



“Homelands” Exhibit to Open April 30

It is with a great deal of excitement that we open *Homelands: The Story of the Czech & Slovak People*, the long-awaited and much-anticipated core exhibit of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. The staff, especially curator Carmen Langel, and our exhibit designer, Robert Bodnar, have spent many months preparing for *Homelands'* opening.

Homelands: The Story of the Czech & Slovak People is a multi-media exploration of the celebrations and travails of Czechs & Slovaks from the days of Slavic tribes wandering into Central Europe through the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Sections such as Arts and Letters, Three Struggles for Freedom, and Immigration and Acculturation will profile the historical figures, the struggles, the artistic achievements, and the political accomplishments of a people whose story has become one of western civilizations extraordinary histories.

At the heart of this exhibit, of course, is the museum's collection. Now displayed using the finest exhibit cases

and lighting, and enveloped within a compelling interpretation, our artifacts will seem altogether new. And in some cases they are. One of the values of a show such as *A Thousand Years of Czech Culture* is that the attention it brought the institution spurred important donations to the collection. Rare maps, glass and porcelain, a Mucha print, a

printing press on which Czech-language newspapers were printed, an outstanding stamp collection, a Stefánik bust, and much more will be on exhibit for the first time. Long term loans for the purpose of this exhibition have also been secured, including a 1935 Czech-made motorcycle and, from the Chicago Art Institute, an Albin Polášek sculpture.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is *Costume Square*, in which the museum's nationally known

kroje collection will be displayed. Separated into three categories — Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia — the *kroje* (national folk costumes) will be shown in front of dramatic images

Article continued on next page.



This Alfons Mucha print, recently donated to the Museum by Mirko Vondra, will be exhibited for the first time in “Homelands.”

TAKING NOTE

Presenting...

Founding Fathers: The Czechoslovak Legion in Siberia, 1917 to 1920

JOIN US MONDAY, MAY 4, 1998

AT 6:30 P.M. for a presentation by Joan McGuire Mohr. Mohr, a PhD candidate from the Department of History at the University of Pittsburgh, is coming to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library to study a set of World War I scrapbooks donated to the Museum in 1996. While here, she has agreed to give a presentation about the Legions in Siberia. She will explain how the Legion became isolated, stranded thousands of miles from home, and the years it took for them to return home. Some of this information only recently became available with the fall of the Soviet Union.

Mohr will also discuss some of the photographs contained in the Museum's two scrapbooks she will have just examined. ■

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Dan Baldwin,
Executive Director

appropriate to each region. The *kroje* will also have the benefit of new, museum-standard mannequins to ensure their stability while on exhibit.

Homelands will also have a touch of fun, making sure it will appeal to visitors of all ages. A large "castle" reminiscent of medieval structures from Czech and Slovak lands acts as a major staging area before guests embark into the first thematic section. A Czech language program will provide audible Czech pronunciations of English words typed into a computer (we hope to have a similar Slovak language program in 1999). The stamps will be used in ingenious ways throughout the exhibit, not only to make interpretive points, but also to point out that there are many

different ways to learn history and gain an appreciation for other cultures. Several dramatic elements throughout the exhibit are meant not just to teach but to transport visitors into another era.

Why *Homelands*? We spent many months searching for the title of our exhibit. Many titles seemed too clever or too involved, or didn't capture the spirit of what we are trying to accomplish in total. The primary appeal of *Homelands* is its simplicity and its ability to simultaneously invoke a look back and a look to another place while reminding us that the very reason there is a National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids is due to the great migration of Czechs and Slovaks to the U.S. and the understanding of those immigrants of the importance of retaining their ethnic identity.

Homelands: The Story of the Czech & Slovak People would not be possible without the ongoing support of our donors. Many gave as early as 1993 and 1994 through the capital campaign in anticipation of this project. And we are receiving new gifts as the excitement builds. *Homelands*, we hope, will be worth the wait.

— Dan Baldwin, Executive Director

FROM THE CURATOR

This has been a busy winter, reminiscent of the installation of *A Thousand Years of Czech Culture* last year. As we're working on the installation of *Homelands*, we thought members would enjoy a sample of some of the artifacts which will be on exhibit.

One collection you will see includes several dolls from the Bartizal collection. Henrietta Skala Bartizal donated these dolls to the Museum in 1990. She acquired them from Olga Vabel, a Jewish store owner from Prague. During World War II, Olga was forced into hiding to avoid persecution by the Nazis. While in hiding, she mailed her dolls, a few at a time, to the Bartizal family in Chicago. Mrs. Vabel gave them her dolls as a gift for their kindness and to prevent the Nazis from getting them.



A recent donation from Joan Sedlacek will also be exhibited. Joan responded to our request for Czech-made bicycles, printed in the *Fraternal Herald*, the magazine of the Western Fraternal Life Insurance Co. She drove down from St. Paul, Minnesota to deliver her first bicycle, a late 1950s Favorit, to the Museum.

Another popular item will be the Štefánik bust, a gift of Captain Eugene Cernan. Captain Cernan, who is both Czech and Slovak, received the bust and an accompanying medal in recognition for his accomplishments with the United States space program. General Milan R. Štefánik is the highly respected Slovak patriot who was instrumental in the forming of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

These are just a few of the hundreds

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of items which will tell the story of *Homelands*. Many artifacts will be on display for the first time, and many you have seen, though now they will be in an entirely new exhibition format. We look forward to seeing you at *Homelands*.

— Carmen Langel, Curator

On Loan to the Museum



1935 Jawa Lidovj 175 is on loan from Don Schumann for "Homelands" exhibit.

FROM THE LIBRARY

A hundred years ago it took weeks for a letter to travel from the United States to Central Europe. Today, with a computer and a modem, an e-mail message can be sent to Bratislava in a matter of seconds, or an Internet web site in Brno can be viewed with equal ease and speed.

Our Library is now taking advantage of this technology to promote Czech and Slovak history and culture to the world.

The Library is able to communicate with the world through e-mail and its Internet web site. You'll be interested to know that roughly half of the reference questions we receive are sent through e-mail. This impressive number tells us that providing information through the Internet to our members and the general public is a service that is wanted. Our web site currently offers viewers the opportunity to stay informed about upcoming exhibits and programs, the services the Library offers, and general visitor information. One of the short-term goals for the library is to expand the web site. One new "page" will feature links to other web sites that promote Czech and Slovak history and culture.

Another promising use of this tech-

nology is found in the newer online library catalogs. I have identified a few online catalog systems that go beyond simply providing bibliographic information about materials in a library's collection — they can offer the same multimedia capabilities as do web sites. In fact, these systems operate over the Internet itself. Here is an example of how such a system would work in our Library: a person interested in finding archival materials about the American Sokol Organization goes to the library catalog web site, searches the catalog and finds a few catalog records that look interesting. Those records will not only include general catalog information about those items, but may also offer the person the option of looking at a digital image of a Sokol poster noted in the catalog record. The multimedia capabilities these systems offer will allow libraries to present much more than bibliographic references to items in a library — it can potentially offer the user access to a digital image of the items themselves. A researcher half way across the world could take advantage of the materials in the Library's collection without having stepped into the library!

Our goal for future development of the Library is to be foremost in the

public mind when it comes to topics related to Czech and Slovak history and culture. We have a lot of information to offer, but the next step is letting the public know what we have. I believe these computer technologies can be our window to the world.

Computer technology aside, there is a lot of other work to be done in the Library, like cataloging the collection, processing new donations and answering reference questions. The new computer technologies serve as a means to provide better service and more information to our members and the general public, not as an end unto itself. With this in mind, please don't hesitate to contact me about any questions or concerns you may have regarding the progress being made in the Library. I look forward to hearing from you. ■

— David Muhlena, Librarian

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Web site address of the NCSML
www.ncsml.org

GIFT STORE NEWS

As the excitement heightens each day in preparation for the opening of "Homelands," the gift store is anxiously awaiting the arrival of our new glassblown Christmas tree ornaments from the Czech and Slovak Republics.

Many people purchase these glassblown ornaments year around as gifts or to add to their own collection. Therefore, we thought you would like to know some of the history and symbolic meaning of these beautiful ornaments.

Four thousand years ago, natives of remote northern Bohemia originated an art form in glassblowing. The Bohemians had learned this skill from wandering Venetian tradesmen. They used their skill to create glass ornaments for adornment of the fir tree in their Yule celebration of the winter solstice.

For centuries, the glass blowers of

Bohemia have been famous throughout the world for their glassblown Christmas ornaments. The root of early glass blowers has remained in Bohemia, where beautiful ornaments are still produced using forms over 1,000 years old.

Symbolic Meaning of the Ornaments

- Walnut – This is the traditional "fruit" of the Christmas season in central Europe.
- Corn – Symbolizes prosperity, fertility.
- Houses, Churches – Symbols of village life.
- Farm Animals – Traditional symbols of everyday village life.
- Birds – Symbols of joy and cheerfulness.
- Swan – Symbol of gracefulness.
- Owl – Symbol of wisdom.
- Spider – In order for the spider to see the beauty of the tall Christmas tree, it scurried up the trunk and along the branches leaving a trail of dusty, gray

web.

- Clowns, Carrouels and Circus Animals – In the old days, the circus was the main entertainment for the people. Because of its joyful nature, the circus characters have carried over into the Christmas ornament tradition.
- Mushroom – The mushroom is indigenous to Central Europe and typically grows in the late fall. It is very beautiful and looks very much like the ornament, but is very poisonous.
- Musical Instruments – Symbolize the joy that music and singing brings during the Holiday Season.
- Stars, Moons and Angels – The closest you can get to Heaven. ■

— Shirley Rosencrans, Gift Store

Kraslice: *"Kdo chce všechno vědět, musí rok na tomto vajíčku sedět!"*
(Whoever wants to know everything there is to know, must sit on this egg for a year!)

If you lived in the region of the Czech Republic known as Moravia, you might receive an Easter egg with a saying such as this on it.

The custom of decorating eggs evolved along with handwork, and the eggs became special gifts to give to loved ones. Decorated eggs are known by many names. The general term for them, in the Czech and Slovak Republics, is "kraslice." This term is a formation of two words: **krásné** (beautiful) and **vejce** (eggs) — in Czech, and **krásné** (beautiful) and **vajce** (eggs) — in Slovak. In older forms of several Slavic languages, most notably Czech and Russian, the "kras" root meant red. Red is also the Slavic color of joy and life.

Not to be confused with the term "kraslice" is the term "pysanky." This term is most commonly used in eastern Slavic countries. The root "pysat" (eastern Slavic) means to write. Rusyn and Ukrainian "pysanky" are "written upon" eggs as they are made with a writing stylus.

Decorated eggs can also be identified, or named, according to the technique or style of the area in which they are done. The kraslice of the Haná area of Moravia are referred to as "slaměnky" because little pieces of straw (sláma) are

used to create the designs. Small pieces of oat or barley straw are sliced lengthwise, carefully ironed flat, and then cut into tiny geometric shapes. These shapes are arranged into patterns and applied to the egg (generally dyed a dark red or brown) with a colorless glue.

In the neighborhood of Plzeň, "scratched" designs are popular. After the egg has been dyed a bright color, the design is scratched on using the tip of a knife or other sharp object. "Painted" eggs literally have the designs painted on them. Subjects can range from folk designs or traditional patterns to the depiction of folk customs or village scenes, or the illustration of a favorite folk song.

Raised "wax" designs are created using beeswax which has been colored. Eggs dyed red or brown can be decorated with black wax. Brightly colored waxes are beautiful on white eggs.

The "batik" (or wax-resist) method is one of the oldest and most popular. Melted beeswax is applied to an egg using a thin metal tool, a drawing pen, fine paint brush or a tool devised from a pin, with a glass head and a wooden handle. The egg is immersed into the dye baths, beginning with the lightest color first. Continued applications of

wax insure retention of a particular color before the egg is progressed to the next dye bath.

The "shadow imprint" technique is simple and can be a fun one to do with youngsters. An interesting leaf or other natural material needs to be carefully positioned around an egg and held firmly in place with a piece of cheese-cloth or a nylon stocking while the egg is being immersed in the dye. When the cloth and natural material are removed, a "shadow" of the object remains on the egg.

An interesting way to dye eggs is to boil them along with various kinds of natural materials. Boiling eggs with the skins of yellow onions produces a color range from gold to copper (depending on the amount of skins used and the boiling time allowed.) Red cabbage leaves can produce a pale blue to a deeper blue-green shade. Turmeric can be used for yellow, tea leaves for a light tan, and strong coffee for a somewhat darker shade of brown. "To vajíčko malovaný je od srdce darovaný." (This painted egg is given as a gift from the heart.) "Veselé velikonoce!" (Happy Easter!) ■

— Patricia Hikiji, Programs Coordinator

WISH LIST

We are grateful for the response we had to our wish list in the last issue of MOST. The following items were recently donated to the Museum & Library:

- Two paper cutters – Shirley Petersen, in memory of her mother, Leona Netolický Kaplan
 - Two lace tableclothes – Vera Hanson
- Thank you for your support.*

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is still in need of the following items:

- laser or deskjet printer
- flat file cabinet for map storage
- electric calculator with ribbon cartridge
- slide projector
- electric or crank pencil sharpener
- three-ring binders
- hose reel
- CD cassette player for Gift Store

To donate any of these items, please call (319) 362-8500.

Museum Guild's New Slate of Officers for 1998

- Maridee Dugger, *President*
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- Patti Marolf, *Corresponding Secretary*
- Marj Nejd, *Museum Guild Representative*
- Marilyn R. Tucker, *Ex-Officio*

Guild meetings are held the first Saturday morning from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. of each month except during June, July and August when meetings will be held on Monday evenings at 6:30 p.m. at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library.

A special thanks to the Guild for the recent purchase of a new paper shredder.

PROGRAMMING AT A GLANCE

Programming Schedule through July 1998

April 8 — Brno Chamber Orchestra

• 7:30 p.m. — Sinclair Auditorium Coe College.
World class ensemble blends Baroque, Classical, and Contemporary works by composers from the Czech and Slovak regions.

April 11 — Czech & Slovak Easter Customs & Traditions

• 9:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m. Demonstrations of ethnic arts and crafts, by local artists and artisans, in the Museum's WFLA Heritage Hall.
Fee: \$2.00 per adult; \$1.00 per student.

April 15 — Learn At Lunch "Comenius" Presenter, Bob Stone

• 12:00 Noon — 1:00 p.m., in WFLA Heritage Hall. Bring your lunch and watch a film on the life of famous Czech educator, Jan Amos Komenský. Bob Stone, an "obdivovatel Komenského" (admirer of Komenský) will add his special comments and insights. Free.

April 22 — Ames Children's Choir

• 12:00 Noon, in WFLA Heritage Hall. Dr. Sylvia Munsen, Conductor
A program of ethnic music including Czech, Hungarian, and American folk music selections. Admission: Donation at the door.

April 25 — Stories, Tales, Legends, & Lore (children's storytime)

• 10:00 a.m., Museum Library. Free to the public.

April 30 Opening — New Exhibit "Homelands"

May 2 — Member's Reception

May 4 — Lecture "Founding Fathers: The Czechoslovak Legion

in Siberia, 1917 to 1920" Joan McGuire Mohr
• 6:30 p.m., in WFLA Heritage Hall. Free to the public.

May 4 — "Káva a Knihy" Reading-Lecture-Discussion Series

• 7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m., at Museum Library (may be subject to change).

May 16 & 17 — Houby Days Spring Festival in Czech Village

May 20 — Learn At Lunch "The Europeans Come to Iowa"

by Dr. Loren N. Horton
• 12:00 Noon — 1:00 p.m., in WFLA Heritage Hall. Bring your lunch and learn what immigrant "travel diaries" have to tell us about the immigrants who settled our state. Free to the public.

May 23 — Stories, Tales, Legends, & Lore (children's storytime)

• 10:00 a.m., Museum Library. Free to the public.

June 1 — "Káva a Knihy" Reading-Lecture-Discussion Series

• 7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m., at Museum Library.

June 17 — Learn At Lunch (To be announced.)

June 27 — Stories, Tales, Legends, & Lore (children's storytime)

• 10:00 a.m., at Museum Library. Free to the public.

July 6 — "Káva a Knihy" Reading-Lecture-Discussion Series

• 7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m., at Museum Library.

July 10, 11 — Boni Pueri Boys Choir from Czech Republic

July 15 — Learn At Lunch (To be announced.)

July 25 — Stories, Tales, Legends, & Lore (children's storytime)

• 10:00 a.m. at Museum Library. Free to the public.

Čtenarský Spolek

You who come to America should first of all learn to speak the English language...But while you should work indefatigably for the advancement and good of all the community in which you live, you need not therefore abandon your Bohemian traditions and your interest in Bohemian history and institutions. — Taken from a lecture given by Thomas G. Masaryk at the Czech School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on September 13, 1907.

Where Czechs settled in groups, spoke the same language and had similar characteristics and like interests, formal organizations developed. The Čtenarský Spolek (The Reading Society) was the first organization of Czech people in Cedar Rapids. Established in 1868, the by-laws stated that the purpose of the organization was to encourage reading, to promote lectures, and to present dramatic performances.

The Reading Society Hall was a one story frame structure with a 20-foot deep stage, with dressing rooms located under the stage. The assembly room was used

for a dance hall. In the years that followed, The Reading Society served as a nucleus for several auxiliary organizations — a gymnastics group, dramatic club, choral society, library (supplied with 500 volumes), and a school.

In the tradition of the Čtenarský Spolek, "Káva a Knihy" (Coffee & Books) was introduced as a museum program. The objective was to bring together a group of individuals interested in reading Czech and Slovak literature (in English translation), in learning more about Czech and Slovak authors and their writing styles, and in sharing their impressions with others. The group has fifteen registered members who meet once a month. The challenge has been to locate copies of the books to be read. We would also like to invite any of our museum's "reading" membership to read along with us. Any out-of-state member who would like to share insights, book reviews, etc. with the Cedar Rapids "Káva a Knihy" group can do so by mailing the information to the

group's coordinator, Patricia Hikiji, at the Museum address or by sending an E-mail message to phikiji@ncsml.org

We plan to read one or more of Josef Skvorecký's works, choosing from *The Bride of Texas*, *The Cowards*, and *Dvorak in Love*. We are interested in *Mendelssohn is on the Roof* by Jiří Weil and novels by Bohumil Hrabal, Arnost Lustig, and Vladimír Páral. We are also looking for help in locating copies of *The Cunning Little Vixen* by Rudolf Těsnohlídek and *Babička* by Božena Němcová (in English). The edition of *The Cunning Little Vixen* that we are looking for is the 1985 one illustrated by Maurice Sendak and published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Other title and author suggestions would be helpful and appreciated. We look forward to and welcome your contributions. ■

— Patricia Hikiji, Programs Coordinator

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Insurance Company

A WORD FROM DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers Honored

National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library volunteers were recognized for their devoted service to the organization over the past year at a brunch held Sunday, March 15, 1998 in WFLA Heritage Hall. Nearly 200 volunteers attended the event in their honor "A New Season, New Beginnings." A total of 15,000 hours of service were tallied during 1997 when A Thousand Years of Czech Culture attracted over 30,000 visitors from all over the world. ■

AN ORIENTATION AND TRAINING WORKSHOP will be held April 20, 1998 for all current and potential volunteers. The workshop will be offered at three different times — morning, afternoon, and evening to accommodate varying schedules. For more information, call 319-362-8500. ■



You Can Volunteer From A Distance...

Many National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library members have commented they wished they could volunteer, but live too far away to participate in such activities. So, here's your chance to be part of an event we will be holding at the museum November 9, 1998.

All of our volunteers will be recording their volunteer hours from January 1 through November 1, 1998, to use as "buying power" for an auction November 9. The auction will consist of donations such as gift certificates, handcrafted items, baked goods, homemade jams, pickles, etc. What would you like to donate to make this auction exciting for our volunteers?

Please send donations to the museum in care of Patricia Hikiji, Program Coordinator. We look forward to our many long-distance members participating in this event. ■

We're Almost There!

Many generous donors have helped us achieve nearly 83% of our \$600,000 goal for the new core exhibit project *Homelands: The Story of Czech & Slovak People*. If you, too, wish to support the final phase of our effort to secure the remaining 17%, please complete the form below and enclose it with your gift or pledge to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. Thank you! ■

— Judy Ostrander, Director of Development

Please cut along dotted lines and mail contribution with pledge form below. Use enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Contribution/Pledge Form for "Homelands" Exhibit

I would like to help support the new "core" exhibit project at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library with my tax-deductible contribution.

Name _____ Home phone _____

Address _____ Work phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is a contribution of \$ _____ to support the Museum & Library's own world-class exhibit scheduled to open to the public on April 30.

(OR)

I would like to pledge \$ _____ in support of this exhibit. Pledges can be extended over a two-year period. Please bill me as follows:

Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for your support!

NATIONAL NEWS & EVENTS

♦ **Czech Center New York Presents:
Joska Skalnič**

- Wednesday, April 8, at 6:00 p.m.

The artist will discuss *Czech Underground Culture of the 1970s and '80s*.

Seating is limited, so RSVP at 212-288-0830, ext. 100.

Followed by...

Exhibition of Collages and Graphic Art

- Opening Reception at 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Admission free. The exhibition will be on display April 9 – May 14, 1998. For

additional information, contact Petr Polednak at 212-772-6354. Fax 212-288-0971. Czech Center New York, 1109 Madison Ave. (at 83rd St) Subway 4, 5, 6 at 86th St.

♦ **Des Moines Arts Festival**

- June 26, 27, 28

Three stages; If you are interested in performing, call Mo Dana,

♦ **Coe College Band's *Songs of War* Concert Features Music of Czech Composers, Guest Conductor**

• Saturday, April 18 at 7:30 p.m. in Sinclair Auditorium. • In a performance encompassing music that is variously emotional and cerebral, powerful and delicate, dissonant and melodic, the Coe College Concert Band will present its Festival of Bands Grand Finale Concert, "Songs of War." **For ticket information, contact the Coe Box Office at 399-8600, noon to 8:00 p.m. daily, or purchase tickets at the door.**

♦ **Czech & Slovak Connections**

There is a monthly newsletter being published in the US that covers current political and economic news from the Czech and Slovak Republics. Now in its fifth year, it is widely viewed as providing accurate and timely news for busy folks wishing to stay abreast of developments in these lands. **To receive a free sample copy, provide a regular mailing address and your phone number via e-mail to Jerry Machaleck, publisher:**

or, phone

MEMBERS RECEIVE FREE ADMISSION

A reminder to all current members of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library: Your membership allows you free admission and unlimited visits to all museum exhibits! All you need to do is show your current membership card at the visitors station in the Grand Hall. Encourage your family and friends to become members so they too can enjoy these privileges.

Note: Admission prices for non-members are reduced for the month of April to a \$1 donation. Beginning April 30 with the opening of *Homelands* exhibit, admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, and \$2 for children ages 5 – 16. Children under 5 are admitted free with a paying parent or guardian. ■

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