



# **Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International**

2010 Symposium  
Syllabus

## *They Came to the Heartland*



Early Nebraska Settlers - Frank Čeněk Family

Courtesy of Náprstek Museum, Prague, Czech Republic

Sponsor: [wfla](#) Western Fraternal Life Association

April 30 – May 1, 2010  
Lincoln, Nebraska

Czechoslovak Genealogical Society  
International

Symposium

Syllabus

April 30 – May 1, 2010  
Nebraska Union  
Lincoln, Nebraska

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WELCOME TO THE CZECHOSLOVAK GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY 2010 SYMPOSIUM IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

“THEY CAME TO THE HEARTLAND”

It is my pleasure to welcome all symposium attendees on behalf of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International. CGSI was last in Lincoln in 1999 and sponsored the 7<sup>th</sup> Czechoslovak Genealogical/Cultural Conference. We are very pleased to be back.

Symposium sessions are available on a variety of topics with excellent speakers to broaden the knowledge of attendees and to increase the understanding of their family heritage. How did they get to the Heartland? What attracted them? What tools can we use to find information? What about the language? What traditions and customs did they bring with them? All interesting questions and when answered help us add details to our family's story.

The Traveling Library will be available both on Friday and Saturday. The Traveling Library is made up of key resources to help the family researcher. The nearby Nebraska State Historical Society with its extensive research collection will be open and available on Friday for symposium attendees.

The optional Friday tour *The Czech Spirit Survives in Saline County, Nebraska* is opportunity to experience Czech culture. This will be an all day tour.

The Czech National Archive exhibit will be on display Friday and Saturday. It is a copy of the exhibit created by the Czech National Archive in Prague, *Back to One's Roots: Our Ancestor's Everyday Lives as Shown in Archival Documents*. This exhibit opened at the National Archives in Prague during the CGSI 2005 “Back to the Homeland” Conference.

None of this of course would be possible without countless hours of time, effort, and planning. CGSI is fortunate to have talented and devoted volunteers headed by Gene Aksamit and Wayne Sisel. To all of you-thank you! Thank you also to our sponsor, Western Fraternal Life Association for their support.

Our hope is that all of you enjoy the symposium: its sessions, entertainment, and the opportunity to network with others sharing a common interest.

Ginger Simek  
CGSI President

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Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International  
Symposium  
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Nebraska Union  
Lincoln, Nebraska

*Schedule of Events*

Friday

|   |  |                             |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Registration  | 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM<br>6:30 PM to 7:00 PM | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Lobby |
| CGSI Traveling Library  | 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM                       | Regency C                   |
| Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) Library                      | 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM                       | NSHS (next door to Union)   |
| CGSI Sales Room   | 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM                       | Regency B                   |
| Tour: Czech Spirit Survives   | 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM                       |                             |
| Note: The Tour Departs from and Returns to the Holiday Inn – Downtown |  |                             |
| Czech National Archives Exhibit                                       | 9:00 AM to 8:30 PM                       | Regency A                   |
| Social Mixer  | 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM                       | Heritage Room               |

Saturday

|                   |   |            |
|-------------------|---|------------|
| Registration      | 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM  |            |
| 8:30 – 8:40 AM    | Opening   | Auditorium |
| 8:45 – 10:15 AM   | S1- Documenting Czech Immigrant Arrivals by Leo Baca                                    | Auditorium |
|                   | S2 – Homestead Records and the Homestead Records Project by                             | Regency A  |
| 10:30 – 11:45 AM  | S3 – A Century of Czech-American Freethinkers, 1848-1948 by Dr. Bruce Garver            | Regency A  |
|                   | S4 - Searching for Your Czech Ancestors – Emphasis on Nebraska Czechs by Margie Sobotka | Auditorium |
| 12:00 – 1:00 PM   | Box Lunch   |            |
| 1:00 – 2:15 PM    | S5 – Internet Genealogy by Tom McFarland  | Auditorium |
|                   | S6 – The Czechs of Kansas: Border Crossing Frontier Farmers & Then Some by Steve Parke  | Regency A  |
| 2:30 – 3:45 PM    | S7 – Czech Language for Genealogists by Dr Mila Sašková-Pierce                          | Auditorium |
|                   | S8 – Czechs in Iowa by Mike Prohaska  | Regency A  |
| 4:00 – 5:15 PM    | S9 – Czech DNA Project: Background and Update by Leo Baca                               | Regency A  |
|                   | S10 – Czech Rural Folklore and Traditions by Dr Mila Sašková-Pierce                     | Auditorium |
| 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM | CGSI Traveling Library  | Regency C  |
| 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM | Sales Room  | Regency B  |

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
6:00 – 7:00 PM  
7:00 PM

Czech National Archives Exhibit  
Social Hour  
Dinner  
Entertainment: Kramer Sisters Musical Group

Fischer Lounge  
Heritage Room  
Heritage Room

## **S1 - Documenting Czech Immigrant Arrivals** by Leo Baca

### **Introduction**

Invariably, Czech-American genealogists and family historians reach the point of asking how their ancestors came to America. Many questions come to mind. What was the name of the ship? When did they immigrate? How long was the voyage? What did the ship look like? What was the port of entry? In answering these questions, a significant amount of research needs to be done.

### **When Did They Immigrate?**

The sources for immigration dates include oral history, census records, naturalization records, newspapers, and the internet.

### **Passenger Lists**

There are two kinds of passenger lists. They are the customs passenger lists and the immigration passenger lists. The important thing to remember about passenger lists is the fact that the captain was required to turn in a list at each port of call in the United States. The customs passenger lists gave the passenger's name, age, occupation, and country of origin. The heading gave the date and port of departure as well as the embarkation port and date. Microfilm copies of those passenger lists and abstracts can be purchased from the National Archives. In addition, microfilm copies can be rented from the LDS through a Family History Center which may be located near you.

### **What About the Ship?**

If you are interested in learning about the physical details of your immigrant ancestor's ship, the best overall source is Lloyd's *Universal Register*. This was a grand attempt at cataloging all the world's ships over 100 tons. As a note of caution, Lloyd's has published registers of ships that it insures since the early 1800s but the Lloyd's *Universal Register* is totally different because it also includes ships not insured by Lloyd's. Other good sources are *Passenger Ships of the World Past and Present* by Eugene W. Smith and *Ships of our Ancestors* by Michael J. Anuta.

### **Internet Sources**

The best free internet source for passenger arrival information is the Ellis Island Archives website (<http://www.ellislandrecords.org>). This website has passenger list records, copies of original manifests, and ship information (often a picture) on the 22 million immigrants who arrived in Ellis Island (New York) between 1892-1924. Ancestry.com is the best internet source for passenger arrival information, but a subscription is required. However you may be able to get free access to their databases through your local library. Just contact the research librarian to see if access is available.

### **Publications**

To date, nine books entitled *Czech Immigration Passenger Lists, Volumes I-IX* have been published. Anyone wishing to obtain copies of these publications should either check my website ( <http://home.roadrunner.com/~lbaca>) or write to me for information concerning price and

availability. My address is: 1707 Woodcreek, Richardson, Texas 75082-4524. My email address is: [lbaca@tx.rr.com](mailto:lbaca@tx.rr.com).

### **Research Suspended**

Research for Volume X which would have covered Czech arrivals in Baltimore between 1900-1914 has been suspended due to the unavailability of commercially available rentals of passenger list microfilm. A number of volunteers did their best to help, but the task proved to be too daunting.

## **S2 -Homestead Records and the Homestead Records Project**

**By Jason Jurgena**

The Homestead Act of 1862 offered 160 acres of free government land to anyone meeting basic eligibility requirements and agreeing to live on, and farm, the land for five years. Beginning Jan. 1, 1863, and in effect until 1976 in most states and 1986 in Alaska, the Homestead Act resulted in the filing of two million claims and the distribution of 270 million acres of land. The General Land Office kept a file on every homestead claimed, and those files are stored in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Homestead records are largely ignored treasure troves of information for genealogists. This presentation will describe the various types of information found in homestead records and provide information how to obtain a copy of homestead records from National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The presentation will also give an update on the Homestead Records Project being spearheaded by the National Park Service and partners to increase and improve access to this useful source of information.

Homestead records are fantastic resource for historical and genealogical information. Along with the legal description of the land and the name of the person filing the claim there can often be found information about a homesteader's date and place of birth, the names of children that lived on the homestead, naturalization information about immigrant homesteaders, notations regarding military service, the types of crops planted on the homestead, trees cleared, fences built, wells dug, the value and kinds of homes and other buildings on the site, information on neighbors who gave written testimonies on behalf of the homesteaders, and more. If the person filing the claim died and a widow or heirs completed the claim, a date of death is given and relationships are explained. The case files preserve materials of considerable historic and genealogical significance. For instance, the file of Charles Ingalls, father of Laura Ingalls Wilder, includes documentation that his family left their homestead during the winters of 1881-82 and 1882-83 so the children could attend school.

The entire collection of federal homestead records contains an estimated 30 million archival documents contained in approximately 2 million case files. These records are stored at NARA in Washington, D.C. The records exist only in their original paper form. They are printed on acid-based paper and stored in their original acid-based paper envelopes. As are all original documents, they are subject to natural deterioration as well as the dangers of fire and water damage. The records are available to the public but are organized in such a manner that someone must know the legal land description of the homestead they wish to see the file for. No name index to this collection currently exists and due to the size of the collection NARA had no plan in place to microfilm or digitize the collection.

The Homestead Records Project has evolved over time. The first incarnation of the project involved a plan for the acquisition of the homestead records by Homestead National Monument of America (HOME) in Beatrice, NE from NARA. It was determined that this would not be feasible due to the amount of climate controlled space the documents would require and the fragility of the documents themselves. Next, it was decided that records would be microfilmed and made available for public access and research at HOME. This stage included the completion

of a pilot project in 2006 in which approximately 60,000 documents from the Broken Bow, Nebraska US Land Office were microfilmed and made available for research at HOME. As plans for microfilming another Nebraska land office's records were being worked out it was decided that digitization technology had reached a stage where it was a viable access and preservation alternative. The current stage in the project involves the digitizing of the land records and making them available online. The Broken Bow, Nebraska land office records were digitized first since the process is easier to digitize microfilm than it is to digitize fragile paper documents. A pilot project began in 2009 to photograph over 300,000 documents from the Nebraska City/Lincoln US Land Office. This pilot project is expected to be completed sometime in July, 2010. In the coming years HOME, in partnership with the University of Nebraska's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, the National Archives and Records Administration, FamilySearch, and footnote.com hope to digitize the remaining 30,000,000 homesteading documents from the 30 states where homestead claims could be filed.

**S-3 "A century of Czech-American freethinkers, 1848 - 1948"**  
**By Dr. Bruce Garver**

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Czechs were the only European immigrants to the U.S. among whom a majority did not affiliate with any organized religion. This presentation will discuss the origin of Czech free-thinkers (*svobodomyslní Češi*) in Europe, their institutions and periodicals in the U.S. after 1848, and the extent to which they conditioned Czech-American acculturation, politics, and society up to 1948, by which time their influence was rapidly diminishing. All aspects of the history of Czech free-thought remain controversial not only in the United States but also in Europe.

Czech free-thinkers drew their inspiration primarily from the liberalism and nationalism of the revolutions of 1848 throughout Europe and retained these ideals during and after the decade of absolutist rule that followed the Habsburg Monarchy's suppression of these revolutions in 1849 with the help of Russian armies. To a much lesser degree, 19th century Czech free-thought grew out of resentment at the Catholic Counter Reformation and the Habsburgs for having in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) eradicated Czech Hussite and Protestant congregations and driven their few remaining adherents underground. The revival of Czech nationalism, liberalism and free-thought began with the establishment of constitutional rule in the Habsburg Monarchy after the defeat of its armies by the French and Piedmontese at Magenta and Solferino in June 1859. Anti-clericalism became an essential part of Czech liberalism and nationalism not only because of the close association of the Catholic Church with the Habsburg Monarchy but also on account of the reactionary politics practiced by Pope Pius IX (1846-1878). Even the extensive reforms of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), including the endorsement of the Americanist movement within the Catholic Church in the United States, did little to moderate the anti-clericalism of Czech-American freethinkers.

The Czech National Liberal -- or Young Czech -- party, established in 1874, became the principal advocate of industrialization as well as liberalism, national autonomy, and free-thought in the Czech lands of Austria-Hungary until the outbreak of World War I. This party's political and religious views strongly influenced at least half of all Czechs who came to the United States between 1865 and 1914 where Czech immigrant communities became fairly evenly divided between Catholics and free-thinkers and also included small minorities of Protestants and Jews. In lieu of association with any church, Czech free-thinkers established their own periodicals, fraternal and mutual-aid societies, and educational and physical fitness organizations like the Sokol. These societies and organizations promoted fellowship, civic responsibility, charitable work, adult education and many other tasks comparable to those undertaken by churches. Such activities were facilitated by the fact that over 90% of Czech immigrants were literate, and at least half had arrived with small amounts of capital.

Probably 90% or more of Czech freethinkers were agnostic in matters of religion and tolerant of all religious faiths. Some of the relatively few militantly atheistic Czech freethinkers nonetheless exercised a large influence in the editorial content of the Czech language press in the United States. Both Czech-American Catholics and Protestants criticized the relatively high rate of suicide among freethinkers as well as what they perceived to be the preference of freethinkers for weekend dancing and drinking as opposed to keeping the Sabbath holy. Such criticism often overlooked the strong secularly ethical imperatives of free-thought as well as its efforts to promote community service. On balance, Czech free-thought may have somewhat retarded Czech-American acculturation at least to the extent that freethinking weekend schools promoted the study of Czech language and the extent to which the freethinkers' disinterest in organized religion was in marked contrast to the majority of non-English speaking immigrants who affiliated with churches.

Free thinkers constituted a majority of Czech immigrants in the states of Nebraska, Kansas, and South Dakota and in the cities of Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Omaha, where free thought and anti-clericalism also exercised some influence among skilled Czech workers who had been social democrats in Bohemia and Moravia. But many Czech social democrats and Czech progressives, like T. G. Masaryk, were also found among the most vocal critics of Czech free thought on account of what they perceived to be its materialistic and individualistic outlook and its disinclination to support social solidarity and social reform. Nevertheless, Czech-American free-thinkers, with few exceptions, supported the ultimately successful efforts of T. G. Masaryk and *Československé národní sdružení* from 1915 to 1918 to destroy Austria-Hungary and create an independent Czechoslovak state.

The establishment of the Czechoslovak First Republic in October 1918 fulfilled many Czech and Slovak aspirations, including national independence, the enlargement of civil liberties and the promotion of social and educational reform. These achievements undercut the continuing appeal of free-thought as did efforts by Czechs to encourage harmony and mutual interests between themselves and the Slovaks whose devoutly Catholic majority and large Protestant minority had never had any liking for freethought. Furthermore, the Vatican's reconciliation to the Czechoslovak Republic by the mid-1920s, diminished anti-clericalism not only among Czechoslovak citizens but also among Czech-American freethinkers. Moreover, the latter found it increasingly difficult to withstand the growing attractions of the booming American consumer economy of the 1920s along with the accelerating acculturation of the children and grandchildren of Czech immigrants. Finally, the advent of Einstein's theory of relativity and of quantum mechanics as well as other new scientific theories helped to demolish what was left of the mechanistic and materialistic philosophical bases of free-thought.

Almost all Czech-Americans and a majority of Slovak-Americans united after March 1939 to join the second *Československé národní sdružení* in supporting Allied victory and the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Czechoslovak Republic. A similar unity prevailed in the third -- and more than four decades-long -- effort to restore democracy to Czechoslovakia after the Czechoslovak Communist coup d' état of February 25, 1948, an effort whose activities were also supported by new generations of Czech and Slovak immigrants who came to the United States beginning in 1945. By this time, the quarrels and competition between Czech-American Catholics and freethinkers had ceased to be an influential force in public life and were soon to be largely forgotten.

**Short vita:** Bruce Garver received a Ph.D. in history from Yale University in 1971. Since 1976, he has been Professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and has taught Czech immigrant history on eight occasions at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. He was a student in Prague for ten months in 1967, returned to do research in 1971 and 1973, and for short periods in eight different years after 1990. He taught American history in Czech at Charles University in the fall of 1990 and Czech history to American students at Palacký University in Olomouc the fall of 1995. He is the author of a book, *The Young Czech Party, 1874-1901, and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System* (Yale University Press, 1978) and many articles, book chapters, and reviews about modern Czech and Slovak history. Currently, he is doing research on Czech-Italian relations from 1848 to 1918.

## **S4 - Searching for Your Czech Ancestors – Emphasis on Nebraska Czechs**

### **By Margie Sobotka**

The migration of Czechs into Nebraska started in the 1850s with a few men coming from Wisconsin, through Iowa, and also up the river from St. Louis and St. Joseph, MO. They arrived in southern Nebraska, which is now the area of Richardson County, and some of the surrounding counties. The migration in these years was low, and some of the very early immigrants didn't stay and establish themselves as residents. Nebraska at that time was still a territorial division. Some of the early settlers went on to California to try their luck in the gold fields, but eventually ended up back in Wisconsin.

It wasn't until around 1863, during the Civil War era and after the Homestead Act, that the Czech settlers started to come in greater numbers with their families. They came to Cuming County with their wagons and belongings, walking the distance from Wisconsin and Iowa. Quite a few of them came from Manitowoc, Tisch Mills and Mishicot, Wisconsin.

In 1868, a group of Czechs in Chicago founded the Česká Osada (Czech Colony) to go out and search different states for land suitable for settlement by immigrants. These states initially included Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota. One of these groups crossed the Niobrara River into Nebraska and decided it looked promising. This area is now called Knox County Nebraska.

With the Homestead Act of 1863, and Nebraska becoming a state in 1867, and the coming of the railroads, the Czech migration increased in numbers. They came not only from Wisconsin and Iowa, and other cities in the eastern U.S., but they came directly from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Ironically, those from Slovakia did not come in any great numbers to Nebraska, but there were some that came in the 1880s according to records.

Many Czechs immigrated together from the same villages, such as a group of Moravians who arrived on the same ship in 1874, and came directly to Saunders County, Nebraska. Some of the people in this group seemed to be more affluent and were able to establish themselves both on the land and in small businesses in the newly created towns. By this time, advertisements were beginning to be seen in the Czech periodicals, telling of the opportunities for land in the U.S. Also, the established immigrants in the U.S. began writing to relatives in the "old country", telling them of their successes and freedom that they had acquired since coming to America. Many of them sent passage to those left behind and urged them to come to the U.S.

The Czechs by this time were well established in states such as Wisconsin, Iowa and even this early in Nebraska. They then were relocating to North and South Dakota and Kansas. They realized that by selling their holdings and acquiring much cheaper land with more acres, they could capitalize and expand their holdings. This began around 1870s and 1880s and continued well in the 1920s.

Omaha, NE, which was established in the 1850s, became a focal point for most Czechs arriving in Nebraska. Jan Rosicky, who came to Omaha in the early 1870s, was one of the prominent Czechs that helped other Czechs settle in Nebraska. He helped them not only on land acquisition, but also in developing communities in Omaha. He even helped them with the transition from the "old country" to the US and Nebraska. As a result of his influence and foresight, many Czech communities began in Omaha, south of the main business area of Omaha. He began publishing the periodical, "Hospodář" (Farmer) to help the immigrant farmers use new methods of farming over the methods used in Europe. The immigrants also worked in the steel mills, breweries, railroads, and other factories near the river. In 1880s the packing plants sprung up south of Omaha city, and many Czech immigrants settled and worked there and this eventually became South Omaha.

By the 1890s Czechs were settled in almost every county of Nebraska, with some very heavy populations in some of the counties. It was said that at this time, Nebraska had more Czechs than any other state in the US and at least equaled the number of Czech in Chicago, which at one time supposedly had the most Czech immigrants.

In 1889, the US government opened the “unassigned lands” in the Oklahoma territory for settling and the “runs” were organized. A large group of Czechs from Colfax County, Nebraska, decided to try their chances for the land and participated in the first “run”. But about 25 of them thought they could beat the system and tried to establish their claim by being there sooner than they should have been. (The term “sooner”, no doubt came from these early claim jumpers.) But this maneuver backfired, and the 25 Czechs were tried in court and some even served prison terms. The men who were the “sooners” had to forfeit their claims when they were in prison, but “slower folks” acquired the land legally and settled in the area. Also participating in the “runs” were Czechs from Ord, Milligan and Schuyler, Nebraska as well quite a number from Kansas.

As other territories and states became established, and other “unassigned” lands and more railroad lands became available, established Nebraska families moved on to other areas. In some cases, it was already the sons and daughters of the immigrants, now adults, who wanted to acquire their own homes, farms and businesses.

In the early 1900s into the 1920s, Czechs began migrating to other states in greater numbers, and consequently, colonization of Czechs in those states began. A lot of the colonization was helped by the advertising in the Czech periodicals such as the “*Hospodář*” (Farmer), daily newspaper, *Denni Pokrok*, *Hlasatel*, *Slavie* and many others, of land available in different states. Quite a few Czechs migrated from Colfax County, Nebraska, to Market Lake, Idaho. (Market Lake is now known as Roberts, Idaho). As time went on individuals from many parts of Nebraska migrated to this area also.

By 1915, there was another surge of migration to the west, into Montana, Oregon and Washington. There were ranch lands for raising cattle and wheat, although migration was on a smaller scale than to other states. Prior to WW I and into the 1920s, there was much advertising in the periodicals of available land again through railroad lands in several different states and especially Minnesota. This caused what would be “back-tracking” into Minnesota. Colonizing of other areas such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and other states, lured several Czechs into those states

With Nebraska being centrally located with a high number of Czechs, migration to the border states occurred more frequently and in greater numbers than to some other states. These included Republic County, Kansas, Yankton, South Dakota, and back and forth between Nebraska and Iowa.

Just as Wisconsin, Iowa, and Chicago Czechs migrated into Nebraska, groups of Nebraska Czechs resettled in Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi (a few), with some into California. However, Mississippi and California appeared to be an individual decision rather than group colonization. Many of these families eventually lost contact with each other through the migration pattern, just as the early immigrants lost contact with the “old country” when they came to America.

There are many towns in some states that showed the colonization and influence of the Czechs living there. There’s Kolin and Libuse in Louisiana; Bruno, Prague, Pishelville and Tabor in Nebraska; New Prague, Veseli, Tabor, Masaryk and Homolka in Minnesota; Malin, Oregon; Prague, Oklahoma; Tabor, Blaha and Janousek in Kansas; Protivin, Iowa; Menchalville and Chetek, Wisconsin; and no doubt many other towns that are non-existent today.

Whatever reasons motivated the Czechs to move to other areas, and some to remain behind, or those who chose to return to their original state of settlement, one fact remains: that in spite of the hardships of the land, mother nature's blows, the language barrier, and what life dealt them, they survived. They brought with them the ability to read and write (albeit in Czech), their culture, their love of music and the arts, their stubbornness to survive, their unique names, and their unusual accents, and they were very proud to be citizens of the United States!

## S5 - Internet Genealogy By Tom McFarland

Google Advanced Search - [www.google.com/advanced\\_search?hl=en](http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en) - *state and county government, local government, local libraries, genealogical and historical societies, wildcards*

- Google Book Search
- Google Scholar
- Google News Archive
- U.S. Government
- Universities

Ancestry.com - [www.ancestry.com/](http://www.ancestry.com/)

LDS - FamilySearch Record – <http://search.labs.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html#start>

Online Birth and Marriage Records USA - <http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/vitalrecords.html>

Online Death Indexes, Records & Obituaries - [www.deathindexes.com/](http://www.deathindexes.com/)

Find A Grave - [www.findagrave.com/](http://www.findagrave.com/)

Family History Library - [www.familysearch.org/](http://www.familysearch.org/)

Rootsweb - USGenWeb Project - [www.usgenweb.org/](http://www.usgenweb.org/)

RootsWeb.com - [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/)

ICON: International Coalition on Newspapers - Digitized Newspapers - [icon.crl.edu/digitization.htm](http://icon.crl.edu/digitization.htm)

HeritageQuest Online™ - <http://www.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/index>

Footnote.com - [www.footnote.com/](http://www.footnote.com/)

Bureau of Land Management - [www.glorerecords.blm.gov/](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/)

Allen County Public Library: Genealogy - [mt-spurr.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/](http://mt-spurr.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/)

Mid-Continent Public Library - [www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/](http://www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/)

Digitized Newspapers - Small Town - [www.smalltownpapers.com/](http://www.smalltownpapers.com/)

## **S6 - The Czechs of Kansas: Border crossing Frontier Farmers & then Some by Steve Parke**

The Czechs of Kansas present a varied and colorful history. This presentation will cover 20+ such settlements. The earliest settlements were in Northeast Kansas, the vast majority of all settlements were in the north half of Kansas, but the broad, north to south, Central Kansas corridor was the most populous. The Kansas Czechs lived in clusters yet often straddled political boundary lines when settling, probably claiming the best available nearby land.

The first Czechs in Kansas were two Marak families in the Claytonville Township of Brown County in 1857. Francis and Barbara Marak from Mistek, Moravia, and others established Marak on Otter Creek, a Catholic community of immigrants directly from Moravia.

The next Czech settlements would be in northern Riley, western Marshall, eastern Washington, and eastern Republic Counties of Northeast Kansas. Initial settlers in these areas appeared in about 1869 from Iowa and were followed by large influxes of wagon train settlers in the early 1870's. Another northeast Kansas settlement was started on Cross Creek northwest of Topeka by the George Stach, Sr., family in 1871. The evangelistic Stachs from Moravia had initially settled near the Kansas River northwest of Lawrence in 1859 during Territorial Kansas days.

The Central Kansas corridor got its first Czech settlers in 1873-1875. This would include the well-known Wilson area, Francis J. Swehla settlement, focused in Ellsworth County. Other Central Kansas areas initially settled in this time frame were Esbon Township in Jewell County, Stanton Township in Cloud County (Bohemian Hills), the Clear Creek Township of Marion County (Pilsen), Caldwell Township in Sumner County, and the Walnut Township in Barton County (Olmitz). The influx of settlers into these communities was significant by 1880.

Northwest Kansas Czech settlements primarily began in 1878-1879 and grew larger circa 1885. This would include the Banner Township in Rush County (Timken), Smoky Hill Township in Ellis County, Collyer Township in Trego County (Bosna and Voda), Altory Township in Decatur County (Big Timber), and several settlements in Rawlins County, Driftwood Township being the largest. Small groups in adjoining Rooks, Smith and Osborne County locations (Zurich and Alton) have a shared history. And finally to complete the settlement circuit, back east in the industrializing Kansas City area of the early 1900's, Bohemians and Moravians settled primarily on the Kansas side and Slovaks were concentrated on the Missouri side of the city.

Census records are very good in noting people's origins and date of immigration. Kansas census records also note the prior state of residence, very helpful in tracking a family's or a group's path. To date I've found thirteen different prior states of origin with Iowa standing out among the earliest states of origin. Chicago stands out as a large American city of temporary residence.

Trying to create summary themes for this group of people is nearly impossible as an apparent common thread will sooner or later be broken. With that in mind fragile generalizations can be made. Kansas Czechs are from both Bohemia and Moravia in significant numbers with the Bohemians tending to arrive in the 1870's and Moravians in the 1880's. Most initially settled

near streams and creeks in rolling terrain and carried on as farmers for several generations. And every Czech settlement had bands and dance halls with many facilities still standing to this day.

The Kansas Czechs present more cultural diversity than one would expect. Some communities like Caldwell were strongly Lodge oriented. Others like Pilsen were very Catholic. Some like Cross Creek gravitated around the Presbyterian Church. Trego County religious preferences were random like a lottery while Republic County had the most intense religious diversity. The Kansas Czechs also adapted and adjusted to local cultures, creating even more diversity between communities. For instance the Washington County Czechs blended very quickly with the Germans of Hanover while all Rawlins County ethnic groups maintained distinctness.

The most complete single source of information about the Kansas Czechs would be Jan Habenicht's *History of Czechs in America* published in 1910. However, his material more fully describes the Catholic communities, only mentioning or missing Lodge dominated settlements. The Kansas State Historical Society and local historical organizations, public libraries and Catholic Churches together provide much of the information available today but there is still much material to be found in family resources, some of which is now going online. Many of the remaining story tellers are aging and thus the Kansas Czech oral history is rapidly disappearing.

## **S8 - CZECHS IN IOWA**

**By Mike Prohaska**

### **Iowa – Background**

- Land between two rivers – Mississippi and Missouri
- Territory status in 1838, Statehood in 1846
- Most Native American Indians had left the eastern half of the state by 1848

### **Factors Influencing Czech Emigration – Push Factors**

- Revolutionary forces in Europe in 1848 – feudalism/serfdom ended in Bohemia
- Peasants were impoverished, unemployment was high
- Available land very limited, poor quality, typically inherited by oldest son
- Concerns the abolishment of serfdom would be rescinded by Austrian rulers
- Mandatory military conscription terms of up to eight years
- Religious, political and social intolerances

### **Factors Influencing Czech Emigration to Iowa – Pull Factors**

- Abundant quantity of affordable, fertile land available for settlement in Iowa
- Land agents and shipping companies advertising/promoting settlement in U.S.
- Railroad development was rapidly opening up areas such as Iowa for settlement
- Iowa topography in eastern and northeastern Iowa similar to south Bohemia – rolling hills with ample timber and streams
- Earliest Czech settlers sent letters to family/villagers enticing them to join them in U.S./Iowa – links to **chain migration** resulting in **cluster settlements**

### **Result of Push/Pull Factors**

- Majority of Czech settlement in Iowa occurred in last half of 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Settlement began in early 1850s in eastern and northeastern Iowa
- Majority of Czech immigrants were from Bohemia, specifically south Bohemia
- By 1910, an estimated 40,000 Czechs resided in Iowa in over 60 settlements throughout the state (Dr. Jan Habenicht)
- Predominant Czech settlements in eastern, northeastern and northern Iowa

### **Predominant Czech Settlements in Iowa–Early Settlements (Habenicht)**

#### **Eastern Iowa**

**Linn and Johnson Counties** – at least 14,000 Czech residents in 1910

**Linn County** – Cedar Rapids, Ely, Center Point, Prairieburg

- Cedar Rapids – First Czech settlers in 1852; majority of Czechs from Chrudim, Plzen, Tabor regions; 7,000 to 8,000 Czech residents in 1910; Sinclair Packing House (1871) major employer

**Johnson County** – Iowa City, Solon, Shueyville, Swisher

- Iowa City - First Czech settlers in 1853; majority from Plzen region; 500 Czech area families in 1910

**Jones County** – Oxford Junction

- Oxford Junction – First Czech settlers in 1855; majority from south of Trebon and south of Vysoke Myto in northeast Bohemia; over 30 Czech families in 1910 and over 200 Czech families in surrounding vicinity

**Washington County** – Richmond, Riverside, Ainsworth, Wellman

- Richmond – First Czech settlers in 1856; many from Plzen region; about 500 Czech families in Washington County in 1910

**Tama County** – Tama, Toledo, Vining, Chelsea, Clutier, Elberon, Traer, Dysart

- More than 500 Czech area families in 1910

**Northeastern Iowa**

**Winneshiek, Howard, Chickasaw Counties** – Spillville, Fort Atkinson, Conover, Protivin, Saratoga, Lourdes, Schley, Ridgeway, Cresco, Alta Vista, Lawler

- About 1,000 Czech families in these counties in 1910
- Spillville – First Czech settlers in 1854; majority from southern Bohemia regions of Pisek, Tabor, Budejovice; about 400 Czech residents in town in 1910
- Protivin – First Czech settlers in 1855; majority from southern Bohemia regions of Pisek, Tabor, Budejovice; about 200 Czech residents in town in 1910

**Northern Iowa**

**Pocahontas County** – Pocahontas

- Pocahontas – First Czech settlers in 1872; majority from Winneshiek County, Chicago, south Bohemia; about 75 Czech area families in 1910

**Webster County** – Fort Dodge, Otho, Moorland, Callender

- First Czech settlers in 1860s; majority from Wisconsin, Johnson County, south Bohemia

**Hancock County** – Duncan, Garner, Britt

- Duncan – First Czech settlers in area in 1875; majority from Winneshiek County, Franklin County, Chicago, south Bohemia; about 70 Czech area families in 1910

**Czech Heritage in Iowa – Present Day**

Today Czech heritage in Iowa is still evident through historical and cultural societies, museums, cultural events including festivals, parades and dances, and surviving ethnic churches. Several examples are as follows:

- **Cedar Rapids** – Home to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML); Sokol; Czech Village & New Bohemia; Czech Heritage Foundation  
<http://www.ncsml.org/>; <http://www.czechheritagefoundation.org/>
- **Spillville** – St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church; Bily Clock Museum; Antonin Dvorak Exhibit; Andera crosses; Czech Heritage Partnership (CHP);  
<http://www.czechheritagepartnership.org/CzechHeritage/index.html>  
<http://www.bilyclocks.org/>
- **Protivin** – Protivin Czech Days; Family History Center & Masopust (CHP)
- **Oxford Junction** – <http://www.oxfordjctgenealogy.com/>
- **Ely** – <http://www.elyiowa.com/history/index.html>
- **Duncan** – Duncanfest & Winterfest; Duncan Community Ballroom;  
<http://www.duncanballroom.com/>

**S9 - Czech DNA Project:  
Background and Update  
by Leo Baca**

What do genealogists do after they've traced their ancestors as far as written records will take them? Linguistic research and genetics research are two possibilities. We chose to see where genetics research would take us.

I was not aware of the possibilities of genetics research until I attended Dr. Gary Kocurek's presentation at the September 2001 Texas Czech Genealogical Society Conference in College Station. At that time Gary presented the results of his first mitochondrial DNA test which indicated the possibility of a genetic marker for Valachs. His paper on this was published in *Ceske Stopy* (Volume I, Number 3, pages 16-18). That was the beginning of the Czech DNA Project.

Now, what is this all about? Genetics research during the past fifteen years has shown that an incredible amount of information about our ancestry is encoded in our genetic material (DNA). What we have learned in school is that we receive half of our genetic material from each our parents. What we didn't learn was that there are two kinds of DNA that are passed down from the father and mother that are not mixed. This makes it possible to trace both our maternal and paternal lines since no mixing of DNA occurs for these two kinds of DNA.

The method for tracing your maternal line is called mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) sequencing. Mitochondrial DNA is passed from a mother to her children. While all children receive mtDNA from their mother, only females can pass on mtDNA. From these seemingly simple facts, an incredible amount of genetics research has resulted. The clearest expression of this research is in the book entitled *The Seven Daughters of Eve* by Dr. Bryan Sykes of Oxford University. Mitochondrial DNA research has led to the finding of a mitochondrial Eve and an assertion that 95% of all Europeans are descended from seven different women who lived 10,000-45,000 years ago. The basic mtDNA test costs \$129 plus \$2 postage.

The method for gathering a DNA sample does not involve any blood. You are sent a small brush to scrape some cells from the inside of your cheeks. You seal the brush in small plastic package and return it to the genetics testing company with the payment for the test.

The method for tracing your paternal line is called Y chromosome testing. The Y chromosome is passed from father to son. The method for gathering a DNA sample is the same as described above for mtDNA. Family Tree DNA (<http://www.familytreedna.com>) offers group discount rates for various types of genetics study. For a 12 marker test, the group discount rate is \$99 plus \$2 postage. To participate in this study and to obtain the group discount rate, contact Leo Baca at lbaca@tx.rr.com or 1707 Woodcreek, Richardson, TX 75082. The Czech DNA Project has a website: <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/Czech>. You can join the project by visiting this website and ordering a DNA test. The project now has over 300 members.

An update of the results achieved to date will be presented at the CGSI Lincoln, Nebraska Conference on 1 May.

If you want to learn more, there is a list group on the use of DNA in genealogy. You can subscribe at [GENEALOGY-DNA-L@rootsweb.com](mailto:GENEALOGY-DNA-L@rootsweb.com). Just put “subscribe” in the subject line of your email. Or you can email me at [lbaca@tx.rr.com](mailto:lbaca@tx.rr.com) or Joni Hudson at [JOANH954@aol.com](mailto:JOANH954@aol.com). Joni is the project co-administrator. She has been working a number of genealogical issues/problems with project members.

## Speaker Profiles

**Leo Baca** is a fourth generation Czech Texan whose primary interests lie in documenting the arrival of Czech immigrants to America. Leo's other interests include researching Valachian history and the application of genetics to traditional genealogical research. Leo has conducted Czech genealogical research for over thirty years. He has published the nine volume series- *Czech Immigration Passenger Lists, Volumes I-IX* and a translation entitled- *Moravian Wallachia: Its Origin and Development*.

**Bruce Garver** received a Ph.D. in history from Yale University in 1971. Since 1976, he has been Professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and has taught Czech immigrant history on eight occasions at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. He was a student in Prague for ten months in 1967, returned to do research in 1971, 1973, and for short periods in eight different years after 1990. He taught American history in Czech at Charles University in the fall of 1990 and Czech history to American students at Palacky University in Olomouc the fall of 1995. He is the author of a book, *The Young Czech Party, 1874-1901, and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System* (Yale Univ. Press, 1978) and many articles, book chapters, and reviews about modern Czech and Slovak history. Currently, he is doing research on Czech-Italian relations from 1848 to 1918.

**Jason Jurgena** has been the Museum Curator at Homestead National Monument since March of 2009. Prior to working for the National Park Service Jason's museum career has included working at natural history, archaeology, and historic home museums. Jason received his Master's degree in museum studies and anthropology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and has taught Museum Studies courses at the University of Texas at El Paso.

**Tom McFarland** is a longtime avid genealogist, university librarian, and local historian. Over his genealogical career he has published a family history and served in various genealogical societies. He has presented on various genealogical topics, including internet, Irish, and beginning genealogy, plus disseminating and preserving your genealogy.

**Steve Parke** grew up on the rural Voda Road in Trego County, Kansas, and has been researching

family and community history since 1987. After working 20 years in various State of Colorado institutions as a chaplain, he's turned his attention to Kansas history and culture, and immigrant groups like the Bukovina German-Bohemians and the Czechs. He also released a singer songwriter CD in 2009 entitled "Seasons".

**Mike Prohaska** is a fifth-generation Czech whose Iowa heritage is from Duncan, a Czech hamlet in northern Iowa with connections to Spillville, Iowa. A member of **CGSI** since 1997, his involvement includes six years on their Board of Directors. His successful quest for his roots culminated by a 17 member family tour of Bohemia, was featured in the 2008-2009 winter edition of *Slovo*, the biannual publication of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. A trust real estate manager for Wells Fargo in Des Moines, he and his wife reside in Huxley, Iowa and are blessed with the challenge of keeping up with their children and grandchildren who all live nearby.

**Mila Saskova-Pierce**, Associate Professor of Russian and Czech, and Head of the Minor Languages Section, has been at UNL since 1989. Her research interest is in cultural history, teaching methodology, and Slavic linguistics. She has published articles on learning processes; American Czechs' cultural history; Russian, Ukrainian, Slovak, and Czech languages in the United States. At present, she is researching the modalities of teaching foreign languages over the Internet. Under her advising, the Czech Komensky Club, a student club at the University of Nebraska received the prestigious *Gratias Agit Prize* from the government of the Czech Republic for its cultural programming at UNL.

**Margie Sobotka** has conducted research on her and her husband's Czech family for over 50 years. She is a charter member of Eastern Nebraska Genealogical Society (ENGS) and is the treasurer at the present time. She is also a member and board member of CGSI. She has authored several articles on Czech research and family stories for *Journal of Genealogy, Nase Dejiny, Nase Rodina* periodicals. Margie has abstracted and compiled names from *History of Czechs in Nebraska, Nebraska and Kansas Czech Settlers, ZCBI* obituaries and death claims, and other periodicals. Margie has been a speaker at many historical and genealogical workshops over the years.

