



# **E-NEWS**

SPRING - 2006

#7

**FEDERATION OF EAST EUROPEAN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES**

---

## ***FEEFHS - Edmonton, Alberta, Canada Conference***

*In Partnership with Alberta Genealogical Society*

[www.abgensoc.ca/FEEFHS.html](http://www.abgensoc.ca/FEEFHS.html)

*16 - 18 June 2006*

*Four Points Sheraton - Edmonton*

*Over 40 Informative Sessions Featuring Local and International Experts.*

*Sessions Will Appeal to Beginning and Advanced Genealogists.*

*Display Tables for Vendors and Non-Profit Organizations Are Available.*

---

## ***FEEFHS - Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada Conference***

*“Discovering Our Roots*

*From East Europe to the New World”*

[www.eegsociety.org](http://www.eegsociety.org)

*4 - 6 August 2006*

*Victoria Inn - Winnipeg*

---

## **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FROM THE CZECH AND SLOVAK LANDS**

FEEFHS thanks The Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International for the pictures presented in this issue. For more details on this delightful subject, please see the Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, *Naše rodina*, September 2005, Volume 17 Number 3. The main article in this issue is by Michael Cwach and is the result of a Fulbright grant in 2003-2004 to study the history, cultural significance and current state of the bagpipe in Bohemia. "If you have information to share about bagpipes or comments on this article please contact me", Michael Cwach @ [www.mcwach@usd.edu](http://www.mcwach@usd.edu)



Above is the oldest iconographic representation of the bagpipe dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, located in castle Karlstein. Source: Musical Instruments Through the Ages by Alexander Buchner, London: Spring books, 1958.

## **CZECH WEDDINGS**

Music and Marriages - They go together like the M 'n' M's of candy history. "You can't have one without the other". However, there were restrictions on the marriage itself and traditions as

to how the festivities were done.

Encounter and Acquaintance - First, the couple had to meet. Young people can be very creative in searching out their future companion for life. In modern times almost any activity can result in meeting someone. In earlier days, the best place to find a future spouse was in the same village. The pre-marriage time lasted about two years.

Asking for Her Hand - This procedure had strict rules. Included were specific festive dress and bouquets of flowers for the future mother-in-law. The prospective bride visited the family of her boyfriend only after the relationship had turned serious.

A young Czech dulcimer player, Gabriela Jilkova



shows another instrument courtesy of Milan Konecny and Hana Konecna.

Courting and Wooing - After the parents agreed to the marriage, a special procedure of courting took place. The best man was also called the matchmaker (kecal or kecon). These negotiations

took place at the home of the bride with the groom, the groom's father and the best man present. The mayor of the village and a scribe also attended. Another person called the "stará svadby or stará svarby" (old woman of the marriage) was present. This group discussed the dowry that the bride would be receiving as well as the property which the groom would be bringing into the marriage. When all was agreed upon, the girl was asked if she wanted to marry her boyfriend. If she nodded yes, then a marriage contract was written and signed by all parties. These same negotiations took place even if the bride and groom were poor. The contract stated the financial situation of the couple and perhaps even had a note i.e "... being too poor and unable to provide my son with any property for his marriage, I can but let him learn my smith's trade, in order he knew how to obtain bread for himself and family"...The records would continue saying "with which the bride, and her father as well, are fully satisfied." The guests were then treated to kolace and donuts. Men were offered beer and in southern Moravia, wine or spirits.

The government also had something to say about a future marriage and a set of restrictions was imposed. These restrictions often caused a bridal pair to put off the nuptials until they could afford it. In the Germanic areas, a Gemeinde Ehekonsens (community consent) form was required. Before 1848, the authority was the local nobleman and his agents. After 1848 other community authorities took over this responsibility. The restrictions continued until 1920. Anyone whose income did not seem to be sufficient or secure would not be eligible to obtain the legal consent (marriage license). Servants, journeymen and day laborers were particularly affected.

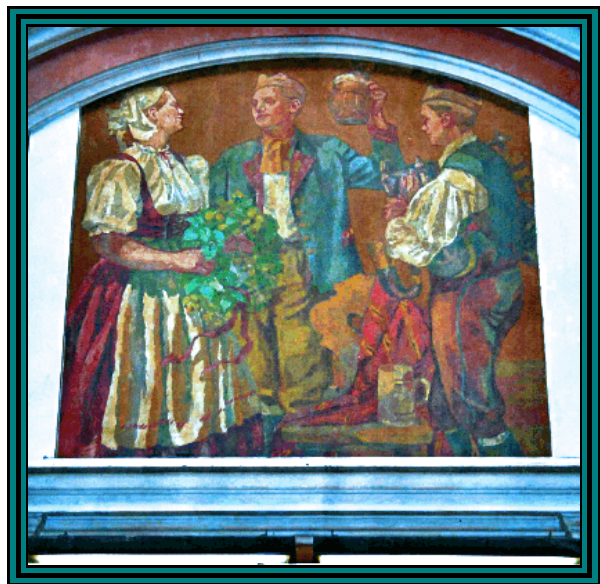
Marriage Contracts - Marriage contracts were found only in noble circles in the Middle Ages. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, contracts between the subject people were common. They were found sometimes as separate documents or their wording was incorporated into the Land Registers of the respective domains. Sometimes there were special books of marriage contracts attached to a collection of Land Register Books, Books of Receipts, Source Books, Books of Obligations, etc.

In the event that the vital registers were destroyed, were not preserved or were in a "pre vital registers period," the Marriage Contract can serve as a primary source of genealogical information. In north east Bohemia, in the District Archives of Chrudim and Litomyšl, the marriage records have been preserved in documentary form or written in books from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Moravia, unfortunately, the first Marriage Contract records can be traced only to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and seldom earlier.

The signing of a marriage contract was considered proof of the concluded marriage, and the wedding, in front of the priest, only confirmed this state. The groom's and bride's families considered each other as relatives as soon as the marriage contract was signed. They behaved like relatives also.

One of the murals in the main train station in Plzeň, Czech Republic. Photo by Michael Cwach.

Examinations of the Engaged Couple - After all



have agreed to the terms in the marriage contract, the engaged couple then went to the priest to be examined. They had to answer between 9 and 11 questions. The State District Archives, in many cases, keep the Protocols of these examinations from various parishes. The Chrudim District Archives have a complete set of files beginning

in 1788. The Protocols from the Valachian parishes in the valley of the river Becva are only preserved from 1840 to the present. In some areas, protocols are kept among other church records and are still in the respective parishes. They were not transferred to the State Archives..

One of the sections of the marriage contract was a provision for the parents of the bride and groom. This section was called a Výměnek, and the person then was called a Výměnkář, which was his social status.

When the wooing was finished, the groom and his father asked the Lordship for his consent. The priest was asked to announce the planned marriage in three banns over the period of three weeks. The approval of the Lordship and later of the community or the district office was a must. A certificate of good conduct and health for the bride, issued by these people, can still be found in the Archives.

Picture taken at the 1993 Dvorak Festival in Spillville, Iowa belonging to Joel Blahnik, standing in the center. Spending a great amount of time in the Czech Republic, Joel works with



famous musicians and musical groups.

Joel, Michael Cwach and sister Anita Smisek, O.P. are founders of the Czech Musical Alliance. They have recorded many songs. You can reach Joel at: [joel@dcwis.com](mailto:joel@dcwis.com).

This subject will be continued in the next issue of E-News.

### **NEWLY PUBLISHED BOOKS**

1. ***Jewish Memorial (Yizkor) Books in UK - Destroyed European Communities.***

Cyril Fox & Saul Issroff. ISBN 0-9537669-5-0  
Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain  
London: 2006, 188 pages

<http://www.jsgsb.org.uk/libcatyz.shtml>

<http://www.jsgsb.org.uk/bookbl.shtml>

<http://www.jsgsb.org.uk/shopping.shtml>

Contact Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain @ [www.jsgsb.org.uk/library.shtml](http://www.jsgsb.org.uk/library.shtml)

2. ***Rodina, a Novel of Mother Russia*** by Kirsten E. A. BORG. Contact: Dr. Kirsten BORG at [www.Kborg2003@yahoo.com](mailto:www.Kborg2003@yahoo.com)

3. ***Descendants of Joannes Kohel and Related Families: Auclair, Ferguson, Grube, Hörz and Panzer*** by Michael F. Kohel at

[Kohelroots@aol.com](mailto:Kohelroots@aol.com) The Kohel Family is from Braunbusch (Prapoříště) west of Klattau (Klatovy) in the Šumavě Mountains, Böhmen (Bohemia).

### **NOTE**

The information for E-News #7 was extracted from a lecture given by Karel Kysilka "The Wedding Traditions and Customs of Bohemia and Moravia" given at the 4<sup>th</sup> Genealogical Conference of the Czech Heritage Society of Texas, Bryan, Texas, 28 July 2000.

## ***E - NEWS***

---

EDITOR: Dee SEMON

FEEFHS Public Relations/Research Secretary

E-mail your interesting items for inclusion in future editions to: [PR@FEEFHS.org](mailto:PR@FEEFHS.org)