A Proud Heritage

History of Czech Settlements

Kewaunee & Manitowoc Counties

Wisconsin

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Heart of The Dairyland
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History of Czech Settlements

In the Old County

In the last half of the 1800's, Wisconsin became the new home of over one million European immigrants, in one of the largest resettlements of that century. These new residents came from lands across Europe - from Iceland to Serbia, and from Russia to Wales. They arrived with few belongings, often little money, and usually big dreams. Sometimes those dreams had been fed by advertisements that read to many like an invitation to the Promised Land:

> "Come! In Wisconsin all men are free and equal before the law. Religious freedom is absolute and there is not the slightest connection between church and state. In Wisconsin no religious qualification is necessary for office or to constitute a voter; all that is required is for the man to be 21 years of age and to have lived in the state one year." (quoted in Van Ess, 6)

Combine that offer with amazing economic opportunities and the chance to own more land than almost anywhere in Europe, and it's no surprise so many came to Wisconsin.

One of the largest groups to emigrate were Czechs, natives of the province of Bohemia, which was then part of the Hapsburg Austrian Empire and today is known as the Czech Republic. A relatively small county, the Czech Republic's neighbors include Germany to the north and west, present-day Austria to the south, and Slovakia (formerly the other half of Czechoslovakia) to the east. Thanks to this location, Czech culture bears the influences of two of Europe's predominant cultural groups: the Slavic and the Germanic. Bohemia was an independent nation during the Middle Ages, but it had been part of the Austrian Empire for over 200 years before its first citizen landed in Wisconsin. During that time, Bohemia experienced extensive immigration from the southern German provinces. Under Austrian rule, a pervasive layer of German culture was laid over Bohemia, with results that included the burning of Czech books and the replacement of Czech nobility with Germans. The Czech language, culture and music, however, were sustained by the peasant classes. These farmers, merchants, craftsmen and their families comprised the bulk of immigrants to Wisconsin.

Although Czechs had come to North America in the 17th and 18th centuries, the largest wave started in the mid- to late-1840's.At this time, several factors came together to push some of them toward America:

•Crop failure. Bohemia did well economically after the Napoleonic Wars in the first quarter of the 1800's, but in 1840 the potato crop failed, much as it did in other countries during that decade. Not only did this cause hunger, but it created severe financial pressures that, not surprisingly, fostered discontent.

•Lack of opportunity to advance. As in much of Europe, land was scarce and opportunities to improve one's economic or social status were few. Many of those who came to Wisconsin were called "Chalupnici," or "cottagers" —farmers who owned small plots of land and whose households consumed most of what they grew. If you were a Chalupnici, you faced a difficult situation. Even if you raised enough on your five to 25 acres to have something left to sell for a profit, you could not increase your operation. There was simply no land for sale.

•Revolution. After the French revolutions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, most of Europe began to rumble. Bohemia, a proud, occupied land with a history of protest and

turmoil, was one of a long list of would-be nations that failed to break free. To 20th-century news-watchers, the events may look familiar: Bohemia won its own constitution as the Austrian empire fell apart, and the German and the Czech leaders fought over their new alliances and the roles of majority and minority in the new kingdom. Government floundered, and within months the Austrian empire was able to take advantage of a minor insurrection and regain uneasy control of Bohemia.

Faced with political instability, economic pressures and other dilemmas, including an unpopular draft, some felt that the time had come for drastic steps. Like thousands across Europe who could tell similar stories, many Czechs decided that their best options lay across the ocean.

Coming to Wisconsin – Once a family decided to leave Bohemia, many factors pushed them toward Wisconsin:

•Transportation systems. By 1850, Milwaukee and Chicago were becoming centers of shipping, thanks to their prime locations on Lake Michigan. Those sailing from Europe could reach these ports via the Great Lakes shipping system and the Erie Canal. When they arrived they could find ships bound for smaller ports, or they could walk to inland locations with relative ease. Later immigrants relied on railroad transportation, but many Czechs came at a time when trains did not yet go where they were heading. The City of Manitowoc, for example, had rail service by 1872, but the City of Kewaunee did not see a locomotive until 1891.

•Climate and location. Czechs in Wisconsin found a climate much like home, except for slightly more severe winters. That meant that they could grow familiar crops, wear traditional clothes, and maintain their culture in ways that would have been more difficult farther south. Wisconsin was also a non-slaveholding state, and without that competition Wisconsin immigrants of all groups could find work more readily than in the pre-Civil War South.

•Politics. Wisconsin actively sought immigrants, using methods that ranged from glowing advertisements to the maintenance of an "Immigration Commissioner" in New York City. The Commissioner's job was simple: convincing newcomers to settle in Wisconsin. For the fledgling state, (Wisconsin became a state in 1848), increasing the occupancy of its sparsely-populated northern areas was the key to increasing its tax base and its position among the rest of the United States. Wisconsin continued to pursue immigrants well into the twentieth century.

•Cultural connections. The first Czechs found that Wisconsin was already populated by immigrants, the majority of whom had come from the German nation-states. Although some Czechs harbored animosity, or at least unease, toward Germans, most Czechs were familiar with that culture and could at some level speak their language. Many Czechs had Germanic family ties, surnames, and sometimes dialects, thanks to centuries of intermarriage. Settling near Germans made sense, especially when many other Wisconsin residents spoke languages that few Czechs could understand. And after the first Czechs arrived, their families and friends back home began to receive letters filled with visions of opportunity. Soon some of them began to desire a new start in Wisconsin.

The presence of earlier German immigrants in Wisconsin also indicates another factor influencing Czech settlements: by the time they got to Wisconsin, some land was already out of their reach. Yankees, Germans and other early-comers had already taken much of the farmland considered most desirable — those places, particularly in the southern portion of the state, that

had prairie, enough forest for fuel and construction, good drainage and sufficient access to markets. Like others in the mid- and late-1800's, Czechs usually settled on unclaimed land that frequently had good soil buried under a thick growth of trees. Several accounts of early Czech settlers describe hiking through forests on Indian trails, the only means of going overland through the woods. They could buy this land from the government for as little as $1.25 per acre, but each acre was packed with trees. As a result, the first tasks of settlement were to cut down trees, process and use the wood somehow (hence log buildings), and get as many of the stumps out of the ground as possible. At the same time, settlers had to grow enough crops to survive, build shelters, feed animals and children, and deal with the other trials of pioneer settlement. One of those trials was isolation — Green Bay, the nearest sizable city in those first years, was at best a long day's walk away.

A TIME LINE OF EARLY CZECH SETTLEMENT:

1848: Bohemian revolution and return of Austrian control. Wisconsin gains statehood.
1850: U.S. Census lists 10,000 Bohemians. Five Bohemian families listed in Manitowoc County.
1854: Manitowoc County area described as having "a few scattered pioneers and Indians." (Manitowoc County H.S., Occupation monograph No. 38, 1979)
1856: City of Kewaunee has one hotel. (Chamber of Commerce, 1983)
1857: fifty Bohemian families arrive in present-day Town of Franklin, Kewaunee County. (Holubetz, n.p.)
1860: U.S. Census lists 1.727 Bohemians in Manitowoc county, out of a total population of 22,416.
1880: Town of Franklin population, predominately Czech, is about 1,400. [In the 1990's, the town had approximately 1000 residents.]
1883: Kewaunee becomes a city. Bohemian immigrant Vojta Mashek elected mayor.

Where did they go?

When Czech immigrants came to rural Wisconsin, they planted their settlements in areas already populated by other groups. And for a long time, they stayed there. Before the 1920s, most rural people of all backgrounds tended to stay close to their communities, often spending a lifetime in or near the houses where they were born. As a result, ethnic groups like the Czech sustained their culture to a remarkable degree. Although the cliche depicts America as a melting pot, Wisconsin's ethnic groups may better compare to a stew — with pockets of Old World cultures remaining predominantly distinct while mingling with and influencing neighboring groups and the surrounding national culture.

Northeast Wisconsin's rural Czech settlement covered a large territory, extending from Algoma in northern Kewaunee County to the City of Manitowoc and south. Except for the German areas of southern Manitowoc and northern Sheboygan counties, it is the largest geographical area along the Green Bay Ethnic Trail to be dominated by one ethnic group.

In Kewaunee County, many Czechs settled in the relatively urban areas that are now the Villages of Luxemburg and Algoma and the City of Kewaunee. Others settled in townships in the southern half of the county and along the Lake Michigan shore. The strongest concentrations were in the townships of Ahnapee, West Kewaunee, Casco, Pierce, Montpelier,

Carlton, and Franklin. They shared the county with the southern edge of the Belgian settlement, located to their west and north, and with an assortment of non-Czechs scattered through the area.

While Kewaunee's Czech population tended to concentrate in the southern part of the county, Manitowoc's Czech population predominated in the north, next to their counterparts across the county line. The Cities of Manitowoc and Two Rivers, and the Towns of Cooperstown, Franklin, Gibson, Mishicot and Kossuth were home to much of the Czech population. (Kossuth is actually named after a Hungarian revolutionary for whom two of the town's Czech founders fought; it is the only known township to take its name from such a source.)

Within these towns, Czechs often founded their own small communities, which might be populated by people from the same village or region in Bohemia. Communities and villages founded or mostly populated by Czechs include Stangelville, Cherneyville, Krok, Pilsen and Norman in Kewaunee County, and Rosencrans, Maribel, Kellnersville, Francis Creek, Mishicot and Menchalville in Manitowoc.

As in many places, however, affordable automobiles and mass media fostered access to the world that few rural people had known previously. The generations that came of age with cars, road improvements, Rural Free Delivery and the radio could travel with relative ease to the cities and other attractions of the area, and they knew much more about the America of popular culture than their parents had. The process of assimilation, which is at work in all immigrant communities from their start, accelerated dramatically. These Czechs began to look, sound and act more like their "American" counterparts than like those in Bohemia. Today you will find Czech names in Green Bay, Madison and Minneapolis phone books — names that sound much like those you will hear on this tour.

Staying who we are

Contrary to popular belief, people who immigrate to the U.S. often do not intend to blend into the American mainstream. Although they left their homeland for more reasons than one can count, Czechs carried in their luggage and in their minds the traditions and reminders that they valued most. For this reason you will find people in Wisconsin today who can speak the language, dance the dances, make the foods and perform the ceremonies that their grandparents brought with them from that distant place. And if you ask questions, you will hear their pride in their answers.

The Church

For Northeast Wisconsin's Czech population, two threads run through most traditions: music and language. And the church, not surprisingly, has been a center of both. Although Bohemia was a birthplace of the Protestant reformations and had a population of "free-thinkers" who did not belong to any church, Northeast Wisconsin's Czechs were predominantly Roman Catholic. Their settlements revolved around the church, with the parish organization at the focus of community life. Religious commitment shows early and strong in the history of almost every Czech settlement.

The story of a now-vanished Manitowoc parish, known as the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, reveals many common elements. Czech settlement in this location dates from the early

1850's. The future St. Mary's began in a member's log cabin, where a group of settlers gathered on Sundays to sing hymns and pray (both, we can assume, in their native language and with traditional music). As with many other Catholic settlers, these first members could not take communion or hold a formal service because they did not have a priest to lead the Mass, as the Catholic church requires. After as much as six years of this self-supervised practice, the group learned that a Father Maly, a Bohemian missionary, had arrived in the territory. The priest visited the new community, held Mass, and for the next several years returned twice every year to read the Mass. By 1863, after a series of Czech priests, the parish had grown in membership and affluence; they dedicated a building solely for church use that year. Many churches used the Czech language for singing and non-liturgical speaking and writing until well into the twentieth century.

One ritual which was common in Czech parishes, as well as those of some other Catholic ethnic groups, was the rogation days. On each of the three days preceding Ascension Thursday in mid- to late spring, daily masses would be followed by a community processional. Led by the priest, and in some cases by the Blessed Sacrament, or communion, the parish members would process from the church into the cemetary, roads or fields. As they walked, the community would pray the rosary, sing the Litany of the Saints, or recite other prayers as a means of asking God's blessing on the summer's crops. In some parishes, these processionals would stop for blessings and hymns at privately-erected chapels or markers near the church. Rogation days are still observed in a few historically Bohemian parishes, including St. Mary's in Luxemburg.

Several other traditions, some of which stemmed from church practices, helped Wisconsin's Czechs maintain their heritage:

•Music. Czech peasant farmers kept their culture alive under the Austrian Empire, and one of the elements they most cherished was their music. According to one researcher, the musical instruments that they brought on the ocean passage were a "necessity of life for the music-loving Czech." (Holubetz, n.p.) Both Czechs writing about their heritage and non-Czechs discussing Wisconsin ethnic groups repeatedly cite music, especially folk music, as the lifeblood of the Czech community — a feature of almost every event and accompaniment to any celebration. Evidence of the value Czechs placed on music may be found in the accounts of their communities, from the proliferation of local brass bands between 1880 and 1920 to accounts of a teacher named Simanek who wrote symphonies in his spare time. This is a feature that still marks historically Czech communities — the small city of Manitowoc is reputed to have one of the largest musicians' union chapters in the state.

•Czech schools. Few writers do more than mention Czech schools in passing; they may have decided these were too common to discuss. But these schools seem to have been crucial to maintaining Czech culture in Wisconsin. Although the first ones may have been part of parochial day schools (several regional churches still maintain parochial schools), there seems to have been a trend toward Sunday schools and other arrangements for teaching the Czech language. Some of the students were German and Irish immigrants of the same area, who probably found their classes useful for doing business with their neighbors. This is a topic of Czech culture that needs further research, but it indicates the depth of Czech efforts to uphold their traditions.

•Plays. Amateur theatrics had a strong tradition in Bohemia, and few of the sources on Northeast Wisconsin Czechs fail to mention the writing and performance of plays. These plays were usually given in Czech (further strengthening the language), and were frequently written by members of the amateur troupe. In Kewaunee, plays were usually given in that city's

"Slovanska Lipa Hall," a building used for meetings, dances and other public events, and common in towns with sizable Czech settlements. Slovanska Lipas were social organizations that pursued a range of educational, dramatic and musical activities; they flourished here during the late 1800s. Manitowoc's amateur theatrics and other events were held in the Opera House or Bohemian Hall, which was built by the Czech community and used by many organizations. Performers from larger communities would often tour smaller settlements, and one Czech writer recalls plays sometimes being presented three times per month. Amateur theater continued to thrive in these cities long after the last presentation in Czech.

•Sokols. Similar to the German Turner Societies, Sokols promoted gymnastic activities and classes, which often carried patriotic overtones. In Kewaunee, the Sokol gained ownership of the Slovanska Lipa's hall in 1878. In later years this Sokol took over many of the Slovanska Lipa's roles, including the Lyra (a Czech singing club), a Czech school, and the Masopust masquerade ball. Other sokols across the area also expanded their activities, but their prominence declined as younger Czechs turned their attention to American sports.

•Masopust. Americans today are familiar with New Orleans' "Fat Tuesday" celebrations, but Wisconsin Czechs also had their day of revelry before the start of Lent. Masopust celebrations varied from one location to the next, but they always seem to involve masks and dances. Kewaunee's and Kellnerville's Masopust masquerade balls attracted people from all over those communities, no doubt enhancing the Czech reputation for knowing how to throw a good party. A rural West Kewaunee native, however, recalled Masopust as a day-long event. It started with a group of neighbors in rags and masks who burst into your house with singing, hollering, and antics of every description. After begging money and food donations (and sometimes pilfering bits of food if the hosts were not generous), the maskers would issue an invitation to the Masopust dance and drive off to wreak similar havoc on the next house. The dance, on the evening before Ash Wednesday, would feature hours of dancing, free beer and food courtesy of the maskers and their families.

•The family role of elders. Finally, one of the strongest tools for maintaining Czech culture could be found in the farm's "little house." The oldest members of a Czech family enjoyed a level of legal and cultural protection that is often emphasized by non-Czech writers. When the oldest son was ready to take over the farm, his parents would execute a legal transaction which gave the farm to the son, This deed, however, included specific provisions concerning the elders' rights to the use of a second, smaller house on the farm which was kept for this purpose. The document also ensured their access to the well, their right to a share of the farm's goods and to the upkeep of their own animals, and several other provisions.

Upon her retirement, the grandmother did not sit idle, but instead took on a new role: as instructor and keeper of her grandchildren. This tradition may have begun during settlement: a woman helping her husband start a farm would have little time or energy left for child-rearing. As a result, the grandmother's position was particularly respected. She was more than a babysitter; she was responsible for teaching her grandchildren the Czech language, traditions, songs, and folk stories, as well as for their religious and moral education.

Assimilation

Although Czech settlements tended to remain distinct, their residents became heavily involved with and active in the larger surrounding community. Since Czech immigrants often brought

valuable skills with them, such as woodworking and baking, and since they tended to be relatively well educated, some soon found themselves at the head of governments and organizations. Algoma and Kewaunee both had first-generation Czechs as mayors. The mayor of Algoma, John Karel, also served on the State Assembly and as a U.S. Consul to Bohemia and Russia.

Czech Businesses

More frequently, Northeast Wisconsin's Czechs became prosperous business owners. The communities of Shoto and Tisch Mills in Manitowoc County and the Village of Denmark in Brown County had early Czech-built flour mills; Denmark, Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Kewaunee, Algoma and Kossuth (later the village of Francis Creek) had Czech breweries. In rural communities, the owner of the mill, tavern or other business tended to become quite powerful. He was often the postmaster, informal peace-keeper and small-time judge, and a leader of church services if an ordained minister was not around. In cities like Kewaunee, Czech skills also did well, as the Svoboda family could attest. After being trained as a cabinet-maker in Bohemia, Joseph Svoboda moved to the new city in 1883 and began making altars, statues and other church furnishings. The current Svoboda Industries still does woodworking, but religious clients have been replaced by homeowners who seek Svoboda's colonial furniture and grandfather clocks. In Algoma, an old Czech-founded Brewery building has been converted to Von Stiehl winery which is a feature of the tourism industry, and is known for the wines they sell. Even Green Bay, home to several ethnic groups but not many Czechs, had a Bohemian Baking Company, established in 1897.

Farming

Those Czechs who farmed also had to find a place in the larger culture. As with many ethnic groups arriving in Northeast Wisconsin in the late 1800s, Czechs frequently turned to dairy farming, then on its way to becoming the most common type of farming in Wisconsin. Although previous settlers had relied on wheat as a cash crop, by the 1880s diseases and the grain's tendency to exhaust soil were toppling King Wheat from favor. As the largest groups of Czechs arrived, increasing demand for dairy products, coupled with improvements in transportation and production, were prompting the University of Wisconsin and other agricultural organizations to tout dairy farming as the farmer's best option. Although dairy requires more equipment, overhead and personal commitment than grain farming, most Czechs apparently agreed with the experts. Evidence of their decisions still sit in Kewaunee County's fields, which have more square stone silos than can be found in most parts of northern Wisconsin. Silos were new technology in the late 1800s, and by the turn of the century round silos had become the norm because they allowed less of their contents to spoil. Square silos are usually early silos; this may indicate that Kewaunee's Czech and Belgian farmers were slightly ahead of their times.

Self-identification:

Finally, Northeast Wisconsin's Czechs assimilated into American culture much as other groups did: they began to call themselves by other names. For some, this happened with the earliest settlement, when they Anglicized their names to make then less difficult for non-Czechs. In a few cases, a Czech might change his family's surname to its English translation — for example, a person named John Krejci might become John Tailor or Taylor. (A slightly different situation arose with Joseph Zelenka, who named his new settlement Greenstreet for its location on a road and the English translation of his name.) Others simplified their names' spellings or adapted English-sounding pronunciations.

For Czechs in the twentieth century, ethnic identity could become particularly tangled,

especially if your heritage also included a Germanic surname or dialect. A German-sounding name in the years surrounding the world wars often exposed a person to verbal or physical attack from those Americans who suspected every "German" of treason against the U.S. This group of Czechs was particularly likely to lose their Czech identity, both through the misunderstanding of people such as census-takers (who often labeled them German or Austrian) and through their own attempts to avoid a potentially uncomfortable label. Rather than try to explain how a person with a German name could call him- or herself Czech, some found it easier to distance themselves entirely from Old World identities — in short, they became "American".

But those who names were clearly non-German, identity problems surfaced as well. Until around the turn of the century, most of these people would have called themselves "Bohemian," rather than "Czech." But "Bohemian" became a derogatory term: the stereotype attached to the word implied backwardness and (incorrectly) a connection with "gypsies," and was generally rather hateful. And although many successfully reconstructed themselves as "Czech," it appears that many decided to avoid the entire issue by defining themselves as "American." Most European ethnic groups faced similar attrition: successive generations tended to lose interest in old world traditions and culture during the mid-twentieth century, and increasingly identified themselves with the United States. Only in the last 20 years has that trend begun to change.

Markers of the past

As you travel through Northeast Wisconsin's Czech area, keep your eyes and your mind alert for what historians call "material culture traces" — existing objects that can tell you about how people used to live. Traces come in all sizes and forms, but the key difference from most other history sources is that, unless it has a label attached or a tour guide nearby, you have to use your own knowledge to figure out what they mean. And discovering what they mean can give you insights that you will seldom get from a book.

<u>On the Farm</u>

Czech buildings in this area look much like local German and Belgian types — certain kinds of log and brick construction, certain types of barns and outbuildings. This does not mean that the Czechs did not have their own style of building, but it does show that European models did not always fit in a new place. The homes that Czech settlers left in Bohemia were often over 400 years old. Since wood for building was scarce, most Bohemian houses were made of stone or brick, and these huge buildings often sheltered several families together. Often they had pens for their animals in one end, as did the houses of several other European groups. Most Bohemian houses sat close together on narrow strips of land that gave every house assess to the road and proximity to its neighbors.

But when Czechs arrived in Wisconsin, they found a dramatically different situation. First of all, there was wood — wood all over the place, growing so thick that building would never happen until some of it was removed. Second, the land that most Czech immigrants bought was divided according to the U.S. survey method, with sections of land one mile square divided into smaller square portions for sale. Instead of the small lots in Bohemia, these farmers might face forty or eighty acres, and the plot was probably almost as wide as it was long. Even if a family lived in a "town," the nearest neighbor might be almost a mile away. Isolation appears to have been a serious problem,especially for Czech women.

Their response to all this was to adapt. Instead of initially trying to find stones or make bricks, they learned to turn trees into square-hewn logs, cut notches in the ends and lay them up into walls. They apparently learned this from the Germans, who had a history of building with log or half-timbering (the Belgians, whose log buildings look very similar, probably learned from the Germans as well, since in Belgium almost all buildings are of brick). Czechs in Wisconsin built their houses on a typical American scale: big enough to hold one relatively nuclear family, instead of several families or the whole clan. And instead of building attached house/barns, they followed the usual American practice of having separate buildings for a variety of functions.

When you see a farm in the Czech area, look for the following:

•Log houses. Usually side-gabled, with the front door in one of the longer walls. Logs tend to be squared, and if you're close enough you can see the adz marks along each log's length. The corners usually have dove-tail joints, which are relatively hard to make but hold better that almost any other type. Spaces between the logs were filled with mud- or clay-based chinking; today the chinking may be cement or may be disintegrated.

• Brick houses. After a family got established, they eventually built a more substantial house. These were most often either brick or log with a brick veneer. Czechs probably started building in brick both because of their heritage and because of the explosion of area brick manufacturers after the disastrous forest fires of 1871. These houses may have side or front gables, and often have wings, or ells, extending to one side. Czech brick houses look like those built by Belgians, and often feature touches that are usually associated with Belgians such as contrasting decorative brickwork above windows and doors. They also look like houses that were being built all over Wisconsin at that time, thanks to the growth of the builder's industry and mail-order or magazine plans.

All-brick houses can be distinguished by a pattern of stretcher and header bricks, or bricks that run parallel with the wall and bricks that stick into the wall, leaving only the butt end exposed. They are usually arranged in a common bond, or a pattern of five rows of stretchers between every row of headers, to tie the inside and outside layers of brick together. All-brick houses will often have an additional, single layer of bricks forming the interior wall, separated from the outer level by an airspace that provides insulation.

Log houses that were sided with brick (a cheaper method) have only stretchers, creating a brick veneer. Unless the bricks are falling off, the logs will be hidden. But evidence of the logs will be found at door and window openings, where a log building reveals the massive thickness of its walls. If the openings are eight inches or more deep, the structure may have logs under its surface.

• Log outbuildings. As families gained affluence, most put wood barn siding over their log barns, granaries or other farm buildings. As a result, most of the log farm buildings you spot from the road are likely to look like frame buildings, except for any areas where the siding has come off. Log farm buildings tend to be lower to the ground than their frame counterparts, and they are not likely to have a foundation or a masonry basement unless they were moved onto it at a later date. You can, however,use the same trick to spot a wood-sided log building as you did with a brick-veneered log house.

One log farm building worth looking for is the double-pen or drive-through barn, which looks like a long, low barn with a wide opening through the center of the long sides (this may be covered by doors). Double-pen barns are actually two small log buildings with an open space between then.

When the roof was put on, it extended across both buildings and the open space in the middle, making a covered area between two storage spaces where crops could be unloaded and threshed.

•L Barns:On some farms, the larger frame barns are set at a right angle to each other, with the juncture pointing northwest. This creates a courtyard sheltered from the brunt of winter winds. It appears to be another practice borrowed from German farmers.There is at least one farm in Manitowoc County, near Maribel, where a clever farmer built an early wooden silo into the corner between his barns, thus ensuring that his silage would seldom freeze and that it would always be easy to reach.

•Little (second) houses. When the oldest members of a Czech family transferred the farm to their children, they usually moved out of the main house and into a smaller house on the same homestead. In this manner the grandparents could maintain their independence, lessen their load of household duties, and still remain integral to the family. Early little houses were often smaller versions of the main house, with the same construction and siding, but most little houses today are of more recent building styles, including ranches and mobile homes. Location on the homestead varies, and sometimes it is difficult to determine if a smaller building is a "little house" or simply a neighbor.

Church Art & Architecture

For most rural Wisconsin communities, social and political events, as well as local identity and pride, focused on the church. You will find churches rising above roofs and trees across the state, and often you will see the spires miles before you reach the town. In almost all of the existing Czech communities, churches still mark the heart of the settlement. It is not surprising that today's residents will often show you the church before almost anything else, and that churches and religious sites and objects can be the easiest places to find a community's ties to its past.

•The church building. Except for some cases of Czech names or phrases written over doors, most of the buildings associated with historically Czech parishes do not look "Czech" at all. Bohemia does not seem to have had a distinct church style — instead, churches in Bohemia bear resemblances to both Western and Eastern European structures. When the Czech parishes in Northeast Wisconsin accumulated enough money to build the massive structures that exist today, the buildings they commissioned were usually of the High Victorian Gothic Style — a late-19th century architectural style that borrowed from the western European medieval tradition with varying degrees of accuracy. This was a popular style for church buildings across the U.S. The Czech parishes' choices may have stemmed in part from their memories of churches back home; it is also likely that the buildings they got were based on published plans (a few parishes could afford an architect) and the traditions and techniques of the masons they hired, who were frequently German. The churches are usually impressive for their grandeur, detail, and the care of their upkeep — reflective of generations of pride.

•Church Art. Most Czechs immigrants could not afford to bring art or large religious objects with them on the passage. But once they had a sufficient church building, Czech artistry often became a prominent visual feature. St. Lawrence church in Stangelville, for example, has an altar which was carved by a Bohemian priest in 1875. This altar was originally made for a log church which served the parish from 1864 to 1894. The same church had a mural of its namesake, a copy of which hung in a church in Mrakow, Bohemia. Almost every church has its special features, reminders of the parish's heritage, and the stories that their keepers can

tell of them are worth seeking. Another common arena where Czech artistry appeared was in the graveyard which accompanied every early church, and sometimes outlasted them.

•Shrines. Outside the church, some of the most impressive signs of devotion are the shrines or markers located along the highways. Topped by a crucifix and often labeled with a scripture verse in Czech (sometimes a translation was added later), these markers were placed by families who wished to express their devotion. Many parishes had shrines at nearby intersections, and such markers were often points of veneration during rogation days.

In praise of the present

Despite the pressures of assimilation and the changes that come with time, Czech culture is alive and prospering in Northeast Wisconsin. During your travels through this area, you will meet some of the practitioners of Czech traditions — people who learned these unique skills from their elders, their peers, or who sometimes learned them independently in order to recapture part of their heritage. These people are the true experts on living Czech culture. When you can, ask them questions, and encourage them to record and continue their work.

Some of the Czech cultural elements you may encounter include:

• Dance music. Polkas, waltzes and schottisches ring from almost every Czech celebration. Polkas are especially popular dances, not only with Czechs but among Poles, Germans, Slovaks and other Central Europeans as well. Czech polkas came to Wisconsin with the earliest settlers, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Czech bands multiplied at breakneck pace. According to one contemporary band leader, Clete Bellin, Czech polkas have a smoother, more flowing sound that those of some other ethnic groups. Czech polkas usually are similar in tempo to others, but are, for example, less staccato than most Polish-style polkas (staccato means that the notes are clipped off short and disconnected from each other).

Another factor that separates the Czech band style from those of other ethnic groups stems from differences in band makeup. Although all dance bands vary in size and instruments used, the typical Czech band has two brass players, who usually play trumpet but may also switch to flugelhorn or baritone, and two or three clarinets and saxophones. These will be accompanied by a piano, drums and a tuba. Unlike German and Polish bands, most Czech bands do not usually include string bases, banjos or concertinas, although several in recent years have replaced the reed section with an accordion.

•Singing and folk songs. Czech dance music often includes a sung part, which is often in Czech. It may have many of folk music's universal themes, including romantic love and the lack of it, love of homeland and nature, and personality sketches, such as one song that describes a blacksmith. Similar themes run through Czech folk songs, which are still popular. Several of those sung by Northeast Wisconsin residents describe life in Bohemia, and were presumably brought to the U.S. by the emigrating generation. Others are described by one Czech researcher as "lyrical in character," with "a number of realistic narrative ballads and songs which consist of sharp, realistic dialogue." (Olshefsky, 25)

• Food. Few aspects of any culture have the staying power through generations that foods can claim, and Northeast Wisconsin's Czechs provide some excellent examples. Czech baked

goods, for example, are known far beyond these communities. The premier spot may belong to the "kolach," which some called "the national cake of Czechoslovakia." (Olshefsky, 25). A kolach is essentially a cake made of raised dough and filled with a prune, berry, poppyseed or other fruit filling. A cookie-sized version, the "kolatchky," is also popular. Other Czech baked goods, such as a rye bread called "zitny chleb" and rolls, known as "rohlicky," also feature poppyseeds, which are still grown on some Czech farms.

Traditional Czech meals require foods such as roasts and smoked meats, potato dumplings and sauerkraut, all of which were originally made in the household.

•Lodges. While most Czechs' social life centered around the parish, those who had no formal church ties found other means of social contact. Czech free-thinkers were particularly strong in the fraternal movement, which also attracted many Czech Catholics. The best-known of these lodges was *Zapadni Ceskabratrska Jednota*, or Z.C.B.J. Although some still use this name, most of the lodges now use the English name of the life insurance they sell: the Western Fraternal Life Association. Most of these lodges meet in the homes of members or in public buildings, but at least two have their own halls. One of these is in Slovan, in central Kewaunee County, where an otherwise typical older house reveals it use in the WFLA crest over the front door. This crest's symbols provide reminders of the lodges' founders and members: industrial and trade tools above, grain and a plow below.

Wisconsin's ethnic groups offer you a chance to encounter places across the globe , sometimes by traveling only a few miles. Many of these people are working to preserve and honor their heritage, a task that has often continued for several generations. As you visit with Northeast Wisconsin's Czechs, think about this challenge, and be sure to let people know that you appreciate their work. In a sense, you benefit each other. You learn more about the world and how the U.S. has evolved, and your Czech counterparts learn that their uniqueness is special to you, too.

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