

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

SILVER LAKE FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: THE JOSEF BARTON FAMILY

Silver Lake area resident, Herald Barton is the son of Joseph Barton Jr. and the grandson of Josef Barton Sr., the latter of whom was an immigrant from the Czech-Moravian highlands known as the Vysočina and the very same village as my Kadlec family, Velké Tresné.

Every family should be so lucky as to have a written account of their grandparent's life story such as this one, which was passed along to me by Barry and Herald Barton last May at the CGSI quarterly meeting held at the McLeod County Historical Museum at Hutchinson.

Translation of Joseph Barton's autobiography-By Emily Barton, 1949

"This is written on my 85th birthday, Feb. 24, 1934. I saw the light of the world Feb. 24, 1849 in Velky Tresny, Moravia, Czechoslovakia. There I spent the spring of my life. In 1869 I was drafted into the German army and released after three years of trying service, in 1872.

Next year several families were preparing to leave for America. My father got permission for my leaving, but the papers didn't come until after my friends left. I lost desire to go until another call came from the army (obsilka na hejtmanstvi). That decided the step.

I left Sept. 1873. Parting with my dear mother was the hardest-for I realized I might never see her again. We parted on a Sunday morning while the others still slept. My father and brother took me to the station, and then came another hard parting. It was a lonesome trip, but God was with me and guided me so that the long journey ended safely.

My destination was Cedar Rapids, Iowa, at two Simon brothers where I found work immediately. There were other Czechs from my neighborhood so I wasn't lonesome. Later I got the address of the Mistr family in Silver Lake Minnesota, and at their invitation I came there.

In half a year I left Iowa and came to Mistr's where I had my second home. They were extremely kind to me. Life would have been much harder without their help. I corresponded with Grandma Mistr after they moved away, to the end of her days.

There were many farms for sale near Silver Lake. I paid \$1,000.00 for this farm in 1875 (160 acres). Mistr's sowed and harvested the grain for me the first year while I hired out to learn some English. I took over in 1878. I remember how I had to watch so thieves wouldn't steal my oxen.

Then came the most important time when I had to choose the mate of my life. I prayed and God sent me the best. In the spring of 1878 the Jerabeks came from Dalecin. I knew Frank Jerabek who told me his sister Frantiska would have me. After overcoming several obstacles, she accepted me for she was meant for me. I recall one early morning when I came to Mlinar's to see her. Her sister, Mrs. Mlinar, was untidy, with disheveled hair. I was taken aback- thinking that those two were sisters. Frantiska was planning to work with an English family and I didn't dissuade her as I had planned. I said I was looking for my oxen and went home. Later on I went to see her and asked her to come with me but she refused. She liked working for the English family. However, her parents sent Mr. Mlinar after her and he brought her home. I never asked her why she refused me that first time.

So we were married on a Sunday, Sept. 2, 1878 in Winsted at a German preacher's home. I wanted a preacher to perform the ceremony and as there was no Czech preacher we had to take the German one. It didn't much matter to me as I knew German better than English, but dear Frantiska didn't understand a word. When I asked the preacher how much I owed him he said whatever I wish to give him. I gave him two dollars, not knowing if that was enough or not. It was rather a poor wedding. Mlinar's gave us a supper and that was all.

We began housekeeping with very little in a log house. A new and happier life began for me, for life is easier for two than one. The beginning was very hard- the first winter the coldest. The windows never froze for no heat remained inside. I don't know how we ever lived through it. I was outside all day, but Frantiska froze inside and hoped for a better future.

That first winter I felled trees for logs for a better home. These I hauled to a saw mill six miles from Silver Lake. We didn't have a clock then and I'd start before dawn to some far off town like Howard Lake and get there before dawn. My wife would hear the big owls hooting in the woods around the house and bury her head under the featherbed in fear. She never heard such weird noises in the old country.

In the spring, the basement was dug and the dirt hauled out with a wheelbarrow. A better and warmer house was built for which we were so thankful. God's blessing was with us, and we got along well. My wife liked company, liked going among people, while I liked to be at home. In that we differed the most. But I didn't keep her from going out or from entertaining.



Barton Family, 1914. Seated: Josef and Frantiska Barton.
Standing L to R: Anna, Frank, Emily, Joseph, Herald and Katherine.

On Dec. 3, 1880, a little girl with light curls came to us. Everybody liked Annie's pretty curls. Feb. 2, 1883 came a helper—Frank. And on Sept 18, 1885 another—Joseph. Last, March 8, 1893 came Emily with such pretty curly hair.

So I believe it was God's will that I left Europe and came to America. For He blessed me with a faithful wife and good children for whom I pray that they be saved in faith and clear conscience to the last day.

My dear wife passed to the everlasting life Nov. 25, 1924 at the age of 64. She had hardening of the arteries and a stroke ended her life. Blessed be her memory. Then came tears and grief to me. I used to sit by the stove evenings and weep. Katherine (Joe's wife) would come and try to cheer me up. She knew I was lonesome. She was good to me the short time she was with us...May she rest in peace.

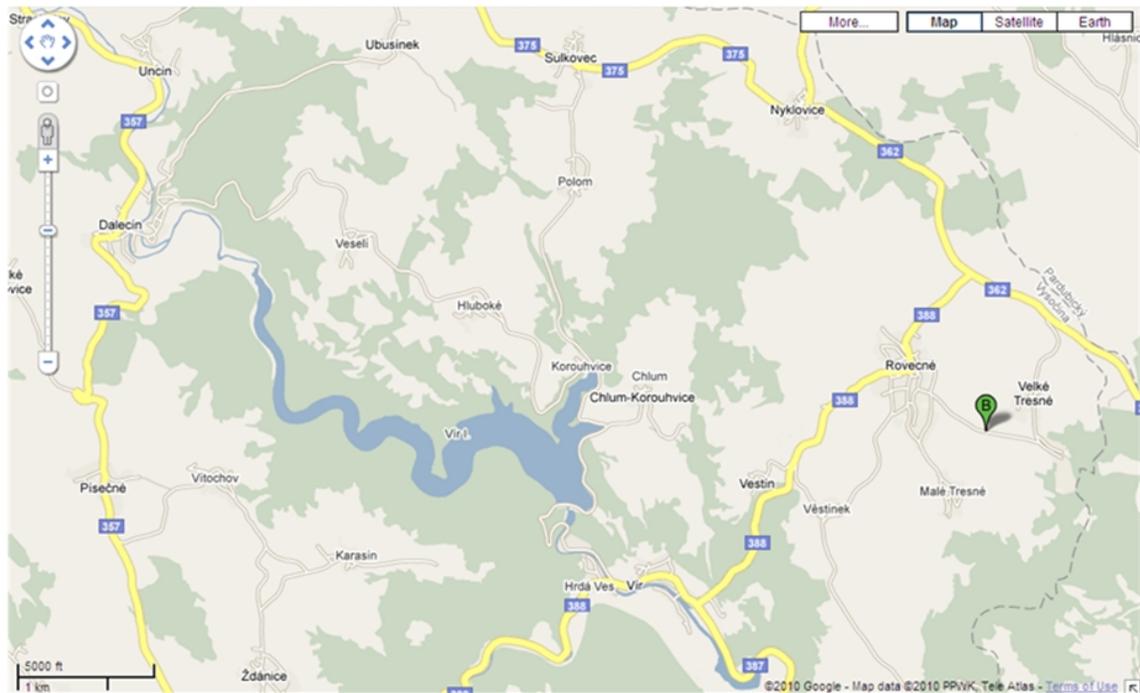
Written May 10, 1934.

My digestive system is wearing out. I am feeling poorly. It will not be long now that I'll walk here. I am getting ready for the journey from which there is no return. I pray god help me prepare and lead me through the valley of death whenever He shall call me.

Joseph Barton, senior, died Sept. 30, 1934, after a brief illness. Age 85.

Epilogue (Doslov)

I have recently uncovered new information on the Barton family of Velké Tresné dating back to 1773, which I will be sharing with the Herald Barton family on my next visit to Silver Lake. Here's a summary: Herald's great grandfather (i.e. the father of Josef⁵ Bartoň born 25 Feb. 1849) was Josef⁴ Bartoň who was born 21 Nov. 1815, married on 28 Jan 1849 to Františka Dostálová of Velké Tresné No. 10, and died 6 Mar 1881. The father of Josef⁴ was also named Josef³, the latter of whom was married on 1 Feb. 1815 to Anna Petrová (born 6 Dec. 1790) from Velké Tresné No. 7. The father of Josef³ was Jan² Bartoň and the father of Jan² was Pavel¹ who was first Bartoň enumerated in the village of Velké Tresné in 1773; he lived in house No. 11 and was from the nearby village of Chlum. Pavel is the great-great-great-great grandfather of Herald Barton, the latter of whom will be 96 years young this July!



Map showing the proximity of the villages of Velké Tresné, Chlum, and Dalecin, Czech Republic.

Mluvíte Český? Do You Speak Czech?

Trpělivost růže přináší ('TR-pyeel-ee-vost ROO-zhye PRZHĚE-nahh-shee'): (Patience brings roses)

As a rule, you should always stress the first syllable of a Czech word!

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: tkadlec@gmail.com or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. Děkuji! Tony Kadlec