

**Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec**

For this column, I am pleased to be able to reprint the next in a series of articles that were written by Mr. Gene Aksamit, a member of the Board of Directors of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI) and resident of the Twin Cities.

**Czech Archive Records – Part I: Parish Registers**

By Gene Aksamit



**Church in the village of Věchnov, Czech Republic (near Bystřice nad Pernštejnem), which is the ancestral village of the Bednar (Bednář) and Kalvoda families who settled in McLeod County, Minnesota.**

“Parish registers – records of births, marriages and deaths – provide the basic information for learning about your Czech ancestors. These records are found in the Regional State Archives. Previous columns have discussed where these archives are located, how to find the name of your ancestral village/parish and how to obtain information from the archives.

Records for many of our Czech ancestors were kept by the Catholic Church. For over 150 years after 1627, when Bohemia had been defeated in the Thirty Years War, Catholicism was the only religion permitted. During the time of Joseph II (1780 – 1790) the keeping of Protestant records was renewed and keeping of Jewish records was started<sup>1</sup>. Protestant records prior to 1627 were for the most part destroyed. Non-Catholic registers are deposited in Regional State

Archives or kept at the local parishes while all Jewish registers are found at the National Archive in Prague.

Although a standard format and rules for recording information existed, parish priests frequently modified them. So the specific information recorded may vary somewhat among parishes, but the following presents what is most commonly found in the registers.

**Birth records** - Contain names of child and parents, dates of birth and baptism, place of birth, father's occupation, whether or not the child was legitimate and religion. Only the date of baptism was recorded in the earliest days of records, but from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the date of birth was also recorded<sup>1</sup>. And importantly, the names and locations of grandparents and godparents are sometimes included. In the case of serfdom, the name of the dominion the parents or grandparents were subject to was noted.

**Marriage records** – In addition to names, ages, marital status and religion of bride and groom, also noted are the date and location of the marriage; groom's occupation; parents' names, locations and occupations; and names of the person performing and witnesses of the marriage ceremony. A future article will discuss wedding contracts that were occasionally used.

**Death records** – Usually includes name of deceased, date and place of death and burial and house number. Sometimes the place of burial was recorded, and from the time of Josef II, the cause of death was noted.

The language used in the registers changed over the centuries and was at the discretion of the priest. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, registers were written mostly in Czech although Latin was sometimes used. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this was reversed. Under Joseph II (1780 – 1790), the registers were recorded in German until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At this time, the registers were again written in Czech except in the regions settled by the German minority.<sup>1</sup> From the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German new-gothic script was used<sup>1</sup>. Study of this script is necessary to be able to read the registers. Professional help may be required to interpret your family information in the registers – but the excitement of learning about your ancestors makes it worthwhile!”

<sup>1</sup> Jan Pařez, Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, Naše rodina, December 1995.

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### ***Mluvíte Česky? Do You Speak Czech?***

**pavučina** – ('PA-vu-chee-na') – spiderweb

**Líná huba, holé neštěstí** – (LIH-nah HU-ba, HO-Lyeh NEH-shtye-sti) –A lazy mouth is a sheer disaster.

**Mluviti stříbro, mlčeti zlato** – (MLU-vi-ti STRHSHI-bro, ML-cheh-ti ZLAH-to) –Speaking is silver, silence is gold.

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

**SILVER LAKE SURNAME-VILLAGE ORIGIN DATABASE**

If you would like your surname(s) and your family village(s) to be included in an online database or need assistance in finding your ancestral village, please contact me by email: [tkadlec@gmail.com](mailto: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