



# OUR STORY

## NAŠA ZGODOVINA



Vol. 8 No. 4 ~ Winter 2018

### Celebrating 15 Years of CSHS

Quite by accident I discovered the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society (CSHS) when my father Vilko Čekuta became a resident at Dom lipa, Slovenian seniors' home. I have always been an avid Slovenian interested in the history, culture and language of Slovenians. My parents encouraged and insisted that my brothers, sister and I speak Slovenian at home and to always remember our ancestral heritage. I was a member of "Slovensko gledališče" (theatre) for years and also taught at the Slovenian language school at Marija Pomagaj for 20 years. Over the years my connection with the Slovenian community slipped a bit and so finding a brochure about CSHS was a pleasant surprise that tweaked my interest to find out more about this organization..

Upon joining I learned that CSHS had been officially incorporated only since July 2003. It had been a brainchild of Stane Kranjc who had for many years contemplated gathering materials for a book about Slovenians in Canada. His idea was to compile information from all the various Slovenian leaders, clubs and organizations into a book entitled Slovenians in Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. He realized that very little was known about Slovenians by many Canadians. Stane, through his research was able to trace some Slovenian immigration that went back to 1850. Most of these early emigrants worked on farms, in mines and in logging and were scattered all over the country. Stane's fear of losing valuable information about these and the newer immigrants inspired him to embark on his project.

Stane soon saw that this idea and hope was of such magnitude that he required more support and assistance to work on the project and he gathered people of like minds around him. And thus the beginning of CSHS came about as the need to collect, process and preserve the information that had been gathered was established. The first official meeting was in July 2002 with the following initial committee members: Stane Kranjc (President), Anne Urbančič (Vice President), Jožica Vegelj (Secretary), Frank Brence (Treasurer), Dorothy Lenarčič (Programme Coordinator) Joe Slobodnik, Frank Habjan, Jerry Ponikvar, John Vintar, Ema Pogačar, and Florjan Markun. A constitution, bylaws, mission and vision were determined as well as retaining CSHS as an independent, non-aligned group. We are forever thankful to this group of individuals who realized that we should hold on to and secure our Slovenian Canadian heritage.

As materials, including artifacts, letters, magazines, paintings, music and more began to accumulate over time,

there was a need for a permanent location to store this valuable historical information. A suitable location was found at Dom Lipa where space was provided in the lower level of the building and now two rooms house our office and collected material. CSHS was recognized and became a member of the Archives Association of Ontario. An archives advisor from the Association was able to provide assistance with proper room maintenance, shelving, acid free protective materials, and helped with processing and organizing the collected information. Money from a provincial grant and also from Urad Vlade Republike Slovenije za Slovence v zamejstvu in po svetu helped with some costs, but much of the money, office needs and work time came from the volunteers. Today volunteers still continue with the collection and preservation of this important work.

CSHS has been growing since its inception 15 years ago but it is changing and enlarging as new material arrives on a regular basis. Our library in Hamilton at St. Gregory the Great Church contains thousands of books that are arranged on the Dewey System. Through our programmes "Povejte nam kaj" and "kdo smo?" we have been able to accumulate oral histories of personal life experiences of many of our seniors. We continually have displays at the various Slovenian summer camps, and events. We have had three exhibitions of our historical material at the Ontario Parliament Buildings and Ottawa and we are also available to assist other organizations in the collection of archival material. We have discussed finding space for a museum where the materials that have been collected over the last 15 years can be on exhibit and where historians, students and scholars can have access to our Slovenian past. We are also lucky enough to have an archivist with Slovenian heritage helping us to make sure our archives are kept in a professional manner.

New young members who are of second and third generations have joined CSHS recently and with their energy and our support and mentorship we can be certain that the Slovenian imprint will be preserved within the history of Canada.



Frank Brence & Jožica Vegelj

### **Milena Soršak**

Kolikokrat slišimo besede o, če bi mogel, kaj vse bi vprašal svoje starše, brate, sestre....pa je prepozno. Potrudimo se, da to ne bo veljalo za KSZD in bodimo hvaležni vsem, ki so poslanstvo ohranjanja preteklosti začutili pred 15 leti.



Stane Kranjc and others ...

### **Mark Ferkul**

It was the *Stories from the Archives* feature in Our Story which initially drew my attention to the work of the CSHS. As one of the newest members of the committee, the CSHS has not only been an outlet for my professional interests in archival management, but also provided me with an opportunity to explore my heritage and further understand my family's connection and contribution to the Canadian-Slovenian community.

### **Franca Anderson**

I am extremely proud of all our accomplishments as a CSHS. We can all be grateful for all the hard work of our founding members in establishing this society. May we continue to successfully document and archive our legacy for the future. Congratulations to all on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **Pamela Gosgnach**

Serendipity is defined as making fortunate discoveries or happening upon things by chance. Both of these definitions could apply to my involvement with CSHS. After moving to Hamilton and joining the Slovenian community at St. Gregory the Great Church, I was encouraged to add to my volunteer resume by acting as the secretary for the historical society. Being part of this group has given me the chance to learn more about the culture and history of Slovenia, to recognize the contribution to Canada and Canadian Slovenians and has nourished my appreciation for places I have visited while vacationing in Slovenia.

My term as secretary to the CSHS will end at the time of the annual general meeting next February. I have enjoyed working with this very dedicated group of people and wish them continued success.

*Čestitke vsem članom društva za vaše trdno delo in hvala vam da sem z vami bila del vaše zgodbe.*

### **Anne Urbancic**

I was delighted to be among the founding members of CSHS. The historical society has worked hard over the past 15 years, and to notable success. From the earliest days, volunteers have put countless hours of effort and energy to make sure that the stories of Slovenians in Canada are preserved, and are part of Canadian history.



CSHS gathering

### **Stephanie Schaeffer**

It is an honour to be part of the CSHS, especially as a historian, where history, in particular our Slovenian history, is being preserved in order to increase our sense of Slovenian identity and our culture. The society is a place where Slovenians can connect and unite together, throughout Canada, sharing and recording their stories and memories so, that it will be preserved for future generations to access. I hope the society will continually strive to grow, expand and keep its Slovenian roots firmly planted in the Canadian community.

### **Mary Rozmanc**

My first introduction to the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society (CSHS) was when I visited the CSHS display table at the Slovenska farma in Bolton, Ontario in the summer of 2006. Jozica Vegelj was manning the display. It was evident she was very knowledgeable and passionate about the CSHS and noticed I was interested in the history of Canadian Slovenians. We exchanged contact information and then I forgot about the CSHS. In September of the same year, I received a telephone message inviting me to the October CSHS board meeting which I did attend. I was so impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the CSHS board members. Later I was asked to become a CSHS board member and I have been a part of the CSHS since then. If you are interested in assisting with the CSHS please send an email to the [cshistorical@gmail.com](mailto:cshistorical@gmail.com)

### **Dorothy Lenarcic**

I am so grateful that Stane Kranjc asked me to help establish the CSHS 15 years ago. To see what it has become, compared to where we started, is breathtaking. How lucky we are to have artifacts and interviews that will help future generations to know who we Slovenians are and how we have contributed to the Canadian identity! The work of the CSHS is ongoing and I urge all to contribute in some way.

*CONGRATULATIONS ~ Miriam Čekuta and CSHS Members*

# Podobice

by Anne Urbancic

In a previous column I mentioned the archival term *ephemera*. The word refers to items that seemingly have no archival value because they last only a brief time. Upon closer look, however, they often tell us interesting stories about our cultural practices.

A good example of ephemera are the holy cards or *podobice* that people tuck into books (not only prayer books), or picture frames, perhaps at the back of drawers or in storage boxes. The Burns Library at Boston College found so many of these between the pages of donated books that the librarians decided to gather them as an independent collection. A California professor discovered a box of about 300 at an antique shop and was so intrigued that she now owns over 40000 of these ephemera, which she calls “the people’s art”. Collectors regularly buy them and trade them (eBay currently offers over twenty-five thousand exemplars).

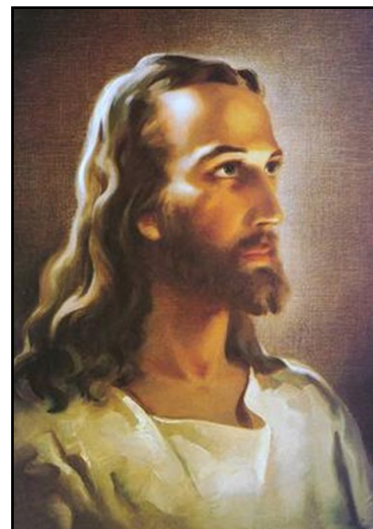
If you grew up in a Catholic household, you will likely remember or have some of your own, perhaps showing images of the patrons of the Slovenian parishes.

These small depictions of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin and of saints have an extensive history of almost six hundred years. While one historian suggests that Pope Clement VI (1291-1352) initiated the tradition, most scholars date them as beginning around 1400 as small woodcuts of saints given to pilgrims. It is not a coincidence that the most popular of saints depicted was St. Christopher, patron of travelers. After the invention of the printing press in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of these cards in a home served as a devotional reminder for the faithful who were often illiterate and could not read the Bible or stories about saints. Consequently, they were widely used by missionaries, including Jesuits, in their mandate of evangelization. By the end of the 1700s, the development of lithography allowed a greater reproduction of these playing card sized artifacts. Especially beautiful were the lithographed cards printed in Paris in the vicinity of the church of St. Sulpice. These were the ones that established not only the tradition of pastel colours but also that of the benevolent and compassionate gaze bestowed upon the viewer. While some cards were plain, others were very elaborate with lace-like filigree cutouts. Later as new technologies allowed mass printing quickly and efficiently, they might also have a prayer on the verso side to aid in personal worship or to teach children the various devotions. Schoolboys and girls were often the recipients of these cards,

which were regularly given to commemorate events such as a First Holy Communion or Confirmation, or as a reward for excellence in academics or for good deeds done. Some cards came with an extra “gift”: a tiny cloth touched to a religious relic (such as the tunic of St. Francis of Assisi), or with a small religious medal. However, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) encouraged more personal prayers that did not rely on pictures, and the prevalence of holy cards diminished. Today, therefore, while the traditional examples are still printed, holy cards have undergone changes. Often, more contemporary saints, like Padre Pio of Pietrelcina or Pope John Paul II, are presented as colour photographs rather than pastel drawings. The tradition of when to give these cards has also changed: now they are most often distributed at Catholic funerals in commemoration of the deceased. As funeral *podobice*, holy cards have also become larger, often a folded card of four pages on which we find on one page the Madonna, Christ or a saint particularly meaningful to the deceased, on another, a photograph of the deceased, and on the remaining two pages a prayer and perhaps an inspirational saying or poem to console us as we view the card. And of course, the funeral home name and address, while not prominent, is never absent.

In an article about holy cards, sociologists Diana George and Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori write that these cards are a sign of “growing up Catholic” (p.251). But the two scholars do not mention that the most widely distributed holy card was not Catholic at all. This status belongs to a reproduction of a painting by Chicago artist Warner Sallman (1892-1968). His depiction of the head of Christ (1940) was distributed by the Salvation Army and the YMCA to Americans fighting overseas and to their families in many millions during the years of World War II. Its popularity continues today.

If you’d like to know more about this fascinating category of ephemera, you may wish to read a column by a known collector, Fr. Eugene Carrella, (<http://omeka.archnyarchives.org/exhibits/show/holycards/history>) or look at the article by Diana George and Mariolini Rizzi Salvatori mentioned above. It is entitled *Holy Cards/Immaginette: The Extraordinary Literacy of Vernacular Religion* (also available online [https://www.jstor.org/stable/20457060?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20457060?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents))



## 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:

The 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.

## Upcoming Events

**Sunday January 20, 2019**

### LUNCH

Please join us for a warm and hearty meal following the masses at  
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church

Cost \$16.00 - Eat in or take out - *No advance sales*

Choices: Golaž, Chicken Schnitzel, Roast Pork



**Saturday, February 9, 2019**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Join us, and share in our achievements of the past year

Dom Lipa - *(lower level)*

52 Neilson Drive, M9C 1V7

Registration: 9:30 am      Refreshments provided



### HVALA / THANK YOU

CSHS would like to thank all our donors who have supported us throughout this year. We are a not-for-profit organization and rely on your donations to assist us in preserving our Slovenian heritage.



***Vesel božič in srečno novo leto 2019!  
Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!***



OUR STORY is published by:  
Canadian Slovenian Historical Society  
Kanadsko slovensko zgodovinsko društvo  
52 Neilson Drive  
Toronto, ON M9C 1V7  
For information contact:  
Miriam Čekuta  
[ourstorymcek@gmail.com](mailto:ourstorymcek@gmail.com)



If you wish to receive an electronic version of  
OUR STORY, please email us at  
[ourstorymcek@gmail.com](mailto:ourstorymcek@gmail.com)  
We encourage you to visit us on our website  
[www.slovenianhistorical.ca](http://www.slovenianhistorical.ca)  
or follow us on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/zgodovina](http://www.facebook.com/zgodovina)