



OUR STORY

NAŠA ZGODOVINA



Canadian Slovenian Historical Society ~ Vol. 10 No. 1 ~ Winter 2020

Remembering May 1945 – Slovenian Exodus



75th Anniversary

Presented
by



Sunday, April 19, 2020
Our Lady of Miraculous Medal
Church Hall
Luncheon & Short Program

*Please note:
Tickets for this event will be available for purchase beginning in March 2020.*



Slovenija Exodus May 1945



Photographs in Vol. 9, No. 3 and this edition of Our Story by Marjan Kocmur

At Pier 21 by Anne Urbančič

As you probably know, May 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the horrific events of the slaughters at Kočevski Rog and Teharje that impelled so many survivors to leave their motherland, their homes, their livelihoods, friends and families in Slovenia in order to make a new path for themselves and their future in Canada. There will be several remembrances of the event, remembrances that must take place so that Slovenian Canadians may honour the motivation that led their parents and grandparents to a foreign land and language.

The monument at Teharje will undoubtedly receive many visitors in the next few months as the anniversary approaches because there still remains a strong emotional pull to see the places where our ancestors determined to change everything about their lives, to board a ship, or a plane, and take new paths far away.

The recorded oral histories of the CSHS Archives tell some details of that trip; we hear of how much sorrow Slovenians felt in departing, how ill from seasickness many passengers were. Our interviewees talk about the abundance of food on board, which they could not bear to eat because they felt so sick. They speak of arriving with only minimal luggage, the barest of necessities with which they would have to start a new life. They tell us of the kindness of the Canadians who welcomed them offering them food to continue their journey from Halifax by train to various parts of Canada. Many speak with wry humour as they describe how they could not eat the Canadian bread: this simple basic nourishment turned out to be so white, so tasteless, so mushy to them, so foreign. They tell us of new acquaintances made on board ships in those two or so weeks of ocean crossing, and of the anxieties as they disembarked and were formally processed for entry into Canada. Sadly but inevitably, the memories are fading with time.

Today it may be hard to imagine the tears and worries and relief of embarking on those ships and then finally arriving in Canada after days of travel. We now board airplanes quite dispassionately and some hours later arrive at our destinations, often without even noticing who is sitting in the seat beside us. Airports all look identical, there are familiar globalized stores, restaurants and products; everyone, whether host or guest, has a smattering of English, or reaches for translation

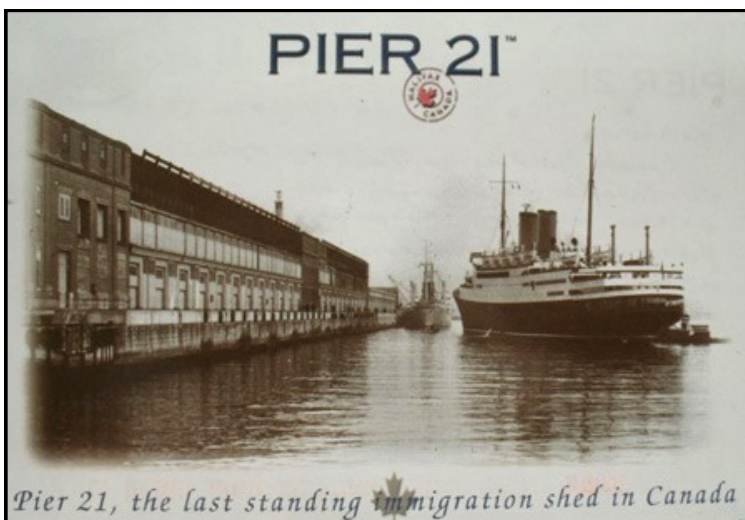
apps on their phone. Our most pressing worry is the jetlag.

What our parents and grandparents thought and said as they came to Canada may never be fully written down or recorded. Nonetheless, their emotions can be felt in places like Pier 21 in Halifax. No longer used as a docking point for immigrant ships, Pier 21 is now a museum, small but powerful. There, Slovenian Canadians can participate in the stories that brought their families to Canada: ship names, passenger lists, what rooms on board looked like, what passengers ate, how they were processed for entry, how and why some were refused. The trainyards that made the final break between Slovenia and Canada still remain, reminding us that in this place the new journey began in earnest and there was no turning back. The museum is well worth a visit. As a recent caller, I was unexpectedly overwhelmed by emotion while crossing the same floors and walking through the same rooms as my parents almost seventy years ago.

The CSHS is keenly aware of the importance of Pier 21 in the history of Canadian Slovenians. One of the first projects undertaken by the founding President, Stane Kranjc, in the early days of the Society was to commemorate the arrival story with a plaque honouring all those Slovenians who came to Canada between 1928 and 1971 when Pier 21 operated. Unveiled by the Slovenian ambassador, Veronika Stabej in late 2003, its very presence still alludes to the sacrifices and difficulties that brought Slovenians to Canada. Today, it is also a sign of pride and deep gratitude for all they have achieved. The simple sentences embrace and encompass the words, spoken and silenced, of all Canadian Slovenian stories. In this year of a difficult anniversary of the massacres at Teharje and Kočevski rog, the plaque offers a continuing recognition that Canadian Slovenians found a welcoming place in Canada.

For more information about the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (Halifax), see: <https://pier21.ca/>

For more information about the Monument at Teharje, see: <http://www.ateljemarkomusic.si/teharje.html>



Canadian Museum of
Immigration at Pier 21

Musée canadien de
l'immigration du Quai 21

Remember May 1945 – Slovenian Exodus by Anne Zagar

You are living with your parents, grandparents, and siblings on your farm in Italian-occupied Slovenia. One evening, a group of angry men arrives and steals your food. As these men leave your home, they start shooting in the direction of the Italian army. The Italian army assumes that it was your family doing the shooting, so they come and burn your family's farm in retaliation, killing whoever is in their path.

Such was life in the 1940s in Slovenia. The outbreak of World War II had added significantly to the sufferings of Slovenians. They were a small but proud group of people, with a population of about one and three-quarter million, most of whom were farmers and peasants, generally peacefully inclined, and faithful Roman Catholics.

The Nazi occupation of Slovenia in April, 1941 had resulted in the partitioning of the country between Germany, and its allies Italy and Hungary. These occupying forces administered violence and persecution, instilling fear in the people. At the same time, adding to the confusion and horror, Slovenian communist partisans commenced their own campaign to take over the country. Their strategy was outright terrorism against the civilian population, torturing and executing any who opposed them. Lists of opponents, marked for liquidation, were compiled. Their policy was to force the population into accepting communist domination.

May 1945 marked the end of World War II. In Slovenia, however, the end of the war marked the start of a new and brutal communist regime. Fearing for their lives, many Slovenians fled across the border, seeking refuge in Italy and Austria. Many passed through the Ljubelj tunnel into Austria and ended up in Vetrinje.

Sadly, many of these Slovenian refugees were forcibly, and through deception, returned to Slovenia where they were summarily executed by the communist partisans. In June 1945, those refugees remaining in Vetrinje were resettled in various displaced persons camps throughout Austria, such as Peggez, Spittal, Lienz, Judenburg and Sankt Veit. Some refugees went to Italy in camps at Barletta and Senigalia. Classified as displaced persons and stateless, they remained in these camps for several years. Many then ended up in Canada, the U.S., Argentina and other countries.

Meet Our New Archivist: Heather Gardiner



I am very excited to be joining the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society (CSHS) as its new archivist. Over the last few weeks, I have had the pleasure meeting some of your members. I am so grateful for the warm welcome (and homemade strudel!) that I have received.

I have worked professionally as an archivist for over twenty years. I graduated with a Masters of Information degree from the University of Toronto in 2001 and started my career at the Region of Peel Archives. Since then I have worked at the Archives of Ontario, Scotiabank Archives and Royal Bank Archives. In 2004, I became the archivist of Women's College Hospital (WCH). In my role at the hospital, I not

CSHS Library Report by Jožica Vegelj

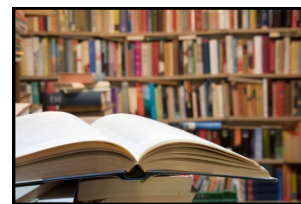
The decision to collect Slovenian books, with the possible goal of creating a library, was made almost as soon as the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society was established. Board members brought bags of books and photographs to be stored - from their own homes and from the Slovenian community at large. By 2010, the collection of material had outgrown the available space at Dom Lipa. A more permanent home was needed and we were fortunate to receive an offer of space for the library from Father Drago Gačnik, pastor at St. Gregory the Great Church in Hamilton.

In 2011, library shelving was purchased and placed in two separate areas at St. Gregory's. One area was dedicated to a collection of religious books and materials and the second area to more general literature.

Since 2011, the team has worked diligently to create an impressive library, with materials organized according to the Dewey Decimal system used in many public libraries. During this process, we separated duplicate copies and have made them available to the public for a small donation at Slovenian community events.

In 2018, we were fortunate to receive some financial support from a grant to the CSHS from the Government of Slovenia. This allowed us to hire a temporary assistant who has worked enthusiastically to process and organize the collection. We are now at the stage of stamping the materials as belonging to the CSHS library and entering them into a computer program which will allow us to post the collection on the CSHS web page. Our goal of having the library open for borrowing is within reach.

"Thank You" to the many people who have helped with the founding of our library.



only collect, catalogue and preserve the historical records and artifacts of WCH, but I operate a very active outreach program. The archives develops historical displays throughout the hospital and at events, organizes tours, prepares articles for the hospital's newsletter, provides content for social media and has produced two online exhibits through the Virtual Museum of Canada. Most recently, the WCH Archives published a book to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Alumnae Association of the WCH School of Nursing. A very important aspect of my job that makes all of these activities possible is successful grant writing.

While I am very new to your organization, I am already keenly aware of the great passion and enthusiasm that your members hold for their culture and history. I cannot wait to assist with helping you to preserve your records and artifacts to ensure that the Canadian-Slovenian legacy is well-documented for future generations.

OUR VISION and MISSION STATEMENT

VISION:

To preserve the records of Slovenian immigration, cultural heritage and continued contributions to Canada and establish the legacy as Canadian Slovenians for future generations.

MISSION:

Canadian Slovenian Historical Society will:

- ◆ archive and preserve the history of Slovenian immigration, its evolutionary heritage and contributions to Canada;
- ◆ gather, record, maintain and augment relevant collections of artifacts reflecting Slovenian cultural traditions, practices and contributions;
- ◆ establish, save and maintain a collection of publications, reports and manuscripts in digital, printed and oral format from Slovenian sources/organizations across Canada;
- ◆ promote academic and literary research of *Canadian Slovenians* in Canada;
- ◆ create/build a display setting of museum format for archives and artifacts;
- ◆ raise awareness, provide access and promote education of the workings and relevance of the CSHS, and strive for community engagement.

UP COMING EVENTS



AGM
Annual General Meeting

Everyone welcome!

Saturday, February 8, 2020

9:30 AM
Registration with meeting to follow

Recreation Room, Dom Lipa
52 Neilson Drive, Etobicoke, ON M9C 1V7

Join us to hear committee reports, meet board members, volunteers and to share in the success of our achievements in the past year.

Refreshments will be served.

FOLLOW US!

 @cshszgodovina <http://www.slovenianhistorical.ca>  @cshszgodovina

HVALA ~ THANK YOU

CSHS appreciates everyone's support.

Your generous donations assist in the preservation of Canadian Slovenian heritage.

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