



OUR STORY NAŠA ZGODOVINA

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CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

Stories from the Archives: Janez Marentič

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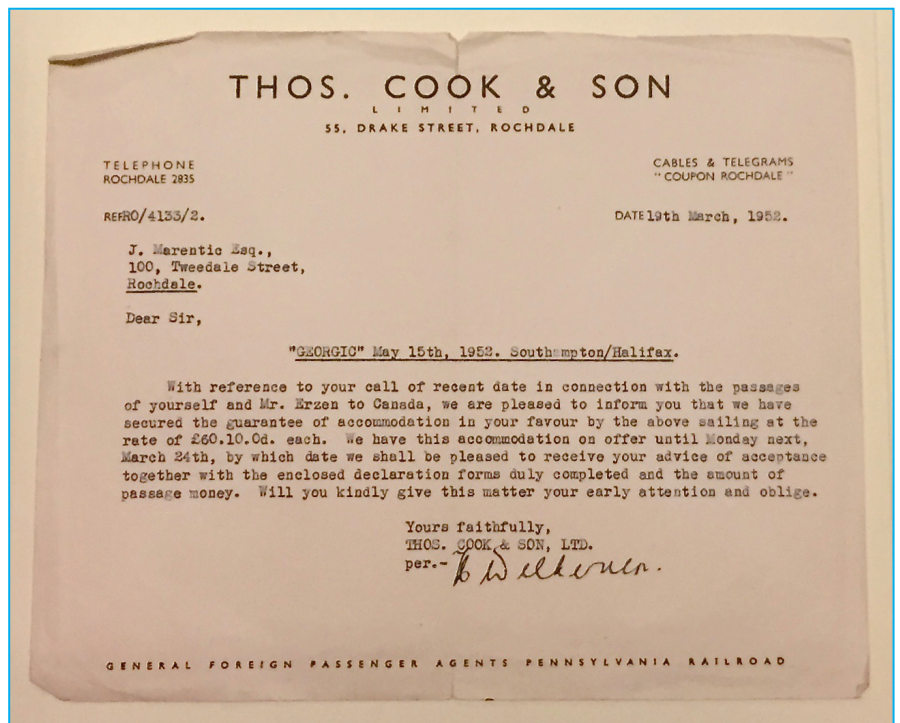


One Saturday afternoon I was processing collections in the CSHS Archives and I stumbled upon the records of Janez Marentič. I was immediately excited when I opened the folder and found original records that document the distinct stages of Janez's immigration journey to Canada. We have his original Aliens Order 1920 Certificate of Registration document from 1948, which he would have had to present if required to any police officer or immigration officer or member of his Majesty's forces acting in the course of his duty after the war. We have the original letter he received notifying him he can sail to Canada. We also have original boarding documents and baggage tags from the ship, and much more. Some of these records your grandparents or parents might still have too. So who was Janez Marentič?

From his records, we know that Janez (August 5, 1912 – January 7, 2010) was born in Gradac, Bela krajina. He worked as a farm labourer before being sent to a Displacement Camp (DP) as a Prisoner of War in Sengwarden #212 (Germany) in possibly either 1940 or 1941. From 1947 to 1948 Janez was employed in the Civil Mixed Watchmen's Service with England's Royal Air Force as security personnel from 1947 to 1948 in Germany. According to his documents, he spoke Slovenian, Serbian, and German. Janez moved to England in 1948. In 1949 he joined the Slovenian Association in Great Britain (slovensko društvo v vel. Britaniji).

In March 1952 Janez received notification of available passage to Canada. He departed Southampton, England on May 15, 1952 on the MV Georgic with Cunard Line and arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia on May 22, 1952. Janez settled in Toronto and joined the Marija Pomagaj parish and various Slovenian clubs. He obtained a Certificate of Canadian Citizenship in 1957. He also received many certificates and awards for his dedication and work with charities and religious institutions.

Janez's collection of personal records is a great reminder of the power of archives and documents and their ability to tell someone's unique story. For any questions or additional information you want to share about Janez Marentič or to share your own story, please contact us at cshistorical@gmail.com.





Identifications and documentation for Janez Marentič's travel to Canada

Thinking about Oral Histories Part 2

Anne Urbančič

Recording your Family

“So, tell me about yourself!”

Whether you are ten years old, or ten times ten, what immediately comes to mind in hearing such an invitation is the problem of where and how to start. The question is such a large one, that it discourages people from answering. Our professional Oral History interviewers have been trained and have learned by experience how to elicit details of a life story from their interviewees. People have asked us how to interview family members for their own personal family archives, and so, as I promised in the previous issue of *OUR STORY*, here are some handy tips for recording an Oral History of your family.

1. Most people record life stories directly to their computers on GarageBand (Mac) or by downloading free software like Audacity. To record with video, you can follow the instructions on the numerous helpful websites available. If you choose to video-tape, be very careful to note the immediate environment, including walls, and what or who is outside your window etc. You don't want your interview to be distracted

by underwear hanging on the clothesline outside. Make sure you make a brief test recording before you sit down with your interviewee.

2. If you have photographs or artifacts (like souvenirs from trips, a favourite personal or household item), have these at hand. Such small objects are full of stories, and with the elderly, they also act as a memory prompt.
3. Make your recording environment as comfortable as possible. Interviewees often get anxious when they are being recorded. Water or a warm drink often help.
4. Have paper and pen at hand to write notes as you record. A written account is an excellent support for an oral history. These notes will allow you to go back after the recording and fill in the names of places, people and dates mentioned in the oral history. For example, the interviewee may say something like: “My sister went to work in the city”, before passing on to what they feel is a more important part of their

story. The written record will allow you to fill in: “My sister [her name] went to work [where, or at what kind of job] in the city [name of the city].

5. Prepare to record for about an hour. Speak slowly and clearly. You may have to stop if the interviewee becomes overwhelmed. Sometimes Oral Histories have an emotional impact, so try to be as neutral as possible.
6. Begin the recording by identifying yourself, the interviewee, the date, the time, the place. These are very important details for the context of the recording. Start your interview by explicitly asking the interviewee if you have their permission to record them. If they say no (but this rarely happens), you cannot continue. It is also important to let them know what will happen to the interview (for example: I will send a copy to all the grandchildren).
7. If another person is present, identify them as well. Often elderly interviewees like to have someone else present to confirm facts as they speak.
8. Prepare “small” questions to ask: How did you come to Canada? By boat? Plane? How was the trip over? What did you see when you first arrived? How did you spend Christmas at your house? How did you celebrate Christmas/Easter/birthdays? What was your house/ garden like? Where did you work? How did you learn English? etc. Larger questions tend to be confusing because they seem without a focus. If the interviewee talks about a photo or artifact you or they have brought to the interview, describe these briefly to add contextual information. Some Oral History guides suggest questions such as “Who was your favourite rela-

tive?”. We avoid questions like these because they are fraught with problems and pitfalls and may have legal repercussions. The internet also offers many sites such as: <http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/familyHistory.html> that will give you examples of questions to ask,

9. You will inevitably have shared in some of the experiences that your interviewee recounts. Try to stay out of the story. You may recall events differently or have different feelings about them. Remember that you are the impartial interviewer.
10. As the interview draws to an end, don’t forget to thank the interviewee. While still recording, remind them of where the interview will go. After you listen to the interview, you may have more questions. These you can add to your written transcript, or to your recording. With the permission of the interviewee, share your recording with your family. Follow your recording software instructions for exporting your interview.

As I mentioned above, our Oral History interviewers have been trained and follow the appropriate procedures for depositing interviews in the archives of the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society. Our archivist also has some words of advice: be sure to contact the CSHS *before* you record if you plan to donate an oral history to our archives, so that we can be aware of your intention. We can then provide you with the necessary consent forms in advance. These forms are required by Canadian Archiving protocols.

Your recording will become a connection to a family member whom you would like to remember as they were at the time of the interview. You can be sure that their story will enhance your own story and add to the history of your family and your community.

EVENTS

June 25th of this year, as in previous years, the flag of Slovenia was raised at the Toronto City Hall in a celebration coinciding with the 26th anniversary of Slovenia’s independence. At 11 o’clock we gathered on the city hall rooftop where John Doma, Honorary Consul General for Toronto, introduced special guests, speakers, and visitors from Slovenia. In addressing those in attendance, he talked about the respect of the “humble, hardworking and honest” Slovenians around the world and some of their great accomplishments. He made special mention of the significant effort that Slovenians have made with beekeeping and the preservation of bees. Slovenian bees are now found in Rideau Hall. John also took this opportunity to thank Marjan Cencen, who was completing his four year assignment as Slovenia’s Ambassador to Canada for his work with

the various Slovenian groups across Canada. During the raising of the flag and the singing of the Slovenian and Canadian National Anthems we were accompanied by HERVOL, a music ensemble from Slovenia.

This year’s festivities were most interesting and important to Slovenians as VSKO (Vse slovenski kulturni odbor) sponsored a Slovenian Cultural Exhibition under the leadership of Marjan Kolaric, Representative of Canadian Slovenians at the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The exhibition prepared by Slovenia archives consisting of many large panels divided into three main themes: 1. A historical documentary on the achievement of Slovenian independence with Canadian participation (from Slovenian archives) 2. Plecnik’s Ljubljana: A Presentation of the architectural

works and urban planning of the Slovenian architect Jozef Plecnik. 3. Exhibition of Ribnica with its iconic local Suha Roba – Woodenware and Pottery



The exhibition was initially on display Saturday June 23 at St. Gregory the Great Church in Hamilton during the 29th “Slovenski Dan” celebrations sponsored by the Slovenian Coordination Committee, Niagara. The full day festivities included a varied cultural program led by Heidi Novak with several choirs, soloists and musicians from the Niagara area.



Next, the exhibition was transferred to the Toronto City Hall Rotunda where it remained on display for the general public from June 25th to June 27th. On June 29th it was presented at the church hall of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Toronto. As this exhibit will now remain on Canadian soil for this coming year we hope that it will be exhibited in many Slovenian com-

munities throughout Canada before it must move on to other countries and continents.

The Canadian Slovenian Historical Society was also asked to contribute to the exhibit by searching their own archives to prepare full sized panels depicting Canadian Slovenian support and assistance for the independence of Slovenia following the plebiscite of December 1990 which culminated in full independence attained June 25, 1991. Our panels were a compilation of photographs, news media reports, clippings, and letters from the archives as well as a short description of how Slovenians in Canada assisted through their persistent demonstrations, vigils and letters to government officials in support of their homeland.



This exhibition is not only informative for Canadian Slovenians, but for other citizens of

Toronto as it gave them a glimpse into Slovenian history, the work of Architect Plecnik as well as craft work from a specific region of Slovenia, Ribnica. We hope that now as it makes its way across Canada, others will also come to know more about our history and culture.



Please visit us on www.slovenianhistorical.ca for more information about the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society or Facebook. If you wish to receive copies of Out Story, Naša zgodovina, please send us your email address to OurStorymcek@gmail.com

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