



OUR STORY NAŠA ZGODOVINA

Vol. 5 No. 2 Summer 2015

Meet our new Directors and Volunteer

Lojze Grebenc

I was born to a family of seven children where the education was of utmost importance by both parents. They both stressed reading, love of Slovenian language and history.

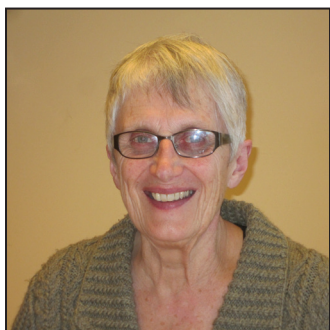
Personally, I have degrees in Philosophy, Theology, Education and Special Education. In my work as a priest, teacher and counselor I have worked with all sorts of people trying to inspire in them a love of learning and the use of books.

All those things helped me to join the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society and working in the Library and Archives at St. Gregory the Great Parish.



Lojze Grebenc, Director

Pamela Gosgnach



Pamela Gosgnach, Secretary

I joined the CSHS as interim recording secretary in September 2014. I was officially accepted as a board member at the annual general meeting held in February 2015 and confirmed to the position of secretary at that time.

When asked why I became interested in the society, I think I would say that next to geography and organizing things, the study of history is dear to my heart. My interest in Slovenian history developed following my marriage to Joseph, a *Beneški Slovenian*, born in Italy within a few kilometers of the Slovenian border and raised in the Slovenian language and tradition.

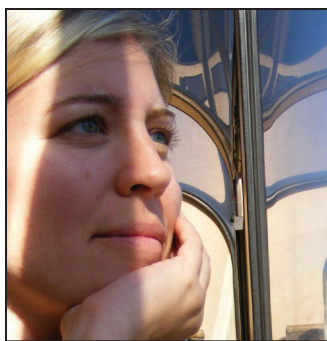
Being from North Wales, I have always had a love for the mountains. Having a connection to Slovenia meant that the mountains were always waiting to be explored. Since my first visit in 1973, I have seen the

many changes that have occurred in the country; visiting the area the summer that Slovenia became independent was certainly a historical moment. I have enjoyed visits to Bled, Ljubljana, Bovec, Kobarid, Tolmin, Škofja Loka, Bohinjska Bistrica, Postojna and am determined one day to see the area around Murska Sobota.

The opportunity to become more involved with the Slovenian community occurred when our family relocated to Ancaster in 2004. While searching for a new parish, we discovered St. Gregory the Great Church. Attending Slovenian Mass has enabled me to add to my vocabulary and listening to the language every Sunday keeps words fresh in my mind ready for meeting relatives each summer.

Some of my own history includes: attending Ysgol Uwchradd Penarlâg (Hawarden High School) in Wales that was established in 1606; teaching in Manchester, London, and emigrating to Canada in 1968. In Canada I taught in Toronto, Pickering and Whitby and retired in 1999.

Barbara Leskovec



Barbara Leskovec, Volunteer

My passion for history developed at a young age from listening to family stories and watching history cartoons. I pursued my passion and eventually obtained a Master of Arts in Archaeology. I am now a practicing archaeologist in the province of Ontario, and on a daily basis, identify and record the earlier occupations of our province. I have also participated in archaeological excavations in Eastern Canada and Slovenia. I joined the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society at the end of 2014 due to my desire to capture the stories of Canadian Slovenians and to document them for future generations. I hope to assist with the Archives and build upon the great work undertaken by past and current members.

Slovenian Canadian Club of Calgary

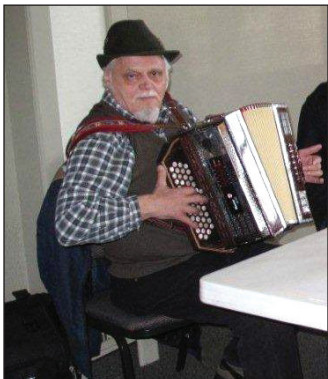
Mary Terenta-Donnelly

TEN YEARS AGO!



Walter Starič and Russel Donnelly

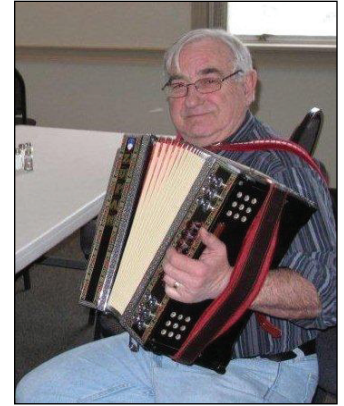
Ten years ago, after retiring from his job as a school administrator, Russel Donnelly decided that he needed to do something. The membership at the Slovenian Canadian Club of Calgary was getting older. There was a need to create something for this group. Create a function to which they can attend during the day. The idea of Seniors Luncheons was born. Russel set to work and called on Mr. Franc Hajdinjak, a well-established member of Slovensko Kanadsko Društvo and had him call around inviting the membership and non-members to our very first Seniors Luncheons. The dates were set and the Seniors Luncheons are held every third Tuesday of the month from October to May. A few years later, Walter Starič retired from his job with Canadian Pacific Railway and he decided to help Russel. These two men work together and with the help from the ladies, who volunteer in the kitchen preparing the lunch, made this a very enjoyable event. The meals are free for the seniors. The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission allows the club to use money from its casino proceeds to sponsor these luncheons. About thirty-seven volunteers work at the two day casino event to raise money and support such events. Seniors Luncheons are very successful and well attended. They continue to draw people from all walks of life and communities.



Frank Vrečar

Videos of Slovenia and key note speakers are brought in from time to time to add a bit of variety to the luncheons. Most of the time the people just want to talk and share their day to day events in their lives. Often

the discussion turns to events that happened years ago. The people love to reminisce about the 'Good Old Days' creating this meeting place. However, no event is complete without Slovenian music. Frank Vrečar and Leo Kladnik bring their accordions to fill the hall with Slovenian music and songs. It is wonderful to be at these events and to watch the Slovenian Canadian hall come alive with laughter and Slovenian culture.



Leo Kladnik



Seniors Luncheon

From our archives

HISTORY OF SLOVENIAN CANADIAN CLUB OF CALGARY

The first Slovenians began settling in Calgary in the early 1920s, in the mining towns of East Coule and Canmore. The major wave of Slovenians arrived and settled in Calgary after the Second World War, up to the mid 1960s.

At that time, the idea to organize and obtain a place where Slovenians could meet and cultivate their culture and their heritage began to take form as fifteen Slovenians gathered and elected their first executive committee to organize Slovenian picnics, dances and other events. First, they began gathering for picnics at the private farms. The dances were organized in rented community halls.

In 1966 the Slovenian Canadian Club of Calgary was registered as a non-profit organization with Alojz Cipot, Frank Skerlak, Rudi Skapin, Slavko Krančan as the first directors. In the following five years, the membership increased to about 100 registered families.

Under the leadership of Marjan Pavlica, the men's choir and a drama section were established.

The activities of the club were adapted to the needs of its members. One of the first priorities was to establish a Slovenian school, which ran for many years under the leadership of Ida Pavlica. Later, the school was reorganized by Anna Terenta and Mary Terenta-Donnelly and offered Slovenian classes to youth and adults...

The Closure of St. Helen's Mission Church Beamsville, Ontario

Jerry Ponikvar

The following story about St. Helen's Church in Beamsville, Ontario was related in an interview with Josie Zamejc (Možina) and Vi Harrison (Možina). The little stone church was built in 1938, is now closing and up for sale. The Diocese is pursuing a larger site to meet the needs of the increased Catholic population of the community. Due to the Ontario Green Belt restrictions, expansion of the present land site is not permitted.

In the late thirties, the pastor, Father Webster of St. Joseph's parish in Grimsby was asked by the Bishop to set up a mission church in Beamsville or Vineland area as there were a number of Catholic families, mostly Polish, Italian, Slovenian and Ukrainian. Since Father Webster was unsuccessful in purchasing a



Frank and Hema Možina

property, he approached a parishioner, Frank Možina to see if he could assist in finding land to build a church. As he took on the task, Frank approached various landowners who were primarily Protestant. When they discovered that he was looking for a property to build a Catholic Church, they refused to sell.

The Možinas lived at the end of Maple Grove Road off Highway 8. Everyone knew Frank as he used his tractor and truck to help out neighbours on the much smaller farms. They in turn would help him with picking the fruit on his farm.

Behind the present church, there lived an elderly man who was living in a shack. The property was given to him by a local farmer for being a loyal employee. Mr. Možina approached the gentleman to see if he was willing to sell the property and a price was negotiated. The exact amount is not known, however the process of building a mission church began. The community who were Catholic European immigrants and farmers, using horse and stoneboat as well as Možina's truck,



all helped in gathering the stones from their properties to build the church. A number of Slovenians and others, along with Father Webster were very helpful in this building project. When it came to naming the church, Frank Možina was approached by the pastor for a suggested name. He thought about it and said how he attended St. Helen's Church in Mirna back home in Slovenia. Father Webster replied that he liked the name. However, W. T. Kernahan who had donated \$500 to the building fund was given the privilege of naming the church St. Helen's, placing it under the patronage of St. Helen, mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor.

During the summer months, children who were mostly Slovenian would attend catechism classes for two weeks led by Father Webster. In the winter months, a nearby neighbour would light the coal furnace to warm up the Church before Mass. To provide for the spiritual needs in the Slovenian language Father Bernard Ambrožič (uncle of Cardinal Aloysius Ambrožič) came from Lemont for missions to assist Father Webster. He looked after the Slovenian parishioners with visits to



their homes. He also organized a special Slovenian Mass and procession around the church property with the portrait of Our Lady of Perpetual Help carried on a pedestal followed by benediction. A large number of Slovenians from the Niagara and Toronto areas as well as from Kirkland Lake gathered to attend this special celebration. The portrait of Mary brought from Lemont, was hung in the church on the side altar where it remained for many years. Eventually, Father Ambrožič took it back to Lemont where it now hangs in the Church at the Shrine. As the Slovenian congregation dwindled and other nationalities arrived, it was recognized that it would not be a Slovenian church especially with Father Ambrožič going back to the States.

The Možina sisters spoke about the many fond memories of walking from the far end of Maple Grove Road to the church. St. Helen's played a big part in the growing up years of the Slovenian youth singing in the choir. They recalled how Father Ambrožič would

come to the Možina home and taught Josie how to play the organ for Mass and weddings. They spoke about attending Midnight Mass, meeting with friends along the way and walking in the snow. There were no snow ploughs in those days. Over the years, there were many Slovenian weddings and funerals at St. Helen's. Many

Slovenian boys were altar servers including Ivan and Hank Žužek, Henry and William Možina.

The photos of this beautiful chapel in the middle of orchards in Beamsville are a glimpse of cherished memories of the Slovenian community and a tribute to Frank Možina for his contribution.

Are You a Secret *DELTIOLOGIST*?

Anne Urbančič

Have you received a postcard recently? With our instant electronic messaging systems this type of mailing has become less and less common. Postcards belong to the subject field called Material Culture which studies the everyday objects of our lives and what they say about us today, and even more, what they say about our past. And did you know that postcards claim a special classification among collectors: *deltiology*? The word was coined in the 1940s from the Greek word meaning "writing tablet".

Postcards have a fascinating history that begins in England in 1840 when writer Thomas Hock mailed the first one. Curiously, he sent it to himself, probably to make fun of the postal service which was still developing at the time. He likely wondered if his hand drawn card would arrive because, at the time, post offices all over the world placed numerous restrictions on what could or could not be considered a postcard, including paper size and weight, and what space might be used for a message. Even the placement of a stamp (private cards) or preprinted stamp (government post card) became a topic of intense debate.

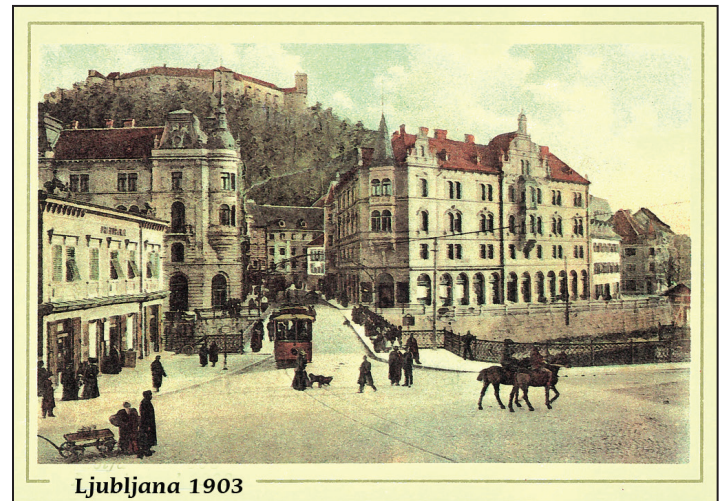
The colourful *photochromic* postcards we see today became popular only after World War 2. The most common theme of postcards is a category called "town view", in other words, a picture of a town or city in whole (often as an aerial view or profile view) or in part. Of course, post cards present a highly idealized perspective of the subject: generally you will not see town view postcards depicting the locality in bad weather, or under less than perfect circumstances, with garbage, slum areas, or industrial zones. Instead, in postcards, we see only the best side of the setting.

Postcards have archival relevance for many reasons. First, as relatively inexpensive entertainment, they arrived at homes where people often carefully saved them. Consequently, many were well preserved, capturing a location at a particular time in its history. Unlike many family photographs, postcards identify the place pictured and the postal stamp gives an approximate date of the picture. Other details are

also historically important: we learn about fashion by looking at the people photographed; we can gather information about transportation systems; we can see how the infrastructure of the area has changed over the years (look for overhead wires or the height of buildings); we can consider architectural styles and how the passing of the years has adapted older styles to newer times. We can also compare what used to be there and what is no longer there. All these hints in the picture offer answers about the history of the place depicted. A great archival study!

Postcards are often show-off opportunities shouting at us to appreciate where the writer has travelled while the receiver stayed at home. They often tell us who the writer is travelling with, and while the writing space does not allow much description, they also often reveal how the writer feels about the place on the postcard. The stamps also tell significant stories.

Are you a secret deltiologist with a collection of attractive family postcards that stimulate your curiosity? Some postcards have become valuable collectors' items; others are valuable as personal family histories. In either case, their stories are worthy of note and certainly never boring.



OUR STORY is published by:
Canadian Slovenian Historical Society
52 Neilson Drive,
Toronto, ON M9C 1V7
For more information contact:
Frank Brenc
Telephone: 416-281-6794
E-mail: frankbrenc@rogers.com

In this issue:

- Meet our new Directors and Volunteer
- Slovenian Canadian Club of Calgary
- The Closure of St. Helen's Mission Church, Beamsville, Ontario
- Are You a Secret *DELTIOLOGIST*?