

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

Silver Lake Family Spotlight—The Moravec and Kriz Families

By Kathy Bednark

I am pleased to present this guest column by Kathy Bednark, a resident of the Twin Cities, who has Moravec and Kriz family roots in Glencoe and Silver Lake, McLeod County, Minnesota. This article highlights the genealogical research connections that she made, to set up her recent trip to the Czech Republic where she visited the places and spaces where her ancestors had lived for countless generations prior.

“My name is Kathy Bednark; I am the daughter of Adeline Ford Bednark Klein whose mother was Josephine Moravec Ford. Christina Kriz Moravec and Joseph Moravec Jr were my great grandparents.

Regarding my genealogical research adventure, it all started with two discoveries. Greg Peters, son of Agnes and Hap Peters, was moving and there were a lot of papers, belongings and memories to sort through. Some very old documents surfaced because my great grandmother, Christina Kriz Moravec, had lived with her daughter Agnes Moravec Peters and it was Greg as an only child who had accumulated lots of this history. Ron Klein, (grandson of Josephine Moravec Ford) as caretaker and trustee for Greg, knew they had found some precious treasures and photo-shopped the fragile pieces of paper together. Both documents were issued in 1877 when Frank and Josephine (Pochop) Kriz were getting ready to emigrate to the U.S. The three Kriz children--Joseph, Christina and Josephine all boarded the ship with their parents to start a new life that eventually unfolded in the Glencoe-Silver Lake area. Those two documents gave us first hand information about my great grandmother that we had never had before. And it could not have been more timely since I was about to visit the Czech Republic.

Ron Pulkrabek (grandson of Clara Moravec Pulkrabek) had done lots of work in 1989 on the genealogy and history of the Moravec and Kriz families. Joseph Moravec Jr and Christina Kriz had both come to the United States as children with their respective families, eventually marrying in 1884 and settling on a farm 3 ½ miles north of Glencoe. Their six children included Clara Pulkrabek, Josephine Ford, Mary Rose Nemeč, Ted Moravec, Agnes Peters and Elenore Ryan. Ron Pulkrabek had uncovered lots of family history but there was more information documented about the Moravec side than the Kriz side, especially family information from the Czech lands.

But now in April, 2010 we were looking at original documents generated in 1877 giving us clues about the background of Christina Kriz Moravec. First we needed some translation assistance. So we found out that one certificate was a report card, certifying that she finished six years of school in Slavkovic, getting B's in religion, the Czech language, math, drawing, history, biology, writing, singing, exercise and one C in the German language. The birth date referenced on the school certificate matched that on the birth / baptismal record--July 21, 1865. The documents were a mix of German and Czech words. Not only did the words have to be translated but the fancy script deciphered.

Two Czech individuals thought the town on the baptismal certificate was “Lany”--which led to a dead end. But thank goodness for CGSI (Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, www.cgisi.org). I went to my first meeting on May 22 of this year and met lots of helpful people. It was Tony Kadlec who looked at the document and said he thought the town was Jámy not Lany; he just happened to have a

cousin who lived in the village of Jámy. Tony soon had me viewing the town website and sure enough the church stamp of St. Martini on the original document matched the name of the current Jámy church--St. Martin. And yes, Jámy was adjacent to Slavkovice.

At the same time, I discovered that the Brno archives could be accessed online, for free. Although it is painstaking work, I started to find the original Kriz and Moravec records--containing birth, death and marriage information. All the records were contained in towns nearby Nové Město na Moravě. The online community is very generous helping to translate very difficult to read Czech and German words. So the search was on. I now had house numbers for all these records and was also able to fill in some missing family names. But the clock was ticking since I was leaving in June.



Generations of the Moravec family originated here, in Pohledec, Czech Republic.

I had decided to spend a week in the Czech Republic before heading to Zakopane in southern Poland where I was to work at an English summer camp on a project with Global Volunteers. Prague seemed like a good base of operation for that precious week. I had the good fortune to stay at Lida's Guesthouse in Praha 4 (website: <http://guest-house-lida.czechtrade.us>). Two brothers and their wives--Jan and Jitka Prouza and Jiří and Jana Prouza exemplify the meaning of hospitality. From the time we started communicating by email in May, they expressed interest and helpfulness in regard to my family

history. So on June 24, Jan Prouza accompanied me on a trip to the countryside to see what we could learn about my ancestry. He was a wonderful driver, translator and go-between the whole day long.

We left Prague at 8:30 am and headed first to Nové Město na Moravě which is the central area close to the original towns of the Moravec and Kriz families. This is hilly beautiful country that is in the Czech Highlands, very rural.

The ladies in the administrative office in Nové Město na Moravě went out of their way making calls and giving us information as we put together a plan for what to do next. One of the things I learned was that the Zubří records that may contain the records of Joseph Moravec Jr were sent to the Brno archives in March. We found out which cemeteries had residents from Pohledec, Zubří, Slavkovice and Jámy. First stop was the Catholic cemetery of Nové Město na Moravě where we found many graves with names on my family tree: Moravec, Nemec, Svoboda, Slama.

The next stop was Pohledec. After talking with local people, we found out where to locate the main Moravec family property--#52 in those Brno archives. I have pictures of what is left of it. I also learned that a 90+ year old Moravec probably descended from Joseph Moravec Sr's brother Frantisek was in a nursing home several towns away. He was still bicycling 2 years ago! Everywhere we went, people were gracious and eager to be of help.



The chalk reproduction of the Kriz homestead in Zubří

On to Zubří (the town name means buffalo). Here we were looking for the house of Anna Vykutil (wife of Joseph Moravec Sr). We just happened to find the location of that very house--#31, by stopping to talk to people who were presently living in that space! The old house had been torn down. But I took a picture of the house from a framed picture as it looked in 1957 before it was destroyed. Then someone ran off to the barn and produced a chalk rendition of the same house that was a perfect match. The family who lived there now was so kind and the woman had me choose one of her art pictures to bring home.

We found that residents of Zubří were buried in the nearby village of Olešná and it was there that we found graves of the Vykutil, Svoboda and Nemeč families and various other names that have shown up on documents for our families like Ruzicka (godparents to Joseph Moravec Jr's two brothers) and Kubik (godparents to Joseph Moravec Sr's children.)

So after finding places and graves connected with the Moravec family, we headed for Kriz country. Our first stop was Slavkovice. I had in my hands Christina Kriz's report card from Slavkovice. (It even says on that document that the family was leaving for Amerika--which was why the certificate was issued.) School was already out for the day but the cleaning lady helped us out so we found out the school's history and saw pictures of what it looked like in 1877. Not only did we learn about the school, but #14, the Kriz house in Slavkovice was right across the street from the school! I also found out that grandfather Frank Pochop was mayor of Slavkovice when his son's family left for the U.S.



Kathy Bednark & Marie Šiklová in St. Martin's Church, Jámy

We had an appointment in Jámy for 2:30. That was the town where Christina Kriz was baptized. Marie Šiklová (maiden name Mičková), a cousin of Tony Kadlec, had arranged for us to meet with the mayor--her brother-in-law. They had gone through a lot of work talking to people about any Kriz or Pochop connections that may still exist. Both were amazed at the old documents that I had and made copies of them. We all went to St. Martin's church (with a history going back to 1672) and saw what was probably the baptismal font from the era of Christina in 1865.

After looking at cemetery record books, we found out who was still paying for the care of some Kriz and Pochop graves and went to the Jámy cemetery finding some family graves. We also stopped to talk to people who may have known of the family. Several people knew there was a visitor from America looking for relatives. I received some nice little gifts from the mayor's office.

On to Hlinné, home of the parents of Frank Kriz and also the Shamlas. (My great grandmother's sister Josephine married Frank Shamla.) This was the only place that still seemed completely set back 100 plus years. We saw the Kriz name on a house and also talked to various people without a lot of success but I really got a feel for what it was probably like in the 1870's there. Then we headed back one last time to Slavkovice and found house #23, probably where the Pochops lived.

My great grandmother Christina Kriz Moravec died in 1955 when I was only seven; I do remember her and did attend her funeral. Great grandfather Joseph Moravec died when I was only three, so I only know of him from pictures. They both came alive for me that very magical day in June when I saw homes, schools, graves, and land associated with their lives and the lives of their ancestors. Jan Prouza and I arrived back in Prague, some 11 1/2 hours later, at almost 8 pm. I'm glad I brought along two little bags of nuts because that is all we had to eat all day. There is no time for food when you are uncovering the treasures of family history and following where the path leads!"

Contacting Kathy Bednark

Anyone with a question about any of the family history mentioned above, accessing the Brno archives or visiting the Czech Republic, can feel free to contact Kathy at kathybednark@msn.com.

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