

Gateway to a

New World

Building Čech and Slovak
Communities in the West End

St. Paul, Minnesota

Co-authored, compiled and edited by Josef Dvořák Landsberger
Design and layout by Weicht Inc.
Published by West 7th/Fort Road Federation



Our commemorative book begins with a box of photographs

The box was purchased for two dollars years ago by our park artist, Craig David, at a garage sale. The location was in the West End but has been forgotten. Over one hundred photographs can be dated to the late 1800s and early 1900s, in decorative cardboard frames that sometimes detail the photographer but not the subjects. The oldest studio was N.A. Giguere; J Mašek's studio was at 179 Colborne. There was a cluster of studios on East 7th Street, and one from New Prague. One photo was inscribed by Pope Pius X to Father Rynda; another by Fr. Tichý to his server, Joe Pavlíček. There are many anonymous first communions, confirmations, weddings in the "Čech" and St. Stanislav style judging from similar photos we have seen in our project. But so many lack identities! Who was the young Holm and Olson baseball player? Whose "old world babička" was pictured? Whose baptism, marriage, whose friend? And who is playing with the cigars? Perhaps you know them? These photos are relics of history. Throughout our book photographs will appear, but those without identity will remain so, and leave you to wonder, as we do.

After our project the "people" will find their way to the Čech collection at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, "priests" to the archives of the Archdiocese of St. Paul, and street scenes to the Visual Resources Collection at Minnesota Historical Society.

What will you do with yours?

one



COMING TOGETHER: People and Places

A baptismal gate is an ironic metaphor for history. We pass through, expecting to find a new experience—yet that experience is in the past. Our gate itself is a mystery: we know it was saved from St. Stanislav Kostka Church in a remodeling. However, time and circumstances prevent us from documenting the hands that made it, the people who entered it to begin new spiritual lives, even its date of removal. Perhaps more will come in our sequel.

Our publications committee developed this commemorative publication to acknowledge the contributions of a significant West End immigrant groups—Bohemians, Moravians, and Slovaks. I personally came to appreciate those institutions that have sponsored ethnic-focused studies, though was disappointed in established historians from the 1850s forward. Established historians basically ignored contributions of ethnic groups, except perhaps the Irish in St. Paul, when writing the history of St. Paul and Minnesota; statistical numbers of those arriving and governed was enough. History is disserved by this superficial accounting and treatment.

We hope to illustrate the lesson that new immigrant groups relied on each other, and on those that preceeded them. For example, Čech and Slovak new arrivals via the upper landing sought out Germans for assistance. Later arrivals, men, women, and children often shared simple one and two room lodgings with families on the “Bohemian Flats” until their own simple lodging was collectively

built. Next they migrated up “Bohemian Hill” to develop neighborhoods in the West End, contributing to the prosperity of the city of St. Paul at large, and now serving as a model for supporting new arrivals in the 21st Century.

We hope you enjoy their stories.

— Joe Landsberger



Upper Landing, late 1800s Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



The West End from the river to the bluff, from 7 Corners at the edge of downtown St. Paul out to Highland, as the High Bridge is being built in 1888. From Randolph to Fort Snelling was known as the "Big Woods". Image: The Library of Congress.

The West End of St. Paul, Minnesota

In the production of this booklet, we refer to the area along West Seventh Street or Old Fort Road as the West End, or the area bounded by the Mississippi River and the upper bluffs, west from Downtown St. Paul out to Fort Snelling. As early immigrants arrived via the Mississippi, they disembarked at the Upper Landing. Some settled along the river out to Randolph Street, then known as the flats—even "Bohemian Flats." Beyond Randolph was known as the "Big Woods." Also beyond Randolph one finds Fountain Cave, birthplace of St. Paul, though now demolished. This cave would have been familiar to early settlers, as was Fort Road, even though this throughfare was changed to West 7th Street by 1850.

The nascent commercial district spread west from Seven Corners and a few Victorian commercial buildings have survived. A

number of houses and early industrial buildings link historically to the many breweries that marked the historic growth of the neighborhoods. Horse-drawn streetcar tracks were laid in 1872, and completed out to Fort Snelling in 1891. Housing included small frame, brick and limestone worker cottages and larger three-story homes, in Italianate, Queen Anne, Eastlake, and Colonial Revival Styles. The city's largest concentration of pre-Civil War houses can be found in Irvine Park, a National Register Historic District. Since the 1970s, neighborhoods have enjoyed a renaissance that has included renovations, historical research, as well as neighborhood revitalization led by the West 7th/Fort Road Federation.

The High Bridge

Since 1889, the High Bridge has served as a vital corridor, connecting the West End with the West Side of the City of St. Paul. In 1905 the southern five spans were destroyed by a tornado. The wrought iron lasted until its demolition in 1985. Its replacement was completed in 1988. Development of the North High Bridge Park began soon after.



High Bridge: 1915

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



Sunday, February 24, 1985 some 25,000 spectators gathered at dozens of vantage points up and down the river to watch the High Bridge demolition at 3:55 p.m. At its base can be seen Kaplan's scrap yard, site of the Upper Landing and Bohemian Flats, later Little Italy. Kaplan's was removed in 1985 and pollution remediation begun, paving the way for another residential complex.

Photo taken by Joe Landsberger from his front porch at 169 Goodrich Avenue.

The West End Bohemian Community

Often through this narrative, one comes across “Bohemians” collectively referring to St. Paul’s Čech and Slovak people. Czechoslovakia split in 1993, and Bohemians and Moravians formed the current Čech Republic, and Slovaks the Slovak Republic. Slovak immigrants tended to settle in Minneapolis, and Bohemians in St. Paul, and for that reason the St. Paul ethnic group is referred as “Bohemian,” as they often referred to themselves.

Čech names

Čech names in this document are spelled in Čech as a stylistic device, rather than a grammatical convention, following the example set in Thomas Čapek’s *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America* (Houghton Mifflin Co, NY, 1920). For example, St. Stanislaus Kotska Catholic Church becomes St.

Stanislav; Dvorak, becomes Dvořák, and Czech becomes Čech. While their pronunciation may trip you up, we hope this will help you return to yesteryear.

Čech and Slovak Immigration into America:

The first documented Čech immigrant, Augustine Herrman arrived in America as an employee of the West India Company in New York in 1633. He mapped New Amsterdam under Peter Stuyvesant, and then regions of Maryland and Virginia. As a successful landowner, he named his holdings in Virginia “New Bohemia.” One significant group of Čech immigrants were religious refugees, the Moravians. The first Čech Moravian Church was built in New York in 1758. The Moravians descended from a Bohemian and theological line that dates back to Jan Hus, burned at the stake for heresy in 1415 in Prague. “Hussites” organized themselves

among Čech/Bohemians in 1457, migrated into neighboring Silesia and Moravia, and in 1722, Herrnhut, Saxony. From there they emigrated to the eastern United States as the first Čech immigrant wave.

The second wave of Čech immigration began in 1848 and stretched until the First World War. Čechs found familiar territory in the Midwest, and rural American settlement centered in Caledonia, north of Racine, Wisconsin. This area then became a gateway for Čech colonies in Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa and the Dakotas. In 1856 four Čechs made their way up the Mississippi river from Dubuque to St. Paul to seek advice from St. Paul’s Bishop Cretin and inquire about cheap government lands. They continued on to found Nová Praha/New Prague, the oldest Čech colony in Minnesota, and settled its nearby counties of McLeod, LeSueur, Rice, and Scott.

Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"



In the Fall of 1856, Benjamin Fišer came to Owatonna, Minnesota with three small children, six cattle, and countrymen Josef Kaplan, John Pichner, Anton Kubát and Josef Zedník and their families at the invitation of Anton Šimek. "Arriving on St. Václav (Wenceslas) Day at this place, we found out something that greatly alarmed us. Šimek had not expected us so late in the year. You can just imagine how it was for us when we found out that he didn't really know anything about us. This was no small matter; we were

THEY CAME TO MINNESOTA

by Benjamin Fišer, 1882;

translated from the Čech by Steven Wenchel, 1996

completely thrown into such wilderness seclusion. Owatonna at that time consisted of six buildings, and only here and there in the area was an abandoned building."

They built a small house, plugged holes with straw, and covered the roof with cloth. Several families lived together that first winter through many hardships. Heavy frosts came almost immediately. "One day a great wind raged, and we had to stop working. We felt that by morning it would die down, but in the night there was a prairie fire, from where who would know? There were no barriers to the fire, no roads or fields. The fire with the strong wind changed the wide prairie into a sea of fire, and all my efforts had been reduced to nothing. All I had left were a couple of piles of hay..."

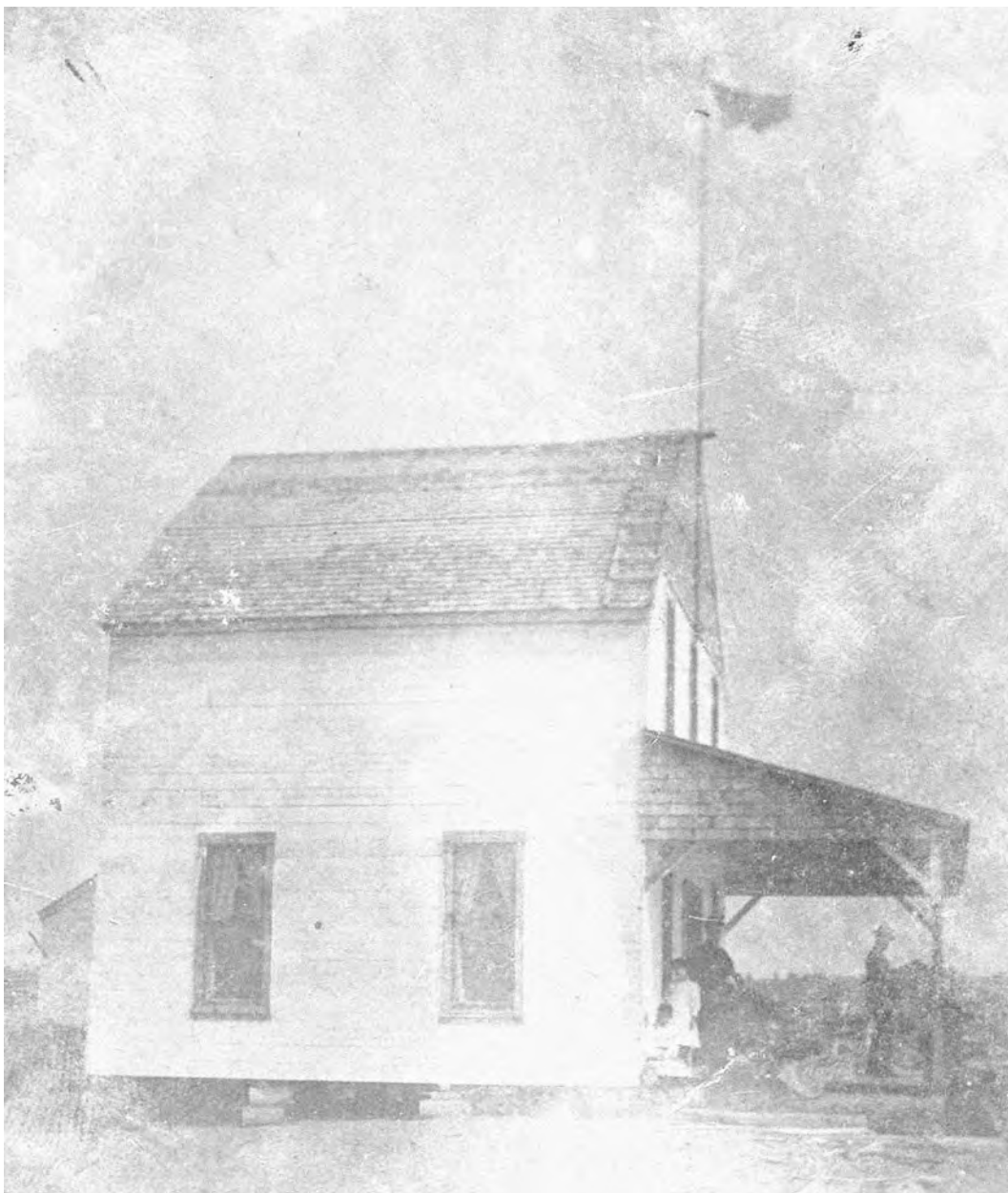
"Then came a winter, the likes of which had never been seen before. So much snow fell that it was impossible to go anywhere. I only had money enough to pay for food. I had to buy hay because the livestock had to be fed. Nothing could be sold; nobody had any

money... When I was told that here one pays forty per cent on borrowed money, I was glad that my creditor accepted oxen as payment. Hay that was bought was consumed, and the money went. On returning home one day, I learned my son Charlie's had been scalded. The poor little fellow had half his body scalded, and skin was flaking off.... We had to tend to the poor little fellow's suffering and help him with home remedies, since there was no money for medicine. Three months went by before we were convinced that our child would survive..."

"Spring was near, and distress reached its highest peak.... The children, thinking we were sleeping, left their beds in the night and looked for food, as they could not sleep with such hunger. I felt so sorry for them, yet there was nothing I could do. I explained to them about our desperate situation and, crying, I told them that we would die of hunger..."

Benjamin sold an old rifle and silk scarf to survive, but soon lost his ox and then lost the cow birthing a calf which survived. When

Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"



Early prairie house or town hall?

Spring came all converged to build houses and till the land, though hail came and destroyed crops. A new child added to the mouths to feed, and desperation increased. As winter approached, they "had plenty of flour, but there was no great satisfaction, no richness, and we became convinced that hunger is the best cook."

Not far from his home he was attacked by three men, and escaped. "There are people who take the best claims for good money and leave, and there are people who come to the empty wilderness, cut down trees and then leave..." Almost a year later it was announced that a company was planning to build a railroad to Michigan... "I slaughtered my last ox, and the man who was in charge of building the track bought half of the ox. He told me that when he got some money, he would pay me. I kept some meat for myself, but I never did get paid for the rest, not one cent. So I went to work on the railroad. I worked for thirty days. The company then went bankrupt, and I didn't get a thing for my meat or for my work..."

Editor's note: Benjamin Fišer's great, great granddaughter, Teresa Fisher Boardman lives in Upper Town. Her family moved to St. Paul in 1950s.

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



When Michael Karták came with his family to St. Paul on September 8, 1860 there were about six families living south of the landing, a place later referred to as the Upper Levee. As was common in other cities of the Midwest, namely Chicago, the first job the new arrivals from Bohemia were usually able to secure was cutting wood for the winter.

Michael Karták, a man reputed to have formidable strength, was an exception when he found a job as furrier within days of his landing. He came upon two men who were trying clumsily to beat a wolf's skin, took the instrument from the less skilled, and proved his ability. One of them spoke to him in English: "I shook my head to show him I did not understand. Then he spoke in German, and that went better. He asked me who I was and what I was doing, and when I had explained my predicament he promised that he would find me work with a furrier, which he did, and I began working immediately." So he did not have to start as a laborer as others did, and could practice his trade.

THEY CAME TO ST. PAUL

by Daniel Nečas

Two events in this story help us understand the relative success of many Čech immigrants in America. It is often forgotten that the Čechs, having been closely connected to the German-speaking cultures of Austria and Germany for centuries, very early joined the massive wave of German emigration, and often

settled side by side with the Germans and were able to communicate in the new country with members of an ethnic group that was large and significant enough to provide access to better paying jobs in the trades.

The Bohemian community on the Upper Levee was growing throughout the 1860s



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

West End looking west from downtown: 1863

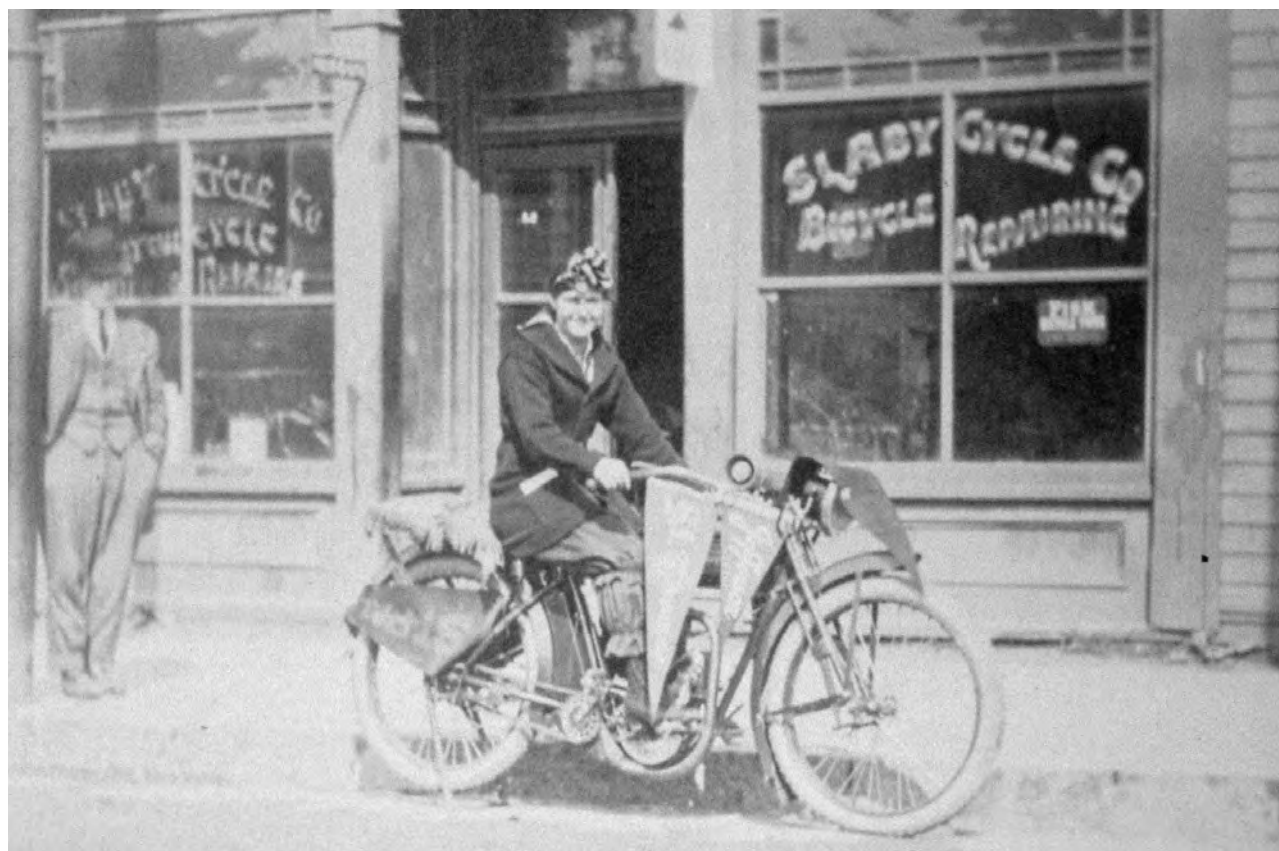
although the Čechs did not remain there long. The city directory of 1880 lists six families on the flats: Benda, Hamr, Hazuka, Sterba, Tuma, and Vondra. By the end of the 1880's the majority of them had moved up to the West 7th Street neighborhood, and the area on the river flats was left to the Italians who made their presence there visible and long enough so that the place is now known mostly as St. Paul's former Little Italy.

When Michael Karták wrote his account in 1885 he estimated that there were about 300 Čech families in St. Paul at that time. According to research by Karleen Chott Sheppard, the city directory of 1880 lists 257 names (of which 241 were residents of the West 7th area) that are almost indisputably of Čech origin. In addition, many ethnic Čechs to this day have German (and Italian!) surnames, so the total number of St. Paul's inhabitants at the beginning of the 1880s, who or whose parents came from the territory of Bohemia, was most likely much higher than the number of all family members who belonged to the 257-300 families indicated by the city directory and Karták.

By the end of the 1880's, the Čech community in the West 7th area had established its own institutions — taverns, shops and stores, fraternal halls (Bohemian Benevolent Society "Slovanská Lípa" *Slavic Linden Tree*, Č.S.P.S. Lodge #12 "Čech") gymnastic organization (Sokol), churches (St. Stanislav

and Cyril Congregational), a free-thought society, a dance hall, school and more. The neighborhood was a lively place charged with a distinctive character featuring strong cultural traditions brought by the Bohemians from their native land (upon his debarkation, Michael Karták recognized the first of his fellow countrymen by his dress).

Based upon Karták, Michael, Autobiography, Amerikán Národní Kalendář (American National Annual), 1886; and Karleen Chott Sheppard — Čechoslovaks (Bohemians): Earliest Settlers in the West Seventh Street Area, St. Paul, 1979; Early Čech Settlers in Minnesota: Biographies and translations from Amerikán Národní Kalendář, 2002.



Fort Road street scene, 1915 Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

BOHEMIAN FLATS: The Stepping Stone to “Bohemian Hill”

by Gary J. Brueggemann

One of Saint Paul’s oldest, most celebrated ethnic enclaves was the old rustic Upper Levee neighborhood, underneath the north side of the High Bridge and just a few blocks up river from the historic Chestnut Street boat docks—the “Upper Landing.” Although best remembered as “Little Italy”—the home of 80 some closely-knit families from Southern Italy, who dominated the levee for more than a half century—the place was originally known as “Bohemian Flats,” due to its marked concentration of families from Bohemia, Austria-Hungary. “Bohemian Flats” began as a poor man’s sprawl, growing out from the bustling Upper Landing business district, shortly after the first Bohemian or Čech immigrants arrived in Saint Paul, during the height of the steamboat era. The first Čechs to settle in Saint Paul came between 1859-1860—not long after Minnesota became a state, or about 20 years after the town was founded. One of those first Bohemian settlers was Tomáš Heraff (?-1891), who presumably made his home along the Upper Levee around 1859 but

later moved on top of the Cliff Street bluff, (old Stewart Avenue), where he became a successful stone mason and popular local politician. (The house that he built in 1881 and which was his home for the last 10 years of his life, still stands at 364 Emma Street.)

Another of the Upper Levee pioneers was František Kahout (1830-1888), a Čech-speaking native of Bohemia, who came to Saint Paul, along with his 32 year-old Bohemian wife, Anna, and their three year-old son, František Jr., in 1868. They settled on the Upper Levee, near a spring fed pond toward the bluff and new railroad tracks, later to be known as “Kahout’s Pond.” Kahout—a harness-maker by trade and reportedly “a man of prodigious physical strength,” spent the rest of his life residing with his wife Anna and their eventual ten children in their simple pond side home on old Railroad Avenue—one of the Upper Levee’s first streets. Other early settlers of “Bohemian Flats” included George Behmer, William Binder, John Ertman, August Plantke, Joseph Shinderus, Albert Wuršek, James Wondra and Mary



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

Shacks with High Bridge in background: 1893

Pollack. The early settlers of the Flats, mostly Bohemian, came to the levee mainly because it was then one of the cheapest, most convenient and unregulated places to live in Saint Paul.

These first homes were simple shacks built in random fashion with little regard to which direction they faced, and only a small section of the levee would ever be platted into residential lots and streets. Later, some of those shacks were remodeled into attractive little cottages. Most of the others, however, remained crude until they were ultimately razed and replaced with real houses, or new commercial development. The opening of Martin Delaney’s “Northwest Stockyards” (the predecessor of James McMillan’s Meat Packing Plant—a levee landmark from 1892-1937) in 1880 near Kahout’s Pond, magnified the levee’s low status image. The stockyards butchered about 20 cattle a day and dumped their refuse into a backwater part of Kahout’s Pond. A vivid, albeit prejudiced, description of Bohemian Flats, appeared in the November 11, 1888 *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*:

Photo: Ramsey County Historical Society



498 Duke was a typical West End cottage at the end of the flats at James, with fruit trees, garden, and small out building to keep domestic animals.

Few persons care to set foot on the East side river flats excepting the members of the Slavonic community which has established itself there, and those whom business may call into that low-lying district. The locality has no attractions for the man out for a walk and carriage people would never think of driving down there. The shanties of the settlers, which seem to be shared equally with them by the hens and the geese that they keep, lend a certain picturesqueness to the view, it is true, but this is offset by the odors that float across the flats from the garbage dock on the river bank and that arise from the door yards of the rough board dwellings. Hence visits to the flats, like angels' visits, are few and far between.

At this time Bohemian Flats eventually transformed into "Little Italy" as most of the Bohemians were now ready to move up to the higher status bluff-top community along present Cliff Street, nearer their institutions and the concentration of Čech families in St. Paul. Thus, Bohemian Flats served as the steppingstone to the city's Čech center — a neighborhood that could have aptly been called "Bohemian Hill."

Coincidentally, the year this description was written marked the beginning of the end of the Bohemian's domination of the levee, and within two decades "Bohemian Flats" had transformed into "Little Italy." The Bohemians had simply reached the point where they could move up to the higher status bluff top community along present Cliff Street, nearer their institutions and the greatest concentration of Čech families in St. Paul. Thus, Bohemian Flats served as the stepping stone to the city's Čech center — a neighborhood that could have aptly been called, "Bohemian Hill."



At 192 Goodrich with High Bridge as backdrop, 1900

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



The Mazek family driving by 740 Butternut Street in 1915

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

A BOHEMIAN FAMILY

by Joe Landsberger

In the early 1860s, the families of František Dvořák and Marie Lizzie Moznott arrived in one of the first waves of Bohemian immigrants to the United States. Unlike immigrants of other cultures who sent pioneer sons to America to pave the way, Bohemians relocated as families to make their new lives. Their families settled and farmed in Spillville, Iowa in a Bohemian colony, and on October 1, 1877, František and Lizzie married and had six boys and four girls.

The farmland around Spillville was already taken, so as the children grew to maturity, they looked to other states to establish their farms. Their first-born son, William (born a bit before their marriage) left for the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889, and was soon joined by his sister Julia. He died a year and a half later of typhus, and after Julia buried him in Canute, she returned to Iowa. But soon she and her sister Rose joined brothers Roman, Joe and Albert to homestead around Canby in western Minnesota.

After annulled first marriages, the sisters relocated to St. Paul, and joined the Bohemian

community in its West End. Julia met Joe Svobodný and they married in January 1905, bought a house at 796 Juno, and raised two daughters, Wilma and Angie. Although Julia continued to attend church, Joe was a “free thinker”, and didn’t. Joe worked as a cigar roller his entire life in downtown St. Paul, and Julia tended her extended family.

Meanwhile, in Canby, Bohemians met Swedes, and Joe Dvořák (Wilma’s brother) met Hilda Thompson and married November 1908. They bought a farm and raised Herford cattle and Duroc-Jesey hogs until Joe injured his back breaking a horse, and died from complications in August 1923. Since Hilda had few resources, when she re-married, the boys were sent to live with Dvořáks in Spillville, and the girls sent to Julia in St. Paul.

Hildred was the first in 1928 after she finished high school, and Julia sent her up to Crocus Hill to keep house and work for her room and board, as did many young Bohemian girls of that time. After a year and a half she began nursing school in February 1930 at City Hospital, and even earned \$7 a month for the



Photo: Joe Landsberger

Blanche Dvořák Landsberger in front of St. Francis de Sales “Business School” 1928

three-year program. Soon after she began her studies, she was placed in “contagion” for six weeks for diphtheria.

Blanche joined her sister Hildred, and she too was sent “up the hill,” though her placement was not so fortunate and Hildred helped her find another. Blanche was then sent to St. Francis de Sales Business School to complete her education. Jeanette joined her two sisters in the early 1930s. Her family on

the hill helped her to complete high school at Mechanic Arts and she also studied nursing at City Hospital.

Julia and Joe Svobodný lived out their lives in the West End, and when Julia died in 1968, their daughter Wilma, and her husband Pavel Strachoda, continued to live in the Juno house until their deaths in the late 1980's.

Hildred continued to work at City (Ancker) Hospital in the records department until her marriage in 1945, then relocated to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Jeannette joined the Navy during World War II and married soon after. Blanche continued to live in St. Paul, and had eight children. Her son Joe Landsberger lives in the West End.

Ancker Hospital (now Regions Hospital) was located at the eastern end of Jefferson. It provided care, education, and employment for the West End as the City of St. Paul's Hospital from 1882 to 1905, when it moved to it's present site by the State Capital. It was torn down in 1967. The location is now home to Bridgeview School and the Administrative Offices of the St. Paul School System. Nationally, Ancker was one of the first to offer onsite housing and training for nurses in a cohort educational system.

Ambulance Court at Ancker Hospital in 1911 Photo: Ramsey County Historical Society



LEAVING HOME: colonizing America

by František Gerga as related to his daughter,
Mary Gerga Bolles

What led my family of Slovaks to leave home and colonize America in the late 1800s? What led me to leave my village of Lendak, Slovakia at the base of the Tatra mountains in 1913?

As my mother and father watched from the window, at the age of 19, I left my village for good. I met three friends, Vincent Najpovar, Phillip Fudali, and Joe Hudacek on a hill after dinner and we paid a guide to walk us to Novitark. There we slept until 4 a.m., met a new guide who helped us slip across the German border and catch a train to the German port of Bremen. From there the steamer George Washington sailed to New York.

The cheapest fare was in the hold, and the nine-day journey was primitive. Each person had a bucket for food and not much room to sleep. When I saw the Statue of Liberty I became so excited I threw my bucket

in the sea, not knowing it would still be some time before I would be allowed off the ship, and hunger became an issue. I passed through Ellis Island without a physical, though had to wait for my friends to pass the medical exam. An "X" was marked on their chests to indicate they were healthy. I bought a bag of food for a dollar, ate it all, then ate little until my train arrived in Duluth via Montreal. The train seats were wooden and not much comfort.

We rested a couple days in Superior, proceeded to Aurora on the Iron Range, and looked for my brother Jan who preceded me in 1909. In those days, most immigrants used saloons as post offices to locate relatives and friends. But without much luck or language skills, we went from one to another, and at last



The Gerga wedding in front of St. Stan's with John and Ann Kulhanek

Photo: Mary Gerga Bolles

tried to communicate with some Slavs, and then a bartender. One offer was turned down after free drinks: the situation didn't seem right. We left the bar, and ran into a policeman who spoke our language. Brother Jan lived across the street, but didn't go to the station because it rained that night!

I worked the open pit mines, then returned to Superior to work in a chair factory. Once I tried to charge some meat, and the butcher asked if I knew Jan Gerga who owed him money. I said yes, but it turned out not to be my brother's, but my father's debt! The reason that I came to Minnesota was that my father,

Photo: Mary Gerga Bolles



The Gerga house at 317 Harrison, as well as its neighborhood, were cleared to make way for 35E at the foot of the upper bluff in the 1950s, prematurely disrupting the traditions of a neighborhood, and adding to the flight out of the inner cities due to short-sighted urban political policies.

Jan, preceeded my brother and I to Minnesota twice back the 1880s, once for five years and once for six. You see, a Slovak's ties to return to his village were stronger than a Bohemian's!

After several years working in North Dakota and Montana, I settled in St. Paul and worked at McMillan's slaughter house on the flats below the High Bridge. The flats extended along the Mississippi River, from the Upper Levee out to Randolph Avenue. Here a small Slovak colony formed with fellow villagers from Lendak: Florian Halcin, George Berosik, and Matt Hudacek. You see, often old world villages populated new

American towns. In 1916 I married Mary Stodola in St. Stanislav Church and moved up the hill to Cliff Street and Butternut at the High Bridge. Mary had to walk two blocks for water, and on her journey she would pick up chunks of coal for heating dropped from the passing trains. Later I saved and bought a motorcycle, but we lost the house to pay a \$30 speeding fine I got on the High Bridge! I worked at Armour's in South St. Paul from 1919-60. One of my sons, George, was killed in action in Saipan in the Pacific June 16, 1944, and my daughter Mary Bolles lives in West St. Paul.



Photo: Mary Gerga Bolles

Gerga family cousins in Lendak, Slovakia in their traditional dress. In the background are the Tatra Mountains, the tallest and most scenic of the Karpatské Mountain range on the border between Slovakia and Poland.

GROWING UP IN ST. PAUL: West 7th Street

Čechs, Slovaks,
Bohemians, & Kolache
Dough Rising in
the Warm Attic

by Emily Panuška Erickson
as related to her son, Warren Erickson

In the 1880s the extended Panuška family moved to the U.S. from Kladrubce in western Bohemia, and to St. Paul in 1893. It appears my father heard of the wonderful hunting and fishing in Minnesota! The large family grew with nine children and two Novak grandparents in a duplex at Armstrong and Jefferson: “My earliest memories of growing up in St. Paul center around the West Seventh Street neighborhood where I was born, as Emma Marie Panuška... In 1900 we were living in a duplex at 686 Armstrong Street, a neighborhood where many other families of



Photo: Florence Panuška Mamm

The year is 1914, and pictured in the photo are three Panuška children, with Ed holding the flag. Čech School Other children are Vitek (6), Skarda (4), Jansky (3), Hampl (3). At this time, F. B. Matlach taught Čech culture and language to over 50 children in the old Jefferson School, Pleasant and Sherman Streets. Matlach also published Minnesostské listy, the Čech Minnesota newspaper supplement to Osvěta ameriká. Not married, he was often found at Novak's tailor shop.

Čech, Slovak and Bohemian ancestry lived. We lived in our community, we played there in our yards, we went to nearby schools and churches, our mothers shopped there, our fathers usually worked nearby... Some years later, I caught scarlet fever and was taken to Ancker Hospital on Jefferson. My sister

Angela also had an encounter there when she somehow got a crochet hook caught in her cheek.”

Eventually they moved to 709 Jefferson in a large house with five bedrooms. “Mother’s kolaches were very good. She set up her dough in the attic on Friday nights

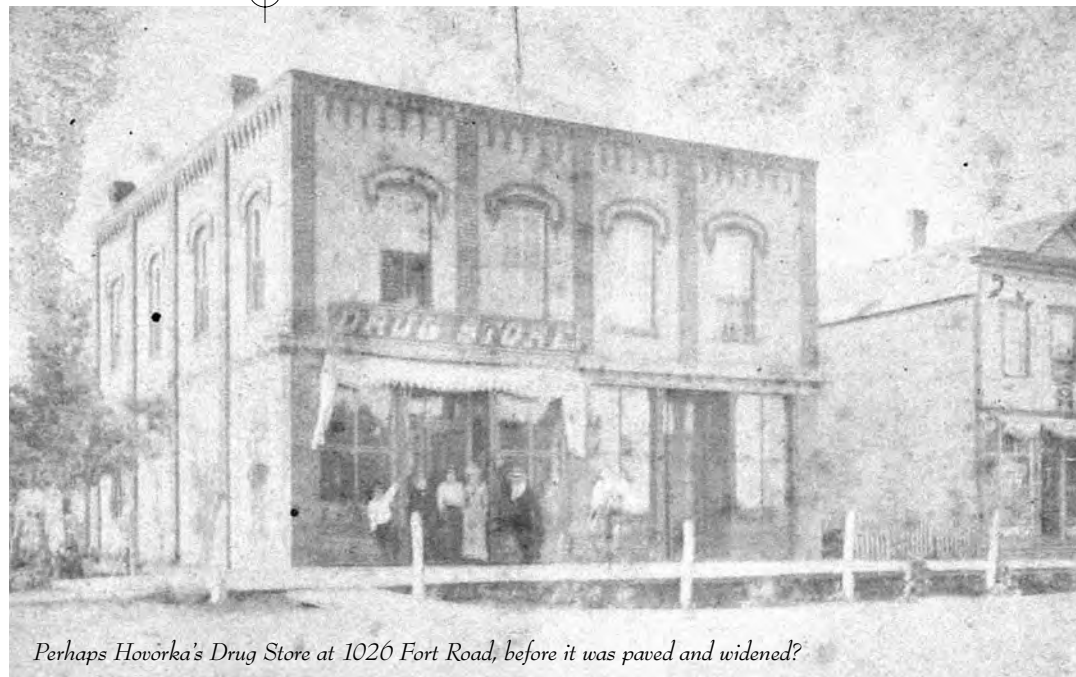
because it was warm up there. On Saturday mornings she would take the dough down and make about four pans of wonderful kolaches with prune, poppy seed, and fruit fillings.”

“On Saturdays we attended Čech school, walking a mile to Western Avenue near West Seventh Street.... I also attended Sunday School at a Čech Congregational Church... The building is there but is now a private home. The Reverend Trcka was the minister ... and later officiated at my wedding.”

“Mr. Machovec, our regular grocer, would come every morning to take mother’s order and return in the afternoon with the traditional wooden box filled with our groceries.... One day when she walked to Machovec’s store our dog, Dick, followed her and when she entered by the side door Dick sat outside waiting. Mother left by the front door to catch a streetcar downtown. Returning several hours later, she found Dick still waiting for her at the side door.”

“We bought milk from a neighbor, Mrs. Tucher, who had a cow in her barn on Arbor Street. She sold tickets for twelve quarts of milk for a dollar. Of course, the milk was not pasteurized in those days. Her daughter later developed tuberculosis and died, as did my playmate Margaret Brinkman.”

“At the turn-of-the-century, when my father was working as head cutter for Schaub Brothers, then the leading tailoring establishment in St. Paul he made a name



Perhaps Hovorka's Drug Store at 1026 Fort Road, before it was paved and widened?

Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"

for himself by fashioning an automobile coat... taking first prize at the 1900 World's Exposition in Paris... Sometime around 1905, after having worked several years for Schaub, my father organized Panuška & Son at 370 Robert Street, and headed the company for twenty-five years.”

“In those long ago times, we had a neighborhood mall of sorts on West Seventh Street east of Randolph. Located there were Machovec’s groceries (997 West 7th), Ferbers Dry Goods (995), Koch’s shoe store (989), the candy store, Rothmeyer’s saloon (949), and Jelínek’s pharmacy and ice cream parlor (961)... Across West Seventh Street was Graff & Cummings clothing store, Rybak’s meat market (943), the Garden Theater (927), and a barber shop. Shleck Brothers hardware store was located at 991.”

“On the other side of Machovec’s store was Škarda groceries, (1015), my grandfather’s (tailor) shop, and McAfee & Walter’s butcher shop (1035). The Masonic Hall was upstairs. On the corner was Bauer’s hardware store at 1097. Back of Jelínek’s was the St. Francis De Sales Catholic church, since torn down. Across the street from Machovec’s and at the foot of Randolph Street was Hovorka’s drug store at 1026. The Bohemians dealt in a variety of trades but the most prevalent were shoe-making, cigar-making, tailoring, butchering, and selling groceries... František Wosika opened a saloon at 974 in 1887, his descendents carried on the trade more recently at 731 Randolph.”

Adapted with permission from Ramsey County History.

Photo: Louis Pilney



Pilney's Food Market, Fort Road and Market (Randolph). Pictured (right to left) are John Lunak, Frank Pilney, and John Friedman. Not pictured is Mary Tschida who worked for 64 years and 3 generations of Pilneys.

Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"

Clothing shop on Fort Road before the turn of the century, with bonnets hanging from the ceiling.



Čech immigrants often brought more money with them than other immigrant groups, were over 90% literate, and preferred the edge of cities near rivers and lakes if they did not move to rural environs. An early priest of St. Stanislav Church, Fr. Jan Rynda, reports that "One of our old parishioners informed me that the Čechs in St. Paul would have been better off materially if they had

land is now worth \$30,000." However, just as there was much speculation in land in early St. Paul history, there also were great losses in these investments.

They were generally skilled workers: butchers, carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths, and cigar makers. The 1880 St. Paul City Directory identifies only 41 of the 257 individuals as laborers, the rest covered a

BUSINESS & COMMERCE

been more enterprising and if they had known how to profit by the experiences of others with land as it then was. Among them was one to whom was given the opportunity to cut and chop wood, and choose between \$3.00 cash and a lot of land. He chose the cash, though the

nearly complete range of all trades necessary for the existence of the community. Unlike other non-English and non-German speaking immigrants, especially from the later, "new" wave of immigration with whom they are often and to some extent incorrectly associated, the Čechs or Bohemians were able to move within the usual pattern of immigration rather quickly. One more example from Karták's story illustrates this fact as well: "A policeman who was watching our disagreement, came to ask what the trouble was. Because he was a German, we easily understood each other." (Sheppard/Nečas)

Čechs tended to both patronize and work together in businesses found by their fellow Čechs, and many of these were West End institutions. These are a few that lasted over 50 years: Karl Záleský established his West End Bakery in 1910 at 451 Bay; Wenzel Hovorka had his drugstore at 1026-28 for 50 years. The Polish, František Bulera established his grocery in 1903 at 407-09 James.

The Garden Movie Theater (at 927 Fort Road) sponsored Čech film series in the 1930s and 40s. And, of course, many saloons along Fort Road were communal Čech living rooms that supported its many breweries.

František J. Pilney came to St. Paul in 1902 from Jordan, Minnesota. He took a job with Pabst Meats on the east side of St. Paul for a couple years before starting his own meat market in 1904. In 1932, West 7th was widened, and ten feet of each building was cut off along the south side of the avenue. Undeterred, František remodeled to the distinctive look the building now

holds. Throughout the years delivery was a large part of the business, starting with horse and buggy down to truck delivery. The store was in business 94 years, through three generations: František J. Louis, and Louis, Jr.

Cigar Manufacturing

One of the more unusual occupations of Bohemians in America was cigar manufacturing. This occupation originated in Sedlec, Bohemia. In Sedlec, over 2,000 Bohemians worked in a large cigar-making industry for the Austrian monopoly. Čapek writes that in late 1873 95% of Bohemian

Vačláv and Rosa



Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"

employment in New York made cigars, which decreased to 3.2% in 1900. In the early days piecework could also be performed in homes, and thus children were taught the skills at an early age. St. Paul Bohemians also worked in this industry, and there were several cigar companies in the early 1900s, including Kuhles & Stock Cigar Company (353-355 Jackson Street), Hart & Murphy Cigar Manufacturers (455-457 Jackson), and later the Worch Cigar Company. František Korbel worked in the New York cigar industry until he left for California's Sonoma Valley to make wine. The West End's State Representative from 1921-35, Albert J Samec, Jr., was listed as a cigar maker by trade. Joe Svobodný, 796 Juno, worked at Worch Cigar Company until his retirement in the 1950's.

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



Čuhles and Co Cigar Co 1900



Vác Pícha



V. Končal



Fr. Novotný



Anton Jurka



Mich Kartak



Voj Hájek



Jos Pícha



Jan Pícha



Fr. Vačura

ŘÁD ČECH č. XII Č.S.P.S.

Image: Sokol Minnesota

1633 First documented Čech immigrant, Augustine Herrman arrives in America

1748 First Čech Moravian Church built in New York

1838 St. Paul “founded” by Pig’s Eye Parrant who is driven out of Fort Snelling because of his sales of bootleg liquor to soldiers and to the native Indian population.

1841 Fr. Louis Gautier erects the first Catholic chapel and renames the city after the Apostle Paul

1848 Earliest important American-Čech rural settlement is established in Caledonia, north of Racine, Wisconsin.

1849 Fort Road re-named West Seventh Street, though Fort Road used into later 1800’s

1854 The Česko-Slovanská Podporující Společnost (C.S.P.S.—Čech Slavonic Protection Society) is founded March 4 in Jakub Mottl’s Saloon in St. Louis, Missouri.

1854 First Čech Catholic Church erected in St. Louis, Missouri and dedicated to the Čech Saint Jan Nepomucký

1856 Four Čechs found Nová Praha/New Prague, the oldest Čech colony in Minnesota.

Catholic Central Union) begins with 21 members to provide death benefits and mutual support in St. Louis, MO

1877-80 Fr. Tichý sets up administration of St. Paul Čech Catholics before relocating to New Prague

1879 St. Stanislav Parish House completed.

1879 Č.S.P.S. establishes its first hall at Western and Michigan Avenues. This first hall is a re-located schoolhouse with an addition for a stage.

1880 Census notes that there are 267,000 foreign born in Minnesota, of which Čechs are the 6th largest group with 7,750. Austrians are larger and probably include many Čechs.

1881 Blanche Yurka, actress and author, born in St. Paul.

1882 First Minnesota SOKOL is organized by 10 men

1882 First St. Stanislav Parish House completed.

1886 First Č.S.P.S. Hall burns down and is replaced by a two story brick building

1886 Fr. Jan Rynda becomes pastor of St. Stanislav Church

1886 Cyril Congregational Church on Erie Street established

1920 Sokolská Hlídka (SOKOL Outlook) published in St. Paul

1921 George Samec (502 Jefferson) is elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives

1924 Fr. Rynda removed from St. Stans and returns to Moravia.

1930 Census: Minnesota is sixth in states with a Čech-speaking population of 7,814 out of 491,638 nationally.

1930’s SOKOL Camp built in Pine River as a collaboration of the SOKOLs of the Northern District.

1932 Back drops of the Č.S.P.S. Hall are painted by Victor Hubal, Sr. with scenes from Českoslovakia.

1932 Československé Spolky v Americe formed in Chicago (C.S.A.: Czechoslovak Society of America) nationally combines Č.S.P.S. and four other benevolent or fraternal federations.

1934 Second St. Stanislav Church destroyed by fire on April 16.

1941 The third St. Stanislav Kostka Church is built

1942 St. Stanislav Church basement is remodeled with two rooms for the school.

1858 Minnesota becomes the 32nd state

1858 Tomáš Mareš, a Čech, arrives in St. Paul then moves to LeSueur County

1859 Josef Trnka and Tomaš Herauf arrive in St. Paul

1860 František Kofízek started Slovan Amerikánský (American Slav), first American Čech newspaper in Racine Wisconsin

1860 Vojta Handl, Karel Kopriva, František Filípek, Michal Karták follow. The area of the Upper Landing is established as the first Čech community in St. Paul.

1861 First Catholic mass said in St. Paul for 3 Čech families by Fr. Peter Malý at the German Assumption Church on Fort Road.

1862 SOKOL (Falcon) is founded in Prague, Bohemia.

1862 The American Homestead Act of 1862 promises a 160 acre plot of land to anyone willing to live and work the property for 5 years and encourages (Čech) settlement of the prairie states

1865 The American Sokol (Falcon) is founded in St. Louis patterned after Sokol of Prague.

1870 Slovanská Lipa (Slavic Linden Tree) is formed in St. Paul as a Čech free-thought reading and discussion society

1870 Antonín Jurka arrives in St. Paul

1872 The first St. Stanislav Kostka Church I is built in St. Paul

1872 Č.S.P.S. Lodge #12 "Čech" established in St. Paul

1876 Slovanská Lipa merges with Č.S.P.S. Lodge in St. Paul

1877 Lodge St. Vaclav of the První Římsko-Katolická Ústřední Jednota (first Roman

1886 St. Stanislav School occupies first church, when the second, larger church is built. A convent is built in back.

1887 Minnesotské Noviny published as Minnesota's first Čech newspaper

1889 St. Paul's High Bridge is built

1890 Antonín Zujíc, a one-legged dancer, moves to St. Paul

1891 "Obzor" a Čech Catholic paper is published for Minnesota Catholic Čechs

1891 The state convention of the IUJ is held in St. Paul

1893 Antonín Dvořák, Čech composer and conductor, visits St. Paul

1896 11th national congress of affiliated Č.S.P.S. lodges held in St. Paul

1902 A brick school building of 4 rooms replaces the first St. Stanislav Church which is torn down

1904 Minnesostské listy, a Čech Minnesota newspaper addition, is added to Osvěta ameriká, a national paper. This supplement is edited by František Matlach

1904 A tornado destroys the 5 northern spans of the High Bridge

1905 St. Stanislav statistics: Church: 1000 communicants; School: 250 pupils; Society membership: 700.

1910 the United States census indicates that Minnesota has 33,247 residents who were born in _echoslovakia, 4,140 of these live in St. Paul. Minnesota ranks 6th of the states, with Illinois first with 124,225 (most in the City of Chicago).

1917 Č.S.P.S. hall renovated, Raymond Pavelka, architect.

1918 Czechoslovakia gains independence following World War I.

1951 St. Stanislav' School is remodeled with a second floor and four additional rooms, (Pešek and Shifflet, architects).

1958 Cyril Congregational Church closes and its records transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society.

1973 The West 7th Federation is incorporated.

1974 West 7th Neighborhood Center rents St. Stan's school for a year

1975 Č.S.P.S. Hall is threatened with demolition by developers. Led by Henry E Jansesn and researched by Marlin Heise, a group organizes to plan preservation.

1975 St. Stanislav' youth house sold

1977 Č.S.P.S. Hall is declared a National and State Historic Site and placed on the National Register of Historic Sites (Building - #77000763).

1978 Sokol St. Paul changes it's name to Sokol Minnesota

1979 Č.S.P.S. Hall sold by Czechoslovak Society of Minnesota to Sokol Minnesota.

1980 Č.S.P.S. Hall partially restored

1982 St. Stanislav School building is leased and eventually sold in 1993.

1984 Sandy (Žaloudek) Pappas is elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives, and to the Minnesota Senate in 1991

1992 In a nationwide referendum, the people of Czechoslovakia vote to separate into two republics: the Czech and Slovak. The Czech Republic combines Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian areas.

1999 Václav Havel Civil Society Symposium takes place in St. Paul

GATHERING TOGETHER: Society and Culture

Our access to history, to our stories—is fading and colored with time. Dr. Winston Chrislock, for example, has presented us with a conundrum: the philosophical divisions of the early Čech-Slovak immigrants. Catholics, Congregationalists, and free-thinkers building and gathering in landmarks and societies: St. Stan's, Cyril Congregational Church, the Čech Hall. As we continue in describing major Slavonic West End institutions, we wonder: if these divisions were so deep, why are these structures so close to each other? What happened when a Čech-speaking Catholic passed a Čech-speaking free-thinking neighbor on the street? At the bakery? At the grocers? At work? What if one was Bohemian and one Slovak? My own family's experience says probably not much: my great aunt Julia Dvořák was Catholic and her husband Joe Svobodný a free thinker, or maybe just unchurched. But as Aunt Dolly says: that wasn't a problem. Father Rynda was a good friend with Vaclav Pícha, and spent many hours in discussion in the back rooms of Pícha's Saloon

on the first floor of the Č.S.P.S. Hall. Yet he forbade his parishioners the same pleasure. Antonin Dvořák stayed with Father Rynda, yet the major musical event was held in the Č.S.P.S. Hall. So also, a major Congregationalist was instrumental in building the Č.S.P.S. Hall and promoting Slavonic culture and language. Could it be that this intellectual division that ordered lives did not restrict them, or their cultural acuity? Could this cultural, internal competition paradoxically have strengthened these very cultural institutions? Could choice of path have provided safety, as well as diversity, of exploration in cultural development? Did the Čechs and Slovaks learn a lesson of history so well illustrated by Chrislock, that the real philosophy was adaptation and application to their new Minnesota circumstances, their new

world? Did the cultural mix through intermarriage develop a hybrid, the fruits of which we experience today as evidenced in its last strong institution, the Č.S.P.S. Hall?

Č.S.P.S. Hall today is the longest Čech-serving building in the United States, witnessing a convergence of these philosophies: whether free-thinking, Catholic, Congregationalist, and now culture-specific.



Photo: Lisa Weicht

WEST END CONTROVERSIES: Čech Catholics, Free Thinkers, and Congregationalists

by C. Winston Chrislock

Since its genesis, the Čech colony along West 7th Street found itself divided by religious factionalism. Three buildings in the community are associated with this. The first is St. Stanislav Catholic Church, the second the Č.S.P.S. Hall, and the third a private residence at Erie Street which until 1958 housed Cyril Congregational Church.

Most Čech immigrants were nominally Catholic, but to some that Church was associated with Austro-Hungarian repression. The Čechs had experienced their own religious reformation under Jan Hus in the 15th century, one hundred years before the Germans underwent their Lutheran Reformation. The Čech defeat at the hands of the Catholic Habsburgs at the battle of White Mountain (Bílá Hora) in 1620 meant the loss of Čech independence to the Catholic Habsburgs, virtual destruction of the Hussite Protestant movement, and forced conversion back to Catholicism. When Čechs left Bohemia and Moravia for St. Paul some of them broke completely with a church which they

associated as an institution of repression while others remained faithful to it. This led to development of three important Čech centers, none of which had much to do with one another until World War I spawned the movement for an independent Czechoslovakia.

The first of these was St. Stanislav of Kostka Roman Catholic Church, founded in 1872. Its most forceful priest was Fr. Jan Rynda, who served the church from 1886 to 1924. He was active in promoting Čech interests in the St. Paul archdioceses.

Less than 100 yards away from St. Stanislav Church is the Č.S.P.S. hall, founded in 1887. Throughout its history it has housed several Čech fraternal lodges, singing and theatrical societies, and Čech Sokol organizations. All of these groups were, more or less, associated with religious liberalism and/or free-thought and had little use for the Catholic Church. This was reflected by the fact that neither St. Stanislav nor Č.S.P.S. groups, though established to promote Čech culture, cooperated to do so.

Cyril Congregational Church, which existed from the 1880s until 1958, and held services in Čech until 1945, had no use for either St. Stanislav or the Č.S.P.S. hall. The first was a den of papists linked with the oppressor of the Čechs and the second was a bastion of sin associated with atheism, dancing and alcohol.

Only two events brought the three to cooperate—and then only to a limited degree. During World War I, T. G. Masaryk led a movement to establish an independent Czechoslovakia. He depended, in part, on the Cech-American community for financial and political support. This led Fr. Rynda and Cyril Church to cooperate with Č.S.P.S. groups in 1918 to support Masaryk's movement. After Masaryk's success in 1918, the relationship among the three again cooled, only to warm up during World War II when Čech-Americans again lent financial and political support to liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazis. After 1945, though in close physical proximity and linked by their Čech identity, there was little to hold them together. They went their

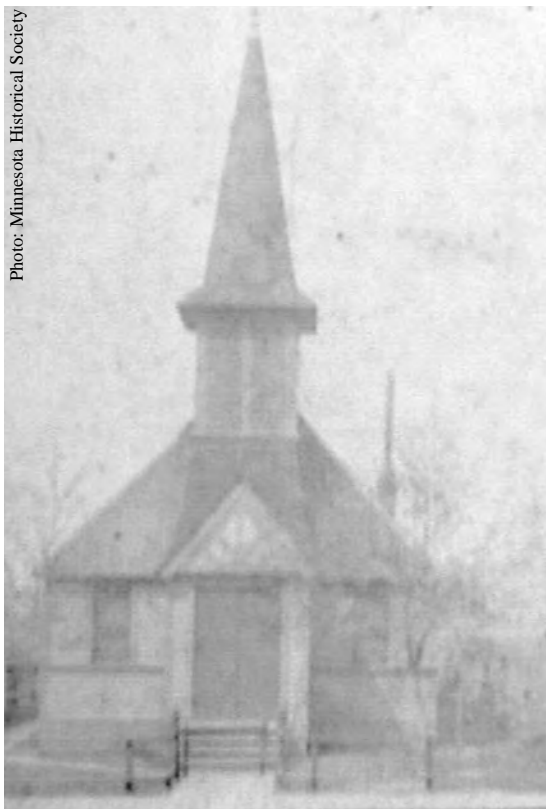
separate ways, or in the case of Cyril Church, disappeared from the scene.

A number of converging factors, however, bring cooperation to communities of St. Stanislav and the Č.S.P.S. Hall. A declining percentage and importance of Čech membership at St. Stanislav Church has refocused attention on the role of both SOKOL and the Hall bring to the visibility and viability

of Čech cultural events. So also, decreasing numbers of descendants in each community of Čech speakers experienced family traditions have likewise raised the visibility of the Č.S.P.S. hall. This is enhanced by the establishment in 2002 of the Čech and Slovak Cultural Center, and installation of an Honorary Consulate for the Čech Republic (Dr. Josef Mestenhauser) at the hall.

Community members of the several groups have also become involved in placing the old St. Stanislav baptismal gate in a small park near the High Bridge. Old divisions have faded to proactively support visibility of Čech- and Slovak-American contributions to the building of St. Paul and its West End.

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



First Cyril Church in 1887

Photo: Lisa Weicht



Sign of current Č.S.P.S. hall on West 7th Street.

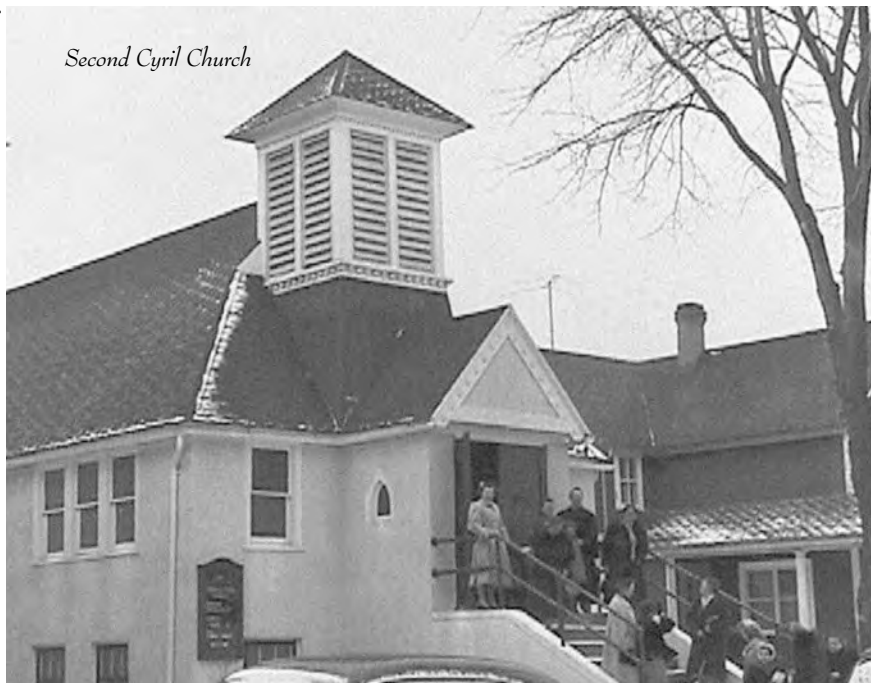
Photo: Archdiocese of St. Paul



First St. Stanislav Catholic Church

CYRIL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



This congregation had its start in 1887 with a visit from Dr. H. A. Schaffer, Superintendent of the Čech Congregational Missionary Association. Schaffer was a leading national religious advisor and figures

prominently in Protestant outreach to the Czech immigrants. His missions were specifically directed to Čech people alienated from Roman Catholicism, who wished to establish a “free church” tradition of local

congregational autonomy in all matters. However, this tradition did not relate to Čech origins of the Moravian Church since theirs was based on a personal relationship with God out of the teachings of the martyred Jan Hus, and Congregationalists believed in the ascendancy of the Bible. On October 16, 1887 Dr. Schaffer dedicated the Cyril Chapel on 373 Daly. The Reverend John Prucha served as pastor for two years, and was followed by his brother Václav, Joseph Stipek, and Phillip Reitingner until 1896 when the Reverend Charles Trcka became pastor. Pastor Trcka served as pastor for forty years, including formal incorporation in 1906 and the move to 277 Erie Street. At the 60th anniversary in 1947, the Martha Ladies Aid Society was particularly celebrated for its good works. The church dissolved in 1959 and church documents were transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society.

Doug Ohman/Pioneer Photography



THE CHURCH OF ST. STANISLAV KOSTKA

by Sharen Darling

As the fourth oldest parish in St. Paul, St. Stanislav Kostka Church has served its congregation for 131 years. Čech and Polish immigrants who needed to hear the gospel in their native tongue founded the church. Bishop Grace agreed and sent them Father Bast who helped the immigrants build a small wooden church (60 by 26 feet), which Bishop Grace dedicated to St. Stanislav Kostka in the year 1872. Like the immigrants, who named their church after him, Stanislav was a young man with a spirit of adventure as he left his wealthy home in Vienna and set out to become a Jesuit priest.

In 1874 Fr. Steinocher was assigned as the first Čech pastor of the parish. However, the Polish parishioners were dissatisfied because he was not of their nationality. Fr. Stroelke, a Pole, was put in charge in 1877 and he, too, could not keep the peace among his own people so the bishop assigned Fr. Francis Tichý from Detroit, Michigan to take charge of the parish and organize the parish. Fr. Tichý initiated building the rectory as well

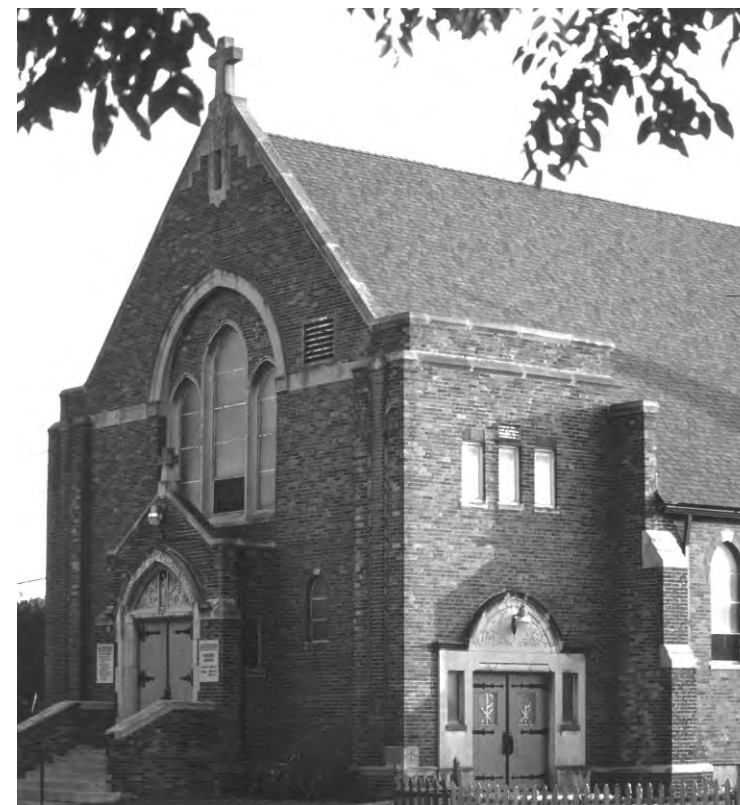
as a brick meeting hall. During this time the Polish members also left the parish and organized St. Adalbert's church.

In 1880 Fr. Tichý was re-assigned to New Prague, and various priests were assigned to St. Stanislav Church until 1886 when



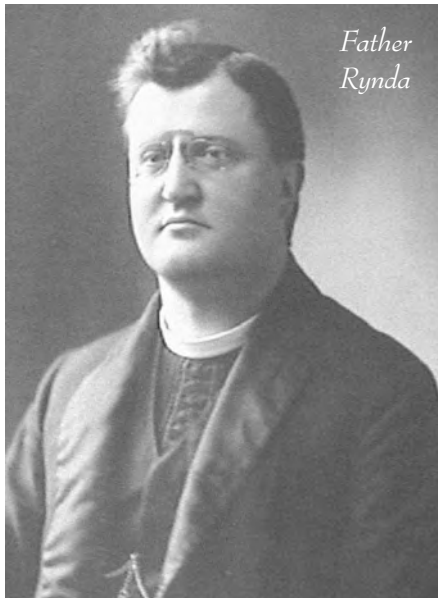
Fr. Francis Tichý

Archbishop Ireland called Fr. Jan Rynda to take charge. He served for nearly 40 years and during that time oversaw the building of a large brick church, which Archbishop Ireland pronounced a "Čech paradise." He established a school in 1886, though its school with four classrooms was not completed until 1902. That year the Church Hall or Katolická Beseda was also completed. Both the school and hall had central heating, a novelty for its time. The hall accommodated 700 and had a grand piano on its stage. In 1924 Fr. Rynda retired to his birthplace in Moravia and Fr. Alphonse



St. Stanislav Church, 2003 Photo: Doug Ohman/Pioneer Photography

Photo: Archdiocese of St. Paul



Kotouč, another Moravian, succeeded him as pastor for the next 15 years.

In 1927, St. Stanislav Clubs, led by the Mothers' Club, petitioned the Archbishop to replace Fr. Kotouč with Fr. Baštýř. Fr. Kotouč was not popular since the introduction of English into services, and they alleged that he refused baptism to those who did not support the church financially. They protested the lack of lay involvement in the affairs of the Church and financial support of the Church decreases significantly by parishioners. They were not successful, however, and Fr. Kotouč served until 1939, when the use of the Czech language in the school and the church came to an end.

On April 15, 1934 a fire broke out and

destroyed the church, just after Sunday Mass attended by 800 worshipers including 175 children. The fire marshal declared that the fire was the result of defective wiring. The country was in the midst of the depression and many parishioners were having a hard time making a living so building a new church was out of the question. Mass was held in the church hall. The year 1939 brought many changes and Fr. Václav Jiráček was the next pastor and oversaw the building of a new church, in 1940, Pesek and Shifflet (Minneapolis), architects. The second St. Stanislav Parish House was also purchased and remodeled. The first Mass in the third church was offered on May 5, 1941. In 1951, the school accommodated eight grades with 300 children, and the second convent was built for its School Sisters of Notre Dame. Fr. Jiráček was succeeded by Fr. Charles Jirík in 1966, and Fr. Alfred Sklužaček in 1967.

In 1975 the first non-Čech priest took over as pastor, and Fr. John Clay remains the pastor to this day. Fr. Clay grew up in New Ulm, Minnesota and was not necessarily conscious that St. Stanislav was a Čech community when he became the pastor. His approach to ministry is to take people where they are in their lives at the time and try to help them see all the possibilities open to them, and then let them come to their own decisions. Fr. Clay says, "This is a welcoming parish for all people." He takes pride in the parish's

program for alienated and healing Catholics. He is aware that "you can't be everything for everybody."

Fr. Clay's tenure at the parish began at the time that many changes were taking place in the church as a result of Vatican II. Lay people were now allowed to take a more active role in liturgies and they ministered alongside the clergy. Changes in the worship space itself took place in the late 70's and early 80's. The communion rail was removed to open up the sanctuary and the floor was raised to make the altar more visible from the pews. The communion rail was re-purposed for a new altar, pulpit, and kneeling benches for Mass servers. In a 1981 visitation, Bishop Kenney reported that there were "approximately 500 family units in the parish, many of them widows and widowers." In 1982, the St. Stanislav School building was leased to a Montessori Center, and sold in 1985.

Fr. Clay began celebrating the sacrament of baptism in this remodeled sanctuary, as the baptistery to its left was too small. This space was also re-purposed, both into a reconciliation room and an elevator. So the baptismal gate, that once initiated new members into the congregation, was removed. For a while it was stored in the garage, eventually sold, and stored again on a private lot. Now the gate will be installed in North High Bridge Park where it will welcome people to the neighborhood.

Today the church of St. Stanislav has a much smaller percentage of Čech members. The congregation has grown to over a thousand families from all over the city and many are not even aware of the Čech connection, and has embraced cultural diversity. With the shortage of priests, Dolores Movack Hunstad assists as Pastoral Minister. Though of Polish heritage, she attended St. Stanislav's School over 60 years ago. Her family lived across Fort Road from Degidio's Bar, and sold Christmas trees from their yard. Hunstad was trained at Cathedral Church and the College of St. Catherine, and has 25 years counseling experience teens at the Home of the Good Shepard. In her post-retirement occupation, her first anxieties about ministering to Father Clay were related, "But Father, I am more experienced with f*** you's than with Hail Mary's". Nonetheless, her work, as with Fr. Clay's has made St. Stanislav, "A welcoming parish for all people."

Based upon: Rynda, Fr. Jon, Dějiny osady sv. Stanislava, "Přuvodce po Českých Katolických Osadách v Arcidiecesi St. Paul, Minn," 1910; Mašek, Kris. "Checking on the Čechs: A History of St. Stanislav Church, St. Paul." 1988; Reardon, James Michael, The Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of St. Paul," 1952; Clay, Rev. John, Interview, February 2003; Dolores Novack Hunstad, Interview, March 2003.

Flames suddenly appeared in various locations of the church. Seventeen other buildings—mostly homes—were damaged, and only the vessels and vestments were saved. Hook and ladder truck No 1 was half buried by debris from a falling wall. At this time 300 families were enrolled in the parish. Economic depression prevented re-building until 1941.



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



Photo: Dennis Moran

Jan
Martin
Pešek

Jan Martin Pešek was born in Hvozdovec, Bohemia in 1869 and was an active parishioner of St. Stanislav Church. His parents were among the earliest Čech settlers in St. Paul, Minnesota, though moved to Montgomery when he was 10. Jan returned four years later to work as a bookkeeper in his Uncle Sladek's grocery store. In 1895 Pešek married Katherine Kovařík in Spillville, Iowa, sister of Antonín Dvořák's personal secretary. Pešek worked as a mail carrier in St. Paul from 1893 to his retirement in 1933. He was active in many church and ethnic Čech organizations, and occasionally spoke to civic groups on the history of Bohemia and St. Stanislav Parish. He encouraged the use of the Čech language, and from April 1891 through May 1894, published a Bohemian language newspaper, *Obzor*, in St. Paul that was co-edited by Father Jan Rynda. While the first Pešek residence was up the hill on Lincoln Avenue, he moved to a craft-style house he built at 529 Michigan Street, and remained a life-long St. Paul resident.

POLITICIANS

Čech and Slovak patterns of settlement and colonization reflect their approach to politics and participating in the affairs of their larger political communities. Their communities were self-contained and concentrated in the West End of St. Paul, and the leadership tended to focus on preserving cultural institutions and activities. As long as their interests and community were not threatened by the larger polities, their allegiance and interests were internal, or found external expression in unions and professional organizations.

In the civil war era of the 1860s, these first immigrant groups aligned themselves with Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party, mostly in opposition to slavery. In Minnesota, in the following years, they found they identified more with the emerging coalition of the Democratic Farmer Labour party. This is not to say that they visibly participated in the affairs of either city or state government, or were influential in the corridors of power in either, outside of their elected representatives.

Tomáš Heraff was said to be a popular local politician and stone mason and died February 12, 1891.

Albert J Samec, Jr. served the West End,

then the 39th District, from 1921-35. He was born in 1884 in Lomničí nad Luzničí Bohemia and came to the United States as an infant in 1885. A cigar maker by trade, he lived at 417 Duke and 502 Jefferson Avenue. He died March 1, 1935 in office, and flags were flown at half-mast in bereavement.

Joseph H. Mašek was born two blocks from the C.S.P.S. Hall to immigrant parents in 1879. He served six terms as representative, and four as Senator (1938-56). He resided at 130 Prospect Boulevard until his death in 1964.

Our current senator, **Sandy Pappas**, Čech heritage reaches up to Hibbing Minnesota. Her maternal Čech name was Shotec, though this was simplified from Žaloudek. In the 1970's Sandy was active in community organizing, worked for a local arts organization (COMPAS), and presented a play based upon the life of Blanche Yurka in the Č.S.P.S. Hall. Sandy began serving in the Minnesota State House of Representatives in 1985, and in the Senate in 1991.

Josef Pavlíček was born in Rozsochy, Moravia April 23, 1890. He immigrated to the United States in 1908, moved to St. Paul in 1809, and worked for St. Paul Public Works from 1921-61. There he became respected as "Mr. City Hall" as a life-long employee of the



One state legislator was Jan Peter (JP) Jelínek, a Republican who resided at 325 Oneida. He established his first pharmacy in 1898 at 961 Fort Road, and later his second at 291 Fort Road. Both were local institutions, and contributed to his popularity. He represented the West End, then District 35, for only one term. He also was elected in 1910 as the President of the Minnesota State Pharmaceutical Association.

Public Works Department. He was associated with the Č.S.P.S. Hall for over 50 years, led hundreds of activities associated with cultural, social, and political life in the preservation of Čech culture in St. Paul, and was also editor of *Sokol Outlook* (Sokolská Hlídka). Through the 1930-50's he promoted a Čech film series at the Garden Theater at 929 Fort Road. He was a long-time member and officer of the St. Paul SOKOL Gymnastic Society, chief promoter of the SOKOL summer camp at Pine City, Minnesota and served as president of Northern District of the American SOKOL Union. He also was a member of the Czechoslovak Society of America, and of Lodge Ore! (St. Paul) of the Western Bohemian Fraternal Association, was the Českoslovak representative for the St. Paul International Institute, and active in the relief movements for Czechoslovakia during World War II.

Česko-Slovanský Podporující Spolek

by Michael Justin

Simple, yet sturdy and attractive, the Č.S.P.S. Hall is an important structure within the West Seventh Community. Saint Paulites may recognize it now as the home to its first floor occupant, the German restaurant Glockenspiel, but it continues its historic use as a center for the Čech community.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1976, the structure is considered important, not for its architectural value, but for its continuing use as the center of a small, but vital ethnic group. The current Č.S.P.S. lodge has played a central role in the Čech and Slovak community of St Paul since its construction in 1887, and is arguably the oldest such structure in continuous use by the Čech community in the United States.

As an organization, the Č.S.P.S. was founded in St. Louis in 1854, but did not reach national importance until the 1870s. Its female compliment was the Jednota Českých Dám, or Union of Čech Women. The original St. Paul hall was a wooden schoolhouse that was moved to the current site in 1879. That structure was partially destroyed by a fire of unknown origin on May 25, 1886. Though only insured for \$1,400, the one hundred-plus

members of Lodge Čech No. 12 Č.S.P.S. were undaunted, and they managed to raise \$10,000 to build a new, brick structure, on the same location. William J. Gronewold is credited as the general contractor and Emil W. Ulrici as the architect by some sources. Emil W. Ulrici was the architect of the 1886 structure. Ulrici was a German who built almost exclusively for wealthy German immigrants in Saint Paul in the 1880s.

The brick hall was finally finished in 1890. According to a story by Marlin L. Heise in the *Community Reporter*, Oct. 1976, citing *Panorama* (Cicero, Ill., Čechoslovak National Council of America, 1970), the first members of Č.S.P.S. Rad (lodge) Čech No 12 included a carpenter, a gunsmith, a laborer, a mason, a policeman, a teacher, two cutters, three saloon keepers, and four tailors, all living within 10 blocks of the Hall. In 1896, the national Č.S.P.S. convention was held in St. Paul, and the year following there was a split between the eastern and western organizations.

The building was substantially remodeled in 1917 based on blueprints by local architect and engineer Raymond Paul Pavlecka. At this time, the entrance to the upper levels was

moved to the center of the building and a third story was added to increase meeting room space. The second floor was remodeled to relocate the stage from the center of the floor to the north end. All in all, this remodeling cost \$18,000.

The first floor has always been home to retail and commercial businesses. One of the more popular businesses was Pícha's Saloon, which opened in 1889, even as construction continued on the building's second floor. Owner/operator Václav Pícha lived on the premises in a small apartment in the back. Václav Pícha (died 1914), who was the owner/operator of the first bar below the meeting rooms. "Old Pícha" was noted for selling a mug of beer for a nickel and offering a free lunch bar. He died at age 73 on July 9, 1914, after almost twenty-five years in business. The bar continued on until about 1919, when the space was taken over by a meat market. Other first floor businesses and tenants include grocery stores, bakeries, and a print shop; an Irish dance group, Laotian Family Industries, and Lavoptik Medical Manufacturing.

The second and third stories have always

been used by various Čech and Slovakian organizations such as the Českoslovak Society of America (C.S.A.), Sokol, and a variety of Čech and Slovakian fraternal insurance groups and related organizations. In 1932, the Č.S.P.S. merged with other fraternal groups to form the C.S.A. Pictures hanging on the walls of the third floor meeting room show members of the various lodges over the years. Here, a photo of Č.S.P.S. Lodge Čech No 12 shows the founders, including Michael Karták, Václav Pícha, and Antonín Jurka. Another large picture on the third floor depicts the members of Z.C.B.J. Lodge Orel (eagle) No.69. This original lodge was organized in 1899 and current members still meet in the third floor room. Other portraits on the walls include various noted individuals such first presidents as George Washington (American) and Tomáš Garrigue Masryk (Čechoslovakia), and current presidents Václav Havel (Čech Republic), and Michal Kováč (Slovak Republic).

Also in the room are the original elaborately carved gothic officers chairs and marble-topped tables. The old upright piano in the corner is kept in tune, and is played at the beginning of meetings. The original light



Photo: Lisa Weicht

fixtures have been restored and hang from the ceiling.

The second floor has undergone various changes over the years. The original floor plan consisted of a Lodge room, a Bar room, an ante room, a small stage, and a large dance room that housed the gymnastic equipment. It included a ticket window at the top of the stairs, a lobby, coat check room and men's and ladies restrooms. During the remodeling in 1917, notable changes, aside from adding the

third story, included moving the stage to the opposite end of the dance floor and adding a kitchen between the lodge room and a club room. More recently, the club room has been updated to include a modern, commercial kitchen. Impressive features of the second floor are the hand painted backdrops that were painted for the stage by Viktor Hubal, with scenes of various landscapes from Českoslovakia.

Based upon Sadlaček, Joan Interview March 2003.

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



SOKOL

by Robert J. Vanyo

adults, juniors and children the ideals of self-respect, directness, and honor: to be physically fit, mentally alert and morally strong! There are Sokol Units in many other locations in the United States and the world, which makes being a member of the active gymnastic group exciting. Gymnastic competitions are sometimes scheduled between other Sokol Units such as Sokol Omaha, Sokol Cedar Rapids, Sokol Chicago, etc. It's fun to travel and meet Sokols from other places. The Sokol program is the source of having Czech and Slovak Folk Dance Groups for children, juniors, and adults. These dancers have been invited to and performed at social events in many towns and villages in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Illinois, especially the Twin Cities. The folk dancers are constantly being asked to perform at some place or another. All the folk dances are taught right here at the Č.S.P.S. Hall! St Paul Sokol changed its name to Sokol Minnesota in 1978 and purchased the lodge building from Č.S.P.S. in a consolidation of St. Paul Czech

It was September 1943 when I first came to St. Paul by train from Grand Forks, N.D. My parents had moved here during the war to work in the meat packing plant in South St. Paul. The first ride to school on a street car went out West Seventh Street.

It was awesome to see the Minnesota State Capitol Building, the High Bridge and the Č.S.P.S. Hall. My parents bought the brick house on Goodhue Street that still stands just to the south of the Winslow apartments. It is the only house not removed from that block. My parents lived there from 1945 to 1978.

The Č.S.P.S. Hall was our neighbor, and many of the events attracted me and others of my family, but especially me. The Sokol

Organization had a program that attracted my attention: First, I liked to dance to "Old Time Music," polkas and waltzes. Second, I became interested in a new sport called gymnastics. So: welcome to Sokol.

Sokol was first founded in the Czech nation in 1862. Soon after the first American Sokol unit was begun in St. Louis, Missouri in 1865. St. Paul's began in June 13, 1882 and has been continuous since then as a Sokol unit. The Sokol movement evolved from the great idea that bodily health produced mental and moral health. Sokols strive for physical improvement, moral purity and nobility, concord, equality, and sincerity.

In the gymnasium, the Sokols instill in

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society



organizations based there, as well as to care for our building.

The third floor contains our meeting room and some storage. It has many very old pictures of old organizations and of their members hanging on the wall—some since the later 1800s. The second floor auditorium is where all the gymnastic classes are taught and require special set up or mounting hooks on the floor and ceiling for the gymnastic equipment. All instructors attend special training before qualifying to teach in our program.

Seniors have their own class on Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. We sing Čech, Moravian, and Slovak folk songs about an hour, then go to the gym for marching, warm-up exercises, and games. There is no charge and it is fun.

Several ethnic dinners are served each year at the Hall. The ethnic foods are prepared at the hall by volunteer members who come together to make cabbage rolls, pirohy, or koláče: only the best! We all learn to do some part of the preparations and contribute.

If you just want to take a little break from making cabbage rolls, go up on the third floor and see some of the things there, or look out the East window and view downtown and the high bridge. Or, go to the first floor gift shop!

Often family tradition and culture are tied to history, such as the Walla-Smolik-Dolejsi family. Joseph Walla was the first gymnastic instructor at the C.S.P.S. Hall in 1882. The family lived at 364 Goodhue through several generations. His daughter, Bessie, married Albert Smolik, and they raised their children within the protective embrace of the Hall. Bessie was a gymnastics teacher, involved for many years with St. Paul Sokol. Pictured here is the Smolik family in their gymnastic attire: Don, Georgiana, Sylvia, Bessie, and Albert in 1928.

*Joan Sedlacek
and her mother
Lorene Ahlf
Sedlacek,
pictured in their
Bohemian kroje,
or folk costumes.*



Photo: Joan Sedlacek



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

Musician: (Vac.) Horějš Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"



It was difficult for Čech and Slavic immigrants to pass on their deep love for their native language (despite Saturday morning classes at the Jefferson School) but not so their love for music, dance, theater, and the spoken word, especially poetry. These cultural activities were based both in the home, church and social halls, and incorporated into gatherings and events. The Čech saying, "Co Čech to muzikant" (If Čech, then a musician) was no idle boast. John Pešek in a 1937 article in the *West End Call* recalled that "There, being a number of musicians, Sunday

gatherings were enlivened with music, and Sunday picnics with bands playing at (West End) Shades' and Banholzer parks." Perhaps Čechs won arguments with Germans over who composed the Beer Barrel Polka (J Vejvoda's *Škoda Lásky*), and the Blue Skirt Waltz (V Blaha's *Sukynda*) even though in Čech the skirt is red!

To this day, social occasions at the Čech Hall conclude with folk songs, and a group meets weekly on Tuesday mornings to formally continue the tradition. In 1976, as first and second generations began retirement, the love of folk singing formally organized into Tuesday morning sessions that at times even included exercise! The leadership, musicology, and piano is provided by Georgiana Smolek Delogi, who well remembers playing for her father and mother at home. She now waits to inspire the next generation to take up the songbooks. The Č.S.P.S. Hall celebrated its status as an National Register Historic site in

Čech and Slovak Culture in the West End

1979 with a Čech Chamber Music Festival in conjunction with the Schubert Club. Seven concerts were given including one that required a nine-foot Grand piano for pianist Richard Zgodova.

Georgiana fondly remembers the Damatičky Odbor or Drama Club in the Č.S.P.S. Hall. In the old days, there were often four productions per year, with cast numbers depending upon the piece performed—in Čech. A prompter was an integral part of the production, often providing impatient comment to those with the poorest memories. A kind of informal creative competition took place between the Č.S.P.S. Hall and Beseda (Hall) of St. Stanislav Church which also sponsored cultural events and theater.

Čech institutions were challenged in the 1950s by loss of its local population. This was due to not only the general decline and neglect of inner cities, but also to the move to the suburbs compounded in the West End by the clearing of whole neighborhoods to make way for the freeway 35E.

Photo: Unidentified, from the box of "mystery photos"



*Jan Bílý, a
Minnesota
violinist,
circa 1880s*

Bohemian, Moravian, and Slovak culture is rich with a folk dancing tradition, both in their respective countries and in St. Paul. The St. Paul Čech and Slovak Folk Dancers officially began in 1962, although folk dance presentations stretch back to the early settlers and institutions. An average of 15-20 performances a year support the group throughout the Midwest, some paid and some voluntary. The group practices every two weeks, and is supported by the monies collected for performances. The music and dances presented by the group are similar to those one would see in Europe. One year the dancers had 26 and the consensus was that was too many!

The group takes great pride in the originality of its dance steps, musical numbers, and folk dress or Koru. Each dancer's costume represents a district or region of the Čech and Slovak Republics. The finery of the folk dress along with the dance steps are

an exciting and colorful way of displaying culture. Through the year the group performs at ethnic festivals, including them Festival of Nations in St. Paul, as well as the Dožínky in New Prague and Kolářky Days in Montgomery.

One member relates that although he grew up listening to Čech music, had no accompanying dance tradition. When he moved to St. Paul, however, a casual conversation revealed his Čech ethnicity. She needed a partner and he really had no chance!

*Sibirinky Dancers of
the St. Paul Sokol
Society, 1941, Chas
Lalesky, Georgiana
Smolik, Henry Jansen,
Ann Delastrada*



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

Photo: Sokol Minnesota



*Sokol Minneosta Czechoslovak Singers April 26,
1999 on the occasion of the visit of Vaclav Havel,
President of the Czech Republic to the City of St. Paul.*

When Antonin Dvořák came to the West End

by **Tim Rumsey**

On Tuesday, September 5, 1893 the world renowned Čech composer Antonin Dvořák came to St. Paul, Minnesota at the invitation of Father Jan Rynda, pastor of St. Stanislav Catholic Church. The Master, or Maestro, as some called him, was a classical artist near the status of Brahms, Bach or Beethoven. He was the greatest living Bohemian at the time, and perhaps since. Dvořák was accompanied to St. Paul by his wife, Anna, and his secretary, Josef Kovařík of Spillville, Iowa. Kovařík was also the future brother-in-law of John Pešek of 529 Michigan Street. The Master had just completed his greatest work, Symphony No. 9 (*From the New World*) several months before in New York and was summering with his family to relieve his homesickness for Bohemia in Spillville where essentially everyone spoke Čech. The trip to St. Paul was highlighted by a triumphant gathering in his honor at the Č.S.P.S. Hall.

We know that Antonin Dvořák grew up in a Bohemian village, the son of an inn-keeper-butcher. As his natural musical talent

evolved, he came to the attention of the great Johannes Brahms.

In 1892 he was offered a lucrative two-year position at the National Conservatory of Music in New York with an opportunity for teaching, composing, and some travel. Dvořák became interested in American folk tunes,

particularly, “plantation music, Negro spirituals, and native Indian melodies.”

Kovařík convinced the Master and his family to vacation in his hometown of Spillville in the summer of 1893. Father Rynda extended the invitation to the West End when he met Dvořák and Kovařík at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. In America Dvořák became fascinated with minstrel performances and Indian Medicine Shows. He said he learned music from “birds, wind, water, trains, ships, and God.” Part of his reason for visiting St. Paul was to see the Minnehaha Falls he had read about in a Čech translation of Longfellow’s “Song of Hiawatha.” Dvořák

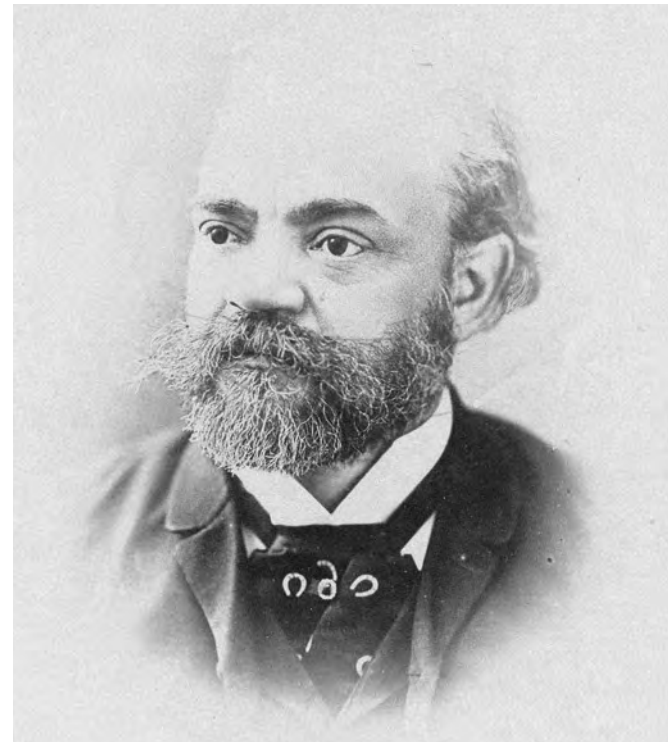


Photo: Dennis Morgan

went for a walk at 4 a.m. every morning followed by daily mass. He continued this routine in Spillville and often played the church organ. He walked with a black notebook, recording the songs of nature. In Spillville he talked to near every town person he met, conversation sometime continuing in little taverns. He was a devoted familyman.

In St. Paul Dvořák, his wife, and Kovařík were met at the St. Paul Depot by Father Rynda at 7 a.m. After breakfast at the St. Stan’s Rectory, the Master and his wife accepted an invitation to a welcoming gathering later that evening at the Č.S.P.S.

Hall. They then went with Rynda on a morning buggy tour of St. Paul. Although it's not noted, he must have shown them the neighboring Catholic Churches, though the Cathedral would not be complete until 1916. Since Dvořák had been described as "eager for the Mississippi," Rynda must have driven his guests over the High Bridge, with its sweeping view of St. Paul and the West End. Then on to Minnehaha Falls where the enchanted Dvořák stayed for an hour. He had uncharacteristically forgotten his notebook, so in his excitement he wrote a melody inspired by the "laughing waters" on his starched shirt cuffs. It must have been afternoon by the time they returned. He probably inquired about local minstrel shows. In the 1870s the Munger Brothers had a music hall for that exact purpose not far down Fort Road at Eagle Street, Daniel Emerson, who wrote "Dixie" and "Old Dan Tucker" also once lived near by.

It was said that the Master was not a social person, and that he endured occasions of the large crowds he drew. There were 300 persons crowded into the Č.S.P.S. Hall that evening. Dvořák and his wife were introduced by the local maestro, Antonin Jurka. There were

more introductions and fêting, but most of all there was music, featuring local violin virtuoso Emil Straka.

So we presume the Master endured (but appreciated) the evening. All we know about the next morning is that he and Anna couldn't wait to return to their children in Spillville despite vigorous persuasions by Rynda to stay.

But wouldn't Dvořák have taken his 4 a.m. walk? Perhaps with Kovařík, his "faithful shadow" so he wouldn't get lost or fall into one of the many limestone quarries dotting the neighborhood? He would have been drawn back to the Mississippi, down Western past the Č.S.P.S. across West 7th (newly renamed from Fort Road), and past the lovely Lauer Flats. He and Kovařík could have stopped at the Omaha and Chicago tracks, the shortline, to converse (in Čech!) with some Omaha Shop workers waiting to catch a caboose or hand pumper to the round House. Ancker Hospital in its 1893 glory would be unavoidable to his eye, as well as another view of the High Bridge off to the east. The woods beyond Grace Street would have beckoned. He could skirt along the limestone ridge behind Ancker. There would be pigeons pecking at spilt grain

on the tracks below. Or maybe an owl or fox in the hollow behind Ancker. He would have heard rumblings of iron from three tiers of railroad tracks, or the violin-like chorus of 100 slowly braking railroad cars.

And then it was back to civilization, to Colborne Avenue. More workers, perhaps Funk's Brewery, Stahlman's Cave Brewery, Ancker, more railroad people. Up Colborne to Grace, the Master ahead of his secretary, between the Shortline and Ancker, up Western and back to St. Stan's. In that half mile walk Dvořák could have encountered the village feel of 1893 West End. Then there must have been mass and breakfast.

But no staying longer—their train left at 8 a.m.

Based upon Spillville, Patricia Hampl, Milkweed Editions, 1987; When Minnehaha Falls Inspired Dvořák, Lionel Davis and Kenneth Carley, Minnesota History, Fall 1968; Antonin Dvořák, Jeff Abbas, <http://www.chefjeff.org/Dvořák.htm>, (March 5, 2003); Uppertown Survey, James A. Sazevich, 1992; The St. Paul Pioneer Press, September 6, 1893; The St. Paul Globe, September 6, 1893.

BLANCHE YURKA

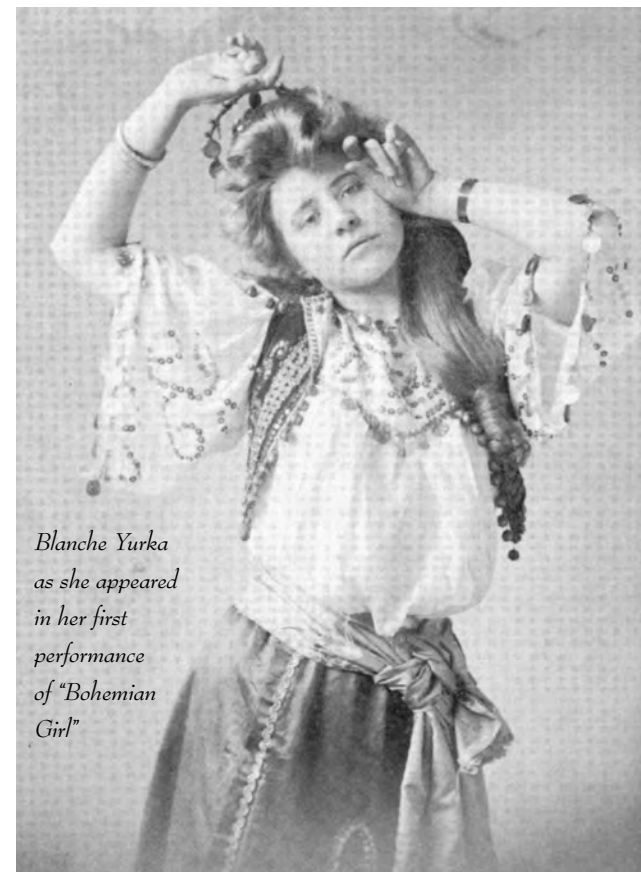
“Bohemian Girl”

Anton Jurka was born in 1840 in Královice, Bohemia. When he completed his secondary education, he attended technical school in Praha, and emigrated in 1866. In Chicago he was active in the theater, and in 1867 moved to St. Louis as editor of *Pozor americke and Katolické noviny*. In 1870 he moved to St. Paul and taught Čech children in Jefferson elementary school for six years, the German language for eleven, and Čech language classes at the Č.S.P.S. Hall. He helped found the free-thinking group which grew to be the Č.S.P.S. Lodge Čech, Number 12, and was active in the national organization. He married Karolina Novak, and established his family in a small cottage at 16 Douglas Street. When his teaching appointment was terminated in the St. Paul Schools, he moved his family to New York in 1900, and became Executive Secretary of the Čech Benevolent Society.

Based upon a translation by Karleen Chott Sheppard of a biography of Antonin Jurka,

originally published in *Kvety americke*, Omaha, Nebraska, likely written by the publisher Jan Rosicky (the article is signed only by an initial J.R.)

Blanche Yurka was born in the Jurka's Douglas Street cottage on June 18, 1887. When the family moved to New York, they immediately associated themselves with the local Čech Sokol where Blanche took singing lessons. Her first performance was in Balfe's "Bohemian Girl" produced by the locals, and she was an immediate success. She subsequently received a scholarship at age 15 at the Metropolitan Opera House to study under impresario Heinrich Conreid. However, her future lay in the theater, and she became a stage and film star, featured in such award-winning films as "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" (1944) and "The Song of Bernadette" (1943). She made her film debut in 1935 as the vengeful Madame de Farge in "A Tale of Two Cities" and was known to acting students for her



*Blanche Yurka
as she appeared
in her first
performance
of "Bohemian
Girl"*

Photo: Ohio University Press

teachings. She wrote her autobiography "Bohemian Girl" and "Dear Audience, A Guide to the Enjoyment of Theater." She died in New York on June 6, 1974.

Based upon Blanche Yurka's autobiography "Bohemian Girl."

RESOURCES:

Studying the history of the West 7th neighborhood would be much more difficult without the foundation of enthusiastic researchers and institutions who have worked to preserve our ethnic history and heritage:

The Minnesota Historical Society is a private, non-profit educational and cultural institution established in 1849 to preserve and share Minnesota history. The Society collects, preserves and tells the story of Minnesota's past through interactive and engaging museum exhibits, extensive libraries and collections, 25 historic sites, educational programs and book publishing.

Immigration History Research Center is an international resource on American immigration and ethnic history founded in 1965. The IHRC collects, preserves, and makes available archival and published resources documenting immigration and ethnicity on a national scope. These materials are particularly rich for ethnic groups that originated in eastern, central, and southern Europe and the Near East — those who came to this country during the great wave of migration that gained momentum in the 1880s and peaked in the first decades of the 20th century.

The Archdiocese of St. Paul archives are a rich depository of birth, death, and marriage statistics by parish, as well as documents related to each. In addition, there are many historic photographs by parish stemming from the early days of the archdiocese.

Dr. Winston Chrislock, self-proclaimed Norwegian, has been a professor at the University of St. Thomas since 1972, and has been active in, and lectured at, a number of local Czech organizations, including the recently formed Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota. Dr. Chrislock specializes in East Central Europe, Modern Europe, American Foreign Policy, and Modern World History. He wrote the chapter on Czech Immigration for the Minnesota Historical Society's book on Minnesota's Immigrant Groups *They Chose Minnesota, A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* published in 1981 among other works.

Gary J. Brueggemann, a life long resident of St. Paul and the West End, teaches history at both Century and Inver Hills Community Colleges—a position he has held for over 20 years. He has researched and authored a number of booklets and articles on State and West End

history and has been writing and lecturing about those subjects for the past 25 years.

Michael Justin has lived in the West End since 1987 and is an archeologist with URS Corporation. His interests have led him to a number of interesting projects, including the Schneider-Bulera House at 365 Michigan Street, as well as a number of investigations of Native American sites throughout the United States. He has published in the *Minnesota Archeologist*, the journal of the Minnesota Archeological Society.

Daniel Nečas is an immigrant from Prague, Czech Republic and has been an assistant curator for archival operations at the Immigration History Research Center for the past two years. He is currently translating into English the two-volume set of *Dejiny Slováků v Americe (History of Slovaks in America)* by Konstantin Culen. Nečas has a Master of Arts in modern philology (linguistics) from Charles University in Prague where he is currently enrolled in a PhD program; his dissertation deals with development of Czech language and literature in the Baroque Period.

Tim Rumsey has been a physician at the United Family Practice Center (UFPC) on Fort Road, a training clinic for the United Family Medicine Residency Program, since the 1970s. The clinic serves the community with access to affordable, quality health care. He is completing an historical novel set in the West End.

Karleen Chott Sheppard is a descendant of two families from Bohemia who came to Minnesota in the 1870s, and has taken great effort to research both her genealogy and the Czech American community. Sources include census records, city directories, naturalization records, as well as Czech newspapers and family records. She has translated and self-published a number of extremely useful historical articles, indexes, biographies, and obituaries related to early settlers of the Midwest from Bohemia and Moravia. Sheppard translated one of the earliest records of Czech settlement in St. Paul, an autobiographical article by Michael Karták, published in 1886 in the popular Czech American periodical, *Amerikan Národní Kalendár* (American National Annual).

Sharen Darling is a registrar at the School of Divinity at the University of St. Thomas. In the 1980s she wrote for the *Community Reporter*, featuring fictional series on early settlers, as well as a series on the churches of the West End.

Josef (Joe) Landsberger is a Quaker educator who is listed in *Who's Who in America*. He has been developing learner support programs at the University of St. Thomas for the past 27 years, and has received numerous commendations for his international Web site "Study Guides and Strategies," published in 20 languages, including Czech (<http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides>). He has been developing the North High Bridge Park since 1988. Though he has wandered the earth extensively, he is a life-long resident of St. Paul.

Lisa Weicht is a graphic designer, art director, and communications specialist. She has worked in the creative industry for thirteen years, and began her own company two years ago. Weicht Inc., 275 Banfil Street, St. Paul, MN 55102.

Dr. Robert M. Frame III has been recognized for his service on many historic and preservation committees including the City of St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission.

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The North High Bridge Park is a creative community development project of the Upper Town and Uppertown Triangle neighborhoods of Bohemian Hill. The park and its Sculpture Garden have evolved into multi-cultural projects that reflect the history and diversity of their neighborhoods and city, and are dedicated to peaceful co-existence.

Development began after the new High Bridge was completed in 1988, and the half-acre park was landscaped where an early Cech settlement was said to exist. In 1993 tons of stone were used to build retaining walls for a garden and for a Zoran Mojislov sculpture, “The Watcher.” The Green Chair became a favored city “photo-op” in 1995. In 1998 the Peace Pole was installed, incorporating English (May Peace Prevail over the Earth), Čech, Spanish, and Hmong. The eastern parcel of land along the bluff was also added at that time.

The Community Gate is sparked by two events: the opening of a new addition to the original park property, and the gifts of historic materials to the park. The gate itself measures nine feet square, and was removed during the renovation of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, a national church for Čech and Slovak Catholics. It will be the park’s first historical and cultural icon.

Many Americans today associate gates with “gated communities,” negative symbols of retreat, isolation, and exclusion. We intend to reverse that imagery, and reinvigorate the traditional concept of gate as a welcoming entry. The park is strategically located at a convergence of transportation: at the horizon lies St. Paul’s airport, below its bluff the railroads and river. The bridge serves cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians. In marking this point of entrance and passage, our park’s Community Gate will speak the language of openness and invitation, and bid “**Enter here, friend.**”