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NAME: M. C. Zipoy
419 Ontario St.

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: G. Fleischauer

Mr. Zipoy came from ,Slovakia in 1884 when the settlements in Bohemia Flats just beginning. Was 18 when he came here but had never seen a dollar bill. 10 acres made a farmer a rich man there- For working out they were paid a few pennies a day. (20¢ a day considered a good wage)

He estimates that there were only 3,500 in Mpls. when he came (50 yrs ago) However, this is a great underestimation. In 1871, according to census, over 13,000 were here.

He landed in Pittsburg coal mines working for sixty five cents a day, three days a week. He could not speak or understand English. One of the fellow workers in the mine told him to write to a man in Minneapolis and see about going there to work in the sawmills.

The man answered immediately telling him that they were a group of immigrants from all parts of Europe without money who had to live very reasonably, so they had built shanties and lean-tos down along the river bank and did not pay rent. He was certain there was work in the sawmills for everyone.

Zipoy went to Minneapolis and worked in the mills for awhile, but soon afterwards, got a job in a grocery store working for a Swedish man as delivery boy. Neither of them had learned English and they couldn't understand each other at first, but in about two or three years, Zipoy had learned a great deal of English. He has been in the grocery business in Minneapolis almost fifty years, and now owns his own store. He says "They knew how to buy groceries. Never buys 5 lbs of flour - never less than 49#. Quantities were cheaper.

His wife is fifty five years old now and has been in America twenty five years. She had taken nurse's training in Czech, before she came here.

M. C. Zipoy
Feb. 1939
G. Fleischauer

The hospitals there, she said, are much nicer than the city hospitals here. They are placed right in the middle of the city, and a park ground is made all around it. The place is bordered around by fruit and nut trees and there are many plots of gay flowers on the grounds. It had about 2000 patients while she was there. In the spring time when the trees are blooming, the patients are taken out on the grounds if they are able to be moved.

At a very young age, the girls were taught to loom their own linen from flax they raised. There was no work to do in the fields in the winter so the girls spent much of their time embroidering. The bright thread for this was often bought from the store but some of the women spun it and had it dyed at the textile factories. If any festive day called for a gift, it was always something made by hand at home. (Such as Xmas)

As soon as a girl began to think about becoming a bride, she atarted knitting clothes for babies. Most of Mrs. Zipoy's girl friends prepared for six. Baby clothes were always pure white. Bonnets, boots, jackets and large shawls were made for them, and laid away with a wide ribbon tied around the bundle.

Christmas lasted about ten days. Most of the people were farmers so they were not very busy during the winter months. It usually ended with a ceremony at church on January the sixth to celebrate the three wise men going to the Christ Child in Bethlehem. Still celebrated today as Epiphany. The presents they exchanged, if any, were something knitted, cooked or carved by themselves. Their christmas trees were cut from the woods nearest them, and trimmed with tiny cookies the mother baked, nut shells painted gay colors, bright bits of rags or paper and small candles of twisted wax.

On Christmas evening the windows of the church were opened so that people in their homes or on the streets could hear the choir caroling. The

The churches were usually located high on a hill and the songs could be heard "far and far."

New Year's celebration similar to ours.

At Eastertime, three willow sticks were braided together and bits of rags tied around them all down the stick. They carried this with them as they went around from house to house singing holy songs. "They sang all of the time, in the homes, in the fields and at church. When they brought a load of hay in from the fields at harvest time, they sang all the way."

Potatoes and Sauerkraut were their main foods. Mrs. Zipoy says she knows at least 35 ways to cook potatoes....potato struddle, potato noodles, etc. (for a feature story.)

Potatoes cooked and "mushed" - with flour added until it is quite stiff. Scraped into pretty shapes onto a platter. Covered with butter and poppy seed.

Potatoe Strudle:

Potatoes cooked and "mushed" with flour added until stiff enough to roll onto a board. Sprinkled with butter and cinnamon, rolled and sliced.

There were twelve Irishmen and two Germans here fifty years ago, Zipoy said speaking of the flats. The people were very religious, but at first there was no church so they held services in their homes or on the river bank on good days. By 1868, they had congregated enough and collected enough money to build their first church in Minneapolis.

The church is now 50 years old. The old church was removed (how ?) when rest of houses were taken down.

Mr. Zipoy says the best cheese, better than the Swiss---It is white, and so is their butter made from goat's milk. Everyone in his locality owned a goat or two.

Mrs. Zipoy says "but the Czechs have the best cabbage. It is sweet,

white, tender.

Grapes grew wild in some parts of the old country near their homes. They were on hills facing the afternoon sun, rocky hills and were called stone grapes. Red, blue, white ones.

In the city at Christmas time, they had fish cooked 3 ways.

1. fish soup, made with fish head & eggs (roe) Hard small rounds of bread were put in here & served.
2. blue fish stuffed with white almonds only.
3.

Their home:

Very modern, tastefully and comfortably furnished.

She in an orcid knit dress - unraveling a sweater and rolling the yarn up.

He: checking statements---

Left them:listening to Stassen's taking gov. oath

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NAME: Mary Bakalar
270 22nd Ave. So.

DATE: Feb. 19, 1939

SUBMITTED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Information by Helen Bakalar

Mother from (Lascov) Markan, Slovensko, Czechoslovakia.

Lived in this house for 15 years, before that on 2nd ave. Own this house. Father is a worker (laborer) on the WPA.

They came here in 1901 with a Czech family; but they are Slovaks.

First worked in a steam factory 5 or 6 years at Pittsburg.

Came to Mpls. in 1908.

Worked as laborer in Washburn flour mills in winter for about 8 years. On streetcar in summer....a laborer on the line.

At first, this used to be a great mushroom place by the banks and the brewries. One man kept rabbits and pigeons.

When asked if he wanted to go back, he said, "What do I do I go back? Give me some money to buy some land I be allright. Got no land to work, worse than here."

"Only rich men have machine in fields, poor man have to carve it by hand. Ladies go behind, pick it up, put him in little pile, enough to tie together."

Washing clothes: After beating, put in big barrel, cover with ashes, leave one week.

Cheese made nite before Easter.

Milk, eggs and nutmeg.

Boil and stir it all the time until it curdles, and all the water goes off. Squeeze again. Tie off in quarter sections by putting a string half way over both ways....that makes wedges. Next day by nite, eat it.

Remedies:

Take some grass and mix it with salt and put it on wores or cuts.

Use bread and milk and butter on sore spots, also bacon.

Cabbage leaves also.

If pus comes on anything, put potatoes on, cooked.

7 weeks after Easter celebrate by psalms in church or home. Eat kalachki.

NAME: Mrs. Kieferle

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DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Mrs. Kieferle is 53 years old now., born in this house. Parents were among the first settlers here, came from Baden, Germany.

It was all hills and water in the pocket and it reminded them so much of their home. They bought a lot here for $500 when they could have got one up above for less; but they chose this place because the real estate men told them that this was to be the navigation center of the northwest in a few years. They were the first settlers on the upper levee, but it was a great picnic gound then.

Father worked in the lumber yards and at Coopers, making flour barrels, butter tubs and so forth.

(parents died in 1924, and 1925. Piece in newspaper about them. Mother's name was Kaltenback.)

Journal - newspaper library.

Her husband was a butcher for 22 years, now a night janitor at courthouse. At first, the people below were called the Shanty Irish.

Costumes: "Slovak kids used to wear three or four petticoats with wide lace showing on the bottom.

A fruit house up north used to dump fruit into the river. The kids took logs and sticks to reach for a banana or orange.

A negro minister used to bring 20 or 30 down to the river to be baptized every year. About 15 years ago is the last she remembers.

Quarries behing Petros at one time low wagons filled with rocks, such big pieces...passed by all day...blasting all the time.

Used to be a great place for sliding from Cedar to the river. The river used to be wider before the seawall was built. They were not allowed on the river, but they made ponds near it to skate on.

University students used to rent a bob sled from down here. Sled held about 12 or 15. Became almost an established sport.

They talked of shipping scrap iron from here. They needed more land than they had.

Spring 1926, they came and told set price that they wanted ground and house had to be moved back for the railroad. This house can't be moved on the hill because the roof is too high to go under the bridge. Kitchen upstairs and downstairs has been added. Had high fence to keep chickens for fresh eggs. During the floods, their friends, part Bohemina, part German, brought, oh, such a load of feather ticks. They laid on them and covered with them. They lugged it all in and we were always bewildered of how we should make space for it all.

Excursion boats used to stop across from us where the warehouses are noe. One time a loadof automobiles came up on the boat and everyone got excited, thinking that at last, this was becoming an important shipping spot. The cars stayed there for a few days days, and after we had all gone down to see them they took them away.

They used to haul coffee, tea, sugar and big ~~bails~~ bales of cotton up, now nothing but coal comes.

Taxes used to be 50 or 60 dollars a year, but now they have only a half a lot, so it is cut some.

They have one of the two furnaces in the valley.

There are three places with running water.

Children want to get away, but all her brothers and sisters have nice homes, and no one wants this house, but her girls want a bathtub. One son just got back from the CCC. One daughter is a typist at the court house and the other goes to South High.

Boy, 18, goes to Mary Miller Voc. studying jewlry,medal.

* * *

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NAME: Rev. J. M. Vrudny
419 Ontario St., Mpls.
DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Rev. J. M. Vrudny - pastor Slovak Lutheran Church

Born in Slovakia, 1888.

Began training for ministry there, but came here when twenty five years old and finished studies in America.

Not well acquainted with history of flats having only been among this congregation for six years. However, related prevalent superstitions, folklore practised in his village in Europe, and related by members of his congregation to him as part of their life when they first moved to Bohemia Flats.

Many of the Slavs believe in the departed spirits visiting them. When the table was set for the Christmas Eve supper, a place was always left for the departed because they really believed that they were present.

On Xmas Eve - just at sunset before church bells ring, the young ladies who want to get married, begin to sweep the kitchen floor. When the bell starts to ring, they take all the sweepings out. The villages are usually small enough so every one knows each others name. The first man they see, they believe they will get a man by that name to marry. "The nicest part of that is it usually works. The sweetheart hangs around waiting for her. The girl not only gets a kick out of it but usually a kiss."

Before services Christmas Eve, the wives or housladies go down to the stable to give the cows bread and Christmas wafers, and garlic to the horse. That is done so that the cows will be good milkers for the year; and the garlic is supposed to make the horses spry.

Then they ~~will~~ all go to a candle light service. Christmas day is another long service when the streets are empty and everyone in the whole village is in the churches. The young girls and women do not take seats but stand in front for the two and a half hour service. It is considered a disgrace for

them to move at all and sometimes they faint before it is ended. The young married girls wear hats with a great deal of fancy ornaments on them. When church is over, they put the hats away again, and they use it for about five years. After that, they are too old to wear a hat. Then they have to dress like the old ladies.....So they wear shawls, just like that thing you have on your head now." he stopped to laugh heartily, then said, "I always have to laugh with myself when I see all those young University girls wearing the headress of Europe's old women."

Christmas celebration lasts about 10 days there because they are mostly farmers and do not have much to do in the winter time.

Kriciar - 1 penny

filler - ½ penny

Shoemaker was the school teacher because he had the most education.

"Each village has its own superstitions, but the people from this part has a spring custom called "Morena."

When spring came, they made a dummy, usually a woman and stuffed it with hay or straw. The boys take it up and carry it, dragging it on the street, and singing as they leap down the road until they get it to the river. They throw it in the water singing, Drown the winter." It is said that this is a heathen custom, and was supposed to have good effect on their crops.

"When the day after Easter came, the boys and men went around sprinkling water on any girl they found outside. In some parts, they took birch branches and swung them on the women, especially on the young girls. This is traced to the early happenings in the Crhistian church, when Christ rose from the dead, the people congregated on the streets and would not go away. The High priest did not like this and tried to force them away by swinging sticks and at them and throwing water on them.

If someone is visiting, or they have visitors, and a headache starts, they think it is an evil eye before them. They have a ready cure, though. The mother, who is really the family doctor, takes a pan with water, and goes to the oven and takes out seven pieces of burning charcoal and throws them into the water, praying as she does it. The fire is put out by the water, and the sick person washed in this water. In some places, they drink of it. ("the nicest part about it is that they really get well.")

If a farmer takes the oxen or a herd of swine to market, he has to watch them, and if he meets someone with empty pails it is a sign of bad luck, and signifies that he will sell nothing, so he turns back without trying. On the other hand, if he meets someone with full pails, it means that his luck will be good that day.

NAME: Mrs. Susan Shingler
47 421 - 5th Ave. So. Mpls.
DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Mrs. Susan Shingler, born 1887 in Vazec, Slovakia, under the rule of Austria Hungary. Came in 1914, a widow with four children.

In Slovakia, Vazec was considered a progressive little village about twenty five years ago. It had a population of approximately six or seven thousand people, and mostly a farming district.

Most of the farmers in the village owned their owned property, a pair of oxen and milk cows. Some owned bee hives, and others a blacksmith shop, and although money was very seldom seen, they bartered their products among themself whenever occasion called for it. (These people, as a race, are very proud and do not want anyone to give them a thing. They comment on relief with hatred.

Besides that, a band of gypsies was usually no farther away than the edge of the village who made nails, wagon chains, knives and rings, who came constantly to the peasant's door, selling their wares for money and sometimes even for food.

In Vazec, the average cottage had three rooms with a big hay loft overhead. One of these rooms was used for cooking and eating. It was equipped with a home-made stove built of bricks which had an iron top and oven, a long wooden table and bench. Sometimes they had silverware, but most of the people ate from one large pan with a wooden or horn spoon they had made themselves.

One room was used for sleeping, and the other one for storage, where great bunches of corn were hung by their husks along the rafters to dry, long strings of dried pears, peaches and apples dangling from the ceiling, buckets of honey, etc....piles of dried berries and poppy seed.

Mrs. Shingler says that either the people did not know about preserving food by canning it, or it was considered too complicated or expensive for them. She had never heard of housewives canning until she came to America to live.

Some of the peasants of the poorer villages never killed their animals for meat, but Mrs. Shingler says they had a herd of swine and a flock of sheep. They butchered whenever they needed meat. The woods around them were filled with wild boar and deer, but the people were never allowed to kill them for food. The lord would often ride into the village and select a group of men to go hunting with him. He paid each man a little bit--"just a few pennies, not at all very much" to accompany him on the chase. Whatever game was killed, was taken to the land-owner's house. Without him along, no one was allowed on the hunting grounds.

* * *

NAME: Anna Sabol
2119 Washington Ave.
DATE: Feb. 1939

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INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Anna Sabol: 57 years old. Been in America 38 years.

Lived 10 years in flat, going directly there from Europe.

Brown house below bridge... 2119 Washington Avenue...owns the place.

(also has spring water)

In Europe, she lived in a little village like the flats where they raised cows mostly. (Babic Czechoslovakia.)

Her husband came from Europe, too.

He was a flour mill worker. She worked in the paper mills. She came to the flats because she had an uncle who lived there.

Her house was in the flood, but she never minded it. Lived along Mill St. Owned house and sold it for $80.

When she came, she brought just a little bundle and a feather pillow.

Went to school 6 years in Europe,...reading, writing, etc.

No organization but the Luther League.

National affair in costume held by the church at Dania (Danu) Hall, MPLS. Cedar Ave., Old country dances,,,,,circle dances. Violin and accordian music. Held once or twice a year.

CUSTOMS:

Birth....godmother brought presents. There was a big party at the baptism. Held a week or two after the child is born. The godfather stands up, asking for offering for the babies.

WAKES: Day person is brought from the mortuary until burial there is eating and drinking, people stay all night.

CHRISTMAS TIME: Go around and serenade the neighbors under their

their windows. No Xmas tree in Europe. Make mushroom soup. Juice from sauerkraut with diced mushrooms and salt and pepper in it.

Bread dough is dried first, then made into small rounds, rolled in poppy seed with honey for the Xmas feast. Some of these are put under the pillow on Xmas Eve, so the young girls will dream about their boy friend. On Christmas Eve, they never ate until the stars came out. Just before supper, all got holy bread from church. Dip it in honey and eat it.

EPIPHANY, If a girl has a boy friend she goes steady with, he plants 2 trees in front of her house when she is not looking. Hang leaves on the house here. The people take them in and make like tea for cough medicine.

As soon as somebody moved out of the flats, another party moved in. One Co. had a motorcycle, holding races, starting at the bottom of the hill and going up to the top of the bridge....about 12 years ago.

People went out in boats and canoes, picking wood out of the river.

She has a loom, and makes rugs.

FROM A LETTER of DEWEY ALBINSON
75 Ste. Ursule
Quebec City, P.Q. Feb. 18, 1939

TO: Gladys Fleischauer

Dear Miss Fleisheurer:

I have your letter of February 2nd, which I find here waiting for me upon my return from Montreal. It brought back to mind my many experiences with the art projects, which now seem very far away. I am glad that you are on the Writer's Project. From the tone of your letter, you are enjoying yourself.

As for the Bohemian Flats under the Washington Avenue Bridge, I mourn deeply that they should be destroyed, for they were the one bit of atmosphere in the whole city of Minneapolis. They were a real inspiration to paint. Vaclav Vytlacil (look in the American Art Annual for address, or address in care of the Art students' League of New York City) worked there a great deal when he was in Minneapolis. He spoke the Czech language, which made it very interesting. The people were deeply suspicious of us because they sensed that we were making pictures for the newspapers to bring about pressure to have them removed from the hollow. They did not like publicity of any kind and possibly also sensed that our work might cause ridicule. I got to know some of them quite well and learned that many of them had made good money and owned houses up on the hill or out near Minnehaha Falls and yet would prefer to live down there.

There were no studios in the hollow but a number of artists had rented houses down there, some of which could actually be purchased for around $35 to %50. All I know is, I parted with $5 for the use of one house. There were no names on any of the streets. As far as the artists were concerned, there was no housekeeping going on down there. The houses were merely used for the storing of materials. Big canvases also, could not be taken home so easily on the streetcar.

I should think that you might be able to find some good photographs of this settlement, for many were taken for the newspapers during the years 1915 to 1918. If you could contact the papers, particularly the old Spring numbers, I think you might be able to dig up some good material. In the Spring the settlement was usually under water. Look for March numbers.

At the moment I can recall only two canvases of mine from the Flats that show interesting spots. One is of the church. This belongs to Harry David of the David Advertising Agency in St. Paul. The other canvas shows several of the streets looking towards the river. This belongs to Dr. Kenneth Britizius of Minneapolis. He is in the Physicians' and Surgeons' Building. I am sure that both persons would be glad to permit you to take photographs.

I just happened to recall one experience when Vytlacil and I approached our place. We found the women peeking into the windows in great anger. (Vytlacil had some paintings which they had spied, showing the women at the fountain barefooted and chunky of ankle.) When he broke out and cursed them in their native tongue, it was too much for them.

Anthony Angarola worked in the Flats too and did some most interesting work. Also, there was Elmer Young and Chatwood Burton (Architectural Department of the University of Minnesota.)

Here's hoping all goes well.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Dewey Albinson

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NAME: Mrs. Susan Cupka 52

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Mrs. Susan Cupka, Born 1903 in Vazec, Slovakia, finishes her Mother's (Mrs. Shingler) interview.

"When we were children in Europe, we used to go in the fall picking wild mushrooms, to sell. We saved a little to use for the bigger holidays. We had every kind of berry grow there, strawberry, blueberry, and logan berries, but we didn't eat them ourselves unless they could not be sold in the city.

We always raised our own flax to make linen for our clothes. The girls were taught to sew while they were very young. They made all this beautiful embroidery on their skirts and aprons, and on the men's clothes. Each village dressed a little bit differently, but everyone in one village dressed very much alike. Even the styles for marriage were different. We were all Slovaks but each one went into his own dialect, calling everything by a little bit different name.

In the spring, when we began to work outside again, everyone celebrated. The climate about the same as ours. The men plowed the fields in April, and after the first day when the men came back, the women waited for them to sprinkle them with water to insure good crops.

When the first flowers bloomed, the girsl made wreaths from cowslips, pinks and violets and all the other wild flowers, which they placed on their heads and danced on the fields, singing, then finally, throwing them into the falls, making wishes for good harvests as they did so.

"I do get lonesome for that. Everything is so open there... the fields and all. We never wore shoes then and it was such a good feeling to go running through the high grasses barefooted. We had big ovens made of brick outside to use in the summer time. One of us had to crawl into it to

make it very clean, and I used to love to watch mother pull out the big loves of bread with a long stick like the bakers use here. From the left over dough she always made little figures of men for all the children.

They didn't have a doctor in town and most of the people doctored themselves. The state provided a midwife for confinements; but I imagine more than one person died of ruptured appendix and thought it was a tummy ache.

In the winter time, the women spinned flax and embroidered. The men made wagons, sleds and dolls from blocks of wood for their children. Even their skates were made of wood with a thick strip of wire attached to the middle running from the toe to the heel, and were held on by ropes.

When the snow was especially fresh, about eighteen or twenty of the peasants congregated to go sleighing down the biggest hill they could find, which was often a mile and a half long or so. The men had to pull the sleigh up again, and two or three rides in one evening was usually enough for everyone.

When they washed clothes, they began soaking them, then boiled them for an hour or two. Next day they were taken out and hauled down to the river where they paddled them with wide sticks. They were rinsed over and over until they were snow white, then paddled some more and rinsed again. They usually had so many clothes it was only necessary to wash once a month unless there was a baby in the house.

Most of the women had no irons, so when the clothes were still slightly damp, they were rolled with a rolling pin until they were smooth. Usually the blacksmith's wife had a regular flat iron. They would starch and iron the ladies shirts for church in exchange for a handful of vegetables or dried fruits.

Like most other parts of Slovakia, their wedding feasts lasted for

three days. The party left from the bridegroom's house before going to the church to be married after which they went to the bride's house for the wedding feast. They stayed there until about midnight, then go back to the groom's to continue celebrating. Gypsie bands played for them, charging twelve dollars for three days for the band. They usually danced the two-step, or chardis, and sometimes three together.

When the wedding party moves to the groom's house, they take the bride's bedding and her hope chest in a big wagon and go singing through the streets at midnight. The hope chest in this community is filled by the girl and her mother and sometimes an aunt or grandmother. It includes about twenty five shirts and skirts for both him and her. The skirts are usually pleated or gathered so closely that they can be expanded or made smaller if the girl grows heavier of loses weight. The bride is obliged to give gifts to the men relatives of the groom. This is usually a shirt she has made herself of homespun. She givesthe grooms mother a nice shawl or skirt. The groom gives his bride a pair of boots, amde wither of felt or leather.

Their father dies, and the mother decided to come to America, expecting to find so many things better. "We certainly did, too. We like our country, but we love this one."

The train/trip to the sea port at Brennen, Bremen, Germany, took three days. Their boat trip was seven days, and not a very comfortable time. "We traveled a bunch of people together in one room. Each one had his bundle of clothes and feather pillow. At that time,$200 of American money equaled $250 of theirs. The trip cost $1300 of European money. The mother drew it out like a mortgage on their property.

When they came here, relatives told them of the Bohemia Flats. So they rented a house which they later bought for $165. There were five rooms in t

in the house, and for the first year, her mother kept boarders to earn their living. The next year she began going out to do housecleaning and laundry work in private homes. The payment for the house was called a lease rather than rent and was paid two or three times a year. (They cannot remember to whom it was paid, a lawyer came collecting is all they remember.) They city was had been piped below the bridge, but they never put it in their house, but went to the pipes for it instead.

The oldest boy, 16, began working in the sash and door Co. (Wabasha) 10 hours a day for $1.25 a day. She began working in a laundry and a store. Together they raised the family, paid off the mortgage in Europe and boutht their home on the flats.

They lived near enough to the river to be flooded each spring when the ice broke. The police usually kept pretty good tract of the floods, and warned them so they could be all packed and ready to leave when the first warning came. They moved to higher ground until it was safe again, two or three families living together, many going to the buildings around them, some staying in the beer caves. Afterwards, they had to go back and clean out all the sand and dirt that the water washed in, dry them out and move in again.

Moved out in 1931.

"We have never taken anything from anyone. We have always worked. Susan Cupka is married now and has four children of her own.

Slovakia has always been under someone's yoke, yet it is such a tiny place. They have rich iron and coal mines but they are all controlled. They have some of the best textile workers in the world there, and one of the best glass factories. It makes the Bohemia glass that is noted for its beautiful ornamentation and hardness.

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NAME: Mrs. Anno Petro, nee Hayda
276 22nd Ave. So., Mpls.

54

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Born in Monhan, Slovakia Territory on January 23, 1867.

Raised on her parent's farm in Slovakia. She had attended a small school in the village where Bible, knitting and music were taught. At the age of twelve, the children were confirmed, and education ended there unless they could afford to attend a higher school. There was only one school room, besides another adjoining room where the teacher lived. They had only men teachers and there were about fifty pupils each year.

Land was not measured by acres, but she estimates her father's farm was about twenty acres.

When she was seventeen, her father died, and she went to one of the lord's houses to work as a servant. Her wages were twenty five dollars a year. She had some friends who had worked on farms as servants to the lords, receiving only a small percentage of the crops they raised and no freedom at all. They had broken away and come to America. They wrote letters to her telling how free they were, so she began to think this was a "sweet land," too.

When she was twenty years old, her grandmother gave her $150 of Old Country money to come. She went directly from Ellis Island to her a farm in N. Y., fifty years ago. 3 yrs. N.Y. truck farming - 1 dollar a day. Saved money to send for mother & grandmother. From there she came to her friend's in Minneapolis. Her friends had a big house where they took in roomers, so she lived there, working for her living.

The lumber business was prominent at that time and many of the immigrants worked on the logging crews. Some of the men were single and boarded at the rooming house where she lived. Micheal Petro was one of them. He had been born in Austria the same year as she had been. (In 1897 he got his

second citizenship papers, breaking away from the Emperor of Austira.

There were no Chech churches here at that time. There was no great ceremony for her as was "the custom always"; but they went to a German church with a German preacher officiating, whose language she had never learned, so she did not understand any of the ceremony excepting to know that she had been married.

Micheal Petro worked in the sawmills for 15 years, then became a section man on the tracks. 33 years ago they moved down to Bohemian Flats. Their first house was the lower steps and cost them one dollar a month for rent for 5 years (to Water Power Co.? to gov. (?). She did not seem clear about this.) Their next house was located where 3rd Street was and cost them twenty five dollars a year. After that they bought a place for six hundred dollars under the bridge....one of those places now cleaned up, after they had lived there 4 and one half years. At first they cooked on small wood stoves, and carried their water from the well in the middle of the village. They picked up their own wood from the river banks and hills, always having plenty.

Until the squatters were moved out, they followed more or less the customs of their native land here. Always wearing aprons and head shawls to church, and going to market with their willow baskets over their arms. She said, "If its true about the bridge, I can't figure it out, why they would move us. My house I own now, and the next door house is mine. My hunsband built this one 28 years ago for us. If it's true, God only knows what they are going to do next."

In her own country, she said, the little village she lived in did not celebrate Christmas our way. To her home it was a strictly holy day. Although many of the other villages had Christmas trees, she had never heard of one until she came to America. There was no visiting allowed on her farm,

they could not sweep the floor, and outside of milking the cow, no chores could be performed. For two and a half hours they sat in church, and all day they prayed. The food was prepared the days ahead, and no presents were given.

(Christmas season now----Small artivicial tree covered with tinsel and cotton with small twisted wax candles snapped on the limbs.)

When she came over, she brought one feather pillow, a bright woolen scarf and only the clothes she was wearing.

(She wears high black shoes as a hangover from the days when girls in Europe wore boots or went barefooted. She always wears a peasant apron and a dust cap. She has a dozen blooming plants in the winter, drawing sharp bright lines against the snow covered hills outside. Above her door is a bouquet of dried peppermint plant hanging upside down, which is used for stomach aches. She denies (with a great deal of excitement that this is to keep the "evil eye" away as one of the Bohemian neighbors insisted.)

Her husband died of heart trouble a year ago. Sundays she goes to chruch, and every other day when she is not busy feeding the few chickens she has cooped up in the back yard, carrying in buckets of coal or water, or chopping long logs, she sits by the windows and reads the Bible she brought from Chech, 52 years ago.

Worked at Donaldson's as scrubwoman from 1920-30.

Potatoes couldn't be raised by the river because they rotted even though potatoes are one of their most important foods.

* * *

55

NAME: Mrs. J. S. Micatek
Dr. Smisek Office (Seven Corners, Mpls)

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Mrs. J. S. Micatek, attendant at office of Dr. Smisek's Office - Seven Corners - Mpls. wife of the third minister in the First Slovak Church, Bohemia Flats.

Came to America with parents in the early 1880's when she was six and a half years. Homeland: Nemcovce, Sariska State of Czechoslovakia Republic. There were only about six peasant homes in this village. The remaining area was the rich lands of the lords and ruins of their older homes. The lord who owned their village owned several others, and when he sent his men out to call the peasants to his fields to do the work, they were forced to go no matter how much their own crops needed attention. If they did not work fast enough, they were whipped. If they refused to go, they were jailed.

Her parents had been told that in America whenever you worked you were paid wages, according to the work you could do. They had come with the idea of making a little money to buy land in Europe, when they went back. After they were here, however, they became acquainted with conditions, they decided that this was a much better place to live than their homeland.

She has been raised on the flats and lived there while her husband was pastor of the congregation there. She does not remember how many houses were there when sch came, but when she left (around 1910) there were about 400 families living on three streets.

The little homes were crowded yeat each one had a bed of parsley for soup and lettuce and flowers. From the bridge looking down, the little village made a very gay sight. In the beginning, many of the homes were whitewashed inside several times a year. Later, paint was used.

They were a group of workers. In the early 1880's many of the men who came to work in the sawmills or streets were single. If a man came with his wife and children, she usually boarded the single men. The boarders bought their own groceries, but the housewife cooked it for them. Sometimes three or four boarders had to sleep in one bed (if she was taking in twelve or so at a time besides her family). She washed, ironed and mended besides, charging each of them two dollars a month for those services. The common laborers on the sawmills were earning one dollar and a half a day, but the few fortunate ones at the flour mills were earning two dollars a day. This appealed to them as much as ten or twenty five would now.

With a family like this, the housewife had to bake bread every day. They had given up weaving their dress fabrics from flax they raised. Instead, they sewed dresses for their children of several scraps of material. To have a dress for play with two sleeves matching was almost out of the ordinary in her home until they started school. But don't you think for one minute, she insisted briskly, that any of them were relief-raiders. They were poor, but they were very proud and every one of them had made good.

The village had two grocery stores. One was run by the village midwife, who was also the dressmaker and owned the only sewing machine in the flats. One dairyman had several cows to supply the flats with milk. It was delivered by his wife and son who hauled the two twenty gallon cans up and down the streets every morning and every night. When she was ill, they led the cow around to the houses, milking it to order.

There were two brewries overlooking the flats, but very few of their people worked there, the Germans being preferred for that work. Nevertheless they were so handy, many of the people went a little wild over it. Some of the men had been under yoke so long before they came, that coming and finding

such freedom and wages and all, it was hard on them. They frisked around like a young calf that acts like it won't stop till it breaks its legs.

There was no policeman's beat here in the very early days. If any trouble arose, a patrol was called from up on the hill. The only time a policeman frequented the place was in the springtime when the ice in the river broke and the people had to be informed of the danger of a flood. The schoolhouse was on higher ground and many of the families camped in it during the wettest days. Some of them wouldn't move until they had to wade out.

Her parents had not thought so much of education. By the time she was twelve, she had finished the fifth grade. If her mother washed, she was kept home to help, and no questions were ever asked by the teacher. While she was still twelve her parents sent her to a wealthy family in the city to work as a nursegirl to a six month old baby for one dollar a week. Later she attended evening classes at Jackson school in improve her 3 r's.

There were three streets in the flats. Some man (name not remembered) said he had privileges from the government to collect the lease.

The highest rent was along Mill Street and was about $25 a year, about $18 along Cooper, and about $15 along Wood.

In 1931 when the Bohemian Flats was cleared, the lower levee was cleared completely and all but fourteen houses of the Upper Levee were cleared. Some of them were sold. Low prices were placed on some so they were wrecked and the people took the lumber with them when they moved out on the hill.

Their first church was moved at the same time. There had been no Christmas trees on the flats until one was set up in church the first year it was built. They had two men to watch the candles so it would not burn their new building. When they first came from Europe, their church and religion was closer to them than anyone else.

Weddings on the Flats:

Perhaps a week before the wedding 2 or 3 men who were going to stand up at the alter during the ceremony went around the flats wearing a rose or carrying a cane with bright ribbons tied to it to show the people that he was one of the best men, and he would invite the people who were to come to the wedding. Sunday evening, they would start the celebration by dancing until midnight. On Monday morning at ten, the wedding would be held at church. An elderly man, versed in the Bible would talk with the girl before she left for the church, instructing her and reading her from the book of Job. The bride's father and mother provided all the food. Sometimes there would be 200 at the wedding supper. When they had finished eating, the same man who had instructed the bride, acted as toastmaster and suggesting helping the young couple with a collection. The closer he was to the family, the larger his donation was. A near relative would give five dollars while a friend would put in fifty cents or a quarter. The collection was often around a hundred dollars. This was done instead of bridal showers or wedding presents.

(Made flutes of bark - main musical instrument. Some families were too poor to have oxen or even horses so they hitched their cows to the plow. Did not even have harnesses but made their own rope from hemp & used it. Then in the eve the cow was expected to milk.

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NAME: Micheal Matlach (F. B.)
595 Endicott Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

6 years old when he came with parents from Czecho-Slovakia. Went to a farm in Nebraska first. His father came because in the winter time he had to dig stumps. It was tiresome work and nothing for it. He was one of the cottagers there. Czechs from his village went to Nebraska first and wrote, "Come before it is too late." It was to better him. Educated ones came for of more freedom. He said, "I was raised on the prairies of Neb. and then went to shcool and studied law."

Does not belong to any church.

He belongs to the Sokols, and the Western Bohemian Fraternal Association. "That's not the only lodge there is, though," he insisted, "competition in lodges are keen. The Sokols, besides their internationally known gymnastics put on theatricals, and public exhibitions of their gymnastics. Women and men drill separately most; but sometimes mass drill. Once in three years there is a great one with aid of other units in Northwestern District (Minn. and part of N. Dak., and part of Wisc.) Dues for this organization are 35 cents a month.

Besides the Sokols, are the free thinkers, mostly called rationalists now. They take rational view of religion because science has given us a little different view than the Bible tells on the world. For instance, he said, Anthropology....the study of man...the Bible tells a man was made at such and such a time, but science figures it out more scientifically...how Darwin says, like."

He has written a manuscript which he has given to Ester Jeraby at the Historical Library. It is mostly a list of the Bohemian lodge, a history of

the first Czech teachers and professors in Minnesota. Anna Nedobety was the first teacher of the Czechs in St. Paul. Antonin Jerka taught German to the public schools. V. K. Franda about 15 years ago was principal of Central High School in St. Paul. John and Anton Zeleny were professors of physics at U. John is now teaching physics at Yale, but Anton had retired because of 65 age limit....lives in Mpls.

Vytlacil, Vaclav: now in New York, but once a painter in the flats. Exhibited paintings of the lower levee at the public library in St. Paul.

The houses in the flats were after the European style, looking like little cigar boxes on a narrow street. They were, he said (referring to the people) oblivious of drama and mankind in its tenser moments in the metropolis about them. There was an editorial in the Tirbune about that time (1931). It was a nice "idetorial." I took pains to translate it because it had such a nice poetical---style."

Ref. to Father Hovarka, Cath. priest on 21st and 5th.

* * *

NAME: Mrs. Bastiss

Mrs. Mary Bastiss
58 DATE: Feb. 1939 248-22nd Ave. Mpls.

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Mrs. Bastiss - from Lomice, Czech. 65 years ago--Catholic.

Her father was a miller and owned their own property, so she had never worked out until she came to New York. She was eighteen when she came, and had made the trip with friends bringing only the clothes she had on and a feather tick.

Her uncle in New York was a cigar maker, and she stayed there with him for two years. She had learned to speak German in the school she attended in Czech, so she went to do domestic work in a German home.

Minneapolis started down here," she said, "there were little boats on the river, the breeze and the beautiful banks. Everyone had flowers growing from their window boxes or around the trees. It was just like a park, and on Sundays, all the people used to come down to have picnics and take pictures., and walk around the little houses."

Her first home was on the Upper Flats in Minneapolis (present home) It is a small cottage along 22nd Ave. So. and one of the fourteen remaining homes. The people came here because of the beautiful scenery then. They have cut most of it down now. There used to be a quarry behind Petro's house. Her husband worked in the lumber yards on 2nd Ave. as foreman grading lumber. He has been dead for 21 years now. Hurt by falling from a stone quarry 36 feet high. "It wasn't his fault. If it should happen now, I should get some money. At that time they have no ambulance, so four men carried him home with his skull broken. Invalid for three months.

There were six children to raise, two of the boys worked their way thru college. Albert, the alderman in Mpls. now, studied law at night, and supported the family by working in the day time. His brother Emil, also worked and helped, studying electrical engineering at the same time. Both are in the

the city now.

There was not the same Washington Avenue bridge then, and not much University, there was a small bridge, but it was taken up while she was living there.

Slovak Polish, Irish, French, Germans all lived down here.....all workers.

She has city water now. Three of the fourteen houses have.

Logs driving down the river in the spring raised the river for floods, and when the snow melted, the river rose. It never came to the Upper Levee, but she remembers the people moving into their homes during those days.

In Czech, the people who had money had trees. She remembers having a Christmas doll. They did not celebrate Dec. 25th any other way than in the church. The next day, they celebrated as we do on Christmas. The children had presents if the people had money enough. They never said Santa Caluse, but always the Christ Child.

At Easter time, they had red eggs, but they never said the bunny brought them, just called them chicken eggs. The game of rolling eggs as they do in Wash. now was popular among her people.

"Chech is a beautiful country. Too bad it was broken." She had lived in the city and gone to a school much like our American schools (to eight grade.)

The farmers couldn't do that. They were pressed under the Franz Joseph. Now they are under the Hitler." I just want to go back for a visit.

Always had newspapers around for the children, so they would like an education....even when they were little.

(Christmas tree ornaments sewed onto a linen shelf scarf in the dining room. A pleated silk scarf tied over her white hair. She had just come in from cleaning the snow from the walks when we arrived.

* * *

Gladys L. J. Leuchauer
Federal Writers Project, Minn
July 24, 1922.

59 Mrs. John Grega, 232 22nd Ave. So. Mpls Minn.

According to Mrs. Grega, who has been in Minneapolis for 29 years, the boarding house had been used for the brewry workers once, " "from what they tell me, I don't know for good, because that was long before my time here". At the time that she was in the Flats, the boarding house held about ten or twelve families, all Slovaks, with a few boarders of single men who come from the old country but no want to make home here because they think they go back. They were coming and going all the time, but about ten or twelve families were always there, each with their own housekeeping quarters. Weddings were held there."My wedding lasted for two days there,"she said,"It be a lot of fun."

The building was very large, and was made of bricks. The church clubs used to hold ice cream socials in it, and everyone there had fun because those who had music from the old country came outside in groups and played while some sang songs, or danced.

When the railroad tracks came through, the house was broken down, and the site of it covered up. She does not know if the city did the wrecking, who collected the rent from it, or what price was paid when it was destroyed.

Lee Grove

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Rev. Karl (Karol) Hauser [63]
2002 Dupont Ave. So.
Minneapolis
Minnesota

(Personal remarks of the interviewer: Rev. Hauser, in his eighties, finds his memory beginning to fail; hence the confused and sometimes contradictory statements in his remarks. Both he and Mrs. Hauser praised the friendly way the manuscript was written, and liked it very much. The interview took place at their home Sunday afternoon, August 6, 1939. Interviewed by Lee Grove.)

"I was born in Brindia (Brin) /sp?/, Moravia . . . then traveled in Germany came to America from Hamburg, coming to New Ulm in ~~1884~~ 1885 . . Sept. or Oct., 1885, stayed there until May 30, 1885, then got a call to a German Lutheran church at ~~Zumbro~~ Montgomery, (county seat of ~~LeSueur~~ Le Sueur county, v-e-r-f-y) Rev. Sievers in a conference (churchconference/ in 1887 at Mankato told a story /of the plight of the Bohemian Flats residents/ asked me to preach there once. I came inJune or July, 1887, . . . then I taught a conference in Minnesota . . . Czechs and Slovaks both called Bohemians . . . then came 1888 conference . . . I was preaching at a German Lutheran church at Lansburg, 3 miles from New Prague . . . the church there not feel like letting me go, but at last at a meeting there gave me a call, but only when I gave them a new minister. I had my last sermon there at Thanksgiving, 1888, then I gave my first sermon at First Advent (after that) . . . most of the Bohemians went to the coal mines in Pennsylvania first . . . they came here because their friends live here. . . Flats did not belong to anyone at that time, but you'd better ~~check~~ ask some one about that Mike Zipoy was there when I came. . ..

"Swedes, little church down there belong to Rev. Luther Petri (son is a lawyer here now); he had a Sunday school down there in it. Synod bought the chapel and we collected money from Pillsbury, Lowry and other friends, funds for the church and we converted the Sunday school.

"Irish, quite a few ~~came~~ down there. Catholics, orBohemians went to some

church south east. Some of the Slovaks were Greek Catholics and had a church over north east, they have it there yet. . . .

"People always called the village Bohemian Flats.

"There was a Heinrich and a Noerenberg brewery each down there. Glueks?

" There was a cooper shop on Washington Avenue . . just before Washington goes down to the Flats. We made a parochial school out of it. Rev. Gertsen /sp?/, a Norwegian Lutheran pastor, was a school director at that time and through him we got all school seats for it.

"In the new generation there are business and professional men that have come from this colony living all through the city now.

"Kolacky can be filled with cheese, prunes, fur fruits, or anything."

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Federal Writer's Project, Minnesota
July 22, 1939.

Bohemia Flats. Mpls. Minn.

Interview:

John Lucas, 19th and Riverside. An attendant at Webb Filling Station.

"I spell my name just like you say it,L-u-c-a-s, but in the old country, it really is Luckas, with a silent sound on the "c". "I never lived in the Flats, but my mother was born down there. Her father was Andrew Kolesar, and was considered the politician of the Flats..... that is, he had a bit of education and acted as spokesman for many of the people there. He died when he was about 34, so I don't know much about him. He worked at water works, or the pumping station, and now his son, Andrew, has the same job. Andrew lives at 3517 27th Avé. So..... anyway if that isn't the right address, most anyone around could tell you which house it is, because he's been there so long. He was born on the Flats.

"Both my father and mother are Slovak. Dad came from a little town, which I do not know the name of, but it is about 30 miles away from the big town of Kocis, Slovakia. (He was not quite certain about this spelling, but was sure it could be found on an older map.) He came when he was sixteen, with a bunch of other Slavs. First he went to Illinois, where he worked on a section for a while, then got a job in a bottle glass factory for a few months, and after that, came here. When he was about 20 years old, he got a job with the Minneapolis Street Railway Company, and has been with them ever since, about 30 or 35 years now.

"We are Catholic," he said,"But the folks go to Holy Name, which is an Irish parish near their home. Sometimes I go to a Bohemian church, and sometimes to a German. "

His mother lived on the Flats until she was about fourteen years old. Her address is now 3820 16th Avenue South. Mpls.

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Bohemia Flats, Minneapolis

Submitted by Gladys L. Fleischauer
Federal Writer's Project, Minn.
July, 1939

Interview with Andrew Sabako.
1901 Washington Avenue, Mpls.
In the Kokesh Building, A Grocery Store.

Andrew Sabako was born in Vazec, Slovakia, where he lived on his fathers plot of farm ground until he was seventeen. His father had come to America before him, sent him fare, and told him to come because he could earn money here. "I didn't want to stay there, anyway. I didn't like the King. The king made the boys who were twentyone go into the army and work three years ... for nothing! I run away. As soon as I crossed the Austrian-Hungary border, into Germany, I was safe. He came directly to the Flats in Minneapolis where he had lived every since he had come to America. He had learned of the Flats from friends who lived there who had come before him. They did not have a whole house, but were boarders with one of the Slovak families.

His first job was working on the section. 10 hours a day for 1.25 per day. Then he went to the Pillsbury Flour Mill and worked a s a daily laborer for fourteen years. From there he went to the Milwaukee Railroad in the shop as a painter's helper. He has been in the grocery business at this address for a bit over one year. Kokesh, the grocer from the Flats, carried on a business at this building at the same time he run his store in the Lower Flats. He said that as far as he knew, Kokesh had come to America as a poor man. Now both of his daughters are living from the interest of his savings. Kokesh died in California some time ago.

He says he remembers when the women used to take their good rugs down to the river and lay them on a wooden bench to scrub, then rinse them in the river and lay them on the rocks to dry in the sun. No rugs were ever sent to the cleaners.

He said that all nationalities lived there, and were a happy colony together. They went to live there because it was cheap, but they were economical and saved. People who bought their first house in the Flats for $150 now own places for $7000 or $8000. They are scattered throughout the city.

School used to held in the schoolhouse(now gone) over the Flats. Rev. Karol Hauser and Rev. J.S. Micatek were teachers, teaching regular classes besides religion. Only one teacher at a time, however.

Bohemia Flats, Minneapolis.

Submitted by Gladys L. Fleischauer
Federal Writer's Project.
July, 1939

73

Interview with Susan Sabako.
1901 Washington Avenue. Mpl.s
In the Kokesh Building. A Grocery Store.

Lived in the Flats from 1898 to 1910, approximately. Her father's folks had a small farm in Europe, but when they came to America, they left the land for those who were staying, instead of selling it. She came from Vazec, Slovakia with her mother, bringing only the clothes they wore and a Bible. Her father was already here, and had been boarding in the Flats, awaiting their arrival. He had work with the steel machineries, and had been in America three years before they joined him.

Her mother's name was Maria Rollins. They rented a four room house on the Flats, (Address was 221 22nd Avenue So., which was still a part of the Lower Flat, and was located right beneath the Washington Avenue Bridge.) Her mother had three children, and took in ten or twelve boarders. The price of their board was determined by the amount of the food bills. The grocery bill and meat bill were summed up at the end of the month, and divided amongst the boarders. Besides paying the food bill, they gave her two dollars a month, for cooking, washing, ironing, mending and cleaning. As more children came, fewer boarders could be accomadated.

She remembers the brick boarding house, but it was not a brewry building at that time. Several families lived in it, but not in community fashion.

In Europe, she had gone to a Lutheran church, but after she was married, she was converted to the Baptist Church, and now is a member of the First Slovak Baptist Church, on Seven Corners, Mpls.

She said that they had never given presents at Christmas, but now they do. It used to celebrated in their home with meat and pastry and good meals. Unlike the American habit they have adopted, no fuss was ever made for any birthday in the home.

They belong to no lodges.

72-73

At the store of A. Sabako, a Slavik family.....
The father attends the store in the day time, and does not remember much about the Flats. His daughter, advised coming back in the evening to see her mother. She said that they belonged to the Baptist(First) Church on Seven Corners, Mpls. "Almost everyone up there once lived in the Flats" she said.

I went in search of the minister, Rev. Voitka, of the church, but found that he was in Georgia for some world conference.

Fleischauer

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Federal Writer's Project, Minnesota.
Submitted by Gladys L. Fleischauer
July 22, 1939.

"Our Lady of Perpetual Help".... Catholic parish.
21st Ave. and S. 5. Mpls., Minn.

There are no members of the Flats in his parish. In the past, a few of the former residents , were members, but they have all died or left. Of the two hundred families belonging to his church, he estimates that there are about fourty or forty five Slovak families, and thirty Chexz families. The remainder of that number are German, Irish and a few Poles.

"There used to be a few Irish down in the Flats; but there were a great many more Swedes than Irish. Next to the Czechs and Slovaks, I guess the Swedes ranked in highest population there. During the last ten years of the Low Flats, there were a lot of vacant houses, and people moved before they were even told to. Before that, I understand, although I was not here at that time, that it was quite a colony. They are moved out, now and it is a good thing. The houses were so small, and not sanitary, at all, they had no water works, you know."

As far as he knew, he insisted that there were no customs or superstitions left with the people. "That was for the old ones who had just left home. Now they do as America does; and the old superstitions are dropped."

His church takes care of all the Catholic families in that vicinity, just as the other Catholic churches in other parts of the city take care its neighbors."

NAME: M. C. Zipoy
419 Ontario St.

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: G. Fleischauer

Mr. Zipoy came from ,Slovakia in 1884 when the settlements in Bohemia Flats just beginning. Was 18 when he came here but had never seen a dollar bill. 10 acres made a farmer a rich man there- For working out they were paid a few pennies a day. (20¢ a day considered a good wage)

He estimates that there were only 3,500 in Mpls. when he came (50 yrs ago) However, this is a great underestimation. In 1871, according to census, over 13,000 were here.

He landed in Pittsburg coal mines working for sixty five cents a day, three days a week. He could not speak or understand English. One of the fellow workers in the mine told him to write to a man in Minneapolis and see about going there to work in the sawmills.

The man answered immediately telling him that they were a group of immigrants from all parts of Europe without money who had to live very reasonably, so they had built shanties and lean-tos down along the river bank and did not pay rent. He was certain there was work in the sawmills for everyone.

Zipoy went to Minneapolis and worked in the mills for awhile, but soon afterwards, got a job in a grocery store working for a Swedish man as delivery boy. Neither of them had learned English and they couldn't understand each other at first, but in about two or three years, Zipoy had learned a great deal of English. He has been in the grocery business in Minneapolis almost fifty years, and now owns his own store. He says "They knew how to buy groceries. Never buys 5 lbs of flour - never less than 49½#. Quantities were cheaper.

His wife is fifty five years old now and has been in America twenty five years. She had taken nurse's training in Czech, before she came here.

The hospitals there, she said, are much nicer than the city hospitals here. They are placed right in the middle of the city, and a park ground is made all around it. The place is bordered around by fruit and nut trees and there are many plots of gay flowers on the grounds. It had about 2000 patients while she was there. In the spring time when the trees are blooming, the patients are taken out on the grounds if they are able to be moved.

At a very young age, the girls were taught to loom their own linen from flax they raised. There was no work to do in the fields in the winter so the girls spent much of their time embroidering. The bright thread for this was often bought from the store but some of the women spun it and had it dyed at the textile factories. If any festive day called for a gift, it was always something made by hand at home. (Such as Xmas)

As soon as a girl began to think about becoming a bride, she started knitting clothes for babies. Most of Mrs. Zipoy's girl friends prepared for six. Baby clothes were always pure white. Bonnets, boots, jackets and large shawls were made for them, and laid away with a wide ribbon tied around the bundle.

Christmas lasted about ten days. Most of the people were farmers so they were not very busy during the winter months. It usually ended with a ceremony at church on January the sixth to celebrate the three wise men going to the Christ Child in Bethlehem. Still celebrated today as Epiphany. The presents they exchanged, if any, were something knitted, cooked or carved by themselves. Their christmas trees were cut from the woods nearest them, and trimmed with tiny cookies the mother baked, nut shells painted gay colors, bright bits of rags or paper and small candles of twisted wax.

On Christmas evening the windows of the church were opened so that people in their homes or on the streets could hear the choir caroling. The

The churches were usually located high on a hill and the songs could be heard "far and far."

New Year's celebration similar to ours.

At Eastertime, three willow sticks were braided together and bitx of rags tied around them all down the stick. They carried this with them as they went around from house to house singing holy songs. "They sang all of the time, in the homes, in the fields and at church. When they brought a load of hay in from the fields at harvest time, they sang all the way."

Potatoes and Sauerkraut were their main foods. Mrs. Zipoy says she knows at least 35 ways to cook potatoes....potato struddle, potato noodles, etc. (for a feature story.)

Potatoes cooked and "mushed" - with flour added until it is quite stiff. Scraped into pretty shapes onto a platter. Covered with butter and poppy seed.

Potatoe Strudle:

Potatoes cooked and "mushed" with flour added until stiff enough to roll onto a board. Sprinkled with butter and cinnamon, rolled and sliced.

There were twelve Irishmen and two Germans here fifty years ago, Zipoy said speaking of the flats. The people were very religious, but at first there was no church so they held services in their homes or on the river bank on good days. By 1888, they had congregated enough and collected enough money to build their first church in Minneapolis.

The church is now 50 years old. The old church was removed (how ?) when rest of houses were taken down.

Mr. Zipoy says the best cheese, better than the Swiss---It is white, and so is their butter made from goat's milk. Everyone in his locality owned a goat or two.

Mrs. Zipoy says "but the Czechs have the best cabbage. It is sweet,

white, tender.

Grapes grew wild in some parts of the old country near their homes. They were on hills facing the afternoon sun, rocky hills and were called stone grapes. Red, blue, white ones.

In the city at Christmas time, they had fish cooked 3 ways.

1. fish soup, made with fish head & eggs (roe) Hard small rounds of bread were put in here & served.
2. blue fish stuffed with white almonds only.
3.

Their home:

Very modern, tastefully and comfortably furnished.

She in an orcid knit dress - unraveling a sweater and rolling the yarn up.

He: checking statements---

Left them:listening to Stassen's taking gov. oath

NAME: Mary Bakalar
270 22nd Ave. So.

DATE: Feb. 19, 1939

SUBMITTED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Information by Helen Bakalar

Mother from (Lascov) Markan, Slovensko, Czechoslovakia.

Lived in this house for 15 years, before that on 2nd ave. Own this house. Father is a worker (laborer) on the WPA.

They came here in 1901 with a Czech family; but they are Slovaks.

First worked in a steam factory 5 or 6 years at Pittsburg.

Came to Mpls. in 1908.

Worked as laborer in Washburn flour mills in winter for about 8 years. On streetcar in summer....a laborer on the line.

At first, this used to be a great mushroom place by the banks and the brewries. One man kept rabbits and pigeons.

When asked if he wanted to go back, he said, "What do I do I go back? Give me some money to buy some land I be allright. Got no land to work, worse than here."

"Only rich men have machine in fields, poor man have to carve it by hand. Ladies go behind, pick it up, put him in little pile, enough to tie together."

Washing clothes: After beating, put in big barrel, cover with ashes, leave one week.

Cheese made nite before Easter.

Milk, eggs and nutmeg.

Boil and stir it all the time until it curdles, and all the water goes off. Squeeze again. Tie off in quarter sections by putting a string half way over both ways....that makes wedges. Next day by nite, eat it.

Remedies:

Take some grass and mix it with salt and put it on sores or cuts.

Use bread and milk and butter on sore spots, also bacon.

Cabbage leaves also.

If pus comes on anything, put potatoes on, cooked.

7 weeks after Easter celebrate by psalms in church or home. Eat kalachki.

Bohemia Flats, Minneapolis.

Submitted by Gladys L. Fleischauer
Federal Writer's Project, Minn.
July, 1939.

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Interview: Anna Chovanec.
278 22nd Avenue. So., Mpls., Minn.

Anna Chovanec is the widow of Joseph Chovanec, who was killed on duty on the Municipal River Barge six years ago. He had come to America from Slovakia thirteen years ago, landed at the Flats just as the thick of its population had dwindled. For three years he worked, saving money to send for his family, so when they came, their first and only home in America has been The Flats. However, it was the Upper Flat and not the Lower Flat on which they settled. They lived in a large wooden house of six or seven rooms for which they pay fifteen dollars a month. Mrs. Anno Petro, another Slovak, who lives next door, owns the house, and the two back yards of the two households form an earthen floored court which they keep swept smooth and clear of dried leaves, broken twigs or gusts of gravel washed down from the steep cliffs and hills directly behind them. A spring flows continually in the back yard, draining into a pipe from where it is carried away under control so that the yard remains dry. Soft water for washing is kept in a cistern by one of the many wooden sheds. Around each house are a variety of healthy , gay looking flowers, and an apple tree flaunts a bountiful yeild in the front yard of the Widow Petro.

The back yard court is the scene where the women with their bare or mocassined feet hang the Monday washing between the two houses, and the swift, emotional sound of Slovak confuses the air. Even the children speak Slovak, and I hear them calling to one another, "Jancka," to call the pale, rad headed John, "Ruotka" to fetch young Ruthie, and Marya, or Virgin or Mary or Virginia.

The children work together in a very healthy way, loading blocks of city pavement, used for fuel, onto the curved slat of a barrel, which they use for a tray to carry the tarred wooden squares into one

of the many sheds that border the courtyard on the Chovanec side. On an old wagon, whose "box" is made from rough irregular slabs of planks, placed onto four small wagon wheels, they haul loads of wood into the yard. When the bridge or the wooden steps leading "from the hill" into their little valley is being repaired by the city, the old wood doesn't lay around very long, but is hauled into shelter by this industrious little group of Slovak children.

When the chunks are large, as parts of trees from the summer storms often are, I see them laboring with a very heavy axe which looks much too large for their small arms, splitting and chopping into sizeable pieces. Sometimes, two of them work together with a handsaw, while Ruthie, the youngest, dodges about under the bouncing wood, gathering it almost as it falls, and storing it neatly away in the wood shed.

MRs. Chovanec's mother, who lives with them, and is also a widow, hobbles about, carrying pails to the spring, or sits on a wooden bench which leans against the shed, paring vegetables in the sun. Occassionally they set a large pan full of bread dough in the sun, when the day is not too hot. The batter is always covered with a square of white cloth, under which the children keep peeking with an avid curiosity as the lively dough rises to the top. Later, the curiosity has turned to pleasure when they seek their reward, and are given one of the warm brown Kolacky buns, sprinkled generously with chopped walnuts and ground poppyseed.

In the old country, Mrs. Chovanec's mother used to be the village midwife. She still owns a piece of land in Europe, but has given up all plans for going back, and is now trying to sell the land. When she is not busy making rich brews from the many herbs so familiar to their everyday cookery, she sits in the small room off the kitchen before the loom, and works on the bright rags, weaving rugs which they sell and which provides one part of their small income. The grandmother and the mother speak Slovak almost entirely, but understand English quite well.

Mrs. Chovanec, with four small children, her mother and two adolescent daughters, has had to work out most of the time. Some of her jobs have been sewing jackets on power machines, labor work in Waldorf paper factory, where"no matter how hard you work, sixty nine dollars a month is the most you can make", and as a helper at the Gladness bakeries. Since an illness last fall which has kept her alternately at home and in the hospital, she helps on the rugs, when the housework is finished.

One of the daughters, Ann, who is eighteen, helps support the fatherless family with wages she earns in a knitting mill, and Mary, who is sixteen, divides her time between work at Powers shipping room, or behind a counter in the day, and vocational school at night. Outside of their working hours, and routine at home, they seem to live a happy, healthy life, with many friends and engaging in unorganized activities of all kinds. Mary spends quite a bit of time with singing groups, and sings in her church choir.

They are Lutheran, and deeply religious. They like the valley very much, enjoying the river and the hills full of trees, and keep looking forward with a keen delight to the finishing of the River boulevard's construction work, when a road will follow the contours of the river to a small park not far away, which is equipped with benches, fireplace, tables and you suddenly come upon springs of clear crystal water spouting out of the yellow and sulphur colored cliffs. They think of moving sometime, but if you ask them about it, no one shows any sign of anxiety or haste, and they begin to talk about the coziness of their own valley, showing a deep pride in it as they detail it.

G. Fleischauer - February 24, 1929.

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Carrie Finstrom - resident of the flats.

Scandinavian.

When the people moved down here they paid five hundred dollars for every one of the lots, and they got cheated. There wasn't even any ground, it was all just limestone chips from all the quarries around here. This place was filled with quarries. The David C. Bell Company used to be right where the wooden stairs are now and they took all the good rock out of the place to build their First National Bank. The people had to bring mud up from the river, and haul loads of dirt and fertilizer down here, and finally the weather washed some better land into the hollow. Now when the city came to move us out and buy the land, they got us to sign a paper, and after we signed it, we found we got cheated out of a boulevard. They promised us one, but they gave us just a little slice of land. Bastiss was the only one who didn't get cheated.

I had to chop my house right off and pull another big ten room duplex down. They didn't pay nearly enough. I bought the place with insurance money after my mother died, and my brother and I had it in a joint title that whoever lived the longest kept it and so the place is mine. We paid five dollars a year for the ground to keep that shack on it; that's my storeroom now, but if they move us off 22nd. st. to build a new bridge, that's where I'll move to. They are building a retaining wall beneath the St. Mary's and Fairview Hospitals, and we call that Suicide Blvd. because it is a blind corner and everyone is going to be killed coming around there.

I always say that the Czechs think they are better than the Slovaks, and the Slovaks think they are better than the Germans, and the Germans think that they are better than the Liptovs and the Liptovs think that they are better than the Speezocks.....

46

NAME: THOMAS SHAFAR
244 - 22nd Ave So. Mpls
DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Thomas Shafar: 88 years old. From the beer city of Budweise, Bohemia.

Came here in 1869 working his way up on a steamer.

On May 1st, went to work on the police force, in 1886.

Served 23 years. After 20 years, pension began, so he retired.

Aublrect had a store here for about two years. Kokesh started his store about 1888, and kept it about 29 years.

Danish woman and a man living here first. He was always fishing, and she was always washing and scrubbing.

Appearance: Lots were run clear to the river.

When Slovaks and Scandinavians came, the rest moved out.

During the floods, moved the people out in the patrol wagon to the Sunday Schools on 30th Ave.

4 or 5 sawmills used to be above the flour mills (before he came) rafts down the river bringing lumber.

Lived in the flats first. Bought this place, after living across the streets renting.

Sawyer Brewry: Henriches and Norenburck and one other man.....When it was time to move the houses and charges leases, a woman came out and chopped the ropes.

The salons closed on Sundays. Went to the brewry for a keg and took it to some house in the flats. By evening they were all filled up and fighting. They came after him with teakettles filled with hot water if he went to try to straighten them out.

* * *

45

NAME: Wallace Mrs M.G. Wallace

DATE: Feb. 1939 2212 - 2½ St. Mpls.

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Referred to: Mrs. Olestad of 2210 9th St. So. (about Bender House)

Came here one year ago September from China. Wanted place near U but across river was so expensive. Found this house...four rooms for nine dollars, did a lot of repairing, made a rock garden, put up trellises, etc. furnished with carved dark furniture from China. Muslin draperies bound in two inch bands of blue....copper trays of fruit...etc. "We liked the view so, it was just like being out in the country. Some people thing that this is a tough place to live, but there is no more respectable place in town. No one else but the very rich have a view like this. Both taught in China. Now he teaches Zoology at U. All our friends wonder how we ever found this place.... We just heard about it and liked it so when we came that we took it. We used to carry water on Saturday and fill a great big tank in the kitchen to use all week. Last month we got the city water put in. The water from the spring got so awful we couldn't use it. It had become all full of gas. If we had a pail of it standing in the kitchen, you couldn't stand to be in the room.

About the only organization they are active in is to help China...they both lecture for it. The Minneapolis Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Agression.

At one time before the city moved the railroad in, Carrie's house was a great big one. The cottage she lives in now is really just a little part out of the big house. She had eleven rooms upstairs full of roomers, and three families living downstairs. She had just bought it the year and a half before for $3500. The city gave her 4900 dollars for it when they tore it down. She leased the lot under the bridge for five or ten dollars a year... two room shack still standing which she used now as a storeroom, and intends

to move back into it if the houses along 22nd are ever moved away. There was a court all around her boarding house, with the red pump in the middle of the court. Now the red pump stands on the boulevard of 22nd.

* * *

NAME: Mamie Groscost
2101 2nd St. Mpls.

37

DATE: Feb. 19, 1938

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Glieschauer

Mamie Groscost.....Czech, but American-born.

2101 2nd St. Mpls., (around the curve by the coal docks.)

35 years old.

Grade school education, and telephone operator 10 or 11 years.

Grandfather was a miller and postmaster.

Men worked in the mills and railroad yards. In 1931, many went on the farms. This is so different now, it's hard to say how it was. One little street ran from here. "It was so romantic....all trees..... It's been an interesting place and I've enjoyed living here. We were not allowed to go way down by the river because it was too dangerous, but we always wanted to go anyway. The village below was filled with dogs. You don't see many dogs any more, but there were plenty of them here then. People would have laughed at pedigreed pups, there were just all mixed ones then. It's sort of interesting sitting on the windows now watching the boats come in."

There used to be a train bridge right in front of the dandpiles (white sandpiles by their house) but the U. bought it out and moved it way over. There were many big houses too, but they wereall knocked down first. They were nearer to the river and the water washed out their foundations.

The Dairy cow woman was across from Carries.

During the floods----all those near the river had boats. The women go out in the boats to get their clothes and pillows. Their houses were half in water. "They'd go out in these blooming boats and go paddling around there." We thought if we could only live there.

Every summer the artists came from the University with big canvases.

One painted her on the back porch with a big tub of leaves.

She used to be a Sokol.

Her husband, German, was a truck driver on the WPA, and a union man. She says, "People think that dictatorship is so wonderful, but they ought to be under it for awhile. We need Democracy."

* * *

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NAME: Josie Verabec
2101 2nd St., Mpls.

DATE: Feb. 19, 1939

INTERVIED BY: Gladys Flieschauer

Josie Verabec - Born in Apator, Czech, 1873.

Education: 3 grades of school. "At that time, farmer's children can't do anything like go to school. Different in this country."

Came to America when she was 20 years old with four sisters. Their mother had died, and their father, 48, had married a girl 24 with 14 cows and a mortgage. They all worked on their father's farm, and came to America together when their father gave them the money.

When she got here, she went to Omaha, Nebraska, where her sister was being married so that she would not be alone in America. "It was very lonesome when I first come, but good eat. Cleveland was president then. On the farm where I go, butter is ten cents a pound. Good eggs for five cents the dozen, two big watermelons for ten cents. Everything much better."

She worked for a landlady who had 14 czech boarders for ten dollars a month. Each boarder paid four dollars a week for bed and wash and food.

One was a Bookeeper, and she married him. (a nephew to the landlady.) "Two babies come, then he say he go to Chicago. He put me on my sister's farm. She had cows, but they no give milk because they are going to have babies; so we bought the milk from the next cows for the babies and coffee. Then I got a letter from him and it was here in Minneapolis, so I come to. He no want me no more, so I give him two babies and a divorce. Next I marry a machinist who work across the river at Powers. He died a long time ago. I work all the time washing clothes and cleaning houses for many, many years.

* * *

When she left Czecho-Slovakia, she left most of her clothes there . .

"me single yet. Me no wanna go on farm. Clothes me have only good on farm." She brought her feather bed and three pillows, however.

* * *

When she had time, she used to crochet "fascinators" which is a square woolen schawl for the shoulders or head. "Make money now for my good friends and myself for Christmas.

* * *

In the old country:

"Only Christmas tree we have be at school. No tree at home....never... our stepmother no care for us so "priest's wife"...no catholic, protestant, braid big pan of good bread....sweet bread with lots of butter, made for poor children. Presents were pencils, writing books, nuts and "apples once." The very poor children got shoes from the "priest's wife." She no call him "priest".. he be "Minister."

On Christmas eve...."me no eat all day....me so hungry....mama boil barley, and boil dry mushrooms, chop and put in barley and some grease, put in oven and make brown.

Christmas day: eat beef soup, pork and potatoes. The rest of the days, soup, soup, soup, and potatoes three times a day. The soups were usually rice, milk, or potatoe. Rye bread bake <u>on</u> oven... make much better taste than in pan. White bread same way.

In winter time, work in the barn in day time beating wheat with a stick. At night, make threads for cloth, fix feathers for feather pillows. Once in a while, men come with accordion and ask to dance, but we have one small room and hay loft above. We sleep on top of stove, so no room to dance, so they are sent away. We have meat only on hollowday (holiday)...father no like that if I laugh. All week work like slave on farm. On Sunday, pray, pray and sing songs.....

No allowed to see king's castles and big churches when cousin take us on train to Praha to see Sokols act...."Oh I wish I could see all those things....no, all I do is go to church."

My country all broke now. I hate to get my papers to see how it break. "I don't want to go back. I like this country. I get it better here. Once I almost jump into the Seine there. My father made me go to school with a jacket like a patchwork quilt, and all the little girls and boys laugh at it.

Valentine Day: no send pretty papers, but men brought great big cookies made to hearts to their sweethearts."

She had never seen a safety pin or a banana until she came her. Now she works for a young German and his wife. Wife be young and quick and says "Hurry up and be done and sit down. I say when I be done, I be done, I no rush and kill myself. I work easy with much time.

***

Flats:

Their house is on the site where one of the stone quarries were. They paid $450 for the hole, and filled it with dirt for 10 cents a load.... (38 yrs. ago) That took many weeks to fill. City brought some down from streets. Next door stop it because it was street sweepings and there were horses on the street then. They just dropped it here, but he covered it with sand. House was square to begin it. Kitchen added on, then upstairs made for more people.....called "1st attic." First it had only a front door.

A bank curved most of the way around two sides. Once horses fell down the bank and broke our shed and their feet.

"Once coal caught the fire, couple of years ago. Fireman can't choke that because it big fire." It used to be the best place to live. Now it is nasty. All soot and dirty and smoke.

Karistesh (not certain about spelling) was a Slovak woman who kept cows in the cave for milk. She sold it for five cents a quart, but gave me more. The cows just stayed in the cave alone. In Europe, the little girls and boys have to watch by them all the time. There are two sticks in the ground with a young tree wound around and the cows could go under or jump over, but they have to stay inside when they are watched.

The little church was under the train bridge (left of Wash. from 21st.) When the flats were moved, one woman wouldn't go. They broke off her shed and knock her house down. She say, I no move, so she build a fire on a little kerosene stove and cook outside and sleep outside."

Brewry had gone from this side by the time she came. "I just see by cellar down ~~in cellar down~~ in bank for beer.

Belongs to a Bohemian insurance lodge, but no church.

Lives where she works but goes to her daughter's house - the house she speaks of here - at 2101 2nd St., Mpls.

* * *

4-9

NAME: CITY ENGINEER
E.R.T. Peterson
101 (vault) Court House

DATE: Feb. 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Owner of the land on the flats:

Fidelity Trust Co.

Farm Lands Investment Co. -- several Washburn heirs mostly and

Charles E. Russell.

Charles H. Smith

Florence E. Robinson

Jenny E. Lane, also connected with the Washburn family.

Once used to be known as the Danish flats, and was settled by the Danes.

* * *

S. S. Thorpe was the first barge to come up the river in 1926. It came from St. Louis. Most of them hauling cotton, however, came from Memphis.

The dock house was built in 1927. In 1928, the land was acquired by the city by condemnation by a resolution of Alderman Peterson.

The Nuremburg Brewry and another one where the radio towers are now used to be there. In 1905 the last one was blown out of there by dynamite after having been abandoned for many years.

At one time, houses lined both sides of Wood St. and both sides of Cooper, which run parallel with the river.

In 1917 the high dam was completed. All those houses were torn off those streets before then because they were the ones that were flooded each spring. Logs jammed the river while the people were there. So many at at time you could walk to the other side on the jammed logs.

In April, 1916, they had the highest water on record, but there was a hard flood in 1911 also.

Finstrom's house used to be a two-story affair. The little place she lives in now was separate from the rest and behind the big one. She used her black shanty on the hill to store potatoes, but if they ever have to move from 22nd, she plans to go back and live in it, and be the sole survivor of the flats.

In 1928, a survey was made of every house. Photos were taken of each one. There were 59 houses and one church left. They were all immaculate, he says, "rag rugs on the floors, and featherbeds....every one so high you couldn't see the top of them. One house was right under the Washington Avenue bridge and had to be ripped down. Some Slovak people had lived there fifty years. "I don't believe the man had had a bath since he came there fifty years ago. Anyway I got the General hospital to come and get him and they gave him a bath, and he died the next day. They had a boy who worked at the Foundry.

After the people got out of there, I tried to get a wrecking company to tear the place down, so I told the people that they could have all the lumber from the place if they did the work and cleaned the ground up good. In less than three hours the place was completely cleared.

Photographer who took picture of flats:

A. E. Kairies
617 4th Ave. So.

Pr 2133

Neg. dev. for about 25 cents each.

* * *

67 Lee Grove
July 20, 1939

INSCRIPTION ON TABLET NEAR WASHINGTON AVENUE BRIDGE ON EAST BANK OF MISSISSIPPI:

Old Portage Trail

"From time immemorial, Indians, Traders and Explorers, among whom were Hennepin and Carver, have used the Mississippi River as a highway of travel [.] unloading their canoes at the bend just below here they plodded up the portage trail, across what is now the university campus, and along the bluffs to a point about half a mile above the Falls of St.Anthony.

"This tablet erected by the Minnesota Society Daughters of the American Colonists 1933"

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Grove
Bohemian Flats Study
Summer, 1939

Interview with Richard S.Wiggin, City Attorney; July, 1939

1921 Condemnation proceedings . . . fee owners lived on upper flat.

Dec. 22, 1914, start of first condemnation proceedings, concluded in 1922

Definition of levee: space between dock and wharf

The place was given name of Bohemian Flats because 8 or 12 families had fee ownership.

Thinks to classify the villagers as people without emotions or ambitions is wrong. He recalled that 7 Irish "kids" lived there, who subsequently went on the Orpheum circuit. A daughter of another family became a nurse in anesthesia at the University Hospital.

"If you were to take the whole group and measure their possessions--these people and their descendants--you'd find as much property as among any similar group in the city. They were well able (qualified) to get along in the world."

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MEMO BOHEMIA FLATS

Bohemia Flats, below the Washington Avenue Bridge, Minneapolis, was once known also the Connemara Patch, presumably because of the Connemara Irish who settled there.

Lee Grove

Source: Miss Florence Rowles
1100 Hodgson Bldg.
Mpls.

Three story, red brick building on corner of Washington Avenue and 19th Avenue South, bears the legend: "Joseph Kokesh 1896." (Personal observation)

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BOHEMIA FLATS STUDY - MINNEAPOLIS.

Letter from N. A. Johnson, Cedar, Minn. June 13, 1939.

6/13-39

Federal Writers Project
Attention: Mr. Roscoe Macy;

Dear Sir:-

Yours re Bohemia Flats reed. I left the flats 46 years ago - I have no photos or other things that could be of any use only. My memories of the place I remember we had one Bohemian street, one Irish and one Swedish. None of the older folk could talk English but they got along. My mother done dewing for the girls at that time and she got along and she did not know a word of English. My father worked at the Pillsbury Flour Mills and myself was a newsboy and bootblack. There were times when I made as much money as my father did. I went to the original River Side Chapel up on the hill from the flats. Miss Pettit was my Sunday School teacher. She is now Mrs. Douglas (of the Linseed Douglas) and lives on Park avenue. I have seen her once since the Flat days about 10 years ago.

Bohemia Flats Study - Minneapolis

Letter from N. A. Johnson, Cedar, Minn June 15,1939.

One of my friends of that time, Mike Tish, lost one of his legs in the railroad yards. He was a wonderful singer - led the singing at the chapel on 20th and 2½ street. I have not heard of him for many years. Mr. Page, our Sunday School Superintendent is still in Minneapolis. He was at one time teacher of Law at the U. Mr. Stricker of Janney,Semple,Hill & Company was one of the Sunday School teachers. I see him occasionally.

My folks came from Hastings, Minn. to live on the flats because the buildings were cheap. My father sold his home for $200. When he left they paid a sort of tax of $25 per year for ground rent. Those were the days of logging - the river was full of logs from early spring until the first of July. Us boys would walk up the river to the falls and pick a large log and steer it through the rapids down below the Washington Avenue bridge.

I was just interrupted so I cannot think of the old days. If you can use anything that I have told you, go ahead, but be sure and let me have one of those books.

Yours very truly
N. A. Johnson.

60

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xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

6/13-39

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Attention: Mr. Roscoe Macy;

Dear Sir:-

Yours re Bohemia Flats recd. I left the flats 46 years ago - I have no photos or other things that could be of any use only. My memories of the place I remember we had one Bohemian street, one Irish and one Swedish. None of the older folk could talk English but they got along. My mother done dewing for the girls at that time and she got along and she did not know a word of English. My father worked at the Pillsbury Flour Mills and myself was a newsboy and bootblack. There were times when I made as much money as my father did. I went to the original River Side Chapel up on the hill from the flats. Miss Pettit was my Sunday School teacher. She is now Mrs. Douglas (of the Linseed Douglas) and lives on Park avenue. I have seen her once since the Flat days about 10 years ago.

Bohemia Flats Study - Minneapolis

Letter from N. A. Johnson, Cedar, Minn June 13,1939.

One of my friends of that time, Mike Tish, lost one of his legs in the railroad yards. He was a wonderful singer - led the singing at the chapel on 20th and 2½ street. I have not heard of him for many years. Mr. Page, our Sunday School Superintendent is still in Minneapolis. He was at one time teacher of Law at the U. Mr. Stricker of Janney,Semple,Hill & Company was one of the Sunday School teachers. I see him occasionally.

My folks came from Hastings, Minn. to live on the flats because the buildings were cheap. My father sold his home for $200. When he left they paid a sort of tax of $25 per year for ground rent. Those were the days of logging - the river was full of logs from early spring until the first of July. Us boys would walk up the river to the falls and pick a large log and steer it through the rapids down below the Washington Avenue bridge.

I was just interrupted so I cannot think of the old days. If you can use anything that I have told you, go ahead, but be sure and let me have one of those books.

Yours very truly
N. A. Johnson.

40

BOHEMIA FLATS STUDY - MINNEAPOLIS.

Letter from N. A. Johnson, Cedar, Minn. June 15, 1939.

6/13-39

Federal Writers Project
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60

BOHEMIA FLATS STUDY - MINNEAPOLIS.

SOCIAL-ETHNIC STUDIES

Source: Letter from N. A. Johnson, Cedar, Minn. Date of Publication June 13, 1939.
(~~edition, page, coden~~)

Vol.____ No.____ Date Line of Story____

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Your Item No.____ Page No.____ Your Name____

Bohemia Flats Study - Minneapolis

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Your Item No. Page No. Your Name

(538)59

In Czechoslovakia.....

Mrs Petro
Mrs. Margaret Rubshik

There are two classes of people in Monhan, Slovakia, where Mrs. Petro comes from. Either they are very rich, or else they are the peasant farmers who hardly knew what money looks like.

Many of the rich are the land-owners who have the peasants working on their farms as servants without ever being able to own the land. These poor farmers live in small huts, made much like our American Indian's huts used to be built. There is no wooden floor, only the earth, pressed hard by their bare feet, and swept clean many times a day. Beds are very rare, usually wide boards laid on the earth floor, covered with straw and ticks are substituted. Their roofs are straw or mud, and no peasant ever thinks of having more than one small rug in his home. These are woven by hand by the housolady of bright scraps of rags and it is always placed by the threshold. Very little furniture is in their rooms. No chairs are needed since they eat while roaming the room. If they own pretty dishes, little niches or shelves are made on the wall to hold them, and they are used only for very special occasions. But for "everyday" use, the meal is all in one pot which is placed on the table for community use. Each member has his own wooden spoon, however. Coffee is considered a luxury, and for breakfast, it is usually replaced by several "spoonfuls" of soup. (Most every farmer owns a goat, wild nut & fruit trees and a small acerage. This supplies practically all their food. No hunting for game). Since meat is never had unless their stock die, their gravies are made from sauerkraut juice, carrot or onion juice. They cannot afford to kill their animals since it is their only means of earning any money at all. No holiday was great enough to make them part with a laying chicken unless it conveniently dies.....Most every peasant keeps a goat, the rich milk is used to make cheese and butter. The family eats these only when they cannot be marketed in town.

In spite of poverty that deprives them of eggs, baking powder or butter, and very little bacon fat or lard, the Czechs are "beautiful bakers." (They never heard of a cake.) Some do not even have an oven. Instead, bricks are heated on top of the wood stove, then placed beside the stove to keep hot while the batter of dough is poured onto the bricks where it bakes for hours. Their bread is made in enormous loaves, usually black made from rye with a bit of lard, some karaway seeds and home made yeast. Even such a little bit is not always easy to have. Yet the bands of gypsies that roam the Old World in colorful abandon come to the peasant doors begging them for bread. The peasants are all a warm-hearted people and would "split their last crumb" to help some one, but the gypsies are very ungracious. Sometimes they get a loaf, after much plaguing, they spit on it and toss it into the air bouncing it around like a football. It's perfect sport to them to dance away, laughily, heartily, leaving the ruined bread for the peasant's swine.

Czechs boasts of having the best cabbage in the world. Sauerkraut, made at home, is almost as common to them as bread. It is used in many ways. Often dumplings are added to it. They are made with flour and water and one grated potato. The dough is rolled thin, then quartered. The houselady throws one of the "Quarters" over her arm as she pinches off bits and drops into the stewing kraut. (these are called potato noodles.) Fruit and nut trees grow wild there. In the fall, pears and peaches and apples are gathered in great quantities. The peasants dry them in the sun, and have them for sauce and baking, and on holidays - fruit soup - during the fruitless winters. They raise their own poppy seeds, and it is used as freely as our paprika for garnisheing their simple foods. The peasant woman spends a great deal of time and pleasure over her cooking. Almost everyghing they cook takes an hour at least. They raise almost everything that ever goes onto their tables besides

the flour and sugar. Very few of them make their own flour.

Weddings rank next to the Holy Days for festivities in that part of the Old World. The newlyweds do not dash away on a honeymoon the minute the ceremony is over. They have receptions lasting two or three days. Often the celebration starts the day before the wedding. The couple doesn't go together before they're married, either. Sometimes they have been friends. Because the villages are quite small, they usually know each other, but the arrangements are all made by the parents. If the girl's parents know of some suitable young man, they ask him to marry their daughter. They invite him over to see her, and the plans are continued. It is up to the girl's parents to provide some sort of hope chest for them. This usually includes a sheet or so, often made of linen spun by hand, a feather tick, and towels.

The boy's clothing amounts to a costume. They wear breeches with high boots (worn later only in the coldest part of winter) white shirts with full sleeves, tight vests of bright blues or reds, heavily embroidered, and tall crowned hats with a gay plume sewed on. On the wedding day, they add a sprig of the traditional plant, Rose Marie, tying it to their hat with a ribbon of their favorite color. No one would think of being married there without the Rose Marie on them. It is dark dull green with needles giving off a fragrance, sharp like sage. It rarely blooms but when it does, tiny blue flowers come out at the tips. There is one in every home in that part of Europe. The groom makes a wreath for his bride's head veil of these springs. She wears wide bright ribbons, making the crown of her veil which is beaded, and the ribbons, stream over the veil to the floor. Ordinarily, their aprons are black, but for marriage, it is white, and only covers the front of the skirt even if it does have about six yards of material in it. But the girl usually makes it herself, pinching tiny pleats into it, until six yards fits onto a band that only covers the front.

Before the girl goes to the church to be married, an elderly man who is not a relative talks to her about the marriage state. Sometimes the talks are very long, lasting a half hour or an hour because he does not feel he has impressed her until she begins to weep. As a result, the bride usually shows up with her eyes all red and puffing, looking more like she were about to attend a funeral.

After the ceremony is over, all the griends and relations go back to the bride's house to feast. The next day, they celebrate and feast all day at the groom's house. They gypsies come in from the fringe of the village to play for the dancers, demanding money for their music but accepting food from the festive boards if there is no money to give them.

These colorful traditions were continued a long time after the Czechs came to Minneapolis and settled on Bohemia Flats. Most of their customs were observed faithfully for years. Workers saved a little bit of money from each pay check, and finally they would have enough to buy a lot on the hill. They began to scatter, gradually mingling with their friends at work, or school, or at the stores, adapting new interests and activities and dropping the Old World customs.

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Margaret Rubshik (408 St. S. E. Ontario, Mpls.) who was born in a two-room house on the Upper Flats says that when she was a young girl, the Advent Season and Lent were very strict days. Their grandmother who had come with her mother and aunt from Czech only a few years before collected all the rolls for the player piano and all the victrola records to look in a big chest. No music was allowed until those holy seasons were over. If the children were ever left alone in the house, one would watch at the window for their parents to start coming down the hill while the other one "pumped furiously through a piano tune" and another one hovered over the victrola needle. They always managed to replace the records in time.

The two days following Easter were merry days, however, called "Sprinklers." On Monday, the boys went through the Flats pouring water on the girls, throwing a dipper full of cold spring water in their face, or dragging them for a ways into the river. When a girl got "sprinkled" she or her parents would have to give the culprit a present because it was believed considered to bring the girl good luck. The wetter she became, the more lucky who was supposed to be.

On Tuesday, the tables were turned, and the girls doused the boys and collected the presents which was usually a boiled egg, dyed brown from the juice of cooked onion skins and decorated with wax markings. Sometimes it was a kolachek or a penny.

The houses in the Upper Flats were spaced farther apart than the squatter's shanties on the lower flats. Most of them had a garden lot where they raised cucumbers, parsley, cabbage, celery, and at least one apple tree. Every one grew flowers, even the lower flats.

(Whitewashed walls - occasionally adding bluing before it was applied - no basements - no 2nd floors - during floods often woke up in A. M. with collection of lower leveers in bed with them.

Mrs. Rubshik says that every Saturday morning before she went to Reverend Hauser's catechism class held in the little wooden church they had built below the bridge, she had to scrub the bare floors and chairs with a stiff scrubbing brush and lye water until they were very white. - In spite of their very crowded quarters the place had to be spotlessly clean.

On Christmas and Easter, the church choir went around from house to house caroling. This was another custom remembered by their mothers from Europe and carried on here. - and after 50 years is still done. The congregation being much larger now, it takes the Choir most of Xmas week to visit each member.

ARTHUR

Kerrick WPA Art Project
Jan. 9, 1939
G. Fleischauer

43

"There used to be a whole mess of those houses down there until just about eight years ago, "Kerrick said, "they were painted all bright colors, green yellow, blue.....sometimes just half of it was painted. They grew gourds and painted them. The strings of gourds were hanging all over the place, I guess they sold them. Every house had a picket fence around it when I was there, just a wooden fence, and lots of the houses were made of driftwood. The people were down there catching driftwood all the time, standing on a big wide sandbar in the Mississippi and fishing it out piece by piece until they had enough. They got all their feul for the winter that way, too. Each one had a celery bed and a flower bed and grew lots of garlic and peppers and poppy seed. They knew hos to cook with that stuff, too. I used to paint down there all the time. The kids sat for their pictures. We never paid them but I mused to take the stuff down to make goulash and then eat with them. I ate with lots of them without ever knowing their names. Grandma and grandpa I usually called them.

The pigs and cows sometimes lived in the house. They had the stable right inside because there was no space outdoors.. the houses were too close. There were so many fences and houses and kids there was hardly space to walk around. The kids on the lower levee were always dirty, but they were healthy little devils. They built some kind of a steam bath house down there, Regular Turkish Sweat, quite a big affair, they stuck their kids in their naked and boiled the germs right out of their hides. They made homebrew and for a while they bootlegged it. Their funerals were almost a s big as their weddings, they had long celebrations for both of them.

For a while there was a portable sawmill that they used to cut the logs they rescued from the river. All that stuff has been moved out now though.

When I came back from Europe, the first thing I noticed was those women flogging their clothes against the rocks down in the river, just like

they did in the old country. That's how they did all their washing. The place was full of big boulders then.

When we came down to paint, they thought we were just plain nuts. They thought just painting was wasting our time. They were tolerant of us but they thought we ought to be doing something worthwile now that we were grown. Guess they all thought they were pretty good themselves because they were imported people.

They made their own cigars.

After the flavor of Arthur Kerrick, WPA artist
Jan. 9, 1939

S-D

G. Fleischauer - IV.

BRIDGE ACROSS MISSISSIPPI ALONG WASHINGTON AVENUE.

The Washington Avenue bridge was built in 1886.

In 1890, it was widened.

In 1905, it was strengthened for street car service.

There has been a lot of talk for a long time about evacuating the rest of the flats, but it will be five years yet before they tackle a new bridge across there. - - -

(By the superintendent of the Washington Avenue Bridge.)

WATER WORKS IN THE FLATS.

Before water was piped down there, the village drew their water from the red pump along 22nd. avenue.

At one time, the flats extended along 19th avenue to 22nd avenue.

Many homes were evacuated in 1925.

When the river terminal was put in, in 1925, (call River Terminal) water was piped in then. The Water Department bought the water main along 22nd. street up to the little half block called 2½ st. The River Terminal was 30 feet lower than 22nd. st.

First one to have water was house nearest bridge, 208, 22nd Ave., in 1928.

Second house, 248 ...Bastiss; and third...Cutlass.. 269, 22nd.Ave... both this fall (1938)

The rest of the houses could have it any time now.

E. Fleischauer - Information II

By calling dockmaster at Federal Barge Line - ft. Wash. Ave. bridge.

1st. seawall began in 1926.

Additional dockage - 1932, 1935.

People were moving away in groups between 1926, 1931.

1931 - City bought property - remaining houses moved out or wrecked.

Coal docks were started 1931 - ended 1932.

Barges had been running in since 1926 -
1932 their barges began.

Coal docks belong to them.

Gladys Fleischauer
Federal Writer's Project, Minnesota
July 22, 1939

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Bohemia Flats, Mpls. Minn.

Went to Dr. Smisek's office to see Miss J.S. Micatek. She said now that she thought about it, she wasn't even sure if the passage read to the bride-to-be- was in Job. She leaving them for a vacation of a week, and promised that in ten days, she would be able to find it for me.

She said that it might be in the part called "Upper Coriphic" (spelled according to pron. she didn't know how to spell it.) She said that this is a section which is not always in the Bibles, but is an addition with some lessons and instructions. In the talk the sponsor gives the girl, he refers to a man written of in this book.

"Marriage to the Slovak mind is considered a very important step. When they said, love, honor, and obey until death us do part, they meant just what they said. I was married by a German minister, so there was no Slovak service for me, but in the Slovak service, after the ceremony is over, all the people leave the church, and only the bride and her oldest bridesmaid and the minister remain. Then when the church is all clear, they kneel at the altar, to give thanks for having a husband, and ask the Lord for blessing on the marriage. It was a very beautiful gesture, but they don't do it any more. They do it quick, the American way.

When a child is born, they wait one week, then have it baptised. Six weeks later, the mother and godmother take the child to church service, and there is a little ritual at the altar where the pastor prays with them, and they give thanks for being delivered safely.

"When I was a girl in Europe, there were only Catholics and Lutherans, but now there are everything from 7 Day Adventists to Baptists. The Congregationalists were the first to start up here. The people were deeply religious and had no church to go to, so when they found a pastor who spoke their mother

"tongue, they were delighted. They all started going to his church, and finally joined. Then they discovered that they weren't Lutheran's at all; but deceided to stay in the church anyway. That's the way the Baptists got started, and all the rest. Then the Slavs started to go back to Europe and soon other religions besides Lutheran and Catholic were started there,too.

Came to America to earn money to buy land in Europe - Decided to stay because "freedom was much better here."

49

Notes on meeting with E. R. T. Peterson, City Hall, on July 5, 1939

In House Document 137, Part One, Page 34, Anno 1932, the settlement is referred to as Bohemian Flats

Frank Kopacek /sp.?/, lives on south side of 2d Street between 19th and 20th; former resident

John [redacted] Lucas /sp?/ Webb filling station, Riverside and 19th; his parents born there.

Arthur Jenson, 808 1st Nat'l Soo Line Bldg., attorney for Ed O'Brien realty company which handled much of Flats property.

[redacted] Thorpe, tow boat, arrived Aug. 25, 1927, from St. Louis

Public Levee dedicated in 1856 [redacted] Plat of City of Minneapolis

Bohemian Flats, federal flowage rights, about 1917; Mr. Van Sant, U.S. Engineers Office, 615 Commerce Bldg.

Church stood until about 1928 in Flats.

Shafer there in the Sixties; was a clerk on a steamboat, liked the place and stayed there. He was of Swiss nationality. Alderman Bastis's father came there about the same time.

error - he was Bohemian - L.G.

719 Day Bldg.

44

Mrs. Pehacheck:
U. of M. Library

Mrs. Elizabeth Pehousek
639 Erie — Mpls.

Feb. 1939

G. Fleischauer

They didn't live there because they wanted to. They had to live reasonably at first. Every one of them has betterd themselves.

Education high ideal, father Catholic Loyalist---

Good old King Wenzel (?)

Dewey Albinson used to have a studio there.

56

NAME: Mrs. Franklin Vanek
1245 Linclon Avenue
St. Paul, Minn.

DATE: Feb. 19, 1939

INTERVIEWED BY: Gladys Fleischauer

Bozena Vanek has never lived on the flats; but well acquainted with conditions, and lectures at many national affairs.

"They went there because of the trees, and the way it was located, cupped down there between the hills and cliffs." She said, "that is how many of their villages were situated, isolating them from the industrial parts. The many trees probably attracted them, too. In Europe, the trees are all claimed by the landowners. The peasant's pick up the twigs and branches to burn. For that "privilege" they are allowed to take care of the new trees. Whenever one is taken out, they plant more. These are called "little schools of trees." They nurse them thru, therefore, they love the forests. At one time, they used to hold their worship in the forests. After many, many conturies, these are almost virgin forests. Now after the recent crisis, the Germans took it over in two months; being short of wood, have cut down great groves of them, then took over the Czech's locomotives to transport the trees to Germany.

The Czechs are a more cosmopolitan people. Costumes have been influenced by western costumes.....Germans, Scandinavians.....only in the mountains or wooded villages are they very different.

Their national dance is sort of a quadrille like dance, something like our old tyme square dance. The music for this is made of 22 old folk songs, one following the other, the steps changing as the music changes.

They use their theatres to impress the history they are so proud of on the people.....in poems, plays, music, etc. The Hungarians or Austirans are just entertained, and never get the real point because they do not know

that it is there, but the Czech people look for it and are disappointed if they do not get it.

Their St. Wenzel Day is about the same time as our Thanksgiveing... celebrate as we do...eating and drinking.

One Slovak says to another: "What would you do if you were made the emperor? Other Slovak: If I were made Emperor, I would put fresh straw in my wooden shoes every day.

1st Slovak: Oh! If I were the emperor, I would make for milk to run thru the river, then I would just lie on my stomach to drink it."

The Czechs are very fond of telling this because they think it shows how much the Slovaks really need the Czechs to "mother" them.

Maurice Kimball, who is a writer of Czech affairs, broadcasted the revent crisis from there, and he said,"Czechs are more like the Scotch than any part of the Slavs. The main difference is that they are not so attached to their hard liquor. They even have bagpipes, although they are different that the Scotch bagpipes. There is a little bag with a goat's head on it. They put the bag under their arm and pump air into it with their arms. It sounds like a clarinet or a flute. (a man at the Y.W. is supposed to have one)

Kolachki Day at Montgomery is run by the Irish because the fathers are Irish, the Mothers are Bohemians.

"Germans paraded in and took the ore and coal mines from Czech. Left 60% of the porcelian and glass industries. Left only the anthracite coal and textiles. They took all the iron, but we can laugh at that because iron is just about gone. During the last 1000 years, it was all taken out of the ground.

Germans eat a hard dumpling. Get indigestion. Make him good and sick. But I tell you, we feel that they just borrowed the place for a little while. You can't make a Nazi out of a democrat."