



## CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

### Inside the CSHS Archives: Andy Stritof

Emily Chicorli

A collection that has recently been reexamined in the CSHS Archives is the Andy (Andrej) Stritof fonds. Andy was born on April 9, 1903, in Cajnarje Slovenia. He came to Canada in 1925 as part of a farm-workers group. Planning only to stay a couple of years, Andy got stuck in the middle of the Depression. He spent the first part of his life in Canada struggling to adjust to a new country. He started off working in British Columbia before travelling to Windsor, Ontario, in hopes of finding work in the auto industry. With no opportunities in Windsor, Andy moved onto mining in Northern Ontario where he stayed until the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1941 Andy then moved south to Hamilton, Ontario, where he ended up joining the Art Club of Hamilton. His love for two countries led him into expressing his “rebellious and revolutionary ideas” through art.



Andy painted oil paintings and his style was influenced by impressionism, abstract/nonobjective art, and cubism. He was often referred to as “the Canadian Picasso.” His paintings were on display at the Hamilton Art Gallery and in Slovenia. Although he lived the life of an artist, Andy never sold any of his paintings and did not receive any public recognition of his works.

Only about 40 of his paintings have been preserved, 12 of which are in the CSHS Archives. Andy donated his

paintings to the community so that they can remain a symbol of the era that Slovenian emigrants worked and contributed to the well-being of Canada. In 1986 Andy moved back to his homeland and passed away in 1994. He is buried at Žale Cemetery in Ljubljana.

From 1982 to 1986 Cveta Kocjančič interviewed Andy and published his story in her book entitled, *Unhappy Rebel: The Life and Art of Andy Stritof* (1993). Much of Andy’s story in this short article has been provided by Cveta’s book. The CSHS Archives holds 12 of Andy’s paintings, photographs, numerous sketches and drawings, catalogues from his art exhibits, newspaper clippings featuring articles about him, and some correspondence and records kept during his time with the Bled Mutual Benefit Society (Vzajemna Podporna Zveza “Bled”) and the League of Canadian-Slovenians.



# Thinking about Oral Histories

Anne Urbančič

As the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society enters its fifteenth year of service to the Canadian Slovenian community, I would like to reflect back on one of the many activities we provide for Slovenians and also Canadians of Slovenian Heritage all across Canada. Our mission statement from the earliest intentions was to “conduct, educate and encourage the preservation of the Slovenian migration and its contribution to Canada by:

- Supporting the objectives of CSHS to gather, record and establish a permanent Museum of relevant collections of artefacts reflecting Slovenian cultural preservations;
- Establishing a Library of publications, reports and manuscripts both in digital and printed format;
- Promoting academic and literary research of the Slovenians in a Canadian milieu.” (from the CSHS Constitution)

Among our proudest achievements is the collection of oral histories of Slovenians who came to Canada under some of the most trying circumstances and were able begin all over again with a new language, a new community, a new attitude. Some never saw their families in Slovenia again. Some have children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren who travel often to Slovenia, to revive and honour their heritage roots.

Oral histories are important, as the anthropologists seeking to solve the mystery of what happened to Sir John Franklin’s ill-fated ships, HMS Terror and HMS Erebus, have discovered. For over a century and a half, the Indigenous peoples of Nunavut have told and retold tales of the mysterious disappearance of the two ships in 1848 with all who were on board. No written history existed of what happened to the captain and crew. Then, only by chance, in 2014 one of the historians found HMS Erebus. The ship lay in the frigid waters exactly where the stories of the Indigenous peoples of the area indicated it would. Just recently, the Government of

## Student Award Project for the Archives

During this year, we will be publishing a few of the submissions of the Slovenian Language School Student Archives Research Project. This may assist you as you begin recoding your oral history.

Please visit us on [www.slovenianhistorical.ca](http://www.slovenianhistorical.ca) for more information about the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society

If you wish to receive copies of Out Story, Nasa zgodovina, please send us your email address to [OurStorymcek@gmail.com](mailto:OurStorymcek@gmail.com)

Canada has decided to collect more of the oral histories to help in the archeological search. You can read about this project at

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/02/13/parks-canada-launches-project-in-nunavut-to-collect-inuit-elder-testimony-on-franklin-expedition.html>

At the CSHS we do not have the resources or personnel that the government has offered for the Franklin project. Nonetheless, our hardworking volunteers have recorded an impressive number of stories of our community since our archives began. You can call us to arrange a recording session. However, you can certainly do this on your own, with your parents, grandparents, with your children for your own family history. You can even record your life story.

Recording today is much easier than when we started. Fifteen years ago, I would have liked to get the full story of my father’s arrival to Canada. I know the circumstances of how he ended up in Toronto were horrendous. He left behind his beloved Slovenia, with the heartbreak of never seeing his mother and father again. When, decades later, he visited his village as an elderly man, so much had changed that he felt overwhelmed. In particular, he noticed that the villagers no longer gathered in the evenings in front of the houses to tell tales of the past. As a little boy, he had marvelled at their imaginative recounting of what had happened before he was born. Some of these stories he later told his children and we too listened enraptured.

When I joined the CSHS, I asked him to tape his life story for the archives. He asked for a portable recorder with a mini-cassette so that he could record himself whenever he had some free time. But, sadly, he never did. He didn’t know where to start.

In fact, how to begin is the hardest aspect of an oral history recording. Each life is so nuanced, so filled with details and circumstances that the project seems daunting at first. But I encourage you to take the first steps. **In the next OUR STORY watch for hints on how to become the oral historian for your family.**



# The Button Accordion Championships 2018

Franca Anderson

Button Accordion music embraces the heart and soul of Slovenian heritage. The “Button Accordion Rocks” Club, incorporated in 2017, is dedicated to preserving the wonderful musical traditions of the button accordion and promoting its continued popularity for future generations.

Everyone is welcome to attend the Button Accordion Championships 2018 on August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, hosted at Simon Gregorčič Park, 1600 Highway 9, Newmarket, ON.

The Championships are twofold. First, button accordionists can showcase their talents for championships in four categories-youth, adult, seniors and groups(youth, adults and seniors may also enter as groups) All button accordion players are invited to register for the competition at [www.Button.Akordion.Rocks](http://www.Button.Akordion.Rocks) , or on the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/buttonakordion.rocks/> You may also contact Martin Pusic ([1-226-934-3947](tel:1-226-934-3947) or, [martin.pusic@rogers.com](mailto:martin.pusic@rogers.com))

The second component of the Button Accordion Championships 2018 will include an outstanding musical program of events featuring renown button accordion musicians Martin Tezak (Slovenia) Lynn Marie Rink (USA) and Michael Bridge (Canada)

All are also sure to enjoy an array of activities, including traditional Slovenian folk dancing, comedy skits, guests’ invitational playing of instruments and live band dances with Ansambel Atomik Harmonic from Slovenia!

Young and old alike are welcome to participate in our fabulous two day music festivities that focus on the button accordion championships and filled with amazing button accordion music. Join us in our enthusiasm for continued excellence and enhanced popularity of the button accordion on August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

See you there! Na svidenje!

## ACTIVITIES

### Lunch

The annual CSHS fundraiser was held on Sunday January 21<sup>st</sup> in the auditorium of OLMM following the Sunday masses. On our display table, overseen by our archivist Emily Chicorli, was information about CSHS and the work we do within the Slovenian community. We are once more grateful to the chef Marija Sorsak and her kitchen helpers who prepared many mouth-watering meals for this lunch.

A big thank you to the many volunteers who supported us in the kitchen, the bar and serving coffee and krofe.



### Annual General Meeting

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, CSHS held our Annual General Meeting which was attended by the Board members and several CSHS supporters. Various reports were presented. Our annual goals were attained as we continued our mission of informing the Slovenian community about our work. This year, we had displays in the Ontario Parliament Buildings, at Slovenian parks and we also participated in Ottawa’ Cultural Days.



The library in Hamilton at St Gregory the Great Church is overflowing with donated books which have been organized in the Dewey system.

We are thankful to those who support us either by donating their time or monetary assistance, especially St. Gregory Church in Hamilton and Dom Lipa.



*Canadian Slovenian Historical Society  
wishes you  
Happy Easter  
Vesele velikonočne praznike*



Annually the ladies of the Catholic Women's League from Marija Pomagaj Church gather to make butarice that are then distributed on Palm Sunday

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