

May 29, 2009 Hutchinson, Minnesota

Efforts Underway to Re-catalogue and Preserve the Historical Library Collection of the Bohemian Reading and Educational Society (Česky Čtenářský V Zdělavajici Spolek)

On January 9, 1876, a small group of Bohemian settlers in McLeod County met at the home of Josef Zila in Hutchinson township for the purpose of providing social and educational advantages for themselves and their children. The charter members of the Bohemian Reading and Educational Society were Josef Kadlec, Paul Chernausek, Josef Janecky, Vaclav Pessek, Josef Zila, Jan Kasper, Anton Zeleny, Josef Friauf, Frank Kasper, and Vaclav Zavoral.

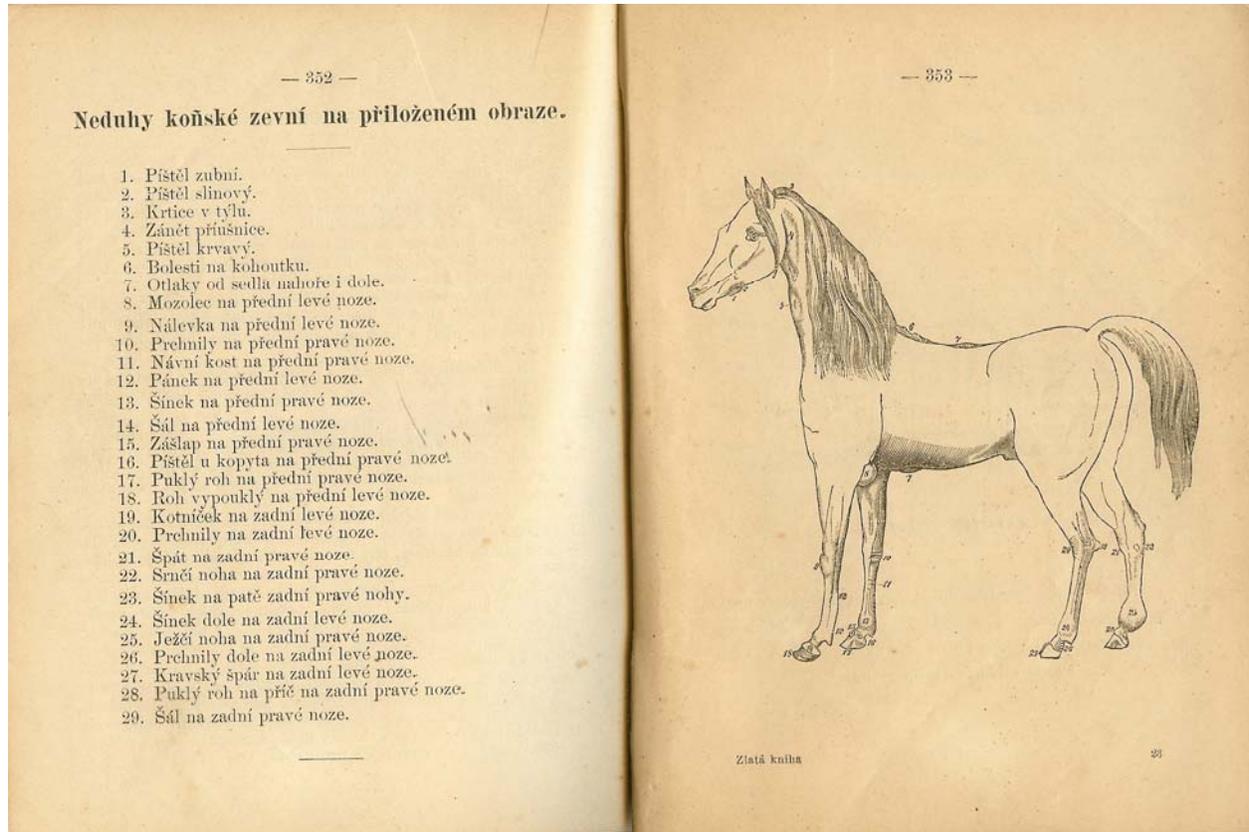
Meetings were held on the first Sunday afternoon of each month, at the home of John Danek or John Drahos, and dues were ten cents per month. Incorporated into the bylaws was a resolution that the Society purchase \$20 worth of Czech books each year; teach school in the Czech language; organize a Czech choir and Dramatic club. In 1882, membership had increased to fifty, too large for any home, so it was decided to build a Hall. In 1883 a committee of Frank Danek, Paul Chernausek, J.V. Kadlec, Frank Mikulecky, and John Vojta bought an acre in the southeast corner of section 35, for \$60. The dimensions of the Hall built that summer were 52 feet long, 30 feet wide and 16 feet high, and was first used November 10, 1883.



Bohemian Reading and Educational Society picnic, held at the Bohemian Hall, on the Northwest corner of the intersection of what is now State Highway 7 and Major Avenue, sometime between 1884 and 1895.

The original library collection of the Bohemian Reading and Educational Society still remains today, under the ownership and care of the Lodge Lumir #34, Z.C.B.J (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association) and is comprised of nearly 800 books, all in the Czech language, with the earliest books dating back to 1825. The vast majority of the collection is comprised of secular works of world literature and philosophy, published in Prague during the Austro-Hungarian

Empire (i.e. before 1918 when the country of Czechoslovakia would come into political existence, later to become the Czech Republic in 1993). Also surviving are the original handwritten record books that include circulation records indicating 'which members read what books and when', and an early index of the library collection holdings.



From a book in the Bohemian Reading and Educational Society Library on how to identify the diseases of a horse, from Zlatá Kniha Pro Farmera (Gold Book for Farmers) published by the "Slavie", Racine, Wisconsin, 1894.

Efforts are currently underway to re-catalogue the collection and establish a database of the publication information, titles, authors, and a digital image of the cover of each volume.

For more information about the collection or how you can contribute towards the ongoing preservation of it, please contact Tony Kadlec at (651) 271-0422 or tkadlec@gmail.com.