

## **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 III: Beyond Parish Vital Registers**

By Gene Aksamit

“Names and dates of birth, marriage and death of our ancestors are the basic building blocks of family history. In the last article (Part II) we discussed how land books may contain information about your ancestor’s lives. The Czech Archives contain many additional sources that can help you develop the life story of your ancestor.

Manorial records are one such source. Before 1848, most of our ancestors lived on large feudal domains usually owned by a member of the nobility or the Church. The manorial authorities that administered these domains kept records that pertained to the ordinary people who lived within the domain. An example is the forced labor (called “robot”) levied on serfs as part of the feudal duties owed to their overlords. Other examples include certificates of competence for tradesmen, judicial matters, taxation, wedding contracts, etc. My great-great-grandfather and grandmother, Josef and Marie Aksamit, had a wedding contract that spelled out in detail an interesting approach to property distribution as well as how Josef’s father was to be cared for until his death. The entire wedding contract is presented within an article in the December 2009 issue of *Naše rodina*, the CGSI quarterly publication. These types of records provide very interesting “peeks” into the lives of our ancestors.

A number of other interesting documents follow. However, unlike the birth, marriage and death records which have for the most part been preserved, these have not all been saved. But if you are among the lucky, these documents can certainly help you develop the story of your ancestor. For example, school records that have been preserved contain personal data in attendance registers, report cards and diplomas. From the second half of the seventeenth century, church records included a census of all “souls” living in each town and village. Beginning in 1857, a census was conducted essentially every 10 years through 1921 and included pertinent personal information. Biographical and personal information was also included in passports issued to tradesmen allowing them to travel to find jobs in their trade. A necessary document for anyone to emigrate from the Czech lands was the Permission to Emigrate for which the application included the person’s reasons for wanting to leave the country. Passports issued prior to emigration give details of the holder’s wealth and family relationships.

This article only briefly touches on the wide range of documents that help you learn about your ancestor’s lives. A Special Edition of CGSI’s *Naše rodina* published in February 2008, and available through CGSI ([www.cgsi.org](http://www.cgsi.org)), includes an article by Dr. Lenka Matušiková that provides a comprehensive description of the many documents that have been preserved and can be found in the Czech archives. Taxing property has occurred for centuries and certainly created a burden for our ancestors. The next article will be on tax cadasters which recorded all tax payers in the Czech lands and their property, providing information on the economic status of our ancestors.”

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

### **Compass Directions:**

**sever** – ('SEH-vehr')-north

**jih** – ('YIH')-south

**východ** – ('VEE-khohd')-east (literally translates as 'come out' or 'come up')

**západ** – ('ZAHH-pahd')-west (literally translates as 'drop down')

**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