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CZECH COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

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The object of this undergraduate thesis is to map the history of the Czech communities in America and report on their current situation. The thesis is divided into two main sections, first being on the history of Czech immigration to the United States, It first lists the first important individual settlers and their arrival and then it introduces larger waves of immigration. Finally, it refers to the current numbers of immigrants and the parts of the United States they settled in. The second part focuses on the cultural background and habits of these newly established communities. It is divided into two main fields that are music and literature. These fields each start with historical background, they also list most famous figures and then show current situation. Finally, there is a summarization of the whole thesis including the results of the thesis in the conclusion part.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The immigration to the United States of America is a very intensely discussed topic. With each American president comes the question of what is he or she planning on doing with the increasing immigration numbers and illegal citizens on American soil. But although the American society is not so open to new immigrants coming in from different countries, regimes and religious backgrounds, many people all over the world have been exposed to depictions in the media and taught in schools that America welcomes everyone. Czech people were among those, who tried and tested this supposed openness and hospitality as early as possible. The first immigrants came to America in the seventeenth century and became acclaimed and appreciated members of the society. They built their own houses, managed their farms, learned the new language and tried not to deviate from the “average” American in any way, other than by keeping their cultural background. As the old Czech saying “Golden Czech Hands” goes, immigrants of Czech or Bohemian ancestry did not need any help in their new homeland, they always provided for themselves and formed a strong community, in which they could rely on each other. This is a prevalent theme during the whole of my thesis. Once there were more and more Czechs coming to America they started to feel the need to include their own culture and heritage in their everyday lives. That is the exact moment the true Czech-American community was born. Because the largest number of immigrants came during the second half of the nineteenth century in search for cheap land, the most Czech populated areas are the state of Texas, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. This thesis provides a detailed look on the immigration patterns and also an overview of the areas they settled in. The second part of this thesis focuses on the ways the Czech communities have kept their heritage alive and how they educated and informed the new generations of Czech-Americans about their origin, history and culture.

The two main sections of the chapter called Cultural Habits are on music and literature, each starting with the most famous and acclaimed figures and then going into other important figures and events that helped to shape the Czech-American community until today. The main purpose of this thesis is to map and look into all the ways and means through which the Czech-American community was able to survive and thanks to which it is still active up until this day. There are many organizations and clubs that provide an outlet through which Czechs can get together and also festivals and musical events that are

happening every year. Many Czechs living abroad organize meet-ups or book clubs, reading Czech popular authors. They try to educate parents on the benefits of bilingualism and encourage them to teach their children the difficult but beautiful Czech language. Many of them started their own restaurants with Czech-themed cuisine and pastries and the Czech fruit filled Kolaches are famous throughout the States. The Czechs are well-respected, welcomed and honorable citizens and as such are also regarded in this thesis.

2. CZECH IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

To understand the behavior and habits of Czech Americans or Czechs living in the United States, we must have a look at the development of their immigration to the United States throughout the years. The departure of Czech people from their own country had a lot of reasons, most of them being mainly political, religious or economic (Saxon-Ford, 1998). The Czech nation in the course of its history was for a long time under the dominance of monarchies, rulers and other nations and therefore the Czech people were exploring their options with emigration being usually their last but hopeful one. As it stands in The Star-Spangled Banner, the national anthem of The United States of America, America is often referred to as the “Land of the free” or in pop culture the “Land of opportunities” and this has been a tremendous enticement for people from all over the world. This chapter of the thesis will give you a brief history of the Czech immigration to the United States and therefore a foundation for understanding the living situations of Czechs and Czech communities in America. The Czech people were among the first who knew about the discovery of America or the “New World” as it was referred to back then and there are still publications in Plzeň, Czech Republic from the 1500, which report such event. The immigration of Czech people therefore dates back as far back as to the seventeenth century.

2.1. First settlers

The first documented settler of Czech heritage, who arrived to and stayed in America, was Augustine Hermann (in Czech Augustin Heřman). Augustine Hermann was born in the city of Prague, Kingdom of Bohemia, in the first half of the seventeenth century, estimated 1621. He immigrated with his parents to the Netherlands when he was around twelve years old and later went to America. Hermann was a merchant, explorer and a cartographer, who came to America on a transatlantic ship. Hermann first settled in New Amsterdam, now lower Manhattan in New York City, where he was a well-respected merchant given his Dutch background. He sold goods and transported them, belonging to a strong group of Dutch traders, who had a lot of influence among the community. In approximately 1660 Hermann and his wife moved to Maryland, after having some trade disputes in New Amsterdam. They were given only a limited citizenship, as was then a custom. The publications, which mention Hermann’s life, are not in an agreement whether Lord Baltimore asked him to produce a

detailed map of Maryland and Virginia after he learned that Hermann was also a cartographer or whether Hermann proposed this idea to Lord Baltimore himself, nevertheless he finished his map and received 5000 acres of land for it. He named this land Bohemia Manor and when he was finally awarded citizenship he also added to his name the suffix Bohemiensis.

Hermann's map of Maryland and Virginia was a much-appreciated work, which was used for another 70 years and because of it he became a well-known and respected person. Hermann was very proud of his Czech heritage and mentioned it in a lot of works he wrote during his life. He died in 1686 at his Bohemia Manor in Cecil County, Maryland and was also buried there. (Coclains, 2013) In an interview in 2005 for Český Rozhlas, Radio Praha, a Czech genealogist and historian Miloslav Rechcigl described Hermann as one of the first "true Americans", saying "It has to do with the type of life he led: among the Dutch, among the British, European influences as well as American ones, he was an all-around person, energetic and sort of expressed characteristics of true Americans."

The second settler with Bohemian ancestors was Frederick Phillipse. It is not entirely known which of his ancestors were of Bohemian heritage, as he was born in the Netherlands to an Englishwoman and a Dutch man, however in the course of history, he is still considered among the first "Czechs" in America. He came to New Amsterdam in 1647; some sources report this move a few years later, in 1653, as a merchant and a carpenter. He later gave up carpentry to become a full time trader. Phillipse was very successful during his time and was later referred to as "the Dutch Millionaire". From the city officials he received a great amount of land and various city estates. He named his land Philipsborough and started to build churches and castles across his grounds. One of his churches built in 1699 is now the oldest church in New York State. The Manor of Philipsborough, or Phillipse Manor, as it is often called, extended along the Hudson River from Spuyten Duyvil Creek to Croton River, a distance of about twenty-one miles, and comprised about 156,000 acres. Another man of Czech ancestry, that participated in the making of American history. ("Frederick Philipse", n.d.)

2.2. Larger waves of immigration

A big wave of immigrants came to America in the eighteenth century. These were the members of the so called Unity of the Brethren, religious group coming to America searching

for religious freedom, their right to practice their own beliefs during the years 1741 and 1762. The Unity of the Brethren, established in 1457, came into existence because of a reforming priest, Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake in 1415. Hus wanted to transform the church and bring it back to the principals on which it was originally started. Big part of his work was to remove distracting influences that developed over the years and transcribe the scripture into a language common people understand as opposed to church Latin, which was the language used in all of the religious documents and also for Holy Writ, which only the educated and clergy were able to learn. Religious conflict in Europe grew until people were forced to either not practice their religion of choice or leave their country. A lot of those who left their homeland and emigrated later joined movements, the Unity of the Brethren or also Moravian Church, which today are two separate churches.

During the nineteenth century, more specifically in the second half, Czech people heard that there was an opportunity of gaining cheap land in the southern states of America, especially in Texas. The Czechs established numerous social organizations all over the state, one of them being the Československý Čtenářský Spolek (Czechoslovakian Reading Club), the Sokol (Falcon) club and other. From this time forth, the immigration grew and developed until the year 1914, when it was suppressed due to the outbreak of the First World War.

In the areas Czech Protestants settled, mostly in Texas, for the lack of support for their own belief, few of them decided to start congregations, not only to practice their faith but also to be able to teach their children. A few of Czech pastors also came to America, to lead these newly established congregations and to start some more. Representatives of these congregations arranged a meeting in Texas in the year 1903, to officially create the Unity of the Brethren, in the effort to resurrect the Brethren Church, which was for many years very strongly suppressed in their homeland. (“Unity Of The Brethren”, n.d., History)

The Moravian Church, or Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren), as it has been officially known since 1457, arose as followers of Hus gathered in the village of Kunvald, about 100 miles east of Prague, in eastern Bohemia, and organized the church. This was 60 years before Martin Luther began his reformation and 100 years before the establishment of the Anglican Church. By 1467 the Moravian Church had established its own ministry, and in the years that followed three orders of the ministry were defined: deacon, presbyter and bishop.

The Moravians first came to America during the colonial period. In 1735 they were part of General Oglethorpe's philanthropic venture in Georgia. Settlement congregations were established in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. They built the communities of Bethlehem, Nazareth, Lititz, and Hope. They also established congregations in Philadelphia and on Staten Island in New York. All were considered frontier centers for the spread of the gospel, particularly in mission to the Native Americans. Bethlehem was the center of Moravian activity in colonial America. ("A Brief History", n.d.) According to David Bíróczi (2003), the Moravian Brethren were fond of music. They organized the first symphonic orchestra in America and the Moravian Trombone Choir claims the longest continuous existence of any musical ensemble in the USA. Today the Moravian Brethren in the USA consist of about 50,000 members. Cortés' (2013) study on Czech immigration found the following:

Sustained Czech immigration began in 1848 after a failed revolution, and even those Czechs who returned home after a few years when it was safer to do so spread the word of America, and attracted further immigration. While many immigrant groups settled primarily in New York City or nearby northeast cities because of the proximity to their arrival point at Ellis Island, Czechs clustered around Chicago, which in the 19th century was the hub of American railways. By the end of the 1850s there were 10 000 Czech Americans. Most had arrived in family groups, unlike the common trend of young men immigrating alone to secure work and sending for their families later or marrying local girls. By the turn of the century, American-born Czech Americans outnumbered first-generation Czech immigrants, 199 939 to 156 640. New immigration restrictions exacerbated this. In the 20th century, many of the Czechs admitted to the United States were professionals, journalists, or students – refugees first from Nazi persecution in the 1930s and 1940s, and later from the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Many Czech immigrants Americanized their names, either choosing a new name that was phonemically similar or translating the meaning of their surname into English. (p. 662)

At the beginning of the twentieth century Czech people coming to the United States were equally divided between rural and urban areas. Their main targeted farm areas were Nebraska, Wisconsin, Texas, Iowa and Minnesota and for urban areas then mainly Chicago or New York. By 1900 Chicago became the third-largest Czech urban center in the world after second Vienna and first Prague. A lot of Czech people that left their homeland as farmers first came to Wisconsin because of the cheap, plentiful land that was offered. A lot of these new settlers later went on and explored other parts of the States, many of them going west into the plains of Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa. In southeast Nebraska a great community grew in the city of Wilber, Czech settlers there wanted to keep in touch with their Czech heritage and therefore they established Bohemian cemetery, polka band and a Sokol Hall. Later on a Czech Museum and in 1961 a Czech festival, that has continued up until now.

Another great community established in Texas, where by 1910 the number of Czech-born Texans reached fifteen thousand. A lot of the Texas immigrants came to Texas from Moravia, especially Valašsko in Czech and northeastern Bohemia. The Czech language had gone through changes to preserve itself, although still with a prevalent Moravian dialect. At this moment most of the Czech heritage was located in the “Big Four” counties – Fayette, Lavaca, Austin and Washington. (Bronner, 2006) Worth a mention are also the villages of Cedar Rapids and Spillville in Iowa, which are until present day considered as “Czech” villages, with a high number of Czech immigrants, which established museums and hold annual Czech themed festivals. The National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids hold the largest collection of authentic costumes and preserve various Czech traditions. In an interview by Český rozhlas, Radio Praha (2012) with its head Gail Naughton, regarding severe floods that damaged everything in their way, we learn more about what the museums mission is and what it has to offer:

So what is your *raison d’être*? Obviously you are not a museum in the classical sense of the word, you are much more interactive and alive...

“Our mission is to inspire people of all backgrounds to connect to Czech and Slovak history and culture and the key there is that we are trying to broaden the scope of people that we reach. The Czechs and Slovaks have this really important experience in the 20th century –in contemporary history –and there are a lot of lessons to be learnt. The search for freedom –which is really a

thematic tie of the 20th century for Czechs and Slovaks -is something that we've all experienced, all our families have at one point or another come from somewhere else and so we all have that in common. So we are looking at those lessons and the things that we share.”

What are the kinds of things that you offer? You currently have an Alfons Mucha exhibition, I believe?

“To open the museum two months ago we organized an Alfons Mucha exhibition, partnered with the Mucha Trust, and we have over 230 items some from Prague and some from London. It is the largest Mucha exhibition that the foundation has ever done and what's special about this exhibition is that of course it is wonderful and you don't need to do another thing but look at all the beautiful work but in addition to that we really delve into the story of the man and his dedication to his culture and how he developed in many artistic ways –not only the commercial art that we all identify with him. It's wonderful and we've had record numbers of people coming –the word is out in the United States and this is really the only chance to see a Mucha exhibition in the US in the last two decades.” (para. 3., 4)

2.3. Current statistics of immigration

In the American Community Survey [ACS] (2010), which provides the estimates on population, demographic and housing unit and works along with the U.S. Census Bureau, it was revealed that 1, 533, 826 people list their ancestry as Czech and 304, 020 people identify with Czechoslovakian ancestry. In the year 2014 the ACS provides data that 1, 479, 588 people identify with Czech ancestry, without listing the numbers for Czechoslovakian ancestry.

3. CULTURAL HABITS

These next chapters of the thesis focus on the way Czech-Americans have been living and maintaining their Czech cultural history and habits, while also not deviating from the true American life. The obstacles they have been facing naturally come with each new generation. Many of them do not have any relatives that still live in the Czech Republic and therefore they only learn what being Czech means by remembering, cherishing and preserving what their parents and grandparents have told them. The other obstacle also comes when we

evaluate what this century presents and that is globalization. According to the BBC GCSE Bitesize Guide Globalization is a term used to describe a process of “massively increased trade and cultural exchange”, people want to be able to communicate with others all over the world through buying from and promoting the same brands, working for the same companies and corporations, supporting international trade and investment. Through information technology, the Internet and social media, people are now able to communicate with each other from different ends of the planet, which also comes with the necessity of being able to speak the same language. But this development has left a little to no room for using languages that will not help or benefit its speaker in his professional life and maintaining cultural habits that can be listed on curriculums. This reflects deeply on the current generation of Czech-Americans and explains their declining interest in Czech cultural values.

The two main components in keeping any culture alive are music and literature. People have been using these media all throughout history and they are playing a significant part when talking about any culture.

3.1. Music

3.1.1. Musical history

As we can find out from the Moravian Book of Worship (1995), the very first music played by the Czechs in America came with the Moravian Brethren, mentioned in the previous chapter. They played Czech hymns and liturgies and songs by Jan Hus, Matěj Kunvaldský, Lukáš of Prague, Jan Roh and others, which were originally published in Bohemian Brethren Hymnals of the 16th century.

Perhaps one of the most famous musicians that moved to America during his career was Antonín Leopold Dvořák. Dvořák was born September 8, 1841 in Bohemian, now Czech, village Nelahozeves in the Austrian Empire. He was born as the first of eight children to a butcher named František Dvořák and his wife Anna Dvořáková. He started school at six years old and also immediately started playing the violin. His father František wanted him to one-day takeover the family business and therefore become a butcher as well but from Antonín's early age it was well apparent that he was more gifted for music. When he was just twelve years old he went on to pursue his music career and started to learn how to play other musical instruments as well. In 1859 Dvořák finished a two-year course at the Institute for

Church Music in Prague. For the next few years Dvořák played where possible, trying to earn more money, composed some works, which he never showed to anyone and got married. After settling in a small village in Vysoká, he started to compose some of his most famous works and to become a recognized composer. In 1875 after gaining some years of experience, Dvořák decided to apply for a scholarship at the Ministry of Culture and Education in Vienna, which was annually given to impoverished and struggling artists. The institution's committee decided to give him the highest grant of 400 gulden and he continued to receive this award for the next four years. Around this time, young Dvořák came into knowing Johannes Brahms, another German piano player, composer and conductor. They formed a great friendship and admired each other works. Brahms introduced Dvořák to his respected German publisher Fritz Simrock and from then on Dvořák started to finally earn money through his composition. As he was starting to become more and more known and respected as a musician, offers to perform his works elsewhere have become more frequent. After this successful time in Dvořák's career, his personal life has suffered a great loss. His three small children all suddenly died within close time to each other of different causes and therefore marked a dark and mournful time in his compositions. During this period Dvořák composed his first widely successful work Stabat Mater. This work brought him the attention of musical enthusiasts in England and in 1880 he was invited to London. He presented his works and received a great admiration and fame every time he visited. His connections with England and their appreciation of his music resulted in an honorary degree from Cambridge University in 1891. A year later, Dvořák becomes such desired persona that he receives an invitation to come to America. Jeanette Thurber, who was then the president of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York, offered Dvořák the position of a composition teacher and director of the school in order to educate and inspire the American students and musicians with European style of composing. In 1892 Dvořák finally accepted this offer after much deliberation and moved with his whole family to New York. They arrived during the 400th anniversary celebration of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America. The celebrations Dvořák encountered were enormous, the city flooded with visitors and every street and corner was decorated with signs and bunting. Dvořák was so moved and astonished by this experience that he even wrote a letter to his friend Karel Bašťař:

14 October 1892: Just imagine row after row [of marchers], an incredible procession of people working both in the fields of industry and the crafts, and

huge numbers of gymnasts - among them members of the Czech Sokol - and crowds of people from the arts and also many nationalities and colors. And all of this went on uninterruptedly, from dawn until 2:00 in the morning ... Thousands upon thousands of people, and an ever-changing sight! And you should hear all the kinds of music! ... Well, America seems to have demonstrated all it is and all it is capable of! I haven't got enough words to describe it all. ("Dvořák's American Heritage Association", n.d., Dvořák's Arrival)

He spent two years in America, taught three school years at the Conservatory in New York and also traveled a lot with his family during his stay. Many sources report that he really enjoyed his stay and would have even considered settling in the United States had not his wife persuaded him to come back to Bohemia for their family. For that reason the legend that is being told about his sorrow and nostalgia for his home country and composing the Ninth Symphony also subtitled *From the New World* by Dvořák himself out of those feelings is not entirely true, although some think the main reason was that only one of their children stayed with them during their last year spent in America. He vacationed in the "Czech" village of Spillville in Iowa, which also was the birthplace of his close friend and violinist Josef Kovařík. Some of the works composed during Dvořák's time in Spillville were the String Quartet in F and the String Quartet in E-flat. He also traveled to Chicago for the World Exposition, and during the "Czech Day" that was held on the 12th of August, he conducted performances of the Symphony No. 8, three Slavonic Dances from the op. 72 set, and the overture *Domov můj* (My Home).

Dvořák was very strongly influenced by African-American music, which he tried to incorporate into his own works. He saw himself in his young assistant Harry T. Burleigh, who was an African-American singer, who was also enrolled at the National Conservatory and also sang in the men and boys choir at the Free African Church of St. Philip's, New York City's first African-American congregation of Protestant Episcopalians. Antonín directed the National Conservatory orchestra classes that took place twice a week and Harry Burleigh served as the orchestra librarian and copyist, and filled in on double bass and tympani. According to some sources, the orchestra librarian used to be the person closest to the director, as he was not directly taught by him, therefore the young Harry and Antonín formed

a close relationship according to Burleigh's friend Victor Herbert who described it in a letter to Carl Engel, who was the chief of the music division of the Library of Congress. Herbert wrote:

"Dr. Dvořák was most kind and unaffected and took great interest in his pupils, one of which, Harry Burleigh, had the privilege of giving the Dr. some of the thematic material for his Symphony. ... I have seen this denied - but it is true."
("Dvořák's American Heritage Association", n.d.,)

Based on this relationship, Dvořák emerged himself more into the African-American music and through his very public declarations of admiration towards it; he most definitely has given broad encouragement to the development of jazz. In the year 1893 there were even several articles in prestigious newspaper about Dvořák's views on Negro music.

"In the Negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music. They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, solemn, religious, bold, merry, gay or what you will. It is music that suits itself to any mood or any purpose. There is nothing in the whole age of composition that cannot be supplied with themes from this source." (Interviewed by James Creelman, *New York Herald*, May 21, 1893)

Dvořák influenced a lot of American musicians, mainly because a few of his students taught, later to become, other famous musicians. According to the Dvořák American Heritage Association, his student Will Marion Cook became the teacher of Duke Ellington, Harry Rowe Shelley taught Charles Ives, and Rubin Goldmark taught both Aaron Copland and George Gershwin. The Dvořák American Heritage Association is one of the most respected and honored organizations that commemorates, celebrates and continues to explore composer Antonín Dvořák's extraordinary musical contributions, with a special emphasis on his influential residency in the United States in the years 1892-95. From its building in New York City, it tries to preserve and honor the composer's legacy, as well as educate and inspire students of music and general public. ("Dvořák's American Heritage Association", n.d.,Home)

Other than Antonín Dvořák's impact on American music, Czech immigrants had a strong musical influence on the popular and most played music in the areas they were living in. The perfect example of that is Texas music.

As reported by Clayton and Specht (2005):

By the early twentieth century, Czech dance halls in Texas rang with the sounds of Czech polkas, country and blues. Frank Baca established the first Texas Czech band, The Baca Band, in Fayetteville in 1882, which toured throughout the state. Although Baca died in 1907, the band has added new members over the years and continues to tour. The late Adolph Hofner grew up in a Czech family in San Antonio and absorbed both traditional Czech musical influences and Texas western swing. Perhaps best known for fiddle classic "Cotton-Eyed Joe" Hofner also is believed to be responsible for incorporating the polka into western swing. The Patek family of Shiner, Texas also has maintained one of the state's most enduring and popular Czech bands for several generations. Each year, celebrations are still held throughout Texas – including the Pražská Pout' (Prazka Pout) in Praha, the Czech folk festival in Shiner, and the National Polka Festival in Ennis – and Czech music still can be heard on a variety of radio stations throughout Central Texas. (p. 20, 21)

As Gary Hartman (2008) mentions in his book on Texas music, once Czech people formed their communities, they started to go by the old proverb that "every Czech is a musician" and therefore started to pick up all sorts of instruments, such as accordions, pianos, clarinets or trumpets and played at social gatherings and events of any kind. The first Czech performer was Frederick Limsky, who played for Sam Houston and his troops at the battle of San Jacinto. Then came Fran Bača and his The Bača Band, who were one of the first famous performing and recording artists. His band consisted mostly of family members who took over the band once Bača died. The band was very frequently played on the radio and recorded with major record labels such as Columbia, Okeh and Brunswick. The Bača Band played genres varying from Czech waltzes and polkas to jazz and blues. John Pátek, another immigrant born in Czechoslovakia, formed in 1920 in Shiner, Texas his family band called the Pátek Band, later renamed the Joe Pátek Orchestra, after his son took over. They were as

well as The Bača Band famous and sought after group in the Southwest. Their most famous song is “The Shiner Song” a song celebrating the Shiner culture and because it was sang in Czech, the Czech immigrants of Texas soon considered it an “anthem” of their community. A half German and half Czech born in Moulton, Texas, Adolph Hofner was another of very famous artists. He grew up in a very music oriented family and was introduced not only to American but also to German and Czech national music. He started to be drawn to Western swing during the 1930s and only ten years later was one of the most acclaimed artist of this genre. He is considered to be the first person to introduce the accordion into the Western swing and also one of the most versatile artists during his time. The Czech Texas community found music very important and this is proven in the number of music venues they established. “Czech Texans founded the SPJST (Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas) on July 1, 1897, as a fraternal organization deigned to provide insurance, medical care, and other types of social and economic support for Czech immigrants.” (Hartman, p. 116) These SPJST centers later became places for gatherings and festivals and weddings of Czech immigrants but were also later opened to the public. SPJST is until today still an active organization and serves its original purpose for rural communities all over the state of Texas.

Today the Czech Texans listen to Czech-language radio and Czech Texas music on radio stations such as KOOP-FM radio in Austin or KVLG-AM radio in La Grange. The publication *Czech Music in Nebraska (Česká hudba v Nebrasce)* by Vladimír and DeLores Kucera published in 1980 lists a great amount of either Czech born or American born Czech musicians that influenced the development of music in America.

3.1.3 Current musical acts

In the recent years, there are more bands and musicians that keep up the tradition of playing polka and swing, rather than pop and other newer genres. There are not that many newly formed bands that play Czech inspired music or sing in Czech language, although there is quite a big demand for Czech artists to come and play in America. An owner of an American company Tamizdat, which helps bring artists from Central and Eastern Europe, by helping them with their Visa applications, Matthew Covey talked about such demand in an interview with Český rozhlas, Radio Praha (2008):

Around how many Czech artists come here to the US every year? “In terms of bands and solo musicians we probably handle applications for around 12 groups a year, I would guess.” Can you give us some names of artists who have played here? “There’s a number of groups that come with a fair amount of regularity. Bands like the Plastic People, Sunshine, Lenka Dusilová or Chinaski.”

Although music is only a part of person’s identity, for people living abroad and speaking different languages it is still a very valuable one. As these reports show, young Czech-Americans are still interested in Czech music and what it has to offer. On the other hand, their American musical endeavors have not gone unnoticed also and they greatly contribute to maintaining a community.

3.2. Literature

3.2.1. Literary history

The Czechs arriving in America early in the 19th century were relatively well-educated people, but mostly farmers looking for cheap land, therefore not much literature of this time period has remained in existence. According to Nelson (2005) the most common form of literature produced by the Czech immigrants during this time were various weekly magazines and newspaper such as the Slovan, Svoboda, Bratrské Listy, Věstník, Hospodář, Našinec or Amerikán. During the years 1868 and 1870 poet Josef Václav Sládek traveled through the states and published his experiences in a book called My America (Má Amerika) in 1914, which has become one of the classic works in Czech literature. But that is one in a few publications that withstood the test of time. The Czechs in America also published numerous brochures and guides on how to learn the English language or how to plant certain crops or spices such as the Rostliny kořenné: neboli koření kuchyňské: praktické návody k pěstování 50 druhů rostlin kořených, jež slouží v kuchyních ke kořenění různých pokrmův a nápojů, zároveň s návody k zužitkování v kuchařství, hospodářství, lékařství, zvěrolékařství, průmyslu, obchodu a t.d.: k potřebě Čechoameričanů written by Ferdinand L. Musil, published in Chicago in 1918 or a publications on how to raise a family such as the Rodinný krb (Family fireside) published in Milwaukee written by Antonín Novák.

One of the most famous writers who wrote about the Czech immigrants without actually being Czech is the American born writer and critic Willa Cather. Willa Cather was born on December 7, 1873 in the Back Creek Valley, Virginia. When she was nine, her whole family moved to Nebraska. Cather had hard time adjusting to the life on the prairie, but as she grew up she learned to love the lands surrounding her and made it the heart of her novels. In Nebraska, in 1890 the immigrants made up 43% of the state population and therefore different languages and cultures always surrounded Cather. She attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and graduated in 1895. She became a theater critic and a columnist, writing for Nebraska State Journal and Lincoln Courier. After some persuasion from her friend she, then living in New York, started writing her own works, but only after moving to Pittsburgh did she really start to write.

“Pittsburgh was even more vital, more creative, more hungry for culture than New York. Pittsburgh was the birthplace of my writing.” (“Goodreads”, n.d.)

In 1913, Willa Cather published her first novel *O Pioneers!*, which celebrated Swedish farmers of Nebraska and in 1915 *The Song of the Lark* which depicts the life of an aspiring singer and German immigrant Thea Kronborg. In 1918 she publishes the final book of this “prairie trilogy” called *My Ántonia*. *My Ántonia* is a novel about a New York City lawyer, Jim Burden, who writes a memoir of his upbringing in Nebraska and a girl named Ántonia, who comes from a Bohemian immigrant family. The novel starts with Shimerdas, Ántonia’s family, moving to Nebraska right next to the Burden’s family. The kids of both families start playing together and Jim and Ántonia, being close in age, become good friends. The story gets darker as Mr. Shimerda commits a suicide and leaves his family struggling. Jim and Ántonia grow apart. The story then continues with the two main characters meeting and growing apart once again, while Ántonia lives through being abandoned pregnant at the altar and having to come face her family’s disapproval as she raises her child on her own. Meanwhile Jim finishes his education and becomes a lawyer. He goes back to Nebraska on several occasions and remembers to see Ántonia every time. The story is a telling of a lifelong friendship and the hardships of Czech immigrants during the nineteenth century, as she based her main character Ántonia on her childhood friend Annie Pavelka. It depicts the landscape and conditions under which people have been living during this particular time period. Cather’s observations greatly capture the essence of America at that time.

“During that burning day when we were crossing Iowa, our talk kept returning to a central figure, a Bohemian girl whom we had known long ago and whom both of us admired. More than any other person we remembered, this girl seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood. To speak her name was to call up pictures of people and places, to set a quiet drama going in one's brain. I had lost sight of her altogether, but Jim had found her again after long years, had renewed a friendship that meant a great deal to him, and out of his busy life had set apart time enough to enjoy that friendship.” (My *Ántonia*, p. 12)

In her work Cather focuses on depicting the Czech immigrants as a resilient community that did not want to succumb to the American lifestyle and tried to keep and preserve their national pride and traditions. Cather strongly disagrees with the convictions of that time, that in order to be good citizens, immigrants needed to assimilate with the American way of living and tries to pose a question, whether it can bring America more good than harm to let immigrants live in their own communities and with their own culture. (Prchal, 2004) Cather wrote about different groups of immigrants she came across while living in Nebraska as a child, however Czech immigrants left seemingly stronger impression than others as they were the heroes of more than one of her stories such as *Peter* (1892), her first published story, *The Bohemian Girl* (1912) and *Neighbor Rosicky* (1930). She gained respect and critics approval and after *My Ántonia* was regarded as one of the nation's best novelists. In an interview for *Český rozhlas, Radio Praha*, (2012), David Vaughan, a writer and broadcaster explained Cather's fascination with the immigrants: “She was born into a family that was very well established and had been farming for six generations. They were old American settlers, weren't they? Yes, they were exactly this, so when they moved to Nebraska they had resources, which other people, who came there from Europe as immigrants, lacked. “

After finishing her immigrant trilogy, Willa Cather changed her subject of writing. In *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1920) she wrote about artists and then in her critically most acclaimed novel *One of Ours* (1922) for which she won the Pulitzer Prize, she depicted the life of a soldier and the horrors of World War I based on the life of her cousin G.P. Cather. Willa Cather received great recognition in America during her time and as one of a few chose

to shed light on heavy topics that were burdening the American society. (“The Willa Cather Archive”, n.d.)

3.2.2 Contemporary literature

Although as mentioned previously, that during the 18th and 19th centuries, there were mostly magazines and journals being published, in the 20th century, this trend died down and recently has almost completely vanished. Not many Czech immigrants feel the need to publish their own literature when they want to get in touch with the Czech language, because they can connect with their Czech families in Czech Republic, if they are lucky to still have any, easily over the internet or if they want to they can easily buy Czech written books through there as well. And on the other hand, not many Czech writers immigrate to the United States, because the competition is far bigger than in the Czech Republic and they do not get the guarantee that their work is going to be well translated and therefore understood by the different audience. Despite all of those reasons, there are still some writers who either emigrated or are popular in spite of the distance.

One of the more famous Czech authors, who immigrated to the United States, was Arnošt Lustig a Czech Jewish author and publicist who is known for having written a plethora of books and stories about the Holocaust. He came to the US in the year 1970 after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia and spent his first year as a student of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. He later became a professor at the American University in Washington D.C. His most famous books are *Night and Hope* (1957), *Dita Saxova* (1962) and *A Prayer For Katerina Horowitzowa* (1974). Another author writing and living in America was Rio Preisner. He was a Czech catholic and writer, poet, professor and philosopher. As well as Arnošt Lustig, he came to America after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1969 and taught German studies and German at the University of Pennsylvania. His most acclaimed work is *Americana*, a two-part essay on modern America.

A poet, translator and a professor Jiřina Fuchsová immigrated to New York in 1963 and worked as a shop assistant until she learned English. She is a university professor and a translator living in Los Angeles. Her works are written in Czech and published mainly in the Czech Republic. A critically acclaimed writer and scientist is Miloslav Rechcigl, Jr., Ph.D, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1950, became American citizen and studied at Cornell

University. He was among the first founders and past Presidents of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU). Some of his works about Czech immigrants include *On Behalf of Their Homeland: Fifty Years of SVU* published also in Czech in Prague. Among the critically acclaimed and into English translated authors are Karel Čapek and his world famous robots in *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots*, *The Gardener's Year* or *War with the Newts*. Jaroslav Hašek and his description of a typical Czech in *The Good Soldier Svejk: and His Fortunes in the World War*. Václav Havel as our former president and playwright of plays such as *The Garden Party* and *Other Plays* or *Leaving*. Ota Pavel with his autobiographical *How I Came to Know Fish* or Franz Kafka, a German writing author of *The Metamorphosis* or *The Trial* and one of the very influential authors of the 20th century. And perhaps the most talked about author in our modern days Milan Kundera and his *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. (Jeffries, 2011)

A very helpful source of inspiration and reading recommendations is the CzechLit – Czech Literature Online portal, financed by the Czech Ministry of Culture and managed by the Arts and Theatre Institute (Institut umění/Divadelní ústav), which according to its CzechLit Editor-in-Chief David Záborský, targets three groups of users: readers, translators and foreign publishers.

“Thanks to our carefully thought-out menu system the members of these different groups with different preferences are offered appropriate content. Our interests focus on books, particularly newly published ones in Czech and recently published translations. Apart from an overview of books and authors we also offer you information on events associated with Czech literature.” (Záborský, n.d.)

3.3. Current cultural events and festivals and active organizations

Up until this day, there are still a lot of centers and organizations that try and preserve the Czech culture and educate people about their history. These establishments are mainly in the areas of the highest numbers of Czech population such as Texas, Minnesota and Iowa.

One of these centers is the Czech and Slovak Cultural Centre of Minnesota. This center is a nonprofit organization and its founding was inspired by Václav Havel's visit of Minnesota in 1999. The center itself was then founded in 2001. According to its website its goals are:

- To act as a point of contact for people from the Czech and Slovak Republics
- To be a resource for Minnesotans interested in Central Europe
- Develop and sponsor symposia, educational courses, literary circles, concerts, exhibits, and theater performances.
- Maintain a content-rich website that will help strengthen the Czech and Slovak community in Minnesota
- Partner with embassies, government agencies, the Minnesota International Center, Universities, other Central European groups, and other cultural organizations to bring Czech and Slovak exhibits, artists, performing groups, and speakers to Minnesota
- Promote business relationships between Minnesota and the Czech and Slovak Republics
- Facilitate exchange programs for teachers, students, and professionals (CSCC 2014)

Some of the upcoming events the center organizes are Symposium on Multilingual Education and Culture, Radio Free Europe Lecture or literary presentations and book clubs, where people that are interested read a Czech or Slovak book in translation and then discuss it in small group. Its Literary Ventures have a full year schedule and everyone can join in.

Another organization is Meetup, the world's largest network of local groups, where people find the group that interests them and that they want to meet up with. According to its website, it currently has 26.45 million members and 247,251 Meetup Groups. Every user can search for an event that interests them and Czech groups are no exception. (Meetup, 2016) The Czech Heritage Society of Texas is another non-profit organization that was founded in 1982 and is dedicated to preserve Texas Czech Heritage such as Genealogy, History, Music, Customs, Food, Costumes and Language. Czechoslovak Society of Arts & Sciences (SVU) is an international cultural organization, established 1958 in Washington D.C. and an independent non-profit international cultural organization dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, the free dissemination of ideas, and the fostering of contact among people. It brings together scholars, scientists, artists, writers, students, lawyers, businessmen and others, throughout the world who have, because of their ethnic background or professional calling, have an interest in the Czech Republic and/ or Slovakia, their histories, peoples or their

cultural and intellectual contributions. (SVU, 2016) Those are some of the many organizations that operate in the United States of America and a very detailed list of many of them also provide the Embassy of the Czech Republic situated in Washington, D.C.

A yearly festival that takes place in Oklahoma is the famous Kolache Festival in Prague. The tradition of this festival started in the year 1952 when Czechoslovakian immigrants took part in the Oklahoma Land Run and decided to stay in an area, which they called Prague. When they wanted to celebrate the town's 50th birthday, they decided to organize a Czech themed festival and named it after the nation's most loved pastries called Kolache. This celebration is held up until this day and happens every year on the First Saturday of May. The festival is very popular and brings around 30 000 people into the town each year. It includes a parade, where residents of Prague dress in authentic colorful Czech costumes and around 50 000 of Kolaches are consumed during the event. Music groups play Czech music and contests such as Best Homemade Kolaches or the Best Costume are being held. The Costume Contest has a very clear guideline on how the costumes should look like:

Women and girls costumes are based on the following: full skirt with trim, apron with trim, white blouse with puffed sleeves and trim, vest with trim, headpiece (cap, bow or garland), black or dark shoes or boots.

Men and boys costumes are based on the following: dark color pants with decorative trim down the legs, vest with trim, white shirt with puffed sleeves and trim, Czech hat/cap with trim, and black or dark shoes/boots. (Prague Kolache Festival, 2014)

Each year the festival has a theme, for example the theme of 2016 Festival was "Remembering Our Homeland", that dictates the look of the parade as well.

Another Kolache Festival happens in the town of Caldwell, the "Official Kolache Capital of Texas." This festival is held each year on the second Saturday in September and has everything the Prague festival has. It offers Kolache Bake Show Competition or live music and polka dancing. The county also hosts Kolache Krunch 5K, which is a 5 kilometers long run/walk, which happens early in the morning on the day of the festival. A very similar festival is held in Hallettsville, Texas, on the last Saturday of September. Offering from

Eating Contests to arts and crafts booths to classic car show everything the visitor can think of. There are also Polka Festivals held in Texas or Czech Days Festival held in Tabor, South Dakota. This festival focuses on authentic music and dances as well as presenting Mini Czech Pioneer Village and eating authentic food. Czech-Slovak Community Festival is held each year in June the town of Phillips, Wisconsin and a multitude of Czech-themed festivals is held in the state of Nebraska. A list of upcoming events, along with a calendar and a description can be found at the Czechevents website that is run by The Czech North American Chamber of Commerce & Culture Inc, which was founded in 1998 by Thomas J. Bata, famous shoemaker, and industrialist A. Karel Velan. (The Czech North American Chamber of Commerce & Culture Inc., n.d., Home)

In addition to the various festivals there are also many restaurants that specialize in Czech cuisine that are spread out all over the United States. Some offer authentic Czech beer or brew it in accordance with the strong Czech beer tradition, some offer sauerkraut, dumplings and pork roast. Some of the highest rated restaurants are Czech Plaza Restaurant in Illinois, a restaurant with long tradition and satisfied customers, that offers large portions of traditional Czech foods such as Fruit Dumplings, Koprova sauce and Beef Goulash along with on tap beers such as Pilsner Urquell, Praga Dark and Czechvar or Koliba Restaurant in New York City, which offers Beef with Cream Sauce or Fried Cauliflower with Roasted Potatoes. A Texas favorite is Czech-American Restaurant that combines Czech and American cuisine along with Czech beers on tap. You can also find Czech bakeries all over Texas, one of them being Czech Stop and Little Czech Bakery that offers variations of the favorite kolache's and other traditional Czech baked goods. (Yelp, n.d.) A very thorough list of Czech restaurants in America can also be found on the Embassy of Czech Republic in Washington D.C. website.

4. CONCLUSION

The future of Czech communities is unknown, because each new generation of Czech-Americans has to decide, if they want to get in touch with their roots or not. There is still a large number of people, approximately 1.5 million, that list their ancestry as Czech and therefore for some part, they feel as being a part of the community, however it takes active people, who organize events and meet-ups to keep the community strong. This thesis has proven, that thanks to the social media and the power of Internet, it is easier to find like-minded people and get involved and that the current generations can get information on their ancestry much easier than ever before. There are already many books written about their ancestors that came to the United States of America two centuries ago and what were their reasons, but a lot more can be found on the internet in the form of short articles or enthusiast stories. People like to share their experiences and dedicate blogs and websites to their ancestry. Nowadays, many Americans who were born in the states, to which came large Czech immigration groups such as Texas or Iowa, strongly identify with Czech culture, visit Czech-themed festivals, try Czech food and also want to educate themselves on the history of Czech immigration. As Gail Naughton said in an interview for Radio Praha, Český rozhlas, when asked what kind of people visit The National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids: “Well, it’s a mix. There are people, of course, who are of Czech or Slovak descent, who want to come. They enjoy it; they tell us all the things we need to do, to get right and so forth. And then there are more serious researchers. We’ve had people use the library for their research and will continue to do that. We have some general public, who really are not Czech or Slovak – they’re history aficionados or they’re just interested in history and culture. They’ll come for a temporary exhibition, and then go through our historical exhibition. So it’s a wide range of people really.” With this said, the Czech-Americans have in general many opportunities on how to get reacquainted with their heritage, but sadly with each year passing by, not many choose to do so. We can only hope that there will still be those few individuals, who decide to dedicate their life to cultural preservation and will also educate their peers and children. The foundation for this preservation has been already laid and we can only wonder if people will still continue to build on it.

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6. SHRNUTÍ

Předmětem bakalářské práce je zmapovat historii Českých komunit v Americe a informovat o jejich současné situaci.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí, z nich první se zabývá historií imigrace do USA a jmenuje několik významných prvních osadníků a jejich příjezd a dále pak informuje o větších vlnách imigrace. Ke konci pak uvádí současné počty imigrantů a představuje části USA, ve kterých se usadili. Druhá část práce se soustředí na kulturní pozadí a zvyky a tradice těchto nově vzniklých komunit. Je rozdělena do dvou okruhů, kterými jsou hudba a literatura. Oba tyto okruhy v úvodu zmiňují historické pozadí, dále významné osobnosti a poté ukazují současnou situaci. Na konci této práce se pak nachází shrnutí a hodnocení dosažené poznatky.