

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

SILVER LAKE: 1933 TIME PASSAGES: PART 3 OF 4

I am pleased to present a series of articles contributed by Ron Pulkrabek written from the perspective of a visitor to the village of Silver Lake at the end of the year 1933.

“...Then up to the corner diagonally from St. Adalberts Church stands the Mallak Confectionery and Clothing Store. Right next door is Frank Dudek’s Tailor Shop. He must be a fine tailor with the looks of the way people are dressed in Silver Lake. Frank makes men’s shirts in one arm length only. Then sells a sort of arm garter so each man can adjust the arm length he needs. Across the alley is Ed Nuwash’s Furniture Store and Mortuary. Whenever there is a funeral, furniture is moved to one side, folding chairs are set up and the casket is rolled in up front. Women might be admiring the new furniture while giving their last respects. Upstairs is the huge Krejci’s dancehall entered by 38 outside roof-covered steps. Next door is John Navaratil’s Confectionery and Grocery Store complete with a soda fountain. The Farmers and Merchants Bank built the next solid building but went broke a few years ago during the depression. Everyone lost all their money at the time. The patrons just received word that the State Banking Commission will pay them back a 5% dividend on the \$21,644 they lost. Charlie Podrasky now has a 3.2 tavern there now.

J. J. Danek built the huge 3 story building on the corner opening up the hardware store and lodging upstairs and sells Ford cars. Just recently he held a contest to see how many pumps on a hand tire pump it would take to bust an inner tube. The tube reached 24 inches in diameter and 7 feet across before it burst at 6678 pumps. Albert Buska won a new inner tube by guessing 7000 pumps. Earlier in the year, Daneks had a “back to school” sale. Buy 25 cents worth of school supplies and you will receive a lead pencil and an oversized eraser for free.

Continuing south down the street on the corner is a large, neat 3-story building housing Frank Nuwash’s Furniture Store and Undertaker. Upstairs is a dance hall. Across the street is the Silver Lake Brewery built by Wencel Chalupsky which at one time was doing very well filling wagon loads with wooden keg beer and bottles. The Prohibition Act of 1920 caused it to close down. Although twelve years later the Prohibition Act was repealed but it was too much for the Company and now stands idle. Just this year on April 1st, 1933, Silver Lake voters cast 116 to 42, to repeal the act and approve selling liquors. Fifty two women voted. It didn’t take long for the saloons to get into full time business. Happy days are here again! Now liquor can be bought legally! A closed down flour mill started by Anton Dlouhy and John Totusek was also in the area. It was 3 stories high with a large engine that once supplied electricity to the town of Silver Lake.

Across the street from Nuwash’s stands the City Hotel built by J. B. Jerabek. It is more or less used as a boarding hotel. Up the street and across the alley is Dr. Trutna’s office and Hawlish’s Drug Store. The Drug store has Christmas cards on sale from 1 cent to 5 cents. It will cost you 3 cents to mail them. A penny post card is 1 cent. People tell me Dr. Trutna is a good doctor but has dull needles and skimps on the Novocain which causes temporary excessive pain when sewing up minor cuts. Dr. and Mrs. Trutna have opened their house for people to come to see their gigantic Biblical scenes. Dr. Trutna has hand fashioned scenes of Bethlehem and Jerusalem during Jesus’ time.

On the corner is the Citizens State Bank of Silver Lake. It was originally called the Citizens Bank but closed down in 1919 with the depositors losing most of their money but reopened under new management and a new name a few months later. Irvin Burich is now the bookkeeper receiving \$70 a month. He said in 1903 the bank was looted. The 18 inch thick vault was blasted open with nitroglycerin and the thieves escaped with \$2,226. Some people heard a slight muffle in the early morning but didn't think much of it. The thieves were never caught. The bank is closed over the noon hour.

A few stores west of the bank is John Svanda's Hardware Store. It is a packed little hardware store with all the hard to find items. Looking for a rubber washer for a Hudson hand sprayer? John will open a big drawer which has little drawers in it and way back in one of the boxes he has various rubber washers. One is sure to fit. This summer he had fly spray on sale at 45 cents per gallon. A few stores farther to the west is Mimm's Tavern and next door is Joseph Filipi's Tavern or "Narodina Hostinec" (Family Liquor Store).



Joseph Filipi's Tavern or "Narodina Hostinec", Silver Lake, McLeod County, Minnesota

On past occasions Joe has run out of the door with a 5 cent glass of beer to give to a thirsty patron who drank it while sitting on a load of wheat attending his horses. He will sell beer by the gallon or in 4 gallon wooden/pony kegs, especially suitable for farmers during threshing. Next is the gigantic, modernly architected and designed, solid brick, City Hall, including a bell tower. An opera house-like theater

upstairs with fancy stage curtains, seats 400. Local actors perform theatricals to full houses very often. Admission is 10 cents. Concerts, lectures, magic acts, and silent movies are also performed here with between-acts orchestras consisting of W. O. Merrill, Jim Ziska, and Bernie Stibal. Just this summer The Merchants Players have performed every Monday night for the last 10 weeks. They will close with, "Girl from Denver". The Dawson Players continued in future weeks to record crowds with, "She Devil", a 3 act comedy. The fire hall is on the ground floor and a seldom used small jail is in the south corner.



Silver Lake Village Hall and Opera House, Constructed in 1907, Razed in 1960, Silver Lake, McLeod County, Minnesota

The water tower is just south of the City Hall. A new 7 inch diameter well was drilled this year. They hit an excellent vein at 137 feet. Martin Matousek's blacksmith shop is just to the south. Martin will sharpen and put new points on your plow shares for 50 cents. Just to the south is the Czech Congregational Church of Silver Lake. This solid Church was built in 1910 with specifications that the basement walls must be 8 ½ feet high and 2 feet thick; have a belfry; that the auditorium floor be level, [not slanted] and the church wired for electricity. The parishioners keep close ties to the old country of

Czechoslovakia by taking up collections for the Czech parishes and people over there. Services in English have just started in 1928.

Just to the southwest, on the shores of Silver Lake is Frank Bren's saw mill. Hundreds of farmer's logs are waiting to be sawed into lumber. Frank not only has a saw mill, but a drying shed, a planning shed and can saw and form tongue and grooved flooring. He also constructs buildings and round roofed barns. In 1923 he recently completed a 40 high, round roofed barn, for Charley W. Pulkrabek, south of town, complete with a huge dormer on the north side and two, 8 foot high cupolas on the roof. With river sand cement mixture, home-sawed lumber, Jamesway stanchions, and a 50 foot manure carrier track, it cost \$4000. Frank does excellent work and expects a full hours work for 25 cents.

Across the street from the City Hall is the Stibal Building which after several different businesses is now the Joe Lowy Grocery Store. It is the largest grocery store in Silver Lake. It has just about everything a person would want. Just to the west is the Silver Lake Leader office. W. O. Merrill is busy on next week's edition, hand cranking the newly installed Washington press machine. He has composed, typesets, edited, and published the Silver Lake Leader since 1901 in addition to doing numerous other jobs. The yearly subscription rate is \$1. I scan the paper.

What a busy and interesting town this is. I see thanks and meeting notices from different organizations, including; The Bohemian Reading and Educational Society, The Silver Lake Fire Department, dances the same day at Chaupsky's Hall and Sherin's Hall starting at 9 PM and lasting until early the next morning, American Legion Post #141, American Auxillary Unit #141, Degree of Honor Lodge #182, Knights of Columbus Council #1842, Silver Lake Branch of The American Red Cross, Junior Red Cross, Silver Seekers 4-H Club, The Silver Lake Study Club, The ZCJB Lodge, [Zapadni Cesko Brtska Jednota] Silver Lake Shipping Association, Stritesky Trucking, Silver Lake Farmers Cooperative Creamery, etc. "

Next Week: Směs (Miscellany) from 1933

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. See this article online at: www.kadlecovi.com Děkuji! Tony Kadlec