



V Ljubljani poteka razstava:

## Podobe kanadskih slovencev - Images of Canadian Slovenians

od 20. junija do 20. julija 2012.

Razstava je rezultat sodelovanja Instituta za slovensko izseljenstvo in imigracije ZRC SAZU iz Ljubljane in **Kanadsko slovensko zgodovinsko društvo** iz Toronta. V naslednji številki "Our Story - Naša zgodovina" bo bolj obsežno poročilo o tej razstavi.

Kanada je bila za Evropejce precej časa manj privlačna in slabše prepoznana priseljska destinacija od ZDA. Neskončne, neposeljene divjine, manj ugodne klimatske razmere ter revno gospodarstvo in slabše življenjske razmere so dolgo časa vplivali na nizek demografski prirastek. Na prehodu v 20. stoletje, ko so se vanjo naseljevali prvi Slovenci, je imela Kanada manj kot 5 milijonov prebivalcev; največje mesto je bilo Montreal, v katerem je tedaj živel približno toliko ljudi, kot jih živi danes v Ljubljani.

Od srede stoletja je Kanada na stežaj odprla svoje meje, število prebivalstva je začelo strmo naraščati, država pa se je v naslednjih desetletjih gospodarsko močno okrepila. Leta 2011 so samo na širšem področju Toronta (GTA) našli več kot 6 milijonov prebivalcev, populacija Kanade pa se je začela približevati 35 milijonom ljudi. Med pisano množico ljudi z vseh vetrov živi in deluje okoli 30.000 kanadskih Slovencev, ki so razpršeni po vsej Kanadi, zlasti po največjih urbanih središčih. V zadnjih letih kaže, da se Slovenci spet bolj zanimajo za izselitev v Kanado.

Kljub relativni maloštevilnosti so kanadski Slovenci pustili v svoji novi domovini viden pečat. Naj gre za

kulturo, gospodarstvo, znanost, politiko ali šport, na vseh področjih najdemo izstopajoče predstavnike slovenskega rodu. A upoštevati je treba tudi tiste komajda vidne posameznike, ki so položili na tisoče kilometrov železniških tirov, obdelovali na stotine arov rodovitnih polj, krčili neobvladljivo obsežne gozdove, kopali rudna bogastva, sodelovali v obeh svetovnih vojnah, gradili mesta in vzgajali rodove mladih Kanadčanov. Tudi ti so skoraj brez dokumentiranih sledi vseskozi vzpostavljali kanadsko družbo in jo pomagali bogatiti. Ob vsem so Slovenci v Kanadi, slovenski Kanadčani ali kanadski Slovenci, kakor koli jih imenujemo, vseskozi ohranjali in razvijali dediščino dežele, iz katere so prišli. Načini, s katerimi so ohranjali svoje slovenske običaje in kulturo, premoščali domotožje ali prenašali tradicijo svojega domačega okolja na naslednji rod, so tako številni in raznovrstni, da jih ni mogoče v celoti popisati. Stik kanadskih Slovencev s Slovenijo je še vedno navzoč in se kaže skozi umetnost, kulturo, politiko, gospodarstvo in znanost. Pričujoča razstava skuša prikazati raznolike mostove, ki so se preko kanadskih Slovencev vzpostavili med kanadskim in slovenskim okoljem – in je ne nazadnje tudi izraz teh vezi.



Predstavitve razstave - Ljubljana 20.6.2012



Gradivo Kanadskih Slovencev v besedah in slikah

# It Happend 75 Years Ago

## The Slovenian Society of St. Joseph - Društvo sv. Jožefa - Hamilton

On Sunday, March 18, 2012, the Slovenian Society of St. Joseph / Društvo sv. Jožefa marked its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the celebration of Mass by Rev. Father Drago Gačnik, Pastor of St. Gregory Parish, followed by a banquet in the Church Hall.

The Slovenian Society of St. Joseph was founded on April 25, 1937 by Rev. Father Bernard Ambrožič of Lemont, Illinois. Joseph Vinčec made the initial request of the Franciscan Fathers in Lemont to send a priest to Hamilton to serve the spiritual needs of the Slovenian community. In his visits from Lemont, Father Ambrožič soon realized the need for the establishment of a Slovenian Parish and for this purpose he founded the St. Joseph Society to create a bond between the community and the priest.

Joseph Staresinic, the first president served on the Board for over twenty years. His committee included Marta Kolenko - vice president; Ignac Horvat – corresponding secretary; Joe Vinčec / Anton Ritlop – treasurer; John Horvat – recording secretary; Stefan Tivadar – committee representative; and Olga Kostrič – trustee; and Father Bernard as spiritual director. The meetings took place at Stanislaus Parish Polish Hall where the Slovenian community held their Sunday Masses and other religious services. Joseph's successors as president were Joseph Vuk, Martin Hanc, Paul Ruzic, Stefan Dorenčec, Martin Farkas, Ignac Kolenko, Frank Kozlar, Ignac Prša, Kazimir Žižek, Marko Ferfolja and Jerry Ponikvar.

The St. Joseph Society was established as a social community and a support group for Slovenian immigrants who settled in the Hamilton/Niagara area. The Society provided financial assistance to members in case of illness or other difficulties.

The St. Joseph Society originally had its centre in Beamsville and in 1958 they purchased a hall on Beach Road. However, when the Slovenian Parish of St. Gregory the Great was established in 1960 by Father Alojz Tomc, the hall was sold and the proceeds were donated to the St. Gregory Parish building fund. During the period between the mid 1960's until approximately 1980, the Društvo was not active until Father Charles Ceglar, the then pastor, renewed the St. Joseph Society's activities and initiatives. Over the years, the St. Joseph Society has supported and contributed financially to many special projects of the parish through the volunteering of the special talents and skills.

In the mid to late 1980's the Društvo began discussions to develop and to establish a Villa Slovenia Senior's Home at 23 Delawana Drive in conjunction with the Ontario Ministry of Housing on property



Jerry Ponikvar

owned by the Slovenian Parish and The Episcopal Diocese of Hamilton. Construction started in 1991 and it was officially opened on September 25, 1992 with thirty units operated by the Board of Directors of St. Joseph Society in conjunction with the TAG Management Firm and the Hamilton Housing Authority. Društvo members who were involved with this project included: Marko Ferfolja, Ignac Prša, Kazimir Žižek, John Babič Jr., John Demšar, Frank Pelčar, Ludvik Hull, Milan Ferletic, Polde Kline, Tony Letnik, Ernest Zrim, Max Sagadin, Cecilia Mlinarich, Father Frank Slobodnik and Father Charles Ceglar.

The official opening was chaired by Frank Novak with His Excellency Bishop Tonnos officiating in the ribbon cutting ceremony and the Blessing of the Villa.

The St. Joseph Society which was incorporated in 1995 has continued to be a very active organization. Presently there are 126 members. It holds regular Tuesday socials for its members in the lower hall of the Villa, which was constructed with funds from the Society, when the Villa was built. Members have an opportunity to play cards, chess, billiards or just to come together to socialize from September to May. During the summer months, the bocce courts constructed by the Society, in front of the Villa always have a large number of members turn out for a good afternoon of bocce, socializing and fun. Only a severe storm keeps the members away. Over the past twelve years, an annual bocce tournament has been held on Labour Day weekend followed by a gathering for a meal and trophy/prize presentations. Highlight of the year, is the annual Christmas Gathering with food and entertainment. The evening concludes with a draw for poinsettias. The contribution of three to five hundred dollars goes to the support of the Hamilton Christmas Tree of Hope. Regular weekly Monday afternoon Bingos are held for Villa residents and members. Everyone listens for the numbers as Frank Erzar calls the bingo with support from his team of helpers which include Vinko Benc, Frank Mramor, Ivan Miketič and Jerry Ponikvar. Our treasurer, Peter Novak, has responsibility for the financial records, and makes sure that the bar and the necessary supplies are well stocked for the members.

A very popular activity over the past 15 years has been the subsidized day and overnight coach excursions. The St. Joseph Society and their carrier, Maxima Tours organized day trips to various parts of Niagara and southern Ontario. Extended 4 day trips have been taken to Moosonee-Polar Bear Express, Agawa Canyon, Mackinaw Island, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, as well as Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City. In the USA, the

group trips include Chicago, Atlantic City, New York, Philadelphia, Boston and the New England Coast and Lancaster Amish area of Pennsylvania.

Annual trips on the St. Joseph Society itinerary include Octoberfest at Club Sava, Kitchener and St. Jacob Market. The Annual Cleveland Polka Festival on American Thanksgiving weekend has also been a most enjoyable experience during the past ten years. Appreciation is extended to the late Max Sagadin and Polde Kline and now Frank Erzar who have assisted Jerry Ponikvar with the coordination of these trips.

It has been a special privilege to have been associated with the St. Gregory Parish Community through my affiliation with the St. Joseph Society. I wish to express my deep appreciation to all of the members, too numerous to mention, who over the years have served the Society on the various committees or Board of Directors. We thank them for their sacrifices,

their contribution and for the legacy that they have left us.

As we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of društvo sv. Jožefa, the Slovenian Society of St. Joseph - Hamilton, we can take great pride in all of our accomplishments and the enjoyment that has been brought to our members and our St. Gregory Parish Church community. It is our hope that we will continue to be vibrant as we encourage our next generation to take up the challenge to become involved and to blaze the trail of the future. Just as at the time of our pioneer members, each era has its particular needs and as we move on in this twenty first century, it is our hope that the društvo/St. Joseph Society will meet the new challenges and continue to serve the interests of its members in our Slovenian Community.

From the information in the archives and records of društvo sv. Jožefa by Jerry Ponikvar

## Sounds of a Special Music

Twice a year throughout the 1960s and 70s, the Children's Choir of the parish of Marija Pomagaj in Toronto put on concerts that always attracted full houses, both at the Saturday and Sunday evening performances. Crisp white shirts, and navy blue pants or skirts were their uniform. Slowly and seriously they filed up the stage steps to their assigned place as the stage lights illuminated them. All eyes on the conductor, Fr. Tone Zrnec, who had spent long hours training them in weekly practices. The master of ceremonies announced the title of each song. Fr. Zrnec, dead center in front of the choir facing their upturned faces, raised his arms and the children began to sing in three part harmony, their clear sweet voices joined melodiously to fill the audience with nostalgic memories as they heard traditional Slovenian songs (*Barčica, Po Jezeru*, and many others). At other times, the young singers astonished the listeners with their repertoire: songs from various genres sung in English, French, and even in Spanish, particularly Agustín Lara's *Granada* with its long notes and quick changes of tempo. Today he is known for his fabulous rendition of this evocative song, but did Plácido Domingo sing it better when he was the age of these young choristers?

This picture was taken at one of the Marija Pomagaj concerts, in 1963 or 1964. Are you in it? Do you recognize any of the young singers? If you can help identify the children in the photo, or, if you can add to our collection of similar photos, please contact our archivist, Frank Majzelj at [cshistorical@gmail.com](mailto:cshistorical@gmail.com).



### UPDATES and THANK YOU:

Thanks to our readers, the photos shown in previous issues of *Our Story / Naša zgodovina* have all been identified. We are very grateful to all of you who wrote to the archivist with your information.

# Miner's Safety Hat and Carbide Lamp

Gregor Vintar used these in the early 1930s at the Hollinger Gold Mine in Timmins, Ontario.



**SAFETY HAT (HELMET) 1.** It was made of leather treated with pitch (tar) for stiffness and waterproofing. Underground conditions necessitated some form of protection from

falling rock fragments and dripping water.

2. Later, hardhats made of a fibre material akin to fibreglass were used and provided better protection.

## The Brown Suitcase

You might think that the old brown suitcase, recently received by the CSHS Archives and shown in this photo, looks quite nondescript: not made by a famous designer label, not plastered with decals from numerous ports of call colourfully boasting about where the suitcase has travelled. But when it arrived at our archives room, carried by its present owner, Dr. Tony Benchina of Cullman, Alabama, the brown valise created a lot of excitement. What was in it? Books, photographs, family documents including some favourite family recipes. Most from the 1920s and 1930s when the Benchina family, first dad, and later followed by mom, came to Timmins, Ontario to marry and settle there. Family weddings, the three boys and the house: how many memories, happy and sad, framed in the black and white pictures and interleaved in the books. For our archives, the suitcase contained a unique treasure, a wonderful record of the lives of Slovenian pioneers establishing themselves in northern Ontario. How curious to see the handsome young couple in their official wedding portrait looking out into the future, not knowing what it might bring, and having that future, in the person of their youngest son, looking back at them as he explained what and whom the picture represented. A friend of mine poignantly noted about such pictures that their son knows more about his parents now than they knew about themselves when the picture was taken. On that day, looking forward, they knew nothing of what would happen; he, on the

**LAMP 1.** The carbide lamp provided a phosphorescent glow and was a great improvement over lanterns. It could be worn on coveralls, hung up via a sharp hook, or temporarily attached to the hat.

2. A battery-powered lamp replaced the carbide lamp and was worn on the newer hardhat. It shed more light and allowed the miner to readily focus on the rockface where he was drilling holes for the addition of dynamite.



*Submitted by Gregor Vintar's son, John. June 17, 2012.*

other hand, looking backwards, knows everything that happened.

The photos are a witness to years long gone. Not only are the people important, but where they lived, worked, played, worshipped, even what they wore. Just look at the intricate wedding dress! Since that far away wedding day it has been used to help the wardrobe departments of several movies looking for authentic 1930's period pieces. And the suitcase itself is special because it is the very one that Mrs. Benchina packed her belongings in when she left Slovenia to start a new life in faraway Canada. Hidden treasures indeed!



Dr. Benchina and Dr. Urbančič

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52 Neilson Drive,

Toronto, ON M9C 1V7

For more information contact:

Frank Majzelj

Telephone: 905-643-3563

E-mail: cshistorical@gmail.com.

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