

Czech Music in Nebraska



Ceska Hudba v Nebrasce

OUR COVER PICTURE

The Pavlik Band of Verdigre, Nebraska, was organized in 1878 by the five Pavlik brothers: Matej, John, Albert, Charles and Vaclav. Mr. Vaclav Tomek also played in the band. (Photo courtesy of Edward S. Pavlik, Verdigre, Neraska).



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Bohemians (Czechs) as a whole are extremely fond of dramatic performances. One of their sayings is “The stage is the school of life.”

A very large percentage are good musicians, so that wherever even a small group lives, they are sure to have a very good band.

Ruzena Rosicka

They love their native music, with its pronounced and unusual rhythm especially when played by their somewhat martial bands.

A Guide to the Cornhusker State

Czechs—A Nation of Musicians

An important Czechoslovakian folklore is music. Song and music at all times used to accompany man from the cradle to the grave and were a necessary accompaniment of all important family events. The most popular of the musical instruments were bagpipes, usually with violin, clarinet and cembalo accompaniment.

Typical for pastoral soloist music were different types of fifes and horns, the latter often monstrous contraptions, several feet long.

Traditional folk music has been at present superseded by modern forms, but old rural musical instruments and popular tunes have been revived in amateur groups of folklore music or during folklore festivals.



ZLATE CESKE VZPOMINKY GOLDEN CZECH MEMORIES

There is an old proverb which says that every Czech is born, not with a silver spoon in his mouth, but with a violin under his pillow. Such a saying is certainly testimony to the musical proclivities of this western outpost of the Slavic race.

Suffering forges the great links in the chain of musical expression. Perhaps this accounts for the emotional beauty of Czech music. For the Czechs have loved their country with a passion—and their land has been invaded, raped and divided innumerable times in the last thousand years. All the pathos and pride of such a heritage have spawned a beautiful melancholy in the romance of Czech music. The triumphs and travails of these valiant people, who have resisted destruction with their love of the land, have led to folk melodies and dances that gave birth to the musical genius of such sons as Dvorak, Smetana and Janacek.

Czech dancing and singing are the products of hundreds of years of change wrought by the course of history. The culture, learned and folk, of the Germans, Hungarians and Austrians who dominated the country for centuries and the Reformation under Jan Hus, which heralded the awakening of the nation, left their signature on Czech folk art.

The Hussite movement in Bohemia and Moravia, in the 15th century brought about the cultivation of a new religious music. They used secular melodies and set new words to them in keeping with the spirit of the new nationalism.

It is even said that the Czech Hussites routed the Imperial German Army with the singing of “Ktoz jsu Bozi bojovnici” (Ye, warriors of the Lord).

Underneath this layer of folk history lies an even older one that goes back to the time when these ancient Slavs worshipped pagan gods. The songs for the New Year, Easter and Christmas, in spite of their Christian disguise, reveal ancient rites and beliefs in the texts. Some of them are still sung today.

Shepherds songs, love songs, songs of nature and dance songs abound in Czech folk music. Many ancient ceremonies and tunes are connected with burying the stuffed effigies representing Death as a way of greeting the advent of Spring. At harvest time a “wheat-bride” is chosen. On May Day eve (Walpurgis Night) fires are kindled to rid the locale of witches. Most of these customs have dwindled out. One of these old New Years’ Day songs (koledy) set down in 1426 by the priest Jan of Hoksov was still sung in the 19th century—with some variation, of course. Melodic elements of this ancient model are also found in some wedding and harvest songs.

The Czech people are the most westernized of all the Slavic people. Even though they originally came from the East, their music in the last few centuries has shown its face to be more Western. The melodies are dominated by a harmonic feeling, rhythms are simple 2/4, 3/4, or a combination of both for many dances. Even when a few declamatory, slow melodies are found they are made to conform to a metrical pattern.

The lyrics of these songs most often tell of the beauties of peace and love rather than the glories of war. From the beginning Bohemians and Moravians, like their Slavic brothers, were herdsmen and farmers. Even their early mythology has no war-like gods, no symbols to glorify militarism. Slavic songs sing of nature and the tenderness of love. When they tell us history, it is to lament the loss of liberty, the death of a hero, or to tell us the splendor of a city conquered by the enemy.

Czech music is made in a single spirit, which gives men the culture of God and not an injected culture. That is why Czech music, so long as it springs from this source, will join all countrymen in solidarity. Music binds all nations and all people with one spirit, one happiness, one paradise.

The enchanting Czech melodies that have inspired musicians—where do they come from? What gave them shape? Leaf through dusty tomes, peer through ancient Church archives, remember the tragedies, the heroism and the love to find the answer. Or, if you could see the Czechs in their handsome costumes dance the furiant, the polka, the kolecko, the rejdovak and the rejdovacka during the many holidays and feast days the story would come to life before your eyes—all the “zlate vzpominky”.

Mrs. DeLores Kucera



Mikulas Ales: A young violinist

CZECHS: THE MOST MUSICAL PEOPLE OF ALL EUROPE

The Czech people have always been recognized as specially gifted musically and tens of thousand folk songs bear witness. Music, often called the language of the heart, occupies the foremost position in the cultural art field of the Czech people. The National Anthem, festival songs, love songs, religious hymns, patriotic and Sokol songs and the simple folk songs speak of the things closest to the heart of every Czech: love of homeland, church, family and friend. These combine to form the richest segment of Czech folk and artistic art.

Some of the songs are carefree and happy. Some are sad and melancholy, but they all reflect the everyday emotions of a nation of Czech people. Musical historian Charles Burney, in 1773, called Czechs the most musical people of all Europe. (Note 1)

Music is an integrated part of every Czech's way of life; at home, in church, at work and on festive occasions. The partisans created their stirring patriotic songs during every political, cultural and religious oppression.

On the contrary, Slovak music shows the heavy influence of Hungarian music (sometimes referred to as gypsy rhythm). This influence came about during the nearly thousand years the Slovak nation suffered under the Hungarian rule. Perhaps a change never came afterward because Slovaks never entered under the influence of Czech and Western music.

The Czech and Moravian songs are an entirely different sphere of melody. They typify the happy and gay spirit of a happy and gay people. Czech national songs are centuries old, originating as far back as the prehistorical age of our nation. Even during pagan times, our forefathers had love, dance and even war songs. They also had mourning songs to sing on graves and special exorcist songs against diseases.

In the early time of Christianity, when all culture was only a privilege of clergy, secular folk songs were damned and therefore not recorded. But just enough early Czech folk songs are documented in the country. For example: one of the followers of the Chronicler Kosmas (See note 2), Canon Pragensis Vincentius, who lived in the 12th century, describing the glorious Italian campaign of the Czech king Vladislav, remarked that during the preparation for this campaign in 1158 war songs resounded throughout the Czech lands.

Later, we have information about a song that accompanied the old pagan custom of carrying the image of Morana, goddess of winter and death, from the village. The songs started with these words: *Vele, vele, stoji dubec prostred dvora* (See, see, the oak stays in the middle of the yard).

During the early time of Christianity, educated priests composed only religious hymns.

Hospodine, pomiluj ny

Hospodine, pomiluj ny,
 Jezu Kriste, pomiluj ny, Ty spase všeho-míra

The first system of musical notation consists of a vocal line in the treble clef and a piano accompaniment in the bass clef. The music is in a simple, homophonic style with a steady rhythm.

Krieš, Krieš, Krieš,

The second system of musical notation continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment from the first system, ending with a double bar line.

ny spasiš i u-slyšíš,
 Hospodine hlasy naše!
 Dej nám všem, Hospodine,
 mír a mír v naší zemi!
 Krieš, Krieš, Krieš.

Svatý Václave

Sva - tý Vá - cla - ve, vévodo české ze - mě,

The first system of musical notation for 'Svatý Václave' features a vocal line in the treble clef and a piano accompaniment in the bass clef. The piano part has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment compared to the first piece.

kníže náš, pros za nás Boha,
 svatého Ducha! Kriste e - leison!

The second system of musical notation continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. A small 'Píseň' (Song) marking is visible in the piano part.

Ty jsi dědic české ze - mě!
 rozpomeň se na své plé - mě! nedej zahynou-ti

The third system of musical notation continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment.

nám, si budoucím,
 sva - tý Václave! Kriste e - leison!

The fourth system of musical notation concludes the piece with a final vocal phrase and piano accompaniment.

The composition of the hymn, which is rhymeless with frequent assonance, also proves its antiquity.

Saint Wenceslas, Duke of the Czech lands. Our Prince, pray to God for us, And the Holy Ghost! – Kyrie eleison!	Svaty Vaclave, vevodo ceske zeme, knize nas, pros za nas Boha, Svateho Ducha, Kriste elejson!
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O, Thy, Inheritor of Czech lands, Remember Thy race, Thy people, Suffering not us nor our children To perish, Saint Wenceslas!	Ty jsi dedic ceske zeme, rozpomen se na sve pleme, nedej zahynouti nam ni Budoucim, Svaty Vaclave! Kriste elejson
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Many additional verses were added to this hymn when it became very popular. And this hymn was a part of the coronation of Czech kings.

To this old religious hymn we may add two Easter church songs: “Jezu Kriste, scedry kneze” (Jesus Christ, Generous Prince), and “Boh vse mohuci” (Almighty God), both from the 14th century.

Jan Hus nationalized the Czech liturgy and prepared, for his faithful in the Bethlehem chapel, some religious hymns in Czech in the year 1410-1412.

The Hussites, his followers, strictly opposed ornate church liturgy, and also, unfortunately, liturgical music. This delayed the development of music in Czech lands by at least two centuries. (See note 3)

The great strategist Jan Zizka, military leader of the people’s army of Hussites in victorious campaigns, was the author of the war-song or war hymn “Ktoz jsu Bozi bojovnici” (Ye, warriors of the Lord), which has often been called the Czech Marseillaise of the 15th century:

You who are champions of God and of His law,
Pray Him to assist you and laud Him and His law,
So shall we conquer through God and be victorious\

Kdoz jste Bozi bojovnici a zakona Jeho,
Prostez od Boha pomoci a doufejtez v Neho,
Ze konecne s Nim vzdycky zvitezime!

Our Lord has told us not to fear those who can kill the body,
But keep Him near, and fight with will.
Fight valiantly them with no fear and make strong your hearts

Tent Pan veli se nebati zahubci telesnych,
Velit I zivot ztratiti pro lasku bliznich svych,
Proto posilnete zmuzile srdci svych

From the 15th and 16th centuries we have a few folk songs. For example: the song “Zalo devce, zalo travu” (A girl reaping the grass) is popular in our time, but originally this old folk song started differently: “Pekna Kaca zala travu” (A nice Catherine was reaping the grass).

The largest number of folk songs are from the 18th and 19th centuries, the period of the deepest national and political destruction when the Czech nation struggled for its cultural existence and independent national life

And it was the common and simple people in small towns and villages who saved and preserved spirit and language mostly with folk songs. For example, the popular song “Horo, horo, vysoka jsi” (O, mount, mount, how high you are) was composed in 1834 in the jail in Jicin, Bohemia, by a soldier expecting the death penalty for murdering his girlfriend.

Many of the folk songs from these centuries have much lyrical and musical worth and have had a deep influence on the development of modern music (Dvorak, Smetana). Also influential are Vaclav Hanka’s (Note 3) song “Vystavim si skromnou chaloupku” (I will build a spare cottage), and the songs “Moravo, Moravo” (Moravia, Moravia), “Nad Beroukou pod Tetinem” (Up the river under Tetin), “U panskeho dvora” (At the Lord’s yard),

Byvali Cechove”, “Tazete se proc jsem Slovan” (You are asking me why I am a Slav), “Cervena, modra fiala” (The red and blue violet).

A very popular modern time folk song “Koline, Koline” (O, Kolin, Kolin) has its origin after the battle at Kolin, Bohemia, 1757.

THE SONG OF NATIONAL PRIDE – Choral narodni hrdosti

The Czech National Anthem “Kde domov muj” (Where is my home) has its origin in the operetta “Fidlovacka aneb zadny hnev a rvacka” (The Fidlovacka or not any anger and fighting). The music of this drama was composed by Frantisek Skroup and the lyrics by Josef Kajetan Tyl.

The operetta “Fidlovacka” was first performed on December 21, 1834 in the Estate Theatre (Stavovske divadlo) in Prague, Bohemia. The main goal of this play was to strengthen the national feeling during a period of very rigid cultural oppression. The song “Kde domov muj” was performed in the fourth act of that operetta. In the scene, all was quiet when actor Karel Mares, portraying a blind violinist, first started with his saying: “Mnoho neumim, co ale dam, jde ze srdce” (Much I don’t know, but what I am giving you, it is coming from my heart). Then, after a short prelude of violin and horns, he sang with deep affection about the beauty of the Czech land and its people:

Kde domov muj? Kde domov muj?
Voda huci po lucinach,
Bory sumi po skalinach,
V sade stkvi se jara kvet
Zemsky raj to na pohled.
A to je ta krasna zeme,
Zeme ceska, domov muj,
Zeme ceska, domov muj.

Where is my home? Where is my home?
Rivers roar through the meadows,
Pines rustle over the mountains,
The spring flowers brilliantly
Bloom in the orchards,
And at first sight behold
An earthly paradise!
And this beautiful land is Bohemia,
My country, my home, Bohemia,
My country, my home.

But, after the first performance, the operetta "Fidlovacka" was forbidden because the Austrian police in Prague were worried that the play--especially the aria "Kde domov muj"--would incite the Czech people against the tyranny of the Austrian government.

Kde domov můj?

(J. K. Tyl)

Fr. Škroup.

Sopr.
All

1. Kde do - mov můj, kde do - mov můj? Vo - dá
2. Kde do - mov můj, kde do - mov můj? V kra - ji

Ten.
Bass

hu - ěf po lu - ěi - nách, bo - ry šu - mí po ska -
znáš - li, bo - hu mi - lém, du - še ú - tě vtě - le

li - nách, v sa - de stkví se ja - řa květ, zem - ský ráj to na po
či - lém, my - sl ja - snou vznik a zdar a tu si lu vzdoru

cresc.
hled, a to jest tá krá - sna ze - me, ze - me
zmar: to je Če - chů slav - né ple - me, me - zi

cresc.
če - ská, do - mov můj, ze - me če - ská, do - mov můj.
Če - chy, do - mov můj, me - zi Če - chy, do - mov můj.

“Kde domov můj” is essentially characteristic of the Czech people. There are no battle cries or praise of king or kingdom, there is just the humble admiration of the people for the beauty of Czech rivers, woods, meadows, and majestic mountains. There is a reverence to their homeland as a paradise on earth. Historians of music have marveled at the simplicity of the song, and soon the aria was accepted by all the nation and consequently recognized as the official National Anthem in 1918 when an independent Czechoslovak Republic was born.

THE AUTHOR OF THE LYRICS OF ‘FIDLOVACKA’

Josef Kajetan Tyl (1808-1856), the author of the lyrics of this operetta, was born on February 4, 1808, in Kutna Hora, Bohemia, into the family of an army musician and later a tailor. During his high school days in Prague, J. K. Tyl was deeply influenced by some of the activities of the leaders of the National Revival, especially by linguist Josef Jungmann (1773-1847) and Tyl’s forerunner Vaclav Klicpera (1792-1859). Later J. K. Tyl started to study Philosophy, but his love for drama and dramatic activity was much stronger. Therefore, he left the Faculty and dedicated his entire life to writing more than one hundred dramas, mostly about Czech history, and being a member of a traveling dramatical company. But, his writing and acting life could not support him. He was persecuted by the police and without money when he died July 11, 1856, in Plzen (Pilsen), Bohemia.



Thousands and thousands of Czech folk songs were composed during the 18th and 19th centuries. Young people, after working hard as slaves in the fields of the noblemen, would sit at night in the village square and sing. Some gifted girl or boy wrote lyrics, others in the group composed the music, and from that a folk song was born.

How rich is the treasure of our folk songs. The most precious aspects of Czech folklore were conceived by the Czech people themselves and furthered by the great musical artists too. This can be seen in the compositions of Antonin Dvorak, his operas, symphonies, Biblical songs, the artistic work of Bedrich Smetana, his famous opera “Prodana Nevesta” (Bartered Bride), the work of Zdenek Fibich, Janacek’s musical compositions in the modern time and rich line of other modernists.

The most popular composer of modern folk songs was Karel Hasler, considered a patriotic martyr for the song he composed during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, his political parody (skit) of the song “Pisnicka ceska” (Our Czech song). His parody:

To je ta pisnicka Ceska
Kterou si zpivame dneska.
Poslyste, lidicky, zahodte vidlicky,
Bez tak uz neni co zrat.
Vsecko nam sebrali,
Vsecko nam sezral,
Nechali jen ten protektorat. (See note 5)
To je ta pisnicka Ceska,
Kterou si zpivame dneska.

(See note 6)

Hosi od gestapa, vy tu pekne spite,
Vy se odtud domu nikdy nevratite.
Nevratite se vy nikdy domu zpatky,
Budou pro vas plakat otcove I matky,
Zustante tady jako bidne tretv.
Budu pro vas plakat otcove I matky.

It is that Czech song,
That we are singing today.
Listen, folks, throw away the forks,
Anyway there is nothing to eat now,
All they took from us.
All they devour from us.
And left the Protectorate to us.

It is that Czech song,
That we are singing today.
You bad men of the Gestapo,
You are nicely sleeping here,
But you will never return
You will never return
You will never return to your homeland.

Karel Hasler was arrested by the Gestapo on October 17, 1941, and sent to the concentration camp in Mauthausen, Germany. One early morning in the winter time, he

was stripped nude and tied with other prisoners under the icy shower and left there until his death on December 22, 1941.

Karel Hasler gave to his beloved country and people many songs. His most popular songs are:

Kdyz se nad Prahou vecer sklani
Nad Prahou tancily hvezdicky
Hosi od Zborova
Musiky, muziky
Pisnicka Ceska

Na cisarske louce stoji rada topolu
Po starych zameckych schodech
Vltavo, Vltavo, vodicko hluboka
and hundreds of others

Our music and our folk songs are the sweetness of the Czech soul, so devoted to the homeland because it is the beating of our hearts.

Ta nase pisnicka Ceska,
Ta je tak hezka, tak hezka,
Tak jako na louce kyticka,
Vyrostla ta nase pisnicka.

Our Czech song is so sweet,
it is so sweetly alluring,
just like flowers on the meadow,
That's how our song has become.

Az se ta pisnicka ztrati,
Pak uz nic nebudem mit,
Jestli nam zahyne,
Vsechno s ni pomine,
Potom uz nebudem zit.

Then, if we should lose our songs,
nothing in life will remain,
if it should ever die,
each thing will pass away,
Nothing in life will remain.

Partly from an article "Music in Czechoslovakia"
By Vladimir Kucera in his book "Let us learn
Czech".

Notes

1. "Every Czech a musician" was a famous slogan and the great English music historian, Dr. Charles Burney (1726-1814), who in 1771 traveled in Central Europe, wrote this in his travelog:--I had frequently been told that the Bohemians were the most musical people of all Europe. An eminent German composer, now in London, had declared to me, that if they enjoyed the same advantage as the Italians, they (Czechs) would excel them. I crossed the whole Kingdom of Bohemia from south to north, and being very assiduous in my enquiries, how the common people learned music. I found out at length that not only in every large town, but in all villages, where there is a reading and writing school, children of both sexes are taught music"

The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands and United Provinces,--(London 1775: newly edited by Percy A. Scholes as An 18th Century Musical Tour in Central Europe and Netherlands. London Oxford University Press, 1959) Cf. Chapter X, p. 131,32

2. Kosmas, Canon Pragensis, the author of Latin "Chronica Bohemorum" (Kronika Ceska) and called "the father of Czech history." His work consists of three books, but was only after Bozotecna's (his wife) death in 1117, that Kosmas began his great historical work.

3. Vaclav Hanka (1791-1861), a poet and philologist. From his collection of folk songs entitled "Pisne" (Songs), still popular are: "Moravo, Moravo" and "Vystavim si skromnou chaloupku." It was Hanka who supposedly found the famous ancient manuscripts: "Rukopis kralovedvorsky and Zelenohorsky" (Queen's Court and Green Mountain Manuscripts). Some modern literary historians and especially prof. Tomas Masaryk declared those Hanka's manuscripts as forgeries. But the importance of the manuscripts for Czech national ideology, poetry and art at that time cannot be overestimated.

4. Fidlovacka (the shoemakers festival) is an instrument used by shoemakers as a slicker of hide

5. Protektorat. March 15th, 1939, the second black day for our nation. A definite liquidation of Czechoslovakia. On short Hitler's order the "Protektorate Bohmen and Mahren" was created. For next several years the brown tyranny suppressed all human rights in my country.

6. Gestapo. Geheime State Polizie (Secret state police), terror of those creatures "black dressed SS men" sent thousands of Czech men, women and children to the concentration camps and killed there 400,000 mostly educated Czechs.

MUSIC AND THE CZECHS IN AMERICA

By Dr. Josef Cada

At a time when the recreation of so many of us demands the services of others and when we choose to be onlookers rather than performers, the manner of passing our leisure moments before the advent of the stereo or television seems like a page torn out of a book on the Baroque Era.

With each passing day we tend to function more and more as recipients rather than donors. Yet, not too long ago, there was a time when the more active members of every Czech family engaged in some recreational physical exercise or, when and if they were artistically inclined, they toyed as an amateur with some musical instrument.

Most all who lived in a Czech, or for that matter, in a central European neighborhood, will verify that most evenings and weekends the air of the community was filled with the sounds of music.

Singing in lay or church choral societies was quite popular. Many a church loft became not only a place to worship God through songs, but also to experience a sense of keen competition for solo parts.

To the people immigrated from Bohemia and Moravia, music became the preferred and effective way of communication with native Americans. It served as a means of their

introduction to the American culture of their time far more tellingly than the spoken word.

DVORAK DIRECTED THE BOHEMIAN DAY

Czechs, even as late as the 1920's, recalled with misty eyes the "Bohemian Day" of August 12, 1893. At the World's Columbian Exposition, their already renowned countryman, Antonin Dvorak, directed a huge all Czech-American choir and orchestra in his works at the Festival Hall and assisted with similar success at the "Russian Day" of the World's Fair.

Productions such as the one gracing the "Bohemian Day", which according to some sources drew the second largest attendance of the Exposition, were not exceedingly difficult undertakings for Czech communities. Singing societies were established in all larger Czech communities. Chicago, for example, founded its first noteworthy choir, the "Lumir" in 1862, and Detroit, Cleveland, New York, Milwaukee St. Louis and other Czech centers soon followed. These first societies were, for the most part, sponsored by a cultural organization known as the Slovanska Lipa which also founded Czech-American dramatic clubs and gymnastic groups known as Sokols.

IN 1900, FOURTEEN SINGING GROUPS IN CHICAGO

While the life of individual choirs can be traced through only such fragile and seldom preserved documentary sources as concert programs, it is still feasible to infer the nature of their development and function from such prototypes as the singing societies of Chicago. The dozens of choirs which grew up in America were usually adjuncts of fraternal, labor and social organizations.

In 1900 there were fourteen singing clubs in the Chicago area. They presented periodic concerts and musical plays. As joint organizations they performed at important events, such as the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 and the Century of Progress Fair of 1933 and 1934. Of the many Chicago choirs, two in particular enjoyed long and fruitful existences. One was the Lyra, (Lyre), the other the Cesko-DeInicky Pevecky Sbor (Bohemian Workman's Singing Society), established in 1870 and 1890 respectively. In 1879, the Lyra added a women's auxiliary, known as the Lada (Harmony). On May 1, 1887, together with other Czech choirs, it produced the monumental and then recently written "Stabat Mater", for which Antonin Dvorak received an honorary doctor's degree at Cambridge University.

In 1895 the Lyra marked its twenty-fifth anniversary by establishing a union of Chicago Czech choirs. This made possible annual musical festivities in the manner of German-American singing societies. The union presented two such festivals in 1898 and 1900 at Chicago's Sudebaker Theatre. The second had considerable value in relating the Czechs to the city's cultural life. Its guests were distinguished musical and public figures.

BOHEMIAN WORKMEN'S SINGING SOCIETY

A meeting of labor organizations held in Chicago during October 1900 resolved to establish the Cesko-Delnicky Pevecký Sbor or the Bohemian Workmen's Singing Society as it was publicly known.

In nature and range of activity the labor Society equaled the efforts of the Lyra. Beside the usual public performances expected of it, it also sponsored notable musical events. In June of 1903, for example, it presented and accompanied Ruzena Maturova, the principal soprano of Prague's National Opera, the Narodni Divadlo. It participated in the choral festivities at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 and the Bohemian Night of the University of Chicago in November 14, 1917, where as a token of Czech-American propaganda, it sang Dvorak's stirring cantata "The American Flag".

AFTER WORLD WAR ONE

After World War One, as a foretoken of the dusk which would soon gather over so many facets of ethnic-American life, the Workmen's Singing Society joined ranks with the Lyra to form the Bohemian Workmen Singing Society Lyra. This new group also became a principal member of the Czechoslovak Choral Association, already formed during World War One, of several men's and women's choirs in Chicago.

Like the dramatic societies of the same period, the singing circles raised the cultural sights of the Czechs and created respect for their community in the eyes of the American people. Even today [1980] the Bohemian Workmen Singing Society Lyra carries on. Its voices, however, are no longer those of enthused immigrants from one-time Bohemia and Moravia, but rather those of aging men whose ranks are occasionally rejuvenated by recent escape arrivals from Czechoslovakia.

Church choirs, though limited in their public activity, have also played a part in Czech-American cultural life. As early as 1876 the periodical "Hlas" of St. Louis announced a sacred concert at St. Joseph's Church in Carlton, Wisconsin. Later it carried an appreciative article regarding a vocal training school conducted by Fr. Vojtech Cipin for the improvement of the quality of church singers. The good Father maintained that when Czechs learned to sing better they would also become better Christians.

Czech-American Catholic church history records a long list of clergy who insisted on excellence of performance in liturgical music. Some, like Fr. Bohumil Mateju of the Redemptorists in New York or Alois Mergl of Chicago, both trained singers, were also amateur composers and raised their choirs to high degrees of musical ability. The faithful themselves became sensitive to the quality and nature of singing during services. At St. Stanislas Church in St. Paul the question of the choir's overly operatic singing stirred a spirited parish argument. The issue required a settlement by Archbishop Ireland, who after hearing the choir, pronounced its performance acceptable..

CRETE ORCHESTRA IN NEBRASKA

Czech-Americans earned a nationwide reputation as instrumental music performers. Their bands were a matter of community pride. Every large settlement had one which excelled in its time. In Texas it was the Baca Band of Fayetteville and Pekar Band of Damon. The Czech Band of Milwaukee vied with the best of brass ensembles of that city in the 1860's. In Cleveland many of the Czechs played in brass bands. The leading organizations were Jan Zamecnik's Light Artillery Band and the Western Band led by Frank Hruby. In the pioneer days of Nebraska it was the popular Crete Orchestra which used "to drive to Lincoln back in Governor Butler's day and play at the dances in the capital."

CZECH MUSICIANS AND BANDMASTERS IN ARMED FORCES

A number of Czechs were held in high esteem as bandmasters in America's armed forces. Some of the best known were Joseph Buchar at West Point, Emmanuel Bolech in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, J. Jicha on the battleship South Carolina, F. Karasek of the Columbus, Ohio Arsenal and V.F. Safranek at Fort Snelling. In 1917 the Czech Band of Chicago offered its services to the American Army and was formed into the military band of the Thirty-eighth Infantry Regiment at Syracuse, New York. Of Czech bandmasters, the one who finally reached nationwide fame was Bohumir Kryl. His reputation was based not only on his ensemble, but also the fact that he was a cornet virtuoso and a soloist with the Sousa Band.

The opportunities to earn a living by playing were invariably good. Musicians were employed for every possible reason. Even amateurs could earn a dollar playing in funeral processions whenever the family of a bereaved one desired to stage an elaborate funeral and doubled or tripled the number of players. Lodges, parishes, clubs and associations of one sort or another had their annual dances and summer picnics by the hundreds each year and required the services of a band. Extra'acte music was indispensable in the many amateur and professional plays presented annually from September to May.

While the services of brass and woodwind players were usually restricted to the Czech community, musicians of string and keyboard instruments found employment in wider areas as members of ensembles or as soloists.

CZECHS IN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS

Czechs filled the chairs of every instrument section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from the day of its establishment in 1891. They were similarly well represented in the New York Philharmonic and Boston Symphony orchestras. Larger Czech-populated cities, with enough professional or semi-professional string musicians, frequently supported chamber orchestras, quartets and trios. Chicagoans enjoyed the opportunity to attend orchestral concerts by Czech players as early as the 1880's, and in 1910, the active Czech society for the advancement of chamber music existed in the city. Because of its strange cultural and artistic orientation, the East, most especially New York, engaged a large number of musicians of Bohemian extraction. Victor Kolar, the

conductor of the Detroit Symphony, Rudolf Friml, famed for his musical comedies, Wenceslaus Raboch, whom critics declared had not many equals as an organist and Joseph Kovarik, a viola player with the New York Symphony and guide to Antonin Dvorak were notable in this category.

VISITING ARTISTS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Czech-Americans' musical reputation was likewise enhanced by visiting artists from Bohemia. The arrival of each was an event to be remembered for a long time in the community. "It was no small matter to see the name of a famous countryman appear on a poster of advertisement," said one commentator on Czech-American life. The event itself was a topic of discussion in the settlement and gave rise to banquets, public receptions and soirees honoring the artist. The turn of the century provided several such opportunities. In 1895, violinist Frantisek Ondricek visited America after a triumphant tour of Europe. In 1901 Jan Kubelik began the first of his several tours and a year later Jaroslav Kocian, an equally great compatriot, followed him. From 1908 to 1916 Emma Destinova reigned as a prima donna at the Metropolitan and the same stage hosted the tenor of the Narodni and several European opera houses, Karel Burian.

Indirectly, the Czech community shared reflected glory in the performances of German artists born in Bohemia, like the renowned Madame Schumann-Heink, Leo Slezak of the Metropolitan or Gustav Mahler, the eminent composer and conductor responsible for introducing the "Bartered Bride" at the Metropolitan Opera on February 19, 1909.

In 1892, the Czechs of America struck an especially powerful chord in their cultural recognition through music. Antonin Dvorak, the composer, came to the States to assume the directorate of the New York Conservatory of Music. The choice in itself was a significant recognition of the part Bohemia played in the realm of Europe's intellectual and artistic life, for Mrs. Thuber, the founder of the conservatory, was a woman of pronounced ambitions for her school. It was said that she always aimed at the "big game." On her faculty were teachers of the caliber of Anton Seidle of the New York Philharmonic, Victor Herbert, W. Safonoff, the distinguished Russian conductor and James G. Huneker, one of America's leading musicologists and critics.

DVORAK'S PRESENCE BECAME A STRONG INFLUENCE TO AMERICAN MUSIC

Dvorak's presence became a strong influence in calling the attention of the American intellectual and musical world to the Czech people. Yet, he was a man of simple tastes and democratic bearing. His undisputed prominence as a composer was no barrier to conviviality or intimate relationships with his countrymen in the States. His vacation at Spillville, Iowa, and ole Bohemian village became a legend cherished and often recounted by later generations. He was simple, pious and familiar with his acquaintances. Still, not unlike other geniuses, he had his moments of unpredictability and moodiness. These traits earned him sobriquet of "Old Borax" among his students and musical associates.

Dvorak's fame and activity naturally reflected on his countrymen living in America. Here was a son of a nation of six million teaching a nation of 70,000,000 how to write music and composing for it the "New World Symphony", the "American quartet", the cantata "American Flag" and "Humoresque".

DVORAK CONCERNED WITH AMERICAN MUSIC

Dvorak was deeply concerned with American music and left a definite imprint on it. He took his task at the conservatory to be not so much to interpret the great masters, as to give what encouragement he could to the young musicians of America. He endeavored to impress them with the idea that American music must find its source in Negro melodies, Indian chants and Creole songs, which he considered as unique in character as the melodies of his homeland. His fascination with plantation music led him to concentrate attention on the Negroes in his classes. In January 1894 the Conservatory gave a program in which all but one performer were blacks. Dvorak also wrote his immortal "Cello Concerto in B Minor" in New York. He was inspired to do so by the appearance of Victor Herbert's own concerto for the instrument, written when Herbert was the first cellist of the New York Philharmonic.

Since the Czechs of America distinguished themselves in no field of artistic endeavor as much as they had in music, they confirmed the old slogan of the home country that, "he who is a Czech is also a musician."

The Bohemian and Moravian brought much musical wealth to the States. If today this contribution is almost exclusively realized on the concert podium or by an occasional production of the stage or concert versions of Smetana, Dvorak or Janacek's works, it is largely because America's taste in aesthetic matters has taken a path towards the elemental. That direction is encouraged by the radio, stereo and television. Unfortunately, these trends are encouraged by the comfort into which many an American has fallen, not knowing the techniques of personal musical performance in instrumental or vocal production and thereby lacking in judgment of what is beautifully enduring and inspiring.

This article by Dr. Josef Cada by the courtesy of the Czech weekly magazine HLAS NARODA, Chicago

The social feature is very important to people from a foreign country for they naturally have a sentiment for their native land and like to meet others of their kind. Their gymnastic (Sokol), dramatic and singing societies supply needs of a social character and no community of any size is without at least one.

THE GREAT CZECH MUSICIANS



Antonín Dvořák

His Eminence, Josef Cardinal Beran, with Josef Janečka, during the Cardinal's visit to Chicago, April 23-



His Eminence, Josef Cardinal Beran, with Josef Janečka, during the Cardinal's visit to Chicago, April 23-



This envelope was sent to me by Josef Janečka of Riverside, Ill., President of the "First Czechoslovak Philatelic Club of America," elected in 1959 and still President in 1980. Also he is past President of "Society for Czechoslovak Philately." Josef has issued only 250 copies privately to honor this great Czech composer.

ANTONIN DVORAK (1841-1904), was the prince of Czech composers and his musical spontaneity and powerful, inventive talent made him a unique figure in the history of Czech and American music.

At the age of sixteen he ventured to Prague, enduring many hardships and poverty, to study his “life-long love”—music. His earliest famous works were “The Slavonic Dances” (Slovanske tance) so well known for their combination of moods and temperament.

Dvorak is best known for his “New World Symphony” (Symfonie Noveho Sveta), a masterpiece that made critics call him the “father of American music.”

Dvorak was visiting the United States as the guest director at the New York Conservatory of Music in 1893, when he visited the small Czech community of Spillville, Iowa. While there, he was motivated by the beauty and tempo of the Indians performing their musical rituals. He considered these rituals, and the melancholy, gay and gracious melodies of the American Negro folk songs, to be all that was needed to produce a masterpiece of American music that would dispel the idea that America was not actually rich in folk music and original serious music. The critics acclaimed this symphony as one of the most important works in the history of American music. During the second movement of the symphony, which betrayed his feelings of homesickness for his beloved Bohemia, the audience sat with tears rolling down their cheeks. Antonin Dvorak was praised for his wealth of tender, pathetic and fiery melody and his rich harmonic stress and delicate varying instrumentation. His music will always live as a reminder of the Czechs’ artistic accomplishments.

X

Much misinformation has been spread abroad about the work that Dvorak did while he was in Spillville, Iowa in 1893. It was rumored that he composed at least one widely-known quartette there, that he found inspiration for “Humoreska” (Humoresque), and that he made some final corrections on his famous “Symfonie Noveho Sveta” (The New World Symphony).

His “American Quartette” was, in fact, composed in Spillville, Iowa, and had its first rendition here by Dvorak and John J. Kovarik, Jr. They used the manuscript score. Dvorak also composed a quintette for strings there, but it was not widely received in spite of its unquestioned merits. “Humoreska,” however, was written after Dvorak left Spillville, Iowa. “The New World Symphony” was already in part form when he came to Spillville. It was given its first hearing in New York City the following winter. This part was reprinted from a pamphlet: “Visit Spillville, home of Antonin Dvorak and the Bily clocks”

ANTONIN DVORAK IN OMAHA – 1893

The historical days of September 1893 were moments of happiness, admiration and pride when the great composer, conductor and teacher Antonin Dvorak, his wife Anna, and gifted violinist Josef Kovarik of Spillville, Iowa, visited the Czechs in Omaha.

A welcome committee was dispatched early Saturday, September 2nd, to Council Bluffs, Iowa to wait for the Dvoraks' arrival by train from St. Paul, Missouri. In Omaha, Dvorak was the guest of Edward Rosewater with other members of the committee: Josef Rosicky, Tomas Capek, V. L. Vodicka, F. Kaspar, and S. B. Letovsky.

At the depot in Omaha, the members of another committee headed by Reverend Jan Vranek, F. Bandhauer, J.R. Jicinsky, J. Mik and Ed. Tischler, greeted the Czech musician in the name of the Czechs in Omaha.

Then Dvorak company was taken by Edward Rosewater to his residence at 1711 Douglas Street.

On Saturday evening, the Omaha Czech band stood outside the Rosewater home and surprised the Maestro with a musical performance. Dvorak, standing on the balcony of the house, was very touched by this unexpected musical greeting, especially when the band played our national hymn "Kde domov muj" and the all Slavs' hymn "Hej, Slovane". He walked down from the balcony with warmly thanked the musicians for their welcome. Later, the guests watched the Omaha Bee paper presses roll, and visited the smelter where many Czech immigrants had found jobs.

Sunday, September 3rd, the Dvoraks attended Mass at the Saint Wenceslas Church, 1432 South 14th Street, then dined with Father Jan Vranek. (He retrieved Dvorak's cigar butt from the ashtray for a souvenir, but it was eventually destroyed by a new housekeeper).

On Sunday afternoon there was a grand reception at Havlicek Hall. By 3:30, the hall was overcrowded. Many American musicians were present and some Germans too. Thanks to the hard work of the organizer, the decoration of the hall and preparation of the program were very good.

Above the entrance to the hall was the inscription: "Budiz vitan, Mistre!" (You are welcome, Maestro!) On the stage was another poster with the citation from the Jablonsky poem, "Dokud cesky zpev nezhyne, dotud bude zit Cech" (If the Czech song will not perish, the Czech will live). The hall was decorated with American and Czech banners, and the stage with beautiful flowers.

"It was a very touching moment" wrote the Czech newspaper Pokrok Zapadu (The Progress of the West) on September 6, 1893, "when Tomas Capek presented Antonin Dvorak with words from the heart to the heart of all present in the hall." After the Capek speech the gathering greeted our Maestro with ringing cheers.

The musical part of this afternoon program started with Dvorak's "Polonaise" performed by professor Dworzak. Then the girls' singing group of the Saint Wenceslas parish in Omaha sang a few Czech songs. Their performance of the hymn, "Kde domov muj" was the best accepted of all. Then Reverend Jan Vranek recited a poem he composed just for the Maestro's visit to Omaha:

Nas Dvorak us nas, tvurce carnych tonu,
Je v nasem stredu mily, vzacny host,
Jenz veleben je hlasy milionu,
Na nejz je hrda nase narodnost.

On ceske jmeno hudbou proslavuje,
On ceskou pisni podmanuje svet,
On carozvuky z lyry vykouzluje,
A nikdo jak on, nedovede pet.

Je pravym Cechem celou dusi svoji,
Jet srdce jeho lyrou ze zlata,
A niz na sta zvuku lahodnych se roji,
Jez napevy tak je bohata.

O, my jej ctime, my jej ctime vrele,
Nas narod s chloubou k nemu pohlizi.
Zrit slavika v nem, zri v nem tesitele,
Ze Cechum zas se jaro priblizi.

Nas narod trpi – kdyby nemel pisni,
Snad davno by byl mrtev, pochovan,
Snad byl by zhynul, v utrapach a tisni,
Vsak pisnemi byl spasen, zachovan.

Ta pisen lidu vzkrisila jej z hrobu,
Jiz pasacek sin a vsi notoval,
Ta pisen lidu zazehnala mdlobu,
Tou pisni Cech si reky odchoval.

Kdyz vsude umlk cesky hovor mily,
Ve vesnicich si cesky zpival lid,
A pisni ty nam mnohe muze odkojili,
Jiz dovedli nas narod probudit.

Cech zpiva v stesti, v zarmutku, bolesti,
Cech zpiva v strastech, trudu, bolesti,
A byt I mel jen sladkou pisen svoji,
On snese muzne kazde nestesti.

A proto zdrav bud, drahy mistre hudby,
A Tvych pisni vane sladka nadeje,
Ze narod nas se docka lepsi sudby,
Ze pisen viteznou si zapeje.

Afterward, Dvorak asked Reverend Jan Vranek for his poem as a souvenir of his visit in Omaha. The piano solo by professor Dworzak followed the recitation, as well as a flute solo by F. Svoboda accompanied by Miss Machova on the piano. And again Reverend Jan Vranek presented a recitation of a poem "Milota." Josef Rosicky recited a poem "Tri doby zeme ceske" (Three historical ages of the Czech land).

During the program, Antonin Dvorak, very touched, expressed his delight about the very hearty welcome he had received and his surprise at how many Czechs were living in Omaha.

The next part of the program was a piano solo by professor Dworzak who dedicated his own composition "A Reminiscence of Omaha" (Vzpominka z Omahy) to the Maestro. And again on the stage Reverend Jan Vranek recited two poems, and Jan Rosicky one poem "Vyslouzilec" followed by F. Svoboda with a flute solo. The assembly was now in a very warm mood.

The speech by Jan Rosicky was heard with solemn attention by the audience, especially when he said that the genius of one of the most talented sons of Cechie should have world recognition. England presented Dvorak with the honor of Doctor of Music, but America accepted him as her own son, recognizing his great musical talent and named him Director of the New York Conservatory of Music.

The highlight of the program was a violin solo by young artist Josef Kovarik. The thunderous applause was almost impossible to stop, especially when Dvorak, the great Maestro of tunes, went to the piano and followed Kovarik's violin solo on the piano.

It was almost 8 o'clock when the guests were ready to leave with Edward Rosewater. As Dvorak left he said, "Maybe, we will see you again, if we return to the West. Thanks to you all, I was very happy here, like when at home."

A copy of the Omaha Sun Newspaper with the story: Composer Dvorak was here and some other information by Dr. Charles C. Charvat of Omaha

The copy of the Czech newspaper Pokrok Zapadu with the story About Antonin Dvorak in Omaha was sent by Josef Svoboda, UNL archivist

Edward Rosewater, a Jewish Czech immigrant, came to Omaha in 1863. In 1871, he established the Omaha Bee, and same year he founded the first Czech newspaper in Omaha, the Pokrok Zapadu (The Progress of the West)

Jan Rosicky came to this country in 1861 as a fifteen-year old boy. In 1877, he bought Pokrok Zapadu. A very profitable portion of Rosicky's venture proved to be an agricultural magazine Hospodar (The Farmer). This Czech paper is still published in West, Texas.

Reverend Jan Vranek (later Msgr), wrote a large number of poems. A collection of these, under the title "On American Soil," was published by the Benedictine Press in Chicago in 1905. Their theme is love of his native country and the Catholic faith.

A wooden Havlicek Hall was located on 13th and Williams Streets, which is now a parking lot for the Bohemian Café. Later, the hall burned down.

BEDRICH SMETANA (1824-1884)



Although Antonin Dvorak is the best-known Czech classical composer, Bedrich Smetana was the first to write a Czech opera that won world-wide fame. Smetana composed eight thrilling operas, of which “Prodana nevesta” (Bartered Bride) is the most loved and popular. He also composed the symphonic poem “Ma vlast” (My Country).

The opera “Hubicka (The Kiss) was a beloved opera written in the latter part of Smetana’s life, during his complete deafness. This opera, completed in July 1876, was the greatest of Smetana’s triumphs. In times of national tragedy, the opera “Libuse” has instilled Smetana’s countrymen with his undying faith in his nation’s triumphant survival through wars and the country’s occupation by foreign enemies:

“Muj drahy, cesky narod neskona, on pekla hruzy slavne prekona!”
My beloved Czech nation shall not perish. It shall triumph over all
Infernal terrors!

A prophesy of the legendary Princess Libuse from the Opera “Libuse”

ZDENEK FIBICH

The third personality of the great generation of musical romanticists, Zdenek Fibich (1850-1900) was a quite cultivated person who enriched Czech music, in ideas and in form, through his romantic melodramas and operas.

Composer Josef Suk (1874-1935), who married Antonin Dvorak's daughter, was a direct musical follower of the Maestro Dvorak. He was the author of a rich line of the beautiful musical compositions. In 1919, Suk composed the dramatic march "V nový život" (Toward the New Life) for the VII All Sokol Festival 1920 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. In the free world, this march was performed June 6, 1962, in Vienna, Austria, for the celebration of the centennial jubilee of the Sokol organization (1862-1962). The last chairman of the Sokol organization in Czechoslovakia, Dr. Antonin Hrebík, was present there.

Leos Janacek (1854-1928) had visions of making Brno, the capital city of Moravia, Czechoslovakia, the musical center of the country. He founded a society for the promotion of church music in Moravia.



In 1899, Janacek published the volume "Narodni pisne moravske" (The National Songs of Moravia). His opera "Liska Bystrouska" (The Cunning Little Vixen) was extremely successful. For his modern musical "Glagolska mse (The Glagolic Mass), Janacek used Old Slavic liturgical texts as his reminiscences of the Great Moravian Empire (Rise Velkomoravska) and the tradition of saints Cyril and Methodius. (World famous Czech pianist Rudolf Firkusny was Janacek's student at the Brno Conservatory).

In 1928, Janacek passed away and his coffin was laid in state at the Old Brno monastery of the Saint Augustine church.

The first Prince of this big Slavic territory was Mojmir (probably 830-846). The Great Moravian Slavic territory was the first and also last attempt to organize

a state of Slavic tribes as a defense against political and military aggression from the West.

THE MAESTRO OF OPERETTAS

Prague-born composer Rudolf Friml (1879-1972), was the last of the great operettists. The composer of “Rose Mary”, and “The Vagabond King”, died in Hollywood, California, on November 12, 1971, at the age of 92 years. Friml, a baker’s son, was baptized Rudolf Fryml, but he later changed his last name to Friml, which he felt sounded more Czech.



He was a student of Antonin Dvorak at the Prague conservatory. However, Friml’s first steps in the world of music in Prague were closely related to the name of Karel Hasler, a very popular composer of Czech songs, who married Friml’s sister Zdenka.

Friml first came to the United States in 1901 on a concert tour as the piano accompanist for one of the greatest Czech violinists, Jan Kubelik. He returned to this country in 1906. His American patroness, Mrs. Grace Cowles, aunt of President Roosevelt’s wife, sent Friml to Vienna, Austria, to study with Teodor Leszetycki, the

famous Polish pianist and teacher..

Friml got his first break when the musical star Emma Trentini split up with Victor Herbert and commissioned Friml to write an operetta for her. It was “Firefly” (Svatojanska muska). He composed 33 operettas that made him a musical legend, and wrote such popular songs as “Indian Love Call” and “Donkey Serenade” which he later called an “abortion.”

Rudolf Friml lived until his death with his fourth wife, an attractive Chinese woman named Kay he met in Hong Kong and married in 1952. Friml had three children.

P.S. A few years ago before Friml’s death, I recommended that former state Senator Joe Vosoba of Wilber, Saline County, contact Rudolf Friml to ask him if he would be willing to be in Wilber during the Czech festival and accept The Czech King Charles Award. This award is presented annually to a person of Czech descent who has earned national or international repute in their chosen field. When Vosoba finally contacted Friml by telephone in Hollywood, California, Friml gladly accepted Vosoba’s invitation and promised to visit the Czech festival in Wilber. But this conversation ended when Friml’s wife took the telephone and told Vosoba,

Josef Janecka, president of the First Czechoslovak Philatelic Club in America, sent me this interesting music sheet to honor the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rudolf Friml in 1879. During the summer, around 1910-1912, Friml stayed with some Czech people in Lyons, Ill., where he composed two songs: "Jindy a dnes" (Another Time and Today) and "Churavim" (I am Ailing). Only 600 copies were issued to honor our great composer.

Rudolf Friml:

Jindy a dnes.

Tempo di Menuetto.

Byly jsme k tomu zick s nash celou tam do loka.

A CZECH MUSICIAN, COMPOSER, BANDMASTER

Frantisek Kmoch (1848-1912), was the composer of songs popular world-wide and marches for brass band, and a great bandmaster. In his homeland and elsewhere, and especially here in Czech America, all men and women with love for music know and sing Kmoch's songs: "Koline, Koline" (The City of Kolin), "Pode mlejnem, nade mlejnem, husy se pasou" (At the Mill), "Andulko Safarova" (The Manager's Daughter, Annie), "Muziky, muziky" (Musicians, musicians), "Vrany kone" (Black Horses) and many others.



František Kmoch
1848 - 1912

Kmoch was born in a musical family where his mother sang during her daily work and his father played clarinet in the local band. He started as a country school teacher, but family tradition and his ardent love for music were stronger. Kmoch left the school rooms and went to the city of Kolin in the northeast part of Bohemia to start his beloved musical activity.

In Kolin, Kmoch first founded a trumpet corps, but soon grew rapidly into a large brass band. And it was in Kolin that our great musical organizer started to compose many waltzes, polkas, mazurkas and a variety of folk songs. The name of his band, called by the Czech people "kutalka," was heard and praised all over the "old country." He traveled with his "boys" throughout his homeland and he was invited to foreign lands too. He performed concerts in Austria, Poland, Hungaria, and Russia, and

Kmoch and his musicians were also invited to play for our Czech people in America.

Frantisek Kmoch died after a long illness on April 30, 1912, just a quarter of a year before the All Sokol Festival in Prague, for which he was preparing his great brass band so carefully. His patriotic long life's work-- his music, the Czech music, and his songs--didn't die. It is still alive and will never perish. Today, and forever, his banner is and will be gloriously carried by "Kolinska Kmochova hudba" (The Kmoch's Kolin Band).



Frantisek Smetana, a prominent cellist, was born in Czechoslovakia. He gave his first recital on the cello at the age of 10, and at age 16, he made his debut with the Plzen (Pilsen in Bohemia) Symphony Orchestra playing Haydn's cello concerto. He studied with K. P. Sadlo at the State Conservatory of Music in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and with Pierre Fournier in Paris, France.

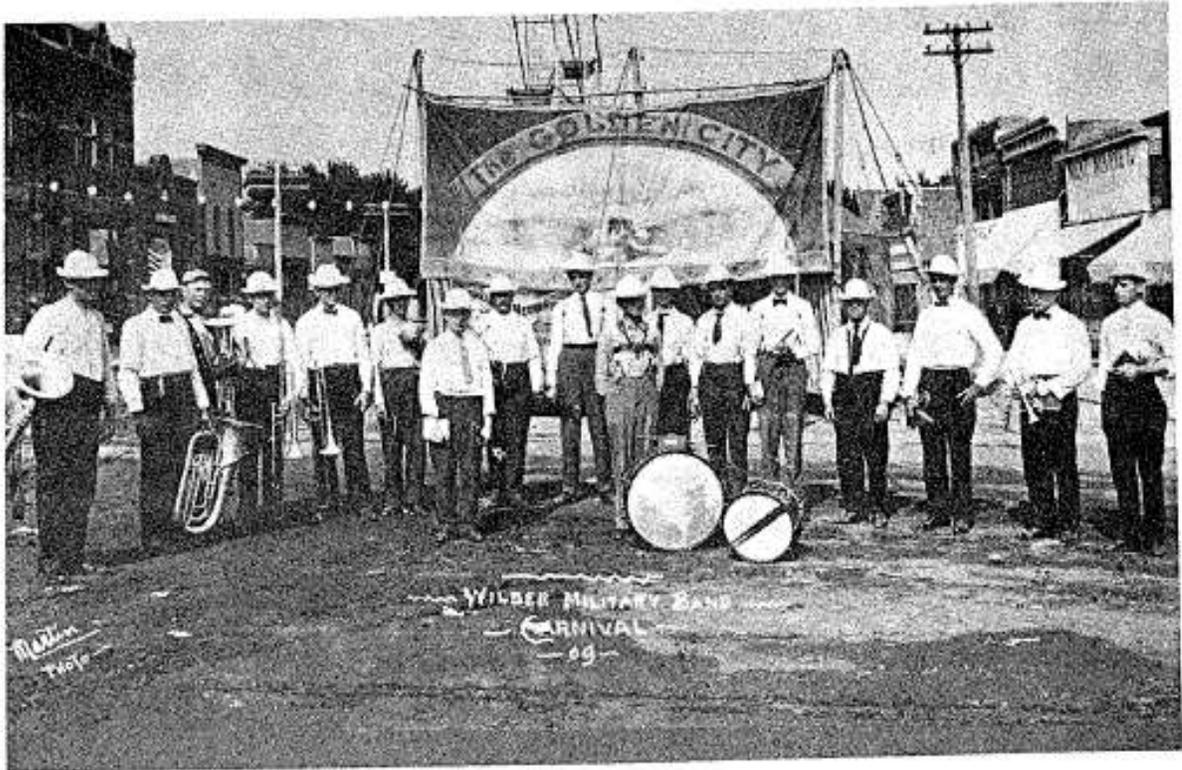
His brilliant career as a soloist was matched by his interest and success in chamber music. He was a member of the Smetana trio, Czech Nonet, Pesek Quartet and Prague trio. Professional appearances took him throughout Europe and to Canada, Iceland, China, Korea, Mongolia and Jamaica as well as many parts of the United States. He was a soloist with the Czech Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic of London, Berlin Symphonic, Hilversum Radio Symphony, Rykjavik Radio Symphony and McGill Chamber Symphony.

Presently Smetana is a member of the Musical Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va.

Critics have particularly extolled the rare poetry and depth of feeling in his interpretive style which has been developed through long and close association with chamber music.

Dolly Smetana was the permanent accompanist of her husband. She studied piano at the Academy of Music in Prague and with V. Kurz and Marguerite Long in Paris. She performed with her husband in most of his solo appearances.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN NEBRASKA



Wilber Military Band 1909 – left to right: Ed. Huletz, Ed. Havlovic, William Chaloupka, Mike Chaloupka, (not identified), Josef Kudlacek, Dale Chaloupka, Tom Pasek Sr., Harry Watson, Frank McElroy, John Bouchal, Frank Anyz, Adolph Jindra, Bill Petit, Steve Shestak, Hugo Chaloupka and Jim Kudrna.

Picture was taken during the 1909 Carnival in Wilber, Nebraska

Picture courtesy of Mrs. Robert Shestak

SALINE COUNTY – MECCA OF MUSICIANS

Music was important to the first Czechs of Nebraska and still is. Saline County, Nebraska, may lead all counties with Czech settlements in musicians and bands.

The first outstanding early pioneer musician was Josef Francl, who settled in Saline County in 1867. The next most outstanding musician was Stepan Jelinek who came to Saline County with his parents at the age of six weeks. Stepan became nationally known, having played in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and later, becoming its conductor.

Next was Frank Nedela Sr. who organized a band in Wilber. For over fifty years, Frank Nedela's band played for every occasion requiring music; political rallies, funerals, church music, etc. Possibly one of his best engagements was playing for the second inauguration of Governor D. Butler, Nebraska's first governor.

Some other outstanding musicians of Saline County were Bartolomej Brt, who came to Crete, Saline County, in 1882, and specialized in playing a Czech bagpipe (dudy) and also Vaclav Brt who played a Czech trumpet.

One of Wilber's famous musicians and an actor, too, was Tomas Pasek, who led many brass bands. Also, mention must be given to Lumir Havlicek of Crete, Saline County, who was a long time instructor of music in Crete public schools and conducted many different bands

We may also mention the names of Frank Hladky, composer and violinist; Jerry Koci, bandmaster in Crete; Frantisek Alois Drdlla, composer and violinist; August Molzer, Josef Bouska and his musical family; Frank Kunc Jr. Wilber musician; Mary Elizabeth Aron Shebl; Frank Anyz, publisher, composer, teacher; Edward C. Brt, musician and historian; Klasek's musical family; members of U-neta Orchestra of Dorchester; and many other devoted musicians.

JOSEF FRANCL: A PIONEER MUSICIAN

The first outstanding Czech in Saline County



As far as we know, the first Czech to enter the Nebraska Territory, was Josef Francl, the Vanguard of the Czech pioneers. He traveled over land through Nebraska in 1854 on his way to the California gold fields. It is a very interesting coincidence and really proof of the saying that the Czech nation is a nation of musicians. And I may say he was the first outstanding Czech pioneer in Saline County. Our musician and goldminer was born in Bohemia 1824. He studied music at the Prague Conservatory, and later directed an orchestra which went on many concert tours through Bohemia, Austria and Germany.

On April 18, 1854 Josef Francel left Watertown in an oxen-drawn wagon with four companions, leaving his wife and a small son Fred, hoping to find fortune in the gold fields of California. Luckily for us, Francel wrote a diary during his trip to the West.

When his group succeeded in crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains, his daily diary ends. From several letters, the last sent from California, we find that luck was against him and he didn't find gold. Therefore, Francel returned to Watertown, where he taught piano and directed a singing society.

Francel returned to Nebraska in 1869 with his little family to homestead in Saline County one mile south of Crete, Nebraska. Broken and bent with failure, he tried desperately to establish his roots here by building a trading post of sorts for the fellow emigrants on their own trip further west.

He bade his Nebraska home farewell in 1874 and started his second trip to the California gold fields, but this time his trip was tragic.

In the meantime his oldest son Fred had moved near Walla Walla, Oregon with Theodore Daum, who occupied himself by making cord-wood.

In 1875 Francel set out afoot for Walla Walla and eventually arrived in Portland, Oregon, a distance of 600 miles. He found Fred in the mountains, and in November of that year all three set out on horseback for California. A few days later, Fred turned back, intending to take a boat. On December 3, 1875 Francel and Daum camped near a large spring. Daum walked out a short distance to look for the right direction and when he returned one hour later, Francel had vanished.

For two days Daum conducted a fruitless search for Francel. Finally he found his way to an Indian settlement where he was directed to the Klamath Indian Agency. There he met people who accompanied him back to aid him in his search. Shortly after, Francel was discovered dead.

Francel's journey through deep snow had resulted in the end of the colorful and dramatic life of the first Czech musician in Nebraska.

In 1915 his sons, Ernest and Josef, searched for his grave in the Fort Klamath cemetery, but in vain.

There are some of Francel's descendants in Saline County. The late Czech pioneer musician Edward C. Brt of Crete, Nebraska, who was acquainted with Francel's widow, sons, and grandchildren, wrote in his memoirs:

A letter by Mrs. Helen G. Francel

Crete, Nebraska, January 27, 1980

To Mr. Bernard Klasek of Wilber:

I received your letter asking for information about Joseph Francel the musician. My husband Joe used to tell about his grandfather that studied in Prague, Bohemia, Conservatory of Music and later played many concert tours in Vienna and other countries. He spoke many languages. He later moved to Watertown, Wisconsin, and later to Crete, Saline County. He died trying to reach the gold fields in California.

I have some Crete News clippings of his life that were published in 1965. I don't have the book. I asked Jim Krebs about it and he said he has the book which you could borrow. He said he already gave Joe Vosoba most of the information he knows. Sorry, I can't help you more.

Sincerely,
Helen G. Francl

TOMAS PASEK, PROMINENT PIONEER, MUSICIAN, ACTOR

Tomas Pasek was born in Prestice, District Pisek, Bohemia, on February 13, 1849. At the early age of 15 he started his wonderful and colorful musical career and lived to be 90 years, 7 months and 5 days old.



In the year 1866, a boy of 17, he emigrated by himself to the U.S. and first lived at Saint Paul, Missouri, where he played in a German band for ten years. He married Katerina Sedlacek there in 1869.

In 1876, he and his family came to Nebraska and settled northwest of Wilber, Saline County. After 13 years, in 1889, he moved to Wilber, Nebraska, where he owned the Wilber Opera House for years. Mr. and Mrs. Pasek were blessed with eleven children, nineteen grandchildren and eighteen great grandchildren.

Like many Czech pioneers, Tomas Pasek and his wife underwent the many hardships of first settlers. During a diphtheria epidemic, four of their children died in one week.

He was known to be the oldest bandmaster west of the Mississippi River. He was conductor of Pasek's band, which for years traveled extensively to play for various occasions. He was also a

THOMAS PASHEK, DIRECTOR.

CONCERT

—of the—

JUVENILE BAND

at the Opera House, Thursday, April 17th 1902.

PROGRAMME:

I. March, Juvenile Band.....Souza
 II. Song, Quartett—Lincoln Luse, Horace Clark, Frank Hayek and Clifford Broliar
 III. Duet..... Mrs. Kačer and Mrs. Borecký
 IV. Concert Polka—Cornet solo..... Strebinger
 V. Duet..... Misses Anna Zwoneček and Loretta Shabata
 VI. Duet..... Willie Pashek and Sylva Anderl
 VII. Concert Polka—Bariton solo..... Czibulka
 VIII. Quartett—Link Luse, Horace Clark, Frank Hayek and Clifford Broliar
 IX. Song..... Miss Anna Zwoneček
 X. Duet..... Willie Pashek and Irma Sadflek
 XI. "Comische Zapfenstreich"—the Band..... Holeček
 XII. March—the Band..... Laube

DANCE AFTER CONCERT. Po koncertu taneční zábava.

Admission 25c. Vstupné 25c.

cornetist of note, and excellent leader and teacher.

In 1896 he started the first "juvenile band" in Wilber, which was very popular. As a good and ardent musician, he organized "The Jolly Jazzettes," the first girls' orchestra, which performed many concerts. The ladies, under the direction of Prof. William Pasek, made an enviable reputation for themselves. One of the most popular pieces performed by this orchestra was "Away Out West in Kansas," dedicated to the mayor of Wilber.

Pasek organized a military band too. He made quite a hit with all of his musical groups.

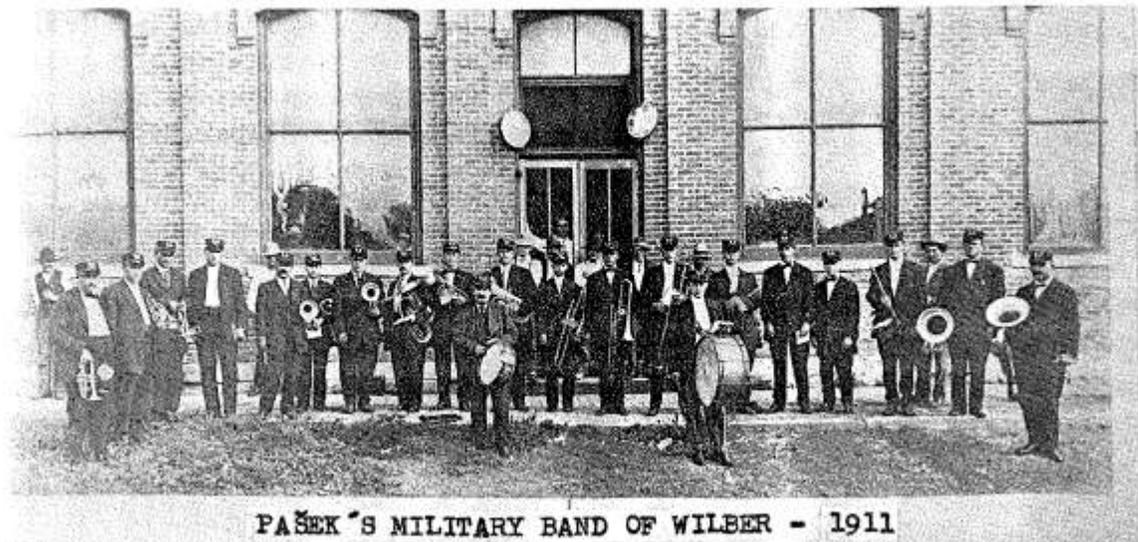
The girls' orchestra consisted of the following young ladies: Bertha Bednar, piano; Marie Diller and Alice Musil, saxophones; and Olga Novak, violin. The leader Pasek also played the violin.

Tomas Pasek, a hard working pioneer musician and band leader, died on September 18, 1939. His wife died several years ago. For the last two years before his death, Pasek had been in frail health but was able to get around. He was survived by two sons, William and Edward, and three daughters: Mrs. Anna Chaloupka, Mrs. Katie Nedela and Mrs. Abbie Cerny, all of Wilber.

Tomas Pasek was a member of Z.C.B.J. and an honorary member of the Sokol in Wilber.

Funeral dirges were played by a large group of musicians, pupils and fellow bandmembers. Mrs. Sylvia Slapnicka, grandchild of Pasek, sang accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Klasek on the piano and violin.

Interment took place in the Bohemian cemetery of Wilber, Nebraska.



Left to right: Tomas Pasek, Sr., Harry Magnuson, Otto Vosika, L. B. Hokuf, Joe Placek, Frank Charvat, Charles Bors, Josef Kudlacek, Sr., Otto Kubicek, Joe Pospisil, Robert Safarik, Frank Kudlacek, Frank Anyz, Ed. Houser, Joe Melcer, John Bouchal, Adolph Jindra, Dale Chaloupka, Fred Bors, Tom Pasek, Jr., Ed. Huletz

JOLLY JAZZETTES – 1925



The leader of this group of young ladies was William Pasek. When he was a youth, his father, Tom Pasek, Sr., sent William to Czechoslovakia to study violin under the noted violin teacher Sevcik. Upon his return to the United States, William performed a coming home recital at the Wilber Opera House. He opened a studio and taught violin for many years. In addition to his studio work, he played for many activities in Wilber and the surrounding area. He was also a performing member of the Wilber Commercial Club Band and dance orchestras.

Picture courtesy of Mrs. Bertha Bednar Pospisil, Wilber, Nebraska

FRANK NEDELA SR.

A pioneer band director, instructor and composer of many old time selections including marches, polkas and quadrilles, Frank Nedela Sr. arrived in the United States from Czechoslovakia in the year 1867, first living in Chicago. In 1868 he headed west and located in Richardson County in the southeast corner of Nebraska, finally settling in Saline County in 1871.



Pictured above is the "Kid Band" of the middle 90's developed by Frank Nedela Sr. A picture of the original Nedela Pioneer Band has not been located. The boys pictured were all sons of pioneer families, trained by Mr. Nedela. Henry and Vance Jelinek of Wilber were both in the band but are not pictured.

Left to right in the bottom row are Edward Jelinek, Joe Nedela, Frank Nedela Jr., Frank Nedela Sr., Otton J. Kubicek and Charles Aron. Standing at the top from left to right are Fred Jelinek, Anton Belka, Edward J. Aron, Charley Jelinek and Anton Frolic.

Photo courtesy of Mrs. Evelyn Orth, Wilber, Nebraska

He organized what was called the Nedela Pioneer Band. Some of the original members were Frank Nedela Sr., John Nedela (his father), Thomas Aron, Joseph Chyba and John Svoboda. All of these men played together in Chicago before moving west. Edward C. Brt related that this band was the first west of the Missouri River.

Nedela's band was known through all Nebraska and as far as Chicago, and very active playing at weddings, dances, operas, political rallies and other occasions requiring music.

This band played for the last Inauguration of Governor David Butler of Nebraska.

Nedela, as a young man, served in a military band in the Austrian Army. (Czechoslovakia was at that time governed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire). He served in the army during the Schleswig-Holstein war of 1864 and the Prussian-Austrian war of 1866. It should be noted that for many of the engagements the band played, the members had to walk or ride in a wagon until the railroad reached Crete and Wilber. A selected group from the band accompanied the choir in the Catholic churches during mass services. It was also customary in those days to have the band lead funeral processions, and Nedela played "Taps" at all funerals of G.A.R. veterans.

As years went by other Czech musicians came to settle in Saline County and joined the Nedela band. Among those were Frank Brt Sr., Frank Justa, Shebl, Gerner, Hercog, Bohac, Dedic, Baloun and Joseph Franta Sr.

Nearly all of these men received military musical training in the Austrian army where they had also learned trades and thus were instrumental in the building of towns and farms in Saline County.

The story below is an excerpt taken from the No. 15 Centennial Series, "The Czechs," as featured in the April 12, 1980 issue of the Lincoln Star and written by Dorothy Weyer Creigh:

Gregarious and fun-loving, Czechs seized every opportunity for merrymaking, celebrating Old World customs, absorbing new country ones and inventing reasons for partying when there were no others. They love music, particularly bands: Frank Nedela's band in Crete is the first-known one in the state and it played at the inauguration of the first governor, David Butler in 1867. Beer gardens sprang up in many Czech villages in Nebraska, and descendants of the first oompahpah band players are still pounding out the beat or playing the accordion when there is no other instrumentation available. Rose Rosicky, Czech historian, estimated in 1929 that two out of every five Nebraska Czechs played a musical instrument. They shivareed newlyweds, celebrated saints' days and gorged on ducklings, dumplings, sauerkraut and kolaches.

Although by now the Czechs have become part of the Nebraska culture generally they are still keenly aware of their own particular heritage.

Relatives of this great musician live in Crete at the present time (1980) including grandchildren Karl Nedela and Marie Nedela, great-grandchildren Mary Ann Nedela Kohl (Mrs. Leonard A.) and Kay Nedela Pomajzl (Mrs. Harold) and several great-great grandchildren.

More information by Mrs. Al Cochnar, Dorchester, Nebraska:

Frank Nedela Sr. was born April 30, 1842 and was only 25 years old when his band entertained at the Governor's Inauguration. Going to Lincoln on foot from Crete, Nebraska was almost an everyday occasion as many walked along the railroad tracks to get supplies several times a month. Mention was not made of how the band traveled.

Nedela died January 4, 1924 at the age of 82 and is interred in the Crete Riverside Cemetery.

The Nedela Band was a brass band and had from 10 to 12 members. The instrumentation consisted of several cornets, alto horns, baritone, bass horn and one clarinet. Drums are not mentioned. Early records of personnel are not available, but a membership roll from the early 1890's is as follows: Frank Nedela Sr. (director), his son Nedela Jr., Edward Jelinek, Joseph Nedela, Otto Kubicek, Charles Aron, Fred Jelinek, Anton Belka, Edward J. Aron, Charles Jelinek and Anton Frolik. The Saline County area, mainly Crete and Wilber, seemed to be a "mecca" for talented Czech musicians. Six members of the list were either blood-relatives or related by marriage

CZECH MUSICIANS IN SALINE COUNTY



FRANK NEDELA SR. — Well known Czech musician, Saline Co.

Frank Nedela Sr. — Well known Czech musician, Saline Co.

In 1869 my father came to Nebraska with my brother-in-law, Thomas Aron, and settled in Saline County on claims.

They wrote us telling us to come too. I married Miss Marie Papik and the day after the wedding, April 1, 1869, we started for Nebraska. Any one can image our wedding trip when one considered what Nebraska was like in those days. We had to go by wagon from Nebraska City and those who had no conveyance had to go on foot. Before my father came to Nebraska he sent me to this state to locate on a claim, and I did take one up in Johnson County and then returned to Chicago. When I

arrived in Nebraska the second time I inquired if I could take up a claim again, having done so once before, and was told to go ahead, that no one would know. I did so, but was sorry for it. I prepared a dugout where we spent our honeymoon. I plowed some and

prepared for the next year, but before the year was up, it became known that I was not entitled to a homestead and I was afraid I would lose it.

I went to Lincoln, where my sister worked for the family of Governor Butler, and asked his advice. He sent me to an attorney, Mr. Robinson, then considered the best in Lincoln, and in accordance with his advice I gave up the homestead and got a preemption and agreed to pay \$200 within a year. It was sad to have no money and agree to pay \$200 within a year and not know where to get it. I thought it over and decided to do the work I fairly hated—shoemaking—but there was no other way. I worked one winter in Lincoln and earned a nice sum. There was no railroad then so I used to walk.

Music is my passion. I served in a military band in the old country during the war between Prussia and Austria so pretty soon I gathered a few fellow musicians into a band. There were five of us: my father Jan Nedela, my brother-in-law Thomas Aron, Josef Chyba, Jan Svoboda and I. We used to play in the capital city and our music was well liked. We got very good pay, \$8.00 per man, and the one who owned the horse team we used for traveling got \$8.00 for his playing and \$8.00 for transporting. Our band was the first that played in Lincoln for there was no other in this part of the country.

In the fall of 1870 Crete was established and I plied my trade there. In the spring of 1871 the railroad was built and I made good money with my cobbling. I had two workmen and we had all we could do. In those days we made boots and shoes to order. A pair of boots cost from \$11.00 to \$17.00 and there was good profit in it. Thus I worked for two-and-a-half years while my wife worked on the farm.

I went home Saturday evening and stayed over Sunday. I lived on the farm two years and then opened a saloon in Crete. In the spring of 1875 I rented a place and a year-and-a-half later built my own building. In 1880 I sold it and built a larger one where I kept a saloon for fifteen years. Then I started something about which I had no knowledge whatever, a drug store, and to this day I wonder how it happened that I made a success of it, for I had to hire help to run the place. Later, my son studied to be a druggist and then he took care of the store.

I own three farms, a store in town and nice home, and I am well situated in every way, and my family life has been a happy one, also.

STEPAN JELINEK: A Great Czech Musician

Stepan Jelinek, a cornetist of ability, was born in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, August 10, 1865, and came to Saline County, Nebraska, with his parents Frank and Marie Jelinek in 1869, settling on a homestead near Crete.



He grew to manhood in Saline County. After raising enough money to cover expenses, he entered the Northwestern University School of Music. This led to his winning first chair in the cornet section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

After the Spanish-American War began, Jelinek was appointed bandmaster of the Eleventh Infantry Band and played for troops in Puerto Rico beginning his duties November 1, 1894.

In 1896 his band returned to Washington, D. C., where they played at the New Year's reception of President McKinley at the White House. His band remained in Washington until the close of April, when they sailed for the Philippine Islands, arriving at Samar Inland on June 1, 1897. There he spent three years.

In September 1897 Stepan obtained leave, promising to return, but his parents did not wish him to do so.

After leaving service, Jelinek worked a homestead in South Dakota before moving to Lincoln, Nebraska in 1906.

Stepan married Miss Frances Dvoracek of Wilber, Nebraska, and they lived in Lincoln at 1215 So. 17th Street. For several years he was a teacher of brass instruments at the University of Nebraska Conservatory of Music and played in or directed orchestras until his death in 1954. He is buried in the Crete, Nebraska cemetery.



Stepan Jelinek, his wife and daughter



Stepan Jelinek Military Band – 1896

His old Crete Military Band which serenaded dances, weddings and parades before the turn of the century was considered one of the best in Nebraska. It won several prizes at state fairs.

Miss Viola Jelinek, the daughter of Stepan Jelinek, in memory of her father and her Czech heritage left funds of \$383,000.00 to perform a series of memorial musical programs on the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

Two Czech Fest performances were held in Kimball Recital Hall on the NU Campus in 1977. Those performances featured some of the world and Czechoslovakia's finest musicians as follows: Prague Chamber Orchestra February 19, and Czech Philharmonic Orchestra March 14, both in 1977.

EDWARD C. BRT - Czech Musician and Historian



Edward C. Brt, a pupil of Frank Nedela Sr.'s "Kid Band" in Crete, Nebraska, and greatly inspired by Stepan Jelinek whom he admired during his musical career. This picture was taken about 1915 when Brt played in the Crete Musical Band

Edward C. Brt of Crete, a member of the Nedela's "Kid Band" in the middle 1880's, joined this band in 1896 and was the only one who may preserve for us almost completely the history of Czech musicians and bands in Saline County. My good friend, Edward C. Brt, was born on March 13, 1882. He married Martha Henke at Western on April 26, 1917.

During his business career he was a cashier at the Abie State Bank, and secretary-treasurer of the Bruno Cooperative Credit Association. When he moved

from Butler County to Crete, Saline County, in 1944, he worked for a short time for The Crete Mills. Later he was associated with the City National Bank of Crete and also the Saline Bank in Western.

But Brt was deep in his heart an ardent musician. In every town where he lived, Edward C. Brt played cornet for local bands, in both Butler and Saline counties

A man of splendid memory, he was especially interested in the history of Czech musicians and bands and made many contributions of Czech artifacts to the Nebraska State Historical Society Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska. It was he who donated a rare exhibit, the bagpipe played by his grandfather Bartolomej Brt, to the Society Museum.

During the time I worked with the Nebraska Historical Society Museum in Lincoln, Mr. Brt often visited me there and told me many interesting stories about Czech musicians and bands in Saline County.

Mr. Edward C. Brt, Crete's oldest resident at nearly 96 years old, and a former resident of Abie and Bruno communities, died on February 26, 1978 in the Crete Hospital.

He was survived by a son Blaine of Crete, a daughter, Mrs. James Denney of Omaha, and two brothers. Preceding him in death were his wife and two daughters, Genevieve and Carolyn.

(Picture p. 71) A picture of an early Stanley Slepicka Band of Wilber. L. to r: Stanley Slepicka, accordion; Frank Kudlacek, trumpet; Lumir Simecek, drums; Joe Zvonecek, trumpet and bass horn. Picture courtesy of Mrs. Jelinek

MUSIC IN SALINE COUNTY

By Edward C. Brt

For the past twenty-one years since returning to Saline County from Butler County, I have been gathering historical material pertaining to our great state of Nebraska for the coming Centennial in 1967

I have been requested by many musician friends to write and mention something about the musical tradition in Nebraska. All my life I have worked for or with the early pioneers of Saline and Butler counties, with all the different nationalities, but mainly with the Czech pioneers.

I thought it might be interesting to mention the Czech musical tradition in Nebraska. I have claimed Crete as my hometown since 1889, but after being married, my wife and I were absent from Crete for 27 years. This story I am relating in my biography, which I will write in the near future. We spent over a year in Tobias, Nebraska, during World War I, then ten years in Western and about seven years in Omaha.

From my musical experience in all these different places, I can state that you will not find such a musical tradition in any other county or state. Every place I lived in, I either played in a band or orchestra.

I would say that the first outstanding early Czech pioneer musician was Josef Francel, who was called the Vanguard of the Czech pioneers in Nebraska and Saline County. There are many of his descendents in Saline County. The writer was well acquainted with his widow, sons and grandchildren.

Our next outstanding musician was Stepan Jelinek, who was brought to Saline County by his parents at the age of six weeks. The family came from Wisconsin.

The next great musician of Saline County was Frank Nedela. He came from Chicago. Jan Nedela, his father, went to Russia (while they were in the "old country") to make a living with music. Jan Svoboda, Tomas Aron, Jan Chyba and Jan and Frank Nedela Sr., already played together in a band in Chicago. All five of the above emigrated to Saline County and settled in one section south of Crete. They played at the Inauguration of Governor David Butler, Nebraska's first Governor

Frank Nedela Sr., was my instructor in music and also served as the Godfather at my baptism, so I have always held him in the highest esteem. In 1896 he placed me in his band composed of the older musicians that came from the "old country." He had started a juvenile boys band in 1893 or 1894. Ever since I have kept up my interest in music and have tooted a horn.

For more than fifty years Nedela's bands – the old and young--were known far and wide. They played for every occasion requiring music, political rallies, funerals, church, etc. I recollect my special joy was when Nedela gave me a silver dollar for

playing with his old band. At that time it seemed there were not a lot of silver dollars in circulation, so the one he gave me when I was 14, looked like a little saucer.

Now I would say that the next outstanding musical organization that came to Saline County was that of my grandfather Bartolomej Brt, composed of my grandfather, playing a Czech bagpipe, my father on the bass horn and clarinet, and my uncle Vaclav Brt playing a Czech trumpet. The above all came to America in 1874 and located in Saline County. All these have their instruments preserved, and I have reason to believe that my grandfather's Czech bagpipe is the only one in America. It is still in good shape and could be made to play if the person could be found to play it. Twelve or more years ago, it was presented to our State Historical Society in Lincoln. At its dedication and since that time, I am informed they have never received any other kind of bagpipe, Czech or Scotch.

I might add that the "Brt Trio," after coming to America, played for our First Saline County Czechs at the Frank Jelinek place. They received a live cow for their services. (This was not bad pay in the pioneer days). The Nedela Brass Band with whom my father, Frank Brt Sr., later played bass horn, was paid \$8.00 when they would go to Lincoln to play. Their driver, if he was one of the musicians, also, got \$8.00 more.

Twenty years ago one of the county pioneers, namely J. Kotas, wrote to me from Denton, Montana, stating that the "Brt Trio" played for his wedding, which he celebrated with two other relatives, all at the same time and place. They danced to the sweet strains of the "dudy" (the Czech name for bagpipe) at this "marathon" wedding, dancing all day, all night, and part of the next day.

The next outstanding musical organization which was a credit to Saline County was the Medical Musical Organization of Crete led by Lumir Havlicek.

There were many more bands, musical organizations and orchestras in Saline County and throughout the state. I have been furnished pictures of some that were donated to me for historical purposes. I would like to mention these here but will present them later.

I must also mention that our neighboring city Wilber also had many musical organizations. I have many pictures of them. Especially I wish to mention Wilber's most famous Czech musician Tomas Pasek and his different bands. Pasek was another of Saline County's famous band leaders.

In conclusion, I will say there is nothing in any state that can compare with the musical tradition of Saline County and the state of Nebraska.



This is a picture of the four Kubert Brothers when they lived on a farm at DeWitt and later on a farm near Crete. From l. to r: Lambert played alto and drums; Ervin played saxophone and vBaritone; Fred played piano accordion and trumpet; Edward Played tuba and saxophone.

Photo courtesy of L. Kubert, Dorchester, Ne.

FRANK ANYZ JR. – A Publisher, Composer, Teacher



Frank Anyz, Jr. was born on July 6, 1885. When he started school, his parents decided on a musical career for him and arranged with a professor to give him violin lessons. Young Frank devoted himself studiously to the violin, the instrument of his choice. At the age of 14 he was admitted to the Austro-Hungarian Army School of Music where he kept up his lessons on the violin and, in addition, took lessons on various band and orchestra instruments.

On graduation from the Army School he was assigned to the Army regimental band stationed at Budapest, Hungary. He spent four years with the Army Band and then came to the United States with his parents and settled in Wilber, Nebraska.

At first he was employed as a reporter and later as publisher of the Czech weekly newspaper, "Wilbersky Listy." Later he became editor of "The Saline County Democrat." He still remained greatly interested in music and gave lessons to many young boys on various musical instruments. Among his youngest students were Louis Kusy, violin, Otto Jelinek, violin and Bernard Klasek, violin and drums.

He played in various bands and orchestras and for several years was the director of the Wilber Commercial Club Band.

However, when his health began to fail, he had to give up these activities and also his job with the Wilber State Bank he held for a number of years. After spending a month in a hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska, he went to Boulder, Colorado where he passed away on December 28, 1920.

He arranged for the piano a composition entitled "From the Bohemian Hills" (Z ceskych hor), published in sheet music form. Another arrangement "Memories" (Vzpominky) remained unfinished and was never published.

Photo of Frank Anyz Jr. (p. 76) taken about 1913 and sent by
Courtesy of Bernard J. Klasek

LUMIR C. HAVLICEK – MUSICIAN, COMPOSER, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Lumir C. Havlicek, musician, composer and director of music was born August 11, 1895 in Crete, Nebraska and died March 16, 1969.

His musical education began in the Crete School and Doane College. He received a Bachelor of Music Degree from the Vandercook School of Music in Chicago, a Bachelor Degree of Music in Education and a Master Degree of Music in Education from the University of Nebraska. He was a Charter Member of the National Band Association and a life member of the Nebraska Music Educational Association



Stamford, Nebraska was his first teaching assignment, consisting of all vocal and instrumental music in the school from 1941-1942. Gothenburg was his next position as instrumental instructor. He began his teaching career in the Crete Schools in 1943 where he taught for 17 years. During his term as band director he also served as vocal instructor for two years. Under his direction the chorus and vocal groups presented two operettas, the first one "Chonita, a Gypsy Romance" at the Sokol Hall in 1946. The next year, the operetta "Jeannie" was given with

53 in the cast and chorus. Other schools where he served as band instructor were Newcastle, Milligan, Stromsburg, Western, Dorchester, Alexandria, Tobias and Peru State College.

During the years he spent in Crete he also directed the American Legion Juvenile Band and the Crete Municipal Band. In 1944-1945 he was director of the Navy Band

when it was stationed at Doane College. He was also director of the 110th Medical Regiment Band for nine years. Concerts were given weekly in the city park

While in the Army in World War I, he was a member of the 355th Infantry Band of the 89th Division, seeing active service in the Muse-Argon and St. Micheal Drive. Before going overseas the band made a tour of Nebraska towns, Crete included.

Mr. Havlicek was warrant officer and director of the 110th Medical Regiment Band, the first National Guard band west of the Mississippi River. He served in that capacity for nine years. When the band was first organized in 1927 in Crete, Doane Music Professor W. H. Hupford was the Director and soon after recommended Mr. Havlicek for the position. The membership consisted mostly of Crete musicians. They gave many concerts in Crete and surrounding towns and were much in demand as a fine musical organization. During August of each year, the entire band spent two weeks at the National Guard encampment in Ashland, Nebraska.

Dr. David Hilton of Lincoln was influential in locating the 110th Medical Regiment Band in Crete. Mr. Havlicek was also a composer of many band selections and arrangements. His first published number was a march for full band entitled "On the Big Blue," dedicated to the city of Crete. Among other publications are "Sunset Trail," "Sky Pilot," "Pride of the Prairie," "American Hymns," "Scherzo for Band," "Three Pals," a trumpet trio "Trumpeters Polka," "Two Canaries," a flute duet with piano accompaniment, and "Woodwind Caprice."

In 1923, when Mrs. B. G. Miller promoted the planting of the First Living Christmas Tree, she requested that Mr. Havlicek compose some music for that occasion. He arranged, but did not compose, several Christmas carols and hymns for full band which were printed as "The Living Christmas Spirit," the tree to be a symbol of lasting peace.

Besides his compositions for band he also composed, and had published, four books of piano marches for the Order of the Eastern Star. He was a past patron of the Order and organist at one time. Thousands of his piano marches have been sold and are still in demand.

Mr. Havlicek was also piano accompanist for various choral groups, including the Men's Glee Club of Doane College in 1923-1924, and he played violin in Doane Symphony concerts and trumpet with the Doane Crete Choral Society.

For many years he was the piano accompanist for the Cretonians, a Crete men's choral group under the direction of Professor Geo H. Aller. The Cretonians earned the title of "Ambassadors of Song" and were presented with an Award of Merit by the Music War Council of America.

He was a Past Master of the Crete Masonic Lodge, High Priest in the Royal Arch and belonged to the Scottish Rite in Lincoln.

As a member of the Methodist Church since 1915 he served there as organist for 17 years.

He had three sons and a daughter, all of whom are associated with music in various ways. His son Gerald is a salesman for several music companies; Byron, a band instructor; Dr. Larry, who has a Master Degree in Music, is now professor of education at Kansas University. His daughter Alice is a teacher in Casper, Wyoming. In 1958, when Larry returned from service overseas in the U. S. Army, Mr. Havlicek was teaching band at Crete High School, Byron was the band instructor at Nebraska Wesleyan University

and Larry directed the Doane College Band, while the oldest son Gerald was out selling instruments.

By Mrs. Lumir Havlicek

THE CZECH BANDMASTER OF THE SIOUX

John F. Lenger, a Czech immigrant with a very colorful life, was born in Tabor, South Bohemia, Czechoslovakia in 1849. He started his musical career at the age of six.

His musical studies were at the conservatory in Prague, Bohemia. At the age of fourteen he enlisted in the Austrian army as a musician. (At that time Bohemia and Moravia were part of the Austrian Empire).

The future life of this musically gifted man had a very interesting continuation.

In 1869 John immigrated to the United States and his first stop was Baltimore, Maryland. From there he moved to Chicago, Illinois but not for too long. The American West was too tempting for him. His next stop was Yankton, South Dakota where his parents lived. There the young "professor" of music organized the Yankton City Band. There Lenger also met his future wife.

This southeast corner of South Dakota and northeast territory of Nebraska were in the north stream of the immigration settlements of the Czechs who came mostly from Chicago, Illinois.

In 1879 Lenger and his wife moved to the newly established village of Niobrara in Knox County, Nebraska, and there they spent much of their lives. As late as 1858 Niobrara was the territory of a Ponca Indian village.

In Niobrara, Lenger started as a music teacher and bandleader. In 1882 he organized the Niobrara Helicon Band with forty members. In the same year Lenger organized a "parlor orchestra," a special organization to entertain immigrants when they came to Niobrara without money.



“Lenger was a member of the local (Niobrara) Masonic Lodge and attained the 32nd degree in this order, a fact which he proudly announced on his personal letterhead. A copy of the letterhead given to the author (James H. Howard) by his niece Mildred Lenger (still living in Niobrara) has an engraving of a handsome man with a full black beard and the caption J. F. Lenger, 32nd Band Master, Niobrara, Nebraska.” (From the article by James H. Howard: Nebraska History, summer edition 1972).

In Niobrara, John F. Lenger was very active organizing musical bands in eastern Nebraska and southern South Dakota, including municipal bands in Verdel, Lynch, Winetoon, Orchard, Page, Royal and Foster, in Nebraska, and Gregory in South Dakota. He had a very large and wide plan that every town should have a band.

But his most historically famous band was organized in 1884 among the Santee Sioux on the Niobrara Reservation. He is probably the only Czech who did this with the Indians.

A group of Santee leaders visited J. F. Lenger, the music man, asking if he would be willing to teach their young men music, and thus this famous Santee Sioux Band, entirely composed of Indians was formed, which was a success from the beginning.

When Lenger started to teach music to his young Indian boys he had some problems with the Sioux language.

“At first he worked through an interpreter, but soon mastered the Sioux language. He found it necessary to work out a plan of explaining musical terms by signs in order to help those native Americans to grasp the idea of musical phenomena.

“The Indian youth in school is easily taught music, but it was a different matter to undertake training a band of thirty-seven braves, who could not speak English,” he said. (Norfolk News, Nebraska, January 2, 1929).

In 1885 the agent for the Santee, Flandreau and Ponca Agencies wrote, “During the last winter, a few of the Santees concluded to start a brass band. Some assistance was rendered and about \$200.00 was expended for instruments. The band was started with 17 members. They now play very nicely. They received \$65.00 for playing at Niobrara, Nebraska on the 4th of July. The Indians take quite an interest in music and can learn very readily.” (Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1885)

The Niobrara engagement was among the first public appearances of the Santee Sioux Band. The band soon became known throughout the area and was invited to play for any official or private program.

“The body of handsome Indian youth in their bright uniforms, instruments polished until they sparkled, was at once a sensation. Even more striking was their leader, Professor Lenger, attired in a beaded buckskin chief’s costume made for him by the Santee women, his long black beard whipped by the breeze. Great events for the Santee Sioux Band were their appearances at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 and the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha in 1898. Perhaps the greatest occasion for Lenger and the band, however, was a special command performance for President Benjamin Harrison.”

John F. Lenger
Music Man Among the Santee
By James H. Howard

John F. Lenger spent the later years of his life in Gregory, South Dakota. On January 2, 1929 the Norfolk News featured the story that Lenger was still bandmaster of two bands at eighty-one years of age:

“He takes pupils on any or all instruments. From early morning until late at night a person passing his house can hear the sweet strains of music. He is either helping one of his many pupils over a difficult passage or playing for his own pleasure.

“Our very special and colorful Czech musician, teacher and bandmaster John F. Lenger died at the age of 92.

“Lenger did have really deep Czech roots. His paternal grandfather, a Frenchman, had died at the age of 136, his maternal grandmother lived to the age of 110, mother lived to 95 and his father lived to 99.

(Norfolk News)

Lenger’s favorite composition “Colonel Bogey March” was used in the movie “Bridge on the River Kwai,” and was played at his funeral on March 29, 1941 by the Niobrara High School Band.

NOTES

James H. Howard: John F. Lenger:
“Music Man Among the Santee”:
Nebraska History, a quarterly journal
Published by Nebraska State Historical
Society, Summer 1972

Norfolk News – Norfolk, Nebraska

Reports of the Commissioner of
Indian Affairs, 1885

A niece of the Czech bandmaster John F. Lenger, Mrs. Mildred Lenger of Niobrara, Nebraska, a very kind lady of cooperation, sent me not only some photos of her uncle from the family album but also this information: “My uncle married a Czech girl named Mary Pisek. They didn’t have children of their own but they were like parents to several orphaned nephews and a niece.

“If you need more information in that area I might be able to find out some but I doubt it would be material pertinent to my uncle’s musical career. Although Uncle John is known for the Santee Sioux Indian Band, he also played with many Bohemian musicians in bands, concert work and directed so many Czech groups and bands with Czech players. I have another picture that could be better for he history in your book and I will send it to you. To me, it is more impressive than the picture I have already sent you.”

BIOGRAPHY OF FRANK HLADKY
Born in Crete, Nebraska, January 31, 1898



Frank Hladky, Professor of Violin at Oklahoma State University-Photo taken in January 1956

Frank Hladky, son of Frank and Anna Hladky of Crete, Nebraska, started violin lessons at an early age with James Shebl and continued his instruction for ten years with Joseph Franta of Crete, who was a pupil of Edward Herman, a New York City violin virtuoso.

Later he studied at the Bush Conservatory in Chicago with Richard Czerwonky. Still later he studied violin with Richard Burgin at the New

England Conservatory and played viola as well as violin in chamber music there under Joseph Adamovski.

In 1920 Frank Hladky accepted a position with Oklahoma A & M College, now known as Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. He was head of the Department of Violin and String instruction, taught many music courses such as conducting and chamber music, and was conductor of the University Symphony Orchestra during his tenure at Oklahoma State University. He retired from the University in 1963 with a special retirement performance by the Oklahoma City Symphony with his son Robert Hladky performing a cello concerto and Frank conducting. During his 43 years of teaching he played in faculty trios and quartets, and took his university symphony orchestra on tour many times. He also played violin in the Oklahoma City symphony for six years.

His contributions to the musical life of our country have been mainly to teach and encourage young students by coaching and teaching and then allowing them to perform as soloists with the university orchestra. Many of his former students are now playing in professional orchestras and chamber music groups and are teaching in universities and high schools

In 1922 Frank Hladky married Keyte Madden of Ardmore, Oklahoma, who was, at the time of their marriage, a professor at Oklahoma State University. They had three children: Frank, Jr., is a psychiatrist, plays the violin, is married and has two children and a grandson. He is currently living in New Mexico after being head of the Tulsa Psychiatric Clinic for 16 years. Their second son, James Robert, has a doctorate in performing arts from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and is presently professor of cello and head of graduate studies in music at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. He performs a lot as a cello soloist and in chamber music at the university. He is married and has three children.

The Hladkys' third child is their daughter Markeyta, who is a pianist and piano teacher. She has a masters degree in piano from the University of Oklahoma. She, like her brother Robert, does a lot of performing and accompanying. She is married and has three children and lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Kayte and Frank Hladky traveled extensively after retirement and then settled in Florida where they lived for eight years on Ann Maria Island, Florida

While there they made many friends and Frank Hladky played in two string quartets every week with fellow musicians. They are presently residing with their daughter, Markeyta Morey and her family, at 5853 S. Irvington, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Markeyta Hladky Morey



Mr. Frank and Mrs. Keyte
Hladky 50th wedding
anniversary 1972

Jeste jsou pametníci toho, kdy po naší vlasti
Se rozlehaly písně od rána do večera. Matka
Uspávala zpěvem dítě, mládež si zpívala při
Hrách. Písníku si notil pasáček, když se ba-
Tolil za husami. Také dívka na pastvě si ve-
Sele prozpěvovala. Člověk si písní oslazo-
Val každou práci. A ta starenka, když překlá-
Dala věci ve své starodávne thruhlici, zpíva-
La si starou písníku.-



MARY ELIZABETH ARON SHEBL

From grandma's stories by Mary Aron Shebl (1871-1962) who was born in Saline County on her father's homestead on the bank of the Blue River south of Crete, Nebraska. She wrote these accounts for her great grandson (4) who represents the 6th generation of Nebraskans living in the state:

Mary Elizabeth Aron Shebl was the daughter of Thomas Aron of Podebrady, Bohemia, a Saline County pioneer and homesteader. She was a proud Czech pioneer who instilled in all of us the pride of our Czech heritage and American opportunities. She could read and write in both languages and she taught her only child, Elsie Shebl Dredla (Mrs. Thomas J. Dredla Sr. – 1892-1945) and her granddaughter, Marion Dredla Moravec (Mrs. Daniel F. Moravec Sr.) to do so also. Mary Aron came from a musical family both from her father's side and her mother's side and married Joseph George Shebl who also was musical. Her daughter, Elsie Shebl Dredla, was a music major in college and taught piano in Crete before her marriage.

Mary Aron Shebl says of her father: "His trade in Cechy was that of a bricklayer and stone mason, and as an extra source of revenue, he played his cornet. Though he was self-taught, he was adept at transposing for various other instruments in the brass band. He had a very keen ear for music. He was one of eight children of a family with meager possessions and an uncertain future in the old country. He emigrated to the promised land of America. He landed in Baltimore in the early part of the year 1867. He came with all of his earthly possessions in a little bundle and his faithful cornet to make a living and establish a home and family. He had no opportunity to work at this trade in Baltimore as it was mainly a seaport where ships were loaded and unloaded of lumber cargo. He decided to go on to Chicago, a rising metropolis where many Bohemians were starting a new history in the Czech tradition. It is there he met and married my mother, Elizabeth Nedela."

"The Nedela family was also very talented in music but poor. They could not furnish the means for education for all the children in Bohemia so only the eldest child, a son Vaclav, was favored to excel in the musical talent that they all had. As with so many people in Europe in that day his fame was of short duration because of the disease of tuberculosis. He had made his debut as tenor soloist in the National Opera House of Prague. My mother was 14 years old when she heard him sing there. The death of this brilliant brother at the height of his career determined the fate of the family to sail for America to save at least three of the children.

"Thomas Aron joined with his brother-in-law Frank Nedela to form the first brass band in Nebraska which played for the inauguration of Governor Butler. He was responsible for organizing the first Czech Society called the 'Ctenarsky Spolek' to propagate the use of the Czech language. He made sure to get all the literature available at that time and all of us children were able to train ourselves in the use of the Czech language,"

On the subject of Crete and celebrations:

"I remember hearing that there were just a couple of buildings in Crete the first fourth of July when my parents came in 1867

"I don't remember that because I was born in 1871 and Crete was organized in 1870. But the first fourth of July that they celebrated, they did so at what they used to call Blue River City and so they all celebrated with all the other nationalities. My father with Frank Nedela provided the music with their brass band—the first in the state of Nebraska."

Other occasions; Barn raisings and weddings:

"The first schoolhouse was a gathering place where the settlers used to take part in dramatic plays in education and my father organized the 'Reading Circle.' The members gathered together so that they might improve their education, their use of the new language and to learn the customs of the new land. The band was the center of many of the social gatherings. The whole family would go to the barn dances and weddings. The little ones played until they fell asleep. When it was late and time to go home, all the sleeping children would be gathered up and put in the wagon and off the family went for home."

About her husband Joseph George Shebl:

"I came from a musical family and I married Joseph Shebl (Mseno) on May 28, 1888, and he too was musical. He came directly to Nebraska, as his family knew the Nedela family in Bohemia. He lived with the Aron – Nedela families the first winter

before he established himself as a wagonmaker and cabinet builder. He made friends with the Aron boys and soon became involved in musical activities. He played the violin and trumpet. He became a member of the first brass band along with all the relatives. We had one child, a daughter Elsie Shebl Dredla who was an accomplished pianist. Mr. Shebl passed away on April 3, 1921. His sister Anna married C. W. Havlicek whose son Lumir taught music in the Crete Public Schools and organized bands and music for succeeding generations of American-Czechs to perform in contests with great success. Lumir's son is presently involved with music and the music field.

Mrs. Daniel F. Moravec

(Marion Dredla Moravec) Lincoln, Nebraska

FRANTISEK ALOIS DRDLA – Violinist and Composer

Frantisek Alois Drdla was a recognized Czech composer and violinist in Czechoslovakia. He was born November 28, 1868 in Zdar on the Sazava and died November 3, 1944 in Bad Gastein, Austria. He was a student of music under the director Antonin Hromadka, the elder. He was associated with the Prague conservatory in the years 1880-1882. There he studied with Bennewitz and Josef Foerstr.

He continued his studies at the Vienna Conservatory (1882-1888) studying violin with J. Helmersberger, the younger, and composition with Fr. Frenn and A. Brueckner. At this time his father moved the family from Zdar, Moravia to Vienna.

He was a violinist at the Vienna Court Opera from 1890-1893. He was the director of the orchestra and the concertmaster in the theatre in Vienna from 1894 to 1899. Solos were written for him by Johann Strauss, the younger, and C. Millocker. He acquired a reputation as a violinist of refined technique and capacity for expression. He performed in festivals in Bayreuth and performed in concerts in Europe in the years 1899 to 1905 and in America from 1923 to 1925. He performed for President Coolidge at the White House.

In 1927, the president of Austria conferred the title of professor on him and Drdla devoted himself mainly to composing and private instruction. He wrote over 300 compositions and was best remembered for his popular "Serenade A," "Souvenir," "Vision" and "Intermezzo." The influence and sponsorship of his friend Jan Kubelik as well as Vaclav Prihoda and Oskar Nedbal is reflected in his expressive national themes.



Frantisek Drdla

Frantisek Drdla was very proud of his Czech origin. He had a feeling for his Czech nationality. He often appeared at Czech concerts in Vienna and various social gatherings, especially the Slavic Beseda and the Choral Group Slovan (1891, 1898, 1908, 1910) and even after the revolutionary change in 1918. He loved to return to his native Zdar on the Sazava where he held concerts in 1900 and 1922. He last visited his native town in 1941 and 1943.

The compositions of F. Drdla distinguish themselves by technical maturity especially with a melodic desire to please and with a live sense of sound. His compositions were

written for the piano and violin. His "Serenade A" gained world renown thanks to Jan Kubelik and his violin. This serenade was dedicated to Jan Kubelik and was especially popular after the Czechoslovakian Republic was established 1918 after World War I and on into World War II. As late as 1941 his work was performed in the German theatre. His "Goddess of Love" was broadcast in Czechoslovakia on November 25, 1944.

Many of his momentos are in the possession of the County Museum in Zdar. Yehudi Menuhin and Fritz Krisler both recorded Drdla's work here in this country.

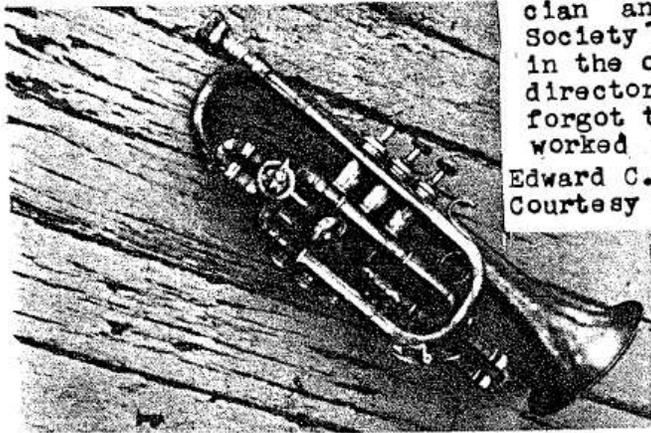
Drdla's American relatives settled in Saline County. Thomas Drdla, his cousin, came to this country in 1880. The family lived in Crete, Nebraska. An Irish postmaster felt the original name had too many consonants and inserted an E into the original name. "Dredla" became a banking and legal business name for Thomas Drdla's son, Anton who became mayor of Crete and was associated with the Crete State Bank. It was also a public name for Anton's son, Thomas J. Dredla Sr. who was both City and County Attorney,

and his son, Thomas J. Dredla Jr. also was an attorney in public life. As a result, the second spelling remained. Family members who settled in Omaha retained the original spelling.

Thomas J. Dredla Sr. took his family to Europe many times. On one of the visits in 1934 he met and visited with Franz Drdla in Vienna where he and his sister lived.

Mrs. Daniel F. Moravec (Marion Dredla Moravec)

Lincoln, Nebraska



A souvenir to revive my many reminiscences. Edward C. Brt donated this cornet to the Historical Society Lincoln, Nebraska.

Anytime, when this Czech musician and historian visited the Society's building, after his stop in the office of Marvin F. Kivett, director of the Society, he never forgot to visit me, also, when I worked there.

Edward C. Brt Collection
Courtesy of Mrs. James (Brt) Denney

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Courtesy of Mrs. James (Brt) Denney

REVEREND DR. EDWARD J. CHAPURAN

By Frank J. Chapuran, Omaha

Reverend Edward Chapuran (Cepuran) was born in Omaha, Nebraska on January 30, 1898. He was ordained a priest July 1, 1922. He was sent to St. Wenceslas Church in Dodge, Nebraska, and was recalled to St. Wenceslas Church in Omaha on January 1923 as an assistant to Msgr. Jan Vranek.

He was National Chaplain of the Catholic Sokol movement, which was always known as good in heart, clean and strong in loyalty, faith and physique. To him was given the responsibility of placing the Czech language as a credited language in the universities of America.

This he has accomplished. He also founded the Czech Department at Creighton University and the first Czech college girls' club in America at Mt. Saint Mary's College in Omaha. In all matters pertaining to Czech-Americans in America, he was always called upon for aid on different occasions whether it be of a general scope in his position as State Chaplain of the National Alliance of Czech-American Catholics, or conventions or meetings of fraternal unions.



Among the many organizations and clubs he was interested in, he helped the young people of the parish, fond of their mother tongue, organize themselves into a cultural, musical and dramatic club. The club was named the Smetana Club after the famous Czech composer, Bedrich Smetana.

Father Chapuran organized the Saint Wenceslas Band August 10, 1931 to duly represent the Nebraska Czechs. The band traveled throughout Nebraska and also to South Dakota playing concerts featuring Czech music. He composed many band numbers, one of which was "The Deal March" played in honor of President Franklin D. Roosevelt over network radio in 1936.

The band was invited to participate and play in the celebration of Czech Day at the World's Fair in Chicago, where they won the National Class A Amateur Contest.

To counteract the evil influence that jazz music brought about, Father Chap with the assistance of the Smetana Club developed the Smetana Orchestra playing traditional folk music of the Czechs. On February 5, 1928 this orchestra sponsored an all-Czech dance for young people. From then on Czech music became popular throughout the

nation. The Smetana Orchestra traveled over 200,000 miles of musical tours as far as Texas featuring Czech dance music.

The band gave several weekly broadcasts over Station WZAW. On July 10, 1936 the Saint Wenceslas Band played in San Antonio, Texas for the National Sokol Tournament. During the Czech crisis when Hitler was encroaching on Czechoslovakia, the Saint Wenceslas Band, directed by Father Chapuran, raised considerable amounts of money by concerts, etc., and sent it to the Czech refugees banished from the Sudetenland. Father Chapuran died in Omaha April 11, 1952 (Good Friday).

The author of this article, Mr. Frank J. Chapuran of Omaha, a nephew of Father Chapuran, sent me this information: "The information given you was compiled from the History of Saint Wenceslas Bohemian (Czech) Catholic Church written by Rev. Edward Chapuran, Pastor. This information was compiled in case I needed it when I was asked to accept a plaque placing the name of Father Chapuran into the Sokol Polka Hall of Fame at 13th & Martha Sts. Sokol Hall, in recognition for contributions and the perpetuation of polka music for dancing and the listening public. This award was made on October 21, 1973."

HOWARD – BUFFALO COUNTIES

Many small Czech communities over the state of Nebraska used the talents of Czech-Americans. Many also were first, second and third generation Americans at the turn of the century

The Howard County community of St. Paul had Czech immigrants who came by way of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Elba too had Czech immigrants and the cemetery at Warsaw has very early records of the pioneers of this county who are buried there. Although no organized club or group of Czech immigrants can be identified per se, many fine Czech musicians added to the community musical life. Musical groups, bands, choirs and study clubs were held at various times in the late 1800's and early 1900's. For example, Emma Bartle Moravec of St. Paul (1884-1949) daughter of pioneer Howard County merchants Frank (1856-1949) and Veronica (1859-1927), attended Nebraska Wesleyan University and taught music for 40 years in this small community. She represents hundreds of other men and women who gave of their time and talents through children's private lessons and also through their church. Mrs. (Louis) Moravec was her church's organist for 40 years.

Choral groups were also a part of these small communities when transportation was minimal and entertainment was centered around home, school and church. Some church choirs had members of other churches help them with their musical efforts. In the early pioneer days, not all denominations of churches could be found in small villages. Upon close examination one would find a good percentage of school bands in many small towns of Czech descent.

Ravenna, Nebraska, in Buffalo County, was another such community. Here too was a group of Czech immigrants. In addition to musical talents, this community had a Sokol organization, and the community was very supportive of the chapter and the men

MY FATHER, ALBERT ELIAS, AND HIS MUSICAL FAMILY

My father, Albert Elias, became a member of the American Federation of Musicians Union in its beginning in 1897. He became identified with professional musical affairs in Omaha in 1892 and earned a high reputation as a trumpet player in the good old days.

My brother, Frank, was a drummer who played drums in the pit orchestra at the Orpheum Theater during the days of vaudeville and musical road shows. He organized the Shrine Band in 1918 and was the leader of the band for several years. He was a past president of the Omaha Musicians Association.

Another brother, Fred, was a former member of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra. He was a trumpeter and wrote three books called, "Secrets of the Trumpet," "The Elias Buzz System," and the "Emboucher Developer," in which he described his system of playing every scale on a trumpet without touching the valves. He won a gold trumpet from a musical instrument company in 1931 in recognition of the unusual playing method. (I have paper clippings on these articles.) Frank was four and Fred was two years old when they came to Omaha. Both boys were born in Czechoslovakia.

My father and brothers would ask me quite often to join them in playing in the orchestra. I played the piano with them for dances that were held in the various dance halls that were in the Czech communities in Omaha. Czech music was important to us as we grew up in our family home and of course the polkas were always popular with us.

My daughters, Geraldine and Patricia, both inherited the love of music. Both played the piano, and Patricia (often called "Pat") also played the flute in the school band. She taught herself to play the organ. "Pat" is the wife of former Governor and now U.S. Senator Jim Exon. While living in the governor's mansion, she spent many leisure hours playing Czech music on the organ.

The above written by Anna Elias Pros, Omaha, mother of Mrs. Patricia Exon.

PATRICIA EXON

The Czechs of Nebraska may be very proud that the wife of former Nebraska Governor and now U.S. Senator J.J. Exon is of Czech nationality. And we can be sure of the fact that she is very proud of her origin too. Pat's ethnic heritage shows through clearly publicly, not only in her interviews, but also in her frequent visits to Czech festivals and Sokol exhibitions. Her desire to perfect her family's native tongue was so strong that she attended the evening Czech class at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

On January 7, 1971, during the Governor's Inauguration Ball of her newly elected husband, Patricia proved her love for their Czech origin and heritage by requesting that a dancing group of Czech children from Dwight, under the direction of Mrs. Policka, perform Czech folk dances during the celebration.

Born November 6, 1921, under the sign of Scorpio, the Omaha born native said she inherited some of the Scorpio musical interest and talent. She plays the flute, piano and organ. She has composed musical scores and lyrics for "Homesteader" presented on a Lincoln television station during the Nebraska Centennial celebration in 1967, as well as having participated in the Omaha Symphony in the past. Second only to her enthusiasm for music, bowling, and writing, comes the art of cooking, deeply influenced by the Czech old kitchen and recipes, mostly roast pork, dumplings, sauerkraut and kolace.

FRANK KUNC JR. --- WILBER MUSICIAN



Czech musician Frank Kunc Jr. (in front) and some of his band members: (Left to right): Leon Gerner, Adolf Sobotka, Ed Burda, Ed Spinar, Irvin Karpisek, Anton Kupka and Warren Ripa.

Frank Kunc Jr. was born May 10, 1891 to a family of musicians making him the third melodious generation that we know of. His father played the violin and alto and his grandfather played the cornet. Many times he would walk 17 miles to Milligan to play for a dance. For three dollars they would start at eight and sometimes see the sun came up while they were still playing.

Mr. Kunc started playing as a young lad, learning his music from his father. He played with different groups and at the age of 21 in 1912 he started his own band. The members of this group were Charlie Drda, Adolf Hoffman, Lou Hoffman, Joe Rehor and Joe Stich. As time went on and his band members married and moved away, he added different members to his group.

Through the years he taught many, many students to play different band instruments. Included as his students were the Broz brothers, Robert, Victor and Milo, and also Robert and Ludvik Vosika, and later, in 1924, all these students became members of his band. As a band they played for all occasions including dance jobs, barn dances, platform dances, county fairs, parades, dedications of building and house parties. Some of the dance halls in the vicinity were Klasel, Mir, Columbus, Brush Creek, Tabor and Saline Center, all being Z.C.B.J. Halls, plus the Wilber and Milligan Sokol Halls. His band also played for Memorial Day at the Pleasant Hill and Norfolk Cemeteries and at funerals. His father accompanied him on Memorial Days and at funerals as long as his health permitted him. In the 1920's many times it was the custom to have his band play at funerals.



Kunc's original band - 1912

Some of the band members:

Back row: Joe Stich, Frank Kunc Jr., Lew Hoffman

Front row: Joe Rehor, Adolph Hoffman, Charlie Drda

In the 1920's Mr. Kunc added an accordion to his group played by Fred Sasek and changed his band to an orchestra. The orchestra played for dances which took them to spots in Nebraska and Kansas, within a 100 mile radius of home. In 1931 they drove to play at Radio station KMMJ, which was located in Clay Center NE . For two winters they traveled to York to broadcast over a radio station there. Their highest honor, however, was representing the state at a Des Moines, Iowa farm convention in 1937. Among the thousands applauding the Nebraskans was Vice President Alben Barkley.



Picture Kunc's Band -- Back row: Milo Broz, Louis Hoffman, Mr. Karpisek, Laddie Vosika
 Front row: Bernard J. Klasek, Robert Broz, Frank Kunc, Robert Vosika.
 Picture taken May 30, 1929. Photo courtesy of Bernard Klasek of Wilber, NE

Some of the other members of the orchestra, beside the ones named earlier, included: Norman Blaha, Albion Broz, Bernard Broz, Ed Burda, Jim Dvorak, Lumir Freeouf, Leon Gerner, the Horak brothers, Irvin Javorsky, Irvin Karpisek, John Karpisek, Lambert Karpisek, Leonard Kassik, Bernard Klasek, Frank Kubert, Anton Kupka, Warren Ripa, Victpr Maryska, Adolph Sobotka, Eddie Spinar, Lumir and Charles Tachovsky, Larry Vilda and Mr. Kunc's son Robert. Mr. Kunc was a dedicated farmer, beside being a great musician. His love for music never ended. In later years after he could not play the trumpet as well, he played the drum. As long as his health permitted, he and his group marched in all the Wilber Czech Days parades. For these occasions he asked other area musicians to accompany his group. They played Bohemian music, Czech polkas and waltzes, and in the early days, German music also.

He played many instruments but his main loves were the trumpet and the violin. He still loved to bring out his violin and play for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In

fact, he was still planning an evening of playing with Fred Horak on the concertina just before he became ill.



Early Day Band, leading the procession to the Pleasant Hill Cemetery near Dorchester for Memorial Day Service included the young Frank Kunc, Jr. and his father, Frank Kunc Sr. Year of picture unknown.



Kunc's band taken in 1937:
Back row: Ludvik Vosika, Robert Vosika, Frank Kunc, Sr., Robert Horak and Otto Horak
Front row: Frank Kubert, Frank Kunc Jr., Robert Broz and John Karpisek



Wilber aCzech musicians 1978
Left to right: Josef Hojer, Sobotka, Kelly Adolf Homolka, Cleo Miller, Fred Dvorak, Sr.

In addition to his orchestra, Fred Horak played the concertina, Victor Broz played drums and Mr. Kunc played the violin. The group played for square dances around the area. A Czech-inscribed trumpet over a century old was among Mr. Kunc's most choice keepsakes. It not only reminded him of his grandfather's days with a Chicago band before he came to Saline County in 1882, but of its presence at so many big occasions around the area..Mr. Kunc's band and orchestra was always known as "Kunc's Band."

In 1938 Mr. Kunc was elected dance Mmanager of Saline County's dance hall, Saline Center Hall, and held that office for at least twenty years, hiring all the orchestras and bands during that time.

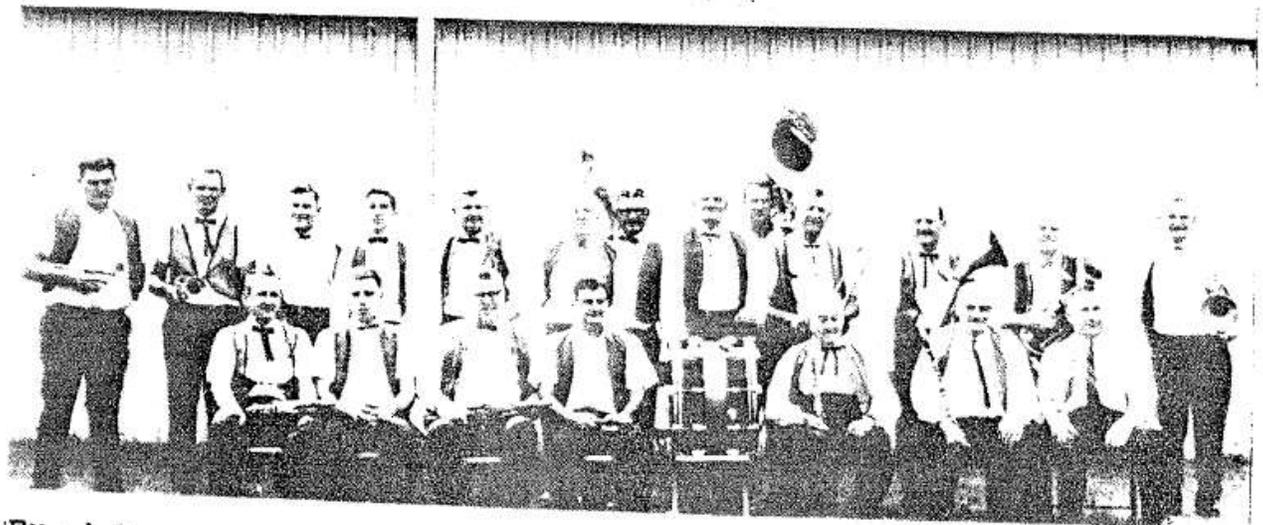
This great musician passed away on November 2, 1978 at the age of 87. He received the Knight of Blanik award for his contribution to Czech heritage.

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I remember, as a boy, that Kunc's Band often played for funerals in my old neighborhood in the middle of Saline County. They also played for Memorial Day at North Fork Cemetery, near Saline County. The thing that I always remember is that they would parade down the road to the cemetery gate playing a fast and lively polka. When they passed beneath the cemetery gate, they would immediately switch to a mournful dirge, and they played that kind of music in the cemetery. As they marched out of the cemetery they would be playing a dirge, and as soon as they passed through the cemetery gate going out, they would again switch to a peppy polka. Strange that such things should stay in your memory.

I also remember a rather touching time in 1964, when Saline Center Hall celebrated its 25th anniversary. There was a big public celebration, and Kunc's band, greatly expanded by a lot of former players and volunteers, played a very fine concert for the occasion. At that time, most of the band members were old, elderly or middle-aged, and most of them had spent 25 happy years with Saline Center. They had a little different tempo and way of playing the Czech music than the dance bands, and it was a very fine concert.

Joe T. Vosoba, Wilber, NE



Frank Kunc, Jr. Band --performed at the dedication of the Saline County Historical Society Building Museum in Dorchester, NE, September 21, 1964 Pictured are from left to right:

Back row: Richard Karpisek, Bernard Broz, Elmer Pomajzl, Chas. Maryska, Robert Broz,

Viktor Maryska, Milo Broz, Frank Kunc Jr. (director), Glen Ripa, Adolf B.Sobotka, Robert Vosika, Bernard J. Klasek, Viktor Broz

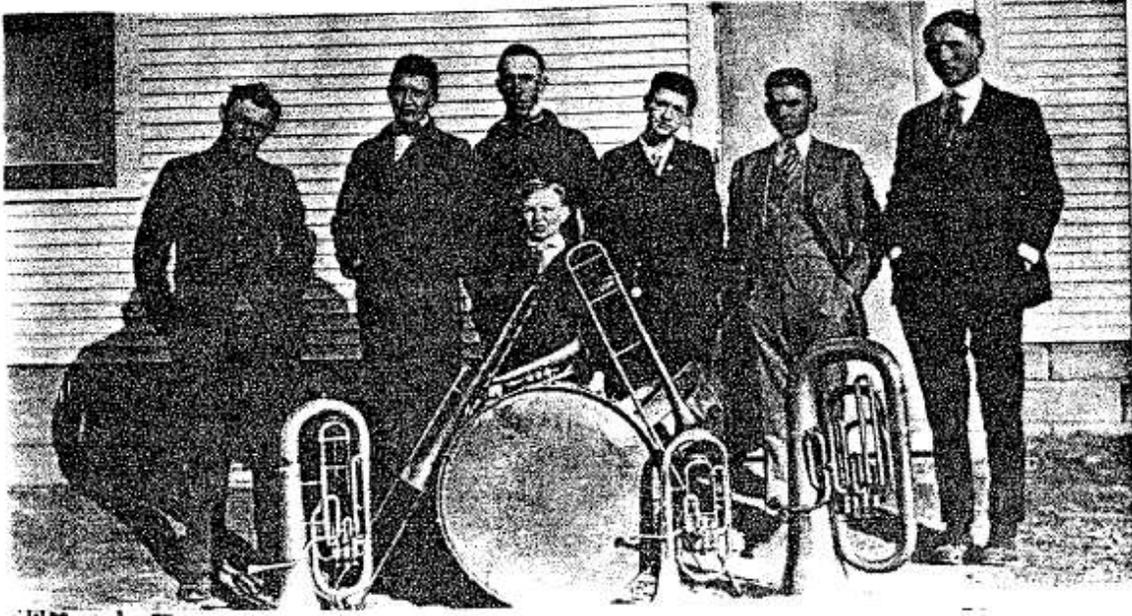
Front row: Warren Ripa, Glen Burda, Norman Blaha, Irvin Karpisek, Anton Kupka, Anton

Cidlik (from Dwight), Ernest Sedlak.

From Robert and Irene Kunc, Wilber:

One of the very first places Mr. Frank Kunc, Jr. played with his band was at the charivari for the Josephine Rehor-Joe Vosoba wedding. Since this was one of his first dances Mr. Kunc was still a little nervous about performing for the wedding dance. Joe Rehor, a Member of the band was a brother of the bride. A dance platform was built at the home of the bride's parents for the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Vosoba were the parents of Joe T. Vosoba of Wilber, NE

Elmer J. Nemecek of Crete, NE played with Frank Kunc's orchestra.



These musicians were all students in the Wilber Public School. All but one graduated from this school from the years 1917 (2), 1918, 1919, and 1923. They organized a band following World War I. The members rehearsed without a director and played largely for their own entertainment. From left to right: Josef Janecek, trombone; Adolf Sobotka trombone; Fank Warta, cornet; Ora Russell, baritone; Josef Sefrna, alto; Vaclav Barta, bass horn; the boy Standing in front, Bernard Klasek, drums.

SRB MUSICAL FAMILY

Josef Srb (1859-1922) and Marie Skala Srb (1863-1921), husband and wife, owned a farm five miles north of Dodge, NE and were truly a musical family. To this union were born four sons: Gilbert Srb, M.D. (1895-1967) bass horn, piano, Dodge NE; Josef J. Srb, M.D. (1888-1957) trombone, Dwight NE; Professor Jerome Srb (1884-1949) violin, baritone horn, UNL graduate College of Agriculture; and Adolph F. Srb, M.D. (1892-1976) trumpet and baton of Omaha, NE. Joining the four brothers were three sisters, Ann, Helen and Ardath. The Srb Band was organized during the early pioneer history of Dodge and was the center of all civic celebrations and recreational activities. It is a well-known anecdote from



Srb Band. Front row: John Shala, Joe Srb, Tom Vogltance.
Back row: A. (Dick) Scholte, Vincent Kriz, Al
Clement, Adolph Srb, Frank Bartosh, Joe Srb, Ed
Schinkel and Jerome Srb

Dodge history that Joseph Srb, father of the three doctors Srb and Professor Srb, made a trip to Fremont, NE on foot to buy a flute and by the time he had walked back to his home in Dodge, he had mastered the instrument.

Later, Joseph Sr. and his brother Frank owned and operated the Srb Brothers Furniture and Undertaking establishment. The coffin nails saved from the boxes they came in were welcome gifts to farmer customers. In the Silver Jubilee edition of the "Criterion," Joseph Srb Sr. was listed as an expert musician and leader of the band. His family all participated in band and other musical activities.

This article is primarily offered as a tribute to the late Dr. Adolph Frank Srb, a general practitioner and surgeon in Omaha for 56 years. I knew him, admired his work, both in the health care area and his musical ability, and loved him. He provided both medical care and inspiration to our family in some rather difficult times. Always, he was a gentleman, humanitarian and friend. When Sousa's band was in Omaha, Adolph played in it as a substitute. Adolph was a graduate of Creighton University College of Medicine in 1916. His first office was in the Belvedere Apartments at the southeast corner of 16th and William Streets in Omaha. Adolph served in France in WWI. His first wife, Alice Ferne Longacare Srb (1894-1919) a Phi Beta Kappa, died in the flu epidemic. In 1923 he married Marie Rose Wagner of

Fremont, NE, his future bookkeeper and mother of seven children.



Dr. Adolf Srb musical family: Front row: JoAnn, flute; Mrs. Srb; Dr. Srb, trumpet,(conductor's baton); Gwen, violin Back row: Rudy, clarinet, piano; Joe, French horn, voice; Kay, trombone; Doug; Warren "Fritz", trumpet, Donald Jack portrait of the family of Dr. Adolf Srb 1958, Sun Newspaper, Omaha

In 1923 Dr. Adolph Srb built a massive brick home at 1719 S. 16th Street in Omaha,

with 16 room plus basement (for his office and treatment rooms, childbirth and minor surgery. Trying to collect bills during the 30's, Dr. Srb would settle for musical instruments.

He donated flutes, clarinets, 32 violins, etc. to Comenius School, 15th and Pine Street which gave music lessons. Here, Dr. Srb recruited an orchestra which performed free at Sokol Halls, etc. He hired professional musicians to augment it, and put on two-hour Memorial Day Concerts at Dodge (1949-1961) in the chapel of the Bohemian National Cemetery. Mrs. Srb cooked for the musicians and guests.

Dr. Srb was one of the busiest surgeons, obstetricians, general practitioners and musicians in Omaha His schedule for many years: 8 A.M. to 3 P.M.--surgery and making his rounds at Doctors Hospital (where he was chief of staff); from 4 to 6 P.M. and 8 to 10 P.M home office hours; from 7 to 8 P.M. he conducted the Srb orchestra from the area of Comenius Youth School to which he had donated the instruments. House calls were squeezed in as needed if necessary.

Among Dr. Srb's close relatives were five physicians, a dentist, and a PhD in genetics. But none of his children were attracted to the health sciences. Son Warren explained why he wasn't. One day Dr. Srb ordered him to put on sterile gloves to hold apart the cheeks of a prone patient being treated for hemorrhoids. Warren succeeded admirably and later wheedled, "Shouldn't I get half the fee?" "Yes, you earned it, half of three dollars." "Gee, when do I get the \$1.50?" "When the patient pays me, and he owes me \$400.00 already." After Warren got out of the Marines in 1946, he started looking for a job and Dr. Srb offered him one, collecting unpaid bills for 50 percent commission. Warren started out with a sheaf of the largest bills. He couldn't collect a cent and wasted all his carfare. Then Dr. Srb let attorneys tackle them. He ended up burning about \$60,000 worth of bad debts to make room for more in his filing cabinets. Dr. Srb's right hand man for over 30 years was Rose Blazek, R.N. In his last years, after his cerebral vascular accidents, she also nursed him. And she continued his office practice until the end, consulting him when necessary.

Dr. Adolph F. Srb, 84, died April 29, 1976 in Omaha, Nebraska and a giant among men was lost, particularly to the Czech people. An old Czech custom was having orchestras play at funerals. For Dr. Srb's funeral, an orchestra of his sons played a waltz, a polka, and the Czech national anthem. Dr. and Mrs. Srb are buried at Dodge, Nebraska. The Srb family, in memorial, produced a 35 minute record of 12 Czech selections of beautiful music which is available from Moostash Joe, KHUB, Fremont, Nebraska.

DeLores Kucera

FRANK KOLBABA



Professor Frank J. Kolbaba started playing the violin when he was six years old. He studied violin, cello, viola and double bass at the Prague

Conservatory of Music and was a pupil of Professor Sevcik. Kolbaba was a professor of music in Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1903-1905; Chicago 1905-1908; Howard Payne College, Texas; Baylor College, Texas; Washburn College, Kansas; Agr and

Mech State College, New Mexico; State Teachers College, New Mexico; Luther College and Prague High School (1939-1954).

He was an accomplished artist and concert violinist and always displayed proudly a

gold trimmed baton from Countess Wilhemine from Auersperg, Czechoslovakia, and endorsements from Prince Vinzenz von Auersperg, Neomi Jireckova Countess of Samokova,

Cardinal Skrbensky from Hriste, etc.

He was village clerk and collector for sixteen years Professor Kolbaba wrote and had published the music of "Kralovna Noci" (The Queen of the Night).

A GLIMPSE OF THE U-NETA ORCHESTRA

By Mrs. Al Cochnar, Dorchester, NE

The U-neta Orchestra of Dorchester, NE was organized in 1938 by Alfred F. (Al) Cochnar. Because he wanted a Czech heritage sound, the name "U-neta" was selected. Charter members were Alfred F. Cochnar, who played saxophone, clarinet and trombone; Teresa M Kohl, lead trumpet, Korg and arranger; Verlee Bouska, second trumpet; Leonard A. Kohl, baritone; Anton F. Kohl, drums; Carol Jelinek, piano; (replaced in one year by Ray Jelinek), and June Dunder, bass horn and fiddle. This orchestra was one of the very first bands to dress in uniform and to specialize in singing Czech vocals because of their outstanding public address system. Leonard Chlup originally played trumpet.

Many people have inquired concerning the territory played and traveled by the U-neta Orchestra. Name a town in Nebraska. If they ever held polka dances, U-neta was probably there. While other bands played in the home area, U-neta traveled from the very earliest days of its organization into all surrounding and outlying states and became known as the state's most-traveled Czech dance orchestra." Talking about bookings, early dance date books show an average of 20 bookings or more a month. Dates were slightly curbed however, because of teenagers involved. A record of forty years of continuous, consecutive bookings (1938-1978) by the same manager was set by Al Cochnar. Change of personnel was perhaps greater than any other Czech orchestra. Membership consisted of some 65 musicians over the many years. This is not counting an occasional substitute. U-neta was a money-making outlet for aspiring young musicians, both fellows and girls.

Twelve musicians continued professionally in performance or as teachers. By the way, U-neta was never an all girl orchestra. At one time however, there were 6 girls and 2 fellows. Some human interest memories are as follows: Traveled in dust storms that resembled snow-blizzards; had to wait for waters to subside when roads were flooded; gravel roads of yesterday held all the hazards one could think of; the blizzard of '41 kept U-neta in one town for three days; one young man owed his life to the band, as he was

rescued from a burning car following an accident; one time the entire band was taken into custody by the state police (must remain anonymous) because their auto license number supposedly matched the description of a burglary car; these are only a few, but-- U-neta was never in a car accident.



Alfred F. Cochran and Teresa Cochran
A Live-time of Musical Happiness

The 1978 group was as follows: Alfred F. Cochran (deceased August 11, 1978); Teresa Kohl-Cochran, Anton F. (Frick) Kohl Jr., three from the original band.; Emil Brodecky played saxophone and clarinet; Lynn Egger (deceased Dec. 24, 1979) was the accordionist; the sixth man was a substitute.

Personal notes might include the fact that Alfred F. and Teresa were married in 1942. Thus began the 36 year husband-wife team in the polka business. They have catalogued mementos documenting proof concerning orchestra happenings. (Other information concerning albums, band history, etc. can be found in "Czech Music--A. Bouska Family Heritage.")



Nebraska State Historical Society Folklore Festival
Ferguson House June 29, 1979
The U-neta Orchestra represented the Czech people
in a program of folklore music.
Teresa and Anton F. shown singing a Czech duet.

KLASEKS: THEMOST ACTIVE MUSICAL FAMILY



Do you recognize this good looking young man?The answer is on a later page

Bernard J. Klasek was born to Stephen and Josephine (Polivka) Klasek on March 10, 1905 on a farm west of Wilber, Nebraska.. When he was about 5 years old, his parents moved to Wilber. He started his musical education when about nine years old.

He studied violin with Frank Anyz, Jr. Under this teacher he was introduced to learning percussion instruments. When about twelve he started playing trap drums with dance orchestras. He also was invited to play snare drums with the Wilber Municipal Band.

He also got interested in the brass instruments, starting on the cornet, and received instruction from Joseph Kudlacek who played baritone with Pasek's Military Band and the Wilber Municipal Band. When Mr. Anyz, Jr. became unable to continue teaching because of his health, Bernard took up his violin studies with Joseph Franta of Crete, Nebraska for some six years. During these years he played with many dance bands and with the Crete Municipal Band, the Doane

College Band, Orchestra and the 110th Medical Regimental Band.



Klasek Trio
Bernard J. (violin),
Sylvia F. (piano)
Charles B. (cello)

While attending Doane College at Crete he met Sylvia F. Smrz, of Crete, an accomplished pianist and accompanist. She was the daughter of Joseph and Marie (Kolarik) Smrz. Sylvia's first teacher was Leon Jelinek, then Mrs. Aller, and Prof. Byler when she studied at Doane College. She played her first school operetta when she was in the sixth grade and has been fulfilling the role of accompanist ever since. Her family was musical, singing for funerals, participating in Czech operetta, and playing in the Smrz dance orchestra. She also played with the Crete High School orchestra under the direction of V. J. Shebl.

On February 26, 1931 Bernard and Sylvia were married and the music activities for both were a hobby and avocation in the communities of Crete and Wilber. They both directed the singing and instrumental playing for the many Czech operettas and municipal plays performed in Wilber and occasionally in Crete. Sylvia directed many school groups, both large and small, as well as soloists. She was a very active member of the Wilber Music Club.

On December 28, 1931 their son Charles was born, and he too was guided in the field of music. He started playing the cello when about seven years old. He studied throughout his school years with teachers in the Nebraska University School of Music.

While in the Wilber public schools he played in the orchestra. Along with his cello, (which was half his size when he started) he also studied other instruments, including the bass horn and the tuba. He performed during his years in college in the Nebraska Marching and Concert Bands, the University Orchestra, and the Lincoln Symphony.

Sylvia, Bernard and Charles had their own musical string trio and during the time that Charles was in school, and for some years while at the University, the trio played many, many places in local communities throughout the State. These were chamber music presentations, playing for weddings, church, flower shows, exhibitions, etc.

Charles was an active 4-H Club member. His mother directed trios, quartettes, small and large choruses, always coming home with purple ribbons. At two different times, Sylvia took singing groups to the National 4-H Congress in Chicago. Another time she accompanied a trumpet trio that also performed at the National 4-H Congress in Chicago. On another occasion she directed and accompanied a 4-H trip to Philadelphia for a nationwide Television broadcast on the Paul Whiteman Show. The Klasek String Trio plays on occasion largely at family reunion times. Sylvia and Bernard still play but not as often as in earlier days. During the past few years Sylvia has directed a church choir and played the organ. She was the Order of Eastern Star organist for over twenty-five years and during that time served as Grand Organist of the Grand Chapter. It was during these years that the Klasek Trio played for this fraternal chapter throughout the state when making visitations.

Further mention must be made of her being the Wilber Rotary Club pianist for some 48 years. She also played for and directed the singing at the Wilber Czech Schools. During the past eighteen years she has labored long and hard playing for the Beseda dance rehearsals, accompanying small and large groups at the Wilber Czech Festival Days. The members of the Klasek String Trio wish to extend a belated appreciation to our parents for giving us the opportunity to obtain a musical education by which we were able to relate to our Czech heritage.

By profession, Bernard was Principal of Schools at Callaway, Nebraska for two years; superintendent of the Wilber Public Schools for 26 years; and is presently serving his 18th year

as Saline County superintendent of schools. He also served as county clerk for a term. Sylvia served in the Saline County Welfare Office for 15 years. Charles is currently director of international education at Southern Illinois University, at Carbondale, IL.

Answer to photograph--Bernard Klasek

ANTON PISKAC:PRINTER, JOURNALIST, MUSICIAN



Anton Piskac was born in Chotobor, Bohemia, on March 23, 1890. His father, Antonin Piskac, left

Chotobor for America, arriving in New York City on June 30, 1906. Three of his good friends from Chotobor were already settled in Beatrice, Nebraska, and one, Pavel Kopecky, helped Antonin get started in his trade of shoemaking. He played cards (Marias) with a Mr. Pilny and others. And one year later, in 1907, father Antonin saved enough money so the rest of the Piskac family could come, and they arrived in New York June 7, 1907. Grandmother Katerina David Piskacova came to Beatrice with all the children: Antonin, age 17, Marie, Karel, Anna

and Jerry. In Beatrice, the first home purchased in America cost \$400.00.

Anton started work in a Beatrice print shop and was there from 1907 to 1911. In his free time he played the flute, violin or cello with small groups. He often traveled to Odell by bicycle to play in bands and other small groups. In 1911 he went to Chicago to attend a school for linotype operators, following which he was employed at National Printing Company in Omaha. He married Jindriska Pechousek in 1912.

He remained in the printing trade, with music as a second line, for a good many years. He was a member of the old Omaha Symphony Orchestra when Sandor Harmati was conductor,

all through the 1920's until the depression came. He played in several theater orchestras, at the Rialto, Sun, Strand, and Brandeis during the days of silent movies. His second instrument was the flute, and in later years, he started his grandchildren on this instrument as well as the cello.

He became editor of the farm magazine "Hospodar" from 1918 to 1920 and again from 1946 to 1961, when the magazine went to West, Texas, for publication. In 1935, during the Great depression, he had the courage to start his own printing company, the Automatic Printing Company, 1713 Cuming Street in Omaha, and at present, the firm is busy in commercial printing. His three sons, Jerry, Anton S., George, and two daughters, Henrietta Shutt and Heddy Kohl are involved in the printing business, which is a family corporation and now regularly employs between 26 and 30 various craftsmen.

As a hobby, Anton raised prize rabbits for years, and received hundreds of first place awards.. During the depression the Piskac family ate many a rabbit--fried, stewed, or baked. His pigeons were entered in many cross-country shows, and his beautiful cases of butterflies and insects, properly mounted and identified, went to his grandchildren. His collection of flutes was given to a grandson, J. J. Kohl, who is a composer of modern music in Seattle, Washington.

Anton Piskac was editor of "The Fraternal Herald" (Bratrsky Vestnik) in 1956 when Otakar Charvat died. The Herald has been printed by Automatic Printing Company since 1938, and was a newsprint magazine entirely in Czech in earlier years. In 1956 the offset printing of the magazine began, and the major portion of the Herald has been in English since that time. Heddy Kohl was English editor until 1964 when her sister, Henrietta Shutt took this responsibility and then became editor in 1972. Anton held the position of Czech editor until 1972, and at the present time is the only intertype operator of Czech in the Omaha area so continues to set type at age 89 for the few pages of Czech in the Fraternal Herald. Anton maintains a continuing interest in current events, music, and plays the cello at least once a week in a trio. Until 2 years ago, he taught pupils at no charge on the flute and cello. There are now seventeen grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Some of the Piskac males changed their last name to Prescott for more phonetic English pronunciation, but Anton Piskac stayed with his Czech name as did his son, Anton Piskac, Jr. and Anton S. Piskac, son of Anton Jr., who is soon to be a practicing medical doctor.

By Mrs. Henrietta P. Shutt
Editor of Fraternal Herald, Omaha NE

VACLAV POSPISIL: AN ACCOMPLISHED MUSICIAN



Vaclav Pospisil (known also as William Vaclav Pospisil (1846-1916)

Terezie Pospisilova, rozena Pospisil Sr.) was born on August 17, 1846, Kohoutova (1857-1937) in the small town of Hlizov, Bohemia, some 50 miles east and a little south of the capital city of

Prague, Czechoslovakia. His first wife, Barbora Kolman was born in 1852 also in Hlizov. Vaclav attended school in his home town. At the age of 12 he started to study music and also learned to be a mason. At the age of 14 he joined the army where he was given the opportunity to study music. He spent most of his army years from age 14 to 21 in Italy.

Vaclav became an accomplished musician who played many instruments.

He could, and did, orchestrate music and did some composing.

He was discharged from the army in early 1868 and very shortly thereafter he married Barbora Kolman. Their first son, Rudolf, was born April 17, 1869. (Rudolf never married. He died in Wilber, Nebraska June 20, 1908.) In 1871, Vaclav and Barbora, with infant son Rudolf, came to New York City where Vaclav followed his favorite occupation of music.

On September 5, 1874, son Josef was born. (Josef married Anna Shimonek and their son Stepan was born to them in 1896 in Wilber.) Son Charles was born February 27, 1876. (Charles married Blanche Herman and after the tragic death of Blanche he married Katy Chmelir. Charles died in Wilber in 1940.) On November 2, 1877, daughter Blazena (called Blanche and sometimes Bertha) was born. She married Anton Novak and had four children, Anton Jr., Blanche, Edward, and Charles. Blanche passed away March 20, 1931 in Wilber.

In 1878 the family returned to the old European fatherland of Czechoslovakia. There Vaclav managed an inn. Son Vaclav (William Jr.) was born August 15, 1879. William Jr. married Mary Havel and had four children, Clarence, Milada, Robert, and Alvin. He died March 23, 1933. The charm of America was too much for Vaclav and his family, so in 1880 they returned to New York City where Vaclav had his own 100 piece band.

While in New York City; two more children were born. On November 15, 1881, daughter Mary was born. Mary married Adolf Vilda and had four children, Otto, Ladimir, Blanche, and Charles. Mary passed away March 11, 1960. On July 6, 1883 son Henry was born. Henry married Jennie Jelinek and they had two sons, Stanley and Steve. In 1886 the family moved to Wilber. Son Milos (Miles) was born in Wilber on November 8, 1889. Milos married Anna Chmelir. He passed away on September 28, 1966.

In Wilber, Vaclav occupied himself successfully with his music. Vaclav also had a cigar manufacturing enterprise in which his son Josef and Josef's wife Anna were employed. Vaclav also owned an inn, and a small farm. To reach the farm west of Wilber, you cross Turkey Creek. A very short distance beyond Turkey Creek is a road leading south. Three quarters of a mile south on the west side of this road is the location of the farm. Vaclav lived in a wooden home which stood on the corner of 6th and School Streets (southwest of the actual corner.) In the square block of land, belonging to the house, Vaclav cultivated fruit trees, berries, grapes and garden vegetables. Today (1980) there stands a concrete block home in place of the old wooden structure. This new home was built about 1911 by Henry, son of Vaclav. This home is now occupied by Stanley Pospisil, son of Henry and grandson of Vaclav.

By Jaromir Pospisil, Colonel US Army Retired



Family

1. Vaclav Pospisil
- 1a Terezie Kohout Pospisil
- 1b Jaromir Jan Pospisil
2. Rudolf Pospisil
3. Josef Pospisil
- 3a Anna Shimonek Pospisil
4. Mary Pospisil Vilda
- 4a Adolf Vilda
- 4b Otto Vilda
- 4c Ladimir Vilda

- III Tomas Pasek (?)
- IV Karel Altman
- V Frank Anyz
- VI Mr. Tobiska
- VII Mr. Kudlacek
- VIII Rudolf Pospisil

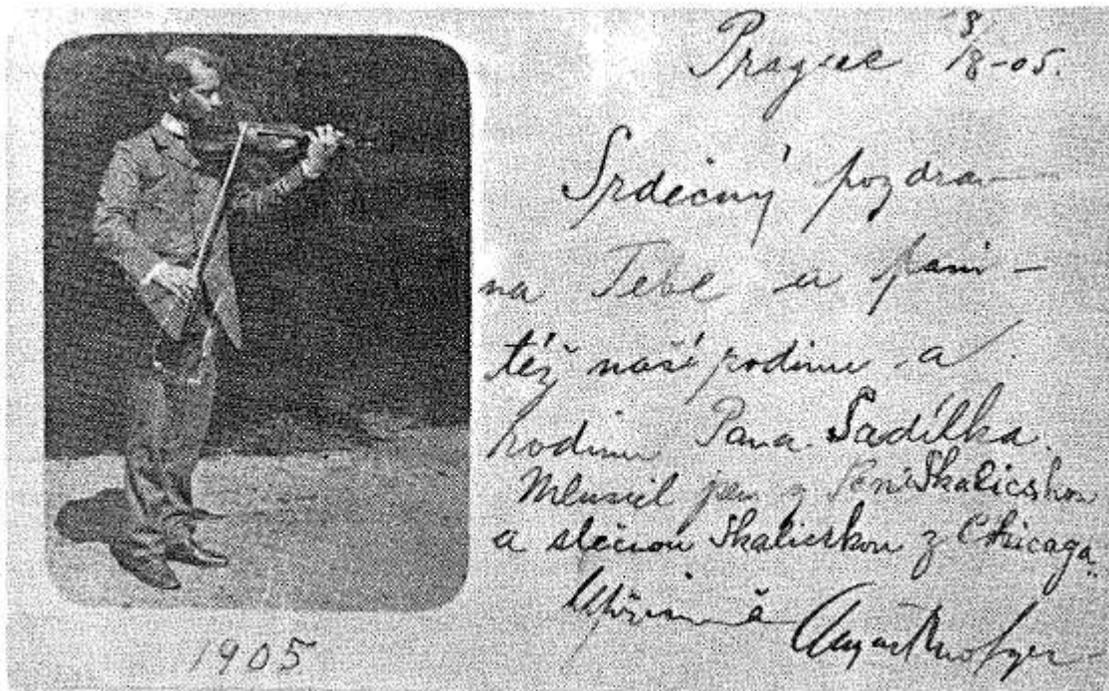
- A Bartolmej Kohout
(brother of Mrs. Terezie
Pospisil)
- B Dr Jos. Cerny
- C Mrs. Kudlacek
- D John Hoffman
- E Anna Kohout Hanus
(Sister of Mrs. Terezie
Pospisil)A

Musical Family

- I Vaclav Pospisil
- II Frank Hotovec
- IIb Mrs. Mayme Hotovec Broz
- IIc Sophie Hotovec

AUGUST MOLZER

August Molzer was born in Slany, Bohemia, in 1881, and at the age of seven came with his parents to Wilber, Saline Co., Nebraska. He taught music in country schools near Hallam, Lancaster County, and in Wilber, at the age of 15. In 1910 he went back to Prague, Czechoslovakia, to study music, and became one of the most renowned concert violinists and teachers of violin. While in Prague he studied under the famous professor O. Sevcik, the teacher of Jan Kubelik and Kocian, two of the world's most renowned violinists. He also studied piano and music theory under the personal direction of the famous Czech composer Antonin Dvorak.



August Molzer sent this card to Dr. Charles Stastny of Wilber, NE from Prague, CZ in 1905. Card courtesy of Mrs. Elsa Skocpolof Crete, NE

He was invited to become an assistant at one of the most notable musical institutions in the world, the Vienna Violin High School, but he returned to Nebraska to care for his ailing mother. Returning to Nebraska, he taught two years at Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln. Later, Molzer was head of the music theory and violin departments of the University of Nebraska for 35 years.

From 1929 to 1941 he served as head of the University of Wyoming music department.

In the early 1900's Mr. Molzer operated Molzer Violin School in Lincoln and in 1925 started Molzer Music Company which his son Robert continued to operate. In 1966, August Molzer was honored at Carnegie Hall in New York at a North American Defense Command band concert. The performance, directed by Molzer's son, Victor, an Air Force Major and band director, included a "Slavic Folk Festival" written by the senior Molzer. For the last 20 years he lived and worked in Denver, Colorado. This great Czech musician, August Molzer, former Lincoln resident and businessman, died in 1967 in Denver at the age of 86. His son, Major Victor Molzer, was born in Lincoln, Nebraska. For years Major Molzer was assistant chief and executive officer of the Air Force bands at the Pentagon before his assignment to NORAD (North American Air Defense.) He was director of the Air Force Band in the Pacific and command director of Pacific Air Forces bands.

Mrs. Evelyn Herman supported me with this information about August Molzer given to her by Bernard Klasek of Wilber: August Molzer graduated from Wilber High School in 1897. The family name at the time was Melcer and Mr. Klasek remembers that when August Molzer was in Czechoslovakia (or Germany) he changed his name to Molzer and kept that spelling the rest of his life. Since August graduated two years before Mrs. Herman, (mother of Floyd Herman) and who is now 98 years old, it may be that he was in Czechoslovakia at the time she was in Prague after her graduation. She cannot recall how long she stayed there at that time. Both Floyd's mother and Mr. Klasek remember that his wife was an accomplished pianist and accompanied him. Jim Slepicka, who worked for the Molzer store not too many years ago (and the store is still in business as of my 1979 Lincoln phone book), spoke with Floyd's mother at some length and she remembers he told her that August's son was in the store. Floyd's mother has very little to add to what is in your "Czechs



From left: Mrs. Evelyn Herman, her mother 90 years old; Floyd Herman beside his mother 98 years old.

And Nebraska” book of 1967. She remembers mostly that August loved to ice skate in Wilber and she too was an avid skater. It was evidently a favorite winter sport there. She remembers he had a brother, Ben, and another brother whose name she cannot recall who lived in California. Also, according to your book, August was born in 1881 and so was she, which surprised her because she thought he was older.

OTHER PROMINENT CZECH MUSICIANS

ARCHIE BALEY, violinist, son of Frank and Anna Stibralova Baley of Omaha was born in 1906 in Lesterville, South Dakota. At the early age of four he began to take violin lessons from Dr. Juergans. In 1913 he studied with Prof. Machek of Chicago, Illinois and Professor Rychlik of Cleveland, Ohio, and in 1915 with Prof. F. Mach of Omaha, with whom he continued steadily during the next seven years. In 1921, when he was but fifteen years old, he studied with the great Czech violinist Prof. O. Sevcik of Prague when the master was an instructor at the Ithaca Conservatory, Ithaca, New York. In the winter of that year he began to teach. In 1922 he headed a company of five artists who made a summer concert tour through Nebraska and South Dakota. In 1923 he graduated from Omaha Central High School, where he took an active part in the orchestra. In the fall of 1924 he became the musical and dramatic critic of the Omaha Daily News and in 1926, became a member of the World Herald staff.

ANTHONY DONATO was born in Prague, Nebraska on March 8, 1909. He is an educator, composer, conductor and violinist. Donato studied at the University of Nebraska and since 1947, he has been a professor of theory and composition at Northwestern University.

C.W. HAVLICEK was born in Wisconsin in 1865 and came with his parents to Nebraska in 1866. At the age of ten he began learning the jeweler's trade with his brother-in-law Josef Kopecky in Crete and in 1887 established that business for himself. In 1911 he sold out and started the music business.

KAREL HAVLICEK, a famous violinist, was born in Omaha and studied music in Berlin, Dresden, Paris and Prague. He made many concert tours throughout the United States, and then became a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Later he taught violin at Washington State College.

FRANK W. HODEK, a famous concert pianist, composer, and orchestra director, was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1895. He studied music in Prague, Czechoslovakia but came to Omaha to conduct the nightingale Orchestra which has made many tours throughout Nebraska and neighboring states.

AGNES KNOFLICEK, a famous violinist, was born in Nebraska. At the age of fourteen she went to Prague, Czechoslovakia to study violin with Professor Suchy and Professor Sevcik. She gave many concerts throughout the United States as a solo violinist.

STANISLAV (STANLEY) BARTA LETOVSKY, veteran Omaha musician and composer, was born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1864 and died in 1934 in Omaha. He was the last of a family of five sons and two daughters of the pioneer Czech journalist, Jan Barta Letovsky, founder and editor of the semi-weekly Slovan Americky of Iowa City,

the first newspaper in the Czech language in America. Departing from the journalistic bent of his father and brothers, Stanislav showed an early talent for music and began studying the violin at the age of seven. For 22 years, Stanislav Letovsky participated actively in the musical life in Omaha, composing, teaching, and playing in various orchestras. He was a cellist in the orchestra which opened the new Boyd Theatre in 1891, and 29 years later, returned to occupy the same position at the closing performance before the building was torn down. His hobby was a string quartet and for years he was a member of such a musical group composed of veteran Omaha musicians. He was a charter member of the Omaha Musicians Association and served as its first secretary. He was also a member of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra until his later years when ill health prevented him from being very active. Stanislav Barta Letovsky composed several operas and was well-known for his ability to arrange music for road shows coming to Omaha. He was the father of Stan Slav (Stanley) Jan Letovsky, a prominent Omaha musician and composer.

STANISLAV (STANLEY) JAN LETOVSKY was the grandson of the pioneer Czech journalist Jan Barta Letovsky. He was born in Omaha, his parents being Stanislav and Agnes Rezac Letovsky. At the age of six, he began to study music under his father, a composer and cellist of marked ability, and later under Richard Burmeister, the close friend and pupil of Franz Liszt. At the age of 18, Letovsky went abroad to finish his studies. He accepted the position of assistant conductor of the Stadt Theatre in Kiel, Germany, during which time he composed and played several tours of piano concerts. At this time, he was offered a scholarship to the Schwenka Piano School in Berlin. Later, in Posen, Germany, the first conductor, Dr. Fritz Stiedry (Stedry) resigned his position in favor of the young musician, who conducted in an amazing manner Richard Wagner's opera "Ring of the Nibelungen." During that period, Letovsky made his debut as an acknowledged pianist at a philharmonic concert at the Academy of Posen, Germany. The following season he accepted the position of First Conductor of the Grand Duke's Royal Opera in Mecklenburg and in 1916 he was the recipient of a scholarship for piano and Composition to the Academy of Tone Art in Vienna, Austria. His works as published in Berlin by Schlesinger were: "Sonata for Piano"; D Flat, Op.1; "Variations Upon An Original Theme" for piano Op. 2; five piano pieces; "Praeludion"; Il Penseroso; "Valse Intermezzo"; "Sehnsucht"; "L' Allegro"; Op.3 "Four Ballads for Piano; Op 4, "Five Fantasy Pieces", Op.5; Grand Opera in three acts, "Lady Anne", Op 6; "Five Songs" Op 14; a concert number for violins with piano accompaniment. Because of ill health, Letovsky returned to Omaha and opened a studio where he taught piano and voice until the early 1950's. He left Omaha for California and later for Denver, Colorado where he continued to teach. In a span of years he made four trips to Europe, where he continued to write music.

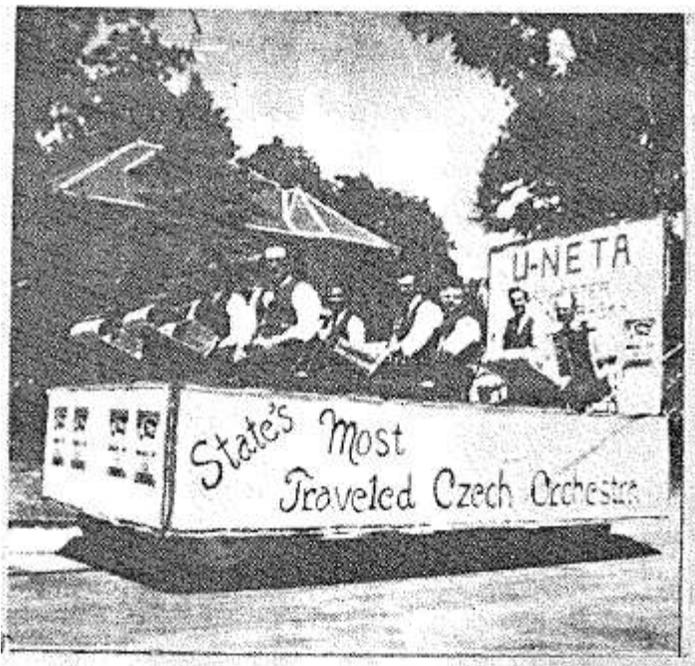
Letovsky's last trip to Europe was in 1965 and his career ended with his death in Berlin, Germany in September of 1965. Letovsky was survived by one daughter, Ursula Maria Letovsky, an Omaha designer of fine jewelry.

FRANK J. MACH, a great violinist, was born in Omaha in 1887 and studied violin in Prague, Czechoslovakia under Professor Jan Marak. He returned to Omaha to teach music, and has taught leaders of many famous orchestras.

MARIE MIKOVA was born in Omaha, daughter of Josef and Anna Drozda Mik. She graduated from Omaha High School and became a well known concert pianist throughout the country. She studied piano in Omaha under August M. Borglum. In 1810 she studied piano with Wager Swayne in Paris, and played concerts with the Thouche Orchestra. She made many concert tours throughout the United States and also taught music at California State University in Berkeley.

HELEN KHYL SADILEK, a pianist, was born in Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of Karel and Mary Sabata Sadilek, who were residents of Nebraska. She returned to Omaha for her education, graduating from Central High School. She studied in Berlin, Germany, and then returned to Omaha to open her own piano teaching school, coaching voice and also giving many concerts throughout the united States. In 1916 She married Louis KhyL.

CLARA TESAR SCHNEIDER, famous violinist, was born in South Omaha in 1902. She began studying violin at the age of 8 under the supervision of Professor F.Mach. She toured many eastern states giving concerts, and was also concertmaster and soloist for the Omaha Symphony Orchestra.



Wilber Czech Festival August 1964 - The U-neta Orchestra in parade.

In this photo Alfred F. and Teresa Cochnar are pictured along with son James A.(deceased 1965). James was a grandson of Josef Bouska. He played in one of Wilber's first Czech festivals. Festival 1962 is pictured.

CZECH BANDS AND ORCHESTRAS



Crete Municipal Band organized in 1915.

Top row, left to right: Frank Hladky, Axel Smith, Dr. C. M. Tobiska, Joe Nedela, Otto Kopecky.

Middle row; Joseph Shebl, Frank Nedela, Jr., Frank Kolouch, Josef Smrz, Jim Shebl, Otto Kraus

Front row: Frank Dredla, Vance Jelinek, Frank Justa, Prof. Robert Dick, Director, Lad B. Hokuf, Edward C. Brt, Charles Tinker

Picture courtesy of Miss Wilma Smrz, Crete, NE

JERRY KOCI BAND OF CRETE, NEBRASKA

“Dear Mr. Tesar: Thank you for your letter. Grandpa is still very alert and can recall many happy times he played for so many dances. He will be 90 on November 20, 1980. He has made his home with us (my husband and myself) since grandmother passed away in September of 1964. He can still play his accordion and does a good job. If all goes well with the family plan, we will have a birthday dance for him in November. If you would like to meet my grandfather and even take a picture of him for Dr. Kucera, we could make the trip to Omaha next month. The drive would be good for him. It has been years since he was there. He could tell you in his own words about his years of playing for many dances.”

Grandpa started to play the button accordion at the age of 10 years. His early teens were spent playing the accordion for family gatherings, birthdays, etc. About 1912-1913, Grandpa and his two soon to be brothers-in-law had made a small group playing for barn dances and wedding anniversaries. Around 1919-1921 Grandpa really got started with his love for Czech music. A trumpet player, Joe Pavel of Crete, was with him at that time. Mr. Pavel still is living in Crete and is very alert. In 1923 Grandpa and five young men traveled to York, NE and made the first polka music broadcast on the air (radio.) It was located in the basement of a home. I wish I had a picture of that day. I do have a beautiful picture of Grandpa and his dance band taken in 1926. The band members still living are: Grandpa Jerry Koci; Ed Keller, drums, Crete; Jim Sinkule, saxophone, Crete; and Fred Chrastil, Dewitt, who sang and played the clarinet. Also, Mr. Adolph Sobotka of Wilber joined Grandpa's band to play bass when his regular was unable to play. This man was Alexis Smith. It was a fun time for Grandpa when a man from Omaha Harness, “Bill” Kalash heard of Grandpa's good music and hired them to play on many radio stations. In the early 30's they played at Clay Center and York, Nebraska radio stations, and later on a Grand Island station. He played in Shenandoah, Iowa. In one week the mail and letters that came in filled a bushel basket and even money came in. A lady here in Crete now 61 years old tells me that as a young girl about 7 years old she remembers her family tuning the old radio on to hear Koci's music.

People all over tell him about beautiful times they had at his dances. Grandpa and his band played for Mr. And Mrs. Charley Kucera's wedding dance. Mr. Kucera had a beautiful dance band years ago. I remember dancing to their music. The name of Grandpa's band was “Jerry Koci's Dance Band.” He had 6 to 8 members, some of German descent, but mostly Czech boys. The band of course started here in Crete. They played polka, Czech and German waltzes and modern numbers too. At this time, the Ed Sysel Band and the Kunc Band also played in the vicinity. Grandpa quit the dance jobs in late 1959. The band played in about every Nebraska town that had a dance hall. They went to Kansas, Iowa, even in Wyoming, and once in North Dakota.

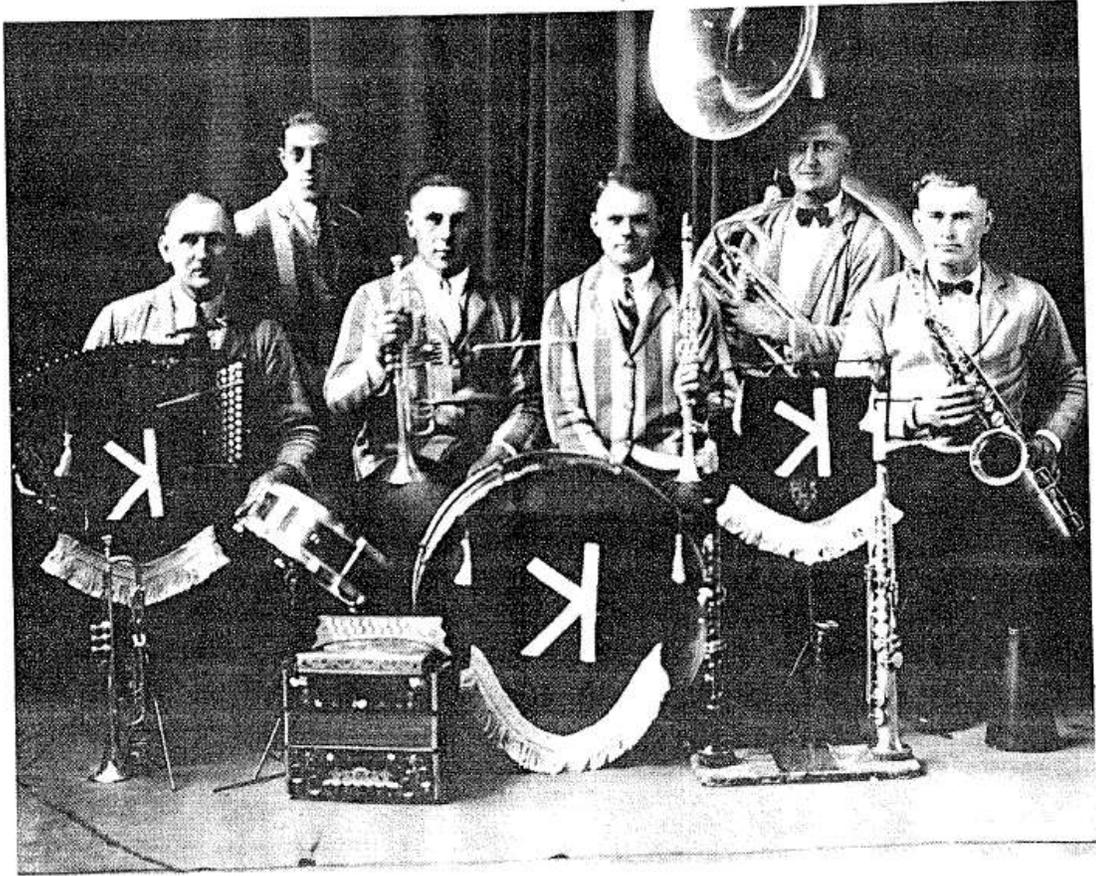
Here is a picture of Grandpa and his band members taken on his 87th birthday at Wilber, Nebraska. It was a surprise birthday party.

What a local newspaper printed about that meeting: Jerry Koci of Crete observed his 87th birthday Sunday at John and Gwen's, doing what he always liked to do best -- playing with his orchestra. Joining him that day, along with his many relatives and friends, were members of his original Jerry Koci Orchestra that began broadcasting over radio stations KMMJ Clay Center and later York in the early 1920's. In the picture from left: Jim Sinkule of Crete on saxophone, Ed Keller of Crete on drums, Koci on accordion, and Adolph Sobotka of Wilber on bass.



I talked with some of the other band members and they said the first dance hall Grandpa and his band played for a dance was in Table Rock, Nebraska. As a young teenager, Grandpa and a friend of his, Fred Fritz who played violin, played for dances in the first log school house built in Saline County. People would move the desks outside and then have a dance. This was the school Grandpa went to and it had the first school teacher in Saline County.

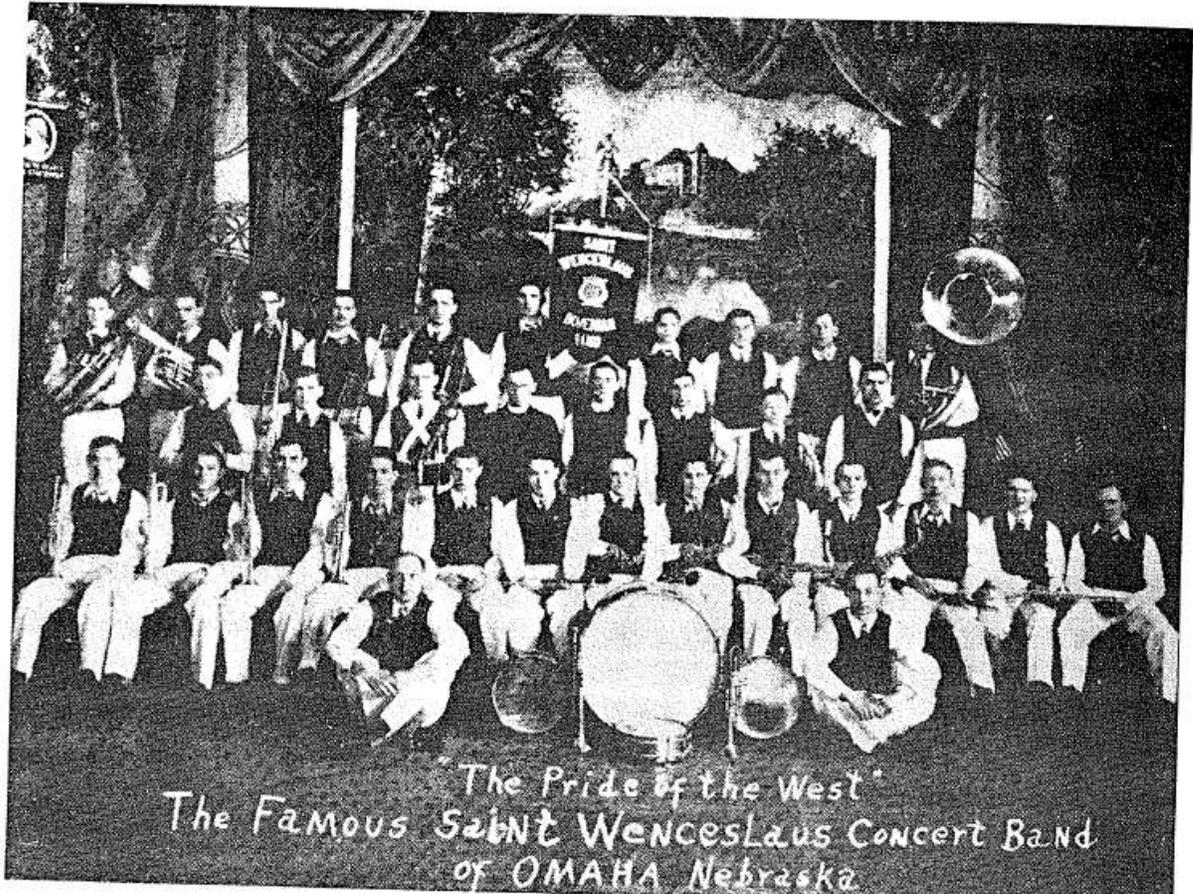
Mrs. Gladys Rahe of Crete, NE
Granddaughter of Jerry Koci



The personnel left to right: James Sinkule, saxophone; Adolf Sobotka, bass; Fred Chrastil, clarinet; Arthur Bauer, cornet; Floyd Segelke, drums; Jerry Koci, accordion

Photo courtesy of Mrs. James Denney (Brt), Omaha NE

THE FAMOUS SAINT WENCESLAS BAND OF OMAHA



The "Notre Dame of Music" is what they are now calling St. Wenceslas Parish and the reason is the Reverend Dr. Edward Chapuran, who has made everyone in his parish, especially the younger folks, more musically inclined than any other spot in the mid-west. Just as Notre Dame is synonymous with football, so too, St. Wenceslas is synonymous with music. The founders of the band were John Kotera, Louis Foral, M. Namestek, John Chapuran, Emil Cermak, Frank Vlach, Frank Kotera and Edward Kroupa. This group, as members of the Smetana Club, initiated the movement for a band that would duly represent the parish in various public functions and celebrations, and perpetuate the Czech adage, "A Czech, a musician," and to develop for greater achievement the honored position held in the past by the Omaha Bohemian Band. Personnel of the first concert appearance of St. Wenceslas Czech Band, December 6, 1931, at the Catholic Sokol Home was as follows: Director and organizer, Rev. Edward

J. Chapuran; Trumpets: M. Namestek, John Chapuran, Wm Bilek, Martin Foral, Joseph Hubschman, Charles Mertz, J. Kovarik, Bernard Petru and Louis Barta; Clarinets: Emil

Vlach, Wm. Mertz, Frank Chapuran, Thos. Cupita, Jr; Piccolo: Emil Cermak; Saxophones: John Kotera, Louis Foral, Frank Mokry, Jerry Runa, Frank Menousek, Jr., Frank Kosik, Jr., and E. Tresnak; Trombones: Frank Kotera, Jr., James Tourek and Anton Cepuran; Alto Horns: Charles Hermanek, Jr., Josef Namestek; Tuba: Ernest Bendekovic, James Zajic, Louis Musilek; Percussion: Richard Citta, Charles Kucera, Frank Zajic, Louis Musilek and Thos. Binder. Accordion: Frank Zajic; Voice: Irene Kotera; Piano accomaniment: Anna Bendekovic.

During these years the band appeared in concert several times at the Catholic Sokol Home, and on excursions to Wahoo, Dwight, Howells and Loma, in Nebraska and to Tabor, SD. They gained national fame in Chicago at the Centennial Of Progress Exposition in 1933, at the Texas Centennial at Dallas, and at the National Sokol Gymnastic Exhibition in San Antonio, TX in 1936. In an editorial criticism on the pages of the Southern Messenger, a Texas newspaper, was the following congratulatory item: "The interpretive sweetness of the arias of the noted Czech composer Smetana, and the well groomed manner of technique and interpretation of the selection played, the young artists under the guidance of their instructor, Father Chapuran, performed as seasoned musicians. St. Wenceslas parishioners and Czechs everywhere are proud of this 'Wonder Band of Omaha.'"

The band is the symbol of a voluntary expression of the soul of music, in the makeup of its membership. There is no monetary gain. The members sacrifice their time and service for a two-fold purpose: the cultivation of the art of music as a cultural hobby in the spirit of good fellowship, and to continue to maintain the honored position for cultural advancement in the Czech-American community. A deep idealism permeates this happy family of musicians. It is not "just another band." There is a stronger tie that binds them together, a sprit of cohesive fellowship that becomes more determined and mutually more assimilated as time marches on. The following musicians are members of St. Wenceslas Band today: Reverend Dr. Edaward Chapuran, director; B.D. Johnson, assistant director; Ernest Bendekovic, Josef and Frank Tourek, Frank Kotera, Josef and William Skupa, Thomas and Josef Cupita, John, Josef and Frank Chapuran, John Kovarik, Mathew, Josef and Frank Namestek, Louis Musilek, Joe Stranglen, R. Citta, Frank Zajic, M. Bursik, Jr., Edwin Roubal, Robert and Charles Kafka, Frank Pesek, Bernard Petru, Milton Dokulil, Frank Serpan, Wm. Mertz, Frances Hermansky, Gus Cisar, Anton Neuvirth, J. Poulicek, A. Tribulato, Louis Gogela, Ed. And J. Velehradsky, Frank and Cyril Menosek, Fr. Kosik, Jr., Wesley Nemetz, J. Francl, John Volenec, Rud. Vlcek, Frank Vlach, John Kotera, Joe Gulizia, Dr. Geo. Drdla, Patrick Lynch, Charles Levendecker, Joseph Hirman, J. Kalina, Jack Gulizia, Leslie Horak, Eugene Smola, Hugh Horton, Kenneth Abensheim, George Sigmund, Harold Kavan.

The Band members are not only appreciative on one another in life's friendships, but every Memorial Day they place wreaths upon the graves of those who have died while in the service of the Saint Wenceslas Band.

Excerpt from The History of St. Wenceslas Czech Catholic Church, the Mother Bohemian Church, Nebraska by Rev. Edward Cepuran, Omaha NE,

December 3, 1939

The copy of this article was presented by Mrs. Theresa Bendekovic, first cousin
Of Rev. Cepuran.

SMETANA CLUB OF OMAHA

The Smetana Club, a music and dramatic circle of talented young people, was organized July 2, 1924, by the Reverend Edward Chapuran, curate at St. Wenceslas Church and the following young people: Frank Kastl, Louis Foral, John Chapuran, Josef Chapuran, Josef Sloup, Frank Vlach, Emil Cermak, Kohn Kotera, Edward Kroupa, Wesley Sloup, James Mirasky, Agnes Krejci, Anna Rozamajzl, Agnes Schuman, Bessie Schuman, Marie Vak, Agnes Foral, Theresa Kastl, Mayme Kastl and Rose Stary.

The first officers were: Frank J. Kastl, President; John Chapuran, Vice President; Mayme Kastl, Secretary; Agnes Krejci, Treasurer, Rev. Edw. Chapuran, director of music and plays.

The Smetana Club was a link in the chain of amateur theatricals produced without interruption since the year 1893, when the Katolicka Beseda (Catholic Dramatic Circle) was founded. That organization presented a regular schedule annually of five to six plays, until the outbreak of United States entered World War I in 1917.

Amateur dramatic and cultural life was thereby extinguished. Following the war, the nation was living through a period of chaotic upheaval of art on the stage and in music, classified as the dark days of jazz. During this time of cultural decay, the Smetana Club endeavored to fulfill its mission in a revival of the cultural code and treasured heritage it embodied in the spirit of the Katolicka Beseda. Its goal was to bridge the glorious past of the Katolicka Beseda and the future life of true cultural revival. These new pioneering disciples were not only successful in the parish but their influence, under the directing hand of Father Chapuran, became nationwide among all Czech-Americans. What was proclaimed as impossible began to miraculously grow and flourish. Czech drama and music again took the lead and today has been universally incorporated into the new American culture now intensively developed.

The Smetana Club produced some excellent plays and in the skilled musical tutorship of Father Cepuran, an orchestra was formed, known as the Smetana Orchestra, which proved a sensation. This orchestra spread the new revival in many states and the

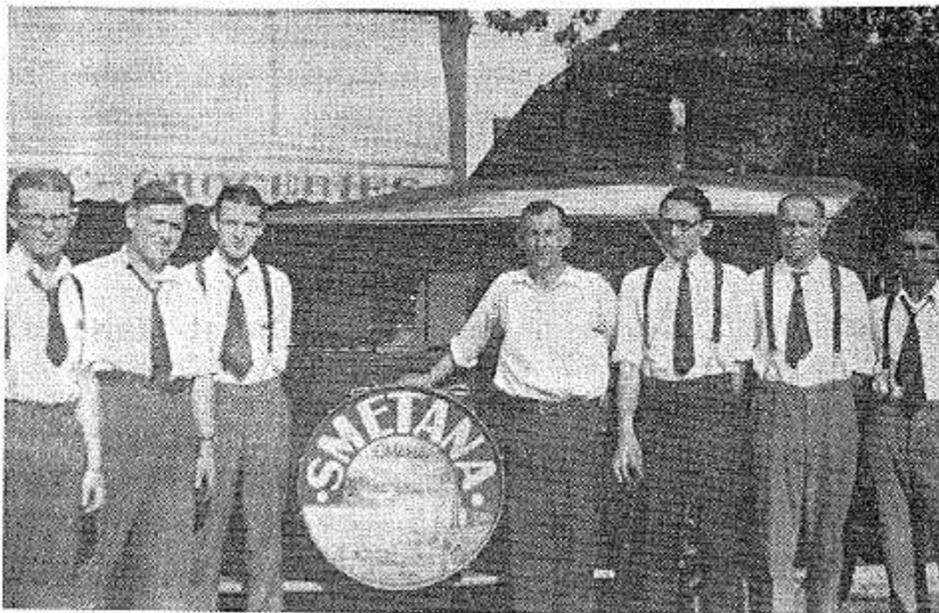
boys covered nearly 180,000 miles of musical tours, as far as Texas. This club was the nucleus of the famous Saint Wenceslas Band that won national recognition at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1933 and further honors at the Texas Centennial in 1936.

The Smetana Club presented the first radio program over station WAAW and in the ensuing years the name of Saint Wenceslas was termed the "Notre Dame of Music." Today, radio stations throughout the country have daily programs of Czech heritage. This was the result of the daring promotion of the Smetana group. The Smetana Club accomplished its purpose and the growing influence of Czech culture everywhere is a living tribute to its opportune pioneering spirit of revival. The membership was scattered in the pursuit of this ideal and hence the continuation of cultural advancement was assimilated by other sympathetic and enthusiastic groups in the parish, who today carry on the traditions and art of the Czechs. The Catholic Sokols, The Beseda Club and the Saint Wenceslas Band.

The officers in the final year of the Smetana Club activities were: John Chapuran, President; Bessie Schumann, Vice President; Teresa Kastl, Secretary; Emil Cermak, Treasurer. (1927)

Excerpt from The History of St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, the Mother Bohemian Church in Nebraska, by Rev. Edward Cepuran,

Omaha, NE, December 3, 1939



Smetana Club in Omaha Pictured left to right: John Cepuran, Ernie Benicorich, Frank Charlie Kucera John Kotera, . J. Namestek, and Richard Citta Photo courtesy of Mrs. Rudie Sobotka, 11014 Military Ave. Omaha, NE, 68164

JOSEPH SINKULE -- LEADER OF THE SINKULE BAND

At the age of 18 years, Joseph Sinkule came to Prague, Nebraska from Czechoslovakia with his parents in 1906. There they learned farming and Joe played for parties and house dances as he had learned to play the button accordion in Czechoslovakia. Then in 1911 the family went to Holt County to work on Joe Fisher's ranch. Joe also played for house and barn dances there.

In March of 1914, Joe and Rose Urban were married and farmed there the first year. On March 2, 1915, their daughter Adela (Mrs. Victor Kaspar) was born.

In May of 1915 they went to Louisiana to a small Czech community called Kolin, where they had bought 80 acres through a Czech agent. But after one and a half years they came back to Nebraska and lived on rented farms. Joe Jr. was born in 1917. They rented a farm close to Liberty, Nebraska. In 1925 Joe talked about having an orchestra, so he, along with two Krikaves brothers, Emil Beranek and William Dezort played together until 1929. When they left the farm Joe then got other men who could travel. They played all through the mid-west, mostly in Czech and German communities.

The Sinkule Orchestra played all the mid-west beginning in 1929 and then toured Texas from 1930 to 1932. In 1933 they got a job on Radio Station KGBC in York, Nebraska where they played for the Miller Brewing Company. This lasted through 1936 when the station was sold to a company from St. Louis.

Joe Jr. and Adela (Mrs. Victor Kaspar) sang songs with the orchestra and Pete Janak played with the orchestra for six years, beginning in April 1934 at York. Frank Vococil also was with the orchestra several years. The orchestra leaders were Joseph Sinkule, Jim Hovorka, Jim Tourek, and Mr. Kovarek. They have all passed away with only Mr. Kovarek living at the time of the Hall of Fame presentation. After the York radio station was sold, they started playing at Omaha Station WAAW Grain Exchange for Peets Flavor and Extract Co. of Council Bluffs, and played there until the station was sold to the World Herald.

Joe Sinkule, Jr. started playing with his father's orchestra when he was 14 years old. The group played together until 1942. Joe Sr. retired and Joe Jr. ran the orchestra until it disbanded. Since late 1974 or early 1975 he has been playing with the Vern Luddington orchestra. Under the headline "Two Beat a Path to Hall of Fame" the Omaha

World Herald printed this story on November 19, 1979: Joe Sinkule and Milo Palensky have heard millions of feet slip and skid across Wooden dance floors with a "step, shuffle, shuffle." They are drummers- polka drummers. They've laid down the bottom for thousands of polka tunes played in dance halls across the west. For their many years of work in helping to promote polka music, they have been inducted into the Sokol Omaha Polka Hall of Fame. They were honored Sunday night during a dance at Omaha Sokol Hall.

Initiated in 1973, the Hall of Fame has some 30 members, said Ron Naherdny, master of ceremonies. The Luddington group was featured at the Sunday night dance, and the honor to Sinkule was a surprise. He said, "I am a man of many words. Humbly, I accept this honor. Thanks."

CLARKSON NEBRASKA, A MUSICAL TOWN

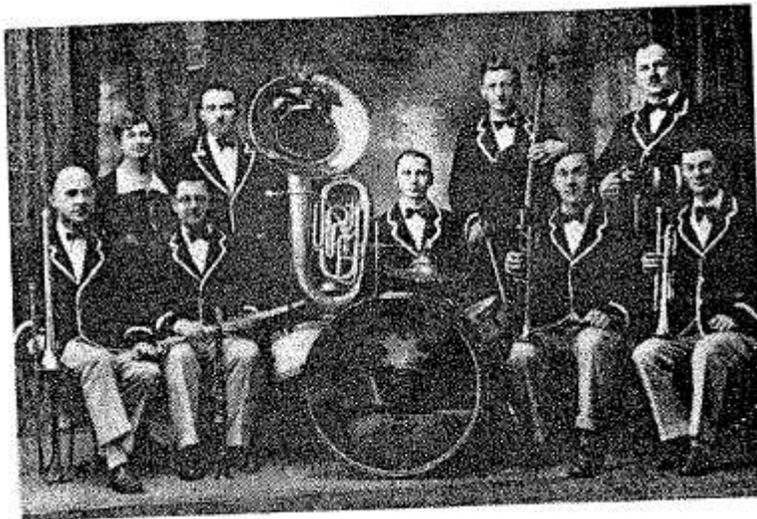


Clarkson Band: Back row, left to right, Bill Kile, W.A. Karel, James Krofta, Frank Kucera, Joe Janecek, Frank Vidlak, Pete Kunesh. Middle row: J. F. Jirovec, Louis Evert, Buster Miller, Joe Konovsky, B.J. Swoboda, Clyde Karel, Leo Pavlik, Stanley Juva. Front row: James Walla, Lambert Jirovec, Louise Jirovec, John Polodina, Red Swien, Leo Zelenda. Drums: Frank J. Miller and Filbert Wacha.

The Clarkson Band, under the direction of the late Petr Zak of Clarkson, was one of the many bands to play in the parade and during the celebration of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition held in Omaha during September of 1898. The 27th of September was designated as Czech Day. A special railroad car was chartered for the many Czech residents of Clarkson and its community, along with the band, to make the trip to Omaha.

Clarkson Band at an Omaha contest placed in Class A on August 30, 1928. J. F. Jirovec was the director. Clarkson and its community always had a number of dance bands that booked from Clarkson. During the time of the Jirovec Band, Krofta Band and Zak Band, there had been from year to year different bands, and later on, orchestras springing up which supplied dancing pleasure for the public in all parts of the state and even out of state.

There were the Bohemian Aces, which had organized under that name since Clarkson was known as the town of the Bohemian Alps. Those originally with the band were Clyde Karel, John Poledna, Charles Podany, Filbert Wacha, John Kucera, Roland Urbanek, Frank Miler and James Budin. At one time the Frank Studnicka Band was booking out of Clarkson. Then for a long time there was the Brdicko Band which was managed by James Brdicko, Sr., along with his son. There was also the Dolezal Orchestra north of Leigh, with some members from Clarkson. After some of the orchestras had discontinued, a new band was organized, with most members coming from the Bohemian Aces. This Band was known as the Pla-Mor Band with the following members: Clyde Karel, John Poledna, Emil Brdicko, Joseph L. Jindra, Filbert Wacha, Cleo Karel and Steve Cech. Cech was also a member of the prominent Cech Orchestra. One of the problems worth mentioning was that the name Pla-Mor was registered with the state, and the band had to change its name, or else pay a royalty for the use of the name every time the orchestra played in Nebraska. After many days of deliberation on what was best for the orchestra, the band members voted that the name be changed to Hi-Life Orchestra.



Jirovec Orchestra Front row: left to right, W. A. Karel, Clyde Karel, Filbert Wacha, Joseph F. Jirovec, Leo Zelenda. Back row: Mrs. Charles Novotny,, John Poledna, Charles J. Novotny, Frank Ferenc.

There was also the Joe Fiala Blue Coats, which booked out from our friends to the east, Howells, NE. Many Clarkson people played in this band.



Clarkson Bohemian Ladies Brass Band, top row, left to right: Emma Storek Hughs, Bessie Odvarka, Spicka Dech, Emma Tomes (Louis), Rose Severa O'Brien, Emma Vitek Novotny, Vlasta Kastanek Travnicek. Bottom row: Bessie Polansky Spangler, Ida Dusatko Turek, C.Vyskocil Leader, Anna Bos Karel and Anna Jirovec Kubik.

The Duffy Belorad Band booked from our friends to the west, Leigh, NE. This band has a number of Clarkson people playing with it. Presently there is the quite well- known band booking out of Howells by the name of Solid Eight Orchestra. This band also has a few members from Clarkson. Clarkson has been a contributor for our neighboring town bands, which made us proud that our community had produced so many people to play with bands for functions that the entire community could enjoy.



Clarkson Dance Band, left to right: Joseph Krofta, John Bos, James Krofta, Petr Zak, Steve Severa, James Hobel, Frank S. Novotny and Frank Svehla. Part of this article was taken from "Clarkson Diamond Jubilee 1886-1961"

Note: This is from the person re-typing this manuscript. There is a picture of a Clarkson orchestra



LARRY KONCEL TRIO

This band was organized in January of 1978 in Comstock, Nebraska by Larry Koncel. The members are Larry Koncel, Cordovox Accordion; Diane Koncel, bass guitar, and Mike Bruha, drums. This trio has played all over Nebraska and are planning to make appearances out of state. They play Czech polkas and waltzes. They have one record out by Czech Records, CMJ Recording of Dodge, Nebraska. Larry Koncel pointed out that the trio is 100% Czech.

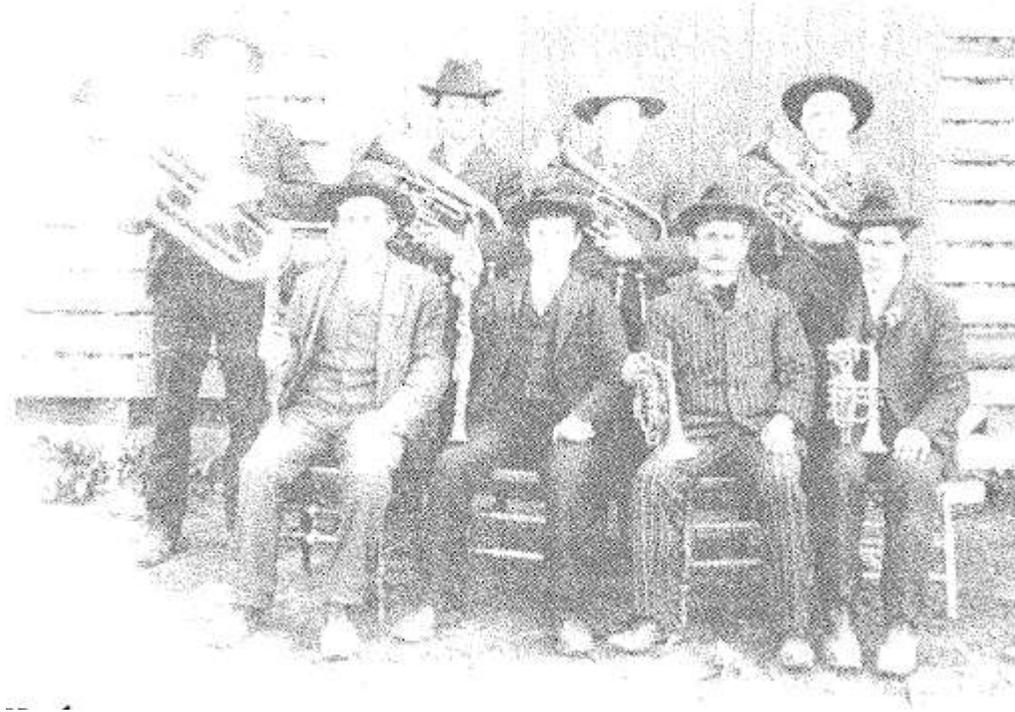
THE HUNGRY FIVE OF WILBER

This was a fun group of musicians who played specially arranged music for five instruments: one trumpet, two clarinets, one trombone and one tuba. Although we were all Czechs, the music we played was German, with a good and lively rhythm. Group members were Lloyd Tachovsky, trumpet; Henry Wit and Willis Skrdla, clarinets; Alfred Novak, trombone; and Leonard Tyser, tuba. Leonard Tyser was the organizer of this group.

We did not play for dances, but played for special occasions like masquerade balls and parties, and mostly for the fun of playing good music.

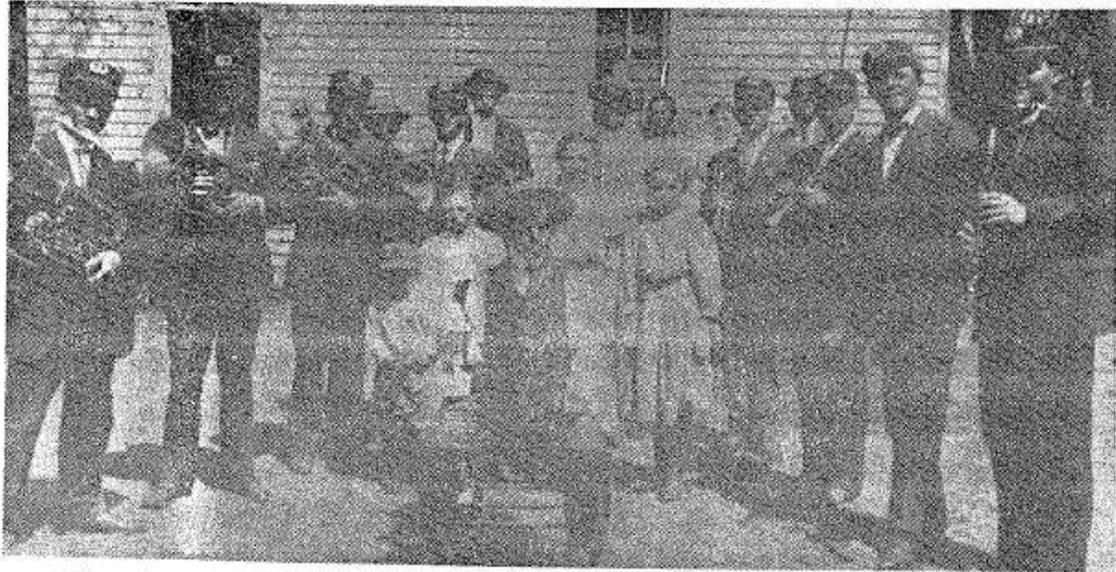
Submitted by Leonard Tyser, Wilber NE

VRANA BAND 1905 - LINWOOD, NE



Vrana Band 1905, Linwood, NSE. Members of that band: Standing, left to right:

Mike Brtek, Rudolf Kavan, Ed Urbanek, Anton Krofta. Seated: Anton Vrana, Charles Vrana, Frank Vrana, James Svoboda.



The Linwood Brass Band (The name of this band is unknown, year around 1913.)

Left to right: John Peltz, Charles Mensik, Charles Kavan, Louis Shavlik, Anton Krofta, ?, Frank Shavlik, Joe Mensik.

Photos courtesy of Mrs. Milo Stuchlik, Schuyler, NE

FOUR YOUNG ADVENTURERS - SCHUYLER, NE



My contribution, in part, consists of a brief history of a small, but interesting group

From left: Frank Kopecky, harp; Frank Melichar, 1st violin and singer; of young musicians.

They traveled, to not only J. Sanda, flute: Frank Kudrnac, 2nd violin in Bohemia and Moravia, but into Poland, and finally Russia, playing for dances and weddings. Their instruments were two violins, a flute and a small -sized harp. These harps, manufactured in Bohemia, took the place of pianos. They provided the band with melodic base and after-beat.

Other small bands without this harp were using just the non-melodic drums. This group came to the United States and landed in Omaha in 1912. From there, they used to travel to different towns in Nebraska and other states, wherever they were invited. They used to be quite a busy little band until the time of Prohibition. That cut their activities to a stand-still and the boys had to learn some trades as endeavors for their livelihoods. The only one still living today, the harp player, Frank Kopecky, became a successful shoe store owner and prominent citizen of Schuyler, Nebraska. The first violinist, Frank Melichar, was quite a remarkable and prominent man who lived in Omaha. He was very well liked and popular in his community until he passed away. The records of the other two gentlemen, violinist Frank Kudrnac and flute player John Sanda, were not available to me. Well, that is the story of very young adventurers who covered a large territory, over different lands and languages in two continents. This would be the extent of my story describing the history of four young people, but I also intended to develop on the subject of the erroneous attitude of millions of intelligent and educated people, who insist on accepting the theory that the dance music called polka is of Polish origin. Also, that the “Czardas,” (Cardas) which originated in Bohemia, are a Hungarian creation. There are a few misconceptions of a similar kind, prevailing among the wide public, that I’ve had in mind, which are generally unknown to many potential “contributors.” However, since it is too late, we have to just forget about it.

By James Hruban, Schuyler, NE

DODGE COMMUNITY BAND

The Dodge Community Band was organized in 1923 by A. J. Clement. In 1928 this band won the “Omaha Bee News” popularity contest in the Class B division of a radio broadcast. A.J. Clement was the director of the Dodge Band for many years. The band served its community well with its summer concerts, at the festivals, ball games, and representing Dodge in other communities.

The Dodge Community Band was succeeded by the Dodge High School Band of which the community was equally proud. Both bands were supported in part by a tax levy and continued providing the Wednesday evening summer concerts.

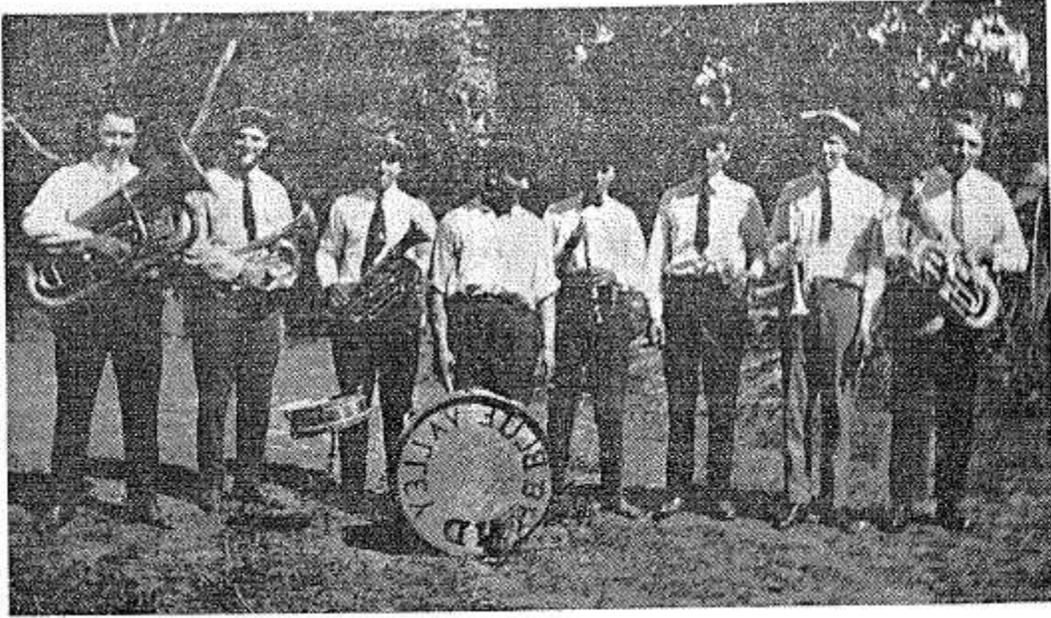
From “Dodge Diamond Days” 1963



First row: A.J. Clement, Director; Vincent Kriz, Elhard Kriz, John Horak, Earl Nelson, Harold Patterson, Otto Kurz, Emil Tomka, Anton Stecher, Joe Wiesen, Joe Tichota
Second row: Edward Minarik, Anton Kriz, Alois Kriz, Stephen Janecek, Marvin Deer, John Skala, Tom Vogltance, Joe Stecher, John Vogltance, E.E. Kauffold, Charles Faltin, Joe Frei, Joe Clement, James Smith.
Third row: Charles Vrba, G.J. Bergmeyer, Frank J. Ritzdorf, Frank Sindelar, Harry Ralston, Ollie Miller, Frank Bartosh

BLUE VALLEY BAND

The Blue Valley Band was organized by Lewis Plachy, who had had previous musical training. Most of the other members took lessons from Professor Quiverin in Dorchester, Nebraska. There were eight original members that started playing together in 1922. They are as follows in the picture, starting from the left:



John Freeouf, baritone; William Plouzek, cornet; Lewis Plachy, cornet; James Kucera, clarinet; Joseph Chrastil, drums; Henry Zumpfe, alto; Jay Jeffries, alto; Rudolph Chrastil, bass

They used to get together in their homes to practice and always had a party. They played waltzes and polkas for public dances in ZC B J Halls and for weddings and parties. There were other members that played with them at various times. They were Arthur Bauer, William Pospisil, Frank Brchan, Joseph Smrz, and Anton Neuviatk. The band existed for about five years and usually got four dollars for playing from 8 in the evening until 3 or 4 in the morning. They are all deceased except for Rudolph Chrastil.

By Mrs. Abbie Plouzek, Crete, NE

THE JIM HOVORKA BAND

Jim Hovorka was born in what is now Czechoslovakia in 1889. He came here in 1903, and his family first went to Oklahoma, then eventually settled in Schuyler, Nebraska. He married Agnes Hruza of Prague, Nebraska and they had six children. After his marriage the couple moved to Omaha in 1917.

He took violin lessons in Czechoslovakia and after coming here he bought an accordion and taught himself to play. The accordion was a year younger than he was when he bought it.

In 1929, he started his first band after teaching himself to play the piano accordion when he was 30 years old. His sons, George and Ernest, played with him after teaching themselves to play the trombone and tuba while going to South High School. They traveled through Nebraska, Iowa, Oklahoma, and South Dakota, where Jim became acquainted with Lawrence Welk, who also was starting out with a polka band. Jim called his band "The Harmony Boys" When George and Ernest came home from the service, he started up the band again in 1945. While his sons were gone, he played with Charlie Kucera's Band.

Jim's band traveled extensively through Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota, as well as once in a while in Texas. He gave up traveling to play in town almost every weekend. By then, they called themselves "Omaha's Biggest Little Polka Band." He was asked to lead the Czech Brass Band in concert in Omaha Sokol Hall in 1965. He was asked because he the oldest such musician in Omaha and had one of the first polka bands. During the early 1930's he also played over radio station WAAW at the Grain Exchange every Saturday morning at 5:30 a.m.

He passed away in July, 1969, at the age of 79, just short of his 80th birthday, which would have been in September. He is a member of the Polka Hall of Fame at Sokol Omaha..



Stastny Orchestra,
Clarkson, NE
Front row, left to right
Stastny, Nemeč, J.F.
Jirovec
Back row: Albert,
Shubert, Frank J.
Miller and Vaclav Budin.

STAR DUST ORCHESTRA

One of the most popular dance bands in the late 1930's was the Star Dust Orchestra from Wilber, Nebraska, which was managed by Leonard Tyser. The Star Dust Orchestra was organized in 1935. It was the offspring of Clark's Band which was very popular at that time in Wilber. Clark's Band was composed mainly of high school students with the addition of a few adults. It consisted of forty members, more or less. Mr. Clark conducted bands in about seven or eight other towns in the Wilber area. Some of the bands in the other towns were small and sometimes inexperienced, so Mr. Clark would often take a support group from Wilber to help out those other bands. This group consisted of Lloyd Tachovsky, Richard Stastny, Alfred Novak, Willis Skrdla and Leonard Tyser. It was this group with the addition of a piano player and drummer who formed the first Star Dust Orchestra. All but three members were high school students. The orchestra played Czech, German, and popular dance music. Their theme song, of course, was the popular song "Star Dust."

The original members were: Lloyd Tachovsky and Richard Stastny, trumpets; Alfred Novak, trombone; Willis Skrdla, saxophone and clarinet; Victor Maryska, drums; Harold Zwonechek, piano; and Leonard Tyser, tuba. Leonard Tyser was also the organizer and booking manager. When some of the original members left to attend college or had some other commitments, others who played with the orchestra were: Robert Tichy, trumpet; Leon Gerner, trombone; Norman Blaha, clarinet and saxophone; Ed Smith, piano; and Lumir Tachovsky, trumpet.

The Star Dust Orchestra played in most of the dance halls in southeastern Nebraska and northeastern Kansas. When it was first organized, the orchestra broadcast over radio station KGBZ at York, Nebraska.

In 1941, when Leonard Tyser was drafted into the Army, Victor Maryska took charge of the orchestra which remained in existence until a few years ago.

Submitted by Leonard Tyser, Wilber, NE

HAJNY BROTHERS BAND AND ORCHESTRA



Pictured standing is my father, Frank Hajny, the oldest, and seated from left to right are my uncles, Edward, Emil, Vas, John, and Charley. Charley was the youngest and is the only one still living, residing in Portland, Oregon. My mother, who is now 84, told me this picture was made in 1915.

Vas Hajny, third from left, served in WW I and after the war he played in the DeWeese, Nebraska military band, directed by John Soucheck, who also helped form the Hajny Brothers Orchestra. In the clippings from the year of 1920 is a story of my wife's parents' wedding. This description of the wedding of Mr. And Mrs. Emil Skalka appeared in the Sun, a Clay County newspaper: "After dinner the wedding party led the way to the handsome dance pavilion especially erected for the occasion and the DeWeese Military Band under the direction of Prof. John Soucheck sounded the opening strains of a waltz. In the band were approximately 20 to 30 musicians. Six Hajny brothers and six Skala brothers also played in this band.

By Emil F. Hajny, Hastings, NE

STEVE AND CLARENCE CHRASTIL

Steve Chrastil played trumpet with the Jerry Koci orchestra in the years 1930-1932. He then joined the Joe Sinkule orchestra when he first started broadcasting over the radio station in York, Nebraska, and played with them over a year. Then in the years 1934-1937 we had a local orchestra from Pleasant Hill. We played lots of dances in that area. The musicians were: Norman Blaha, sax and clarinet; Leon Gerner, trombone; Vic Maryska, drums; Ed Smith, piano; Elmer Tachovsky, trumpet; Clarence Chrastil, bass; and Steve Chrastil, trumpet. We went under the name of "Steve's Harmony Boys."

In 1938-1939, Steve and Clarence had an orchestra in Abilene, Kansas, where we broadcast quite regularly over radio station KZBI, and played dances in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska.

In 1940-1941, we had an orchestra at Kearney, Nebraska where we broadcast over radio station KGFW regularly. We played dances all around the Kearney area, and way over west to the Wyoming line. The musicians at that time were: Billi Jezek, piano and accordion; Fred Chrastil, sax and clarinet; Karl Bartz, sax and clarinet; Smith, drums; Clarence Chrastil, bass; and Steve Chrastil, trumpet. Steve and Clarence were both born in Wilber, Nebraska. Clarence lives in Muncie, Indiana and Steve retired from Boeing Airplane Co. in Wichita. He then moved to Wilson, Kansas where he toots his horn with the Wilson City Band in the summer, and along with his wife, Rose on piano and John Jemick on drums, plays at the nursing home every once in a while. Steve and Rose also play with the Wilson Czech Masters.

Steve J. Chrastil, Box 299, Wilson, KA 67490

ERNEST FICTUM

Ernest Fictum, now 63, was 13 years old when he got his first accordion, a Hohner 2-row red accordion. In those years money was hard to come by. He had to sell his bicycle in order to get his accordion. As much as he loved his bike, he made his decision. At age 15 he started playing with Fred Spinar's band. The members of Fred's band were: Fred Spinar, leader (now deceased), trumpet and clarinet; Ernest Fictum, accordion (both button and piano); Fred Chrastil, clarinet; Robert Kotouc, drums; Joe Chrastil, bass; Lou Hoffman, trumpet. They used to broadcast from radio station KMMJ, Clay Center, Nebraska for one hour weekly. Then the band disbanded so Ernest played accordion with the Cochnar Band. Somewhat later he started his own band called "Ernest Fictum's Accordion

Band.” The members were Ernest Fictum (leader) accordion; Albion Broz, trombone; Clarence Maca, trumpet; Al Cudley, bass; Paul Petersen (deceased), drums; Edward Burda, saxophone and clarinet. On March 4, 1939, Ernest Fictum’s Accordion Band played with the Sparta Orchestra of Omaha and the Star Dust Band of Wilber for a triple battle dance at the Sokol Hall. I have a beautiful photo of all three bands in one group taken by the former Wagner Photo Shop of Crete, but I do not wish to part with it to send along with this write-up.

Then came World War II and Ernest was called into the service from September 3, 1942 until October 19, 1945. He served in the Pacific area except for six months. When he returned home from the service he started playing with the Bohemian Aces. Ernest changed instruments and played drums. He played with that group many years. After that he joined the Gil Krajnik Orchestra as a drummer and played with him for over 10 years. On October 13, 1979 he played his last job with the Gil Krajnik Orchestra. He is the vocalist for the song, “Poor Me” on the Gil Krajnik record, “Run on Wheels.”

Now he plays the accordion again with jobs on his own as “Ernie Fictum and his Accordion.” He is operator and owner of a gravel pit which keeps him busy. We have two daughters, Sandy and Ricki.

By Mrs. Ernest (Irene) Fictum.

ROBERT VOSIKA -- Organizer of Band in Wilber, Nebraska

Bob's Melo-Tones Band was organized in 1960, formerly as the Wilber Polka Band which was organized in 1957. Names of the musicians and their instruments are as follows: Robert Vosika, drums; Warren Ripa, alto saxophone, clarinet and vocal; Bernard Broz, trumpet and vocal, George Hynek, Sr., accordion, Glen Ripa, bass; Lumir Freeouf, tenor saxophone.

Occasional musicians were Dolen Freeouf, accordion; Edward Spinar, tenor saxophone; and Adolf Sobotka, bass.



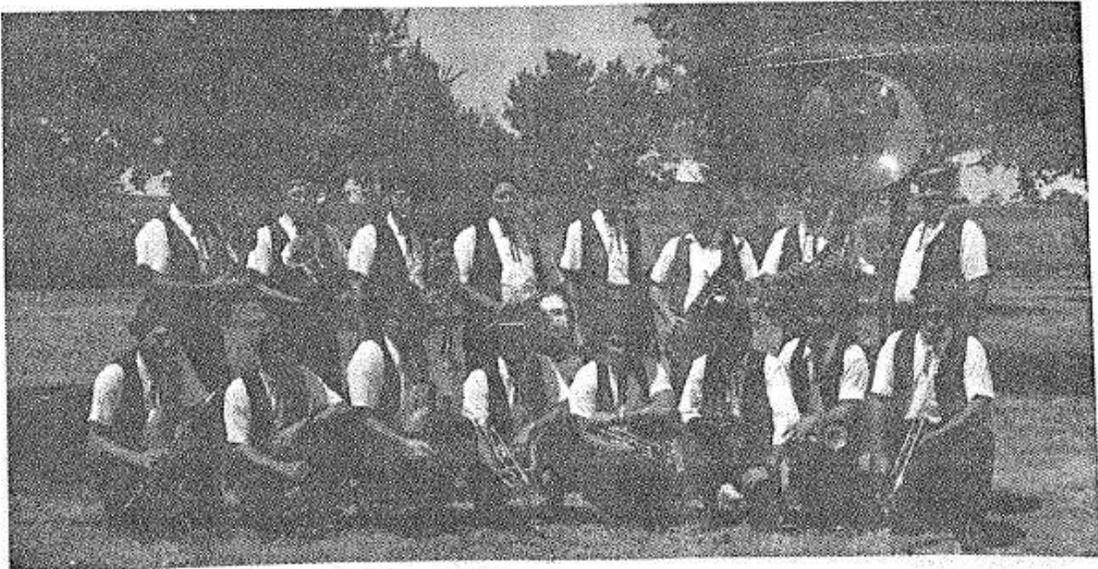
Robert Vosika band -- from left to right: Bernard Broz, Glen Ripa standing, Warren Ripa, Robert Vosika, band leader standing, and George Hynek, Sr. They played for all the Wilber Czechs of Nebraska festivals and took part in all the parades. They entertained the Eagles, American Legion, V.F.W. and other clubs. They also played holiday dances in Wilber, where they played old original Czech music as well as modern. They played in Beatrice, Lincoln, Fairbury and Wilber and at local halls and clubs throughout the area.

They have a record made of their dance band selection at the Battle Dance Saturday of August 4, 1962, "Az budou vonet lipy," (When the Linden Blooms Again), along with other musical instruments and vocal selections. This was the first record cut for the first Wilber Czechs of Nebraska Festival, in 1962 at the Sokol hall in Wilber, Nebraska. In 1970, due to the death of Robert Vosika, the band disbanded.

Mrs. Robert Vosika, Box 45, Wilber, NE

MILLIGAN LEGION CZECH BRASS BAND

We are proud to introduce to you the Milligan Legion Czech Brass Band. In 1966, a group of Czech music lovers decided that Milligan, Nebraska should have a Czech brass band. They wanted to keep alive the heritage and love for Czech music. With this in mind the Milligan Czech Brass Band was organized. In 1967 they played their first concert at the Milligan Auditorium. Since then they have played at ZCBJ state and district conventions, legion conventions, festivals, parades and many other celebrations.



Front row (from left) Louis Dale Svec, clarinet; Frank Koahler, clarinet; Harold Kubicek, Jr. clarinet; Leonard Kassik, trumpet; Ralph Kassik, trumpet; Robert Krupicka, trumpet; Michael Kassisk, trumpet; Rudy Jirkovsky, trumpet.
Back row (from left) Delmar Kuska, alto horn; Alan Skrivanek, alto horn; William Slezak, snare drum; Frank Kassik, cymbals and bass drum; Randy Capek, tenor saxophone; John Halama, bass horn; Cleo Miller, clarinet.

All of the members of the band are of Czech or German decent. Through encouragement of the younger Czech generation, they now have several members from the younger generation in the band.

No band members consider themselves professional musicians, but the love for Czech music and the friendships they share have molded this into a group of musicians that play from their hearts. Their one goal is to keep the love for Czech music alive.

Band members: Leonard Kassik, band director and trumpet; Rudy Jirkovsky, trumpet; Michael Kassik, trumpet; Robert Krupicka, trumpet; Ralph Kassik, trumpet;

Loren Skrivanek, trombone; Leo Kovanda, trombone; Delmas Kuska, alto horn; Randy Capek, tenor sax; Louis D. Svec, clarinet; Cleo Miller, clarinet; Frank Koahler, clarinet; Harold Kubicek, clarinet; Frank Kassik, cymbals and bass drum; William Slezak, snare drums; Jim (Cap) Nohava, bass drums; John Halama, bass horn; Lois Sluka, clarinet; Donna Sluka, trumpet; Mark Oliva, baritone; Alan Skrivanek, alto horn.

Substitute band members are Ernie Becwar, bass drum; Brian Srajhans, snare drums; Jim Urbanek, baritone; Dolan Freeouf, trombone; Chris Sawyer, clarinet.

Leonard Kassik, Milligan, NE

CZECH MUSIC IN LINWOOD, NEBRASKA

The first band in the community of Linwood in Butler County was organized by John B. Tichacek with Jakub Vitamvas, Jan Krejci, Josef Barta, Jan Vavra, Fr. Plastek, and Fr. Kadlec. They made very good music and played for all the dances in the neighborhood for many years until the competition got too strong and they disbanded.

Then came Judge Cherney (Cerny) and he started a band which played for some time. Jake Vitamvas reorganized his band with his sons, Jim, Anton, Frank, Vitam, and Ed Tichacek. Following that, Edward Hobert, his wife Mary Julia Kracl, and a few others had an orchestra and played for many club dances. Also, Judge Cherney with his sons had a strong orchestra and played for many dances.

Edward Hobert organized a concert band and that played for a while until some members moved out and they then disbanded. Then in 1908, he organized another band of 22 members who played together for many years until the close of the World War when they folded. This band consisted of Hobert, his wife on cornet; Alf Tichacek, Ed Halub, Jimmie Tomanek, Albert Vitamvas, cornet; William Tichacek, Anton Vitamvas, clarinet; Edw. Tichacek, baritone; Edw. Kaveny, Joe Macholan, Edw. Vitamvas, alto; Joe Walla, Fred Mundil, trombone; Joe Lebeda, tenor; Jim Vitamvas, Ernest Hallstead, bass; Charley Franklin, snares; George Cranford, bass drum, later to have Fred Thomas take that place; E.P. Wesely, E flat clarinet. This band was one of the best of its size anywhere. They played at many places, county fairs, picnics and concerts.

Following them came the Will Vrana Band of 30 members who played for a few years and then was taken over by Alf Tichacek. That band consisted of George Cihacek, Bud Drasky, Fr. Jelinek, Edward Rezac, cornet; Reynold Sedlicky, Alpha Young, William Tichacek, Eelyn Chernasak, clarinet; Vernon Danahy, Lemer Tichacek, Howard Danahy, Harold Homer, Clarence Shavlik, sax; E.B. Cranford, baritone sax; Ervin Stech, tenor; Vince Peltz, Charles Stava, alto; Leonard Vavra, Lewis Macholan, Will Vrana, bass; George Vitamvas and Frederick Thomas, drums. This band played for a Decoration Day program and was in good shape until it disbanded. Then Alf

Tichacek organized the Girls Band; Fay Cranford, Bernice Walla, violin; William Tichacek, clarinet; Neome and Ardith Strahn, alto and tenor sax; Mildred Vavra and Alf Tichacek, cornet; Helen Mundil, piano; Lemer Tichacek, James Mallon, trombone; Charley Strahn, bass and Alice Svoboda, trap drum. This orchestra played for the Eastern Star picnic at the Alf Tichacek place where they had their outing. They also broadcast on a Norfolk station and played for a dance. Then, due to a misunderstanding this group broke up. Many were the pleasant evenings spent while it lasted.

Now the last orchestra organized by Alf Tichacek consisted of 10 members who were: Vince peltz, Leonard Kavan, cornet; Wm. Tichacek, clarinet, Vernon Danahy, tenor sax, Reynold Sedlicky, alto sax; Adolph Sedlicky, troboe; Ray Barcl, bass; Edward Eckstein, violin; Alf Tichacek, trap drums and Lora Duda, piano. This orchestra was very popular for years. There were many other bands, among them the Mansik Band and the Edward

Duda Orchestra that played for many dances. This is part of the book "A History of the Linwood, NE Community" prepared and written by Alfred Tichacek, 1971.

ROBERT TICHY JR. ---67 YEARS OF MUSIC



Robert Tichy Jr. was born on February 10, 1906.

His first association with music came through his father, Robert Tichy Sr. who played the button accordion. When Robert Tichy Jr. was seven years old he began playing the button accordion at home and in his country school near Wilber, Nebraska. At age 9 he developed an interest in the violin and under the guidance of his country school teacher, developed a desire for music that would become a major part of his life.

During high school, under the advice of his parents, Robert concentrated primarily on his studies, disregarding any ideas of playing in the school band.

But in his senior year, his father gave him a trumpet for Christmas. He took lessons twice a week and in 3 months was playing in the Wilber High School Band.

It didn't take long until people started asking Robert to help them out in their bands. He started playing trumpet in the City Commercial Club Band and soon was playing in Kubert's Brass Band, Pasek's Brass Band, Center Star Band, Kunc's Band, Frank Krajnik's Band, Bill Savage's Band, Slepicka's Band, Peterson's Band and the Jerry Koci Orchestra.

Robert graduated from Wilber High School in 1924, and in 1927 he organized his own band, The Hot Spots. It was an eight-piece orchestra that played modern music along with Czech music and the Beseda dance. The modern music of this era is the type that Lawrence Welk showcases in his program. It was during this time that Robert began building up an enormous library of modern and Czech music for his band. Robert played trumpet and sang vocals along with the other members of the band which included 2 saxophones, a trombone, a banjo, a piano, a drummer and a bass horn. There was no public address system with the band. Robert sang vocals through a megaphone like Rudy Vallee did. Robert and his band usually played for \$5.00 per man. Every once in a while a job would bring \$8.00 apiece, which was big money back in the 1920s and 1930s.

During the thirties, Robert also played for dances that were called Gitney dances. These are dances where every dance costs a dime. A number would be played, then an encore, and then the dance floor would be cleared off and you would start all over again. It was during the thirties that Robert gave music lessons. He had eight students.

Robert also played at Czech plays. His band would play one hour before the play, which would start at 7 or 8 o'clock, play intermission, and then play again after the play was over. The plays were usually over at 10 or 11 o'clock. By the time the chairs were picked up and the floor was swept, his band would start playing around 11 or 11:30 and play until 3 in the morning. Robert recalls one incident when he played until 4 A.M., got to bed at 5, got up at 6, and was cultivating corn before 7 o'clock that same morning.

He said music relaxed him and rejuvenated him. The , Hot Spots played on radio stations KMMJ at Clay Center, KGBZ at York, and KFAB in Lincoln. When WWII broke out, the Hot Spots ended. Many of the boys in the band went into the service which created the difficulty of maintaining a consistent membership. This developed into a problem when it came to booking dance jobs as Robert was never sure who would be available to play in the band at the time of a job, so he folded up the band and played with Benny Marcelino for two or three years and then with Vic Stardust for three years.

In 1957 Robert joined Hank Zahourek's Melody Masters. Robert's son, Norman, also played piano in the band. During this time Robert bought a piano accordion. He sang vocals and played accordion, trumpet, piano and bass while playing for the Melody Masters.

In 1958, Robert bought a Cordavox, which is like a computerized accordion. The Cordavox puts out more music than the basic accordion and puts it out in different styles and tones. Robert said that he is still learning the many intricacies of the instrument but he enjoys the richness and fullness of sound of the instrument, especially when playing three part harmony.

In 1979, Robert quit the Melody Masters and began playing with his grandson who plays drums and guitar. They revived the name Hot Spots and played as a two-piece combo locally, featuring Robert and his Cordavox. The music they play is Czech, western, and modern.

Information compiled by my grandson Robert E. Tichy

KARPISEK ORCHESTRA WILBER, NE

Irvin Karpisek, son of Mr. and Mrs. James P. Karpisek of Wilber, Nebraska, was born on April 29, 1918. He began his musical career at the early age of three when he learned to play the accordion from his father. Irvin also learned to play the E Flat clarinet which he used when he played with Rusty's Orchestra and the Frank Kunc Jr. Band.



In the early 1960's, Irvin organized his own band. One of the original members was his son Richard who played trumpet. The band was usually composed of five instruments: accordion, trumpet, saxophone, bass and drums.

Many excellent musicians played with the group at different times. At the time of

Irvin's death in September of 1977, the band members were as follows:

Irvin Karpisek	accordion (3 row Hlavacek)
Richard Karpisek	trumpet, flugal horn, baritone
James Sinkule	saxophone
John Kastanek	bass
Tony Keller	drums.

The Karpisek orchestra donated time and music playing for many different functions, such as Czech Days parades, political meetings, nursing home entertainment, etc. They also played for many wedding and anniversary dances. Irvin enjoyed playing the old-time Czech polkas and waltzes. He and his son Richard were also able to sing many of the numbers in the Czech language which many people appreciated.

Irvin met and made many good friends through his music and was in his glory when he and other musicians could have a jam session on the street during Wilber Czech Days. The preceding was written by Mary Beth Karpisek, wife of Richard Karpisek, who is the son of Mr. And Mrs. Irvin Karpisek.

SWOBODA MUSICAL FAMILY

Johny Swoboda was born in Omaha on January 9, 1929 to Mr. And Mrs. John Swoboda, Sr. At eight years of age, Johny started accordion lessons with John Matcha. He graduated from South High in 1946. While at South, he played bass horn and trumpet and was the drum major in his senior year. He also studied piano with Gertrude Hoden for five years.

He started playing professionally at Chop's Tavern on 13th Street with the Miles Mucha Silver Moon Orchestra when he was 16 years old. In 1947 he joined the Kostka Brothers Orchestra and in 1948, played with the Ed Vlasek Orchestra. Later he helped form the Dave Huskey Orchestra and played with them until 1950, when he retired from playing to devote more time to his business and family.

He started teaching accordion at Schmoller Mueller in 1947 when he was 18 years old. One day a week he traveled to Plattsmouth, Nebraska to teach the youngsters of that area. In January, 1949, Johny moved to 6047 S. 41st St., the first home of Johny Swoboda's Accordion Studios. By 1955 the modest basement studios were bursting with activity and the Swoboda family had outgrown the home. In May, 1956, Johny moved his business and family to the present location at 20th and Q Streets.

Johny started broadcasting the Johny Swoboda Polka Show from Radio Station KOOO. The show was very popular and grew from a one-hour to a three-hour show every Sunday. Many of Johny's students were featured on his polka show and were given an inside look at the professional world. In 1961, Johny left the radio show to pay attention to his business which was growing rapidly.

In 1963 Johnny changed the store's name to Swoboda's Music Center and added guitar and drums. Later band instruments and electronic equipment were added. Swoboda's Drum Pad was added in 1965 to make more room for the growth of the business.

A great number of today's polka band members walked through Swoboda's doors for their music lessons. Among these were Frank Remar, Lenny Rich, Fred Leas, Dean Hansen, Ray Dusatko, Ron Nadherny, Bob Zagozda, the Ponec Brothers, the Tomaneks, and many others. During this time, Johnny brought many famous polka people to Omaha to entertain polka lovers. The most notable were Lou Prohut, Myron Floren and Frank Yankovitch.

Today, Johnny still concentrates on the needs of today's polka band members. Johnny and his wife, the former Arlene Jelinek of Wahoo, Nebraska, were married on October 18, 1948. They had thirteen children: Mrs. Jolene Hamann Grove Dalton, Mrs. Sharon Stewart, Mrs. John (Phyllis) Kool, Jay; Mrs. John (Cathi) Tierney, Mrs. Timothy (Patti) Dunne, James, Teri, Tom, Mrs. Leroy (Conni) Lane, Larry, Tony, and Margaret.

All the children enjoyed music, Czech and otherwise, on their respective instruments, plus the close association with their Czech heritage in the South Omaha Sokols in which all of the Swoboda family belong and participate. The instruments each played are as follows:

Jolene	Accordion, piano, organ
Sharon	Accordion, organ, piano
Phyllis	Accordion, piano, organ, glockenspiel
Jay	Accordion, drums
Cathi	Accordion, organ, vibes
Patti	Accordion, organ
Jim	Accordion, drums
Teri	Accordion, clarinet
Tom	Accordion, sax
Conni	Accordion, piano, organ, guitar, flute, harp
Larry	Accordion, organ
Tony	Accordion, drums
Margie	Accordion, piano, organ, trumpet

The Swobodas' late son-in-law, Del Hamann, who was killed in a car-train accident in 1973, was very active in Czech music with his two-hour polka show on KOTD Radio, and his own polka band. He played the accordion with Al Grebnik. The children played together in duets, trios, quartets, bands and even a family band. This ten-piece band won many trophies and entertained at many functions.

In 1975, Patti was chosen Nebraska Czech queen and the family band got back together, 12 pieces this time, and entertained at the Saunders County Czech Festival.

As the children got older, and their Sokol interests increased, they learned to dance the polka and waltzes and became members of the South Omaha Sokol Beseda Dancers, who travel many places to display this beautiful Czech folk dance. Patti, Teri and Conni dance with a group of girls, called the Big Joe Dancers, which performed at the polka festivals sponsored by "Big Joe" Siedlik annually. Jim and Tom joined the group when Big Joe's T.V. Polka Show was aired. These dancers opened and closed each show, learning new routines for each show.

In 1978, the Swoboda family was asked to dance at the Orpheum Theater for a Musical show featuring the Lawrence Welk performers. Dressed in Czech costumes, the family demonstrated the mazurka, waltz, and the polka with many variations. Teri and Tom were excited to be asked to dance with Bobby and Cissy on stage when the Lawrence Welk band appeared in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1976.

The whole family loves Czech music, and attending the dances at South Omaha Sokol is their favorite way of having fun. Conni Swoboda reigned as South Omaha Sokol Czech Queen in 1977. She played Czech compositions on the flute and the harp for the talent competition.

Mu-zi-kan-ti, co dě-lá- te? Mu-zi-kan-ti, co dě-lá-te?

Má-te hu- sli-čky a ne-hrá-te, a ne-hrá- te!

Zahréte mně na husličky Zahréte mně na ty dudy.
a rozveselte ty družičky! a rozveselte všechny všudy!

Zahréte mně na tu basu Zahréte mně na trumpétu
a rozveselte všechnu chasu! a vyprovodte mne až k métu!

Zahréte mně věci spolu
a vyprovodte mne až domů!

MATH SLADKY AND HIS BAND



My Dad bought me a piano accordion in Fremont on which I started playing in the 1940's. I had to take a bus once a week from Wahoo to Fremont for lessons. I didn't take very many lessons because of seasonal work. When I did have the time to go again, I lost interest in playing accordion. I really always wanted to play the drums.

I remember whenever my folks went to a dance, they didn't have to worry about me. I could always be found on the stage near the drummer.

My aunt from Omaha found a bass drum that was all metal, with a foot pedal. She got a snare drum from the dime store and gave it to me for my birthday. The thing I will never forget is that the bass drum had "Maxwell House Coffee" printed on it.

I played along with polka music on the radio every day at 6:15 from WNAX, Yankton, South Dakota. Finally, Dad got me a cheap set of drums that had real skins like the real thing. I took them to parties, CYO meetings, etc., and played with accordion players and some other kids who played other instruments. As time went on, I wanted to play in a band. No one needed me at the time so I decided I would start a band by myself. I don't know how I got enough money together but I bought music and some old music stands. I looked for bookings and found one here and there that would pay me as much as \$21.00 for an eight piece band. Little by little we improved and became interested in playing on the radio. That was the thing for bands those days. I found out that the Blue Jackets, run by Gene Benes and Val Hruska were giving up their polka band as well as their spot on radio KLMS in Lincoln, Nebraska. I filled their place and from then on things got better and better.

I had good men approach me to play because we were on the radio. This resulted in playing for more dances. I had the radio show on Sundays live for over seven years, rain or shine, sleet or snow, and we always made it. Some of the time we came home late

from a job and had to be back in Lincoln from Wahoo by noon to start playing at 12:15. Soon there were more sponsors and we ended up being on the radio seven days a week, 45 minutes on week days and one hour and 15 minutes on Sundays. Week days it was recorded but live on Sundays. We started out with a Ford station wagon and a trailer but with fast depreciation, we decided to get a bus. I found an old 21-passenger one in Omaha. I had to pull it home to put the engine in it from a truck. We used this bus many years until someone took the cotter key out of a front wheel nut and we lost the wheel. Needless to say, the bus was wrecked. We then got a four seated car we called the "weiny car," and carried our gear in the last seat, the trunk and on a top rack.

I decided to get out of the band business in 1959 because we averaged over 300 jobs a year. Our peak years were 1955-1956. I got called into the military service in 1961 and had to stay for a year. When I got back and jobbed around a little, many people encouraged me to start my own band again. This second time I started with a three piece group (accordion, tuba and drums). Little by little I added a trombone, then a trumpet. For the bigger places that want a six piece band, I use a banjo. That is what my band consists of today. When I started, my family and I lived on a farm southeast of Wahoo, Nebraska. In 1956 we moved to a farm north of Valparaiso, Nebraska. After coming back from the service in 1962, we lived in Ashland and then moved to Waverly, our present address.

I am a licensed helicopter and airplane pilot and licensed mechanic since leaving the farm. I don't fly solo anymore as it is too expensive. I presently work for the Nebraska State Patrol. We have played for nearly all the festivals around at least once:

Wilber Czech Days, Wilber, NE	Polka Days, Sioux City, IA
Dwight Czech Days, Dwight, NE	Polka Days, Norfolk, NE
Pla-Mor Czech Days, Lincoln, NE	Kolache Days, Verdigre, NE
Czech Days, Norman, WI	Polka Days, Wahoo, NE
Gibbon Polka Days, Gibbon, NE	Neb. Polka Days, Peony Park, Omaha
Polka Days, Sokol Auditorium, Omaha	Durant Polka Days, Durant, IA
Labor Day Polka Day, Swisher, IA	Labor Day Polka Day, Wagner, SD
Czech Days, Tabor, SD	Central Kansas Polka Days, Wichita, KS
Czech Days, Wilson, KS	Winter Polka Days, Bel-Rae Ballroom, Moundsview, MN
Mini-Polka Days, Milligan, NE	
Czech Festival, Gateway, Lincoln, NE	Octoberfest, Norman, WI
Czech Day, Cuba KS	

We play primarily Czech polka and waltz music with Czech vocals. We do play some modern music for those who want a variety. I usually do all the singing with our band in Czech, and some in English. We have played in all the surrounding states: South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa and of course all over the state of Nebraska. Presently we are negotiating tours into Canada, North Dakota and Texas. We have played in virtually every place that can have dances and then for some parties and concerts. We have a mixed audience sometimes but usually it is largely Czech or German.

We made two records with the first KLMS Polka Band which were on 78 rpm only in those days. With the present band we are on eight LP albums with a new one



Math Sladky and his band. From left: Laddie Dolezal, accordion; Lyle Divis, trumpet; Math Sladky, drums and band leader and Czech vocals; Don Horacek, tube (wind bass); Emil Korbelik, trombone; All Welsch, banjo to be released soon. We are also on another album with five other bands which was recorded live at a dance at Gibbon Polka Days, Gibbon, Nebraska. All but the first two albums of the present band are still available. The first two are out of print. All of our albums feature Czech music and Czech singing. There are a few English lyrics but not very many. One album is titled "Old Czech

Favorites.” No one else in the band sings Czech. They may know the words, but can’t or won’t sing.

Other bands I can remember years ago:

Jerry Havel	Prague, NE
Charlie Kucera	Omaha, NE
Red Raven (Eddie Svoboda)	Omaha, NE
Eddie Janak	Omaha, NE
Vince Shimerka	Prague, NE
Jay Kay (Jerry Jaron)	Omaha, NE
Joe Sinkule	
Johny Matuska	Yankton, SD
Frank Kostka	Omaha, NE
Jim Hovorka	Omaha, NE
Jerry Koci	Crete, NE
Ermil Brdicko	Clarkson, NE
Frank Kucera	Abie or Bruno, NE
Ernie Kucera	Abie, NE
Al Grebnick	Schuyler, NE
U-neta Orchestra	Dorchester, NE
Hank Zahourek	Dorchester, NE

I will try to recall someone of musicians that played with us. I don’t know where they

all are today.

Vernon Belik,	Prague, NE	sax and accordion
Milo Navratil	Bee, NE	sax
Joe Peterzilka	Lincoln, NE	trumpet
Val Hruska	Waverly, NE	trumpet
Bert Hernicek		trumpet
Marlene Hurt (now married)		piano
Charlie Dvorak	Omaha, NE	trumpet
Jerry Chaloupa	Omaha, NE	trumpet
Eddie Caloupa	Omaha, NE	trumpet
Jerry Reed	Lincoln, NE	sax, clarinet
John Byres		trumpet
Kenny Grebenick	Omaha, NE	trumpet
Al Grebnick	Schuyler, NE	trumpet, sax, clarinet
Joe Prochaska	Abie, NE	tuba
Bob Stepanik	Dubois, NE	tuba
Frank Sobota	Columbus, NE	tuba
Emil Brodecky	Lincoln NE	sax

Milo Brchan	Lincoln, NE	sax
Loren Racek	Prague or Morse Bluff, NE	sax
Dennis Wesely	Prague, NE	sax, trumpet and piano
Gawain Dvorak	Wahoo, Ne	accordion
Eddie Vanek	Malmo, Ne	tuba
Rudy Faimon		trumpet
Melvin Holtorf	Malmo, NE	trumpet
Eddie Spinar	Crete, NE	sax
Bob Krivohlavek	Fremont, NE	trumpet
Kenny Bolte	Exeter, NE	sax
Lou Vajgrt	Lincoln, NE	trumpet
Kenny Meisinger		tuba
Elmer Nemec	Crete, NE	tuba
Adolph Nemec	Prague, NE	sax
Ernie Hovorka	Omaha, NE	tuba
Sonny Hovorka,	Omaha, NE	tuba
Ron Nadherny	Omaha, NE	trumpet
Vern Luddington	Omaha, NE	tuba

Present members:

Leonard Vidlak	David City, NE	trumpet
Laddie Dolezal	David City, NE	accordion
Don Horacek	Brainard, NE	tuba
Emil Korbelik	Ashland, NE	trombone
Lyle Divis	Brainard, Ne	trumpet
Al Welsch	Lincoln, NE	banjo
Rudy Dvorak	Omaha, NE	tuba
Emil Herms	David City, NE	trumpet
Dave Anderso	Topeka, KS	tuba

I am married to Geraldine Meduna. We have one son and one daughter. Our son is married and has three daughters. Our daughter is married and has one son. My wife came from the farm also, north of Valparaiso. Our son lives in Waverly and works there at Brownie Manufacturing. Our daughter lives in Bruno and they are farmers. My mother is still living in Wahoo. I have three brothers and one sister all married with their own families. I was born in Wahoo on September 12, 1930.

I helped organize the chapter of Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln, along with Mr. and Mrs. Jake Hamsa and Dorothy Stepan.

CZECH DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH OMAHA

In past years there were rich Czech dramatic and musical programs in the National Hall (Narodni sin) at 21st and U Streets in South Omaha.

Mrs. Anna Novotna sent me just a few old posters she saved of the theatrical dramas and operettas performed by the dramatic group of the Sokol Fugner-Tyrs. Some of those were an operetta, "Device z krcmy" (The Girl from the Tavern) presented on January 27th, 1935; a drama "Bordynkari" presented November 3, 1935, both in the National Hall, and on December 1, 1935 an operetta "Tri nevesty pod strechou" (Three Brides Under A Roof).

In the same hall, a program celebrating the 17th anniversary of Czechoslovak independence was performed by ZCJB Lodge Hvezda Svobody (Lodge of the Star of Freedom.) The Dramatic Club Vujan performed an operetta, "Svestkova alej aneb dcerusky tatika_Berusky" (The Prune Alley or the Girls of the Papa Beruska.

Many Omaha Czech orchestras have played in that National Hall in the past years, They were: Vaclav Hovorka; Vaclav Tourek and his Golden Prague (Zlata Praha) Orchestra; the Frank Melichar Orchestra playing for Czech operettas; the Adola Pechar

Orchestra, the Joe Sinkule band playing for dances and radio; the Lyric orchestra; the Sparta

Orchestra; the Frank Kucera, Ernie Kucera and Karel Dvorak orchestras; the Red Raven band directed by Mr. Svoboda; the Smetana orchestra; the Happy Go Lucky orchestra, Leo Buglewicz; and the Metz Bohemians under the name Revolán Orchestra directed by bandmaster Ivan Souba.

Picture of the "Metz Bohemians) Dance Advertisement

DANCE

THE METZ BOHEMIANS

COURTESY OF FONTENELLE BREWING CO.—METZ AND ROBIN HOOD—OMAHA, NEBR.

*To the Music of This Popular Orchestra
Old Time and Modern Swing Music*

Milada Pražanová - Ella Kocanda Vocals

Poster of the play "Nase Zlata Katy"

Dramatický Odbor Těl. Jed. Sokol Omaha

— SEHRAJE —

v neděli odpoledne, 26. března 1950

V SOKOL. AUDITORIU NA 13. A MARTHA UL. V OMAZE

NAŠE ZLATÁ KATY

Veselohra o 3. jednáních od Karla Baláka.

Následující hrají:

RADA LEONARD MOUREK.....p. Stanislav Hasterdlo, st.
PANÍ RADOVÁ.....pí. Marie Dobrovolná
CILKA, jejíž dcera.....pí. Ladislava Bolek-Pražanová
ING. VILDA TOMÁNEK.....p. Gustav Císař
PANÍ KUTEJZLÍKOVÁ.....pí. Anna Bolková
ROMUALD VONBRUCH.....p. Josef Bolek
ČERNÁ LILÍ.....pí. Růžena Hasterdlová
KATY, služebná.....pí. Anna Novotná

Děj se odehrává v Praze, v době přítomné, v bytě rady Mourka.

Divadlo řídí pí. ANASTAZIE KRÁTKÁ Napověda p. JOS. TOMÁNEK
Inspicientka pí. OTILIE CHARVATOVÁ

Veselá tato hra zajisté každého mile pobaví a rozesměje. Ředitelce pí. Anastazii Krátké podařilo se hru po mnohých obtížích dobře obsadit a naše divadlo milovné obecenstvo může se těšit na pěkné pobavení.

Začátek ve 2:15 odpoledne

Vstupné 75c (daň zahrnuta)

Při divadle hraje z ochoty pan
DAVE HUSKEY a jeho orchestr.

Poster for OSLAVU, Rad Hvezda Svobody

Dramatický Odbor Tel. Jed. Sokol Omaha

— SEHRAJE —

v neděli odpoledne, 29. dubna 1951

V SOKOL. AUDITORIU NA 13. A MARTHA UL. V OMAZE

A V TOM ZÁMKU BYLA PANNA

Veselohra o 3 jednáních od Adolfa Branaida

OSOBY:

ROZKOŠNÁ MADLA	.....	pí. Anni Novotný
HRABĚ IGNÁC PUMPRNIKL z Nemanic	.....	p. Jos. Bolek
POLYDOR, jeho pravoboček	.....	p. Ray Andrla
TRUMBUS FRIC, zámecký lokaj a průvodce cizinců	.....	p. Frank Pardubský
LÍZINKA, jeho dcera	.....	sl. Helen Janiček
KAMIL BENDER, učitel hudební	.....	p. Josef Vacek
RADA ZIMOSTRÁZ, jeho strýc	.....	p. Alois Křápek
ADELAIDA VON WOMATSCHEK	.....	pí. Marie Hořejší
EGON, její syn	.....	p. Gustav Cisar

Děj odehrává se v sešlém zámku hrabat z Nemanic v době po první světové válce.

Divadlo řídí pí. ANASTAZIE KRÁTKÁ

Inspicientka pí. ANNA BOLEK

Napověda p. JOSEF TOMÁNEK

Začátek ve 2:15 odpoledne

Vstupné 75c (daň zahrnuta)

PŘI DIVADLE HRAJE "RED RAVEN" ORCHESTRA

Picture of "Tunes" to set your feet a-dancing" from the South Omaha Sun, 5/15/1975
Edward Julils, one of the best Czech vocalists and actors, performed in the National Hall too. He was also the first who sang for radio stations WAAW and KOWH. He played the Czech accordion Heligonka and sang Czech songs.

P.S. Mrs. Doris Ettin sent a collection of copies of old posters too, but printing would be difficult.

NEBRASKA ORCHESTRAS PLAYING AT SOUTH OMAHA SOKOL HALL

April 19, Al Grebnick; April 26, Czech Landers, Frank Kucera; May 3, Frankie Remar; May 4, Dean Hansen Trio; May 17, Al Grebnick; May 24, Battle Dance, Jim Bochnicek vs. Math Sladky; June 7, Ron Nadherny; June 14, Ernie Kucera; June 20, Dean Hansen trio; June 21, Al Grebnick, June 22, Frank Kostka and the Boys; July 5, Jim Bochnicek; July 12, Ernie Kucera; July 19, Battle Dance: Al Grebnick vs. Becwar; July 20, Dean Hansen trio; July 26, Frank Hazuka; August 2, Dean Hansen orchestra; August 9, Ernie Kucera; August 16, Al Grebnick, August 23, Math Sladky; August 30, Battle Dance: Nadherny vs. Becwar September 6, Jim Bochnicek; September 20, Dean Hansen Orchestra; September 27, Ron Nadherny. Frank Tesar, Omaha

THREE GENERATIONS OF MUSIC

Back in 1922, Bohumil Slechta saved up nine dollars he had earned by helping the neighbors, bought his first accordion, and taught himself to play. When his son Henry was 19, he picked up an accordion his father had left around the house and a second generation accordion player was born. They started a musical tradition.



Tunes to set your feet a-dancing

PLAYING A MERRY TUNE to invite the public to the Assumption Parish Czech Festival being held Sunday from noon until 10 p.m. at 22nd and U streets, is Leo Policky. Dancers Marie Halac and Anton Vodicka get in practice

for the music of Frank Reemar and Dick Janak and their orchestras. Czech dinners that will be served include favorites of pork, dumplings, kraut and kolaches. Rides, games, dancing and prizes are the order of the day.

OSLAVU

17. výročí

československé samostatnosti

POŘÁDÁ

Řád Hvězda Svobody

č. 45, Z. Č. B. J.

v neděli, 27. října 1935
v Národní síni, 21. a U ul.

PROGRAM

1. Hymny orchestr p. F. Melichara
2. Uvítání předseda bratr Rud. Šebek
3. Průslov bratr O. Charvat
4. Hudební orchestr
5. Živý obraz
6. Dramatický výstup "Hrobům v dáli," pí. Anz. Horáková
7. Bůseň "28. října," sl. Ml. Pražanová
8. Zpěv pí. O. Jelineková
9. Hudební orchestr
10. Zpěvy žáci České školy
11. "Těžký pušlen," vzápětí scény, Bož. Pochopova a Jeník Kunešův
12. "Neč to praeklo," julesonokrocka. Účinkují: pp. Fr. Janišek, Bed. Sigmund, Ant. Culek, A. Voška, Jos. Horák, sl. A. Pražanová, Rud. Šebek, pí. O. Jelineková, Jan Strnad.

ZAČÁTEK V 8 HOD. VEČER

Vstupné 25 centů

**PO VYČERPÁNÍ PROGRAMU TANEČNÍ
ZÁBAVA.**

K hojně návštěvě zve

Výbor



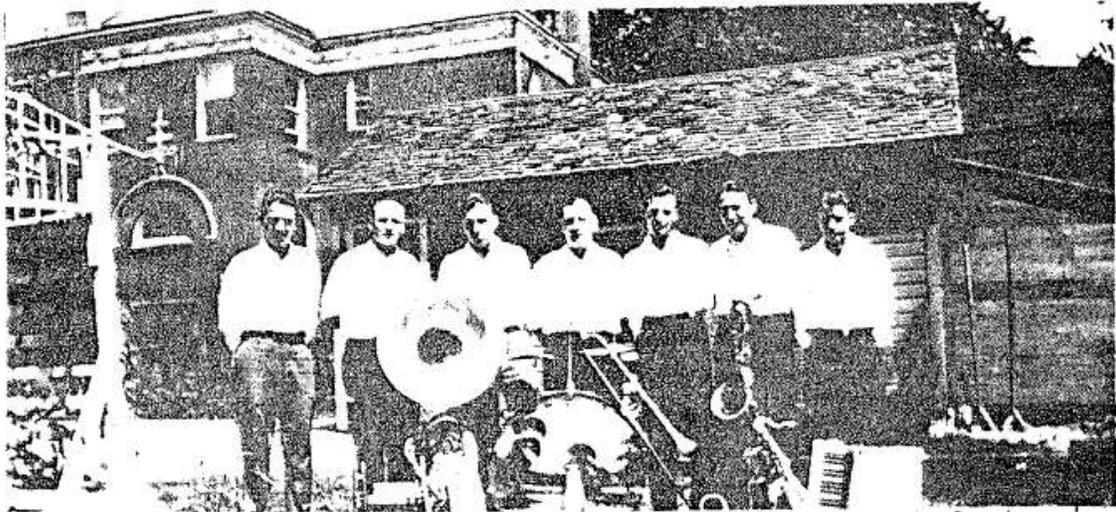
Three generations (from left): Bohumil, Henry, Mike, Vernon and Jim. While his father and grandfather prefer the button keyboard, Jim plays the piano-type accordion. (SUN News Service)

Today, Henry Slechta's three sons have formed their own Czech band and appropriately named themselves The Third Generation. Vernon, 22, plays the tuba; Jim, 18, plays the accordion; and Mike, 16, the drums. "The boys have been interested in music since they were young," Henry Slechta said. "It seems to run in the family." "We stay with the old traditional Czech polkas and waltzes," Vernon said. "We still think that's the best."

The Slechta Boys Orchestra was on the program on March 22, 1950 when the Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln sponsored its third annual Polkathon to raise money for the Easter Seal Society.

Charles Cuchy of Cicero, Illinois sent me a 1933 photo of Omaha's Charley Kucera's Orchestra, who broadcast Czech songs every Monday morning. Mr. Cuchy sent this letter to me: "I was listening in Cicero, Illinois to those beautiful Czech songs broadcasting from Nebraska and I wrote to Mr. Kucera how happy I was to hear them and he sent me a photo of his band.

I am 79 years old and I like Czech songs from my youth when I played them with my accordion there in the old country. I have been in America for 58 years, and I remember my start here was difficult, but when we were singing our Czech songs, we forgot our bad times. Please, write to me how your research is going." Charles Cuchy



Charley Kucera's Orchestra: 833 Pine Street, Omaha, NE
 From left to right: Martin Foral, Mike Namestek, Frank Mirasky, Charley Kucera, Frank Kotera, John Kotera, Albert Binder

THE GOLDEN HARVEST ORCHESTRA

Anton Kvasnicka started his orchestra in 1928 in Saline County, Nebraska. They called their orchestra The Golden Harvest and were a very popular group. The musicians were: Anton Kvasnicka, manager and accordionist, playing a button type 3 and a four-row accordion

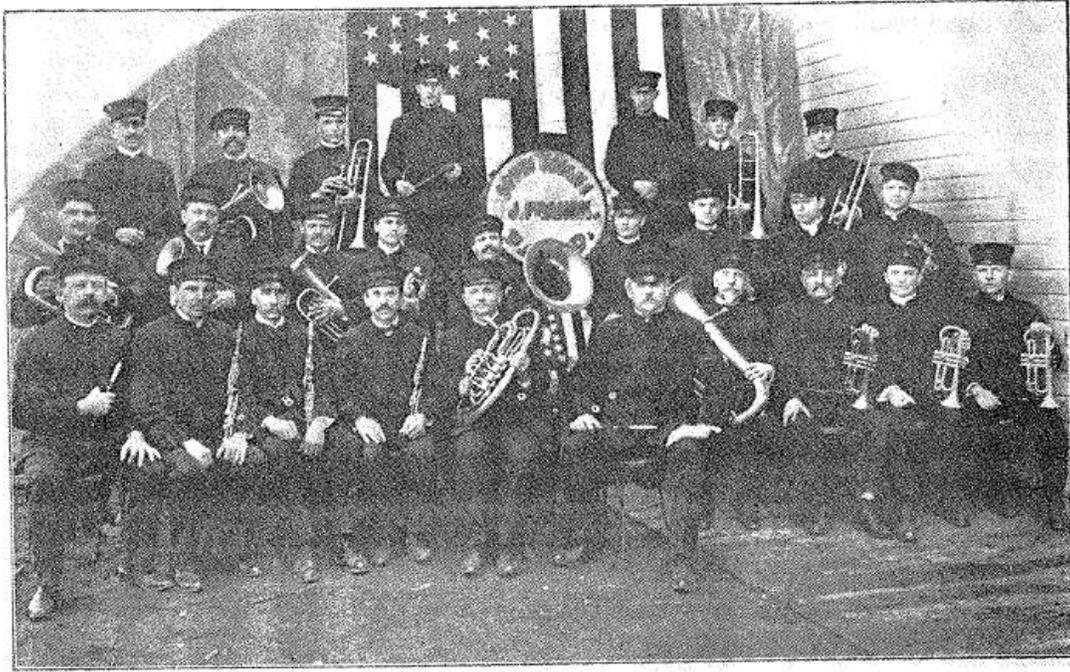
George Elias	trumpet	Otto Kubicek	baritone
Arthur Bauer	trumpet	Edward Sicner	bass
Steve Aksamit	clarinet	Longin Prokop	drums

All these musicians lived in and around Crete, Nebraska. They played for Ceska divadla (Czech plays), many parties and for many dances in Crete Sokol Hall as well as the Wilber and Omaha Sokol Halls. They played in Grand Island, Ravenna, Comstock, Sargent, the Bohemian National Hall in Ord, Columbus dance halls, and Tabor Hall near Dorchester, all in Nebraska.

The first battle dance played at the Jicha Hall in Milligan, Nebraska was by the Golden Harvest and Joe Sinkule's Orchestra.. They also went on several tours playing for dances at Cuba, Narka, Munden and Dodge City, Kansas; Oklahoma City, Winner, South Dakota and Texas, in addition to many other places too numerous to name. I don't remember how long they played for dances. Anton Kvasnicka, my brother, was drafted in WW II and now lives in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

By Mrs. James (Rose) Chlup, Lincoln, NE

FRANEK'S BRASS BAND OF OMAHA -- APRIL 6, 1912



Upper row: J. Kubat, V. Chvala, L. Kaspar, Charles Whitehead, Charles Strengler, V. Hoffman, Josef Pugnar,

Middle row: R. Yechout, F. Stanek, A. Jan, F. Fiala, J. Brazda, Charles Nepodal, J. Buglowitz, H. Chaloupka, J. Blaha

Front row: F. Svododa, O. Humel, V. Vanasek, S. Matocha, J. Mulac, J. Vranek, A. Jakl, A. Elias, J. Nepodal, A. Pechar

Picture courtesy of Mrs. James Denny, Omaha, Nebraska, daughter of E.C. Brt, of Crete, Nebraska

STAN HOJER ORCHESTRA, Dorchester, Nebraska

I am not certain when this orchestra was organized, but they were playing by March of 1928. There were six members in the orchestra: Lumir Freeouf, saxophone, Harry Belka, cornet; Adolph Ripa, bass; Stanley Hojer, accordion; Robert Kotouc, drums; and Louis Hoffman, clarinet. In about 1930 or 1931, Bernard Klasek took Robert Kotouc's place on the drums. The band played together until 1937.



Picture of the Hojer Orchestra

They played for many dances, at the Tabor Hall, Columbus Hall, Crete Sokol Hall, Klacel Hall, Swanton, Tobias Krivoklat, Milligan, Virginia, Syracuse, and also at the Border Inn north of Dorchester and in Cuba, Kansas.

Shortly Stan had a combo which also went under his name. He played his accordion--he had three and all were from Czechoslovakia. Others with him were William Trepka, trumpet; Joe Hojer, drums; Leon Gerner, slide trombone; and his daughter, Darlene (Mrs. Clarence Musil) played the piano.

Stanley enjoyed playing very much and did so until his health failed him. He was born in Czechoslovakia and came to the United States at 4 years of age.

Submitted by Mrs. Stanley Hojer,
Box 433, Western, Nebraska

THE 110TH REGIMENTAL BAND, NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD

The 110th Regimental Band, Nebraska National Guard, was organized and inducted into the service on June 23, 1924 in Crete, Nebraska under the auspices of the Crete Rotary Club, which was instrumental in having the band section of the service company locating in Crete. This was largely through the efforts of Dr. J. J. Hartman, then a rotarian, and his personal friendship with Dr. H. C. Hilton, then commanding colonel of the 110th Medical Regiment. At that time the only band in existence was a combined Crete-Doane College Band under the direction of Prof. Hoxford, an instructor in science and clarinet teacher at Doane College. This was the first medical regiment band west of the Mississippi River. It was known that Crete had an abundance of musical resources to draw on to have such an organization. The initial organization enlisted the services of many young men whose parents were from the pioneer stock of musicians. The personnel of the band consisted of such names as Frank Nedela, Jr. and his son Carl, Edwin and Edward Jelinek, Dwight and Charles Aller, Axel Smith, Vance Kubicek, Henry Slepicka, Emanuel and Charles Dymacek, Edward Portsche, John Brehm, Robert Vasatka, William Trepka, Bernard Klasek, Frank Valenta, Albert Baldwin, and Clyde Knight..

The first encampment was for fifteen days at Ashland, Nebraska on the Platte River, where a new and permanent National Guard Camp was being established. This was the second year of camp, facilities were meager, and there was much to be desired. Camp accommodations were tents and a newly erected kitchen, toilet facilities, a trench, and no hot water for showers. The drill field was a swamp, filled full of holes made by the horses ridden by the officers. The band trained in first aid and stretcher drill and played the parades. Morning reveille was played at 6 a.m. on the Company street to wake up the camp. The band also played the city summer concerts in Crete and was called on to play at many parades and other military functions.

The band was dissolved after the representative from this district repeatedly refused to support the state military appropriations. It was moved to Lincoln. During WWII, the 110th Medical Regiment was called to the southern United States and was absorbed by other branches of the services.



A picture of Henry Slepicka who played with the 110th Regimental Band, Nebraska National Guard. He also had his own Legion Band in Crete.



This is a photocopy of a picture of Adolph Jindra, who was born in Wilber and became an accomplished flutist and piccolo musician. He was a brother of violinist Victor Jindra. Adolph played in several of the military and commercial club bands in Wilber. He served in the armed forces of WWI.

When he was discharged, he stayed in Wilber a short time. In the early days of the twentieth century, industrial companies used to advertise position vacancies which called for musicians playing instruments which were needed for city bands. Mr. Jindra took a position with a Mount Morris, IL publishing and/or Printing company. He remained there until his death.

CZECH BANDS, ORCHESTRAS, MUSICIANS

Garfield, Valley, Kimball and Cheyenne Counties

“Special thanks should go to Mrs. Lorraine Lafler of Sidney, Nebraska for her part in gathering information about musicians in the Nebraska panhandle. After many years of devoted work to preserve the Czech heritage so dear to her, Mrs. Lafler should be credited with organizing our new Czech Club in the vast territory of the northwestern part of this state.” The people that supplied the information about these bands are as follows:

Stanley R. Urbanovsky, Garfield County

Mrs. Adolph Urbanovsky, Valley County

Richard Novotny, Kimball County

Bill Novotny, Kimball County

Millard Musil, Cheyenne County

Vaclav Seda, Cheyenne County

Mrs. Mary (Seda) Hornicek, Cheyenne County

My mother, Mrs. Mary Hornicek’s narrative would also be in Cheyenne County and she gave me the history about my grandfather Vaclav Seda and the band he played in.

Lorraine Lafler

President of the Nebraska Czechs of the Panhandle

OLD MUSICIANS TRAVELED WITH HORSE AND BUGGY

Picture taken in 1887

Photo courtesy of Mrs. Lorraine Lafler



Left to right: Front row Jim (Vaclav) Seda
 Lew De Brunner
 Jim (Vaclav) Klien
 Second row Mr. Thompson
 Jack Fusha
 Vaclav Kucera

These gentlemen formed their group and played in parades, at Fourth of July celebrations, and at dances around the countryside. When they played for a dance and had to travel quite a distance, they would leave around noon in a horse and buggy and did not arrive back home until sometime on Sunday. They were from Sunol, Sidney, and Lodgepole, Nebraska. Vaclav Seda, one of the gentlemen in the picture, learned to play in the old country in a band at the early age of 12 or 13. He said they were very strict and if anyone hit a wrong note they were scolded very severely.

EARLY DAY DANCES IN CHEYENNE COUNTY, Nebraska

Mary Seda, daughter of Vaclav Seda, stated that she remembers about dances in the early days. This was one of the main sources of entertainment then. Dances were held in the houses and barns. She recollects going to Soral's house to dance and to barns on the Seda, Kokes, Henzle, Voskika, Jelinek, Schimka and Fisher farms and the Opera House in Sunol, and in Lodgepole, Nebraska. Some of the musicians that she recalls were Joe Henzle on the accordion, Joe Schimka on the accordion and Jim Vacik on the violin.

Mary and her sister Anna would travel to dance in the area in a horse and buggy. The horse's name was Old Powra and on the way home they would sleep and the horse would take them home. Dances would often start at sundown and last until sunrise. She recalls that they would always go do their chores after a dance and then go to bed. When dances were held at Seda's barn, her mother would spend all afternoon making sandwiches and filling a large tub. Then they would pass these around to everyone at the dance. A keg of beer was usually purchased, and John Soral would always serve the beer. Mary said that at one dance a man got a little too much beer and was found hanging over the manger with his head on one side and his feet on the other. They carried him to a pig trough near the tank and laid him on his back in the water.

On Sunday afternoons the Seda farm was a gathering place for all the neighborhood young people and after dinner they could be seen walking over the hills from all directions. They would dance all afternoon to the accordion music of Henry Seda and then at chore time would head for home. Sometimes some of them would even walk back for a couple hours of dancing in the evening.

Dr. Kucera, the above was narrated to me by my mother, Mrs. Mary Hornicek by Mrs. Lorraine Lafler

ADOLPH URBANOVSKY BAND

Adolph Urbanovsky organized his first band in 1942 with six pieces. In 1968 he organized a second band of three pieces, called Adolph Urbanovsky and his Czech Band.

Members were: Adolph Urbanovsky, piano and button accordion
 Dave McCarthy, bass horn
 Al Moudry, drums
 Agnes Janda, vocalist
 Alice Stevens, vocalist

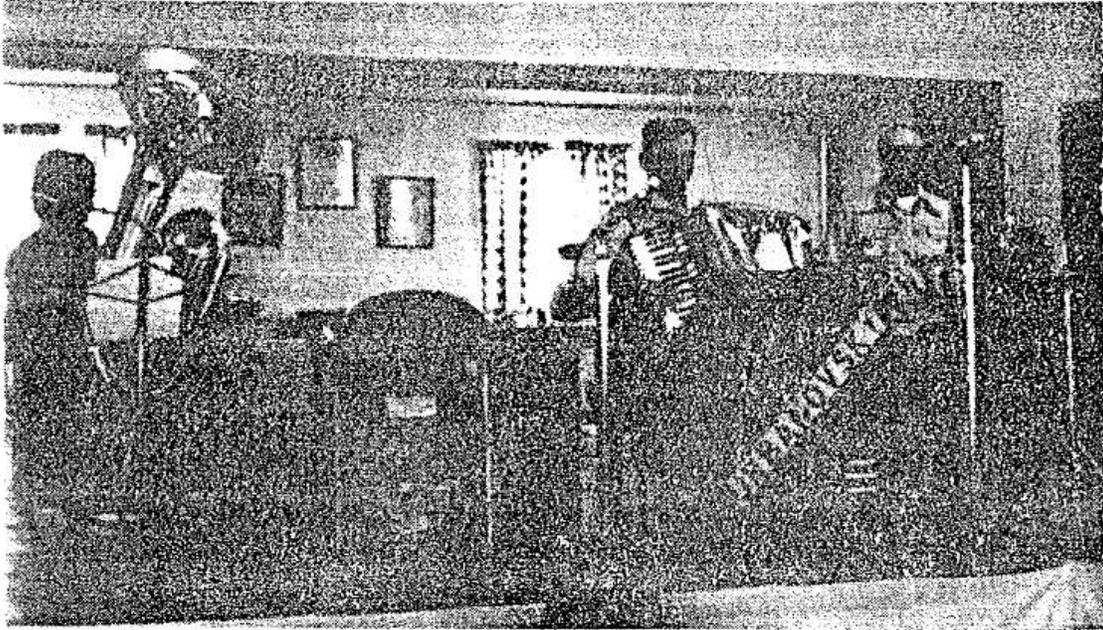
They played at Lincoln Polka Days, Clarkson Czech Days, Lodgepole Czech Day, the WFLA (ZCBI) State Convention and on European tours, plus regular dances. They recorded two record albums and tapes.



From right: Adolph Urbanovsky, accordion; Al Moudry; drums;
Dave McCarthy, bass horn; Agnes Janda, vocal;
Alice Stevens, vocal

STAN URBANOVSKY BAND

On April 13, 1974 I played in public for the first time in Ord, Nebraska with the Urbanovsky- Koncel Band. Larry Koncel played the piano accordion, Stanley R. Urbanovsky also played the piano accordion and Laddie H. Bruha played the drums. In October 1974, we decided to use only one accordion; this is when the Urbanovsky Band or the Stan Urbanovsky Band was started. Stanley R. Urbanovsky played the piano accordion, Eugene Michalski played the drums and Adolph Urbanovsky joined us on the bass horn or tuba. Adolph Urbanovsky wanted to play the accordion and left us. After Adolph left, the Stan Urbanovsky Band began to grow larger. We had our first dance on New Year's Eve, in Burwell, Nebraska in December 1976. Some of these musicians who played for the dance are still with us..



From left, Richard Novotny, bass; Stan Urbanovsky, accordion; Eugene Michalski, drums

MILLARD MUSIL STORY

Millard Musil moved with his family to the Potter area of western Nebraska in 1927. Music has played an important part in his life and he said that if he hadn't gotten married he might have made it his career, but he felt that he preferred to stay home with his wife and family so he played more as a hobby.



Millard Musil on saxophone in lower left corner. Louis Forman on accordion One day during his high school years, he picked up his father's saxophone and tried to play. His father encouraged him to learn and he picked it up very quickly. He played in the school orchestra. In 1936, KMMJ Radio Station in Clay Center, Nebraska advertised that they needed a saxophone player for Rudy Krofta and his Silver Prague Orchestra. Millard decided to try out with his parents' encouragement, and they took him to Clay Center. He got the job and before he knew what was happening was playing on the radio station with Rudy Krofta. He said it was all live in those days and the audience could sit and watch him at this, his first performance.

Rudy Krofta decided to quit and so Millard and Lewis Foreman kept about three of the fellows from Rudy Krofta's original orchestra and they called themselves Lewis Foreman and His Band. They played polkas and modern music and traveled around the territory in a car and trailer. They played at Sokol Hall in Omaha, and in the states of Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota and Iowa.

In 1938 he joined Vern Wilson and his band and again found himself broad-casting from KMMJ. In 1939 KMMJ moved to Grand Island so Millard quit Vern's band and joined another band in the south and played in clubs during the winter months. Millard and his wife, the former Madeline Westrick of Belleville, Kansas moved north of Potter in 1940 where he farmed for many years. He played with the Barker Brothers Band and Dale Chambers Band.

In 1948 Millard organized a polka band with Kenny Rose on the trumpet, Frank Morey on the drums, Charley Dedic, Jr. on the bass horn and Betty Morey on the piano. Millard played saxophone and clarinet. In 1949 Dean Harr joined the orchestra on the saxophone.

In 1950, Basey Knight on string bass took Dedic's place and in 1952, Joe Melik on the saxophone became part of the orchestra, and they started incorporating modern music at that time. Keith Morris took over the piano and Arnold Muehling the drums in 1956. They played at dances, firemen's balls in the area, Fort Sidney Day parades and at Potter Days dances. In the summer seasons of 1959, 1960, and 1961, besides farming and playing regular dances in the area, they played at the Riverside Ballroom and were advertised as, "The Great Band From Nebraska."

Kenneth Rose and Basey Knight recently retired on New Year's Eve 1980 from Millard's band, but he is still playing at dances and is very popular in this area. His band members now are Arnold Muehling on drums, Jose Mendez from Dix on trombone, Judy Harris on piano, and Millard on saxophone and clarinet. (Millard Musil and Preston Love's Orchestra were voted the two outstanding bands in the state of Nebraska in September, 1958.) On June 24, 1978, the band grew and we played at Kearney with 2 trumpets, 1 clarinet, 1 trombone, 1 bass, drums, and a piano accordion. As time went on we needed more money to operate so we reduced the band to 5 pieces: bass, Dean Christenson; trumpet, Ted Luebbe; trombone, Bob Runyan; drums, Eugene Michalski; and piano accordion, Stanley R Urbanovsky. We have had various musicians fill in for a missing member. For example for the November 4, 1979 dance at Lodgepole we had: Eugene Michalski, drums and button accordion; Richard Novotny on bass; James Novotny on the piano and Stanley R.

Urbanovsky on the piano accordion. The Urbanovsky Band has played throughout Nebraska and Wyoming-- as far east as Peony Park in Omaha where we played for the Nebraska Polka Days on September 17, 1977, and as far west as a wedding anniversary dance on November 25, 1978 at Veteran, Wyoming. We played at the New Havens Ballroom at Clarks for a wedding dance, and at the Clarkson Czech Days in a tavern. We entertained mostly at Eagles, Elks, and Legion Clubs and mostly in central Nebraska. Some of the towns we played are Burwell, Ord, Grand Island, Kearney, Loup City, Fullerton, Colon, St. Paul, Albion, St. Libory, Pleasanton, Sargent, Taylor, and Torrington, Wyoming, and we played a Las Vegas night at Ogallala. We played for an open house for Land-O-Lakes Felco Service and Hardware. We played for the Taylor county fair, and also an anniversary party in a newly built garage. We played at the Steam Engine Parties and Marathon dances.

We play mostly for wedding and anniversary dances. I, Stanley R. Urbanovsky, do sing a few numbers in Czech.

By Stanley R. Urbanovsky

MUSICAL ACTIVITY OF NOVOTNY FAMILY

The family of John and Mary Novotny moved to the Kimball area from Ord, Nebraska. Their family was very musical and through the years has provided many hours of dancing and listening pleasure to the people throughout this area. In the years 1937, 1938, and 1939, the Novotny children formed their own orchestra with John Novotny on the accordion, William Novotny on clarinet and saxophone, Lillian Novotny on the trumpet, Alice Novotny on the piano and George Beranek on the drums. The family had little musical training except for Alice who had taken a few piano lessons. After John got married they put one of their younger twin brothers Ronald on the accordion at the tender age of six. Toward the end of the dance, Ronald had a hard time staying awake and sometimes would fall asleep while trying to play. They played at Kimball, Hemingford, Ogallala, Kokes' barn at Crook, Colorado, Benish Hall north of Potter, Seyfang Hall at Potter, Gurley, Dalton, at the National Hall in Ord, Nebraska, and for the Old Settlers Picnic parades and dances.

In 1940, at the age of 10 years, Ronald organized a band with his twin brother Richard on the saxophone, George Beranek on the drums and he played the accordion. They played Czech polkas, waltzes and sang Czech songs at house parties, school houses, wedding and anniversary dances.

In 1947 Ronald organized a band with members taken out of the high school band.

This band was composed of:

Ronald Novotny (leader)	Piano accordion
Richard Novotny	First clarinet
Don Case	First trumpet
Jim Jackson	Second trumpet
Kenneth Heidemann	Bass horn
Rudy Vrtako	Drums
Jean Miller	Piano
George Vrtako	General Manager

This group played in the western Nebraska area for public dances, weddings and anniversaries.

They played polkas and waltzes. In 1948 they borrowed Vrtako's grain truck, put a tarp over the box, placed mattresses in the back and slept there. They carried their instruments in a station wagon and went to eastern Nebraska on a three week tour. They also played at North Loup, Ord, Broken Bow, Burwell, Albion, Norfolk and Schuyler.

Eventually they bought a school bus and made a bedroom for Jean and Ron who were now married. They placed bunks in the bus for the rest of the members and had seats for seating arrangements. George Vrtako, their manager and booking agent, drove the bus.

In 1951, Richard Novotny, Don Case, Jim Jackson, Bob Jackson, and Kenneth Heidemann were drafted for the Korean War and the band was discontinued. In 1967, James Novotny (son of Richard and Carol Novotny) organized a 6th grade band called Goldentones. The members were James Novotny, Jan Dee McNees, Connie Leininger, Lori Troutman, Danny Lukesh, Greg Deboodt, Jamie Jackson, Doug Lockwood and Dickie Moore. James Novotny and Jamie Jackson were sons of Richard Novotny and Jim Jackson, members of the earlier Novotny Polka band. Later on, Jeff Brown, Dennis Deboodt, Tim Deboodt, Jeanie Luther and Richard Novotny were added to this band. This young group used the music from Ronald Novotny's band and won the Lions' talent contest in Kimball two years in a row. The second year they also placed second in the District Lions Contest. This group played for wedding dances, at the country club, father and son banquets, and community affairs in the Kimball area. Their greatest thrill was playing for Robert F. Kennedy when he made his tour across Nebraska in 1968. They received a personal thank you from Robert Kennedy.

In 1968, Richard Novotny decided to use some of the members from the Goldentones and formed another band called Richard Novotny's Bohemian Polka Band. This was comprised of Richard Novotny on saxophone, Jamie Jackson on first trumpet, Jim Jackson on second trumpet, Floyd Hein on accordion, Richard Novotny, Jr. on bass horn, James Novotny on alto saxophone and Carol Novotny on the drums. This band played at the Eagles Hall in Gering for a Czech gathering and they played at several Czech Days festivals in Gering and Lodgepole. The band discontinued for a while and then James Novotny (son of Richard and Carol Novotny) organized another band called *Pieces* that plays country and rock. They organized in July, 1979, and are presently playing in the Kimball and surrounding areas with James Novotny on piano, saxophone and vocal, his brother Richard on bass guitar and vocal, Lyle Schadegg on lead guitar and vocal, and Larry Stoll on drums and vocal. These boys have been staging battle dances in Kimball playing 30 minutes of country and rock and then switching to 30 minutes of polka music with Richard and Carol Novotny and Kenneth Heidemann playing with the boys for the polka session. They have reversible vests wearing one side for their country rock session and the other side designed as a Czech costume for their polka session. So, as you can tell by the foregoing article, the Novotny family has provided many hours of musical entertainment for the people in this area.

By Mrs. Lorraine Lafler of Sidney, NE, President of the Czech Club of the Panhandle	
Mrs. Adolph Urbanovsky	Richard Novotny
409 S. 23rd	South Route
Ord, NE 68862	Kimball, NE

Stanley R. Urbanovsky	Mrs. Mary (Seda) Hornicek
RR 1, Box 104	1044 6 th Ave.
Burwell, NE 68823	Sidney, NE 69162

Willard Musil	Mrs. Lorraine Lafler	
1116 13 th Ave	Rt. 2, Box 52A	Sidney, NE
69162	Sidney, NE 69162	

CZECH BANDS, ORCHESTRAS, MUSICIANS IN BUTLER, COLFAX, SALINE,
DODGE COUNTIES

Alfred Novacek of Dwight, Nebraska , one of the first members of the group for reviving the Czech heritage in Nebraska and organizing our movement, gathered this information written by our musicians for my book.

Names of persons that sent in stories

Al Grebnick	sent in himself
Hank Zahourek	sent in himself
Larry Sabata	sent in himself
Johnie Kucera	sent in himself
Emil Brdicko	sent in by Johnie Kucera
Frank Kucera	sent in by Johnie Kucera
Beanie Kucera	sent in by Johnie Kucera
Ernie Coufal	sent in by himself
White Star Orchestra	sent in by Fred Semin, Jr.
Cesky Pepik	taken from Lincoln Journal (Focus Magazine)
Jerry Havel Orchestra	sent in by Milo Palensky
Palensky family	sent in by Milo Palensky
Allen Valish	sent in by Milo Palensky
Moostash Joe	sent in by himself
Policky Orchestra	sent in by Mrs. Vic Policky
Ernie Kuceraby	Alfred Novacek
Pilsner Orchestra	taken from "Dwight Doodles" edited by Alfred Novacek
Rerucha Brass Band	sent in by Eddie Kozisek
Fred Semin, Sr and Fred Semin Jr.	sent in by Fred Semin Jr.
Sedlak Brass Band	sent in by Mrs. Pete Jakub
Don Korinek	taken from "Dwight Doodles"
Anton Cidlik	taken from "Dwight Doodles"
Raymond Sedlak	send in himself
Kovar Brothers	taken from "Banner Press"
Frank Jisa	taken from his album
Big Joe	sent in by himself
Four generations of Clarinet Players	
Michael Brecka Orchestra	sent in by himself

AL GREBNICK ORCHESTRA



Al Grebnick of Schuyler, who is known as the polka king of Nebraska, began playing the B flat clarinet at the age of 13 in the year 1932 as a side man with various groups. Prior to organizing his own band, he played with the Kucera Brothers: Beanie Kucera, Ernie Kucera, Loe Lukesh, Math Sladky and Jerry Havel.

He formed his own band in 1956 with his son Kenneth, Herman Liska, Leonard Pitz, Leo Pitz and Frank Sobota as the original members. It was also in that year that the band had a prime time TV show on KHAS Hastings for 26 weeks and also appeared on KOLN TV on their noon day show. This helped the band immensely to become established in the

midwest as a top band. The band now has an hour-long radio show from 12:30 on Radio Station KTTT, Columbus, Nebraska. In the year 1957, the group recorded their first release, a 78 rpm record. To this date, the band has 14 45 rpm records, 27 long-play albums, 20 eight-track tapes and nine cassette tapes on the market which are sold on the Nebraska Record Co. label, a company which Al owns. These records and tapes are selling throughout the United States, Canada and other foreign countries. All music for the band is especially arranged and most arrangements are written by Al and Herman Liska. Al collects many tunes from Czechoslovakia on the various tours he makes of that country, then records them on records and tapes. He also finds new tunes that appeal to him on his many tours in other states. The band has toured and played dances in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Ohio, New York, South Dakota, North Dakota, Canada and Czechoslovakia.

Al says that perhaps the most exciting experience in his 47 years of music was getting booked into the state of New York, flying in by jet, and being treated royally by the Czechs and Slovaks in the Binghamton, Endicott, Endwell and Johnson City areas.

He was given many gifts by those people and after the dance tour the band was escorted to the airport by a local band playing polka music while Al and the boys boarded the jet for Nebraska.

In the past years, the following have been members of his orchestra for at least a year's duration: Milo Palensky, Dave Spale, Francis Besch, Joe Stehlik, Duane Stehlik, Del Hamann, Duane Tomsicek, Ed Spinar, Norman Sodomka, Jerry Chaloupa, Bert Hrnicek, Ray Dusatko and Marlyn Grubbs.

Present members of the orchestra are Al, Ken Grebnick, Bob Krivohlavek, Herman Liska, Louis Rezac, Joe Masek and Joe Cada.

Al and his lovely wife, Lucille live in Schuyler. They have four children, Ken, Al Jr., Randy and Sue, and one granddaughter, Natasha.

Al, when asked if he had to do it all again, would he take up dance music, answered, "Yes. Dance music, and especially Czech polkas and waltz music has been very good to me. But most important are all the friends we have made. All the cities and towns we have appeared in really have made it a good life." "Yes," Al repeated, "I would do it all over again if given the chance." First Appleton Brass Band directed by Frank Kadlec and Josef Plasek.



Left to right: Frank Kadlec, Leo Andel, Josef Plasek, John Pokorny, Albert Hinesh and Frank Vanek

THE HANK ZAHOUREK STORY

Hank Zahourek of Dorchester began entertaining at a very early age with what was called the *One Man Band* which included the button accordion, drum, sock cymbals and a bazooka fixed in a radio horn attachment and was featured on Radio Station KORN in Fremont. In 1937 he joined the *Silver Kings Orchestra* of Lincoln and then after the war he organized a group called the *Five Fat Czechs* with Bohumil Slechta of Lincoln as co-manager. In 1950 he, with his family, moved to Crete where they purchased a tavern and then organized a group known as the *Crete Polka Band* with the following members: Elmer Pomajzl, Al Cudley, Bull Trepka, Laven Fictum, Leon Gerner, Leonard Pechoucek, Susan Kotouc and son Daniel Zahourek, who at 3 years old was featured as the youngest Czech vocalist in Radio land. In 1955 he organized another band named *Hank's Melody Masters* which included the following members at one time or another: Louis Fink, Robert Tichy, Norman Tichy, Adolph Sobotka, Duane Stehlik, Ed Burda, Kenneth Bolte, Lumir Vajgrt, George Hynek, Emil Brodecky, Milo Brchan and Vince Colon.

In 1956 they purchased the Blue River Lodge and instituted Sunday matinee dances in the summer and fall which became an instant hit, as many of the well known polka bands played there and people from far and wide patronized the famous Blue River Lodge near Crete. They sold this enterprise in 1975 after 19 years of entertaining the public. Besides operating the Lodge with his wife Helen, he also operated a juke box route. After they sold the lodge, Hank was then a disc jockey for radio station KTAP of Crete for fourteen months. His present band is now known as the *Hank Zahourek Melody Masters* and has the following members: Robert Tichy, Robert Zoubek, Janis Zoubek, Albert Micheltree, Elmer Nemecek, Rusty Likens, Warren Vyhnalek, Dennis Klimes, and Larry Pribyl.

Over the years, Hank's bands played over radio station KLMS in Lincoln, KFAB when it was in Lincoln, KWBE in Beatrice and KGMT in Fairbury. They have made two records and have played in the states of Colorado, Kansas and South Dakota, and Hank says that he has thoroughly enjoyed his 50 years of entertaining the public.

THE LARRY SABATA STORY

Larry; son of Mr. And Mrs. Louis J. Sabata of rural David City was born March 3, 1949 in David City. He began his musical career at the age of ten with his piano accordion. He was a student of the Marvin Klimes Accordion Studio in Lincoln. At one time he assisted Mr. Klimes in giving lessons to other students.

Larry met with great success with his musical talent by entertaining at dances, wedding receptions, restaurants and night clubs. At one time he played with the famous Myron Floren and was invited to play with the Lawrence Welk Show in California.



He has played in the states of Washington, Texas, Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and in Chicago, Illinois. He has made many tapes that were broadcast over the radio. Also, through the years he has won awards and trophies with his musical ability. He is also grateful to appear at the many Czech festivals throughout Nebraska.

He has an organized group named *Larry's Combo* with Milo Palensky on the drums, and Bill Woita Jr. on the guitar. His original member was Ernest Bruner on the drums. His group is much in demand. He always likes to thank Dr. Vladimir Kucera for the encouragement that he gave him.

By Larry Sabata

JOHN G. KUCERA (JOHNIE KUCERA) OF SCHUYLER

A very devoted Czech musician, John G. Kucera, better known as Johnie Kucera, was born on a farm east of Abie in Butler County on September 4, 1927. He always liked music, especially Czech music, but his actual playing did not begin until the age of 18 when he learned to play the accordion and the piano. He played for many gatherings in the neighborhood and surrounding area and then he was asked to play with different bands. Some of those were the Red Jisa, Ernie Coufal, and Emil Brdicko bands.

Then he organized his own little band, the *Johnie Kucera Polka Combo*. Among those that played with him during this time were Joe Vondruska, Frank Zima, Louis Oborny, Frank Vyhliidal, Filbert Wacha, Joe Kudera, Anton Barcal, Reynold Kubik, Milo Palensky, Louis Stranik, Robert Molacek, Jake Lance and Don Vyhliidal. This band played through the 1960's and into the 70's. In 1976 the name of the band was changed to "Schuyler Czech Mates" and took on some new faces which included Robert Hruska and his wife Eleanor, who are the drummer and vocalist, plus Frank Toman on the trombone. Johnie, with his accordion, is seen at many Czech festivals in Nebraska and is tireless with his playing. He is always willing to assist in any Czech program at the festivals, either with his button accordion or piano, plus vocalizing. His group has played in the states of South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska.

EMIL BRDICKO BAND

Emil Brdicko of Clarkson organized his band in 1965 after playing many years with the Frank Kucera orchestra. He named his band the "Polka Masters." Members of his band were Johnie Kucera, Frank Vyhliidal, Charles Polodana, Bill Stuchlik, Frank Toman, Robert Molacek, Frank Bos, Lou Stanik, Junior Pavlik and Joe Molacek. Emil played the trumpet and the accordion.

Emil's band made six albums, appeared on Big Joe's TV programs and also played in states of North and South Dakota. About a month after making his last album in Omaha, Emil passed away from a heart attack in February of 1977.

FRANK KUCERA ORCHESTRA OF SCHUYLER

Frank Kucera actually began his musical career with his accordion in 1934 with his brother Beanie, when they organized the Kucera Brothers Accordion Orchestra. Frank then quit playing in 1941 and did not pick up his accordion again until 1955 when he organized his own band with the following members: Johnie Kucera, Anton Barcal and John Holub. Later on, the following played with him: Bill Navratil, Louis Navratil, Joe Misek, Emil Brdicko, Charles Polanda, Frank Vyhliidal, Raynold Kubik, and Joe Kudera. As time went on the band got smaller and was formed into a combo. But the public asked him to enlarge his band once again and in 1968 he hired a new and young group consisting of Milo Palensky, Raynold Kubik, Emil Makousky, Allen Valish, Allen Moravec and Bob Palensky.

They made four albums and traveled in the states of Kansa, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas, North and South Dakota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

Eventually Allen Valish organized his own band and Frank recruited some more new

members which included Larry Skarka, Bob Poland, Charles Poland, Bernard Kamarad and Harold Skarka. This new band cut two albums. In the summer of 1978 Frank suffered a heart attack which ended his playing and the band.

BEANIE KUCERA BAND OF SCHUYLER

The Beanie Kucera band was organized in 1934, but it was actually named the Kucera Brothers Accordion Orchestra in the beginning. The original members were Bill Sobolik, Anton Barcal, Ed Hovorka, Al Grebnick and the two brothers, Beanie and Frank Kucera. It was a very popular band in that time and area. Due to World War II, the band had to disband, but it was reorganized after the war.

The band continued until 1951 when Beanie decided to move to Spokane, WA and he sold his band to Marlyn Grubbs.

ERNIE COUFAL ORCHESTRA

The Ernie Coufal Orchestra of Bruno originated in 1955 with Ernie as their leader on accordion. His original members were: Bill Navratil, Louis Navratil, Eldon Kracel and Ed Vanek. His present members are: Frank Sedlak, Bill Stuchlik, Dan Daniels, Louis Oborny and occasionally Beth Daniels accompanies on the piano. They have made four tapes and records and played in the states of Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, Kansas and Colorado. They have had some sad and unusual experiences which included a friend of the band members started to play his accordion with them in Wilber, NE when all of a sudden he died right on the spot. And while playing for a dance in Norfolk, NE a man also died suddenly while dancing. Ernie and his band enjoy playing and have met many friends through their travels, and like many bands in Nebraska, have had unusual experiences with the weather; but they have enjoyed every minute of their occupation.