

THE MUSEUM OF SLOVAK EMIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA

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On May 6, 2023, the Museum of Slovak Emigration to North America (Múzeum vysťahovalectva z územia Slovenska do Severnej Ameriky) officially opened in the eastern Slovak village of Ťahyňa, which is situated in lower Zemplín. Professor Martin Javor of Prešov University founded the museum, put together the collection, and continues to gather documents, fraternal items, and photos, which portray the life of Slovak emigrants.

In June 2023, Professor Martin Javor accompanied by his daughter Anna, visited the USA on short trip, stopping at some key Slovak and Rusyn sites in the USA. He was checking for resources for researching Slovak immigrants and to find materials for the museum.

One of the first places they visited was Perth Amboy, New Jersey, which 60 years ago was center of Slovak immigrants on the east coast. His visit there included the home of his ancestors, St. Nicholas Byzantine Church, the site of Holy Trinity Church (built in 1902 and demolished in the 1990s), and St. Nicholas cemeteries.

While in New Jersey, he visited the Home Office of Slovak Catholic Sokol in Passaic, NJ. He collected 1400 kg of books and other materials on a pallet, which he sent to Slovakia for the museum. His cousin Milan Javor and his cousin's husband assisted in packing the materials, as he is striving to save the cultural heritage of Slovaks in America.

Next, he traveled to Wilkes-Barre, PA where he visited the Memorial room of Jozef Murgaš, the site of his Sacred Heart (closed), Slovak Lutheran church of St. Matthew Slovak Lutheran Church (closed), and the grave of Jozef Murgaš in the former Slovak Botanical Garden in Dallas, PA. Audrey Wagner Cunfer, and Melinda Smith served as guides for his visits here.

Heading west, the Javors then stopped to visit the Sisters of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Danville, PA, the former Slovak girls' school, St. Cyril Academy. Sister Loretta Marie, the Director of Jankola Library, accompanied them on a guided tour. Professor Javor was struck by the beauty of the Basilica of St. Cyril and Methodius. The colorful stained-glass windows are decorated with details and subjects from the history of immigration. They concluded their stop with a visit of the Jankola library with its rich collection of books from Slovakia.

The last stop of the Javors was in the Cleveland area where they visited the Slovak Institute at St. Andrew's Benedictine Abbey. Milan Kobulský, the director of the Slovak Institute, served as their guide. They all agreed to cooperate in saving the cultural heritage of Slovaks in America.

After Javor returned to Slovakia, I met him in Košice on July 16, 2023, and he took me to tour the Kasigarda Museum, so I was able to personally see his rich collection of Slovak immigrant memorabilia. Later that week, I spent the day with him at Prešov University and he showed me the wealth of archival material and newspapers he had collected. He noted that there is a great deal of interest in Slovak emigration to North America in Slovakia among his young students but sees interest fading in the USA as ethnic churches close and most of the younger generation ignores its immigrant roots. For Slovaks, rediscovering the history of emigrants is largely unknown, as the communists suppressed this aspect of Slovakia's history.

Finally, in early November 2023, Professor Javor visited me at my home and copied some of my documents and a manuscript which concerned Slovak immigrants. He went on to spend sever-



Ťahyňa, home of Kasigarda, the Museum of Slovak Emigration to N. America (photo: Michael Kopanic).



Prof Martin Javor showing Museum of Slovak Emigration to North America (photo: Michael Kopanic).

al days with Bishop Larry Kulick at the Greensburg Diocese and toured a number of churches there and in the Pittsburgh Diocese.

On April 20, 2024, he will be delivering a keynote address at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The Symposium is sponsored by the Czecho-Slovak Genealogical Society International. For info, go to: <https://cgisi.org/2024-cgisi-symposium>.

If you are traveling to Slovakia to visit the Museum and please contact Professor Martin Javor, to arrange a visit. The Kasigarda website is: <http://www.kasigarda.sk/en/kasigarda-2/>. There also is a Facebook site under title "Kasigarda. Múzeum vysťahovalectva z územia Slovenska do Severnej Ameriky". Kasigarda's Facebook site is: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100054841476795>.

Donations via Paypal and/or an in-person visit to the museum are very welcome. He is also interested in rare books and original documents and will pay for their shipping. For Paypal, send donations to: javorisko@gmail.com or Martin.Javor@kasigarda. You may contact Professor Javor by e-mail at javorisko@gmail.com.