

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.

FINDING YOUR ANCESTRAL VILLAGE – PART 1

By Gene Aksamit, Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International

Records within the Czech archives are organized by parish and village, so knowledge of the name of your ancestral village/town is essential to obtaining family records. It is not unusual to find two or more villages with the same name, but generally not within the same district. So knowledge of the district is also important. Finally, a lot of our ancestors had the same names, so having the correct name of the village/town and district insures that you have found records for your family!

So where do you find information on your ancestral village/town? This and the next issue will list some important sources:

Family Records – Do talk to family members. Your ancestral village/town may have already been retained, recorded or researched by a family member. Marriage and baptismal certificates containing the ancestral village name, as well as other useful genealogical information, are also occasionally found among the immigrant's family papers.

Obituaries – Obituaries of those ancestors who immigrated are very good possibilities for village names. Newspapers for the U.S. locale where your ancestor lived are the best places to start. Many of the state historical societies have excellent collections of old newspapers on microfilm including early ones no longer published.

Periodicals of the various fraternal societies are also good sources of obituaries. One of the larger fraternal organizations was the Západní Český Bratrský Jednota (Ž.C.B.J.), today known as the Western Fraternal Life Association (WFLA). Margie Sobotka, of Elkhorn, NE, has indexed the obituaries from the Bratrský Věstník (Fraternal herald), the monthly periodical for the Ž.C.B.J., for the period from July 1897 to July 1991. The index is on microfilm but provides a quick way to determine if an ancestor's obituary was published in the periodical. The first paragraph of an obituary for one of my great-grandfathers from the September 1908 issue included the text "...born on 24 June 1836 in the village of Pavlov, district of Unhošt, county of Prague...". Now there are nine villages in Bohemia named Pavlov, but only one is located in the above district and county, so the information in the obituary uniquely identifies and locates the Aksamit village. Libraries known to have copies of the microfilm index and periodicals are Nebraska State Historical Society (closed during 2009 for renovation), Love Library (UNL), Omaha (downtown), Tama County, Iowa Historical and Genealogical Society, Immigration History Research Center (Minneapolis), and CGSI (St. Paul).

But you need to be aware of a potential pitfall with the village name as recorded by the family or in obituaries. Word endings in the Czech language depend on how the word is used. In the

example above, Pavlov becomes Pavlově when written ‘in Pavlov’. Unless you are quite familiar with the Czech language, it is best to find someone to assist in identifying your village. CGSI provides such assistance to its members.

Other important sources such as local and national histories will be discussed in the next article in this series.

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FINDING MY KADLEC FAMILY’S ANCESTRAL VILLAGE

Many of you who are reading this article may already know your family’s village(s) of origin or at least know where you can look it up in the case of an emergency. However ten years ago, when I started seriously researching my family tree, I was not so lucky—the identity of my Kadlec home village had never survived the oral or written history of my family. Here are the steps I took to re-discover my Kadlec family’s ancestral village.



From the 1978 McLeod County, Minnesota History book, I learned that my Kadlec family followed the chain migration path of many Czech immigrants in the mid 1850’s; first settling in the village of Caledonia, Racine County, Wisconsin before arriving in Minnesota to acquire farmland. Indeed I found an issue of the Czechoslovak Genealogy Society International (CGSI) publication, Naše Rodina (Czech for “Our Family”), which mentioned my great great grandfather Josef Kadlec and his time in Racine County. Unfortunately my trip to Caledonia, Wisconsin and the Racine County archives yielded virtually no vital information regarding my family, who had passed through that way one hundred and fifty years prior.

In August 2004, I finally found the clue that helped me solve this riddle, inside the Komensky schoolhouse at the cornerstone re-opening celebration that was held there. To my surprise, high up on the wall was a photo of my proud looking great-great grandfather, Josef Kadlec—and documentation of his involvement in the Czech community of Komensky and cofounding of the nearby Bohemian National Cemetery (in 1873) and Bohemian Reading and Educational Society (in 1876).

Figure 1. Komensky Hall Photo of Josef Kadlec with Czech language caption indicating his village of origin.

The digital photo of Josef, which I had taken in the Komensky schoolhouse that day 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 (see Figure 1. above).

With an online Czech to English translation tool and Google.com I was able to identify and locate my ancestral village of Velké Tresné and was on my way to connecting with long lost family there and uncovering seven additional generations of my Kadlec family who lived in the Czech-Moravian highlands!

Mluvíte Česky? Do You Speak Czech?

Pavučina – ('PA-vu-chee-na) - spiderweb

Jak se máš? ('yak say mash') - How are you? (familiar singular)

Jak se máte? ('yak say MAH-tey') - How are you? (formal or familiar plural)

Mám se dobře. ('mam say DOBE-rshe) - I'm fine.

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. Thanks! Tony Kadlec