

Vladimir Kucera

Czech Drama in Nebraska

Ceska Divadla v Nebrasce

(Picture on front page)

Program Z.C.B.J 16. SRPNA 1942 (August 16, 1942)

The picture on the cover:

Members of the Sokol Dramatic Club in Crete and children of the Czech school performed a program of Lidice, the Czech village in Bohemia, completely destroyed by the Nazis. At dawn on June 10, 1942, the execution squad took the lives of 173 Lidice men. The women were put in the Ravensbruck concentration camp and not even children of this tragic village were able to avoid that terrible fate. First of all the Nazis dragged them to a camp in Lodz and then 82 of them were murdered in the gas chambers. The program Lidice was given in Crete August 16, 1942.

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CZECH DRAMA IN THE OLD COUNTRY

By Vladimír Kucera

The history of Czech drama in the 'old country' is centuries old with its origin in the Middle Ages. In the genesis of the first and primitive drama, the Czechs succeeded in the creation of a typical native form and style; very often showing the strong influence of religion, national folk tales, proverbs and folk expressions.

Medieval Czech Drama

The Czech medieval drama is by origin of a religious nature. The nucleus of the first drama was a dialogue between an angel and the three Mary's who were going to see the tomb of Christ after His crucifixion. From this simple dialogue, the so-called 'Scéna příchovní' (The Scene at the Tomb,) the oldest Czech dramatic experience was born.

Then, as later, a scene with the apostles, Peter and John, was added. These plays were for the most part a portion of Easter religious ceremonies and were performed in churches in the Latin language by the clergymen. Later, especially in the country-side, laymen participated in these dramas. As time passed, the original and simple religious forms were enriched. The character of the plays started to become more and more secular and some merry-making scenes were added.

These plays were changed through the years into 'Velikonoční hry' (Easter plays) and 'Pašijové hry' (Passion plays). These Czech plays or dramas were very popular during that earlier time. However, during the period of the Hussites they disappeared, because the Hussites were deeply religious people, and did not like any forms of art, including drama.

After this early period, it is difficult to find any complete information about the Czech theatrical activities until the 16th century.

In the year of 1556, the Jesuit Order was back in Bohemia; the Jesuit leaders learned how important an influence drama may have for the religious education and entertainment of the Czech people. And therefore, the Jesuits started very colorful and expensive theatrical activities in Prague and later in other towns, also. In the Jesuit College, Clementinum, in Prague, they opened a Czech theatre and on October 12, 1567 they performed the first Czech drama. It was a religious story, 'Svatý Václav mučedník' (Saint Wenceslas Martyr). The first Czech drama was very successful and has had many repetitions.

Later, the University of Prague organized and staged plays, too. Jan Amos Komenský (known as Comenius, great education reformer and religious leader), our great exultant and the last Bishop of the Unity of the Czech Brethren, also found the importance and deep influence of drama upon the people and used plays principally for religious and didactical purposes. In his exile in the Polish city of Lešno, Komenský composed in 1640 for his students of the local college these plays: 'Diogenes cynik čili stručný způsob filosofování' (Diogenes Cynik or a Simple Form of Philosophy); 'Ukradení synové Fridricha saského' (Stolen Sons of Fridrich of Sachsen); 'Mauricia císaře tragický konec' (The Tragic End of the Emperor of Mauricia).

In the year of 1641, Komenský's play 'Patriarcha Abrahám' (The Patriarch Abraham) was performed during the public examination of the students. The reason for these religious and didactical plays was to encourage the young members of the Czech community in Lešno to strengthen their faith. Later, when he found the religious fervor of these students to be very low, Komenský composed eight didactical plays, one of them a play called 'Škola hrou čili encyklopedia živá čili Brána jazyků prakticky na jevišti' (The School as a Play or Living Encyclopedia or the Gate of Languages on the Stage).

Dark Ages of the Czech Nation

In 1620, when the Czech nation lost its political, cultural, religious and economical freedom, the Czech lands were for 300 years a part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire under the dynasty of Hapsburgs. A heavy and suffocating cloud of the 'Dark Age' covered all the Czech lands. The despotism of Vienna was felt more strongly in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia than elsewhere. During this time, not only were individuals deprived of all liberty, but their language, so sacred to them, was excluded from schools, courts, and government offices.

But, even after centuries of oppression, the common and simple people especially in the small towns and villages preserved their national spirit, language, folk songs, and traditions. This feeling and the sentiments still living in the hearts of the rural population soon started to spread through all the classes.

In this period of Czech history, dramas were composed too, by unknown writers, but many names and records were lost during the bloody wars in the much suffering Czech lands.

National Revival

Scarcely had men's political eyes become accustomed to the new light when the flash of the double revolution in America and France awed all beholders by its menacing brilliancy. Electric enthusiasm shook the Czech nations, too.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the expansion of the beginning of the movement for a National Revival (*Národní obrození*) created a new and happier era in the history of the Czech people. This brilliant movement with the help of the inspiring work of a patriotic Jesuit priest, Bohuslav Balbín, was followed by the works of many priests, teachers and scientists. It was a period of many known and unknown patriots: National Revivalists (*Národní buditelé*), and Prague became the center of the Czech revival and the revival of Slavs.

During this period of National Revival, the Czech theatrical activity started a new era of life and was a very important part of this historical movement. From that period, Czech dramas were played, not only in Prague and bigger cities, but in many theatrical groups which visited villages in the country-sides, too. Czech drama began to live and it played a very important role of the process of the National Reviving. It is especially necessary to remember the name of a great Czech patriot, Josef Kajetán Tyl (1808-1856), a leading organizer of the Czech theatrical activity, and an actor and writer of many dramas. Also, the popular puppeteer, Matěj Kopecký (1762-1847), as his puppets played an equally important role, too.

The first theatrical presentation in the Czech language took place in Kotce near Prague, where a comedy 'Kníže Honzík' (The Prince Honzík), in translation from German, was performed. By mutilating the Czech language the actors almost destroyed the successful start of this first experiment of Czech drama performance. Regular Czech plays started in Prague in 1785, in the Estates Theatre (Stavovské divadlo). In 1786, at the Horse Market (the main square in Prague Koňský trh, now The Wenceslas Square) a wooden theatre called 'Bouda' (The Booth) was built.

Popular writers of plays during this period of the beginning of Czech drama were: Václav Thám, who wrote 'Břetislav and Jitka' or 'Vlasta and Šarka', and Karel Ignác Thám, who translated a drama 'Loupežníci' (The Robbers) by Friedrich von Schiller. Nepomuk Štěpánek, a director of the Estates Theatre in Prague also translated several foreign plays. The continued progress of Czech drama is linked with the name of Karel Hynek Mácha's contemporaries - Josef Kajetán Tyl who wrote about one hundred plays, and Václav Klicpera who is author of over fifty tragedies and comedies many of which are played today.

The stormy period in which the Czech nation struggled for its cultural existence and for an independent national life, culminated with the building of the National Theatre (*Národní divadlo*) in Prague. On the initiative of the great national revivalists and other leading representatives of the political and cultural life, a Committee for the building of the National Theatre in Prague was set up. The laying of the foundation in 1868 illustrated the great patriotic demonstration of the Czech nation.

The construction of the new temple for the Czech theatrical art was started and finally the long expected day of solemn opening of this theatre by the performance of Bedřich Smetana's 'Libuše' came. But unexpectedly, a tragic blow ruined all hope. The disastrous fire of May 16, 1869, destroyed the newly finished building. But, the Czech people didn't despair and through sacrifice and contributions of many ordinary people, the construction of a new National Theatre in Prague was soon finished. The solemn re-opening took place on August 1881.

Czech theatrical activity was and still is an important part of our culture. Hundreds and hundreds of theatres were built in....

(V manuskriptu chybí celá strana 7. The page number 7 of the manuscript is missing).

ČESKÉ DIVADLO V NEBRASCE

By Vladimír Kučera

Bohatou a pestrou byla divadelní činnost našich přistěhovalců už od samých počátků českého osídlování Nebrasky. Byli to prostí zemědělci a řemeslníci, kteří víc než před sto lety budovali skromné domovy na této tak nehostinné prázemí Nového světa, kde oni hledali a také našli svobodu. Tito chudí, cizí lidé, bez znalosti cizí řeči, avšak dobří vlastníci, muži a ženy, s živou oddaností a pevnou vírou zachovávat, zajistit a předatě přístím dědictví otce, jejich víru, materskou řeč a bohatost národního folkloru: českou písničku, lidový tanec, české zvyky a kroj. Ale oni také uchovali ve svých srdcích lásku pro české divadlo.

A byly to zprvu čtenářské a divadelní kluby, organizované nášinci už první generace našich přistěhovalců, kterezto kluby tolik pomohli udržet nejen styk mezi krajany tehdy skoro ztracenými na periférii prázemí bez viditelných hranic. Ale tyto krajanky spolky byly také vydatnou pomocí při zachování materské řeči české, když tu zatím nebylo českých kurzů a škol, tělocvičných a pojistovacích organizací.

V obci Crete, v okrese Saline, jeden z takových českých pionýrů vlastenců, Josef Jindra (budovatel prvního českého křbitova v Nebrasce) byl z prvních, který roku 1867 založil český čtenářský spolek. Později tento spolek byl změněn v organizaci sokolskou a pak v česko-slovanský podporující spolek.

Podle zachovaných zpráv první české divadlo v Salinském okrese a snad i v Nebrasce bylo sehráno někdy během roku 1869 a to v drzáku Jana M. Svobody, asi dvě míle od obce Crete (tak zaznamenala Ruzena Rosická v dokumentární historii o Čechách v Nebrasce). Toho roku čtenářský a dramatický klub sebral veselohru Rekrutyrka v Kocourkove (Recruiting in Kocourkov).

Svobodův držák, o rozměru 16 x 22, byl hlediskem, osvětlovaným dvěma malými okny, hrubá prkna položená na dřevěných 'kozách' (trestles) byla podlahou primitivního jeviště. Bílý, kalikový záves byl oponou ručně zvedanou. Josef Jindra byl režisérem této veselohry, a herci byli: Jan Svoboda, Frank Nedela, Vít Jelinek, Frank Znamenak,

Vaclav Aksamit, Anton Herman, pani Alzbeta Aronpova a slečna Nedelova provdána Kubikova. Osmileta Barbora Nedelova predstavovala v teto veselohre maleho chlapce.

A tehoz roku zacala divadelni cinnost i v Omaze. Prvni ceske divadlo v Omaze bylo sehrano nekdy na podzim roku 1869 a to v Stepankove drevene sini na rohu Trinacte a William ulice, kde je nyne Prague hotel. A omazsti zacali take s veselohrou: Vesnický kantor (The Country Teacher). Matej Nerad hral ulohu kantora a rozpustile skolaky sehrali F. M. Mares, Jan Stibal, Frank Vodicka, Flora Pintnerova a Eleonora Vodickova, provdána Maresova.

Konstrukce jeviste byla na tu dobu sice jednoduchou ale praktickou. Jeviste bylo postaveno v rohu sine a to na 'kozach', pres ktere byla polozena hruba prkna. Kalikova, pekne zdobena opona, se spoustela na valci. Kulisy byly upevneny na valeckach a vytahovaly se ke stropu tak "sikovne", ze jedna kulisa v zapalu teto hry spadla a trefila 'pana kantora' zrovna pres jeho okulary, ktere mel vyriznute z plechu, jak zaznamenal Frantisek Vodicka.

Uspech tohoto prvniho divadla v Omaze povzbudil omazske ochotniky, kteri jeste tehoz roku, v mesici rijnu, predvedli dalsi hru a to Divotvorný klobouk (The Magic Hat), divadlo sepsane tehdy uz popularnim spisovatelem her Vaclavem Klimentem Klicperou (1792 – 1859).

Po techto hrach v Omaze nastalo odmlceni a to az do roku 1874, kdy do Omahy prijel Frank Josef Sadilek s Chicaga s jeho zenou. Tento divadelni nadsenec znovu ozivil ceske hry v Omaze a nadto jeho pricinem byl zalozen 23. kvetna 1874 Dramaticky spolek Klicpera. Jeho predsedou se stal F. J. Sadilek, reziserem F. M. Mares a pokladnikem F. B. Zdrubek.

Novy ochotnický spolek zahajil dramatickou cinnost hrou Katovo posledni dilo (The Executioner's Last Work). V teto hre, ktera mela veliky uspech, mimo jine ucinkovali F. J. Sadilek, F. B. Zdrubek, F. M. Mares, Matej Nerad a F. Vodicka, hlavni zenskou ulohu mela pani Zdrubkova. A omazsti ochotnici sehrali pote radu jinych, uspesnych divadel. Avsak po odjezdu F. J. Sadilka do Wilberu ceska divadelni scena v Omaze se opet odmlcela. Teprve po prijedu Jana Rosickeho, pocatkem roku 1876, nastalo opet oziveni dramaticke cinnosti.

(Historie počátku divadelnictví v Omaze v Nebrasce se poměrně různí, myslím však, že zachované, písemné vzpomínky F. Vodického jsou pravděpodobné).

Take cestí vlastence v okrese Colfax se dali do práce. Pravděpodobně první divadlo v tomto okrese, tak početně osídleném nasince, bylo sehráno roku 1874 v kostelní farnosti Tabor, poblíž obce Howells. Byla to hra Hluchoněmý Frantík (Deaf and Dumb Frank). V divadle účinkovali: Frank J. Jonas s manželkou, Jiri Jonas, slečna Marie Sindelarova (provdaná Polednova) a Josef Sindelar v titulní úloze. Toto divadlo bylo předvedeno v držáku F. J. Jonase. Primitivní oponou byly dva kusy plátna dohromady sesité. Stejněho roku jiná hra byla předvedena a to Frantík, pražský student (Frank, a Prague student), a opět s J. B. Sindelarem v titulní úloze.

Zájem a obliba českého divadla v Nebrasce se nyní šířila do všech okresů Nebrasky osídlených českými přistěhovalci. Jakmile v osadách jen trochu mohli vše připravit, poradali divadelní představení. Technicky stále dokonalejší jeviště byla budována skoro ve všech síních českých spolků: Západní české bratrské jednoty (Z.C.B.J.), v sokolovnách i v sálech katolického dělníka. I dodnes možno shlédnout tato jeviště v Albie, Bee, Burwell, Clarkson, Crete, Dwight, Linwood, Loma, Milligan, Ord, Prague, Morse Bluff, Table Rock, Tabor (Z.C.B.J.), v Omaze, ve Schuyler, Verdigre, Weston a Wilber a ještě v jiných budovách českých spolků.

Snad tento můj stručný úvod k této studii o divadlech v Nebrasce není úplným, ale jsem si jist, že skoro ve čtyřiceti osadách Nebrasky česká divadla byla v minulosti hrána.

Ale dnes? Jevišťe v českých sálech Nebrasky jsou ticha. Kdysi, a po dlouhou dobu minula, tak bohatá činnost divadelní je dnes mrtvou. Se smutkem v srdci a vazte se mnou, milí čtenáři, jak bolestnou je tato pravda. Mnohé stavby, budované tak příkladnou obětavostí českých lidí, ještě tu sice stojí, ale jeviště v nich, když živa krásou materské řeči, už dávno oneměla.

Jestli i dnes možno vyhledat a shlédnout tato kdysi tak významná střediska, stánky českého slova, práce i zábavy. A jestli citlivá duše a české srdce nám dovolí aspoň na chvíli zastínit náš zrak, snad v našem snění se nám vybaví obraz českého

divdla, ceske hry, snad uzrime vesele tvare hercu, a snad i v tichu onemele samoty zaslechneme jejich hlasy ... Ale to bude jen zdanlivy sen! Tato, po mnoho let tak bohata a pestra divadelni cinnost nasich otcu a matek minula, je dnes uz jen mrtvou vzpominkou.

Tak mnohe, tak zive, ratolesti kdysi bohate kvetouciho stromu slvoanske lipy symbolu to posvatneho dedistvi ceskeho, pomalu usychaly a odumrely.

Ale snad prece jen je tu nadeje, ze v budoucnu se nam podari, po obetave praci, nejen ozivit ceskou rec, pisnicku a hudbu, ale v srdcich mlade generace ceske vzplane opet laska k ceskemu divadlu.

CZECH DRAMA IN NEBRASKA

The Czech immigrants brought to Nebraska a treasure of rich Czech folklore, music, drama, singing, and dancing. From the beginning of their settlement in this State they formed Reading and Dramatic clubs for the purpose of preserving their mother tongue and producing amateur theatrical excursions.

In Crete in Saline County, Josef Jindra founded a Czech Reading Society in 1867. It was the first Czech Society of Club formed in Nebraska. Later, it was changed to a Sokol organization and then to a Lodge of the Bohemian Slavonian Benevolent Society.

In 1872, Frank Mares called a meeting in Omaha for the purpose of forming a society to promote the Czech language and social life. On January 256, 1873, officers of the organization called 'The Reading and Benevolent Society', were chosen. This club disbanded in 1875, and the money was given to the reading circle of the dramatic society 'Klicpera'. The dramatic club Klicpera (the name of a Czech playwright, Václav Klicpera) in Omaha was founded by f. B. Zdrubek in 1874.

These clubs are the first of which we have record, and it is significant that they were formed at a time when life was a struggle for existence in this almost unsettled land. It is strong proof that the Czech pioneers hungered for spiritual food even though often being denied in many cases, sufficient food for body.

Probably, the first theatrical performance in Nebraska was giving in 1869, by the Reading and Dramatic Society on the farm of Jan. M Svoboda, near Crete in Saline County. A log house, 16 x 22, served for the opera house, lighted only by two windows. The first play was Rekrutyřka v Kocourkove (Recruiting in Kocourkov), with Josef Jindra as director and the following actors and actresses: Jan Svoboda, Frank Nedela, Vít Jelínek, Frank Znamenáček, Aksamit, Anton Herman, Ms. Aron and Miss Nedela (Kubíček). Eight year old Barbara Ned_la played the part of a boy in this play. Boards laid across two strong saw bucks served a a stage and white calico curtains were used for the drop.

In Omaha, the first dramatic performance was given in the fall of 1869, in Štěpánek Hall on 13th and William Streets which was then a wagon road. For the first play a comedy 'Vesnický kantor; (Country Teacher) was chosen. This first performance was directed by a most ardent promoter of Czech drama, Martej Nerad.

An interim came until 1874, when Frank J. Sadílek of Wilber, arrived in Omaha and put new life into the drama there. From that time, dramatic performances have been given steadily in Omaha. Catholic societies celebrated occasions connected with their church and performed plays, too.

In Colfax County, probably the first performance of this kind was given in the country church settlement of Tábora, near Howells, in 1874, by the Bohemian Reading Society. The play Hluchonemý Frantík (Deaf and Mute Frantík), presented the following performers: Mr. and Mrs. Frank J. Jonáš, George Jonáš, Miss Mary Šindelárová (Poledna), and Josef B. Šindelár, who had the title role. The play was performed in the sod house on the farm of Frank J. Jonáš, the curtain being two sheets sewn together. That same year and in the same place another play was presented: 'Frantík, prazský student' (Frank, a Prague Student) with J. B. Šindelár again in the title role.

A stage for theatrical activities was built in almost every Czech hall (Western Fraternal Life Association, Sokol and Catholic Workman). You may find these stages in Abie, Burwell, Clarkson, Crete, Dwight, Linwood, Loma, Milligan, Niobrara, Ord, Prague, Morse Bluff, Table Rock, Tábora (Z.C.B. J. Lodge) Omaha, Schuyler, Verdigre, Weston, Wilber and also in other places settled by the Czechs.

Maybe this report of mine is not complete, but I found that in almost 40 towns and villages across Nebraska the dramas were performed in the past. But now, the stages in the Czech Halls in Nebraska are silent. The rich Czech theatrical activities of the past are dead.

I think it is a sad story to report this reality. The Czech Halls with stages are still there, but they are silent and dark now. And if you will visit with me those Halls with silent stages, and if you may have a little imagination, just close your eyes and try see in dreams those devoted Czech actors and actresses of the past playing with smiles of happiness our dramas and if you listen carefully, you may hear their ringing voices, too.

But, it will be my friends, only a dream. That rich part of our heritage is dead and in now just a memory.

And I confess and I believe it is a part of my national duty to try to preserve the history of Czech who can still remember, with the help of the officers of the Z.C.B. J., Sokol and Catholic Workman organizations, and finally without the partial finanacil help from the Nebraska Czechs, Inc., I could not finish this difficult work.

The Czech theatrical activities in Nebraska are silent and dead now. And to revive Czech drama in modern time, it will require the new enthusiasm of the young Czech generation.

May we expect it??

Vladimír Kucera

THE PAGEANT OF THE CZECH PEOPLE

The only present drama activity known today is the very popular 'Pageant of the Czech People', presented in unique dramatic real live stills and accompanied by very appropriate Czech folk songs and classical music. It has been presented the past seventeen consecutive years every evening during the two days Czech Festival in Wilber, Nebraska.

The very able author-producer-director team for this historical pageant is former State Senator, Attorney Joseph Vosoba and his wife Kathy.

According to the Lincoln Journal and Star newspaper of July 31, 1977, 'Heritage, culture and tradition is the hallmark of a proud people and this dramatization is unique on this globe. So far as it is known, there's nothing like it anywhere, not in the free world.'

This spectacular pageant, both legend and a little hard history is different each year except for some of the most memorable events in Czech history which are sometime repeated. For example, there is always a depiction of the legendary "Forefather Czech" as leader of a group of people leading them from the original cradle of all slavic tribes in the territory north of the Carpathian Mountains to the "land of paradise" in the middle of Europe, and now bearing his name "Cechy" and accompanied the same as in every other scenes, by stirring appropriate music.

Also often repeated is a story about the martyrdom of a great Czech, Jan Hus, the first religious reformer in Europe, who preceded Martin Luther by more than a Century.

(Picture pg. 18 of the original script)

Jan Hus was condemned to die burned at the stage

The Pageant of the Czech People

A story about the great warrior Jan Zizka z Trocnova, indomitable military strategist and leader who defended the religious heritage during the Hussite wars after the death of Jan Hus. Also touching is the sorrowful scene of Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) world known educator, The Teacher of Nations, leaving his homeland and pushed into exile.

(Picture pg. 19 of the original script)

The Legendary “Forefather Czech” leading a group of this Slavic tribe
to the land of “paradise” in the heart of Europe
The Pageant of the Czech People

The year of 1978 was the 600 year anniversary of the death of the great Czech King and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles IV, the founder of Charles University in Prague in 1348, the first university in central and Eastern Europe. To show some of the imminent part of his life and work, special scenes were dedicated to him.

For mention, we record the story about the martyrdom of the Saint Jan z Nepomuk, the confessor of the Queen, who after severe torture was drowned in the Vltava River in Prague by order of the King because he refused to violate the confessional secret.

According to Vosoba, the strive for authenticity requires a great deal of research, a time-consuming continued history lesson. The author could produce such a success only through a strong personal conviction that the annual pageant should serve as a reminder of the Czech oppression, too.

Truly, a great deal of this pageant’s success is the dedication of the actors who have faithfully been part of the show for years. As Wilberite Harry Šalda, portraying Jan Hus in the pageant, stated, “if you get involved, it is much more meaningful. When I was a kid in Wilber, you were just an ‘old bohunk.’ now there is pride in our Czech ancestry.” According to farmer and novice actor Šalda, the pageant has helped to restore pride to the Czech people.

That pride in being Czech is certainly a credit to Vosoba who has spent so many hours of this talent and time without payment to produce for his fellow men a source of

pride in their heritage and culture. To ask Vosoba why he does it, one gets a direct answer, “because I am Czech.”

The changing stories in the “Pageant of the Czech People” is really one of the best parts of the Wilber’s Festival, a highly educational show with living people, thanks to the dedication and artistry of Joseph Vosoba and his wife Kathy, two truly proud Czechs.

They both, along with their actors, sound technicians, prop men and volunteers, are truly an inspiration to all their fellow men not only in Nebraska but world-wide.

Delores Kucera

ABIE - BUTLER COUNTY

The Czech settlers organized their Dramatic and Reading Club shortly after their arrival here in 1869, and continued their activity for many years.

James Stuhl sent me this information about the activity and directing of the Czech plays in Abie: "I had been doing the directing for about 26 years. Before my time others had been active in the line. Czech plays were well attended. We had people come from Omaha, Clarkson, Howells, David City, Schuyler and a lot of other small villages. All the proceeds went toward good causes. For instance, the church, school, polio fund, Red Cross, hospital, etc. The cast did this willingly and gladly.

Our last lay Vesela vojna (Merry Army) was presented in 1955 in the Abie Sokol Hall. Now it is impossible to try to get a cast together. The young generation is not interested and many don't speak Czech any more. Our usual attendance at these Czech plays was anywhere between 600 to 750."

In the year of 1888, the Society of Saints Peter and Paul built a hall with a small stage close to the Catholic church. The Telocvicná jednota Sokol (The Gymnastic Sokol Society) started in about 1921 and built the Sokol Auditorium in 1923, a brick structure with fine stage equipment for their plays.

(Printed program on pg. 23 of the original script)

CESKE DIVADLO V BEE, NEBRASKA.

BEE - SEWARD COUNTY Saint Wenceslas Parish

Czech drama began in the parish of Bee, Butler County, sometime in the early 1930's and continued until the beginning of World War II when the young men of the parish went to serve their country. Reverend Michael Paxourek was the director and instructor for these Czech plays. Below is a program of a play given on March 19, 1939 which was a comedy named Domaci lekar (Home Doctor.)

(Picture on pg. 24 of the original script)

Reverend Michael Pazourek

Photo given by Ms. Ludmila Pazourek to Alfred Novacek

CZECH DRAMA IN BRAINARD - BUTLER COUNTY

Some early drama activity was evident in Brainard in the early 1900's under the sponsorship of the late Rt. Reverend Monsignor Alois Klein, when some plays were produced through the Holy Trinity Parish.

The groups responsible for this were the Catholic worker (Katolický delník) branch and a social group known as the Knights of Saint George. Together they put on plays and any profit was divided among the two groups and the parish. Most of the plays were presented in the Z. C. B. J. Hall, and in neighboring towns and also in Omaha, as many other dramatic groups.

(Hand bill on pg. 25 of the original script)

DIVADLO

Some of the main people responsible for producing these plays were Mr. Jim Fuxa who directed most of the productions, Mr. and Mrs. Anton Janák, Ludmila Stoupová, Charles Veselý and Alois Mergl. Some of the other actors were Regina and Marcelle Mergl, Mrs. and Mr. Adolf Wolfe, Mrs. and Mr. Cril Palík, Mrs. Fred Krizová, Tillie Šenkýr, Emil B. Kobza Jr., Raymond Palík, Jan Havlovic, Rose Krizová, and George Kriz

Information given by Charles Vesely

(picture pg. 26 of the original script)

CZECH DRAMA I

On the stage of the play *Na manzelske fronte stavka* (Strike on the Matrimonial front).

From left: Karel Hulinsky, Irma (Cadek) Sturek, Marie (Bruhova) Urbanovska, Vaclav Kriz, Emilie Krumlova, Leo Rejad, Josef Kruml, Frank Cade, Lillie Hulinska, Albert Hulinsky, Anna (Hrebec) Kamaradova, Vojtech Kamarad.

BURWELL – VALLEY COUNTRY

BURWELL, Eureka Township - VALLEY COUNTY

Z.C.B.J. Lodge Josef Jungman No. 161

Reminiscences by James Rejda, Burwell

On October 28, 1906, the Josef Jungman Lodge was founded and one of its first projects was to present a Czech play. Those responsible for this were Elizabeth and Minnie Lukeš, Anna Rejda, Jan Sibal, Frank Dobes and Josef Bartos. This play was presented sometime in the year 1907. Admission was 25 cents for adults, 15 cents for children.

The next known play was on December 27, 1914 under the direction of Joe Lukesh. Mr. Lukesh is also remembered as one of the outstanding musicians in Nebraska and had one of the outstanding Czech orchestra in Nebraska in the 1930's and 1940's. Some other actors in the play Zarlivec (The Jealous One) presented in 1914 were Phyllis Lukes, Albert Bazant, Joe Masin and Matilda Rejda.

There was a lull in Czech drama in this area until the year 1924, when a new hall was built for the Jungman Lodge.

In the spring of that year, Joe Kocourek, an immigrant of Czechoslovakia, directed a play titled Osudny destnik (Fatal Umbrella). Members of the cast were Lydia Peša, Emma Hulinský, Vencil Bruha, Joe Mašín and James Rejda.

On August 16, 1925 we played the three - act drama Julinciny vdavky, coached by Joe Kocourek. The following actors included Lydia Peša, Barbora Hulinský, Helen Šibal, Joe Mašín, Agnes Cadek, George Lehecka, and James Rejda. The proceed from this play was \$102.62 and it was also repeated in Ord. The actors were so enthused that they continued presenting plays for the next year.

Mr Joe Kocourek then moved to Omaha, so the directing of plays was taken over by James Rejda. The play books Nase miminko (Our Baby Joe) were purchased in an Omaha Czech bookstore. It was a comdey in three acts. The cast was Mrs. Mary

Nekuda, Agnes Cadek, James Rejda, Joe and Charles Mašín, Matilda Rejda, Ludvik Rejda, Minnie Adamek. After a showing in Jungman Hall and Ord, we started a new three act play of great merit by the name Zahrada na Certovce (A Garden Certovka). This was the summer of 1926. The play was very well received and we played to full houses in Jungman Hall, Ord, Saint Paul and Spencer, Nebraska. We were warmly beckoned to present this play in South Dakota (Colane) too, but refused.

Next time we swung into action was the play Ta, jiz nelze odolat (Impossible to be Loved) which we performed at Jungman Hall, May 20, 1927. Later that year we presented the play in Orde on November 20. On May 20, 1928, we staged Na manzelske fronte klid (Peace on the Matrimonial Front) in the Jungman Hall, then in the Z.C.B.J. Hall eight miles south of the Jungman Hall on May 27 and in Saint Paul June 10. The play Zapad slunce na horach (Sunset on the Mountains) we presented on July 14, in Jungman Hall, then in Ravenna October 16, 1929.

Our activities in 1930: A play Roztomila Baruska (The Charming Barbara) was played at Jungman Hall on April 20, in Orde on June 15 and in Ravenna on July 20. A play Ctveractvi krajanka Svejka (A comedy of Millers' Journeyman Svejka) was performed on September 21, 1930 in Jungman Hall and in Saint Paul on November 2. A play Na otavském klepáci (At the County Flour Mill) was performed in Jungman Hall on April 26, 1931 and in Ord on May 17.

Activities in 1932: I have two hand bills for that year: Zemsky raj to na pohled (Earthly Paradise to See) and Princezna z farmy (A Princess from a Farm). The first one was played only in Jungman Hall while the second was in Jungman Hall and in Saint Paul.

Our activities in 1933: A play Kazdy snad ma neco rad (Everybody likes Something) was performed on May 21, and at Spencer on June 17.

Our dramatic activity in 1934: A play Laska divy tvori (The Love Creates Miracles) was played in Jungman Hall on June 3 and in Ord on July 1.

Our activities in 1936: A play Pan Švejk se žení (Mr. Švejk is marrying) was sponsored by the Jungman Dramatic Circle in the Jungman Hall. A play Nas sluha Matej (Our Servant Matej) sponsored by the Jungman Lodge in their Hall was the

observance of their 30th anniversary of existence as a lodge and the 18th anniversary of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Dramatic activities in 1937: On April 4, enclosed is a complete hand bill with two pictures of the cast. This play was repeated in Milligan on June 21.

1938: A play Nez to prasklo (was a military show with all male performers. The play depicted the downfall of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Activity in 1939: On November 30 a drama Na potoce za mlynici (On the Pond Behind the Mill) was played.

There were many more plays and many more actors, but the memory is dim and the records scant, so what was forgotten was unintentional.

The last play was given on Sunday, February 23, 1941, to a full house and the proceeds were given to the Czech National alliance. We were also known as the Jungman Dramatic Circle.

(Picture pg. 30 of the original script)

Burwell - Valley County A scene of the first act of the play
“Zapad slunce na horach.” On the picture is a garden in the front of The Inn

(Hand bill pg. 30a of the original script)

CESKE DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg. 30b of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg. 30c of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg. 30d of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg. 30e of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg 30f of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg. 30g of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill pg. 30h of the original script)

DIVADLO

DRAMATIC CLUB OF THE SOKOL BRUSH CREEK

The sokol Bursh Creek Theatrical Group performed on May 24, 1929, a three-act play Poslední muz (The Last Man) at the Swanton Saline County, Nebraska, W.O.W. Hall.

(Hand bill pg. 31 of the original script)

Telovychovna Jednota Sokol Brush Creek

(Hand bill pg. 32 of the original script)

DIVADLO

On April 5, 1930, the Sokol Brush Creek presented a three-act play titled Napadnik z Ameriky nebo Prohibice v Praze (A suitor from American or The Prohibition in Prague) in the Sokol Pavilion in Wilber.

On December 13, 1930, the Sokol Brush Creek presented a three-act operetta Matcina pisen (The Mother's Song) at the Wilber Sokol Auditoriu. This play brought out a large crowd and the play was said to have been very interesting and well presented.

(Hand bill pg. 33 of given script)

T.J. SOKOL BRUSH CREEK

On September 14, 1933 the Dramatic Club of the Sokol Brush Creek was founded. The names of the founding members of this new club were as follows: Václav Langpoul, Frank Mezera, Karel Holecek, Matie Tobiška, Tom Mara, Elmer Sasek, Frank Maruska, Ed. Richtarik, Georgi Krajnikova, Ruzena Maryskova, Adela Slepnickova, Martin Ryba, Viktor Slepicka, Lumir Rezabek, joining later: Evelyn Janeckova, Mildred Schleisova, Kamila Ticha, and Norbert Slepicka. Karel Holecek was elected president of the Club, Martin Ryba vice presdient, Frank Mezera secreatry. On November 26,

1934, Kamila Ticha, Lidya Perkarkova and Tillie Vicinova joined this Club.

On September 14, 1933 the first play of this new club was presented at the Wilber Sokol Hall entitled Zapovezena cesticka do lasky nebicka (A Forbidden Way to Heaven of Love). Director was Vaclav Langpoul.

On October 2, 1933, the play Slečna tulacka (Miss Runaway) was performed at the Wilber Opera House under the direction of Tom Mára and Václav Langpoul.

On November 11, 1933, a play Deti naseho pluku (The Children of Our Regiment) was presented at Wilber Sokol Auditorium and directed by Frank Mezera.

On November 30, 1933, a play entitled Nechod tam, pojd radej k nam (Don't Go There, Better come to Us) was performed at the Wilber Opera House, and was directed by Martin Ryba.

On December 31, 1933, a play Ta ceska muzika ta srdce proniká (That Czech music Penetrated the Heart) directors of that show were Václav Langpoul and Karel Holecek.

On March 17, 1934, a three-act operetta entitled Ruze prerie (The Rose of the Prairie) was presented at the Wilber Sokol Auditorium. The play was presented in Cuba, Kansas on April 8, 1934 also.

(Hand bill pg. 34a of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 34b of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 34c of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 35 of the original script)

DIVADLO!

On September 15, 1934, for the commemoration of 48 years of existence of the Sokol Brush Creek, the Dramatic Club presented at Wilber Opera House a three-act

comedy entitled Jedenacte prikazani aneb Nezapres zeny sve (The Eleventh Commandment or Never Deny Your Wife).

On November 17, 1934, a three-act play entitled Vstup do srdce zakazan (The Entry to the Heart is Forbidden) was presented at the Wilber Opera House by the Dramatic Club of Sokol Brush Creek. This show was given in Odell, Gage County, Nebraska, also.

In February 18, 1935, minutes it states that a discussion was held concerning the repair of the Opera House stage. A proposition was made to the owners, "Could they give two plays rent free and apply the profits to the repair of the stage. A play was planned for April 1, 1935, under the direction of Marie Slapnicka and Vaclav Langpoul.

The minutes end here and that's about all the information I have.

Information given by Elmer Sasek.

On February 8, 1935, a three-act operetta entitled Presazena ruze prerie (Transplanted Rose of Prairie) was performed at the Wilber Opera House. Miss Eliška Dubová presented the music.

On April 6, 1935, a three-act drama entitled Hrich lesniho Krikavy (Forester's Krikava Sin) was presented at the Wilber Opera House.

On October 12, 1935, a three-act comedy Nase tchyne odzbrojuje (Our Mother-in-law is Unarming) at the Wilber Opera House.

On November 16, 1935, a three-act comedy Ja se zenit nebudu (I Will Never Marry) was performed at the Wilber Opera House.

(Hand bill pg. 36a of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 36b of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 36c of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 36d of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 36e of the original script)

“Navrat ztracene dcery”

(Hand bill pg. 36f of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 36g of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 36h of the original script)

OSLAVA!

On December 25, 1935, a three-act drama Navrat ztracene dcery (Slavny den doktora Martina) - (The Return of the Missing Daughter or The Glorious Day of Doctor Martin) was presented at the Wilber Opera House.

On the New Year, January 1st, 1936, The Dramatic Club of Sokol Brush Creek performed in Swanton a comedy Naše tchýn odzbrojuje (Our Mother-in-law is Unarming).

On April 4, 1936, The Dramatic Club of the Sokol Brush Creek performed at the Wilber Opera House a four-act show entitled Zatoulana svatba (The Lost Wedding).

For the commemoration of 50 years of the Sokol Brush Creek on August 28, 1938, a special program was arranged: Sokol exhibition, an appearance of pupils of the Czech school of Wilber, directed by Professor Kolbaba, Beseda dances of young boys and girls of Wilber, and a speech by the president of the Wilber Sokol and Mr. Frank Prasek, the organizer of the Z.C.B.J.

On December 25, 1936, the members of the sokol Dramatic Club of Swanton presented a three-act play in the Wilber Opera House entitled Tatinek sel na zalety.

The Czech immigrants brought to Nebraska a treasure of beauty and riches in Czech folklore, music, drama, songs and folk dances.

CEDAR HILL - BUTLER COUNTY

The 1930's had the Cedar Hill Parishioners struggling with a prolonged drought and low prices for farm products, consequently the church also suffered in the monetary area. It was decided to try to produce a Czech play, commonly called "divadlo" with the young people of the parish. This would keep the young people occupied, preserve the Czech language and hopefully aid the parish financially. In the fall of 1931, a Drama Club was organized.

Mr. Joseph Sousek took it on himself to be the director of the play. He ordered several plays from different publishing houses; the final choice was Tatinkovy juchty (Father's Boots) a two-act comedy. The cast was chosen as follows: BALTAZAR RYPAK: Josef Vojtech; PANI RYPAKOVA: Agnes Nemcová; MATYSEK, MARINA and MADLENA; (their children): Albin Cihacek, Cecilie Souskova, and Marie Sloupova; HEDVIKA, administrator's daughter: Lillian Vranova; FRANTISEK, her brother: Ernest Humlicek; CHYTIL, policeman: Rudolf Stranik; KORBELIK, inn-keeper: Viktor Sloup; FLASINETAR, organ-grinder: Frank Blatny.

To keep down the expenses, the individual parts were hand written, which was quite a task - to be sure. After several weeks of learning the lines and practicing the parts, Sunday, February 17, 1935, was chosen for the first attempt to present it to the public. Since Cedar Hill, being a rural parish had no hall, the Z.C.B.J. (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association - Západní česká bratrská jednota) hall at Morse Bluff, Nebraska, was rented.

The evening of the presentation the hall was packed and the play was a success. The audience enjoyed it and talked about it for many weeks; because the play was published in Czechoslovakia and portrayed the Czech life. Many in attendance were not too far removed from the 'old country' to have nostalgic memories. This was an encouragement to produce more plays in the future. Tatinkovy juchty was also presented in Abie, Nebraska, on February 27, 1935 in Wahoo, Nebraska and Plasi church basement (a rural Parish south of Prague, Nebraska). The interest in Czech plays kept up for next three years. The plays that were presented to the public, besides

Tatinkovy juchty were Pepicka z male hospudky (Josie from a little Tavern); Slecna Marie veze zenicha na trakari (Miss mary hauling her Bridegroom in a Wheelbarrow); Anton, nezlob! (Anton, Don't Annoy me!); Osel je osel (Donkey is a Donkey); and Sojci pero (Blue Jay's Feather).

Slecna Marie veze zenicha na trakari was the largest production of them all. The play was a musical comedy of three acts. It involved every member of the Drama Club, and also many adults and their talents. The total income for Slecna Marie veze zenicha na trakari was \$91.85, expense \$34.10, total profit \$57.75 not very large by today's standards, but it must be remembered that the price of admission was adults 25 cents. Another noteworthy reflection is that while the members of the cast always received recognition by applause when presenting a play, there were three people Mr. Joseph Sousek, director, Mrs. Václav Nemcova and Mr. Jan Humlicek, prompters, who were also very important to the play, but were never seen.

The last Czech play Sojci pero was presented December 3, 1938. World War II and the induction of the young men prevented the plays to be continued.

Albín L. Cihacek, Morse Bluff

(Hand bill pg. 40 of the original script)

VZHURU DO PRAGUE, NEBRASKA

(Hand bill pg. 40a of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 40b of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 40c of the original script)

DIVADLO!

CRETE SALINE COUNTY

By Mrs. Helena Kupkova

Mr. Kucera: I regret that I have no knowledge of the early beginning of Czech theatrical activities in Crete, Saline County, apparently, the "American Opera" you mention was the old "Opera House" on north main street, which is still there, but no longer in use. The plays were staged in the upstairs ballroom, while the street area was occupied by businesses. After the new Sokol Hall was built in 1916, the performances were staged there, where a fine stage had been built for this purpose.

My first memory of Czech plays - the coaching and directing was done by Mr. Frank Dredle, probably in the early 1910's and 20's. There always was a prompter (napoveda) which position I remember was held by Mrs. Joe Smrz for many years. Later Mrs. J.W. (Augusta) Sedlackova took over the directing and Mrs. Stevie Kadlecova, Novakova was prompter. For many years, the Joe Smrz band played for the public dances after each production.

Later bands hired were: The Lesslie Doane's Little Brass Band of Wilber, Jim Hovorka Orchestra, Jerry Koci's Band, Lukes's Band, Melody boys Orchestra, Jolly Rambler's Band, Henry H. Slepicka's Band, H. Stein Orchestra, Ed Sysel Orchestra, R. Tichy Band, and others.

The last director I know of was Mrs. Frances Kucharova. The activity in the theatre declined when World War II started.

At first, the Crete Sokols (Telocvicna jednota Sokol - The Gymnastic Sokol Society) had built a wooden structure or hall for their activities, (that hall burned down in 1913) and the new one a brick building was built in 1915 on 19th & Norman Ave.

But I doubt that the old wooden hall had a stage there since their plays were held in the above mentioned Opera House. This Opera House building now belongs to and is occupied by the First Federal Bank and is soon to be razed for their expansion. How sad it is to see these historical buildings pass on for "progress." Some of the actors

before my time were Mr. Jaroslav Elias, Mrs. Otylie Elias, Mrs. Otylie Eliasova, Mr. Joe Louda, Mrs. Mary Loudova, Mrs. Frank Dredlova, Mrs. Mary Ulrichova, and I am sure there are others whom I do not remember.

Later actors: Dr. L.r. Aksamit, Mrs. Anna Bazantova, Mr. Albert Bazant, Mrs. Fannie Borecka, Mr. Frank Crha, Mrs. Marie Dedicova, Mrs. Antonie Hlavata, Mr. Emil Hojer, Miss Emilie Kadlecova, Mr. Joe Kalina, Ms. Frances Kucharova, Mr. Joe Kunc, Mrs. Antonie (Helena) Kupkova, Mr. Jan Machacek, Mrs. Arline Nesporova, Mr. Jan and Viktor Nespor, Mr. Steve Pomajzl, Mr. Frank Prasek, Mr. V. Prochazka, Dr. F.J. Travnicek, Mr. And Mrs. Louis Wondrusková, Mr. Geo Znamenacek.

A sumptuous dinner was always served to those participating after each production and was prepared and served by the Sokol Ladies.

In the 30's, a Dramatic club was organized, which met once a month on Sundays. A bounteous meal was prepared by the ladies, for all who took part in plays and their families. Usually a small program was held after, followed by a sing fest and dancing. Always good food drinks and a good time were had by all.

The Czech school was started in 1936, mostly at the insistence of Mr. Joe Vosika, and organized by the school board: Mrs. J.W. Sedlackova, Mrs. Joe Vavrikova, Mrs. Eman Dymackova Sr., and Mrs. Stevie Kadlecova. Mrs. Antonie (Helena) Kupkova was hired as teacher. At first, the school was supported by the Czech lodges of Crete: Telocvicna jednota Sokol, Sokolice Libuse, Z.C.B.J. Lodge Nebraska No. 3 and J.C.D. (Jednota ceskych dam - The Society of the Czech ladies) Lodge Kvetoslava. Later they took in maen also and it became Jednota ceských dam a panu.

The school became self supporting by programs in which every pupil took part in some way: singing, dances, plays, etc for a full night of entertainment. There were two of these entertainments, usually about Thanksgiving time and for Mother's Day when classes discontinued. Telocvicna jednota Sokol provided the lower rooms of the Sokol Hall for classes, as well the stage for programs without charge. The older students attended in the forenoons 9 - 12 on Saturday and the little folks in the afternoon, from 1 to 5 pm. As many as 57 pupils attended the classes during the four years. As stated above, every child took part in the programs in some way, which required a lot of

material, so Mrs. Kupkova often had to translate material from her school teaching days to have the right material for all. She also directed all the programs. These programs were always attended by a full house of families and friends. A public dance followed, where adults as the children had a good time. Bands hired to play for these dances: Joe Lukesh Orchestra, Ed Sysel's Band, Sparta Orchestra and Jim Javorka's Band, both from Omaha.

Again interest lagged when World War II was declared.

For several summers, at this time, during vacation, Mrs. Kupkova taught Czech classes in Wilber, Nebraska, Saline Center Jall, Lodge Z.C.B.J. No. 389, and Tábor Lodge No. 74. All were well attended and a program was held at each place at the end of the summer session. (Except Tábor, which ended with a picnic, and was supported by the lodge). The other two schools became self-supporting with proceeds from the large attendance at the program. In all three schools children averaged ages five to twenty. Several older adults took advantage of the classes in Wilber which lasted from ten to twelve weeks. Of course a dance always followed the programs, as is the Czech custom.

Z.C.B.J Play a Success

The play, entitled "Falesna Koucuka," (*should be probably Falesna Kocicka*) put on by the Z.C.B.J. lodges of Crete, was played at Sokol Hall, Monday evening, to a good house and greatly enjoyed by every one present.

The characters of the cast were Wm. Lanik, playing nicely the wealthy dentist, Dr. Prelouc; Miss Lillian Sysel, as the doctor's housekeeper, and Mrs. Anton Kupa as "Milca," a pretty young girl in training and care of the doctor, played their parts cleverly; Mrs. Mary Louda as Clara, Milca's best friend, who tells the doctor all she knows and gives away all the plans made by Milca and the housekeeper, was good as was Eman Dymacek, as father of Milca and Frank Crha, as stepfather, and Albert Bazant, a lover of Milea was also very good and full of humor. Finally all ends well. A social dance followed the play.

(Picture pg. 45 of the original script)
Children of Crete Czech school dancing
“Sla Nanyinka do zeli”

(Picture pg. 45 of the original script)
Czech school students in Crete about 1938. Helen Kupkova teacher
is in back row next to left of the tall student

(Hand bill pg. 45a of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 45b of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 45c of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 45d of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 45e of the original script)

DIVADLO!

(Hand bill pg. 45f of the original script)

DIVADLO! 1935

(Hand bill pg. 45g of the original script)

DIVADLO! 1937

(Hand bill pg. 45h of the original script)

DIVADLO! 1938

(Hand bill pg. 45i of the original script)

DIVADLO! 1939

(Hand bill pg. 45j of the original script)

DIVADLO! 1940

(Hand bill pg. 45k of the original script)

DETSKE DIVADLO! 1940

(Hand bill pag. 45l of the original script)

Ditky ceské skoly v Crete

DÍVADLO

DEWEESE - CLAY COUNTY

My old friend Leo Cecava sent me this short information:

Dr. Kucera, I am sorry I cannot help you more. Here the settlement is very mixed not only Czechs, but mostly German. We didn't have Czech plays in Deweese, but many years ago the Czech actors from Milligan in Fillmore County, twice performed here for us. I remember that during one of those plays I was at home with our children when my wife went to see the play because she wanted to remember Czech acting as she herself was an actress as young girl in her village close to Tišnov, Moravia - Czechoslovakia. I wish you, my friend, to finish that history of Czech drama in Nebraska with the same success as you did with the history of Czech cemeteries and churches in Nebraska.

DODGE - DODGE COUNTY

In 1887 a frame hall was erected by Charles Gohr, who operated it as a community meeting and dance hall. It was sold soon after to the Bohemian Theatrical Society. Later The Gymnastic Sokol Society purchased the hall in 1920. The Dodge citizens who will admit that they are 50 years old or older have many happy memories of the entertainments attended in this Sokol Hall. There were presented many different programs including Czech plays.

The Catholic Czechs in Dodge founded in 1900 Ctenarsky klub Jablonsky (The Reading Club Jablonský) with a theatrical group and performed Czech plays.

(Picture pg. 47 of the original script)

Dodge Theatrical Group. Sitting from left to right: F.J. Suchan,
Polly Tichota, Faltin, Marie Janecek, Navratil, Colly Janecek,
Miss Karnik, Emma Mares, Koehler, Sophie Vrba, Herzberg. Vendelin Kliment.
Standing left to right: Charley Faltin, Joe F. Minarik, John T. Minarik. I.J.Koliha,
Frank Havelka, F.J. Srb, John Horak, Charles Vrba, Joseph Minarik, Sr., A.A. Tresnak.

DU BOIS - PAWNEE COUNTY

Mr. Frank Stastny, now in Virginia, Gage County, sent me this information about the theatrical activity in DuBois, Pawnee County.

He wrote: Dear Countryman, I received your letter with your request to send you some information about the Czech plays in DuBois. It was many years ago, when we performed the last play here. I remember the name of the drama, Nasi furianti.

A new brick hall of the Z.C.B.J. (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association Lodge. No. 101) was built in DuBois, and the opening of that building was on November 1921, in the presence of Stanislav Serpan, the editor of the Fraternal Herald at that time. But, many years before this, the Lodge performed Czech plays, usually during the autumn until 1927. At first, when we didn't have our own hall those plays were performed in the hall of K. of P. In Du Bois. When our hall was built the theatrical activity continued especially in summer time with a Czech school, too. After the death of Frank Dobrovolný, a very active director, Josef Ruzicka took charge of the plays. But, after his death, it was the end of Czech plays in Du Bois.

CZECH DRAMA IN DWIGHT

Czech theatre and drama probably got its beginning in Dwight sometime in the early and mid 1920's. Reverend Michael Pazourek, pastor of Assumption Catholic church was one of the leaders in promoting the activity and it was carried on by many of the local residents.

An actual Dwight Dramatic Club was organized and presented plays in both halls, the Assumption Parish Hall and Lodge No. 158 Z.C.B.J. Hall. Mrs. Blanche Pospichal was one of the promoters and organizers of the club.

Many different plays were presented each year and also in other towns and parishes in addition to traveling to Omaha to present their plays.

Maybe one of the outstanding productions presented was the entire Passion Play which was given in the year 1934. Reverend Benedict Bauer O.S.B. pastor of

Assumption church at that time directed and supervised the entire production. It was presented three nights in a row on a week-end to a full capacity crowd each time in the Assumption Parish Hall. Father Bauer even produced his talents at Assumption High School where according to records, the junior class of the high school presented a play on February 27, 1938 entitled Panský Jiri (Mr. George) to a full house. Then, this play was taken to the towns of Deweese and Abie.

Two very well received plays given by the local actors was one titled Nasledky prvního manželství (Consequences of the First Marriage) given November 16, 1930 and the other one given in 1931 titled Vsechna ma láska (All My Love). According to local critics, these were two of Dwight's outstanding plays. It is also noted that after each play was presented, lunch was served and then a dance was held. Admission for these plays was fifty cents for adults and fifteen cents for children.

Some of the local actors were James Kabourek, Agnes Kabourková, Anton J. Prenosil, Blanche Pospichalova, Josef Augusts Sr., Josef Korinek, Frank Hamsa Sr., Jakub Hamsa, Adrian Kudlacek, Alice Kaiferova, Vlasta Stranska, Mrs. Emil and Ernest Korinek, Jan Frank and Frank Voboril. These actors could be considered the mainstay and the nucleus of the club.

The list of actors could go on and on. For instance, in the presentation of the Passion Play, the list of actors and participants were numerous. Many times children were needed for a part and they were chosen from either the public or parochial school. Plays continued up until about 1940 when World War II began and many of the actors left. After that, the enthusiasm for a Dramatic Club could not be generated. The last actual Czech play performed in Dwight was on May 27, 1967 given by players from Tábora, South Dakota, titled Hospudka u Markety (Martha's Tavern). Do thus ended Czech drama for the Dwight area.

Alfred Novacek

GERANIUM - NETOLICE - VALLEY COUNTY

The Z.C.B.J (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association Lodge) Slavin is just in the center of an originally pure Czech settlement. It was the pioneer of the national and cultural life for all 36 years of its existence. Except for many different programs, festivals and entertainments for different occasions, the Czech drama was performed.

LOMA - BUTLER COUNTY

The introduction of Czech drama came into the parish of Loma, Butler County, about the year 1925 under the direction of Reverend Michael Pazourek. The plays were given about twice a year and were also performed in the neighboring parishes and towns.

Some of the parish actors included John Eksstein, Frank Ekstein, Frank Wais, Joseph Linhart, Mile Linhart, Matt Kantor, Emil Kocian, Ed Bohaty, Agnes Wais, and Helen Bartek. The last play was performed about the year 1935.

Below is a program of a play named Furiant given sometime in the year 1934 or 1935.

Vojtech Kabela-Matt Kantor, Baruska safarka-Ag. Waisova, Frantisek-Ed Bohatý, Matka Ludmila-An. Waisová, Marenka-L. Rehovska, Pavel její syn-Jan Ekstein, Verunka jeho dcera- B. Sedlackova, Petr celedin-Fr. Ekstein, Josef Zelenka mlynar-Jos. Linhart, Betuska devecka-H. Bartek, Kacenkajeho dcera-L. Linhartova, Simek posel-Th. Bartek, Jan jeho syn-F. Wais

HEMINGFORD - BOX BUTTE COUNTY

Dear Dr. Kucera: I read of your request concerning the history of Czech theatrical activities in Nebraska and I will try to help with my story. I lived in the western part of Nebraska from the year of 1921, when as a young girl of eleven I had emigrated with my parents from Prague (Czechoslovakia) to America. There were many of our Czech countrymen living on farms in Box Butte County, Nebraska, in the vicinity of the little

town of Hemingfor.

During Second World War, the late Stanislav Serpan of Omaha named our countrymen "Zapadli vlastenci" (Sunken Patriots). They were really patriots, because they were collecting and sending money for a Second Czech Resistance Movement. But, to return to my story: in 1926, our Czechs founded Z.C.B.J. Lodge Box Butte, which is now known as Box Butte Lawn Lodge No. 298. Then, in the year 1928, they erected their own hall. Mr. Frank Turek donated a portion of his land in the vicinity of Saint Wenceslas Catholic church and our countrymen constructed the hall themselves. In that hall they presented many Czech plays, dances and other programs and activities.

The Z.C.B.J. Hall is located 12 miles west of Hemingford, Nebraska. The Lawn Catholic church was built in 1912 and was located one-fourth mile from the hall, but the church was torn down in 1963. The Catholic Cemetery is located near where the church once stood. There are many Czech people buried at this cemetery such as: Hovorka, Shimek, Barta, Koper, Sokol, Duchon, Matousek, Tlampa and Stumpf. At the cemetery, there is a memorial dedicated to the memory of the Czechs who built (founded) that church.

The first Czech one-act play was performed in April of 1927, in the garage of Mr. Stránský. I acted in only one lady's part. I was sixteen year old girl at that time. Our practices were held on Saturday and Sunday as I attended school in town during the week. (My parents were farming, although they had been born as Prague's city people). I cannot remember the name of the play, but I remember I portrayed a maiden and it was a play of rural life.

As the opening of our new Z.C.B.J hall in September of 1928, a Czech play was presented also. We performed four times each winter season. After that year, our theatrical activities continued until 1937.

We performed only in the winter months, as in the summer the farmers didn't have time to spare from their work. I cannot remember the names of those plays, except one, "The Lass of a Professor" (Zabicky pana profesora). We presented only comedies, as during that time of bad depression, our people had enough trouble and needed the laughter, which we tried to give them. We didn't print programs as all the

people in the audience knew and recognized us very well.

Traveling back and forth for those practices was not too easy as in winter months the roads were usually very bad, especially in snow storms when we had to clean our own roads of snow. I usually took my little girl with me later after I was married, as my husband and I both were performing. All in all, it was a joyous time, even with the hardships. as it was our only source of amusement.

I remember the names of the actors very well:

Mike Kresl (now deceased) was our director, St. Civish (now deceased), Josef Jansa (deceased), Frank Stransky (deceased), Josef Stumpf (now Madison, Wisc.), Emil Nekuda (my husband), Alois Vorovka (father, who was our prompter) is also deceased, Mary Vorovkova (my mother-deceased), Frances Matouskova (married Prochazkova in Hemingford), Lucy Stumfova (married Krizova), Louisa Vorovkova (married Nekudova-No. Hollywood), Sofie Plananska (our prompter now deceased).

In the western part of Nebraska where we lived, we were really “Zapadli vlastenci” very far from others; 60 miles from the Wyoming border, 65 miles from the border of South Dakota and very far from Omaha and Lincoln. But, through all that time, we were preserving our Czech heritage and honoring our Czech ancestry.

Sadly, the young Czechs of today do not care too much about their heritage and ancestry and we older ones are not so many now. I hope that my short story and reminiscences may be of a little help. With the sokol Nazdar!

P.S. Here in Los Angels, I performed very often in the halls of LaCrescenta and Sokol.

(Picture pg. 55 of the original script)

Milligan Auditorium built in 1929

(Hand bill page 55a of the original script)

Home Talent Bohemian Play

“Za hokynarskym Kramen”

CZECH PLAYS PRESENTED IN MILLIGAN

By Mrs. Frank V. Hamouzová
President of the Czech Culture Club in Milligan

In a building located on a corner northeast from the Milligan Auditorium, then owned by Thomas Jicha, the first Czech play was presented in Milligan in 1906. This building is still standing there. The play was presented on the second floor.

The play entitled Bedrich a jeho chasa (Bedrich and His Gang) was a comedy with singing. There was a cast of eighteen people. The singing was accompanied by the orchestra of Josef Vesely of Tobias. Mr. Vesely played the violin and his son-in-law played the violin-cello. The place was filled to capacity. After the play, a dance was held on the second floor and refreshments were served in the tavern on the first floor.

Thomas Jicha ran the play on his own. It was interesting to note that he purchased only one copy of the play book and the part for each member of the cast was hand-written by one actor, a man who had been in Milligan only three months, and who played the leading part of Bohes, the son of a widow. Bohes sang most of his part. The part of the leading lady was played by Miss Emma Mengler (Mrs. B.F. Dye). The play was directed by Vít Laun.

In 1909, Dramaticky sbor Zaboř (Dramatic Club Zaboř) was organized which brought to life Czech plays again. Members of the group were Frank Hrdý, Sr., Rudolph Homolka, Frank Laun, Frank Kofranek, Hynek Jaros, Karel Beránek, Frank Rischling, Sr., Thomas Pulec, Kamil Ondrak, Thomas Jicha and Josef Jicha, Sr.

On February 22, 1910, this play Pražské svadlenky (The Prague Seamstresses) was presented in Josef Jicka's Central Hall.

Under the direction of Karel Beránek, the play Chudý písničkar (The Poor Songster) was put on at Jicha's Central Hall in 1911.

On January 6, 1912, the play Zlý duch (The Evil Spirit) was presented in Jicha's Central Hall. Among the thirty-five in the cast were Albery Frycek, Miss Lillian Kotas (Mrs. Albert Frycek), William Slass, Miss Agnes Placek (Mrs. Henry Steinacher),

Charles J. Kotas, Josef Sádlo, Frank Laun, Charles Smrha, Václav Ach, Hynek Jaros, Miss Stella Rosanek (Mrs. Fred Hospodsky), Miss Emma Mengler (Mrs. B.F. Dye), Frank Hrdy, Sr., Miss Bessie Selement (Mrs Henry Wanek),. Miss Rose Kassik (Mrs. Frank Stych), Miss Rose Klosner, Mrs. Alois (Barbara) Jezek, Sr., Thomas Pulec, Frank Hrdý, Jr., Josef Koza, Mrs. Joe (Zofia) Barta, Frank Korbelik, Josef Korbelik, Edward Stech, Joseph Jicha, Jr., Mamie Placek (Mrs. Clarence Zajícek) and Antonie Laun.

On November 29, 1926, the volunteer society “Ochotnické Druzstvo” later known as “Ochotnický krouzek” was organized. The Charter members were Frank Hrdy. Sr., Vaclav Ach, Josef Sadlo, Vaclav (James) J. Novak, Albert Kassik, Sr., Karel Beranek, John Kucera, Sr., Fred Kassik, Miss Emma Hamouz (Mrs. Robert V. Smrha), Miss Rose Soukup (Mrs. Hery S. Duba), Mrs. Ignac (Marie) Sebesta, Karel Novak, Mrs. Alois (Barbara) Jezek , Sr., Miss Anna Novak (Mrs. Rudy Jansky), Mrs. J. J. Novak, Albert Frycek, Mrs. Albert (Marie) Kassik, Sr., Miss Mildred Placek (Mrs. Albert Smrha), Mrs. Vaclav (Agnes) Ach, Rudolph Sadlo and Mrs. Anna Ondrak. Thereafter, anyone appearing in the cast of a play under the auspices of the “Ochotnický krouzek” became a member.

(Picture pg. 58 of the original script)

Thomas Jicha who was responsible for the presentation of the first Czech play in Milligan

Officers elected were as follows: President - Frank Hrdy, Sr; Secretary, Albert Frycek; Treasurer, Václav J. Novak; Director, Josef Sadlo; Coach, Vaclav Ach; Stage Managers: Karel Beranek and Albert Kassik, Sr., and Prompter, Mrs. Anna Ondrak.

On January 28, 1927, the play Nasledky prohibice (The Consequences of the Prohibition) was presented at Jicha’s Central Hall. This was the first play presented by “Ochotnický krouzek.” In the cast were Frank Hrdy, Sr., Mrs. Ignac (Marie) Sebesta, Fred Kassik, Miss Rose Soukup (Mrs. Henry S. Duba), Karel Novak, Albert Frycek, John Kucera, Sr., Vaclav Ach and Miss Alice Svec (Mrs. John Kucera, Jr.).

On January 18, 1928, “Ochotnický krouzek” presented the play Hamba na muze (Shame on Husbands) at Jicha’s Central Hall. The cast was comprised of Karel

Beranek, Mrs. Ignac (Marie) Sebesta, Miss Anna Slajchert (Mrs. Edward Vasatka), Rudolph Sadlo, Vaclav Ach, Mrs. Alois (Barbara) Jezek, Sr.; J.J. Novak., Mrs. Vaclav (Agnes) Ach, Mrs. J.J. (Betty) Novak, Frank Hrdy, Sr., Fred Kassik, Miss Rose Soukup (Mrs. Henry S. Duba), Miss Agnes Jezek (Mrs. Edward Bulin), Miss Emma Hamouz (Mrs. Robert V. Smrha), Miss Wilma Soukup (Mrs. Fred Huppert), Miss Georgia Kunce (Mrs. Victor Nespory) and Albert Frycek.

On April 13, 1928, the "Ochotnický krouzek" presented the play V malé chaloupce na farme (In a Little Cottage on the Farm) at Jicha's Central Hall. Those appearing in the play were Mrs. Alois (Barbara) Jezek, Sr.; Vaclav Ach, J.J. Novak, Miss Rose Soukup (Mrs. Henry S. Duba), Frank Hrdy, Sr.; Josef Sadlo, Fred Kassik, John Kucera, Sr.; Miss Georgia Kunce (Mrs. Victor Nespory) and Miss Wilma Soukup (Mrs. Fred Huppert).

On June 17, 1928, the "Ochotnický krouzek" put on the play Bordynkari (The Boarders) at Jicha's Central Hall at the time of the sokol slet held in Milligan. In the play were Frank Hrdy, Sr.; Fred Kassik, Vaclav Ach, Mrs. Ignac (Marie) Sebesta, Miss Bertha Kunce (Mrs. John J. Kubicek), Miss Anna Slajchert (Mrs. Edward Vasatka), Miss Mildred Placek (Mrs. Albert Smrha), Mrs. J. J. (Betty) Novak, Miss Georgia Kunce (Mrs. Victor Nespory), Václav (J.J.) Novák, Jan Chmelka, John Kucera, Sr.; Karel Beránek, Albert Frycek, Mrs. Vaclav (Agnes) Ach, Miss Anna Capek (Mrs. Leo Urban), Miss Anna Ach (Mrs. G. Craig Russell) and Josef Sádlo.

A three-act play, Tri dcerusky na vdavani (Three Daughters for Marriage) must have been presented about the middle or late twenties. All that was available was one play book with the cast written therein in pencil. Two names had been erased. It is not known who played the part of Emerencie, the aunt of the three daughters of Dlabac, and the part of the town officer. The rest of the cast is as follows: Kajetan Dlabac, janitor played by J. J. Novak; Jenovefa, his wife by Mrs. Ignac (Marie) Sebesta; their three daughters-Mila by Miss Rose Soukup (Mrs. Henry S. Duba), Fanca by Miss Mildred Placek (Mrs. Albert Smrha) and Icka by Miss Emma Hamouz (Mrs. Robert V. Smrha); Vojta Smid, watchman by Fred Kassik; Alois Pentlicka, cupbearer, by Rudolph Sadlo; Edward Svoboda, Romulad's Assistant by John Kucera, Sr.; Dr. Otto Jandera, a

university professor by Karel Beránek and Knirsch, Judicial councilman by Frank Hrdy, Sr.

The first act takes place in the downstairs apartment of Dlabac. The second act takes place in the upstairs apartment of Knirsch, who is rich. The third act takes place the following morning at the Knirsch apartment.

Much to the disapproval of Jenovefa, her daughter Fanca is engaged to Vojta and another daughter Mila is dating Alois. She wants to see her daughters married to rich men with higher professions. Icka gets acquainted with Dr. Jandera and gives the Knirsch's address. Since the Knirsch family is on vacation, Jenovefa decides that they will pretend to be the Knirsch family having only one daughter. She instructs the other two daughters not to claim them as their family. The three move into the Knirsch apartment to impress the professor.

Appearing on the scene in the polar traveler and his assistant, friends of Knirsch, but known only by correspondence. This problem is minor. However, the coming of Emerencie causes another problem. The final problem is the arrival of Knirsch himself. Somehow everything falls into place and all ends well. The professor loves Icka whether rich or poor. Jenovefa consents to all the wishes of her daughters when it comes to marriage - future husbands don't have to be rich.

When the Milligan Auditorium was dedicated in April of 1930, two Czech plays were presented. On the afternoon of April 27, was presented the play Podskalák (Dweller at the Foot of the Rock). Those in the cast were Rudolph Spousta, Sr.; Miss Rose M Soukup (Mrs Henry S. Duba). Miss Milo Buzek, Dr. B. J. Bukacek. Miss Arlene Bors (Mrs. Deryl Hillis), Fred Hospodsky, Milo Buzek, Vena Jezek, Stanley Chudly, Mrs. J. J. (Betty) Novak, Josef Sadlo, Karel Beranek, Edward Laun, Otto Kottas, Rudolph Sadlo, J. J. Nova, Miss Rose Nova (Mrs. Roy Meyer), Richard Slepicka, Ernest Kotas, Milton Stastny, Emil Beranek, Milton Havel and Albert Kassik, Jr.

The second play was presented on the evening of April 27. It was entitled Tulacka krev (Vagabond Blood). Appearing in the play were J.J. Novak, Miss Rose Novak (Mrs. Roy Meyer), Fred Kassik, Miss Emma Hamouz (Mrs. Robert V. Smrha), Frank Hrdy, Sr.; Rudolph Sádlo, Mrs. Alois (Barbara) Jezek, Sr.; Miss Rose Soukup

(Mrs. Henry S. Duba), Josef Sadlo, Albert Frycek, Vaclav Ach, Anton Stech, Miss Anna Smetana (Mrs. Chas. Slepí_ka), Miss Agnes Stech (Mrs. Milo Stych), Miss Agatha Jirkovsky (Mrs. Paul Archer), Adolp Hendrych, John Halama, Sr.; Edward Hamouz, Miss Evelyn Frycek (Mrs Joe Halama) and Frank Laun.

On October 22, 1933, “Ochotnický krouzek” sponsored the presentation of the play Kdyz clovek zdedi milion (When One Inherits a Million) at the Milligan Auditorium. Appearing in the play were Joseph Ach, Miss Anna Smrha, Miss Helene Kucera (Mrs. Phil Smith), Miss Olga Vosoba (Mrs. Ivan Kay), Harry Kottas, Edward Laun, Edward Stych, Albert Kassik, Jr.; Louis Hamouz and Miss Anne Slajchert (Mrs. Edward Vastka).

On February 14, 1934, “Ochotnický krouzek” presented the play Sirotek (Orphan) under the direction of Václav Ach at the Milligan Auditorium. The play depicted the serious tragic life of the peasantry. An orphaned girl child is brought from the city to be kept by the municipality of her mother’s home, the mayor deciding that she should be kept by different families in rotation. But a poor bachelor adopts her and rears her, educating her well. The son of a rich man falls in love with her, his mother consenting to the match, but the father turns the son out of doors. The girl is saved from drowning by the village simpleton. Her long-lost father happens on the scene and he being rich and prominent, the match comes off.

James J. Novak played the part of the rich son’s father; Mrs. Ema Bouse the part of his wife; Harry Kottas the rich son, Mrs. Albert Kassik, Sr., the part of the maid; Joseph Ach the simpleton; Václav Ach the go-between; Mrs. James J. Novák, the potion mixer; W. Kotas the poor educated bachelor; Miss Emma Hejtmánek (Mrs. Louis Psotta) the orphan; Edward F. Laun the long-lost father; Fred Kassik the tavern-keeper; Miss Mildred Placek (Mrs. Albert Smrha) his daughter; John F. Kucera the peasant and Ben Jezek the constable.

On February 25, 1934, at the Milligan Auditorium, the play Prazske svadlenky (The Prague Seamstresses) was presented. Miss Anna Smrha portrayed the part of the rich customer with a favorite nephew. A poor widow, played by Mrs. Karel Beranek, was assisted by the shop girl, Miss Libbie Beránek (Mrs. Lous Rischling). Karel Beranek played the rich man with Joseph Ach as his son and Miss Irma Soukup (Mrs. Robert

Dinneen) as his daughter.

Others taking part were Miss Germaine Beranek (Mrs. Charles Petracek), Miss Helen Beranek (Mrs. Frank Turek), Miss Zdenka Beranek (Mrs. John Sershan), Emil Beranek, Harry Kottas, Miss Helene Kucera (Mrs. Phil Smith), Miss Marian Smrha (Mrs. Cecil Lingenfelter), Miss Marian Kassik (Mrs. Emil Beránek), Frank H. Houkup, Eman (Emil R.) Havel, Albert Kassik, Jr., Edward F. Laun, and Miss Anne Slajchert (Mrs. Edward Vasatka). Karel Beranek coached the play. Mrs. Ondrak was the prompter.

Cikanka a její deti (The Gypsy Mother and her Children), a Czech drama in three acts was staged at the Milligan Auditorium under the auspices of "Sv. Vaclavskeho Svazu" (Saint Wenceslas Guild) on April 7, 1934.

A rich man's son leaves home to marry a gypsy and becomes a Romany, coming back with the troupe some years later to die and be buried in the home-town cemetery, to be followed later by his widow, who leaves a little boy and baby girl to be looked after by the community as unknown waifs.

The little boy escapes after being confined in an institution and makes his way back to the gypsy associates. The little girl is adopted by her grandfather, who is not aware of their relationship. The little boy, grown to manhood and knowing where his sister is being raised, comes for her and breaks up an engagement-the girl finding out her origin and refusing to stay and make her lover unhappy because of her lowly birth.

A document which the little boy had gotten from his mother and written by his father solves the mystery of the children's origin and makes the grandfather happy and likewise the two lovers. All ends as a good story should.

Those appearing in the play were William Kotas, Miss Agnes Stech (Mrs. Milo Stych), Henry Lorenz, Mrs. William Koca, Charles Hamouz, Alois Stech, Miss Jarmila Novak (Mrs. Otto Kottas), Edward F. Laun, Anton Stech, Fred Jirkovsky, Miss Helen Kucera (Mrs. Phil Smith), Miss Anne Slajchert (Mrs. Edward Vasatka), Miss Marian Kassik (Mrs. Emil Beranek), Frank Laun Jr., Edward Hamouz, Miss Evelyn Frycek (Mrs. Joe Halama), Miss Agatha Jirkovsky (Mrs. Paul Archer), Miss Agnes Hendrych (Mrs. John Halama Sr.; Hynek Jaros and Mrs. Albert (Marie) Kassik, Sr.

On April 15, 1934, presented at the Milligan Auditorium was the three-act play

Kraska ze Sumavy (The Beauty from the Sumava), by the young people of the local gymnastic society, Sokol Rip under the direction of Josef Sádlo.

The story is one of a baroncy with a democratic baron and his beautiful daughter, a haughty overseer and a good game reserve keeper and his daughter, a main poacher and a minor poacher - both in love, but happily not with the same maiden, a highborn rich young gentleman who passes himself off as a poor assistant to the baron and who wins the baron's beautiful daughter; a widowed sister to the warden, whose daughter is in love with the same assistant, but alas hopelessly so; and several minor characters whose lives and actions intertwine and intermingle with those of the others to bring about fascinating intrigues and love scenes that can end only as such things can and usually do in perfect union of the happy couples.

The play is interspersed with several happy songs, roundalays and dances. This, together with the pretty costumes of the Šumava put the finishing touches to a story that is enjoyed by everyone.

John Halama, Sr., played the part of the baron and Miss Agnes Hendrych (Mrs. John Halama Sr.) that of his daughter. Rudolph Sadlo was his assistant. Adolph Hendrych was the game warden and Miss Marie Sadlo (Mrs. John Stewart) played the part of his daughter whose hand was won by the lessor of the poachers, Joseph Turek. The main poacher was played by George Turk. He sought and won the hand of the warden's domestic played by Rose Marie Sadlo (Mrs. Frank Cecnle).

Bohumil Podlesak played the part of the arrogant overseer, who finally got his as the arrogance goes, much to his chagrin. Miss Alice Oliva (Mrs. Russell Cox) played the part of the widowed sister of the warden. Miss Helen Novak (Mrs. Jergen Folkerts) played the part of her daughter, who felt herself jilted and wanting to go home. Jerry Sadlo, the rich landowner and uncle of the barons assistant, whom he finally found engaged to the baron's daughter, arrives to give them his blessings also.

Joseph Sadlo, Jr., Miss Mildred Stych (Mrs. Ted Hanzl), Emil Beranek, Henry Novak, and William Jezek played minor roles. Some dozen girls and boys played the parts of the villagers invited to take part in the festivities of the play.

Between acts, recitations, songs and dialogues were given. William Jezek played

selections on his piano accordion. Miss Irma Havel (Mrs. Albert Naimon) played the piano accompaniments for the singers. Mrs. Ann Ondrák was the prompter.

“Ochotnický krouzek” put on a Czech play on Sunday evening, May 6, 1934. “A Carefree Bachelor” is a play about two neighbors bent on disagreement, one with a son and the other with a daughter, who both through differently from their parents. Being very much in love, they were determined to let nothing separate them. A pear tree on one side of the wall (a division stonewall) had a branch with lovely pears extending over the wall and giving the excuse for harsh words between the neighboring fathers, one being willing to shoot the other in defense of his rights and over willing and anxious to disembowel his neighbor if he so much as put his hand upon the fruit of his own tree. It took much scheming on the part of the bachelor and knight of the road to put a stop to the quarrel, unite the neighbors in friendship and bring about the union of the lovers

(Picture on page 68 of the original script)

Josef Sadlo who directed plays

This he does by confiscating the fine pear and putting a spoiled one under the bough and making believe that it was the fruit of the tree that had proven to be rotten and not a thing to be fought or quarreled over.

William Kotas played the part of the father of the son and was the owner of the pear tree. James J. Novak was the father of the daughter and the heroine. Joseph Ach played the son's part. Miss Ema Hejtmanek (Mrs. Louise Psotta) played the sweetheart's part. Miss Helen Kucera (Mrs. Phil Smith) played the part of the sweetheart's mother and Miss Anna Slajchert (Mrs. Edward Vasata) the part of her chum and well-wisher. Frank Beranek played the part of the absentminded professor, who finally fell in love with the chum. Edward F. Laun was the care-free bachelor. Miss Jarmila Novak (Mrs. Otto Kottas) played the part of the domestic. The play ended with her betrothal to the bachelor. Mrs. Anna Ondrak was the prompter and Vaclav Ach was the coach.

On November 25, 1934, the play Z českých mlynu (Jolly Personnel of the Old

Mills) was presented by Telocvicna jednota Sokol Riip at the Milligan Auditorium. It was coached by Josef Sadlo.

The finale where the old baron and lover jumps into the well to rescue the fair maiden and where both are pulled out by means of the windlass and bucket, brought the play to a hilarious close.

Those taking part were William Kotas, Emil Kassik, Jr., George Turek, Joseph Turek, Miss Agnes Hendrych (Mrs. John Halama, Sr.), Adolph Hendrych, Miss Alice Oliva (Mrs. Russell Cox), John Oliva, Jr., Miss Emilye Cecnle, Rudolph Cecnle, Rudolph Sadlo, Jerry Sadlo, Miss Rose Marie Sadlo (Mrs. Frank Cecnle, Miss Marie Sadlo (Mrs. John Stewart) Joseph Sadlo, Jr., and Bohumil Podlesak.

William Jezek presented piano accordion selections between acts. There was a skit. Miss Irma Havel (Mrs. Albert Naimon) was the piano accompanist. Mrs. Anna Ondrak was the prompter.

(Picture on page 69 of the original script)

Mrs. Anna Ondrák who prompted most of the Czech plays

Presented in the Milligan Auditorium on January 6, 1935, by Telocvicna jednota Sokol Rip was the play V cerne rokli (In the Black Canyon). The cast was comprised of Rudolph Sadlo, Miss Agnes Hendrych (Mrs. John Halama, Sr., John Halama, Sr., Adolph Hendrych, Bohumil Podlesák, Jerry Sadlo, George Turek, Miss Emilye Cecnle, and Miss Helen Hendrych (Mrs. Donald Havel).

On January 27, 1935, "Ochotnický kroužek" presented the play Kde se pivo vari (Where Beer is Brewed) at the Milligan Auditorium. It was a three-act play with singing. Miss Irma Havel (Mrs. Albert Naimon) directed the singing. Mrs. Anna Ondrak was the prompter.

V cervancich svobody (Zenith of Freedom), a three-act play was presented on October 26, 1945, at the Milligan Auditorium. Those in the cast were Adolph Hendrych, Miss Jarmila Novak (Mrs. Otto Kottas), Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz), Edward Svajgr, Edward Laun, Miss Agnes Hendrych (Mrs. John Halama, Sr.), Jerry

Sadlo, Hynek Jaros, Bohumil Podlesak, George Turek, Miss Martha Svajgr (Mrs. Clarence Jirka), and Miss Rose Marie Sadlo (Mrs. Frank Cecnle). Josef Sadlo coached the play. Miss Anna Ondrak was the prompter.

On December 14, 1935, two one-act plays were presented at the Milligan Auditorium. Those in the cast for the one entitled Pantata Vohnout poprve v divadle (Vohnout's First Appearance in a Theatre) was Edward Laun, Mrs. James (Amalie) Simkovsky, Joe F. Cedrdle, Mrs. Hynek (Anna) Jaros, Policajt (A Policeman), Josef Sadlo, Vojta Novak, Mrs. Albert Novak, and Emil Kassik, Sr.

Those appearing in the play entitled Vojak Svejik porucikem (Soldier Svejik, the Lieutenant) were Edward Laun, George Turek, Edward Svajgr and James Svajgr.

The three-act play Podzimni pisen (Autumn Song) was presented on January 25, 1936 at the Milligan Auditorium, v Cesko, narodni sini) by Cornhusker Z.C.B.J. Lodge. It was coached by Miss Anna Smrha, assisted by her father, Dr. V.V. Smrha. Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs. Frank V.Hamous) directed the play and Mrs. Anna Ondrak was the prompter.

It was a melodrama. The setting was in a small town in the summer in the garden outside the Novotny tavern for the first two acts. The third act takes place five years later in August at the Rehor estate.

Mrs. Novotný, the owner of the tavern is played by Mrs. James (Amelia) Simkovsky, her daughter Hela by Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs Frank V. Hamouz, and her son Standa by Otto Kottas. Hela is in love with Zeman, a student, played by Edward Svajgr, but feels obligated to marry Rehor , a rich landowner and an older man, played by Adolf Hendrych, who will pay the Novotný's enormous debts and put Standa through college. Rehor loves Hela and is very good to her.

When the third act opens, Hela is a widow - Rehor has been buried for three-fourths of a year. Zeman appears on the scene. He is still in love with Hela and had stayed single. He proposes to her.

Other students were Starek portrayed by Frank Soukup, Dolfík by Frederick J. Kottas, and Franta by James (Vena) Ach, Jr. Young ladies of the village were Ema played by Miss Jánský (Mrs. Albert Michl), Marka by Miss Irma Soukup (Mrs. Robert

Dinneen) and Ruza by Miss Helen Novak (Mrs. Jurgen Folkerts).

Mrs. Rudy (Anna) Jansky played two parts; Zdenka, the fiancee of Standa and Tonka, the maid. Mrs. Charles (Pauline) Brt portrayed the part of the hokyne (huckster). Much comedy was brought in by Matej the hostler, played by George Turek. This play was presented at a later date with the following change in the cast: Rehor was played by Joseph Ach, Starek by Adolph Heendrych, Ema by Miss Helen Hendrych (Mrs. Donald Havel), Marka by Miss Zdenka Beranek (Mrs. John Sershen), Tonka by Miss Evelyn Frycek (Mrs. Joe Halama), Zdenka by Miss Bessie Jun (Mrs. Arnold Husa), and the hokyne (huckster) by Mrs. Albert (Marie) Kassik, Sr. Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz) coached the play and Mrs. Anna Ondrak was the prompter.

A three-act play Kam nemuze cert, nastroci babu or Hrom ma do baby uhodit (Were the Devil Can't Get, He Pushes - in The Old Lady or May Lightning Strike the Old Lady) was presented in the Milligan Auditorium on March 28, 1936.

In the cast were Jerry Sadlo, Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz), Miss Rose Marie Sadlo (Mrs. Frank V. Cecrdle), Edward Svajgr, George Turek, Miss Marie Sadlo (Mrs. John Stewart), Edward Laun, Miss Martha Svajgr (Mrs. Clarence Jirka) and Angeline Novak (Mrs. Frederick J. Kottas). Josef Sadlo was the coach and Mrs. Anna Ondrak the prompter.

The three-act play entitled Podnajemnik pani Bernaskove (The Boarder of Mrs. Bernasek) was presented by May 30, 1936 by Z C.B.J. Cornhusker Lodge. It was coached by Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz) and prompted by Mrs. Anna Ondrak.

The setting is the living room in the home of Mrs. Bernášek. The second act takes place several weeks later. The third act takes place only a day after the second act. Kveta Bernášková, a widow portrayed by Miss Anges. M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz), concerned about marrying off her two daughters, Mára and Tylda portrayed respectively by Miss Anna Laun (Mrs. Leo Cudly) and Miss Helen Novák (Mrs. Jurgen Folkerts), decided to take in a boarder, who might be a prospective husband for one of her daughters.

(Picture on pg. 73 of the original script)

Václav Ach who directed plays

She does not know that Mára is already in love with Geza Kocic, a football player, played by Frederick J. Kottas and Tylda has her eyes on Jarda Moucka, who delivers the baking, played by Edward Švajgr. The part of Václav Rubsš, the landlord is presented by Adolph Hendrych. Much humor is brought in by Daja Kyselá, and old maid interested in the professor, portrayed by Martha Švajgr (Mrs. Clarence Jirka). The part of the boarder is played by George Turek, who in the end becomes engaged to Mrs. Bernášek.

The landlord is pleased to learn that there are three engaged couples. Now there will be three weddings - no bad rumors! So all ends well.

The three-act play, Laska na konci vesnice (Romance in a Little Village), was presented on November 7, 1936 at the Milligan Auditorium by volunteer young members of "Ochotnický krouzek" on behalf of financing the Milligan Auditorium. Jakub Svatý, a rustic farmer is portrayed by George Turek. He has two sons, Václav played by Edward Švajgr and Jirí by Adolph Hendrych. The farm on the edge of the village is called u Trech svatých (At Three Saints), but "Svatý" here is the name of the family.

Jirí works as a mechanic at the factory of Kristián Lobosický, who is played by Edward Laun. Václav was studying to be a lawyer, but all of a sudden stopped his education and went to the farm. He has a very sour disposition. He is rather rude at times.

Lobosický has two children - daughter Iska portrayed by Miss Bessie Jun (Mrs. Arnold Husa) and son Edmund by Frederick J. Kotta. Jirí is constantly proposing to Iska. In the end Iska becomes engaged to Václav, who has changed. The part of Barunka, the housekeeper at the farm is played by Mrs. James (Amelia) Šimkovský. In the third act it is learned that Barunka is Lobosický's first love, but his parents would not allow him to marry a poor girl then. She talks Lobosický into letting his daughter Iska get engaged to Václav, a peasant's son.

Terezka, a hired girl at the Svatý's is portrayed by Miss Agnes M. Capek (Mrs.

Frank V. Hamouz). She is also in love with Václav, but he doesn't even know about it. Much humor is brought in by Zanda a common beggar, played by James Ach, Jr.

The setting is in the garden of the Svatý's farm. The first act takes place on a Saturday afternoon, the second a few days later in the afternoon and the third the following Sunday afternoon.

The above play was presented at a later date in the spring of 1937, in Cuba, Kansas. The Steinacher Orchestra played for a dance following the play. After all expenses were paid, the profit was divided among the members of the cast and the Orchestra. This came to three dollars a piece, big money in the depression years.

Edward Laun and James Ach, Jr. took a different route. Their car broke down and they were late in getting to Cuba. Mrs. Hamouz had to play the part of the beggar in the first act. A well-dressed beggar brought many a laugh from the audience. As is said "Whatever happens the play must go on". In an item in a Czech paper appeared the following statement: "A Milligan group came to Cuba to put on a Czech play and on the way they lost two actors." Well, they were found to finish the performance and got safely back to Milligan. What more can anyone ask for!

Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz was the coach and Mrs. Anna Ondrák the prompter.

The three-act play, To vsecko z lasky (All for Love) was presented on January 30, 1937 at the Milligan Auditorium by the "Ochotnický krouzek."

The setting is in the living room of the residence of Josef Drazan played by Josef Ach. The part of Drazan's wife, Lucie, is played by Miss Evelyn Frycek (Mrs. Joe Halama) and the parts of their three daughters - Jarmila by Miss Zdenka Beranek (Mrs. JohnSershan), Vanda by Miss Angeline Novák (Mrs. Frederick J. Kottas) and Klára, the Doctor, by Miss Bessie Jun (Mrs. Arnold Husa).

Jarmila is married to Arnošt Bartošek, played by Adolph Hendrych who has his eyes on pretty girls. Arguments take place. Klára has a solution to offer to Jarmila - count to ten and backwards to one before exploding. This works even for others.

Borivoj Kocicka, who sees Klára, a passenger on the same train is too shy to make her acquaintance. However, he does come to the house with the excuse of returning Klára's gloves, which happen to be her aunt's. When he is there, Klára

detects that he has a heart condition and prescribes medication. Cleverly Borivoj gets back to the house prior to the date of his appointment and ask for the hand of Klára in marriage.

Vanda is in love with Jaroslav Benda, played by Frederick J. Kottas, but her father wants her to marry Xaver Patocka, played by Edward Laun, who is old, bald headed and rich. Klára reports that Vanda is very ill with small pox. Patocka is afraid and runs away. Jaroslav appears on the scene and gets engaged to Vanda, getting her father's consent. Klára washes off Vanda's pretense small pox.

Václav Cibus, a soldier, played by Edward Svajgr and Berta, the chambermaid, played by Miss Agnes M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz), who are the comedians in the play, decide they would be getting married also so as to keep up with the others.

ames (Vena) Ach played the part of Cenek Uher, who is constantly complaining of a cold and running nose. The audience gets quite a laugh about the remedy prescribed by Cibus.

The play is coached and directed by Miss Agnes Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz). Mrs. Anna Ondrák is the prompter.

On February 27, 1937, the play Zasnoubeni na paloucku or Ruze Prerie (Engagement on the Meadow or Prairie Rose) was presented at the Milligan Auditorium. The play was coached by Josef Sadlo and prompted by Mrs. Anna Ondrák. Mrs. Henry Steinacher directed the singing.

In the cast were George Turek, Mrs. James (Amelie) Šimkovský, Rudolph Sadlo, Miss Marie Sadlo (Mrs. John Stewart), Henry Rischling, Miss Alice Kubíček (Mrs. Odrich Janoušek), Josef Sadlo, Sr., Miss Helen Hendrych (Mrs. Donald Havel), Miss Helen Novák (Mrs. Jurgen Folkerts), Jerry Sadlo, Edward Laun and Hynek Jaroš.

The above play was also presented in Prague, Saunders County, Nebraska, on March 14, 1937.

A three-act play Obchod (Business is Business) was presented by the "Ochotnický krouzek" at the Milligan Auditorium. It was coached and directed by Miss Agnes M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz) and prompted by Mrs. Anna Ondrák. The first act opens early in the morning at the home of a big factory owner, Florián Faltys,

portrayed by Václav Ach, Sr. The second act takes place on the evening of the same day at the same place. The third act takes place in the office of Faltys. He is using “Business is Business” for too many excuses for not being home for dinner and for staying out late at night. His daughter, Adela, portrayed by Miss Agnes M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz) is suspicious and decides to disguise herself playing the part of a man, a young American, dictating an agreement to her father to write and sign, where by he gives his daughter’s hand to Janoušek (her lover) as well as the right to manage the business for a specific set payment. Faltys needs money desperately for his business.

(Picture on pg. 78 of the original script)

Post card picturing one of the cast in the Ludvíkovce

Adel gets his dictated contract into the hand of Jaromír Janoušek, an officer in Faltys’s business, portrayed by Charles Hamouz, who according to her instructions can use the contract to his benefit. All turns out well.

Alois Kulhánek, a lackkey at the Faltys factory, played by Adolph Hendrych, under the falso pretense, signs Faltys’s name on a business contract, which turns out to be a good boy. Alois gets a raise and now he is able to propose to Rézi, a chambermaid at the Faltys home, portrayed by Miss Bessie Jun (Mrs. Anrold Husa). Others in the cast are Miss Evelyn Frycek (Mrs. Joe Halama) as Olga the friend of Adela; Henry Rischling as Gerner, the salesman from New York; Miss Zdenka Beránek (Mrs. John Sershan) as Sáša, the secretary; Edward Laun as Halama, the book keeper; Albert Kassik, Jr. As Jaidr Veselý, the young lawyer; Mrs. Albert Kassik, Sr. as Mrs Metelka, who wants to sue Alois after sustaining a bicycle injury; Louis Suda, the policeman and Edward Zelenka as the Faltys chauffeur.

The three-act play Letni boure na fare (The Summer thunderstorm at the Rectory) was presented on November 5, 1937 at the Milligan Auditorium under the auspices of “Ochotnický krouzek.” It was coached and directed by Miss Anges. M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz). Mrs. Anna Ondrák was the prompter.

The setting is the garden in the rectory and the time starts at about 10 a.m. and ends near noon.

William Kotas played the part of P. Vavrinec Vysoký, the priest, who is the guardian of Hanicka, an orphan played by Miss Zdenka Beránek (Mrs. John Seršen). Václav Ach, Sr. portrayed Barnabáš Pondelicek, the sexton and Mrs. Henry (Agnes) Kassik portrayed Barbara, the housekeeper at the rectory.

Vilém Belský played by Edward Švajgr is the nephew of Alexander Šebor, a rich big landowner, who is portrayed by Frank Schultz, Sr. Vilém is engaged to Klára, portrayed by Miss Bessie Jun (Mrs. Arnold Husa). Klára is the niece of Felicie Salmonová portrayed by Miss Agnes M Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz).

Through some misunderstanding, it is believed that Vilém, a former army officer, intends to ask for the hand of Hanicka, who constantly keeps rejecting him. Felicie would like to see Klára become a nun, so that she (Felicie) could use the money to promote her welfare promotions.

All ends well. Vilém gets Klára. Matej gets Hanicka. The priest remarks “The storm has blown over and now the sun is shining.”

The last Czech play to be presented was Nase tchyne odzbrojuje (Our Mother-in-law Disarms). This was put on by the of “Ochotnický krouzek” on February 19, 1938 at the Milligan Auditorium under the direction of Miss Agnes M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz). Mrs. Anna Ondrák was the prompter.

The setting is the outside garden near a country mill, which is not used for milling anymore, but as a dwelling place for summer resort vacationers. The sign on the mill reads “Mlyn pro radost” (Mill for Joy).

Martin Lopata, the owner of the mill is portrayed by Václav Ach, Sr. Lidka, his daughter, played by Miss Agnes M. Capek (Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz) thinks she is in love with Dr. Jaromír Borecký, an upcoming lawyer, who at one point is mistaken for a doctor of medicine. Jaromír, played by Adolph Hendrych, is engaged to Bozena, played by Miss Bessie Jun (Mrs. Arnold Husa) the daughter of Antonín Fialka, a dealer in smoked meats in Prague, and Leokodie played by Mrs. Henry (Agnes) Kassik. The part of Fialka is portrayed by George Turek. Antonín is hen-pecked husband, who upon the

advice of Jaromír takes a stand against his domineering wife, Leokodie, who is thus disarmed of her power. Jaromí also gives good advice to Vašek Kudrna, portrayed by Rudy Oliva, who assists with the cleaning and serving at the mill resort, as to how to win the hand of Lidka, who really is in love with Vašek.

The part of Dr. Tobiáš Kolbaba, a doctor of medicine, who comes to spend his vacation at the mill is played by Fred Skocpol. He is surprised to learn that Leokadie is the one who was his love many years ago. Her parents disapproved and took her away. He never married.

The fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the Milligan Auditorium will be observed in April of 1980. Plans are being made for the presentation of a Czech play by "Ochotnický krouzek."

Plays put on by "Ochotnický krouzek" were mostly for the benefit of the Milligan Auditorium. This was during the depression years and the Auditorium was very much in need of funds. The dollar was worth much more in those years.

Groups from other towns presented Czech plays in Milligan. The Milligan groups also went to other towns.

In the summer of 1920, "Ludvíkovci" of Chicago presented a number of Czech plays in Jícha's Central Hall.

Mrs. Arnold Husa and Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz directed a number of Czech programs and short plays presented by children. There were also short plays presented as entertainment during the times of conventions held in Milligan. Annually the Czech Culture Club of Milligan goes to Wilber to participate in the Czech pageant at the Wilber Czech Festival. Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz wrote this history of the Czech plays presented in Milligan to the best of her ability from information available. Authentic records could not be found for many Czech plays presented during certain years.

(Picture on pg. 82 of the original script)

Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz who directed most of the last plays presented

Aside from her own records, she got material from the Milligan Review and

Josef Sadlo. Mrs. Henry Kassik had the play bills.

Recognition goes to all who participated in the plays, to all who directed and coached the plays, and to the prompters - especially to Mrs. Anna Ondrák who prompted most of the plays.

(Hand bill on pg. 82a of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill on pg. 82b of the original script)

Program v Nedeli, 27. srpna

(Hand bill on pg. 82c of the original script)

DIVADLO

(Hand bill on pg. 82d of the original script)

DIVADLO

DRAMATIC CLUB IN NIOBRARA - KNOX COUNTY

The first Czech organization for social activity in Know County was founded December 8, 1878, under the name Cesky lev (The Czech Lion). This organization performed some Czech plays in the hall of Z.C.B.J. Lodge Vyšehrad No. 53 built in 19j10. It was a brick building with a fine stage, but the original old Niobrara, established in 1867 doesn't exist on the same place now.

The problem for many years for the citizens was this village was built on a very low ground. When the near-by dam, the Lewis and Clark Lake was built a few years ago, the village was in permanent danger of flooding. Therefore, the Federal government decided to move the Niobrara people out of the old place and built a new village on higher elevation.

Mr. Frank Somer of Niobrara sent me this information: "In reply to your letter to Mrs. Evelyn Skokan of Niobrara, I have to say our Dramatic Club of 1924 existed for only two years.

(Picture on pg. 83 of the original script)
Z.C.B.J Dramatic Club Niobrara 1925

We put on about three plays which we played in Niobrara and in Dante, South Dakota, too. I have a photo of the member of our Dramatic Club and I will send it to you. Our director was J. B. Liška, now 89 years old, who is in the Verdigre, Nebraska Rest Home. Maybe he may give your more information. He still has a good memory and reads a lot.

(Picture on pg. 84 of the original script)
The ZCBJ Lodge Hall in Niobrara

ODELL - GAGE COUNTY

The first Czech drama presented in the town of Odell was performed on October 11, 1923 at the Z.C.B.J. (Západní Cesko - Bratrská Jednota). It was a three-act comedy titled Bordynkari.

The Dramatic Club of the Z.C.B.J. presented on e drama regularly every year. The last dramatic activity in Odell was in 194 or 1925.

Mrs. Elsie L. Weiner, born Elsie Beranová, a secretary of the Z.C.B.J. sent the following brief informaiton and two copies of the old posters:

“I hope what I am sending you will help. I can speak and read Czech quite well, but I am not very good at writing it so one could read it. We have no records of our plays, but I think they started about 1912 or 1913 and were given every year usually in October. My mother, Ms. Joseph Beran was the prompter and the plays ended about 1924 or 1925. I have tow bills or “plakáty” only. They are so fragile and brittle that I was afraid to send them so I had Photostatic copies made. The Z.C.B.J Lodge hall where the plays were presented was about 1 ½ north east of Odell, Nebraska, however, it was torn down in the fifties. Our main director was Frank Beloušek who later moved to Council Bluffs. Frank Balcar in the cast was our Czech school teacher.

We had Czech school every Sunday morning at the Lodge hall. I finished the

first grade before it closed. I am the “Elsie Beranová” listed on the 1923 play poster. I am glad that you are getting all these Czech records together for safe keeping.

P.S. We even took our plays to other towns as Cuba, Kansas, DuBois and Table Rock, Nebraska. We gave a play Hastrmani (Watermen) at the Odell Opera House for Red Cross Benefit during the war.”

Mrs. Elsie L. Weiner

(Picture on pg. 86 of the original script)

AMATEUR CZECH DRAMA IN OMAHA

SKUPINA A DIVADELNÍHO PREDSTAVENÍ “DVA SIROTCI”

A group of the actors of the play Two Orphans (Dva sirotci) performed in January 1916 by the Dramatic Club Mošna of Omaha.

(Hand bill on pg. 86a of the original script)

DIVADLO.

AMATEUR DRAMA OF CZECH PEOPLE IN OMAHA

by Dr. Charles C. Charvát

Published in the Omaha World Herald Magazine September 25, 1927

In this day of community drama and little theatres, attention should be called to the amateur dramatics of the Czech people in Omaha. This form of entertainment flourished in the local Bohemian colony as in all city and rural communities of these nationals throughout the United States, many years prior to the modern flair for neighborhood theatricals. It was an institution with them along before action was afoot to combat the commercialized legitimate stage. It is still very vital, here and elsewhere, and collectively should constitute an important chapter in the recorded dramatic history of this country. The Czechs of Omaha have cultivated drama in amateur circles for

almost sixty years. If it is plausible that every race coming to America brings some artistic instinct or train which it contributed to the amalgam of the American genius, then the Czechs have perhaps most definitely, after, music, lent their love for drama. This devotion to Thespis and Thalia has often been implanted in American - born children by their parents who bring them to the many plays performed in the Czech language during the winter months in settlement halls. After becoming a habit in these private centers, this interest is easily transferred to American plays. Then the fact prevails that every Czech, even after he has completely forgotten his paternal idiom, is a devotee of the stage and no mean judge or plays. It is also true that as a consequence the acting ranks of the American stage and of the motion pictures have been enriched for this source.

First Czech Play Here in 1869

Despite the effects of rapid Americanization, many Czech plays are yet to be seen in Omaha every year. These are given by regular dramatic societies, various lodges and church groups. Czech professional and business men are keen boosters of this drama. Stanley Šerpan, Czechoslovak Consul in Omaha, is one such and for years he has himself appeared in plays given at the Telocvicná Jednota Sokol (Gymnastic Society Sokol) hall. The late Msgr. John Vrának of St. Wenceslas church, a poet and priest of note, was widely known for his active support of "Beseda dramatics." The Czech press is wholehearted in its backing of plays, whether in city or rural district.

The first Czech play in Omaha was staged in 1869 on a roughly constructed in the old Štěpánek hall, not then yet painted outside or plastered inside which stood at Thirteenth and William Streets. The play was "Rozpustili kluci" (Rowdies). A second play, "Divotvorný klobouk" (The Magic Hat), was produced shortly after. More success was gained when plays began to be given on a well equipped stage in the new Kucera hall in 1874, near the same locality. Other halls where Czech national plays were offered have come and gone. The Catholic Turner (Katolický Sokol) hall near Thirteenth and William has seen a huge number of them. The recently erected Sokol Auditorium at Thirteenth and Martha is elegantly furnished for the performance of such plays. The

bohemian National Turner hall at Twenty-first and U Streets and the Catholic Turner hall at Twentieth and S Streets are both equipped with necessary stage paraphernalia.

Acting Done by Young and Old

Some amateur organizations for Czech dramatics no longer exist. The dramatic section of the Tel.Jednota Sokol lodge will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary this winter. It gives a least seven plays a season. The "Mosna Club", named after a famous Czech comedian, is an independent dramatic society composed of 25 amateur actors who strive for excellence in their plays. "The Beseda Club" of St. Wenceslas parish gives at least nine plays each winter. The "Beseda Club" of St. Adalbert church and the Assumption church, each give several plays. The Pathfinder Club, a junior division of the Telocvicná Jednota Soko., is increasing the number of its plays every year. The dramatic department of the Sokol-Fugner-Tyrš on the South Side always gives a number of plays a year. Repetitions of these performances in the city and in outstate Czech centers are frequent.

The acting is done by people, young and old, whose daily pursuit is making a living by brain or brawn who have a penchant for the boards. A mother who has been acting in Czech plays from girlhood may be in the same play with her daughter; or it may be that father and son are acting in the same play. Quite a number have literally grown up on the amateur state.

(Pictures on pg. 90 of given script)

Mr. And Mrs. Matej Nerad

Matej Nerad a director of the first play in Omaha

a most ardent promoter of Czech drama

Sokol Auditorium in Omaha

Their histrionic ability is not always excellent. Usually, it is far better than the average run of amateur acting and some of it would scarcely need touching up to pass muster on the professional stage.

They Know Their Audience

The acting is never bad for several reasons. The audience is not harshly critical, but decidedly tolerant. It is appreciative, but never indifferent. The participants are actuated by knowledge of the peculiar enthusiasm of their audience and by the tradition which they seek sincerely to realize it successfully.

The directing is done by men and women who have had years of experience in such amateur acting and who have an unceasing love of Czech drama. There are quite a few of those. Some are practical enough to be professionals. If not always possessed of the most advanced theories of technique they nevertheless have one great advantage over many professional directors; they know their audience. Where the one is contending with a complex and fickle public, the other knows exactly what his people want.

The desire of the Czech-American audience is plays in the Czech language with plenty of old country atmosphere. More specifically, these plays should have a strong flavor of regional color and a lot of suspense. Character study and emotion are more desirable than action. Social comedies with country and small town setting are preferred to historical plays, tragedies and problem dramas. The farce and melodrama with a sparkle of dialect and the enhancement of folk costumes are always in demand.

How Plays Are Obtained

This is what the director knows. He succeeds by following the simple formula with all the elaboration of scenery, costume and other appurtenances that his talent and budget permit. His plays he obtains from Czech book agencies or newspapers here and in the east, who in turn obtain them direct from Czechoslovakia.

The production rights are obtained when the director purchases as many copies of the play as there are characters in it.

B.W. Bartoš, a veteran actor and director of the Tel.Jednota Sokol players, declares that in the last 40 years he has found the Czech drama in Omaha to be a great help in teaching him and others the fluency and beauty of the Czech language. "Czech drama has been the cleanest and most educational kind of entertainment that our

Czech people have had in Omaha,” says Bartoš. “It has given our growing Czech-Americans an insight into the artistic and social characteristics of the Czech nation.”

Movies Take People Away

Joseph J. Hudecek is an American-Born Czech who has acted and directed the “Catholic Beseda” plays of St. Wenceslas parish for 35 years. He says he owes his interest to the encouragement of Monsignor Vránek, who considered these theatrics the best means of retaining a speaking knowledge of the mother tongue and the home ties among the youth of his parish. Hudecek frequently takes his players into outstate Czech parishes where they invariably scored success.

The motion pictures are taking away much attendance from Czech plays in Omaha, according to Frank Pardubský, a director of the Mošna Club, who boasts that he has acted in more Czech plays during the last 20 years in Omaha than any other amateur. “The movie competition and the rivalry of the various Czech dramatic groups are making for better plays among our people.” avers Pardubský.

Publicity is obtained by notices of coming performances in the news column of the “Národní Pokrok,” the local Czech weekly, and in Czech newspapers published elsewhere but circulated here. IN case of plays by church organizations the pastor exhorts his people from the pulpit to attend. But the greatest advertisement is obtained from specially printed posters on colored paper, usually 24 x 48, containing the names of the play, author, cast and hall, as well as the date and admission. These bills are posted in every Czech place of business available.

Criticism appears in subsequent issues of the newspapers. These were once unrightly adulatory, but of late the reviewers give constructive and uncompromising comments along with praiseworthy remarks. The after-discussions of every play by those who have seen it are more frequent than is customary with any other class of American play-goers.

Dancing After Performance

The performance begins at 8 o'clock and ends at 10:30 or 11. Then until

midnight, there is dancing to Czech and American music by an orchestra which is always Czech. The latter feature is, of course, a lure for the youth and as soon as the seats are pushed aside following the drop of the final curtain, one would suppose that a dance had been going on the whole evening. Both old and young can go home afterwards feeling that they had received their money's worth.

The love of drama among these people is closely connected with the National Theatre in Prague, Czechoslovakia, a nationally subsidized playhouse which is to the Czechs partly what the Abbey Theatre is to the Irish and partly what the Theatre Francais is to the French. Its history is a part of the development of the Czech drama, which is of considerable moment in Czech literature.

According to reliable sources, the first theatrical presentation in the Czech language was in Kotce, near Prague. Regular plays started in 1785, in the Estates Theatre. The notable impetus was achieved when one Josef Kajetán Tyl organized a Czech troupe which won great success. In 1868, with much pomp, the cornerstone of the first National Theatre in Prague was laid, for which funds had been raised by public subscription through Bohemia and Moravia. Upon its completion, 13 years later, the premiere of Smetana's "Libuše" was given there as an opening number. This almost finished building was razed by a fire of undetermined origin. In a few days another public subscription was under way. The present architectural gem, affectionately called "the Golden Shrine on the Vltava," because it stands by a historic and majestic national river, was erected in 1883 with the aid of leading national sculptors, painters and decorators.

With a beautiful National Theatre available, the Czechs in 1883 still lacked a substantial dramatic repertoire. Till then artistic technique in dramaturgy had been heedlessly sacrificed for nationalism, which resulted in a loose and patriotically one-sided drama. Conditions improved as more judicious translations were made from foreign works. The influence of Shakespeare was imported from England; that of Goethe and Schiller from Germany; that of Scribe and Sardou from France; and that of Ibsen from Norway. Historical tragedies, social comedies, problem drama and impressionistic works soon originated in Czech.

Other theatres had to be built and drama fastened its grip on the Czech people, so that even when they emigrated they took their passion for drama with them. The recent popularity of Karel Capek's R.U.R. - The Insect World, - and The Makropulous Affair, in Europe and America, is an indication that this national dramatic talent is eventually breaking its long obstructing national barriers and is becoming both a national and universal art.

This glimpse into the historical development of drama in a European country is significant in connection with amateur Czech plays in Omaha insofar as it reveals how this art was carried from eastern Europe by Czech immigrants into the American wild west; how it flourished here in its original color and how it has been modifying itself to the American habitat...

No Czech can be without his "divadlo," even after he has forgotten the meaning of the word.

Published in the Omaha World Herald
Magazine September 25, 1927

As a native of Omaha, Dr. Charvát graduated from Creighton University, where later he served as professor of English and American literatures. He received the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Iowa. On a visit to Prague he attended the National Theatre and other playhouses. There he discovered the strong love Czech people have for the theatre - a love which they brought to the United States.

CESKÉ DIVADLO V OMAZE

S.Š.

Když před 23 lety psal zveřejnělý učitel Rudolf Fibinger náčrt dějin Sokola v Omaze, měl zde po ruce ještě staré ročníky Pokroku, z nichž mohl čerpat informace o poměrech, jež zde panovaly a událostech, které se odehrávaly. Dle přání dlouholetého majitele a redaktora Pokroku Západy, Jana Rosického, jenž v roce 1910 zemřel, byly svazeny ročníky onoho listu, jež vydával až do roku 1900, poslány po jeho smrti do Prahy do Národního muzea. Když před deseti lety jeho dcera slečna Ruzena Rosická pracovala na sepsání dějin Čechu v Nebrasce, poznali jsme jaký omyl byl učiněn, posláním oněch starých jediných spolehlivých a jediných existujících památníků dob před 60 lety – ale příliš pozdě. Správa muzea má pravidlo, že předměty jednou darované za žádnou cenu nevrátí.

Vím, že již při založení Sokola bylo v Omaze hráno velmi často české divadlo. Zdá se, že je poradali majitelé českých síní či hostinců, a poradaly je spolky, z nichž Sokol a rad Palacký zde celých 60 let vytrvali. Nemáme však doklady o tom, které kusy a kdy byly hrány a kdo je řídil, s některými výjimkami (viz článek bratra O. Charvata).

Pamatujeme, že v sezóně 1906-07 nebylo z nějakých důvodů možno zvolit ředitele divadla, a nebylo radně divadelní organizace. Tu v Sokole byl ustanoven učitel Rudolf Fibinger, aby se postaral o řízení nových kusů. Na jaro 1907 byla svolána schůze všech zainteresovaných českých ochotníků v Omaze, “k organizační schůzi Dramatického odboru T.J. Sokol, na čtvrtek 20. června 1907.

Na této schůzi byl zvolen na návrh Josefa Mika předsedou a pak ředitelem Bohumil Bartoš, tajemníkem Stanislav Serpán. Na otázku předsedy Bartoše, zda je prání přítomných, aby klub zorganizován byl jako samostatný, neodvislý, přijat návrh p. O. Charvata, aby zorganizován byl jako Dramatický Odbor T.J. Sokola. O návrhu promluvil pan Mlýk dovozuje, že jako odbor Sokola pozivati bude klub značných výhod, na které jinak v případě založení neodvislého klubu, museli by členové přispívat.

Vsak jako odbor Sokola ma pravo odbyvat schuze v sini bezplatne, rovnez i zkousky. Podle stanov bude arci vytezek divadel patrii Sokolu, ale v pripade deficitu, bude jej ted hradit Sokol.

Z té doby nám schází zápisky asi za tri roky, o kusech hraných I kdo v nich ucinkoval, a seznam ochotníku od té doby pusobivších prineseme v příštích číslech Sokolského Vestníku.

V následujících prinasime seznam her hraných v období reorganizace Dramatickeho Odboru z r. 1907 do nynejší doby, s výjimkou let 1917 - 1919, jez doplníme v nejbližši dobe.

1907: Vojnarka, Manzelské štěstí, ridil Boh. Bartoš.

1908: Diblík cili šotek z hor, Bankrotár, Mlsánicko a který je ten pravý, Majitel hutí, Romantické vrtochy, Závet, Krejčí a švec, Otec, ríd. Boh. Bartoš.

1909: Láska v národním dome, Srázka vlakz, Maryša, Vosí hnízdo, Pod krovem otcovským, ríd.Boh.Bartoš, (Pri srázce vlaku 31.ledna ucinkoval posledne jako nápoveda - mnohaletý - ríd. hudby Rud. Fibinger, 4. brezna zemrel).

Podzim: Václav Hrobcický z Hrobcic, Cop, Palackého trída číslo 27. rídil Boh. Bartoš.

1910: Smery zivota, Dedeckovy housle, Sberatelka starozitností a V ochrane Napoleona I., Dedeckovy housle: opakována, ríd.Josef Mík,

Podzim: Za šlechtickým erbem, Zne, ríd. Jos. Mík, program vecer a jednoakt: Jen moudre.

1911: Tretí zvonení, Magda naseho veku, Prazské švadlenky, ríd.Jos. Mík. Progr. vecer se zpevy z opery V studni. (V té dobe sehr. V Omaze jinými sdruzeními: Dáblova dcera, Tezké ryby, Jedenácté prikázání, Podskalák, Slunce, a Konkursy p. notáre, Škola, Prodaná nevesta).

Podzim: Palicova dcera, Faust II., Její pastorkyne, Ruzová pouta, rídil Boh. Bartoš.

1912: Charleyova teta (opakováno v podzimu no sjezdu Z.C.B.J., Na fare, U bílého koníčka, Nevinne odsouzen (ve prospěch české školy), Muj ráj, a Kleparské tercetto, řídil Boh. Bartoš.. - Také dram. Odbor Soc. Sekce K.H. Borovský porádal div. představení.

Podzim: Bodrý venkovan, Ach ta láska, Na kozlanském klepáři, řídil Jos. Mík.

1913: Oblaka, Julinciny vdavky, Paní Marjánka, matka pluku (ve prospěch národ.hrbítova).

Podzim: Julinciny vdavky, Ohnivá zeme, Vojnarka, Zabec, říd. Jos. Mík.

1914: Madam X, Kulatý svět, říd. Jos. Mík, 24. cervence při sletu, Popelka, 26. cervence Vojnarka, říd. Boh. Bartoš.

Podzim: Vpád, Svobodní zednáři, říd. Jos. Mík. A L. Hunáček.

1915: Maryša, říd. Boh. Bartoš, Dobráček, říd. Jos. Mík. A L. Hunáček, Závet říd. Jos. Mík.

Podzim: Anezka, Španelská vesnice (opak. V Plattsmouth), říd. Stan. Šerpan.

1916: Nerozlucní přátelé, Rychtáruv poklad, Zmarený život, Mlsáníčko, Dva sirotci, říd. Stan. Šerpan.

Podzim: Naši furianti.

1917: Bojarova dcera, Fedora, Pan Johanes (a jiné), řídil Stan. Šerpan.

1918: 17. Brezna Psohlavci, 14. Dubna Staré hríchy, říd. Václav Urban.

1919: 16.listopadu Otec, říd. Boh. Bartoš.

1920: 11.ledna: Poslední muz, 22.unora: Naše sufrazetka, oboje řídil Boh. Bartoš. Pan Mesíček, obchodník, říd. Vác. Urban. Sýkora strýce Tobiáše, Písmáková dcera, říd. Fr.

Pardubský.

1921: Polský Zid, Na letním bytě, V cervánkách svobody, říd. Fr. Pardubský. -Smír, Pojd na mé srdce, Sedlák Zlatodvorský, řídila pí. Anna Vránová.

1922: Dedeckovy housle, Strakonický dudák, říd. pí. Anna Vránová, Pepincina první láska, říd. Bedřich Sláma.

1923: Macickova dovolená, říd. Bed. Sláma, Zápas o nevestu, říd. Jirí Hladík, Dve Ruzeny, říd. Fr. Svoboda, Romantické vrtochy, říd. Jirí Hladík, V nížine, říd. Karel Šerpan a Václav Kostinec, Prazské děti cili Dítě lásky, říd. Anna Vránová, Západ slunce no horách, Marinka Válková, říd. Boh. Bartoš.

1924: V českém ráji říd. Anna Vránová, Prazské švadlenky, Z manzelského ráje, říd. Jirí Hladík. Kletba mamonu, říd. Anna Vránová, Povoden, Naše miminko, V zakletém zámku, říd. Boh. Bartoš.

1925: Námluvy v lese, Nevesta legionárova, Vrah, Noční manévry, Paní fabrikantová, řídil Boh. Bartoš.

1926: Batoch, Zlatý Jirí Bobeček z ministerstva, Podvodnice, říd. Boh. Bartoš. Psohlavci, říd. Ant. Halouska.

1927: Minulost pana rady, Osel je osel, Veselá bída, Všem ku štěstí, říd. Ant. Halouska, Lucerna, Zázračný panák, říd. Vác. Urban. Naše Anca ráda tancí, říd. Lad Kadlec.

1928: Trvdé hlavy, Druhé mládí, Granáty, říd. Jos. Mík, Krajánek Holander, říd. Lad Kadlec, Pro vlajku ceskoslovenskou, říd. Anna Vránová, Vítězství lásky, říd. Jos. Mík.

1929: Má panenka modrooká, říd. Lad Kadlec, Devce jako květ, říd. Jan Bureš, Dve

ruze, ríd. Jos. Mík, Šumavský slavicek, ríd. Lad Kadlec, Česká maminka, ríd. Anna Vránová, Pjodskalák, ríd. Ant. Halouska.

1930: Zahrej mi, tatícku naposled, ríd. Lad Kadlec, Obchod je obchod, ríd. Ant. Halouska, Já dohrál písen poslední, ríd. Lad Kadlec, Drama jedné noci, ríd. Boh. Bartoš, Slecna tulacka, ríd. Anna Vránová.

1931: Lucifer, ríd. L. Kadlec, Radostná událost, ríd. Anna Vránová, Peg mého srdce, ríd. Boh. Bartoš, Znamení na dverích, ríd. Boh. Bartoš, Horská láska, ríd. L. Kadlec, Zavadilka vdává dceru, ríd. Anna Vránová.

1932: Kouzlo cervánku, ríd. Boh. Bartoš, Zelené království, ríd. Anna Vránová, Me sme me, ríd. Anna Vránová (opakováno v září 1932 na sjezdu Z.C.B.J., Rézinka od pechoty, ríd. L. Kadlec, Ta naše Mána, , ríd. Ant. Halouska.

1933: Devce od Cerchova, ríd. Ant. Halouska., Vstup do srdce zakázán, ríd. Anna Vránová, Srázka vlaku, ríd. Bo_ena Šerpanová, Muzikanti z české vesnice, ríd. L. Kadlec, Hasici jedou, rídil Ant. Halouska.

1934: Návrat ztracené dcery, Nejhezčí nozky z republiky, ríd. Ant. Halouska, Slecinka z bílého zámecku, ríd. Bozena Šerpanová, Darebnice, Svatba pod poklickou, ríd. Jan Bureš.

1935: Královnicka, ríd. Anna Vránová, Nezvedená Lída, ríd. M. Horejší, Dvojník pana Dibelky, ríd. Jan Bureš, Nevesta s dukáty, ríd. Marie Horejší.

1936: Hrích lesního Krikavy, ríd. Jan Bureš, Na svatém kopecku, ríd. Boh. Bartoš, Anezka Hruzova pred porotou, rídil Josef Brezácek.

1937: Vonavá selka, ríd. Ant. Halouska, Trináct zlodeju, rídil Boh. Bartoš, Vesnice

zpívá, řídil L. Kadlec.

V době od r. 1907 řídil (pro Sokola) Boh. Bartoš 66 divadelních her, Jos. Mík 31, Stanislav Šerpan 18 nebo 19, Anna Vránová 16, Ant. Halouska 14, Lad Kadlec 11, Václav Urban 5, Pardubský 5, Jan Bureš 4, Bedrich Sláma 3, Jirí Hladík 4, po dvou Bozena Šerpanová a po jedné Karel Šerpan, Fr. Svoboda a Josef Brezáček.

Před r. 1907 ovšem Josef Mík řídil radu let mnoho her podobně i Boh. Bartoš řídil divadlo již ve staré (shorelé) Národní síni.

Památník oslavy 60. Výrocí trvání Telocnicné jednoty Sokol Omaha
31.října 1937

BEGINNING OF AMATEUR THEATRICAL PRODUCTION IN OMAHA

by Otakar Charvát

I will state emphatically at the beginning, that this article is not and should not be taken for a real history of the theatrical efforts of the Czech people in Omaha, but rather as a reminiscences on the beginning of the Czech enthusiasts in more or less a prairie town on the banks of the Missouri, whose streets at that time, were mostly only dirt roads between hills and bluffs. About 30 years ago, I wrote a more detailed history of Omaha Czech theatrical plays for “Národní Pokrok” when it was still possible to find some authentic facts in Czech newspapers and publications, supplemented by reminiscences of old Czech settlers and other people, who knew the first amateur actors, but today (in 1952) it would be very difficult to find such material as most of the old timers rest peacefully in our Bohemian National Cemetery. I don't even have a copy of that first article as the Czech weekly paper, Národní Pokrok” ceased publication some years ago, so I am writing just from memory and from a few sources still in existence. In later years, I didn't collect any such material, because I felt the people were not very much interested in this subject anymore.

Czech Drama in the Old Country

Just so that we can better understand the period in which the Czech amateur theatrical production in Omaha started, we have to briefly review the situation of the Czech theatre in the old country. At the time when the first Czechs started to immigrate to Omaha, the homeland already had a strong theatrical movement among the patriots, and Czech plays were one of the means to promote Czech national patriotism. The first amateur actors called themselves ‘liboherci’ (translated: Pleasure-actors), because they were not performing for financial gain, which at best was very poor. They performed for their own and their audience's pleasure. The first Czech traveling theatrical troupe was organized by Josef Alois Prokop, a contemporary of Josef Kajetán Tyl, with whom

he acted in traveling theatrical companies.

First Czech Plays in America

The first Czech dramatic play in America took place in the Czech town of Kossuth, Wisconsin, in September, 1857. Because this poor pioneer town, located in the woods, did not have a suitable hall, the play was given in the home of a local evangelical teacher, Václav Šimonek.

In Omaha

In Omaha, the first Czech play followed twelve years later, in the fall of 1869. It took place in the hall of Václav Štěpánek, built on the corner of 13th and Williams, where the Prague Hotel now stands. It was the first Czech hall in Omaha - only a wooden frame structure, not very showy, but for those days it was a sufficient place for Czech social gatherings.

This hall had a very interesting history. After the first owner, Štěpánek, it was sold to K. Jankele, Václav Kucera, and Jirí Hofman, who sold it in 1876 to Omaha Bishop O'Connor, who remodeled it and used it for several years as a Catholic church.

The First Czech Settlement in Omaha

Thirteenth Street, between Center and Leavenworth Streets, was the first Czech settlement in Omaha, and it did not look much like a city street. It was more or less a dirt wagon road along a creek which flowed from about 13th and Center to which another creek flowed at about Leavenworth Street. A very poor wooden bridge was built over the creek, and along the creek on Thirteenth Street, shanties were built, the first homes of poor Czech settlers. The only advantage the owners of these shanties had, was that they did not have to worry much about wood for cooking and heating.

The bluffs all along the creek were covered with brush and trees that gave them

plenty of wood. Lighting of the street was poor, or there was none, and the actors had to carry lanterns when they walked to evening rehearsals. In rainy weather, they had to walk in mud that occasionally reached to people's knees, and with a lantern some one often slipped into a deep mudhole. Some of the actors came to rehearsals from as far away as the bank of the river, where some of the first settlers had their shanties halfway dug into the bluffs and halfway out. So, considering all the circumstances, it could be said that the first Czech would-be-actors were people with a great devotion to the theatre.

Matej Nerad directed the first play

In these environments the first theatrical efforts in Omaha were born. Nothing very artistic could be expected from these first Czech amateur actors. For their first performance, they presented a comical sketch Vesnický kantor (Country Teacher). Director Matej Nerad portrayed the teacher, and his rompish, ungovernable pupils, boys and girls, were portrayed by the following: F.M. Mareš, who later moved to Crete, Nebraska, Jan Stíbal, who became postmaster in Richland, Nebraska, Frank Vodicka, Flora Pintner, and Eleanor Vodicka, who later married Mareš and moved to Crete.

Primitive stage, curtain, oil lamps

The 'beautiful stage' was in harmony with the poor neighborhood and the hall. A platform was built in one corner of the hall with boards nailed on sawhorses; the curtain was made from printed calico goods, rolled on a roller, and side curtains were also rolled on a small roller, fastened to the ceiling. The fastening evidently wasn't too durable; because during the performance one of the side curtain rollers fell on the teacher's specs cut out from a piece of sheet metal, which added extra hilarity for the public. The illumination of the stage consisted of several smoking oil lamps.

Regardless of all the imperfections, the actors played with enthusiasm. In love of the Czech theatre, the actors and public revealed the love of their homeland and the

plays provided them a comfort in their home-sickness and a much needed recreation in their hard lives, so they appreciated the plays even with all the imperfections. A real pleasure was afforded to the, especially when there was Czech singing during the plays.

The public had very little comfort. Some could have 'seats'.... provided by placing boards over beer kegs, but most of them had to stand during performances, as the hall did not have enough room for seats, But for the people who came to those plays, they were grateful for even the poor illusion of Czech theatre.

When we take into consideration that even in the homeland the first Czech theatres had a very limited number of good plays to choose from, how extremely more difficult it was for our amateur players in this country! Most of the available plays required quite elaborate costumes, decorations, and many players. Our people didn't have money for that so the actors were forced to make all requisites for plays, especially the historical costumes.

After the successful performance of the "Country Teacher" and comedy Divotvorný klobouk (Magic Hat) by V.K. Klicpera. Practically the same people played in this as in the first comedy, with the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Sprostý and Mr. and Mrs. Malý. Václav Vodc_ka was the prompter.

The cradle of the Czech drama

After that, the cradle of Czech theatrical productions in Omaha Štěpánek Hall, produced the comedy, První den po svatbě (First day after the Wedding) and later, another comedy, the name of which was lost. Then theatrical activity stopped for some time. Some of the actors moved from Omaha, only three men and two women actors were left here, and with such a small personnel, it was impossible to produce plays.

F.J. Sadílek revived Czech drama

There was a revival of the Czech theatrical movement in 1874, when Frank J.

Sadílek came to Omaha, who later and for many years, was very active in Wilber, Nebraska. It seems that Sadílek was the first Czech who had some experience in theatrical matters. He was an enthusiastic actor and soon after he came here, he started to work on the revival of the Czech theatrical movement.

Štěpánek's Hall, at that time, was owned by Václav Kucera; it was remodeled and there was a fairly good stage built inside. Through the efforts of Sadílek, on August 23, 1874, a Dramatic Club, Klicpera was organized. Sadílek was president, F.M. Mareš was production manager, and F.B. Zdrubek was secretary-treasurer of the Club.

Soon after that, the new club produced the first drama Katovo poslední dílo (The Executioner's Last Work). It was performed on September 29, 1874, with great success. The actors were Sadílek, Zdenek, Mareš, Nerad, F. Vodicka and others, and the title woman's role was played by Mrs. Zdrubek. After that, there was a comedy, Veselý švec (Happy Cobbler) with the same personnel and two new ones, J. Budka and J. Krampus.

There more plays were produced after that in the same Kucera's Hall, Za živa mrtví manželé, Cech a Nemeč, and Mlynář a jeho dítě (The Miller and His Child). The theatrical activity stopped for some time when F.J.Sadílek moved to Chicago, but the activity was revived after Jan Rosický came here in 1876, and Sadílek also returned here shortly after. Several plays were produced in Kucera's Hall before it was remodeled into a church, among them one called Bratr honák (Borther Cowboy).

Kucera then built a hall connected with a tavern on Leavenworth Street, between 13th and 14th Streets. The hall also had a stage and several Czech plays were given, among them Kneisel's Chudý písničkář (Poor Troubador), in which Jan Rosický was starred as a 'písničkář', Vojtech Vávra and Mrs. Mach, who later became a very good actress, played his daughter, Rozarka.

Available personnel steadily increased as new settlers came to Omaha, a good many with some experience in acting in other cities or in the old country. The plays were given later in Svařina's Hall, named Bohemian Hall. This hall burned down and after it was rebuilt, was known as Metz Hall and is now the Catholic Sokol Hall.

This hall was bigger, more modern and had a sizeable stage, which witnessed

'the golden days of Czech plays in Omaha.' In this hall were produced big elaborate dramas of that period such as Monika, Schiller's Loupežníci (Robbers), Kollár's Pražský Zid (The Jew of Prague), Dva sirotci (Two Orphans), Zvoník u Matky boží (Hunch back of Notre Dame) and several plays by the Czech play-writer Tyl. The plays were produced quite often and were very good. To those actors named before, we add the following, many of whom played with distinction: F.W. Banhauer and Emilie Krejčí, who later became his wife, Jan Heller, Rypáček, Jájek, Josef Braun, Jaromír Racek, Steiger brothers, Fligl, Rousar, Chrastil, Karel Bartoš, Podolák and others.

There was a misunderstanding, however, among the players, and the organization split into two factions, which didn't help the theatrical movement. One group, called Kollár stayed and produced plays in Svacina's hall. The other group, Tyl staged some plays in Kessler's hall, which no longer exists, but which stood on 13th Street, now the location of Svoboda's Monument works. However, this group didn't produce plays very long, and activity in the Kollár group also diminished.

Dramatic Club Sokol

The dramatic players were again united in the first Dramatic Group of Telocvicná Jednota Sokol (Gymnastic Sokol Society). The theatrical productions were first given in the newly built National or Havlíček's Hall on the southeast corner of 13th and Williams St. This hall burned down in 1917 and was never rebuilt. Now it is a parking lot for customers of the Bohemian Café. This hall witnessed many beautiful and significant activities or Czech Omaha social life. Later, this group of players gave plays in the new Metz Hall. In this period, among the outstanding new actors were Anton Steiger, J.A. Hospodský, marionet-actor Švejda, and others.

To give a history of the Czech theatrical movement in Omaha from this period on to the present time, would not only require a huge task for someone with a lot of time on his hands, but one who would also face a possibility that he would displease some people. So, I will end this article by just stating the main fact in a few words.

In the first four decades of this century, there was a great deal of theatrical activity

in Omaha. In some years as many as twenty plays were produced in several halls. Plays were produced not only by the Dramatic Group of Sokol, reorganized in June, 1907, but by several other dramatic groups, among which there was healthy competition. Plays, always good ones, were given under the auspices of different lodges and societies. Plays were also given by the Czech Catholic groups.

Sokol Tyrš also had a good theatrical group which, for years, played in Metz Hall. Then there was the Dramatic Club Mošna, which produced many nice plays and operettas. To name the plays, directors, and outstanding actors of this era would take much space and time.

So, let us just state, that even the later Czech amateur players did not lack the enthusiasm of the pioneers, and with better talent and surroundings, produced plays that were equal to professional theatrical productions. Up to the Second World War, this activity was a result of love, devotion and skill to the Czech theater. This movement continued through an eighty year period. The last curtain fell on many devoted members of the Czech Thalia, and I wonder if anyone from the younger generation ever stops at their resting places in the Bohemian National Cemetery and lays a flower on their graves.

This article was written in Czech in 1952 by the late Otokar Charvát for the Památník
Issued for the Diamond Celebration of Sokol Omaha.
Later, it was published in English in the Fraternal Herald.

Otokar Charvát was born in Bohemia, 1883, and came to Omaha in 1906 as Editor of Pokrok Západu. Later, he was Editor of Nová Doba and Národní pokrok. In 1940 he was named Editor of Fraternal Herald. He also edited the magazine Hospodár. Otokar Charvát died in 1956.

ORD - VALLEY COUNTY

In the hall of the ZCBJ Lodge Dennice No. 14, the Sokol gymnastic group met there and they also sponsored Czech plays which were very well attended and greatly enjoyed by the people from near and far. Some of these plays were also presented in neighboring communities. The prominent actors did perform there along with the Theatre Company of František Ludvík.

Following the Second World War, conditions had changed the same as in other Czech organizations. The older Czech residents have gone to their final resting place and the third and fourth generations are no longer fully Czech having no Czech language spoken in their homes any more.

(Picture on pg. 113 of the original script)

Old South Omaha Sokol; Hall was dedicated in 1904.

It was then known as the Bohemian Hall.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CZECH DRAMATICS IN SCHUYLER

By James Hruban

Dramatics, or dramatic performances of amateurs, have been a typical activity in the social life of Czech immigrants, wherever the Czech settlements were found. So called, 'Volunteer groups for performing of plays' were founded among members of several different lodges like Catholic worker, or Western Fraternal Life Association and others. But the greatest contribution to this kind of activity came from the gymnastic and cultural organization of the Telocvicná Jednota Sokol.

The Sokol organization movement in Schuyler had its beginnings as early as in 1875. Due to prevailing hardships or maybe adverse conditions, the organization did not make much progress. But the renewed interest was aroused in 1892.

The membership began to increase and the new determination was evident. The result was, the laying of a new foundation for a lodge that has flourished for a half century. Besides the outstanding gymnastic activity the regular dances and picnics, the dramatics became very popular and developed into a remarkable degree of performing arts. Unfortunately, the records of names of plays and authors were quite scant. All that the old settlers remember is that the first play was given in 1892. The name of it was The Fatal Date (Nešťastné dostaveníčko). Since then the plays were always given during the winter season.

The old members mentioned other plays: The Three Grooms and The Smart Apprentice (Chytrý krajánek) and Forester's Daughter (Dcera lesníkova) many of them quite obsolete now. The names of players have been remembered by a few old timers. Just lately one of them brought an old announcement of a play Tramp's Blood (Tulácká krev) given in 1935. The names of players since 1892, as given by the old members would be as follows: Rudolf Daricek, as actor and a very capable director for many years, Marie Daricek (wife), Ed Hans, Geo. Dvorák, Emma Zrazan, Jennie Vávra, Václav Malý, Tillie Palík, Marie Shonka, and Ant. Kalík.

Since 1900, the number has increased. Chas. Mastný, Ed Varejcka, Millie Varejcka, John Varejcka, H. Shonka and Marie and Martha Sobota, the two quite outstanding singers often participating on radio programs in Omaha and Lincoln, Anton and Vlasta Hovorka, Frank Kopecký, Martin Král, Frank Šlerka, Mr. And Mrs. Joe Novotný, Julie Bureš, Mary Dudek, Jan Krca, Joe Svoboda, Marie Míšek, Louis Kopecký, Jan Steinberger, Luzy Bamová, Mamie Radhaus, and C. Barta

Many of those that are still living cherish the beautiful memories of the old days. That is the reason - that practically all of them seem to agree - that the greatest impression or impact on the public's sentiment was achieved by a performance of a play by the name of Beautiful Maiden of Šumava (Kráska ze Šumavy).

(Picture on pg. 116 of the original script)

DIVADLO

The sentiment and enthusiasm was created not only by some exceptional acting, but mostly by an extensive and elaborate structure of the scenery. One of the acts portrayed the scene of a peasant courtyard, with bunnies running playfully around, a flock of pigeons flying freely around the scenery. During the action of the play, an elegant carriage, drawn by a pair of nice horses, appeared on the stage and two passengers (players) descended off the carriage and a moment later two other 'guests' arrived on other two horses and finally the "Beautiful Maiden" (Marie Sobotová - Uerling) arrived on the fifth horse.

Every move of all the players as well as the animals seemed so natural, that it created a powerful impression of the audience. The play was done in 1925 and had to be repeated several times to satisfy the demand. Of courses, the spacious stage made it possible to accommodate the movements of five horses behind the 'wings' of the stage. Also, the stage was in a big hall on the second story and the five good-natured horses had to struggle the ascent and descent of two flights of stairs for every rehearsal.

The "modern" life brought many changes into the life of average people. The gymnastic activities of youngsters gave way to competitive sports. Dramatics were suppressed by radio and television. The last play was done in Schuyler in 1942. Therefore, the preservation of old traditions, as well "Mother-tongue" is now days out of consideration.

Your fathers and mothers, so devoted to the tongue of their forefathers, tried to not only preserve but also to pass the language on to the next generation. After working hard the virgin soil of the prairie, they tried often to be together, to speak in the tongue of their gender and also to hear their mother tongue and the songs of their native homeland from the stages of the Czech theatres in Nebraska.

(Hand bill Divadlo pg. 117a of the original script)

THEATRICAL ACTIVITY OF SWANTON DRAMATIC CLUB

On April 27, 1918, the Swanton Dramatic Club at the Tábor Lodge Hall at Pleasant Hill presented a drama Zárlivost (Jealousy).

On October 28, 1920, the Theatrical group of Wilber under the direction of J.A. Hospodský performed a three-act drama Návrat zajatcův (The Return of a Prisoner) in Swanton, Saline County, Nebraska.

On May 1, 1929, the Swanton Dramatic Club performed a three-act comedy Jeho poslední dostaveníčko (His Late Date) at the W.O.W. Hall in Swanton.

(Hand bill "Jealousy" on pg. 118 of the original script)

On December 1, 1929, after the conclusion of the meeting of the lodges, the fourth district Z.C.B.J. , a four-act comedy Od starého k mladému posvícení (From the Old Toward the New Festival) was performed at the W.O.W. Hall in Swanton.

The theatrical group of Swanton presented on November 9, 1934, a three-act comedy entitled Zenuška podle módy (A Wife According to Fashion) at the W.O.W. Hall in Swanton. (This show on November 9, was originally scheduled for November 4th).

(Hand bill Divadlo ve Swanton! pg. 119 of the original script)

On January 27, 1935, a three-act play comedy Pockej ty budeš litovat (Just Wait You Will Regret) was performed at W.O.W. Hall in Swanton. The Theatrical group of Swanton repeated this show on March 1, 1935 at the Wilber Opera House.

On January 25, 1936, a three-act comedy Tatínek šel na zálety (Daddy Went Wooing) was performed at the W.O.W. Hall in Swanton. On December 25, 1936, this show was presented by the Theatrical group of Swanton at the Wilber Opera House.

(Hand bills Divadlo pg.119abc of the original script)

HISTORY OF CZECH DRAMA IN TABLE ROCK

Our records show that all the Czech plays were performed in the old Opera House which was later purchased by the Z.C.B.J. Lodge. The director at all these plays, Mrs. Anna Kovanda was a very intelligent and talented Czech lady. These plays were all sponsored by the Z.C.B.J. Lodge (Premysl Otakar II No. 84) at Table Rock. The director selected Czech citizens of this community who were well casted for their character parts and were willing to spend many hours in practice. The plays were all well attended and highly complimented by the audience.

The plays were always followed by a dance that lasted into the early hours of the morning. The first play performed was on December 23, 1902, but the records failed to record the name of the play. The dates and names of the other early plays were in December 1903, Popelka; in December 1904, Pensionát paní Borové (The Boarding house of Mrs. Borová); in December 1908, Mestská rada na námluvách (The City Council on Courtship); in December 1910, Pražské švadlenky (The Seamstress of Prague); in December 1911, Jak se v praze lidi baví (How the People of Prague Entertain); in December 1912, Charleyova teta (The Aunt of Charley), in December 1916, Chudý písničkář (The Poor Ballad Singer) was performed with the following cast of characters:

Václav, Vávra, a rich farmer.....	Rudolf Kovanda
Antonín, his son.....	Ralf Štěpán
Panna Betuška.....	Mary Tomková
Petr, hired man.....	Henry Krofta
Kilián, hired man.....	Jesse Vondrášek
Madlenka, hired girl.....	May Tenk
Závora, Justice of Peace.....	John Tomek
Kacenska, his daughter.....	Helena Petrášek
Hruška.....	Otto Petrášek
Kobla.....	Albert Krofta

Vojtech Vávra wandering singer and brother of Vávra.....Joe Tomek
 Rozárka, his daughter.....Mary Petrášková
 Matka Barbora in charge of Rozárka.....Helena Hrušková
 Zarezal.....Fred Tomek
 Brouzil.....John Tomek
 Vrba, pal of Vojtech.....Albert Krofta
 Kalous, pal of Vojtech.....Jesse Vondrášek
 Play in charge of Mrs. Anna Kovanda - Pianist Minnie Kubick

On December 21, 1917, the play Amazonky anebo dívčí válka (The Amazons, or the Maidens of War) was presented. Play in charge of Mrs. Anna Kovanda - Pianist R.A. Kovanda

The following critic was printed in the "Table Rock Argus": An audience which taxed the capacity of the opera house was called out by the annual play given by the Bohemian young people on Friday evening. The play was "The Amazons, or The Maidens of War." The cast of characters being as follows:

Ondrej Kolcava.....Henry Krofta
 Dorota.....Mary Tomek
 Halák.....Wm. Vondrášek
 Stazicka.....Lillie Tenk
 Liška.....Albert Krofta
 Hubáček.....Jess Vondrášek
 Brezina.....Albert Krofta
 Vorlíčka.....Emil Rabštejnek
 Apolenka.....Mary Kovanda
 Kudrna.....Frank Tomek
 Matej.....Jess Vondrášek
 Beta.....Minnie Kubick
 Voršila.....Grace Scott
 Verunka.....Olga Rabštejnek

There were no balks and very little prompting, each member of the cast having their part so well committed that prompting was unnecessary, and to Mrs. A.R. Kovanda is given the credit for the splendid training the young people received. The duet between the lovers, Mrs. Mary E. Kovanda and Frank Tomek, was particularly well rendered, as was also the choruses and solos. R.A.Kovanda presided at the piano with pleasing effect. The Argus would have to go into details and tell how well each individual of the cast performed, but space will not permit, but each member of the cast received liberal applause as they cleverly drove home their hits. The play was followed by a dance, which was much enjoyed by the participants. The proceeds, \$180.00 is to be divided between the Red Cross and other benevolences.

“Argus December 21, 1917”

On January 2, 1923, the play Mlsní kocouri (The Daintiness Tom-Cats) was performed. The following critic was printed in the Table Rock Argus Weekly:

This play called out an audience at the Ideal Theatre on Tuesday evening which filled practically every seat in the house. It was staged by our Bohemian young people, under the direction of Mrs. A.R. Kovanda and all who participated deserves credit for its success. Some of the characterization was really wonderful and when it is considered that nearly every part was taken by young persons who live upon farms and had never taken part in a play before, the magnitude of the work of both actor and director can be understood. So realistic was the acting that the writer, although not understanding the language, could easily follow the plot. It may be that at times he laughed at the wrong time, but if he did there was so much humor in the play it was not noticed. The play was given under the auspices of the Z.C.B.J lodge and proceeds amounted to \$170.00.

On January 1925, the play Kdyz srdce povída (When the Heart is Telling). On December 27, 1926, the play Zuzancin pan kaprál (The Zuzanka's Corporal) was given with the following cast of characters:

Krupicka, kupec a majitel domu.....Joe Tomek

Josef, jeho deti.....Lewis Hubka
 Bozenka, jeho deti.....Emily Hubka
 Marketa, jeho sestra.....Julia Blaha
 Vendelín, jeho priruci.....Paul Sochor
 Jaroslav Javorský, technik.....Frank Sochor
 Jirí Slavík, kaprál.....Rudolf Karas
 Melichar Stehýnko, kaprál.....John Tomek
 Paní Rosalia, kartárka.....Bla_ena Vrtiška
 Zuzanka, kucharka.....Helen Hubka
 Behálek, domovník.....JohnTomek
 Dr. Holub, notár.....Lewis Hubka
 Václav, juvecký mládenec.....Rudolf Karas

Divadlo ridila Anna Kovanda - Pianistka Mary Petrášek

Between acts the following performed with song and dance: Olive Tomek, Millie Jaša, Blanche Vrtiška, Agnes Hubka with Mary Kovanda at the piano.

In December 1928, a play Ferdinand spí (The Ferdinand Sleeps) was performed with the following cast of characters:

Traplicka, domácí pán.....Rudolf Šnábl
 Matylida, jeho paní.....Ema Tomek
 Emilie, jejich dcera.....Olga Rabštejnek
 Ferdinand Valecák, asistent u dráhy.....Lewis Hubka
 Mudr Ladislav Jetel.....James Kruška
 Klára Hosmanová.....Marie Hubka
 Derdvy, nakladatel.....Josef Švanda
 Kukssbich, vrchní inspektor u dráhy.....Emil Rabštejnek
 Beláková, vdova soukromnice.....Olive Tomek
 Zofie, její dcera.....Evelyn Hanna

Katynka, sluzka u Traplicku.....Mary Stan_k
Marjánka, devecka.....Mary Hubka
Divadlo ridila sestra Anna Kovanda
Hudbu ridil bratr Arnold Petrášek

The last play to be produced in the old Opera House or Z.C.B.J Hall was Look Out Lizzie. This play was the only one in the English language and it was directed by Mildred Mier, although the play cast and director were of Czech heritage. The cast included Nettie and Lawrence Stehlík, elsie and Lawrence Wenzbauer, Ila and Frank Petrášek, Leonard Lukšík and Dolores Penkava.

Date of presentation was April 1, 1955 at 8 P.M. No doubt there were other Czech plays presented, but we couldn't locate any of those records.

Komenský, a literary Czech Club, also sponsored some Czech plays in the early 1900's. Complete records of the Komenský Club plays couldn't be found.

Compiled from Z._B.J Lodge Secretary's books and the "Table Rock Argus"
by Bessie Rexroth and Mary E. Sturgeon. October 1977

(Picture on pg. 125 of the original script)

Performers in the play "Look Out Lizzie."

Sitting from left: Nettie and Lawrence Stehlík, Elsie and Lawrence Wenzbauer; standing: Lilli and Frank Petrášek, Leonard Lukšík and Donald Penkava

The partiotic and theatrical work of your forefathers has an essential influence toward the preservation of the Czech language in this state. Hundred and hundred of Czech plays were performed by the countrymen of first, second, third, and probably by the fourth Czech generation in Nebraska.

(Hand bill of program pg. 125a of the original script)

(Hand bill of program pg. 126b of the original script)

Look Out Lizzie!

HISTORY OF THE OLD TABLE ROCK OPERA HOUSE **(LATER CALLED Z.C.B.J HALL)**

The old Opera House is the second story in the building on lot 8 block 29 in original Table Rock. It was built in about the year 1893. Records show that on February 5, 1898, Wm. Sutton became owner of the Opera House. He sold it in October 1917 to his daughter and husband Mr. And Mrs. J.H. Hylton.

During the time the Sutton and Hylton families owned the Opera House it was used for medicine shows, chautauquas, silent movies, dances and other social gatherings. Dr. James Plihal, Dentist, had his office there for about six years.

On March 15, 1924, Lodge Premysl Otakar II., No. 84 (Z.C.B.J.) Western Bohemian Fraternal Association bought the Opera House for \$2000.00. The Opera House included the large hall with its sky light and balcony, a large stage with two dressing rooms, a kitchen cloak room, a stored room and the stair way leading from the second story to the street.

This upper story for 39 years was used by Lodge Premysl Otakar II., No. 84 Z.C.B.J. for its meetings, dances, Czech school and plays. The Lodge also rented this hall to the public for its activities. Before the local high school had a gymnasium, the Z.C.B.J. Lodge rented its hall to the school plays, parties, banquets and graduation exercises.

On January 24, 1963, the Z.C.B.J. Lodge donated this hall to Gordon Bethel and Howard Howell who had laces of business on the ground floor of this building. Shortly after this Gordon Bethel became the sole owner. Then in December 1965 Gordon Bethel deeded this hall to the Table Rock Historical Society and Museum.

At the present time this hall is called the Opera House Museum. It contains a replica of an early kitchen, bedroom, living room and the old Post Office. Family histories and pictures of early pioneers of the Table Rock community, antiques and other treasures are displayed here.

This Opera House or Z.C.B.J. Hall is the only one of its kind in this part of the state.

Compiled from authentic county records on July 9, 1971

By Mrs. Bessie Rexroth and Mrs. Mary Sturgeon

Probably, the first theatrical performance in Nebraska was given in 1869, by *The Reading and Dramatic Society* on the farm of Jan M. Svoboda, near Crete in Saline County. K This first play was *Rekrutyрка v Kocourkove* (Recruiting in Kocourkov) with Josef Jindra as the director. Boards laid across two strong saw bucks served for a stage and white calico curtains were used for the drops.

AT THE LODGE TÁBOR Z.C.B.J.

On December 15, 1929, a comedy Mlynárova Marenka (The Miller's Mary) was presented by the actors of the Sokol Crete after the meeting of the District organization of the Z.C.B.J.

(Hand bill OZNÁMENI pg. 128 of the original script)

A COMEDY AT THE TOBIAS PAVILION

On December 5, 1931, the Theatrical group from Narka, Kansas presented a three-act comedy entitled Trikrát svatba (Three Times Wedding) at the Tobias Pavilion.

(Hand bill DIVADLO pg. 129 of the original script)

One after another of the Czech generation of men with possible reminiscences are gone for Eternity, and the younger generation remember only a little about that time that was once such a rich theatrical period.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CZECH DRAMATICS IN VERDIGRE-KNOX COUNTY

By Edward S. Pavlík

In the early days, Verdigre, Nebraska had quite a few Czech immigrants and there were many good musicians among them. The best known here was Pavlík's Band and they were quite good with Czech music. Also, there were many accordion and violin musicians playing Czech music.

In drama, there were some Czech plays presented in the early years about 1888, but what I can pin-point most occurred after 1903. That is when the Zápádní cesko-Bratrská Jednota (now Western Fraternal Life Association) Lodge Bílá Hora No 5, built the new brick hall which we still have as shown in the picture enclosed. The Z.C.B.J. Catholic and other dramatic clubs and later, the Telocvicná jednota Sokol and Catholic Sokol were presenting Czech plays, approximately one to two a year. The first one I can find a record of was the play Vojnarka that was presented on Saturday January 18, 1908.

Here is a copy of the original poster:

The Verdigre Dramatic Club will open their winter entertainment at the Z.C.B.J. Hall on Saturday, January 18, 1908 with one of the most brilliant Dramas - New scenery - Elegant Costumes.

VOJNARKA

Drama in 4 acts. Time of event 1860, on the Bohemian and Moravian Line - Scene 1, Interior of farm house, Scene 2, Exterior of Vojnarka's farm house; Scene 3, In the village Inn; and 4th scene same as scene 2

Cast of Characters

Madelaine Vojnarka, Farmer's widow.....Mrs. Bessie Šedivý
Johnny, her 5 year old son.....George Jecmínek
Jacob Vojnar, his uncle.....Mr. Frank Soušek
Anton Havel.....Mr. Premysl Šedivý
His mother.....Mrs. Fanny Tikalský

Jan Hruška, matchmaker and singer.....Mr. John Franek
Betka, hired girl.....Miss Liddy Šedivý
Martin, hired man at Vojnkrka's farm.....Mr. Louis J.Barták
Drtina, musician.....Mr. Albert Jecmínek
Brozek, musician.....Mr. Vac Tikalský
Inn keeper.....Mrs. Mary Šedivý
Marjanka, her daughter.....Miss Mary Jecmínek

Josef Šedivý - Stage Manager

Tickets for sale at Joe Sucha Office. Adm. \$1.00 - Reserved seats

Following were these plays: a comedy Mlsní kocourů on Saturday, April 29, 1911 then a play Zrzavá (Red Haired Girl). This play was performed at the Z.C.B.J. Hall on Saturday, February 10, 1917 by the Verdigre Dramatic club. This was a very successful Czech play with a cast of 20 performers. On Saturday, January 12, 1918 at the Z.C.B.J. Hall a three act play was performed entitled Svobodní zednáři (Free Massons).

The play was full of humor and fun and a dance was held after the play. The Ludvík's Bohemian Dramatic Co. Presented at the Z.C.B.J. Hall at Verdigre, a play Cerný kriz v lese (The Black Cross in the Forest), a melodrama in 5 acts. Next, a comedy of three acts was performed by the Bohemian Dramatic Club Šamberk on April 9, 1921, had the title Poslední muz (The Last Man). This play, written after the war, was directed by Frank Liška and Vac Muller.

Actors: Frank Liška, Miss Alice Chocholoušek, Joseph Vavruška, Henry Pilar, Mrs. M. Lapseh, Leo Lapseh, Mrs. J. Muller, Mrs. V. Vejvoda, K. Chocholoušek, Miss Marie Beran.

The play Diblíkova dceruška was performed on November 1, 1922. A large dance was held after the play. Music was presented by Donat and Pavlík's Orchestra. A play Deblík, šotek z hor - a story from the life in a Czech village was performed on May 13, 1922 consisting of five-acts. The drama Zrzavá was produced on September

26, 1916, under the auspices of the Western Bohemian Catholic Union. A comedy Saniberg was given complete with songs by Dramatic Club. Eleanor Jiráček in the leading role.

A Czech play, V černé roklí (In the Black Gulf) was produced by the Bohemian Dramatic Club Šamberk on April 26, 1924. On May 5, 1928, a play Mlsní kocourů, a comedy in three-acts was performed by 20 performers from Gergory, South Dakota. A drama Zasnoubení potmě (Engagement in the Dark) was presented on September 9, 1928.

A large celebration commemorating the 10th anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia was prepared by the Sokol organization on Sunday, October 28, 1928 with the program consisting of an address, songs, Sokol exhibits and finally with a dance. A short play Sokolská láska was performed, too.

On Sunday, November 25, 1928, a comedy of four-acts Naše roztomilá Baruška was performed by local talent. It was a very large show with the title Tri dcery na vdávání (Three Daughters for Marriage). It was a comedy and was performed on April 27, 1930 by the Catholic Club of Verdigre.

Cast of characters:

Kajetán Dlabac, domovník.....John Herout
Jenofa, jeho dcera.....paní Marie Havlíček
Mila, jejich dcera.....slečna Vernoika Beran
Francka, jejich dcera.....slečna Lydia Vejvoda
Icka, jejich dcera..... slečna Marie Beran
Vojta Šmíd, strážník.....Charles Chocholoušek
Alvis Pentlicka, cíšník.....Otto Lapesch
Rumuald Muchansov, polární cestovatel.....Joseph M. Ondráček
Edward Svoboda, jeho asistent.....Charles Beran
Dr. Otto Jandera, jeho asistent.....John Lapesch
Obecní zřízenec.....Adolp Studený
Krisch, soudní rada.....Edward Vejvoda, Jr.

A Czech play performed by the Tábora, South Dakota Sokol on October 12, 1931. Dance after the show by Tábora Home Sokol Orchestra. A very beautiful play Dva sirotci (Two Orphans) given by the Verdigre Bohemian Local Talent Club was performed on February 6, 1915. A Czech play Dva vojáci od muziky was performed by the Tábora, South Dakota Dramatic Club on June 11, 1961 and the same visiting Dramatic Club performed a play Hospudka u Markety on June 13, 1962.

Below you will find the names of some very devoted actors and addresses of the Czech talents: Mr. Joseph Lapesh, John and Otto Lapesh, Mr. and Mrs. Vac Miller, Ms. and Mr. Premysl Šedivý, Camilla Liška, Frank Liška Sr., Frank Liška Jr., Ms. and Mr. Vac Tikalský, Augusta Tikalský, , Julia Holan, Elsie Chocholoušek, Charles Chocholoušek, John Beran, Veronika Beran, Marie Beran, Vac Beran, Edward S. Pavlík, Adolph Studený, Emil Vogeltanz, Elsie Paderta, Vac Paul, Julia Paul, Frank E. Herout, Joe Vavruška, Ms. and Mr. Frank Wostral, Ludvig Klimeš, Ms. J.J. Svoboda, Ms. Ivan Soua, Marie Klimeš, Frank Soucek Sr., Otto Stanek, Henry Pilar, Ms. Ed Vejvoda, Ms. and Mr. Joseph Šedivý, Ms. Ivan Souba, John Franek, Ms. Frank Kalal, Vera Kalal, Joe Ondráček, Edward Jiráček, and many others that I can't remember.

Most of the plays in Verdigre were very rich looking as the costumes were rented from an Omaha company.

The plays were continued up into the 1930's and we had many dances and musical programs. At that time, the Sokols were very active, but then World War Two came and that took many of our young men to the service. Also, other men, boys, women and girls were left to work in factories and defense plants and therefore, the activities faded and never were recovered. Now we only have one Czech program a year and that is put on by the music instructor of the Verdigre Public School, George Vondráček, which is performed by the local school children and a few Czech musicians and singers, which is a very nice program, but it is running short of Czech talent.

(Picture on pg. 135 of the original script)

Edward S. Pavlík Mayor during Diamond Jubilee of Verdigre 1962

Today, there seems to be too many automobiles and maybe too much money as it seems that everyone would have rather go away for entertainment, but we are trying to hang on as long as we can.

Eldiva Jedlicka, a brilliant pianist and vocalist - Verdigre has had in the past and still has some very talented musicians. Mrs. Eldiva Jedlicka - Pavlík, the wife of Mr. Ed. S. Pavlík, is really a special exception. A talented pianist and gifted vocalist, she has delighted many audiences with her sympathetic and brilliant performances of standard classics. As an interpreter of the dramatic; in either instrumental or vocal form, Ms. Jedlicka - Pavlík has no peer. A special feature of her artistry was and still is in her interpretation of fold music.

“In her songs, she is notable self-assured. She has an easy stage presence, much vivacity and dramatic power. Her voice has a beautiful quality. It is clear and flexible and in good control. An added charm was given this recital by the introduction of a number of Bohemian songs, which were given a grace and freedom that could not easily be acquired by a stranger to that tongue.”

An excerpt from Lincoln Star Journal

October 18, 1924

(Picture pg. 136 of the original script)

DIVADLO

The Actors of the play Dva sirotci (Two Orphans) From left: Josef Broz, Agnes Liškova, Fanny Tikalská, Augusta Tikalská, Ludvík K.J. Plimeš. Back row: Frank Broz, Vac. Muller and Emil Vogaltanz - Center kneeling: J.J. Svoboda - Standing: F.L.-Mrs. Jos. Lapesh, Premysl Šedivý, Mrs. V. Muller, Millie Liška, Mrs. J.J. Svoboda, Frank Liška Sr., Back row: F.L. Vac Beran, Josef Šedivý, Frank Wostral, Leon Olsummer and Edward Jiráček were also in the play, but are not on the picture.

By E.S. Pavlík

VIRGINIA - GAGE COUNTY

The first Czech drama in Virginia, Gage County, was performed on November 1911 in the Hubka Hall under the direction of Anna Fisherová. In the Z.C.B.J. Hall of Západní ceska bratrská jednota, Lodge Osveta No. 94, built 1923, performers from DuBois of the Lodge Jan Kollár presented a Czech play on New Year's 1924. The success of this play so much influenced the members of the Lodge Osveta in Virginia that they presented that same winter under the direction of Helen and Marie Hubkové a play Cerný kriz v lese (A Black Cross in the Forest).

(Picture pg. 137 of the original script)

The Hall of Z.C.B.J. Osveta No. 94 in Virginia

The old Czech patriot Frank Štastný sent me this information: The hall of our Z.C.B.J. Ledge with a nice stage was built in 1923 at a cost of \$6000.00. Members of our Lodge Osveta performed there for many years. The actors of fraternal Lodge from DuBois and Lodge Otakar from Table Rock were very often performing in our Virginia hall. Today the situation is much different than in the old times. Our hall was sold to the American Legion. They tore down the stage and instead built a kitchen and a platform for musicians. Anyway, it will remain as a memory for us here about what the old settlers built in the past. The cemetery isn't Czech anymore, but in neighboring Odell there is a Czech cemetery. Therefore, I sent your letter to the friends there and maybe they will write something to you about the Czech theatrical activities.

The Czech theatrical activities in Nebraska are silent and dead now. To revive Czech drama in modern time, it will require the renewed enthusiasm of the young Czech generation. May we expect it?

The Czech theatrical activities from the beginning of the Czech settlements in this state once so rich and colorful, is now dead. And the stages today, in all those Czech lodges and society halls that were years and years before so alive with the mother tongue and Czech songs, are now only silent. Testimony of that activity of the Czech men and women that once was so devoted and joyful.

CZECH DRAMA IN WESTON - BUTLER COUNTY

Information by Mrs. Louis Rezek

Czech drama began in the Weston area sometime in the early nineteen hundred. Some of the performers were direct immigrants from Czechoslovakia, so the language came very easily to the, but most were born in America. Most of the actors were members of the Catholic Sokol.

Mr. Anton Dvorák of Omaha came to Weston to direct the plays. In the picture taken before 1915 only three cast members are alive today. The name of this play is unknown. I talked to all three-Mrs. Gabriella (Meduna) Šabatka lives in Wahoo, Nebraska, and gave me the names of the cast. Mr. L.J. Kovanda, was the owner of the Kovanda Opera House. It still is a pillar of the main street of Weston, Nebraska.

Mr. Anton Cuda and his wife also live in Wahoo, Nebraska. Mrs. Anna (Machá_ek) Pavlík is a resident of haven House in Wahoo, Nebraska.

They are all in their eighties, such beautiful and gracious people. Mrs. Gabriella (Meduna) Šabatka remembered the play Cerný kriz v lese (Black Cross in the Forest), performed at the Kovanda Opera House at Weston, Nebraska, on February 20, 1915. It was one of the outstanding plays performed to an overflowing crowds. On Saturday, February 23, the group went by grain to Brainard, Nebraska and gave the play. They stayed at the hotel in Brainard, because no trains were running on Sunday. Monday they took the freight train back to Weston.

(Picture pg. 140 of the original script)

Standing left to right: Antonie Staska, William Meduna, L.J. Kovanda, Opera house owner, Anton Cuda, Louis Meduna, Marie (Kubišta) Pechová. Sitting left to right: Anna Macháček) Pavlíková, Rose (Popová) Woitová, Gabriella (Medunová) Šabatková, Marie Machácková, Dr. James Woita

(Picture pg. 140 of the original script)

Kovanda Opera House in Weston

(Hand bill DIVADLO pg. 140a of the original script)

(Program for Piano and Voice Recital pg. 140b of given script)

(Picture pg. 140c of the original script)

Concert Artist-Eldiva Jedlicka

(Program pg. 140d of the original script)

Verdigre 75th Diamond Jubilee, Inc.

HISTORY OF THE CZECH DRAMA IN WILBER

Our Czech pioneers not only knew how to work, but they found time too, to foster a social life. Czechs are fond of drama and in Wilber, Saline County, Nebraska, fine plays were given by amateur talents. Their Telocvicná jednota Sokol (The Gymnastic Sokol Society) Dramatic and Singing Societies supply needs of social character and no community of any size is without at least one.

written by Ruzena Rosická many years ago.

In the year 1893, the Dramatic Club Tyl (named for the great patriot and dramatist Josef Kajetán Tyl (1808-1856) was founded in Wilber, Saline County,

Nebraska, and produced plays that were often difficult to present both as to acting and as to outlay, but people loved this national activity and made a success of it.

But years before the founding of the Dramatic Club Tyl with its so rich theatrical activities, the Czech plays were performed in Wilber in the old, wooden hall of Matej Hokuf (later this hall was burned) under the direction of Josef Schuessler, whom Matej Hokuf called in September 1877 from Chicago, Illinois.

From the year 1859 until 1877, J.K. Schuessler was a member of the traveling theatrical company of Alois Prokop. He directed plays in Hokuf hall for 27 years. J.K. Schuessler with his wife came to this country in 1864. He was also a director of a theatre Sokol cesko-americký in Chicago until the year 1877. This oldest Czech-American actor was born in 1833, in Luze, Bohemia and Schuessler brought to Wilber his two daughters Anna and Bohumila. The younger Bohumila was later married to Bedrich Herman (The son of Jan Herman), the oldest Anna was married to Jan Frank Špirek. J.K. Schuessler died in 1903.

When Schuessler left the Matej Hokuf theatre, Petr Šafarík was the director of plays. Petr Šafarík came to Wilber in 1873. After him, the directors were as follows: František Ruzicka, František J. Sadílek and others.

The first Czech drama in Wilber was presented on September 30, 1877, under the direction of J. K. Schuessler in Hokuf's wooden hall. It was a drama, Palicova dcera (Incendiary's Daughter) by Josef Kajetán Tyl.

The Opposition, a newspaper published in Wilber, had this announcement on September 30, 1877:

Local gossip! Read the new Bohemian theatre advertisement, remember the date, and don't fail to attend. Bohemian Theatre at Hokuf's Hall, Wilber - Sunday, September 30, 1877 - The popular Drama in Five Acts, entitled Incendiary's Daughter by Josef Kajetán Tyl.

Admission - 25 cents, Children under 12 years 15 cents. Doors open at 7 p.m. - Commencement at 8.

Opposition October 4, 1988

Local Gossip! The Theatre at Hokuf's was well attended there being about 500 present. There will be a variety entertainment at Hokuf's Hall Saturday evening, October 13th. The performance will consist of comical and sentimental plays, vocal and instrumental music and will conclude with a dance. The proceeds will be applied to the benefit of the Bohemian paper.

The Opposition - October 18, 1877

Notwithstanding the inclement weather on Saturday evening the Theatre given for the benefit of the Bohemian paper at Hokuf's Hall, brought out a fair audience. The talent secured for the occasion was first-class in every respect. The rendition of that beautiful duet, Larboard Watch, sang so sweetly by our favorite vocalists, Mrs. Sadílek and Dr. J.A. Paddock, elicited a hearty applause by the audience, inasmuch as repetition was solicited. The proceeds we understand were upwards of \$70.00.

The Opposition - October 25, 1877

Theatre in Wilber! Hokuf's Hall

Saturday, October 27, 1877

A play: A Happy Shoemaker (Štastny švec) or The Changed Wives (Vymenené manzelky) a comic play, with songs in three acts.

Admission 25 cents - Children under 12 years 15 cents.

Commencement at 8.

The Opposition - January 31, 1878

Bohemian Theatre! Wilber Hokuf's Hall

Sunday, March 31, 1878. For the benefit of Josef Schuessler

A play Galley Slaves (A Dramatic plays in 3 acts)

New costumes! Social dance after the theatre

Admission 25 cents, Children under 12 years 15 cents

Commencement at 7.

The Opposition - April 25, 1878

The theatre at Hokuf's Hall Sunday night was well attended and the play, The Devil's Mill was hugely enjoyed by all who were fortunate enough to understand it. The actors proved themselves masters of the situation and Mr. Schuessler, the gentlemanly stage Manager, deserves a great deal of praise for having them so thoroughly drilled and proficient in their several parts.

The Opposition - May 16, 1878 Bohemian Theatre! Wilber Hokuf's Hall
Stage Manager J. Schuessler

Sunday, May 19, 1878 A play The Songs of a Musician a life scene with songs in 4 acts.
Social dance after the Theatre

New costumes from Omaha

Admission 25 cents. Children under 12 years 15 cents

Doors open at 7 p.m.

Commencement at 8

The Opposition - May 23, 1878

The Song of a Musician was rendered by Mr. J. Schuessler and his talented actors last Sunday night was highly appreciated by the immense throng assembled at Hokuf's Hall. Schuessler strives to make each entertainment excel any former production and thus far he has succeeded admirably. The music for these occasions is furnished by the Wilber brass band.

The Opposition - June 6, 1878 Bohemian Theatre! Wilber Hokuf's Hall Sunday

June 9, 1878. J.Schuessler, Stage Manager

A play The Journey to America in 4 acts

An add in The Opposition To the Citizens of Wilber: I wish to announce to the people of Wilber and vicinity that I have opened a new bakery on Third Street, and will keep at

all times a good supply of fresh bread, cakes, pies, fruits, confectioners and everything pertaining to that line. I will see you 28 loaves of good bread for \$1.00 and everything else as cheap as you can buy any place in town. Give me a call.

The Opposition - June 27, 1878 Bohemian Theatre! Wilber Hokuf's Hall:

Saturday, July 6, 1878. Jos. Schessler, State Manager

The celebration and remembrance of the burning of John Hus, the great Bohemian reformer, in the year 1415.

A dramatic play John Hus in 5 acts - A play by Josef Kajetán Tyl. New scenery by V. Janda.

New costumes ordered from Chicago.

Admission 35 cents, children 15 cents

From the beginning of the Czech amateur theatrical activity in Wilber, there were many talented actors. Those men and women traveled many miles from their farms to Wilber for rehearsal and as the town grew, new people came, as Cenek Duras with wife, J. J. Dvorák, V.A. Young, Mrs. Hermanová, Antonín Nepil, Josef Ruzicka, Dr. Jan Habenicht, František J. Sadílek and wife, Josef Tobicka, J.A. Hospodský, Karel Štastný, J.H. Brt, Frank Fictum and others.

Probably the best actors of that time were machinist Antonín Nepil, František J. Sadílek, Cenek Duras and his wife, Mrs. Hermanová, Mrs. Špírková and other ladies.

One of the oldest amateur actors and musicians in Wilber and in the state without a doubt was Tomáš Pašek, who used to come afoot six miles and further to attend rehearsals in Wilber, for he wanted to spare his horse team, so tired from the day's work. He was even more tired, but his love for dramatic art was greater.

The members of the Dramatic Club Tyl which was founded in 1893 in Wilber worked hard to present "divdla" not only in Wilber but in the surrounding Czech towns including Omaha and lodge halls and always tried to offer the best.

(Picture pg. 146 of the original script)

Terezie Jurková - Sadíková came to Chicago at the age of six with her family. She came to Omaha in 1876, then to Wilber in 1877.

(Picture pg. 146 of the original script)

Jan Brt, a druggist, a good actor in Czech plays in Wilber

I will name just a few of those and so many early Czech plays. The Dramatic Club Tyl presented an operetta U jezera (At the Lake) which was often repeated, Hrabe Monte Christo (The Count of Monte Christo), Dva sirotci (Two Orphan), a historical play Chodové which was repeated in Omaha, Kříž u potoka (A Cross at a Stream), Nevinne odsouzen (Innocently Condemned), Švanda dudák (The Švanda Bagpiper), Slepá nevěsta (A Blind Bride), Anezka Hruzová před porotou (Agnes Hruzová Before the Jury). For the performance of this play the members of the jury were chosen from among the audience attending from far and near, such as DuBois, Deweese, David City, Lincoln, Crete, Swanton, Western, and both Cuba and Hanover, Kansas.

But after this first period of the theatrical activity of the Dramatic Club Tyl in Wilber the activity of plays was almost stopped.

The prominent director of plays and very active actor Frank J. Sadílek, did finish his story in his book Z mých vzpomínek (From My Reminiscence) published in 1914, very pessimistically with these words: “The Dramatic Club Tyl of Wilber presented very nice plays and as some of the club members were gone, others soon came to take his or her place for the continuation of the theatrical activities. Very often they came from Omaha to perform in Wilber, very good and experienced actors as J. A Hospodský, Bandhauer, Heller, Karel Bartoš and others and we played in Omaha, too.

About 1908, when Dr. Karel Štastný, my son-in-law died, the so beautiful and so rich theatrical activity in Wilber started to slowly die.” But it didn't die! When I asked my helper of performing Czech plays in Wilber, Mr. Bernard Klásek of Wilber, this informed friend and diligent actor and musician, sent me this explanation: “I believe Mr. Sadílek made that prediction when fewer Czechs were coming to the U.S. and Saline County

was founded in the year 1914 when he wrote his book. The drama did go down, but not completely. It started gradually to gather strength and when the Sokol activities were revitalized we had a considerable activity with second generation Czechs taking part. True they were not as proficient in the language as the immigrants were, but we had a lot of Czechs who supported the plays.”

The Czech theatrical activity in Wilber was so rich that I can only report the year and the name of those plays. I cannot go in detail and write the names of all the actors, just the names of plays and actors of special importance. Most of those plays were performed by the Dramatic Club of Sokol Wilber, Z.C.B.J. (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association), some were presented by J.C.D. (Jednota českých dam - The Society of Czech Ladies), Saint Wenceslas Parish in Wilber, actors, and visiting theatrical groups like The Ludvík Theatre Company and guests from Omaha and other towns.

(Program pg. 148a of the original script)

Anezka Hruzová pred porotou

(pg. 149 of the original script)

An Advertisement for A Bohemian Play DRAGOUN V OHNI

Theatrical activities 1916

On October 28, a two act play Dragoun v ohni (The Dragon in Fire) was performed at the Lower Opera House to celebrate 2000 membership of Z.C.B.J. Lodge Libuse No. 70. A social dance after the play was on the program.

Theatrical activities 1917

On March 31, a four act play Bohata holka (The Rich Girl) under the management of F. J. Sadilek was presented at Placek’s Opera House to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Lodge Sbor Pavla Cecha, No. 113, J.C.D. (Jednota českých dam - the Society of Czech Ladies.)

(Picture on pg. 150 of the original script)

Advertisement for Bohata Holka

Theatrical activities 1920

The theatrical group of Wilber, for the celebration of the Havel's Festival, performed on October 1920, a three act tragedy Navrat zajatcu (The Return of a Prisoner) at the Wilber Opera House. H. A. Hospodsky was a director of this show.

(Picture on pg. 150 of the original script)

Advertisement for Navrat zajatcu

Theatrical Activities 1921

On January first, a five act comedy Potrhy svec (The Crazy Shoemaker) was presented at the Wilber Opera House. This play was repeated January 15th, and also February 13th. The profit from this play was for the benefit of the Hoover Fund of Czechoslovak Orphans. On February 5th, 1921, the Theatrical group of Wilber presented this comedy at the hall of Lodge Tabor Z.C.B.J.

(Picture on pg. 151 of the original script)

Advertisement for Potrhly svec

(Picture on pg. 151a of the original script)

Advertisement for Potrhly svec

(Picture on pg. 151a of the original script)

Advertisement for Mistr Bedrnik a jeho chasa

On March 19th, a six act comedy Mistr Bedrnik a jeho chasa (Master Bedrnik and His Young Fellows) was performed in Wilber.

On April 30 a one act comedy Boccaciu Decameron and a one act comedy

Nebezpečne Sousedství (A Dangerous Neighborhood) was performed by the Dramatic Club, Wilber as a farewell for Tomas Pasek.

(Picture on pg. 152 of the original script)

Advertisement for Boccaciov Decameron and Nebezpečne Sousedství

On July 24, a play Nerozlucni pratele (The Inseparable Friends) was presented at the Wilber Opera House. Among the actors were J.J. Novak, Mrs.J. Richtarik. Miss Irma Hospodsky, B. V. Horacek, Sidney Broz, Dr. Josef Cerna, Josef Kudlacek, Jaroslav Jurena, and Mrs. Barbora Shestak.

(Picture on pg. 153 of the original script)

Advertisement for Cerny Kriz v Lese

On October 30th; a play Cerny Kriz v Lese (The Black Cross in the Forest) was presented at the Wilber Opera House.

Theatrical Activities 1922

On February 23, a three act comedy Pojd na me srdce (Come On My Heart) was performed at the Wilber Opera House.

On March 19th, a drama Na selskem grunte (On the Peasant Property) was presented at the Wilber Opera House.

For the celebration of Joseph's and Josephine's, a three-act drama Farar z Podlesi (The Priest of Podlesi) was scheduled on March 19th but was postponed and presented on March 24th.

On Aril 16th, Easter Sunday, a play Nase roztomila Baruska (Our Charming Baruska) was presented at the Wilber Opera House. A three act comedy with songs lumpaci vagabuandus was performed by the Dramatic Club of Wilber. It was the last play of the spring season.

On July 13 and 14 the National Theatre Cesko-Americke, under the direction of Joseph R. Krejci and the artistic management of V. Havelka, presented at the Opera House a three act operetta Kde scrivener zpiva (Where the Skylark is Singing), music by Fr. Lehar, and a one act comedy Dvojcata (Twins).

On October 13th the Dramatic Club performed a three act comedy Macickova dovolena (Macicek's Vacation) at the Wilber Opera House.

Theatrical Activities 1923

On June 16;, the Dramatic Club Wilber performed a three act comedy Papinkovy zalety (Daddy's Wooing) for the American Legion in Wilber.

For the start of a new autumn theatrical season the Dramatic Club Wilber presented on September 28 a three act comedy v Ceskem raji (In the Czech Paradise) at the Wilber Opera House.

On November 24, 1923, the Wilber Dramatic Club presented a three act comedy Sykorka stryce Tobias (A Titmouse of Uncle Tobias).

Theatrical activity in Wilber 1924

On January 1, the Dramatic Club performed a four act drama about the life of our retired farmers Kletba mamonu.

On February 2, a play Paprikovy strycek (Red Pepper Uncle) was presented.

A comedy Tchyne do domu spokojenost z domu (Mother-in-law in the House and Happiness out of the House) was organized by Sbor Luna No. 22 S.P.J. on October 17, in the Opera House.

(Picture on pg. 155 of the original script)

Advertisement for Tchyne do domu spokojenost z domu

Theatrical Activities in Wilber 1925

The actors group of Wilber presented on January 1, a four act drama by Josef Kajetan Tyl named Prazsky flamed (The Idle Fellow of Prague). Lodge Western Star No. 28 J.C.D. (Jednota ceskych dam--The Society of Czech of Czech Ladies) presented on January 16, a two act comedy Prvni den po svatbe (The First Day after the Wedding) in the Opera House.

The Dramatic Club Wilber presented on March 20, a three act comedy Bozenciny zenichove (The Bridegrooms of Beatrice). On May 29, the Dramatic Club presented a drama Kletba mamonu. A Wilber group of actors presented a five act drama Zebracka a její syn (The Beggar Woman and her Son).

The Lodge of Pavel Cech No. 113 J.C.D. performed on November 7, a comedy Lord cesnek (Lord Garlic). The Dramatic club Wilber performed on December 4 a four act comedy Pan Svejk se zení (Mr. Svejk is Going to Marry).

On November 27, a comedy Proc bychom se netesili (Why Not Be Happy) was performed in Wilber. The Stage Manager was V. Sudik, music by Tomas Pasek.

Lodges Praha and Libuse of Z.C.B.J. arranged on December 18, a three act comedy To byla noc (It Was a Night).

(Picture on pg. 156a of the original script)

Advertisement for Prazsky Flamendr

(Picture on pg. 156a of the original script)

Advertisement for Proc bychom se netesili

(Picture on pg. 157 of the original script)

Advertisement for Pan Svejk se Zeni

Theatrical Activity in Wilber 1926

On January 15, a comedy Ta nase Mana (That's Our Mary) for the 40th year commemoration of the Lodge Hvezda zapudu (The Western Star) No. 28 of J.C.D. was presented.

On January 24, a theatrical group of Wilber presented a three act comedy Ta Nase Mana in Milligan.

(A picture on pg. 158 of the original script)

Advertisement for Ta Nase Mana

On April 16, a three act comedy Manzelska zed (A Matrimonial Wall) was performed by the Wilber Sokol at the Opera Hall. The same play was presented on April 18, in the hall of Lodge Tabor Z.C.B.J. in Dorchester.

On September 17, the Dramatic Club Wilber Sokol gave a one act comedy Sokolska laska (The Sokol's Love) IN THE Sokol Pavilion.

The American Legion presented on St. Wenceslas Day, September 28, in the newly arranged Opera Hall a three act comedy Senkyrka u divoke krazy (An Innkeeper at a Wild Beauty).

(A picture on pg. 159 of the original script)

Advertisement for Manzelska Zed

On October 1, a comedy with songs and dances Zasnoubeni po tme (The Engagement in the Dark) was performed at the Sokol Pavilion in Wilber under the direction of the Secretary, Mrs. Anna Malacova from Omaha. The various dances were performed by youngsters.

On October 15, Lodges Libuse and Praha Z.C.B.J. organized a five act play Furiant at the Sokol Pavilion.

On November 17, a one act comedy Pred svatadou (Before the Wedding) was performed by the Wilber Catholic Parish of St. Wenceslas in the Opera House.

On December 3, a three act drama Venkovane v Praze aneb Hvezda Prikopu (The Peasants in Prague or the Star of Prikopu) was presented by Lodge Pavel Cech, No. 113, J.C.D. in the Opera House. This program started with the unfurling of the American and then the Czech flags, and Dr. J. F. Sramek and Mrs. S. Slepnicka sang the American and Czech anthems.

After the play, Miss Havelkova, Roby Hanzlova, Stella Maresova, Evelyn Hotovec, Lillian Brabcova, Edna Prokopova, Vera Kalalova and Loretta Kubcova, performed dances with the motto: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter.

(A picture on pg. 160 of the original script)

Advertisement for "Furiant"

For a farewell of the year 1926 and to greet the new year 1927, on December 31, a three act comedy Ja se zenit nebudu (I Will Not Marry) was presented.

(A picture on pg. 161 of the original script)

Advertisement for "Pred Svatbou"

(A picture on pg. 161a of the original script)

Advertisement for "Pozor! Pozor!"

Theatrical activities 1929 in Wilber

On February 9, the Dramatic Club performed a play with delightful songs, Lucifer.

On March 30, Sokol Dramatic Club from Omaha presented a three act play with songs and dances Ma panenka modrooka (My Blue-eyed Doll).

On April 6, the Wilber Dramatic club performed a three act comedy, Armada spasu (An Army of Fun) at the Opera Hall.

On April 13, the Lodge Hvezda of West No. 28, presented a three act comedy Honba za lupicem aneb falesny Lecian (A Hunting After the Bandit or a False Lecian) at the Wilber Sokol Hall.

The Dramatic Club Sokol performed a three act comedy Ceska maminka (The Czech Mother). This play was presented on the day of St. Wenceslas, September 28.

On October 12, the Lodge of Pavel Cech No. 113, J.C.D. arranged at the Sokol Hall a four act drama Tajemstvi myslivny (The Mystery of the Gamekeeper's House).

On October 27, the Dramatic club Sokol Wilber performed a three act play Pro vlajku ceskoslovenskou (For the Czechoslovakian Flag) to commemorate eleven years of Czech Independence. The first act of this play was during the Mobilization of 1914; second act was during the war in the Army Lazaretto and the third act in December of 1918 with the arrival of the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic.

(A picture on pg. 162a of the original script)

Advertisement for "Lucifer"

(A picture on pg. 162a of the original script)

Advertisement for "Honba za Lupicem aneb Falesni Lecian"

(A picture on pg. 162 of the original script)

Advertisement for "Pro vlajku Ceskoslovenskou"

On November 9, 1929, the Lodge Libuse No. 70, Z.C.B.J. presented a four act drama with songs Chudy pisnickar (The Poor Ballad Singer) at the Sokol Hall.

(A picture on pg. 163a of the original script)

Poster for "Krajanek Svejek"

(A picture on pg. 163b of the original script)

Poster for "Pepicka z Male Hospudky"

(A picture on pg. 163c of the original script)

Poster for "Ja Dohral"

(A picture on pg. 163d of the original script)
Poster for Loutkove Divadlo or Posviceni v Hudlicich

(A picture on pg. 163e of the original script)
Poster for "Kam Nemuze Cert Nastrci Babu"

Theatrical Activities in Wilber in 1930

On January 1, the Dramatic Club Sokol Wilber presented a comedy Krajanek Svejka (The Miller's Journeyman Svejka).

On March 8, a comedy Pepicka z male hospudky (Josephine from a Small Pub).

On March 22, a play Zahrej mi, taticku, naposled (Daddy, Play for Me A LastTime) presented by the Dramatic club Sokol Omaha at the Sokol Pavilion in Wilber.

The Dramatic Club Sokol Wilber performed on May 10, an operetta Tonca s Emou do vdavek se zenou (Tony with Emma are Running for a Wedding). This play was repeated on May 24 in the Wilber Sokol Pavilion.

The three days of dedication and celebration of the new Sokol Wilber Auditorium, September 26, 27, 28, started with music by the Wilber Municipal Band; on September 27th, a dance with music by the Persians of Lincoln, and on September 28th, a three-act operetta Andulka safari (A Steward's Annie). It is a story of rural life with songs and dances. The names of actors are as follows:

Velkostatkar (Landowner) Zalesky	J.J. Novak
Leopold Schwestka, spravce (Administrator)	J. Langpaul
Pani Tucna, kucharka (a cook)	pani Beta Dejml
Otacek, je ji syn (her son)	Bernard Klasek
Matejka, safar (steward)	Frank M. Dejml
Barbora, jeho zena (his wife)	pi. Tereza Bartos
Andulka, jejich decera (their daughter)	sl. Georgia Krajnik
Sojka, domkar (farmer)	Martin J. Ryba

Frantik, jeho syn (his son)

W. J. Borecky

slecna Mici (Miss Mici

Irma Richtarik

Klofac Tvaruzek, hlidac (Watchman)

Karel Holecek

The director: Anton Novak

Music: Mrs. Josephine Shary

The Dramatic Club of Sokol Omaha performed October 25, in the Sokol Auditorium in Wilber, a three act play with songs Ja dohral pisen posledni (I finished the Last Song). The Stage Manager was L. T. Kadlec; the director of the Sokol orchestra was Karel Pepodal.

Something special was presented in the Sokol Hall in Wilber on November 8, 1930. It was a Puppet Theater Posvicseni v Hudlicich (Thanksgiving in Hudlice) presented by the first Czech-American Traveling Theatre.

On November 23rd, a three act play U vrbicek (At the Willow) was presented in the Sokol Hall in Wilber under the shield of the Brush Creek Sokol.

On November 27, a three act comedy Kam nemuze cert nastrci babu (Where The Devil Cannot Go, He Will Push There a Crone). This play was presented by the Dramatic Club Sokol of Wilber.

Theatrical activities 1931 in Wilber

The Wilber Sokol Dramatic club performed on January 1st a four act play Hrabenka z podskali (The Countess of Podskali). On February 21, 1931, for the celebration of the fifth year of existence of Sokol Wilber a three act operetta V nasem pivovare vesele jsou tvare (In Our Brewery There are Merry Faces) was performed.

(A picture on pg. 165a of the original script)

Poster for "Hrabenka z Podskali"

(A picture on pg. 166 of the original script)

Program for V nasem pivovare vesele jsou tvare

On March 28, 1931, the Wilber Sokol presented a comedy Obchod je obchod (Business is Business).

On April 11, 1931, the Dramatic Club of the Crete Sokol performed a drama in Wilber Laska nad pomstu mocnejsi (Love is Stronger Than Vengeance). Between acts, two vocal selections were given by Helen Kohl, with Dr. Leonard Aksamit accompanying her on the accordion. The play was directed by Mrs. J.W. Sedlackova.

(A picture on pg. 166a of the original script)

Poster for "Ukradeny kontysic"

The Dramatic Club Wilber Sokol presented in Crete on May 4, 1931 an operetta V nasem pivovare vesele jsou tvare (In Our Brewery there Are Merry Faces) for the celebration of 47 years of existence of Sokol Crete.

On September 26, the Sokol in Wilber performed a three act play Ukradeny kontysic (A Stolen County Seat). The play was taken from a historical event of Saline County, the moving of the county seat records from Pleasant Hill to Wilber in 1878. Although based on fact, the play was spiced up with some of the author's original ideas and a love story, which ended happily and captured the interest of the audience.

The first act was at the old court house at Pleasant Hill where the county officials were to be seen in the performance of their official duties when the Wilber gang arrived to make off with the county records and furniture. Lumir Vosika, the Sheriff, Bernard Klasek, the County Treasurer, and other officers objecting to the proceedings halted the action of the Wilberites only for a short time until the famous "fake" telegram from District Judge Weaver at Falls City told them that the decision was in favor of Wilber and that the County Seat could be moved. The telegram later proved to be a market report. The treasurer, Mr. Klasek, was picked up in his office chair and carried struggling from the scene.

The second act had as a setting a place along the road to Wilber, where a wagon carrying the safe from the Treasurer's office had broken down, and the Deputy Sheriff had been left to guard it. A pony and a rider brought onto the stage gave a realistic

touch to the scene. The arrival at Wilber with the court house supplies, and the gay celebration that evening including the wedding of the lovers of the play, brought it to a very pleasing ending. Miss Camille Dvorakova and Elmer Sasek, playing the part of Marenka and Frantisek, were the lovers whose wedding ceremony was performed so eloquently by Judge J. J. Novak.

The players were as follows: Bernard Klasek, County Treasurer; Emil Kostka, County Clerk; Lumir Vosika, Sheriff; J. J. Novak, judge; Fred Shimerda, commissioner; Tom Mara, janitor; Mrs. Beta Dejmlova, janitor's wife; Karel Holecek, farmer Horak; Mrs. Terezie Bartosova, farmer Horak's, wife; Miss Kamila Dvorakova, their daughter; Elmer Sasek, her sweetheart; Edward Rychtarik, William Borecky, Jaroslav Jurena, Viktor Slepicka, William Pasek, Jan Kores, Frank Kozak, farmers; F. J. Maryska, a peddler.

The play was written by Joe Jaeger, a former resident of this county. The audience was delighted between the acts with a violin trio consisting of Miss Olga Novakova, Bernard Klasek, and W. M. Pasek and vocal duet by Misses Kamila Dvorakova and Helena Kuncova.

Music for the dance after the play was furnished by Slepicka's Brass Band. Some of the Directors--Mrs. Stanley Bartos, W. J. Borecky, F. M. Dejml (Dejml wrote and directed the play "Stolen County Seat." Cenek Duras, Karel Holecek, J. A. Hospodsky, Dr. Kalal, Mrs. Alice Kostka, Mrs. Joseph Kunc, James Langpaul, Tomas Mara, Frank Mezera, Mrs. Herman, Mr. and Mrs. Anton Novak, J. J. Novak, Harry Peikar, Martin Ryba, J. R. Schuessler, F. J. Sadilek and Mrs Sadilek, Mrs. Spirk, Frantisek Ruzicka, Peter Safarik.

(A picture on pg. 168a of the original script)

Poster for "Brabcak sevce andryska"

(A picture on pg. 168b of the original script)

Poster for "Pobehlice"

(A picture on pg. 169 of the original script)
Advertisement for “Los Ten Nejstastnejsi”

On October 25, 1931 a three act play with songs Ja dohral pisen posledni (I Finished My Last Song)

On November 1, a play Los ten nejstastnejsi nebo Zenich a loterie (A Lottery Ticket is the Happiest or The Bridegroom From the Lottery).

On November 26, 1931, a three act comedy with songs Brabcak sevce Andrese (A Sparrow of the Shoemaker Andrysek).

After the District meeting of the Z.C.B.J. the actors from the Z.C.B.J. Dramatic Club of Crete performed a one act comedy Populace (A Runaway Girl) in the Wilber Sokol Hall. The Sysel’s Band played for the dance.

Theatrical activities for 1932 in Wilber

On March 19, the members of the Wilber Dramatic Club with actors from Sokol Brush Creek presented a play Hasici jedou (The Firemen are Riding) in the Wilber Hall. This play was directed by Martin Ryba.

For the celebration of six years of existence of Sokol Wilber a three act drama Tatickovi to nejkrasnejs (For Daddy All the Beautiful) was presented on February 20th in the Sokol Auditorium.

On May 21, a drama of rural life Vymenkari (The Retired Farmers) was presented as the last Czech play of the spring season.

To commemorate the Festival of Saint Wenceslas, the Dramatic Club of Sokol Wilber opened its autumn season on September 24th, with the operetta Romanek z ceske vesnicky (Romance of a Czech Village).

The Lodge Libuse No. 70, Z.C.B.J. presented on October 15 a three act comedy Kdyz clovek zdedi million (When a Person Inherited a Million). The Dramatic Club of Omaha Sokol presented on November 5th a three act play Rezinka od pechoty (Rezinka of the Infantry).

On November 24th the Wilber Sokol actors performed a three act comedy Senkyrka u zelene zaby (An Innkeeper of the Green Frog).

(A picture on pg. 170a of the original script)
Advertisement for “Kdyz clovek zdedi million”

(A picture on pg. 170a of the original script)
Advertisement for “Senkyrka u Zelene Zaby”

Theatrical Activity in Wilber 1933

On January 1st a comedy with songs Zenich se zajecim srdcem (A Bridegroom With a Rabbit Heart” was presented.

On May 14th, 1933, a comedy Pernikove srdce (A Gingerbread Heart) was presented by the Sokol of Wilber Dramatic Club.

On November 11th, 1933, a play with songs entitled Deti naseho pluku (The Children of our Regiment) was performed in the Wilber Sokol Auditorium.

On November 30th, a three act operetta Tulak (Tramp) was presented at the Wilber Sokol Auditorium by Sokol of Wilber with Miss Helen Kunc and Harry Peiker in the title roles, supported by a cast of thirty people. Baruska, the maid, Vojtanek and Felix, the meek husband and his jealous wife, Marta, provided most of the comedy. The play was in modern costume. This play required much preparation and the cast worked very hard to make the play a success. Mrs. Sylvia Klasek directed the chorus and played the piano accompaniment.

On December 31st, 1933 an operetta Ta ceska musika srdce pronika (That Czech Music is Penetrating the Heart) was performed in the Wilber Opera House by the Dramatic Club of the Sokol Brush Creek.

A stage for theatrical activities was built in almost every Czech Hall; Western Bohemian Fraternal Association, Sokol and Catholic Workman.

HOW MUCH YOU PAID FOR THE ADMISSION

It depended on the budget of the expenses of a particular play and music. It was normally 50 cents for gentlemen, 35 cents for ladies and between 15 or 25 cents for children.

(A picture on pg. 172a of the original script)

Poster for "Tulak"

(A picture on pg. 172b of the original script)

Poster for "Pernikove Srdce"

Theatrical activity in Wilber 1934

On January first, 1934, the operetta Romanek z ceske vesnice (Romance of a Czech Village) was presented by the Wilber Sokol Dramatic Club.

The Dramatic Club of Sokol Wilber presented on January 27 a drama Dva Sirotci (The Two Orphans), a story of the Revolution in Paris in 1779 Prodejte hadry, kosti, stare zelezo (Sell Your Old Rags, Bones and Old Iron) was the title of the lively three act comedy presented by the Sokol on February 24, 1934.

(A picture on pg. 173 of the original script)

Newspaper Article on Anniversary

(A picture on pg. 173a of the original script)

Poster for "Muzikanti z Ceske Vesnice"

(A picture on pg. 173b of the original script)

Poster for "Prodejte, Hadry, Kosti, Strare Zelezo"

(A picture on pg. 173c of the original script)

Poster for "Marjanko, Marjanko Ma"

(A picture on pg. 173d of the original script)

Poster for "Karneval"

(A picture on pg. 173e of the original script)

Poster for “V Cas Valky Tam U Nas”

(A picture on pg. 173f of the original script)

Poster for “My jdem svetem s flasinetem”

(A picture on pg. 174 of the original script)

Poster for “Ruze z Hor”

On March 17th, an operetta Ruze prerie (A Rose of the Prairie).

On April 28th a three act merry comedy with songs, Marjanko, Marjanko, ma. (Oh Mary, Mary Mine) was presented by the Wilber Sokol at the Sokol Auditorium. On May 19th, the Sokol exercise was presented.

On September 29th, the Dramatic Club Sokol Wilber presented a five act operetta “Karnival” (A Carnival) with songs and dance directed by Bernard Klasek and stage manager Harry Peiker.

On October 27th, a four act play V cas valky tam u vas (During the War There In The Old Country) with living pictures, songs, singing choir, and a gymnastic performance given by Sokol.

A play, My jdeme svetem s flasinetem (Traveling the World with a Hand Organ) was presented by the Wilber Sokol on Thanksgiving night before a large audience.

Those participating were:

Josef Klika, organ grinder

Anna, his wife

Harry, their son

Mina, their daughter

Lojza, his helper

Robert Steinic, Harry’s friend

Frank Bily

Mrs. of Platonova

Mrs. of Bardonova

W. M. Borecky

Mrs. Barbora Shestak

Rudy K. Kunc

Miss Helene Kuncova

Harry Peiker

Wm. Pasek

Adolph Zajicek

Mrs. Mildred Hoffman

Mrs. Irene Hanek

A Lady	Mrs. Theresa Bartos
Bibiana Kleprtackova	Mrs. Emma F. Kucerova
Lanka, her daughter	Mrs. Camille Brozova
Guests	Elenor Kadlec, Vera Dejml
Guests	Milo Dejml and Fr. Kozak Jr.
Councilor Slivka	F.O. Kucera
Moric Immergruen, banker	Bernard Klasek
Police Commissar	Jerry Kadlec
Policeman	Robert Hoffman
Boy	Robert Kucera
Servants	Melvin Prachejl, Frank Pekarek

On December 25th a merry three act play with songs Ruze z hor (A Rose From The Mountains) was presented.

Theatrical activity in Wilber 1935

A three act play "Bordynkari" (Boarders) was presented on January first and was a repeat performance of a play given in Wilber twenty two years ago. It was a big hit.

(A picture on pg. 176 of the original script)

Playbill for "Bordynkari"

On February 2nd a three act play Zavadiilka vdava dceru (Mrs. Zavadilka is Marrying Her Daughter). On February 23rd a three act drama Osirelo dite (The Child Orphan) was presented in the Sokol Wilber Auditorium for commemorating nine years of existence of Sokol Wilber. On April 20th, a play Cikanko, ty krasna (Oh, You Beautiful Gypsy Girl), a story about the perfidious heart and love of a beautiful gypsy girl.

(A picture on pg. 176a of the original script)

Playbill for “Osirelo Dite”

(A picture on pg. 176b of the original script)

Playbill for “Cikanko Ty Krasna”

(A picture on pg. 176c of the original script)

Playbill for “Pisen Mladi”

(A picture on pg. 176d of the original script)

Playbill for “Ceskem Divadlem”

(A picture on pg. 176e of the original script)

Playbill for “Dcerusky tatika Berusky aneb Svestkova Aleje

On May 11th, a three act operetta Pisen mladi (A Song of Youth) was performed by the Wilber Sokol group for the benefit of the Czech School.

On September 28th, the Wilber Catholic Parish of St. Wenceslas celebrated the Name Day of this Czech Prince with a morning Holy Mass. During this mass, Reverend Benedict Bauer of Dwight was present with a Czech sermon. In the evening, the Saint Ivan No. 16, K.D. from Brainard, Butler County, performed at the Wilber Auditorium the play Staroceske posviceni dedy Moravece (An Old Czech Thanksgiving Day of Grandfather Moravec.)

On November 28th the Sokol theatrical group performed a three act comedy with songs Dcerusky tatika Berusky aneb Svestkova aleje (The Daughters of Daddy Baruska or The Plum Alley).

The Theatrical Actvity in Wilber 1936

On January 1st, the wilber Sokol Dramatic club performed a four act drama Dite lesa (The Child of the Forest). A play Cerveny kohout nebo palic (A Red Rooster or the Incendiary) scheduled for February 15th was cancelled and postponed until March 21st.

On April 11th, 1936 the Wilber Sokol presented a three act merry play with songs Vesnice zpiva (The Village is Singing).

On May 23rd, a group of young actors from Milligan, Fillmore County, presented in the Sokol Wilber Auditorium a three act play Starousku nezapirej aneb Hrom ma do baby uhodit (Old Papa, Don't Deny or Thunder Must Strike the Old Woman).

(A picture on pg. 177a of the original script)

Dva Nejkrasnejsi Ceske Mluvene Filmy

Trampoty Pana Naceradce

Karel Havlicek Borovsky

Po Predstaveni Tanecni Zabava

Cerveny Kohout

(A picture on pg. 178 of the original script)

Advertisement for "Starousku nezapirej "

On September 19th, the children from the Czech summer school presented a three act comedy Rozpustili kluci (Naughty Boys).

On September 24th, a four act comedy Nevesta s dukaty (The Bride with Ducats) was performed by the Wilber Dramatic Club at the Auditorium. And on November 26th a three act comedy Zazracny panak (The Miracle Dandy) was performed.

Theatrical activity in Wilber 1937

On January 1st, Wilber Sokol presented a three act comedy with songs and dances Husopaska (Selska krev--The Goose Girl).

On August 21st and 22nd, a great celebration in the form of a Czech Day in Wilber commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Western Bohemian Fraternal Organization.

During the program, a Czech play Okenko do nebe (The Little window to Heaven) was given on Saturday evening, August 21st by the Clarkson Dramatic Club at the Sokol Auditorium.

On Sunday, August 22nd, there was a grand parade of floats and costumed groups followed by a varied program at the Ball Park, including speakers from Cedar Rapids, Lincoln, and Omaha, plus chorus singing, concert band music, Sokol drills and

Czechoslovak folk dances. A large dance was held Sunday evening at the Sokol Auditorium.

On October 23rd, the Wilber Sokol Dramatic Club in cooperation with the Sokol Brush Creek and the pupils of the Czech school, presented a three act play Slib z fronty (A Promise from the Front).

(A picture on pg. 179 of the original script)

A newspaper article about the above play

(A picture on pg. 179a of the original script)

Poster advertising "Husopaska)

(A picture on pg. 180 of the original script)

Poster advertising "Lida, devce z Krkonos"

On November 25th the Wilber Sokol presented a three act comedy Lida, devce z Krkonos aneb Nerikej, hochu, ze mne mas rad (Lida, a Girl from the Great Mountains or Don't Say, Boyo, You Like Me.)

(A picture on pg. 181,181a-c of the original script)

Poster for "Slib z Fronty"

Poster for "Cerveny Kohout aneb Palic"

Poster for "Vesnice Zpiva"

Poster for "Rozpustilil kluci"

THE DEDICATED WORK OF INVISIBLE PERSONS

The prompter is a very important member of the play. In Wilber there were a number of prompters who worked over those many years of the theatrical activities. Franta Cetlovsky, Mrs. Frank Anyz;, Mrs. Betty Holecek, Mrs Anna Honzik, one of the charter members, Mrs. Lizzie Jiskra were the ever faithful prompters.

Theatrical activity in Wilber 1938

On January 1st, a three act comedy with songs and dances V udoli tom carokrasnem (In the Charming valley) was presented by the Wilber Sokol group at the Sokol Auditorium.

On February 26th a three act play Cela ves se smeje aneb na nasi pude strasi (The Whole Village is Laughing or In Our Attic is Fright) was presented for the celebration of twelve years since the founding of the Sokol Wilber.

(A picture on pg. 182 of the original script)

Newspaper Article on the Messiah

On April 16th, a three act comedy Nas Naci pro legraci (Our Naci for Fun) was presented by the Sokol Wilber.

The students of the Czech school under the direction of Prof. Frank J. Kolbaba, a noted Czech scholar and violinist who was a pupil of Sevcik, a great Czech violinist, presented a very amusing program entitled Cirkus on Saturday, August 20th. Prof. J. Kolbaba was appointed by the trustees of the Sokol and Z.C.B.J. lodges to teach Czech language in Wilber. Prof. Kolbaba was well known among the Czechs as a poet and his poems and songs were frequently printed in leading Czech papers. As a violin teacher, he was employed by leading colleges and universities of Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico.

A fair crowd attended the Czech school program at the Sokol Auditorium given by the 34 students who attended the summer term. Prof. Kolbaba wrote the music and speaking parts. A short musical program preceded the play Cirkus.

The following children participated: Georgia Horacek, Elvira Homolka, Darlene Hoffman, Irma Petracek, Louise Fay Simecek, Sylvia Zavadil, Blanche Kostka, Chloe Vesely, Josephine Janecek, Mavis Svarc, Laura Neuman, Emily Kostka, Joe Horacek, Joan Simecek, Mable Neuman, LeRoy Zavadil, Lorraine Eldred, Albertus Dodson, Martha Horacek, Lillian Wanek, Darlene Smisek, Shirley Svarc, Ann Slapnicka, Lydia Vosicky, Irene Langpaul, Joe Spurek, Robert Kostka and Irvin Fuchs. Superintendent

and Mrs. Klasek assisted in the musical numbers.

Czech students attending the summer session of Peru State College held a picnic Sunday, June 12th. The affair was sponsored by Mrs. Emilie P. Kirk, art instructor, and the committee in charge included Miss Lillian Havel, Miss Helen Nova, and Miss Mildred Rischling. The following attended the picnic: Lillian Havel, Vera Dejml, Evelyn Homolka, Helen Janecek, Inez Shimerda, Evelyn Zajicek, Elmer Broz, Charles Rezabek, all of Wilber; Ella Barta, Swanton; Alice Klasek, Georgia Klasek, Western; Rose Buzek, Anna Hromadka, Helen Novak, Mildred Richling, Erma Schultz, Rose Suda, Irma Vosoba, Milligan; Libbye Slama, Dorchester; Mildred Cervený, Fairbury; Sylvia Hubka, Pawnee City; Blanche Jirovsky, Geneva; Adles Jun, Ludvik Jun, DuBois; Gladys Kalina, Agnes Kouma, Georgia Ann Maixner, Dwight; Martha Kuzel, Exeter; Helen Peters, Odell; Rose Placek, Fairmont; Georgia Ujck, Omaha; Dorothy Barta, Steele City, and Mr. and Mrs. Kirk of Peru.

(A picture on pg. 173a of the original script)

Poster for "Cela Ves se smeje"

(A picture on pg. 183b of the original script)

Poster for "Nas Naci pro legraci"

In observance of the 12th anniversary of the organization of the present chapter of the Sokol of Wilber, the Czech play *Strasidelna hospoda* (The Haunted Inn) was presented at the Sokol Auditorium and was well attended and much enjoyed by all present. A "Comedy of Errors" is a right description of this play. Many a hearty laugh was enjoyed by the audience at the complications and comical situations of the play.

The Wilber Sokol play *Nevesta legionarova* (The Bride of the Legionary) was presented on October 29th, 1938 for a commemoration of the 20th existence of the Czechoslovak Republic.

On November fifth, an entertainment in the Wilber Sokol Auditorium was arranged by the Lodge Rad Praha No. 54 Z.C.B.J. to commemorate the 40 year Jubilee. The same day in the evening a speech by Vojta Benes, a brother of the

Czechoslovak President, Edward Benes, was given.

On November 24th, 1938, Sokol of Wilber presented a three act comedy Manzel v kleci (The Husband in a Cage).

(A picture on pg. 184a of the original script)

Poster for "Nevesta Legionarova"

(A picture on pg. 184b of the original script)

Poster for "Mazel v Kleci"

To see the old year out and the new year in, a play Kazdy snad ma neco rad neb Vincek Duh, spravny sluha (Perhaps Everyone Likes Something or Vincek Duhs, a Right Servant) was presented on December 31st, 1938 by the Sokol of Wilber theatrical group at the Sokol Auditorium in Wilber.

(A picture on pg. 185 of the original script)

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT THE PRECEDING PLAY

(A picture on pg. 185a of the original script)

Poster for "Marenku si neber"

The last play in Wilber

A drama Marenku si neber (Don't marry Her) was the last play performed by the Wilber Sokol Dramatic Club in 1942. The play was scheduled on January 1st, 1942, but because of a very bad blizzard, it was postponed to January 24th, 1942. This was the time of World War II and quite a few of Czech people were involved in activities supporting the war effort.

And now, during our present time that very rich theatrical activity in Wilber is dead and the modern stage in the sokol Auditorium is now silent. Do you believe it will be permanently?

OPERETTA PLEASES WILBER AUDIENCE (pg. 187 of the original script)

The Wilber Republican February 27, 1931

(By our Theatrical Correspondent)

The operetta V nasem pivovare vesele jsou tvare given at the Sokol Auditorium by the Sokol Dramatic club on Saturday, February 1, was one of the best dramatic plays presented here in a long time. We always expect them to give us a fine performance and we have never been disappointed in the past, but this time they gave us a play far beyond our expectations and in a manner that would be a credit to any professionals.

Staging a musical operetta is a much harder task than an ordinary play, more especially when accompanied by a whole orchestra. The orchestra and the players performed together in such manner and fine harmony that we cannot see it could be improved. Our players have given us many musical operettas in the past but never one accompanied by an entire orchestra like this time. Each individual member strived to give the best he had and accompanied by the fine orchestra, made the performance come off in a first class manner.

We could see that something extra ordinary was to be given us when the director of the orchestra, Bernard Klasek, raised his baton to start and we heard one of the finest overtures to which we have ever had the pleasure of listening.

The Czechs are a nation that love music and songs and we have many among us who are accomplished musicians. One of these, Mr. Klasek, made his selections and the result was simply fine. Mr. Klasek devoted much of his time and talent to produce the good results of this play. This music was in perfect harmony with the singers on the stage. The musicians and the players were in perfect harmony with each other and the whole performance appeared as though given by professionals. We might ask that the musicians or at least some of them may be truly called professionals as in the case of Tom Pasek, Sr., who has been in the musical field for over 65 years, and who is 82 years of age. He may be old in years, but only a youngster when it comes to music.

Miss Olga Novak and Wm Pasek playing the first and second violins made their

instruments sing and trill in the songs without missing a single note. At the piano was Miss Sylvia Smrz of Crete and this instrument was certainly played to the entire satisfaction of the director Mr. Klasek. The clarinets of Leslie Doane and Henry Bednar were in the finest harmony with the violins and we must say the same of the cornet of Robert Tichy and the trombone of Adolf Sobotka. The drums were played by Chas.

Novak, the youngest member of the orchestra, but with a bright future in this line. That the whole orchestra played with pep and feeling was evidenced by the work of Mr. Pasek who had only about half his bow left when the play was over.

The play was started by the chorus of "Malsters" who sang to the birthday of the "Dad" and was composed of Messers. B. Horacek, E. Kostka, L. Rychtarik, J. Kores and the Slepicka bothers. Their coming out reminded us much of some of the good times of former days. Mr. Langpaul in the part of "Dad" was at home on the stage as he usually is. In the past we usually saw him in the roles of a lover, but since he took on the responsible position of "Dad" he seemed to have put on additional weight.

The part of Dr. Vransy was played by Fr. Mezera and he looked the part. His worst enemy, Miss Lizinka was played by Miss C. Dvorak who hated the doctor on the outward appearance so much that it took many sweet kisses to smooth things over when no one was present. It was a pleasure to listen to their duet accompanied by the orchestra. Miss Dvorak controls her voice in a fine manner and she can be pleased with her performance in this play. Mrs. A. Kozak playing the part of the good old Czech mother who suffers much because she wishes to see her daughter Lizinka and the doctor happy. "Dad" certainly was not right to call this good old mother a "hag" but this is not his fault but that of the author Branard.

Harry Peiker in the part of Tonda Rozpuk and K. Holecek as Matejcek Cespiva were the Malsters. Tonda, although a Malster by trade has different employment by making arrangements for secret meetings of Lizinka and the doctor. The part of the servant Nanyinka was played by Mrs. M. Slapnicka. She fell in love with both Cespiva and Rozpuk but this we must forgive her as all Nanyinkas seem to have this habit.

The duet and dance of Mrs. Slapnicka and Mr. Peiker were well received by the audience. They responded with an encore. Mr. Cespiva was sincere in love and

sincere when he inflicted the whipping. The old Jewish man with his aching back will testify to that. The hair of J. J. Novak has changed color since the last time we saw him but we must admit that this was the first time we ever saw a red haired forester. Wm. Borecky in the part of the miller has added considerable flesh.

In general we could see that that air about the brewery agrees with all the gentlemen. We could see that this extra flesh did not fit them very well but we hope that they will get used to it in a short time and will be able to handle their extra weights in a proper manner.

It's no use, but in the end, the old Jew played by Elmer Sasek was unbeatable. No one could believe that Mr. Sasek did not slip from some Jewish ghetto somewhere in the Jewish part of the city of Praha; it was worth the price of admission to see Mr. Sasek only in the role of the old Jew.

The performance was perfect, but to be perfect, very many things are necessary. In the first place a modern well equipped stage is a necessity. The profit derived from this and similar performances has enabled the Sokol Society to build this modern auditorium and completely equipped stage. The beautiful scenery on a large stage with modern lighting effects where the lights can be dimmed to resemble the light of the moon, and the moon showing through the clouds, all adds to the successful performance of the play. This all takes a lot of work and Mr. Peiker certainly does his share when he sings, takes part in plays, paints scenery, makes up the characters and solicits ads for Sokol's programs.

AFTER THE PLAY A DANCE-

The climax of the typical Czech program was the dance in which the entire audience participated. The bands that played for these social evening dances were popular not only in Wilber, but throughout Nebraska. Most of these dances were often playing until the early hours of the morning. The following list contains the names of some of those orchestras and bands: W. Borecky, Fred Kubert's band, Charles Kucera, Jerry Koci, Frank Kunc, Moon Masters Orchestra. Tomas Pasek, Stanley Slepicka, Sobotka Band, Henry Steinacher Orchestra from Milligan. The City Band under

St.Shestak, Steve's Harmony Boys, Ed Sysel Orchestra and Robert Tichy Band.

In 1963, Wilber was designated the Czech Capital of Nebraska by Governor Frank Morrison's proclamation.

On May 11, 1953 at a public business meeting in Wilber the state organization was formed. The local group became the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber and superimposed over that a state organization called the "Nebraska Czechs Incorporated."

In 1965 a State Historical Marker was dedicated in Wilber to the Nebraska Czechs for their organization and to their Nebraska ancestry.

It was these devoted performers, our Czech pioneers, who were not only building houses of prayers, churches, and cemeteries, but they, with an excessive devotion, built different society halls, with stages for theaters, too. These halls are still here, are still preserved, but their stages are silent, and maybe forever?

But Wilber, the Czech Capital of Nebraska, started the first move to revive Czech theatrical activity in Nebraska and it should be an urgent example for others to follow. From the first Czech Festival in Wilber in 1962, Joe Vosoba with help of his wife Kathy, started to prepare and perform every year from 1962, an evening program-- now traditional--"The Pageant of the Czech People," a living panorama from the history of the Czech nation, with Czech and English explanation of what every scene on the stage is showing, and with a part of Czech classical music. This is not only a very interesting program but educational as well. Who will follow this theatrical action, not only special in the United States, but in the free world, too?

Mr. Bernard Klasek sent this explanation about buildings where the Czech plays were performed in the past: The Opera House in Wilber; Placek's Opera House and the Lower Opera House were all known as the Wilber Opera House, and it was located just east of the railroad tracks. The building is no longer standing. The Sokol Pavilion was located where the present Sokol auditorium is standing the Pavilion was constructed more or less as a temporary building to hold the Sokol activities.

(A picture on pg. 193 of the original script)

Picture of Sokol Pavilion 1926

Picture of Old Sokol Auditorium

Picture of Sokol Auditorium 1979

CZECH DRAMS IN CLARKSON - COLFAX COUNTY

My Explanation

The theatrical activity in this typical Czech community was very rich in the past. Mrs. Blanche Pospichalova was a leading promoter and director of Czech plays. I am very sorry, but I cannot have what I wanted in this book. I did try with the help of Alfred Novacek of Dwight to contact the leading Czech people there asking for information about this matter. We received a promise many months ago and we had counted on it and we were waiting. At the last moment those Czech friends, who promised a story about Czech dramas were busy with other Czech actions, and one of their problems was, they themselves are busy with research for publishing a book about the history of their town and in that book will be a special chapter about the Czech plays there.

Many months ago I sent a few letters to the older citizens of Clarkson asking them for any information about theatrical activities, but I didn't receive any answer. I regret it very much. Therefore, my book is not complete.

I have just a few copies of theatrical posters and one photo sent by me by Frank Smrz of Omaha, a former citizen and actor in Clarkson.

(A picture on pg. 193b-g of the original script)

Picture of cast of :“Nase Gusta”

Picture of Z.C.B.J. Hall in Clarkson

Poster of “Diblikova dceruska”

Poster of “Ta Nase Mana”

Poster of “Zahraj mi tatinku naposled”

Poster of “Hrabenka z Podskali”

Poster of “Slepy Zenich”

LUDVIK THEATRE COMPANY

By Alfred Novacek

(A picture on pg. 194 of the original script)

Frantisek Ludvik

Frantisek Ludvik, the founder of the most famous theatre companies in the Old Country, was born March 3rd 1843. in Prague, Bohemia. In 1893 a few prominent Czech Americans invited and sponsored the Ludvik Theatre Company to tour the United States.

On March 8, 1893, a theatre group of 20 left Bremen, Germany, on the ship “America” arriving in America on March 20 where they were greeted by their Czech American friends.

Their first play was in New York City in Central Opera House to an overflow crowd. From there they toured Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Kewanee, Manitowoc, Racine, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City, finally reaching Nebraska on October 9 at Omaha.

From Omaha, they performed at Plattsmouth on October 15, then to Dodge, Schuyler, Linwood, Prague, Wahoo, Crete, Wilber, Milligan, then back to Wilber, then on to Humboldt, then back to Omaha and then reaching New York on January 21, 1894

According to excerpts taken from a book written in 1918, Pamatnik Ludvikovy divadelni spolecnosti about the travels of the Ludvik Theatre Company in America, they were very well received in Czech Nebraska. Many towns and the town people greeted them at the railroad stations with bands and then a parade to the hall where a banquet was held. It was said that the town of Wilber really made them feel at home, because practically the entire town and countryside was settled by Czechs and they really poured out their love for their countrymen.

Another example was the village of Linwood where a band greeted them at the station and then marched to a hall where they were treated royally with a meal and all the trimmings. A Band was also on hand to see them off as they departed to Prague, Nebraska. When the group was about to depart back to Europe, approximately twelve of the actors and Mr. Ludvik decided to stay and make America their home and settled in Chicago where they founded the Ludvik Theatre Company presenting plays each Sunday to the Czech Americans in the Chicago area.

To celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Ludvik Theatre Company in America, they decided to make another tour of America to play to Czech Americans. The troupe left La Salle Station in Chicago on May 11, 1917, and arrived in Omaha the next day. On May 13th, they played to a full house in Sokol Hall on 13th Street, following the next day at the Catholic Sokol Hall and then on to South Omaha. While they were in Omaha their headquarters was at the Prague Hotel. From South Omaha, they proceeded to Plattsmouth, then on to Humboldt, stopping in Lincoln to be greeted by Professor Melzer, Sarka Hrbek and a host of students from the University of Nebraska of Czech descent.

From Humboldt to Milligan, Wilber, Crete, Prague, Weston, Brainard, Bruno, Linwood, back to Omaha, and then to Schuyler, Ord, Ravenna, back to Omaha, and then to Dodge, Howells, Clarkson, Verdigre, Spencer, Niobrara, then back to Brainard and then back to Omaha. By popular demand they returned to Prague, Crete, Wilber, Milligan and then one last stop in Omaha, before departing for Iowa on September 1st.

All in all they played to over thirty five thousand people in approximately 40 different plays. As was stated from the excerpts, the trip and tour through Nebraska by

the Ludvik Theatre Company was received very warmly by the Czech Nebraskans as each town hosted them in their own special way. It should be said that all the traveling was done by trains and each of the 20 actors was paid fifty dollars a week for the tour. During the season in Chicago, they gave plays every Sunday and were paid little or nothing.

The above brief history was taken from a book Pamatnik Ludvikovy divadelni spolecnosti published in 1918 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the Company. The book was given to the author by Libuse Zdenek Prokop, one of the performers that made the tours and was a regular actor with the theatre company.

Frantisek Ludvik, the founder of the permanent Czech theatre in America. He was born March 3, 1843 in Prague, Bohemia. He first started to perform on the stage in 1893. Frantisek Ludvik died October 24, 1910 in Chicago.

DRAMATIC CLUB TABOR, SOUTH DAKOTA

This very active Dramatic club of Tabor (Czech Heritage {Preservation Society Inc.}) performed some Czech plays in Nebraska too. During the year of 1961, a comedy Dva vojaci od muziky (Two Soldiers from a Band) was presented on April 23 in Abie, on June 4 in Omaha, and on June 11 in Verdigre.

In the year 1962 a play Hospudka u Markyty (An Inn at Markyta) was performed on April 15 in Abie, on May 13 in Verdigre, in Omaha on May 20th and on May 27, in Dwight.

On August 4th and 5th, this Dramatic Club presented an operetta Hospudka u Markyty in Wilber, NE.

MY GRANDFATHER FRANK J. SADILEK

By Mrs. Elsa Skocpol

The families of both my grandfather Frank J. Sadilek and Terezie Jurka, who became his wife in July 1876, had been active Czech theatre at Sokol Hall in Chicago. At that time Grandfather was employed in Omaha, working under John Rosicky, who was one of the editors of Edward Rosewater's weekly Czech paper, Pokrok Zapadu, which Mr. Rosicky purchased in 1877, and which company was later named the "National Printing Company".

Previous to his marriage, Grandfather had shared a room with Joseph Novinsky, a co-worker at Pokrok Zapadu for a few months. Mr. Novinsky then moved to Wilber and became editor of "Beseda", the first Czech newspaper printed in Wilber. Mr. Novinsky wrote a letter to Grandfather, urging him to move to Wilber, stating that there was a good opening there for a harness shop (which had been Grandfather's occupation in Chicago.) But the most attractive opening to my Grandfather was that the Wilber Czechs were building a Czech theatre and needed a director for their plays.

In 1877 he and his wife moved to Wilber, and for many years he spent much time organizing and directing the Czech Amateur Theatre there.

(A picture on pg. 199 of the original script)

Picture Frank and Terezie Sadilek

Frank Sadilek of Wilber with his wife formerly Terezie Jurkova of Chicago. Both were born in Czechoslovakia. Picture was taken approximately in the 1880's. Terezie Jurkova Sadilkova came to Chicago at the age of 6 with her family. She and her sister Anna and brother Josef performed in the plays at the old Sokol Hall in Chicago before she came to Omaha in 1876 and then to Wilber in 1877.

In those early years many talented Czech actors were drawn to settle in Wilber because of their great love for drama. Not only comedies, but Czech historical plays, and translations from novels of other nations were produced. Czech settlers from many

miles around Wilber attended the plays, sometimes walking many miles to be present. As a child, I can remember mention of names of some of those earlier actors-Joseph K.Bartos, Joseph Novinsky, the Safariks, Dr. John Habenicht, Alois and Marie Borecky, and Chenek Duras. The Omaha actors came to Wilber a number of times and the Wilber actors presented plays in Omaha. After 1900, my father, Dr. Charles Stastny, became director; and until his death in 1907 I can remember attending plays in which J.A. Hospodsky, J.V.Shestak, Alois Slepicka, John and Lilie Brt, Stanislav and Alice Kostorys, my parents, Charles and Olga Stastny, and my grandparents had roles.

In subsequent years because of the death of earlier actors and the growing lack of fluency in the Czech language among the younger townsmen, the number of Czech dramatic presentations lessened.

My last memory of attending Czech plays was sometime after my marriage to Lad J. Scopol in 1917 when the Ludvikovci from Chicago came to present several evenings of their plays in Wilber. As usual the visiting players were entertained in the Wilber players' homes, and Mrs. Ludvik and the leading actor and actress stayed in the Sadilek home. My grandparents brought the three of them out to our farm; I remember how delighted the young city-bred Zdenka and Prokop were to be able to pick apples off the trees and walk among the animals in the barnyard, and walk across our bridge into the woods along Turkey Creek.

In Omaha, the first dramatic performance was given in the fall of 1869 in Stepanek Hall on 13th and William Streets. For the first play a comedy Vesnicky kantor (Country Teacher) was chosen. This first performance was directed by a most ardent promotor of Czech drama, Matej Nerad.

A RECOLLECTION OF MY MOTHER AS AN ACTRESS AND SINGER

By Anelka Tauchen Thompson

My mother, Rosalie Bouska Tauchen, was born in Czechoslovakia and came to Wilber, NE in 1879, when she was eight years old.

At that time Wilber, a Czech settlement, already had a cultural atmosphere. For that reason it attracted musicians and actors from the old country. Mother's brother, for example, was a bass player in the well-known Pasek Band. The family attended all the plays and operas. Mother early received piano and singing lessons from a European-trained professor living in Wilber. Because of this instruction, and her native talent, in later years she was asked to take parts in musical plays. Mother could both act and sing beautifully.

My father, Vaclav Tauchen, a Czech who once lived in Paris, France, and in Buenos Aires, Argentina, had a tailoring business in Lincoln. On Saturday nights he and several Czech friends would go by train to Wilber for the Czech plays given by the local talent. After the performance they would dance with the native girls. It was the custom, old timers will remember, to have dancing after the show. Then late Sunday night the young men would return to Lincoln and next day to work.

Once my mother had a rare singing part in a certain play. As usual, my father was in the audience. Next to him sat an elderly woman unknown to him. Father was impressed by the talented singer. Turning to his neighbor he inquired about the young lady. Sensing romance, the woman immediately took the role of Cupid.. That is, she not only told my father the singer's name, but later introduced them. Of course the couple danced together, and not for the last time!

A courtship of six months followed. Then they were married and lived in Lincoln. But a few years later, in 1898, they moved to Omaha. Their marriage was blessed with three daughters: Regina, Irene, and Angeline.

Father joined the Telocvicna Jednota Sokol, and mother joined the Dramaticky odbor of the Sokols, in other words, the dramatic section of the lodge. At first she was

only given minor parts, but because of her success in those parts, the directors soon gave her important roles.

Mother had brought her piano from Wilber. In those early days there were very few pianos in the Czech colony of Omaha. As a result, our home was constantly used for group singing and for rehearsals. Since practically every young man in the old country was given violin lessons, immigrant musicians often came to our house. I well remember some of the most beautiful Czech songs played on those violins while my mother accompanied the players at the piano. This usually happened when the musicians were rehearsing for some musical production.

To this day those lovely melodies linger in my memory; and often, when I sit at the piano and hum them, some of the words come back to me.

Mother was invited to sing a solo on opening day when the first Sokol Hall was completed in 1899. That building stood on the parking lot just north of the present Sokol Hall at Thirteenth and Martha Streets. All that happened before I was born. But I recall people saying how as the actor's children, they sat in the front row. There they patiently waited for the "oporna" to rise. Meanwhile they gazed at the mural painted on the front curtain. Their Czech language teachers had told them, during the Saturday morning classes, about the scene--the meeting of "Oldrich a Bozena." Then the house lightsent out, and the children saw parents, relatives and friends behind footlights and wearing actors' grease on their faces.

Plays were given about once a month, and staged by qualified directors. A week or so before opening night, and as a means of publicity, various colored "plakaty" (posters) or posters appeared in stores and store windows of "Bohemian Town" as the Czech neighborhood came to be known. Persons who had leading parts in the plays or operas had their names in large print on the "plakaty." Those who had minor parts had their names in small print. I was always proud of my mother when her name appeared in large print.

Our family saved all those posters, as well as clippings from Czech newspapers like Pokrok and Osveta which reported eagerly waited and much discussed kritika. The kritika meant a great deal to the performers and directors. Often they were

complimentary, well and good; but sometimes they were unfavorable, and that was disturbing. Unfortunately those precious souvenirs or memorabilia have largely disappeared through the years.

To this day, however, I have a trunk full of old costumes worn in those plays, operas, and skits. Moreover, I still make use of them from time to time, as occasion requires. Needless to say, each costume my mother wore brings fond memories. So do those later worn by my two sisters, who also had talent for the performing arts.

I recall three plays in which mother had leading roles. One was Prazske saliency. Mother was the teacher of this dress-making class in Prague. Then there was Karlova teta (Charlie's Aunt) in which mother was the aunt. Also I recall Psohlavci, which play called for a flag with a dog's head on it, the emblem of a Czech tribe. Our family could not eat or work on the kitchen table for a week because we were all involved in the process of painting a large dog's head on white canvas.

One of the truly memorable events was the presentation, about 1916, of the opera V studni (In the Well). Mother had the contralto lead. But our whole family was again involved. Study and rehearsals were held for almost a year. That circumstance both disturbed and enriched our family life. Fortunately, all went well. Hard work and perseverance led to a happy conclusion.

On opening night Sokol Hall was packed. An unexpected large representation came from outstate Czech communities. A fifteen piece orchestra, composed of able musicians, accompanied all singing in the opera. With that kind of support the cast outdid themselves. No wonder, then, that that performance was considered the most outstanding ever given in the old Sokol Hall, where excellent performances had been the rule for years.

The new Sokol Hall was erected in 1926. Here the tradition of Czech plays by local talent continued to thrive. Many excellent plays were regularly staged. The best of them often went on the road. That is, the cast traveled to Wilber, Crete, Prague, Milligan, Schuyler, Ravenna, and Clarkson, where audiences welcomed the troupe and appreciated their performance.

Looking back, I see how my life has been enriched by all those plays and operas.

Because of them, interest in dramatics became so imbedded in me that I feel fortunate and grateful for being a member of a family who loved Show Business. Along with that theatrical interest I also became imbued with the ideology of the great Sokol Organization. Now a lone survivor, I do have precious memories which I regard as “pictures of the heart.”

Signed by Andelka Tauchen Thompson
February 1977

SCHUYLER THEATRICAL MEMOIRS

By James Truhlar

In the old country, the expression of the free national inner feeling was forbidden by the Habsburg dynasty. Therefore, people turned to stage plays and songs, both being very popular. Nearly every little town or village that had a school had their own stage plays. Sometimes the plays were for adults alone and sometimes for children, which were played by themselves, like Krakonos or Snehurka or others. The old adage bitten by show business as by magic certainly seemed to be true.

Plays were sponsored usually by teachers, for they usually had a better education. Even if it didn't succeed financially, some plays were of such nature that they strengthened the national pride of the viewers and inspired them, like in the plays, Noc na Karlstejne, Psohlavci, Kalich and others.

In the year of 1883 the Czechs built for themselves the National Theater in Prague, Bohemia, where plays were put on every day. Most popular was the great opera Prodana nevesta (Bartered Bride) by Bedrich Smetana. By the way, this opera was performed in different years in Lincoln, NE, by the Wesleyan players, twice nightly for three nights to a packed house. The costumes and music were excellent and it was in English and that was one reason for such a good attendance. In the old country I also saw “Bartered Bride” several times with as much enjoyment.

At the opening of the National Theatre in Prague a large delegation of American

Czechs attended. Vojta Naprstek, who printed the first Czech paper in America, said these famed words, "The heart ties, not even oceans can separate."

This love for drama was brought to America by the very first settlers and as soon as a town was barely established, they put on a play. People would come in all kinds of weather and in buggies, wagons, or horseback. They took extra pains not to miss the rare opportunity to attend the play and be able to visit with other people. Other than barn dances, this was their only source of entertainment. New Years and Easter nights were usually the highlights of the entire year when Czech plays were staged in Schuyler. These plays were presented in the Czech language and were tremendously successful events for people over a far area.

Not only in Schuyler, but also in surrounding towns like Clarkson, Howells, Leight, Richland, and Rogers; north to Linwood, Abie, Bruno, Octavia, David City and Bellwood, including the farms in between. The old Janecek Hall was the scene for many standing room only capacity crowds. A tale was going around at the time that if Mohn Madr would stomp his foot just a little harder at a dance, the entire hall would fall down. Fortunately, that never happened; however, this hall was eventually town down.

We came to Schuyler in 1925 and lived there until 1943. After being there only four years from the old country, I was anxious to perform in a play, but I was never asked to. Later performers were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Novotny, James Prokupek, Frank Kopecky, John Krca, Ed Varejcka and Marie Vrba, with Anton Hovorka and his band playing for the dances after the plays. I remember only Tulacka krev, although there were many others staged.

The last show put on was by Lada Bednar in 1940 by the name of Hrich lesniho Krikavy. In the spring of 1942 I urged the performers to stage one more play, Zeleni hajove for the benefit for the National Alliance, but I couldn't arouse their enthusiasm. I ordered all the booklets, but just as in other places, the Czech theatrical activity was slowly dying and there was no new replacement.

Schuyler performers were fortunate that they had in their midst the very able singers, the Sobota sisters, that enabled them to perform some very nice operettas.

Mrs. Norma Vrba, in the year 1935 wrote:

The New Year's plays dated back to 1892 when the newly formed Tel. Jednota Sokol Karel Stulik, later changed to Tel. Jed. Sokol Schuyler presented a three act play entitled The Three Grooms on the first of January.

This marked the beginning and in the casts of the two plays were the following:

Mary Daricek (Kupka), Jennie Vavra (Briggs), Emma Zerzan (Stopka), Mrs. Vaclav Maly, Matilda Polek, George Dworak, Edward Hans, Rudolph Daricek, M. F. Shonka and Anton Kalik. John Varejcka, Emil Faltys, Joseph Svoboda and John Steinberger were others whose ability was evident in the early productions. It wasn't long before the Sokols had developed an enviable reputation for the excellence of their dramatizations, giving repeat performances and playing at various nearby towns. Much of the credit for the exceptional characterizations, the elaborate scenic and stage properties will always be given to the late Rudolph A. Daricek, who headed the dramatic department in 1893. He was assisted for many years by Charles Mastny, Joseph Novotny and Anton Hovorka who carried on in his footsteps.

But in spite of their loyal efforts the passage of years and the press of modern times have exacted their toll of the old time zest and glamour. The New Year's plays with their inspired Czech singing, the jolly folk dancing, the stamping villain, and the lovely heroine can only be viewed in retrospect today. They are already of another era."

It is regrettable that this natural process or what we call the "American Melting Pot" took its toll in our Czech minority, but the same thing happened to other minorities beside those that converse in English. Although we tried to preserve our language in this country by teaching the Czech language in different towns, only three schools remain: Nebraska University, the Czech Cultural Club in Omaha and in Wilber, but students never advance enough to perform a Czech play. They know a lot of words and some can converse in Czech but they aren't fluent enough to stage a Czech play.

Although we still have a few Czech days celebrations where Czech costumes can be seen and the Czech language and songs so dear to our old hearts can be heard, the occasion lasts only a short time. Those golden days where the Czech language was spoken in homes, churches and businesses are gone forever.

(A picture on pg. 210 of the original script)
Small poster for "KAZDY SNAD MA NECO RAD"

TWO REMINISCENCES IN CZECH
(Pages 211-3 of the original script)
from OSVETA AMERICKA - Rocnik XI
cislo 46, east II Omaha June 15, 1904

CZECH DRAMA IN IOWA

Czech drama started in the first part of the 18th century in Iowa and it was no surprise that it began in Cedar Rapids as at third of its population then and at the beginning of the 19th century consisted of Czech immigrants. It was also no surprise that when the late Czechoslovak Senator, Vojta Benes, brother of the President of Czechoslovakia, Dr. Edvard Benes, visited Cedar Rapids several times he named it "The Czech Athens."

The earliest beginning of the interest in Czech stage plays originated just about the same time that the Fraternal Benevolent Society (C.S.P.S.) was born in the city of St. Louis, Missouri in 1854. One of its first lodges in Cedar Rapids was called Prokop Velky No. 137. They erected a three story building containing in addition to several business places, a large meeting hall and a club room, plus an elaborate hall with the capacity of about 1000. In this hall a very large stage was located with equipment quite modern for that era.

The Czech Reading Society (Ctenarsky spolek), justly called the "Father" of all Czech organizations in Cedar Rapids, had in addition to a large library its own Dramatic branch which introduced the very first plays on the stage of the C.S.P.S. Hall. Inborn rivalry that existed among the Czech people led to the organization of other dramatic clubs

They included the Sokols, and both Catholic parishes, St. Wenceslas and St.

Ludmila. This seemingly innocent competition led to borrowing actors and equipment and this led in 1900 to an organization of an independent and most successful Czech Dramatic Society (Ochotnicke druzstvo.) It was not responsible to any organization and sole purpose was to present the very best Czech plays including dramas, light comedy and operettas.

Among its early directors were John Pichner, Anton Jenista, John J. Hrbek and later Fran Chramosta and Mirko L. Hromadka. Both of these were excellent in presenting elaborate musicals including Green Youth (Zelene mladi), Autumn Maneuvers (Podzimni manevery), Dressmakers of Prague (Prazske svadlenky), Flowers of Autumn (Kvety podzimu) and many others.

M. L. Hromadka, formerly of Omaha where he was very active in the Mosna Dramatic club, was called to Cedar Rapids in the early 1930's. He was there to assume a position with the Bohemian Fraternal and he brought with him a very valuable friend, John Spicka, an artist-painter of stage sceneries.

The writer of this study became active in Czech drama in 1920, in the capacity of an actor, director and make-up man remaining almost to the year when the Czech Dramatic Society was dissolved in 1967. In addition to this activity, he was also an author of two successful plays, The Bachelors (Beclaci) and The Liquid Gold (Tekute zlato.) As a director, he presented some 60 productions, some quite elaborate as the heavy dramas Lidice by Hostovsky, The Jew of Prague (Prazsky zid), Chocolate Princess (Cokoladova princezna) and others.

It must also be mentioned that the late Otokar Charvat, Editor from Omaha, supplied many books of Czech plays while many others were obtained directly from Prague from the popular Czech play writers Branald Brothers.

There is no question that the Czech drama clubs in Cedar Rapids were as successful as in other states with Czech populations, which were a great help in the preservation of Czech schools, Czech churches, Czech fraternal organizations and the Sokol movement. At the same time, they added a lot to the overall contribution of Czechoslovaks in building this great country of ours.

T. B. Hlubucek, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

In 1872, Frank mares called a meeting in Omaha for the purpose of forming a society to promote the Czech language and social life. On January 26, 1873, officers of the organization called The Reading and Benevolent Society were chosen. This club disbanded in 1875 and the money was given to the reading circle of the Dramatic Society Klicpera in Omaha which was founded by F. B. Zdrubek in 1874.

POSTSCRIPT

When I decided to try and find contemporaries of the Czech theatrical activities in Nebraska that were still living and also to secure printed remembrances from that by-gone period, I was sure how difficult this work would be. I had a feeling that it was an action just close to the twelfth hour, and after that it would all be too late.

Relatively much easier was my historical study about Czech cemeteries and churches; those are still almost all preserved and official records are too. But the Czech theatrical activities from the beginning of the Czech settlements in this state once so rich and colorful, is now dead. And the stages, today in all those Czech lodges and society halls that were years and years ago so alive with the mother tongue and Czech songs are now only silent testimony of that activity of the Czech men and women that once was so devoted and joyful.

Your fathers and mothers, so devoted to the tongue of their forefathers tried to not only preserve but also to pass it on to the next generation. After the laborious work in the hard virgin soil of the prairie, they tried often to be together, to speak in the tongue of their gender and also to hear their mother tongue and songs of their native country from the stages of the Czech theatres. And believe with me, that their patriotic and theatrical work had an essential influence toward the preservation of the Czech language in this state too.

Hundreds of Czech plays were performed by the countrymen of first, second, third and probably by the fourth Czech generations. It was these devoted performers, our Czech pioneers, who were not only building houses of prayers, churches, and cemeteries, but they, with an excessive devotion, built different society halls, with stages for theatres too. Those halls are still here, are still preserved, but their stages are silent, and maybe will be forever.

But these stages, once so loud, so alive with Czech voices, are no more sounding with words and songs in the mother tongue. And so, after long, but with critical hesitation, I finally decided to commence this work, and with a strong expectation, that there was now a possibility to try to find reminiscences of those contemporaries, who, now are only a few, but still are with us.

Old minutes of meetings and activities of the dramatic clubs, Z.C.B.J. (Zapadni ceska bratraska jednota -- Western Bohemian Fraternal Association) and Sokol societies and of the Catholic Workman organizations in Nebraska, are for the majority incomplete and lost. The posters, photos of actors and the plays' sceneries, are only from a small number preserved, and it was only possible to ask for help and reminiscences of those who had saved memories of that time that was such an important patriotic theatrical activity.

And I must praise all those individuals who understood the importance not only to write the history of Czech theatres in Nebraska, but also preserved the theatrical posters, clippings, and photos. And if it is still possible, I beg those unknown to me, members of their families, who own documents and souvenirs about Czech theatres to save them for the future and donate that material to our libraries and museums in Nebraska, and maybe they would be a necessary interest of those souvenirs for the Czech part of the Dvoracek's library and Czech museum in Wilber.

One after another of the old generation of men with possible reminiscences, are gone for Eternity, and the younger generation remembers only a little about that time that was once such a rich theatrical activity of their forefathers.

When I announced in the Czech newspapers my plan to put together a history of Czech theatres in Nebraska, many friends did understand the significance of this action.

And I cannot remember all the names of those individual who did express their willingness to write their own reminiscences or reminiscences traditionally preserved in their families. And many of these individuals sent me the theatrical material, books of plays, posters and photos. And especially one of them, and one of the first, was the senior of Czech journalism, Anton Piskac, Sr., of Omaha, and Ed Sterba of Bellevue. And our special thanks to Bernard Klasek of Wilber, who with an extraordinary action started the research and did try to go deeply into the resources of Czech theatrical activity in Wilber and neighboring places. Mr. Klasek sent a surprising number of old original posters of theatrical performances in his community and did try to find the old clippings and records about that time of rich activity. It would be difficult to count the hours Mr. Klasek, with the help of Mrs. Sylvia Klasek, spent in his research.

The same thanks goe to Mrs. Helen Kupka of Crete, Saline County, who wrote an interesting history of the theatrical activity in Crete and who sent so many old posters and photos. One of the most complete stories about Czech dramas in Milligan, Fillmore County, was written by Mrs. Frank V. Hamouz, President of the Czech Culture Club in Milligan. Her work was of a devoted historian in her town.

It is necessary too, to name the long line of those willing helpers for my almost emergency work that started very close to the twelfth hour. They are Leo Cecava, Deweese; Albin L. Cihacek, Morse Bluff; James Hruban, Schuyler, Mrs. Louise Nekudova, North Hollywood, CA; Alfred Novacek, Dwight, who did contact Clarkson, Colfax County for information about their theatrical activity; Edward S. Pavlik, Verdigre; Mrs. Blanche Pospichal, Clarkson (posters); James Rejda, Burwell; my praise to Mrs. Bessie Rexroth of Table Rock, Pawnee County, and to Mrs. Mary Surgeon, both very devoted to the Czech activity; Mrs. Louise Rezek, Lincoln, Joe Sechovec, Dodge; Mrs. Elsie Skocpol, Crete; John Slaby, Omaha (tape); Frank Smrz, Omaha (photo); Frank J. Somer, Niobrara; James Stuhl, Abie; Jirina Sudikova, Colon (play books); Frank Stastny, Virginia; Mrs. Tauchen Thompsonova Andelka, the indefatigable worker and supporter of all Czech activities in Nebraska, Omaha; Frank Tesar, Omaha, my helper from the beginning of our research; Josef Svoboda, UNL, photo, old Czech magazine; James Truhlar, Lincoln; Charles Vesely, Brainard; Mrs. Elsie Weiner, Odell; Mr.

Kenneth G. Kopta did very fast and good work copying photos.

My special thanks to Mrs. Delores Kucera, who spent many hours correcting my story and supporting me always in my research.

Maybe this, my history of Czech theatrical performances in Nebraska is not complete and therefore, dear readers accept my work with your friendly understanding. I was trying to acquire information how and where it was possible for me. Very many of our Czech men and women helped positively, but I have to report that for some it was not of enough interest to spend fifteen cents postage to answer my letter.

Let it be given my and our thanks to all undersigned or not, to all known and unknown, for their help in preserving the history that for a time was so rich and colorful, patriotic work of the Czech generation of the past.

Vladimir Kucera

Mily ctenari, mila ctenarko

Kdyz jsem se rozhodl vyhledat jeste tu zijici pametniky ceske divadelni cinnosti v Nebrasce a ziskast i pisemne pamatky z te doby, byl jsem si vedom tezkosti teto prace. Vedel jsem, ze je to akce jiste uz v hodine dvanacte, ze za deset let snad uz bude pozde.

Pomerne snadnejsi byla moje studie o ceskych hrbitovech a kostelich, vzdyt tyto jsou z valne casti dosud zachovany, stejne jako uredni zaznamy o nich. Ale cinnost devadelni, uz od samych zacatku ceskeho osidlovani tohoto statu tak bohata, uz odumrela. A jeviste dnes v tak mnohych ceskych spolkovych salech pred lety a lety ziva materskou reci a ceskym zpevem, jsou dnes uz jen nemym svedectvim kdysi tak obetave i radostne cinnosti ceskych muzu a zen minula.

Vasi otcve a matky, verni materske reci predku a odhodlani ji nejen zachovat, ale take predate zivou i budoucim generacim, po lopotne praci na tvrde, panenske pude prerie, se hledeli shromazdovat, byt pospolu, porozpravet po cesku a take slyest rec a zpev domoviny z jevist divadel.

A verte se mnou, ze tato jejich vlastenecka prace divadelni mela take podstavny vliv pro udrzeni ceske reci v tomto statu.

Stovky ceskych divadel bylo sehrano krajany prvni, druhe a treti a snad castecne i generace ctvrte. Oni to byli, ti obetavi ochotnici, cesti pionyri, kteri nejen budovali modlitebny, kostely a hrbity, ale oni s tak nadmernou obetavosti staveli i spolkovy saly s jevisty pro divadla. Tyto spolkovy budovy jsou z vetsiny zachovany dodnes, ale jejich jeviste uz onemela, snad navzdy!

Uz tam z nich nenaznivaji slova a zpevy v reci materske!

A tak, kdyz po jistem ba kritickem vahani, konecne jsem se rozhodl a dal do prace, mocnou ponutkou bylo, ze snad jeste dnes je mozno se pokusit zachytit vzpominky tech vrstevniku, kteri ovsem uz jen v tak mael poctu jsou mezi nami.

Stare zapisky o schuzich a jednanich dramatickych klubu, Z.C.B.J. a sokolskych jednot i spolku Katolickeho delnika v Nebrasce jsou z vetsiny spore, neuplne nebo dokonce ztracene. Plakaty, fotografie herzu a jevistnich scen jsou jen uz z male casti zachovany a bylo nutno spolehat na vzpominky tech, kteri zachovali pamet na tuto kdysi tak narodne zivou a vyznamnou cinnost divadelni. A musim zdat díky tem jedincum, kteri pochopili dulezitost nejen sepsat dejiny ceskeho divadla v Nebrasce, ale kteri take zachovali mnohe divadelni plakaty, vystricky a fotografie. A je-li jeste mozno, tak prosim ty, me snad dosud znamy clenym nasich rodin, kteri vlastni doklady a pamatky o ceskych divadlech, aby je zachranili pro budoucnost a venovali nasim knihovnam a muzeim v Nebrasce, a snad i potrebnym zajemem o tyto pamatky projevi i ceska cast Dvorackovy knihovny a ceske museum ve Wilber.

Jenda za druhou ze stare generace pametniku nam uz odesla na Vecnost, a generace mladych uz jen tak malo pamatuje na tuto kdysi tak bohatou cinnost divadelni jejich predku.

Kdyz jsem oznamil v ceskem tisku plan dat dohromady historii ceskeho divadla v Nebrasce, velmi mnozi pochopili vyznam teto prace. A nemohu nez nevpomenout zvlaste tech jedincu, kteri projevili ochotu sepsat sve vzpominky nebo vzpominky zachovane v jejich rodinach. A mnozi z nich take poslali divadelni material, knizky her, plakaty a fotografie. A jednim z nich, a to z prvych, byl staresina ceskeho zurnalismu,

Anton Piskac Sr. z Omahy. A Ed Sterba z Bellevue.

Zvlastni muj dik patri Bernardu Klaskovi z Wilber, Salinsky okres, jenomu z prednich pracovníku ceske Nebrasky, který ve spolupraci s pani Synchronii Kraskovou, se tal prikladne zapojil do teto prace a hledel jit az k samym pramenum ceskeho divadla ve Wilber a Salinskem okrese. Tento neunavny pracovník získal překvapující pocet otisku puvodnich plakatu divadel, pocetnych vystrizku a kniznich pramenu. Stejny dik pani Helene Kupkove z Crete, Salinsky okres. I ona sepsala historii divadelnictvi v Crete a dala k dispozici radu puvodnich plakatu. Vydatnou pomocnici byla ta obetava Bessie Rexroth a Mary E. Sturgeon, Table Rock; ne mensi dik pani Frank V. Hamouzove, která sepsala historii divadel v Milligan, Fillmore okrese. Jeji prace je dukazem obetave lasky k historii Milligan.

A musim i jmenovat radu jinych a tak ochotnych pomocniku me veru zachranne prace uz skoro v hodine dvanacte. Jejich jmena uvadim v predchozim clanku 'Postscript.'

Snad tato moje historie ceskeho divadla v Nebrasce neni uplnou a proto, mili ctenari, prijmete vse s laskavym porozumenim. Hledel jsem získat informace jak a kde jen mylo mozno. Dopsal jsem mnohym, nekteri odpovedeli, jinym jsem nestal ani za postovni znamku.

Ale je mym svedectvim, ze jsem prece jen naseł jedince a jejich podporu a spolupraci na teto studii. Budiz jim vzdan dik, vsem tem podepsanym I nepodepsanym, me znamym I neznamym, za jakoukoliv pomoc zajistit pro budoucnost historii teto kdysi tak bohate, kulturni prace ceskych generaci minula.

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A stage for theatrical activities was built in almost every Czech Hall (Western Bohemian Fraternal Association, Sokol and Catholic Workman). You may find these stages in Abie, Burwell, Clarkson, Crete, Dwight, Linwood, Loma, Milligan, Niobrara, Ord, Prague, Morse Bluff, Table Rock, Tabor (Z.C.B.J. Lodge) Omaha, Schuyler, Verdigre, Weston, Wilber and also in other places settled by the Czechs.