



OUR STORY

NAŠA ZGODOVINA

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Meet Our New Volunteers



Anne Žagar

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I am very pleased to join the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society, as the events and stories of those who lived in the past have always been of interest to me. Learning about them makes me more appreciative of living in a country like Canada, where I am able to take advantage of the freedoms and privileges that we often take for granted.

There is also a lot to learn from history, and hopefully this knowledge would encourage us not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

My parents, Joseph and Ann Mihevc were Slovenian refugees and arrived in Canada after the Second World War. I was born in Canada, and grew up in the circle of the Slovenian community, where, as a young child, I went to Slovenian school, was part of the children's choir, and thereafter, was involved with various other activities.

My undergraduate degree in history and English was obtained at the University of Toronto. Because of my diverse business experience with various companies and government bodies, my education degree was in business and I taught at three different high schools in the Mississauga/Brampton area with the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board. I also taught co-operative education, and during my last few years, worked as a guidance counselor, and as department head. I truly enjoyed my teaching career, and I retired in June 2013. I have now decided to reignite my interest in history, and in particular, the history of Slovenians in Canada.

Slovenia is such a small country, and, unfortunately, most people have never heard of it or know where it is, although the achievements of Slovenian athletes during the latest Olympics may have changed that somewhat. The contributions of Slovenians to Canada have been significant, and the stories of Slovenian immigrant experiences add to the rich dimension of Canadian history as well. I believe that it is very important that the Slovenian story be told and preserved, and I am very happy to assist in this endeavour.



Mario Ulčar

Mario Ulčar

Mario was born in Steinfeld, a refugee camp in Spittal, Austria. The family immigrated to Toronto, Ontario, Canada and settled in southern Etobicoke. They attended Marija Pomagaj Church and participated in all the cultural events, including Slovenian school. As there was so many Slovenian immigrants, there was a need to establish a

second Slovenian parish. Stane Ulčar, his father, was one of the founding fathers of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church in Etobicoke. Once the church was built, Mario was the first altar boy and continued to be an active leader in roles in scouting, president of the youth club, drummer for the band "Veseli Študentje", chairman of the Ljubljana pavilion in Caravan. Mario founded a theatrical group called Mladi Glas which later evolved into the present day dance group. After joining the Board of Directors for Slovenia Parishes Credit Union, he held various offices for 18 years. He has also been on the Slovenian Summer Camp (in Bolton, Ontario) committee for over 10 years coordinating the bar and youth sports.

After graduating from Ryerson, he worked in the computer industry and performed technical support duties and later managerial duties. This led him to George Brown College where he was a professor in electronics for 33 years. Mario married Millie Koščak and together they have 5 children, 8 grandchildren and counting.

Today Mario continues to organize the sporting activities at the Slovenian Summer Camp which attracts over 500 young people of Slovenian descent each summer. Recently he has joined the CSHS and is excited to be in charge of launching the new website which is scheduled to be up and running early 2016.

*Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year!*



Emily Chicorli

Emily Chicorli

Hello, nice to meet you! Zdravo - *lepo je vas spoznati!*

As of September 2015 I have been the Archivist/Advisor for the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society (CSHS) Archives. I have a graduate degree in Archival Studies from the University of British Columbia, as well as a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History and the Humanities, and a Bachelor of Education from York University. A passion for history and learning has always been important to me, just as engaging with communities is also very a significant part of the work I aim to do. Therefore, I am delighted to be a part of the wonderful work done by the CSHS.

“Chicorli” does not look like a Slovenian name. It is actually a shortened Ukrainian surname from my dad’s side, whose origins got lost with various changes throughout history. My mother’s side, the Slovenian side (Levstik), has always been a huge part of my life. Whether it was attending mass at Marija Pomagaj, going to tombola events as a kid, watching my grandmother make *potica* in the kitchen, attending

Slovenian *šola*, or going to the Slovenian Farm, being part of a Slovenian-Canadian family has always been an influential part of my life. My grandmother, Slavka Levstik (née Petek), always shares her stories of coming to Canada during the war and the hardships she and her family endured in Slovenia and being newcomers to Canada. I am very proud of my family for being brave, hardworking, kind and for never giving up – key qualities in Slovenians!

My Canadian-Slovenian-Ukrainian heritage is something I am very proud of and that’s why I am excited to be the latest addition to the CSHS community.

Andrea Davidson

I am currently studying literature and history at the University of Toronto. I have had experience working and volunteering in several different archives and museums. As a new volunteer for the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society’s archives and oral history program, I am delighted to learn more about my Canadian Slovenian heritage.



Andrea Davidson

Some of the rest of the volunteers - Board Meeting at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Hamilton



Photo by Fr. Drago Gačnik

Christmas Cards

Anne Urbančič

When I was a child, the sure arrival of Christmas announced itself at our house through delicious baking smells from the kitchen, lights twinkling around the front veranda, a cheery wreath on the windows and a daily click-thunk-click as the mail carrier slid an assortment of Christmas greetings through the horizontal slot of our old-fashioned front door. Once the first few cards had arrived and were placed on display, my family gathered to write our own, sending them to various parts of Canada, to Slovenia and in particular across the Toronto area. Canadian winter themes, or secular Christmas motifs, or religious cards, all with an English greeting which we then repeated in Slovenian: *Vam želimo vesel božič in srečno novo leto*. Once the flap was tucked into the envelope and each envelope stamped at the special Canada Post Christmas rate, off they went to the red iron mailbox at the corner of our street. As we counted down the days to Christmas, every day brought a handful of cards to add to our annual collection. It just wasn't Christmas yet until every bookshelf, every window sill of our living room and dining room boasted evocative Santa Clauses and manger scenes, wreaths and angels, holly and shepherds.

Was your home similarly decorated with Christmas cards? Did you ever wonder about how this tradition came to be?

In ancient times, people exchanged good-luck charms at the time of the winter solstice. They wished each other all the best for when the deep dark nights would slowly give way to longer sunnier days. Later, once the printing press had been invented, devotional cards, usually with an image of a suffering Christ depicted on them, were offered during the Christmas period. This custom from Germany, gave people an opportunity to offer blessings to the receiver of these cards, called *andrachtsbilder*. (They continued as holy cards or *podobice*). Still later, with the boom of industries, tradesmen offered cards to their customers, often decorated with seasonal designs. (These were similar to today's business cards). Then, in 1843, the director of the famous Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Sir Henry Cole, realized that he couldn't possibly continue writing personal Christmas letters to his ever widening network of friends, colleagues and acquaintances. So he commissioned illustrator John Calcott Horsley to provide him with printed but hand coloured greetings, much like postcards, on similar 3" x 5" cardstock paper. One thousand cards were printed, depicting a merry scene with a family celebrating a Christmas feast, flanked at the sides by their deeds of charity: on one side feeding the hungry,

on the other, dressing the poor. The sketches of the gaunt naked impoverished did not affect the sensitive Victorian recipients greatly; they were far more offended by the central dinner scene where everyone raised a wine glass, and even the chubby child had a sip. If the picture proved unpopular, the idea of a printed card was not. It caught on very quickly and had firmly established itself in Britain by the 1860s with cards showing more innocuous scenes such as sprays of holly, ivy, winter birds and sleighs pulled through snowy landscapes. The British postal service helped make these cards even more popular by allowing a special penny rate for their delivery anywhere in the United Kingdom. Cards made their way across the ocean to the United States; since imported British cards were costly, an American lithographer, Louis Prang, initiated the card tradition in his typography shop in Boston. Because he used zinc plates to produce colours instead of hand colouring them, the enterprise became much less expensive. By 1881, he was printing about 5 million cards. Many bore pictures of cherubs or hearts or flowers and could easily be adapted to other occasions with a simple of change in the greeting. The Christmas motifs we recognize on cards today were firmly in place by the 1920s. Despite the conventional scenes, Christmas cards do reflect the time they were printed: patriotic cards during WW2, bright neon-like colours in the 1960s, nostalgic themes after the recession of the 1980s. To my amusement, I discovered that one cultural historian has noticed how today, in our health conscious times, Santa appears slimmer on Christmas cards than in previous decades.

The arrival of email, and changes to postal rates have had their effect because we send and receive fewer cards. Some people even forgo cards altogether; others prefer to make their own cards and greetings only for special friends. Many cards contain a family update letter, a custom which gained popularity after the mimeograph machine became more common in the 1950s. Some cards tell receivers that their senders support special charities. Many cards have sparkly glitter, or fuzzy flocking, or cut-outs or pop-ups to make them more elaborate and special.

As always, some cards have become valuable items for archives or special collections. But whether funny

or serious or sad or nostalgic, homemade or fancily engraved, all Christmas cards carry meaning; they tell the receivers that as the days grow shorter and colder, and as the festivities bring families and friends together, the sender is thinking of them and conveying warm wishes. And, although this article is not a Christmas card, I wish you all *Vesele praznike!*



St. Nicholas (sv. Miklavž)

St. Nicholas is a fourth century Christian and Greek bishop of Myra, which is now part of modern Turkey. He had a reputation for secretly putting coins in the shoes of the poor who left them out in hopes of gifts and, therefore, became the model for the modern-day Santa Claus for the Christian holiday of Christmas.



Can you remember when St. Nicholas (*Miklavž*) brought you presents if you were a good child in the past year?



Can you remember being terrified when the devil (*parkelj*) appeared and threatened to take you away?

Historic pictures from personal archives of Ciril Soršak.

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V tihi Sveti noči

Roman Mihelj

Barrie, Ontario

Povzeto po Glasilu kanadskih Slovencev
november-december 2010

V tihi Sveti noči
je žarek luči zasijal
in nežni glas pojoči
se čuje iz višav.

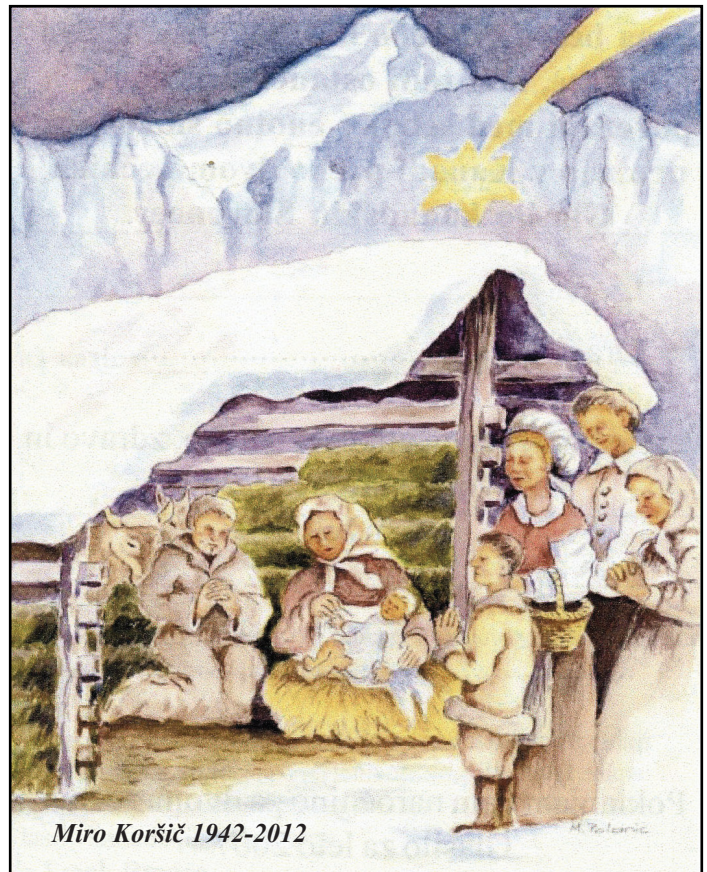
Ljubezen danes sveti,
poslana nam na svet,
a ti glasovi vneti
so prišli Njej zapet.

Od kje ta žarek sveti,
ki temo je razgnal?
Zakaj se čuje petje
tak' nežno iz višav?

Tudi moje srce poje,
ker čuti Njen prihod,
v Ljubezni se ogreva,
saj rešila me je zmot.



*Vesele božične praznike
ter srečno novo leto 2016*



Miro Koršič 1942-2012