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Nebraska**

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SOUDESKA: THE CZECH FESTIVAL
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN WILBER, NEBRASKA

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Sociology

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By Lois Shimerda Rood

April, 1985

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of
Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters
of Arts degree, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Andris E. J. J. SOCIOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

Susan J. Rosinski ENGLISH - UN-L

Wayne Wheeler

Chairman

22 April 1985

Date

DEDICATION

To my parents

Milo A. Shimerda
Edna L. Shimerda

My bother and sister

John H. Shimerda
Rosalie J. Shimerda

And my children

John M. Rood
Lisa M. Rood
Justin T. Rood

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis represents a beginning, more than an end of a project. Producing this ethnography of the Czech Festival of Wilber, Nebraska has given me a chance to become reacquainted with the people of that community whom I have not been close to for nearly 20 years. It has generated a new interest for me in Czech culture and introduced me to the complexity of Czech history and language. I would like to thank the many people who have assisted and supported me during the completion of this project.

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of my thesis committee: Wayne Wheeler, Ph.D., chairman; Andris Skreija, Ph.D.; and Susan Rosowski, Ph.D., for their advice and assistance.

My sincere thanks to the people of Wilber and to many of the festival organizers. All of the people I contacted gave generously of their time and energy to make resources available to me. Mrs. Irma Ourecky allowed me to use her many volumes of scrap books covering festival activities since 1962. She also provided a tour of the Czech Museum and Craft Shop. Walter and Helen Baer presented an historic slide show of the Wilber festival and other information regarding its origins. Joe and Kathy Vosoba provided information on how the first festival came about and other aspects of the Czech culture and historic pageant. Bernard and Sylvia Klasek provided me with many resources on history, culture, music, and folklore. Doris Ourecky provided data on leadership of the Nebraska Czech organization and the Czech Queens. Many people from Wilber participated in interviews whose names will be kept anonymous.

A very special thanks to Jo Ellen Gaines who spent many long hours at the word processor. Without her competent help and perseverance, it would not have been possible to meet necessary deadlines.

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Since most of the field research was conducted while I spent weekends at my father's acreage near Swanton, Nebraska, I wish to thank him for his beautiful surroundings, excellent cooking, and great sense of humor which helped to keep my work in perspective. Thanks also to my mother who supported me in many ways, and helped me at home while I spent weekends working on this project. Also, I wish to thank my good friends Tauni Waddington, Loretta McClarnon, Karen Faison, and Kathy Larimer who provided encouragement and support throughout the project.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Thesis Topic

This field study explores the meaning of the Czech Festival, Soudeksa, to the members of the community of Wilber, Nebraska and to those who participate. It examines the ways in which the festival affects both change and continuity in the major institutions of the community--specifically the family, the church, the education system, the political structure, and the economy. The meaning of festival to various groups of citizens important to the community is analyzed.

Soudeksa is the Czech word for festival. The first weekend in August a festival is held in Wilber, Nebraska, "the Czech Capital" of the state. This festival attracts thousands of people to this eastern Nebraska community each year. The festival has been celebrating the Czech heritage since 1962. Since the Wilber Festival, many other Czech communities have initiated similar events. Other ethnic communities have initiated festivals, as well.

Tourists, including many of Czech descent, come to Wilber to view a Czech historical pageant, a parade, and many contests, dance and drink beer, eat Czech food, visit the Czech museum, library and hotel, and hear the Czech language spoken. Some come to have fun. Some come to remind themselves of their own ethnic roots. Some come to feel a sense of community in a rapidly changing world. This is a field study of this festival in the town of Wilber.

Purpose of the Research Project

The purpose of this project is to produce an ethnography of the Czech Festival of Wilber, Nebraska.

Today's rapidly changing society contains threats to "community" as an emotional bond which gives people a feeling of belonging and purpose in life. To study the community of Wilber is to study in microcosm the social processes which provide that sense of belonging.

An ethnography is primarily a description of a culture. To study any culture is a highly complex undertaking. However, a study of the meaning of the Czech Festival as it relates to change and continuity is a manageable task. In field research, any hypothesis or development of grounded theory is more likely to be a result of, rather than an impetus of social research.

The goal of this field study was to become familiar with Wilber in general and its festival in particular. The most important results of the project were to acquire insight and understanding as to the meaning of festival to the people of Wilber.

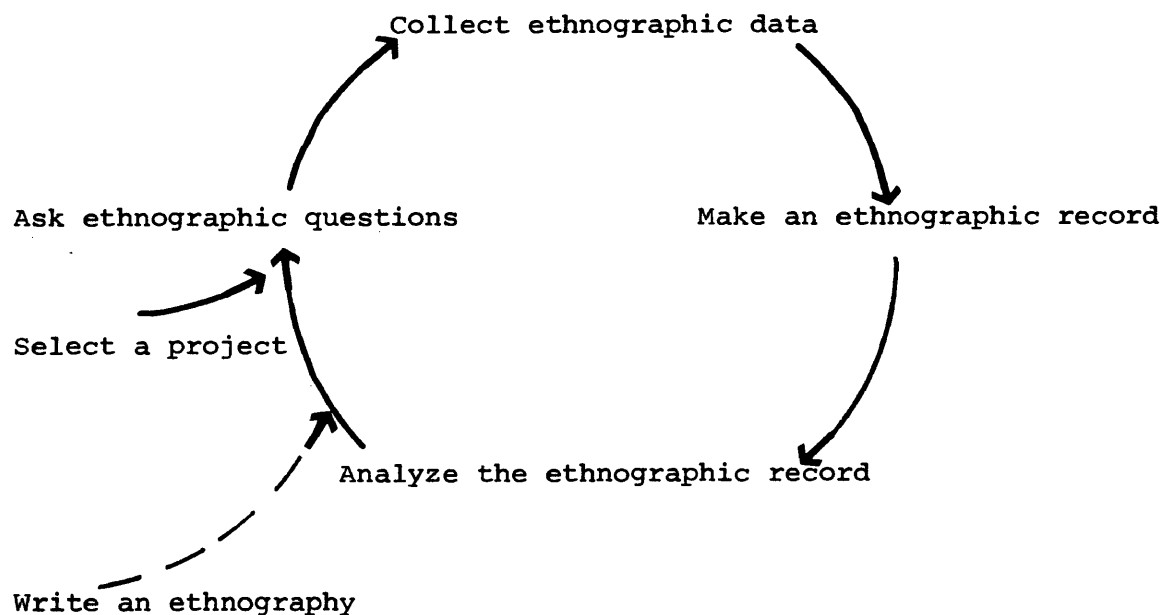
The study is relevant because it is important to understand what social change in a highly technological society means to the individual. It will provide insights into the ways individuals integrate their sense of belonging (as immigrants to a new world with dreams, hopes, visions, opportunities, and values) into their sense of self as actors in a modern, industrialized world.

Methodology

An ethnography is primarily exploratory and descriptive. Therefore, the methods I chose are those of participant observation, unstructured and open-ended individual and group interviews, analysis of documents, and local history.

The data was recorded in field journals. Interviews were recorded on cassette tapes. Photographs of activities, settings, buildings, and artifacts were taken.

The methodological approach was a model suggested by James P. Spradley in the book entitled, Participant Observation. This model is a cyclic design, rather than the traditional linear model which is used in quantitative research. The cycle is illustrated as follows (Spradley, 1980):



Personal Interest and Access

In their guide to field research, Analyzing Social Settings, Lofland and Lofland suggest that the richness of potential data of a particular social setting is dependent on the researcher's access to that setting. They suggest that the researcher select a problem that both has interest for the social scientist and enables the researcher to gain access to the setting and activities (Lofland, and Lofland, 1984).

It is also necessary for the social scientist to be distanced enough emotionally to be able to bracket personal feelings and biases in order to provide an objective analysis. This ability to discover meaning and to bracket personal biases enables the researcher to engage in what Max Weber called verstehen, that is, understanding or interpretation (Gerth, and Mills, 1958).

This particular research project provided both possibilities for me. I grew up on a farm near Wilber and attended a one-room rural school until age 12. I moved to Wilber in 1956 and was graduated from Wilber High School in 1962. I left the community that year, which was the first year that the Czech Festival was held. I am both a "product of" and a person who is "distanced from" the Wilber community. These advantages enable me to gain access to both open and closed settings and act as a participant as well as an observer. My "way of seeing," as Berger and Kellner describe in Sociology Reinterpreted is both that of native and outsider (Berger, and Kellner, 1981).

Sources of Data

The research was conducted during a period from November, 1981 through February, 1985. Early research was conducted by analyzing the scrapbooks of a local historian. These 25 volumes of primary documents included festival programs, newspaper articles, special announcements and correspondence. I also viewed a collection of slides of various Wilber festivals from 1962 to the present and photographs of a folk festival in Czechoslovakia made available from one of the initial conference organizers who attended that festival. I was able to view a videotape of the Czech Pageant provided to me by a past president of the Nebraska Czechs. Many books and magazines regarding Czech culture and the Czech heritage were made available to me by festival organizers. The library has collections of each of the Czech Spectaculars, a cultural event that takes place each year at the festival.

In addition to the data provided in these local histories, I interviewed each of the conference originators, and other individuals acquainted in various ways to the community of Wilber and the Czech Festival. I also reviewed local data and documents regarding festival attendance, population data, etc. A summation of the data is provided in various tables, graphs, maps, and graphics included in this study. I attended the 1984 Czech Festival and participated in and observed each of the festival activities.

Full descriptions of each of the primary sources of information are included in the appendices.

Projected Outcomes

Festivals are complex, social events. I analyzed the festival according to its goals, activities, meanings, actors, artifacts, and location. I moved from global to focused observations.

Some of the questions for which I sought answers through this research were:

1. How does the festival serve to give members a feeling of belonging and status?
2. How does the festival enable the community to connect with the mass society?
3. How does the festival enhance social interaction and socialization?
4. How does the festival assist the community in maintaining social control?
5. How does the festival serve to solve problems for its members?
6. How does the festival manage social conflicts between members and outsiders?
7. How does the festival affect major institutions of family, church, school, politics, and economics?
8. How do the institutions affect the festival?
9. How does the festival contribute to the management of the many cultural contradictions in the community?

Constraints

Some personal, professional, and pragmatic constraints were experienced. Time available for participant observation and interviewing was somewhat limited. Therefore, documentary research supplemented participant observation and interview data. Although access was possible, and people welcomed me with kindness and enthusiasm, the time that I have been away from the community increased my distance from them. Therefore, I had to be cautious about my interpretations accurately reflecting the meaning of events to the people who experienced them. Since I was the only researcher, it was not possible to analyze the many aspects of social life that under other circumstances, might have been significant.

Ethical Considerations

In this research I have sought to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the people I have interviewed. The people who contributed to the research have had their identity kept confidential unless they have given me permission to identify a particular quotation.

Before obtaining data, I informed each interviewee of my research objectives. I also made my identity explicit. I did not identify myself as a researcher in public or open settings, however.

The intimate and private lives of community members did not need to be examined in order to conduct this research.

My own personal views were bracketed as much as possible, although I am certain they may have come through in my interpretations.

CHAPTER II: THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

Unit of Social Organization

A community is one of the oldest forms of social organization. A community is made up of all ages, both sexes and has a specific geographic location. It is both a stable and continuing entity, as well as a changing and problem-solving entity. Its stability and continuity are generally referred to as maintenance. Its ability to solve problems for its members and to perpetuate itself as a social group is often referred to as social change (Wheeler, 1983).

Rates of Change

Rate of change in various communities can be very rapid or very slow. However, each community serves the similar, basic problem-solving functions for its members. These are the problems of social interaction, social identity, and subsistence. Each community develops ways of providing a sense of cohesion to its members and provides them with a feeling of belonging to the same social entity (Wheeler, 1983).

Definitions

For the sociologist, as for the lay person, the term "community" has many different, and often ambiguous meanings. Dennis Poplin suggests that the concept of community is used in

three different ways. The first is as a synonym which refers to the shared cultures of groups, also called total institutions, such as prisons or military establishments. The second is a moral community in which members share beliefs and values and a search for a moral unity among participants. And third, it is used to refer to social or territorial units of social organization such as villages, towns, cities, or metropolises (Poplin, 1979).

Classifications

Using this definition, there are a variety of ways to classify communities. Some common classifications include size and population density, governing structure, economic basis, geographic location, or sociocultural identity. It is difficult to make a distinction between rural and urban communities since both rural and urban are relative terms. Population size, for example, is an on-going continuum. But, ruralness not only has to do with size, but also population density, a community's relationship to its environment, and also the sociocultural and economic characteristics of the population.

Many of these characteristics are described by Poplin (1979) in order to provide us with a systematic approach to analyzing communities (see Figure #1, page 12).

FIGURE #1: CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNAL UNITS

	<u>Village</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Metropolitan Area</u>
Demographic Characteristics			
Size of population	small (under 10,000)	intermediate (10-50,000)	large (over 50,000)
Density of population	low	intermediate	high
Community-Hinterland Relations			
Hinterland population	small	variable	large
Community's influence over hinterland	limited	variable	extensive
Number of community-hinterland ties	few	variable	many
Sociocultural Characteristics			
Heterogeneity of population	low	intermediate	high
Availability of organizations and services	low	intermediate	extensive
Division of labor	low	intermediate	high
Potential anonymity of the individual	low	variable	high
Predominant character of social relations	primary	secondary	secondary
Predominant type of social control	primary	secondary	secondary
Degree of status ranking on basis of overt symbols	low	intermediate	high

(Poplin, 1979)

Rural-Urban Population Trends

Today, the majority of Americans live in communities that are both large and urban. This social trend has emerged in the last 100 years. Modernization, industrialization, and urbanization have been the major social change processes that have affected individuals in our country and the communities in which they live (see Figure #2, page 13 and Figure #3, page 14).

FIGURE #2: RURAL-URBAN POPULATION

Percentage of the Total Population Living in Urban (over 2,500 population) and Rural (under 2,500) Places, 1860 to 1970

	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1970	73.5	26.5
1960	69.9	30.1
1950*	64.0	36.0
1940	56.5	43.5
1930	56.2	43.8
1920	51.2	48.8
1910	45.7	54.3
1900	39.7	60.3
1890	35.1	64.9
1880	28.2	71.8
1870	25.7	74.3
1860	19.8	80.2

 * In 1950, the U.S. Bureau of Census modified its definition of urban. This accounts for 5 percent of the increase between 1940 and 1950.

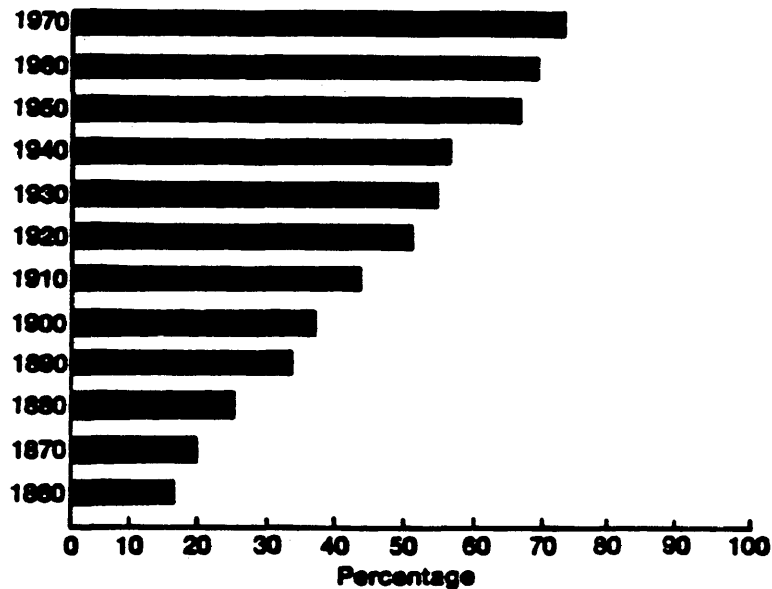
U.S. Census.

(Poplin, 1979)

Population changes have occurred because the availability of jobs has advanced through modern technology and relocated people to the cities. This movement to the cities has increased economic opportunities, but has decreased a person's social and psychological identification with primary groups (Poplin, 1979).

FIGURE #3: PERCENTAGE OF RURAL-URBAN POPULATION

Percentage of Total U.S. Population Living
in Urban Places, 1860 to 1970 (U.S. Census).



(Poplin, 1979)

Theories of the Rural-Urban Transition

Ferdinand Toennies (1855-1936) was a German Sociologist who presented an evolutionary view of this social change process from rural to urban. He described Germeinschaft (rural) and Gesellschaft (urban) with the following characteristics and suggested that rural societies are replaced by urban ones (Vago, 1980) (see Figure #4, page 15).

FIGURE #4: TOENNIES' SOCIAL CHANGE PROCESS FROM RURAL TO URBAN

	Gemeinschaft	Gesellschaft
Size:	Small	Large
Location:	Rural	Urban
Population:	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Economy:	Agricultural	Industrial
Labor:	Generalized	Specialized
Social Control:	Primary Group	Secondary Group
Relationships:	Personal Trust	Impersonal Distrust
Commitments:	Informal/Intimate	Formal/Contractual
Goals:	Idealistic	Realistic

(Rood, 1985)

Howard P. Becker (1899-1960) saw the transition as one from sacred-traditional to secular-pragmatic. Robert Redfield (1897-1958) described the transition as the folk/urban continuum (Vago, 1980).

Today, most Americans live in urban environments, but all experience the impact of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization.

The Affect of Modernization and Urbanization on the Individual

In the modern world many people do not feel a sense of belonging. Emile Durkheim referred to the absence of a sense of affiliation as "anomie." He anticipated that a person's feeling of belong-

ingness would be threatened in a larger, more complex, industrialized, urban society (Coser, 1977).

Poplin characterizes the modern world as being one where the individual is "alienated, feels powerless and alone." The concept of "community" is often referred to as the opposite of the modern world.

Poplin outlines the following characteristics of moral communities and mass society (see Figure #5, below):

FIGURE #5: CHARACTERISTICS OF MORAL COMMUNITIES AND MASS SOCIETY

<u>Moral Communities</u>	<u>Mass Society</u>
<p><u>Identification</u> Members of the moral community have a deep sense of belonging to a significant, meaningful group.</p>	<p><u>Alienation</u> Members of mass society have a deep sense of being "cut off" from meaningful group association.</p>
<p><u>Moral Unity</u> Members of the moral community have a sense of pursuing common goals and feel a oneness with other community members.</p>	<p><u>Moral Fragmentation</u> Members of mass society pursue divergent goals and feel no sense of oneness with other members of the mass society.</p>
<p><u>Involvement</u> Members of the moral community are submerged in various group and have a compelling need to participate in these groups.</p>	<p><u>Disengagement</u> Members of mass society have no meaningful group membership and feel no compulsion to participate in the collective activities of various groups.</p>
<p><u>Wholeness</u> Members of the moral community regard each other as whole persons who are of intrinsic significance and worth.</p>	<p><u>Segmentation</u> Members of mass society regard each other as means to ends and assign no intrinsic worth or significance to the individual.</p>

(Poplin, 1979)

Definition of Community in this Study

This paper will define community as a social and territorial unit of social organization. However, the characteristics of "moral community" and "mass society" as defined by Poplin are important in our understanding of how these differences are perceived by individuals.

CHAPTER III: THE CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY
AND THE EFFECT ON ETHNICITY

THE CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE EFFECT ON ETHNICITY

The First Cycle

We can conceive of our brief history as a nation in distinctly different cycles. The first cycle (first generation immigrants) is that which Frederick Jackson Turner defined as the "frontier." Turner wrote in 1893 that "the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period in American history." The characteristics of a frontier was the period in our history where many diverse groups came together. There were no social structures, organizations, traditions or customs to define a person's place. They needed each other to solve the problems of the environment and to survive. Turner suggests that during this phase of American history the dominant characteristic was "role" rather than "structure" and the emphasis was on "action, behavior and change." It was what an individual did that defined his place in this new world. The frontier was a collection of ethnic groups where positions were not yet fixed.

The Second Cycle

The close of the frontier gave way to what Turner referred to as the "non-frontier," the second cycle (second generation immigrants). During the early 1900s the social institutions and organizations became more established. "Structure" rather than "role" became the dominant characteristic and the emphasis was on "status

position and social class." During this phase, it became important to be "Americanized." Although the early settlers came from very different cultural, religious, and educational backgrounds, it was crucial to the nation-building process that these differences be de-emphasized and a common identity and culture be created (Turner, 1929).

This was a period in which Americans sought to Americanize their names and lose their accents. With the onset of the First World War, there was strong pressure from the government to eliminate speaking languages other than English in order to create an American identity, loyalty, and patriotism, and to give up Old World customs and tradition.

The conventional interpretation of history ... is that the nation is a "melting pot" in which the best of each ethnic tradition is fused with 'the best of other ethnic traditions, so that out of the totality will emerge something finer, more noble and complete than the culture of any one group.' As a matter of fact, that has not happened.... When groups 'gave up something'--their language, their religion, their systems for raising families and organizing themselves into groups, their architecture, crafts, or expressive culture--they did so because they were under strong pressure to do so from the forces which dominated the educational and economic systems.... These forces sought to standardize behavior through the public schools so as to make people rootless, moveable pegs in an assembly line industrial system; similar forces seeking standardization wanted to centralize power and build a nation of aggressive military action (Buller, et.al., 1976).

The Third Cycle

The third cycle, "the modern, industrialized, urban world" took people off of their land and into cities. On the land, a person's behavior and ability to adapt to the social and environmental

conditions was a leveling process.

But, in the cities people went from the land to the factories and with that came a search for equality and a romanticized perception of their past. This phenomenon has been referred to as "romantic pluralism" (Wheeler, 1962).

Most Americans could trace their immediate heritage back to the land, or the small towns of parents or grandparents. For many, the complex modern, urban world did not produce a sense of belonging, but of "anomie." Many people have felt alienated from their roots, from their work or from themselves.

They (i.e., third generation) have everything their grandparents and great-grandparents came for but the price they paid is the lack of feeling of belonging, a lack of social psychological roots. There develops, then, what Hansen chose to call third-generation interest, a principle which makes it possible for the present to say something and do something about the future in the name of the past. It is an impulse which forces many different people to interest themselves in the one factor they have in common: heritage (Wheeler, 1975).

The Fourth Cycle

Today, the fourth cycle (fourth generation) is yet in another phase. America is a part of a global transition to a "complex, bureaucratic, technocratic society." There is a feeling among most Americans that we are in the midst of a revolution and a dynamic period of social change. We have moved from the frontier, to the agrarian society, to the modern, urban, and industrialized world. It has become evident to many that it is our fate as Americans, that our origins and differences will, in fact, be totally assimilated into a common culture.

Many of us, today, have no ties back to our ethnic heritage. For some, we don't even know our ancestry.

Figure #6 below summarizes the cycles of American history as these social changes occurred.

FIGURE #6: CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY AS THEY RELATE TO GOALS

<u>Cycle</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Generation</u>	<u>Goals</u>
I	Prior to 1930	"Frontier"	First	Society Building
II	1930 - 1960	"Non-Frontier"	Second	Nation Building
III	1960 - 1980	"Modern, Industrialized Urban World"	Third	Search for Equality
IV	1980 -----	"Complex, Bureaucratic, Technocratic Society"	Fourth	Search for Community

(Rood, 1985)

CHAPTER IV: THE CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY
AND THE MEANING OF FESTIVAL

THE CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE MEANING OF FESTIVAL

Universality of Festival and Ritual

Regardless of the age, size, or location of a community, it must meet the needs of the members if they are to continue.

One of the primary ways in which a community or social group is able to provide opportunities to meet these needs of social interaction, social identification, and subsistence is through ceremony and ritual. Rituals are social activities that are greater than any individual member and serve to bring people together to act upon and to reenact their values, share commonalities, and display unique talents, contributions and differences. Through these activities, they learn their roles in the community, gain status, and acquire membership into the community.

One important ritual among social groups is the festival. People flock to festivals whether it be a pre-literature culture in New Guinea, a Johanne Sebastian Bach 300-year celebration in Germany, or a state fair in Iowa.

Why do people do it? Why do thousands of ordinary people every year plan to go to the Plaza in Kansas City during the Christmas season, fight for a parking place, walk several blocks in the cold, push and shove each other just to "be there" at the very moment when the lights go on? The lights will be there tomorrow. The lighting ceremony will be televised that evening on every news station. Yet, there is something important about "being there."

Reasons for Festivals and Rituals

Why do people plan their once in a lifetime goal to make it to "Mardi Gras," or the "Kentucky Derby" or the "Miss America Pageant"? Why do these communities go to the tremendous effort and expense every year to have these social events? Spectaculars, festivals, pageants, are a lot of work. They are work for those who put them on and they are work for those who make the effort to attend. But they are important. So important, in fact, that Jack Ludwig, author of The Great American Spectaculars, and professor of English at Stoney Brook, ranked them right up there next to bread itself (Ludwig, 1976).

People have festivals for many reasons. They are found in every culture and in every community of any size. And, nearly any social group that exists over time will begin to create its own festivals and ritual. Festivals are important and complex social interactions. There are political, economic, cultural, religious, and sentimental reasons for festivals.

Communities have such events in order to present to the world, if only for a weekend or a day, that their place is not like any other place in the whole world (Ludwig, 1976).

Changing Trends in the Meaning of Festivals

Robert Meyer, Jr., author of Festivals U.S.A. & Canada, and former festival organizer himself suggests that there is a change in the trend of festivals in the United States. This trend is moving

from the religious and agricultural festivals of the past to the arts, crafts, and folk festivals of today. He states:

The trend is away from milling about in a midway atmosphere, and toward contemplation of the arts in community cultural centers and on college campuses. So, during the 1960s attention is shifting from allegorical street processions to allegory depicted in the dance, drama, films, music, painting and sculpture (Meyer, 1967).

Types of Festivals

Meyer (1967) categorizes the following types of festivals for us: agricultural, arts, beauty pageants, community, crafts, dance, drama, fairs, film, floral, folk, forest, holiday, music, and sports festivals and winter carnivals. He has also listed most of the major and stable festivals in the United States and gives their dates of origin. It is evident by reviewing this survey that community and folk festivals emerged in the 1960s whereas most of the economy-based (agriculture, fairs, etc.) and religious festivals developed in the United States around the 1930s.

Better transportation and increased leisure time make it possible for more people to go greater distances for these celebrations. Because of this change in lifestyles, the small towns can compete with larger communities to attract participants. Small communities can offer an escape from modernization and urbanization. Evidence of this is demonstrated by reviewing the "Calendar of Events" in Nebraska promoted through Nebraska tourism efforts. Many of the highly publicized activities are located in small communities.

The Cycles of American History and Its Impact on Festival

In the first cycle, prior to the 1930s, people did not have much time for festivals. They came together instead to structure society and create American institutions such as schools, churches, and government structures. Their rituals were primarily religious in nature or celebrations of births and weddings, and to pay respect for their dead. Rituals were a chance to gain strength from others and end their isolation.

Festivals in this country emerged in the second cycle in the 1930s. Our "frontier cycle" had ended and we were now a nation rather than many small groups, and the fairs, and religious festivals helped in the process of Americanization. These festivals attempted to downplay the differences and emphasize a common future.

Festivals flourished again in the 1960s, but the reasons were not to perpetuate our sameness, but instead to celebrate our differences as these unique cultural identities were becoming lost in the process of Americanization. During America's third cycle many ethnic festivals developed due to "third generation interest." These festivals contributed to both maintaining the heritage and culture of ancestors, and also enabled the communities to grow and change by boosting their economies and linking the community to the greater society.

Many of the festivals that started in the 1960s are now depending on a later generation to sustain them. How this new generation responds to the meaning of festival in the fourth cycle has not adequately been studied in local settings. The third generation is concerned. Will the festival interest wane? Will the ethnic

emphasis disappear? Or will there be more enthusiasm than ever in such ceremonies and rituals?

Today, the festivals are not waning, but instead becoming a regular, routine, and important part of our modern, bureaucratic world. Here the individual can reflect on the past, be reminded of roots, demonstrate individual talents, and "let go," if just for a while, of the complex, bureaucratic world.

Festivals are one way in which people show their individuality and their universality. Festival planning responds to both of these needs for those who put on the festival and for those who attend.

Figure #7 below demonstrates how the perception of ethnicity has changed through the four cycles of American history. It also shows the changes in the types of festivals and the role festival plays in community life.

FIGURE #7: CYCLES OF AMERICAN HISTORY SHOWING THE CHANGE IN THE PERCEPTION OF ETHNICITY AND THE ROLE OF FESTIVAL OR RITUAL

Cycle	Perception of Ethnicity	Types of Festivals or Rituals	Role of Festival or Ritual
I	Ethnicity Evident	Religious, & Ceremonial (births, deaths, weddings, holidays)	End Isolation, Emphasis: Spiritual/ Cooperation
II	Ethnicity Devalued	Agricultural, Fairs, Economic Base; Patriotic	Americanization; Emphasis: Commonality
III	Ethnicity Romanticized	Ethnic, Folk	Heritage Identification; Emphasis: Uniqueness
IV	Total Assimilation Evident	Cultural Crafts, Art Music	Find Community; Emphasis: Value Verification, Involvement, Participation, Creativity

(Rood, 1985)

CHAPTER V: PERCEPTIONS OF WILBER

PERCEPTIONS OF WILBER

A Visitor's View of Wilber

Wilber is located in eastern Nebraska about 35 miles southwest of Lincoln, the state's capital city and 92 miles southwest of Omaha, the state's most populated city. Wilber is a small town with only 1624 residents.

To get to Wilber, visitors turn off the state's interstate highway system at the Crete exit west of Lincoln and travel south on state highway 103. From a distance, Wilber appears to be very similar to the many small rural communities scattered about the great plains region of the United States. The most dominant features of these small towns are the tall white grain elevators located next to the railroad tracks that cut through the towns.

One of the first things they would probably notice is that each local motorist nearing Wilber would give the tourists a personal wave as their cars pass, but only using the index finger to give this unique greeting. Nearing the town, tourists see some peculiar aspects of this rural community. First is a telephone pole with the sign, "Chaloupkaville" nailed to the pole. Then there is a green and white sign saying, "Czecherettes Welcome You" placed there by the local 4-H chapter, and later, a sign saying, "Vitame Vas, Wilber, Czech Capital of Nebraska."

Arriving in Wilber on the corner of 3rd and Main Street, tourists spot a Nebraska historical marker designating Wilber as the

Czech Capital of Nebraska and providing visitors with a brief history of the Czech immigrants in Nebraska.

Driving down the major business street of the town, our visitor would see a few retail shops, local bars, a few professional offices, a drug store, a savings and loan company, a cafe called the Wilber club, some grocery stores, and a gas station.

Closer observation directs tourists' attention to the ethnic aspects of this community. In the main business district most of the local shops have their signs brightly painted and written in the Czech language. There is a Czech museum, a Czech bakery, a meat market selling Czech sausages, a Czech craft shop, a Sokol Hall, and a library with a Czech name. The visitor might even hear Czech music being played on the main streets in the middle of the afternoon.

If tourists stop to look at the local telephone directory, their eyes would glance over the strange spellings of the many Slavic names. They would notice that some names are spelled without a vowel. This would provide validation that this is indeed, a highly ethnic community. As they drove around to explore the community further they would notice that most of the lawns are well cared for and the houses freshly painted. If it were spring, summer or fall, the tourist would see many of the homes adorned with a variety of flowers and shrubbery. Some of the homes would obviously be over a hundred years old and reflect the architecture of eastern Europe. Other homes would be extremely modern and located in a new sub-division similar to that found in urban suburbs.

Tourists could not miss the large, restored Wilber Hotel. This old, frontier establishment might cause them to think about what life must have been like on the prairie for the pioneers. They would also notice the beautiful white marble county court house that would reveal Wilber as the county seat of Saline County. They might also see the county jail across the street from the court house.

The tourists would notice two different schools. The old school is obviously an old high school since it bears the motto, "WHS-Wisdom, Honor, Service." The sign in the window reads,

Our mission: to educate our children to live in an ever changing world, with intelligence, wisdom and dreams.

Next to the old high school are the ruins of an old elementary school that served the community in earlier days. In a more recently developed part of the town they would find another school. This is a large modern building with a sign saying Wilber-Clatonia Public School. It appears to have been built in the mid-1960s.

Visitors would be able to count three churches -- Methodist, Lutheran, and Catholic. They might notice that the bars outnumber the churches.

They also would see a Wilber Nursing Home as they come into the town. There might be residents of the nursing home sitting or walking outside. On the other side of town they would see a "Czech Village" which appears to be some kind of small, multi-unit housing.

On the outskirts of the town they would come across the Legion Park and the Gun Club. At the park some teenagers might be playing

tennis and the girls might be practicing for a softball tournament. They would eventually come across a cemetery with the words, "Cecho Slavnsky Hrbítov" on its gates. There would also be another cemetery on the other side of town with the words, "Sunnyside" upon its gates.

The tourists have noticed an absence of activity in this small town. Not many cars on the streets and not many people are mingling about. Perhaps they would go into one of the local bars and order a glass of beer and look over the menu written on a board placed on the wall for all to see. They might order a pork dinner just for fun instead of the usual hamburger, and decide to try a kolache to find out what they are. They might begin to feel a little uncomfortable in the bar as they notice that the local folks seem to stare at them and expose their identity as outsiders. They might have the strange sense that, somehow, they have intruded into a world where they do not belong.

By this time the visitors would most likely assume that they had come across a "quaint little Czech village." They would probably begin to compare it with their own crowded, noisy, urban environment. There certainly wouldn't be traffic to worry about on the way to work. They haven't seen one franchised, fast food restaurant. Here they wouldn't have to stand in line at a check-out counter, and they probably wouldn't work all day in a large, complex, bureaucratic office. Perhaps they have come to believe that they have found a folk community where life is simpler and where people have escaped the complexity of modern life.

These are the first impressions for outsiders of Wilber, Nebraska.

The Sociologist's View

Many people erroneously believe that the small town is the "polar opposite" of mass society. They interpret life in these small rural communities to be "laid back," simpler, slower-paced, more honest, and an easier way of life. The small town is seen to exist far away from the hectic pace and the complex problems of the urban dweller.

This paper contends that this is a highly idealized and inaccurate view of small town life. The small town, and particularly those that can be referred to as "folk" communities are not the polar opposite of mass society, but instead part and parcel of the complex social processes that are occurring throughout every segment of our society. The folk community and mass society perform instead, necessary reciprocal functions, one for the other.

This field study explores the reciprocity between the small town and the mass society by examining the meaning of the Czech Festival, Soudeska, to the members of Wilber and to those who attend the festival activities.

The festival is a vehicle which provides the visitors with a feeling of roots, belonging and values in a world which is often alienating, impersonal, and materialistic. It is also a vehicle for the members of a small community to create the necessary ties to help them withstand the strong forces of rapid economic, technological, and social change.

For both the provider and the participant, a festival is one means to create cohesion among individuals who are by the nature of their existence in competition with each other.

CHAPTER VI: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

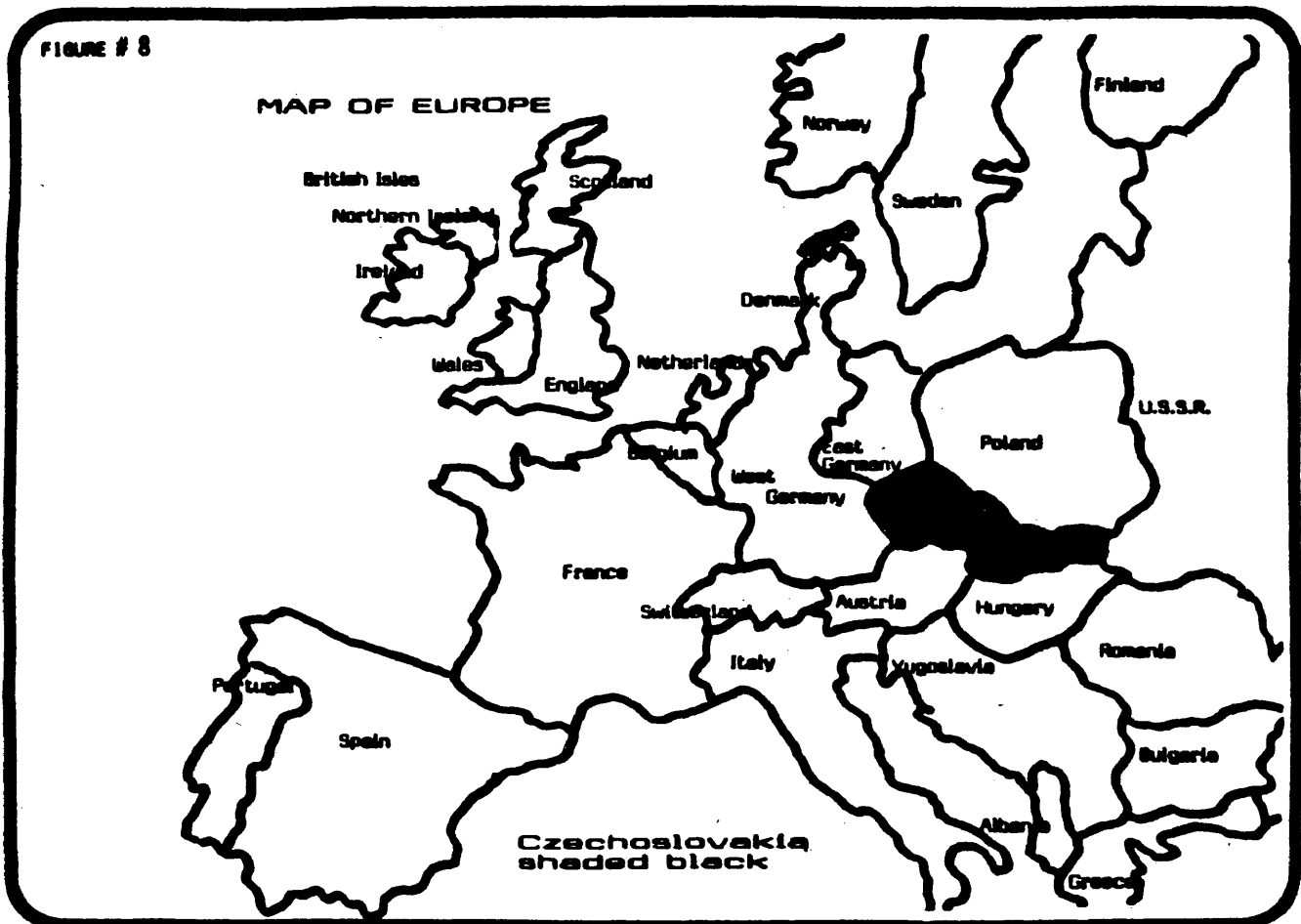
The focus of this study is Soudeška, a festival in Wilber, Nebraska which celebrates the Czech heritage and culture. This celebration is largely symbolic and includes some history, some myth, and some legend.

Czechoslovakia Today

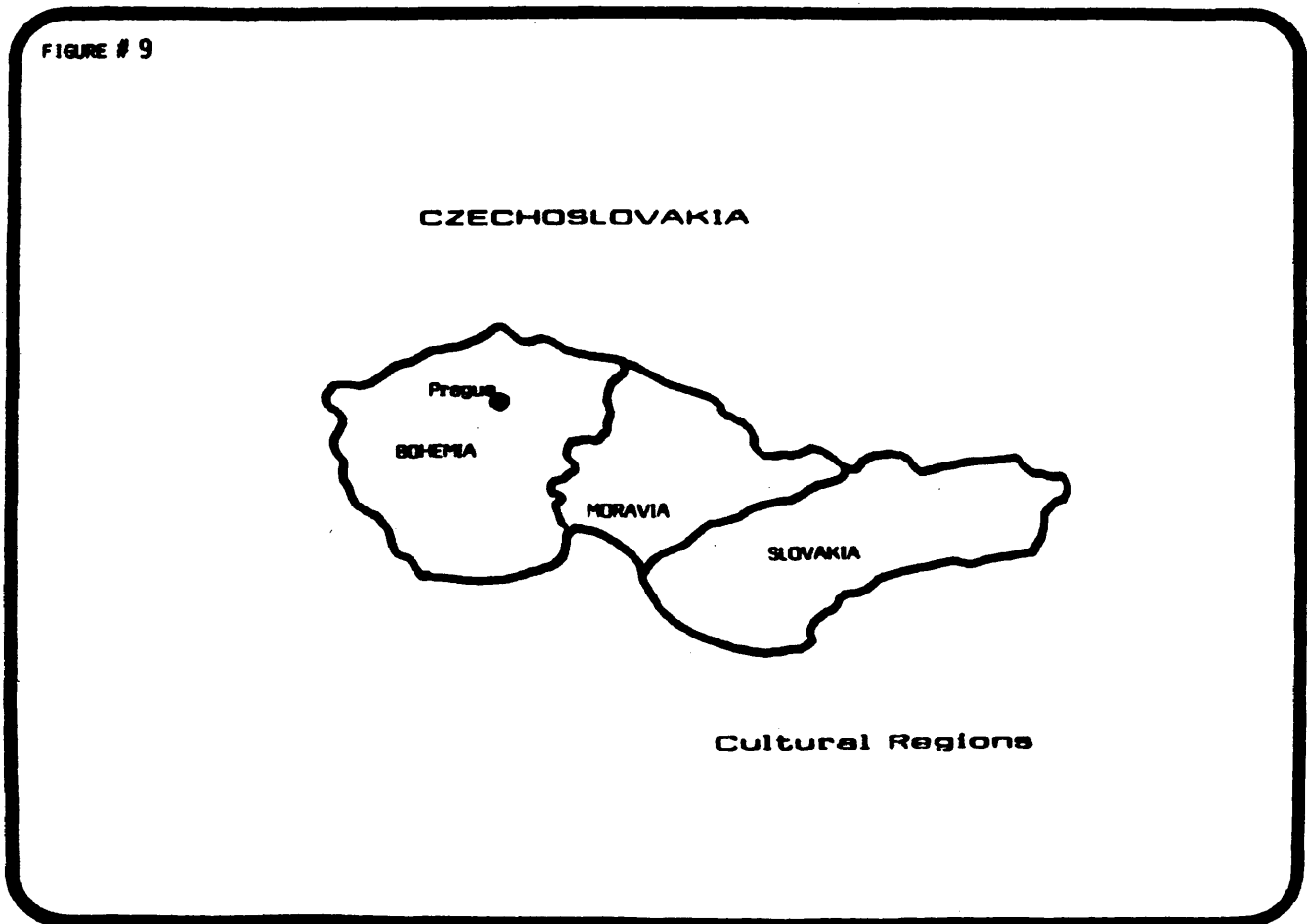
A very brief overview of Czechoslovakia is intended to give the reader insight into some of the symbolism of the festival at Wilber. A detailed history of the 1500-year unrest in this geographic region would be far beyond the aims of this project.

This small, landlocked country in eastern Europe, known to us since World War I as Czechoslovakia, has been the stage of many of the political and religious struggles of Europe and of western civilization. These struggles have torn this small country from north to south and east to west for centuries. Some knowledge of Czechoslovakia is important to our understanding of why Czechs came to the United States, and why they have some of the cultural differences, religious attitudes, political convictions, and values somewhat different from many of the other immigrants who came to the United States.

Area. Czechoslovakia is a landlocked country in eastern Europe. This small country is approximately 50,000 square miles (about the size of the state of New York). It is 470 miles east to west, and 235 miles north to south. It is bordered by the U.S.S.R., Poland, Hungary, Austria, West Germany, and East Germany (See Figure #8 below).



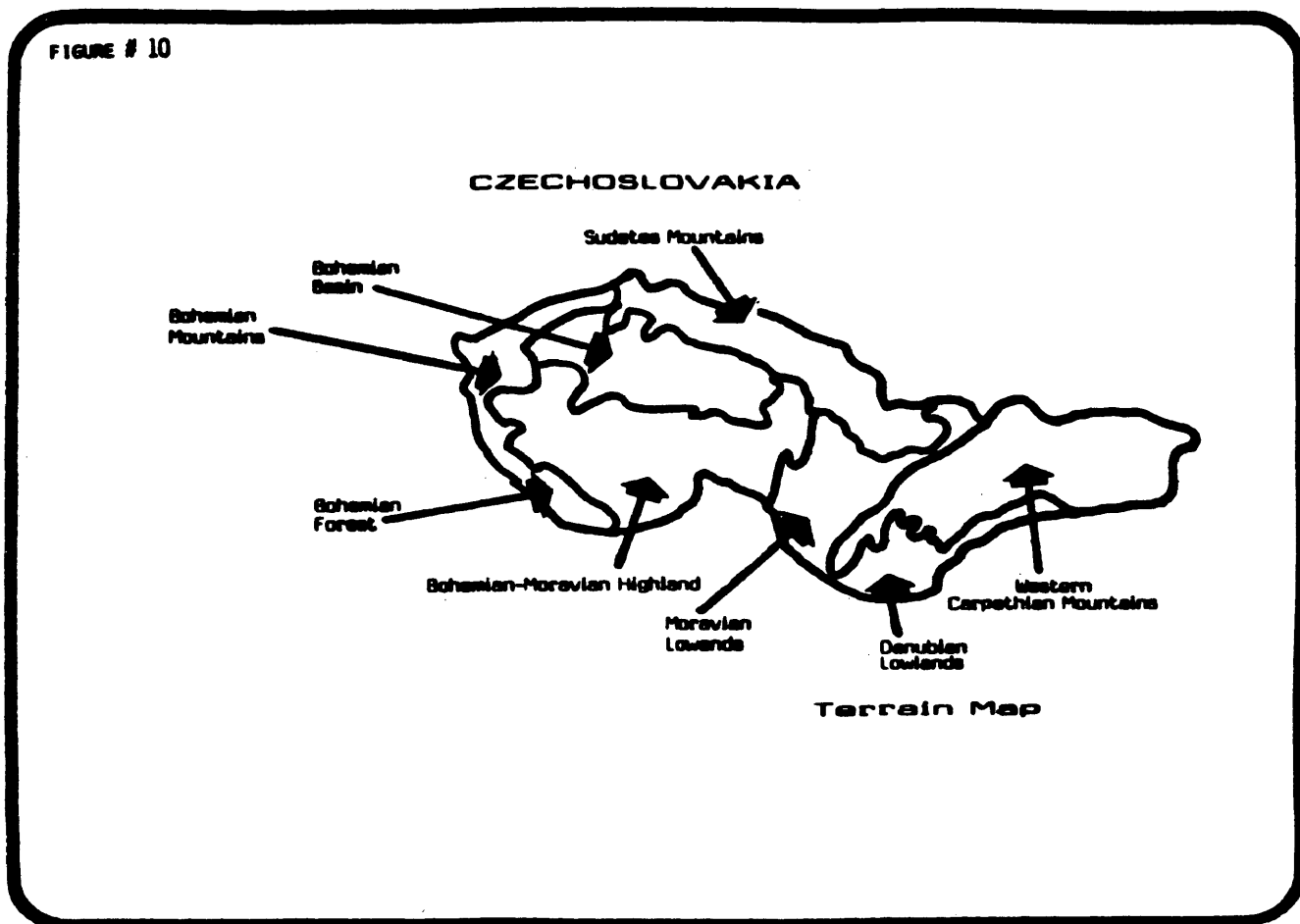
People. There are two Slavic peoples who live in Czechoslovakia. They are the Czechs and the Slovaks. The country has three major regions -- Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia (see Figure 9 below).



The country has approximately 15,456,000 people. About 57% of the population is urban and 43% rural. The Czechs make up about 65% of the country's people with Slovaks making up about 30%. Hungarians are the largest minority with others including Germans, Gypsies, Poles, and Ukrainians. Prague is the capital city.

Regions. There are seven primary geographical regions in the country: (1) the Bohemian Mountains, (2) the Sudeten Mountains, (3)

the Bohemian Basin, (4) the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, (5) the Moravian Lowlands, (6) the Danubian Lowlands, and (7) the Western Carpathians (see Figure #10 below).



Economy. Czechoslovakia is both an agricultural and an industrial nation. 55% of the country is farmland and 35% forest land. There are also large deposits of coal and other minerals. Much of the industry is heavy manufacturing.

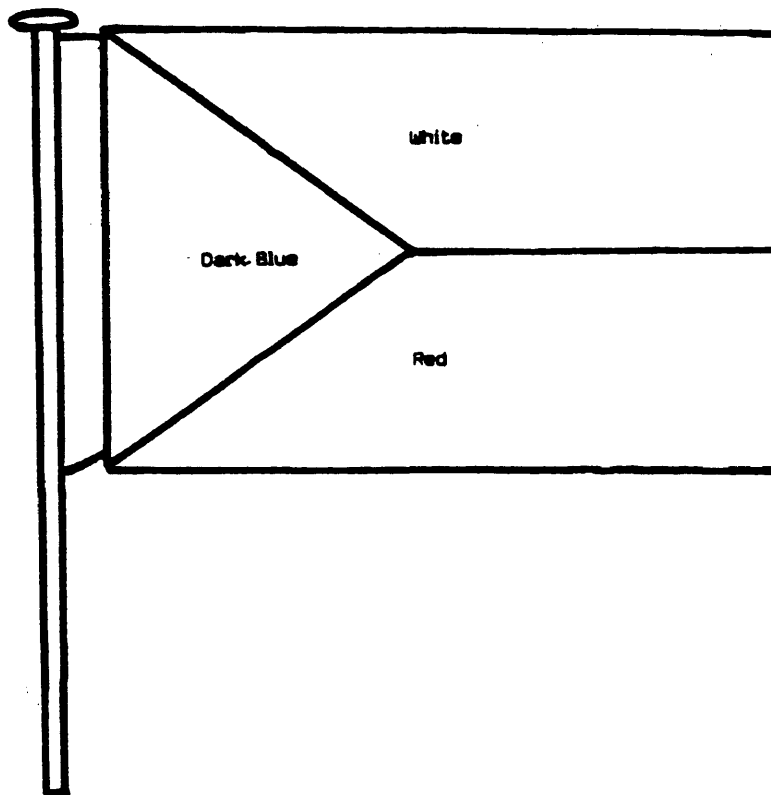
Government. Today, Czechoslovakia is in the Soviet bloc and has been a Communist state since February, 1948.

Education and religion. Nearly all people in Czechoslovakia can read and write. There are six major Universities in Czechoslovakia. Charles University in Prague is the oldest university east of the Rhine and north of the Alps. Although two-thirds of the country's inhabitants are Catholic, only a few attend church. About 12% are Protestants. Jews and Eastern Orthodox are minority religious groups.

Symbols. The flag of Czechoslovakia is blue, white, and red, and is divided into three sections which symbolize the three regions of Czechoslovakia (Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia) (see Figure #11 below).

FIGURE # 11

CZECHOSLOVAK FLAG



The Coat of Arms is a figure of a two-tailed lion which symbolizes the Bohemian kingdom. It bears the Slovakian shield. This symbol now carries a red star standing for communism (see Figure #12 below).

FIGURE # 12

TWO-TAILED LION



A SYMBOL OF THE BOHEMIAN KINGDOM

An Historical Sketch of Czechoslovakia

The Ancient Tribes

In the first centuries B.C., the area now known as Bohemia was occupied by a Celtic people called Boii (the Romans gave the name of Bohemia to the land of the Boii). Later Germanic peoples called Macromanni settled in the area. Slavic people occupied the area known as Bohemia and Moravia in the sixth century and were named after one of their leaders, Cech. The Czechs called Bohemia "Cechy." Bohemia is a Latin name and the name that the English gave to the inhabitants of the Czech land.

The Great Moravian Empire

In A.D. 800s, the tribes came together and formed the Great Moravian Empire. In about A.D. 900, the Magyars, who were Hungarians, conquered this Empire. The Magyars ruled the eastern part of that Empire for a thousand years.

The Christianization of the Czechs

In A.D. 863, Constantine and Methodius, the apostles of the Slavs, came to Great Moravia from Byzantium and introduced Christianity to its Slavic inhabitants using the Old Church Slavonic language. The two apostles pursued their efforts in spite of the efforts of the German bishop of Mainz to Christianize the Czechs and to expand the interests of of the Holy Roman Empire and the German princes. The Czechs of Bohemia were influenced heavily by the German missionaries whereas the inhabitants of Moravia were more influenced by the Eastern Church. The Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia succeeded in maintaining their culture and language during this period largely because the church liturgy was in the Old Church

Slavonic language.

Bohemia Under the Holy Roman Empire

The tribes united during the ninth century under the Premyslid Dynasty. This was due to the marriage of their ruler Libuse (later a national heroine) with Premysl, a plowman. Bohemia became an autonomous principality in the Holy Roman Empire. This autonomy was confirmed in the twelfth century. The ruling duke of Bohemia was elevated to a King and thus recognized by the Holy Roman Emperor and the German princes. Bohemia reached its greatest territorial extent under King Otokar II (1253-1278). Bohemia experienced its "Golden Age" as a cultural and political center under King Charles IV, the Holy Roman Emperor (1346-1378). Prague became the Empire's capital city and Charles University was founded in Prague as the first university east of the Rhine.

Religious Reform and the Hussite Wars

Jan Hus (John Huss) led a reform movement against the corrupt practices of the Catholic church and was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1415. This set off a series of civil wars in the region known as the Hussite Wars which continued until 1434.

Hapsburg Rule and the Thirty Years War

In 1526, Ferdinand I, the Hapsburg ruler of Austria and a Catholic, became the King of Bohemia and Hungary. After 1517, the Protestant Reformation spread to many parts of Europe and at least half of the inhabitants of Bohemia embraced Protestantism by 1600. In 1618, the Bohemian Diet elected a Protestant King. In doing so they defied the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor and began the revolt that led to the Thirty Years War. The Protestants were defeated in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 and Bohemia lost

its independence. The Hapsburg Emperor, supported by the Jesuits, forced almost all Czech Protestants to adopt the Catholic religion. He also made German the administrative language of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia in place of Czech. For nearly three centuries after the Battle of White Mountain, Bohemia and Moravia were part of the Hapsburg Empire. Most of Silesia was seized by Prussia in 1740.

New Nationalism and Czech Independence

During the 1800s, there was a "national" revival of the Czech language and culture. Czechs who outnumbered the Germans two to one, soon surpassed the Germans in wealth, education, and influence. World War I began in 1914. Tomas G. Masaryk and Eduard Benes left Bohemia and formed the Czechoslovak National Council in order to overthrow the Hapsburgs and establish Czechoslovakia as an independent state. In 1918, the Allies recognized Czechoslovakia as an ally and as an independent state. Masaryk became its first president after the overthrow of the Hapsburgs in October, 1918 until his retirement in October, 1935. He was succeeded by Eduard Benes.

Czechoslovakia Under Communism.

During the brief independence in Czechoslovakia there was much internal and external unrest. Many Slovaks, especially those who supported the Slovak People's Party resented the Czech predominance. After 1933, most Germans (Germans were now 25 percent of the inhabitants in Czechoslovakia) sought greater autonomy. Hitler threatened war against Czechoslovakia if the Sudeten Germans were not allowed self-determination. Britain, France, and Italy signed an agreement with Hitler and forced Czechoslovakia to surrender all area inhabited by Germans over to Germany. Hungary and Poland

then seized other parts of Czechoslovakia. In 1939, Hitler occupied what was left of Bohemia and Moravia. Over 250,000 Czechs and Slovaks died in World War II.

Benes fled the country in 1938 and set up a government-in-exile. In 1945, the Soviet Army freed most of Czechoslovakia from the Germans. Benes returned to form a government of national unity in which the anti-fascist political parties were represented.

The Communists held leading positions in the government. In February, 1948, a Communist coup forced Benes to authorize formation of a Communist government; he then resigned. At this time the Communists took over the businesses, industries, and schools. Farmers were persuaded to join state farms or government cooperatives. Political opponents of the Communists were imprisoned.

Today, Czechoslovakia is a part of the Soviet Bloc. The standard of living is higher than that of Russia, but has not kept pace with other European nations since World War II. Many of the political and economic reforms started in the late 1960s have not continued and people are not guaranteed basic human and legal rights. (Rosicky, 1929; Glaser, 1961; Thomson, 1953.)

Czech Immigration To the United States

In 1910, the Census reported 539,392 Bohemians in the United States. Approximately one-eighth of these resided in Nebraska. Most of the immigrants came to this country before World War I and before the Czechs obtained their independence in 1918. Many Czechs left their homeland because of religious oppression, political

unrest and the economic conditions of the country at that time. Most of the people who came to the United States were small land owners in the Old Country. They came to the United States to better themselves economically. The land they owned in Czechoslovakia was often sold to pay for transportation and registration fees. The people who came to this country were generally well educated and cultured people. People who were not land owners generally were not able to come (Rosicky, 1929).

Czechs in Nebraska

By 1930, Nebraska contained many of the Czechs in the United States. The majority of these were from Bohemia and Moravia. Only a few Slovaks resided in Omaha. Some of the people who were Czechs registered as Austrians and therefore, were not reported in Czech rolls. Nebraska had the largest number of first generation Czech farmers in the United States (Rosicky, 1929).

There were a number of economic incentives which drew Czechs to Nebraska. The most important incentive was the Homestead Law of 1862. Through this law a person could settle upon 160 acres of land. The filing fee was \$14.00. A person needed to live upon it for five years before it became his.

The Timber Claim Act of 1873 gave 160 acres of land to a person if he lived on it for eight years and planted trees on 10 acres of it (Kaura, 1962).

In 1870, the railroads began to sell their land. At that time John Rosicky of Omaha, who as the publisher of a Czech language

newspaper, encouraged many of his fellow countrymen to come to Nebraska.

Nebraska became known as the Soldier State since so many soldiers obtained land through these acts. In 1904, Dr. John Habenicht computed the number of Czech families in Nebraska counties (Rosicky, 1929). A map showing the number of families settling in Nebraska according to Habenicht is included as a reference in Appendix A.

Czechs in Saline County

The first Czechs that came to Nebraska settled in 1865 in Richardson, Cuming, and Saline Counties. Saline County is the largest Czech country of settlement, and along with those mentioned above, the oldest. The very first white settler in the county was Victor Vifquain, a Belgian who came in 1858. The Czechs began settling in 1865. The first to plat land in the county were the Jelinek brothers, Frank and Joseph, and Vaclav Sestak (Shestak) who platted land close to the present site of Crete, Nebraska.

The Czechs in this county and others had difficulty integrating with persons of other nationalities because of language barriers, and because of differences in religious and political beliefs. Because of their strong desire to obtain land and better themselves economically, and because of a very deep skepticism of formalized religion, the Czechs organized themselves into fraternal organizations. Some of these are "Zapadni Cesko-Bratska Jednota (ZCBJ)" meaning "Western Fraternal Life Association," and the "Czech Sla-

vonie Benevolent Society (CSPS). These provided low-cost life and illness insurance and cultural centers for the Czechs.

Another important organization was Sokol (meaning falcon), a gymnastics organization that Czech boys and girls, and men and women ordinarily participated in until about the age of 30. Sokol Halls and fraternal lodges housed many cultural events such as plays, dances, town meetings, singing circles, and reading clubs. These clubs were extremely important to Czech pioneers in America because of their physical and social isolation.

The slogans for the Sokol are: "Not gain or glory" and "A sound mind in a sound body." The following is the creed of the Crete Sokols in Saline County (Kaura, 1962).

1. We American Sokols of Czech descent mutually agree to strive for the development of men, strong in mind and body.
2. We aim to promote the betterment of our heritage.
3. We realize that education and high ethics are the only road to a better way of life with our fellow men.
4. We pledge ourselves to oppose anyone who in any way would interfere with our rights and our freedom, and thus prevent the development of our freedom-loving organization and our country.

The Sokol organization originated in Czechoslovakia and was used to unite the Czechs when they were still a people without a country.

The Sokol organization was instrumental in the development of many music groups and theatre. Brass bands flourished in Nebraska as well as Czech dramas.

Czechs in the new country created cemetery associations to

provide a dignifying setting where they could bury their dead. These Czech cemeteries were patterned after those in the Old Country which were maintained like beautiful gardens. Czech cemeteries flourished through Nebraska. The Czech cemeteries do not exclude persons of other origins, but are distinctly Czech in their design. One of the most distinguished is the Bohemian cemetery near Wilber which bears the inscription, "What you are, we were -- what we are, you will be." Many of the tombstones are written in Czech. Some of them bear spiritual, poetic, or humorous inscriptions. Some describe the hardships of the Czechs in their new country.

Czechs have represented the dominant ethnic group in Saline County since 1890. This data is included in Appendix B.

The Community of Wilber

The town of Wilber is one of many towns founded by pioneers on the prairies of the United States. Wilber was founded by two men, C. D. Wilber and Jacob Mowery. It was platted on March 10, 1873. The land, like much other land was acquired from the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad by Mr. Wilber and as a homestead grant from the government by Mr. Mowery. The first settlers came to Wilber about 1865. Originally, the community was composed of Germans, English, and Czechs. In fact, the English outnumbered the Czechs. This did not remain the case, however, and today Wilber has a majority of residents of Czech descent (Ourecky, not dated).

The location of Wilber appears to have been significant in attracting people of Czech origin. It is located in the Big Blue

River valley which, because of its gently rolling hills and fertile valleys, is said to have reminded many of the Czech immigrants of their homeland. The town's population today is a little over 1600. The overall population of the United States continues to increase. However, the annual percentage of increase has declined since the "babyboom" years of the 1950s. The population of Wilber has increased steadily since it was founded. However, the majority of small towns have declined in population since the 1960s (see Figure 13 below).

FIGURE # 13: POPULATION OF WILBER

1900	1250
1940	1355
1950	1356
1960	1358
1970	1483
1980	1624

* data from 1910 to 1930 not available

* Taken from the U.S. Bureau of the Census; Population data from respective years.

The community has a mayor-city council form of government. The mayor is elected for a two-year term as are four city councilpersons. The city clerk, treasurer and attorney are appointed and also serve two-year terms. There is a volunteer fire department and local police who work closely with the Saline County Sheriff's Office. Wilber also has a jail. There is a nine-member planning commission that meets monthly and reports to the City Council and the Mayor. This group is appointed annually.

There are three churches in Wilber. Membership rolls compiled in 1970 showed that the Lutheran church was the largest. It had 311 members. The Catholic church reported 200 members. There were 130 Methodists reported.

Wilber has one physician, but the closest hospital is located at Crete, ten miles north of Wilber. The community of Wilber also has three law offices and one dentist. There are two banks in Wilber and one savings and loan company.

There are a variety of fraternal orders and social clubs in Wilber. These include the American Legion, Legion Auxillary, Phythian Knights and Sisters, Wilber Sokols, Sportsmen Club, Brush Creek Sokols, Wilber Firemen Service and Auxilliary, Federated Women's Club, Masons and Eastern Star, Garden Club, Gun Club, PEO, Rotary and Lions, and Extension clubs.

Wilber's median income is somewhat lower than that of the county. It has a slightly higher percentage of blue collar workers. However, a greater percentage of residents of Wilber own their own homes, and a disproportionately high number of persons over the age of 65 reside in the community. A summary of this information is included in Appendix C.

Wilber is a farming community. The primary crops are wheat, grain sorghum, corn, soybeans, and alfalfa. Most of these farms are family owned and operated. This agricultural base forms the economic foundation of the community. Business and commercial enterprises and some local industry exist in Wilber and in nearby communities.

Perceptions of Czech Values and Character

It is commonly said that the Czech person is one who loves truth, justice, freedom, and humanism. This is probably due to the long struggle for Czech independence. Even after the Czechs finally achieved their independence in 1918, the country was torn apart by both world wars, and particularly damaged by Hitler's armies. The country's independence lasted only for a few years when the nation was taken over by Communists. The two world wars and the communist invasion brought more Czech immigrants to the United States.

This section provides perceptions of the Czech values as seen by a United States anthropologist during World War I; an historian from Nebraska during the early days of Czech settlement in Saline County, and Nebraska author, Willa Cather during the 1920s.

Ales Hrdlicka, Curator of Physical Anthropology at the U. S. National Museum, described the people of Czechoslovakia in 1917, during those years of the Czech struggle for independence. This article was found among the collections of one of the Wilber festival organizers.

To attempt to define the characteristics of a whole people is a matter of difficulty and serious responsibility even for one descended from and well acquainted with that people. Moreover, under modern conditions of intercourse of men and nations, with the inevitable admixtures of blood, the characteristics of individual groups of strains of the race tend to become weaker and obscured.

Thus the Czech of today is not wholly the Czech of the fifteenth century, and to a casual observer may appear to differ but little from his neighbors. Yet he differs, and under modern polish and more or less perceptible effects of centuries of oppression, is still in a large measure the Czech of the old.

He is kind and with a stock of native humor. He is

musical, loves songs, poetry, art, nature, fellowship, the other sex. He is an intent thinker and restless seeker of truth, of learning, but no apt schemer. He is ambitious, and covetous of freedom in the broadest sense, but tendencies to domineering, oppression, power by force over others, are foreign to his nature. He ardently searches for God and is inclined to be deeply religious but is impatient of dogma, as of all other undue restraint.

He may be opinionated, stubborn, but is happy to accept facts and recognize true superiority. He is easily hurt and does not forget the injury; will fight, but is not lastingly revengeful or vicious. He is not cold, calculating, thin-lipped nor again as inflammable as the Pole or the southern Slav, but is sympathetic and full of trust, and through this often open to imposition.

His endurance and bravery in war for a cause which he approved were proverbial, as was his hospitality in peace.

He is often highly capable in languages, science, literary and technical education, and is inventive, as well as industrial, but not commercial. Imaginative, artistic, creative, rather than frigidly practical. Inclined at times to melancholy, brooding, pessimism, he is yet deep at heart forever bouyant, optimistic, hopeful -- hopeful not of possessions or power, but of human happiness, and of the freedom and future golden age of not merely his own, but all people (Hrdlicka, 1917).

The following quotation from Addison Sheldon, Superintendent of the Nebraska Historical Society, describes one perception of the Czechs in Nebraska.

In a log school house on Turkey Creek, about three miles southwest of Wilber, I began to know Nebraska Czechs. ... How fascinating the difference between the Slavic mind and the Anglo Saxon, as they worked side by side on home-made benches in mud-chinked long cabins. ... Most of those in Saline county lived in dugouts driven into the side of a ravine. They worked with feverish haste to get ahead in the new land. They wanted the children to get an English education, but corn husking took precedence over everything. Those were hard pioneer days for us all. But the Czech immigrant knew how to work harder and live on less than any other American-born settler. For that reason he fell into the severe condemnation of many of his neighbors whose ancestors had come to America a hundred years earlier or more.

If I were to put upon the printed page some of the epithets applied to these people from Central Europe, with their hard living, their queer customs, their joyous and sometimes hilarious beer-hall festivals, their old-country music, with its wild notes of passion, despair and defiance, their strange

intense language with its jarring Z's and R's, -- by their prairies and backwoods American neighbors, in the seventies and eighties, I greatly fear it would not add to the growing cordinality between this group and the rest of us. So I merely refer to those things which mark early contact between the Czech and the Anglo Saxon in Nebraska.

But for all of that -- for me and my three hundred years of Yankee ancestry -- there was a challenge and a charm in these people. They certainly were different from the rest of us. They were more than different. They were hungry to know the new things in the new land. I had some Czech school-children who were dull, but I do not remember one who was not eager. And many of them had minds of extraordinary power and clearness. They were sensitive in so many ways, to a picture, to a story, to a sentiment. I learned to know and to love the characteristics of these people in spite of all the contrast between them and those of my blood.

by Addison E. Sheldon
Supt., Nebraska State
Historical Society
(Rosicky, 1977)

But the Czechs sought to sustain their values in the new world and placed a high value on music, art, education, love of liberty and love of land. Nebraska author, Willa Cather describes her impressions of the Czechs she knew in Nebraska.

There is a Prague in Nebraska as well as in Bohemia. Many of our Czech immigrants were people of a very superior type. The political emigration resulting from the revolutionary disturbances of 1848 was distinctly different from the emigration resulting from economic causes, and brought to the United States brilliant young men from both Germany and Bohemia. In Nebraska our Czech settlements were large and very prosperous. I have walked about the streets of Wilber, the county seat of Saline County, for a whole day without hearing a word of English spoken. In Wilber, in the old days, behind the big, friendly brick saloon--it was not a "saloon," properly speaking, but a beer garden--there was a pleasant little theater where the boys and girls were trained to give the masterpieces of Czech drama in the Czech language. "Americanization" has doubtless done away with all this. Our lawmakers have a rooted conviction that a boy can be a better American if he speaks only one language than if he speaks two. I could name a dozen Bohemian towns in Nebraska where one used to be able to go into a bakery and buy better pastry than is to be had anywhere except in the best pastry shops of Prague or Vienna (Cather, 1923).

Many of these characteristics are still attributed to the Czechs in the United States and were frequently cited by people who were interviewed during this study.

Czechs are said to be proud of the fact that they were among the best educated in all of Europe. Due to compulsory education promoted by the Austrians, illiteracy was virtually unknown. This value on education has persisted in the United States.

Czechs are also attributed with a love of music. There is a Czech slogan, "Every Czech is a musician." Music was a very important part of the Old-World culture and it served to provide inspiration and enjoyment to Czech immigrants in a new and isolated environment.

Another important value attributed to the Czech people is a reverence for nature and a love of the land. It is said that the Czechs have almost a spiritual feeling about the land. Many Czechs believe in nature as the guiding force and the land is deeply meaningful in their religious orientation as well as their personal and political struggles for freedom, independence, and betterment from one generation to another.

It was very difficult for the Czechs to assimilate successfully into the American experience. Part of this was due to their geographic isolation and part of it was due to their difficult Slavic language.

To attempt to identify uniquely Czech characteristics after 150 years of assimilation into a common culture would be very difficult. Also, perceptions of ethnicity change based on how familiar a person is with individuals who are from a particular ethnic group.

Below is a chart (Figure #14) of how others perceive the Czech values and character, and how they perceive themselves.

FIGURE #14: SUMMARY OF PERCEPTIONS OF VALUES, ATTRIBUTES, PASSIONS, AND EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CZECHS

<u>Values</u>	<u>Passions</u>	<u>Attributes</u>
Independence	Music	Artistic
Truth	Poetry	Imaginative
Justice	Art	Creative
Humanism	Nature	Ambitious
Peace	Land	
Education	Fellowship	
Religious Freedom	Beauty	
	Family	
<u>Emotional Characteristics</u>	<u>Barriers to Assimilation</u>	
Optimistic	Pessimistic	Difficult Language
Bouyant	Brooding	Strange Customs
Hopeful	Melancholy	Geographic Isolation
Trusting	Jealous	Mistrusting of Organ- ized Religion
Sensitive	Easily Hurt	Extremes of Emotions & Behavior
Kind	Stubborn	Working on the Land
Brave	Defiant	Took Precedence over Education and Social Activities
Humorous	Despairing	
Thoughtful	Opinionated	

(Rood, 1985)

CHAPTER VII: THE WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

THE WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

Festival Origins

The Wilber Czech Festival originated in the 1960s. It is one of the many "community," "folk" or "ethnic" festivals that Meyer referred to as emerging during that period. The purpose of these festivals was different than the early festivals of the 1930s. The 1930 festivals were important in the assimilation process. The early festivals emphasized commonalities rather than differences because the individual at that time still felt the hurts of the Americanization process.

The 1960 festivals, on the other hand were started by a later generation. A generation who did not experience the pain of feeling inferior or left out. This was a generation who was able to have a kind remembrance of their ethnic culture and that recognition of uniqueness became even more important as our culture became more standardized and impersonal.

The Wilber Czech Festival came about for three seemingly unrelated reasons.

First, there was a large amount of interest generated in the state about the Czech heritage by Dr. Vladimir Kucera. Dr. Kucera was a political refugee and former newspaper editor from Brno, Czechoslovakia. He was employed at the Nebraska State Historical Society and the University of Nebraska. He accompanied an exhibit to nearly 80 communities in Nebraska during the Nebraska Territorial Centennial in 1954 (cited in a World Herald article of February 19,

1961). As this train moved through communities such as David City, Ord, Wilber, and Schuyler, Kucera talked with many descendants of the Czech settlers. He had on exhibit a sign reading "Mluv Cesky" meaning "Speak Czech" inside the train, thus inviting people of Czech origin to speak their native tongue with him. Dr. Kucera, who had fought both Nazi and Communist oppression before escaping into Austria in the late 1940's, found that many of the Czech descendants feared that the Czech language was disappearing in America.

In 1958, with 14 students, he started his first Czech language classes at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. In 1959, the University authorized him to start classes in Wilber and Omaha Technical High School. Dr. Kucera's energy and commitment to preserve the Czech heritage in Nebraska found him conducting classes five nights a week to people of all ages in communities in Nebraska.

In addition to teaching Czech he taught Czech culture, history, and music. Classes were later conducted in Milligan, Dwight, Schuyler, Clarkson, Abie, Table Rock, North Bend, and Weston. These classes "planted the seeds" for the festival, according to a festival organizer, Joe Vosoba, and "generated both the interest and the talent" necessary for such an undertaking.

According to Vosoba, another factor was the fact that during this time in Nebraska, Governor Brooks had a big drive to attract industry to the state. Realizing that tourism was an industry, Governor Morrison heavily promoted tourism in Nebraska during his administration.

A third factor was that Wilber had a Dale Carnegie course at the Lutheran Church where Bill Temps was pastor. Bill Temps was an

"extremely bright and enthusiastic" man, according to Vosoba, who began discussing ideas about what could be done to attract tourists. One night four men got together -- Bill Temps, Joe Vosoba, Gene Zajicek, and Walter Baer. That was when the idea for the festival came into being. The four individuals committed themselves to giving the idea a try. "Let's do it," "Let's preserve the Czech heritage and form a Czech organization," Vosoba quoted as the outcome of that meeting.

Walter Baer and his wife Helen, were instrumental and enthusiastic from the onset. The original group had a variety of things in mind. First, of course, was the preservation of the Czech heritage. It was obvious to them that the Czech heritage was being lost to third and fourth generations. Another purpose was to create a tourist attraction, for commercial purposes, in Wilber. Once the four agreed, the next step was to get the community of Wilber to accept the idea.

They scheduled a meeting at Sokol Hall. They advertised and posted signs and developed a slate of officers for the next Czech organization. Some of the people tried to learn the Beseda, a Czech folk dance in order to have entertainment. They put some crude costumes together but the Beseda was too complicated to learn in just two weeks. They improvised and learned a simpler folk dance that was performed by several couples. There were from 200 to 500 persons who came, according to World Herald newspaper accounts.

Governor Frank B. Morrison attended the meeting as did Joe Seacrest from the Lincoln Journal. They brought with them a professor in architecture from Britain. Before they assembled at Sokol

Hall, they drove around the town. The architect said, "that hotel you have is marvelous, marvelous. Whatever you do, don't ever let that hotel be destroyed? It is a marvelous example of frontier architecture."

At the organizational meeting the Governor and Seacrest spoke. An organization called "the Nebraska Czechs, Inc." was established. There was a membership campaign at the meeting. The organization was modeled after the Pennsylvania Dutch who promoted similar activities and events. The group wanted to have a festival to commemorate Czech culture and to promote tourism.

They tried to settle on an appropriate date. At first, July 6th, the day when Jan Hus was burned at the stake for religious reform in Czechoslovakia, was suggested. The date that was set was the first weekend in August because it was the height of the tourist season.

The original officers of the Nebraska Czechs, Inc. were Joe Vosoba, President; Gene Zajicek, Vice President; Helen Novak Baer, Secretary; Sid Hroch, Treasurer; Ray Houska, Mary Bartos Menne, and Bertha Pospisil, Directors.

The first meeting had representatives from Crete, Dewitt, Dorchester, Brainard, Fairbury, Dwight, Milligan, and Lincoln. There was entertainment provided by the Sauerkraut Band. The Youth-Can-Do representative, Sharon Ann Horacek, spoke for the young people and the group organized the first fund-raising project for the Nebraska Czechs, Inc., a car wash.

A newspaper article of March 15, 1962, states that this group (the Nebraska Czech's, Inc.) is considering "revival of the Czech

festival days which have not been held in Wilber since 1937" (no other accounts of this earlier festival have been found in my research).

Another newspaper article first discussed the idea for a Czech festival at a "Baer for Mayor" meeting where about 150 people heard Vosoba introduce Walter Baer as candidate for mayor. Baer stated in his remarks, "You must have action. If you don't act, nothing gets done!" The article states, "He spoke on a proposal for a society to promote and perpetuate Czech tradition, customs, and names in Wilber and encourage active cooperation in a Czech festival in Wilber." Baer's closing remarks were: "If you select me as mayor, I promise you in every way I can I will help you build to pass on to your children the same forward looking city your forefathers developed and passed on to us." Baer, the Pennsylvania Dutch candidate for mayor became synonymous with the idea of a Czech festival for Wilber. His opponent was Irvin Bech, a Czech and mayor of Wilber for 14 years. Baer won the election. However, Bech returned to the office of Mayor after Baer's first and only term.

Another seemingly unrelated incident that had its influence on the origin of the Czech festival was found in another unidentified newspaper article in Mrs. Ourecky's scrapbooks. "Strange as it may seem, the idea for Nebraska Czechs didn't originate with a Czech," Joe Vosoba was quoted as saying. The article continues, "He referred to the Rev. J. F. Balzer of Lincoln, former longtime minister of the First Congregational Church of Crete and ex-sociology professor. Rev. Balzer mentioned several years ago that Czechs of Saline County should do something to preserve their heritage, said Mr. Vosoba."

Rev. Balzer was also mentioned in another interview with Professor Wayne Wheeler, sociology professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, who credited Balzer with promoting the idea of festival in Saline County. Wheeler, who had studied in Sweden and corresponded frequently with Balzer, was doing a doctoral dissertation on Lindsborg, Kansas, a Swedish community. Lindsborg had a festival and one of the chapters in Wheeler's dissertation had to do with the festival of "Hyllingsfest." This festival was promoted by a Lindsborg physician who was of Dutch extraction from Holland, Michigan. Wheeler, who returned to Sweden after receiving his Ph.D. in sociology, and who originally came from Crete, Nebraska, in Saline County, reported frequently writing from 1959 and after to Balzer and telling him that "what the Czechs needed in Saline County was an ethnic festival."

"While the Rev. Balzer planted the seed, Mr. Vosoba said that Dr. Vladimir Kucera, a staff member of the Nebraska State Historical Society and University of Nebraska Czech language instructor helped it grow." (unidentified newspaper article).

The first meeting in April, 1962, at the Wilber Sokol auditorium was a start. At the original meeting, plans were under way for a Czech library, a Czech museum, renovation of the Wilber Hotel, and the promotion of Czech festivals throughout Czech communities. Today, these original plans are reality.

The significance of how the festival originated is related to the three problem-solving functions of community: social identification, social interaction and subsistence. Obviously, the identification of the Wilber residents with a Czech heritage, culture, and

value system helped to give the members a sense of belonging and meaning. The festival was an appropriate vehicle for social interaction of the members and provided a focus for the celebration of the Czech heritage and values. In addition, the problem of subsistence was addressed in the economic and political value of festival. (Wilber actually grew in population from 1969 to 1980 when many such small towns were declining in population.)

The Wilber Czech Festival became linked with a concept of progressiveness for Wilber which had far-reaching effects for the community.

It is accurate, I believe, to say that the motivations of the festival were: 1) to preserve heritage (social identification), 2) to promote Wilber and tourism in Nebraska (subsistence), and 3) to provide an opportunity for people in the community to work together for a common goal (social interaction). These are depicted in Figure #15 below.

FIGURE #15: MOTIVATIONS FOR FESTIVAL IN WILBER

<u>Reasons for Festival</u>	<u>Needs of Community Members</u>
Preserve Heritage	Social Identification
Promote Tourism and Benefit Economy	Subsistence
Cooperation Toward a Common Goal	Social Interaction

A New State Organization

In order to provide strength to the new project and also to further assist tourism in Nebraska, a statewide organization was formed. This organization assisted the people of Wilber in building ties politically and economically with the leadership of the state and also to build alliances with other small communities like their own.

In 1962 the state organization was founded. Many of the early founders were the same individuals who started the Wilber organization. The name of the state organization was "The Nebraska Czechs Incorporated." Its major purpose was to "perpetuate Czech culture, traditions, literature, and artifacts." It also hoped to get other communities involved in starting local Czech organizations and wished to promote tourism in Nebraska.

There are now 14 affiliated chapters. Each of the local groups are called the Nebraska Czechs of _____ and state their local community.

Dwight and Wilber were the first communities to charter with the state organization in 1962. Twelve other chapters were chartered later. The state organization assisted each of the communities with coordinating and publicizing their activities and assisted the state of Nebraska with advancing tourism. There are some predominately Czech communities which have not chartered with the state organization. Most of the chapters hold festivals or other Czech cultural events to promote the Czech heritage. Residents of Wilber have continued to be active over the years in the leadership

of the state organization and spend a great deal of time working with Nebraska tourism efforts. They have fostered the development of other Czech festivals as well as other ethnic festivals in Nebraska and other states (see Figure 16 below).

FIGURE #16: NEBRASKA FESTIVALS

These Chapters in Order of Getting Chartered

	<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Celebration Dates (1985)</u>	<u>Location</u>
I.	Dwight	July 19,20,21	Dwight
II.	Wilber	Aug. 2,3,4	Wilber
III.	Schuyler	inactive	
IV.	Omaha Czech Cultural Club	May 5	Omaha
V.	Komensky	inactive	
VI.	Saunders County	Sept. 22	Prague
VII.	Fremont	inactive	
VIII.	Sokol South Omaha	July 14	Omaha
IX.	Lincoln	Nov. 3	Lincoln
X.	South Central Nebraska	June 8	Hastings
XI.	Butler County	June 29,30	David City
XII.	Clarkson	June 21,22,23	
XIII.	Panhandle	Oct. 20	Lodgepole
XIV.	Sokol Omaha	Nov. 17	Omaha

Leadership of the state and local organization is included in Appendix D and E.

The local chapter of the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber is a loosely structured organization. Any member of the local community can participate in the selection of its leadership. Leaders are selected at an annual public meeting. However, many of the leadership responsibilities are, in fact, rotated among those community leaders who show a strong interest in keeping the festival alive. The work of the festival is done through a variety of committees. These are also loosely structured and those who are willing to work are welcome on the committees. Most of the original festival organizers are still spearheading the committees and some are concerned that there will not be people to take their places in the future.

One does not have to be Czech to head the Czech organization and in fact, several of the presidents have not been of Czech descent. But they must be interested in perpetuating the heritage and the festival.

Czech Festival Themes

Each year it is the responsibility of the president of the local chapter to select a theme. This theme emphasizes some aspect of Czech culture or history. The themes are emphasized throughout the various activities of the festival such as the floats that are entered in the parade and the displays that local merchants arrange in their windows.

One can see by the choice of the festival themes that the residents of Wilber perpetuate a nostalgic view of the past. These themes are an example of the "romantic pluralism" in which later

generations who no longer are scarred by the difficult processes of Americanization come to romanticize the pasts of their ancestors.

Wheeler explains this phenomena of "romantic pluralism" by saying:

While first and second-generation immigrants looked upon immigrant status as a mark of inferiority, "foreign" customs and habits are no longer those of greenhorns but of full-fledged Americans. It is now possible for members of the younger generations to say in effect, "We have never lived in a time when we didn't think with gratitude and a certain emotional warmth to our ties in the Old Country (Wheeler, 1962)."

The festival theme provides a focus for the festival activities and provides an opportunity for community members and festival participants to learn about various aspects of their past (see Figure 17 below).

FIGURE #17: CZECH FESTIVAL THEMES

1962	Our Czech Heritage
1963	Labors of Our Forefathers
1964	Folklore & Fantasy
1965	Czech Traditions
1966	Horticulture & Handcraft
1967	Contributions to Nebraska
1968	Contributions to America
1969	Music Music
1970	Happy Czech Memories
1971	Czech Traditions
1972	Czech Entertainment & Art
1973	Centennial Memories
1974	Holidays & Celebrations
1975	Pioneers of the Prairie
1976	Czechs Celebrate America's Birth
1977	Czech Spirit of 77
1978	Tales of Youth
1979	Back to Our Homeland
1980	The Golden Era
1981	Czech Songs & Dance
1982	Our Communities -- Rewards of our Labors
1983	Czech Beauty & Romance
1984	Reflections of the Past

The Seal of the Nebraska Czechs, Inc.

One of the many ways in which a community demonstrates both its individuality and its universality is through its choice of images and symbols.

The choice and interpretation of the seal of the Nebraska Czechs, Inc. depicts both maintenance and perpetuation - continuity and change. It symbolized the ability of people to overcome problems and create a successful future. It also pays tribute to the pioneers of the past, while at the same time looking to the promise of the future.

Much of the meaning of community in this paper is addressed in the symbol designed for the organization for the Nebraska Czechs, Inc.

It shows a view of the prairie and is symbolic of the determination and hard work of the Czech settlers. In the foreground of the symbol is a plough. This symbolizes the wealth produced in the state by the Czech people. The design's shape is a circle that is supposed to indicate all the pioneers who helped develop this land.

This is a description of the meaning of the seal to the Nebraska Czechs described by Walter Baer for Wilber's nomination for the AK-SAR-BEN Good Neighbor Award.

The Nebraska Czech seal depicts many of the aims and ambitions of the Nebraska Czechs. It is a prairie scene with a plough and sheaf of wheat, with the slogan "Pioneers of the Prairie." The prairie is the land where they settled and which they conquered. The plough depicts the soil which they broke to make productive, and the sheaf of golden wheat indicates the wealth which they helped to produce in our great state.

Figure #18 shows the symbol of the Nebraska Czechs, Inc.



Czech Historical Marker

Another example of how our uniqueness and our commonalities are demonstrated is through the historical markers which have flourished throughout the United States since the 1960s.

The historical marker (see Figure #19) in Wilber which designates the community as the Czech Capital of Nebraska is an integrating symbol. It is significant in the fact that it identifies values important to the Czech people, but also emphasizes the common future that many divergent groups hold as Americans.

FIGURE #19: CZECH CAPITAL

Many nationalities blended in America and Nebraska to create our great nation and state. Prominent among them were the Czechs.

They left a land which knew a great history and culture. The first university in Central Europe was established in Prague over 100 years before Columbus discovered America. Throughout generations of wars and oppression the Czech people kept alive their language, music, arts and customs, and they brought them to the New World. Here they live on.

Charles Culek, who came to Nebraska in 1856, was the first permanent Czech settler. The first Czechs came to Saline County in 1865. In all, some 50,000 Czechs settled in Nebraska, most of them from the Province of Bohemia.

They tended to congregate in villages, such as Wilber, officially designated by the Governor as the Czech Capital of Nebraska. Schuyler, Clarkson, Prague, and other towns were mainly settled by Czechs. Like other pioneers, Czechs conquered the hardships of frontier life, and thrived in the new land. Here they found freedom from oppression, and opportunity for their children. These people's industry and patriotism, with that of other nationalities, helped to make America and Nebraska great.

Nebraska Czechs of Wilber

Historical Land Mark Council

CHAPTER VIII: STAGING THE FESTIVAL

STAGING THE FESTIVAL

Part of putting on a festival is to set a stage where the visitors can become active participants rather than simply spectators. The community must provide a variety of activities and events to interest the diversity of people who may attend. As Meyer (1967) suggests, because of the raised educational levels of the American public, many come to learn about an ethnic culture they know little about. Some will want to learn about what life was like on the prairie. Some will want to experience the small town atmosphere and want to get away from the mass standardization of urban life. Still others will come "for the hilariously good time they can find downtown." A festival is a time to have fun, to "let it all hang out" and to be able to do things that they would not be able to do in their own communities. Figure #20 below lists reasons for providing and attending the festival.

FIGURE #20: REASONS FOR STAGING AND ATTENDING FESTIVAL	
<u>Reasons For Attending Festival</u>	<u>Reasons For Providing Festival</u>
Search for Community	Community Identity
Need for Roots	Perpetuate Heritage
Vacation, Social, Leisure	Bolster Economy
Reunion	Enhance Cohesion
Education - Culture	Individual Recognition
Value Clarification	Value Verification

The Festival Program

The festival is a two-day event with most of the activities offered on both days of the event. The activities can be classified

into cultural, recreational, and recognition. Figure #21 below shows the conference program.

FIGURE # 21: THE FESTIVAL PROGRAM

Come & See the Progress at Hotel Wilber

FESTIVAL ENTERTAINMENT

Friday, August 3

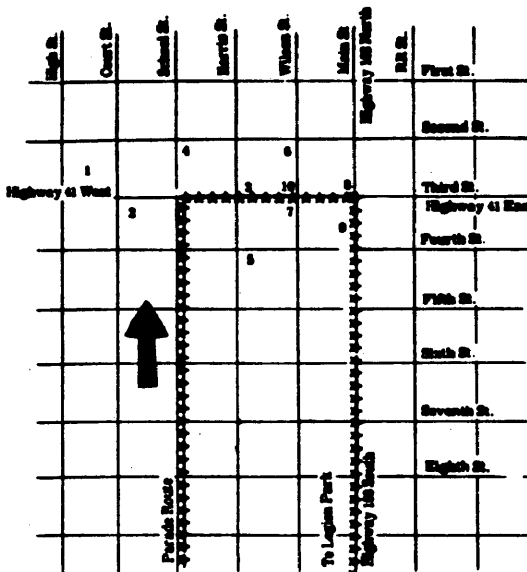
- 6:30 p.m. Sausage Luncheon Hotel Wilber
- 9:00 p.m. Children's Parade Main Street
- Following Children's Parade Hotel Wilber
- Community Awards
- Entertainment by Wilber Czech Singers

Saturday, August 4

- 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Visit the Czech Museum
- 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Art Show - Czech Museum
- 10:00 a.m.-"Czech Folk Tale" Puppet Show Christine Janda Dvoracek Memorial Library
- 10:30 a.m.-"Reflections of the Past" Travelogue Suse Salds Dvoracek Memorial Library
- 1:00 p.m. Flag Raising Ceremony American Legion Post No. 101 & Wilber-Claonia High School Band In front of Post Office
- 2:00 p.m. Parade Theme: "Reflections of the Past" (Time Schedule Subject to Length of Parade)
- 3:00 p.m. Court House Welcome by Christine E. Janda, President Nebraska Czechs of Wilber and Mayor Elmer Dube Introduction of Special Guests Greetings from State of Nebraska
- 3:30 p.m. - Puppet Show Dvoracek Library
- 4:00 p.m. - Travelogue Dvoracek Library
- 3:30 p.m. Talent & Accordion Contests Court House
- 5:30 p.m. Willie Heldemann, Electronic Accordionist Court House
- 6:00 p.m. Wilber Beseda Dancers Court House Leonard Lisek Band
- 7:00 p.m. Dr. Jaromir Spart, Philadelphia, PA Blues from Prague and Cabaret Songs
- 7:30 p.m. Miss Nebraska Czech Queen Contest Court House
- 9:00 p.m. Czech Historical Pageant Court House

For Your Eating & Drinking Pleasure

- Dick & Lita's Bar**
Opened Saturday & Sunday
Wines - Liquor - Beer
-
- For Mela Tavern**
"Friendliest Place in Wilber"
-
- M-D Bar**
Opened Saturday & Sunday
Czech Sandwiches
Beer - Wine - Liquor
-
- Bob's Bar**
Opened Friday, Saturday & Sunday
Hot Italian Sausage Sandwiches
Beer - Liquor - Wine



- 1. Court House
- 2. Dvoracek Memorial Library
- 3. Post Office
- 4. Lutheran Church
- 5. United Methodist Church
- 6. Hotel Wilber
- 7. Bandstand
- 8. Czech Museum
- 9. Police Station
- 10. Registration & Information Booth

Parade time is 2:00 p.m.
Parade forms in Legion Park and will follow the star line.

Buy your tickets for the drawing.
Cash prizes of \$2,000⁰⁰

Visit the Bandstand for musical entertainment during the afternoon and evening.
Visit the stores and booths for fine displays and items for sale.
Enjoy the fine Czech foods being served by various organizations.

Sunday, August 5

- 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Visit the Czech Museum
- 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. Art Show - Czech Museum
- 10:00 a.m. "Czech Folk Tale" Puppet Show Christine Janda Dvoracek Memorial Library
- 10:30 a.m. "Reflections of the Past" Travelogue Suse Salds Dvoracek Memorial Library
- 1:00 p.m. Flag Raising Ceremony American Legion Post No. 101 & Wilber-Claonia High School Band In front of Post Office
- 2:00 p.m. Parade Theme: "Reflections of the Past"
- 3:30 p.m. Court House Welcome by Christine E. Janda, President and Mayor Elmer Dube Nebraska Czechs of Wilber Introduction of Special Guests Presentation of King Charles Award
- 3:30 p.m. - Puppet Show Dvoracek Library
- 4:00 p.m. - Travelogue Dvoracek Library
- 4:00 p.m. Court House All Nebraska Czech Spectacular
- Special presentation by S. Omaha Beseda Dancers
- 5:00 p.m. - Kolace Eating Contest Bandstand
- 6:00 p.m. - Willie Heldemann Court House Wilber Beseda Dancers
- 7:00 p.m. - Dance Contest - All Ages Court House Shrine's Polka Band
- 8:00 p.m. Wilber Czech Chorus Court House
- 8:30 p.m. Dr. Jaromir Spart Court House Guitarist and Folk Song Singer
- 9:00 p.m. Czech Historical Pageant Court House
- 10:00 p.m. Drawing for \$2,000⁰⁰ in Cash Prizes Bandstand

For Your Eating & Drinking Pleasure

- American Legion Auxiliary
Hamburgers - Hog Dogs - Iced Tea - Pop
Legion Bingo Saturday & Sunday
North of Bandstand

- Sebel Hall**
Kolacas for sale both days
Saturday 4:00 - 11:00 p.m.
Sandwiches & Kolacas - Cold Drinks & Coffee
Free Dancing - Adolph Nemetz - 7-11 p.m.
Sunday - 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. & 4:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.
Serving Czech Sandwiches with Luncheon Plates
Free Dancing - Gunner & The Boys - 7-11 p.m.

- 1888 Hotel Wilber**
1st stage of renovation completed
Beer Garden, Ratscheher, Street dances
Serving Duck Dinners & Polish Sausage Luncheon Plates
Meals include dumplings, kraut, rye bread
Appetizers, Kolace & drink
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. & 4:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.
Both days of the festival

- Club Wilber Restaurant & Lounge**
NO MEMBERSHIP NEEDED
Duck & Pork Dinners with all the Trimmings
Duck, Polish Sausage, & Cold Ham Sandwiches
"Featuring Bohemian Reuben"
Serving Czech Beer & other Spirits in Air Conditioned Comfort

This part of the paper takes a look at the festival atmosphere -- the costumes, the food, the beer-gardens, and the music. For this is what gives the festival its unique identity, but is is also what enables people to come together to meet their common social and psychological needs of belonging, of roots, and simply for fun (see Figure 22).



CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- Historical Pageant
- Art Show
- Musical and Dramatic Performances
- Museum
- Travelogue
- Beseda Dancers
- Czech Chorus



RECOGNITION



FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES



RECREATIONAL

- King Charles Award
- Nebraska Czech Queen
- Ladies of Libuse
- Knights of Blanek
- Prince and Princess
- Contests
- Fun Run

- Beer Gardens
- Polka Dancing
- Raffels
- Amusement Rides
- Parade
- Children's Parade



FOOD AND DRINK

- Pork - Sausage - Duck
- Kraut
- Rye Bread
- Liver Dumpling Soup
- Kolache & Pastries
- Non-ethnic food



Festival Designs at Corners

Parades

Every year, on both days of the festival, there is a large parade. The first years there were about 60 entries. Now there are over 100. The parade is a chance to enhance the annual festival theme. The parade has many floats provided by social and civic organizations, merchants, churches and other groups from both Wilber and the surrounding areas. Many political candidates use the parade as a way to get some publicity among the large crowd of potential voters. Wilber invites the other Czech communities in Nebraska and other states to participate. There are also other ethnic groups invited from a variety of communities and national backgrounds. School bands from many Nebraska communities participate.

The parade helps to promote the community of Wilber to many people. It is an opportunity to recognize a prize winning float. Many times the floats are cynical or provide a chance for the community to laugh at itself and some typical "Czech characteristics." One recurring humorous theme is that Czechs enjoy a little too much beer.

The parade serves to build cohesion because it builds pride in the Czech heritage and supports certain values by developing the parade entries around various aspects of the Czech heritage such as the holidays, the arts, the music, the history, or the pioneer experience. The parade is important because it is one example of the way the Wilber community presents itself to the rest of society.



Wilber residents dress up in Czech costumes for festival days.

Visitors from many Czech communities come to Wilber to share a common heritage.

Wilber-Clatonia Wolverine Band plays, "New York, New York" on main street to kick-off festival activities.





Czech Royalty is crowned at the festival.

Pride in an ancient heritage is passed down to new generations.

Czechs, "lovers of liberty", promote their values and their heritage during the parade and at cultural events.

The Wilber-Clatonia Wolverine Band

For 22 years the Wilber Czech Festival began its colorful parade with the Wilber-Clatonia High School marching band leading the activities in colorful Czech costumes. The band would play traditional Czech music which was enjoyed by the many festival visitors.

In 1984, however, the youth decided instead to wear their traditional high school uniforms in their school colors of green and white. They also decided to make a major public statement by playing, "New York, New York" rather than the traditional Czech folk music. Many of the observers were shocked. This was an intentional act on the part of the youth and some school administrators who felt that the band had been misrepresented as a Czech school, rather than the community's public school.

This protest met with disappointment on the part of the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber, but they also felt that "... they are still our band, so they will be up front as always." The issues involved were significant. One youth wrote a convincing letter to the editor of the Wilber Republican trying to explain the sentiments of many of the young people from the school. He desired spectators to be aware of their side of the story.

In the past, each band student has been responsible for his or her own Czech outfit. A larger part of the band members did not have Czech outfits. ... These students had to acquire their outfit, to be worn approximately three to four times a year, at their own expense. ... Had someone offered to find outfits for all needing members, without this cost, then I am sure the W-C band would have obliged the public in wearing them on Czech Days. Yet, there was no such offer.

He continues:

... We are not the Wilber Czech Band, but are the Wilber-Clatonia Band. We represent not only Wilber, but also Clatonia (which is predominately German) Swanton, Webster and Crete, as there are also children from all of these communities attending W-C schools. ... We are just a high school band, who is prideful of their school and represents it so with its colors (Wilber Republican, 1984).

Other editorials from the same issue of the Wilber Republican did not seem to understand the youth's point of view.

... Where is that band that wears those colorful ethnic costumes in the parade?
... Surely the non-ethnic tendencies could be put aside for that one special day.

Another letter to the editor states:

... All agreed the song ("New York, New York") was in very bad taste for Wilber.

Although the controversy seemed to focus on the band, there were deeper issues involved. There was some feeling among the youth that the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber used the youth to work hard on festival activities and to promote the festival through the band and other activities. They felt that the festival represented a personal expense in terms of the costs of costumes and the time involved to manage such activities as the festival carnival which provided rides to children. The youth thought that they should be assisted with buying uniforms and also to be able to keep some of the profits from the carnival so that they could improve on activities for youth such as softball and other activities.

Costumes

Costumes are worn by many people at the festival. Usually, women wear costumes with red or blue skirts and white blouses. The blouse has very large puffed sleeves. Sometimes the sleeves are stuffed with tissue paper to stay puffed. They also wear colorful vests which may be hand embroidered or decorated with sequins or rickrack accents. Usually a headdress is worn, often a colorful scarf with flowers. Nearly every costume has an apron and many ribbons streaming down the length of the skirt. Men dress more simply. They usually wear a Czech hat and a colorful vest. The governor and his wife have worn Czech costumes during festival activities. The costumes are so popular that there is now a shop which sells local craft and costumes to festival visitors. Women's costumes cost over \$100.00. Men's vests and shirt cost about \$40.00. They have been marketed throughout the United States and Canada.

Since one of the main purposes of the festival is to commemorate Czech heritage, much attention and recognition is given to costumes which demonstrate the handwork so traditional of the past. In most of the contests, contestants are judged for the beauty and authenticity of the costume.

Pictures of Czech traditional dress are found in the museum in the Wilber and in many other parts of the community.

Czech Music

The Wilber festival has revitalized an interest in Czech music and dancing. Music and dancing is a major part of the activities. Early Czech settlers in Nebraska were particularly known for their brass bands. The button accordion and the concertina were also favorite instruments because they were easy to move about and it was possible for one musician to provide entertainment for a large group of people. These early accordians were later replaced by the piano accordion.

Accordion contests are a "must" at festival days. Music of every kind is heard throughout the festival -- on the courthouse steps, in the streets, in the taverns, and at other events. During the festival many of the tourists are seen playing their instruments by their campers or in people's yards.

There are small polka bands that play continuously in every tavern and beer garden. Sometimes there are "battle band" contests in which one band tries to out-do another. In addition to the traditional music such as the polkas, waltzes and schottisches, the festival serves to expose people to the more classical variety of musical literature by famous Czech composers. Among the best known is that of Antonin Dvorak who composed "The New World Symphony." Another favorite is the more nationalistic composer, Bedrich Smetana. Lesser known composers such as Jiri Benda, a violinist of the 1700s who was frequently praised by Mozart for his duodramas, Jan

Dussek, a pianist in the late 1700s, Jan Voriscek of the early 1800s who influenced the music of Schubert and Vitezslav Novak who wrote in the late 1800s and early 1900s are also promoted.

In addition to folk and classical music there are opportunities for celebrators to join in group singing in the Czech language. At each festival, the group joins in singing the Czech National Anthem. Mrs. Frank Morrison, the wife of the former governor of the state has sung in Czech at many of the annual celebrations. One year an operetta was performed in Czech and in later years groups from other national backgrounds who take pride in their heritage have been asked to share their music as well. Festival participants have enjoyed the music and dancing of the young people of Irish descent from O'Neill as well as drum and bugle corps, an all black group from North Omaha. The music of many other groups has been loved as well.

Music tends to create solidarity among Czech and non-Czech alike, native or non-native. It provides a means for people to be accepted for at least two days in greater human context where people can agree that they are more alike than different, particularly in their sensitivity, their love of fun, and their desire for freedom. One musician told me that nothing cuts across all differences like sharing and making music together. He said, "music cuts across social class, and nationality, and sex and race and all economic differences. Making music together is a beautiful, loving experience. The accomplished musician is anxious to help the novice. It is one of the places where you can see old and young, rich and poor, black and white, powerful and powerless equally enjoying each other."



Festival participants enjoy traditional folk dancing in the Beer Garden at the re-stored Wilber Hotel.



The Hotel Beer Garden displays the Czech Coat of Arms. The two-tailed lion is the symbol of the Bohemian Kingdom. The shield is a symbol of the Slovaks.

Figure #23 below shows the types of music heard at the festival. Figure #24 below lists favorite instruments of the Czechs.

FIGURE #23: TYPES OF CZECH MUSIC HEARD AT FESTIVAL

Festival Songs
Folk Melodies
Religious Hymns
Love Songs
Patriotic Songs
Sokol Songs
Dances--Polkas, Waltzes, Schotishes
Classical
Pagan and Legendary

FIGURE #24: FAVORITE INSTRUMENTS OF THE CZECHS

Violins
Concertinas
Accordians
Bagpipes
Brass Bands

Czech Food

There is no doubt that Czech cooking can take its share of the credit for the large festival crowds. Czech dinners are prepared and served at each of the three churches, the Sokol Hall and the Legion Hall, the Wilber Hotel, and the cafes and taverns.

Among the favorite dishes served are duck, dumplings, kraut and kolacky (a Bohemian tart, fruit-filled pastry), bologna, wieners, roast pork, poppyseed rolls, rye bread, apple strudel and housky (a braided Bohemian bread). Nearly every available person in Wilber helps in some way to prepare food for the festival.

In 1984, the streets where the parade took place in the downtown of Wilber had many booths from out of town. These booths rented the space in order to "sell their wares." Even though much of what was sold was not Czech, the money that came in from the many booths helped festival finances.

However, these booths were severely criticized by the public. These booths in such a public location as the parade route in Wilber's downtown detracted from the authenticity of the festival and caused many of the visitors to question the credibility of the Czechs.

One editorial in the August 15, 1984 issue of the Wilber Republican said:

Having seen pictures in the Omaha paper of people dressed in interesting attractive and authentic Czech costumes, it seemed incongruous to see spray-painted cowboy hats in pastel colors, plastic shoes, and polish sausage sandwiches for sale at a Czech festival. Actually, almost all of the items for sale along main street were something less than flea market-craft sale caliber.

Beer Gardens

The festival would not be accurately reported without due attention to the favorite drink -- beer (pivo) and in most cases, red beer (beer with tomato juice, called pivo cerveny).

In the early years of the festival, beer was everywhere! People crammed into every possible inch of every tavern and beer garden. Beer trucks were literally lined up along the highway and there was a steady stream of ice trucks as well to keep the beverage cold. Some of the tavern owners reported that if they ever left their establishment they were not able to get back in because of the crowds.

The tavern owners had to make an extra effort to accommodate the crowds. Special help had to be hired, wiring put up for bands, etc. Many times, fights broke out in the taverns or on the streets and much damage was done to some of the businesses. One year, Vosoba reported, "A cop arrested a boy without a shirt and the rest of the kids surrounded him. It was like water around an island. Luckily a couple of state patrol cars pulled in and then there was a helluva rainstorm. It rained buckets." This incident was also reported by a person who was acting as a security officer at the time. The incident caused the drinking masses to develop into an unmanageable crowd and the scene was headed toward an all out brawl. At this time the festival crowd was near 70,000. The town of about 1,400 people was not set up to handle so many people, drinking so much beer. Had it not been for near tornado weather quickly emerging, the incident might have broken out into a major problem. However, the weather immediately dispersed the crowds and the

problem was solved.

Relations between the Nebraska Czechs and the tavern owners have not always been good. The Czechs in the organization felt that the taverns were making a great deal of money from the festival and should contribute to the organization. The tavern owners, on the other hand, felt that the festival was so large and created so much additional trouble and expense that they could not afford to give donations to the Nebraska Czechs.

One year the tavern owners closed down in protest and the festival was seriously affected. The size of the crowds was drastically reduced. The tavern owners had some power over the Nebraska Czechs as it was not possible for non-profit organizations to sell beer. In 1981, the law changed and the Nebraska Czechs now have a beer garden of their own at the Wilber Hotel. Now the tavern owners must stay open in order to compete and reap some of the profits from the festival.

Another issue surrounding "beer" is that it is tied too closely to the Czech heritage. One youth leader said, "Omm Pa Pa and Beer, what kind of a tradition is that to hand down to your kids? Just how much of that music can a person listen to anyway? Enough is enough."

A newcomer said that the Wilber community does have trouble with youth drinking and taking drugs. She said that it is not nearly as bad as she believes it is in larger communities, but it is there. She said that alcohol and drug education is everywhere -- in the school, in the youth groups, and in the church groups. She felt Wilber was an excellent community for raising children, but that they needed to have more for youth to do. She felt that many

citizens took a strong interest in the youth and were responsible for the first place the girls took in softball last year, as well as other outstanding achievements, but much more needed to be done.

The original Czech Festival organizers would like to see the role of beer downplayed at the festival.

There was no comparison between the 1984 festival and the festivals of the 1960s. The crowds of the earlier festivals were enormous, and most of the people came to drink beer. Many of the people who came were university students and youth from Omaha and Lincoln. The taverns were so crowded that one could not move inside them. In 1984, the taverns were full and people were having fun, but they were manageable and not unruly. The activities that seemed to receive the largest crowds were those which were, in fact, commemorating the Czech heritage. The crowds appeared to be offended at non-authentic festival activities. This observer expected the crowds to have dwindled since the first festival years, but surprisingly they were about the same -- over 60,000.

Pageant

A unique part of the Czech Festival is the annual pageant. This is a pageant which Czechs refer to as part legend, part history, and part myth. It celebrates the spirit of Czech people.

The original pageant was written by District Court Judge Stanley Bartos who attempted to translate many of the Czech myths and to weave them into a symbolic pageant including aspects of Czech history.

This is one attempt at the festival to acquaint visitors with

the history of Czechoslovakia. It depicts events such as the dawning of the Czech nation, the founding of Prague, the political reformation started by Jan Hus, and so on.

The original pageant has been added to many times in the last twenty years, but it is still presented in a similar way. Joe Vosoba continues to narrate the pageant and local people, in colorful costumes, play the various roles.

The pageant also tends to give meaning to people who are of Czech descent as it ties them together with a history of struggle for freedom, independence, and a more secure way of life. This pageant also creates a feeling of pride in young and old in their Czech heritage. One of the areas that is very significant to Czech history is "downplayed" in the Czech pageant is the oppression of the Czechs by the Germans. Because the Wilber community is next to many German communities and because the schools of Wilber and Clatonia (a German community) have recently been consolidated, the people responsible for the pageant see "no need" in emphasizing this aspect of Czech history.

This is significant in the nature of community which could serve to break down cohesion among the members of the actual community which includes not only Czechs but many Germans in the surrounding area and schools. Czechs who have married outside of their nationality have espoused, most frequently, persons of German descent.

Accentuating the historic oppression of Czechs by Germans could also serve to harm social identification and social interaction as it would create an "in" group and "out" group among people who need to work together for the success of the community.

Art Exhibits

Another way in which a community encourages involvement and recognizes individual talents is by showing the arts and crafts of community members. This is a popular attraction for participants from urban communities since they are able to find those hand-crafted items that are not a part of our mass-production society.

There is also an art exhibit on display during the festival. This exhibit shows and sells the work of contributing artists.

In addition to a variety of contributions from local exhibitors, there are also some of the works of renowned wildlife artist, Les Kouba. These exhibits are part of the local emphasis to "shift the emphasis from the old beer-garden image to the cultural," reported a past festival president.

Other Cultural Programs

Cultural programs also get more people to work together. This is an opportunity to share a culture with different age groups and provide a social outlet for community members. For those who attend the festival it is an opportunity to hear the Czech language and learn about the folk music and dancing unique to the Czechs.

Polka Mass

In 1980, the St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church presented a Polka Mass in the evening on the grounds of the church. Nearly 500 people participated in the mass. A variety of Czech melodies were sung in English led by the "Church Singers."

Ladies Czech Chorus

This is a group of about 15 Czech women who sing songs in the Czech language. This keeps another aspect of the Czech heritage alive. They sing at a variety of Wilber events, regularly sing at the nursing home, and also tour outside of Wilber to groups wanting to learn more about the Czech culture.

Wilber Beseda Dancers

The Wilber Beseda Dancers practice and perform Czech folk dances including the difficult favorite, the Beseda.

Wilber Czech Puppeteers

This is a group of young people who perform a folktale at the Czech Festival in the library. They use string puppets and marionettes.

Czech Culture Program

This is a program held the last Thursday of each month at the Wilber Nursing Home. The program includes musical programs, slide presentations, polka bands, and school group performances. Most of the programs are performed in Czech costumes.

Travelogue

The Czechs' "love of liberty" is demonstrated in the fact that they are still genuinely concerned about the status of life for people in Czechoslovakia. Their programs are broadcast over Radio

Free Europe and occasionally tours are organized to visit their homeland. Young and old people have visited Czechoslovakia and have had varying impressions of life under communism.

Occasionally, Czechs from Wilber and other Czech communities organize trips to visit their homeland. One of the events at the festival is a Travelogue which is a presentation of a person's recent trip to Czechoslovakia.

One such visit was a group of Saline County citizens who visited Czechoslovakia on a music tour. This was a group that was put together by Czech Heritage, Inc. An article in the Crete News reported, "The couples were also surprised to find there were not as many Czech bands playing the old-time folk songs as there are in their native Saline County." One of the tourist's relatives in Czechoslovakia told the Americans, "We have everything we want except our freedom." This particular group was made up of 111 musicians led by Polka Band leader Ernie Kucera who convinced the communist government to allow the tour and enable Czech bands from eight states to perform with bands in Czechoslovakia.

Visitors at the festival view the Travelogue and join the Czechs in their celebration of freedom and a democratic system of government.

CHAPTER IX: A CHANCE TO BE RECOGNIZED

FESTIVAL: A CHANCE TO BE RECOGNIZED

A festival provides an opportunity to enhance the status of community members. Many of the festival activities recognize and reward its members for contributing to the community and measuring up to its expectations. These recognitions also help to give individuals opportunities in the greater society. Recognition is not unique to the Wilber Czech Festival but can be found at every similar celebration throughout the world.

The Czech Festival honors individuals through the King Charles Award, the various contests, selection of "Czech Royalty" and through selection of local community contributors. This section will explain each of these awards.

King Charles Award

In 1969 a new feature was added to the list of activities of the Wilber Czech Festival. That was a "King Charles Award." This award is named after the King of Bohemia who was responsible for building Bohemia as one of the cultural centers of eastern Europe, and established the first university in eastern Europe.

The award is now given each year to a person of Czech descent who achieved national or international recognition. The purpose of this award was to promote the accomplishments of people of Czech nationality in various intellectual domains such as politics, art, science, business, and athletics. This activity also promotes the

festival since people come to hear these recognized and in some cases, famous personalities.

The King Charles Award gives the community an opportunity to tell the world that people of Czech origin are making important contributions to the nation and to the future.

The first award winner was Eugene Cernan, astronaut of Apollo X. Although Cernan did not attend the festival, his mother came and accepted the award for him. The Nebraska Czechs of Wilber received a picture that the astronauts of Apollo X took of the earth as seen from space. This photograph had a personal inscription from Cernan that said, "A Moon's eye view of the happy people of Wilber, as seen from Apollo X." This became a significant symbol of the visions, dreams, and hopes of the citizens of the community.

FIGURE #25: KING CHARLES AWARD WINNERS

1969	Eugene Cernan	Astronaut
1970	Roman Hruska	U.S. Senator
1971	John Stasney	President, National Assn. of Home Builders
1972	Dr. Elvin Frolik	Dean, UNL Department of Agriculture
1973	Joseph Martinek	Poet & Nationalist
1974	George Dufek	First American to the South Pole
1975	Milo Pekarek	Nat'l Speaker, "Challenge of Change" National Cash Register
1976	Dr. J. Allen Hynek	Astronomer; UFO authority
1977	Bob Cerv	Big League Baseball; New York Yankees
1978	Dr. Raymond Dvorak	Music Professor; Band Leader
1979	Cz Chernak	T.V. Producer; "Chips," "Ironsides"
1980	Leo Kouba	Wildlife Painter
1981	Dr. Louis Gogela	Neurosurgeon
1982	Vladimir Kucera	Author, Journalist, Professor
1983	Dr. James Jirsa	Earthquake Engineering Expert
1984	Jaromir Pospisil	U.S. Army Colonel

Knights of Blanek and the Ladies of Libuse Awards

The community uses the festival to recognize other citizens who have made worthwhile contributions. An award known as "Ladies of Libuse" honors women who have contributed toward the community and the perpetuation of the Czech heritage. The "Knights of Blanek" give a similar award to a man. Both of these have a legendary significance.

Libuse was a legendary Czech Queen who is said to have had the gift of prophecy and established the location of Prague. The Knights of Blanek were the legendary armies of St. Wenceslaus who are supposedly still sleeping in a cave in a mountain waiting to awaken to save the Czech nation.

The first person chosen to win the "Knights of Blanek" award was Dr. Vladimir Kucera. The first person to win the "Ladies of Libuse" award was Mrs. Irma Durecky. Citizens choose to honor persons who have contributed greatly toward maintaining the Czech heritage and culture.

The Knights of Blanek and the Ladies of Libuse award are significant because they are an opportunity to recognize community members who have demonstrated those efforts and values which the community values. For the individual it is a chance to solidify one's status as a leader of the community.

Czech "Royalty"

Many queens are seen during festival days. At the first Czech Festival a young, unmarried woman of Czech descent was chosen to reign over the festival activities. As the festival grew and the Nebraska Czechs, Inc., had other charter members in other Czech communities across Nebraska, both a Wilber Czech Queen and a Nebraska Czech Queen are chosen at the Wilber Festival. This contest generally is judged on the girl's talent, costume, and personality. Every girl must perform some type of entertainment in a talent competition. The costumes have to be hand made and cannot be purchased.

Other queens from the Czech communities are asked to ride in the parade. Queens from other types of contests are also invited to Wilber.

Many of the girls who are selected as a queen in the Czech contests often participate in the Miss Nebraska pageant. Many also enter such contests as the Miss Teenage America and Miss Dogpatch USA contest, etc.

The activity of choosing a queen helps to promote the community at state tourism activities throughout the year. It also gives the girls some advantage in other kinds of competition such as heading marching bands as head majorettes at nearby universities and colleges.

One year, following the festival, three Wilber girls were heading marching bands in colleges in Nebraska. A former Nebraska Czech Queen led the University of Nebraska marching band as their

"Golden Girl." A runner-up for Wilber Czech Queen headed the Plainsman Marching Band at Wesleyan University in Lincoln. Her younger sister was a majorette with the same college band.

Perhaps one characteristic of Americans is that they hold a nostalgic view of royalty. Since America has no monarch of its own to idealize, Americans create their royalty at almost every opportunity. There are high school homecoming queens, Miss America Pageants, Junior Miss, the Wheat Queen, the Pork Queen, the AK-SAR-BEN King, and countless other make-believe monarchs. American monarchs, however, do not rise to their thrones through birth, but rather by being selected, of course, through a democratic process. Even though the Czech resisted the feudal lords' domination of their own country, the Wilber Czechs have, like every other celebration in America, chosen royalty.

In 1984, a young woman won the title for the Nebraska Czech Queen, but had to give up her throne because she refused to participate in the Miss Nebraska Pageant which is a requirement of the award recipient.

There is an expectation of the Wilber Czech Queen and the Nebraska Czech Queen that they will represent their community and their ethnic heritage at other events in Nebraska and other states (see Appendices F & G).

Contests

People come to the festival to participate, not to be a spectator. Everybody wants some part of the action. For that

reason, and to again demonstrate our individuality and recognize people for involvement, many other contests are held.

Kolache Eating Contest

The Kolache Eating Contest is held each year at the festival and is opened to boys and girls eleven years of age and younger. Kolache is a fruit filled pastry, a favorite of the Czechs.

Czech Heritage Coloring Contest

Another contest is held for children where they color pictures from the Czech Heritage coloring book. Nearly 50 children under the age of 11 participated last year including many pre-schoolers.

Duck Dumpling Run

This is a race of either 2 miles or 6.2. In 1984, 143 people participated in the race. It too is held at the time of the festival.

Dance Contest

A dance contest is held during festival days in front of the courthouse. People compete by various age categories. However, those classified as 46 or older are required to dance the polka and the waltz.

Talent Contest

A general talent contest is also held at the courthouse during the festival. This is primarily for young people who can compete with a variety of talents.

Accordian Contest

Another contest divided by age category is the accordian contest. Here people show their talent on the American Czech's favorite instrument.

The Children's Parade

The heritage can only be perpetuated if there are those who care enough to carry it on in years to come. Because of this it is important to interest the young people in the activity. The young people have a chance to participate and be recognized while at the same time adding color to the event through the Children's Parade.

The Children's Parade is held on the Friday night before the festival. It recognizes and awards children for their contributions to their Czech heritage. This colorful parade includes young people with their tricycles, go-carts, bicycles, wagons, and buggies. Many of the children include their pets in the festivities. Figure #26 lists the children's awards.

FIGURE #26: CHILDREN'S AWARDS

Best Czech Dressed Girl (Princess)
Best Czech Dressed Boy (Prince)
Pets
Bicycles and Tricycles
Wagons and Buggies
Go-Carts
Group -- Three or More

This is also a way to interest very young people in the Czech heritage and also to help them learn about competition and participation in the community.

The children who receive the award for the Best Czech Dressed Boy and Girl do not have to be of Czech origin, but they are honored for the authenticity of the Czech costumes.

The children's pictures are displayed in the Czech museum and those of the Czech Queens to give permanence to their recognition.

CHAPTER X: SAVING THE HERITAGE

SAVING THE HERITAGE

There is a social and psychological need of people to have some sense of immortality, that somehow their lives and their efforts have made a difference. One way in which average persons can achieve immortality is to create stable, permanent evidence of their existence. Perhaps it is this need which has been the impetus for the growth of museums in many small communities in the United States. Wheeler discusses this phenomena again in his explanation of "romantic pluralism."

Romantic pluralism developed after assimilation has run its course and when people loosened from their ethnic heritages by the frontier experience seek to establish heritages for themselves in the mass society. It is based, not necessarily upon objectively determined historical, cultural, and social fact but on contemporary belief which, having been defined as real, has resulted in real social organization and real rituals in innumerable local communities. It is the heritage which descendants of immigrants have created out of the materials they have had at hand--the scraps and pieces of the Old World Cultures filtered through memories and oral traditions, home-modified contemporary clothing and the like. These created heritages are at once an outgrowth of and a reaction to American society. Generations removed from the hurts of assimilation in American and the real peasant life of Europe of the last century, members of a mass society, attempting to escape the hurts of their own lives find a Rousseauan peace in romantic pluralism. Thus, while romantic pluralism is fiction, it is well to remember that it is a convenient fiction. It serves the important social psychological function of establishing a heritage and an identity in a mass society (Wheeler, 1975).

Wilber has taken "the scraps and pieces of the Old World Cultures" and has given them a permanent place in the local community in its museum, craft shop, library, bakery, and hotel. This section explains how this permanence is important to the community and to mass society.

The Czech Museum

The Wilber Czech Museum is located in the heart of downtown Wilber. The building for the museum was donated to the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber by Wilber residents. The museum contains many different examples of Czech pioneer life and Czech culture. People who are interested in touring the museum have a number they can call at any time, and tours can be arranged.

The museum has a variety of small rooms which depict the life of early Czech settlers. There is a Czech kitchen complete with kolache, a parlor, and a bedroom. There are also replicas of a Czech butcher shop, a grocery store, dentist office, schoolroom, and a blacksmith shop. The collections have, in most cases been donated by people who have shut down an actual business in the community.

There is also a collection of about 90 dolls from every region in Czechoslovakia. These dolls are displayed in book cases made for the museum by high school youth. There are fine examples of traditional Czech dress as well as examples of the needlework and laces so traditional of Czech culture. Tools and implements important to the early farmers are also displayed, as well as pictures made from human hair that was also traditional of the Czechs (they are said to have saved and used everything). Religious artifacts are also displayed including a large garnet cross from Czechoslovakia and a wooden cross which an older couple from out of state traveled specifically to Wilber to donate to the museum which also had come from Czechoslovakia.

This museum is an educational attraction for children and youth and for the many people who are interested in various cultures and pioneer history. It is also a place where people can donate their most important sentimental objects where they can be sure they will be taken care of and not lost or put up for sale in such a material and disposable world.

The Wilber Hotel

The Wilber Hotel was built in 1895. It was purchased by the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber from the family of Amelia Barta, a widow who operated the hotel for 25 years. The structure was renovated at a cost of \$200,000 made available from a federal restoration grant, and \$20,000 made available from the Peter Kiewit Foundation. The hotel is an example of frontier architecture and was recognized many years ago as a building of historical significance that should be saved. The hotel opened its doors as an ethnic restaurant about three years ago. However, it was plagued by a variety of problems and had to change in May of last year to only serve private parties. In 1985, the Wilber Hotel had to shut down completely. The hotel when operating was primarily supported by out-of-town guests, tours, and special occasions. It never received the kind of support it desired from the local community. It was criticized for its poor management and the lack of experience of many of its employees.

The Wilber Bakery

On the main street of Wilber is a Czech bakery. It is not the bakery that Cather described in the early 1900s, but it is a bakery that has excellent Czech pastries. The baker there is not Czech, but he was the one who was able to bake Czech pastries authentic enough to please the local clientele.

When the local baker who had been there for years retired, there was deep concern by the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber and also by the community in general, that the old "Wilber Rye" recipe would be forever lost. But the recipe lives, due to the work of the organization. The Nebraska Czechs of Wilber bought the bakery when the owner retired and a new baker for the community was sought.

At first the new bakery was owned by the Czech organization, but it became more feasible to operate it as an independent business. The bakery features the traditional recipe of Wilber Rye bread, kolache, and other delicate pastries.

The Craft Shop

The Nebraska Czechs of Wilber also have a small shop which sells craft items. One of the outstanding features of this shop is the beautiful hand made costumes that are for sale. These costumes are hand made by volunteer people in the community. Each of the costumes is decorated with lace and traditional Czech embroidery.

The shop also has other items for sale as well as ceramic mugs,

antique pewter figurines, items such as napkins and coasters bearing the seal of the Nebraska Czechs, and plaques.

This small shop ships these goods and other Czech artifacts to nearly every state in the United States and many provinces in Canada.

The Museum, the Wilber Hotel, the Bakery, and the Craft Shop all serve to maintain the traditions, heritage, and folk crafts of Czechoslovakia.

The following four pages of photographic reproductions provide examples of the many ways Wilber is preserving its ethnic heritage.

PRESERVING A HERITAGE



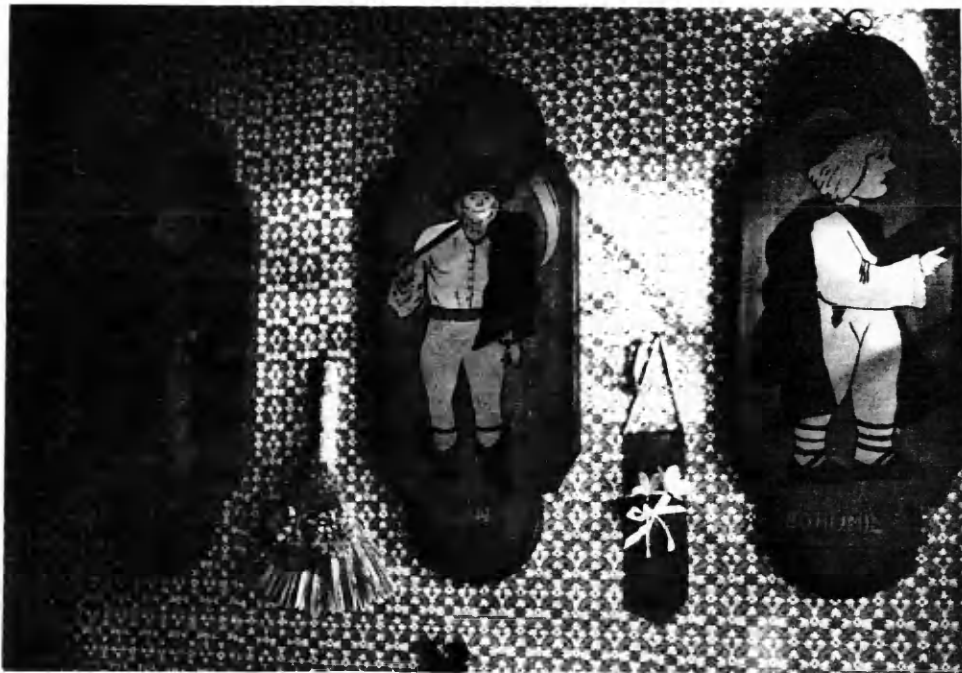
Legends, music, crafts, folklore, and cuisine preserved through publications and recordings.



Frontier architecture preserved by restoration of the Wilber Hotel.

TALES OF THE CZECHS

Some history, myths, and legends are passed down to new generations through art, folklore, and pagentry.



Arts and Crafts

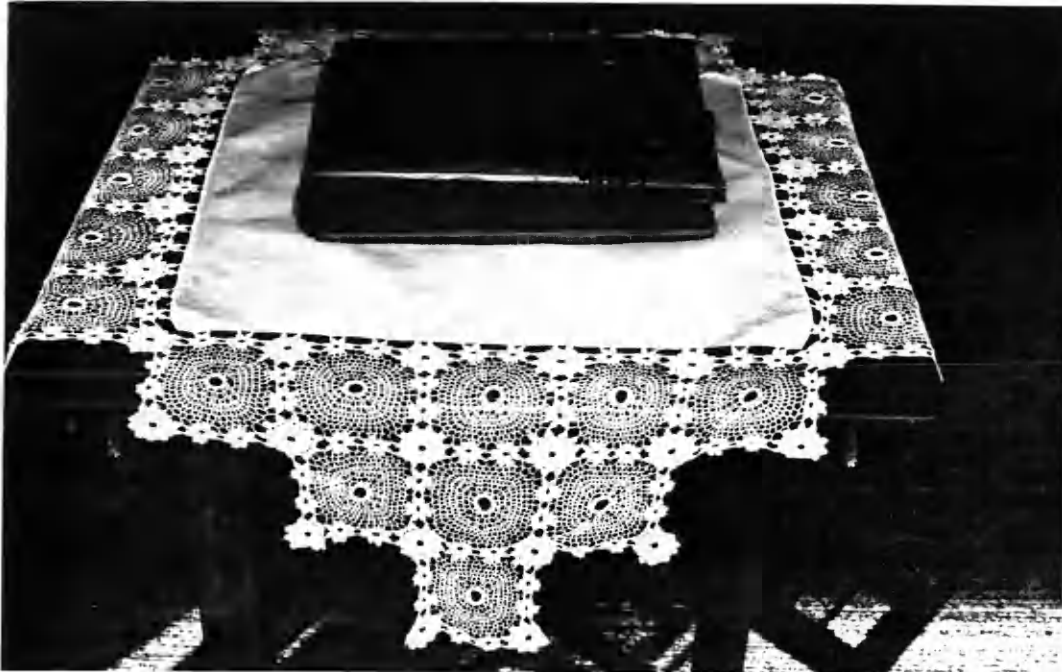
Puppet Theatre



Historic Pageant



The museum is a home for items of deep personal and emotional significance.



Family Bible

Czech Folk Costume



Pioneer Bridal Gown



The museum preserves the arts, crafts, artifacts, dress, and lifestyles of Czechs in Nebraska



CHAPTER XI: THE MEANING OF FESTIVAL

THE MEANING OF FESTIVAL

Festival: Contributions to the Sense of Community

A community as a unit of social and territorial organization exists but, in order to continue, it must also have that sense of community that Poplin defined. That sense of community is seen as the opposite of the sense of mass society. Identification, moral unity, involvement and wholeness must be developed in order to counteract the forces of alienation, moral fragmentation, disengagement, and segmentation.

A festival is only one vehicle, but an important vehicle in developing this sense of community. The following section describes how the Wilber Czech Festival contributes to build this sense of community.

Festival Contributes to Moral Unity

The Wilber Czech Festival is a symbol and a ritual. It is the focal point for the continuity and change necessary for the community to survive. It is the perpetuation of a heritage, and a culture, of a value system and a spirit of cooperation, hope, and promise. It provides a means to promote the community positively to the greater society, and to develop pride, social identification and a feeling of belonging in its members. It also serves to recognize and thereby create avenues of prestige and status for people who share values that are seen as beneficial to the community.

The Wilber Czech Festival provides its members and those who attend with important socio-psychological roots. Its success

depends on giving this sense of meaning to those who are involved.

For two days, people from all kinds of background can celebrate a common heritage. They can celebrate together their common history that America is made up of many different kinds of people who came to this country from many different places, and for many different reasons to find opportunities that they did not have in the Old World. For many it is also a remembrance of a past where life was more directly connected to nature, not to technology and people came together because they needed each other in order to survive the harshness of their lives.

It is that spirit that exists in Wilber and the many "folk communities" during the days of their festivals, and it is because of this more general need for social identification and meaning, as Americans, in a complex world, that the folk festival continues to increase in number and importance in recent years.

Festival Connection and Identification

The festival functions in a variety of capacities for those who come. One of these is certainly as a reunion. Many people come to see people from the community that they have not seen in years. Some of the people who were raised in Wilber, return at festival time to see their relatives and to hope to run into some of their old friends who they have not seen in a long time.

Some people of Czech descent travel from Chicago or Milwaukee or countless other places just to see other people who also speak the Czech language and take pride in their history and their common culture. There is a greater community of Czechs which each of these communities experience when coming to Wilber because they not only

get to know Nebraska Czechs, but also see Czechs from throughout the United States and Canada.

There are those who come who are close to their ethnic background, which is not Czech, who like to be around people who take pride in their past and of course, it gives them ideas as to how to perpetuate their own heritage.

There are those who come "for the hilariously good time they can find downtown." It is a "fun" and "rowdy" time for dancing the polka and drinking plenty of beer. For many, a chance to dance the polka is a rare opportunity in deed, and not generally accessible in urban culture.

Others come to share a past with their children or grandchildren. Being Czech or partially Czech is part of some people's past and they wish that this new generation would be able to get a glimpse at those roots, no matter how momentary it may be.

One woman who originally came from the area said that the festival did not meet those needs for her. She doesn't go to Wilber during the festival because of the large crowds, but is very glad it is there. She says, "I think it functions as part of my imagery, my memory bank, part of my connection with the past, and maybe part of my fantasy world."

Some people come because it is a chance to be together, to once again feel that common sense of community and a simpler past. It is a way of remembering their parents and grandparents and an earlier part of their lives.

Some people go because it is very closely connected with nature, with farming, is close to the land and to rural and small

town America. It is a refuge for a few days from the busyness of urban life.

Some come because they are interested in the arts, the music, the crafts, and the cooking, the pageants and the travelogue. To come to the festival is an educational opportunity about to learn about a part of the world that many Nebraskans know little about, even though Czechs are one of the largest groups that settled the state.

Some must come also because they can make a personal advantage from the festival. For politicians it is a chance to gain visibility in front of the large crowds of voters. For performers it is a chance to be seen and compete in contests. For others it is a chance to "sell their wares".

Festival Contributes to Social Identification

Those are the reasons that people tend to come, but what are the reasons that the community has kept up its strong efforts for 23 years?

When asking people this question I was struck by the nearly unanimous opinion that the motivations for the festival are primarily to perpetuate the Czech heritage. This opinion was held by young and old, visitor and native, newcomer and old-time resident. One woman who is of both Czech and German descent said:

I don't think there is any doubt that the Czech people are very proud of being Czech. I think they have a need to pass that down to the generations and I think that they always have been a cohesive group of people from the time they came to the prairie and they could not speak the language. They needed each other very much. I think it is part of their past, their "collective consciousness", their psyche. And, I don't think it was just to make money.

One festival organizer said enthusiastically:

It's pride! Pride! Pride in our past! That is why we do it, that is the only reason why we do it. Pride in our belief in God, pride in our country and our freedom, pride in our families and our community, and pride in our past! You must be proud of who you are and where you come from.

Festival Contributes to Subsistence

In addition to perpetuating the Czech heritage, the festival helps the community economically and helps to build important ties to state leadership. One motivation of festivals is to help the community grow economically and promote tourism.

Most people agreed that although the festival is a lot of work, and creates a lot of otherwise unnecessary expense (like paying nearly \$10,000 each year for additional police protection), the festival is an advantage economically. "The churches benefit, the businesses benefit, the taverns benefit, all have benefited from the festival". Most agreed with this remark. The youth might be the exception. There was some evidence that the youth felt that they were putting in much more than they got back such as helping with the carnival at festival time, and many other setting up and tearing down activities. They did not feel they were getting much back to support youth activities.

Festival as a Mechanism to Build Cohesion

Another reason that the people continue to struggle so hard for the festival is that it is a symbol to them of people working together, solving their problems and overlooking their differences for a common goal. There is the strong belief that "communities are made, they don't just happen and it takes hard work to make this occur".

This attitude was echoed by both conference organizers and newcomers alike. One organizer was not certain that the festival would continue, but he still believed it was worth it. He quoted a saying familiar to him, "'Some people have to build, so that others can tear down'. So you see, it is that building thing, that goal, working toward something, and you will always have those who will tear down. The one's who are the most critical are the ones who do the least."

Festival as a Link to Mass Society

Another reason, of course, is that it promotes the community of Wilber to the rest of the state and the country. One woman said that the festival "gives Wilber an identity--whenever I am with other people they immediately know that Wilber is a Czech community."

A similar reason is that it enables the community to have greater contact and rejuvenation of ideas from outside. This helps the community to renew itself.

A woman of German descent who lived in the community echoed this theme:

People from Czechoslovakia come to Wilber to visit and vice versa. It is good for us in America to communicate with others throughout the world. The more we know about each other, the closer we will become to having a 'world community,' with differences, perhaps, but understanding rather than disagreements.

Figure #27 shows the relationships important to Wilber. Some serve to perpetuate the community by linking it with mass society. Others serve to maintain a common heritage and a shared culture.

CZECHOSLOVAKIAN
ANCESTORS

TOURS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA
RADIO FREE EUROPE BROADCASTS
RECENT CZECHOSLOVAKIAN IMMIGRANTS
VISITORS

MASS
SOCIETY

TOURISM
VISITORS
COMMERCE
LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT

FARMERS
AREA FARMERS
FARM ORGANIZATIONS



← **RELATIONSHIPS**
IMPORTANT
TO WILBER →



OTHER CZECH
COMMUNITIES

DWIGHT, NE
SCHUYLER, NE
OMAHA, NE
LINCOLN, NE
PRAGUE, NE
HASTINGS, NE
DAVID CITY, NE
LODGEPOLE, NE
GERING, NE
FREMONT, NE
BRAINARD, NE
LOMA, NE
MILLIGAN, NE
CLARKSON, NE
ABIE, NE

TABLE ROCK, NE
NORTH BEND, NE
WESTON, NE

YUKON, OK
TABOR, SD
WILSON, KS
CALDWELL, KS
PRAGUE, OK
WINNEPEG, CANADA

NEIGHBORING
COMMUNITIES
IN NEBRASKA

BEATRICE
DEWITT
CRETE
WESTERN
DORCHESTER
FRIEND
TOBIAS
FAIRBURY
HICKMAN
ODELL
PLYMOUTH
SWANTON

Festival as a Means of Enhancing Individuality and Involvement

One major function was not stated by the people in Wilber directly, but certainly became overwhelmingly evident to this observer. That is, the festival has become a focal point for the many diverse, unique and creative energies of many people of all ages. This small community must have a higher majority of artists, craftsman, hobbieists and adventurers than an average community of its size.

Many people of all ages are reviving the folk arts of Czechoslovakia. Some of these include embroidery and tatting, crewel, needlepoint and quilting. Many women in the community make their own clothes. Czech dolls are made, but also cornhusk dolls, imitations of the cabbage patch dolls, and other items for children. Intricate costumes are made as well as traditional quilts, doilies, pillows, dresser scarves, sheets and pillowcases which are hand embroidered and laced, and so on.

People pass down the traditional cooking and pastries traditional of their background. Many people have presented at cultural groups throughout the United States and Canada. The community has its own historians, writers, poets, musicians, and artists. Since 1960, books have been written on cooking, Czech cemeteries, Czech folklore, Czech music, Czech bands, Czech legends and myths. These crafts, presentations, and publications are ways of maintaining and perpetuating a heritage.

Festival as a Comment on Mass Society

The festival is more than a perpetuation of an heritage, or an effort to boost a small town economically. It is in many ways, a vehicle to withstand the forces of mass society.

The View of the Future

From the books recently published on Czech culture and from the discussion with many of the festival organizers and participants, the view of the future is not very positive.

One of the women who was asked whether or not growing up in Wilber helped prepare her for the world she is living in today responded by saying, "how can anyone be prepared for this?" One organizer commented, "You belong to an entirely different generation and God I hope you kids can straighten it out because it is being left in a bad situation".

This attitude was also evident with the newcomers of Wilber. Most of the new members of the Wilber community, although somewhat suspicious of the motivations of the Wilber Czechs, were very happy to live in Wilber. To them it meant jobs and a good school for their children. But it also represented a place to live that is close to nature and safe. The newcomers who had lived in larger cities did not want to go back. They were happy in Wilber.

The people who live there seem to live there by choice. They are not people who feel trapped, or without alternatives. Most of them are well aware of city life and prefer to stay in their small town unless they are traveling for personal growth or vacation reasons. The main reason that they gave for this is that they feel

safer there and they feel that their children have more personal freedom.

A Concern for Environment

Some of the people could not conceive of living in a crowded neighborhood, fighting rush hour traffic and working in an office all day long. That was not considered a healthy way for people to live. Many of the people in Wilber believe that hard physical work and creative expression are good for an individual. Many believe that city life is an inferior way to live.

Over and over again, this observer heard about the reverence that the Czech people have about their land. A spiritual or sacred meaning has been attributed to it by the people who live there and those who have studied their culture. Nature is perceived as a guiding force in their lives. The community of Wilber is directly dependent on the land and the success of the community is dependent on the success of farming. One person who was interviewed had this to say when asked what values she has developed by growing up in or around Wilber.

... the love of land, the beauty of the land. The need we have for a connection with the environment and a need for community. At a very deep level, there is the paganism. I always wondered why there was an oak tree over my grandmother's grave. My grandmother almost worshipped trees. I am sure that although she probably didn't know it that feeling probably goes back to the ancient tribes. There is a spirituality that comes from being outside rather than inside. I have never felt close to God inside of a church.

A Concern for Freedom

The Czech people have always been people who have valued their freedom...freedom of thought, freedom of religion. They are said to have a strong independent spirit as well as a

physical spirit. It is also said that they have a love of the arts and the violins. Those are the things that I think of when I think of being Czech.

This description was given to this observer by a person who no longer lives in Wilber, but frequently visits her friends and relatives.

One organizer stated, "The Czechs are freedom-loving people and they would fight at the drop of the hat if anyone interferes with their freedom."

Perhaps that is why some people in Wilber are so concerned about the future. Their ancestors came from a country that was small and land-locked. Because of their geographic location they were not able to be free or find their own destiny. Because of this isolation they were vulnerable to the German princes, the feudal lords, the Catholic church, the Nazis and the Communists. This strong value of freedom causes people from a small town in Nebraska to broadcast over Radio Free Europe and to connect with their relatives behind the Iron Curtain. Love of liberty inspires some to visit their native country and see for themselves what life is like under communism. It is also this love of freedom that causes them to be highly suspicious of forces in our own country which are moving toward a corporately owned, bureaucratic world where the decisions of a few affect the lives of many.

This value of freedom is also at stake concerning the fate of the family-owned farms. The people of Wilber have a heritage rooted in oppression and adversity. However, there is a positiveness and a

sense of power that one experiences when talking to the local people. There is a sense of personal responsibility and involvement in creating the future. "If you take a positive attitude you can get things done". That was stated by one conference organizer and echoed in this comment by another. "You have to make things happen. You have to work hard to get what you want".

A Concern for the Individual

There is definitely an interest in culture and a belief that life is to be lived. People should be actors and not spectators. This means everyone -- the old, the young, the Czech and non-Czech, all members of the community.

Another concern about the future is that mass society is becoming devaluing to the individual. The individual is seen as a means to an end rather than an end in and of itself. The value of materialism is contrary to this value of humanism.

The citizens of Wilber were critical of a world which expects standardization and tries to make people fit into a rigid modes so that they can become useful to a bureaucratic world.

Many members of the Wilber community have some kind of individual talent -- a craft or a hobby or a personal adventure to share with their fellows. One woman outside of Wilber discussed the authenticity of the festival.

There are parts of the festival that are better than others...the slides, the art work, the evening program, the pageant. ... those are the things that I really do love. It would be nice to show butchering, sausage making, quilting. ... Those are the things that preserve a past. The beer drinking doesn't, but it is fun.

There are always people in a community who are going to make any celebration as artistic and authentic as possible because those are the artists and scholars of the community. Then there are those who enjoy it at a different social level.

A Concern About the Future of Education

Feelings about education are strong in the Wilber community. Education is considered of the utmost importance. There is a general agreement among the people interviewed that the schools in Wilber are good, but there was a major reaction against the standardization of contemporary education.

When one is visiting with people from Wilber about education, many persons mention Bernard Klasek who had been superintendent of Wilber schools for twenty years, superintendent of the county for another twenty years, and a life long resident of Wilber. He was considered to be one of the most important people in the lives of many former students of the Wilber schools.

Words about education and about his attitudes about academic freedom is reminiscent of this 1917 description of Czech educator Jan Amos Komensky, or Comenius (1592-1671). Comenius was driven from Czechoslovakia after all of his books and manuscripts were burned. This is a description of his attitudes about education.

... He condemns the system of mere memorizing in school, then in use, and urges that the scholar be taught to think. Teaching should be, as far as possible, demonstrative, directed to nature, and develop habits of individual observation.

All children, without exception--rich or poor, noble or common--should receive schooling, and all should learn the limits of their possibilities. 'They should learn to observe all things of importance, to reflect on the cause of their being as they are, and on their interrelations and utility for the children are destined to be not merely spectators in this world, but active participants.

'Languages should be taught, like the mother tongue, by conversation on ordinary topics; pictures, object lessons, should be used; teaching should go hand in hand with a happy life. In his course he included singing, economy, politics, world history, geography, and the arts and handicrafts. He was one of the first to advocate teaching science in the schools.

The child should 'learn by doing'. Education should be made pleasant; the parents should be friends of their teachers; the school-room should be spacious, and each school should have a good place for play and recreation (Hrdlicka, 1917).

One woman, who graduated from Wilber High School several years ago when Klasek was superintendent of schools is now a teacher herself in a junior high in Lincoln. She said:

I feel that if I give anything back to this community it would be to carry on the traditions of the people that I knew as a child that made an impact on my life and to carry that out in my own life wherever I was. Especially, my wonderful, wonderful time in Wilber High School and having Bernard Klasek touch my life. He was a wonderful educator! I am a teacher and the longer I live, the more I see the wisdom he had.

... he had a rare quality of looking at a human being and seeing that which would flourish and grow in the future and supporting it. I try to do that with the young people I work with. It is a philosophy of living, a very deep philosophy of life.

There was not much support for standardization of curriculum in this Czech community. Many felt that the kind of education that people got in Wilber was the kind that enabled people to grow into functioning, flexible adults who could take responsibility for their future. There was also the feeling that that kind of education included a place for people who came from homes that were not supportive of education or did not have the advantages materialistically. The community provided, where the parents could not.

One interviewee stated:

Today, through standardization the adult structures are becoming strengthened and the kid is becoming more and more powerless. If they can't cope, well tough, something is wrong with the kid. The increased standardization is suppressing individuality. The kind of education I had was one where the individual talents were valued. They were held in esteem and they were held as sacred and those individual talents were nurtured so that they could grow.

There is no question that freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and academic freedom are among those cherished in Wilber.

Summation

Wilber is not a small, simple community living in the idealized version of the past. It is instead experiencing the same processes of rapid social change of all other communities.

There are some values, however, that Wilber is trying to preserve. Below (Figure #28) is a depiction of an ideal value structure as this researcher believes many Wilber residents and festival organizers, particularly would support. It is contrasted with the opposite values that have been identified by Durkheim, Poplin, and others as characteristic of mass society.

FIGURE #28: IDEALIZED VALUE STRUCTURE AND
CHARACTERISTICS OF MASS SOCIETY

Wilber-Idealized
Value Structure

Pride in heritage
Celebration of cultures
Sense of community
Respect for elderly citizens
Individual contributions
Private ownership
Cooperative organization
Leadership by contract
Goal orientation
Love of nature
Investment in youth
Physical labor
Humanism as a dominate value

Mass Society-Characteristics
of Mass Society

Lack of roots
Standardizations & prejudice
Feeling of alienation
Exclusion of the elderly
Standardization
Corporate ownership
Bureaucratic organization
Leadership by authority
Sense of powerlessness
Alienation from nature
Control of youth
Sedentary living
Materialism as a dominate
value

The immigrant experience in America was one of slow and difficult assimilation into the American society. The frontier experience, "the first cycle" found individuals with ethnic backgrounds isolated and vastly different from one another but needing each other to create a new society. These people came together to form communities, to build schools and churches. They needed each other in order to survive against the unpredictability of their new environment.

The end of the frontier, "the second cycle" was the phase of American history in which the many diverse groups started to structure a society. They created institutions and organizations and with those structures came position and status for individuals. Ethnicity was viewed as inferior in the second cycle and it was highly valued to give up one's cultural past and language and become "Americanized". Part of this Americanization process was to share commonalities through newly emerging celebrations such as state fairs and religious festivals.

The third generation experience, "the third cycle" was one in which individuals with ethnic ancestry became in fact, "Americanized". And they could reflect with nostalgic remembrance, rather than pain, their diverse backgrounds. This was a time that ethnic groups fought hard for equality through the civil rights movement of the 1960s, but it was also a time of "romantic pluralism" in which individuals sought to accentuate their differences in a modern, industrialized and increasingly standardized world. This uniqueness was fostered through the emergence of "ethnic" or "folk" festivals.

With this generation, "the fourth cycle", it is becoming evident that our assimilation as Americans has become complete. It will soon be hard to distinguish from what ethnic ancestry we originated. The remembrances of our past will be those that we have constructed from previous generations. For this the festival will serve to foster that "sense of community" which provides a "moral unity" among uniquely different, often competitive, and yet very similar individuals.

Festivals will become an important, stable part of mass society where individuals can feel a sense of belonging, involvement and identification. The ethnic festival will have a valuable role to play in mass society.

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INTERVIEWS

Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with festival organizers or participants and countless other conversations.

APPENDICES

(Refer to page 49 of the text)

FOREIGN BORN POPULATION, STATE OF NEBRASKA, 1870-1950, SALINE COUNTY

Place of Birth	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
United Kingdom									
England			319	184	118	64	42	21	
England & Wales	36	292							12
Northern Ireland							1		
Scotland	8	92	72	48	31	21	19	5	2
Wales			6	6	4	5			
Ireland	27	213	203	122	60	31			
Iris							7	3	2
Norway			15	7	4	2	4		
Sweden			70	52	43	29	28	20	8
Sweden & Norway	9	70							
Denmark			75	51	24	20	15	9	11
Netherlands						1	1	3	
Holland			7	1	2				
Switzerland			44	17	20	13	5	3	
France		5	1	1	7	2			
Germany	92	674	1088	846	685	486	336	210	177
Austria			90	44	1917	319	10	11	8
Poland			4	4		6		2	1
Czechoslovakia						1280	1226	336	320
Bohemia			2043	1889					
Hungary			14	12	11	7	10	12	4
Yugoslavia						4			1
U. S. S. R.								52	30
Russia			123	128	136	94	92		
Lithuania									
Finland									

(Wheeler, 1975)

FOREIGN BORN POPULATION, STATE OF NEBRASKA, 1870-1950, SALINE COUNTY

Place of Birth	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
Rumania									
Greece					5	2			
Italy					7	1	2	1	1
Portugal									
Other Europe									8
Belgium			3	2	1	1			
Bulgaria									
Latvia									
Luxembourg			1						
Spain									
Turkey									
Southwest Asia									
Palestine & Syria									
China			1						
Japan									
Other Asia								2	Asia 2
Canada		354				91	56		
English Canada	32		333	179	115			29	16
French Canada				10	5			6	2
Mexico						2			1
Cuba									
Other America								2	3
Africa									
All Other			2	4	14	6	13		7
Not Reported									

(Wheeler, 1975)

FOREIGN STOCK, STATE OF NEBRASKA, 1960 and 1970, SALINE COUNTY

Country of Origin	1960	1970	Country of Origin	1960	1970
United Kingdom	116	66	Asia	4	
Ireland (Eire)	16	33	Canada	121	37
Norway	17		Mexico		
Sweden	32	43	Cuba		7
Denmark	71		Other America		16
Netherlands			All other	3	159
Switzerland	36		Not reported		
France	12				
Germany	726	568			
Austria	45	71			
Poland	12				
Czechoslovakia	2055	1497			
Hungary	33	33			
Yugoslavia	8				
U. S. S. R.	152	144			
Lithuania					
Finland					
Rumania					
Greece					
Italy		16			
Portugal					
Other Europe	13				

(Wheeler, 1975)

(Refer to page 51 of the text)

EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION FOR SALINE COUNTY AND WILBER

AREA NAME	POPULATION	HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS	FAMILIES	MINORITIES	PERCENT	MEDIAN INCOME	WHITECOLLAR WORKERS	BLUE COLLAR WORKERS	FAMILY TYPE HOUSEHOLDS	MALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS ONLY	FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD ONLY	OWN	RENT	TOTAL	POOR	PERCENT
Wilber	1624	700	446	7	0.4	12941	32.6	67.4	85.4	2.5	12.1	79.1	20.9	1503	182	12.1
Saline	13131	4973	3572	107	0.8	15223	35.3	64.7	91.9	2.2	5.9	75	25	12323	1479	12.0

Source: Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1985; U.S. Census Data, 1980

THE AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WILBER AND SALINE COUNTY

AREA NAME	TOTAL	UNDER 5	PERCENT	AGE 5 TO 13	PERCENT	AGE 14 TO 18	PERCENT	AGE 19 TO 24	PERCENT	AGE 25 TO 34	PERCENT	AGE 35 TO 40	PERCENT	AGE 45 TO 54	PERCENT	AGE 55 TO 64	PERCENT	OVER 65	PERCENT
Wilber	1624	92	5.7	154	9.5	122	7.5	99	6.1	184	11.3	109	6.7	124	7.6	187	11.5	553	34.1
Saline County	13131	862	6.6	1559	11.9	1158	8.8	1455	11.1	1645	12.5	1190	9.1	1180	9.0	1470	11.2	2612	19.9

Source: Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1985, U.S. Census Data, 1980

PERSONS 16 YEARS AND OVER WITH UNEMPLOYMENT IN 1979

AREA NAME	TOTAL	CELL ONE - UNEMPLOYED 1 TO 4 WEEKS	PERCENT	CELL TWO - UNEMPLOYED 5 TO 14 WEEKS	PERCENT	CELL THREE - UNEMPLOYED 15 OR MORE WEEKS	PERCENT
Wilber	72	23	31.9	37	51.4	12	16.7
Saline	767	423	55.1	186	24.3	158	20.6

Source: Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1985; U.S. Census Data, 1980.

(Refer to page 66 of the text)

NEBRASKA CZECHS, INC. -- LEADERSHIP

Past OfficersMarch 1965 - September 1966

President - Helene Baer, Wilber
 V. Pres. - Alfred Novacek, Dwight
 Treas. - Larry Mihulka, Beatrice
 Sec./Hist. - Evelyn Herman, Wilber

Sept. 1966 - September 1967

President - Alfred Novacek, Dwight
 V. Pres. - Edw. Varejcka, Schuyler
 Treas. - Evelyn Herman, Wilber
 Sec./Hist. - Amy Policky, Dwight

Nov. 1967 - Nov. 1968

President - Edw. Varejcka
 V. Pres. - Frank Smrz, Omaha
 Treas. - Helene Baer
 Sec./Hist. - Irma Ourecky

Aug. 1968 - Sept. 1969

President - Frank Smrz
 V. Pres. - Joe Stehlik, Table Rock
 Sec./Hist. - Irma Ourecky
 Treas. - Helene Baer
 News Rpt. - Evelyn Herman

Aug. 1969 - Sept. 1970

President - Joe Stehlik
 V. Pres. - Bernard Klasek, Wilber
 Sec. - Irma Ourecky
 Treas. - Helene Baer
 Hist./News - Evelyn Herman

Aug. 1970 - Sept. 1971

President - Bernard Klasek
 V. Pres. - Rose Storm, Wahoo
 Treas. - Alfred Novacek
 Sec./Hist. - Irma Ourecky

Sept. 1971 - Sept. 1972

President - Alfred Novacek
 1st V.P. - Rose Storm
 2nd V.P. - John Oborny, Fremont
 Treas. - Bernard Klasek
 Sec./Hist. - Irma Ourecky

Sept. 1972 - Sept. 1973

President - Rose Storm
 V. Pres. - Anton Novotny, Omaha
 Treas. - Bernard Klasek
 Hist. - Dorothy Stepan
 Sec./N.Rpt. - Irma Ourecky

Sept. 1973 - Sept. 1974

President - Anton Novotny
 V. Pres. - Anne Novotny
 Treas. - Bernard Klasek
 Hist. - Dorothy Stepan
 Sec./N.Rpt. - Irma Ourecky

Sept. 1974 - Sept. 1975

President - Anne Novotny
 V. Pres. - Jake Hamsa
 Treas. - Bernard Klasek
 Hist. - Georgia Sudik, Colon
 Sec./News - Irma Ourecky

Oct. 1977 - 1978

President - Alfred Novacek
V. Pres. - Jim Sousek, Malmo
Treas. - Bernard Klasek
Hist. - Jake Hamsa
Sec./News - Georgia Sudik
2nd V.P. - Vern Teply, Omaha

1978 - 1979

President - Jim Sousek
1st V.P. - Agnes Svoboda
Treas. - Bernard Klasek
Sec. - Georgia Sudik
Historian -

1979 - 1980

President - Vern Teply
1st V.P. - Agnes Svoboda, David City
2nd V.P. - Anne Novotny
Treas. - Bernard Klasek
Sec. - Georgia Sudik
Historian -

1980 - 1981

President - Agnes Svoboda
1st V.P. - Anne Novotny
2nd V.P. - Irma Ourecky
Treas. - Elsie Cecrle
Sec. - Georgia Sudik
Historian - Georgia Sudik

NEBRASKA CZECHS OF WILBER -- LEADERS

1962	Festival Chairman	Lumir Fritz
1963	Festival Chairman	Floyd Herman
1964	President	Lulu Kohel
1965	President	Lyle Altman
1966	President	Glenn Zajicek
1967	President	Stanley Pospisil
1968	President	Jim Novotny
1969	President	Irma Ourecky
1970	President	Irma Ourecky
1971	President	Joe (Pep) Horacek
1972	President	Bill Stehlik
1973	President	Eugene Dirkschneider
1974	President	Fred Shimonek
1975	President	Milo T. Jelinek
1976	President	George Hynek
1977	President	Don Moss
1978	President	Irma Ourecky
1979	President	Scott Havel
1980	President	Richard Rains
1981	President	Harley Bergmeyer
1982	President	Gregory Barnas
1983	President	Dr. H. Larry Mitchell
1984	President	Christine Janda

(refer to page 97 of the text)

NEBRASKA CZECH QUEENS

1962	Jane Pospisil	Wilber Chapter
1963	Susie Sasek	Wilber Chapter
1964	Bonita Faye Krula	Schuyler Chapter
1965	Susie Kunc	Wilber Chapter
1966	Janis Kovar	Wilber Chapter
1967	Marlyn Jakub	Dwight Chapter
1968	Susie Herman	Wilber Chapter
1969	Mary Anna Novotny	Omaha Czech Culture Club Chapter
1970	Sharon Hotovy	Dwight Chapter
1971	Karen Prazan	Omaha Czech Culture Club Chapter
1972	Vicki Hurt	South Omaha Sokol Chapter
1973	Barbara Caha	Saunders County Chapter
1974	Debra Ann Slezak	South Omaha Sokol Chapter
1975	Patricia Marie Swoboda	South Omaha Sokol Chapter
1976	Lynne M. Satorie	South Omaha Sokol Chapter
1977	Diane Kay Maryska	Wilber Chapter
1978	Denise Marie Micek	South Omaha Sokol Chapter
1979	Kathleen Korinek	Wilber Chapter
1980	Nancy Velehradsky	South Omaha Sokol Chapter
1981	Jolene Strouf	Lincoln Chapter
1982	Marian Meduna	Saunders County Chapter
1983	Barbara Ann Meduma	Saunders County Chapter
1984	Thomasine Wilson	Nebr. Czechs of Panhandle

(refer to page 97 of the text)

WILBER CZECH QUEENS

1962	Jane Pospisil, Wilber
1963	Susie Sasek, Wilber
1964	Barbara Fisher, Western
1965	Susie Kunc, Wilber
1966	Janis Kovar, Wilber
1967	Marcia Swoboda, Omaha
1968	Susie Herman, Wilber
1969	Margaret Hajek, Odell
1970	Francine Vana, Wilber
1971	Cecelia Sand, Crete
1972	Linda Pospichal, Crete
1973	Linda Rakosnik, Wilber
1974	LuAnn Tichy, Wilber
1975	Karen Hynek, Wilber
1976	Lori Ourecky, Wilber
1977	Diane Mariska, Wilber
1978	Susan Rakosnik, Wilber
1979	Kathy Korienk, Wilber
1980	Rhonda Greeder, Wilber
1981	Jill Fritz, Wilber
1982	Deanna Bulin, Hickman
1983	Donna Sticka, Friend
1984	Susie Salda, Wilber