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The Czech immigrant - a process of acculturation: Schuyler, Nebraska, 1870-1920

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THE CZECH IMMIGRANT-
A PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION:
SCHUYLER, NEBRASKA, 1870-1920

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PREFACE

Oscar Handlin wrote, "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history."[1] Yet, how strange that so many people are reluctant to be referred to as Irish, Polish, German, or Swedish. Their wish is to be called an American. The heritage their parents or grandparents left behind has often been ignored. I did not fully understand the traditions of my Czechoslovak heritage even though I grew up with a foreign language and hints of a different culture. In a time of resurgent interest in the ethnic dimensions of American history, I became interested in my roots and in the Czech background of my own community.

What we seek in any study of history is not so much a mass of facts and dates as a way to make sense out of those facts. We are curious to know not only what happened but also how and why it happened. We want to know what it all means, why and in what way it is significant to us. In the larger scheme of things, we would like to know where we are, how we relate to what has gone before and what lies ahead.

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[1]Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People (Boston: Little and Brown, 1951), p. 3.

As Michael Novak wrote in, The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics, "To learn the habits, instincts, and aspirations of a person's grandparents is to discern the emotional weight of much in that person's life that otherwise seems inexplicable."[2] Novak's observation was the general premise on which initial research for this study was carried out. It is important for me---with a heritage I knew little or nothing about---to discover the habits and aspirations of grandparents I never knew.

Ethnicity has exercised a persistent and pervasive influence upon American history. Americans have traditionally defined themselves and others as members of ethnocultural groups. On the basis of their origins, they have shared with "their own kind" a sense of a common heritage and collective destiny. Ethnic cultures have sustained patterns of values, attitudes, and behaviors which have differentiated various segments of the population. The resulting ethnic pluralism has profoundly affected all aspects of American life.[3]

The study of immigration history involves not only the process of physical migration, but the long range consequences of this mingling of people as well. Until recently,

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[2]Michael Novak, The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), p. xvi.

[3]Rudolph J. Vecoli, "European Americans: From Immigrants to Ethnics," Migration of America's Racial Groups (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1976), p. 403.

most American scholars and laymen generally accepted the assimilation doctrine. The "melting pot" it was assumed, would transform the foreigners into the indistinguishable Americans in a generation or two at the most. Especially in recent years, however, the idea of a new "pluralism" has inspired historians and others to explore the ethnic dimension of American life in the past as well as in the present.[4]

The historians who established immigration history as field of study after World War I were, almost to the man, Turnerians. It is conceded that Turner was perhaps the first to call attention to the need for the study of immigration. His frontier thesis contended that "in the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality or characteristics."[5] For Turner, the frontier was the "line of the most rapid and effective Americanization."[6]

Marcus Lee Hansen, a student of Turner, in The Immigrant in American History, focused on the interaction between the immigrant's heritage and the American environment. Hansen thought immigrants had exercised a conservative and

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History as quoted in Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Ethnicity: A Neglected Dimension of American History," The State of American History (New York: Quadrangle, 1970), p. 75.

[6]Charles E. Richards, "An American Fantasy-The Crucible of the Frontier: Montgomery County, Iowa (1870-1920," (MA Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1971), p. 3.

stabilizing influence upon American democracy. Yet, he proclaimed, "it is the ultimate fate of any national group to be amalgamated into the composite American race."[7]

The theory of total assimilation had prevailed for many years, but with Handlin's book (Boston Immigrants) on the Irish in Boston a paradigm shift occurred. The theme of acculturation was introduced. Unwilling to assimilate the Irish, Boston became a divided city. From contacts of dissimilar cultures, an ethnic pluralism emerged. Here was no tale of rapid, easy assimilation.[8] Handlin, however, is best known for The Uprooted, and this work has had much influence on the thinking of historians and social scientists. He attempted to explain the effects of migration upon the immigrants themselves. Torn from their traditional peasant communities, they became individuals without meaningful ties to their fellow men. Though the immigrant sought to regain his lost community by creating ethnic institutions, he failed to escape from his alienated condition. Paradoxically, however, in this book Handlin has reinforced the assimilationist ideology. One must also ask if his immigrant was typical of

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[7]Marcus Lee Hansen, The Immigrant in American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1940), pp. 10-16.

[8]Oscar Handlin, Boston Immigrants (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. ix-xi.

the many differnt groups represented in European immigrtion.[9]

The making of Americans has been a basic theme in the writing of American immigration history. What was to be the significance of this foreign invasion for the emerging American nationality? Was America a "melting pot" in which all diverse elements would be fused into a new human type or was it a mosaic composed of distinct ethnic groups? Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer said that the "point about the melting pot is that it did not happen."[10] Ethnicity, they said, pervaded all spheres of life. Ethnic groups were not only a source of individual identity, they also became interest groups by which persons sought to defend or advance their position in society.[11]

Recently, Timothy L. Smith depicted immigrants as eagerly pursuing assimilation as a means of advancing their fortunes and those of their children. He stressed assimila-

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[9]Although this author finds merit in Handlin's work, at times, it is vague and impressionistic and claims, without evidence, to present a picture of the typical immigrant. Handlin, The Uprooted, p. 5.

[10]Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1963), pp. 23-30.

[11]Ibid.

tion, [illegible]ural and [illegible]tural, rather than ethnic exclusiveness [illegible] key to understanding immigration history.[12]

In Assimilation in American Life, Milton Gordon summarized three contending ideologies of ethnic group relations: Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. Gordon defined cultural pluralism as the model of American society: composite of groups which have preserved their own cultural identity. Acculturation, he said, was likely to be the first of the types of assimilation to occur when a minority group arrived on the scene. In acculturation, the first process which occurred was the taking on of the English language and American behavioral patterns. While this process was only partially completed in the immigrant generation itself, with the second and succeeding generations, exposed to the American public school system and speaking English as their native tongue, the impact of the American acculturation process became overwhelming, according to Gordon Anglo-conformity demanded the complete renunciation of the immigrants ancestral culture in favor of

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[12]Smith's ideas were in contrast to Glazer and Moynihan. Timothy L. Smith, "New Approaches to the History of Immigration," American Historical Review, 71 (July, 1966), pp. 1265-1279

the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon "core group." The melting pot, Gordon related, was the biological merger of the Anglo-Saxon peoples with other immigrant groups and a blending of their respective cultures into a new indigenous American type.[13]

By its nature, immigration history lends itself to studies of particular ethnic groups. Such studies tend to follow a common pattern examining first, the cause of emigration from the old country; next, the route of migration and patterns of settlement; and finally, the social, economic, political, religious, and cultural adjustments to American conditions.[14]

The community of Schuyler, Nebraska, was chosen for this study because it is my hometown; I am familar with the town and its people, and a fairly large portion of the population was, and still is, Czech. It is often easier for an "insider" to gather information than for someone considered an "outsider." With general works on Schuyler Czechs few in number, talking to older Czechs within the community proved to be of enormous value. These taped interviews comprise a substantial portion of this study.

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[13]Gordon calls cultural assimilation acculturation. He writes that cultural pluralism preserves the communal life and significant portions of the culture of the immigrant. Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 105.

[14]Vecoli, America's Racial Groups, pp. 412-415.

The year 1870 was selected as a base line against which to project the culture of the early 1900's because the ethnic characteristics of the area were formed during the 1880's. The year 1920 was used as the terminal date because of immigration restrictions which soon followed the census of that year. Czechs have arrived since but certainly not in any significant numbers.

Robert I. Kutak, in his 1924 study of Czechs in Milligan, Nebraska, had a decided advantage over this researcher and her study of Czechs in Schuyler.[15] He had approximately 140 first-generation Czechs as sources of information, whereas in 1975, there were only four first-generation Czechs to interview in Schuyler. General impressions rather than specific conclusions, were derived from this small number. More second-generation Czechs, however, were available to shed valuable light on the acculturation process.

Although Colfax County histories are available, Schuyler, itself, has no compiled history or city directories. The only guide to the history of the town came from a centennial booklet printed in 1970. School records were not available

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[15]Robert I. Kutak, The Story of a Bohemian-American Village (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1924; rep. ed., 1968), p. 9.

for the years 1870-1920. The only class lists came from a 1932 publication of high school graduates which was incomplete by its own admission.

This is not a community study, such as sociologist Ruth Glass castigates for their "innumeracy," but a study of a particular ethnic group, the Czechs, within a community setting.[16] A particular effort will be made to apply the Gordon interpretations of acculturation, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism to the Czech immigrants in Schuyler. By doing this, one may be able to shed new light on the relatively neglected "new" immigrant, the Czech.[17]

Much of what remains of early Czech life is in the memories of a few elderly Czechs. Immigrants of Czech origin were important to the early settlement of Nebraska and to Schuyler.[18] University of Nebraska Archivist Joseph Svoboda, a native of Czechoslovakia, said that since the 1920's the

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[16]Colin Bell and Howard Newby, Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 10.

[17]Czechs are considered "new" immigrants by virtue of their homeland (Eastern Europe) and by their language (Slavic). Some, however, could view them as "old" immigrants because of their occupations, skills, and literacy. Czechs arrived in large numbers in Schuyler after 1870, at a time of the "new" immigration, therefore, they will be viewed in this light.

[18]By 1910, the number of first and second generation Czechs in Nebraska was nearly 51,000 or about ten percent of the state's population of foreign birth and foreign parentage. Svoboda, Broken Hoops and Plains People (Lincoln: Nebraska Developmental Center, 1976), p. 153.

preservation of traditions passed along from parents and grandparents has diminished largely as the result of improved communications and the mobility created through modern technology. Unless systematic effort is made to collect and preserve a record of Nebraska's Czech heritage, that heritage will be lost.[19] This study is a small effort to record the Czech experience in Schuyler.

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[19] Omaha World-Herald, 24 July 1975.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

. would like to take this opportunity to thank the many generous people of Schuyler who gave their time and energy so this study could be completed. Particularly, ' would like to thank those first and second generation Czechs who consented to interviews and inquiries into their personal lives. would like specifically acknowledge my family who aided in this research by providing knowledge and encouragement when the task appeared almost insurmountable. Last, but not least, would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. Jo Ann Carrigan, Dr. Harl Dalstrom, and Dr. William Pratt. Without their patience, wise counsel, and advice this study would never have been completed.

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INTRODUCTION

Schuyler, Nebraska, is located in almost the exact geographical center of the United States. Situated near the north bank of the Platte River, it has an altitude of 1350 feet, the prevailing slope of the surrounding country being to the south and east.[1]

The soil is a rich loam mixed with sand. The general surface consists of undulating prairie highland, not broken or abrupt. The land is gently rolling, has a moderate amount of vegetation, and is well suited to agriculture. The weather as a rule is dry and invigorating, typical of the climate along the eastern edge of the northern great plains. As early as 1855, pioneers came to settle this frontier land.[2]

Commercial interests influenced early settlement at Schuyler. In 1855, Congress first appropriated funds for the construction of a highway in Nebraska Territory. That road ran through the southern portion of the present Colfax County. A year later, Isaac Albertson and E. Toncray came from Omaha to the Schuyler area for the purpose of

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[1] Schuyler Founders Day (Schuyler Sun, 1935), pp. 15-19.

[2] Schuyler Centennial (Schuyler Sun, 1970), p. 10.

founding a city at some point west of North Bend on the Platte River. These men named the town Buchanan, but building only progressed as far as one log house. The established towns of Fremont and Columbus to the east and west of Buchanan probably prevented its growth. After its demise, another town named Neenah was proposed about five miles west of present-day Schuyler, but it also failed to develop because of the small number of settlers. Soon after 1866, the area began to develop primarily from the westward movement of population after the Civil War. Road and water transportation facilities and a liberal land policy, after the Homestead Act of 1862, encouraged population growth in and around Schuyler, as did good climate and soil. But Colfax County was not rapidly and permanently settled until the full impact of the Homestead Act was achieved and the Union Pacific Railroad was constructed.[3]

With the organization of Colfax County in 1869, the population in and around Schuyler was estimated at 200. Rapid growth followed, and the United States Census of 1880 recorded the population of Schuyler as 1017. Further data on the population showed a consistent increase until 1890 and only a slight change thereafter. From 1890 until 1910, the population remained fairly steady, but a significant

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[3] Schuyler Centennial, p. 10; Schuyler Founders Day, 14.

increase by 1920 brought the total number of resident 2636.[4]

With regard to foreign-born population the figures of the United States Census indicated that the Czech, German, and Irish nationalities predominated in Colfax County. The greater number of these foreign-born immigrants arrived between 1870 and 1890.[5]

For several decades (1890-1914), ever since the immigrant tide to America shifted from the countries of western and northern Europe to those of the southern and eastern parts of the Continent, it had been customary to speak and write about the "new immigration"[6] as contrasted with the old. Moreover, comparisons between these two groups have worked, generally, to the disadvantage of the more recent arrivals.[7]

From 1820 to 1930, some fourteen million persons from southern and eastern Europe entered the United States, al-

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[4]The population of Schuyler rose to 2,160 in 1890; held at 2,157 in 1900; but rose from 2,152 in 1910 to 2,636 in 1920. The validity of the 1890 Federal Census for Nebraska has been challenged but for our purposes, we will use the population number previously stated. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population: 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, vol. I, II, III.

[5]Ibid.

[6]See Preface for discussion of "new immigration."

[7]Carl Wittke, We Who Built American (New York: Prentice Hall, Incorporated, 1940), p. 405.

though it was after 1880 that the "new immigration" tide reached major proportions. That there were significant differences between the new arrivals and the older immigrants and Anglo-Saxon was apparent to even the most casual observer. The newcomers from southern and eastern Europe were strikingly different in language, customs, political experiences and ideologies, and personal standards of living.[8]

Many of the new immigrants crowded into the foreign quarters that were in existence in many of America's industrial and urban centers. Carl Wittke described the life of these immigrants as "hardly more than the constant procession of the push cart and the baby carriage."[9] With the opportunities for agricultural expansion and the era of free lands coming to an end, most of the newcomers became city dwellers and city builders.[10]

Around the turn-of-the-century, a growing number of Anglo-Americans believed that immigration from southern and eastern Europe was undesirable because it represented an "ignorant, unassimilable, strange mass of human beings"

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid; this may be an overstatement.

[10] Philip Taylor, The Distant Magnet (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 48.

whom few could understand.[11] Many believed they endangered American civilization as well as American democracy. With the rise of labor disputes and radical programs of political and economic reform, it became convenient to blame all existing discontent on the newly-arrived immigrants. Mobs were described as "foreign mobs" made up of "foreign-scum; beer-smelling Germans, ignorant Bohemians, uncouth Poles, or wide-eyed Russians."[12]

For centuries, Bohemia had been ruled by foreign dynasties, generally indifferent to the welfare of their Czech subjects. After the Thirty Years' War of the seventeenth century, the Czech population was reduced by two-thirds. These losses were made up by massive German settlement in the land, where the German language was favored in official and polite circles while Czech became the language of servants and peasants.[13]

The Bohemian state and the Czech nation gradually began to disappear, but the systematic attempts of the Hapsburgs to hasten the total absorption of Bohemia into the Austro-

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[11]See Preface for explanation on old and new immigrants.

[12]Wittke, We Who Built America, p. 408.

[13]Robert W. Seton-Watson, A History of the Czech and Slovaks (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 16; S. Harrison Thomson, Czechoslovakia in European History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 27.

Hungarian Empire in the eighteenth century finally provoked Bohemian resistance. Czech intellecturals and Bohemian nobles resented the attack on their inherited privileges and promoted a Czech national revival at the end of the eighteenth century.[14]

In 1848, the year of revolutions throughout Europe and particularly within the Hapsburg Empire, the Czechs sought civil liberties, the public use of their language, and the restitution of their historic state rights. The failure of this revolutionary movement forced a number of its Czech leaders to flee the country. The first stage of Czech immigration thus had its origin in the revolutionary disturbances of the times. However, it was not political oppression but economic conditions which led the largest number of Czechs to emigrate. The urge for greater economic security was very strong and stories of the discovery of gold in 1849, in California, lured Czechs to America.[15]

Beginning in 1867, the Hapsburg Monarch allowed its citizens to emigrate freely. By 1870, economic problems and rural overpopulation accounted for most emmigration. The majority of these immigrants were peasants who had owned very

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[14]Seton-Watson, Czechs and Slovaks, p. 17.

[15]Kutak, Bohemian-American Village, p. 10; Joseph Svoboda, "Czechs: Love of Liberty," Broken Hoops and Plains People (Lincoln: Nebraska Development Center, 1976), pp. 156-157.

little land, usually not more than 2.5 acres. These cottagers, as they were called, represented the rural lower middle class who had very little opportunity to improve their lot in a strictly stratified society. They could, however, sell their land and thereby afford transportation for themselves and their families to America, and still have enough money left to pay for land registration fees and immediate necessities.[16] In America, the Homestead Law provided a very real inducement to peasants to leave their "homeland" and seek a better economic life.[17]

Czechs began arriving in Nebraska after 1863 following the passage of the Free Homestead Act. Many settled first in Saline County between the communities of Wilber and Crete. Some of these Czechs came from Wisconsin where they had not liked the rocky soil nor the wet and cold climate. Roughly one-in-eight of the 539,392 Bohemians in the United States by 1910 resided in Nebraska.[18]

The first Czech immigrants came to Colfax County in 1868, although other settlers had been in the area since the 1850's.[19]

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[16]Svoboda, "Czechs," p. 157.

[17]Kutak, Bohemian-American Village, p. 10.

[18]Sarka B. Hrbkova, Bohemians in Nebraska (Lincoln: State Historical Society Publications, 1919), p. 152.

[19]In 1857, Colfax County was in the newly-formed Platte County, but by 1869 Colfax became a county in its own right. Schuyler Founders Day, p. 5; Schuyler Centennial, p. 7.

These early Czechs were attracted by the Union Pacific and Burlington Railroads, which advertised widely, and by the good soil of the area. The Burlington system, whose nearly three million acres lay in Iowa and Nebraska, was intensely active as a promoter of immigration, either through its own land departments in the two states, or through land companies in which its officers had a major interest. The Union Pacific called attention to its lands in the Platte Valley by referring to it as a "flowery meadow of great fertility clothed in nutritious grasses, and watered by numerous streams."[20]

It is easier to describe the propaganda campaigns of the railroads than to estimate how effectively they determined the scale and direction of emigration. However, whether the immigrant took the initiative or whether he was affected by some organization, once a few members of his group had settled, the way was open for others. The influences of letters and remittances helped to reinforce the concentration of fellow-countrymen.[21]

The 1870's and 1880's saw greatly increased immigration

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[20]Hrbkova, Bohemians in Nebraska, p. 142; Schuyler Centennial, p. 7; Interview with Julia Howe at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 18 July 1975; John Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), pp. 4-9.

[21]Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 8

Schuyler.[22] Many Czechs came as a result of letters from other Czechs and the promise of good farm land at cheap prices.[23] The Czechs occupied the central and the northern parts of Colfax County, dividing their trading between the village of Clarkson, in the northern part of the county, and Schuyler. Life on the Nebraska frontier was not easy. In the beginning, at least, the Czechs' standard of living fell somewhat below that which they were accustomed to in Europe. Like other pioneers on the prairies their first homes were dugouts, later sodhouses, and eventually the more durable frame dwellings.[24]

The enactment of drastic, restrictive legislation against immigrants following the close of World War I brought to an end a migration as important as any in American and perhaps world history.[25] Since 1910 there has been a lessening of

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[22]The estimated Czech population of Schuyler in 1880 was 636; it rose to 832 in 1890 and 1072 in 1900; in 1910 it fell to 929 and 927 in 1920. These estimates of the author are from incomplete school census records. School Census Records (1870-1920), County Superintendent, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

[23]Interview with Julia Howe; Interview with Martin Kral his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 15 July 1975.

[24]Schuyler Centennial, p. 11; Schuyler Founders Day, 23; Hrbkova, Bohemians in Nebraska, pp. 142-143.

[25]Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Ethnicity: A Neglected Dimension of American History," The State of American History (New York: Quandrangle, 1970), p. 75.

the number of immigrants coming to the United States and immigration quotas have remained unfilled.[26]

More work needs to be done on the tide of "new" immigration, especially the immigration to places other than the cities. This study deals with that "new" immigration to a small town.

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[26]Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 183.

CHAPTER I

MAKING A LIVING IN TOWN

Economic developments have conditioned every aspect of immigration. The immigrants employment activities were effected by his decision to migrate, his age upon arrival, the place of settlement and even his marital status.[1]

Peasant life in the old country had been governed by traditional obligations and the desire for stability, not by any wish to innovate, to maximize profit, or to raise one's standard of living if it meant a ceaseless multiplication of wants. The characteristic peasant life seemed to depend on the possession of land and on some stability in the standard of living.[2]

Czechs like great numbers of Europeans, however, were landless, or almost so. The stability of their existence was threatened by the changing forces of the eighteenth and nine-

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[1]Niles Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1933; rep. ed., 1970), p. 268.

[2]Yet among the Czech peasants, this may not have been the case. Czech peasants of the period 1848-1914 in Bohemia and Moravia did often make innovations, increase profit and play politics as exampled by credit unions, savings and loan societies, agrarian unions and cooperatives. Taylor, Distant Magnet, pp. 48-51.

teenth centuries.[3] The immigrant wanted freedom from laws and customs that curbed individual economic enterprise. In the countryside, the peasant sought exemption from the traditional restrictions upon the transfer of land. In the cities, the workers wished to escape guild regulations.[4]

Defeated or at least discouraged by conditions of life at home, immigrants sought an asylum on another continent. Some remained in the city, where they landed, while others "silently passed from view and were swallowed up in the great hinterland."[5] What became of them?

Although immigrants reached America at different times and places, all were needed by an expanding economy, which demanded especially unskilled and semi-skilled labor in great quantities. Immigrants, it is true, themselves helped shape American development. They provided much of the labor on farms, in mines and in factories. Generally speaking, however, they did not give many of the orders nor make many of the decisions. The advantages lay with native Americans, or pos-

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[3]Hansen, Immigrant in American History, p. 53.

[4]Czech city workers generally emigrated, not to escape guild regulations, but simply because job opportunities were limited and sometimes, especially in the 1880s when anti-Socialist laws were enforced, because the right to organize trade unions and to strike was abridged. Ibid, p. 81.

[5]Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 210.

ibly with immigrants' children born or educated in America.[6]

Immigrants' lives were often made more difficult by their being newcomers, settling in American communities which were themselves new or rapidly changing. In much of the rural Middle West, the immigrant found a social structure and a political and judical system. What the immigrant needed was system of communications to link him with the old country and with fellow-immigrants in America.[7]

The first Czech settlers to come to Nebraska, and to Schuyler, were pioneer farmers.[8] Living was necessarily frugal. "It is an iron country and the spirit is oppressed by its rigor and its melancholy," wrote Willa Cather.[9] Along with the economic hardships and the rigor of pioneering, Czech settlers faced extreme isolation and loneliness. The conflict between a desire for the greatest possible personal freedom and economic security on the one hand, and a sentimental longing for the homeland on the other, did not prevent the Czech pioneers from staying. Their isolation

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[6] Ibid, p. 170.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Joseph Svoboda, "Czechs: The Love of Liberty," Broken Hoops and Plains People (Lincoln: Nebraska Development Center, 1976), pp. 159-164; Naturalization: Petition and Record, Vol. II, III, 1870-1920, Clerk of the District Court, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

[9] Willa Cather, O Pioneers (Boston: Houghton and Miffen, 1929), pp. 15, 187-188.

became bearable by occasional visits to their Czech neighbors and to the growing number of predominantly Czech villages which had sprung up since the late 1860's in eastern Nebraska.[10]

The general character of the Czech himself has a great deal to do with his success, of whatever degree. The Czech peasant, not unlike others, has been characterized as a man of simple habits, frugal, and conservative. He was proverbially hard-headed, intelligent, and proud of his calling.[11] His willingness to go without until he had what he wanted helped him to accomplish his goals. A case in point was John Moural and Frank Kovarik who came to America from Bohemia in 1854. They landed in Quebec, Canada; not finding work they proceeded to Cleveland, Ohio. With their savings gone, Kovarik found work driving stock to slaughter and received as pay the head, brains, kidneys, and intestines of the cattle. For the next twelve years, the two men worked as carpenters for $1.00 a day. Saving half of their earnings, they eventually came to the Schuyler area in 1868 and settled homesteads.[12]

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[7] Ibid.

[10] Svoboda, "Czechs," p. 164; Edmund de S. Brunner, Immigrant Farmers and Their Children (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1929), p. 187.

[11] Svoboda, "Czechs," p. 164; E. F. Prantner, These Help Build America (Chicago: Czechoslovak Review, 1922), p. 19. Willa Cather, O Pioneers (Boston: Houghton and Miffen, 1929).

[12] Both Moural and Kovarik were considered moderately successful, accumulating land which remains in their respective families in 1976. Rose Rosicky, History of Czechs in Nebraska (Omaha: Czech Historical Society of Nebraska, 1929), pp. 138-140.

Land ownership more than anything else concerned the Czechs of America, and the story of Czechs in Schuyler is no different. They were interested in land and more land, whether they lived in town or the countryside. Many who invested in land prospered, the farmer to a higher degree than the city man. He would buy land for about $5 or less an acre from the railroads and land companies or get it from the government and, by the early 1900's he valued the same land at from $75 to $300 an acre. Anyone who bought city lots before mass building began was able to sell his land quickly and advantageously; a less astute or unlucky buyer had to bide his time. Building lots were contracted for on the installment plan; one or two hundred dollars sufficed to bind the purchase. Early recognizing the value of self-help, the Czechs joined savings, loan and building associations. With the aid of such associations, like the Folda Bank, many were able to build and own their homes.[13]

Between 1870 and 1920, the vast majority of Czechs who arrived in Schuyler listed their occupations as farmers or laborers.[14] The farmers provided the impetus for the economy while the laborers provided the man-power needed to construct a thriving community. Artisans---shoemakers,

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[13]Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 69; Schuyler Centennial, p. 21. The same trend was prevalent in Bohemia after the law of 1873 which permitted the formation of savings and loan associations.

[14]Naturalization: Petition and Record, 1870-1920.

tailors, harnessmakers, blacksmiths, among others, affected the pattern of production in the new community. Some of the most important artisans were those engaged in building trades: carpenters, masons, or bricklayers. Artisans or craftsmen provided a variety of other services.[15]

Czechs who arrived in Schuyler between 1870 and 1880 made up a sizeable portion of the business community from 1880 to 1900. Using a sample of sixty-five Czech immigrants to Schuyler during this time, twenty-four were craftsmen and artisans, while the remaining forty-one were about evenly divided between laborers and farmers.[16]

Blacksmiths Joseph Sramek and Frank Pesek and shoemaker, Frank Vanicek came to the town between 1870 and 1880. Joseph Zerzan was a school teacher in Cedar Rapids, Iowa before arriving in Schuyler in 1875. Within five years of his arrival, he established a hardware and machinery store, later adding real estate sales. Martin and John Prokes were butchers and had established a meat market by 1890. Their brother Frank was in the lumber business. M. F. Bednar listed his occupation as harnessmaker and Frank Chrastil

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[15]Ibid; See Curti's The Making of an American Community for a discussion of other immigrant occupations and services.

[16]The author used a list of twenty-three original Czech settlers to Schuyler between 1870 and 1875 taken from Rosicky's book and added names from the local school census. The names were then checked against Naturalization Petitions and Records to determine occupations. School Census, 1870-1900, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

was an undertaker. Both men had businesses in town before 1890. F. V. Svoboda had been a schoolteacher before coming to Schuyler. In Schuyler, he was a photographer and newspaper and magazine publisher. He published the only Czech juvenile magazine in the state in the 1890's and established the Messenger in 1909. His brother, Peter, was an undertaker. Frank Folda, the first Czech settler in Schuyler in 1868, acquired land and cattle. He served as an interpreter and adviser to other Czech settlers and helped them to acquire land. In 1887, he established the Folda Banking House. Joseph Dvorak, Peter Rank, Vaclav Maly, Joseph Kubik, and John Hanecek had general stores, saloons, or merchandise stores and Frank Dudek ran a dry goods store.[17]

Between 1890 and 1910, Czechs in Schuyler had a complete monopoly on shoe shops, mercantile, grocery, and dry goods stores. Czechs also had jewelry stores, feed stores, restaurants, livery and feed stables. By 1910, Czechs comprised about eighty-five percent of the business community even though they numbered only about forty-three percent of the total population.[18]

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[17]All the men listed were original settlers to the town of Schuyler, coming between the years 1868 and 1875. By 1900, they had established themselves in the business community, using occupations learned in the old country. Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, pp. 138-145; Naturalization Petitions and Records, 1870-1920.

[18]The estimate of eighty-five percent is that of the author. A business list was published in 1902 and from that list, plus photographs, advertisements, and interviews, the author developed a composite view of the business community at five-year intervals. Schuyler Sun, 3 July 1902.

Thomas Čapek indicated that Czechs were basically a people who preferred to work indoors; hence, shop-keeping was an agreeable occupation.[19] Because the town of Schuyler had such a large Czech population by 1900,[20] there was little problem in making a living. Czechs would patronize, for the most part, only Czech-owned businesses. Every Czech who owned a business apparently had a fairly respectable position in the community as well as freedom and a sense of opportunity, yet his business might have been so small as to make it an economic hardship. Most artisans made no more than $1.50 a day; and many customers bought on credit which, presumably, burdened the storekeeper more.[21]

It is impossible to present a statistical analysis of successes and failures in merchandising or other business aspects. There were probably some business failures, but none were reported in the local press.[22]

Many Czech immigrants remained, for the most part, where they came---in Schuyler. That is not to say, of course,

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[19]Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 26.

[20]The Czech population in Schuyler in 1900 was 1072.

[21]Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 175; Capek, Cechs in America, p. 26.

[22]This author found no articles in local newspapers dealing with business failures between 1870 and 1920, only selling out to a partner, retiring, or going into another business were reported. Court proceedings listed in newspapers revealed no bankruptcy actions but that is not to say there never were any. Schuyler Sun; Schuyler Quill; Schuyler Messenger, 1870-1920.

some did not move away.[23] Many moved up the economic ladder, at least to the lower middle class level and some much higher. Because there were so many Czechs, in comparison to their native and ethnic groups, their position was an important one in Schuyler. Like Wilber, Clarkson, and Milligan, Schuyler was basically a Czech community.[24]

It is difficult to assess the average yearly income of all the Czech people in Schuyler between 1870 and 1920 but the discussion of various Czech individuals as to relative gains or setbacks may help to determine successes, failures, and income and put their position in perspective.

The saloon-keeper, according to Thomas Capek, preceded all others as a Czech businessman. To open a saloon required less preliminary training than almost any other business undertaking; the brewer furnished what little captial was needed for the start, and if the beginner established himself in a foreign quarter, among the people of his own nationality, he could get on tolerably well with only the rudiments of English. The saloon and the saloon-keeper had a great influence on the immigrant.[25]

Between 1870 and 1920, sixteen different Czech men

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[23]A cross-check of school census records reveals very few variations in names; only about eight to fourteen names did not reappear year after year.

[24]Naturalization: Petition and Record, 1870-1920.

[25]Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia, likewise, maintained saloons and also controlled the liquor and beer trade from top to bottom. Capek, Cechs in America, p. 77.

were proprietors or owners of saloons in Schuyler. Two of the sixteen eventually left town; V. Sudik bought land in Oklahoma and departed in 1903 and J. Kudrna moved with five other Czechs in 1912 to Minnesota to begin a Czech community there.[26]

Peter Rank worked on the railroad and his wife farmed in Morse Bluff, Nebraska, before arriving in Schuyler in 1873. He was first a saloon-keeper, then owned a general store. His store was built at a cost of $5000. Later he built a dancing hall which was destroyed by fire in 1888, after which he erected a brick building for the same purpose. At the time of his death in 1892, he owned a store, dance hall and saloon, with an inventory in the saloon valued at $640, two city lots and some livestock, as well as his home valued at approximately $2500. It seems apparent that Rank prospered during his eighteen years in Schuyler.[27]

In the early years, there were few specialists in merchandising in Schuyler, about one-half of the businessmen of the 1870's being "general merchants." The "traders" of the 1870's were also a large group but there were some specialists

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[26]Minutes of (Schuyler) City Council Meetings, 7 May 1895, 6 April 1897, 14 May 1902, Office of the City Clerk, City Hall, Schuyler, Nebraska; Quill, 12 May 1903; 15 February 1912.

[27]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 140; Probated Will #645, Clerk of the Court, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

dealing in lumber, saddlemaking, and blacksmithing. By the 1880's special establishments for purveying drugs, groceries, hardware, furniture, jewelry, bank, and other items had been established in Schuyler.[28]

John Dudek owned a hardware, harness, and sporting goods business in the early 1890's. At the time of his death in 1938, his estate was valued at approximately $50,000. Another Czech pioneer to Schuyler was Vaclav Maly. He and Dudek arrived in town in 1875. Maly owned a general store. Before his death he had acquired land, livestock, and owned his own home. The business successes of these men enabled them to purchase that most important commodity to Czechs---land.[29]

J. H. and Frank Otradovsky had been druggists in South Dakota before arriving in Schuyler in 1870. Frank built a grocery store and in 1884, a house and barn in North Schuyler at a cost of $1400. He also owned ten acres of land and a town subdivision. Their store remained on the same corner and in the same family until the early 1970's. When J. H. Otradovsky died, he left real estate valued at $2000, a personal estate of $18,000 and one hundred corporate stocks.[30]

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[28]Schuyler Sun, 31 August 1950; Schuyler Centennial, p. 15.

[29]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 139; Schuyler Founders Day, p. 51; Probated Will #1770, 1938.

[30]Plat Book of Colfax County (Minneapolis: Northwest Publishing Company, 1899), p. 7; Probated Will #1307, 1948; Interview with Editha Otradovsky at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 24 July 1975.

Frank Chrastil, a pioneer Czech who arrived in town in 1875, had a furniture store and undertaking business. He died in 1904 leaving to his wife and two children an estate valued at about $7000 plus two city lots.[31] The other furniture and undertaking establishment in Schuyler in the early 1900's was owned by a Czech, Votava, along with his partner, Kolm. Although no estimate can be made of their dollar-worth, both men did own homes and businesses as well as farm land.[32]

A relatively successful tailor in Schuyler was Joseph Svoboda, who came to town in the early 1890's. By the early 1900's, he employed five tailors in his shop. He also brought over from Bohemia other tailors he needed to improve his business. Home and land were his major purchases as it was with so many other Czechs. "We lived quite well, did not want for anything. Money was there to invest but Father never did," said Svoboda's daughter.[33] Jan Varejcka was one of Svoboda's tailors, but in 1916 he acquired his own shop. In 1914, Varejcka had saved enough money to buy land and build his home in Northeast Schuyler for about $1000. He was never as successful financially as Svoboda but the family lived comfortably, never in want or poverty.[34]

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[31]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 140; Probated Will #636, 1904.

[32]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 41; Interview with E. J Krejci at his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 4 July 1975.

[33]Interview with Evelyn Krejci at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 4 July 1975.

[34]Interview with John Varejcka at his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 15 July 1975.

Only moderately successful was Anton Langer, who came o Schuyler in 1870 and was the town's first photographer. Later, he established a barber shop. In 1924 Langer died leaving real estate valued at $200 and a cash savings of over $2500.[35] If individuals were grouped into social classes, Langer would probably be placed in the middle class. He was not wealthy, but quiet typical of many other Czechs whose major goal in America was to buy land and own their own home.[36]

Schuyler Czechs included extraordinarily successful businessmen. The Otradovskys belong in this group along with John Prokes, Frank Folda, and Gerald Ehrenberger. John and Clara Prokes arrived in the Schuyler area in 1875 with their three sons, Martin, John, and Frank. By 1890, the parents had accumulated approximately five hundred acres of farm land while sons Martin and John worked together in the butcher shop business and Frank went into partnership with Michael Higgins in the lumber business. When John died in the early 1900's his estate was valued at more than $155,000 and among the two brothers, they had more than 800 acres of prime farm land.[37]

Frank Folda, arriving in Schuyler in 1868, acquired land (480 acres in Colfax County and seven sections in Butler

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[35]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 141; Probated Will #1345, 1924.

[36]Stephen Thernstrom in his study of Newburyport, Massachusetts used land acquisition and home ownership to delineate which he called "property mobility."

[37]Ibid; Probated Will #1331, 1908; Interview with Editha Otradovsky.

County), cattle, a grain business, as well as a land business[24] in the early 1870's. In 1887, the Folda Banking House came into existence and served as the foundation of five more Folda banks in Colfax County. Around 1890, Folda established a Czech weekly newspaper called Nova Doba. At the time of his death, he had money, stocks, cattle, horses, farm land, city lots, houses and tenements, other real estate valued at $25,000 and a personal account of $25,000.[38]

A successful second-generation Czech was Gerald Ehrenberger. Born in 1879, he quit school after finishing the sixth grade and went to work as a chore boy at the Abbott Ranch. In 1893, he worked at the Schuyler brickyard, and during three winters with baling crews on the Fonda Ranch. At age sixteen, he took a job as an office errand boy and successively moved up to bookkeeper, grain buyer, secretary-treasurer, vice president, president, and manager of the local mill. He eventually organized his own grain business and at his death in 1975 his holdings included the Golden West Grain Company in Schuyler, elevators in Rogers, farms (both irrigated and dry land) totaling approximately 1,800 acres, rental residences in Schuyler and in rural areas.[39]

Two of the relatively successful businessmen of Czech nationality, Frank Folda and F. H. Svoboda, found time to

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[38]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 141; Probated Will #237.

[39]Schuyler Centennial, p. 46; Interview with Gerald Ehrenberger at his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 27 December 1974.

diversify their interests and add to their prominance and wealth in Schuyler. Both men entered the newspaper business. Journalism was a favorite occupation of the intellectual. The capital outlay was small, and newspapers were supported because many of the Czech newcomers were from the "reading class." Newspapers served both as an aspect and an instrument of culture.[40] Svoboda published the Messenger in 1910. The newspaper consolidated with the Schuyler Sun in 1902 and continues as a weekly publication under Svoboda's grandson.[41]

In assessing the prominence of Czechs in the business community of Schuyler, one must conclude that their coming when the town was in its infancy contributed to their success and influence. Czechs who remained in the cities, found Anglo-Americans already in control, but in Schuyler, Czechs could give the orders, buy the land, own the stores and shops, and provide the services. Few were there before them. The Czech with skills and crafts put them to use supplying what the remaining populace needed to start a thriving, new community. Their numbers alone must have added also to their success and, always, the early availability of land contributed further to their strong position in the community.

After 1890, the tide of Czech immigrants shifted from the artisan and professional to include many more laborers.

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[40]Schuyler Centennial, p. 14; Hansen, Immigrant in American History, p. 137; Capek, Cechs in America, p. 27.

[41]Schuyler Centennial, p. 14.

Jobs were difficult to find in the over-populated cities of the "old country" and so these laborers emigrated where opportunities for employment could be found. Schuyler had settled into a stable-to-moderate growth pattern with Czechs owning or operating 85 to 98 businesses.[42] Before 1880, most immigrants from Bohemia had been artisans or professionals but after that time, with land policies and guild practices being what they were, more and more semi-skilled or unskilled laborers and farmers sought asylum in America.[43] This pattern appeared in the Czech immigrants arriving in Schuyler. From a sample of ninety immigrants arriving between 1900 and 1910, forty-eight were laborers, twenty-three were farmers and nineteen had a profession, art, or skill.[44] From 1910 to 1920, from a sample of 150 Czech immigrants, laborers numbered seventy-four, farmers fifty-two and artisans sixteen.[45]

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[42]It should be noted that Schuyler had three Czech doctors from 1880 through 1920 serving the community. Schuyler Sun, 15 June 1950; Naturalization: Petition and Record, 1890-1920.

[43]Czech immigrants farmer arriving in Schuyler may not have been able to buy land immediately upon arrival, therefore, many worked for farmers at a wage and eventually rented land. Many Czech farmers bided their time and bought out Irish farmers or married into families of Czech farmers and then inherited the land. Čapek, Čechs in America, pp. 76-77; Interview with E. J. Krejci, 4 July 1975.

[44]Naturalization: Petition and Record, 1870-1920.

[45]Ibid.

In Boston and New York immigrants were likely to take their place in the American labor force. While a handful of skilled men could make $3 a day and craftsmen such as masons, blacksmiths, and printers $2, most artisans made no more than $1.50. Most laborers and helpers of skilled men made around $1. A single man, to be sure, needed to spend ilttle more than $4 a week on board and lodging in the early 1900's but a family occupying four rooms would spend $5 or $6 a month in rent alone. Middle-class observers thought $10 a week the minimum for a decent living for a man, his wife, and children. Immigrants in these cities occupied the poorer-paid jobs to a disproportionate extent. They were also concentrated in jobs that were subject to seasonal and other fluctuations.[46] Wages depended upon the number of working days in the normal year and upon the fluctuations in the state of business from one year to the next. White-collar staff sometimes made more than $900 a year, but the majority earned between $100 and $300 a year.[47]

In Schuyler, before 1880, laborers could earn $1 a day and, if single, might have received free board and room from the employer. After 1880, $1 a day remained a fairly standard wage for the common laborer, although less than he could earn in the city. Carpenter apprentices or those engaged in other

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[46]Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 189.

[47]Ibid; Rowland Berthoff, An Unsettled People (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 326-327.

building trades could earn 35 cents an hour or as much as 50 cents an hour after 1880. After 1890, white-collar workers could earn $2 a day and this also included skilled workers in the stores and shops.[48]

After 1890, Schuyler had several enterprises which employed moderately large numbers of laborers. Wells-Nieman Mill at its peak employed as many as 300 laborers. Jonas Chicory factory, the local brewery, lumber yards, brickyards, and various building trades were all looking for workers. Pay was approximately $1 a day in all these enterprises before 1890, and $1.50 to $2 a day after 1900.[49]

Farmers were always looking for help and Irish farmers in the area especially sought out Bohemian laborers. Many Czechs came to America with a good working knowledge of farming methods, and the Irish appreciated the hard-working and reliable Bohemian hands. "There wasn't a single farm hand we employed of Czech descent that didn't go on to own his own farm. Many eventually bought out the Irish farmers they had previously worked for," related E. J. Krejci.[50]

Another longtime Czech resident of Colfax County also

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[48]White-collar wages in Schuyler were usually slightly less than was the pay for comparable jobs in the cities. Interview with E. J. Krejci; Interview with John Varejcka.

[49]Schuyler Centennial, pp. 14-18; Schuyler Founders Day, pp. 10-13; Interview with Mary Vybrial at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 12 July 1975.

[50]Interview with E. J. Krejci.

said the nature of the "fun-loving" Irishman and the "hard working Czech" led many Irish farmers eventually to sell out to the more persistent Czechs.[51] Other Czech farm laborers rented from gentlemen-farmers such as Folda and Prokes. These businessmen would provide residences for the Czechs who managed their farms. Still other Bohemians rented 40, 60, or 80 acres and received a percentage of the yearly crops as pay.[52]

Czech laborers arriving in Schuyler after 1890 made up a sizeble percentage of the lower class, if only because there were more of them than any other ethnic group in town. If a Czech arrived in Schuyler as a single man, chances were that his family in Bohemia had financed his trip to America. His job was, first and foremost, to work and save in order to bring other family members to America. If a man arrived from Bohemia with his family, the burden of providing housing and finding a job was very much his concern. When he arrived in Schuyler, his savings may have been depleted, but if he already had relatives in the area, as many did, the period of adjustment was not quite so difficult. In the business community, language was not a great barrier to finding a job as it might have been in other areas. However, chances for success or even moderate advancement were fairly slim.

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[51]Interview with Charles Novotny at the Clarkson Museum, Clarkson, Nebraska, 2 July 1975.

[52]Interview with Martin Kral at his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 15 July 1975.

Wages were simply not adequate to afford the laborer many opportunities. Some relief came in the fact, however, that many Czech wives went to work as domestics, and children were also sent into the labor market, to work at any job they could find.[53]

Some mention should probably be made about child labor and its value to the Czech economic story. Legal abolition of industrial child labor progressively removed children from almost all sectors of the productive economy. In 1900 a quarter of all boys between ten and fifteen and a tenth of the girls of the same age worked for wages in the United States. By 1920 those fractions had been cut in half. Henceforth, young people would not leave the family to go into the labor market until near the end of adolescence. It was no longer possible to return children to their premodern economic relationship to their families. The modern family simply had little work for them.[54]

Niles Carpenter reported that proportionately more immigrant children in the United States were gainfully employed than was the case with native white children between 1910 and 1920.[55] It stands to reason that children living in

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[53]Čapek, Čechs in America, pp.14-16; Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children, p. 269; Records of Tax Assessment, I, II, III, 1870-1920, Office of the Assessor, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska, Interviews with E. J. Krecji, John Varejcka, Martin Kral.

[54]Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 397.

[55]Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children, pp. 268-269.

the larger cities may have had more opportunity for employment than the children living in small villages and towns. The same situation could have applied to women. However, Czech children and women did work at various menial jobs. The mill provided some work for youth at 50 cents a day in 1900 for clean-up chores, and the farms always hired young people in the summer. Young people could work at the brickyard for 50 cents a day and in the stores and shops for about the same wage after 1900. Some Czech children quit school to go to work when family needs dictated. The trend seemed to be for the older children in the family to work so that by 1910 more and more of the younger children in the family could remain in school and graduate.[56]

Julia Howe quit school to go to work, as did all but one of her brothers. The boys apprenticed in their father's blacksmith shop, and she did domestic work. Many Czech women served as domestics for about 15 cents to 25 cents an hour in the first decade of the twentieth century. If the Czech girl was unmarried, she may have "lived-in" with a family and could earn $15 a month plus board.[57] The Czech immigrant believed that if he could send his children to work, they would eventually acquire the property which was so important to him and the secu-

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[56] Schuyler Centennial, p. 14; Schuyler Founders Day, 25; Interviews with E. J. Krejci, John Varejcka, Julia Howe.

[57] Interview with Julia Howe and Mary Vybrial.

rity he felt went with it.[58]

Although the economic story of the Czech immigrant in Schuyler may not be so different from that of other Czech communities in Nebraska, it does provide some interesting characteristics. In Schuyler many Czechs who arrived before 1890 made up the middle and upper classes. If one looks at an 1890 map of Schuyler and the land immediately bordering the town, Czechs owned ninety percent of the land.[59] Again, the Czech obsession with owning land, no matter how small a plot, cannot be stressed enough. To him land ownership was a sign of success.

Some Czechs were not very popular with their Anglo-American or Irish neighbors when it was discovered that the Czech family went "without" so that father could save money to buy land in town or so that the new barn the Czech built was better than his family dwelling. It was a characteristic other ethnic groups sometimes found peculiar, but it was a typical one among most Czechs.[60] Even if his income reached only $300 to $500 annually in 1900 or 1910, a Czech could save part of that for the eventual security he wanted for his family. Of course, that is not to say all Czech were this frugal or conservative, but many were. Many others, however,

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[58] Ibid; Čapek, Čechs in America, p

[59] Plat Book of Colfax County, p. 7

[60] Smith Americans in the Making, p. 30; Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 138; Capek, Cechs in America, p. 21.

did not rise above the working class level, if the measurement rested solely on annual incomes, but many general laborers by 1920 were at least starting to buy homes. In a sample of fifty-eight Czech laborers of 1920, forty-three were in the process of building their own homes by 1920.[61] As there were no financial disasters nationally at this time and the town was still fairly young, much still needed to be done and jobs were available. The chance for economic advancement was still available to the Czech arrivals after 1900.[62]

A knowledge of English was both a prerequisite for immigrant advancement and a consequence of upward mobility. The first process of cultural assimilation or acculturation was likely to be the "taking on of the English language and American behavioral patterns," even while the creation of the immigrant colonies sealed off their members from extensive primary contacts with the "core society." It would appear from all indications, however, that the "core society" in Schuyler was heavily Czech. For many in various occupations, it was not demanded of them to learn the English language. They acquired it, not out of pressure, but as a matter of wanting to be Americanized. Many, of course, refused, but

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[61] Plat Book of Colfax County, pp. 7-10; Tax Records, III, 1910; Permits to Build, I, III, Office of the City Clerk, City Hall, Schuyler, Nebraska.

[62] Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 391; Schuyler Centennial, . 21.

the businessmen did take the first step in the acculturation process by learning the English language.[63]

Before general conclusions can be drawn, facets of the assimilation process must be examined, in educational and religious systems, family and social life, and politics. The succeeding chapters will examine these facets.

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[63]In other words, the Czech businessman's experience in Schuyler was typical of that of immigrant businessmen generally. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 35; Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 259.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION AND RELIGION

Education has always been dear to the Czechs and they are proud to be called the "Nation of Comenius." Jan Amos Komensky (also called Comenius) published many books in the 1600's which won him the plaudits of scholars throughout Europe. He helped to inspire, through his writings and his example, a "fine school system" in Bohemia and Moravia after 1860. The Comenius ideal of a universal education for everyone inspired Czech immigrants to establish schools in the United States. Education was a passion, not only in the old country but also among Czechs in America. Illiteracy was practically non-existent among the Czech people after 1870. Among 17,662 Czechs admitted to the United States in the years 1911-1912, the rate of illiteracy was only about 1.1 percent.[1]

Often the great heroes of a nation are soldiers. This is not true of Czechoslovakia; her national heroes have been scholars and musicians.[2]

Many Americans mistakenly assumed that ethnic groups

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[1]Czechs, for example, had the lowest rate of illiteracy of any people inhabiting the Hapsbury Monarchy, including Germans. Panorama: A Historical Review of Czechs and Slovaks in the United States of America (Cicero, Illinois: Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1970), p. 9.

[2]Robert H. Vickers, History of Bohemia (Chicago: Charles Sergel Company, 1894), pp. 665-656.

living in close proximity to each other reproduced homeland surroundings and perpetuated isolated group life; that is through churches and schools, immigrants would maintain the speech, the ideals, and to some extent the manner of life of the mother country.[3] Actually we find that to a great extent the school, and to a lesser extent the church, represented an important step away from old world patterns especially for second, third, and fourth generation Czechs.

The process of Americanization began in the primary grades of the public schools and was completed in adult life. Often, Czechs, like other foreign-born parents, complained of the rapid denationalization of their offspring.[4]

Mrs. Julia Howe recalled how her father became furious if his children spoke English at home. "Everyone speaks Bohemian here," he would say.[5] It was by no means unusual for such parents, in order to give their children a working foundation in their vernacular, to make it a practice to converse with them at home in their native tongue, to the exclusion of English. As a result, school teachers were often incredulous that a particular child had been born in America

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[3]Herbert S. Nelli, The Italians in Chicago; 1880-1930 (New York: Oxford Press, 1970), p. 156.

[4]Thomas Čapek, The Čechs in America (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1933; rep. ed., 1969), Chapter XVI: Robert I. Kutak, The Story of a Bohemian-American Village (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1922; rep. ed., 1971), pp. 56-61.

[5]Interview with Julia Howe at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, July 1975.

and brought no knowledge of the English language to the classroom. Čapek related the story of a Czech boy in New York in the 1890's who knew but a few words of English, and those he pronounced like a foreigner. Having been taken on a visit to his grandparents in California where there were no Czechs, the boy later told his grandfather how stupid his playmates were; they could not speak Czech.[6]

It has often been observed that while the first child of foreign-born parents speaks the mother tongue of the parents passably, the youngest child speaks it poorly or not at all. When the first offspring came, the parents in all probability were still monolingual, knowing no other language except their own tongue. Meantime as the other children began arriving, the parents already had acquired a speaking knowledge of English; that is to say, they had become bilingual. In consequence, the later-born children, no longer needing the "other" language in their intercourse with parents or older kin, never learned it.[7]

The language factor represented a fundamental break between the parent and child, which continually widened as the child grew older. The forces which the dominant society exerted upon ethnic groups were exerted primarily upon the child, so that he, rather than the parent, became the transmitting agent of social change.[8]

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[6]Čapek, Čechs in America, p

[7]Ibid.

[8]Sallie TeSelle, The Rediscovery of Ethnicity (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 101.

These explanations did not totally fit the Czech experience. The typical Czech mother stayed close to home and never learned English; the father learned it only through the demands of business, and the children learned English in school. In the home, Czech remained the only language for the first and second generations. Parental pressure to preserve the Czech tongue notwithstanding, the moment the child crossed the threshold of the schoolhouse, the question of his future language loyalty was settled: it was English.[9]

> With . . . members of the family, he will talk Czech because he has found out that father, mother, or grandmother knows no other language. Let the child, however, sense a speaking knowledge of English in anyone, that person will ever afterward be addressed by him in English.[10]

The educational system of Schuyler dated from a log schoolhouse built in 1859. When Schuyler was platted ten years later, the log school gave way to a two-room frame building in town. Surrounding Schuyler, country schools were quite common and remain so. Marie Herbrich, educated in Bohemia in the 1890's walked to a country school three miles from her sister's farm home. "I went to learn English. I was really anxious to learn to read and spell. I learned two hundred words the first day as I walked back to the farm." Her teacher was Charles Severyn, a Czech who spoke to her in

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[9]Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 103.

[10]Ibid.

native tongue until she began to learn English.[11]

Julia Novotny started to school with other members of her family at the age of four in 1899. "I didn't learn much at first. I couldn't speak English, either, but I just wanted to be going somewhere and it gave Mother time to do her work with all of us away," she recalled.[12]

Julia Howe could not speak English when she started to school. "The teachers couldn't understand us but we learned fast. Besides, the North Ward, where I went, was all Czechs.' Schuyler also had East and West Ward schools. According to Mrs. Howe, other nationalities, such as German, Irish, and Anglo-American, went to these wards.[13]

Bohemian children were active in school programs and athletics and were given awards for perfect attendance and scholarship. April 30, 1896, Bohemian children gave all but two of the forty-eight spoken "pieces" on the program at School District Forty-Seven.[14] At the commencement exercises on May 28, 1896, Czechs delivered the seven graduation speeches.[15]

With a total of thirty-four students enrolled in School District Twenty-Eight, eighteen Bohemian children were on the

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[11]Interview with Marie Herbrich at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 14 July 1975.

[12]Interview with Julia Novotny, Senior Citizens Home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 18 July 1975.

[13]Interview with Julia Howe.

[14]Quill (Schuyler, Nebraska), 3 May 1896.

[15]Ibid, 30 May 1896.

January, 1889 honor roll. An October, 1895 honor roll for no absences, no tardies and above average grades included thirty-three Czech names of first through fifth graders. Although no accurate count can be made of the total number of students enrolled, it can be estimated that about sixty-five Czechs were in these grades at North Ward.[16]

Education was not confined to the curriculum of the public school for Czech children. Statistics do not reveal efforts to perpetuate the Czech language and history. In 1887, a Boehmian school was established in Schuyler by the Literary and Dramatic Society "Tyl" and "Západní Jednota" Number Forty-two of the Western Bohemian Fraternal Association. Joseph Zerzan, Joseph Kubic, Vaclav Maly, and Joseph Smathlan took turns teaching the early classes.[17]

School authorities granted free use of Public School facilities for classes until the Sokol Hall was built and could be used. The teacher of the class in 1898 was Antony Donato. A Schuyler High School graduate in 1897, Donato was

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[16]The only enrollment lists available are those of high school graduates from 1889 until 1932. The names appearing are not inclusive and do not allow for those students who did not finish high school and graduate nor those that did not respond to the questionnaire sent out to complie the graduate directory. Of the total number of 453, Czech graduates numbered 188. Graduates, Schuyler High School (1889-1932) (Schuyler Sun, 1933), pp. 3-19; Quill (Schuyler, Nebraska), 12 January 1889; Schuyler Sun, 5 October 1895.

[17]Schuyler Centennial (Schuyler Sun, 1970), p. 1[illegible]

a singer, actor, and a violinist. "We loved to go. It was great," said Mrs. Howe. "We learned history and the language perfectly. Then we sang Czech songs and at the end of the summer school, we had a pageant or play."[18]

The Bohemian school was opened for six weeks in the summer for Czech children with classes arranged on a beginner and advanced basis. The school was established for the expressed purpose of perpetuating the Czech heritage in the areas of language, music, poetry, and history. Czech parents did not hesitate to send their children to the public schools but neither were they hesitant in demanding their children also go to the Bohemian school.[19]

Looking back to the first two decades of the twentieth century, one long-term Schuyler Czech resident recalled sending his children to Czech school. "My children liked to go to Bohemian school. We talked only Bohemian at home but they learned it in class, too. They also had a program with poems, songs, and recitations."[20]

It is not unusual for children to resist school, but Czech children also had to give up part of their summer for instructional purposes. John Varejcka recalled a visit to his brother's home one summer. His mother sent word that it was

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[18]Interview with Julia Howe.

[19]Interview with John Varejcka.

[20]Interview with Martin Kral at his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 15 July 1975.

time for him to come home because Bohemian school was going to start the next Monday. "How he cried when he had to go off to school. But he still liked it, I think," recalled Mame Varejcka.[21] The teacher apparently was another reason why he cried when he had to go to school. "He was quite a taskmaster. His discipline was very strict and we never got away with anything," he said.[22]

The Bohemian school was temporarily halted in 1889, presumably because a qualified teacher could not be employed, but resumed in 1892 with L. Fufs as the teacher. During World War I there was no school but it reconvened in 1920 with Rudolph Kohlicek Hartward from Chicago as the teacher of a class of twenty-one children.[23]

Czech parents sent their children to the public school knowing that it was inevitable that they would learn the English language. For many the Bohemian school offered protection against the total loss of their native language and culture. A few, however, did send their children to school specifically to learn English. "Learn to speak English so you can talk to all people, not just Czech," said the sister of Marie Herbrich.[24] Mary Vybrial received the same advice

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[21]Interview with Mame Varejcka at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 18 July 1975.

[22]Interview with John Varejcka

[23]The Bohemian school was closed during World War I because no teacher could be hired. Nebraska Czech Music Center: Schuyler (Schuyler Sun, 1964), p. 15.

[24]Interview with Marie Herbrich.

from her mother in the early 1900's.[25] It is clear that the process of acculturation began with the second and third-generation Czechs when they started to school. Obviously an immigrant able to speak English is clearly more assimilated than the immigrant who has only his native language.[26]

It is very difficult to calculate accurately the number of second, third, or fourth-generation Czechs in Schuyler who secured a higher education, for adequate records are lacking. Regardless, it is fairly safe to conclude from the people interviewed that most valued a college education. Czech fathers did not want their children to have to work as hard as they had to work. College would provide Bohemian children with a better living, as it would others.[27]

Of the 188 Czech high school graduates between 1890 and 1920, listed in the 1932 directory, one hundred and five were women while the remaining eighty-three were men. Of the 105 women who graduated only forty-three remained in Schuyler while fifty-nine of the male graduates remained.[28]

It appears some second-generation Czechs did continue with their education. Of the same 188 graduates, seven were

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[25]Interview with Mary Vybrial at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 14 July 1975.

[26]Stanley Lieberson, Ethnic Patterns in American Cities (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 9.

[27]Czechs fathers were no different from many parents in viewing education as a means of advancement.

[28]Graduates, Schuyler High School, pp. 3-19.

teachers; four women with normal training certificates remained in the community; one other taught in Omaha; one taught in Seward, Nebraska while two men, Charles Severyn, taught first in Schuyler rural schools and then in Omaha and Kubik taught mathematics in Washington state. Czech college graduates from Schuyler between 1890 and 1920, included one lawyer, one professor of biology, three registered nurses, three druggists, two accountants, and four doctors. The doctors included two general practitioners, one surgeon, and an obstetrican and gynecologist, all practicing away from Schuyler. The nurses all returned to Schuyler as did one druggist and one accountant. One Czech graduate became a reporter for the Omaha Bee but it is not known whether he had any college journalistic training.[29]

Like the young people of other nationalities living in small towns, many Bohemian young people chose not to return to Schuyler after college because job opportunities were not available. Czech women graduates also seemed to follow in the same paths as non-Czech women; the majority became wives or worked in offices and banks as stenographers or became nurses and teachers.[30]

If Bohemian young people did not finish school, often it was for economic reasons. "I had to quit school and get a job," related Mrs. Howe. "Father said we could not waste

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

time sitting at a desk when we could be out earning money."[31] Ironically, Mrs. Howe's father and her brother, Gerald, who also quit school in the first decade of the twentieth century, both served on the Schuyler School Board.[32]

Schuyler, although heavily Catholic, had no parochial school so all children were educated in the public school system and through the summer Bohemian school. However, the Sisters of Notre Dame in the early 1900's taught religious vacation summer school in Schuyler in addition to catechetical classes. Besides religion, the Sisters taught music, art, and the Czech language.[33] The absence of a parochial school could have speeded the acculturation process except for the Czech language being used by the Sisters in their dealings with Bohemian children.[34] The public school speeded acculturation of Czech children while the Czech summer school and the classes taught by the Sisters tried to prevent it. Thus education served as a strong means of acculturation.

After Bohemia lost its independence at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, Protestantism, the religion of a majority of Czechs, was proscribed. The religious ideals of John Huss and the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren had been very strong, especially in the country districts. Because the

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[31]Interview with Julia Howe.

[32]Refer to Chapter IV for a discussion of the composition of the Schuyler School Board and Czech representation. Ibid.

[33]Vladimir Kucera, Czechs and Nebraska (Ord, Nebraska: Quiz Graphic Arts, Incorporated, 1969), p. 182.

[34]Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, pp. 197-198.

Protestant majority has opposed the counter Reformation and rebelled against the Hapsburgs, the church after 1620 did all within its power to stamp out the heresy which had arisen some two centuries before. The Bohemians were required to belong to the Catholic Church, which sought at all times to promote the welfare of the Hapsburg kings.[35]

For some two centuries or more, Czech people lived under the oppressive rule of Church and State. When feelings of nationalism swept over Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century there awakened in the minds of many Czech patriots a desire to secure political independence for Bohemia. The Catholic Church joined the Hapsburg regime in opposing the movement towards autonomy. Given the close association of Church and State, the Czech struggle for political autonomy and civil liberties took on marked anti-clerical tones. As a result, many who emigrated from Bohemia to other parts of the world during the century withdrew from the Catholic Church, and many did not ally themselves with any of the Protestant faiths.[36]

Criticism has been raised against Czech immigrants in America on the grounds that they were non-religious. However, their opposition to the Church had been based largely on political rather than on religious grounds. They have contended that the Church should concern itself only with God, and they

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[35]J. F. Bradley, Czechoslovakia (Edinburg: University Press, 1971), pp. 13-15.

[36]Kutak, Bohemian-American Village, pp. 88-90.

have held tenaciously to the belief that men should be free to think as they please. A strong desire to hold to what the Czech considered to be the truth has characterized his attitude toward religion.[37]

The Czechs, in general, were not atheistic or anti-religious, but many of them, especially Freethinkers, were opposed to the form in which religion was offered to them. Their bitter experience in Bohemia had taught them the necessity of the separation of Church and State, and they were eager to help solve the problem of the proper place of the Church in the life of the community.[38]

Out of the problems with the Church there arose in the old country a group of highly articulate militants, far more numerous than all of the Protestant sects combined. By the nineteenth century, they were known as Liberals, after having first been called Freethinkers. Rose Rosicky explained that generally these Czech Liberals divided into two groups: "negativists, the milder type, and radicals, with a pronounced anti-Catholic tendency."[39]

The latter group was the concern of the Catholic Church in Nebraska. The Church felt that the Czechs' high veneration

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Čapek, Čechs in America, pp. 101-105.

[39] Czech-Americans referred to Freethinkers as Liberals. Both Capek and Rosicky were strong partisans of the Freethinkers as opposed to the Czech Catholic cause. Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, p. 279.

of John Huss' spirit of independence and rebelliousness more than his theological ideas was a definite problem. Free-thinkers were a substantial part of the Bohemian immigration to America between 1870 and 1890. For years they nursed deep resentment against all things Catholic and anything German.[40]

The Catholic Church in Nebraska called the Liberals' thinking "at best pantheistic and at worst atheistic." The Church felt the Liberals tolerated no concept of religion other than a naturalistic culture with its components of humanitarianism and Czech nationalism.[41]

Henry Casper explained that priests who had any contact with pioneer Czech settlements caught almost in a "glance the perils facing the faithful." Besides enjoying next to a complete monopoly of the Czech press in the country, the Liberals organized their lodges and sokols with results that were "highly destructive to the religious faith of untutored peasants."[42] Of the Boehmian Slavic Benevolent Society and

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[40]There was no way to determine the exact number of Freethinkers or Liberals in Schuyler because they were not organized into any definite group. Freethinkers were numerous in Saline County but a relatively small number in Colfax County. There are, however, some sign of anti-German feelings remaining among Czechs even today. If resentment against anything Catholic was a valid claim, the number of Czechs belonging to the Catholic churches might dispel that claim. That does not say liberal thinking was not present among Schuyler Czechs; it was. Henry W. Casper, History of the Catholic Church in Nebraska (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1969), p. 103.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

the Western Bohemian Fraternal Association, a Czech authority wrote in the early 1900's"

> These organizations are chiefly responsible for the loss of faith amongst many Bohemians of this country, having enticed thousands of well-meaning people to join its ranks under the pretext of strict neutrality in religious matters. By association with Freethinkers and under other evil influences, thousands grew lukewarm in the performance of their religious duties and finally lost their faith entirely.[43]

Despite the sentiments of the Czech Liberals and their attitude toward the Church, many Catholics in Schuyler did not abandon the Church. After the Czechs arrived in America, settled into their homes and occupations, thoughts turned to erecting churches. Most of the churches in the Schuyler area were built in the decade following 1875. Perhaps the upward trend of business accounted in part for the building of churches at this time. But the increase in population must also be taken into consideration as a factor encouraging church membership and construction.[44]

Since America is predominantly Protestant, it is safe t say the Catholic immigrants received a less than cordial welcome and assimilated more slowly. Protestant Czechs broke down the barriers in a Protestant community more

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[43]See Chapter III for a discussion of the Bohemian Benevolent Society and the Western Fraternal Association. Joseph Sinkmajer, "Bohemians of the United States," The Catholic Encyclopedia, II, July, 1961, pp. 620-622.

[44]Schuyler Founders Day, p. 37.

readily than the Catholics who persisted in keeping themselves apart.[45]

"New immigrant" arrivals wished to have their own church set in the framework of their own national culture and language. So the newcomers resisted inclusion in regular Catholic "territorial parishes" and clamored to have a priest and congregation of their own language and traditions. The church's response was to set up so-called "national parishes" whose congregation consisted of all persons within an inclusive area from the particular national background and with a priest from the same traditions and language.[46]

Certainly the policy of the Church itself was not to foster national communalism any longer than necessary. In general, the official position of the Church on this question of membership in "national parishes" was clearly to encourage "assimilation into a larger community by lifting all barriers to affiliation with the territorial parish" for those who spoke English.[47]

In the countryside surrounding Schuyler, the Czechs

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[45]Although Smith is speaking of Protestants in general, this may have been the case among Czech Protestants, as well. William Carlson Smith, Americans in the Making (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1970), p. 150.

[46]Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, pp. 197-198.

[47]Thomas J. Harte, "Racial and National Parishes in the United States," The Sociology of the Parish (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1951), pp. 154-157.

organized a number of Catholic parishes as well as a Protestant Church at Maple Creek. In 1873, a group of Bohemian Catholics founded St. Mary's at Wilson, a farming area northwest of Schuyler. The land was donated by Joseph Mrazek, a Czech. Father Antony Sulak, a Bohemian-speaking Jesuit from Omaha and Franciscans from Columbus served the parish until 1875 when it became a mission of St. Mary's Schuyler as it remained in 1975. A Czech priest served the church at the time the present church building was constructed in 1918.[48]

In 1878, two Czechs, John Folda and William Heun, donated the land on which Holy Trinity Catholic Church and a cemetery were to be established north of Schuyler. In 1920, Czechs began saving money to be used in the erection of a parish house and a new brick church.[49]

In Schuyler, Bohemian Catholics did not have their own church until 1914. St. Mary's Catholic Church was organized into a congregation in 1913 by Father Francis Tomanek. Catholics in Schuyler were mainly of two nationalities, Irish and Bohemian. Since the number of Catholics was considered large enough for two congregations, the Bohemians decided to build a church of their own. This gave them the

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[48]The Czech membership remained firm at St. Mary's as witnessed by the 1975 rolls. The trustees, sexton, custodian, and the organist were all Czech. Schuyler Centennial, p. 22.

[49]The Catholics of Holy Trinity raised $50,000 by 1928 to construct the parish house and church. The parish has had eight priests, all Czech. Ibid, p. 21.

opportunity to have the "gospel preached in their language." The organization of St. Mary's in Schuyler provides a good example of the "national parish." In 1914 two Czech women purchased lots for $1100 and donated them to the parish. St. Mary's became known as the "Bohemian Catholic Church." The priests serving the parish were also Czech. One of the most prominent priests to serve in Schuyler was Father John Broz, a poet, essayist, folklorist, anthropologist, and authority on Czech immigration to Nebraska.[50]

As far back as 1790 in the old country, Czech Protestants were allowed to organize the Evangelical Reformed Church in Bohemia and Moravia. It was from these Protestant congregations that the early Czech Protestants emigrated to America to settle Nebraska.[51]

Bethlehem Chapel at Maple Creek is Presbyterian. Many Czechs, discontented with the Catholic Church but unwilling to give up religious ties altogether, leaned toward the Presbyterian Churches because there was no Pope or hierarchy, which Czechs oppose, to dictate to the worshippers. As did many of Czech descent in this area, Maple Creek Presbyterian pioneers worshipped in homes and schools until 1920 when the church cornerstone was laid. The Reverend Anton Svoboda

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[50]Schuyler Centennial, pp. 21-23; Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 209.

[51]Kucera, Czechs and Nebraska, pp. 178-179.

and later the Rev. B.F. Parolek conducted services, baptizing and performing marriage cermonies. With land donated by John Blazek in 1920, the first church building was completed under the leadership of the Rev. Joseph Havlik, with much of the construction done by men of the congregation.[52]

There were apparently no direct conflicts between the various religions the Czechs chose to follow.[53] Still, antagonisms did arise between the Catholic priest and parish members over church control. In the mid and late nineteenth century, the big problem confronting the church dealt with trusteeship. Nebraska church statutes contained no clear-cut provision for the appointment of trustees of church property. Many parishes assumed from a previous 1864 state statute that trustees were to be elected by the entire church membership. In 1881, Bishop James O'Conner directed that any constructing, enlarging, or renovating of any parish building had to be submitted to him for inspection and approval. In Nebraska hostility toward this episcopal control was found in the rural areas, especialky among the Czechs.[54]

The Czech parishioners of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin at Dry Creek, north of Schuyler had undertaken to erect a church structure without consulting the bishop

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[52]Schuyler Centennial, p. 21.

[53]Schuyler Founders Day, p. 37.

[54]Casper, History of the Catholic Church, p. 36.

nor had they taken their priest, the Rev. Francis Pold, into their confidence. Considerable opposition flared when Pold named two lay trustees. Several congregation members contended the right of appointment lay with the people. Father Pold said in no uncertain terms the congregation at Dry Creek was to learn and to recognize authority, first of the statutes in question, and, second, of the bishop himself. Pold left the parish and its members joined Holy Trinity at Heun. While a similar spirit affected Catholics living around Wilson, those living along Maple Creek and at Schuyler were relatively free of it.[55]

Henry Casper felt, for the most part, the trustee problem was rooted in the inability of "untrained minds to grasp the theological thinking behind ecclesiastical problems."[56] However, a more appropriate answer might be the religious dictatorship of the Catholic Church in the "old" country which led many Czechs to leave the church altogether. They felt they as parishoners should hold control over their own church without ouside interference.

Czechs made up between twelve and eighteen percent of the congregations of Schuyler's other four major churches. Statistics of religious affiliation in Schuyler over a period of years are hard to obtain It is only possible to give

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid, p.

fairly accurate figures for the entire county. In 1900 there were 3,139 Catholics and 1,921 Protestants out of a total county population of 11,211. Catholics totalled 4,243 and Protestants numbered 1,490 in 1910 from a total county census figure of 11,610 while in 1920 there were 3,368 Catholics and 2,050 Protestants from a county population of 11,624.[57] Not all of the population is specifically accounted for by the survey. Those who were Christian but revealed no direct affiliations and those too young to be confirmed or counted as members account in part for incompleteness. Others were Liberals or Freethinkers and therefore are not listed. The dominant creed in the county, then, was Catholic, with Presbyterians and Lutherans as the leading Protestant denominations.[58]

At the rural Bethlehem Chapel, Czechs made up almost ninety-two percent of the church membership; in the Presbyterian Church in Schuyler, Czechs constituted a little over sixty percent of the membership between 1915 and 1920. Czechs made up about ninety-five percent of the membership of St. Mary's Catholic Church and at times nearly one hundred percent, but only about sixteen percent of the predominantly Irish

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[57]The accuracy of this survey seems questionable. The increase of 1,104 in the Catholic Church from 1900-1920 seems inaccurate. Possibly different methods of estimating the number of their congregations were used. Schuyler Founders Day, p. 31.

[58]U. S. Bureau of the Census, Report on Religious Bodies, 1900, 1910, 1920, Vol. I. as quoted in Schuyler Founders Day p. 31.

. Augustine's Catholic Church in Schuyler.[59]

Even though many Czechs were members and served various churches diligently, there were others who never participated. Mrs. Novotny talked about her attitude toward religion and the church:

> It is very important to do what is right. Do not do anything that is not right. That was our religion as taught to us by our father. We were baptized Catholic in the early 1900's and remained so in our own way even though we did not go to church. Going to church was not all that important.[60]

. F. Kopecky, a Czech shoemaker in Schuyler for over forty years simply said, "I graduated from the Church. I am not associated with any."[61]

"I was baptized Catholic," stated Marie Herbrich. "My husband wasn't, we were married by a judge and still had a happy life together, even though we didn't go to church."[62]

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[59]St. Augustine's was organized in 1879. The church membership rolls obviously vary from year-to year. No records were available from the Methodist Church in Schuyler because they were destroyed in a fire. The Lutheran Church was predominantely German and had no real involvement with the Czechs. Totals from both the rural Bethlehem Chapel and the Schuyler Presbyterian Church are not completely accurate and are the author's estimates based upon sketchy membership rolls. Presbyterian Church Membership Rolls, Schuyler Presbyterian Church, 1915-1920; Presbyterian Church Membership Rolls, Bethlehem Chapel, 1915-1920; Catholic Registry, St. Mary's Catholic Church, 1915-1920.

[60]Interview with Julia Novotny.

[61]Interview with E. F. Kopecky at his home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 17 July 1975.

[62]Interview with Marie Herbrich

Mrs. Herbrich further discussed her views on the church. "I believe in God but I don't go to church, however, I would never join any other. My daughter joined at the urging of a friend, now all her children go."[63]

Martin Kral and his wife were both baptized Catholic and took religion classes in school in the "old" country. As he said:

> I learned nothing but religion in school. About religion, I don't know. I never go in the church because many times I got beat. It was impossible to accept. As a child we had to go to church and as Catholics, it was kind of mixed up in our minds. So we did not believe what they taught us. We stopped going and we are still alive.[64]

Mrs. Kral also expressed her views by saying: "We don't believe everything is God's. I think that is nature, it isn't because God made it---nobody sees God so how can you believe something you can't even see?"[65]

These views, though interesting, appear more representative of the "old" Czech views Kutak wrote about in Milligan, the views of Liberals or Freethinkers rather than those of the majority of the Czechs in Schuyler. Only some abandoned their faith altogether, while others simply did not attend church but continued to believe in a Supreme Being. Being free to attend religious services, or not, many Czechs chose

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Interview with Martin Kral.

[65] Interview with Mrs. Martin Kral at her home, Schuyler, Nebraska, 15 July 1975.

continue within the confines of the church.

Thomas Čapek tried to explain his people's views on religion when he indicated the primary cause of religious alienation lay deep in Bohemian's past. To contend that any one person, priest or otherwise, was responsible for the movement away from the church was a false assumption. The truth of the matter is that the Czech inclination to dissent, to question and to challenge, is largely inherited from his Hussite forefathers and the legacy of Hapsburg domination. In America, the Czechs could speak, and think freely away from the oppression to which he was subjected in his native land.[66] The organization of Czech congregations did in contrast to public schools help preserve the Czech identity in America.

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[66]Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 56.

CHAPTER III

HOME AND SOCIAL LIFE

As immigrants arrived in the New World and settled into their new lives, they sought to perpetuate as much as possible their European style of life, certainly as much as would enable them to feel secure in the unfamiliar American world. Immigrants' lives were often made more difficult by their being newcomers settling in American communities which were themselves new and changing. In much of the rural Middle West, the first immigrants must have felt alien in so many ways because of their language and their customs that they sought the companionship of their own kind in the varied social activities of their new communities and sought to maintain strong home and family ties.[1]

Although home and family life may not have varied a great deal among the various immigrant groups in small rural communities of Nebraska,[2] Berthoff has suggested the not yet wholly "Americanized" immigrants were more closely united among themselves, perhaps, the more they were cut off from their Euro-

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[1]Taylor, Distant Magnet, pp. 210-212.

[2]See Kutak's account of life in Milligan for further eference. Bohemian-American Village,

pean kin.[3] Old-style families, if they were not repeatedly on the move, set great store by kinship. Each ethnic group can be identified by its native food, habits, lodges and associations, and general life-style. This chapter will try to present a general picture of life in the home, as well as discuss the size of families, tendencies toward intermarrage and then develope a picture of Czech social life outside the confines of the home. Comparisons will not be generally drawn with other ethnic groups.

In the Anglo-American home, the very popularity of the "family reunion" only underscored the opinion that the large family feeling, which characterized certain European peoples, was lacking. The Czechs had reunions every Sunday, a day which was a great family institution. The core family, married children and their children, aunts and uncles, would gather for the day.[4] On holidays, as many as fifty or sixty family members would gather for the feast and companionship of their own kind.[5] These holidays provided just another means for the Czechs to get together. Like Anglo-Americans and some other immigrant groups, Czechs celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas. However, in some homes, Czech Christmas, called

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[3]Bethoff, Unsettled People, pp. 401-402.

[4]Ibid, p. 402; Interview with Mame Jarejcka, Julia Howe, Marie Herbrich.

[5]Berthoff, Unsettle People, p. 402.

St. Nicholas Day, was observed during the second week of December.[6]

The preparation of food was the central activity of the Czech home and the great time-consumer for the women, whether for holidays or everyday. The family members may have dressed in typical American clothes, factory-made or sewn at home to a popular pattern, but cooking and the food remained Czech.[7]

The Czech women, who moved with their families to the small villages of the Middle West pursued a career as housekeeper and mother, similar to the duties of the women in the old country.[8] To supplement the family income, some Czech women provided domestic services to others in the community. Domestic service, also, was a very prevalent occupation among women in Bohemia.[9] Working hours were long for the women, whether they lived in a small town or in city tenements. When the children were all at home, breakfast was served before they got ready for school. Her job also included the care of ducks, geese, and chickens which were raised in the backyard. The cow had to be milked and in the spring and summer, a garden

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[6]Interview with Evelyn Krejci; John Varejcka.

[7]Kutak, Bohemian-American Village, p. 67.

[8]It is difficult to assess, to what extent, if any, the activities of Czech-American women differed from those of other immigrant wives or from native-born Americans. Czech women did play a very important part in the revival of national consciousness and culture in Bohemia and Moravia.

[9]Interview with Mary Vybrial.

would be put in and tended by the woman of the house.[10]

During the course of the week, the Czech women had less leisure time, but they spent it in much the same manner as they had their Sundays. There was less visiting by the entire family but the women would get together in the afternoons to gossip, discuss lodge activities, and their children, and to compare the work done in their gardens. This practice does not appear any different from the practice of the modern-day small town housewife who holds afternoon "coffees." It does indicate, however, that the Czech women, many of whom had come from small closely-knit old country villages, wanted to perpetuate the closeness of that life in the United States. The neighborhoods they resided in were Czech and their gatherings were confined to Czech women, who spoke only Czech.[11]

During the winter months in Schuyler, the Czech women had feather-stripping parties. The feathers were used in the making of quilts or pillows. Most Czech families never gave doweries to their daughters but they did give them feather quilts and pillows.[12] These parties served to maintain the close-knit communal ties among the immigrants while serving a practical purpose at the same time. In essence, the women were reinforcing ethnic ties because their everyday life con-

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[10]Interview with Mrs. John Varejcka.

[11]Interview with Julia Howe; Julia Novotny.

[12]Interview with Mame Varejcka; Mrs. John Varejcka.

tinued to revolve around their Czech families and their Czech neighbors. They needed and preferred the security of a communal life made up of their fellow-immigrants from the homeland.[13]

Berthoff has suggested that by the late nineteenth century "the American of Angle-Saxon origin lacked that large family feeling which characterized certain European peoples."[14] The family's internal structure, the network of interrelations among its various individual members, had often grown quite casual and startlingly loose. But Czech families, like other immigrant groups, retained the intimacy of family life through family activities. The institution of the family was very important to the Czech. Home life had been important in the old country and remained so in the United States. The consciousness of one's ancestry and the influence derived from communication with the oldest member of the family was another indication of the Czech's reluctance to cast off old allegiances.[15]

Czech children, like other immigrant children, were reared under the old world pattern of domestic paternalism. Czech homes were patriarchal and authoritarian. Czech families raised their children under definite sets of rules, but American family life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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[13]Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, pp. 240-242.

[14]Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 400.

[15]Interview with John Varejcka; Evelyn Krejci.

century was changing. Many Czechs, and possibly other immigrants, felt American youths were "spoiled, capricious, and precocious." They attributed their forwardness to a lack of discipline in the home.[16] However, Berthoff indicated, "in a rapidly changing society the relations between parents and children was chancy at best."[17]

One of the reasons for migration from Bohemia and Moravia was the fact that many peasants could not support themselves on the land (especially in southern Bohemia). Large families usually contributed to this poverty. However, in looking at Czech family size in Schuyler, one finds Czech families were not inordinately large. In 1890, using a sampling of sixty-two families, the average family had 3.5 children while in 1920, using a sampling of eighty-five Czech families, 3.4 children was the average size. In comparison, the average size of an Irish family in Schuyler in 1890, from a sampling of twenty-six families, was 4.2 while in 1920, of twenty-four families, the average number of children per family was 3.8.[18]

In the United States, between 1800 and 1875 the annual birthrate had already fallen off more than a third to about 35 births per 1000 population; by 1900 it was below 30; by

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[16]Interview with Martin Kral.

[17]Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 408.

[18]Office of the County Superintendent, School Census, 1890-1920.

1920 at about 25. Accordingly, where four or five children to a family had been typical in 1875, by 1900 there were three or four.[19] Niles Carpenter advanced the thesis that the foreign stock was not increasing any more rapidly than the original American stock, although general opinion held to the opposite point of view.[20]

The most children in any one Schuyler Czech family in the 1890 sample was seven; four families had six; six families had five and seventeen families had four. Nine children was the largest number in a family in 1920 sample while one other family had eight. Again six, five, and four children in a family was common in 1920 but the majority of families had three or less.[21] Perhaps there was not so wide a difference between the size of the families of native and foreign-born as has been widely believed.[22]

Advocates of the notion that the United States is a huge "melting pot" have systematically delineated their views, and the concept does lend itself to any discussion of ethnic history. However, it fails to give clues as to the exact implications of the term as it relates to behavior and the organization of society.[23] Yet certain logical inferences

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[19]Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 406.

[20]Niles Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1932; rep.ed., 1969), pp. 178-184.

[21]School Census, 1890-1920.

[22]Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children, p. 183.

[23]Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, p. 124.

can be made and one feature appears to be a complete mixture of the various stocks through intermarriage---in other words, marital assimilation or amalgamation. If large-scale intermarriage has taken place, then obviously the immigrants must have entered outside social activities to some extent. Thus the process of structural assimilation somehow reflects a blending of native and foreign-born.[24]

Intermarriage is a very reliable index of acculturation. Naturally language barriers and other factors for some time inhibited intermarriage. Yet some immigrants might have lived a segregated life so completely that possible marriage-partners would simply not be met.[25] Early immigrant arrivals married their own kind but intermarriage tended to be more common in the later period. Drachsler's studies on intermarriage indicated that second-generation men and women married outside their group two or three times as often as those of the first generation. In the United States, Czechs had rates of intermarriage ranging from thirty to fifty per cent.[26]

Generally speaking, first and second generation Czechs chose life partners from among their own nationality, but that is not to say mixed marriages did not occasionally

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Merle Curti, The Making of an American Community (Stanford: Standord University Press, 1959), pp. 104-106.

[26] Julius Drachsler, Intermarriage in New York City as quoted in Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 271.

occur. If they did take place, however, the union was with other middle-Europeans, particularly Germans. One reason seems to have been the language. Another reason may have been the availability of that particular nationality. More Czechs could speak German than the other Slavic languages, such as Russian or Polish and Czechs and Germans often settled in the same areas. Therefore, intermarriage with other Slavic people were comparatively rare.[27]

Testing the assumption that Czechs married other Czechs, a sampling of thirty marriages between 1870 and 1875 was taken in Schuyler. Twenty-four of the thirty marriages were between foreign-born Czechs. One partner in each of the remaining six marriages, also, was a foreign-born Czech.[28] Marriages between Czechs continued to follow the same trends from 1880 to 1900 as they had before. In a sampling of 65 marriages from 1880 to 1900, only six had a non-Czech mate. Of the six, four husbands were American, one man listed his place of birth as Scotland and the other England, but four of the six had wives born in Bohemia.[29] This may be somewhat surprising con-

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[27]Czechs and Germans had a similar socio-economic status. Clerk of the District Court, Marriage Register, Vol. I, II, 1870-1920, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

[28]Marriage Register, 1870-1880.

[29]Ibid, 1880-1900.

sidering the trend in the United States favored marriages between native women and foreign-born men more than it did foreign-born women and native men.[30]

After 1900, and until 1920, Czechs continued to marry other Czechs at a ratio of four to one. The only difference from previous marriage statistics was that the homeland of the married couples was listed as the United States instead of Bohemia.[31] The marriage patterns after 1920 seemed to resemble those of the past; however, the youngest children in the family of the first-generation Czechs may have married native Americans. Social contacts were lending themselves to such interrelationships. Czechs who left Schuyler altogether also were more likely to marry outside their own ethnic group.[32]

Czechs tended to look with disapproval on mixed marriages, especially if they were made by their own children. Although there is little evidence of the Czech attitude toward intermarriage of those of different religions, this too, may have caused disapproval. Yet from Schuyler Czechs interviewed, it appeared they looked disapprovingly on mixed marriages, ethnically or into other religious groups.[33]

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[30]Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children, p. 240.

[31]Marriage Register, 1870-1920.

[32]Ibid; Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children, p. 240.

[33]Interviews with John Varejcka; Evelyn Krejci; Martin Kral; Julia Novotny.

In general, the average age at which Czechs married was approximately twenty-seven in 1890, but fell between 1890 and 1920 to about twenty-five for men and from twenty-three to twenty-two for the women. These ages appear to be about the same for that of native-born Americans, as well.[34]

The annual divorce rate in the United States had been miniscule at the middle of the nineteenth century, but steadily rose to 10 per 10,000 populations in 1914 and to about 17 per 10,000 population in 1929. Most couples, of course, stayed together---nineteen out of twenty in 1880; nine out of ten in 1910.[35] The divorce rate among Czechs was also minimal. Among Schuyler Czechs there was apparently only one marriage between 1870 and 1920 in which both partners had been divorced prior to remarriage.[36]

The Czechs remained, for the most part, very conscious of their own identity as a distinct ethnic group up to 1920. Intermarriage was rare, personal contacts remained within the ethnic group at least for the women, in day-to-day contacts. The family continued to function closely within the

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[34]Marriage Register, 1870-1920; Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 402.

[35]Carpenter, Immigrants and Their Children, p. 320; Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 402.

[36]Clerk of the District Court, Divorce Records, 1870-1920, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

realm of ethnic contact. The structural separation was also quite apparent in the outside social activities of the Czechs where they sought the companionship of their own kind within the community of Schuyler.

For the purpose of self-help, the Czechs organized themselves into fraternal benevolent associations which paid a benefit to members in case of illness or death. In addition to benevolent associations, the Czechs formed social interest groups, such as reading societies, dramatic and singing circles and gymnastic associations. Frantisek Sokol-Tuma, a Czech writer who arrived in the United States in 1904 for the purpose of visiting Czechs communities observed:

> The Czechs in America are brought together only for mutual protection . . . necessitated by lack of American social legislation. Above that, they are interested only in social gatherings, concerts, stage plays, but all their activity is not motivated for the national Czech good but is dependent upon personal reasons.[37]

While this observation may be superficial and lacks understanding of American conditions, it also strikes a true note about the Czech immigrants, observed Joseph Svoboda. They were aware of the need for their security on one hand, and they loved social life and group activities on the other.[38]

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[37]Frantisek Sokol-Tůma, Z Čest po Americe as quoted i Svoboda, "Czechs", p. 159.

[38]Svoboda, "Czechs", p. 159.

The organization of benevolent societies and fraternal unions served both as a medium whereby the normal social life of the community found expression and as an escape mechanism which permitted members temporarily to leave their everyday life and institute their own traditions into social activities. This allowed the Czechs to gather with friends, relatives, and countrymen and communicate in the familiar tongue and possibly to seek protection against the uncertainties of a strange and sometimes hostile environment.[39]

One of the best known societies, and the first such Czech organization established in the United States, was the Česko-Slovanský Podporující Spolek (Č.S.P.S.) founded in 1854. This Czecho Slavonic Benevolent Society is the oldest existing fraternal organization among the Czechs in America.[40] The Č.S.P.S. flourished for years. Some Czechs living in the Middle West and West, however, wanted changes. Many were dissatisfied with the relative high cost of benefits being paid to the eastern factory workers. Benefit claims coming from the Middle West and West were less, yet all Czechs continued to share the rising cost. A convention, therefore, was held in Omaha in 1897 and the Western Bohemian Fraternal

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[39]Kutak, Bohemian-American Village, p. 98.

[40]Panorama: Czechs and Slovaks in the United States,

Association came into existence.[41]

The Western Fraternal Association paid sick benefits and insurance much as did the Č.S.P.S. The Association conducted schools, held entertainments, lectures, and gatherings of various kinds in the community. Only persons of Czech extraction were permitted to become members and the Czech language was used exclusively.[42]

The Č.S.P.S. Lodge (Zapadni Jednota Lodge #42) was organized in Schuyler June 1, 1879 with fourteen charter members.[43] In addition to the direct participation of the members in the business of the lodge and the social gathering which followed, the society performed other functions in the community. In the course of a year, the lodge gave dances and masquerade balls to raise money. When the Czech lodge put on a play, it was usually given in the Czech language which helped to preserve the language and the culture of the Czechs in the community.[44]

The Sokol, the Czech patriotic gymnastic association

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[41] Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 256.

[42] Today the name has been changed to the Western Fraternal Life Association and anyone can join just as long as he abides by the rules and pays the premiums. Svoboda "Czechs", p. 170.

[43] Schuyler Centennial, p. 16; Czechs and Nebraska, p.307.

[44] Ibid.

founded in Bohemia in 1862 by Dr. Miroslav Tyrš, with the professed ideal that there must be a vigorous mind in a healthy body, was brought to the United States by Czech immigrants in 1865 and spread rapidly among the Czech-American communities. The Sokol Movement in Czechoslovakia appeared at a time when intellectuals, such as Tyrš, were preparing the people for the revival of Czech nationalism. He saw the Sokol Movement as the first organized step in winning freedom from the Hapsburg crown.[45] This militant attitude, based on democratic principles, was brought to America, where the order grew and prospered. It has been the strongest association among the Czech people in the United States, with local units in nearly every Czech community.[46]

A handful of Czechs organized the first Sokol Lodge in Schuyler on October 11, 1891, although the Sokol Movement had been steadily growing in Nebraska since 1875. The objective of the organization locally was the same as it was elsewhere, to promote gymnastics for both men and women, Czech literature, dramatics, and singing, patriotism, fellowship, and intellectual and cultural improvement.[47]

The various Czech lodges and Sokols were not without their critics, one of the strongest being the Catholic Church.

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[45]"Tyl" is also a literary and dramatic society; Svoboda, "Czechs" p. 170.

[46]Rosicky, Czechs in Nebraska, pp. 353-354: Smith, Americans in the Making, pp. 102, 105.

[47]Schuyler Centennial, p. 17.

According to Henry Casper, Czechs had organized their lodges "with the results that were highly destructive to the religious faith of untutored peasants."[48] The Western Bohemian Fraternal Association had been accused of being an organization atheistic in "spirit and, therefore, propagating atheism amongst its members."[49]

The main objective of the Sokol was to promote gymnastics and to expect high standards in their drill teams. Many honors were brought back to Schuyler from the various tournaments throughout the state. National tournaments, usually held in Chicago, brought together participants from every part of the United States in which Czechs were found.[50]

In 1915, female members of the Sokol in Schuyler attended the annual tournament in Omaha. The six girls participating received recognition and were recipients of a diploma for their excellent athletic world. These girls no longer received the criticism for their athletic costumes and "their immodest actions" as had the girls' gymnatic class of 1892. Czech women were not offended by the Sokol girls who participated in competition,

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[48]This author questions Casper's judgement as being very predjudiced. See chapter two for a further discussion of the Church and Czech organizations. Casper, Catholic Church of Nebraska, p. 103.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Schuyler Centennial, p. 16

but Anglo-American women were shocked, at first, to see the young girls boldly displaying their uncovered legs and participating in what they considered unladylike exercises. But as time progressed, and when the girls began to bring honors home to Schuyler, the attitudes of non-Czechs began to change.[51] The girls provided a source of pride to the Czechs in Schuyler, as did the accomplishments of other Sokol participants in local, state, and national tournaments.

No Czech society considered its activities complete without a ball, annual, semiannual or quarterly. Picnics were as popular; everyone arranged them. The yearning for familiar pleasures, for the company of understanding countrymen, and the feeling of not being alone drew immigrants together in their wide variety of organized social activities.[52]

A number of organizations were devoted exclusively to amateur theater and music. The Czechs love singing and the choral society offered them an opportunity to sing; so long as the professional theater in the United States refused to produce plays by Bohemian playwrights and continued to feature western European playwrights, Czech-American amateurs portrayed on the stage the heroes of their native land.[53]

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[51] Schuyler Sun, 5 September 1915.

[52] The German immigrants in Schuyler organized lodges and societies such as the Friedelic Jaanz Lodge in 1899 and the Mainnerchor Singing Society in 1894. Schuyler Founders Day, p. 55.

[53] Kucera, Czechs and Nebraska, p. 2

The Schuyler Sokol developed an enviable reputation for the excellence of their plays. The casts toured nearby towns and helped to fill the Sokol treasury. The money was used for civic betterment, schools, and to buy land on which to build "their fine new hall that would fully answer training, social, and business needs."[54]

Language plays were a source of pride to the Czech immigrants. They carried with them that pride in the theater and other art forms from the old country. Popular subscription and funds from the wealthier classes built the National Theater of Prague which provided an institutional basis of cultural nationalism in the old country.[55]

Older Czechs in Schuyler preferred the serious patriotic plays that brought back memories of their homeland rather than the English-speaking productions, but younger Schuyler Czechs, born in the United States, liked the lighter comic productions. Rarely, however, did the young and old clash over what was presented. The audience was never harshly critical but tolerant of what was presented and generally very appreciative of the efforts of the young.[56] The Czech drama was one of the most

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[54]Schuyler Centennial, p. 16; Schuyler Herald, 13 November 1904.

[55]Seton-Watson, Czechs and Slovaks, p. 223; Bradley, Czechoslovakia, p. 132.

[56]Interview with Julia Howe; Julia Novotny; Kucera, Czechs and Nebraska, p. 39.

important links the Czech people had with the old country.[57]

The Czech people have always had a love for music, not unlike other ethnic groups. The musical talent of the Czechs found expression in native composers who were a source of pride to all Czechs. Their music was featured when the Czechs gathered for concerts. This love for music was expressed in Schuyler with the formation of several bands and was featured in concerts by Czech musicans. In the tradition of the Hlahol, an outstanding Czech choir formed in Prague in the 1860's, Schuyler Czech men and women belonged to the Lumire Singing Club, a choral society which met once a month in the early 1900's.[58]

Czech women were involved in the dramatic, singing, benevolent, and fraternal societies and associations in Schuyler but in the last third of the nineteenth century a thoroughly new type of voluntary association began to appear among Czech, and non-Czech women; the women's club.[59] The Bohemian Women's Club was organized in January, 1903 by Mrs. ~. Safarik. "The object and purpose of the club was similar o the General Federation of Women's Clubs, taking the broadest view of their social and cultural responsibilities." In

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[57]Kutak, Bohemian-American Village, p. 105.

[58]"Lumir" was a legendary Czech hero. Seton-Watson, Czechs and Slovaks, p. 55; Schuyler Founders Day, p. 55.

[59]Berthoff, Unsettled People, p. 499.

many towns the local women's club took the lead in the cause of civic reform.[60]

The Bohemian Women's Club was a more formal club than the Bohemian Kensington Club which was organized in Schuyler in 1911. Membership in the Women's Club included only those Czech women who were considered to be the social leaders of the community. Husband's of the women were bankers, large store owners, newspaper owners, or other professional men. These women generally had outside help in their homes, and thus had more time to socialize in the afternoon. The Kensington Club was very informal, arising more or less spontaneously out of parties and entertainments given by its members. Kensington Club members came from the more prosperous farms, but did include city women whose husbands were saloon owners, tailors, or lesser business people.[61]

Another informal Czech women's organization was the Bohemian Literary Club. Fifteen ladies from various social backgrounds, rural and town, belonged to this group.[62] The Literary Club and the various dramatic societies in the town were active in promoting Czech schools and a Czech library. When the public library was built in Schuyler in 1908, the Czech books were all donated to the new institution. The Bohemian Literary Club reviewed the writings of Czech poets

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[60] Ibid; Schuyler Sun, 30 January 1903.

[61] Messenger, 20 November 1911; 5 September 1915.

and writers, writings which found their way into the Czech summer schools and Czech homes in the community.[63]

Group conflict, if any, between the Czechs and other national groups in Schuyler is hard to assess. Some first and second generation Czechs apparently felt some animosity toward Germans living in Schuyler. Their attitude and resentment went back to the relationship of the two groups in the old country where the German nobility had once reduced the Czech language to that of peasants and servants. The Czechs resented the superior attitude they felt the Germans displayed toward them. Conflict between Czechs and Germans in Schuyler appeared to be one of silent animosity rather than open hostility. It would appear, however, the Czechs limited their social contacts with other ethnic groups, much as they did their contacts in the home. They remained separate in order to guarantee the continuance of their own ethnic culture and the existence of the ethnic group, itself, without interfering with the requirements of American citizenship. In effect, this demanded keeping the primary group relations confined to the ethnic group and preventing a significant amount of intermarriage and socializing with other native-born people.[64] In essence, it would appear, the Czechs in

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[63]Ibid; 17 March 1916; The author assumes that women of other immigrant groups in Schuyler had their social clubs.

[64]Interview with Julia Howe; Julia Novotny; Mr. and Mrs. J. Krejci.

Schuyler were simply unwilling to assimilate into the general American society. The various social groups helped them to maintain their own language and heritage, but they were organized for the purpose of maintaining Czech ideals in America and of defending the honor of the Czech name. Every one of them performed some good service, helped remove some prejudices which Anglo-Americans might have displayed to foreigners, and brought some knowledge of the Czechs to America.[65]

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[65]Svoboda, "Czechs," p. 1

CHAPTER IV

CITY ELECTIONS IN SCHUYLER

1880-1920

When the first Czech immigrants came to Schuyler in 1868 the town had yet to be incorporated. After the creation of Colfax County in 1869, the first meeting of the county commissioners, appointed by the Governor, was held and the commissioners proceeded to divide the county into three commissioner districts. In August of 1869, the county was divided into Elderad, Shell Creek, Grant, and Schuyler precincts. This division was later supplemented by others and in time twelve precincts were formed. In November, 1869, the commissioners received a petition from inhabitants of Schuyler asking that their settlement be incorporated as a town.[1]

On June 7, 1870 the town of Schuyler incorporated under the provisions of Chapter 53 of the revised statutes of Nebraska (1866). The first meeting of the board of trustees was held June 8, 1870. In July, 1870 the Clarkson Brothers, owners of the town site of Schuyler, donated block 113 for the county buildings. Schuyler was declared a city

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[1]Schuyler Founders Day, pp. 23-24

[2]Ordinances of the City of Schuyler, Vol. I., 1870, Minutes of the City Council, City Clerk, City Hall, Schuyler, Nebraska.

of the second class in 1870 and continued as such until March 26, 1879, but was changed to village status in April, 1880. In April, 1887, under the provisions of Chapter 14 of the compiled statutes of Nebraska (1887), it returned to second class city status.[3]

The first general election was held in Schuyler October 12, 1869 with Charles E. Sumner becoming the first mayor. In 1870, the Board of Trustees began to draw up the ordinances which would govern the town of Schuyler. Ordinance three of the revised ordinances adopted by the Board in 1877 created the town's three wards: South Schuyler, Hoxie's Addition and its continuations east of the center of Montana Street were to be known as Ward One; Court House Square, Clarkson Addition and blocks 113-120 west of the center of Montana Street were Ward Two and the area north of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, including the Dorsey Addition, was designated Ward Three.[4]

On September 12, 1879, the Board passed an ordinance calling for the election of city officers using a law passed by the State Legislature in March, 1879. The state law "provided for the organization, government, and powers of cities and villages and such members of the board of education as assigned by law for the school district of the city." These

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

officers were to be elected by qualified voters in elections held the first Tuesday of April of each year. City officers would include the mayor who was to be paid a per annum salary of $100; six councilmen, two from each ward at a salary of $50 per annum; a city clerk salaried at $150; a city treasurer for $75 per annum; and six board of education members. The board members could run for a long term of two years or a short term of one year.[5]

This chapter will deal with the voting patterns of Schuyler from 1880 to 1919 with emphasis placed on the total average vote and the percentage of the total vote cast by the third ward, which was the principal Czech residential area. Its primary concern will be the number of Czechs running and winning or losing races for the various city officers. Czechs lived in all three wards in the town but constituted a majority only in the third ward. There is no documentary evidence to support that judgment, but interviews conducted by this author and general knowledge of those living in Schuyler placed the Czechs in the third ward. Therefore, voting will be assessed according to that judgment.[6]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Interviews with Jerry Severyn, Julia Howe, Mary Vybrial, Marie Herbrich, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Krejci, Mr. and Mrs. John Varejcka, Mame Varejcka, Julia Novotny. Street addresses were never used in census data or in the registration of voters in Schuyler, making it more difficult to assess accurately where the majority of Czechs resided. Likewise, the town had never had a city directory.

FIGURE I

CZECH AND NON-CZECH CANDIDATES FOR THE OFFICE OF MAYOR-------				PERCENT OF CITY VOTE FOR MAYOR AVERAGE CITY VOTE----WARDS----		
Year	Total	Czech	Non-Czech	Year	Average Vote	Third Ward
1880-1889	20	0	20	1880-1889	410	112(27%)
1890-1899	16	1	15	1890-1899	429	115(27%)
1900-1909	20	0	20	1900-1909	432	116(27%)
1910-1919	21	4	17	1910-1919	402	110(27%)

Between 1880 and 1889, twenty candidates ran for the office of mayor but none were Czech. From 1890 until 1899, (Figure I), only one Czech filed and ran for the office. In 1896, E. F. Folda was defeated by a vote of 235 to 156, receiving forty percent of the count. Although he carried the third ward by five votes, he lost the first and second wards. Sixteen candidates filed for the office of mayor between 1890 and 1899. From 1890 until 1899, the average number of votes cast for candidates for mayor was 429, with the third ward casting twenty-seven percent of the total vote.[7]

No Czechs ran for mayor of Schuyler between 1900 and 1909, although the third ward cast twenty-seven percent of the total vote. From 1910 until 1919 four Czechs ran for the office. In 1912, Thomas Wacha won seventy percent of the third

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[7]City Council Minutes, 1880-1890.

ward vote but lost the election by ten votes to J. C. Woodward. John Dudek, a Czech Democrat, won sixty-eight percent of the total vote in 1919 to defeat L. Michaelson, but lost his bid for re-election in 1920 when he received only thirty-one percent of the total vote. Dudek carried the third ward in both elections by fifty-six and fifty-two percent, respectively. He was a resident of the first ward but failed to carry that ward in his 1920 loss.[8]

FIGURE II

CZECH AND NON-CZECH CANDIDATES FOR THE OFFICE OF CITY CLERK--			PERCENT OF CITY VOTE FOR CLERK AVERAGE CITY VOTE----WARDS----		
Year	Total	Non-Czech	Year	Average Vote	Third Ward
1880-1889	20	17	1880-1889	381	98(26%)
1890-1899		12	1890-1899	403	102(25%)
1900-1909		12	1900-1909	410	116(28%)
1910-1919		13	1910-1919	397	109(27%)

Three Czechs and seventeen non-Czechs (Figure II) ran for the office of city clerk between 1880 and 1889 but no Czech was elected. The third ward, over that period, cast twenty-six percent of the total vote. Three Czechs and twelve non-Czechs filed for the office between 1890 and 1899. During

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[8] Ibid. By 1900, Schuyler had a population 2157 with an estimated Czech population of 1072. Ward One had a population of 827, Ward Two, 698, and Ward Three had 632.

that period, the third ward provided twenty-five percent of the total vote, while making up about thirty-three percent of the total population of Schuyler.[9]

Between 1900 and 1909, nine Czechs and twelve non-Czechs ran for Clerk. Czechs held that office in 1902, 1904, 1905, 1908, and 1909. The third ward accounted for twenty-eight percent of the total vote for City Clerk over this ten-year period, about twenty-nine percent of the total population. Twenty-one men ran for Clerk from 1910 until 1919, thirteen were non-Czech and eight were Czech. The third ward provided twenty-seven percent of the total vote count, averaging 116 votes during this period. Four Czechs ran unsuccessfully for the position in 1913, 1914, 1915, and 1917. In those elections, three carried the third ward and one lost it.[10]

Between 1890 and 1899, four Czechs sought the position of City Treasurer (Figure III) with one being elected by a total of fifty-one percent of the vote and fifty-six percent in the third ward. From 1900 until 1909, four Czechs filed for Treasurer but only one was successful. John Gaeth was first elected to the City Treasurer's office in 1909 and held that position until he was defeated by another Czech in 1916. Gaeth consistently won the third ward until his defeat, when

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[9]City Council Minutes, 1890-1900.

[10]Ibid., 1900-1920.

Maly won the third ward by sixty-two percent and overall by fifty-eight percent. The third ward had supported Gaeth by sixty percent in 1914 and fifty-nine percent in 1915.[11]

FIGURE III

CZECH AND NON-CZECH CANDIDATES FOR THE OFFICE OF CITY TREASURER

Year	Total	Czech	Non-Czech
1880-1889	20	0	20
1890-1899			13
1900-1909			17
1910-1919			10

PERCENT OF CITY VOTE FOR CITY TREASURER-AVERAGE CITY VOTE--THIRD WARD----------

Year	Average Vote	Third Ward
1880-1889	406	112(28%)
1890-1899	426	100(23%)
1900-1909	412	117(28%)
1910-1919	413	113(27%)

Czechs did not run for Treasurer again until 1919 when . . W. Shonka won sixty-one percent of the total vote. Between 1910 and 1919, the third ward averaged twenty-seven percent of the total vote for City Treasurer.[12]

City Councilmen, according to the election ordinance of 1879, were to be elected for either one-year short terms or two-year long terms, with two men elected to represent each ward on a partisan political basis. Between 1880 and 1889, nine Czechs ran for the Council and forty-one non-Czechs (Figure IV). In every April city election, six names appeared

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[11] Ibid, 1890-1920.

[12] Ibid.

the ballot for Council positions with three men elected.[1]

FIGURE IV

CZECH AND NON-CZECH CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE OF CITY COUNCILMEN				PERCENT OF CITY VOTE FOR CITY COUNCILMEN-AVERAGE CITY VOTE-THIRD WARD----------		
Year	Total	Czech	Non-Czech	Year	Average Vote	Third Ward
1880-1889	50		41	1880-1889	430	116(27%)
1890-1899				1890-1899	423	103(24%)
1900-1909				1900-1909	434	119(27%)
1910-1919			56	1910-1919	439	118(27%)

From 1900 to 1909, the third ward averaged about twenty-four percent of the total vote for Councilmen while comprising about twenty-nine percent of the total population of Schuyler. During the ten-year period, a total of fifty-eight men filed for the Council of which sixteen were Czech. From 1900 until 1909 more Czechs were elected to the Council than at any other time between 1880 and 1919. Their representation was not limited to the third ward with its Czech majority but came from the other two wards as well. One explanation for this may come from the process of voluntary acculturation of Czech males into the total community and another from the population figures of Schuyler between 1900 and 1909. Approximately, fifty percent of the population was of Czech origin. Fifteen Czechs filed for the

Council from 1910 to 1919; ten were elected. While the representation on the Council did not decrease drastically during this ten-year period, the percentage of Czech population in Schuyler decreased from about fifty percent to forty-three percent.[14]

The City Council of 1920 had Czech representatives from all three wards; Anton Pesek, a Republican from Ward One, Anton Kopac, Republican, from Ward Two, and Frank Bures, a Democrat, from Ward Three. Although the Czechs made up about forty-three percent of the total population of Schuyler, fifty percent of the Council was Czech. Yet as in the previous ten years, the third ward averaged only about twenty-seven percent of the total vote.[15]

The last elective office included in the 1879 ordinance was Board of Education members, elected until 1920, for one and two-year terms on a partisan basis. Before 1890 (Figure V), five Czechs filled for the board; however, none were elected. From 1890 until 1899, eight Czechs ran from a total of thirty candidates. In other city elections, the average voting percentage of the third ward fluctuated between twenty-four and twenty-nine percent from 1890 until 1919 and the Board elections were no different. The third ward averaged between 203 and 222 votes, while the other two wards

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[14]City Council Minutes, 1900-1910: School Census, 1900.

[15]City Council Minutes, 1910-1920.

averaged between 750 and 891 votes. Board candidates averaged almost twice as many votes in the first and second wards than for any other office in city elections. One possible explanation may be that Board members ran at-large from the entire city instead of being limited to representation in one ward.[16]

FIGURE V

CZECH AND NON-CZECH CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE OF SCHOOL BOARD----

Year	Total	Czech	Non-Czech
1880-1889	32	-	27
1890-1899			
1900-1909			
1910-1919			26

PERCENT OF CITY VOTE FOR SCHOOL BOARD-AVERAGE CITY VOTE-THIRD WARD----------

Year	Average Vote	Third Ward
1880-1889	761	218(29%)
1890-1899	891	222(25%)
1900-1909	759	212(28%)
1910-1919	750	203(27%)

Thirty-six candidates, including ten Czechs, filed for Board seats between 1900 and 1909. Over this ten-year period, the third ward consistently supported Czech candidates. Czechs ran for the Board in every election between 1910 and 1919 except two (1911 and 1913) and were elected in every race but 1912 and 1916. In each of the lost elections, the candidates carried the third ward but lost either the first or second or both.[17]

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[16] Ibid, 1880-1920.

[17] Ibid.

Seventeen Czechs filed for Board of Education seats between 1910 and 1919 as compared to twenty-six non-Czech candidates. Czechs made up fifty percent of the school board in 1907, 1910, 1918, and 1920, with representation being city wide.[18]

Although no detailed analysis of Czech political affiliations is available, one can conclude from a variety of Czech-American writers that the "urban" communities sided more often with the Democrats and that the rural regions were more receptive to the Republicans. However, these writers do conclude that Czech immigrants in rural Nebraska may have preferred the Democratic Party because "it was the minority party and the Czechs believed that it stood for the rights of the common people as opposed to wealth and privilege they associated with the Republicans."[19]

In an analysis of party affiliations and voter preferences in the third ward of Schuyler, it appears the party preference was Democratic. In the races for City Clerk from 1880 until 1920, the third ward supported the Republican candidates only twenty-one percent of the time, voting for eight of thirty-eight candidates. In the same forty-year period in the elec-

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Svoboda, "Czechs", p. 145; Kucera, Czechs and Nebraska, p. 24; Čapek, Čechs in America, p. 52.

tions for City Treasurer, the third ward supported the Republican candidates seven percent of the time, voting for only three of the thirty-nine Republican candidates. Every Czech who ran for the office of Treasurer was a Democrat. The third ward elected six Republicans for the School Board from 1880 until 1919 supporting the Republican candidates only twelve percent of the time and Republican City Council candidates only ten percent of the time. The third ward would support a Czech or non-Czech Democrat more readily than a Czech or non-Czech Republican.[20]

The races for mayor were completely different in results than the races for other city offices. The third ward consistently supported the Republican candidates and not the Democrats when the candidates were non-Czechs. Only four Czechs ran for mayor between 1880 and 1920; one was Republican and the other three were Democrats. The third ward supported the Czech Democrats but failed to lend support to the Czech Republican.[21]

It is difficult to assess the reason Czechs did not seek the Mayor's office. Perhaps, Czech candidates felt they could not gain strong support from all three wards because to be elected support had to come from at least two and preferably all three wards. Only after 1921, when Czechs no longer con-

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[20]City Council Minutes, 1880-1920.

[21]Ibid.

fined their residence primarily to one ward and had served the community in other elected city offices over a number of years, did Czechs begin to win the office of mayor.[22]

In 1895, 1901, and 1903, candidates running for Board of Education and City Treasurer offices listed their party affiliation as Populist. Henry Bolton and John Cook, the Populist candidates in 1895 for school board, received only eighteen and four percent of the total vote, respectively, running against four other candidates. Bolton sought the Treasurer's job in 1904 but received only eleven percent of the total vote. John Sprecher, the strongest voice in Schuyler and Colfax County for the Populist cause and editor of the Schuyler Quill, was elected to the school board in 1901. He received the most votes of the four candidates running, getting thirty-seven percent of the total. He was the only Populist ever elected to a city office but served only one term, never filing for re-elections.[23]

Although this chapter is mainly concerned with the results of city elections, broader political issues during 1880-1920 cannot be totally ignored. Czech reaction to issues such as

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[22]Ibid; From 1921 until 1940, every mayor of Schuyler, but one, was a Czech. There were ten mayors during this time, elected for two-year terms. Nine of thirteen mayors of the town from 1946 to 1976 were also Czech. Schuyler Centennial, p. 5.

[23]City Council Minutes, 1890-1910.

prohibition, women's suffrage, and World War I will be discussed briefly.

After 1877, prohibition became an issue in the state of Nebraska. In 1881, the Republicans sponsored a move to add a prohibition amendment to the state constitution. This move may have been one reason the Czechs became increasingly alienated from the Republican party. Paul Kleppner said the shift in party loyalties was associated with ethnocultural factors and not so much on national issues or policies themselves. Whatever the reason for the move, Czechs did oppose various issues and expressed the opposition at the polls in state and general elections. The 1890 Prohibition Amendment was defeated in the third ward by fifty-one percent, twenty-four percent in Ward One, and thirty-six percent in Ward Two. In 1910, the prohibitionists ran a candidate for governor of Nebraska who received only three votes in the third ward while his Democratic opponent received sixty-eight percent of the total vote. In 1916, the Prohibition Amendment received support in Wards One and Two but received only nineteen percent of the vote in Ward Three.[24]

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[24]Immigrants, and especially Catholics, were a source of new votes in the 1870's and 1880's. The growing size of the Catholic electorate and its persistant commitment to the Democracy brought efforts from the Democrats to maintain their support and to gain more. Democrats, therefore, designed rhetoric to appeal to the immigrant Catholic voter of which Czechs belonged. Paul Kleppner, The Cross of Culture (New York: Free Press, 1970), pp. 110, 157.

No prohibitionist candidate was ever listed on the ballot for city elections.[25]

The state of Nebraska had passed regulatory legislation in 1881 (Slocumb High License Bill) and the eight o'clock closing law in 1909. This legislation affected the tavern owners in the community, particularly the Czechs, who had a monopoly on the saloon business. However, the Board of Trustees in drawing up original city ordinances required tavern owners to post $500 security license bonds and in renewing those licenses to file a $250 bond. The city council did not revise its ordinances to comply with the Slocumb Act.[26] The appropriate city ordinance required that saloons be closed at eleven o'clock weekdays and all day Sundays. When the eight o'clock closing law was passed in 1909, the city council did not revise its liquor ordinance to comply with the state; eleven o'clock continued to be the time saloons closed.[27]

A companion reform of prohibition was women's suffrage. If women obtained the vote, so some prohibitionists reasoned, they would aid the cause. In many European countries, women had been unpaid workers in the home and the servants of men.

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[25]Abstract of Votes Cast, 1900-1920, Office of the County Clerk, Colfax County Courthouse, Schuyler, Nebraska.

[26]See Olsen's History of Nebraska for a discussion of the Slocumb Bill. City Ordinances, 1900-1920.

[27]City Ordinances, 1900-1920.

The notion that a "woman's place was in the home," was an idea peasants and others brought with them from Europe.[28]

In 1910, 1914, and 1918 suffrage amendments appeared on the ballot in general elections in Colfax County. In the third ward, ninety-one percent voted against the amendment in 1910, sixty percent against in 1914 and forty-five percent against in 1918. Ward One also opposed the amendment in 1910 and 1914, while Ward Two opposed the amendment only in 1910. The amendment passed in all three wards in 1918 for the first time.[29] It is not evident why the Czechs so rapidly softened their position on suffrage; however, one might assume, they saw the inevitability of its passage and so they went along.

After 1914, the attention of many Czech-Americans and others shifted to the conflict in Europe. Of particular interest was the movement for establishing an independent Bohemia which emerged from a conference held in Prague during the first months of the war and continued after Tomas Masaryk's departure from Austria-Hungary in December, 1914. The war speeded up the creation of a national Czech political organization in the United States, and the first Bohemian National Alliance was founded in Chicago, only weeks after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe.[30]

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[28]The idea of a "women's place" was not inclusive to only Europe. Hansen, Immigrants in America, p. 92.

[29]Abstract of Votes Cast, 1910-1920.

[30]Joseph O'Grady, The Immigrant's Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p. 206.

The Schuyler Chapter of the Bohemian National Alliance, organized in 1917, helped to promote the Czech cause in World War I. Sentiment ran high in Schuyler for the struggle for a Czech homeland. Six men from Colfax County assisted their native land to gain its independence by joining Czech legions in France in 1918.[31]

Other Czechs in Schuyler did their share for the war effort. E. F. Folda was the state secretary for the Victory Loan organization, a group which held local and county campaigns to help finance the war. Edward Sudik helped in Schuyler, and after the war in October, 1919, $2659 was collected for war relief. Of the nineteen total contributors then were Czech.[32]

The Schuyler Red Cross Chapter had receipts in 1919 totaling $11, 018. Two Czech men and one Czech woman served on the chapter's auditing committee and Czech women headed the group's relief committee, supply committee, and shipping committee. Of the four county Red Cross offices, Czechs held two.[33] Czechs and non-Czechs in the county also bought liberty bonds as they tried to do their share in World War I.[34]

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[31]Schuyler Sun, 1917-1919.

[32]Ibid, 14 October 1919.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

The idea of acculturation emphasized the point that immigrants retained a separateness from the larger community in some areas while participating in such areas as politics, business and jobs, and general civic responsibility. The Czech experience in Schuyler seemed to follow this trend Some Czechs did participate in the political life of the community, however, in proportion to their population in the city and in the business community, they did not hold a comparable percentage of city offices. In the first two decades of the twentieth cenury, more Czechs were running for office and getting elected. Gradually, they were picking up political power; which is evidence of acculturation.

CONCLUSIONS

Czechs emigrated to America for the purpose of seeking a better life and to improve their working conditions. Once they had settled in their new homeland, patterns of settlement emerged. The ethnic community was created so the Czechs could communicate in the native language and, also, maintain familiar institutions. They felt a need to band together for mutual aid and mutual protection against the uncertainties of a strange and sometimes hostile environment. The ethnic community was characterized by the ethnic church, conducting services in Czech, the ethnic summer school for appropriate language and Czech historical study by the young, the press published in the native tongue, and the mutual aid societies.

Beneath the formal structure, the informal network of ethnically enclosed cliques and friendship patterns guaranteed both comfortable socializing and confinement of marriage within the ethnic group. Like other ethnic groups, Czechs used their language as a means of warding off assimilation. They used the home, the church, the press, and the ethnic summer school as the weapons in their fight to preserve their language for their children and their grandchildren.

It was in the family and the home that the strongest social relationships were to be found. In Schuyler, as in

Bohemia, the home was a very important element in the life of the individual. The Czech family in Schuyler bore a great resemblance to the patriarchal family of the old world. A few of its functions had been taken away, but many still remained. The only agency in the community which succeeded in taking away an important function from the family was the public school. Many immigrant groups coming to America established their own ethnic summer schools, and the Czechs in Schuyler were no different.[1]

Education was a passion with the Czechs. Although Czech children attended the public school, their parents insisted strenuously that their children also attend the summer language school. These schools were an institutionalized method of adjusting to a strange cultural situation. They played a role in social accommodations for Czechs despite the fact that they may have caused some concern for Anglo-Americans because they used a foreign language. Ethnic summer school was maintained first, in order to preserve the native language as a means of communication and second, to help maintain pride in their Czech heritage. There were strong traditional and historical reasons for devotion to the language. The Czechs came from a country where attempts had been made to

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[1]Lawrence G. Brown, Immigration: Cultural Conflicts and Social Adjustments (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1933), pp. 221-223.

replace their language with the language of foreign rulers, hence, preservation of the language became a matter of patriotism.[2]

Although Czech parents insisted that the native Czech language be spoken in the home, once their children entered the public school system and made their first obvious contact with the American cultural life, the children began to move away from old world patterns and eventually away from the community as well. The ethnic summer school could not prevent the acculturation of the second, third and forth generation Czechs.

Czech language newspapers, of which Schuyler had three at various times between 1880 and 1920, were partly designed to prevent assimilation but often led, consciously or unconsciously, to an interest in American life because they published news regarding activities in the United States or in the community. The fact that the number of Czech papers decreased suggests that eventually this group developed an interest in American life more potent than its interest in European affairs and also that its familiarity with the Czech language had decreased. In Schuyler, the non-Czech papers printed much the same news as the language press, and the lack of subscribers to the Czech papers forced them to stop printing. Many Czech women never learned the English language, so

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[2]Čapek, Čechs in America, p 7

many of these Czech families continued to subscribe to at least one language newspaper published nationally. It was common for the English-speaking husband or children to read the non-language local newspaper to the women so they too were informed about local community affairs. The press served as a means of adjustment for the immigrant.

Schuyler does not appear to follow some other areas where large numbers of Czech Freethinkers and anti-clerical periodicals were to be found. Czechs, for the most part, took an active part in the religious affairs of the community and were instrumental in establishing at least four Catholic and Protestant Churches. In the community, the Church served the social as well as the religious needs of the Czechs. It is difficult to assess which of these two needs, social or religious, drew the people the most. St. Mary's Catholic Church, a Czech parish, did serve to isolate many Czechs from the mainstream, but at the same time, served as a stablizing influence that prevented social disorganization. The Church, Catholic and Protestant, proved an effective medium for either acculturation of immigrants or their isolation, according to the purposes of the clergy and the church's membership.

The Sokol in Schuyler was a very important element in the preservation of the Czech culture and helped hold the Czech community together. It was one means of socializing with other Czechs outside the family but, at the same time, it held them apart from the mainstream of total community life. On

the other hand, organizations which were founded in the United States, with no ties to the old country, were likely to be instruments of change for the immigrant. Women's clubs, essentially American in origin, held meetings (possibly at first in Czech) at which programs were presented having little to do with the old world. Indeed, in the programs from time-to-time, some attempt was made to stress the culture of America. These organizations presumably were the products of the immigrants' efforts to adapt their heritage to American conditions.

Schuyler Czechs belonged to the C.S.P.S. Benevolent Society, and others, which helped to organize their interests and sentiments, and thus served as a cultural habitat and a means of adjustment. There is no doubt that such organizations, at least at the outset, fostered a greater loyalty for the Czech community and the old world, whether from a feeling of selft-interest or patriotism, more than they did for America. With the creation of an independent Czech state and the death of many first-generation Czechs in Schuyler, the various Czech organizations and associations began to decline. They had served their purpose in helping the Czech immigrant to adjust to their American culture. These stablizing institutions operated to aid the transition from one cultural situation to another. They helped make the adjustment of life in the community a process of accommodation rather than an abrupt, disorganizing change.

Like the Irish in Boston, the Czechs in Schuyler were simply unwilling to assimilate into the general American society. However, when possible, through their various societies, associations, and clubs, they were willing to contribute their talents and their money to the community in which they lived and worked. The various social groups helped them to maintain their own language and heritage, but they were organized for the purpose of maintaining Czech ideals in America and of defending the honor of the Czech name.

In essence, the social life of the Czechs in Schuyler was one of limited interaction with other ethnic groups. Many were simply unwilling to participate in the general associational affairs of the community, and the growth of their lodges, societies, and clubs was an accurate reflection of their consciousness as a distinct national group. The Czechs erected their societies to fulfill their social needs, and they remained loyal to them until the second and third generations found that such groups no longer served their purpose. By the 1920's Czech life in Schuyler and Nebraska began to show signs of change. Slow, often imperceptible to contempories, nevertheless, these changes pointed to the disappearance of the Czech way of life.

Schuyler Czechs, from 1870 until 1920, maintained a separateness, even though some secondary contacts occurred on the job, on the civic scene, and in politics. Possibly in no other areas did Czechs come in more frequent contact with

the total community than in the areas of business and politics.

Czechs arriving in Schuyler before 1890 comprised a large portion of business community. Coming when the town was in its infancy helped to contribute to their success and influence. Unlike the cities where others were in control, Czechs in Schuyler assumed control of business. Between 1890 and 1910, Czechs had a monopoly on shoe shops, mercantile, grocery, and dry goods stores, as well as saloons. In 1910, eighty-five percent of the business establishements were controlled by the Czechs. After 1890, many Czechs that arrived in town listed their occupations as laborer or farmer, although a large number had other skills. While Czechs before 1890 comprised upper classes, after 1890 they comprised a sizeable percentage of the lower classes as well, if only by virtue of their large numbers.

In politics, more Czechs were running for office and getting elected after 1900, possibly because Schuyler had its largest number of Czech residents at that time. Czechs dominated the office of city treasurer between 1909 and 1919 and the city clerk's office between 1904 and 1912. They served almost continually on the city council and the school board from 1890 through 1920. However, many of the same men ran time and again for office. The only office Czechs did not run for or get elected to was the office of mayor because they chose to reside in an ethnic neighborhood. This trend was evident in the number of city council and school-board

seats held by the Czechs between 1910 and 1920. Czechs came from all three wards, not just the third ward. Presumably, the Czechs were now being assimilated into the total community; there was no longer any need to seek the security of their own ethnic group exclusively.

Movement into the mainstream of the community was more prevalent among the Czech young people, boys and girls, and Czech men than among first-generation Czech women. Many of the Czech women were never acculturated. There appeared no need when Schuyler had stores, shops, church, social clubs, organizations and associations, entertainment, and newspapers owned or operated by Czechs to fulfill their needs. Living in an ethnic neighborhood, Czech women often did not learn the English language; the larger community never applied any pressure to force the women to conform or move beyond the confines of their own ethnic group.

The Czech experience in Schuyler was one of separation in various parts of their society in hopes of guaranteeing the continuation of their ethnic culture. Relations with others outside the ethnic group was kept at a minimum. One purpose was to prevent a significant amount of intermarriage. Intermarriage was rare among Czechs in Schuyler between 1870 and 1920. They tended to marry within the ethnic group at a ratio of four to one. However, after 1920, when social contacts with those of other nationalities were becoming more common, more intermarriage did occur. Before that time, social

contacts with other ethnic groups were not necessary because the Czechs provided for the social needs of their own people through plays, singing societies, athletic tournaments, organizations and clubs, picnic, and dances. Czechs, therefore, socialized, met and married primarily within their own ethnic group.

Change was evident to a certain extent in the American-born children of Czech immigrants. Exposed to the overwhelming acculturative power of the public school, the Czech immigrants' children yielded to the American cultural system in the second decade of the twentieth century. Survival of traditional ethnic practices proved easy in the home, but more difficult in public areas of life. The need to mix with other ethnic groups proved to be greater.

Czechs in Schuyler, like Czechs and other immigrant groups elsewhere, slowly became acculturated into the mainstream of American life. It would appear to be inevitable, regardless of their insistence on maintaining the native language and customs in the home. Once the second and third generations were educated in the public schools, the Czech tradition could not be perpetuated by the remaining first generation which was dying off. The flow of Czechs from the old country also no longer replenished the declining numbers, nor did Czechs continue to settle an exclusive ethnic area of the community. Ethnic separateness was no longer possible or desirable for those who remained.

APPENDIX 1

CZECH POLITICAL CANDIDATES
1890-1920

Mayor

1896-E. F. Folda

1912-Thomas Wacha
1915-John Janecek
(write-in)

1919-John Dudek*
1920-John Dudek

Treasurer

1
1893-John Cech
Thomas Molacek
1894-Joseph Smatlan*
1896-Thomas Molacek

1901-Vaclav Maly
1902-Frank Sucha
1904-R. A. Daricek
1909-John Gaeth*

1910-John Gaeth*
1911-John Gaeth
1912-John Gaeth*
1913-John Gaeth*
1914-John Gaeth*
1915-John Gaeth*
1916-John Gaeth
Valcav Maly*
1919-Frank Shonka*
1920-Frank Shonka

Clerk

1896-Valcav Maly
1898-M. F. Shonka
1900-Thomas Wacha
1902-F. H. Svoboda*
1903-Frank Kovar
Joseph Otradovsky

Clerk(cont.)

1904-M. F. Shonka*
1905-M. F. Shonka*
Vaclav Maly
1906-Frank Kovar
1908-Frank Kovar*
1909-Frank Kovar*

1910-Frank Kovar*
1911-A. V. Kovar*
1912-A. V. Kovar*
1913-John Pesek
1914-Frank Vybiral
1915-Frank Kovar
1917-Frank Shonka, Jr.*

Councilmen-Ward

1890-J. Otradovsky(3)*
1893-John Gaeth(1)
1894-E. F. Folda(1)*
1895-Vaclav Sudik(1)
Frank Cuba(3)
F. R. Chrastil(3)*
1897-Frank Prokes(1)*
F. R. Chrastil(3)
1899-John Gaeth(2)
Frank Chrastil(1)
J. H. Otradovsky(3)

1900-John Novotny(1)
Joseph Smatlan(2)
1901-R. A. Daricek(1)
1902-R. A. Daricek(1)
1903-Otto Otradovsky(3)*
1094-Thomas Wacha(1)*
C. Sararik(2)
E. F. Vrzak(3)
Frank Kovar(3)*
1906-Thomas Wacha(1)*
Frank Dudek(1)
Ed. Vrzak(3)*

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*Elected.

Councilmen-Ward(cont.)

1908-Frank Dudek(1)*
Ed Vrzak(3)*
1909-F. B. Bures(3)
John Dudek(3)*

1910-Frank Dudek(1)*
1911-Thomas Wacha(1)*
John Dudek(3)*
1912-Anton Langer(1)
1913-Frank Sucha(1)
Joseph Otradovsky(3)*
1915-John Novotny(1)
John Dudek(3)*
1918-A. J. Severyn(3)
Joseph Schmid(3)*
1919-Anton Pesek(1)*
Joseph Otradovsky(3)
1920-Anton Kopac(2)*
Joseph Schmid(3)
Frank Bures(3)*

Board of Education

1893-Vaclav Maly
John Prokes*
1895-C. W. Hrubesky*
Thomas Molacek
John Gaeth
1896-John Prokes*
1898-Joseph Zerzan
1899-John Prokes

1902-Ceril Schmid*
Joseph Otradovsky
1903-Ceril Schmid*
Frank Dudek
1906-Ceril Schmid*
Frank Shonka
1907-Frank Shonka*
1908-Joseph Otradovsky
1909-F. H. Svoboda*
R. A. Daricek*

Board of Education(cont.)

1910-Frank Shonka*
L. H. Sixta
1912-Frank Kovar
1914-Jaroslav Folda*
Frank Kovar
1915-L. H. Sixta*
1916-Frank Noha
1917-Frank Noha
Jaroslav Folda*
1918-J. E. Smatlan*
L. H. Sixta*
1919-E. Schmid*
1920-Gerald Ehrenberger*
W. B. Sadilek*
J. Safarik

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*Elected
Note: The Vaclav Maly listed as a candidate after 1900 may have been Victor, the son of Vaclav, although only the V. was used to designate his name in City Council Minutes.

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