
Chicago Czechs, Country Cottages, and the 1929 Crash: A Personal Story

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All my paternal and maternal grandparents emigrated from Bohemia to the United States in 1891. Born in Chicago in 1935 as a third-generation Czech, I spent every summer of my boyhood in a Czech community in Illinois called Rest Haven Beach, located on the Kankakee River sixty miles southwest of the city and three miles south of Wilmington. As a boy, I thought it natural that almost every family in Rest Haven was Czech. As an adult, I wondered how that happened? Why had so many Czechs bought land there in the 1920s? What legal consequences did they suffer when the Great Depression kept them from building on their property and even from paying back taxes? Telling that story involves telling a personal story, which Naše rodina will publish in two parts:

Part I—"Before the Crash"—tells how Bohemians in the Chicago area were induced to buy vacation property in Rest Haven Beach during the prosperous 1920s. It describes the role of a Cicero newspaper that promoted the sale, and the paper lists names and addresses of those (including my grandparents) who bought lots before the stock market crash in October, 1929.

Part II—"After the Crash"—tells what happened to the property sellers and buyers after the Great Depression hit the nation in the 1930s. The primary seller did very well, moving to Beverly Hills, California. While numerous buyers lost their original investments, many others (including my grandparents and my parents) eventually built cottages and enjoyed summer vacations in the "New Bohemian Resort" on the Kankakee River.

Part I—Before the Crash

My story fits into the larger narrative that began with the first wave of Czech emigration to America in the

mid-1800s. This paper focuses on a later and shorter period—from the 1920s to the 1960s—and only on Czechs living in the Chicago area. By the 1920s, Bohemians in the city were no longer content to survive in the new world; they sought to enjoy its material comforts. Assuming they could navigate Illinois property law, one such comfort within their reach in America, but unreachable in the old world, was owning a *chata* (cabin) or *chalupa* (cottage) in the country. When such an opportunity arose in Chicago during the 1920s, scores of Czechs reached for the brass ring. The 1930s Depression kept the prize beyond the reach of some on the carousel, but others managed to grasp it. The fortunate ones built summer homes in a Czech community nestled alongside a scenic river.

Until now, little was known about how that community came to be located south of Wilmington, within Will County, in Wesley Township. A 179-page township history simply states, "The area along the river in Section 12 and 13 was known as Rest Haven and featured a beach along the river. Many small vacation bungalows were built along the river in the township in the 1920s and 1930s." This paper reconstructs the community's history from two key sources: (1) a 90 year-old newspaper advertisement uncovered by John Persic of the Wilmington Historical Society, and (2) the 90 year-old files of the Will County Recorder of Deeds unearthed by legal researcher, Paulina Jones, employed by John Zelenka.

Czechs Arrive in Chicago and Go to Work

Czech-speaking people from Austria began to emigrate to the United States in small numbers in the mid-1800s. Nearly all worked in agriculture, as did the native-born population. Bohemians emigrated in much larger numbers in the last half of the 19th century. Many settled in farming areas in Midwestern states such as Nebraska, Iowa, and Wisconsin, while others arrived through the port of Galveston and farmed in Texas. Unlike these states, Illinois offered various urban jobs in a large city.

In 1880, Chicago already had over 500,000 inhabitants, trailing only New York, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn (then a separate city). By 1890, Chicago grew to over a million and became the second largest city in the United States. In 1900, its population was almost 1.7 million. Unlike Texas and the other Midwestern states, Illinois contained a true metropolis to attract European immigrants. The Czechs responded. Thomas Čapek reported that in 1910 of the 539,392 foreign-born

Bohemians and Moravians in the United States, 124,225 (nearly one-quarter) lived in Illinois, and 110,736 in Chicago. In contrast, about half of all Slovak immigrants—296,219—clustered in one state, Pennsylvania. There, most Slovaks avoided farming and worked in its mines, steel mills, and railroads.

Farming was not possible for the 100,000+ Czechs living in Chicago in 1910. Unlike Slovaks in Pennsylvania, few Czechs in Illinois took to unskilled industrial labor. Outside of farming, according to Čapek, first-generation Czechs were usually general laborers and frequently tailors, while second generation Czechs became “the clerks and copyists, the salesmen, the machinists, and the draymen, hackmen, and teamsters” required by city life. Lawyers were required too, and Bohemian lawyers created the Bohemian Lawyers’ Association of Chicago on October 15, 1911. It later became just the Bohemian Lawyers Association (BLA) to appeal to suburban attorneys.

My family story mirrored these social trends—even including the role of Bohemian lawyers. Otto Kerner, Sr., the second vice president of the BLA and father of an Illinois governor, was my paternal grandmother’s attorney. Josephine Janda divorced my grandfather, Frank, in a decree granted by the Superior Court of Cook County on January 12, 1922. She paid Otto Kerner \$92.35—about \$1,380 today.

My Czech ancestors’ occupations also reflected urban economics. Paternal grandfather Janda and step-grandfather Worel were both cabinet makers. Děde Janda died in 1930, but děde Worel held a prized job with the federal government and retired with a pension. Uncle Lad Zelenka was a draftsman at Western Electric, and my father was a clerk at Chicago Title and Trust. My paternal grandmother Janda cooked Czech dishes for wealthy families, and one family took her with them to Hayward, Wisconsin on summer holidays. By the mid-1920s, grandparents Worels owned their own two-story home at 2411 So. Harding Avenue, living on the top floor while the Zelenka family lived below. Babi Janda owned a two-story home at 1857 So. Avers Avenue. She lived on the top floor with my parents while her step-daughter and her children lived below. Both homes carried mortgages, but manageable ones. All my grandparents were already familiar with property law.

Some other family facts are pertinent to this story. My aunt Emily Zelenka and uncle Lad had two sons, Robert in 1925 and Richard in 1930. My collaborator on this research, John Zelenka, is Robert’s son, making him my second cousin. My parents, Bessie and John Janda,

had a daughter Ruth, in 1929. I was born in 1935 during the depression (perhaps by mistake). The Worels actually bought lots in Rest Haven and built a cottage there. All four grandchildren lived with them there every summer during the 1930s and early 1940s. Later, I lived year-round in Rest Haven with my parents, so I know it well.

By the 1920s, some first-and second-generation Bohemian immigrants in the Chicago area—like my parents and relatives—had become sufficiently prosperous to imagine a change of life, perhaps owning a house in the countryside. Astute advertising by enterprising real estate developers soon implanted concrete visions on the minds of Bohemian city-dwellers. In a nutshell, Rest Haven Beach emerged as a Czech enclave on the Kankakee River in the 1930s and 1940s through a concerted advertising campaign. Ninety years later, one struggles to reconstruct how that process began, unfolded, and succeeded. Enough facts have been discovered to reveal Rest Haven Beach’s origin. Some key facts remain elusive about its history, but its origin has become clear.

Creating Rest Haven Beach: Phase 1, 1927

The target area on the Kankakee River was three miles south of Wilmington, which had about 1,700 people in 1930. Wilmington was in Will County, Illinois, southwest of adjacent Cook County (embracing Chicago and its suburbs). Wilmington connected to Chicago by Illinois Route 4 (Appendix I), which became U.S. Route 66 in 1930. Chicagoans driving to Los Angeles passed through Wilmington.

Much mystery has surrounded Rest Haven Beach’s subdivision into land lots. John Persic said that local folklore held that lawyer and land speculator, Thomas J. Diven, was planning on having a cemetery there. Thus, the name Rest Haven. He had two locations that were call[ed] ‘Diven subdivision’. The area of Rest Haven was laid out as a cemetery back around 1890. The cemetery did not come to [fruit] for Mr. Diven. He ended up selling the ‘cemetery plots’ as property plots for homes.

The cemetery idea failed, some say, because the water table was too high to guarantee dry graves. Certainly, that would account for the area’s name: “Rest Haven,” which (an Internet search found) is still popular for cemeteries in the United States.

Whoever tagged “Beach” onto Rest Haven managed to transform property unsuitable for a cemetery into

prime vacation lots. Moreover, it was honest marketing. The land was located in Wesley township along a scenic portion on the east bank of the Kankakee River. (See Appendix II.) The river originated to the east in Indiana marshlands. It grew larger in Illinois and had long been highly valued for fishing and boating, as described in a Kankakee River Fishery Fact Sheet:

Flowing for 59 miles in Illinois, the Kankakee River is one the highest quality streams in the State, offering excellent sportfishing and recreational opportunities. The upper river is lower gradient, running through Mومence wetlands, a highly valued floodplain forest. Downstream of Kankakee the gradient increases flowing over bedrock and cobble through Kankakee River State Park and past Wilmington, joining the Des Plaines to form the Illinois River.

Rest Haven Beach did indeed have a sand beach. Roughly 75 feet long, it faced the opposite shore about 300 feet away. A bucolic view like that in Figure 1 would unfold before someone looking south from Rest Haven Beach across the Kankakee River in the 1940s.

Searching local newspapers and consulting local historical societies did not disclose who owned the land before it was developed as vacation property or who subdivided it into saleable lots. Legal researcher Paulina Jones traced the complex title trail from fragile books at the Will County Recorder of Deeds. Without such records maintained in support of the rule of law, this history could not have been reconstructed.



Figure 1: Rest Haven Beach, Looking South

On March 4, 1927, George Martinson and Edna Martinson of Wilmington Township granted Laura Iverson of Joliet title to 70+ acres of land in two parcels along the Kankakee River in Wesley Township. Figure 2 shows a portion of a plat survey of that part of the township. The smaller portion (30+ acres) was in Section 13, and the larger (40+) in adjacent Section 18.

Townships are usually divided into 36 “sections” of land, each one mile square, excepting adjustments for natural boundaries. In the case of Wesley Township, the Kankakee River prevented Sections 12 and 13 from being one mile square—unlike the adjoining section 7 and the nearly square section 18, marked by the heavy lines in Figure 6.

Laura Iverson’s property spanned Section 13 and Section 18. Note that Levi Ducharme owned two large parcels, one of which bordered the Iverson property. (I recall my parents mentioning that a Mr. Ducharme owned the land before it became Rest Haven.)

Also note that T.J. Diven owned 200 acres in Section 7 and 160 in Section 18—among other properties in Wesley Township. Perhaps his nearby holdings fed the belief that he was involved in creating Rest Haven.

Although Laura Iverson did not create Rest Haven Beach, it emerged from her property. In 1927, Iverson granted the 30+ acres in Section 13 to a Martha S. Gilbert. (The other 40+ acres in Section 18 were swampy or sandy.) We know little about Martha Gilbert except that she married Dan G. Gilbert and lived in Chicago. Apparently with little help from her husband, Martha Gilbert developed her property in two phases (my terminology). Phase 1 used those 30+ acres in section 13. On

April 16, 1927, William H. Zarley, County Surveyor, certified that under the direction of Martha S. Gilbert owner thereof I have surveyed and subdivided that part of the North 674.52 feet of the N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 13 T32 N. R9E. of the 3rd P.M. lying East of the Kankakee River into Lots and streets as shown on the attached plat.

This legalese for describing property dates from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which required defining property within mile-square sections. Called the rectangular survey system, the method evolved into the Public Land Survey System. It

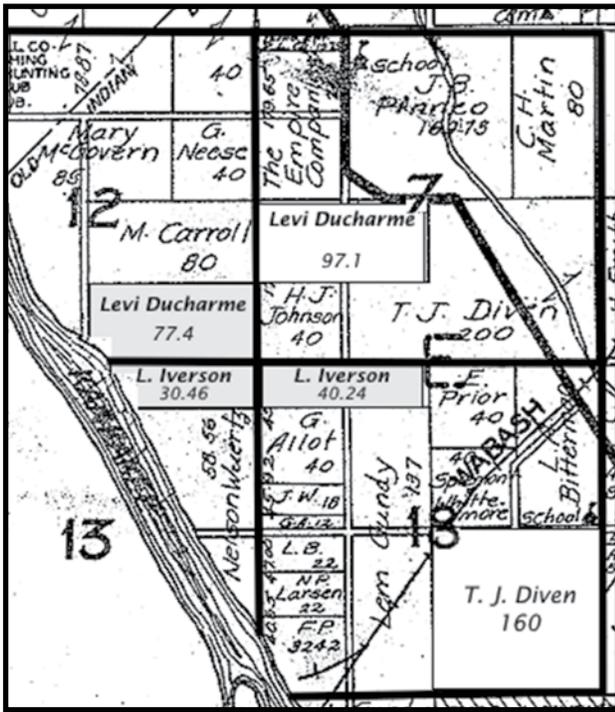


Figure 2: Enhanced Partial View of Wesley Township Survey in the 1920s

is still used today. The subdivision portion of the plat is shown in Figure 3.

Five of the eight numbered blocks in the subdivision contain 50 lots, but block #6 had 34 lots while blocks 7 and 8 each had 58. Taken together, they amount to 400 lots that could be sold individually or in combination. Most lots in the subdivision were roughly 20' to 30' wide and 90' to 120' long, meaning that two were needed to build a cottage—and more if the purchaser wanted a garden.

Having lived in Rest Haven for decades, I know that some lots—especially those at the corner of Elmwood and Hickory to the northeast—were in a perpetual wetland, while others (notably in the triangular Block 6) had sandy and uneven terrain. In truth, only about half of the 400 lots surveyed were well suited as vacation properties. (Martha Gilbert avoided buying the 40+ acres that had clearly undesirable sites for vacation homes.)

Martha Gilbert probably deserves credit for naming the “avenues” in Rest Haven Beach with typical American names: Elmwood, Grand, Orchard, Walnut, Pinegrove, Juneway, Stewart, and Hickory—plus Lakeside Terrace and Maple Terrace. Street signs at each corner displayed the names of the avenues.

Selling Rest Haven Beach to Anyone in 1927-1928

Martha Gilbert’s subdivision survey was certified on April 16, 1927. The spring and summer weeks were probably spent laying out lots, putting up street signs, and grading roads before advertising the sale of vacation lots in the new subdivision.

On July 5, 15, and 22 in 1927, three identical advertisements appeared in the *Chicago Heights Star*, a semi-weekly (Tuesday and Friday). (See Figure 4.) The ads offered “Summer Resort Lots” at Rest Haven Beach on the Kankakee River for \$89.50—about \$1,300 in 2019 dollars—with a down payment of \$19.50 (about \$280 today, according to an Internet inflation calculator) and monthly payments of \$7 (about \$100). Inquiries were directed to the Resort Land and Development Co., which gave its address as Suite 416 in Chicago’s Wrigley Building.

These ads were likely Martha Gilbert’s first attempt to market her new lots. Mrs. Gilbert herself had no apparent Czech ancestry, and the ad did not target Bohemians in its text, design, choice of newspaper, or place of publication. Chicago Heights was 30 miles south of

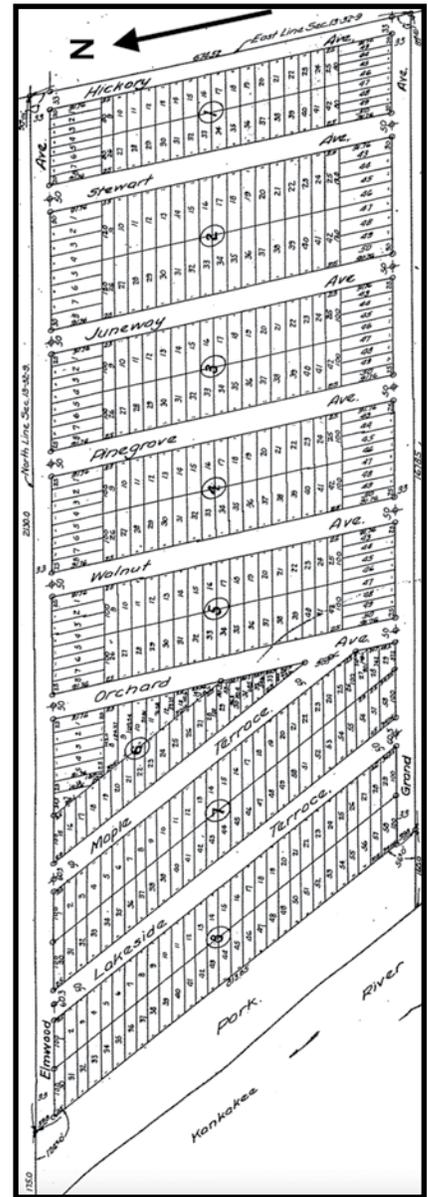


Figure 3: Rest Haven Beach Subdivision: Phase 1, 1927

Greatest Summer Resort Lot Offer
Ever Made for Advertising Purposes
30-Day Pre-Development Sale

—AT—
REST HAVEN BEACH
On Kankakee River—Near Wilmington, Will County, Illinois
We Offer a Beautiful Wooded Building Lot
FOR **\$89.50** Total Cost
No Interest No Assessments
We Will Sell 100 People Lots at This Price

ASSURE YOURSELF OF A GLORIOUS HAPPY SUMMER—ACT NOW!
Resort Land and Development Co., Not Inc.
Waples Bldg., Suite 416, 419 N. Michigan Blvd.,
Phone Superior 3515

MAIL THIS COUPON

Figure 4: Chicago Heights Star, 1927

urbs, notably Cicero and Berwyn. For whatever reason, the Chicago Heights *Star* ran no additional ads after those three, and the Resort Land and Development Co. did not reappear in marketing Rest Haven Beach property.

Instead, the Rest Haven Beach advertising campaign switched to the weekly Cicero’s *Suburban Leader*, self-proclaimed as the “Largest circulation Cook County Suburban Newspaper.” Immediately west of Chicago, Cicero had 44,995 people and was near Chicago’s 26th Street’s vibrant Bohemian commercial center. To Cicero’s west was Berwyn, with 14,150 inhabitants. Together, they had three times Chicago Heights’ population—and many more Bohemians. Although its publisher, William Cepak, was Czech, the *Suburban Leader*’s new advertising campaign initially made no special appeal to Bohemians.

On November 3, 1927, the *Suburban Leader* launched an advertising campaign for the sale of Rest

downtown Chicago and 35 miles northeast of Wilmington. It had only 19,653 people in 1920 and not many Czechs.

Relatively few Czechs would have seen the advertisements in the English-language *Star*, published for the general population. Most Czechs in Illinois lived within Chicago proper and in its western sub-

Haven Beach properties—publishing 40 ads over the next two years. On that day and again on November 10, the paper ran the text in Figure 5, stating that it “is not in the real estate business” but is merely giving its subscribers “the best service we can give them” by providing the opportunity “to purchase summer home sites at Rest Haven Beach.”

The *Leader*’s November 3 and November 10 issues also carried a two-page advertisement, similar to that in Figure 6. Readers were asked to write the newspaper at 5527 W. 22nd Street in Cicero. However, the November 3 ad mistakenly offered the unsustainable price of “\$1 Down \$1 a Month” vs. November 10th’s correct terms: “\$12.50 Down \$7.50 a Month.” Obviously, the first ad had a slip-up.

The *Suburban Leader* pushed the campaign the next month. On December 1 and 8, identical ads urged read-

Newspapers by ancestry

Suburban Leader (Cicero, Illinois) · 10 Nov 1927, Downloaded

Summer Homes For Our Subscribers

REST HAVEN BEACH, ON KANKAKEE RIVER, OFFERS INCOMPARABLE ADVANTAGES

The Suburban Leader is not in the real estate business but it has completed arrangements whereby its readers may secure unsurpassed summer home sites, at a low price, within easy distance of their homes.

The property is EXACTLY as represented in the two-page announcement which appears elsewhere.

Our subscribers are entitled to the best service we can give them. We believe the chance to purchase summer home sites at Rest Haven Beach will be counted to our credit in years to come.

Figure 5: First Suburban Leader Advertisement, November 3, 1927

ers: “GET YOUR SUMMER HOME SITE NOW! Don’t waste one glorious outdoor pleasures that are awaiting you at Rest Haven beach on the Kankakee River.” The ad also stated: “This publication is not in the real estate business. We do not make a penny profit on this transaction.” On December 15, the paper ran an ad saying: SUBURBAN LEADER READERS INVITED TO TAKE A BUS RIDE THIS SUNDAY TO SEE SUMMER HOME SITES AT REST HAVEN BEACH; FREE TRANSPORTATION AND LUNCH PROVIDED. It stated that the bus would

Greatest Summer Resort Lot Subscription Offer Ever Made!
An Opportunity Not to Be Missed!

Call At Our Office For Full Details
 Open Until 9 P. M.

BUY NOW!!!
 These Lots Will Not Be Held Until Next Summer!

Don't wait until next spring to buy your lot and have to pay "resale" prices of from \$150 to \$200. Buy now and take advantage of this assembly lot subscription offer of \$89.50. Be prepared for next summer. Get your lot now and plan to have your cottage ready to move in on the first day of spring. Don't waste one day of the glorious outdoor pleasures that are awaiting you at Rest Haven Beach.

Recent scenes at the site of the West Haven Beach Summer Colony

Famous Rest Haven Beach
 Lots Only **\$89.50**
 \$12.50 Down \$7.00 a Month

No Interest No Assessment

Rest Haven Beach is only a 1 1/2 Hour Drive (53 Miles) from Austin Boulevard and 22nd Street.

Rest Haven Beach is located on the most beautiful part of the Kankakee River near Wilmington, Will County, Ill.

Free Road Auto Map

Important! Call at our office and get your subscription form today. The supply of lots is limited and will have to be secured TODAY!

SUBURBAN LEADER

Figure 6: Suburban Leader Advertisement, November 10, 1927

leave at 9:00 am on December 18 from the *Suburban Leader* office at 5527 West 22nd Street.

Another ad on December 22 said that home sites were **"STILL ON SALE AT LOW WINTER PRICES."** Smaller ads on January 5 and 26, 1928 invited readers to write for more information and a free road atlas. (See Appendix I.) On March 8, the paper renewed its offer for a free bus ride and lunch to see the property. Another ad, illustrated with three photos, praised the **"Lovely Kankakee River Summer House Sites."** Stories with identical texts on March 29 and April 5 rhapsodized: **"SONG OF BIRDS, SCENT OF FLOWERS MAKE FOR JOY AT REST HAVEN BEACH."**

On July 5, readers were assured that **"REST HAVEN BEACH REMAINS HIGH AND DRY; No Danger of Floods at Suburban Leader Summer Resort."** Previously, the newspaper had disavowed any financial interest in Rest Haven Beach. Now it was described as the "Suburban Leader Summer Resort." In any event, the *Suburban Leader* in the next issue on July 12 revealed a major change in its advertising strategy. It called Rest Haven Beach **"The New Bohemian SUMMER RESORT!"**—explicitly appealing for the first time to Czech readers. Perhaps significantly, the new ad for the first time invoked the name of WILLIAM CEPAK, *Publisher*, obviously a Czech.

Cepak's relationship with Gilbert is unknown. The name "Martha S. Gilbert" never appeared in Rest Haven Beach advertisements or in the newspaper itself. Did calling Rest Haven Beach the "Suburban Leader Summer Resort" indicate that Martha Gilbert had sold her interest in the property? Did the new focus selling to

Bohemians imply the failure of the old advertising campaign and a weakness in the market for vacation property?

Creating Rest Haven Beach: Phase 2, 1928

There was no weakness in the market. The "Roaring Twenties" was a period of economic prosperity. Enamored with automobiles, motion pictures, radio, and other innovations, people embraced new opportunities. Owning a country cottage offered one. Vacation properties were "hot," and Martha Gilbert was selling a lot of lots. The *Suburban Leader's* July 12, 1928 ad heralded: **"TEN SUMMER COTTAGES ALREADY ERECTED."** Whatever reasons led to shift marketing focus from the general population to the Bohemian community, they did not include sluggish sales. But who were the buyers?

Determining who bought lots in Rest Haven Beach in the late 1920s required delving into 90-year-old records at the Will County Recorder of Deeds in Joliet—research outside my training and experience. My cousin and Bohemian lawyer John Zelenka explained that since the mid-1800s, the State of Illinois required counties to keep records of deeds and to maintain indexes to their records. Separate Grantor (seller) and Grantee (buyer) Deed Indexes show "the name of the grantor or grantee, the year, month, and day of recordation, the number of the transaction, the book and page of recordation, a legal description of the property deeded or mortgaged, and the type of instrument."

Grantor Indexes are organized roughly alphabetically by the last name of the Grantor, defined as "the seller of a property such as a house. He conveys or gives his title to a grantee—the buyer. A grantor transfers title to a grantee through a legal instrument known as a deed." Figure 7 displays a partial page from a Grantor Index recording transactions from June 10, 1925 to December 5, 1927 for Grantors whose last name begins with "G": Gilbert.

The boxed area of Figure 7 shows that on November 7, 1927, Martha S. Gilbert granted title for one lot in Rest Haven Beach to Emma Arnholz and for two lots each to Aron Nelson, and Frederick H. Booths—via a Warranty Deed (W.D.) that guaranteed clear title to the

GRANTOR INDEX, WILL COUNTY, ILL.										
Refer to sub-index in front portion of book for alphabetical arrangement and page reference to names in this index.										
FAMILY NAME	GRANTOR			GRANTEE	Kind of Int.	DATE OF FILING	BOOK	PAGE	Lot No.	Acres
	Given Name	Given Name	Given Name							
Hilbert	Frank			Edinburgh Cemetery	M.D.	May 23 1927	50	625	8	Section Edgewood, S.E. corner
Hilbert	George			William Zarley et al	Copy	July 10 1927	2900	622	7-6	Section Edgewood, S.E. corner
Hilbert	Ed. of John				Copy	July 10 1927		660		Off Post Mill, Restaurant etc. from
Hilbert				Patrick J. of Alice Graham et al	M.D.	Aug 15 1927	935	677	11	Ceresburg Addn. to plat
Hilbert				Wendie Myrtle Nelson et al	M.D.	Aug 15 1927	935	660	32-3	Enterprise Ind. pt.
Hilbert	John C. et al			Jorgen Christian Nielsen et al	M.D.	Nov 14 1927	335	678	8-6	J. A. Henry's Subd. pt. of J. A. Henry
Hilbert	Lillie			Anna Johnson	M.D.	Nov 14 1927	310	523	18	William Storms Subd. Bks 3, 14, 15
Hilbert	Martha S. et al			Emma Arnholz	M.D.	Nov 7 1927	335	332	7-7	Rest Haven Beach, Subd. pt.
Hilbert	Martha S. et al			Ann Nelson et al	M.D.	Nov 7 1927	335	333	35-8	Rest Haven Beach, a Subd. pt.
Hilbert	Martha S. et al			Fredrick H. Booths	M.D.	Nov 7 1927	335	334	31-7	Rest Haven Beach, a Subd. pt.

Figure 7: Illustrative Page from a 1927 Grantor Index in Will County

property. Records of the deeds, including the property description, are in Book 625 on pages 532, 533, and 534. The monetary consideration for the title grant was only \$1. Property sale prices are not included in Grantor-Grantee Indexes nor usually in deeds. Grantee Indexes are similar but they are organized alphabetically by Grantee and date. They facilitate searching for names of specific property buyers. The information contained in the two indexes should match.

Recall that the first advertisements for Rest Haven Beach lots did not appeal specifically to Bohemians. Note that none of the surnames of the three buyers in the 1927 Grantor Index—Arnholz, Nelson, and Booths—suggest Bohemian heritage. Grantor Gilbert logged 59 grants from November 7, 1927 through June 14, 1928. Reviewing multiple pages in the Will County Grantor Index, Paulina Jones estimated that by the end of 1929, Martha S. Gilbert had granted hundreds of deeds to property in Rest Haven Beach—often for more than one lot. Evidence suggests that sales were very good indeed.

Profiting from her “land-office business,” Mrs. Gilbert soon launched Phase 2. She

bought an adjacent parcel in Section 12 north of Phase 1, from Levi Ducharme of Kankakee. Most of Ducharme’s 77+ acres were swampy, sandy, and undulating, but a strip along the river offered desirable vacation lots. I do not know when Gilbert bought the land or how much she purchased. I estimate that she bought about five acres and probably in late 1927. Significantly, they abutted the north boundary of her existing property.

Martha Gilbert re-engaged William Zarley to subdivide her new acquisition. Zarley’s plat survey of June 30, 1928 in Figure 8 shows a smaller subdivision, positioned above the original one, both joined at Elmwood Avenue. Its three blocks—9, 10, and 11—had 68, 50, and 44 lots respectively for a total of 162. The most desirable ones in both subdivisions were in Blocks 8

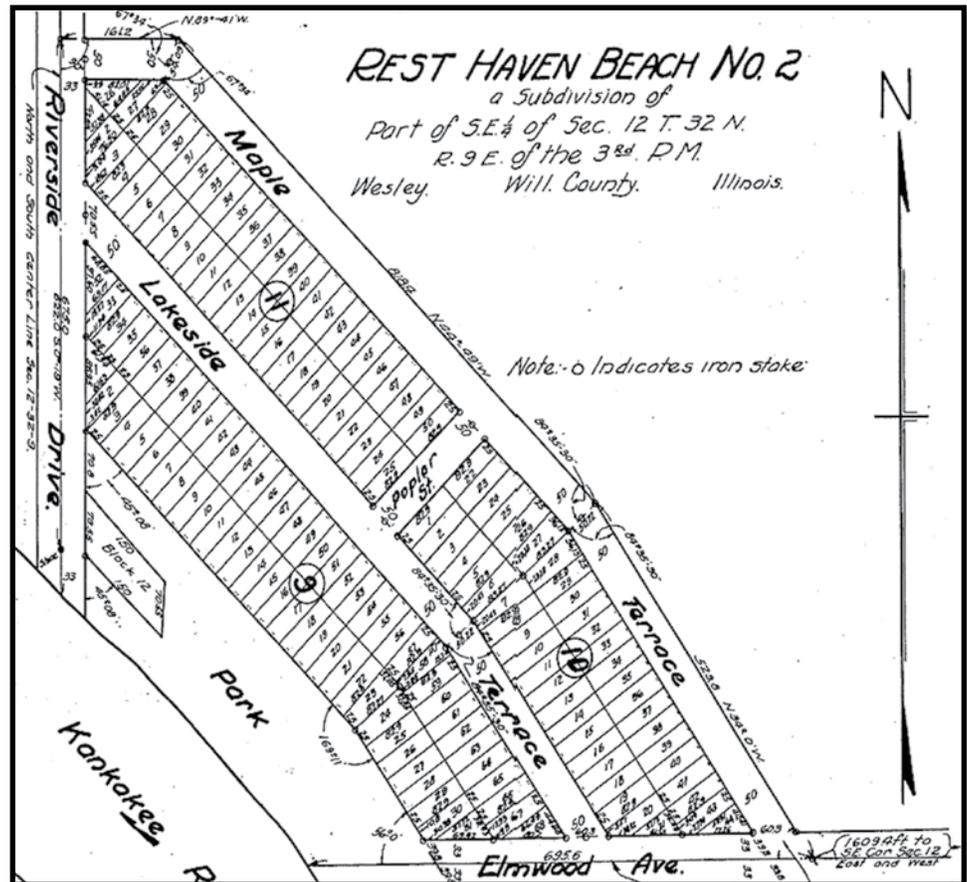


Figure 8: Rest Haven Beach Subdivision: Phase 2, 1928

NOVÉ ČESKÉ LETNÍ BYDLIŠTĚ
THE NEW BOHEMIAN SUMMER RESORT
 On the Lovely Kankakee River Near Wilmington, Illinois

REST HAVEN BEACH
 REST HAVEN BEACH

NOVÉ ČESKÉ LETNÍ KOUPALIŠTĚ
 Letní koupaliště u řeky. Dělátě lepší než na pohořích. Každé Kankakee se rozprostírá na 1000'. Koupaliště pro celou rodinu.

\$99. per lot
 Absolutely no other cost.

FAMOUS REST HAVEN BEACH LOTS
 \$12.50 Down, \$7.00 a month - No Interest, No Special Assurances

ZNÁMÉ "REST HAVEN" Koupališkové Loty
 \$12.50 Dole, \$7.00 měsíčně - zálohy dleh, žádné podmínky

24 LETNÍCH DOMKŮK už se postavěno v "REST HAVEN" koupališti.
 Každé Kankakee v "Rest Haven" koupališti je od 10 do 15000'. Každé se rozprostírá na 1000' a má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště.

KLÍČE K NĚM!
 Každé koupaliště má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště.

ZDARMA!
 Každé koupaliště má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště. Každé má vlastní koupaliště.

Suburban Leader
 5527 West 22nd Street
 Phone CICERO 685
 WILLIAM ČEPAK, Publisher-vydavatel

Figure 9: English-Czech Advertisement in the Cicero Suburban Leader, circa 1929

and 9 that faced the park and the Kankakee River. Lots in Blocks 8 and 9 were often bought in pairs—usually in adjacent pairs, totaling four lots. Owners built on double lots to face the park and river and used the two lots behind for gardens, automobile parking, and to ensure sole access to Lakeside Terrace, a main road that bordered Blocks 8 and 9. I knew several families who owned lots in that configuration.

Both phases of development sold well. Martha Gilbert’s two subdivisions contained a total of 562 lots, some more desirable than others. As in Florida’s property boom, even lots in swampy and sandy areas were sold. Business was good, and Rest Haven Beach had expanded to meet demand. Nevertheless, the Phase 2 subdivision was accompanied by a shift in the sales plan, from appealing to the general public to targeting Bohemians.

Selling Rest Haven Beach to Bohemians in 1928-29

Recall that the *Suburban Leader* signaled its new Czech-centered advertising on July 12, 1928, describ-

ing Rest Haven Beach as “**The New Bohemian SUMMER RESORT.**” On September 13, 20, 27, October 4, 18, and November 3, large illustrated advertisements echoed the message: Rest Haven Beach is a Bohemian community. In the fall of 1928, the marketing campaign shifted again. Similar ads on November 22, December 13 and 27, and January 3 urged readers to “buy now.” The November 22 advertisement said, “**FEW REST HAVEN BEACH LOTS STILL OBTAINABLE AT ‘GROUND FLOOR’ PRICE, \$89.50.**” It further stated: “**TWENTY-FOUR SUMMER HOMES ALREADY BUILT—PRICES GO UP MAY 1, 1929.**” Indeed, on May 30, the *Suburban Leader* posted the new price of \$99.00 with the same terms: \$12.50 down and \$7.00 a month, without interest—so the purchase could be paid off in a year.

The campaign’s Bohemian focus reached its apogee with the advertisement in Figure 9, half in English and half in Czech. This ad, not included among the pages of the *Suburban Leader* in Newspapers.com, seems to have been a “flyer” distributed apart from its regular issues. Although undated, it had to appear after the July

22, 1929 price increase, for the new \$99 price was in the ad. It also had to appear during the summer months, inviting readers to “Come Out and Be Convinced.”

Quite a few came, saw, and signed. Figure 10 reprints the names and addresses of all 74 people listed at the bottom of the advertisement as “Just a Few Lot Owners at Rest Haven Beach.” Figure 10 lists last names first and reordered them alphabetically. Names informally regarded as “Czechoslovakian” (Czech or Slovak) are marked with a check. As one might expect from a newspaper ad touting a “New Bohemian Resort” and half written in the Czech language, most of the listed “lot owners”—62 out of 74—appear to have Czechoslovakian family names on the paternal side. Additional families undoubtedly claimed Czech or Slovak heritage on the maternal side. Given that the *Suburban Leader* was published in Cicero, it is not surprising that most of the claimed buyers (26) lived in Cicero. Berwyn and Chicago each had 23, while two lived in Downers Grove and Brookfield.

The advertisement claimed that these people were

“lot owners,” but had they actually bought the property? I know one that did. Listed among the “owners” was Louis Worel at 2411 So. Harding Ave, Chicago. My grandparents, James and Louise (Aloisie) Worel, lived at that address, but no “Louis” lived there. Louise’s first two husbands (Anton Ringl and Rudolph Vobruba) died early. Louise inherited Vobruba’s house, upgraded to the one on Harding in 1922, and married James in 1926. I suspect that (1) the advertiser could not believe that a “Louise” made the down payment, and (2) my grandmother answered the ad because she wanted a summer cottage for the families of her two newly married daughters—Emily Ringl Zelenka and Bessie Ringl Janda.

On September 24, 1928, James and Louise Worel were granted title to lots 43 and 44 in Block 1 in Figure 3’s plat survey. The lots were long (91’) but narrow (20’). On December 14, they bought adjoining lots 45 and 46. Their lots were on the corner of Grand and Hickory Avenues—the southeast edge of Rest Haven Beach. While the farthest in the subdivision from the

SURNAME	GIVEN	ADDRESS	CITY	CZECH	SURNAME	GIVEN	ADDRESS	CITY	CZECH
Behensky	Charles	2744 So. Ridgeway Ave.	Chicago	✓	Mottl	Charles	6504 West 28th Place	Berwyn	✓
Belson	George	5419 West 22nd St.	Cicero		Novak	Anton	2717 S. St. Louis Ave.	Chicago	✓
Bouse	Edward	2623 So. Trumbell Ave.	Chicago	✓	Pesek	George	511 E. Patauski Ave.	Downers Grv	✓
Brabec	Joseph	1432 So. Komensky Ave.	Chicago	✓	Peterka	James	2827 So. Keeler Ave.	Chicago	✓
Cikanek	Joseph	4303 So. Cullerton Ave.	Chicago	✓	Plechaty	John	1906 So. 59th St.	Cicero	✓
Cikanek	Julian	4144 West 21st St.	Chicago	✓	Prokop	John	2827 So. Troy St.	Chicago	✓
Danek	Louis	2539 So. Lawndale Ave.	Chicago	✓	Rehor	Jerry	6933 West 26th St.	Berwyn	✓
Draznik	Charles	2109 So. 56th Court	Cicero	✓	Ronge	Jerry	1431 So. 61st Court	Cicero	
Drella	Joseph	1918 So. Lombard Ave.	Berwyn	✓	Ronge	Frank	1429 So. 61st Court	Cicero	
Drevikovsky	Anton	2811 So. Lawndale Ave.	Chicago	✓	Ruzicka	Emil	227 Southview Ave.	Brookfield	✓
Dusil	Frank	6502 West 28th Place	Berwyn		Schnekle	Joseph	2333 So. 61st Court	Cicero	
Dusil	Henry	3018 So. Oak Park Ave.	Berwyn		Sichta	Charles	2511 So. Lombard Ave	Berwyn	✓
FencI	Edward	2746 So. Lawndale Ave.	Chicago	✓	Skotty	Jerry	2405 So. Gunderson Ave.	Berwyn	
Francek	James	2144 So. Highland Ave.	Berwyn	✓	Skotty	Frank	6518 West 26th St.	Berwyn	✓
Francek	Joseph	2539 So. Scoville Ave.	Berwyn	✓	Sladek	James	52638 or 6238 West 25 th Pl.	Cicero	✓
Granzig	William	1233 So. Komensky Ave.	Chicago	✓	Smola	Frank	2126 So. Wenonah Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Had	Charle	2321 So. 62nd Ave.	Cicero	✓	Smrt	Anton	2849 So. Kildare Ave.	Chicago	✓
Havelka	Frank	2421 So. 58th Court	Cicero	✓	Srejma	Joseph	2432 So. 58 th Court	Cicero	✓
Herda	James	5512 West 24th St.	Berwyn	✓	Stigleitner	Stefan	2444 So. Harvey Ave.	Berwyn	
Hlad	Anna	5425 West 23rd Place	Cicero	✓	Suchomel	William	1305 So. Clarence Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Hudecek	Joseph	1544 So. Harding Ave.	Chicago	✓	Suchomel	Joseph	5510 West 24th St.	Cicero	✓
Hurak	Stephan	2436 So. 56th Ave.	Cicero	✓	Talas	Aloits	3820 West 24th St.	Chicago	✓
Husak	Joseph	2115 So. Highland Ave.	Berwyn	✓	Talpai	Joseph	1303 So. 58th Ave.	Cicero	✓
Jamostny	Jerry	2426 So. Elmwood Ave.	Berwyn	✓	Trader	Ralph	1519 So. Highland Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Jerousek	Frank	2321 So. Kedvale Ave.	Chicago	✓	Truska, Jr.	Joseph	2636 S. 58th Ave.	Cicero	✓
Jilek	Vaclav	23_4 So. Cuyler Ave.	Berwyn	✓	Urban	Julius	1512 So. 58th Ct.	Cicero	✓
Jrionsek	John	2321 So. 62nd Ave.	Cicero	✓	Vancura	Jakub	1541' So. 61st Ct.	Cicero	✓
Kelly	William	1504 So. Karlov Ave.	Chicago		Vanek	Joseph	1910 So. Lombard Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Kopecky	Joseph	1510 So. Karlov Ave.	Chicago	✓	Vaskovsky	Frank	1905 So. 51st Ct.	Cicero	✓
Kratky	John	2418 So. 56th Court	Cicero	✓	Vaskovsky	Joseph	2831 So. Spaulding Ave.	Chicago	✓
Krtous	Frank	2744 So. Lawndale Ave.	Chicago	✓	Vodak	Joseph	1236 So. Lombard Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Kucera	James	1531 So. 59th Ave.	Cicero	✓	Voller	Karel	5416 West. 22nd Place	Cicero	
Kukouski	Alex	1635 S. Lombard Ave.	Cicero		Worel	Louis	2411 So. Harding Ave.	Chicago	✓
Kurz	James	6633 West 16th St.	Berwyn	✓	Zak	Charles	1156 West 19th Place	Chicago	✓
Lohr	Joseph	5727 West 22 nd St.	Cicero	✓	Zak	Joseph	1984 So. Clarence Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Macena	Joseph	2234 So. 61st Court	Cicero	✓	Zitnik	Bohumil	1816 So. Clinton Ave.	Berwyn	✓
Michl	Frank	2630 So. Clifton Park Ave.	Chicago		Zpevacek	Charles	5338 West 25th Place	Cice ro	✓

Figure 10: Names and Addresses of Lot Owners at Rest Haven Beach, from the Cicero Suburban Leader

Kankakee River (about ¼ mile west), their lots offered a lovely view over farmland to the south and east. By buying four lots, my grandparents provided adequate room for fruit trees and a vineyard next to their cottage. Like the other deeds, theirs contained this covenant:

There shall be no Outside Privys [sic].
There shall be no business on the said land.
There shall be no cottage erected on the said land for less than Four Hundred (\$400) dollars.

A sum of \$400 then would amount to almost \$6,000 now—enough to build more than a shack. So, people who bought vacation lots in Rest Haven Beach had to come up with a good deal of additional money to build summer housing.

By the end of the summer of 1929, scores of Czechoslovak-American families had purchased lots on which to build country cottages in Rest Haven Beach—the “New Bohemian Resort.” Then, in late October, collapse of the stock market led to the Great Depression. The collapse had no effect on Martha S. Gilbert. Having profited greatly from land sales before the crash, she took her money and left the state. By 1930 she and her family were living in Los Angeles, by 1940 in Beverly Hills. However, the stock market collapse and the ensuing Great Depression held severe consequences for many families left owning vacation property on the Kankakee River sixty miles south of Chicago. [Part II of this study, to be published in a future issue of *Naše rodina*, tells how they fared.]

Endnotes

1. One author claimed that Augustin Heřman, born in Prague in 1608, was the first Czech immigrant in the New World, but Czechs did not come in large numbers until “shortly before 1848.” See Jan Habenicht, *History of Czechs in America* (St. Paul: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, 1996), pp. 11 and 18.
2. Ian Willoughby, “Cottage Tradition Changing as Line Between First and Second Homes Blurs, Says Dr. Jiří Vágner,” Czech Radio <<http://www.rozhlas.cz>>, September 7, 2015.
3. Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., *Rural Historic Structural Survey of Wesley Township, Will County, Illinois* (Prepared for the Will County Land Use Department and Will County Historic Preservation Commission, July 2012), p. 23.
4. Reconstructing this history also testifies to the eternal value of the printed word. Will anyone ninety years hence be able to retrieve information stored today in ever-changing digital formats—as we did from printed records?
5. Thomas Čapek, *The Čechs in America* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969; originally published by Houghton Mifflin, 1920), p. 60.
6. Čapek, p. 63.
7. M. Mark Stolarik, *Where Is My Home? Slovak Immigration to North America (1870–2010)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 36.
8. Čapek, p. 70.
9. Čapek, p. 74.
10. “History of the Bohemian Lawyers’ Association” at <<https://www.bohemianlawyers.org/what-we-do>>.
11. Otto Kerner, Jr., was Governor of the State of Illinois from 1961 to 1968. He was later imprisoned in 1973 on charges of mail fraud, conspiracy, and perjury.
12. “Worel”—my grandfather’s surname—was pronounced “Vorel.” Given that the letter “W” in the Czech alphabet is used only for foreign words, the substitution must have occurred on ship manifests or by government officials at entry to the U.S. The substitution appears to have been common. A search of surnames on Leo Baca’s Czech Immigration Passenger lists returns 8 “Worels” and 12 “Vorels.” See <<https://www.cgsi.org/members/passenger-ship-records>>.
13. Robert Zelenka served in the U.S. army in World War II.
14. “In 1920, it [Route 4] was paved for smooth car travel. From 1926 to 1976, Ogden Avenue was designated as U.S. Route 66, connecting Chicagoans to Los Angeles.” *Berwyn*, at <<https://whyberwyn.com/visit/business-districts/route-66/>>.
15. T.J. Diven’s buccaneering life is profiled in *The Story of the Hadsel, Cox, Packard, Jones, Diven Gus Property, SE 1/4, Sec. 7, Wesley Township, Will County, Il.*, by JD Guse (JD Guse Book, 2015).
16. John Persic email to Kenneth Janda of October 26, 2017.
17. Cecilia Rokusek, President of the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, noted that at least one other “Rest Haven” in the United States also had no funereal meaning and had a minor connection to a Czech community. The “Rest Haven” dance hall at Lake Andes in South Dakota in the 1940s bought in popular orchestras and

- nationally-known bands. Occasionally, they booked local bands playing Czech music. One especially popular group was the WNAX Bohemian Band from Yankton, SD. See Harl A. Dalstrom and Kay Calamé Dalstrom, "Back by Popular Demand!": Dancing in Small-Town South Dakota," *South Dakota History*, 32 (Winter, 2002), 283-309 at 294.
18. Kankakee River Fishery Fact Sheet at <<https://www.ifishillinois.org/ssr/kankakee.pdf>>.
 19. Will County Recorder of Deeds, Book 658, page 381.
 20. "A plat is an officially drawn map of a land area that defines the boundaries between different parcels of property to scale." See <<https://info.courthouse-direct.com/blog/what-is-a-plat-survey>>. This segment comes from a Wesley Township survey dated 1937—ten years after the recorded deed, which suggest either that the survey was not updated or that it was dated incorrectly.

About the Author:

Kenneth Janda, is a Payson S. Wild professor emeritus (Political Science) from 2002-date at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. He obtained a B.S. degree in education from Illinois State University and a Ph.D. in Government from Indiana University. His areas of scholarly research concentrated on (a) political parties, (b) computer methods, and (c) American government, including methods of teaching. In recent years, he has been particularly interested in politics and political science in central Europe and the Soviet Union. Professor Janda has published about a dozen books and over a hundred articles and papers, see www.janda.org.

His American government textbook, *The Challenge of Democracy: American Government in Global Politics* is entering its 14th edition. It was translated into Czech as *Vyzva Demokracie: Systém Vlády v USA*. His latest book, "The Emperor and the Peasant: The Birth of the Great War and Death of a Great Empire," was published by McFarland and Company in 2018. He and his wife traveled throughout Czechoslovakia in 1971, 1983, and 1990. They also visited the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1994, following his Fulbright year in Budapest.

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