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Prepared for 4th–8th grade Social  
Studies teachers and their students by



The University of Texas  
INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES  
at San Antonio

# Crossroads of Culture

www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads 

From the Editor:

Thanks for meeting us again at the Crossroads of Culture! With this issue we take a closer look at Texans of Czech descent and at the Czech lands they came from. We are truly excited about our new Czech exhibit with folk dress, history, videos, language insights, and an interactive farmhouse kitchen. It is there that you can observe everyday artifacts from several Czech families whose stories exemplified life in rural Texas during the early part of this century. You can see how they prepared their food and performed daily tasks while learning to speak English and learning about America.


Invite students to collect their family stories, photographs, and artifacts to create an “Institute of Student Cultures” exhibit in your classroom. Use the map activities to consider the impact of culture on geography—and the impact of geography on culture and history. Take the literacy test which immigrants must pass in order to become naturalized American citizens.

Then e-mail me and tell me what kinds of activities and cultural information you’d like more of in the future.

—Mary Grace

Mary Grace Ketner, Editor  
mketner@utsa.edu

## Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia

are the three Czech-speaking lands to which today’s Czech Americans trace their roots. If they arrived before 1993, they did not come from the “Czech Republic.” If they arrived before 1918, they did not come from “Czechoslovakia.” 

CELEBRATING OUR NEW CZECH TEXANS EXHIBIT!

# Texans & Czechs

by Laurie Gudzikowski

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**I**n the twenty years between 1850 and 1870, close to 1,000 Czechs came to Texas. Most came from the province of Moravia and settled in the rich farmlands between the Brazos

and Colorado Rivers. They were pushed from home by a repressive government and desperate economic conditions and pulled to Texas by tales of economic opportunity and religious and political freedom.

The year 1851 was a disaster for agriculture in Moravia. Many were looking for information about emigration to America. Josef Lešikar chanced upon a letter extolling the virtues of Texas and giving some detail about the conditions an immigrant might find there. Josef

Ernst Bergmann, a Bohemian teacher and minister who had immigrated to Texas from Silesia, had written the letter. Lešikar arranged for a newspaper to publish the letter.

*In this way, news about Texas in America was spread all over Moravia in detail. The result was a general emigration from eastern Moravia to Texas.*

Some of Lešikar’s family and friends immediately sold their belongings and set out for Texas.

Unfortunately, bad luck and bad management devastated the venture. Less than half survived the passage.

It took a while for Lešikar to convince his wife to make the journey. By the time he and his family set out, they had the experience of the earlier group to profit from.

*Seventeen families left with me in 1852. . . . Our trip across the ocean lasted seven weeks. After a*

*short rest at Galveston, we were taken by a riverboat to Houston, from whence we proceeded into the interior. This part of the journey lasted a full fourteen days, although it was only a distance of some sixty miles.*

The Czech-Texan pioneers were mainly farmers. They had farmed in the old country and had brought these skills to Texas, needed a bit of assistance to understand different weather conditions and crops

## Create an "Institute of Student Cultures" Exhibit

*We planted the corn about twelve feet apart, leaving three or four stalks together, thinking that in this way we would gather a bigger yield. . . . When the corn began to bloom an American . . . visited us. . . . He pulled up stalks of corn, leaving the space as it should be.*

The American Civil War brought great hardship to the Czech Texans. Many had come to America to avoid conscription and to find freedom. They had no sympathy for slavery or the Southern cause. Some men hid in the woods to evade recruitment. Dr. Anthony Dignowity was so outspoken in his antislavery beliefs that he was forced to flee north for the duration. He returned in 1869 to find that all his possessions had been confiscated.

Family farming remained the major Czech-Texan way of life till World War II. The mid-century movement from farm to city that changed the face of America brought Texas Czechs into the cities.

In the 2000 census, 187,729 Texans claimed Czech ancestry. Czech pride is nourished through organizations such as the Czech Heritage Society of Texas, the SPJST, and the deep religious devotion of the community. Czech celebrations abound in Texas, featuring polka music, traditional costumes, and delicious kolaches. ✂

*Laurie Gudzikowski is Director of the Programs Department at the Institute of Texan Cultures. She supervised the development of ITC's new permanent exhibit, "The Czech Experience in Texas."*

Read "The Hanicaks: One Czech Family" (p. 5), which tells about the first generation of a family who moved from one of the Czech lands—Bohemia, Moravia, or Silesia—which later, with Slovakia, formed the nation of Czechoslovakia (1918-1989), then became today's Czech Republic (1993- ).

Talk with your parents to discover which individual or family group was the first of your ancestors to immigrate to Texas. (Save your Native American ancestors for another assignment.) Do you have ancestors who arrived with the early Spaniards? Do you have ancestors, black or white, who walked or rode in wagons or traveled by steamboat to get to Texas from other states in the United States? Do you have ancestors who arrived by sea from Europe or Asia? Do you have ancestors who arrived by plane from Africa or Australia? Did your family drive to Texas from Illinois last week?

No matter what your answer, you have a "first Texan family" in your history. What can you find out about your first Texans?

### FIRST:

Use your parents and grandparents to learn all you can. Make notes to use as a reference for writing your story.

What were your first Texans' names?

Where did they come from? When did they move?

Why did they leave? (What "pushed" them out?)

Why did they choose Texas as a destination? (What "pulled" them?)

What kinds of hardships did they endure on their journey?

What kinds of difficulties did they encounter after they arrived?

What became of their children?

What anecdotes (short stories or sentences) does your family tell about funny, sad, or memorable experiences of your first Texans?

Tell about something your family values because of your ancestors' experiences. (Examples: "We think education is important." "Our faith keeps us strong in a crisis." "We try to be good neighbors." "We don't let others take advantage of us." "We try to see the silver lining in every cloud.")

Use the Internet, an atlas, and other resources to find out what you can about the country your family came from and the part of Texas they came to. Show their journey on a map.

If you have family photographs, select one to photocopy.

Draw or photograph any "artifacts," or heirlooms, which you have from an early generation.

### THEN:

Mount your photograph, drawing, or family story on a 12" x 18" sheet of construction paper.

Teachers: Use a wall or bulletin board to create an "Institute of Student Cultures" display illustrating the heritage of the students in your classroom. Plan a visit to the Institute of Texan Cultures to see how others have told their ancestors' and family's stories using maps, photographs, drawings, artifacts, and text. ✂

# Geography and Culture?

## Geography and Culture:

The geographical terms people use daily often defy geographical logic. They may be based on history or culture instead of geography. To understand how, try these two activities.

### So you want to be a Czechionaire?

Find the Czech Republic on this map.  
Would you say it is in

A. Eastern Europe	C. Western Europe
B. Afghanistan	D. Hawaii

Need a *LIFELINE*?

1. Eliminate two answers: leaving \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
2. Poll the audience: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Call a friend (Okay, you can call several friends!) They say:

*Czuck:* The Czech language is Slavic, you know, eastern, like Bulgarian, Belarusian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, and Ukrainian, so I'd say eastern Europe.

*Czeryl:* Yes, but written Czech utilizes the Roman alphabet just like French, German, English, and other western languages.

*Czester:* Well, historically Czech lands have been Roman Catholic like western Europe, not Eastern Orthodox.

*Czarlene:* Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia were ruled from Vienna, a cultural center of western Europe, for almost 400 years until 1913. Czechs in the cities spoke and read German more and better than their own language. Definitely western!

*Czauncy:* But Czechoslovakia was part of the Communist bloc throughout most of the last century until 1989, clearly making the nation eastern in the minds of today's world leaders.

You've used all your lifelines, and I need your answer.

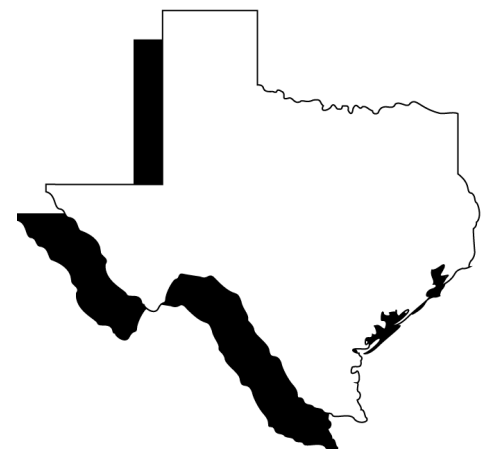
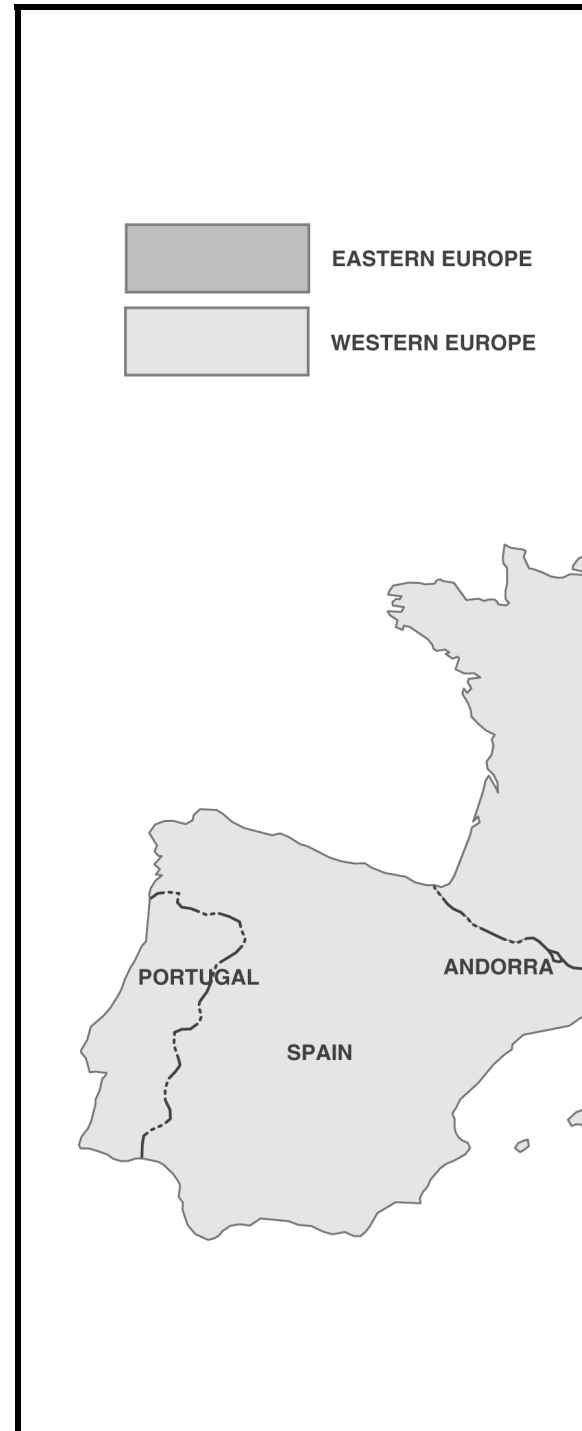
IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?

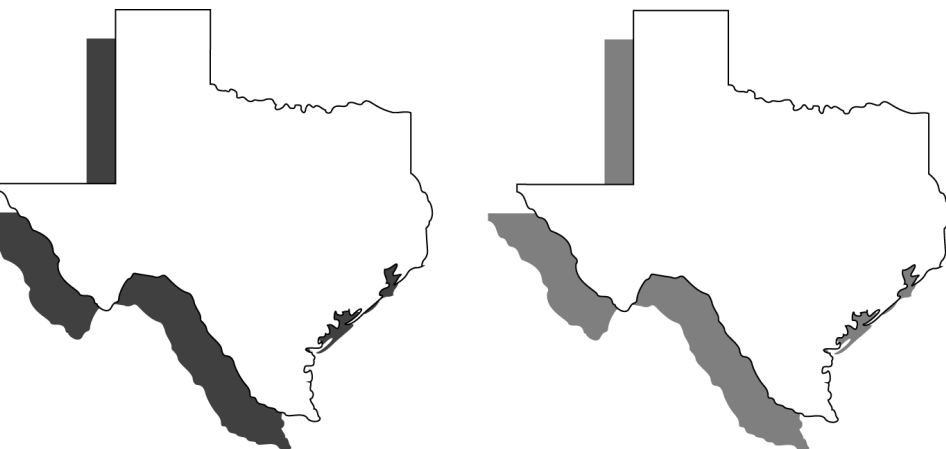
(Play this game again in ten years, after the Czech Republic has been in the European Union for a decade or so.)

### Texas Directions: You Can't Get There from Here

Show this map of Texas to three native Texans. Ask them to locate the following:

1. East Texas
2. West Texas
3. North Texas
4. South Texas
5. Southeast Texas
6. The Panhandle
7. "Southeastern New Mexico"
8. Lower Rio Grande Valley
9. Upper Rio Grande Valley
10. Southwest Texas State University





Do you think someone who has not lived in Texas would answer in the same way? Which answers might confuse them?

Can you think of historical or cultural reasons that explain how or why these terms came into use?

Can you think of other misleading or confusing terms used in Texas geography?



Print out complete lesson plans and student pages from our Web site:  
[www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads](http://www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads)

# The Hanicaks: One Czech-Texan Family

Reprinted by permission from the upcoming book  
*The European Texans* by Allan O. Kownslar, to be published by  
Texas A&M Press in the fall of 2003.

The Hanicak (pronounced Hon-itzak) family—Jan, Katerina, and two of their children, Jan Jr. and Annie—came to Texas in 1906. Jan, a cottager who farmed small plots of land, had to serve in the Austrian Army like most young adult males in what became Czechoslovakia. Austria then controlled where the Hanicak family lived. In the army a cavalry horse injured Jan, and he killed the horse in self-defense. Since there were more men than horses in the army, he was sent to prison as punishment for killing the horse.

Jan's brother, Peter, and his family had already immigrated to a Czech community in Bessmay, Texas, located thirty-seven miles north of Beaumont in south-central Jasper County. Peter worked in a sawmill in nearby Deweyville. When Peter wrote about how good life was in Texas, Jan and Katerina began to save their money to immigrate to Deweyville.

They left from Novy Grozenkov in August 1906, taking only two small trunks of clothes with them. Jan Jr., only 18 months old, was sick during most of the boat trip. In fact, almost everyone on the ship got seasick except Annie, their daughter. She took meals to some people too sick to get their own food. The trip took twenty-six days, and they arrived in Galveston, Texas, on Annie's eighth birthday.

The family moved to Bessmay to join their relatives, and Jan got a job at the nearby sawmill in Kirby. The Hanicaks liked their new home, but life was difficult. Although fluent and literate in Czech, German and Russian, they could not speak English. Some children in school made fun of Annie and took her things. Once the teacher asked Annie if she took a pencil from another student, which she had not, but the only English word she knew at the time was "yes," so that was how she answered. The teacher punished her.

After the Hanicaks had been in Texas for several years, Jan Sr. hurt his leg in an accident at the sawmill. The men who worked with him put a tourniquet on his leg and took him to the closest hospital about thirty miles away. The doctor amputated his leg because the tourniquet had been left on too long. After that money was scarce, so Katerina took in roomers and cooked meals for them, converting the Hanicak home into a boardinghouse. Annie and Jan Jr. helped by running errands for the neighbors and doing odd jobs. At thirteen Jan Jr. quit school and went to work full-time at the sawmill. The family continued to work very hard to save enough money to buy a home. Finally, a few years after Jan Sr. died, Katerina was able to get her own home.

Jan Jr., who took the English name of John, proudly gained American citizenship. In 1935 he married Scottish-Swiss Texan Margaret McGhee of Brownwood, Texas. ✂

## *Crossroads on the Net:*

[www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads](http://www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads)

- 📖 **Crossroads of Culture.** E-mail a printable copy of this newsletter to friends.
- 📖 **Teacher's Guide and Rubric** for the "Institute of Student Cultures" activity.
- 📖 **Student Cultures** notes page to print.
- 📖 **Student pages and maps** for the Geography and Culture activities.
- 📖 **A Czech-Texan Bibliography.** An annotated bibliography of books that relate to the history and culture of Czechs in Texas.
- 📖 **A Webliography of Czech Sites.** Web sites related to modern and historical Czech lands and culture as well as Czech-Texan sites.
- 📖 **New Texans:** New American citizens in Texas talk about their immigration and naturalization. Link to the Literacy Test for Citizenship.
- 📖 **TEKS Applications for each grade, 4-8.** Click on your grade level to see how this issue may be used to build or reinforce Social Studies skills.
- 📖 **Archived Issues** of "Haunting Legends and Cucuis" and "Images of South Texas" (O. Henry and I.N. Hall) each with related lesson plans, resources, and TEKS applications.

**Crossroads of Culture** is distributed three times each school year (fall, winter, and spring) by the Institute of Texan Cultures.

The Institute of Texan Cultures, one of the three campuses of the University of Texas at San Antonio, is an educational center concerned with the history and diverse cultures of Texas. Located at the corner of Bowie and Durango in HemisFair Park in downtown San Antonio, the Institute has easy access from I-10, I-281, and I-35. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesdays through Sundays. Closed Mondays, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the week of Texas Folklife Festival except during Festival hours.

Two school tours are available and may be scheduled for the same trip or separately: (1) a docent-led tour of our Exhibit Floor and the Dome Show, *Faces and Places of Texas*, and (2) Back 40 tours demonstrating pioneer life in replicated 19th century structures. Tours beginning 9:00, 10:45, or 12:45 are \$1 per student, one adult free per every 10 students. Call Blanca at (210) 458-2291 to reserve a tour or to answer other questions about tour scheduling. Our patio and covered verandas may be reserved at no cost for group lunch areas. Unscheduled school groups admitted space permitting; no tour guide provided.

Bus parking available on-site. For driving directions, programs, Texas Folklife Festival information, teacher resources, student activities, and regular admission rates, go to [www.texancultures.utsa.edu](http://www.texancultures.utsa.edu). ✂

## **Institute of Texan Cultures**

### **Selected Events for Spring and Summer 2003**

**Through May 25.** Photography exhibit. **Requiem: By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina.** Photo Gallery. Presented under the auspices of the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, the traveling exhibit is a memorial to the 135 photojournalists who perished while covering the conflict that began with the French Indochina War in the 1950s and culminated in 1975 with the fall of Phnom Penh and Saigon. The fallen are some of the 20th century's most notable photojournalists, including Larry Burrows, Robert Capa, Henri Huet, and Kyoichi Sawada. Included with admission.

**Through July 1.** Painting exhibit. **La Salle Lands in Texas.** Exhibit Floor. Artist Jim Rice's work is featured in this exhibit on La Salle, who led the first French explorations in what became Texas. One painting is loaded with historical errata. Find the errors and check your answers against the "correct" painting. Included with admission.

**June 5-8. Texas Folklife Festival.** Institute Building and Grounds. Ethnic groups from every corner of the state representing 40 countries of the world come together to share mouth-watering cuisine, traditional dances, homespun tales, finely crafted keepsakes, and lively music. For more information, call (210) 458-2224 or visit [texasfolklife festival.org](http://texasfolklife festival.org).

**August 12-November 9.** Special exhibit. **Videotopia.** Exhibit Floor. Video games? In a museum? Learn about the nature of the interactive experience, the technological evolution and innovation in the videogame industry, and how these elements might give clues to the future of technology in our society. Included with admission.

For up-to-date information any time, see the events calendar at <http://www.texancultures.net>