



OST

The Bridge

News of the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library

Summer
Spring 1996



Heritage Hall Dedication Set

*Senator Roman Hruska to be present
October 26*

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is pleased to announce Saturday, October 26, for the dedication of the museum's Roman L. Hruska Grand Hall. Festivities surrounding the dedication will also commemorate the one-year anniversary of the historic building dedication which brought Presidents Bill Clinton, Vaclav Havel and Michal Kovac to the Museum & Library. Traditional *dozinky* (Fall festival) activities will be part of the celebration.

Roman Hruska is a former United States Senator from Omaha, Nebraska, and was a major contributor to the new building capital campaign.

Details on the dedication and associated events will be forthcoming. It promises to be another great day in the museum's history. The dedication will be open to the public.

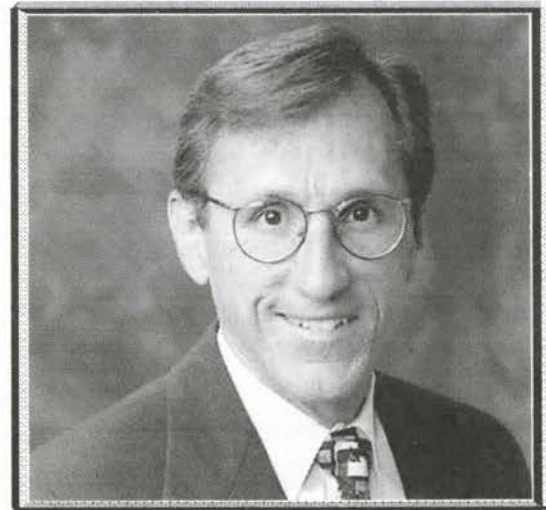


Roman Hruska (right) greeting President Clinton at the October 21, 1995, building dedication.

Museum President Welcomes New Director

The Board of Directors, Museum staff, Museum Guild, and all of our fine members would like to welcome Dan Baldwin as our new permanent Executive Director. It has been a long extensive search but well worth the time.

Dan comes to us from the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis where he was Director of Collections and Conservation. He previously spent seven years at Old City Park Museum in Dallas, Texas, the last 2 1/2 as Executive Director.



We are especially fortunate that Dan and his wife Monica are both natives of Eastern Iowa. Dan is

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Guild Report

The Museum Guild continued to meet during the summer months and chose to have evening meetings in June and July. The August meeting is a motorcoach trip to DeWitt for a lunch and program on "Healthy Exchanges" by Joanna Lund.

The September meeting will be held on Saturday, September 7 at Hamilton Business College at 9:30 am. The program will be "Czech and Slovak Genealogy." The October 5th meeting will be a motorcoach tour to Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin. A Czech Folk sing-a-long and program will be given there by Sister Anita.

During the summer meetings, the Museum Guild membership voted to purchase equipment for the Museum. A shop vacuum, ladder, and large fan with the approximate value of \$300 were purchased and presented to the staff. The organization also approved the purchase of a new sign for the Czech Heritage Mini Museum Project.

Marilyn Tucker, Public Relations Chair, has begun work on the process of petitioning the Post Office Department to feature the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library on a stamp. The project has received enthusiastic support and she is confident the goal of a commemorative stamp will be achieved.

The Museum Guild currently has 97 members and welcomes any new individuals to join. The organization and its members will continue in their efforts to support the activities, programs and facilities of the Museum & Library as well as to provide social opportunities for the membership.

Heritage Hall News

Our Heritage Hall continues to be a very busy place, as we are already renting well into 1997. We have had many wedding receptions, anniversary celebrations and corporation meetings this past year. Make your reservations NOW for that important event.

Director's Report

My first two months as executive director of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library have exceeded the high expectations I brought to the position. The warm reception which has been afforded me by the board, volunteers, and staff has made for an easy transition to a new job and city. Along with my wife and kids, I want to thank all those who have made this possible.

Everyone associated with the museum and library should be proud of the remarkable accomplishments of the past few years. The vision and diligence required for the fund raising and construction of the new building combined with an incredible belief in the value of the mission and collection, a belief which brought three heads of state to the museum's dedication, has laid the ground work for an exciting future.

Yes, there is much work to do. Our exhibits are not up to the standards of the physical structure or our mission as the national museum and library. Public programs which provide an understanding of Czech and Slovak culture beyond what can be gleaned from exhibits must be developed. The library has yet to be organized in a way that allows us to make it accessible to researchers. Critical staff positions must be filled in order to assist in sustaining the financial stability of the institution, prepare the library, and to maintain physical and intellectual control of our very fine collection.

We have already begun making headway in some important areas. The final design plans for a garden and program area have been completed for the south side of the building. Special events and programs are scheduled for this fall, including the dedication of the Hruska Grand Hall. A final design for a 4,000 square foot permanent exhibit will be presented to the board in August. New decorative exterior lights (an unfinished element of the building project) are being designed and will be installed soon, courtesy of the Western Fraternal Life Association.

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Concert To Celebrate Czech Heritage

The Boland-Dowdall Duo, in conjunction with the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, will present a concert of early 19th century Czech music designed to celebrate Cedar Rapids' Czech Heritage. The concert will take place on Sunday, November 3, at 4:30 p.m. Cost is \$5 per person.



John Boland and Jan Dowdall.

The program will introduce the music of Czech composer Wenceslaus Matiegka, who lived in the early nineteenth century. His music is little-known today, but was well-respected in his lifetime. Matiegka was a composer and guitarist, both in Czechoslovakia and in Vienna (where he later lived and worked). His music inspired well-known composers such as Franz Schubert. Schubert actually made minor revisions to one of Matiegka's works, and musicologists claimed for years that Schubert was the author.

Jan Boland, flute, and John Dowdall, guitar, will be joined by New York violist David Miller. The music will be presented through the use of rare early nineteenth-century instruments. The project will eventually develop into a recording.

Since 1983 the Boland-Dowdall Duo has received international acclaim for its performances and interpretation of early nineteenth-century music. Recreating the atmosphere of an 1820 European salon, the Duo performs waltzes, serenades and operatic potpourris on period instruments. Their use of period costuming and lively and informative commentary about the music and its social political milieu has delighted audiences from Boston to Regensburg, Germany.

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is proud to assist in the presentation of this rarely performed Czech music.

Membership & Memorials

Look for a complete listing of Spring and Summer memorial gifts in the Fall issue of "Most." We appreciate the many gifts we receive in remembrance of friends and loved ones.

Please remember to renew your membership soon after receipt of your reminder letter. Memberships supply important revenues which help sustain museum programs and ensure the best care for our artifacts. It is important as well that you don't lose any of the excellent benefits that come with being a member.

Garden Work to Begin

Final plans have been approved for construction of a garden and staging area on the south end of the museum grounds. The plans call for a central green space surrounded by trees, benches, and traditional Czech plantings. There will also be a semicircular stage in the northeast corner. The will be an excellent addition to museum programming and a source of rental income.

Funds for the project have come from the Community Block Development Grant and Trees Forever.

Museum Provides Program for the Visually Impaired

July 9 was a special day at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library as we hosted a group of visually impaired adults from the Iowa Center for the Blind. Patty Hikiji developed a unique program for the visitors which included a tour using descriptive language and hands-on objects which would not suffer from handling.



Patty Hikiji stands with several of the objects used in the tour for the Iowa Center for the Blind.

These types of programs are important for the museum as we break down traditional barriers and make the facility accessible to a wider range of patrons. The program was a complete success, as the following letter shows. Three more groups of visually impaired visitors have been scheduled.

Dear Tour Guides & Staff,

On behalf of the Iowa Center for the Blind, we would like to extend a most sincere and gracious thank you. Our tour required considerable more graphic explanation than usual. Your guides more than arose to the occasion, and with remarkable patience. The hands on viewing of your very valuable artifacts means more to a blind person than can be expressed in words.

The beauty and splendor of your treasures were matched only by the touching saga of the Czechs' migration to the United States. The restored house and furnishings were found to be particularly captivating.

We were able to enjoy a similar cultural event in April of this year. In Kansas City, Missouri the Smithsonian also gave us a historical tour, involving tactile displays. That tour in turn broke ground for the remaining two year tour for blind people. Until then, no visual accessibility had been addressed by Missouri or Kansas for their blind people. We feel that Iowa has, and shall always be, on the cutting edge of modern public blind perception.

Above all, we wish to applaud your organization for their dedication to Czech and Slovak heritage. Each one of us will always remember this opportunity to learn. We will hold this tour in our minds forever.

Sincerely,

The Iowa Center for the Blind

Museum Visitation

Spring and early summer have been a busy time. Sixteen adult groups booked tours in April for a total of 477 individuals. These visitors came from 14 Iowa communities, including Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Ames, Steamboat Rock, Boxholm, Cedar Falls, West Liberty, and Ely. More than 1200 students toured during April and May.

Spring motorcoach tours came from as near as Wisconsin and Minnesota and from as far away as Hawaii. Our adults groups varied in size from a Bible class of six to a motorcoach of sixty-two.

Reunions were the theme for June. Members of the Roosevelt High School class of 1946, Coe College Alumni, crew members of the USS Intrepid, and members of the Kuba family included a museum visit in their reunion plans.

Over 7,000 people toured the museum facility during April, May, and June. It takes a dedicated

group of volunteers to service so many visitors. A special "Dekuji vam mnohokrat" to each and everyone who participated in our volunteer program. Anyone who is interested in volunteer opportunities at the Museum is encouraged to call (319) 362- 8500 for information.

In June, we initiated Sunday afternoon hours of 1 pm to 4 pm.

Bobbin Lace Exhibit to be Installed

Temporary Exhibit Will Feature Fine Czech Art

Thirty pieces of hand-made bobbin lace produced by the Czech Bobbin Lace artist, Otilie Borska, some years before the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia will be featured in the temporary gallery of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library.

The 30 pieces represent the artist's interpretation of the "Swan Lake" ballet. This collection is unique in that the bobbin lace figures are layers or clothed in an additional "layer" of bobbin lace.

In addition to the Swan Lake collection, there will be other works by Mrs. Borska featuring her pioneering work in silhouette bobbin lace where the lace frames or silhouettes a woman's face from the background.



Beautiful works of bobbin lace which depict Swan Lake will be on exhibit this fall.

A variety of bobbin lace works by other artists in the Czech Republic will also be featured. These items were produced after the Revolution, but before the separation into the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The framed bobbin lace pieces are from the collection of Jitka Schaffer, mother of NCSLML board member, Bob Schaffer.

The exhibit will open in late summer and run into late fall, and will be part of the museum tour.

Gift Store News

Activity abounds in the gift store with new arrivals weekly. Our newest items, from Slovakia, are handwork that is done by machine, but of a very fine quality.

Wonderful new wood sculptures are now available in the store. "NIGHT CALLER" (16" X 32"), "IN THE TREE" (11 1/2" x 36") and "NIGHT UNDER KRIBAN" (10 1/2" X 32") are handcrafted by Hubert Grecnar of the northwest Slovak Republic town of Rajec. Many wood carvers live in this area. These works are carved from Lipa (lime) tree wood, a native tree of Slovakia.

We have also added a new book titled Prague Hidden Splendors. It is a superbly illustrated and concise overview of Prague's architectural and cultural history. This book is a reading art for historians and anyone who is planning a visit to this beautiful city. It retails for \$35.00. The Christmas Carp is back after a brief absence. Be sure to stop by and pick up your copy.

We have a nice selection of imported Czech and Slovak costumed dolls.

Still on track are our Czech imported model train sets. We are sure young and old alike would enjoy a special gift to add to their collection of fine tin-plated toys.

With your grills out and the weather so beautiful, a new supply of aprons for that cookout are ready for lazy weekend afternoons.

Finally, if you have any spare time on your hands, the gift store is always in need of volunteers. Please give Sheryl a call at 362-8500 and explore the times and areas of your expertise.

Book Review: A HOME IN BOHEMIA, by Roger Burke

Written in memory of Dr. Milada Horakova, A Home in Bohemia recounts the often unpleasant life experiences of fictional character David Wilson. Roger Burke's central character finds himself talked into an adventure by an American priest of Czech ancestry. At Father Sedlacek's urging, Wilson, a substitute teacher, goes to Czechoslovakia to teach English in an effort to assist in some small way the rebuilding of a country backward and oppressed due to communism. Wilson ends up learning a great deal and it's safe to say benefits as much, if not more, from his experience in Pilsen as does his students.

A "Home in Bohemia" is easy to read and interesting. It shares with the reader a factual historical perspective of Pilsen, Czechoslovakia from WWII to modern times, of which few outside of Pilsen are aware.

Of particular interest is the morality issues between present day Pilsen and post war Pilsen when addressing the fate of Dr. Milada Horakova. The Doctor's letters from Pankrac Prison to her loved ones, as she awaits her execution, are moving, and her plight disturbing. She was guilty of nothing more than being a member of the wrong political party.

The oversized, 207 page paperback is available for \$14 postpaid through the publisher, Columbia River Book Co., 3404 S. Auburn, Kennewick, WA 99337.

John Rocarek

A-Street Sewer Construction To Begin in August

Museum to remain open

Sewer construction by the City of Cedar Rapids will reach A-Street, directly in front of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, sometime in August. Though there will be some

minor inconvenience to visitors, museum operations will continue uninterrupted.

An exact date for the start of construction is not available, as it depends on progress on other sections of the project. Construction should last no more than one month.

The primary change in museum operations will be the closing of its parking lot. To offset this the City will provide parking on the 16th Avenue bridge (which will be reserved for museum patrons) and give the museum use of the Round House parking lots (directly across the street) for its special events, such as Heritage Hall rentals. Catering, tour bus loading and unloading, and handicapped access will be from the corner of 16th Avenue and A Street. The curb will be ramped for wheelchair access. When parked across A Street from the museum, visitors will need to walk to the corner of 16th Avenue to reach the museum.

Museum patrons and rental hall users are encouraged to plan an extra few minutes to account for the short walk. We appreciate your patience during this time of necessary infrastructure repair.

Staff News

Tom Hruska has joined the staff as Facilities Manager. Many may know Tom as a long-time board member and great supporter of the museum and library. Tom brings his extensive knowledge of the museum structure and years of technical experience from US West to the position. Tom will be responsible for the preparation of the Heritage Hall for rentals and special events, and oversee museum maintenance. Tom resigned from the board in order to join the staff.

Heather Gibson and Ludmila Stejskalova joined the tour guide staff in part-time positions. Heather is a Coe College graduate with a degree in education. Ludmila is a native of Prague, pursuing her studies at Kirkwood Community College. Twelve new greeters joined our volunteer pool in May and June.

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The museum gift shop has added Stephanie Orr to its ranks. Stephanie is in charge of the store on weekends. Stephanie is a student at Mount Mercy College.

Our group of summer tour guides includes Debra Simpson, a college intern from the Travel and Tourism program at Iowa Lakes Community College, in Emmetsburg, Iowa. Debbie interprets the museum exhibits for the visitors. Her hours of training and experience will fulfill part of her academic requirements.

Project Pilsen

Roger Burke, author of *A Home in Bohemia*, is on a mission. As founder of Project Pilsen, Roger works tirelessly to raise funds "to build one American House in the heart of Europe so that thousands can build new lives." Project Pilsen is all about the creation of an educational center filled with English language books, periodicals and related materials, including plenty of space for English language classes. The walls are planned to be covered with photos of U.S. soldiers from WWII liberation forces.



*Pilsen 1945: A brief taste of American freedom.
Photo by Jiri Pizak*

Roger tells us, "Elements of General George Patton's 3rd Army entered Pilsen, and liberated the

city from occupying German soldiers. Despite the urging of Czechs to continue on to Prague, only a few hours away, General Patton reluctantly followed orders to halt at Pilsen." Patton voiced bitter disappointment; a tragic age for Czechs and free people everywhere was set in motion: the Cold War.

Robert Burke's goal is to raise \$100,000 to create the educational center American House. To learn more about Project Pilsen-American House, write to Roger Burke, c/o, Columbia River Book Co., 3404 S. Auburn, Kennewick, WA 99337. Roger will send a complimentary copy of "A Home in Bohemia" with each donation to the project of \$15 or more.

Wish List

As an institution whose building and programs have created needs quicker than our budget can supply them, we find that we have critical gaps in certain areas. The following are a few necessities that would go a long ways toward assisting the museum.

1. 35 mm camera (not fancy!)
2. "486" or larger IBM compatible computers
3. computer printers
4. volunteers

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from Manchester and Monica from Davenport. Dan received his M.A. in English and Expository Writing from the University of Iowa, where he was also introduced to museum work as a research assistant at Old Capitol.

All of us at the Museum are enjoying the benefit of Dan's vast experience in museum operations. Most of all, he is a truly congenial fellow whom you will all want to get to know. Please take the time to meet Dan the next time you are in the Museum. Nazdar.

Rod Jiruska
President, NCSLML Board of Directors

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In time our complete vision will be realized. How can I be so sure? I have made a point to meet with and get to know many leaders in the city of Cedar Rapids. Every one of these people openly talk about their hopes for the success of the museum and library. We are in steady contact with Czech organizations throughout the country who offer their support. Artifact and book donations occur almost daily. Tour numbers, Heritage Hall usage, and gift shop sales will exceed projections for 1996. These and many other factors, including the support of the membership, are assets which will propel the museum into the next century, creating a cultural resource which will make a lasting impact on Cedar Rapids, eastern Iowa, and beyond.

I am thrilled to be part of what will no doubt be a very successful future at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library.

Dan Baldwin

Scenes From a Busy Season



National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

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