

# The Velké Tresné Kadlec Family History



Ancestral Kadlec Home, House Number 13, Velké Tresné, Czech Republic

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## Chapter 1. Introduction to this Work

This book is dedicated to my grandfather, Joseph Kadlec and to all of my ancestors known and unknown who have lived throughout the ages, both historic and pre-historic, around this world.

Although my grandpa Joe died one half-year before I was born, I grew to know him through the stories that were told about him. His was the story of an intelligent and well regarded man whose life was full of such sweet promise, but was cut short by a debilitating disease, multiple sclerosis. These stories hinted at his genius and potential as a degreed chemical engineer and as a boy I developed a strong notion that becoming an engineer would be quite a noble accomplishment. As fate would have it, probably due to my admiration for him, I also became an engineer with a special interest in my family history, and enough interest to compel me to start documenting it.

My interest in the Kadlec family grew further when my family moved to the Kadlec farm, where my father and previous generations of Kadlecs had grown up, near Silver Lake, Minnesota. Occasionally as a teenager I would meet old timers around the Silver Lake area who were contemporaries of my grandpa Joe and I would ask them what they remembered about him and my other previously departed ancestors, to see if their stories corroborated with what I had heard from others. Once while in the process of getting a haircut from Phil Pilarski, in the old main street barbershop in Silver Lake, I learned that he had known my great grandfather, Albin. I thought to myself--what an opportunity! Here was my chance to get a firsthand account of Albin from someone who knew him on a personal level, many years ago. And so I asked him what he remembered about Albin. This barber's primary recollection: "*Albin had very hairy ears.*" To my disappointment, he had no other information to share with me.

Sometime after that, I interviewed my grandma Rose for a high school project to document what life was like for her as a young woman and compare her story with the neighboring farmer down the road (George Micka). Rather than rely on my handwritten notes, I chose to record my separate conversations with them on audiotape. To this day I still have the tape with her family stories and the pleasure of being able to hear my grandma's laugh even though she has since passed along to the next world.

Through the years these family stories and legends were told and retold and gradually absorbed into our collective family memory. Some of these stories seemed unfair to me, such as the story about my great great grandmother Francis (Kutina) Kadlec. She held the dubious distinction of having accidentally overflowed the bathtub on the second floor of the then new Kadlec farmhouse, ruining the plaster ceiling of the first floor below. To this day, I cannot look up at that ceiling in the back hallway without thinking about her. But to my mind, the ruined plaster story reminded me of Albin's hairy ears and then a lesson dawned on me: *even though the arc of a person's life has ended, it still lives on, reflected in the curious observations and memories of others.* It makes you wonder what foibles future generations will be told about you and your life, doesn't it?

Personally speaking, it is my occupational hazard as an engineer to tend to the side of objectivity and to avoid value judgments and the personal drama that gets in the way of getting things done. That said, I now find myself engaged in the qualitative world of family lore, working to document family stories and to reconcile them with the facts of people, places, and things learned in my family genealogy research. The arrival of my sons

Theodore Josef and Anton Percy and Nikolas Vitek and the passing of my aunt Joan Kadlec Ahrens has strengthened my resolve to capture those stories as well as I can to make them available for the benefit of the next generation.

Another milestone in my family history research occurred in August of 2004, when my family attended a Czech cultural festival held at the Komensky schoolhouse, located between Hutchinson and Silver Lake, Minnesota about 2 miles west of the Kadlec farm. This was the first time I had the opportunity to walk through the Komensky schoolhouse where my grandma Rose Bednar Kadlec had taught for six years before she was married. To my surprise, high up on the wall was a photo of my proud looking great-great grandfather, Josef Kadlec—and documentation of his founding of the Czech community of Komensky and the nearby Bohemian National Cemetery. My curiosity was peaked even more and I realized there were more generations of Kadlec ancestors to be discovered and revealed for posterity.

Through my genealogy research efforts, I have come to relearn a universal lesson; there is so much to be learned, if you only take the time to learn how and where to look. For example, information regarding my great grandfather's father Josef (generation 7 of the Kadlec family documented here) and his village of origin was unknown—for whatever reason this information was never passed down through the generations in written or oral form. Any government records on the family's place of origin indicated that they were from 'Bohemia' or 'Moravia'—but never any specific place to which I could learn more about and possibly visit with my family someday.

The digital photo of Josef, that I had taken in the Komensky schoolhouse included a caption in the Czech language and sat silently in my computer for nearly two years before I had realized it held the clue to help me solve this mystery. With an online Czech to English translation tool and Google.com I was able to identify and locate the home village of the Kadlec family, Velké Tresné! With just one email I connected through the village website with the mayor of Velké Tresné, Jiří Petr, who through his own kindness, enthusiasm and the help of his local contacts (Erika Cacková for her help with translations and Ladislav Kovář for his research work) was able to help me fully document eight additional generations of the Kadlec family who were previously unknown! The Kadlec family owes a debt of gratitude to Jiří for helping us to more fully connect with the land of our heritage.

In this book I do my best to document the births, deaths, marriages, and notable facts surrounding my living and deceased family. Beyond the facts and figures, I also hope to preserve some stories and memories, to be read and possibly enjoyed by future generations of our family.

But what can be said about the past generations of our Kadlec family? What were the circumstances of their lives and their motivation to immigrate to America? These and other questions revolved in my mind as I undertook the challenge of researching my forefathers. Who were the first members of the Kadlec family to arrive on the American shores? And who were the loved ones they left behind in the 'old country'? What was their journey like coming to a new world and what challenges did they face to transplant our family roots in the small town of Silver Lake, Minnesota?

The small farming town and surrounding community of Silver Lake was largely settled by Czech and Polish immigrants and has been inhabited by successive generations of their descendants, who continue to hold an annual summer celebration they call 'Pola-Czesky Days'. Since my family still lives in the Silver Lake area, we are connected to that

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community, which still retains a tenuous connection to the Czech and Polish culture. At the risk of offending the locals, all that seems to remain is a superficial sense of our Czech and Polish cultures as compared to what it was in my father's generation, and likewise the generation before his. With the exception of the few Czech and Polish carols that are sung at Christmas Mass each year and/or eating some kolaches or poppyseed bread that someone else's mother, grandmother or aunt has made—the rich memories of what it means or once had meant to be quintessentially Czech or Polish for people in the Silver Lake area are seeming to fade away, generation by generation, along with the numbers of people who have retained the ability to speak the language spoken by their forefathers.

Admitting that we are letting these cultures fade away does mean we are not proud of our respective ethnic heritage and culture of origin. Rather it seems to be an American phenomenon to gradually leave your immigrant culture behind, to learn English and then adjust your focus on the future to adapt to new changes posed by newly evolving forces in our globalized world culture (case in point: I just wrote the above paragraph while on one of my regular business trips to Guangzhou, China).

In general, we Americans are certainly proud of our ethnic heritage for many spoken and unspoken reasons. For these spoken reasons of pride, we curiously seem to pick and chose and project the more admirable qualities of our ancestors onto ourselves. For example, regardless of whether we actually are hardworking, we like to consider ourselves in possession of a strong work ethic, just as our grandparents and great grandparents had. And we do this despite the fact the intensity of our modern daily work probably couldn't or shouldn't be compared to the work that the first generations of our family endured in hardships of their daily lives. Or we might consider ourselves stubborn, because that was a quality we may have attributed to our grandparents, who were mostly and resolutely disciplined in their daily life. If we are creative, musical and/or artistic, surely those qualities must have been admired in our culture of origin? Yet it is hard to name a culture where art and music are not revered on some notable level. Surely there is a set of universal values that we have come to know, appreciate, and perpetuate, regardless of our culture of origin.

Although the culture of an American family continually adapts and evolves with each passing generation, it can follow a thread of a family's predominant culture if the family is able to preserve it through their stories and customs. It is my hope that this document can increase the probability that this thread of Czech-American cultural pride will survive and be told by my sons and their sons and daughters and so on.

Anthony Joseph Kadlec



(B. 27 December 1967, M. 15 June 2002, D.?)