

**MASARYK UNIVERSITY BRNO**

FACULTY OF EDUCATION



**Bachelor Thesis**

Brno 2016

Supervisor: **Mgr. Zdeněk Janík, M.A., Ph.D.**

Author: **Alice Luňáková**

**MASARYK UNIVERSITY BRNO**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**Department of English Language and Literature**

**The History of the Czech Immigration to Texas  
in the Nineteenth Century**

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## **Bibliography**

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## **Bibliografický záznam**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis discusses the history of the Czech immigration to Texas in the nineteenth century. In the first two chapters, the thesis deals with the general concepts of culture and immigration and explains the terms assimilation, subculture, identity, nationality and ethnicity, which are significant factors that can be associated with the phenomenon of maintaining an immigrants cultural origins in a new environment. The next chapter outlines the situation in Europe and in the Czech homelands during the nineteenth century, describes the compelling reasons why so many people decided to emigrate, together with the statistics that provide estimates of the total number of immigrants. The following three chapters combine theoretical knowledge from the first chapters, describe the life of the first Czechs in Texas, creating the Czech communities and gradual Czech assimilation among the Americans, as well as the imprints of Czech culture in Texas today.

## **Anotace**

Bakalářská práce pojednává o historii české imigrace do Texasu v devatenáctém století. V prvních dvou kapitolách se práce zabývá obecnými pojmy kultura a imigrace a objasňuje termíny asimilace, subkultura, identita, národnost a etnicita, jež jsou významnou měrou spjatý s jevem, kdy si imigranti udržují svou původní kulturu v novém prostředí. Další kapitola nastiňuje situaci v Evropě a v Českých zemích v devatenáctém století, popisuje pádné důvody k odchodu a rovněž uvádí číselné odhady o celkovém počtu imigrantů. Následující tři kapitoly poté propojují teoretické poznatky z prvních kapitol, popisují život českých imigrantů v Texasu, zakládání českých komunit, postupnou českou asimilaci mezi Američany a rovněž pozůstatky české kultury v tamním prostředí.

## **Keywords**

migration, immigration, emigration, culture, subculture, assimilation, identity, nationality, ethnicity, melting pot, the United States of America, European immigration waves, Czech immigration, the Czech lands in the nineteenth century, Czech communities in Texas, Czech culture in Texas

## **Klíčová slova**

migrace, imigrace, emigrace, kultura, subkultura, asimilace, identita, etnicita, národnost, ztráta původní národnosti a kultury, Spojené státy americké, evropské imigrační vlny, česká imigrace, České země v devatenáctém století, české komunity v Texasu, česká kultura v Texasu

## **Declaration**

*I hereby declare that I have written this bachelor thesis on my own and that I have used only the sources listed in the bibliography.*

## **Prohlášení**

*Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, s využitím pouze citovaných pramenů.*

In Brno, 2016

Alice Luňáková

.....

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Introduction**

The nineteenth century was an era that gave the world many remarkable inventions that, mainly in Europe, considerably changed the previous style of living. Generally speaking, the changes were consequences of the Industrial Revolution, which is a common term describing the transformation relating to working system. Throughout the centuries the majority of the working class used to work in the fields of their countries farming, yet, technology progress was set to transform this agricultural working system. As new factories started to be built in the fast developing cities, people began to leave the country to live and work in the cities close to the industries. However, there were still a considerable number of peasants, who lost their jobs as they were replaced by new agricultural machines. As they gradually began to suffer from lack of finance, they were forced to leave their homes as well. In fact, the United States of America was alluring to the Europeans at that time as they were offering new job opportunities, together with religious freedom, which was not common in some parts of Europe. Thus, several mass immigration waves were poised to happen and resulted in a significant increase of the American population.

The Czech people participated in these immigration waves and left the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to which the Czech lands pertained to, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and up to the beginning of the twentieth. The reasons for which they were compelled to leave everything behind coincided with the overall situation in Europe. They lost their farm jobs and as they were qualified only for this profession, there were not many opportunities for them than to start a new life somewhere else. Both influenced and encouraged by the first Czech pioneers who tried their fortunes in the farming state Texas, they plucked up their courage to emigrate. The aim of this thesis is to depict the historical background of the Czech immigration to Texas, describe the life of the Czech immigrants as well as remaining Czech cultural imprints today.

The motivation for writing about this topic originates from my two extended stays in Texas. First, I studied for one semester at McLennan Community College in Waco in 2014 within the exchange programme offered by the English Department of Faculty of Education. Thanks to this opportunity, I not only learnt about the remarkable history of thousands of the Czechs who settled in Texas, but I was also able to visit the local towns that once used to be the thriving Czech communities, see the Czech signs at the shops and

streets, enter the Czech bakeries to smell and taste the renowned kolaches, attend the Czech festivals, and last but not least, to speak with the Czech descendants whose enthusiasm when speaking of their ancestors amazed me. Their striking pride of being of Czech ancestry raised my interest in learning more about the history of their ancestors. After coming home and starting to research the available sources, I could not find any particularly useful literature as sources of reference, and therefore I decided to return to Texas in the following year. Thanks to my dear friends Kathy and John Hillman I was able to stay at their house for five weeks in the summer in 2015. This enabled me to undertake my research at the Library of Baylor University, visit Czech museums and heritage centres, attend the traditional mass at Praha Feast, and of course I was able to meet more Czech descendants who were more than willing to share with me their personal experiences.

The structure of the thesis consists of six chapters. The first one is focused on the definitions of culture and its components, as well as clarifying the processes which happen as a consequence of immigrating and the mixing of two different cultures together. Terms related to that of immigration, such as assimilation in a new country and perception of immigrants' identity, nationality and ethnicity, are described as well. The second chapter clarifies the three main terms migration, emigration and immigration, depicts the general classification and the main factors leading to immigration. The third chapter outlines the history of both European and Czech immigration in the nineteenth century, presents the statistics and the compelling motives that drove people to emigrate. The fourth chapter briefly covers the life of the very first Czech immigrants to Texas. The fifth chapter deals with the challenging beginnings in a new country, founding of the Czech communities, as well as the gradual disintegration of these communities. The last chapter is dedicated to description of the certain influences and lasting impressions of Czech culture that still remain visible in Texas today.

# 1 Culture

## 1.1 Definition of culture

There are a significant number of definitions explaining the term culture and many interpretations associated with its meaning. It is important to point out that the term culture usually has specific and concrete implications for one's point of view (for example one person recalls art and artistic creation and other may think more of a particular society and its ideas and customs), while in literature the term tends to be perceived in more abstract and complex way.

Looking back in time, the term culture was implied and explained by an English anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* who claims that “culture [...] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Tylor, 1920, p. 1) Since its first publication in 1871, there have been many editions and reprints of this piece of work. For instance the quotation above is taken from its sixth edition. Yet, the definition, now more than a century old, stays the same. However, it may disconcert modern day feminists all over the world, as it is not politically correct. Society includes women too, and therefore they are responsible for producing culture as well as men. (Dennis O’Neal, What is Culture?)

Comparing Tylor’s definition of culture with the more modern definitions, for instance with the definition provided by the Cambridge Online Dictionaries which defines the term culture as “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online) a striking difference can be observed. The word “man” has been replaced by “people” and yet, even though there is certainly nothing wrong with the statement, it is in a way insufficient when compared to what Tylor has stated. To put it more precisely, Tylor himself uses the word *complex* in his definition which shows his comprehensive view on the issue. The problem with the more modern definition is that it can be seen as poorly defined and not addressing everything that culture can embrace. Therefore the compared definitions coincide only in two aspects: beliefs and customs, while Tylor covers other significant areas such as art, morals, law and basically any other capabilities achieved or acquired by members of society (for example language).

In addition, many authors, such as MacKenzie (2005) still tend to return to Tylor for his thorough view. MacKenzie elaborates on the word culture denoting the sharing of language, religion, folk customs and also “aesthetic matters” (p. 13) that imply to the way of existing or common values of people. He also mentions that architecture, tools and weapons create a particular culture. (ibid)

## **1.2 Culture and its components**

It can be concluded from these definitions that the term “culture” is not just about giving definitions, and is worthy of deeper study. As a matter of fact, culture influences daily life and both the direct and indirect links are frequently ignored. Professor Emeritus of Anthropology Dennis O’Neil from Palomar College in California is an important figure in the studies of culture and its relations. Not only for his students, but also for the public he created an educational web page called *Human Culture: An Introduction to the Characteristics of Culture and the Methods used by Anthropologists to Study It* (Dennis O’Neal, What is Culture?), where he claims that there are three parts to culture.

The first, so-called “body of cultural traditions” comprises language, folk customs and religion that are the most obvious elements that differentiate certain groups of people from the others. Secondly, there is “a subculture” that could be described as culture within the culture. In other words, newcomers settling down in a new place with different culture, often maintain much of their original cultural traditions. However, the original culture is influenced by the local culture, thus they unknowingly create a mix of their original culture and the local one that is so-called “subculture”. Examples of these subcultures are Mexican Americans, Vietnamese Americans, or even Czech Americans, where the history of the latter will be described in greater detail in the following chapter. The third stage, which is not so important to deal with in this thesis, is comprised of “cultural universals” which means the “learned behaviour pattern” handed down from generation to generation, but also shared throughout different nations. (ibid) In other words, people all over the world have in common these time-proven and functional features, such as “communicating with a verbal language consisting of a limited set of sounds and grammatical rules for constructing sentences, having a concept of privacy or raising children in some sort of family setting”. (ibid)

### **1.3 Identity, Ethnicity, Nationality and Assimilation**

In order to understand the term “subculture” it is first important to explain the following three terms that are at the core of the discussion: “identity”, “ethnicity” and “assimilation”. The order of clarification of those terms is also important since “identity” can be seen as the most typical aspect of culture, “ethnicity” as resulting from the concept of identity and “assimilation” referring how to deal with different nationalities and ethnicities under one banner, in the state.

It is undeniable that “identity” is another convoluted term that has become a social and cultural phenomenon, although few apt definitions have been stated. For instance Melucci (1996) sees identity as “[...] continuity of the subject over and beyond variations in time and its adaptations to the environment [and] the ability to recognize and to be recognized.” (p. 30) In fact, he refers to the ability to preserve identity over the process of adaptation and change. Other scholars see sameness as an important aspect of identity and claim that “identity would be most salient when people are most similar.” (Bucholtz & Hall in Duranti, 2003, p. 370) In other words what they state as a sense of belonging to a particular group and/or indentifying with others based on what we share, is a culture with identical traits that are most easily noticed by people who share the same physical traits, believe in the same and share same lifestyles, attitudes and values. What is more, those similarities can be seen even more easily when put in contrast with another identity group.

#### **1.3.1 National and cultural identity**

Indeed, there are two components that comprise human identities. The first is concerned with how people perceive themselves. (MacKenzie, 2005, p. 10) Naturally, they know they belong to “[...] a society with which they share many characteristics”. (ibid) The second element is “a process often known as “othering” (ibid) whose principle is to “[...] create a self-definition of their characteristics by contrasting themselves [...] with neighbouring peoples.” (ibid)

Speaking about “othering” Triandafyllidou (2001) mentions the “double-edged character of national identity” which means that people are able to differentiate those who belong to them and who do not. (p. 10) Thus, as it can be seen there are several attributes that can be associated to the term identity. While MacKenzie speaks about “human”

identity, Triandafyllidou uses a different attribute – “national”, which appears to be more pertinent to the thesis.

Making reference to the term “national”, it is important to mention one of the main scholars of nationalism studies, a British Professor Emeritus Anthony D. Smith. (Interview – Anthony D. Smith) In his well-known book *National Identity* published in 1990, he formulated five “fundamental features of national identity”. These are “an historic territory, or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members; a common economy with territorial mobility for members.” (p. 14) Furthermore, he claims that national identity “involves some sense of political community, however tenuous.” (p. 9) By “political communities not only does he refer to “[...] at least some political institutions”, but also to “a definite social space [...], with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong.” (ibid)

In comparison to Barker (2000), he briefly explains the national identity as “a form of identification with representations of shared experiences and history [...] which are told through stories, legends, literature, popular culture and the media.” (p. 253)

In fact, some scholars also mention “cultural identity”, a term which has relevance to this thesis as it is a key component of maintaining a link to ones origins. In principle cultural identity coincides in a certain way with the term national identity. For a better explanation, Friedman (1994) claims that cultural identity represents the particular characteristics of a nation such as history, language and race. (p. 238) Thus, as it can be seen, sharing the same history plays an important role for both cultural and national identity. It is also significant to realize that, cultural identity is “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’,” (Hall in Rutherford, 1990, p. 222), which means that it is a never-ending process that “transcends the time, place and history.” (ibid) In addition, Barker (2000) claims that cultural identity is made up by the perception of similarities and differences of not only basic human identities such as, age, gender, religion, but also nationality and ethnicity. (ibid, p. 231) The two latter terms have key meanings and relevance to subject matter of the thesis.

It is true that apart from national and cultural identity, there is other possible classification of identity that can be asserted. For instance personal identity is related to

the fact that people perceive themselves as a culturally unique being and social to the awareness of being a member of different social group. Last, but not least, here is also ethnic identity which is certainly related to the term “ethnicity”.

According to Dr. Charles Hirschman from the University of Washington Department of Sociology, “ethnicity” is a suitable synonym for “race”, so it might seem that these terms are interchangeable. Yet, they are not entirely identical. Hirschman claims that race is considered to be “a fixed biological category and inherited from generation to generation” (Race and Ethnicity), however, he emphasizes that it is usually perceived subjectively. That is why he prefers to use the term ethnicity, which is basically a historical connection to people’s ancestors. (Race and Ethnicity)

Moreover, it is important to realize that while race is based on physical traits such as skin colour, skull shape or hair type, ethnicity is based on cultural traits such as history, language, art, mythology and folk customs, in other words, the certain cultural component that have been already mentioned above. (Bolaffi, 2003, p. 99-102) Therefore, it can be seen that the terms ethnicity and race differ in a certain way.

When discussing the term ethnicity, it is significant to mention the term “nationality” and realize the fact that whereas ethnicity refers to marginality, nationality refers to majority. According to the Cambridge Online Dictionary nationality represents “a group of people of the same race, religion, traditions” which seems to be a bit vague and also misleading. The definition of ethnicity, very similar, when taken into consideration: “a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins, or the state of belonging to such a group.” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online). Common sense suggests that nationality is firmly bound to the nation and its territory. Ethnicity however does not capitalize on nation and territory as such but on the traits that are similar and shared by the minor group (norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices), which can exist outside of their own territory. This can be seen as referring to another often connected term –“diaspora”. (also discussed in chapter 2.3)

To complete this outline of the crucial terms, assimilation is explained. According to an online contemporary dictionary, one can learn that “assimilation” can occur into groups, into organisms and of sounds. (Cambridge Dictionaries Online) When considering the topic of this thesis, the applicable definition will be the so-called assimilation into groups, which Young (1939) sees as “the common sharing and fusing of folkways and

mores, of laws and other features of two or more distinctive cultures by people who have come into direct relations with each other.” (as cited in Hirsch, 1943, p. 35) In other words, groups of people of different cultural backgrounds who have moved to a new country, start to merge with the local people. Even though Young formulated it more than seventy years ago, the statement remains unchanged with the passage of time.

Furthermore, it is important to realise that “assimilation” is a process as Duncan (1943) mentions “[...] for the most part conscious.” (as cited in Hirsch, 1939, p. 35) Whether this statement is truthful or just partially truthful, could unquestionably be the subject of another great discussion, but it is not going to be discussed as it is not essential.

Nevertheless, it follows that the process of assimilation relates to the definition of subculture that is mentioned above. It could be thought, that those who are creating subcultures are at the same time assimilated into the new culture by which they are surrounded. In this case sub-culture is defined as a new culture entering into a host/majority culture. Yet, there are different kinds of subculture in which assimilation does not play any role. These subcultures come into existence out of or separate from a majority culture. Nevertheless, in terms of this thesis though, immigrants who form into a new majority culture, gradually create ethnic and national subcultures, and therefore in this case the creation of sub-cultures and assimilation coincide.

#### **1.4 Melting pot**

Speaking about the term “subculture”, it is worthwhile looking at one of “the major American myths that most Americans believe in” (Daniels, 1990, p. 17) and that is “melting pot”. It is obvious, that without fully understanding the meaning of all the crucial terms mentioned above, it would be somewhat difficult to fully understand the true meaning of “melting pot”. Indeed, this term was first introduced by Israel Zangwill, an Anglo-Jewish writer in his play of the same name. The play was published in 1908 at the Columbia Theatre in Washington, D.C., in the middle of the biggest immigration wave to the United States, and was very successful. The story was set in New York City, which was considered a home for millions of new immigrants. The main protagonist was a Russian refugee, David Quixano, who managed to flee the unbearable conditions in his homeland and was excited about the cultural mix of nations in the United States. (Schumsky, 1975, p. 29-30) The following words are taken from the final scene of the play:

America is God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming!...Here you stand in your fifty groups with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries, but you won't be like that for long, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to – these are the fires of God. ... German and Frenchman, Irishman and Englishman, Jews and Russians-into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American...He will be the fusion of all races, the coming superman. (as cited in O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 79)

Shumsky (1975) sees the success of the play in its message. As he claims: “*The Melting Pot* presented a picture that was attractive to many Americans.” (p. 29) Americans were pleased to hear that “[...] the United States is a land of universal love and brotherhood [...] and a place in which the divisions among men will soon disappear.” (ibid) In other words, Zangwill captured the immigrant's feelings regarding the process that could be compared to “the pot in which metals are melted at great heat, melding them together into a new compound, with great strength and other combined advantages.” (Laubeová, 2000)

However, this whole idea proved to be impracticable. Even though the play signifies that immigrants must refuse and forget their cultural heritage and identity in order to become Americans, it also indicates why this is not possible. (Schumsky, 1975, p. 37) “Zangwill was trying to depict the reality of the immigrant mind.” (ibid) People of the same national and cultural background tended to gather and keep alive their traditions and habits regardless of the fact that they lived in a new country. (ibid, p. 31) Truth is that they desired to be like Americans, they were trying to imitate them and to live like them, but they were not able to deny their past. “They desired to become a part of their new home, to learn from it and to contribute to it, but they also valued their traditions and heritage.” (ibid) Apparently, the power of being surrounded by certain mentalities seems to be very strong and therefore it is almost impossible to change one's mentality once he or she has grown up. (Mackenzie, 2005, p. 23)

#### **1.4.1 Transformation of melting pot**

Thus, instead of the idea that “[...] all immigrants would be assimilated to a common American identity”, (ibid) lots of mixtures of mentalities have come to existence since the immigration waves to the United States and because this mixture resembles preparing a salad, it has been called “salad bowl”. That is why the process of “melting pot” transformed to “salad bowl”. Sowell (1981) comments on this that although “groups have not vanished in a melting pot” (p. 14) neither did they manage to keep completely their identity and ethnicity without changing. Moreover, “the assimilation of American ethnic groups has not been a one-way process.” (ibid) Most of the cultural characteristics

that are today considered being typical for American society, such as cuisine, music or certain words, used to be formerly “ethnic peculiarities”. (ibid)

Returning to the classification of culture according to O’Neil, it can be stated that the terms “sub-culture” and “salad bowl” are linked to each other. Apparently, the latter could be considered the initial state, because at first, the groups of immigrants of the same origins preferred to stay together. They shared their language, so they could help each other without overcoming the language barrier. These groups dwelled in communities that they founded, not only within the American cities, where a good example could be the legendary “Chinatown” in New York City, but also in the sparsely populated areas throughout all the United States, such as Texas, Oklahoma or Iowa. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that all of the terms mentioned above are related to each other and without fully understanding them one will never be able to understand the whole issue.

## **2 Migration, immigration & emigration**

Before opening the chapter concerning the history of the Czech immigration to the United States of America, it is worth explaining the terms related to this: “migration”, “emigration” and “immigration”. Although the terms seem to be identical and interchangeable, they differ slightly in their meaning. Klemenčič in Isaacs (2007) refers that “migrations are special movements of individual or groups of people from emigrant (place being left) to immigrant (arrival) areas, with the intention of temporary or permanent settlement.” (p. 28) It can be seen therefore that the term migration is a noun describing the movement of people and is actually superior to “emigration” which means leaving the country, and “immigration” which refers to coming to and settling in another country. In addition, Daniels (1990) claims that “migration simply means moving”, whereas “immigration means moving across a national frontier.” (p. 3)

Looking back, the migration of people has taken place ever since humanity existed and it is “[...] a fundamental human activity.” (ibid) Generally speaking, people have not been groundlessly moving from place to place throughout the states and continents. There have always been political, religious or existential reasons that force people to leave. In other words, issues causing migration always reflects the historical epoch and should be perceived in its framework. (Klemenčič in Isaacs, 2007, p. 28)

### **2.1 Push and pull factors**

When examining the motives for leaving someone’s homeland, it is necessary to mention the so-called “push and pull factors” which play a crucial role in influencing people to migrate. Pull factors could be described as attractive forces that stem from the migrants desire to migrate. (Daniels, 1990, p. 27) Strielkowski (2012) puts this statement more firmly when explaining that people began to speculate about leaving their country when they become aware of the possibility to earn more money in the country where they could emigrate and/or they encounter unemployment, in their home country. (p. 27) Thus, the unfavourable financial situation and low employment in the country of origins considered to be so-called pull factors.

Related to push factors, Bauer and Zimmerman (1999) explain that push migration traditionally emanated from the following assorted origins:

[...] positive economic conditions in the target countries relative to the sending regions as measured by variables such as unemployment, wages, working conditions, social security benefits and the structure of economy. (as cited in Strielkowski, 2012, p. 28)

Accordingly, they mention “[...] size and age distribution of the working population as well as family migration and inflow of asylum seekers and refugees [...]” (ibid), that are perceived to have a strong effect on push migration.

Strielkowski (2012) also suggests the usefulness and value of “immigrants’ networks”. (p. 29) People who are involved in these networks in principle work like informers, providing information and beneficial advice to those people pondering immigration to prospective countries. (ibid, p. 29-30)

Before going further, another statement from Wadim Strielkowski is worthy of comment. He claims that “for migration to actually take place [...] there must not be any other barriers such as language, cultural differences, or a great geographical distance.” (ibid, p. 27) It might seem that this is in stark contrast to the whole essence of the topic of this thesis. The Czechs who decided to move to America were definitely of different cultural background and they did not speak the same language. Moreover, the distance between the Czech lands and America was undoubtedly a great one, yet, it did not discourage them from immigrating.

Clearly, it is somewhat difficult to be precise about what he meant by the cultural differences and a great geographical distance, since they are both perceived in a subjective way without giving a “gauge” as a reference. Distance between the Czech lands and Texas was certainly a great one, however, it was rather the accessibility of travelling that played a more crucial role than distance. Therefore, it would be appropriate to consider reformulating the statement and adding a criteria scale. Moreover, the word “barrier” is perhaps not the most appropriate word to be used in the context of immigration and that “obstacle” would be better. There were undoubtedly many obstacles that had to be overcome to enable migration, whereas a barrier would have prevented that act.

## 2.2 Scale of migration

When considering general classification, there are several ways in which the different migrations can be divided. Firstly, depending on the duration of settlement, there are “temporal or permanent migrations”. Secondly, the reasons for moving there are either “voluntary” or “forced” migrations and furthermore, migrations are typically over long distances and from one country to another, but internal migrations are also possible. (Klemenčič in Isaacs, 2007, p. 27)

Together with these classifications, Treibel (1999) refers to “extent of migration” according to which individual, group and mass migrations are divided. Moreover, he also mentions the “territorial aspect” where internal and international migrations exist. (as cited in Strielkowski, 2012, p. 15)

## 2.3 Migrant communities

Undoubtedly, every migration differs in divergent factors and overall development, however, the common aspects can be found in each of them, such as “founding migrant communities”. As Klemenčič in Isaacs (2007) states: “Migrations result in immigrant communities which contemporary social scientists try to redefine as ‘diasporas’.” (p. 29) Looking at the exact definition given by Collins English Dictionary, it is claimed that *diaspora* is “a dispersion or spreading, as of people originally belonging to one nation or having a common culture.” (2005, p. 433) Another definition says that “a diaspora is a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland who have since moved out to places all over the world.” (Vocabulary.com) People living in these *diasporas* tend to attach to their original cultural backgrounds, which indeed brings us back to the topic of so-called subcultures that has already been mentioned and explained in the previous chapter.

To sum up this chapter, it can be claimed that people have been moving from place to place for some time now. It is seemingly a never ending process that will last as long as the human population. As a matter of fact, MacKenzie (2005) claims that “the past few centuries have seen an acceleration of such migrations” (p. 9), which Klemenčič in Isaacs (2007) explains by the development of the transportation throughout the centuries. The following example is given:

Steamboats, in which the 19th-century migrant took at least 10 days to cross the Atlantic, have been replaced by airplanes, in which one can across the ocean – or better, come from place A in Europe to place B in the United States – in less than half a day.” ( p. 29)

In addition, he mentions an interesting fact: “At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, already every 35<sup>th</sup> person worldwide has participated in international migrations.” (ibid, p. 27) However, bearing in mind the general facilitation and quickening of travelling in modern times and the overall rashness, the acceleration is even more visible in the twenty-first century. Thus it is likely that the number is even higher today. Generally, the reasons for migration, so-called “push and pull factors” remains the same and therefore not much has actually changed throughout the centuries. According to Bryant (1999) the Unites States of America was at that time the country that received the largest number of immigrants. The only difference could be found in Bryant's statement that “Asia is replacing Europe as the major immigrant-sending area.” (Bryant, Immigration to the United States) Apparently, people are inclined to migrate more and more and today the topic of international migration has unquestionably become sensitive to deal with

## **3 Czech immigration to Texas**

### **3.1 European immigration to America**

Before discussing all the facts that gave rise to Czech exodus to America, and respectively to Texas, it is important to bear in mind that it was a part of the mass European immigration to the United States during the nineteenth century. Evidently, the Czechs were not the only nation who decided to leave for America as it is a well-known fact that America is a country made of immigrants.

#### **3.1.1 The “new” immigrants**

Daniels (1990) classified the European immigrants to America as the “old” and “new” ones. (p. 121) The old immigrants came especially from Britain and north-western Europe and settled in America before 1880s. Daniels emphasizes that these people “[...] were very much like the settlers of the colonies and were relatively easy to assimilate” (ibid), in comparison to the new immigrants who were from the southern and eastern Europe and differed from them in language, religion and overall cultural background. As he puts it, they were “of very different ethnicity.” (ibid) Thus, since the Czech immigrants belong to the ‘new’ immigrants’ category, it is the history of this category that will be discussed in the thesis.

#### **3.1.2 The number of the European immigrants**

The new immigrants were composed of people from many nations, namely the Irish, Germans, Italians, Swedish, French, Norwegians, Poles and last, but not least, the Czechs. (ibid, p. 121-212) Looking at some numbers, Klemenčič in Isaacs (2007) mentions that “[...] 29 million inhabitants of Europe moved overseas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 36) whereas Daniels (1990) refers to an overall sixty million Europeans who immigrated to America. Bade (2000) emphasizes other estimates that Walther Nugent compared in 1996. According to one of these estimates, around 55 million of Europeans left their country to settle in America during 1846-1924, however, a quarter of them came back, so the final number immigrating was about 41 million. Another source of statistics suggested that around 65 million left Europe and 15 million returned during 1800-1914. (p. 130-131)

It can be seen that the dates which record the mass immigration differ amongst the many sources, and the evidence that supports the factual record is weak. The methods of recording the personal data differed a lot from country to country, moreover, the terms explained earlier, *migrant*, *emigrant* and *immigrant* were defined in an inconsistent way that lead to difficulty in determining and their status. By deeper examination of the archives, many discrepancies and incorrect data can be found and so that is why the statistics might be misleading. (ibid, p. 129)

### **3.2 Reasons for leaving Europe**

Consequently the exact number of Europeans immigrants will never accurately be known, however one fact is certain and that is that the number was very large and a turning point in world history. Apparently there were a number of reasons for this huge exodus. Klemenčič in Isaacs (2007) mentions that a trigger for leaving Europe became the Industrial Revolution (p. 36) that “was linked to large increase in population, leading to mass migrations from Europe to the New World.” (ibid, p. 35)

#### **3.2.1 The Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial Revolution, which had began in Britain in the late eighteenth century, was a pivotal period that impacted the lives of all European inhabitants during the nineteenth century. It was a process during which human power was gradually replaced by machines and factories. The societies that used to be agrarian and rural for several centuries transformed into industrial and urban. The iron and textile industries represented the major role and last, but not least, the means of communication and transportation had been simplified. (Montagna, The Industrial Revolution)

When discussing the changes in transportation, the spread of the railroads across Europe greatly shortened travel time to potential embarkation ports, while the introduction of steamships cut passage time from weeks to days, in the case of the fastest ships. Ships also increased in size, some carrying more than 1,000 immigrants passengers in steerage class. (Coan, 2011, p. 11-14)

However, Eckert (2006) refers that even though there was a technological boom that generated crucial inventions that improved, or at least promised to improve living conditions, the life improvement was uneven between the social groups. She highlights that “peasants gained little benefit from industrialization and modernization, and

continued to suffer from the consequences of crop failures and potato famine.” (p. 13-14) One of the consequences for them was the loss of their jobs, as they were replaced by the new technology and therefore, they were determined to leave for the New World, alias America. (ibid) In addition, Klemenčič in Isaacs (2007) mentions that “fast-developing Atlantic economies attracted millions of people to leave their traditional homes.” (p. 36)

### **3.3 Four waves of European immigration**

As a result America faced several immigration waves from Europe. According to Bade (2000) there were four of them. The first is considered to have started in 1846 during which time more immigrants came to the United States of America than in the previous years. While during the first three decades of the nineteenth century somewhere around fifty thousand people immigrated per year; between the years 1846-1850 the number of immigrants increased fivefold to around 256,000 per year. The second wave in 1862 was subsequently provoked when the government started to support the settlement. The following years 1866-1875 brought approximately 372,000 people a year. Following that the third wave was even greater, which started in 1880. During the ten years that followed around 779,000 immigrants went to America annually. Yet, the greatest influx was still to come. The fourth and final wave that took place during 1906-1910 resulted in some 1,389,000 people per year emigrating. Subsequently emigration figures diminished to 431,000 people per year by the outbreak of the First World War. (p. 131-132)

### **3.4 Czech exodus to America**

Obviously, the number of people emigrating also included the Czech immigrants. The Czech lands were part of the Austrian Empire, respectively the Austro-Hungarian Empire, established in 1867, during the nineteenth century. Hoffmannová (1969) states that the transatlantic emigration acquired mass character after 1848 as the administration procedure of getting permission to leave became easier and furthermore, the living conditions in the Empire impelled certain social classes to quit their homes. (p. 5-6)

In addition, another reason for which leaving became less complicated after 1848 was that any people without debts and with fulfilled military service obligations could legally leave the Empire of Austria. Furthermore, the new railroad network gave access to the North Sea, more precisely to Hamburg, from where ships set sail towards the American

shores and last but not least, the Robot Patent, that abolished *roboty*, (this term is going to be explained later) in 1848, contributed to the exodus as well. (Eckert, 2006, p. 17)

### **3.4.1 The proportion of the emigration from Austria-Hungary**

An interesting fact is that from the overall proportion of people who immigrated from the Empire, it was mainly constituted by Czechs – around 80 %, but this only occurred until 1870. Since that time not only the Czechs immigrated, but also other nationalities were willing to leave from Austria-Hungary. (Hoffmanová, 1969, p. 5-6)

Hoffmanová's estimation is coincident to Josef Polišíenský's table presented in the work *Začiatky českej a slovenskej emigrácie do USA* published in 1970. (as cited in Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 9) He states that the Czechs left in profusion since 1850 and “until the 1880s, [...], they accounted for well over half of the Austrian total” (p. 9) Yet in comparison to the proportion of people who left in the years 1901-1910 “they accounted for only 4.3 % of the Austrian total”. (ibid) However, it does not indicate that the number of the Czech emigrants began to decrease. On the contrary Polišíenský (1970) claims that 94,603 of the Czechs came to the USA in the first decade of the twentieth century which was the most in all the decades since 1850. (as cited in Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 10) Nevertheless, the total number of people which left the Empire was 3.5 million, thus it follows that “the Czech emigration was only a part of a tremendous exodus from the Austrian Empire.” (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 10)

### **3.4.2 The statistics of the Czech immigration**

Even though, it is impossible to establish the exact number of outgoing Czechs, since available sources of statistics of Czech emigrants indicate different numbers, which is analogous to the European statistics, it is beneficial to examine them to create a fundamental conception of the numbers involved. First, Kutnar (1964) claims that according to the official Austrian records, 19,932 Czechs left for America during 1850-1859 (p. 8) This estimation is slightly dissimilar to the Polišíenský's table mentioned above that estimates the number of 23,009 for the years 1850-1860. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 10) It is true that Polišíenský covered the year 1860 as well, but it is unlikely that during just one year more than 3,000 people would have left. This statement is supported by Hoffmanová's estimation (1969) denoting that 1,560 Czechs left in 1860 (p. 5)

However, all these statistics showed only a fraction of the real number. The reason why the numbers are not accurate, especially during the first years of Czech emigration, is that the administrative offices registered only those emigrants who abandoned their Austrian citizenship. Most of the Czechs kept their passports which enabled them to return. Thus, these people were not officially considered as emigrants and they were not included in the statistics. Nevertheless, the majority of them stayed in America and that is why the numbers are misrepresented. (Kutnar, 1964, p. 8)

In the following years the Czech emigration was alternately increasing and decreasing. Polišínský (1970) refers to the number of 33,123 leaving in the years of 1861 to 1870, 52,079 during 1871-1880 and 62,050 in the further decade. It follows that during these decades more and more people emigrated, however the growth was reduced to 42,079 during the years 1891-1900 and was more than doubled the following decade, when 94,603 Czech left. During the last three years before the outbreak of the First World War the number decreased again to 36,681. (as cited in Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 10)

Hoffmanová (1969) states that the Czech exodus was really significant at that time, which was evident by the number of Czechs living in the United States. The estimation made in 1911 was of 750,000 people dwelling there, which represented one tenth of the Czech nation. (p. 6) However, this estimation diverges from the number that Eckert (2006) refers to. She claims that “by 1890, 170,000 Czech immigrants had arrived in America from Bohemia and Moravia [...]” (p. 18) Even though she admits that “the number could also have been twice as high since the emigration of many went unregistered” (ibid), as already stated, the numbers still differs considerably.

Whatever the real number is, it is evident that it was a noticeable fact that reflected the overall atmosphere in the Czech lands during the mid-nineteenth century. Obviously, people were not content with their life situation and they were determined to change it. The principle issues that encouraged the emigration increase were crop failure, rapid industrialization, Germanization, poverty, religious oppression and pervasive persecution. All these undoubtedly led to dissatisfaction among the Czechs and thus they yearned to live in a better world. (Gallup, 1998, p. 3)

### **3.5 The reasons for leaving the Czech lands**

As one can see, some of the issues mentioned above, like crop failure or rapid industrialization are identical to the facts influencing the European emigration waves, nevertheless the Czech emigration was impacted by one significant event that extensively contributed to the exodus as well – the Robota Patent that abolished *robota* in 1848. (Eckert, 2006, p. 11)

#### **3.5.1 Robota**

The Czech word *robota* simply means “forced labour” and in some literature sources it is translated as *corvée*. (ibid, p. 11) It is important to bear in mind, that robota originated from serfdom which existed until 1775 when “the Corvée Patent [...] regulated (and often lightened) peasant labour services on nobles’ estates.” (Sayer, 1998, p. 66) Nonetheless, the peasants were still obliged to work for their lords during designated days throughout a year, especially during the planting and harvesting periods, however, without any remuneration. Seemingly, the peasants suffered the consequences of this duty as “[...] for every day spent working for the lord was a day less they could work for themselves.” (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 12) Even though, the peasants were eventually liberated from this obligation in 1848, they were bound to pay an annual special compensation to their former masters for the loss of their labour, thus the living conditions were not still favourable. (Eckert, 2006, p. 11)

Moreover Janak (1975) claims that although, the robota was abolished, the year 1848 was “a year of lost hope for the Austrian Empire.” (p. 7) There were auspicious attempts to transform the political regimes in the monarchy through revolutions in Prague, Vienna and Budapest, however, they were all unsuccessful. Instead, the monarchy established the onerous regime which conduced to the immigration waves from the Empire. (ibid) Therefore, it can be concluded that the abolishment of robota did not stop the Czech exodus from.

#### **3.5.2 Economical difficulties in Moravia**

Generally speaking, it is important to mention that although the reasons varied, the main cause for leaving the motherland and starting a new life in a far distant Texas continent was economic. Even though the Czech lands were affected by the industrial revolution in mid-nineteenth century the agricultural conditions did not improve, and the

economic development was uneven between the two parts of the Czech lands - Bohemia and Moravia. Whilst northern Bohemia progressed industrially, northeast Moravia, specifically Wallachia and Lachia, followed the industrialization very slowly. (Eckert, 2006, p. 14)

These regions were considered rural areas, which is indeed a crucial fact that should be understood when considering the Czech immigration to Texas. The majority of the immigrants came from Moravia and also the Beskydy Mountains, the eastern parts of the Czech lands at the border of Moravia and Slovakia. (ibid, p. 9) Specifically, Blaha (1983) mentions “the four villages of origin” that most of the people left from. These were Lanškroun, Zádveřice, Vsetín and Frenštát. (p. 4) Gallup (1998) adds that an estimated ninety per cent of newcomers to Texas originated from these four villages (p. 4)

### **3.5.2.1 Life of peasants in the Czech lands**

Living conditions were more difficult for local people in these regions as they were typically less developed than the towns, which was one of the principle reasons to leave. Nevertheless, it would be false to claim that all villagers left these provincial areas. The reasons why people left is more intricate. Most of the people living there were peasants, a general title for a class of people. In those days, peasants were classified into three subclasses, namely *sedláci* (farmers), *chalupníci* (cottagers) and *nádeníci* (labourers). While the farmers enjoyed the highest social status among these three groups and even strengthened the position after the revolutionary year 1848, the cottagers and the labourers lived in poverty. To explain, the cottagers at least possessed houses, in some cases even with land holdings; however the labourers were without any property and bound to their “employees”. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 12-13)

When considering land ownership, Kroulik in Machann (1978) emphasizes that even if the cottagers owned some it was likely to be very tiny and could not guarantee enough bread and butter for the whole family. (p. 54) Moreover, Šimíček (1996) describes the conditions and quality of the lands at that time:

The soil was filled with stones, on the banks and hills, or the sand allowed the growing for only undemanding plants: rye, barley, oats, wheat and potatoes. Fields were often damaged by rain changing the hill brooks into ferocious element, which took not only crops but the soil as well. Peasants tried to save their fields by collecting stones and making protective stone walls. Little productive soil needed much fertilization but the low amount of domestic animals was not able to produce enough manure. (p. 7)

As previously discussed, the year 1848 was on the one hand the year of “lost hope”, and on the other hand it brought, beside the Robota Patent, one positive piece of news for cottagers. They could sell their property and acquire the money to fund the journey to America, respectively to Texas, and therefore the living conditions were seen to become more favourable. Accordingly, the majority of the immigrants were cottagers, who established a particular society in Texas. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 12-13) The community structure will be discussed in details later as well.

### **3.5.3 The end of domestic production of wool**

Clearly there were connecting reasons that influenced the emigration wave. The reason why people who lived in villages were penniless relates to the crisis of domestic textile production in 1850s. To explain, the villagers were employed in different agricultural and industry areas. They farmed, cropped, cultivated the fields and also bred animals, typically sheep for wool. The people manufacturing wool were called weavers and especially for them came a turning point in the 1850s. Cotton started to be imported into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and so the traditional wool manufacture ended. The weavers became suddenly surplus and lost their jobs, which meant no income. This was a difficult situation because there was no other industry offering jobs in these rural regions. Thus the following years were crucial for the weavers. Not only was their financial situation unfavourable, but they also starved. This was the principal reason why they decided to leave everything behind and board the ships to Texas. (Eckert, 2006 p. 15-16)

### **3.5.4 Lack of freedom**

As it has been indicated above, another factor playing an important role in the exodus was political and religious freedom. Literally the feeling of liberty allured the Czechs as much as owning land to farm. The Czech people who were oppressed by the Austro-Hungarian government desired to profess faith without restrictions. (Eckert, 2006, p. 79) Additionally, Kroulik in Machann (1978) explains that the Czech people were not accepting of the Germanization of their motherlands. They preferred immigration to serving in the Austrian army, where they would have to fight for the Hapsburgs who suppressed the Czechs. Moreover, it is important to mention that the first group of Czechs who sailed to the port of Galveston situated in the Gulf of Mexico, fled the oppression. (p. 54)

All in all, the enumeration of the principle reasons to leave seems to be never-ending. There were many key factors that made the Czechs want to move and to detail every reason is almost unrealistic as there were also some individual reasons.

### **3.6 Settling areas in America**

As a matter of fact, they were attracted by the prospects of the New World and based on these prospects they decided to board the ships to the American shores. It can be stated that America at that time had many of the so-called pull factors, especially for people from countries with few or any job opportunities. (Daniels, 1990, p. 16-22)

Regarding the settling, Kutnar (1964) mentions that the Czechs were settling down in different parts of the United States. The first groups of them settled in Texas as they were inspired by Arnošt Bergman, whose life will be discussed later. Certain fractions decided to stay in Wisconsin and Iowa. Lastly it is worth mentioning that within New York and Chicago there were significant numbers of Czechs who started to live and found important communities. (p. 15) Nevertheless, the main focus within this thesis is going to be the Czech immigration to Texas.

Whilst Texas became the most popular destination for Czechs wishing to emigrate there was in fact another place much closer to home and within Europe where they could have lived. This place was Banat and nowadays it is situated in Romania, even though it used to be the part of the Hungarian Empire. People coming from the northeast part of the Czech land were pondering this possibility, but the inhabitants of the Hungarian Empire were not really hospitable to the idea of having more Czechs (or Germans) in their area. This caused the Czechs to discount moving to Banat and they started making plans for Texas instead. (Kroulik in Machann, 1978, p. 53)

### **3.7 Texas attractiveness**

The thing that remains fascinating is the reason why the Czechs decided to leave for the distant state of Texas. Gallup (1998) explains that it became increasingly attractive to the Czechs thanks to the opportunity of having large amounts of land, which were scarce goods for them. (p. 4) On the other hand, Eckert (2006) claims that the very first Czech settlers chose Texas “followed by personal ideas formed against the backdrop of literary novels about America and the independence of the Texas Republic.” (p. 10)

In fact, it was the price of land that brought Texas into focus and inspired them to go there. Buying land which had a low price meant that they could acquire it without spending a fortune. Typically, the price was around five to ten dollars per square acre in 1850s, but then it grew up to fifteen dollars per acre in the eighteen sixties and seventies. Consequently, the Czechs were gathering and settling around counties such as Washington, Bell or McLennan, where the price stayed unchanged. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 41-42)

Additionally, the quality of the land available to purchase was also a significant influencing factor. The Czechs preferred the black-land prairie. (Gallup, 1998, p. 5) Moreover, Eckert (2006) mentions that the arable lands in Texas were made fecund and in general lands were very plentiful and appropriate for farming and that is why “Czechs quickly became attached to the land they acquired.” (ibid, p. 114)

However, not everyone was attracted by the farming possibilities in Texas. The very first brave people, such as Josef Lešikar, whose life is going to be discussed in the following chapter, were not peasants so they were not interested in farming. They left their homeland because of political and religious oppression and Texas was a perfect location for freedom in all senses. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 26)

## 4 Destinies of the First Czech Pioneers

Considering the preceding chapter that discusses when and why the first Czechs came to Texas, it is beneficial to look at the uncommon life stories of some of the very first Czech immigrants. According to Kroulik in Machann (1980), the first Czechs who came to Texas travelled individually, at most accompanied by their relatives, yet subsequently they travelled in groups as genuine explorers. (p. 11) Among those first courageous people, or as Eckert (2006) calls them 'pioneers' (p. 9) was for instance Dr. Anthony Michael Dignowity, Karel Anton Postl, Josef Lešikar or Arnošt Bergman whose remarkable destinies will be briefly described. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 22)

### 4.1 Anthony Michael Dignowity

Even though, the biggest immigration waves started for the reasons that have already been stated after 1848, there were a few people who managed to leave even before this time. One of them was a political activist and writer Anthony Michael Dignowity. On examination of his life, it was full of twists and turns, especially in his childhood. This was not an easy time because of the financial situation of his family. His father as a bad businessman ended up in debt and consequently a young Dignowity was forced to handle his life alone. After a few unsuccessful attempts to earn money by selling some products, he joined the Polish army to fight against Russia in 1830, but successfully escaped to Hamburg to sail and reach the American continent. (Blaha, 1983, p. 1-4)

After boarding the ship called *Good Hope* in 1832, he did not land directly in Galveston, but in New York from where he travelled across the United States and eventually decided to stay in Texas. His travelling to America differed from those who travelled in later years, because he travelled alone and not as a member of a group. After spending some years in Texas he left and travelled across America, however he went back there and spent the rest of his life in San Antonio in Texas. (Malik in Machann, 1972, p. 11)

Dignowity was known for his talent, diligence and range of knowledge. It is a significant fact that he was not only a political activist, businessman and doctor, but also a writer. One of his pieces of work called *Bohemia under Austrian Despotism* depicts, as the name indicates, the oppression at that time. (Blaha, 1983, p. 1-4)

## 4.2 Arnošt Bergman

Nevertheless, Michael Antonin Digowity cannot be considered the only person who would have influenced so strongly the other compatriots to travel to America. Indeed, there were others who did and one such person who was “largely responsible for the first two groups of Czechs to become interested in emigrating to Texas” (Kroulik in Machann, 1978, p. 53), was Reverend Arnošt Bergman who came from Zápudov, a small village located northeast from Prague. He had been living in different places across the Czech lands during his life and finally he settled at Stroužné in Prussian Silesia (nowadays called Pstrazn), where he directed the Czech Evangelic Church after being ordained a minister. (Habenicht, 1996, p. 57) His personality was strongly influenced by the Czech National Revival, as well as by the significant pieces of work by the Czech writer Karel Havlíček Borovský, which was significant since he wished for the Czech people to have nothing other than a democratic government. As the political repression of the Austrian government did not ease off, he decided to abandon Stroužné and start a new life chapter in America. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 26)

He and his family boarded a ship in Hamburg and sailed to Galveston in March 1850, eight years after Michael Antonin Dignowity. Cat Spring became the place where they settled down, eventually. Although the Bergmans were the very first Czechs to arrive there, German colonists who were already established there helped them. Moreover, Bergman started to teach the German children and later he preached in the German Evangelic Church. Life in the community was peaceful and the Czechs and Germans managed to have a good rapport with each other. (Kroulik in Machann, 1972, p. 53)

As a matter of fact, Arnošt Bergman is considered the “father” of Czech immigrants, (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 26) since he encouraged other people to come to America by describing Texas life in his letters that he was sending home. Free living and the available lands were mentioned in these letters that were published in the *Moravské Noviny (the Moravian News)*. (Eckert, 2006, p. 62) In fact, it took just a short while for the news to spread around the surroundings areas as peasants and farmers read the published letters and shared their content with others. Since it was especially peasants suffering from hunger, the positive information about the good living conditions in Texas raised their hopes of a better life somewhere else. What is more, after a while, they started to receive letters written by their kin who had settled in Texas as well, which reinforced their desire

to leave and follow the Czech pioneers. Furthermore, Bergman was involved in the so-called immigrant networks as an informer. He did not only describe the Texas land and overall living conditions, but he also gave counsel to those who were potentially interested in making the journey. Publishing these letters unquestionably resulted in a significant increase in immigration from the Czech lands. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 32) The following extract is from his letter to Josef Lešikar:

Tell them to be sure not to try to save money at the wrong time. It is better to pay a little more and buy passage on a German boat from Mr. Valenti in Hamburg. If this is not possible, then pay only a little more in Bremen and buy passage on a German boat directly to Galveston. In the end, this, although slightly more expensive, passage, will be the most economical. (ibid)

### **4.3 Josef Lešikar**

As it has been already indicated, among those who read the Bergman's letters and was subsequently inspired to leave was a journalist called Josef Lešikar. In fact, he was in charge of dispatching "[...] the first two expeditions of Czech Protestants in 1851 and 1853." (Eckert, 2006, p. 62) A noteworthy fact is that Lešikar was supposed to leave the Czech lands as well in 1851 with the first group, however, due to the insistence of his wife, he decided to stay, which was paradoxical to his strong desire to flee the unbearable conditions in his native country. Two years later, his wife changed her mind and agreed upon departing for Texas. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 30-34)

Lešikar arrived in Texas together with seventeen other families. (Hudson & Maresh, 1934, p. 28) Thus, the Czech migration to Texas that began with individuals, such as Michael Antonin Dignowity and Arnošt Bergman, gradually changed to the migration of groups.

An interesting quote that is worth looking at came from Lešikar: "[...] He described himself as the originator of the emigration of our people to Texas." (Machann & Mendl, 1991, p. 3) As it has been explained above, Reverend Arnošt Bergman is considered as the father of the Czech immigration, so Lešikar's statement might be more appropriate to Bergman's position. In truth they both equally encouraged the Czechs to emigrate to America: Bergman by his enthusiastic letters and Lešikar by his great endeavours when organising the immigration. (ibid)

#### 4.4 Karel Antonín Postl

When it comes to encouraging the Czechs to leave, there was one more significant person whose actions considerably influenced the later immigrants. His name was Karel Antonín Postl, however, he was predominantly well-known under the pseudonym Charles Sealsfield. He was born in South Moravia and educated for priesthood, yet he spent most of his life abroad. He travelled across the United States and lived in France and as well. His life was filled by journalism and writing books. The settings of the majority of his books took place in Texas and since he was able to portray Texas as an exciting place in his stories, it can be considered that he at least attracted the Czechs attention. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 21)

Furthermore, Kroulik in Machann (1978) states that Postl published positive reports about America that might have emboldened the first Czechs to come to Texas, as well as the immigrants several decades later on. (1978, p. 53)

Yet, a book that created “the myth of the American West in Europe” (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p.22) is *Das Kajutenbuch* published in 1841, where Postl described in detail life in Texas. It was not based on reality though. The description was of a life in utopia, which clearly it was not. It is also worth noting that the original title was written in German, which suggests that Postl wrote in German, and therefore influenced many Germans to emigrate as well. (ibid)

## **5 Life of the Czech immigrants**

As it has been already stated, Texas, despite the distance, became an especially popular destination to settle for Czech immigrants in the nineteenth century, obviously, not only for the Czechs, but also for the Germans, Polish or Hungarians. It was typical that the newcomers of all nations founded communities there for themselves so that they could help each other and share their language and culture. As a consequence, there were many different communities formed.

### **5.1 Settling in Texas**

At the very beginning, the first Czech pioneers tended to settle in places that were already occupied by the Germans immigrants, which could be supported by the statement that “wherever the Czechs went, the Germans preceded them.” (Eckert, 2006, p. 64) Čapek (1920) explains that it was not a pure accident, and in fact a deliberate plan made by the Czechs. As their mentalities and way of life were similar, they welcomed the opportunity of living next to each other. In addition, another factor that played a role was the German language. Many of the Czech immigrants could speak German and therefore the Texas setting became less foreign for them. (p. 112) A clear example of peaceful coexistence within these two nations was Cat Spring, a town situated in Austin County, a region in Central Texas, where many Czechs followed Arnošt Bergmann, who, as stated, decided to live there with his family. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 28)

Obviously, Cat Spring was not the only place where they would settle. Naturally, as more and more Czech groups were formed in Texas, more places were occupied by them. Hewitt in Machann (1979) states that they dispersed north, northwest, west, southwest and south from Austin County. The most fertile soils can be found in these areas and that is why the newly arrived Czech families were motivated to move further. (p. 45) They also started to settle in another region, Fayette County, and especially in a town called Fayetteville, where, almost all of the first Czech immigrants spent some time before spreading out in the county and founding more Czech communities with such as Dubina, Hostyn, Roznov or Praha. (Neal, Guide to the Czech Communities in Texas) The latter will be discussed in details later.

It is worth mentioning that certain authors have different opinions regarding the very first settling places. While Cindy Harvey Neal considers Fayetteville the “cradle of Czech

settlement” (ibid), Machann & Mendl (1983) consider the whole of Fayette County as the “cradle” (p. 46) Not to mention the fact that Hewitt in Machann (1979) perceived Austin County, where Frydek community was founded, as the “mother colony.” (p. 45) Because of these differing opinions it is not possible to state which region or even town was more crucial for the first settlers. By 1890 Czech settlements could be found not only in Austin and Fayette County, but also Lavaca, where Bila Hora, Komensky, Moravia, Novohrad, Velehrad and Vsetin were founded. (Guide to the Czech Communities in Texas) In addition, Machann & Mendl (1983) mention the importance of Washington county, where another important community called Veseli (now Wesley) was founded, and call these four counties the “Big Four” of Czechs settling in Texas counties. (p. 47)

## **5.2 Czech communities in Fayette County**

When discussing Fayette County, it is essential to mention one of the most significant Czech communities founded in this region, which was Praha. It was one of the biggest and at that time most famous communities in this region which could be described as “a small parish, strictly Czech in name and origin”. (Svrcek, 1974, p. 148) Before becoming the Czech community the nowadays tiny village did not use to be named Praha, but Mulberry. Indeed, one of the first Czech settlers Matej Novak (in some reference sources the Czech version Matěj Novák is maintained) bought a large amount of land there where he constructed a log house for his family in 1854. In the years that followed many other Czechs followed him and settled in Mulberry which resulted in the creation of a significant community that they decided to call after the capital of the Czech lands. (Baker, 1986, p. 116-118) Machann & Mendl (1983) refers to the fact that even at present Praha is called “*Matička Praha*” (p. 45) which confirms “its later importance to the Texas Czech community as a whole [...]” (ibid)

As more and more families started to live there, the town soon started to prosper. There were stores, restaurants, a post office and even two schools established. Moreover, Weyand & Wayde (1936) mention that the very first Bohemian school in the United States was founded in Praha. (p. 241) Furthermore, a renowned church called Saint Mary’s Catholic Church was built there during the years 1890-1895. (Gallup, 1998, p. 64) The style is a combination of Romanesque and Gothic Revival and the ceilings are painted, which makes it one of the four “Painted Churches of Fayette County”. (Troesser, The Painted Churches Tour of Fayette County)

Praha's prosperity was short lived though and businesses ceased to flourish there when a new town was established nearby in 1873, called Flatonia. It became more attractive for people to live there since it was built on the rail road. Therefore, the number of inhabitants in Praha rapidly declined from seven hundred to one hundred. (Baker, 1986, p. 116-118) Mister Harry Rejček, a ninety-two year old farmer living in West, who is, as his name indicates, a descendent from Czech parents, recalls that his father who came to Texas in around 1890, decided to first settle in Prague, but shortly after he moved to Flatonia. (Interview number 1 in Appendices) This confirms that over time the importance of being surrounded by compatriots decreased little by little and the Czechs prioritised living in a prosperous town over that of living in a true Czech community which will be discussed in details later. On the other hand, Rejček mentions that his older sibling were baptised in Praha, so the community was not completely forgotten. (ibid)

Nevertheless, these days, Praha is considered to be a 'ghost town' and almost nobody lives there anymore. (Baker, 1986, p. 116) The reminiscence on the copious Czech settlement is visible when walking around the tombstones in a huge cemetery located in Praha. Almost every gravestone has a Czech name and inscription on it which proves that this town used to be inhabited predominantly by the Czechs. For instance, there is written "Aneška Pešek – Odpočivej v pokoji." (Picture 7 in Appendices) Furthermore, Eckert (2006) claims that "the cemetery became a symbol of the community." (p. 120) They buried their dead relatives at a cemetery that belonged to their particular community. (ibid)

Another significant community that was founded in Fayette County, as already mentioned above, was Fayetteville. It was, similar to Cat Spring, a town inhabited by the Germans and therefore the Czechs were literally drawn to come there to settle in around 1856. (Blaha, 1983, p. 14) In fact, before the Germans it was "originally an Anglo settlement founded in 1833 [...]." (Gallup, 1998, p. 5) However, as there were two major waves of the Czech immigration to this town, the first one in 1853 and the second in 1856 (Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce), the Czechs gradually became the major population there and created a functioning community. With parallels to Praha, it was a thriving place to live for the Czechs, a Czech Catholic church and school were built in 1870s and a parish house later in the 1890s. (Blaha, 1983, p. 15-16)

Furthermore, one of the first units of the well-known fraternal organization among the Czechs in Texas – *Slovanska Podporujici Jednota Statu Texas* (SPJST) as well as the *Katolicka Jednota Texaska* (KJT) was founded in Fayetteville. (ibid)

### 5.3 West

Another significant Czech community established in Texas important to mention is West situated in McLennan County. As it can be seen, this county does not belong to the “Big Four”, however West and its surroundings played a crucial role for the life of the Czech immigrants. In fact, there were more ethnic groups who co-existed there, namely the Germans and the Anglo Protestants and the latter represented the largest one. Yet, as the first Czech immigrants began to settle there in 1874, the ethnic pattern was going to change. During the following twenty years “the town of West developed into the dominant commercial centre in the area,” (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 220), and consequently, the number of the West residents increased from 1,000 to 2,000 during the last decade of the nineteenth century. (ibid)

One of the reasons that contributed to the population boom was railway construction thanks to which the town became better accessible for the newcomers, especially for the Czechs who became the dominant ethnic. At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, the Czech immigrants as well as their children started to leave the agricultural areas and preferred to live in the flourishing towns where they could run their businesses. (Doherty & Kubala, 2000) Thus, West is a good example of the gradual Czech assimilation which will be discussed later.

Nevertheless, the Czechs still maintained their culture in West, which can be seen by founding numerous clubs in order to share the same language and values, namely *Palace Theatre*, where the Czech plays were performed, or the gymnasium called *Sokol* which served not only as a place for physical training, but also as an important place for social gathering. (Machann and Mendl, 1983, p. 220)

#### 5.4 The features of the Czech communities

Obviously, once the Czechs arrived to Texas, they appreciated living next to the Germans however they did not forget their original identity and culture and therefore they yearned to keep their cultural heritage. In other words, after a while they became less dependent on the Germans and preferred to spend time with their compatriots and form “an all-Czech community where they would not have to live among people from other nationalities [...]” (Skrabaneck, 1988, p. 10)

Speaking generally, Eckert (2006) states that “the Texas Czech community originated with farming families from a few Czech and Moravian villages [...]” (p. 114) Truth is that they were fascinated by the Texas vastness and the possibilities of having a huge area of land to farm and so they were literally thankful to every small piece of it. They carefully cultivated their lands to make them fruitful, as they did not want to experience poverty again. (ibid)

Accordingly the usual Czech community in Texas could be described as a farming community that worked like “a network of extended families, characterized by a common way of life, and a common ethnic identity, [...]” (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 82), which was a crucial factor for the Czechs as they could identify with each other and with whom they shared the same worldviews and values. Creating these communities established a significant bond for them, since they “were united as a community through their mostly peasant origin, farming, religious faith, and mutual organizations.” (Eckert, 2006, p. 118)

Correspondingly, Hewitt in Machann (1979) adds more elements such as music, food, language, literature, “ethical values” and last, but not least, “recreation patterns”, which in other words meant the way they spent their free time. All these issues mentioned above connected them and therefore they found it agreeable to be together because it helped them to not feel so alien and isolated in a new background. (p. 47)

Furthermore, Eckert (2006) emphasizes the importance of the newspapers for the communities. There were several published such as *Svoboda*, *Našinec* or *Slovan* and they were all written by the first settlers in order to provide to the newly arrived immigrants useful pieces of information related to life in Texas. (p. 119) The most famous and popular periodical was *Svoboda* which was firstly published in 1885. The editor-in-chief was

Augustin Haidušek who “played a leading role in influencing the life and education of the Czechs in Texas.” (Malik in Machann, 1979, p. 16)

Yet, it cannot be neglected to mention that the Texas newspapers were central to the creation of Czech journalism in America and accordingly these titles spread all over the country to the places that were inhabited by the Czechs. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 178-179) Additionally, very first settlers might have been struggling for a while to get used to the Texas soil and different climatic conditions; however, they succeeded after a relatively short time. Apparently, they were motivated to persevere and not abandon settling in America as they knew there was no chance of going back (Hewitt in Machann, 1979, p. 46) As a matter of fact; their primary success with crops could also be one of the impulses for them to launch the newspapers to share their experiences of farming with the newcomers. This was especially true of *Hospodář* (Husbandman), another news title that was originally founded in Nebraska, which provided advice and recommendations on the American soil and different agricultural techniques that the Czech newcomers to Texas appreciated as well. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 179)

#### **5.4 Clubs and organizations**

According to Malik in Machann (1979) the Czechs are renowned for “[...] their love for organizations”, (p. 15), which coincides with one saying that “where there are two Czechs, there are three clubs.” (as cited in McConachie, 2000, p. 94) These statements are both supported by the countless number of clubs and organizations that were formed by the Czech immigrants in Texas. There were many different clubs and organizations established in order to enable the Czechs to gather and provide either some sort of education or social help. (Malik in Machann, 1979, p. 15-16)

One of the organizations that “provided different forms of mutual aid” (Gallup, 1998, p. 7) were the so-called fraternal societies that began to be found by the Czech immigrants across Texas. It is important to realize that these fraternal organizations were crucial in maintaining “a sense of ethnic solidarity for Czech communities [...]” (ibid)

The most important of these fraternal organizations were insurance companies, for instance *Rolnický Vzájemný Ochranný Spolek Státu Texas* (in English Farmer’s Mutual Protective Association of Texas) which “catered to specific occupational groups, (ibid)

*Slovanska Podporující Jednota Statu Texas* (in English the Slavic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas), *The Women's Catholic Union or Farmer's Union* or *The Catholic Union of Texas*. It is remarkable to mention that the majority of these organizations “began to be founded first as local benevolent fraternal organizations and mutual aid societies in the 1870s and eventually untied into state institutions.” (Eckert, 2006, p. 168)

For instance, SPJST developed into the most prominent and dominant organization representing the Czech Texans history. The first twenty-five lodges of SPJST were situated in the Czech communities across Texas, such as already mentioned Fayetteville, or Bilá Hora, New Tabor, Velehrad or Snook. The number of lodges gradually increased and there were 146 lodges with an estimated value in insurance terms of \$ 14,758,658. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 97-99) Moreover, the purposes of these lodges were various and often chamber of commerce or polka dances were organised here. They were recognized as the Czech cultural centres and reinforced the good working of the Czech communities. (Gallup, 1998, p. 6)

Nevertheless, in addition to the fraternal organizations, it is also remarkable that so many theatres, dance and reading clubs that “[...] were founded with the purpose of reviving Czech culture.” (Eckert, 2006, p. 168) For instance, Hudson & Maresh (1934) mention *Československý Čtenářský Spolek*, known in English as The Czechoslovakian Reading Club, which was established in Washington County in 1867. (p. 179) This club is considered to be “a pioneer literary club” (ibid) where the Czechs could gather and read copious of Czech literary works which were available at the library. Unfortunately, all the books were lost when the library was razed to the ground during a fire some years later. (ibid)

The Czechs living at Ross Prairie, another important Czech community, also founded a reading club with a library in 1872, yet soon afterwards, it became “[...] the first Czech-English school in Texas.” (Hudson & Maresh, 1934, p. 179) It is interesting to mention that the classes were taught both in Czech and English, which indicates the gradual Czech assimilation that will be discussed later. (ibid)

As already indicated, the Czech amateur actors founded various theatres, such as Tyl Theatre in Velehrad. It was named after the important Czech dramatist Josef Kajetán Tyl. Many performances were organised including comedies and dance spectacles in the

traditional Czech folk costumes and it became extremely popular. (Eckert, 2006, p. 168) Another organization that gathered the Czechs in Texas was Sokol that is described as “the Prague based nineteenth-century gymnastics organization whose purpose was to instil physical stamina and Czech national awareness.” (Gallup, 1998, p. 7)

### **5.5 The Czechs vs. the Americans**

Even though the leaders of the communities challenged others to engage in American society they did not feel very motivated to be part of the world outside of the community and preferred to spend the time with their compatriots, which unquestionably led to “[...] the extraordinary survival of Czech culture and social institutions up to the time of the Second World War [...]. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 228) However, it is important to bear in mind that the lack of interest to get to know each other and in general to be in contact with each other, was mutual: the Czechs refused to participate in the American public life and preferred to be surrounded by their compatriots, and equally the Americans did not desire to participate in the Czech festive events either, even when they were invited. An interesting fact is that the origins of the founding communities, as well as support organizations could be seen at American haughtiness towards the Czechs. (Eckert, 2005, p. 205)

Robert L. Skrabanek was one of the witnesses of a Czech community in Central Texas. He described his experiences and recollections of the life in Snook, which was a rural community, in a book *We're Czechs*. Even though he was born and lived in Texas, he was surrounded by the Czech culture and language everywhere and he was more Czech than American. He puts it as following:

Even though some fifty years had passed between the time my grandparents arrived in America and the date of my birth, I grew up in a situation which was like having one foot in this country with the other still in the Old Country. (Skrabanek, 1988, p. 3)

This statement portrays exactly what life in Czech communities within Texas used to be like. People lived thousands of kilometres away from their birthplaces, but this did not discourage them from creating the Czech environment there. They desired to “transplant their native society to the Texas plains,” (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 82) and they unquestionably succeeded in it. As Skrabanek (1988) mentions: “Within the brief span of a few years, [...] a Czech cultural island was created [...]” (p. 11), because they were not being willing to forget their Czech identity and to become someone new. “We’re

Czechs, they're Americans" (ibid, p. 3) is a statement that Robert L. Skrabanek was told many times by his parents when he was young in order to preserve his origins. As he claims, it had an enduring impact on him and also his friends of the same age. (ibid)

Accordingly, he describes that the manner in which the Czechs and Americans worked was different. Firstly, he is convinced that the Czechs laboured more than the Americans, and even claims that the Americans mocked them at times. One example of this issue was "a matter of ethnic differences" (ibid, p. 17) as the American women would not work. (ibid)

Furthermore, Raymond Snokhous, another Czech descendant, who used to be a General Consul of the Czech Republic in Texas, mentions that his father, who was a blacksmith, always claimed that he loved his work. He was literally grateful for having the opportunity of working as he wanted to, which was not always possible during the times the Czech lands were under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (Štráfěldová, Radio Praha) Thus, it can be concluded that a place of origin, as well as different historical backgrounds, has unquestionably had an enduring impact on people's mentality.

Yet, the differences between the Americans and the Czechs did not only relate to the working habits, but also to the overall approach to life. As already mentioned, the Americans did not share the Czechs' enthusiasm and vigour for work, but they did not understand either that the Czechs were literally "[...] achieving the goals of independence and democracy [...]" (Eckert, 2006, p. 205) by working hard in the farms. What is more, the Americans obviously tended to despise the Czech newcomers in Texas. Frank Lotto states in his book *Fayette County: Her History and Her People* published in 1902 that, according to the Americans the Czechs "do not possess any of the shining social qualities, brilliancy and wit." (as cited in ibid)

## **5.6 Czech assimilation**

Certainly, the both Czechs and Americans relented over the course of time from the neglect towards each other. This could be seen when American businessmen, doctors or lawyers offered their services to the Czechs through advertising in Czech newspapers published in Texas. Yet, at the onset of the twentieth century the Czechs were still distrustful as they had a preference for dealing with their compatriots. However, nothing could stop the gradual process of assimilation that began to appear among the children and

grand-children of the first Czech immigrants. The following generations came much more into contact with the Americans which resulted in adopting new customs. The assimilation was most evident after the WWII, but certain indications were already noticeable at the end of the nineteenth century. (Eckert, 2006, p. 204-205)

### **5.6.1 Running businesses**

Documenting the Czech adaptation to the Texas conditions, Hewitt in Machann (1979) confirms that the Czechs rapidly assimilated to the American background. (p. 46) He clarifies this through the example of “economical and occupational activities based upon impersonal relationships [...]” (ibid), which led to their resisting of “ethnic enclosure.” (ibid) They started to rapidly understand this aspect of the American way of life, which was manifested by the fact that they did not only purchase the lands, but they also began to run businesses. (ibid)

When visiting West in August 2014, I had an opportunity to talk with Mrs. Diane Sulak Wilson, who is a Czech descendant and holds the position of the principle officer of CEFT which is an abbreviation that stands for Czech Educational Foundation of Texas. This organization promotes opportunities to study Czech as well as Czech history. (Czech Educational Foundation of Texas) I was told that two of her relatives ran businesses. Her grandfather, Cyril Method Sulak, owned a cotton gin north of West near the Hill/McLennan County Line and her maternal grandfather, L. J. Snokhous, ran the blacksmith shop also in West. (Picture 10 in Appendices) Furthermore, he shoed horses and made wagons as well.

In addition, there were Czechs who became extremely successful businessmen gaining considerably from the favourable conditions enabling them to have prosperous businesses. A good example could be Ernest Nemecek, who opened his own butchery shop in 1896 in West. The butchery became extremely popular and even today the third generation of Nemeceks family still maintain the tradition of making Czech specialities like *jitrnice* (liver sausage) or smoked pork sausage. (More Over, Tex-Mex, It' Tex-Czech)

### **5.6.2 Disintegration of the Czech communities**

Another example of assimilation was the shift of preferences. Having better jobs and the overall availability of facilities, as in the example of Flatonia, became gradually more important for the Czechs and as a consequence, the original communities started to disintegrate. It is obvious that during the decades that followed the Czech communities did not maintain the same Czech characteristics as the first immigrants who went to Texas. While the first Czech immigrants tended to live in isolation in rural communities and did not mix with the Americans or other nationalities, except the Germans, their children and grand-children became more inclined to participate in the public American life. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 206-208)

In other words, they gradually began to integrate with the Americans and interrelationships including marriage occurred within the American society, which led to a mix of the Czech and American culture. However, Robert. L. Skrabanek notes that whereas “the Americans intermarried with persons of different stock well before the 1920s [...]” (1988, p. 76), the Czechs still preferred to marry their compatriots at that time and “[...] remained pure Czechs for much longer.” (ibid) He states that all of his mother’s and father’s siblings married Czechs with the exception of just one and in fact, it resulted in divorce which might raise the question of whether the different ethnicity played a crucial role in separation. (ibid)

However, the Czech isolation could not be maintained forever. The main turning point which brought significant changes to the Czech communities came when WW II ended and farming became a less important source of subsistence for Texas Czechs. They were more attracted by the opportunities of living in the cities and consequently became Americans. (Eckert, 2006, p. 250-1)

### **5.6.3 Declining of the Czech language**

Moving to the cities was also one of the reasons why the Czech language became less spoken and gradually became for the descendants, “no more than a symbol of the past.” (ibid) In the cities they were predominantly surrounded by English speakers and therefore, they began to prefer English over Czech. It follows that the gradual extinction of the Czech language and preference of English is another clear example of assimilation. (ibid)

Moreover, as the Czech descendant Harry Rejček adds, her daughter, who spoke Czech fluently, used to be discouraged from speaking Czech by their teachers. He shares his daughter's experience from the childhood from which he remembers she was getting scolded by her teacher at school whenever she used her mother-tongue. (Interview number 1 in Appendices)

However, on the other hand, Raymond Snokhous mentions that he as a child attended a Catholic school in West in 1940s, where he could hear nothing but the Czech language. The nuns there taught them in Czech and thus they could learn the mother-tongue of their parents in a different surrounding other than just at home. (Štráfěldová, 2012, Radio Praha)

In addition, another descendant of a Czech family, Alice Powell, who grew up in West as well, and whose grand-father Havel Prnka came to Texas in the nineteenth century from Uhřice in the South Moravia, mentions that she, as well as her sister could only speak Czech when they started to attend school in 1950s. This was because they spoke only Czech with their parents and grand-parents when they were growing up on farms in West. For instance, she remembers her grand-mother helping her with her school work, so it can be seen that she was surrounded by the Czech language and culture everywhere.

Yet, today sixty-nine years old Alice Powell is not as fluent in Czech as she used to be when she was a child. When she listens to the Czech language, she does not catch everything as she is not used to speaking and hearing Czech anymore. She is able to create sentences, however, she needs more time for it. Additionally, when she speaks, she uses dialect words like “ogar” and “tož”, which indicates that her ancestors who taught her Czech came from a certain area in the Czech lands and therefore, it might be more difficult for her to understand Czech of different regions. (Interview 2 in Appendices)

Thus it can be stated that the children of Czech ancestry could speak Czech fluently during the time that they stayed at home, where they were surrounded by this language. However, once they started to attend the school, they gradually switched to English. Consequently, as they used Czech less and less in daily life, they tended to forget their original language.

#### **5.6.4 Different perceiving identity**

With regard to languages it is worth mentioning that one of the crucial facts that contributed to the Czech assimilation was the shift in perceiving identities. Preference for English strengthened the feeling of American identity between immigrant's children and grand-children. This can be demonstrated by Harry Rejček's reaction. When he is asked whether he feels he is Czech or American, he answers without hesitation, that he is American. (Interview 1 in Appendices) However, if hypothetically you could ask his parents the same question, the answer would have probably been different.

It is worthy of note that Mister Rejček's answer differs from that of Robert L. Skrabanek's mentioned above who considers himself Czech, even though he was born in Texas as did Mister Rejček. Further, it is in contrast to Raymond Snokhous' statement "We'll get over it, as we're Czechs", which he proclaimed in an interview for TV Slovácko in 2013. (TV Slovácko: Kunovice – Raymond Snokhous) By this, he was reacting to the sorrowful atmosphere after the catastrophe that happened in the same year when a fertilizer company exploded in West and fifteen people were killed. (West Fertilizer Company Fire and Explosion) Although Raymond Snokhous was born in Texas as was Mister Rejček, he considers himself Czech like Robert. L. Skrabanek.

Yet, it is remarkable that he said this sentence in English, which can lead to the discussion of whether it is ever being possible to regard himself as Czech when speaking a different language. All in all, it can be concluded that, not only particular generations perceive their national identity differently, but also every individual person. It must be borne in mind that the overall development of the Texas Czech is difficult to generalize as there are plenty of remarkable life stories that do not necessarily coincide with certain conceptions. Nevertheless, all the aspects mentioned above clearly prove Czech assimilation among the Americans.

## 6 Czech cultural imprints in Texas

Following the preceding chapter on the Czech communities and their development, it is interesting to look at the Czech population in Texas nowadays. When looking at the number of people of Czech descent in Texas, Gallup (1998) emphasizes that it is literally impossible to ascertain and determine the exact number, as there are some people who do not consider it important to associate themselves with Czech ethnicity when participating in censuses. (p. 88) According to the census undertaken in 2014, there are 203,773 people who consider themselves of Czech ancestry and 20,266 people considering themselves as Czechoslovakian. (American Fact Finder) However, Gallup (1998) claims that the numbers acquired by the census should in fact be at least double those recorded. (p. 88)

The inability to find out the real number is consistent with the statistics that exist which recorded the number of Czechs who settled in Texas in the nineteenth century, in that they were not considered to be accurate. Regardless of the exact figure of the Czech population, one fact is certain: Texas can claim to have the highest population of Czech descendants among all of the American states. (American Fact Finder)

Thus, there is no wonder that the traits of Czech culture have not vanished in the Lone Star State. By contrast, the Texas culture and way of life has been strongly influenced by the great influx of the Czechs and the Czech imprints are still visible throughout Texas today with respect to food, music and architecture. (Teague, 2000, p. 18-19)

### 6.1 Kolaches as a phenomenon

Although the Czech language is today rarely spoken by the fourth or fifth generations of the Czech descendants, there is one Czech word that everyone who is at least a little bit associated with Texas must understand. The word is a noun *koláč* that signifies a sweet open-faced bun in the shape of a circle with various fillings such as cottage cheese, peaches, blueberries, poppy seed or even the sausage fillings. (Machann & Mendl, 1983, p. 139-140) However, the sausage variant called *klobasneks* is not an original Czech recipe and is a product of the Americanisation of the traditional Czech food brought about by the mixing of the two different cultures. (Kolache Crawl: Klobasneks) In other words, it can be also stated that *klobasneks* is a result of creating sub-cultures.

Without any doubts, the Czechs have indelibly etched themselves into the Texas history by imparting the recipes for *kolaches*, which is the term that almost all Texans call them nowadays. It is worth emphasizing that the singular form is indeed *koláč* and plural form is *koláče*, therefore *kolaches* can be characterized by overusing of the plural.

### **6.1.1 Legendary Czech bakeries in West**

Nowadays, there are several bakeries in West and its surrounding areas that keep the Czech heritage alive by offering traditional Czech pastries, not only the renowned *kolaches*, but also *buchta* and strudel. In fact, the origin of the latter is Austrian, thus it can be seen that the Czech cuisine was influenced by Austria and consequently the Czech immigrants brought a little piece of Austrian culture with them when they came to Texas as well.

The very first Czech bakery ran by the Czech immigrants was The Village Bakery (Picture 17 and 18 in Appendices) founded in 1953 by parents of Mimi Montgomery Irwin who is the current owner of the bakery. She states that her mother's family was originally from Moravia and immigrated to Texas. Indeed, it was her grand-mother Honey Morris who "was the true cook in the family and possessed the cherished family recipes that yielded the wonderful pastries." (Village Bakery in West Holds Tight to Its Czech Heritage) That is why Honey's daughter Georgia and her husband Wendel came up with an idea of opening a true Czech bakery. Besides the typical Czech flavours such as poppy seed or blueberries, the owners started to make *kolaches* with strawberry, raspberry or chocolate (Picture 19 in Appendices), which are considered to be typical American flavours. (ibid) This is therefore another good example of the two cultures mixing together and creating the so-called subcultures. The bakery was seen as a great success and this encouraged other Czechs to gradually open similar Czech bakeries as well.

For instance the nowadays legendary 'Czech Stop' with the well-known slogan "Where Delicious Is Our Business" was founded. (Picture 26 in Appendices) The bakery is situated on a slip road of the motorway leading to West. In fact, this bakery is connected to the petrol station, which allows drivers to both fuel their cars and refresh themselves at the same time with freshly made pastries. (Czech Stop)

The enduring presence of Czech food represents an important part of the Texas culture and the owners of the bakeries enthusiastically continue to maintain the Czech

heritage. This is demonstrated by Mimi Montgomery Irwin's statement: "When my father passed away and my mother's health began to decline, I considered selling the bakery but, [...] I felt obligated to carry on the tradition." (Rascoe, Village Bakery in West Holds Tight to Its Czech Heritage)

## **6.2 Czech festivals throughout Texas**

In fact, the enthusiasm and vitality of the Czech descendants to maintain their Czech heritage can be seen not only by making and selling the Czech pastry, but also through their dedication to numerous organized festivals and celebrations which take place every year and are aimed at reminding them of their origins.

One of these celebrations is the annual celebration during the Labour Day Weekend called Westfest which truly represents a successful example of the how Czech culture has been maintained and makes West the "Czech Point of Texas." (ibid) The event has been developing for decades and nowadays the visitors experience dancing polka, listening to Czech music as well as eating typical Czech food. (Picture 21-23 in Appendices) The Czech heritage is undoubtedly maintained by this annual sociable celebration, yet it is only one of the many celebrations that take place. (Westfest)

Another of these celebrations worth mentioning is Pražská Pout' which takes place in the former prospering Czech community of Praha which is nowadays is a "ghost town". Although life there seems to be deserted and "seemingly almost abandoned" (Baker, 1986, p. 118), every year on 15<sup>th</sup> August this town attracts thousands of Czech descendants for a homecoming event called Pražská Pout', alias Praha Feast. (ibid) The event is the church picnic and celebrates both the religious and ethnic importance of the Czechs descendants. As a matter of fact, it commemorates the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven, which is one of the paramount religious holidays for Catholics. (Gallup, 1998, p. 64)

During the celebration, there is a Mass in Saint Mary's Catholic Church and it is partly in the Czech language as the Czech songs such as *Zdravas Maria, boží rodičko; Bože chválíme tebe* or *Tisíckrát pozdravujeme Tebe* are sung. (Picture 29 in Appendices) The bishop changes every year, American Catholic Bishop Brendan Cahill came to give the worship in 2015 (Picture 2 in Appendices), however even the Czech bishops sometimes participate, as in the instance when bishop Vojtěch Cirkle came to Praha in 1993 where he "led a Czech-language mass and afterward mingled with crowds eager to

shake his hand.” (Gallup, 1998, p. 64) This gesture demonstrates the social and human cohesion between the nowadays Czechs and Americans with the Czech ascendants. The bond is still considerably powerful. In general, after mass, the visitors are invited to enjoy Czech food and listen to the music in the huge dancing hall (Picture 4 and 5 in Appendices), which is similar to Westfest.

Obviously, there are much more of the Czech festive events, namely Kolache Fest in Hallettsville, Miss Kolache Festival, National Polka Festival in Ennis, Czech Heritage Festival in Victoria County or Kolache-Klobase Festival in East Bernard. (Texas Czech Legacy Project) Therefore, it can be stated the number of Texas Czech events and their annual copious attendance are an evident proof that the influence of Czech culture is still visible in Texas today and the descendants continue to maintain the Czech traditions as well as their great grand-parents did when they first emigrated.

Therefore, it can be concluded that by organising the numerous Czech events, Texans of Czech ancestry are aware of their origin and feel proud to keep the Czech heritage alive. In addition, they call themselves “Radical Texas Moravians” (Eckert, 2006, p. 275) and clearly assert that “Texas Czech ethnicity has remained unaltered and its future is in their hands.” (ibid) The second part of this statement is unquestionably true, however the statement that ethnicity of Texas Czechs has not changed since the arrival of the first Czech pioneers, is definitely a topic for another great discussion. Related to the extinct of the Czech language or the gradual moving from the rural areas to the cities, is evident that Texas Czech ethnicity have underwent certain changes and it is not indeed the very same as it used to be in the nineteenth century.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to describe and analyze the extremely broad topic of the Czech immigration to Texas that started in the nineteenth century. The thesis is divided to six chapters. The first two chapters deal with clarifying and explaining the crucial terms related to the topic of immigration. Throughout the following chapters, the situation in Europe and the Czech lands has been described, as well as the cogent reasons why people made the decision to leave their homelands. One of the main triggers for leaving the European continent was the Industrial Revolution which led to the epoch-making changes related to working system. Consequently, a lot of peasants lost their livelihoods and this caused them to begin seeking a better place to live. The United States of America became the place they were searching for, and many Czechs made the decision emigrate.

Furthermore, the very beginnings of the Czechs in Texas have been described to outline the concept of what life used to be like for them. The Czech tendency to isolate themselves from the Americans by founding the fraternal and cultural organizations has been compared to the gradual assimilation which ensued. While at the beginning of the mass Czech immigration to Texas that started in 1850s, the Czech communities lived in isolation and did not integrate, but as time went by, the communities converged and mixed. It has been shown that every following generation of Czechs assimilated to a greater extent with the American cultural background. They started to prefer English and live in the cities as this enabled them to establish and run their own businesses despite their peasant roots.

In the last chapter it has been concluded that the Czech ethnicity in Texas could not have remained unchanged due to the cultural process of Americanization, however it is beyond doubt that the certain traits of Czech culture are still alive today. It is true that the vast majority of the descendants do not speak Czech, which was of course absolutely natural for their ancestors. Yet, there are still many more that adore, respect and endeavour to maintain the Czech culture that their ancestors brought to Texas through a genuine recognition of their cultural origins and a desire to see it maintained for generations to come.

In other words, it can be seen that the Texas Czechs do not only express their identities by means of putting on buttons, T-shirt or caps with phrases such as “I am Texas Czech and I am proud of it“, or “Czech me out“, but they also promote Czech culture

through the press, festivals, the traditional costumes, and food, which clearly demonstrates their feeling of a strong Texas Czech bond with their origins.

Nonetheless, although significant pieces of information together with the historical links have been mentioned, there are still a considerable number of other sources of information that have not. There are endless inter-relationships and connections that can be made providing the opportunity to expand the topic well beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the task to describe and cover all the possible links would be almost unachievable, if not only because the history of the Czech descendants is still evolving and it will be very interesting to follow the further development of the Texas Czechs in the future.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Interview with Harry Rejček

Appendix 2: Interview with Alice Powell

Appendix 3: Photographs

## Appendix 1: Interview with Harry Rejček

When visiting West in Texas in August 2015, I had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Harry Rejček, who is a Czech descendant. He shared with me his recollections on his life. He was able to say some sentences in Czech.

Alice Luňáková: Where were you born?

Harry Rejček: Right here. (*He means the farm in West where we are sitting*)

AL: So, did your parents or grandparents come to Texas?

HR: My parents. My daddy came across, supposedly, when he was twelve years old. We don't know for sure if he came with somebody else.

AL: When was he born?

HR: We have to figure it out, because he died in 1978 and he was ninety-nine years old.

AL: Alright, so 1879? Did he ever tell you why he decided to leave his homeland?

HR: Not really. He would never tell us anything. I asked him several times that we sure have relatives in the Czech Republic. He told me nothing. Me and my two daughters were in the Czech Republic and we passed through the town where daddy was born and raised. I inquired about if we have relatives there and I talked to some nice gentleman in a business store and he said oh yes that he knows my father really well. And there was also his grand-daughter, I guess about fourteen years old. And I was telling her: (*Mister Rejček is switching to Czech*) Já jsem z Texasu, mé jméno je Rejček a jestli možná nejsme z rodiny. A ona říká, počkej, já zavolám dědečka. So dědeček came and I told him who I am. He said: Be sure to come by our house, I'll be waiting for you. And so we did and we found our relatives.

AL: Do you remember the name of the town?

HR: Yes, Lipník. (*switching to Czech again*) Znáš Lipník?

AL: Ne.

HR: Neznáš?

AL: Which part of the Czech Republic is it?

HR? Moravia. East Moravia. Where were you born?

AL: Prague.

HR: Anyway, I really don't know much why my daddy came across. Later, his family arrived as well so I have some cousins here around Texas. And yes, his first years of his life here in the country were around Praha and then he married my mom and moved to Flatonia and then they came up here [*West*] looking for a better life. He bought this farm here. My two older sister and brother were baptised in Praha.

AL: Did you speak Czech in your family?

HR: When we were little we spoke Czech. We were able to speak Czech with other kids as well. I talked to my children in Czech as well.

AL: Did you speak to your children in Czech?

HR: For pretty good while, they spoke Czech with their grand-parents. My oldest daughter, she spoke Czech perfect. But when she started school, some crazy old teacher caught her talking Czech to some girl and the teacher forbade her to speak Czech. But I didn't know about that, I wish I'd known about that.

AL: And were parents of your wife from the Czech Republic as well?

HR: Her grand-parents, she is the second generation.

AL: Do you know the reasons why they left?

HR: No. They really never told about it.

AL: So how did you keep the Czech culture alive at home?

HR: Yes, for example at Easter and Christmas we carried on the old traditions. We sang the Czech carols and draw the eggs. My mom used to cook what she called „houska“.

AL: What about the mass in church?

HR: We were pretty large when it started in English. But mostly it used to be in Czech.

AL: Were you interested in the news about Czechoslovakia?

HR: Oh yes. I always read the newspapers. For example, I knew all about 1968 and the Soviet Invasion and the Velvet Revolution. We kept up to date on all that. And I was in Pilsen during the war. We were in Germany and then one day we took off to Czechoslovakia, I was riding the first truck. Actually we went there when the war was over. I spent six days there. It was very interesting. We were telling to the people that the war was over. I also met the Czech soldiers in England when I was serving there. They all spoke good English but I spoke to them English all the time.

AL: How were the Czech natives?

HR: Well they were pretty surprise I could speak Czech to them. They could not figure it out why an America could speak Czech. They were the nicest people you ever saw.

AL: How do you consider yourself? Are you Czech, American or Czech America?

HR: Well, I consider myself American. Of course, you could call me Czech America too, it doesn't matter.

AL: Thank you very much for your time.

## Appendix 2: Interview with Alice Powell

When visiting WestFest in September 2015, I could speak with another Czech descendant Alice Powell. We met at West Museum. She was excited to share with me her recollections of her childhood and of her Czech ancestors. She was able to speak Czech, not fluently though.

Alice Luňáková: So, Alice tell me about your relatives. Who came to Texas?

Alice Powell: My grand-father did. He was from Uhřice. Look. (*showing me a post-card of the town*) I was there a while ago. I loved it there. Anyway, my daddy Havel Prnka was born around 1890 and then he came to Texas. Here is his birth certificate (Picture 13 in Appendices) and here the registration card that he was given when he came to America.

AL: Did you speak Czech or English when you were little?

AP: I only spoke Czech when I started school. My older sister is four years older than me also spoke only Czech. She told me that my dad taught her to say priest and nun in English. I do remember my grandma helping me with my school work. We spoke only Czech when I was growing up on farms in the West area. In one home my grandparents live on one side of the house and we lived on the other side. In fact we called my grandpa daddy in Czech. (*Alice is switching to Czech*) Dědeček. Tell me something in Czech.

AL: Dneska je Westfest, je dost teplo, ale těším se na to.

AP: Once more...Hmm it's difficult for me to understand. Tell something more.

AL: Tak jak se máte? Jak se jmenujete?

AP: Joo, dobře se mám. Jsem Alice. Tož, pamatuju trošku. No, ale už hodně zapomněla..jsem. Já nemluví už.

AL: Ale rozumíte! To je moc dobře. So tell me something about your childhood in West.

AP: Well I know I grew up in a very close and loving family. We were poor but dad without reading or writing created a mechanical tractor repair known throughout the West area. I had only one doll which I still have. One Christmas we got a set of dominoes and one year red rubber balls.

AL: What about your daily life in West?

AP: Well, I remember staying in a makeshift baby pen in the fields when my mom and grandparents picked cotton. We shared the pen with small coloured children while their parents picked cotton. I picked cotton at an early age throughout the summers. Also Saturday

was a special day. We would go grocery shopping and then to the drive-in movie, which my daddy helped build. Admission was forty four pennies. I could go on and on. My oldest sister rode to school in a flatbed trailer with rails. Several children were picked up and the fathers took turns driving. My daddy set this up. Of course the generous help from the town of West when our home burned. The West Furniture provided a table and chairs, people brought Clothes and donations.

AL: Did you grand-parents speak English well?

AP: Well, I remember that my older sister went with my grandma to the doctor to translate Czech to English.

AL: What did you do at Christmas?

AP: Oh that was really nice time. We sang the Czech songs... *(again switching to Czech)*  
Narodil se Kristus Pán...to bylo no. Jo to bylo moc hezký.

AL: Thank you very much for your time.

### Appendix 3: Photographs taken by Alice Luňáková

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**Picture 1 Saint Mary's Catholic Church**



**Picture 2 Catholic Bishop Brendan Cahill**



Picture 3 Praha Feast button



Picture 4 Dancing polka at Praha Feast



Picture 5 Serving kolaches at Praha Feast



Picture 6 Railway line leading to Flatonia



Picture 7 The *Pešek* Inscription on Praha cemetery tombstone



Picture 8 Gateway to Praha cemetery



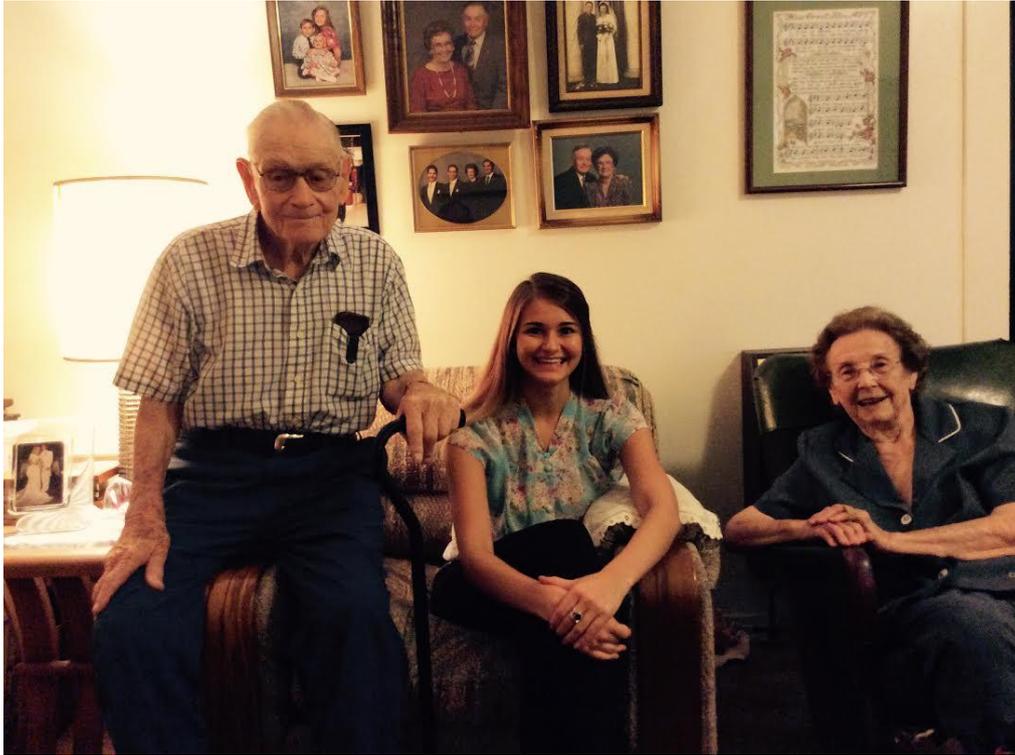
Picture 9 Tombstone identifying Florian Vrana and Anna Vrana



Picture 10 The old L.J. Snokhous Blacksmith shop in West







Picture 15 The Rejčeks



Picture 16 The Rejček's farm



Picture 17 The entrance to The Village Bakery in West



Picture 18 The village Bakery



Picture 19 Various flavours of kolaches



Picture 20 Railway in West



Picture 21 Dancing polka in folk costumes at Westfest



Picture 22 "Westfest means fun, food and dance."



Picture 23 The main dancing hall at Westfest



Picture 24 Cottage cheese kolach



Picture 25 Westfest parade



Picture 26 Czech Stop



Picture 27 Picha's Czech American Restaurant in West



Picture 28 Frank Nemecek at Westfest Parade

**TISÍCKRÁT POZDRAVUJEME TEBE**

Tisíckrát pozdravujeme Tebe ---  
o Matičko Krista Ježíše, ---  
ty jsi okrasou celého nebe, ---  
tobě se koří celá říše! ---  
Ty jsi u Boha ta nejprvnější ---  
tobě čest a chválu nejprvnější ---  
[: Andělé a svatí vzdávají, ---  
královnou tebe nazývají. :]

Příspěj nám také, o Matko naše! ---  
všichni s vroucím srdcem žádáme; ---  
tys jediné outočiště naše, ---  
po Kristu nad tebe nemáme; ---  
at' chvalo zpěv tobě prospěvat ---  
můžem, tvoje jméno zvelebvat; ---  
[: Bychom se zalíbili Bohu, ---  
chceme tě chválit v každou dobu. :]

+ + + + +

**BOŽE CHVÁLÍME TEBE**

Bože, chválíme Tebe ---  
Pane, moc Tvou velebíme, ---  
kterou zná zem i nebe ---  
skutkům Tvojm se díváme, ---  
[: Když se vše v světě mění ---  
Ty sám jsi bez proměny. :]

Vše, co jen chválit může ---  
Cherubini, Serafini, ---  
chváli Tě, velký Bože ---  
nebes, země městěním, ---  
[: Ode všech býval nazván, ---  
svatý, svatý, svatý Pán. :]

Svatý Pán Bůh Sabaoth, ---  
svatý, Jenž řídí národy, ---  
Jenž pomáhá z bíd a psot, ---  
nebe, zem, povětří, vody ---  
[: Plné jsou cti chvály Tvě, ---  
neb vše dílo ruk Tvých je. :]

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**ZDRAV BUD' CHLEBE ANĚLSKÝ**

Zdráv bud' chlebe anělský, ---  
Ježíši můj, ---  
pokrme ty nebeský, ---  
o Bože můj, ---  
vnejsvětější svátosti ---  
mannou rajske sladkosti ---  
mne vždy živ a nasycuj, ---  
Ježíši můj.

Živ mne, abych nelačněl ---  
Ježíši můj, ---  
Dávej se mi za úděl, ---  
o Bože můj, ---  
v svátosti té velebné, ---  
oblažuj vždy srdce má, ---  
a mou duši posvěcuj, ---  
Ježíši můj!

**BUDIŽ POZDRAVENÁ SVATÁ HOSTIE**

Budiž pozdravena svatá hostie, ---  
v kteréžto Pán Kristus své božství kryje.

Sbor:  
Zdráv bud', Ježíši! ---  
Synu Marie, ---  
posilniž mou duši, svatá hostie!

Budiž nám k věčnému všchném k spasení, ---  
zbav nás zde na světě zlého soužení.

Sbor: Zdráv bud', Ježíši! atd.

Tělo Kristovo jest s krví spojené, ---  
spoj nás Svoji láskou, ochraňuj věrné.

Sbor: Zdráv bud', Ježíši! atd.

Na cestu věčnosti anělským chlebem ---  
račiž nás posilnit na věky. Amen.

Sbor: Zdráv bud', Ježíši! atd.

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*Assumption of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary  
Catholic Church  
Praha, Texas*



Picture 29 Songs during the Catholic mass at Praha Feast