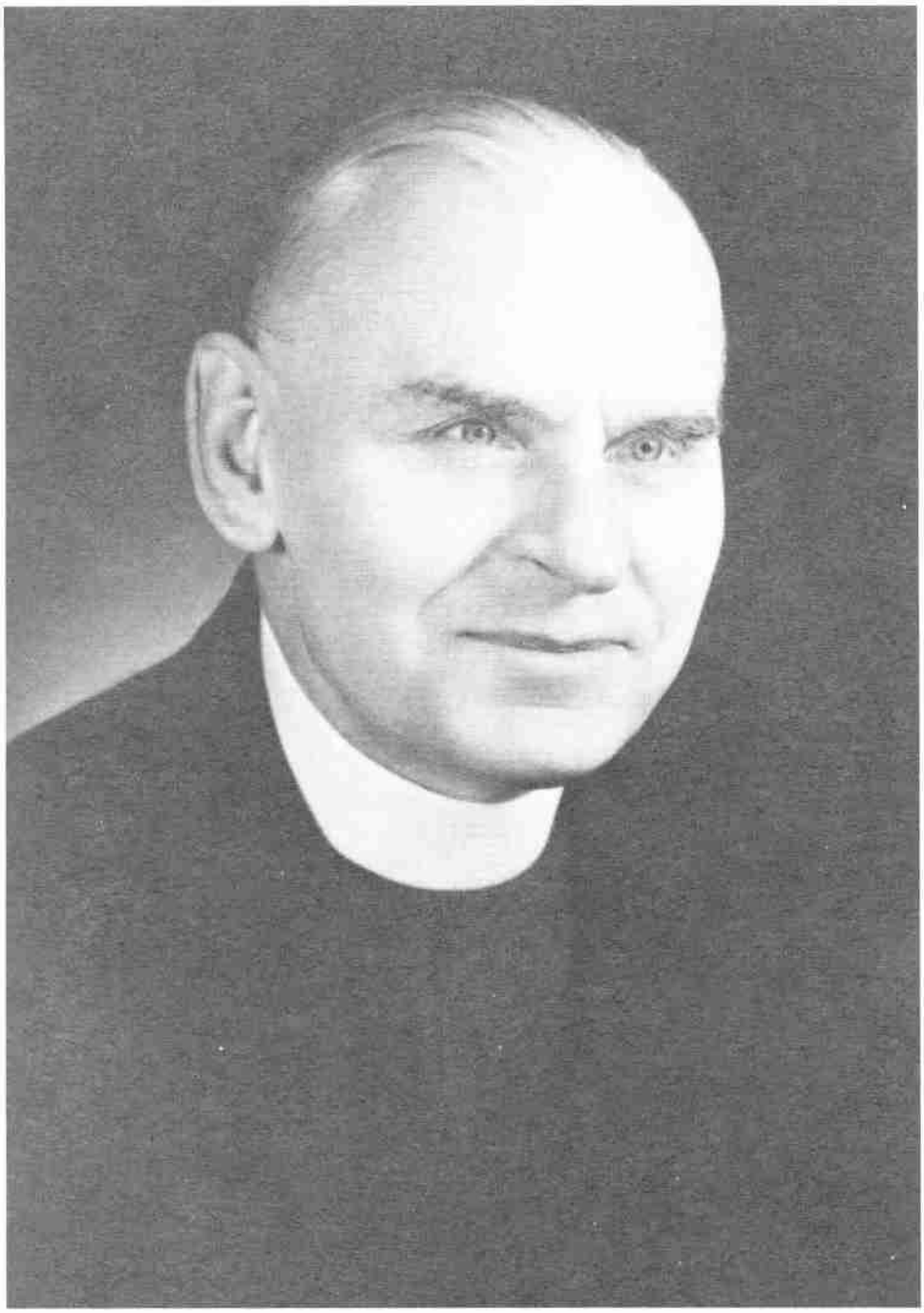
May Crowning May 6, 1951. In the photo above the Children of Mary Sodality form a canopy of lilies for the entrance procession. The photo below shows the church filled to capacity for the ceremonies.

In the photo above, Sophie Mendyka Pelletier is the crowner of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the photo below Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and procession mark the conclusion of the crowning ceremonies. Seen in this picture are Rev. John Rzasa, Rev. Stanislaus Nalewajk-Pastor, Rev. John Sobolewski and Rev. Ladislaus Kaminski.

Dedication of Polish American Veteran's Home May 27, 1951. Pictured left to right, Rev. John Sobolewski, Attorney Joseph Bogdanski, Joseph Klinski, Virginia Stopa, Edward Slisz, Stanley Nessing and Rev. Stanislaus Nalewajk.

Father Nalewajk, John Kreminski and Judge Joseph Bogdanski discuss the fund-raising effort for the new convent.

St. Stanislaus Convent
Dedicated May 26,1957



Rev. William Topor
Pastor, 1959-1972

Chapter Ten
Parish in Crisis

The 1970s, no less than the 1960s, were a painful time for America. During the first years of the decade the war in Vietnam continued, and domestic opposition to American policy escalated. On the domestic side, the wrenching Watergate scandal traumatized the nation. The fragmentation and division of American society, which erupted in the 1960s, appeared to carry over into the new decade. Among White ethnic Americans, there was, according to Msgr. Geno Baroni of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, confusion, fear, and alienation because the social rhetoric of the time belittled and attacked the middle income groups as bigots or racists. Despite the melting pot which immigrants and their children embraced, America remained a cultural, racial, and ethnically pluralistic country, where the descendants of the immigrants were beginning to redefine themselves.[1] Public controversy also became an increasingly frequent phenomenon in the lives of American Catholics as they began to debate American involvement in Vietnam and as their Church and they experimented in implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Change at St. Stanislaus provoked the parish's greatest crisis since the pioneer days of Klawiter and Misicki.[2] Once again, the heart of the matter, in an altered context, was the laypersons' role and voice in the administration of a Roman Catholic parish, in this case, the determination of both the nature of the pastorate and the person of the pastor. The problems arose following the death of Father Topor when a successor was to be named. Shortly after Topor's death, some 20 parishioners titling themselves "The Concerned Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish" approached Hartford Archbishop John Francis Whealon. Under the leadership of John Gaj, a school teacher and former seminarian, the group advanced the candidacy of Rev. Stephen F. Ptaszynski. Ptaszynski, who had served twice previously at St. Stanislaus (9 months in 1945 and 1946 immediately after ordination, and for 13 years from 1955 to 1968), counted many friends among the parishioners, and was eager to return to the parish. In a well-organized effort by his supporters, 1,600 signatures were collected on a petition urging his nomination as pastor.[3] Whealon, however, after consultations with parish priests and parishioners, decided to appoint a pastoral team ministry of three priests, each appointed as co-pastor, in place of the traditional single pastor.

This new form of pastoral care was introduced in the Hartford Archdiocese in 1970 on a five year experimental basis. The decision was in part a response to Vatican II, which called for prudent structural changes in areas advantageous "for the good of souls", although the bishop's ultimate authority in implementing such changes was asserted in a papal decree on August 6, 1966. The decision was also a response to a detailed sociological study by professors Douglas T. Hall and Benjamin Schneider of Yale University, which revealed that assistant pastors or curates were frequently dissatisfied with their pastoral duties. A final factor behind the diocesan decision to experiment with the team ministry was a study by the Archdiocesan Preliminary Personnel Board which concluded that while the role of the priest in a Christian community was essentially one of leadership, in actual practice the curate or assistant pastor enjoyed little of this authority or of the responsibility of priestly leadership.[4]

As an alternate form of pastoral care, the team ministry was a radical, if not revolutionary restructuring of traditional parish administration, a restructuring that was also to be accompanied by the creation of parish councils which were to encourage greater lay participation in parish life. The team ministry involved the voluntary sharing of authority and responsibility by the priests assigned to a parish. Such a pastoral team, formed by mutual consent, jointly planned their ministry and established their areas of individual responsibility. The equal sharing of authority is what distinguished the team ministry from the traditional pastorate, although, to satisfy the demands of civil and ecclesiastical law, one priest was appointed parish administrator after being selected by the priests making up the team ministry.[5] Finally, Archbishop Whealon played a major role in the determination of a team ministry, interviewing the parish priests and lay leaders to determine whether the parish would benefit most from team leadership or the traditional parish structure.[6]

The team ministry had been successfully introduced into seventeen Archdiocesan parishes.[7] However, the introduction of a team ministry at St. Stanislaus was the first time it was to be tried in a Polish parish. As one source masterfully put it in a classic understatement, the appointment of "the First Team Ministry to the oldest Polish parish in Connecticut was an experience for both priests and people."[8] The team appointed in June, 1972, consisted of Ptaszynski, pastor of St. Monica Church in Northford; Rev. Peter S. Sobiecki, an assistant pastor at St. Stanislaus parish in Bristol; and Rev. George F. Ziezulewicz, a faculty member at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in New Britain. Ptaszynski was selected by the appointed co-pastors to be the administrator.[9]

There was both support for and reservations among the priests and parishioners about the team ministry, points which surfaced during Whealon's consultations. The Association of the Polish Priests of Connecticut voted their approval of the concept, although concern was voiced that parishioners in Polish parishes did not understand that their priests supported the concept, nor did they know about the problems of pastor - assistant pastor relations within a given the rectory. The concept would have to be explained to parishioners, and the proper personnel assembled for a team.[10] These concerns seemed justified, for at a meeting with parish leaders, most, but not all, expressed a preference for a single pastor. As one participant noted: "I can't see three bosses."[11] Everyone agreed, however, that the priests assigned to the parish should be Polish-speaking, for St. Stanislaus serves "the Polish community of Meriden." The strength of this parish of 2,050 families consisted of "the loyalty of this very large congregation and their fidelity to the reception of

the sacraments."[12] The events that followed severely tested that loyalty.

The reception of the team ministry was in fact enthusiastic. More than 2,000 parishioners turned out to welcome the new team at a July reception in the Community Center Hall on a hot Sunday afternoon. During the Summer and the Fall, the co-pastors focused their attention to the liturgy "to enhance the beauty of the Divine Liturgy", introducing new rites for Baptism, Marriage, and Christian burial. Necessary building repairs were undertaken, religious education was re-invigorated, the CYO program for high school students expanded, and adult religious discussion groups organized.[13] CYO membership increased from 20 to 125; a folk mass was introduced, and, "to preserve the ethnic culture and traditions within the parish, Polish language classes" were restored.[14]

While the reinvigoration of parish life was undeniable, it was also clear that the success of the team ministry was dependent upon the ability of the co-pastors "to harmonize their individual talents and adapt to their distinct personalities." It was soon apparent to the co-pastors, as one account of the events noted, that they could not provide "effective pastoral care because of the co-pastors' inability to operate as a team."[15] One member of the team seemed to be in charge. According to Sobiecki, the impression in the parish was that "the oldest man (in this case Father Ptaszynski) is automatically the 'pastor'", a misconception that Sobiecki believed that Ptaszynski could have done more to clarify. Parishioners told Sobiecki that they knew it was a team ministry, but "Father Steve is the boss."[16] Furthermore, two members of the team, Ptaszynski and Ziezulewicz, found themselves in disagreement, and Ziezulewicz filed a grievance with the Diocesan Personnel Board in the Fall of 1972. The entire matter culminated in March, 1973, when Whealon dissolved the team.

The matter at this point appeared relatively simple. Personality differences and conflicting ambitions contributed to the break up of the team. The question facing the Archbishop was whether to appoint a new team (for the experiment was too short to determine the viability of the team ministry concept), or to return to the traditional pastorate. Whealon again consulted with parishioners and the co-pastors. Two of the co-pastors, Ziezulewicz and Sobiecki, remained committed to the team ministry concept, and to a team ministry at St. Stanislaus. There were also parishioners who believed that "the parish has been revitalized spiritually, morally, socially, physically, and financially as a result of the co-pastorship."[17] Others, however, held contrary opinions. Parishioners consulted previously were re-consulted, and some who earlier supported the single pastor concept, continued to do so. Now, however, they boomed Ptaszynski's candidacy. As one trustee said: "Fr. Steve was there for 13 years - the people consider him as pastor."[18] The matter was further complicated at a meeting of the Meriden Council of Polish Organizations. Ptaszynski, the organization's chaplain, when asked about the internal differences between the co-pastors at a February Council meeting, publicly presented his version of events. This, in the view of supporters of the team ministry concept, was one-sided, and provoked "vicious, unfounded and extremely damaging" rumors about Ziezulewicz and Sobiecki. Furthermore, it led the Council to send a letter to Whealon endorsing the pastor-curate ministry and Ptaszynski as the prime candidate for the pastorship.[19] The parish was thus splitting into two factions, those supporting the team ministry, and those favoring both the traditional pastor-curate ministry and making Ptaszynski pastor.

The emerging split confronted Whealon with the need to make a Solomon-like decision. The Archbishop concluded, after his consultations, to appoint either

a three-man team or a pastor and two assistants, and the vacancy announcement went out once again to the priests of the Archdiocese. In the meantime, Ziezulewicz remained at St. Stanislaus until he received an official letter of transfer of assignment from Whealon, posting him to Holy Cross Parish in New Britain on temporary assignment. Sobiecki also remained on the job until ordered off by his physician, and with Whealon's approval. At the same time, Ptaszynski supporters began circulating a petition advocating his appointment, eventually claiming 2,500 signatures. This move was contrary to Archdiocesan regulations, but was nevertheless reminiscent of the congregational spirit of earlier disputes between Polish immigrants and the Irish bishops.[20] Critics of those gathering signatures claimed that non-parishioners of Polish extraction were being asked to sign, that older people were asked to sign for their children and grandchildren, that the petition appeared in the school and among the altar boys, and that some complained that their names appeared on the petition contrary to their wishes. [21]

It was in this increasingly acrimonious atmosphere that Whealon announced on April 13, 1973, effective April 26, the appointment of a new team ministry to St. Stanislaus: Sobiecki from the first team, and two new members, Frs. Theophil T. Mierzwinski and Edward S. Jaksina.[22] Mierzwinski was elected administrator. Ptaszynski, although he applied for the pastoral vacancy, was not recommended, and for the interim was unassigned until appointed a "priest in residence" at St. John Vianney in West Haven.[23]

The appointment of the new team was accepted "with mixed emotions."[24] In fact, the decision to appoint a new team and Ptaszynski's transfer from St. Stanislaus, moves intended to resolve the dispute, ignited instead a fierce crisis that would take three years to run its course. And the stakes were high, for the dispute involved "a fundamental Church law concerning the authority of a bishop to govern and appoint in the jurisdiction entrusted to him by the Church."[25] Conversely, the issue was the extent of congregational involvement in determining the administration of a Roman Catholic parish.

When Whealon's decision was announced, Ptaszynski later maintained: "I resigned myself to the decision" and that before departing "personally appealed to the parishioners not to make any further efforts on my behalf."[26] Ptaszynski's supporters, however, were already moving into action. In mid-April a broadside was circulated by a group calling itself "Concerned Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish" protesting the departure of Ptaszynski. Citing the 2,500 parishioners who signed the petition requesting Ptaszynski's appointment as pastor, the group claimed "most of the parishioners have worked tirelessly to have Fr. Steve as their pastor because of his able leadership, concern for all the people and his desire to do the work of God." Seeking an interview with Whealon, the Concerned Parishioners" wanted to know why their views were not taken into consideration, and quoted the Archbishop when he was appointed to Hartford in 1969 to the effect that the diocese does not belong to him, or the parish or the pastor, "but rather to the people of God." And unable to obtain an interview, the Concerned Parishioners sought to pressure the Archbishop to listen to them by recommending the following measures: a 10 cents maximum weekly donation to the parish; no donations for flowers for Easter; the immediate resignation of all volunteer workers; the retention by all parish societies of their treasuries; the silent observance of Easter with no singing in church; and the immediate formation of a parish council consisting of "responsible parishioners."[27]

The actions proposed by the Concerned Parishioners were drastic, and they provoked a counter-broadside by supporters of the team ministry and Sobiecki, and the interest of the local media. The deepening split was reflected by a group calling itself the "Most Devoted Parishioners of Holy Mother Church and St. Stanislaus Parish." They endorsed the changes of Vatican II, and opposed "boycotts - obscenities - childish tantrums - refusals to participate in the Divine Worship - and meetings - and committees reminiscent of schismatical groups long ago."[28] As for the Concerned Parishioners, their efforts to obtain a meeting with Whealon were unsuccessful, and sometimes abrupt, as when the Archbishop was invited with only two days notice to address a meeting scheduled for May 6. Whealon, on the other hand, while grateful for "the interest in the parish and in the welfare of Father Stephen Ptaszynski", held that the decision to name a team ministry was made "on the basis of what was best for the parish and with full concern for the good of all priests concerned." From the Archdiocese's point of view, reversing the appointment was, for canonical reasons, impossible and not open to discussion.[29]

Both sides dug in. Apparently stung by the charges of schism, the Concerned Parishioners changed their names to the "Loyal Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish", which was formally established at a large public meeting on May 6, 1973 at the Knights of Columbus Hall.[30] The new group named Atty. William Shea, a former Meriden mayor, to represent them; vowed to continue their efforts for Ptaszynski's recall, hopefully by meetings with Whealon and the Archdiocesan Personnel Board; and voted to continue their boycott "until the injustice that has been done to our parish and Father Steve" was rectified.[31]

The Chancery's determination was uncompromising, and at times provocatively so. An unidentified Archdiocesan spokesman pronounced the matter a closed issue. In words tantamount to baiting, the official declared: "We expect there's a minority of people kicking up a fuss, but they'll cool off after awhile. When the parishioners see how good the new priests are, they'll forget about Father Ptaszynski."[32] The Archdiocesean Chancellor, Msgr. William Mullen, declared the assignments set and "that's the way it is." And as for the boycott, Mullen just shrugged "It's their parish."[33]

However, neither side could remain indifferent, nor was it in their interest for the dispute to continue. A meeting did take place between Whealon and representatives of the LPs on May 22. From the point of views of the Loyal Parishioners, the meeting was "unsuccessful", for the delegation (John Gaj, George Falis, Janice Gaj, Valetine Czapiga, and Richard Weronik) failed to change Whealon's mind. As the local paper reported, the Loyal Parishioners "ran into a stern roadblock."[34] Whealon insisted that no injustice had been done to any of the priests involved. Upholding episcopal authority, he wrote subsequently to Gaj that "The only Catholic Christian response in the face of a difficulty such as this is to be loyal to the priests of your parish and to your Archbishop, to pray for them and to encourage them."[35] Gaj, however, in advocating Ptaszynski's cause, held that parishioners' views should be taken into consideration in naming pastors, asking parenthetically: "What are the rights of the parishioners?"[36] And according to the flyer that the Loyal Parishioners circulated about their meeting with Whealon, the Archbishop asserted that the church is not a democracy, and that it was not for laypersons "to judge their priests."[37]

The issue was congregational versus episcopal authority. Unsuccessful with Whealon, the Loyal Parishioners attempted to take their grievances further up

the episcopal ladder. Appealing to their common ethnicity, the Loyal Parishioners asked John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia for a meeting. Krol declined to involve himself in an area outside of his competence, but promised to share the concerns of the Loyal Parishioners with Whealon. While believing that the Loyal Parishioners were probably well intentioned, the first Polish American cardinal did not subscribe to what he saw as congregationalism.[38] Failing to enlist Krol, the Loyal Parishioners next pressed their case with the acting Apostolic Delegate in Washington, Msgr. Francis De Nittis. In outlining their version of events, Gaj and Falis claimed that "Another sad result of the Archbishop's refusal to consider our request is the loss of some of our parishioners to the national church", a statment suggesting that schism was still a threat. This was relevant within the context of the major argument that the Loyal Parishioners were advancing. They held that "the parish exists solely for the good of souls", and that "pastors should enjoy in their respective parishes that stability which the good of souls demands." Thus they objected to the rules governing the team ministry, an "admittedly experimental system", which led in their view to Ptaszynski's arbitrary departure. And unless the questions were solved, it was predicted that St. Stanislaus "will never be the parish it once was, and in fact may no longer be a parish at all."[39]

The parish was in deep crisis, but the office of the Apostolic Delegate upheld Whealon. De Nittis responded to Gaj and Falis by invoking Vatican II, reminding the Loyal Parishioners that "With ready Christian obedience, laymen as well as disciples of Christ should accept whatever their sacred pastors, as representatives of Christ, decree in their roles as teachers and rulers in the Church."[40] Frustrated by the Apostolic Delegate, it was subsequently reported that the Loyal Parishioners then presented their case to Rome, but with no visible effect.

The Loyal Parishioners were unprepared to be obedient until their demands were met, while the team was committed to fulfilling its ministry and to upholding "the principle of authority in the Catholic Church."[41] The co-pastors, in a weekly parish bulletin in August, 1973, informed everyone that "this pastoral team is here to stay" and invited everyone "to accept this fact with humble Christian realism."[42] This statement, in the polarized atmosphere within the parish, mirrored the breakdown of relations between the Loyal Parishioners and the team. A previous reconciliation meeting on July 1, had deteriorated into a discussion about the personal relations between the members of the first team, and was abruptly terminated by one of the co-pastors while Gaj was speaking.[43] The Loyal Parishioners, on the other hand, acting on a vote taken at the May 6th meeting, attempted to assert their authority "to represent the parishioners."[44] The team responded by publicly questioning the size of the Loyal Parishioners, and by belittling them. A verse from Timothy (4:1-5) was invoked by the team to describe their critics: "For there will come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine: but having itching ears, will heap up to themselves teachers according to their own desires, and they will turn away their hearing from truth and turn aside rather to fables."[45] And the Loyal Parishioners, without access to the pulpit or the parish bulletin, began to place in the Friday and Saturday editions of the Meriden *Record* and *Journal* paid ads.

The ads aired the Loyal Parishioners' demands and grievances and urged solidarity with the financial boycott. However, they also castigated the team and the Archbishop in language that a clerical critic considered "vulgar and undignified" and "much to the discomfort and disedification of readers."[46] One ad emotionally asserted that bishops "should not be shoved down the throat of our people",

and suggested that Whealon did not have the interests of his flock at heart. Another retorted that the parish was not Whealon's "feudal fiefdom" while yet another charged that the new team "did not take into consideration the COMMON GOOD of the parish."[47]

Both sides claimed to have the parish's common good at heart, but the acrimony affected every area of parish life. With the approach of the new school year, critics of the Loyal Parishioners charged them with wanting to close the school, ruining the church, and with wanting to build a new church, a charge that they heatedly denied.[48] In December, 1973, the team oversaw the election of a Parish Council, which was mandatory for all archdiocesean parishes.[49] The Loyal Parishioners responded with charges that only those parishioners who had signed a "loyalty pledge" to the Co-Pastors" were placed on the ballots; that names were cleared by a secret screening committee; and that ballots had to be signed, the result of all of which "only about 470 parishioners" out of 3,000 cast ballots.[50] Thus the Loyal Parishioners questioned the lay center of parish authority endorsed by the team ministry as an affirmation of its authority. The Loyal Parishioners also charged that they were victims of bomb threats, and complained of pressure tactics from the co-pastors, that some children at the school were threatened, that some of their children were being charged additional tuition fees in the parish school because of the boycott, that a relative of John Gaj was singled out for dismissal from his job as sexton, and that the 1973 parish books were adjusted to reduce the size of the parish deficit.[51]

The dispute continued on into and through 1974. The co-pastors were convinced that the situation was aggravated by some "outside priests" who are "opposed to the team ministry idea." According to Jaksina, these priests "have egged the dissidents on, telling them that the priests are on their side and if they keep up the fight, the Archbishop will have to give in."[52] One team member expressed the view that the fundamental issue was the right of episcopal appointment, which was being challenged by the machinations of lesser clergy and "the controlled outcry of the 'proletariat'."[53]

Still, there were what might be very loosely described as tentative peace feelers from the Loyal Parishioners to the Archdiocese. It was clear, however, that their fundamental positions remained unchanged. Thus there was no response from the Archdiocese, which was concerned that a response might, against its intentions, escalate the situation.[54] And this concern was justified.

The effect of the Loyal Parishioners' economic boycott and call for a boycott by volunteer workers were the subject of intensely conflicting opinions. The Loyal Parishioners maintained that the economic boycott was indeed hurting, and at the bottom of their ads included an appeal to "Continue Boycott To Assure Our Success."[55] Mierzwinski admitted that the impact of both boycotts "was rough." Financially, an estimated $400 to $1,000 a week was being lost, while the priest celebrating Mass had to take up the collection. The team, however, claimed that both boycotts rapidly lost their initial impact, and with satisfaction noted that there were more volunteers by early 1975 than when the first team was in place.[56] By the summer of 1974, the co-pastors were confident enough in the strength of their position to issue a letter addressing the financial boycott's impact, and to lecture what they labelled "the group with the problem."

Addressing "the ill-advised leaders of the rebellion against Church authority", and citing comparative financial figures for January-June 1973 and 1974 (which in

fact confirmed an increase in revenues beginning in March, 1974), the co-pastors wrote: "THE SIMPLE TRUTH is that the true parishioners support the Church and follow Christ's teachers. In the words of the Gospel they are 'growing rich in the sight of God'."[57]

After suggesting that the Loyal Parishioners were "not in the sight of God", the co-pastors compared the "group with the problem" to family members who were not shouldering their financial burden. They then announced a series of what might be described as punitive measures: non-supporting parishioners would be expected to make a contribution for requested parish services; they would receive on a statement that they attended Mass in response to requests for baptismal, confirmation, and wedding certificates; and boycotters would not receive parish envelopes for 1975 unless they made up for the 1974 non-support or personally requested the envelopes along with a $20 deposit. Trying to take the moral high road, the co-pastors promised that all would continue to receive their spiritual administrations without prejudice. No one was to be ejected from the parish, "unlike the group that has the one fixed purpose of ejecting us." And the justification for all this was the "fundamental realization: If religious authority comes from above, from properly ordained successors of Christ, then the Church is a Family of God. If religious authority comes from below, from the people, then the Church is no family. It is a debating assembly at best and an unbelieving commune at worst."[58]

The co-pastors' letter was harsh and uncompromising, and, in the context of the crisis, undiplomatic.[59] It was forwarded by Thomas J. Draus, Chairman of the Loyal Parishioners, to Whealon, together with a letter complaining that his group for months has been subjected to comments in the parish bulletin and ridiculed from the pulpit.[60] He denied that his group was leading a rebellion, and noted: "If we wanted to be ex-parishioners we would have accepted the invitation of Archbishop Edward C. Payne of Hartford who called me ... and offered help." The co-pastors' letter was no attempt to heal wounds, and Draus defended the ad campaign as "the only way we can communicate with our Co-Pastors." However, he urged a return to a single pastor ministry and "a Pastor who will be gifted with a deep understanding of our needs."[61]

For Whealon, the Co-pastors' letter and Draus', despite its adherence to the Loyal Parishioners' key demand, presented an opportunity to find a way out of the dispute. The August 4 letter went against his directive to the team to take no public notice of the boycott, preach Jesus Christ and charity to all, and to let the protesting group protest without reacting.[62] After consulting with a member of the team, the Archbishop wrote to Draus, expressing his concern that the situation had escalated to a new level of name-calling by which "the good name of Christianity, of the Catholic faith and of the parish is being openly disparaged." In his view, the root of this "scandal before the community" was a lack of Christian charity, and not the personnel and financial questions. He therefore ordered the co-pastors to refrain from all public mention of the dissident group and to preach and write exclusively "of the Gospel of charity and forgiveness of Jesus Christ crucified, no matter what the provocations may be to write or speak otherwise." In turn, he called upon the Loyal Parishioners "also to follow the Gospel of Jesus Christ and demonstrate, publicly and privately, the charity and forgiveness that the Lord exemplified. While admitting "to not understanding your grievance", he urged the dissenting group to take their complaint to the Archdiocesan Board of Conciliation and Arbitration if it is a matter of justice, and, if not, to resolve it in accord with the Gospel.[63]

Whether one sides with the Loyal Parishioners or with the Archbishop, one cannot deny Whealon the credit for retaking the initiative in attempting to lay the groundwork to resolve what had become a very painful public controversy. The Archbishop brought the prestige of his office into the dispute. It remained now for the Loyal Parishioners to respond.

The olive branch, however, was rejected. Not only did the ads continue; a particularly harsh ad appeared in October, 1974 accusing Sobiecki and Ziezulewicz of betraying the parishioners' trust and of being unworthy of their calling, and the co-pastors and Whealon of being hypocrites. Specifically, Ziezulewicz was accused of just packing up his bags and leaving the parish "as if he had no responsibility to the Parishioners." Sobiecki was accused of feigning illness and leaving the parish during Holy Week, and both were accused of gallivanting about "God only knows where." Sobiecki, furthermore, was accused of being instrumental in Ptaszynski's removal.[64] Whether the ads were the result of absentmindedness or of malice aforethought, they maligned and libelled Ziezulewicz and Sobiecki. After consulting with the Archdiocesan attorney, Whealon granted permission to Sobiecki and Ziezulewicz to sue for libel "as a last resort and with reluctance." He added: "I hope and pray that this entire matter will be swiftly settled and then completely laid to rest, so that the parish priests can go about their work together without harassment and so that all parishioners - including the Loyal Parishioners - can work together in harmony for a stronger, more spiritual, more united parish."[65]

The libel suit named as defendants the two Meriden newspapers and the officers of the Loyal Parishioners (Draus, Cutler, John J. Katuzney, John Gaj, and Theodore Mielcarz), demanding retractions from both parties. The newspapers printed a retraction, and a suit was not brought against them.[66] The Loyal Parishioners, counselled by Atty. Shea, remained unmoved. At an open meeting on December 8, 1974 at the Knights of Columbus Hall, by a vote of 370-7, the Loyal Parishioners voted to sign petitions stating that they are willing to be co-defendants in the threatened libel suit. According to Shea, the threatened suit by Atty. Joseph P. Cooney, who represented the Archdiocese and who was representing Sobiecki and Ziezulewicz in this case, was "a tactic being used by Mr. Cooney to silence the group."[67] Quoted in the press as giving "you my best advice", Shea advocated that all Loyal Parishioners sign the petition and "stand up and be counted in the courtroom." And in an emotional meeting, most present followed his advice.

There were, however, some faint signs of a softening of the position of the Loyal Parishioners. Draus was quoted in the press as willing to accept either a pastor-curate or team ministry. While still wanting a change in pastors, he claimed that the Loyal Parishioners wanted to "make a fresh start."[68] The hint was but the faintest, for in January the group placed ads calling for a referendum, with supervised balloting, to determine whether the parishioners wanted a pastor or team ministry pastorate.[69] This compromise, however, was in fact contrary to Canon Law, for a popularly elected pastor would not hold office by virtue of episcopal appointment, but by congregational ballot. Thus while a referendum was democratic and might allow the parishioners to express their opinion as well as serve as a basis for a dialogue to reunify the parish factions, it challenged the manner in which the Roman Catholic Church was organized.

The Loyal Parishioners still refused to retract, and a $50,000 libel suit was filed against their officers. It was, according to Atty. Cooney, the first time in the Archdiocese's modern history that such a legal action was taken, and the suit attracted

considerable media interest.[70] The filing of the suit appeared to have an effect. The ads ceased. The matter, however, dragged on for another year, during which time it appeared that the Loyal Parishioners were losing both members and financial support. It was estimated that 10% of the 3,800 adult parishioners belonged to the Loyal Parishioners in the Spring of 1975, a far cry from earlier claims of 1,500 or more.

Finally, the dispute came to an end. In 1976 the Loyal Parishioners agreed to cease as an organization and to publish an apology in the Meriden newspapers. The apology acknowledged that statements were made on both sides "in anger and sometimes without full understanding of all facts or the positions of others" and they expressed sorrow at the hurt that resulted to many. "The time has come for peace" and they believed that it was "our Christian duty to ask for the forgiveness of our trespasses as we forgive the trespass of others." Gratefully acknowledging the withdrawal of the suit by Sobiecki and Ziezulewicz, they called upon all parishioners "to look on their fellow parishioners as brothers and sisters in Christ" and "to renew our faith in Christ and in one another and that our acts should stand as a demonstration of the 'good news'."[71] This, in turn, was acknowledged in the *Sunday Bulletin* by the Co-pastors, who: "as your fathers in Christ, again recommend to all our parishioners, as sons and daughters in Christ, the prayer and attitude of St. Francis, which embodies the good news of the Christ - LORD, make me an instrument of your peace; Where there is hatred, let me sow Love; Where there is injury, Pardon."[72]

After three years of acrimony, which on more than one occasion resulted in parishioners refusing to share with each other the sign of peace as these two hostile sides shared the same church and sacraments, one asked "What was it all about?" What was at issue in this dispute which deeply pained parishioners on both sides and which many believed embarrassed both the parish and Meriden's Polish community?

In some respects, the conflict was reminiscent of those between episcopal authority and the congregational spirit that manifested itself in Polish parishes during the immigrant years. "Independentism", as it was then called, was the immigrant's demand to retain ownership of parish property and to exercise a voice in the selection of pastors and curates. When taken to its logical extension, it culminated in the organization of the Polish National Catholic Church, the only successful schismatic movement in the history of American Catholicism. In Connecticut at least 9 PNCC parishes were organized, including St. Casimir's in nearby Wallingford.[73]

The threat of schism was raised in the St. Stanislaus crisis, but as a tactical threat and not as a matter of theological conviction.[74] The Concerned Parishioners were deeply attached to their parish, and early in the dispute, changed their name to the Loyal Parishioners, a clear indication that schism was not the issue. The issue, however, was episcopal authority versus the wishes of a large body of parishioners who objected to a new form of pastoral ministry. The more fundamental issue, however, the heart of the matter, was that these parishioners were angered that their well-liked candidate, Ptaszynski, was not appointed pastor. They accepted Ptaszynski as part of a team ministry, but when the team broke up, it was Ptaszynski's departure from the parish which brought his supporters to challenge episcopal authority. The pastoral appointments after Ceppa's demise were never questioned. In this case, however, the popular Ptaszynski became the issue. And when he departed soon after the controversy ignited, urging his supporters to accept the situation, outside priests helped keep the issue alive and to prolong the crisis unnecessarily.

[1] *The Catholic Transcript*, March 10, 1972.

[2] See Chapter Two.

[3] Dan Foskett, "Appointments of Priest are Key to Dispute in Meriden", *The Catholic Transcript*, April 11, 1975. Hereafter Foskett.

[4] Edward S. Jaksina, Theophil T. Mierzwinski, and Peter S. Sobiecki, "The Story of Saint Stanislaus in Meriden, Connecticut [1891-1976]," in *St. Stanislaus RC Church 1881-1976* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1976), p. 12. This 85th anniversary booklet was authored by the second team ministry. Hereafter, Jaksina.

[5] Jaksina, p. 12.

[6] *The Catholic Transcript*, February 18, 1972.

[7] *Ibid*. Rev. Daniel Johnson, Vicar for Priests, was responsible for the program. He was aided by an advisory board which included Msgr. John P. Wodarski and Revs. Richard J. Toner, Douglas A. Morrison, Benjamin A.D'Aprile, and Charles J Mac Donald.

[8] Jaksina, p. 13.

[9] *The Catholic Transcript*, June 2, 1972. Ptaszynski, born on July 8, 1918, attended St. Stanislaus School in Bristol. He was ordained after study at St. Thomas [Bloomfield, Ct.] and St. Bernard [Rochester, NY] seminaries on March 17, 1945. Sobiecki, a native of New Britain, was ordained in 1966. Previously he was an assistant pastor at Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Hartford, and at St. Stanislaus in Bristol. Ziezulewicz, a native of Holy Cross Parish in New Britain, was ordained in 1964. Another team [Revs. Theophil Mierzwinski, Edward Jaksina, and Paul Wysocki] also applied for the vacancy.

[10] AAH: SSF. Undated notes. The parish profile (St. Stanislaus' is dated May 5, 1972), was the document circulated to all Archdiocesan priests announcing a parish vacancy, and inviting interested priests to submit their applications and their plans for administering the parish.

[11] Those participating included Tom Draus, Martin Sobolewski, trustees Ben Cwiekowski and John Kreminski, Stasia Karsmarski from the School, Helen Gansecki from the Council, and Mary Curylo, President of the Ladies Guild. AAH:SSF. Undated notes.

[12] "A Profile of St. Stanislaus Parish, Meriden". AAH:SSF.

[13] Jaksina, p. 13.

[14] Loretta Cherniak, Mary Jane Hepp, Leona Janz, Michael Laverty, Mr. and Mrs John Marut, Mr. and Mrs. David Szymaszek, Patricia Stempien, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Wanat, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Zwirko to Archbishop John F. Whealon, February 21, 1973. From the scrapbook of Mr. David Szymaszek. Hereafter, Szymaszek File.

[15] Jaksina, p. 13.

[16] Foskett.

[17] Cherniak *et al*., to Whealon, February 21, 1973. Szymaszek File.

[18] "St. Stanislaus, Meriden. 2-16-73." AAH:SSF.

[19] David R. Szymaszek, Richard V. Zwirko, and John A Marut to Rev. Daniel E. Johnson, March 1, 1973. Rev. Johnson was Vicar For Priests, and had met with these individuals earlier.

[20] See Chapters 2 and 3.

[21] Szymaszek *et al*., to Johnson, March 21, 1973. Szymaszek File.

[22] Mierzwinski, a Torrington native, was on the staff of St. Thomas Seminary, where he had served as a faculty member and librarian since 1948, the year of his ordination. He had also served as chaplain at the motherhouse of the Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception and at St. Lucien's Home in New Britain. Jaksina, a native of New Britain, was ordained in 1955. He was an assistant pastor at St. Justin's in Hartford, and prior to that at St. Adalbert's in Thompsonville, St. Agnes in Woodmont, Ss. Peter and Paul in Wallingford, and St. Mary's in Torrington, where he served on the town's Human Relations Commission. *The Catholic Transcript*, April 13, 1973.

[23] *MMR*, July 20, 1973, and Gaj to *MMR*, July 25, 1973, explaining that "in residence" was only a temporary assignment and declaring that the LPs were continuing to fight for Ptaszynski's return to St. Stanislaus.

[24] Jaksina, p. 13.

[25] Foskett.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] "Dear Fellow Parishioners [4/12/1973]." Szymaszek File, p. 10. This letter was mailed to 3,500 parishioners. *MMR*, April 14, 1973.

[28] "To Our Devoted Parishioners" [April, 1973 - ?]. Szymaszek File, p. 11. See also *MMR*, April 14, 1973. The schismatic group referred to was the Polish National Catholic Church. See Chapter 2.

[29] Whealon to John Gaj, April 16, 1973; Gaj to Whealon, May 2, 1973; Gaj and George E. Falis to Whealon, May 10, 1973; and Msgr. William J. Mullen to Gaj, May 11, 1973. AAH:SSF

[30] Members included: Ted Mielcarz, Charles Machnik, Chester Gromala, Frank Kogut Sr., Walter Liber, John Krystock, Helen Zwolinski, Mary Curylo, Janice Gaj, Stacia Cylkowski, Helen Zygmont, Marion Bukowski, Valentine Czapiga, and Ann Cutler

[31] *MMR*, May 7, 1973. "Dear Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish", Szymaszek File. It was reported that 1,200 crowded into the meeting. While the meeting was jammed, the KofC Hall legally held 400. [John P. Wodarski], "Sobiecki & Ziezulewicz vs Loyal Parishioners, 18 February, 1975, Review of Case." Association of Polish Priests in Connecticut Papers, Loyal Parishioners File, CPAAMC. Hereafter [Wodarski].

[32] *MMR*, May 5, 1973.

[33] *MDJ*, May 7, 1973. These quotes were cited with astonishment by the adult supervisor of the CYO Program in a letter to Whealon. Weronik, upset with he way in which "the affair had been handled" and with Whealon's refusal to meet with the parish's "duly elected representatives", resigned his function and joined the boycott. Richard M. Weronik to Whealon, May 10, 1973. Mullen made no excuses for his remarks. Mullen to Weronik, May 24, 1973, AAH:SSF.

[34] *MDJ* and *MMR* , May 23, 1973

[35] Whealon to Gaj, May 24, 1973. AAH:SSF. Whealon was also appalled at the negative interpretation placed upon considered and considerate decisions, as evidenced by some letters that he received. A number of the participants in the dispute on all sides were recipients of anonymous, and, in some cases, intimidating letters. For such letters see AAH:SSF, [Wodarski], and Szymaszek File.

[36] Gaj to Whealon, June 4, 1973. AAH:SSF.

[37] "To the Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish..." [Undated]. Szymaszek File, pp. 19-20. The LPs also claimed that Whealon took exception when they objected to being used as "guinea pigs" in another experiment with a second team ministry. *Ibid.*

[38] Gaj and Falis to John Cardinal Krol, May 31, 1973; Krol to Gaj, June 5, 1973; and Krol to Whealon, June 5, 1973, AAH:SSF.

[39] Gaj and Falis to Most Reverend Jean Jadot, June 6, 1973. Szymaszek File, pp. 15-17.

[40] De Nittis to Gaj and Falis, June 7, 1973. Whealon appreciated De Nittis' "perceptive answer". Whealon to De Nittis, June 12, 1973. AAH:SSF.

[41] Jaksina, p. 13.

[42] Parish bulletin, [VIII/5/73]. Szymaszek File, p. 25.

[43] *MDJ* , July 20, 1973.

[44] "The Voice of the Parishioners, 7/14/73." Szymaszek File, pp. 26-27.

[45] *MDJ* , October 24, 1973. This was in response to an LP meeting. See MMR, October 24, 1973.

[46] [Wodarski]

[47] See ads for May 24 and 31, 1974, as well as other ads. Szymaszek File, pp. 33, 39-40, 43-4. Italics in original.

[48] "The Voice of the Parishioners 10/7/73". Szymaszek File, pp. 26-7.

[49] The elected members of this representative body included: Ronald Backus, Anne Gade,Benjamin Ganseeki, Donald Hepp, Stasia Karsmarski, Henry Kulesza, Henry Lapuc, John Marut, Magdalene Nawrocki, Joseph Sieracki, Alexandra Stankewich, and Frank Zaremba. *Ex Officio* : the three co-pastors, Sister Mary Kathleen Ann [principal of St. Stanislaus School], Sister Mary Magdalene [coordinator of St. Stanislaus Convent], Anne Kosinski [Ladies Guild president], Michael Laverty [Holy Name Society president], and John Lein [Home and School Association president]. Stankewich was elected president, and on January 4, 1974 the new Council was formally presented to the parish at the annual Oplatek Supper. Stankewich and Joseph Sieracki were nominated parish trustees. Jaksina, p. 15.

[50] "Memo To the Polish Clergy in the State of Connecticut From The Loyal Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Church. May 6, 1974." Szymaszek File, pp. 34-7. The pledge read: "I, a candidate for the Parish Council of St. Stanislaus Church, Meriden, Connecticut, pledge myself to assist and advise the priests who have been appointed and sent to exercise legitimate authority as pastors. I am aware of the objectives and policies they propose for the good and development of the parish, and I agree to support them in public and privately." *St. Stanislaus Parish Council, Minutes, 1974-1984.* [Hereafter SSPC.M.] This is the very first item in the minutes, and contains an annotation that the pledge was sworn by newly elected officers.

[51] *MDJ* , May 16, 1974. In an annotated copy of this article by an unidentified hand, the charges of threats against some school children, adjusting books, and of a secret screening committee were noted as "not true". While not denying the $75 tuition surcharge for children of boycotting parents, the annotator denied that the children of non-parishioners were not being charged the same. AAH:SSF. The co-pastors frequently complained about the accuracy of the charges made by the LPs.

[52] Foskett. A name that came up in several interviews was Fr. Raymond Rubinowski, who had served as a curate at St. Stanislaus from 1965 to 1972, and who was very friendly with a leading parish family associated with the LPs. One source reported that Mierzwinski and Rubinowski exchanged heated words after a 40 Hours Devotion. Rubinowski, since deceased, was assistant pastor at Ss. Peter and Paul in nearby Wallingford.

[53] Mierzwinski to Whealon, November 23, 1974. AAH:SSF.

[54] See Gaj to Whealon, October 8, 1973; Mullen to Gaj, October 15, 1973; Gaj to Whealon, January 5, 1974; Thomas J.Draus to Whealon, April 26, 1974; Rev. Gene E. Gianelli to Draus, April 30, 1974; Whealon to William Wholen, [undated]. AAH:SSF.

[55] Szymaszek File, p. 44.

[56] Foskett.

[57] "Dear Parishioner: August 4, 1974." Szymaszek File, pp. 41-2. Italics in original.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] The behavior of both sides in the dispute, perhaps motivated by frustration and anger, was on more than one occasion open to question. One pastor close to the scene, while disagreeing with the LPs' position, noted that the team said things which "were immature - even juvenile." Foskett. On the other side, the content and tone of LP ads, often provocative, did nothing to advance a resolution of the crisis. Furthermore, the entire affair caused the team considerable personal anguish. See Mierzwinski to Whealon, November 23, 1974. AAH:SSF.

[60] Parishioners began to bring tape recorders to Mass to record the sermons.

[61] Draus to Whealon, August 14, 1974. Payne was Archbishop of the Arcdiocese of New England of the Independent Catholic Church, a small group that can be traced back to the Old Catholics. *The Hartford Courant*, March 11, 1972. I am grateful to Gerald Renner of the *Courant* for this information.

[62] Memo from Whealon to Gianelli, 8-21-74. AAH:SSF.

[63] Whealon to Draus, August 26, 1974. AAH:SSF. See also Jaksina, p. 14. Mierzwinski and Sobiecki defended this letter as a personal invitation to each parishioner only after it became apparent that the dissidents would continue to oppose everything they would propose. After 15 months at St. Stanislaus, and efforts to dialogue and resolve the problem, they felt that the time had come take a clear stand, an action that some parishioners felt should have come earlier. They regretted other interpretations which might be made of the letter. This would be their last public invitation. They believed that the majority of parishioners were with them, but promised to persevere. Mierzwinski and Sobiecki to Whealon, August 23, 1974. The letter included a fresh LP ad (*MDJ*, August 23, 1974) attacking the Co-pastors' August 4th letter. AAH:SSF. While the LPs did contact the Archdiocesan Office for Due Process Procedures, they did not pursue this avenue. Foskett.

[64] "ATTENTION *Parishioners of St. Stanislaus Church* ", October 18, and *MDJ*, October 19, 1974.

[65] Jaksina, p. 14.

[66] *MDJ*, January 17, 1975, and *MMR*, January 18, 1975.

[67] *MDJ* , December 9, 1974. While some K of C members did not like their hall being used for the meeting, there was a faction, largely Polish, which apparently supported the dissidents. Joseph P. Cooney to Whealon, December 6, 1974. AAH:SSF.

[68] *MMR*, December 10, 1974.

[69] *MDJ*, January 10, and *MMR*, January 11, 1975.

[70] *MDJ*, February 15; *MMR*, February 17; *New Britain Herald*, February 18; *The Providence Journal* , February 18; *Hartford Courant*, February 18; *New York Daily News*, February 18; and *The Catholic Transcript*, February 21, 1975.

[71] *MDJ* and *MMR*, July 2 and 3, 1976.

[72] *Sunday Bulletin*, July 11, 1976. The prayer was cited in its entirety.

[73] See Stanislaus A. Blejwas, "The Wallingford Schism: The Organization of St. Casimir's Parish of the Polish National Catholic Church", *PNCC Studies*, forthcoming.

[74] Mierzwinski was of the opinion that "The parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish in overwhelming numbers are loyal Catholics first, with a true appreciation of their Parish traditions having had an opportunity to flourish within the arms of the Catholic Church on American soil." Mierzwinski to Whealon, November 23, 1974. AAH:SSF.

Chapter Eleven
Parish Faith

The acrimony and wounds caused by the crisis did not heal immediately, nor was it realistic to expect that they would. The crisis, however, should not obscure the fact that the parish continued to function. While the crisis and its aftermath preoccupied the parishioners, other matters demanded attention. There were the daily and weekly religious practices and ethnic rituals and customs that carried with them the assurance, stability, and continuity of tradition, the warp and the woof of the fabric of parish life. There were also the changes propelling the parish, as a unit of the Roman Catholic Church, into a new historical era for American Catholicism.

The period after the Second Vatican Council was one of uncertain expectation for American Catholics. Until the Council, the Catholic family and Sunday Mass were the bastions of Catholic life, a situation partially attributable to the defensive, immigrant nature of American Catholicism. However, a new postwar generation of Catholics, more Americanized and more fully integrated into American life, was emerging. The numbers of Catholics with college education grew, as did the impulse for change. Small groups fostered sentiment for liturgical change through greater lay participation and the introduction of the vernacular in services, and urged as well an expanded role for the laity in the administration of Church affairs.[1] The impetus for change accelerated with Vatican II, which raised a host of issues affecting the Church in the modern world, and which opened the way for change at the parish level. The Council Fathers discussed religious freedom, ecumenism, relations with non-Christian religions, the apostolate of the laity, and the Sacred Liturgy, among many others. The Council's impact, however, at the parish level, was most obvious in liturgical reform, the use of the vernacular, and in the limited democratization of parish administration.

The pastoral policies submitted to the Archdiocesan Personnel Board when the team of Sobiecki, Jaksina, and Mierzwinski applied for the parish in 1973 reflected the influence of Vatican II. The co-pastors, all second-generation Polish Americans, recognized the validity and necessity of a bi-lingual apostolate. The team also accepted "the need for structuring and developing significant lay participation in the parish community." They next intended to strengthen the parish community through the liturgy, educational programs at all levels, social

activities, and through civic participation. Finally, the team was committed to furthering the process of renewal inaugurated by Vatican II and being implemented in the Hartford Archdiocese. Such an ambitious program was clearly dependent upon the parishioners' cooperating with the pastors and a willingness "to fulfill their responsibilities to God, to their parish, and to each other."[2]

Implemented in difficult circumstances, the team's policies did bring change to the parish. The election of a Parish Council (which was mandatory for all parishes in the Archdiocese) on December 16, 1973 was among the most obvious changes. While leading Loyal Parishioners protested the electoral process,[3] the Council opened the way for greater lay participation and shared responsibility in parish administration and development through committees (administration, liturgy, education, and social [originally separate parish life and social committees]). The Parish Council would also serve as a vehicle to re-involve Loyal Parishioners in active roles in parish life, and as a way to enhance the participation of women in parish administration, a concern voiced by the Council's first president, Alexandra Stankewich.[4] The introduction of the Parish Council, however, was in fact, a limited democratization of parish life, for the Council could only act as advisors to the Co-pastors. Legal authority remained, as it had in the past, with the parish corporation, whose officers included the co-pastor designated as administrator, and the two parish trustees.[5] Nevertheless, the creation of the council did encourage lay assistance in parish administration and development, and lay initiative. The first council, elected from a cross section of the parish population (youth, retired or elderly, widow or widower, single home-maker, married man, teaching, industry, skilled trade, professional, commerce and communications, and civil servant), enabled the co-pastors to share their administrative duties, and at the same time to benefit from the parishioners' expertise and support in undertaking maintenance of parish property.[6] During the team's tenure, repairs were carried out at St. Stanislaus Cemetery, records updated, and names given to cemetery's six sections: Our Lady of Czestochowa, St. Joseph, St. Theresa, St. Stanislaus, St. Andrew Bobola, and Blessed Maria Ledochowska. Repairs were also carried out to the roads and parking lots near the school, Community Center, and the church painted.[7]

The impact of Vatican II was not limited to increased lay participation in parish administration, but extended to the Church's interior architecture, and to the liturgy. In the Spring of 1976 the Co-pastors announced that the interior renovation initiated by Topor would be completed, and Peter Kosinski, a graduate of the parish school, was commissioned to design the architectural plans. Following the guidelines of Vatican II, the shrine of the Blessed Sacrament was moved to the center of the sanctuary, and sanctuary furnishing re-arranged for easier visibility by the congregation. The south side of the sanctuary was reserved for the saints, primarily the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, while the north side became the baptistry. In the vestibule, the former baptistry was reconstructed into a Reconciliation Room for the new Rite of Penance. The new, however, was linked with the old. A "Last Supper Scene", which had been painted by parishioner Julius Gutzwa in 1936, was recovered and refurbished by Ben Cwiekowski, and inserted into the altar of sacrifice.[8]

The Church, of course, is the physical structure for the celebration of the liturgy. By the time the team arrived at St. Stanislaus, the liturgy was being celebrated in English and Polish, with two of the six Sunday Masses in Polish. In addition to daily Mass, Saturday vigil Masses were celebrated, and, on special

occasions, Mass was celebrated in the homes of parishioners to deepen awareness of the Eucharist and strengthen neighborhood and family ties. Concern remained about the understanding and the acceptance of new liturgies by older parishioners, but the acceptance of change was also increasing as the Parish Council's Liturgical Committee grappled with developing liturgies for the entire parish.[9] The impact of Vatican II was also reflected by the participation of new personnel on the altar for services. During the the second team's tenure women lectors were introduced, and, as a result of the restoration of the permanent deaconate, lay deacons became an official part of parish life. On November 13, 1976, Henry Lepkowski was ordained to the lay deaconate, and was joined on March 10, 1978 by Stanley Nessing. The deacons were expected to assist in the preparations for marriages, conduct funeral services at wakes, bring Communion to the sick, participate in the pre-baptismal programs, and participate in other parish charitable and educational activities.[10] They, in turn, were joined by five extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist - Mr. and Mrs Joseph F. Erazmus, Leon C. Sieracki, and Sisters Mary Kondziolka and Mary Magdalane Przywara - who were inducted on June 1, 1977.[11]

Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist, is central to the Roman Catholic liturgy, but it was, and is, complemented by other liturgical and ethnic observances occurring throughout the year at St. Stanislaus. Marianism, which is rooted in Polish traditions, is very strong in the Polish American community. As the 1986 President of the Parish Council, Henrietta Kulinski remarked in urging the perpetuation of the traditional May Crowning: "The Polish people have always had a great devotion to the Blessed Mother, and will always continue to do so."[12] At St. Stanislaus there are devotions in May (litanies, May crowning, the celebration of Polish Constitution Day [May 3] honoring Mary, Queen of Poland) and October (Rosary). While the sick and the infirm received regular visitations in hospitals, and in convalescent and private homes, on the Feast of St. Joseph (March 19 - a popular Polish namesday), the Co-pastors held a General Anointing of the Sick in the Church. Lenten devotions included the Stations of the Cross in both English and Polish, and the traditional *Gorzkie Zale* (Bitter Lamentations). Forty Hours Devotion in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, a still-popular service in Connecticut's Polish American community, continued, while there were services in June and on the First Friday of every month in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There are services in May to the parish's patron, St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr, and annual devotions to St. Anne. Other ethnic observances include an annual Mass at the parish cemetery to coincide with All Soul's Day, which is still widely commemorated in Poland and in Polish American parishes; the blessing of homes and the inscription of the initials of the Three Kings (+K+M+B plus current year) over the doorways on the Feast of the Epiphany; the blessing of Easter food on Holy Saturday; and, deriving from family and religious customs, annual parish *oplatek* and *swieconka* dinners.[13]

Pilgrimages also reflect Parish religiosity and ethnicity. Parishioners travelled and prayed at the North American Martyrs Shrine in Auriesville, New York; the Czestochowa Shrine in Doylestown, Pennsylvania; the Polish Franciscans in Ware, Massachusetts; the Felician Sisters in Enfield, Connecticut; the Graymoor Shrine in Graymoor, New York; and to the Shrine of St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec and St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal, Canada.[14] And a few years later, in 1982, parishioners made a pilgrimage to Rome to attend the canonization of Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, OFM, the Polish friar who sacrificed his life for another prisoner at Auschwitz.[15]

These religious services and ethnic rituals shape the parishioners' spirituality. While the nature and quality of the individual parishioner's spiritual life is not readily transferrable to paper, there are statistics which provide some basis for commenting upon the parishioners' religiosity. It is notable that when the first team ministry was appointed in 1972 that there were 4,930 parishioners. When the crisis erupted the following year, membership dropped to 4,695. Furthermore, the Sacrament of Confirmation, which would normally require the presence of a bishop, was not administered in 1973. However, by 1974 membership returned to 4,892, and by 1978, the last year of the team ministry, reached 6,518, its highest level since 1960.[16] The figures suggest that headway was being made in healing the rift caused by the crisis, and that in fact the parish was again growing.

St. Stanislaus was an older parish. In comparison to the pastorates of Nalewajk and Topor, the annual average number of Baptisms (150, 91, and 60 respectively), First Communions (112, 117, 61), Confirmations (126, 98, 84), and Marriages (48, 35, and 35), was down, while the annual average number of funerals up (54, 65, 76).[17] There are several explanations for this downward trend. Family size declined in the years after the post-World War II baby boom. This decline may have been accelerated with the revolution of American sexual mores in the 1960s. The availability of the birth-control pills appears to have contributed to a crisis for American Catholics, as did the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* by Pope Paul VI in 1968. This encyclical banning artificial means of birth control has been considered by researchers a turning point in the attitude of many priests and laypersons towards the Catholic Church. Without a sociological study, it is difficult to ascertain how these findings apply to St. Stanislaus. However, the decline in Baptisms, and a decline in school enrollment beginning in 1966 when enrollment dropped under 700 for the first time since 1955, and continued to slide downwards thereafter, suggest that some parishioners were making their own minds up about sexual matters.[18] This, in turn, may suggest a weakening of papal teaching authority on the local level.

St. Stanislaus was no longer an immigrant parish, but an ethnic parish in which the majority of parishioners were second, third, and even fourth generation Americans of Polish origin. However, the values and the traditions of the immigrant generation, although diluted and with the use of the Polish language uncommon among the younger parishioners, continued to survive. This was due not only to the parish religious practices and ethnic rituals, but also to the school, which assisted in not only Americanizing the immigrants and their children, but also in helping to preserve what could be described as an ethnic rather than an immigrant identity.[19] While the approach in the school curriculum to Polish history was low key, it was treated as "a part of [our] regular approach to world history", and included names overlooked in non-Polish schools, like Copernicus, Chopin, Kosciuszko, Pulaski, Paderewski, and Polish saints.[20]

The parish's ethnic identity survived in other ways. The late 1960s and the early 1970s were a time when "Polack jokes" plagued the television airwaves, stereotyping Polish characters and using anti-Polish comedy. Responding to these abuses, Polish Americans engaged in a variety of positive actions, including anti-defamation law suits and the positive promotion of Polish ethnic identity and Polish culture.[21] In Connecticut one response was the successful lobbying effort of the Connecticut District of the Polish American Congress for the creation of a Polish Studies program at a Connecticut public institution of higher education. In 1974 two

members of Meriden's Polish community, State Senator John Zajac (1971-1975) and Representative Daniel Brunski (1973-75) joined other Polish and non-Polish state legislators to pass a bill establishing Copernicus Center at then Central Connecticut State College for the teaching and encouraging of the study of Polish language, art, history, and culture.[22] In the parish itself, on October 9, 1977, a Copernicus Library and Center for Religious and Ethnic Studies was dedicated. Among its purposes was to provide parishioners with the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the language and cultural heritage of their immigrant ancestors. This event, part of the Parish's celebration of Pulaski Day, included an address by Dr. Walter Golaski, then Chairman of the Kosciuszko Foundation Board of Trustees.[23]

During the co-pastorate of Sobiecki, Jaksina, and Mierzwinski, St. Stanislaus School marked its 80th anniversary, and, on November 21, 1975, the 60th anniversary of the current school building, an event celebrated with a Mass of Thanksgiving and a parish dinner. As part of the anniversary celebrations, an Alumni Association was also formed, and the first reunion held on February 14, 1976. In April, 1976 the Parish also hosted the Connecticut celebration marking the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis.[24]

Christian education remained a high priority, for the issue was "the future of the parish, not just the present, active membership." As the co-pastors noted: "The concept of education and Christian formation encompasses a parish's life - from birth to death."[25] Maintaining this commitment, because of changes in personnel, is not easy. For sure no one anticipated that when the first modern lay teacher was hired in 1954 (Mrs. Wanda Gula), that the number of nuns would decline to such a point where the teaching staff would consist entirely of lay teachers. Thus the consequences of another crisis facing American Catholicism, the decline in vocations to the sisterhoods, also affected St. Stanislaus School. The rise in the number of lay teachers required a greater financial outlay by the Parish. The parish's annual subsidy to St. Stanislaus School, which between 1973 and 1978 ranged from $34,000 (1976) to $89,703 (1978), and which averaged $52,036 annually, was evidence that the parishioners under the leadership of the Home and School Association, were sustaining this commitment to a Catholic education.[26] St. Stanislaus School remains an integral segment of the parish community, the object of constant concern, solicitation, and improvement. During this period an example of this commitment was the dedication of a new school library on October 20, 1974 in the Sienkiewicz Room of the adjacent Community Center, with a collection exceeding 4,000 volumes.[27]

St. Stanislaus School was not, of course, immune to the crisis. Enrollment fell from 398 in 1972 to 365 in 1973, and to a low of 336 in 1974. However, as the crisis was overcome, it increased, returning almost to pre-crisis levels in 1978 with an enrollment of 387 students.[28] And throughout the tenure of both team ministries, religious instruction, which enrolled annually an average of 343 students, was conducted for those attending public grammar and high schools, while Lenten lectures and continuing courses were offered for adults wishing to deepen their knowledge of their faith.[29]

Perhaps more so than in other parishes, and certainly very much in the tradition of the earlier immigrant parishes, St. Stanislaus Parish remained and, despite the crisis, flourished as a center of community life. The underutilized Community Center was extensively refurbished, and on October 28, 1973 re-opened under a newly formed Board of Directors charged with coordinating all

activities at the Center and with providing "maximum efficient use of the facilities by parishioners and their guests."[30] The first floor meeting rooms were renamed for distinguished Poles (St. Hedwig, Paderewski, Copernicus, St. Casimir, Sienkiewicz, and Kolbe). The Center hosts, and continues to do so, educational, recreational, and social programs for parishioners and their guests. The School's Ben Nessing Intramural Leagues basketball games are played in the Center; the School varsity teams participate in the Archdiocesan basketball league and in the Meriden Deanery Catholic Conference; while the Center is used for a host of community activities, ranging from Polish language classes to programs of Birthright of Greater New Haven, Bloodmobile, Welcome Wagon of Meriden, pre-Cana conferences and a host of other parish and community activities. The Community Center is the headquarters for the annual parish June Festival inaugurated in 1975, and which requires a substantial annual mobilization of volunteer labor. The Christmas bazaar is also held in the Community Center, which is also the location of the parish *oplatek* and *swieconka* dinners. And it is at the *swieconka* dinners that the annual award for outstanding service to the parish, which the pastors initiated in 1975, is made.[31]

Any community of believers is, of course, part of a larger community and society. In the case of a Roman Catholic parish, the parish is part of an old and worldwide Church claiming universality. St. Stanislaus, like other Catholic parishes, participates in the life of its Church and in social and community events and projects, and speaks out on moral issues. As yet another reflection of Vatican II, there were Thanksgiving ecumenical services, and, in January, participation in the "Annual World Day of Prayer". Parishioners also participated in the Holy Year Jubilee Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral on October 16, 1974, and in the 41st International Eucharistic Congress in 1976. St. Stanislaus also participates in the broader life of its Church's apostolic mission through financial contributions for various charitable activities. Apart from contributing to Peter's Pence, the parishioners donate to numerous "second collections", including the Catholic League for Religious Assistance to Poland, the missions, the Archdiocesan Campaign for Human Development, the collection for needy Catholic schools, American Catholic Overseas Aid, the Catholic University of America, the maintenance of the Holy Land Shrines, the Archdiocesan Easter Charities Collection, and to various missionaries making personal appeals at Sunday services.[32] At the local level, St. Stanislaus, demonstrating its care for the poor of the parish and the community, organizes clothing drives, is involved in Operation PANTRY (Parishes Aiding Needy Through Reserved Yield), and, more recently, in Operation Rice Bowl.[33]

The parish is also represented at community functions. It actively participated in Meriden's celebration of the American Bicentennial, and annually took part in the Meriden Expo, where Polish booths were set up. Finally, the Parish speaks out on moral and public issues. In 1977 the opening of a Family Planning Clinic at both Memorial and Meriden-Wallingford hospitals was criticized. As the *Sunday Bulletin* commented: "How ironical to have a suggestion that we applaud a program which will associate hospitals with the elimination of human life."[34] The Parish also protests the second-class public funding of parochial education, and supported tuition tax credits for parents of children in private schools.[35]

The warp and woof of parish life suggests that underneath the crisis and controversy the fundamental cloth of St. Stanislaus parish was indeed, flexible, and resilient. It has been severely tested, and found to be made of durable material. While there were still aftershocks of the crisis, headway was made in healing wounds and

in reforging a reunited parish community.[36] Not only was parish membership and school enrollment up; so was parish income. While income had declined from $225,794 in 1972 to $199,726 in 1973, by 1977 it reached a new high of $329,792.[37] Healing is a slow process, which the Co-pastors tried to encourage. Taking an admittedly rather odd anniversary date, the parish's 85th in 1976, they linked it with the American Bicentennial year which "had become a sign of reconciliation." Emphasizing "the joyful sharing of rebirth", the co-pastors wrote to the parishioners: "we strive to live together not as partisan brothers and sisters but as family members knitted together by the Lord's grace and the Lord's example. What we cannot achieve of ourselves God can effect as we respond to His grace of light and healing."[38] And symbolic of the healing process was the presence of Archbishop Whealon as the chief celebrant of the 85th Anniversary on November 21, 1976, when the Mass of Christ the King was celebrated.[39]

Despite the progress of the healing process, the work and stress of the preceding three years took their toll on the co-pastors. In October, 1977 there was a mutual parting of the ways, as Fr. Sobiecki, "at his own request and with arrangements through Father Edmund O'Brien", the archdiocesan Vicar of Priests, took up residence at St. Stanislaus in Bristol. "Father Peter will not return", the parishioners were informed, and all three priests requested the dissolution of the team.[40] The abruptness of the departure suggested stress within the team, a development that would not be unexpected after what the team had been through. Sobiecki remained as long as he did because of his commitment to his Church and his desire to uphold its authority, which he did. But the team no longer existed. Jaksina and Mierzwinski alone assumed the burden of parish administration, and were to remain until at least June, 1978, when the situation would be evaluated. At that time, however, the team's final breakup occurred when Mierzwinski suffered a stroke and died an untimely death on June 17, 1978, the 30th anniversary year of his ordination.

Mierzwinski's passing was mourned by Whealon, his fellow priests, and the parishioners. The popular and scholarly priest was remembered for his intellectual interests, his administrative skills, and for his service to the parishioners, especially to the sick. Whealon described him as "one of the finest priests in the Archdiocese and at the height of his power." The Archbishop hoped that his death would encourage new vocations from the parish. Another of his confreres, Rev. James Conefrey, reminded the listeners of Mierzwinski's eye problem and periods of disquietude which demanded hospitalization, and recalled his tranquility and humility. The Rev. Paul Wysocki, speaking in Polish, dwelt upon Mierzwinski's gentle nature, and recalled that Theophil meant "Lover of God." Wysocki noted that Mierzwinski's own love was so great that he was reluctant to pass judgement "on even the worst of his transgressors", a statement hinting at the difficulties that Mierzwinski had endured. Wysocki also remarked that the pastor could have lived longer if he had spared himself.[41]

Mierzwinski was eulogized by his co-pastor, Jaksina, as "a true man of God", "an Other Christ ... who prayed, suffered and worked for the glory of the Father and the welfare of all men." Jaksina credited his fellow co-pastor with the renovation of the church for the 85th Anniversary, but also emphasized his generosity and, perhaps in an allusion to the recent crisis, his courage "when it came to standing up for a principle, for the good of the Church."[42] Finally, and perhaps reflecting the evolving ethnic profile of St. Stanislaus parish, Jaksina praised Mierzwinski as

"proud of his Polish heritage", but also one who "would insist on the necessity of the Catholic faith in that heritage." In Mierzwinski, a second-generation Polish American, the link between the Roman Catholic faith and the Polish fatherland continued. But like the Polish-born Ceppa, "he was an American, who respected all the other heritages in the rainbow which is America."[43] In this respect, Mierzwinski extended the tradition of Ceppa: he acknowledged and took pride in his ethnic roots, but, taking advantage of American cultural pluralism, clearly set his identity in America.

What is striking in the eulogies and newspaper account of Mierzwinski's death is the absence of any direct reference to the crisis that the team and the parish went through.[44] Yet, privately, parishioners and priests asked if the crisis or stress upon and within the team had contributed to his untimely death.

The team of Sobiecki, Mierzwinski, and Jaksina, together with the parish, weathered a harsh storm at a time when American Catholicism was changing and when Polish Americans were redefining their identities as ethnic Americans. Their team ministry was one of the winds of change that blew through the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II, and they oversaw other changes inspired by the Church Fathers. Without exaggeration, their ministry at St. Stanislaus was an historic one, both for the parish and the Archdiocese, demonstrating that change was possible, but that it also required wisdom on all sides and an understanding for the strength of parish tradition. The experiment had not been an easy one, and the healing process was not complete. It remained to be seen if a new team ministry would be appointed to St. Stanislaus.

[1] Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 453-54; and Andrew Greeley, "American Catholicism: 200 Years and Counting", *The Critic*, 34, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 14-47, 54-70, for comments about the need to understand the immigrant experience in order to understand the Catholic experience in America, as well as James S. Olson, *Catholic Immigrants in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1987).

[2] Jaksina, p. 15.

[3] See Chapter 10.

[4] "In today's world, we must not overlook the women", *SSPC. M.* September 18, 1974.

[5] *Sunday Bulletin* , October 23, 1977. Article II.a. of the original By-laws state the Council's purpose: "To act as advisors only to the Co-Pastors." Underscore in the original. *SSPC. M.* Reflecting this view of church administration, Stankewich wrote: "I firmly believe we are endowed by God with special gifts to serve our Parish through the Council - mainly to support our Co-Ministry in their dedication to our Parish. Our role should be of firm reliance and support in their endeavor of diversification and needs of the Parish". March 10, 1976.*SSPC.M.* In another statement, a member said: "We do not, as council members, make any changes nor administer any authority in the Parish. We act as advisors to the Co-Pastors, through our Committees". December 14, 1977. *SSPC.M.*

[6] These electoral categories were deleted in the revised By-laws adopted on December 9, 1976. *SSPC.M.*

[7] Jaksina, pp. 15-16, *et passim.*

[8] Gutzwa designed the Pulaski Monument erected in 1934. His newly recovered painting was now framed with wood from the old altar rails. *Sunday Bulletin*, June 26, 1977.

[9] *SSPC.M.* Liturgical Committee, October 3, 1978.

[10] *Sunday Bulletin*, February 6, 1977.

[11] *Sunday Bulletin*, June 5, 1977.

[12] *SSPC.M.* May 14, 1986. See John J. Bukowczyk, "Mary the Messiah: Polish Immigrant Heresy and the Malleable Ideology of the Roman Catholic Church, 1880-1930", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 4 (Spring, 1985), pp. 5-32.

[13] *Oplatek* is a wafer shared by the head of the household and all its members at the Christmas Eve meal (*wigilia*). It is the most celebrated of Polish customs. On Polish customs see Zygmunt Gloger, *Rok Polski w zyciu, tradycyi i piesni* (Warsaw: Jan Fiszer, 1900), or *Treasured Polish Christmas Carols and Traditions* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Polanie Publishers, 1972). It is the religious traditions and customs that have survived the best in the Polish immigrant community, a fact reflected in the celebration of parish or organizational *oplatek* and *swieconka* dinners. There is also an annual Mass at the cemetery on Memorial Day, arranged in conjunction with the local post

of the Polish Legion of American Veterans.

[14] Various *Sunday Bulletins, 1976-1989.*

[15] *Sunday Bulletin*, July 11 and September 26, 1982.

[16] *Annual Reports, 1960, 1972-1973.* AAH.

[17] *Annual Reports, 1948-1978.* AAH.

[18] *Annual Reports 1948-1978.* AAH. From 1955 to 1966, with the exception of 1958, enrollment, reflecting the post-war baby boom generation, remained above 700.

[19] An ethnic identity may be considered a tenuous awareness and sentimental attachment to a group's history, traditions, and customs, without, however, the knowledge of the language.

[20] *MMR&J*, August 16, 1977.

[21] Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, pp. 112-16.

[22] *MDJ* , May 17, 1974.

[23] *Meriden Record and Journal*, October 8, 1977, and *Sunday Bulletin*, October 9, 1977.

[24] *MDJ*, April 22, 1976. The celebration also marked the 50th anniversary of Order's Marymount Province. The various celebrations of 1975 and 1976 were announced by the Parish by the Council on March 12, 1975 as events "which will emphasize our role in the Bicentennial". *SSPC.M.*

[25] Jaksina, p. 16.

[26] *Annual Reports, 1973-1978.* AAH.

[27] Jaksina, p. 17.

[28] *Annual Reports, 1972-1978.* AAH.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Mierzwinski, David Szymaszek, Helen Gansecki, John Marut, and Barbara Kowalski. Jaksina, p. 16. For the Constitution of the Board see *SSPC.M.*

[31] The first recipient was Leo Mierzejewski, who retired after 45 years as sexton. In 1976 the Sisters of St. Joseph, who were celebrating their Order's 75th Anniversary, were honored for more than six decades of service to the School. Jaksina, p. 18. In 1977 Ceppa and Bartlewski were honored posthumously, while the 1978 honorees were John Stanulevich, who was prominently involved with parish baseball and basketball teams from the 1920s to the 1950s, and Catherine Wanat, who for the past 21 years was president of the St. Theresa Society. *Sunday Bulletin*, April 24, 1977, and March 5, 1978.

[32] Pastors of Polish parishes have noted that their congregations are significantly less generous in donating to second collections than to parish collections and fund raisers.

[33] *Sunday Bulletins, 1976-1989.* There was, however, resistance to setting up a soup kitchen on parish property because of the possible impact of its clientele upon children. Parish volunteers eventually helped staff a soup kitchen at the Salvation Army. *SSPC.M.* May 11 and September 18, 1983, and November 14, 1984.

[34] *Sunday Bulletin*, July 31, 1977.

[35] *Sunday Bulletin*, August 14, 1983.

[36] The estate of Frank and Josephine Kogut brought suit against the parish for curbing installed at the parish cemetery. The court found for the estate, which claimed that the water diverted by the curbing damaged their adjacent property. The Parish decided not to contest the judgement, and to make payment and repairs. *Sunday Bulletin*, October 9, 1977. This minor dispute is relevant in that members of the Kogut family had been prominent Loyal Parishioners. Once the repairs were made, Mrs. Josephine Kogut turned back to the Parish the money awarded as damages "since the diversion of water had been stopped. *Sunday Bulletin*, December 4, 1977.

[37] *Annual Reports, 1972-1978.* AAH. The yearly average over these seven years was $274,214.

[38] Jaksina, v.

[39] *MMR*, November 13, 1976.

[40] *Sunday Bulletin*, November, 13, 1977.

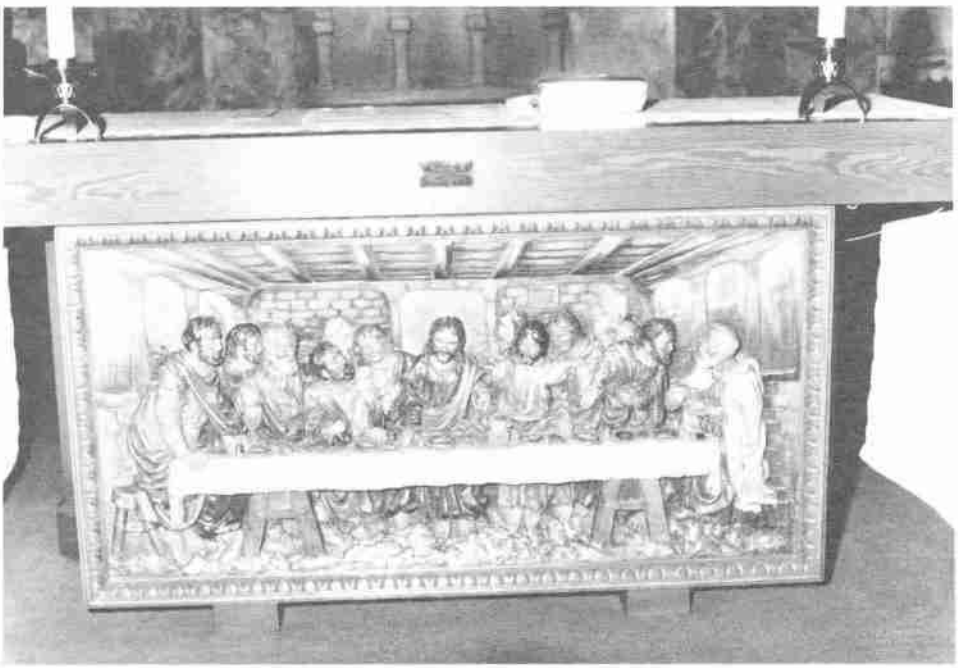
[41] *MMR&J*, June 21, 1978.

[42] Sunday Bulletin, June 25, 1978.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *MMR&J*, June 19, and 21, 1972, and *The Catholic Transcript*, June 23, 1972.

Co-Pastors
Rev. Edward Jaksina, Rev. Peter Sobiecki, Rev. Theophil Mierzwinski
1972-1978



The woodcarving painted by Julius Gutzwa in 1936 was refurbished in 1976 by parishioner Ben Cwiekowski and restored to a place of prominence in front of the Altar of Sacrifice.

St. Stanislaus Parish permanent lay deacons Henry Lepkowski and Stanley Nessing.

Chapter Twelve
"God Must Love This Parish"

While it was not clear then, the year 1978 opened a new era as the final decades of the Twentieth Century approached. The electrifying news of Krakow's Karol Cardinal Wojtyla's election as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church excited world attention. The first non-Italian Pope in four and a half centuries came from Poland, a country largely on the periphery of world news since its forcible incorporation into the Soviet Bloc at the end of World War II. The elevation of John Paul II to the papacy renewed interest in Polish developments, and the Pope himself instilled love and courage among his fellow countrymen during his first papal visit to his homeland in 1979. When the shipyard worker in Gdansk in the summer of 1980 became the rallying point of nation-wide strikes against the communist regime, Our Lady of Czestochowa and the Polish Pope were among the religious and patriotic symbols invoked by the strikers at the Lenin Shipyard gates under the leadership of the electrician Lech Walesa. Human solidarity paved the way for the emergence of the Independent, Self-Governing Free Trade Union - Solidarity, whose non-violent struggle over the next decade would dramatically alter the politics of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

On December 13, 1981, Poland's communist regime attempted to crush Solidarity by imposing martial law. The United States under President Ronald Reagan took the initiative in protesting this outrage by imposing economic sanctions in a calibrated effort to compel Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski to abolish martial law and to restore Solidarity and human rights. Finally, in 1989, faced with a permanently failing economy, a dissident opposition supported by Poles both at home and abroad and by western governments and trade unions, and Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the unpopular regime agreed to Solidarity's re-legalization and to the holding of the first semi-free election in post-war Poland. A new government under Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a close adviser to Lech Walesa, took office, the first non-communist Polish government since World War II. The creation of the Mazowiecki Government started the dominoes toppling as old communist governments rapidly fell in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria and Romania, while at the same time the citizens of the Baltic and other Soviet republics voiced their demands for autonomy, freedom, and independence. For Poland, this dramatic decade culminated with the election of the shipyard electrician, Lech

Walesa, as President of the Republic of Poland in December, 1990. A sovereign and democratic Poland, the dream of Poles for more than a half century following the outbreak of World War II, was once again possible.

These dramatic changes, directly and indirectly, affected Polish Americans of all generations. The election of John Paul II was an event similar to President Kennedy's assassination in that every Pole and Polish American can tell you where they were when they heard the news. With the "Polish" Pope and the daring exploits of Solidarity, Polish-American pride and recognition soared, while the "Polish joke" lost some of its currency and sting.[1] The Polish American Congress pursued its lobbying activities with renewed vigor, as its leadership was consulted by the White House and the State Department about Polish developments and the American responses. Solidarity support groups intent upon persuading Washington to keep economic and diplomatic pressure upon the Jaruzelski regime until the restoration of human, civil, and political rights appeared in cities with large Polish American populations. And with the events of 1989, the anti-communist stance that the Polish American Congress had adhered to since 1945 was vindicated.

The political events in Poland brought to the United States a new generation of political emigres numbering 52,000 between the years 1982 and 1989.[2] The Solidarity immigration infused a fresh Polish presence into the United States, but like the post-World War II political emigres, its members did not fit easily into America. Not only was their life style European and more middle class; some found Polonia's view of freedom shallow, and thought that it was too preoccupied with unimportant issues like fighting the Polish joke. This new immigration, which had lived and made history for 16 months before martial law, wanted to continue the political struggle against the Jaruzelski. As new arrivals, they remained mentally in Poland, involved in Polish politics, living a Polish life, and speaking Polish.[3]

It has been asked whether Polish Americans during this period won acclaim by proxy, by the mere fact that they happened to be of Polish origin.[4] Polish developments and the arrival of a new immigration raised the question as to what it meant to be a Polish American in the 1980s, particularly as various communities were into the third or fourth generation. Were the identities and interests of Polish Americans comparable and compatible with those of the Solidarity immigration? Would the revived ethnic identities, the new ethnicity of the 1970s, result in a new interest in Poland, and how long would that interest last? Was this interest in Poland a temporary, artificial phenomena?

Statistics suggest that the new ethnicity of the 1970s could prove to be somewhat ephemeral. In 1971, one survey of Polish parochial schools found that only 20.4% still taught Polish history or culture, 13.5% taught Polish reading, and a mere 4.1% provided Polish-language religious instruction. While over 2,000 young Polish Americans participated in summer schools of Polish language and culture in Poland during the 1970s, there were more than 8,000,000 who identified themselves as Polish American in the 1980 US Census. In 1979, while 2,452,000 Polish Americans claimed Polish as their mother tongue, less than one-third spoke Polish at home, a further suggestion of the erosion of the ethnic culture. Third generation inter-marriage was reported to be running at 80%, while a 1982 study estimated that only 7% of all Polish Americans belonged to a Polish organization.[5] Did this all mean a passing community and the final emergence of a Catholic melting pot? Connecticut Polonia and St. Stanislaus Parish provide ambiguous answers.

There were in 1980 287,016 individuals of exclusively Polish (140,035) and

mixed Polish and other (146,981) ancestry among Connecticut's 3,104,576 citizens.[6] While 9% of the State's population, only a small handful could be described as actively involved in Polonia's organizational life. Nevertheless, the activities of Connecticut Polonia reflected Polish American pride in John Paul II, Solidarity, and Lech Walesa in a variety of ways. On November 12, 1978, 1,600 state-wide attended a Mass of Thanksgiving in honor of the new Pope. The event, held at Central Connecticut State College in New Britain and organized by the Association of Polish Priests in Connecticut raised $12,000 for the Church in Poland. Also in New Britain, the Polish Saturday School was renamed in the Pope's honor. Families sent packages to relatives and friends in Poland, particularly as the economy continued to deteriorate. There were fund raisers for the newly established Solidarity. The Connecticut District of the Polish American Congress functioned with renewed enthusiasm. In New Britain, the Polish community's consistent anti-communism and faithfulness to the dream of an independent Poland were underscored by the erection of the first Katyn Monument in America.[7] Funds were collected to support Poland through the Polish American Congress Charitable Foundation in Chicago, and, because of Solidarity, politicians paid renewed interest in the PAC. Connecticut Polonia shared the shock and outrage at the imposition of martial law. There were demonstrations and public protests in New Britain, Hartford, and Bridgeport, and in January, 1982, a small group of Polish Americans organized Solidarity International to support the cause of human rights in Poland and elsewhere. The organization quickly became recognized as a commentator on Polish developments, and it also launched a successful program of sending packages to the families of those interned during martial law.[8] There were vigils when Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko, Solidarity's titular chaplain, disappeared and later turned up murdered. Yale University, with some prodding from the community, sponsored a major conference on Poland in 1984, and throughout the decade Polish scholars, experts, and dissidents spoke at Yale and Central Connecticut State University, while both universities hosted exhibits of Solidarity art. Important Polish clerics like Warsaw Auxiliary Bishop Jerzy Dabrowski (1983) and Henryk Cardinal Gulbinowicz of Wroclaw (1988) visited Connecticut's Polish Catholics. Finally, as Poland and the other East European countries began to regain their independence and sovereignty, those changes also were reflected in community activities. In August, 1989, Bishop Szczepan Wesoly presided over ceremonies in New Britain commemorating the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, reminding those present that only after five decades was Poland again reclaiming its independence. During those five decades Connecticut Polonia, like the overwhelming majority of American Polonia, had ostracized Polish diplomats, refusing to accord legitimacy of the communist authorities. Now the community welcomed Polish diplomats. In September, 1990 Ambassador Kazimierz Dziewanowski delivered the Milewski Lecture at Central Connecticut State University, while in January, 1991, Consul General Jerzy Surdykowski was welcomed at the Haller Post in New Britain. A new era was opening in Polonia-Polish relations.

This decade was not without its stresses and tensions. The Solidarity immigration, numbering over 2,700 between 1982 and 1987, went through the difficulties of resettlement and readjustment.[9] Their frustrations erupted into public view in 1987 and 1988 in disputes at Sacred Heart Parish in New Britain and at St. Michael's Parish in Bridgeport.[10] In both cases, protesters charged that the "Polishness" of the parish was either being diluted or threatened. Abetted by Polish-

born and ordained priests who appeared to promise the dissenters a "Polish" alternative to their Polish American pastors, these demonstrations received wide media coverage, and raised questions about the impact of the Solidarity immigration upon local Polonia and about relations between the two groups.[11] The intensely political culture of a new Polish immigration confronted the assimilated Polish American. Apart from originating in a common homeland and, in most cases, sharing a common religious faith, it could be asked what united the two groups. Was the ethnic identity of Polish Americans and their organizations and institutions to erode further, or would the influx of new immigrants reinforce or infuse a renewed Polish identity into Connecticut Polonia? In broad terms, what was the role of a "Polish" parish as Connecticut Polonia approached the Centennial of its first Roman Catholic parish? Was the parish to be a "Polish" or an ethnic parish?

In the summer of 1978 these events and developments were in the future as the parishioners of St. Stanislaus following Fr. Mierzwinski's death awaited word about the next pastor. In the meantime, a fund was initiated in Mierzwinski's honor, and by December it exceeded $12,000. The news of the election of John Paul II elated the parishioners, and a delegation from St. Stanislaus participated the November state-wide celebration in New Britain in the new Pope's honor.[12] It was shortly thereafter on December 23rd that Fr. Jaksina announced that he was accepting a temporary position in Seymour, while the Rev. Zigford Kriss, principal at South Catholic High School in Hartford, would be the new pastor.[13]

Born on July 29, 1929 in Bloomfield, Kriss was the last of nine children of immigrant Polish parents who spoke Polish at home and who observed Polish customs and traditions. A graduate of Bloomfield High School, he attended St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, New York. He completed his studies at the North American College in Rome (1955-1959), where he was ordained to the priesthood on December 20, 1958. He spent the next twelve years (1959-1971) at Holy Cross Parish in New Britain, where he was assistant pastor and principal of the parish school (1964-1971). Following his strong interest in education, he then pursued graduate studies in education at Hartford's Trinity College, where he received is MA in 1972. After a one-year stint as an Administrative Assistant at East Catholic High School in Manchester, he was appointed Principal at South Catholic.[14]

The most striking aspect about the appointment was that it was a return to the traditional pastorate. It is not precisely clear why another team ministry was not appointed, but at the same time it may be more than coincidental that a team ministry has never been named to another of the 24 Polish Roman Catholic parishes in Connecticut. Perhaps the archdiocesan authorities, the Polish priests, and the parishioners each concluded in their own way that the traditional single-pastor model of parish administration was best suited for traditional-minded Polish parishes. Whatever the reason, one does ask why Kriss applied for the St. Stanislaus pastorship in view of the parish's recent time of trouble.

In making the transition from high school principal to parish pastor, Kriss was following his understanding of the priesthood as a calling to serve God's people. He believed that as a priest he owed more to a parish than to a school because the parish is "the basis where your faith lies." Furthermore, St. Stanislaus was the only parish that he wanted to come to as pastor. While Principal at Holy Cross in New Britain, he was impressed by his teachers originally from Meriden. He believed that their faith came from "the roots of that parish." Prior to applying for the vacancy at

St. Stanislaus, Kriss spoke with Jaksina and Rev. Joseph Parzymies, the seminarian-in-residence. He concluded that St. Stanislaus was "a very fine parish with a few serious problems" requiring immediate and persevering attention. He recognized that the parish community in recent years was "a house divided against itself." His primary goal, therefore, was "to heal", "to encourage the parishioners to continue the slow process of reconciliation and healing" toward which Mierzwinski and Jaksina "encouraged and led their people." Finally, because he was Polish, Kriss felt that he had an obligation to apply.[15] He was himself a second-generation Polish American, as were many of the St. Stanislaus parishioners, and the new pastor felt comfortable and able to relate with the second and the third generations.[16]

To achieve his objectives, Kriss stressed the importance of a good liturgy "because the reconciliation and healing will be accomplished fully only through the Liturgical life in the parish" where "much kindness, understanding and prudence will be needed to further this sensitive area." Secondly he wanted to reduce deficit spending, and eliminate the anticipated $60,000 deficit. He counted among the parish's assets a well-run school and good Religious Education Program, as well as the 13 active parish societies. He felt prepared for the task because of his proven administrative skills, his ability to work with people, and his commitment to the Catholic school system. Finally, he brought with him a commitment to the apostolate of the sick and the elderly.[17]

In his first homily, Kriss set the tone for his new ministry. With the recent crisis in mind, he remarked: "I am not going to look back, but I am going to ask you to look forward with me."[18] The new pastor made it clear that he did not want to hear about the dispute, that he was not taking sides, and that everyone was the same for him. This approach was not necessarily understood by everyone, especially as prominent Loyal Parishioners began to return to active participation in parish life, gaining the presidency of the Parish Council and even being elected parish trustees. For some who had supported Whealon's position during the crisis it appeared that the new pastor had turned the parish over to the Loyal Parishioners, and they asked themselves what the battle had been about. As time passed, however, it became clear that this was part of the healing process. Kriss was not taking sides, but was soothing those who had been hurt. By refusing to engage in discussion about the dispute, he did "the sensible thing" in letting the matter die out. And the pastor made it a point to get close to all parishioners, a fact which came to be recognized.[19]

Healing occurs over time, and so it did at St. Stanislaus. Kriss helped the process by returning to the Church the picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa which had been removed during the renovations under Topor. However, the symbolic closing of this process happened on September 7, 1986 with the dedication of the Msgr. John L. Ceppa Memorial Chapel at the parish cemetery. The beginning of the drive to raise funds for a new chapel goes back to January, 1980 when it was announced that a group of parishioners had donated $10,900 for this purpose.[20] The source was not publicly announced, but the donation came from the Loyal Parishioners, who had collected the money during the crisis to be used for the good of the parish as "we saw it." Former Loyal Parishioners meet with Kriss, who told them that he was not returning with them to the past to listen to who was wrong. The Pastor also told them about the chapel proposal, and the former dissidents decided to turn over these funds to Kriss for this purpose. In the view of the Loyal Parishioners, the money returned to the parish.[21]

Kriss moved the chapel proposal for several reasons. There already were

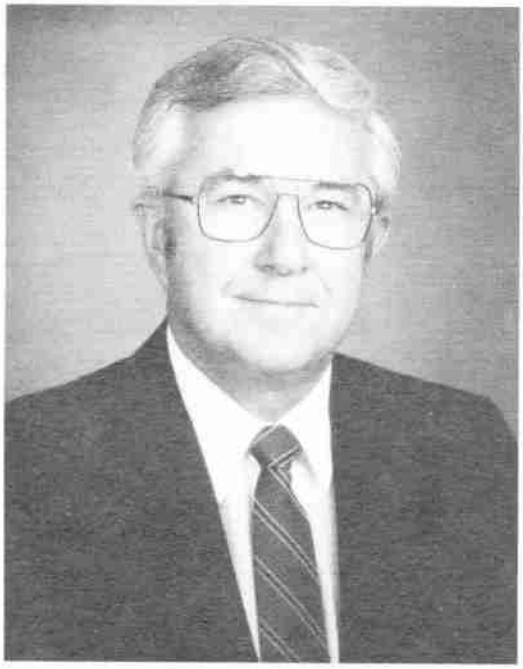
The painting of OurLady of Czestochowa was originally set in the altar over the tabernacle in the first church on Jefferson Street. Purchased by Rev. Thomas Misicki, Pastor, in 1895, the painting was moved to the altar in the new church in 1908. It was removed from the sanctuary during the church renovations of 1966. For several years it was in the vestibule of the community center. The painting has since been encased and returned to a place of prominence in the church sanctuary. The artist was John Tabinski of Rzeszow, Poland.

Monsignor John L. Ceppa Chapel Building Committee
Front Row, *left to right, James Bobbi, Ronald Stempien, Gertrude Roman O'Donnell, Rev. Zigford Kriss, Charles Wisniewski.* ***Back Row,*** *left to right, Thomas Drauss, Robert Sokolowski, Peter Kosinski, Ronald Kogut, Joseph Sieracki.*

Monsignor Ceppa Chapel
October 25, 1985

St. Stanislaus Parish Family celebrates the dedication of the Monsignor Ceppa Memorial Chapel September 7, 1986

Rev. Zigford Kriss, Bishop John Hackett and Monsignor Henry Dziadosz preside at the dedication of the Ceppa Memorial Chapel on September 7, 1986.



John J. Zajac Jr.
State Representative
83rd Assembly District

Robert E. Kosienski
Chief of Police
City of Meriden

Thomas B. Griglun
Judge of Probate
City of Meriden

The First Graduating Class
St. Stanislaus School- 1917

The Parish Centennial Graduating Class St Stanislaus School -1991
Amy Banack, Emily Bartis, Steven Bender, Jamon Bish, Lizabeth Bobbi, Michael Civali, Kristen Daly, Timothy DiLeo, Alex Driver, Andrew Grabiec, Andrew Gregg, Katherine Jachym, Magdalena Janiszewski, Kevin Kofsuske, Elizabeth Krupa, Jennifer Loman, Todd McGinnis and Robert Najarian. Also pictured are Rev. Zigford Kriss, Pastor, Suzanne Gaughran, Teacher, John Salatto, Principal and Rev. Joseph Paciorek.

First Holy Communion Class
From the 1940's

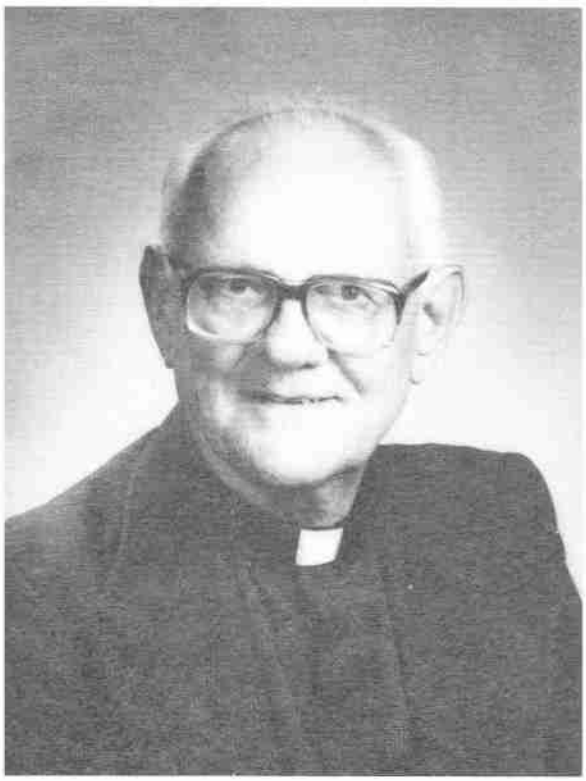
First Holy Communion Class
1991

This photo shows a group of young parishioners who are participating in a play or a show. The date of this picture is unknown.

A group of young parishoners present the musical "Sound of Music" in 1990.

Rev. Allan Hill, Assistant

Rev. Joseph Paciorek, CM
In- Residence



Solemn closing of Forty Hours Devotion April 14, 1991

St. Stanislaus Church
1991

bequests for that purpose. Furthermore, the pastor felt that the parish ought to commemorate Ceppa, to whom it owed so much. While the chapel drive was not originally conceived as an instrument for the reunification of the parish family, everyone got behind the idea with $325,000 in donations and worked together on the project.[22] Therefore, the dedication of the Ceppa Memorial Chapel became a natural crowning moment in the healing of the parish because the pastor helped to create the conditions in which the wounds could heal themselves. The Memorial Chapel became at once a monument to the parish, which renewed its appreciation and pride in its past, and a symbol of the parishioners' confidence in the future. Considering what the parish had been through, and how it had healed and reconciled itself, it was understandable that the pastor could comment with a touch of awe in his voice that "God must love this parish!"[23]

But what of the future? If the past is prologue to the present and the future, the 1980s blazed the paths that St. Stanislaus may travel as it enters its second century.

The St. Stanislaus Parish of the 1980s combined the modernity of a post-Vatican II parish community with traditional ethnic values. While parish administration is again the responsibility of a single pastor, the elected Parish Council actively helps the pastor coordinate parish administration and advises him. However, the relationship between pastor and council has evolved into a more equitable emphasis upon leadership and dedication, as opposed to the restricted, advisory relationship of the first years.[24] The pastor, in turn, whose goal is to have every parishioner involved in the parish in some way, utilizes their individual expertise. The Council's Finance and Liturgy Committees are of particular importance in parish management and organization. A good liturgy is a priority for the pastor, for his opportunity to see and speak with all the parishioners is when they gather to worship together. The advice and support of the Finance Committee, instituted in 1986, is critical in meeting ever mounting expenses. Because of the parish's commitment to a quality program of Catholic education, the Home and School Association is another critical parish group. Parish subsidies to Meriden's largest Catholic school have risen from $93,871 in 1979 to over $200,000 annually in 1991. The faculty, reflecting another aspect of the post-immigrant church, consists entirely of laypeople, including a lay principal.[25] This, in turn, raises the question as to what to do with the convent. Finally, the parish maintains an active adult (i.e., post-grammar school) education program, which requires properly educated lay ministers, especially for the sacramental programs.[26]

St. Stanislaus reflects the post-Vatican II Church in other ways. In addition to the parish deacons, in 1988 Sister Monica Niemira was named Pastoral Minister. This appointment reflects both the changing role of women in the Church and the great decline in male vocations confronting the American Catholic Church. Earlier immigrant parishes prided themselves on the numbers of vocations that they offered to the Church, and there were 7 ordinations from St. Stanislaus in the 1960s. However, there have been none since 1969, this despite prayers and scholarships offered by the Holy Name society for seminary study by parish natives.[27] On the other hand, St. Stanislaus conducts a successful seminarian/deacon-in-residence apprenticeship program to help seminarians understand the job of a priest in parish work and life.[28]

The *Sunday Bulletins* and the Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings indicate that problems confronting the contemporary Church and society also

demand parishioners' attention. Announcements and discussions about Pro-Life activities, masses for separated and divorced Catholics, the cult character of the Moon Unification Church, Catholic School Week, sex education according to diocesan guidelines, the Archdiocesan Renew Program, entrances for the handicapped to parish buildings, the needs of the Church in Latin America, the Soup Kitchen, the Shelter, the problem of drugs and alcoholism among young people, difficulties involving young people in parish activities, and the Apostolate to the elderly (Sunshine Club), especially those confined to nursing homes, indicate that the modern Christian cannot remain apart from the world around the local parish.[29] In the School a "Latch Key" or supervised after-school program was introduced, as was "Rainbows for All God's Children", a support group program for children who have suffered a significant loss in their lives, either by death, divorce, or any other painful transition.[30] The most recent instance of the forcible intrusion of contemporary social problems into parish life was the arrest of Diane Pociadlo, a teacher at the parish school, who was charged with failure to report an alleged case of child abuse. The parish and the community rallied around the teacher, holding that the arrest never should have been made, especially after the actual abusers were charged. The case against Pociadlo was nolled, but it is clear that parish and its parishioners are not immune from society's pains.[31]

St. Stanislaus in the late 1970s and during the 1980s presents a picture of an active parish community. The *Sunday Bulletins* chronicle a full calendar of liturgical, cultural, athletic, and social events.[32] Beyond the Parish, its members remain prominent in public life, re-confirming the integration of Meriden's Poles into the host society, a process that has gone on for nearly a century. State Sen. John Zajac, after losing a race for State Treasurer on the Republican ticket in 1974 won a seat as state representative in 1977, a position that he holds until today. At the local level, Polish names continue to appear on the municipal roster as town clerk (Carol C. Kosienski), deputy mayor (Anthony P. Zemetis), selectmen (Walter Swabski, Bruce P. Soroka, and Zygmont Gonglewski), aldermen (Louis Markiewicz, Frederick Biestek, Roman Artkop, Joseph Grodzicki, William J. Tomkiewicz, Frank J. Duszak, John E. Nowicky, Anthony P. Zemetis, Daniel Iwanicki, David Szymaszek, Martin Lilienthal, and Thomas M. Sobolewski), tax collector (Joseph Zebora), constables (Walter Brys, Walter Swabski), sheriff (Eugene Milewski) members of the Boards of Education (William J. Niemiec, Jr, Frank Kogut), Public Safety (Louis Markiewicz, Roman Artkop, Walter Deptula), Apportionment and Taxation (Theodore Brysh), Tax Review (Robert Salka, Robert F. Sieracki, Frank Kogut, L. Sobolewski), and Economic Opportunity (William Tomkiewicz), as city engineer (Bruce Soroka), director of Public Works (Stanley Wieloch), and again as Chief of Police (Robert Kosienski - 1985).[33] And political influence is used to benefit the neighborhood, as when Alderman David Szymaszek in 1981 successfully pushed for the inclusion of the South Central area in the Neighborhood Preservation Loans and Grants Program, which made low interest redevelopment loans available.[34]

As St. Stanislaus celebrates its centennial, it is clear that this is an active parish community revolving around the Church, School and Community Center, and extending into the broader community. Statistics, however, prompt reflection about the parish's future and its role as an ethnic parish. When Kriss arrived in 1979, there were 5,560 parishioners, a figure which peaked at 6,118 in 1982, and which in 1990 stands at 5,399. St. Stanislaus is still a large parish, but with a declining membership. In 1979 school enrollment was 377, peaking at 462 in 1982,

and standing at 294 for 1990-1991. Enrollment, however, is up to 340 for the 1991-1992 school year, suggesting that a corner is being turned. Another encouraging statistic is the number of parish families, a figure that has risen from 2,009 in 1979 to a high of 2,308 in 1990. However, the average family size is 2.8 persons, a far cry from the early days of immigration when large families were the norm.[35]

These demographics are reflected in the parishioners' sacramental lives. During Kriss' first year 2,246 parishioners attended Sunday Mass, with 1124 (50%) receiving Holy Communion. These figures reached a high in 1981 when 2,304 parishioners were counted at Sunday Mass with 1,259 (55%) receiving Communion.[36] Since then the numbers have declined steadily to 1990, when the figures were 1,768 attending Sunday Mass and 1190 (67%) receiving Communion. While the percentage of those participating in the Sacrament of Communion has risen, and achieved a parish goal often enunciated from the pulpit, the hard numbers are down. Furthermore only 32% of the parishioners in 1990 were attending Sunday Mass.[37] In comparison with the two preceding teams, Baptisms during Kriss' tenure are up slightly (61.8 as an annual average versus 60), as are First Communions 69.4 versus 61) and the number of converts (3.08 versus 1.5). Confirmations, however, are down (37.25 versus 84.1) as are Marriages (27.6 versus 35), while the number of funerals, following a trend going back to the post-war years, up (86.6 versus 76.2).[38]

St. Stanislaus, after a growth surge between 1981 and 1984, experienced a modest but definite demographic decline. While the real beginning of this decline is traceable to the 1950s and 1960s, it remains to be seen if the trend will persist into the parish's next century. It is also noteworthy that despite the pastor's goal of having every parishioner involved in the parish, elections to the Parish Council have sometimes gone uncontested.[39] In the area of finances, it is striking that parish income rose from $390,443 in 1979 to $481,310 in 1986, and to $681,117 for 1990. Despite a declining demographic base, the parishioners remain faithful and generous toward their parish. However, the pastor himself would like to see the creation of a one million dollar endowment in order to assure parish finances, to reduce the time spent on fund-raising, and to allow more time for spiritual needs and activities.[40]

Financial and demographic matters are key issues for Roman Catholic parishes in America, particularly those carrying the burden of maintaining a parish school. Parishes with such institutional complexity, and which require highly skilled pastor-administrators, are an inheritance passed down from the immigrant generation of American Catholicism. In larger cities like Detroit and Chicago, many such parishes have been closed because of declining and assimilated populations, and because unsentimental Church authorities deemed them financially inefficient and too expensive to keep open. The old ethnic neighborhoods where they are located have changed as new immigrant groups have arrived or disappeared under the wrecking crane of urban renewal. As the rates of inter-marriages increased, some have argued that a Catholic melting pot has succeeded in amalgamating the old immigrant/ethnic parishes. St. Stanislaus has not disappeared, nor is it in any immediate danger of doing so. Why then has this urban parish survived in reasonable health for a century? And has it become a part of Catholic melting pot?

The original immigrant parish was the center of an urban village populated with parishioners largely of peasant origin. In the case of St. Stanislaus, nearly every first and second generation Pole belonged to the parish well into the 1930s and 1940s. As a result of post-war inter-marriages and out-migration from the old ethnic neighborhoods, the community and the parish's immigrant ethnic profiles changed.

In 1980 Meriden counted 57,118 citizens, 9,582 of whom were of exclusive (4,830) or mixed Polish ancestry (4,752).[41] In the same year there were 5,744 members of St. Stanislaus Parish. There is a demographic base to support a large parish. However, 3,383 individuals of Polish descent, or 40% of all Meriden citizens of Polish extraction, did not belong to the Polish parish. Furthermore, a survey of the ethnic backgrounds of the parish school children in 1978 revealed that 40% were Polish, 10% Irish, 10% Italian, 9% German, 6% French Canadian, 5% English, 4% Welsh, 3% Portuguese, 3% Russian, 2% Lithuanian, 2% Czechoslovakia, 2% Scottish, 2% American Indian, with the remainder including Austrians, Danes, Puerto Ricans, Swedes, and Hungarians. The commentator concluded that this was a logical development. St. Stanislaus was by location and birthplace of its students an American school of Polish Catholic origin.[42] Both facts may be used to lend support to the argument about the emergence of a Catholic melting pot. St. Stanislaus survived because of a demographic base, but also because it has been flexible and adaptable.

St. Stanislaus continued to cultivate it's ethnic identity, and no less so since 1978. As already indicated, the election of John Paul II was greeted with elation. When Kriss assumed the pastorate, he did so partly because of a sense of obligation about being Polish, and has attempted to cultivate an awareness of Polish culture and traditions. *Oplatek* and *swieconka*, Forty Hours, Marian devotions and the Shepherd's Mass at Christmas, are still part of the parish liturgical life, and *oplatek* and *swieconka* have become popular among the non-Polish parishioners at St. Stanislaus and in other Meriden parishes. Kriss also organized in 1979 a musical and academic program to mark the 900th Anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Stanislaus of Krakow, the parish's patron; a tridium to commemorate the 600th Anniversary of the icon of the Madonna of Czestochowa in 1982; encouraged the collection of funds for Solidarity in 1980, 1981, and 1982; kept a candle lit as a sign of support for Solidarity in the early days of martial law; helped to resettle the few members of the Solidarity immigration who came to Meriden; hosted as rectory guests priests from Poland; and continued the annual collection for the League for Religious Assistance to Poland.[43]

Many of the concerns and interests of Polish Americans in the 1980s also echoed at St. Stanislaus. This is not to say, however, that St. Stanislaus was the "Polish parish" of the immigrant church. Except for some liturgical services, Polish cultural activities were conducted in English. In 1983 the number of Polish-language Masses was reduced from 2 to 1, with the 12 o'clock Sunday Mass attracting about 175 parishioners. Polish-language announcements appear only occasionally in the *Sunday Bulletin*. The maintenance of the Polish language is not, as it was in the days of the immigrant church, an objective, nor is the cultivation of "Polishness". This pains some of the Solidarity immigrants, some of whom were settled in Meriden with assistance from the Parish.[44] They want Polish taught in the parish school. They are critical of the pastor for not meeting this need that they have, and are also critical of the quality of the sermons, which they feel do not deal with themes important and familiar to them, such as the Mother of God.[45] Some of the tensions between immigrant generations which lay behind the disputes at Sacred Heart and St. Michael's in 1987 and 1988-1989 exist at St. Stanislaus.[46] Those recent disputes recalled for some the earlier St. Stanislaus crisis, particularly the inevitability of having to submit to episcopal authority. However, rather than siding with the protesters at Sacred Heart or at St. Michael's, a former Loyal Parishioner criticized

the new emigres, remarking: "You can't bring Solidarity here. This is America. There's a difference."[47]

Helen Zwolinski stated a fact. Unless there were to be a major influx of Polish immigrants, the recent arrivals, who account for perhaps 3% of the parish population, will have to adapt, rather than expect to re-Polonize St. Stanislaus. They will, as they establish their economic foothold, have to integrate themselves into the parish, for the numbers are not there to support a return to the immigrant church of a century ago.[48]

In the pastor's view, the immigrant parish has passed. The objectives of St. Stanislaus Parish as an ethnic institution are to help new immigrants to Americanize in an environment where they can enjoy a Polish language liturgy. Unlike the immigrant parishes, which served as both a culture-preserving and Americanizing institution, the emphasis at St. Stanislaus has been upon the latter ever since the emergence of the second generation. As an ethnic parish, St. Stanislaus' primary obligation is to the second, third, and succeeding generations, which are not exclusively of Polish ancestry. Some are interested in preserving their culture, but no longer can use the language. Hymns and customs, as one expression of the ancestral culture, can be preserved and cultivated, but not the language. Therefore, if St. Stanislaus wants to be a strong parish family, it cannot rely exclusively upon the recent immigrants, lest the parish die. St. Stanislaus' future is as a parish with a strong liturgy and educational program, and these transcend ethnic lines. As an ethnic parish, St. Stanislaus' future is not as a Polish church, but as a church that serves Poles of every generation and everyone else.

May 8, 1991

[1] Bukowczyk, p. 122.

[2] *The Hartford Courant*, February 26, 1989.

[3] See Andrzej Krajewski, ed., *Region USA. Dzialacze Solidarnosci o kraju, o emigracji o sobie* (London: "ANEKS", 1989).

[4] Bukowczyk, p. 123.

[5] *Ibid* pp. 123-24. According to another sources, between 1940 and 1960 those claiming Polish as a first tongue dropped from 2,416,320 to 2,184,936, a loss of 9.6%. Olson, pp. 186-7.

[6] US Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population. I. Characteristics of the Population. General Social and Economic Characteristics . Pt. 8. Connecticut* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, July, 1983), pp. 45-6.

[7] See Jan Wojcik and Mieczyslaw Kierklo, *Z Dziejow Zolnierza-emigranta. Historia "Haller Post" w New Britain* (New Britain, Connecticut: Placowka 111 Stowarzyszenia Weteranow Armii Polskiej w Ameryce, 1991), pp. 41-46.

[8] The letters of appreciation that SI received are available at the CPAAMC.

[9] *The Hartford Courant*, February 26, 1989.

[10] There is an extensive file on these disputes at the CPAAMC.

[11] Personalities also played a role in these complicated disputes.

[12] *Sunday Bulletin*, October 22 and 29, 1978.

[13] *MMR & J*, December 26, 1978.

[14] *Resume of Zigford Kriss*.

[15] In his first homily at St. Stanislaus, Kriss recounted how he told his 89 year old mother about his new appointment. She asked if it was a Polish parish, and when he responded yes she replied "Good!"

[16] *Kriss Resume* and *Interview with Rev. Zigford Kriss*, May 15, 1991. The *Resume* is the one Kriss submitted when applying for the vacancy.

[17] *Kriss Resume*.

[18] *Kriss Homily*. In his first address to the Parish Council, Kriss spoke of the national need for evangelization and in order to bring people back to the Church, including St. Stan's. He also emphasized the good that he saw in the Parish, and urged people not to be overly critical of each other. People who are working should be positively reinforced. "Our job as a Parish is to sooth the pain because a lot of people have been hurt." His

comments met with a cautious, but favorable response. *SSPC.M.* January 14, 1979. Subsequently a letter was mailed to all parishioners, as part of the Parish's evangelization, inviting everyone back to the Parish. *SSPC.M.* March 11, 1979.

[19] *Parishioners Interviews*, July 11, 1989 and April 17, 1991. Kriss wanted the parishioners to think of the Parish as a family and to create a feeling of warmth. *SSPC.M.* March 14, 1979.

[20] *Sunday Bulletin*, January 20, 1980.

[21] *Kriss Interview*, *Parishioners Interviews*, July 11, 1989 and April 17, 1991.

[22] See *Monsignor John L. Ceppa Memorial Chapel Dedicated September 7, 1986, Meriden, Connecticut.*

[23] *Kriss Interview*.

[24] The oath administered to the 1987 Council members reads: "We, the duly elected members of the the Parish Council of the Parish Family of St. Stanislaus dedicate ourselves to serve with God's grace the Parish Family according to the guidelines of the Parish Council. We dedicate ourselves to lead by example of living our Catholic Faith and to use our times and talents for spiritual and material good of the Parish Family of St. Stanislaus." The pastor blesses and accepts "your dedication to serve the Parish Family of St. Stanislaus".*SSPC.M.* For the first pledge see Chapter 11.

[25] See Appendix J.

[26] See *St. Stanislaus Parish Visitation Report to Bishop Rosazza, April 28, 29, 1990*, pp. 13-6, 20-1. Hereafter *Parish Visitation Report*.

[27] See Appendices I and J.

[28] See Appendix H.

[29] *Sunday Bulletins, 1979-1990*. There was some opposition to placing a soup kitchen on parish property for fear of the impact of its clientele upon children. Eventually, parish volunteers worked in the soup kitchen run by the Salvation Army. *SSPC.M.* May 11 and September 28, 1983, and November 14, 1984. Parish volunteers continue to help man the soup kitchen, and requires Confirmation candidates to perform 25 hours of community service. *Parish Visitation Report*, pp. 20, 22-3.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

[31] *MMR&J*, May 9 and 20, and July 3, 5, and 9, 1990.

[32] See Chapter 11.

[33] *Meriden Directory, 1970-1980* and *Meriden, Connecticut City* Directory (Johnson Publishing Company), Inc. Kosienski, a parishioner, was congratulated and commended by the president of the Parish Council because "you never degraded the Polish people and we are proud of you." Kulinski to Kosienski, November 23, 1985, *SSPC.M.*) 1982 to the present.

[34] *SSPC.M.* November 12, 1980, January 28, February 11, March 11, 1981; and D. Szymaszek to Kriss, June 1, 1981, *SSPC.M.*, .

[35] *Annual Reports, 1979-1990*. School enrollment declined in the mid-1980s at St. Stanislaus and at other parochial schools because of the opening of Washington Middle School. Some parents are dissatisfied with large enrollment at WMS, and have begun to enroll their children in the new pre-primary school at St. Stanislaus in order to guarantee their admission into the parish school.

[36] This count is taken in October in accordance with Archdiocesan regulations.

[37] This figure requires some qualification. The average annual number of funerals during Kriss' tenure is 86.6, while the number of Baptism is 61.8. The parish is losing older parishioners who were regular church goers. Secondly, weekly Mass attendance is down in general among American Catholics. There are also more affluent parishioners who have second homes, where they spend their weekends. Finally, many parishioners reside a distance from the parish, and attend Sunday Mass only once or twice a month at St. Stanislaus.

[38] *Annual Reports, 1979-1990*.

[39] See, for example, *Sunday Bulletin*, October 22, 1989. Finding enough active parishioners to serve on the Council and its various committees is a problem that was first noted in 1976, and which has persisted. See *SSPC.M.* December 8, 1976; September 9 and October 14, 1981; and February 20 and November 9, 1983.

[40] *Kriss Interview* and *SSPC.M.*, May 13, 1987. In the winter months preceding the annual June Festival, parish women gather for pierogi making sessions. The pierogi are frozen for later sale at the Festival. This time consuming volunteerism also occurs in other Polish parishes.

[41] US Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population*, pp. 45-46.

[42] *Sunday Bulletin*, February 26, 1978.

[43] *Sunday Bulletins*, April 22, 1979; February 1 and 8, July 5, October 4, December 20, 1981; April 11, August 1, November 28, December 12, 1982; and October 16, 1983. See also *St. Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow, Martyred May 8th, 1079. 900th Jubilee May 1079-1979. Church of St. Stanislaus, Meriden, Connecticut.*

[44] The Parish was approached by the Archdiocesan Catholic Family services in 1981. The response was positive because: "It is our responsibility as we are all generations from immigrants from Poland". *SSPC.M.* September 9, 1981.

[45] Personal letter to the author, July 5, 1989.

[46] See *Parish Visitation Report*, p.5.

[47] *MR & J*, February 19, 1989.

[48] The majority of the Solidarity emigres and immigrants were reported to be doing well, 11 to 12 doing very well, and 2 or 3 having "a problem handling their alcohol". *SSPC.M.* November 10, 1982.

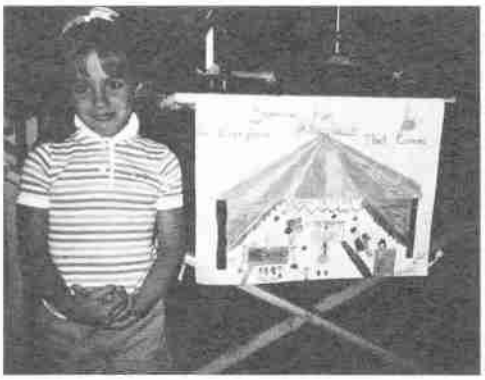
Above left *Sister Sebalda Lewandowski and Father Kriss enjoying a light moment at the annual June Festival.* ***Above right*** *Sister Ludgera Kwolek at the Festival. Sister Sebalda and Sister Ludgera both celebrated their 60th Anniversary as Sisters of St. Joseph in 1991.*

Sister Magdalene Przywara with a young friend at the Festival.

Longtime parishoners Adeline Nalewajek and Vicky Janczura serving up clam chowder and Kielbasa sandwiches at the Festival.

Festival workers Leo Woronick and Frank Ziemba man one of the Festival's game booths.

John Prytko and the"Good Times" orchestra are long time favorite of Festival goers.



The June Fest is for everyone, young and old. This young parishoner is enjoying the music at the festival.

Hungry festival-goers relax and enjoy the famous Polish foods.

Sister Daniel pauses for this picture at the festival.

Young parishoners in traditional costume give an exhibition of traditional Polish dances.

Long time parishoner Catherine Wanat enjoys watching traditional Polish dances.

Parishoner John Korzenko at the Grocery booth.

Appendix A

Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow

In the early Eleventh Century the young Polish State under went a serious political crisis. Casimir the Restorer (1034-1058), facing political unrest, had to surrender the royal crown and was driven into exile. He returned in 1039, and began to reconstruct his state, a policy followed by his son Boleslaus the Bold (1058-1079). Boleslaus, who pursued an active foreign policy, interfered in the affairs Kievan Rus and Hungary, and in the civil wars in the Holy Roman Empire, succeeding in 1076 in regaining the royal crown and having himself crowned as Poland's third king.

In 1071, while still Duke, Boleslaus invested Stanislaus with the office of Bishop of Diocese of Cracow, which was Poland's royal capitol. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the Bishop and the King came into conflict. It has been suggested recently that the origins of their dispute might be traced to Boleslaus' plans to re-build and re-organize the Polish Church, which may have limited the influence and financial resources of the Cracow Diocese. It has also been suggested that Boleslaus' generous endowments to the Church antagonized the wealthy magnates. Between 1077 and 1079 relations between the King and Stanislaus and the magnates worsened, and there may have been a plot organized against Boleslaus. Wincenty Kadlubek, an early biographer of Stanislaus, tells us that the King's behavior became more cruel, and the Bishop and the magnates joined forces and rebelled against him. The King then ordered his Bishop executed and the Bishop's body, as that of a rebel, dismembered. This took place on April 11, 1079, most likely in Wawel courtyard, although popular legend holds that it occurred at the Church of St. Michael on the Hill. The shocking news of the Bishop's execution sparked a revolt, and Boleslaus took refuge in Hungary, where he died in 1081.

The conflict between Stanislaus and Boleslaus was one of the most dramatic conflicts between Church and State in medieval Europe. It occurred three years after the Investiture Controversy between Pope Gregrory VII and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, and preceded the case of Thomas Becket in England.

Bishop Stanislaus is the only participant in the rebellion known to us. Subsequent chroniclers embedded the conflict between the King and his Bishop into Poland's historical tradition. While Gallus the Anonymous (d. c. 1116) neither excused "the rebel bishop" nor approved "of the king who wreaked such a horrid revenge", Wincenty Kadlubek (c. 1160-1223) described Stanislaus as "a martyr" and "a saint". Reflecting medieval religiosity, Kadlubek wrote how four eagles from the four corners of the world converged to guard the Bishop's dismembered body, whose parts shown with an illuminated light "For so many divine lights of incredible brilliance shown in various places as there were particles of the sainted body scattered, and the heaven itself seemed to envy the earth its adornment, an earth embellished by starlight and - one could say - by the Sun's rays." And when Stanislaus' followers, awed by this miracle, came to collect the body, they encountered another miracle, finding it whole "without even a trace of scars".

Kadlubek wrote at a time when the Polish state was wracked by feudal divisions that would last nearly two centuries (1138-1320). His version of events influenced the *Vita minor* of Wincenty of Kielce, who blamed Stanislaus' death for the subsequent fall and disintegration of the Polish Kingdom. This biography was used by the Polish Church to promote the canonization of St. Stanislaus, which took place in 1253, making the Bishop of Cracow

the first native Polish saint. After the canonization, Wincenty of Kielce penned a *Vita maior* (1255), which propounded the re-unification of the state and the restoration of the Kingdom, which its capitol in Cracow. Just as Stanislaus's body was made whole, so would the Polish state be reunified. Thus the biographies of St. Stanislaus and the growing cult of the new saint became important factors in the efforts to reunify the Polish State in the late Thirteenth and early Fourteenth Century, establishing a tradition within the Polish Church of identifying the interests of the nation with those of the Church.

The cult of St. Stanislaus spread throughout Poland. A liturgical song of the Polish clergy ran: "*Powstan, Polsko z ciemnosci ku swiatlo, bo nastal dzien uroczysty, ciesze sie Krakowie...i czcij uroczyscie pamiec swietgo Stanislawa biskupa, jasniejacego cudami*" (Arise, Poland, from the darkness to the light, for the festive day has arrived: rejoice Cracow ... and ceremoniously venerate the memory of Bishop St. Stanislaus, radiant with miracles). The sixteenth-century Polish King, Zygmunt the Old (1506-1548) jokingly complained that there were Stanislauses from one end of his Kingdom to another (*Stanislaw z izby - Stanislaw do izby*).

When peasant immigrants came to the United States, they also brought with them their traditional names. Among the 759 Polish parishes in the United States in 1959, 97 were named St. Stanislaus, 63 after Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr, and 34 after the sixteenth-century Stanislaus Kostka (1550-1568).

In our own time the dramatic conflict between Stanislaus and Boleslaus took on a new meaning in 1979 when the first Polish Pope, John Paul II, returned to visit his native land. Karol Wojtyla, himself an episcopal descendant of Stanislaus as Bishop of Cracow, made this trip on the 900th anniversary of his predecessor's death. The significance of the visit, within the context of church-state conflict in post-war communist Poland, was not lost upon Poles.

Sources: Anonim tzw. Gall, *Kronika polska* (Wroclaw, Poland: Ossolineum, 1975. Biblioteka Narodowa, Nr. 59. First ed. 1923), pp. 57-58; Marian Plezia, ed., *Sredniowieczne zywoty i cuda patronow Polski* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987), pp. 97-331; Tadeusz Grudzinski, *Boleslaus the Bold and Bishop Stanislaus: The Story of a Conflict* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1985), especially chapters 3, 6 and 7; and Rev. Z. M. A. Peszkowski, "List of Polish Roman Catholic Parishes in the United States", *Sacrum Poloniae Millennium* VI, 255-369.

Appendix B

Charter Members of the Parish, 1892

Andrzej and Katarzyna Brys; Maciej Brys; Wincenty and Katarzyna Brys; Jan Bober; Jan Bober (later of New Britain); Michal Blazejowski; Andrzej Borek; Wilhelm Bobinski; Tekla Bozyk; Maciej Borek; Aleksander Chylewski; Wojciech and Anna Curylo; Wojciech and Anna Dybski; Marcin and Agnieszka Fydrych; Michal and Marya Ferenz; Walenty Fydrych; Tomasz and Anna Gramza; Maciej Guła; Jozef Grela; Jozef Grzebien; Wawrzyniec Galat; Michal Gosztyla; Wladyslaw Guła; Jozef Haras; Adam and Ewa Jaroszewski; Anna Jedynak; Andrzej Jesionek; Jan and Anna Jarzemski; Jozef and Zofia Karpinski; Jan and Marya Karasiewicz; Michal Kocon; Jan and Jozefa Kurcon; Stanislaw and Karolina Kania; Jan and Marya Krupa; Antoni Kuzminski; Maryan Krajewski; Stanislaw Kasprzycki; Michal and Marya Kloc; Konstanty Krajewski; Franciszek and Teresa Kusza; Katarzyna Kudla (wife of Zieminski); Josef and Anna Kaczmarski; Wojciech and Zofia Krupa; Michal and Jadwiga Krol; Antoni and Wiktoria Lepak; Ewa Lenczowska; Kazimierz and Marya Lepak; Antoni and Marya Morawski; Jozef and Monika Morawski; Jan Markowski; Boleslaw and Marta Markowski; Bronislaw Markowski; Michal Milas; Jan Miga; Jan and Weronika Milosnicki; Weronika Markowska; Stanislaw and Magdalena Moczadlo; Jozef Midura; Wladyslaw Miga; Klemens and Aniela Makowiec; Wojciech and Anna Muszynski; Piotr Mackiewicz; Antoni and Anna Nowakowski; Antoni and Marya Nozynski; Jan Nowak; Konstanty and Ewa Nowakowski; Jan and Agata Niemiec; Waclaw Pietrzycki; Andrzej Pietrzycki; Wojciech and Ewa Pinkos; Tekla Pracon; Jan and Katarzyna Pyrek; Franciszek Podgorski; Jan Polak; Michal and Tekla Pasionek; Wawrzyniec and Apolonia Rogosz; Wojciech and Jozefa Rogosz; Jan Radkowski; Katarzyna Rogosz; Wojciech and Zofia Stachura; Franciszek Szumny; Aleksander Sopocki; Andrzej and Anna Swieton; Karol and Marya Szymanski; Josef Sitko; Andrzej and Weronika Sujdak; Jan Sitko; Julian and Jadwiga Smialowski; Ludwik Stefanowicz; Marya Szarek; Jan and Antonina Szargalski; Jakob and Franciszka Smietana; Jan Szarek; Jakob Skwarski; Jozef and Ludwika Składzien; Stanislaw and Anna Sobelewski; Jozef and Kazimiera Tyczkowski; Ignacy Trzcinski; Jozef Wizman, Wojciech Wojcik; Jan Wiktor; Kazimierz Wolak; Mikolaj Wanic; Jozef and Jozefa Wanat; Michal Wolanin; Jan and Wiktoria Wiech; Antoni and Jozefa Zuchowski; Jozef Zarek; Stanislaw Zaleski; Michal Zieminski.

Source: *Album Pamiatkowy Zlotego Jubileuszu Parafii Sw. Stanislawa B. M. w Meriden, Connecticut [1892-1942] w niedziele, 6-go wrzesnia, 1942.. P. 72.*

Appendix C

Veterans of Gen. Haller's Polish Army

I. Adaszkiewicz; W. Andrzejewski; K. Astramowicz; Alex Banaros; Stanislaw Banek; Frank Belczyk; Michal Bieszczak; Frank Bonarek; Jozef Bonczek; Jozef Bogucki; Stanislaw Brodz; Lucyan Chmielewski; Peter Czerwienski; Gustaw Dabrowski; Hipolit Filipkowski; Jozef Goral; Ludwik Grabowski; Jozef Grodzicki; Wincenty Gryga; Jozef Dzikowski; Antoni Grzyancz; Aleksander Ickowski; Frank Jamrzewski; Pawel Jez; Jozef Jojczyk; Maciej Jojczyk; Aleksander Jurkas; Marcin Kaczor; A. Kalinowski; Stanislaw Klenk; Jozef Kaluzny; Waclaw Klosienski; Michal Korona; Henry Kolakowski; Stanley Kos; Paul Kozak; Piotr Krol; Piotr Kwasniewski; Frank Kubicki; Michal Kucma; Ignacy Laskowski; Jan Liber; Michal Liszczak; Sylwester Zygmont; Jos. Mita; Tomasz Maja; Jan Marosz; Teo. Modzelewski; Marcin Mozdziak; Jozef Morcek; Jozef Mrozek; Jan Musnicki; Jozef Nessing; Wincenty Oblon; Jan Ornowski, Jozef Piora; Jozef Polkoszek; Frank Pomian; Stanislaw Morawski; Wincenty Ptak; Jozef Sinder, Jan Siodlowski; Jakob Slowik; Adam Sokolowski; Paul Stankiewicz; Joseph Staszewski; Frank Stawasz; John Swiatek; John Swider; Ignace Szawerda; Bronislaw Szawerda; Michal Tarnowski; Andrew Tokarz; Michael Cwieck; Anthony Urban; John Urban; Wojciech Walczak; John Walek; John Walenta; Jan Waters; John Wenk; Peter Wierzcholek; Joseph Wisniewski; John Wnek; Frank Janneczewski; Bartholomew Zajac; Blasjeh Zima; Marcel Zaorski; Boleslaw Zawacki; Vincent Zokrzewski.

Killed in Action

Franciszek Bonarek; Francizsek Dworak; Jozef Kowalski; Antoni Kalinowski; Stanislaw Morawski; Jozef Mrozek; Walenty Ptak; Jan Swider; Jar. Wisniewski; Piotr Wierzcholek.

Source: *APZJ*, p. 75.

Appendix D

World War I Veterans of the American Armed Forces

Juliusz Awdziewicz; Ludwik Augustin; Jozef Badorek; Stanislaw Baranski; Michael Barran; Jan Bochinski; Stefan Bochinski; Teodor Blazejewski; Karol Bober; Rudolf Bober; Vincent Bogucki; Stanley Bogucki; Stanley Borkowski; John Borys; Frank Brys; Teddy Brys; Walter Brys; Benjamin Brys; John Brys; John Curylo; George Cmiel; Victor Czeczotka; Stanley Damienski; P.M. Dombrowski; William Frank Dombrowski; Andrew Dudek; Teodor Dybiec; Max Dybiec; Stanley Dzieniszewicz; Jozef Fitrzyk; Walter Galat; John Hara; Julian Jasziewicki; B.S. Juralewicz; Michael J. Kabaj; Adam Kaczynski; Jozef Kanownik; Frank Karsmarski; P.L. Karsmarski; John Kiemish; Samuel Kiemish; Adam Kiempurski; Alex Korash; Louis Karach; Paul Klaja; John Kicilenski; Michael Kicilenski; Anthony Kochanowski; Frank Kochanowski; Thomas Kogut; Stanley Kostowski; John Kotowski; John Kabaj; Joseph John Kowaleski; Joseph W. Kowalski; Raymond Kowalksi; Melchior Krajewski; Stanislaus Kogut; Joseph Kowalski; John Krajewski; Michael Krupa; Stefan Kuczala; Paul F. Laskowski; Stanley Laskowski; John Martancik; Leo Mierzejewski; Stefan Mierzejewski; John Muszenski; Anthony Milosnicki; Stanley Milewski; William J. Niemiec; Peter Niemiec; Walter Nalewajek; Jozef Niezgoda; Stanley Nowakowski; F. Olszewski; J.H. Olszewski; John Panek; George W. Pac; Frank Pogorzelski; Anthony Pinkevich; Charles Pinkevich; Stefan Pucinski; Jozef Pokrywka; Stanley Rakowski; Henry Rakowski; Frank Rajewski; Walter Roguz; Alex Rutka; Walter Robakiewicz; Frank Rutkowski; John Savina; Thoeodore Shoneck; Frank Shoneck; John Skiba; Edward Skladzien; Peter W. Skladzien; Dr. Thaddeus S. Skladzien; Walter Slowinski; John Sokol; Peter Sokol; John Sokolawiak; Lawrence Stoba; John Stafinski; Vincent Skotnicki; Frank Swiatek; Henry Swiatek; George Szela; John Sobczyk; Leo Smitana; Joseph Szawerda; Anthony Szymaszek; Adam Tadeusiak; Anthony Wiktor; Konstanty Wierzbiecki; Frank J. Wiech; Leo Wrobel; Albert Zagorski; Walter Zysk; Al. Zawistowski; Walter Zychowski; Edward Zuchowski.

Source: *APZJ*, p. 74.

Appendix E

World War II Veterans of the American Armed Forces

Edward E. Agacinski; Jan J.Antonowicz; Edward W. Astramowicz; Raymond S. Artkop; Jozef B. Augustyn; Jan Awdziewicz; Walter J. Badorek; John Bakaj; Frank Bambuch; Henry John Bak; Jan Bielak; Walter F. Bieluczyk; Edward Bieluczyk; Louis Bochnik; Walter John Bogacz; Edward Borkowski; Vincent J. Blachuta; Michal Bozuchowski; Stefan Bozuchowski; Stanley J. Bozuik; Frank Brys; Walter W. Budnik; Walter B. Budnik; John B. Budnik; Frank J. Budziniak; Benjamin J. Burdacki; Edward J. Burdacki; Frank Burdacki; Rudolf J. Burda; Francis E. Budziniak; Zygmunt Buganski; Jozef Byczynski; Peter Cebula; Stanley J. Chichowski; Walter S. Chichowski; Edward M. Chrostowski; Leon R. Chrostowski; Stanley Chrostowski; John R. Chrostowski; Edward T. Cobey; Eugene J. Cwiekowski; Jozef E. Czarnecki; Alfons Crispino; Walter J. Czapiga; Edward Czaplicki; Jan S. Czerwonka; Edward S. Dara; Paul J. Dara; Richard B. Dabrowski; Thaddeus J. Drozd; Stanley P. Dudek; Edward J. Dudek; Joseph M. Duberek; Frank Dykas; Jozef A. Dziadosz; Tadeusz S. Dziadosz; Peter F. Dziekan; Wawrzyniec Dziurgot; Bronislaw Dziurgot; Jozef F. Erazmus; Aleksander Erazmus;

Henryk Faltynowicz; Tadeusz F. Fiut; Edward Fornal; Adolf Galat; Frank Garska; Jan Garlicki; Alfred R. Garlicki; Jan Antoni Gawel; Franciszek Gawel; Stanley Gawel; Stanley Gawel; Walter Glen; Frank Garstka; Jozef J. Gmitrzuk; Feliks Golanski; Edward Gonet; Rudolf J. Gonet; Stanley J. Gorecki; Tadeusz Gorecki; Valentine Grabowski; Jan J. Grela; Stanley A. Grodziecki; Tadeusz J. Gromala; Jan Grabiecki; Jan C. Gosztyla; Edward Grondzik; Zygmunt Gudelski; Boleslaw Gudelski; Tadeusz J. Gura; Philip Gryga; Victor Andrew Gutzwa; Henry Gudelski; Henry Guzowski; Theodore S. Gwara; Charles A. Harhut; Andrzej Havanec; Louis Impronto; Frank P. Izyk; Henry J. Jakiela; Chester J. Janiga; Theodore J. Jara; Edward J. Jurek;

Edward A. Kaczka; Tadeusz Kaczka; Leon Kaczka; Frank R. Kaminski; Jan Kaluzny; Theodore A. Kaluzny; Adolf W. Kania; John J. Karas; Edward P. Kawecki; Edward W. Kaczenski; Louis A. Kaczmarczyk; Walter A. Kiercz; Stanley J. Kiercz; Stanley F. Kawecki; Walter Kicielinski; John Klimczak; Peter M. Kobren; Edward J. Koczon; Col. Edward H. Kochanowski; Charles E. Kochanowski; John J. Kolek; Benjamin W. Kopacz; Anthony E. Kosinski; Joseph F. Korzenko; Henry A. Kokoszka; Edward F. Kos; Jan F. Kotrys; Alfons Kozuch; Alfred J. Kowalski; Maj. Frank Kowalski; Bronislaw Kronenberger; Robert F. Krupa; Valentine W. Krupa; Frank S. Krol; Karol Krystowski; Edward Krystowski; Marion Krzyzewski; William H. Kuchta; Walter J. Kusek; Edward J. Kusek; Adolf J. Kusza; Frank A. Kusza; Joseph Kusza; Edward Kwasniewski; Walter A. Kwasniewski; Benjamin T. Kwolek; Jan Kwolek; Leo W. Kwolek; Boleslaw Laskarzewski; Edward S. Lenik; Walter M. Lepak; Jan H.F. Lewandowski; Michal E. Lewandowski; Zygmunt F. Lewandowski; Anthony Lewoc; Louis Lis; Stanley Lis; John A. Lilienthal; Andrew J. Lonczak; Aleksander Machnicki; Walter C. Machnicki; Stanley Maciejko; Jan M. Maciejewski; Rudolf Maguder; Walter Majewski; Henry P. Makala; Anthony R. Malazewski; Walter J. Markiewicz; Edward Marosz; Mateusz Marosz; Teddy J. Marosz; Peter J. Masłowski; Stanley W. Michalski; Walter J. Mielcarz; Wallace E. Mierzejewski; Edward Mierzejewski; Michal E. Milewski; Charles E. Milewski; Walter W. Mik; Floyd J. Mik; Florian

Majkowski; Al Mikowski; Raymond J. Mik; John Mita; George S. Morawski; Joseph W. Mroczkowski; Stanley E. Mrozowski; Tadeusz W. Mucik; Jan Mudry; Tadeusz S. Murdzek; Francis J. Muzyczka; Boleslaw Muzyczka; Jozef C. Nessing; Julius A. Nessing; Adam S. Nieckiewicz; Walter A. Niezgorski; Jozef S. Nizki; Walter J. Nowakowski; Jozef S. Oblon; Alfred Oblon, Walter F. Ordas; Stanislaw Orzech (killed aboard USS Arizona, December 7, 1941); Edward S. Owsianik; Edward J. Owsianik;

Theodore A. Pasinski; Walter J. Pernal; Peter S. Petroske; Zygmunt J. Peczynski; Alfred T. Peczynski; Walter Pieciuk; Jozef A. Piechuta; Leo J. Pieniazek; Benjamin S. Pietrzykowski; Peter L. Pilecki; Frank A. Pilecki; Ernest Pinkiewicz; Theodore J. Pinkos; Edward Pisarz; Michal Podgorski; Jan Podgorski; Walter V. Pruszynski; Bronislaw J. Przywara; Andrew F. Pulaski; Aleksander A. Pulaski; Jan J. Pulaski; Zygmunt Pulawski; Frank Renkiewicz; Jan Renkiewicz; Jozef F. Renkiewicz; Feliks M. Rogoz; Jozef P. Rogoz; Stanley J. Rogusz; Walter Rogusz; Czeslaw Roman; Philip J. Rybak; Jan Rychlec; Stanley Rychlec; Tadeusz J. Rymut; Henry F. Rymut; Joseph R. Sargalski; Stanley Sepiol; John J. Shoneck; Vincent Skaczenski; Andrew Skawinski; Walter Skoczylas; Leonard Slawinski; Jan S. Slisz; Edward S. Smilgin; Mateusz Smolenski; Bernard P. Sobolewski; Harold Sobolewski; Stanislaw Sobolewski; Theodore T. Sobolewski; Louis Sobolewski; Michal J. Sokol; Jan J. Sokolowski; Edward S. Slisz; William J. Sowa; Richard S. Sawicki; Adolf Spiec; Chester J. Sroka; Theodore P. Stafinski; Walter J. Stabach; Walter J. Stasialowicz; Walter Stefanowicz; Michal Stefanowicz; Jan J. Stopko; Walter J. Stopa; Jan Szawerda; Edward J. Szawerda; Jan S. Surowiecki; Jozef Surowiecki; Walter R. Susczenski; Walter J. Swieton; Herman J. Szawerda; William Szczepanik; Louis M. Szymaszek; Edward Szymaszek; Jozef Tarnowski; Edward F. Tencza; Walter F. Tencza; Anthony Tomasiewicz; Anthony Tomkiewicz; Chester Tomczuk; Aleksander J. Tomczuk; Frank A. Trawicki; Frank Trella; Adam Tycz;

Jan Urban; Jozef T. Urban; Stefan A. Urbanski; Jan Urbanowicz; Jozef J. Uriasz; Edward Walter Uriasz; Jan Turek; Henry G. Wanat; Charles Walonski; Bernard Warnek; Walter A. Weronik; Anthony Weronik; Adolf Wielgosz; Jan F. Wietrzak; Walter H. Wietrzak; Louis Wilemski; Walter Wisniewski; Stefan Wisniewski; Louis L. Wolenski; Leo J. Woroniuk; Bronislaw Woroniuk; Bronislaw J. Woroniecki; Edward J. Wojcik; Theodore Wrobel; Walter Wszolek; Stanley B. Wysocki; Frank P. Wysocki; Jozef Zaborowski; Wladyslaw Zaborowski; Josef Zagorski Tadeusz Zagorski; Jozef W. Zajac; Teodor F. Zajac; Frank E. Zajac; Walter S. Zajac; Andrew J. Zapal; Stanley J. Zapal; Jan Zalewski; Jozef C. Zalewski; Anthony J. Zawacki; Frank A. Zawacki; Tadeusz Ziemba; Alfred J. Ziemba; Jan A. Zdeb; Stanley J. Zima; Walter Ziolkowski; Jozef W. Zuchowski; Walter Zygmunt; Edward Zyrkowski; Henry Zyrkowski; and Czeslaw Zaleski.

This is an incomplete list from the *APZJ*, pp. 81-83, which was published in 1942. At the end of World War II, it was estimated that over 1,200 parishioners had served in the US Armed Forces.

Appendix F

World War II Dead

Pvt. Leonard Baranski
2-C. Edward Bieluczyk
T.-Sgt. Arthur J. Bieszczak (Biesiak)
Pvt. 1C Vincent J. Blachuta
Pvt. 1C Meceslaw Bogacz
T-5 Frank Budziniak
Sgt. Joseph Byczynski
Pvt. 1C Paul Czaja (Chaya)
Pvt. 1C Anthony Dlugolenski
F. 1C Walter J. Douksza
Thaddeus Gwiazdowski
Walter W. Kaminsky
Cpl. Edward J. Koczon
Pvt. 1C John Kwolek (Kolek)
Frank P. Konopka
Walter Koozmitch
Sgt. Walter Lepak (Lepack)
1st Sgt. Boleslaw L. Liber
Joseph Majewicz
Pvt. 1C Bronislaw Muzycka
Sgt. Julius A. Nessing
A-S. Stanley J. Niewiadomski
S. 2-C Stanislaw Orzech
Pvt. Dominic Paluconis
Sgt. Theodore J. Pinkos
John Podgurski
Staff Sgt. Bronislaw Przywara
A-S. Joseph Pulaski
Stanley Ruchala
Pvt. Thaddeus J. Rzegocki
Pvt. 1C Edward St. Onge
Pvt. 1C Joseph St. Onge
Cpl. Theodore T. Stafinski
Chief Edward J. Szymaszek
Sgt. Bronislaw Woroniuk (Woronik)
Pvt. 1C Frank Zawadcki
Rudolph J. Zebora
Victor Leo Zlotowski
Edward J. Zuraw

Sources: *Dedication of Polish American Veterans New Home 189 East Main Street, Meriden, Connecticut, May 27, 1951* and Sanford H. Wendover *et al., 150 Years of Meriden* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1956), pp. 191-92.

Korean War Dead

Joseph F. Owsianik

Source: Wendover *et al.*, p. 193.

Appendix G

Curates

Rev. Stanislaus Blazejowski	1915-1920
Rev. George Bartlewski	1916-1919
Rev. Ladislaus Nowakowski	1920-1923
Rev. Anthony Wojcieszczuk	1923-1926
Rev. Peter Sroka	1926-1930
Rev. Paul Bartlewski	1930-1938
Rev. John Jankowski	1937-1945
Rev. Joseph David	1938-1939
Rev. John Zyskowski	1939-1941
Rev. John J. Sobolewski	1941-1954
Rev. Joseph R. Barlowski	1941-1955
Rev. Stephen F. Ptaszynski	1945-1946
Rev. John J. Rzasa	1946-1951
Rev. Joseph A. Mik	1951-1954
Rev. Ladislaus J. Kaminski	1954-1959
Rev. Joseph W. Kukuc	1955
Rev. Stephen F. Ptaszynski	1955-1968
Rev. Henry P. Fiedorczyk	1955-1959
Rev. Stanislaus A. Kwasnik	1959-1965
Rev. Stanislaus F. Kaminski	1961-1964
Rev. Francis V. Krukowski	1964-1966
Rev. Raymond Rubinowski	1965-1972
Rev. Chester A. Bieluch	1968-1972
Rev. Stanislaus A. Kaminski	1968-1972
Rev. Daniel J. Plocharczyk	1974-1975
Rev. Joseph Parzymies	1978-1983
Rev. Stephen Bzdyra	1979-1985
Rev. Robert Kwiatkowski	1983-1989
Rev. Adam Subocz	1986-1988
Rev. William Traxl	1989-1990
Rev. Allan Hill	1990-
Rev. John Cook*	1981
Rev. Jozef Liber, S.J.	1981, 1982 (Summer guest)
Rev. Joseph Paciorek*	1985-
Rev. Joseph Olczak*	1990-

*in residence

Source: Edward S. Jaksina, Theophil T. Mierzwinski, and Peter S. Sobiecki, "The Story of St. Stanislaus in Meriden, Connecticut (1891-1976), *St. Stanislaus RC Church 1891-1976* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1976), p. 21; and *Sunday Bulletins, 1976-1989.*

Appendix H

Seminarians in Residence

Joseph Parzymies	1977-1978
Ray Smialowski	1979, 1980
Steve De May	1981
John Gwozdz	1982
Joe Kelley	1983
Adam Subocz	1984
Charles (Chuck) Jacobs	1985
David Borino	1986
Thomas J. Cieslikowski	1987
Joseph Kurnath	1988
Paul Gotta	1989
Daniel Connaghan	1990

Source: *Sunday Bulletins, 1976-1989*

Appendix I

Vocations

1917	Rev. Peter Karsmarski [Kaczmarski]	d. 1932
1917	Rev. Francis Tyczkowski	d. 1982
1920	Rev. Msgr. Ladislaus Nowakowski	d. 1985
1925	Rev. William Topor	d. 1972
1927	Rev. John Balasa	d. 1988
1932	Rev. Walter Sieracki	d. 1966
1932	Rev. John Sobolewski	d. 1983
1933	Rev. John Kolek	d. 1952
1936	Rev. Felix Papciak	d. 1987
1941	Rev. John Wanat	d. 1949
1944	Rev. Theodore Gubala	
1947	Rev. Joseph Pulaski, M.M.	
1948	Rev. Joseph Mik	
1949	Rev. Msgr. Henry Dziadosz	
1950	Rev. Roman Gromala	
1951	Brother Marius (Henry Kaczmarczyk)	
1956	Rev. Adolphe Renkiewicz	
1962	Very Rev. Fred Cwiekowski, S.S.	
1965	Rev. Joseph Rychlec	
1966	Rev. Brian Shaw	
1968	Rev. Thomas Gumprecht, S.A.	
1968	Rev. William Przybylo	
1969	Rev. Albert Landa	
1969	Rev. Bruce Michael Shaw	

Source: Jaksina, *et al.*, p. 22.

Appendix J

Vocations to the Sisterhoods

+ Sr. Emiliana Bialach SSJ
Sr. Agnese Brys SSJ
Sr. Aniceta Brys SSJ
Sr. Bonfilia Brys SSJ
+ Sr. Florence Brys SSJ
Sr. Loretta Brys SSJ
+ Sr. Amelda Cyganiewicz DM
Sr. Henry Dziadosz CDP
Sr. Jeanette Ann Gonglewski SSJ
Sr. Anatolde Gwiazdowski SSJ
Sr. Eve Marie Hajduk SSJ
Sr. Salvatora Hucko SSJ
Sr. Anastasia Kaczmarczyk SSJ
Sr. Jean Kaczmarczyk SSJ
Sr. Maurice Kiewlen SSJ
+ Sr. Paulette Kochanowski SSJ
Sr. Stephanie Ann Koniski SSJ
+ Sr. Domazja Koziol SSJ
Sr. Ludgera Kwolek SSJ
Sr. Sebalda Lwanskowski SSJ
Sr. Rosabelle Mierzejewski SSJ
Sr. Bernadette Nowakowski SSJ
Sr. Laura Nowakowski SSJ
Sr. Ann Ozycz SSJ
+ Sr. Walerian Papciak SSJ
Sr. Alexis Peczynski SSJ
Sr. Loreta Perzanowski DM
Sr. Perpetua Perzanowski DM
+ Sr. Dolores Pinkos
Sr. Febronia Plona DM
Sr. Magdalene Przywara SSJ
Sr. Ursuline Rogoz SSJ
Sr. Judith Shemkovitz SSJ
Sr. Augustine Skoczylas SSJ
+ Sr. Viventia Skotnicki SSJ
+ Sr. Emilie Skotnicki SSJ
Sr. Helene Skrzyniarz SSJ
+ Sr. Estelle Skrypiec SSJ
Sr. Liguori Slavinski SSJ
Sr. Peter Slavinski SSJ
Sr. Lisette Slisz DM
Sr. Angeline Slomczynski SSJ
Sr. Concepta Sokol SSJ
Sr. James Sokol SSJ
Sr. Michelle Sokol SSJ
+ Sr. Radegunda Stankiewicz SSJ
+ Sr. Rozarja Stawasz SSJ
Sr. Avia Strenk SSJ
Sr. Otilia Swiatek DM
Sr. Lucilda Swienton SSJ
Sr. Evangeline Szymanski SSJ
+ Sr. Liguria Uznanski SSJ
Sr. Barbara Wanat SSJ
Sr. Dulcia Wanat SSJ
Sr. Eleanore Woronick RC
+ Sr. Teonila Zajac
Sr. Blanche Zawisza SSJ
+ Sr. Virginella Zysk SSJ

+ deceased

Source: Jaksina,*et al.*, p.22.

Appendix K

Principals of St. Stanislaus School

1914-1919	Sis. Mary Benedict
1918-1924	Sis. Mary Seraphine
1924-1928	Sis. Mary Symphoria
1928-1934	Sis. Mary Wenceslas
1934-1940	Sis. Mary Cajetan
1940-1943	Sis. Mary Paula
1943-1945	Sis. Mary Raphael
1945-1951	Sis. Mary Cajetan
1951-1956	Sis. Mary Theobald
1956-1961	Sis. Mary Dolores
1961-1966	Rev. Stanislaus Kwasnik
1966-1967	Rev. Francis Krukowski
1967-1972	Sis. Mary Alexis
1972-1984	Sis. Mary Kathleen Ann
1984-1990	Sis. Mary Magdalene Przywara
1990-	Mr. John Salatto

Source: *History of St. Stanislaus School* (Meriden, Connecticut: 1976), and *Sunday Bulletins*, 1976-1989

Appendix L

Parish Trustess

1893-1894	Jan Kurcon, Jan Szargalski
1894-1896	Jan Bober, Jan Miga, Michal Blazejewski
1896-1897	Jan Kurcon, Jozef Skladzien
1897-1898	Jan Kurcon, Jan Wanat
1899-1900	Antoni Nowakowski, Franciszek Kwasniewski
1900-1902	Michal Kurcon,Franciszek Szwabski
1902-1905	Jan Swiatek, Stanislaw Sobolewski
1905-1907	Franciszek Zaborowski, Piotr Olszewski
1907-1910	Jakub Smietana, Antoni Nowakowski
1910-1912	Stanislaw Koziara, Jozef Terlikowski
1912-1914	Franciszek Sztukowski, Leon Sobolewski
1914-1916	Franciscek Sztukowski, Franciszek Zaborowski
1916-1920	Franciszek Zaborowski, Michal Szymaszek
1920-1923	Franciszek Zaborowski, Michal Szymaszek
1923-1930	Franciszek Zaorowski, Jozef Niemiec
1930-1947	Jozef A. Niemiec, Stanislaw Nowakowski
1948-1963	Jozef A. Niemiec, John P. Kreminski
1964-1971	John P. Kreminski, Bronislaus E. Cwiekowski
1972-1973	John P. Kreminski, Frank W. Kogut
1974-1983	Alexandra Stankewich, Joseph Sieracki
1984-1985	Charles Wisniewski, Henrietta Kulinski
1986-1987	Charles Wisniewski, Catherine Haras
1988-1990	Charles Wisniewski, Catherine Kulesza
1991-	Charles Wisniewski, Mark Kosnoff

Source: *APZJ*, p. 35 and *Annual Reports, 1944-1990*.

Appendix L

Meriden Polish Societies and Organizations

Two. Sw. Stanislawa, B.M.

The St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Society. A men's society founded on January 1, 1883 according to a report in the Meriden press, and on January 1, 1889 according to the *Pamietnik poswiecenia Domu Polskiego* (April 25, 1937). According to the last source, this was the first Polish society in Meriden and in Connecticut. It eventually joined the Polish National Alliance as Lodge Nr. 1579. Merged with the Knights of the Blessed Virgin on February, 1946.

Tow. Bialego Orla

The White Eagle Society founded on November 15, 1896 as Lodge Nr. 356 of the PNA.

Stow. Siostr Rozancowych

The Rosary Society, founded in 1896.

Polish Political Club

September, 1900. It appears to have been a Polish Republic Club. *MDJ*, September 6 and 19, 1900; *MMR*, August 31 and September 19, 1900; and *MWR*, Septmber 6, 1900. This may later have become the Polish American Club.

Tow. Dzieci Marji

The Children of Mary Solidality, founded on May 22, 1902.

Tow. Rycerzy Polskich

The Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Czestochowa founded on June 29, 1903. Joined the PNA as Lodge Nr. 1194 in 1910. In April 1944 the St. Stanislaus Kostka Society was merged with the Knights, followed by the St. Stanislaus B. M. Society in February, 1946.

Tow. Sw. Stanislawa Kostki

The St. Stanislaus Kostka Society, Lodge Nr. 655 of the PNA, founded on January 15, 1904. The Society founded a PNA scouting nest in 1934. Merged with the Knights of the Blessed Virgin in April, 1944.

Tow. Sokolow Polskich

The Polish Falcons Nest nr. 68. January 21, 1906.

Chor Parafjainy Sw. Cecylji

St. Cecilia's Parish Choir, founded on September 21, 1906.

Tow. Ligi Najsw. Serca Pana Jezusa

The Sacred Heart League founded in 1907.

Tow. Sw. Kazimierza Krol

The Prince Saint Casimir Society, founded on March 14, 1909 as Lodge Nr. 389 of the Polish Roman Catholic Union.

Polish Citizens Club

Tow. Bratniej Pomocy

The Mutual Aid Society founded in 1911.

Tow. Aniolow Strazow

Guardian Angels Society

Tow. Sw. Jadwigi

The St. Hedwig Society under the Protection of the Divine Heart of Jesus Society founded on September 3, 1912. It was group 633 of the Polish Roman Catholic Union.

Sokolice Gniazda 444

Lady Falcons Nest 444, founded in September 25, 1912.

Centrala

United Polish Societies. September, 1913. St. Stanislaus B. M.; St. Stanislaus Kostka; Knights of the Blessed Virgin; St. Casimir Society; Silver City Drum Corps; and the Chopin Band. *MWR*. September 11, 1913.

St. Vincent de Paul Society

Polish Singing Society

Two. Mezow Rozancowych

The Men's Rosary Society founded in May, 1914.

Silver City Fife and Drum Corps

Stow. Weteranow Armji Polskiej

The Polish Army Veterans' Association, Post 73, founded on April 21, 1921.

St. Stanislaus Athletic Association
1925

Gmina 56

Council of PNA Lodges of Meriden and Middletown

Two. Sw. Teresy

The St. Theresa of the Holy Child Jesus Society, Group 552 of the Polish Women's Alliance, founded on May 9, 1928. The PWA history lists April 1, 1928 as the founding day.

Two. M. B. Nieustajacej Pomocy

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Society, founded on April 14, 1929 as Lodge Nr. 1060 of the Polish Roman Catholic Union. In October, 1976 this Society was merged with the St. Hedwig Society.

Tow. Sokolic - Gniazdo Nr. 870

Ladies Falcon Nest 870, founded on May 5, 1930.

Tow. Sw. Anny

The St. Anne Society, Group 645 of the Polish Women's Alliance, founded on Februrary 15, 1931.

Meriden Council of Polish Organizations

Established in 1938, the *Centrala* works for the good of the Polish community and parish, defends the Polish name, and fosters the use of the Polish language.

Saint Joseph Society

Founded on May 1, 1938, it is an insurance organization.

Pulaski (Democratic) Club

Young Men's Polish American Club

Polish Junior League of Connecticut

Meriden Chapter.

Postep

Polish Veterans Club

September, 1946. A Ladies Auxiliary was organized in 1950. That same year the Club voted to affiliate with the Polish Legion of American Veterans as Post 189. Ladies Auxiliary organized in 1950.

St. Stanislaus Retreat League

1950.

Catholic Youth Organization

Home and School Association

Organized on March 5, 1953 under Fr. Nalewajk's leadership.

Holy Name Society

Founded in 1960 with the assistance of Rev. Stanley Kwasnik.

Ladies Guild

Founded on March 2, 1960 with the assistance of Rev. S. Kwasnik.

Parish Council

First elected, December, 1973.

Board of Directors

Community Center, 1973.

Senior Sunshine Club

Brownie Girl Scouts Troop 256

Girl Scouts Troop 99

Cub Scouts Pack 23

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Liber Baptismorum , November, 1915 - December, 1920.
Baptismorum Registrum, January 1, 1921 - December 27, 1936.
Registrum Baptismorum, January 17, 1937 - April 10, 1949
Baptismal Registry, April 17, 1949 - January 6, 1963
Baptismal Registry, January 20, 1963 - present

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First Communion Registry, April 30, 1950 - present

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