

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 II: Land Books

By Gene Aksamit

“Once your family tree includes ancestors in the old country, you will quite likely want to go beyond names and dates and learn something about their lives. There are many archival records that will help you do this with land books being one important source. To illustrate the type of information found in land books, I include a translation of a transaction from 1804 in which my great-great-great-grandfather purchased a home and blacksmith shop. From the Land Book (Gruntovní kniha) for the Estate of Nový Dvůr:

“On April 6, 1804, Jan and Anna Vlasák from Pavlov sold to Jan Aksamit from Kozárovice forge-house (house and blacksmith shop) #16 and a small garden. The garden, house and court measured 327 čtvereční sáh (.29 acres). In addition, Jan Aksamit bought from the Vlasaks two fields: topographical numbers 420 and 277, each measuring 5 strich (about 1 acre). After the contract was concluded, Jan Aksamit immediately paid 685 zlatý (gold coin) to Jan Vlasák. Aksamit was to pay an additional 535 zlatý in the future for the house, garden and court. For the fields, Jan Aksamit had to pay 120 zlatý to the authorities in Nový Dvůr. On November 15, 1798, Jan Vlasák bought the fields from the authorities in Nový Dvůr. He bought 10 strich (about 2 acres) for 20 zlatý per strich, or a total of 200 zlatý. Up to 1804, Vlasák had paid 80 zlatý so the additional 120 zlatý was to be paid by the new owner.

Jan Aksamit also had to pay 8 zlatý per year to the authorities as rent for the forge-house and garden. The rest of the 120 zlatý was to be paid 10 zlatý, 18 ¼ krejcar (smaller coin) per year in addition to 20 zlatý per strich as rent. Jan Aksamit’s payments were to start on April 1, 1804 and be paid every three months to the authorities in Nový Dvůr.”

In addition to learning the family’s location at a specific point in time, we learn something about their economic status from the land records. The above transaction is one of three spanning about 100 years. Although it is difficult to relate the currency to our present values, their economic progress can be tracked. For example, over a period of about 100 years, the above family progressed from a hired blacksmith worker to a rented forge-house, to an owned forge-house with a small garden to an owned forge-house with three acres to an owned forge-house with seven acres. Obviously, this was very slow progress, but not untypical for Bohemia in the 18th/19th centuries.

The feudal system existed in Bohemia until 1848. Under this system, the feudal landlord really owned all property – our ancestors only purchased the hereditary rights. They still had to pay rent for their property as shown in the last paragraph of the above transaction.

No wonder the prospect of obtaining 80 or 160 acres free under the Homestead Act made the decision to leave the homeland for America easier!"

It's a little known fact...Old Czech Currency



Perhaps this 15-Kreuzer coin from the Austrian Empire once rested safely and deeply in the pocket of one of your ancestors?

As a footnote to Gene's article above...the currency system of the Austrian state from the 17th to the end of 19th century was based on a silver standard. In 1748, the so called conventional currency (Konventionelle Waehrung, abbreviated C.W., in Czech k.m.= konvenční měna) was adopted by Austria, Saxony and Bavaria. The basis was the Gulden of Saxony, according to which 18 Guldens = ONE Koelner Mark (Latin: "marca", Czech: "hřivna" = 233.8 grams) of pure silver.

ONE GULDEN (Latin: "florin", Hungarian: "forint", Czech: "zlatý") was divided into 60 Kreuzer (from Latin crucifer=cross - was on the reverse of the coin), in Czech "krejcar".

Another silver standard and coin in that time was a THALER (in Czech "tolar"), originally minted in the royal mint office in Joachimsthal (Jáchymov) in North Bohemia. The modern word "dollar" was derived from the Spanish dollars, so called in the English speaking world because they were of similar size, and weight to the German Thalers.

70 Kreuzer = 1 Gulden and 10 Kreuzer = 1 Thaller

(Source: *Austrian and Czech Currency systems from 17th to 19th centuries* by Karel Kysilka and Wikipedia.org).

Mluvíte Česky? Do You Speak Czech?

kovář – ('KO-varshe') – blacksmith

Colors (Barvy)

černý- ('CHER-nee')-black

modrý- ('MO-dree')-blue

hnědý-('HNEH-dee')-brown

šedý-('SHEH-dee')-gray

zelený-('ZEL-eh-nee')-green

oranžový-('OHR-anzh-oh-vee')-orange

růžový-('RHOO-zhoh-vee')-pink

purpurový-('PUR-pur-oh-vee')-purple

fialový-('FI-ah-loh-vee')-violet

červený-('CHER-veh-nee')-red

bílý-('BYL-lee')-white

žlutý-('ZH-loo-tee')-yellow

zlatý-('ZH-lah-tee')-gold

stříbrný - ('STRZIH-bhr-nee')-silver

Stříbrný Jezero - ('STRZIH-bhr-nee YEH-zehr-oh')-Silver Lake

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 or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. Děkuji! Tony Kadlec