

*2 more  
Prof. Holowak*

Series XXXI-4  
Box 2

# The History of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish



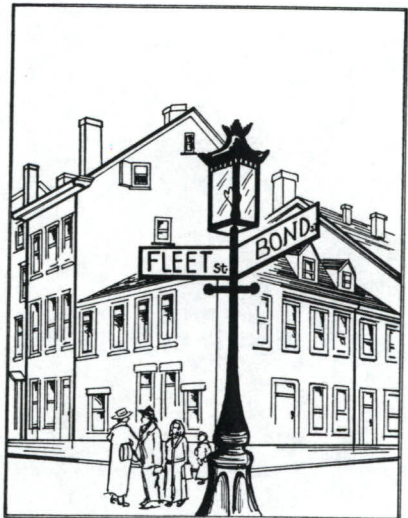
The annals of our history are rooted in the immigrants who inundated our shores, roughly between 1830 and 1900.

The Polish immigrants, by reason of their religion, culture, and language brought with them a collective and an individual personality moulded by the environmental and psychical experiences of a thousand years of Polish history; a history which made them equally the products of partition: three sections which developed profound differences amongst the Poles in Polish-American communities.

In Poland, the role of the Roman Catholic Church was pervasive as the Church was the major formulator of the culture, the vehicle by which the language acquired literary form. The Church was also the matrix of virtually every phase of Polish life.

Is it any wonder, then, that a zealous group of Poles banded together on foreign shores, forming the St. Stanislaus Society,

with the expressed desire of acquiring enough revenue to build a church to service their spiritual needs, as the church was the most important part of the life of the immigrant newcomers.



Along with establishing a church, Father Koncz also provided for the educational needs of his parishioners. Employing the voluntary services of one of his parishioners, a layman, Mr. Julius Kowzan, instructed children during the twilight hours of the day. Eventually, Father Koncz was able to obtain the Felician Sisters who conducted the instructional programs in the school until 1926.

Until funds permitted the procurement of land, religious services were conducted, beginning in 1877, in a rented house on the southwest corner of Bond and Fleet Streets, the site of the first church. The fervent, immigrant Catholics soon aided their first pastor, Father Peter Koncz, a bilingual, immigrant priest, from Wilno, Poland, to purchase, around 1879, the land where the church stands today. The total cost of the land and the construction of a church amounted to the fantastic sum of \$28,000. Door-to-door solicitations and the "penny" contributions from every Pole, as well as from every ethnic group in the area, cleared the church of the debt in one year.



Father Koncz's conversant abilities in the Polish and Lithuanian languages permitted him to act as a missionary among the immigrants, administering to the indigent and the sick. In fact, it was during a sick call that Father Koncz met his death by an assassin's blow to his head. The date of his demise is recorded as February 8, 1886.

The tragic death of the first pastor wasn't the only calamity which occurred in the year 1886. Misunderstandings among parishioners created a rift, causing the separated members to establish the Holy Rosary Church.

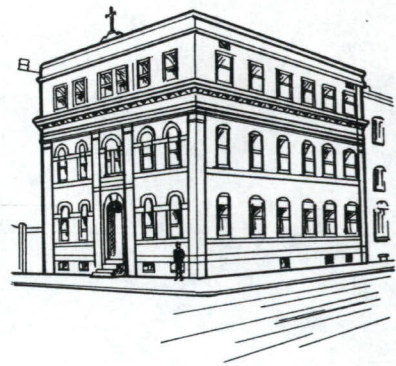


Father John Rodowicz, the second pastor, was an elderly priest when he assumed the pastorate of the parish. During his ten-year term, which ended with his death in 1896, he had the first church torn down and rebuilt. Increased membership in the congregation and a need for a sturdier foundation and stronger walls necessitated the building of a new and larger church which still stands erect today on its present site.



Father Joseph Skrętny, an assistant priest, became pastor in 1896, but served only a year as God called him to his eternal home in 1897. During this one year period, however, Father Skrętny purchased the grounds for a cemetery which is presently located on Dundalk Avenue.

The successor to Father Skrętny was Father Thomas Morys who bought property on Ann & Aliceanna Streets where he built a two-story rectory, which was later elevated to a three-story structure in 1926. He is also credited with being the founder of St. Casimir's Church, our "sister" parish, located in Canton on Kenwood and O'Donnell Streets.



Once again misunderstandings erupted in the parish resulting in Father Morys fleeing in 1905 from Baltimore to Massachusetts, where he died during the influenza epidemic.



Discontent and internal friction with the parish's administrators incited His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons to entrust the parish in 1905 to the Franciscan Minor Conventuals. Therefore, the first Franciscan pastor was Father Francis Pyznar, an extremely energetic personality, who accomplished numerous undertakings, such as constructing the hall, which was considered for years as the largest hall in the city; purchasing a home on Eastern and Patterson Park Avenues to be used as an orphanage; and, enlarging the church by deepening the basement to form a Lower Church.

Liquidation of debts was the major accomplishment of Fr. Pyznar's immediate successor, Father Stanislaus Tarnowski, whose pastorate lasted from 1916 to 1923.

Following Father Tarnowski was Father Bonaventure Santor who was unable to make any significant contributions due to his brief year's term as pastor.



For fifteen years, from 1924 to 1939, Father Alphonse Figlewski became, so to speak, a household name on the lips of the young and old alike. Many a toddler could attribute a ruddy complexion to Father Alphonse's sturdy hands which lifted them by their cheeks into the air. His sermons often conveyed his ardent promotion of religious vocations, and, effective they were, as many a youth heeded the call to religious life.

Father Figlewski's enthusiastic endeavors were also channeled into building a convent, expanding the rectory, and making needed improvements in the church and hall. He was instrumental in planning for the parish's Golden Jubilee.

Upon completion of the convent, Archbishop Michael J. Curley blessed the building on October 4, 1926, and remarked that the convent was "...the nicest in the Archdiocese." The Felician Sisters, who conducted the school, were unable to continue due to a shortage of Felician nuns at the time. As a consequence, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph from Hamburg, New York, replaced the Felician Sisters, and have continued to conduct the school up to the present time.

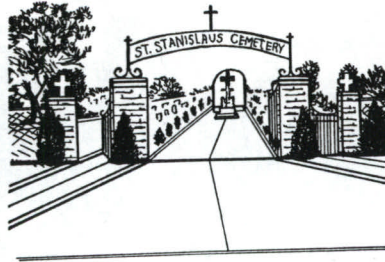
Father Figlewski's influential qualities and popularity were attested to by the fact that throngs of people attended his funeral on November 7, 1954 at S.t Stanislaus Cemetery.



Further renovations, especially to the chapels in the convent and rectory, the cemetery, as well as many improvements in the Upper and Lower Churches were made by Father Celestine Rózewicz who began his term in 1939. Painting the interior of the churches; installing electrical fixtures in the churches; removing the balconies in the Upper Church; and, removal of a termite-infested 100 foot steeple were the consuming tasks completed during his nine-year administration.

The renovations and improvements might have been forgotten, but who could forget Father Celestine's lyrical qualities? It became almost an established tradition to hear Father leading the chanting of "The Litany of the Saints" at our annual Forty Hours Devotions.

Until Father James Cholewka assumed the responsibilities as pastor in 1948, Father Austin Maciejewski acted as interim pastor. It was through the efforts of Father James that the continual beautification of our cemetery grounds was established through the Perpetual Care System at St. Stanislaus Cemetery.



On July 26, 1951, Father Modest Darwaszewski, at one time a newly-ordained associate at the parish, came back to function as the pastor. His pastoral duties lasted for twelve years during which time he had a Mausoleum, a last resting place for departed priests, built in the parish cemetery for a cost of \$27,000.



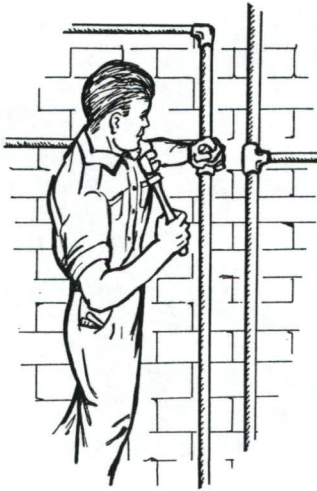
Due to erosion, a new steeple composed of four twenty-foot crosses, costing \$16,000 had to be erected; these crosses, visible for distances around, still stand today as a symbolic representation of a faith commitment in the midst of the Fells Point Community.



Although church attendance was commendable and the Perpetual Novenas to Our Lady, held at the two newly-installed Miraculous Medal Shrines, packed the churches, the start of the migration to the suburbs in the '50's had some minimal effects on parish life.



Since memories so often linger on, the grandiose Diamond Jubilee Celebration in 1955 has been remembered as a most memorable occasion in our parish's memorabilia of events.



The '60's were acute with societal problems; protests of all sorts, shifting populations, and vandalism, to name a few. During this period, specifically in the year 1963, Father Ernest Wieprecht, a sickly man and one who was ultra-conservative in his approach, came on the scene at St. Stanislaus. He was faced with the problems of an increased population shift among young adults from the city to the suburbs, as well as extreme vandalism at the cemetery. Due to his ill health, only the normal routine of maintenance care for the parish was provided, and the renovation of the cemetery's office was attained.

Hoping to curtail the vandalism at the cemetery and on advisement by Brother Alexius Daviditis, now deceased, Father Ernie allowed canine dogs to patrol the cemetery after dark; as a result, police dogs still patrol the grounds today.



Before the decade came to an end, tranquility descended upon Father Ernie as death claimed him on March 26, 1968.

Exuberant, effervescent, and most effective — put these descriptive words together and whom do you have? A Franciscan who arrived in 1968 by the name of Father Cyprian Sondej. His claim to fame at St. Stanislaus was his ability to address everyone by name as he greeted people at the entrance to the church. "How are you, Zosia?" "Jak tam, Józef?" became familiar, but anticipated greetings.

From a list of his accomplishments, one could deduce that Father Cyp, as he was affectionately known, was a "man in perpetual motion; a man on the go." One of his prioritized projects was the complete renovation of the parish school; from new walls and ceilings to wall-to-wall carpeting, the classrooms of the '70's were created and made conducive for innovative learning. Father Cyprian also initiated a "save the newspapers" drive so that a school bus could be purchased to provide children who needed transportation to our school.

Other remodeling efforts were directed to the hall's kitchen, as well as the living quarters in the rectory. Father Cyp also recruited volunteers, and he even rolled up his sleeves on occasion, to paint the exterior walls of buildings facing the school yard.



As the '60's ended and the '70's began, the church was experiencing liturgical changes, proposed by Vatican II, and the promulgation of collegiality, a shared responsibility between clergy and laity. As a result, new altars were bought so that the priests could face the people as they offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and, attendance at the 6 p.m. Saturday night Mass fulfilled one's weekly Sabbath obligation.

In compliance with the Diocese's proposals for a collegial structure at the "grass roots" level, Father Cyprian formed the Parish Council, a group of clergy, religious and laity working together to determine the various needs of the parish and its members. The meetings were vibrant, especially those which discussed "clustering," a word, at first distasteful to many an ear. With

school enrollments dropping severely, and the spiraling cost of tuition and lay teachers' salaries, a merger between schools was recommended. Despite efforts to preserve the individual parochialism of each parish school, a merger between St. Casimir's and St. Stanislaus Schools was inevitable. In 1975, Fr. Cyp, along with School Board Members, therefore, set forth the initial actions necessary to formulate a "clustered" school.

To conclude Fr. Cyprian's life at St. Stanislaus without including his service to the sick would be a great omission. His visitations to the sick, both at home and in the hospitals, as well as his words of consolation in time of need were the spiritual solace given to many by a priest named Fr. Sondej, who left St. Stanislaus for an assignment as pastor to Holy Cross Church in Fall River, Massachusetts, in 1976.

A native Baltimorean and son of St. Casimir's Parish, Father Berard Dudek is the tenth Franciscan to head the parish. To his pastorate, which began in August 1976, he brought with him a keen perception of the Church's collegial structures. His experiences included being an Area Pastor, a representative to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, and a member of the Southeast Urban Area Council, a council which is composed of representatives from the ten parishes in the Southeast Area. His present affiliations have also been extended to being a member of the Archdiocesan Senate of Priests.

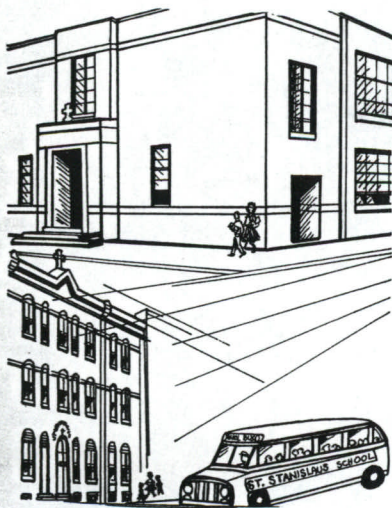
Under his aegis, the Parish Council has continued to function; in fact, Father Berard's quiet mannerisms set the orderly tempo for the seemingly endless and trying sessions concerning the financial status of renovating the hall and the progressive stages of re-building it.

On July 5, 1978, a six-alarm fire devastated the parish hall, an historic landmark which for years was the mecca of parish activities. However, out of the ashes and the agony of uncertainty came the ecstasy of the rededication of a new hall on April 20, 1980.

As with each pastor's administration, the maintenance of buildings is an on-going process. So, too, Father Berard had the Lower Church painted and, in addition, had made improvements in the sacristy, convent, and rectory.

Being oriented to meetings, Father Berard attends regularly the Finance and School Board meetings of the Kolbe School. At these meetings, a discussion of the problems, finances and general business of Kolbe Elementary, K-4, which is housed at St. Stanislaus, and Kolbe Middle School, Grades 5-8, located at St. Casimir's, are surfaced and hopefully solved so that the best educational facilities are provided for our youth, our hope of the future.

The Diaconate Program, Shared Ministries, Youth Ministry, and Stewardship are but a few of the Diocesan concerns for the '80's. What is the Parish Community of St. Stanislaus, under the leadership of Father Berard, doing to meet these challenges? The parish is sponsoring a layman in the Diaconate Program; it has had the laity (both men and women) participate in the liturgy as lectors, cantors, and extraordinary ministers; the parish has made strides in revitalizing the youth activities in the parish; and, the loyalty of the parishioners to come back from the suburbs to their "home" parish has aided stewardship efforts.



In September, 1979, a Polka Mass, with the thematic invocation of the Holy Spirit's intercession and blessings on the parish, inaugurated the monthly, centennial, liturgical, paraliturgical, and social occurrences. These events have been but a prelude to the grand celebration which will occur on October 19, 1980. On this propitious date, Archbishop William Donald Borders will be the main celebrant at a Mass of Thanksgiving.

During this, our centennial year, 1979-1980, in addition to Father Berard Dudek, the Friary has been staffed by Rev. Matthew Kotkowski, O.F.M. Conv., Rev. Jerome Gingras, O.F.M. Conv., and Brother Richard Berges, O.F.M. Conv., present Director of the St. Stanislaus Cemetery.



This history of the parish has been conveyed through the personalities and accomplishments of its pastors. It has been said that "no man is an island...", and so true it is, as the pastors could not have provided for the spiritual needs of their parishioners, completed tasks, or financed undertakings by themselves. However, to have named all the associate priests, the Sisters who staffed our parish school, and the thousands of generous, dedicated, and loyal laity throughout the years would have made this book replete with lists of names and tributes. Therefore, an all-inclusive *THANK YOU* and *BÓG ZAPŁAĆ*, are rendered to all who have contributed their time, talents, and money so that St. Stanislaus could commemorate a centenary year.

As the roots implanted by immigrants over a century ago were nurtured by generations of worshippers through their faith, hope, and charity; so, today, the expressed hope of the Franciscan Friars and the Parish Community is the futuristic expectation for a continual growth which will manifest itself in a "family bearing precious seeds."

—text and drawings  
by Marie Giza



To Tommy—  
I am so pleased  
and proud that you  
are so interested in  
your Polish-Lithuanian  
ancestry. Polonia is  
certainly proud of young  
folks like you who  
spread the good image  
of ethnicity.

My love always,  
Marie G. Giza

St Stanislaus' Catholic Church-- several hundred members  
of the congregation went on a pilgrimage yesterday to 1913  
Holy Rosary, St Patrick's and St Bridget's Catholic Churches  
May 19 14-1

St Stanislaus' School-- has slight fire-- pupils walk 1913  
out thinking it a drill  
Jan 15 7-4





<http://www.sunspot.net/news/education/bal-md.seton21mar21,0,867041.story?coll=bal%2Dlocal%2Dheadlines>

## A place that's more than just a school

### Seton: Since 1993, the Fells Point school has helped transform the lives of some of the city's poorest children.

By Linda Linley  
Sun Staff

March 21, 2003

Sister Mary Bader was having a hectic morning. The cook at Mother Seton Academy called in sick, so Sister Mary made breakfast for 69 pupils. There was no heat in one of the classrooms, so she checked the furnace. When two visitors showed up for a tour, she ushered them around. All before she cooked lunch.

Sister Mary, principal at the academy, took it in stride. She is used to improvising and handling jobs usually assigned to maintenance workers or janitors. The school, which is in Fells Point, has neither.

What Mother Seton Academy does have is a three-story, 13,000-square-foot brick building built in 1925. The building was once a convent but now serves 72 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders who come from some of Baltimore's poorest neighborhoods.

Pupils are referred to the academy by city schools and nonprofit agencies, and they are expected to work hard. They spend nearly 11 hours there three days a week receiving individual tutoring. They also get help with homework every day. And, they help clean up after classes.

"This school has a rare commitment to children," said Nicole Yeftich, Mother Seton's director of graduate support. "The way they come alive here is unbelievable. I've never seen students go through such a transformation."

After leasing the building from the Conventual Franciscan Friars for nine years, the academy trustees recently started negotiations to purchase the former convent, erasing concerns that the school might have to move.

The academy is a tuition-free, Roman Catholic middle school. Each year, it accepts 12 girls and 12 boys for its two sixth-grade classes. The only money that parents are expected to contribute is \$15 per month, which goes toward books.

#### 'Not just academics'

"These are the children that need us the most," said Sister Mary. "The school is not just about academics, but also about the children's social and emotional needs."

Some pupils take two buses to get to the academy, beginning their day at 7:45 a.m. with breakfast at school. Classes begin at 8 a.m. and include language arts, mathematics, religion, Spanish, physical education, science, social studies, literature, health and computer skills. The day also includes tutoring for pupils working below grade level.

Classes end at 3 p.m., but pupils help clean the school before eating a snack and having recess. Then comes a mandatory, hourlong supervised homework period that ends at 4:45. Three nights a week, pupils receive dinner and 1 1/2 hours of tutoring from Loyola College volunteers.

The goal is to get pupils into college preparatory high schools and then into college.

"About 70 percent of our graduates who are seniors in high school have been accepted into college," Sister Mary said with pride.

Sister Ann Claire, who teaches math and religion to eighth-grade girls, said the pupils move forward day by day and inch by inch, adding: "We stay after them all the time. We want to open other worlds to them."

Destiny Cameron, 13, an eighth-grader at Mother Seton, came from Harriet Tubman Elementary School on Harlem Avenue in Baltimore.

"I like the smaller classes," Destiny said. "I also like that people don't judge you here. I am going to a good high school next year, the Institute of Notre Dame. And then I'm going to college."

Tyrell Broughton, 12, a seventh-grader, attended Elmer A. Henderson Elementary on North Wolfe Street, where classes were twice as big. His favorite subjects are math and English, but his eyes light up when he talks about playing the trombone and singing in the choir.

## School history

Started in 1993, the academy is named for Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint, who founded the Daughters of Charity, Sister Mary's order.

The academy is supported by six groups: the Daughters of Charity; Marianist Society; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, Pa.; Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia; and the Xaverian Brothers. The school also gets funding from foundations, corporations and private donations and support from the Archdiocese Of Baltimore, though Mother Seton Academy is an independent school.

The school operates on a budget of \$700,000, most of which is used for salaries for the staff of 21 and for heat and rent.

Fears that the academy might have to move were put to rest when the Conventual Franciscan Friars agreed to negotiate the sale of the convent.

"We are working toward selling the property to the academy," said the Rev. Robert Twele, treasurer for the Conventual Franciscan Friars in the mid-Atlantic and New England areas.

The order owns the valuable 1 1/4 -acre lot at Ann and Fleet streets, home to the former St. Stanislaus Church, the convent and a friary. The church was closed by the Archdiocese Of Baltimore nearly three years ago, and the Franciscan Friars had been trying to decide what to do with the property.

"Given the work they are doing, we are going to work with them so they are able to stay there," Twele said.

Sister Mary said the school will begin a capital campaign to raise money to buy the building and pay for renovations, though she's not sure how much the school will have to raise since a purchase price has not been set.

"We want to stay here because this is like a home to the students and our graduates," Sister Mary said. "The school is more than just a building."

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UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE  
THE BALTIMORE HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY

Survey No. \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION: Father Kolbe School

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT: Sister Theodosia (St. Stanislaus)

1) RECORDS TITLE: Father Kolbe School

2) CONTENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
DESCRIPTION

SPAN DATES

VOLUME

CORRESPONDENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

MINUTES: \_\_\_\_\_

FINANCIAL RECORDS: \_\_\_\_\_

LEGAL DOCUMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP LISTS: Class Lists - St. Stanislaus School <sup>+ Records</sup> c. 1926 - present 26 units

LITERARY PRODUCTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINTED MATERIALS: \_\_\_\_\_

SCRAPBOOKS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHOTOGRAPHS: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTENTS:	DESCRIPTION	SPAN DATES	VOLUME
AUDIO RECORDINGS:			
CARTOGRAPHIC RECORDS:			
GRAPHIC RECORDS:			
OTHER:			

- 3) QUANTITY: Cubic ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Linear ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Microform \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) DATES: Span dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Bulk dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) MEDIUM: Paper: (Loose sheets) \_\_\_\_\_ (Bound Volumes) \_\_\_\_\_ Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
 Audio: \_\_\_\_\_ Microform \_\_\_\_\_ Machine Readable \_\_\_\_\_ Computer Printout \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) FINDING AIDS: \_\_\_\_\_

7) ORIGINALS: \_\_\_\_\_ REPRODUCTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

8) PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Manner of storage: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Appearance/Damage: \_\_\_\_\_

9) ACCESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hours of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

10) LOCATION: *K-4 at St. Stanislaus, and at Convent  
 5-8 at St. Casimir's*

11) COMMENTS, BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL INFORMATION: *School is charter school formed in 1975 from former St. Stanislaus + St. Casimir's Schools. St. Stanislaus now has grades K-4, St. Casimir's grades 5-8. Sister Theodosia of St. Stanislaus is looking for older records at her home, the Convent attached.*

FIELD ARCHIVIST: *M. Hayward* DATE: *5/9/80*