

MOST

THE BRIDGE

News of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

NATIONAL
CZECH &
SLOVAK
MUSEUM &
LIBRARY

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NCSML at Lindale Opens October 24

Lindale Mall, with its easy to find location, ample parking and regional popularity has become the temporary home for numerous Cedar Rapids businesses and organizations that were displaced by the floods of 2008. We feel very fortunate to have found a space that will serve our current needs and we anticipate plenty of foot traffic as the shopping season revs up!

Formerly a photo studio, the interim location is dubbed **NCSML at Lindale**. Roughly 3,200 square feet, it provides enough room for an exhibition gallery, event space and museum store. Additionally, NCSML at Lindale will accommodate several staff offices, storage and shipping space.



Curator Stefanie Kohn begins constructing the exhibition

Preparations for the opening on October 24 are keeping the NCSML staff busy. Curator Stefanie Kohn is assembling artifacts, collection mounts and cases in preparation for

our next exhibit, *Treasures from an Immigrant Trunk*. Museum Store Manager Shirley Rosencrans has been replenishing the inventory of ornaments, books and other treasures popular with shoppers looking for that extra special gift.

Come celebrate the opening on October 24th. Special activities including a ribbon cutting, will begin at 5:00 p.m. NCSML at Lindale Mall is located at 4444 1st Avenue NE, in the corridor next to Younkers and behind Holley's Store for Men. Regular hours for NCSML at Lindale are Monday through Saturday 10 – 8 and Sunday 12 – 5. Reach us by phone: 319-294-5354

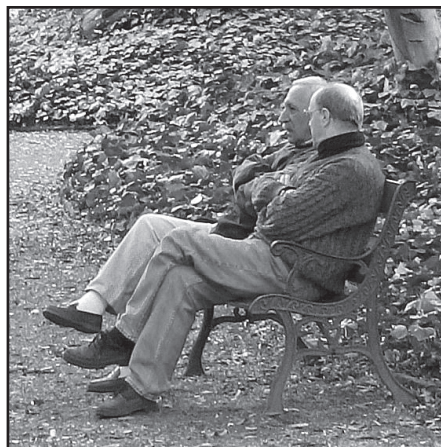
Prestigious Grant Funds National Oral History Project



The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) recently awarded the NCSML a highly competitive grant for a national oral history and outreach project. The project will record the personal stories, family sagas, and community history of political émigrés from Czechoslovakia who settled in Chicago and Cleveland. The grant provides \$116,699 and must be matched 1:1 by the NCSML.

Czech and Slovak political émigrés to the United States have unique stories about life under communism. We intend to document the reasons

why and circumstances under which they left Czechoslovakia and their experiences in America, both in establishing a new life and in advocating for the liberation of their homeland. Their stories are personal, but they help explain monumental



political and cultural shifts that have occurred during the 20th century. To our knowledge, no organized effort has been made to record their experiences for future generations.

150 interviews will be conducted during this project. Photographs, community histories, archival materials, and a project-specific web site will also be used to help us to tell the immigrant story. The primary source materials resulting from this project will be used to develop a future exhibition about the Czech-American and Slovak-American immigrant experience.

For more information contact Dave Muhlena, project director, at 319-362-8500 (ext. 5) or by email at dmuhlena@ncsml.org.

National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

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The NCSML is funded in part by a grant from the Cultural Enrichment Partnership Program administered by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Life changed dramatically on June 13, 2008. But the positive energy is flowing as we make progress each day and as we plan and work for the future. I want to take this opportunity to send my grateful appreciation to everyone who has supported the museum and library in the last few months. Each of you has contributed immensely to our recovery.

The professional staff faced a monumental, unimaginable task in responding to this disaster and I want to recognize them for their outstanding work. They have responded tirelessly and creatively to the immediate demands of stabilizing damaged collections and buildings, establishing an office in loaned space with donated equipment, raising emergency relief funds, reorganizing programs at new locations, preparing for our interim location and communicating with members and friends around the world. I am convinced that the NCSML couldn't have survived these challenging days without the incredible team that is leading it.

This includes the Board of Directors, which has responded in extraordinary ways. The first board meeting was held even before we were able to get back inside the buildings. A group of officers met on a weekly basis to stay on top of our swiftly changing scenario. They offered me personal support, served meals to the clean-up crew, provided professional expertise, and donned Tyvek suits and work boots to help with the dirty work. They continue to work very hard as we plan for full recovery.

And where would we be without the NCSML Museum Guild members and volunteers? So important to the success of our museum in good times, their help has made a critical difference as we recover from the flood. They worked by our sides during the muck-out (such an apt description), helped us regain administrative functions in the office and organized an extremely successful fundraiser. They continue to answer our calls for assistance on a daily basis with cheerful enthusiasm.

From Cedar Rapids, to Chicago, to Prague, people have responded to our crisis with overwhelming support. We extend our deepest appreciation to all who helped us prepare for and clean out after the flood. A task of such enormity would have been impossible without you. To those of you who have sent donations to help with flood recovery, we send our profound thanks. Your gifts are helping us to: (1) pay for flood clean-up (2) replace the loss of earned revenue -- necessary to maintain operations, and (3) maintain our staff so that we can continue to serve our mission and plan for the future.

We have started a scrapbook of letters and notes of support we have received. It is heartwarming to read all the well-wishes and stories of special visits to the museum that have given people such enjoyment over the years. Dry attendance statistics can't express the wonderful moments people remember from time spent at the museum -- like a wedding kiss under the chandelier, the sparkle in the eyes of a third-grader as he learns about life as an immigrant, the 'ah-ha' moment when a visitor understands an important event in history a little better, or the standing ovation for an exceptional concert. By sharing your personal stories of the NCSML, all of you keep us going and give us the confidence that we will come back even stronger than ever.

Like everyone in Cedar Rapids, we want to get back to "normal." But this will take time. We want to make the right decisions regarding the future of our museum. For this reason, we are planning our recovery from the flood in phases.

Literally four days after the flood, we were scheduled to reveal the latest proposed building design (which followed extensive program analysis, building needs assessment and public meetings) for an expansion of the museum and library. Because of our success, we have outgrown our current space and those needs have not changed. But



Marek Skolil, Consul General of the Czech Republic, tours flood damage on June 24

how and when we meet those needs is different in light of the flood. In other words, we know our destination, but we're determining the best route.

In the next months, the Board of Directors and NCSML staff will work with federal, state and local officials as rebuilding and flood control plans for Cedar Rapids are developed. During this time, we will think carefully and creatively about a building plan that will be exciting and visionary.

Our organization exists to preserve Czech and Slovak history and culture. Right now, we are in the center of an historic moment for the NCSML and for Cedar Rapids. We endeavor to make the right decisions for the future of your museum and library. Please continue to stay engaged as we continue with our recovery.

With grateful appreciation,

Gail Naughton



Gail discusses the recovery process with Czech News Agency correspondent, Jaroslav Richter

MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

Implementing an Interim Operating Plan

Sometimes, even the best laid plans are derailed. Such was the case for the NCSML this year. Just as we were preparing to unveil our ambitious plan for expansion, floodwaters spilled over the banks of the Cedar River and our plans, for a moment, seemed to float downriver with the current.

Accomplishing flood clean-up, a behemoth undertaking in and of itself, and simultaneously planning for the future of the NCSML has been challenging; however, a new set of best laid plans are in place for the current

phase of recovery.

There is no doubt that NCSML will have an active presence in Cedar Rapids and across the nation while planning and working to rebuild the national museum. Over the course of the next year the museum board, staff, and volunteers will aggressively work toward the following goals:

- Immediately establish an interim operating location for an exhibit, programs, and museum store. In October, the NCSML at Lindale Mall will open to the public four months after the floodwaters crested. For details, see article on page 1.
- Mount an exhibit featuring the NCSML National Collection at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.
- Develop and mount an exhibit depicting the flood in the Czech Village and New Bohemia area. Please see article on page 4 for further details.

- Open a Museum Store in association with the exhibit.
- Hold select local programs and attend national festivals and events. This summer and fall some programs were held at sites graciously donated by sister organizations. NCSML at Lindale will have programming space for upcoming events, including the 2008 Den Svatého Mikuláše. Museum staff and volunteers are attending Czech and Slovak events and festivals around the country. The NCSML has been seen in Chicago, IL, Wilber, NE, New Prague, MN, and St. Paul, MN. Please stop by the booth if you see us in your town.
- Begin a grant-funded national oral history project titled *Recording Voices and Documenting Memories of Czech- and Slovak-Americans*. For more information about this project, please see the article on page 1.
- Complete a plan for the NCSML's future and raise the money to implement it. While fundraising is a never-ending process, it has become all the more critical as we strive to maintain our current activities and work to support future plans.



Photo Credit: Marion Police Department

June 13, 2008: A city submerged

Two Projects Capture History in the Making

It's not often we find ourselves in the middle of a history making event. But even as we were occupied with the task of flood cleanup, we were keenly aware that the story of the flood was vitally important for us to capture.

Mere days after the flood waters crested, we contacted Tallgrass Historians to help us with an oral history and photography project that will form the heart of an exhibition on the history of Czechs in Cedar Rapids.

On Friday, June 20, exactly one week after the river crested, photographer Mike Whye was snapping images of the unimaginable damage seen throughout Czech Village and New Bohemia, and was framing candid

Continued on next page....

portraits of the people whose stories put a human face on a natural disaster.

As the aptly titled *Flood Oral History Project* got underway, we began receiving phone calls, letters, and e-mail messages from both members and non-members near and far. One after another, they shared family histories and fond recollections of visits to the NCSML and Czech Villages. We soon realized this was not just a local story. It was an international story that touched the hearts of many people.

In response to this outpouring, the NCSML launched an initiative called *My Flood Story* to collect

flood related stories from anyone who had a connection to the museum and/or the neighborhoods. We invite you to submit your memories of the Czech Village, New Bohemia and the NCSML and your reactions to the area's recent flooding. Please submit your stories and photos to the NCSML via the e-mail address myfloodstory@ncsml.org, or by mailing a copy to:

National Czech & Slovak
Museum & Library
ATTN: Jan
c/o Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc
One Research Center
Marion, IA 52302

Stories collected as part of *My Flood Story* will become part of the NCSML's library archives and considered for use by the NCSML in upcoming exhibitions, interpretation, web site, etc. We hope to receive photographs of Czech Village, New Bohemia, and the NCSML before, during, and after the flood. Selected submissions will be posted on the NCSML web site. For more information about *My Flood Story*, call 319-362-8500 (ext. 5509) or visit the museum's web site, www.NCSML.org.

Plans for an Original Flood Exhibit

Materials gleaned from the *Flood Oral History Project* and *My Flood Story* will become part of an exhibit that will open on the first anniversary of the floodwater's crest, June 13, 2009.

The exhibit will tell the story of immigrant Czechs who settled in the Cedar Rapids community, the story of the Czech Village commercial district, as well as the story of the flood, one of the largest natural disasters in the history of the United States. This will help contribute to the resurgence and recovery of this vital historic area, which is critical to achieving the NCSML mission.

STATUS REPORT: COLLECTIONS

Exhibits and Artifacts

As a result of the flood, both the *Homelands* and the 1968 exhibits were completely destroyed. Walls and cases moved around and tipped over. All cases, graphics and exhibit furniture were a total loss. Surprisingly, only three or four pieces of glassware were broken. Through it all, the 800 pound bronze statue of Masaryk stood firm -- we found him exactly in his place with walls, cases and debris fallen all around and on top of him.

During World War II, the statue was buried in order to hide it from the Nazis. It was dug up and reburied twice to avoid discovery. Now we can add another interesting chapter in this statue's already unique history.

Even though the river seemed to

nearly engulf the buildings, we were thrilled to discover that the second floor areas of all three buildings were not touched by the water. Everything stored upstairs was safe!

Staff and volunteers worked tirelessly for nearly a week to remove the artifacts from the attics of the buildings. These items have been placed in a temporary, secure storage facility.

Simultaneously, experts from the Chicago Conservation Center trained staff and volunteers to rinse and dry the artifacts we were rescuing from the horrible black mud. It was wonderful to watch the bright reds and greens on a beautiful embroidered skirt re-emerge as a conservator rinsed the mud away. About 1000 damaged items were taken

to Chicago for further treatment. We are optimistic that most of these damaged artifacts can be restored.



A flood damaged artifact receives a thorough cleaning

A Note About Donations

The NCSML has already been contacted by a number of people willing to donate artifacts or library materials. Your generosity is truly appreciated. We encourage you to contact us if you have items that may replace those that were damaged or lost, though we ask that you refrain from sending items to us until we are ready to accept them. Call 319-362-8500 to speak with Stefanie Kohn, Curator (ext. 9), or Dave Muhlena, Library Director (ext. 5), for more information.

Museum Library and Archives

Nearly all of the archival materials, genealogy resources, periodicals and many of the English-language books were removed from the Library before the rising floodwaters forced us to cease efforts and evacuate. Unfortunately, everything that remained (approximately 7,500 foreign-language books, 3,000 phonograph records, and more than 220 videotapes and DVDs) was completely submerged.

After it was safe to re-enter the museum, staff and volunteers worked continuously for five days to clean mud from salvageable books, which are now in the process of being freeze-

dried. We estimate that up to 20% of the books may have been destroyed. The phonograph records are currently being cleaned and sanitized by staff at the University of Iowa Libraries' Conservation Lab. All of the videotapes and DVDs were lost. All library equipment and fixtures, except for shelving, was damaged beyond repair.

Next steps include conducting a complete inventory of damaged and undamaged books to determine which books were lost. We are fortunate to have duplicate books in offsite storage that may be used to replace some damaged or lost books.



NCSML Board Member Rich Mitvasky washes flood damaged books

Museum Guild Fundraiser Hits the Jackpot



A local couple adds to the "money jar"

Never underestimate peoples' ability to rally for a cause. That was the take home message from the overwhelmingly successful fundraiser, "Save the Museum" Benefit and Bazaar, organized by the Museum Guild on August 9.

In a few short weeks, guild members organized a benefit for the NCSML that surpassed all expectations. The preparation was enormous, as was evidenced by the sheer multitude of activities. There was a mini farmers market, a silent auction, polka music (complete with a polka lesson!), a

mouth-watering array of foods for sale—kolache and other baked goods, bratwurst and hot dogs. Other sale items included Christmas ornaments from the Czech Republic, handcrafts, NCSML Guild cookbooks, BrewNost raffle tickets...there was something for everyone. Turnout was great and dispositions were generous – a total of \$11,002 was raised to help with the costs of recovery! When we need them most, the Museum Guild proves that there is no task too big or small. Here's a special thank you to all who helped to make this event a success.

Saint Nicholas Returns to Cedar Rapids December 6

Every year, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library celebrates Den Svatého Mikuláše (Saint Nicholas Day). Last year, it was nearly cancelled due to a tremendous ice storm; but, we prevailed. This year, the flood and the loss of a location threatened to call off the festivities, however, our interim location at provides a solution to this challenge. Saint Nicholas, the Angel, and the Devil are coming to Lindale Mall on December 6, 2008.

The location may be different, but the day will be just as joyous. Another



flood displaced non-profit organization, Theatre Cedar Rapids, has generously offered to host two of our most anticipated performances at their

interim location, TCR Lindale. The Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre Company performance of *"Education of a Donkey"* begins at 10:00 a.m. and is followed by Světlušky: Cedar Rapids Youth Folk Ensemble Performance. Sv. Mikuláš, Anděl, a Čert (St. Nicholas, the Angel, and the Devil) will be on hand to greet you at the door. TCR Lindale is located in the former Let's Dance/Lindale Plaza Theatre space, located at 4444 1st Avenue NE, across the parking lot from the NCSML at Lindale. Both performances are free and open to the public. Reservations

Continued on next page....

are not required. All children must be accompanied by an adult. The events are sponsored by the Iowa Arts Council and US Bank.

After these performances, join Sv. Mikuláš, Anděl, a Čert (St. Nicholas, the Angel, and the Devil) as they venture across the parking lot to continue the festivities at NCSML at Lindale. There, Master Folk Artist Marj NejdI personalizes ornaments from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. You may choose to have her include a name and year for \$2.00, or a name, year, and additional text for \$4.00.

The Coloring Contest is back for a third year. Youngsters may pick up a coloring sheet from the NCSML or any US Bank branch and enter to win a \$25.00 savings bond. Color St.

Nicholas, the Angel, and the Devil, and turn in your masterpiece to the NCSML at Lindale or a US Bank branch. Artwork will be displayed at the NCSML at Lindale from Dec. 6 – Dec. 13. Ages for the drawing are under 5 years-old, 5 – 8-years-old, and 9 – 12-years-old. The drawing for the savings bonds will take place during the Cookie Walk on Dec. 13 at 11:00 a.m.

Leonard Reyman Accordion Trio performs your favorite holiday songs, accordion style. Sing-a-long and join the fun from noon – 1:00 p.m. Santa's Saxs Concert is from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. and the Czech Heritage Singers take the stage at 3:00. For over 30 years, the Czech Heritage Singers have delighted us with their

renditions of traditional Czech and Slovak Christmas carols. All activities at the NCSML at Lindale are open to the public and free, with donations appreciated.

In addition to the musical entertainment, visitors have the opportunity to create their own Czech and Slovak holiday decorations from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. This is a free activity, with donations appreciated.

The Museum Guild Cookie Walk takes place Saturday, December 13 at the NCSML at Lindale. Sales begin at 10:00 and continue until all the goodies are gone. Cookies are sold by the pound. For more information, call (319) 362-8500.

The Votroubeks Make Giving a Family Affair

Who says family reunions need to be ordinary? The Votroubek Family 2008 Reunion Committee decided to add a philanthropic challenge to their schedule of events. They launched the "Czech It Out" Family auction. The resulting event not only highlighted the family's competitive Czech spirit, but raised \$2,162 plus various matching funds to benefit the NCSML Flood Relief Fund. Several family members have already requested to repeat the auction for NCSML at the next reunion. What a memorable gift – thank you!

Dying for Democracy: Lessons from Czechoslovakia, China & Burma

The right of people to choose their government, i.e. democracy, is not only fully recognized in the United States and many other countries, but it is also embedded within the major global human rights agreements, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant on Political and Civil Rights. Being able to exercise democratic rights is another issue, however. People continue to live under regimes that deny them this most basic of political rights. When faced with such oppression, some people have challenged legal authority, even putting their lives at risk by doing so.

Dr. Rex Honey draws on the experiences of Czechoslovakia, China and Burma to tell the stories of those who have been willing to

die for democracy. His lecture is the last in the series *Shock and Aftershock: Conversations on 1968*, associated with our 2008 temporary exhibit, *1968: Twelve Volatile Months that Changed the World*.

Dr. Honey is Professor of Geography and International Studies at the University of Iowa, where he has been a member of the faculty for 35 years. A political and cultural geographer, he is an expert on the geography of human rights, a subject he has studied on six continents. Formerly Chair of the Human Rights Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers and Secretary of the Commission on Geography and Public Policy for the International Geographical Union, he is currently Director of the Crossing Borders Program at the University of Iowa.

The lecture begins at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 1 at the Carl and Mary Koehler History Center, 615 - 1st Avenue SE. The program is free and open to the public.



Dr. Rex Honey

National Truly Means ‘National’

Someone once said, “It is in the midst of crisis that we find out who we really are.” For those of us in Cedar Rapids, we sometimes take for granted that the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library truly serves the nation. But the Flood of 2008 demonstrated that when it comes to our geographic presence, we touch all corners of the country.

The images of the flood dominated local news for days. What most of the stunned viewers didn’t realize is that these images were seen all over the world. For many, the images of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library surrounded by not inches, but feet of rushing water, became the iconic visuals that told the story of the devastation.

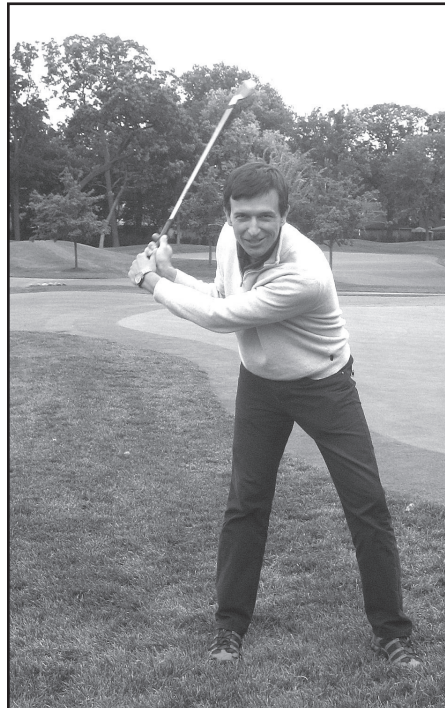
Within hours, we were receiving phone calls and emails from our members, donors and friends throughout the nation and abroad. Amidst the messages of concern and encouragement came the question, “how can we help?”

For those who wished to make a financial contribution, we launched a donations page on the NCSML website to facilitate online giving. Within one week, we received flood aid from 33 states. Next, we sent 2,000 letters to members outside of the immediate crisis zone, requesting support. At the present time, President/CEO Gail Naughton and Vice President for Development Jason Wright are traveling extensively to meet in person with prospective donors.

Donors from 43 states have given to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library flood recovery

fund so far. That is truly remarkable.

In addition to individual donations, members and friends of the NCSML have been organizing fundraisers, including benefit concerts. The first was held in June, by the Iowa Festival Chorus. Originally slated to perform at the NCSML on June 16 before their trip to the Czech Republic, the flood-postponed bon



Leos Janik takes a swing for Iowa

voyage concert became a welcome home benefit concert. In July, a Dixieland-style jazz ensemble, featuring young performers from the Czech Republic, held a concert in Chicago where the audience made a free-will donation.

One group of NCSML supporters in Chicago put on “Swing for Iowa”, a golf-themed fundraiser held on September 3. NCSML staff members, Jason Wright and Dave Muhlena, were present to tell

the story of the flood and to answer questions about the recovery process.

We have received group gifts from over 50 Czech and Slovak organizations and businesses. We can’t list them all by name here, but that doesn’t minimize the significance of each contribution.

The governments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia were deeply saddened to hear of the devastation of the NCSML and Czech Village. Government officials from both countries have been in close communication with us since June and are working diligently to provide us with flood recovery funds.

When in the midst of fundraising for recovery, one’s focus can often become fixed on dollars. But we would be remiss if we did not recognize the enormous in-kind support that is helping us to meet our daily needs. Frank N. Magid Associates, headquartered in Marion, Iowa, took immediate action to provide us with office, meeting and kitchen space. They graciously loaned office furniture, computers, phones, printers and other necessary equipment for us to use as we re-established operations—and then they dedicated members of their staff to help us set up.

We are humbled by the deep generosity of the individuals, businesses and organizations who have donated their time and resources. This outpouring of support from across the country – from across the globe – has reinforced our commitment to serve a national audience.

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30 16th Avenue SW
Cedar Rapids, Iowa USA 52404-5904
(319) 362-8500 • Fax (319) 363-2209

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