

DISSERTATION

JITERNICE AND KOLACHES:
FOOD AND IDENTITY IN WILSON, KANSAS

Submitted by
Jeffrey P. Miller
School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Colorado State University
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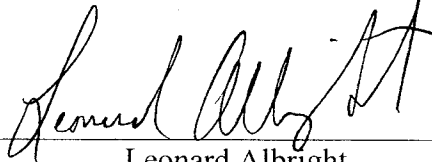
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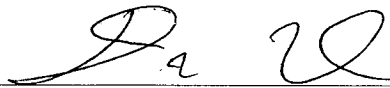
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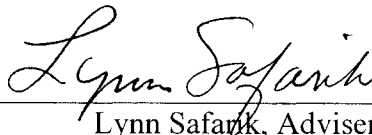
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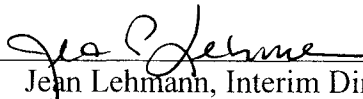
Don Quick



Kenneth Smith



Lynn Safarik, Adviser



Jean Lehmann, Interim Director

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

JITERNICE AND KOLACHES:

FOOD AND IDENTITY IN WILSON, KANSAS

This dissertation is a case study of the development and uses of personal and social identity in a small town (less than 1000 people) in north-central Kansas. Through the use of interviews, observation, document analysis, and analysis of material objects, it examines the tension between modernity and tradition as the town of Wilson, Kansas attempts to form an ethno-historical identity for both internal and external consumption.

Wilson, Kansas is a town with a significant proportion of its population that is ethnically Czech. The town is attempting to use its primary ethnic background, Czech, and historical nature to deal with economic and demographic problems caused by its location away from major transportation infrastructures and lack of large-scale employers. This study discovered the ways in which the residents were using elements of Czech ethnicity and historical identity to create useful social and personal identities in the face of economic and demographic challenges created by their unique situation.

The core of this dissertation focuses on the primary areas of the After-Harvest Czech Festival, the Midland Hotel, analysis of local cookbooks featuring Czech cooking, and changing meal patterns among local residents to examine the nature of the changing identity of the residents and the town. The four areas examined show the difference between the ways that ethnicity is performed in the public and private space and the way

in which the Midland Hotel functions as a metaphor for the larger changes that are affecting the community.

The amount of time I was able to spend in the field limited the number of directions I could take as well as the depth of analysis in these directions. Any of the areas of analysis in this dissertation could be expanded into full studies on their own. More research is needed on the role of the hotel in the community as this study concentrated more on the food. Comparative studies of Wilson and other communities with similar features could prove helpful as well.

Jeffrey P. Miller
School of Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Spring 2005

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the contributions of my committee. Dr. Lynn Safarik, my advisor, believed in this project from the beginning and was my constant cheerleader and sounding board. From my first foray into Wilson during her qualitative research class to the final draft, she saw the potential in this project and gave me the tools and fortitude to see it through. She told when it was good and when it was awful, for that I am extremely grateful. Dr. Ken Smith was a friend, confidant, and supporter from the beginning as well. A friendly voice within my own department, he gave me the room to work on a doctorate at the expense of his own time and projects. Dr. Len Albright gave me moral support and directed me away from some of the bad ideas I had early on in this process. As I frequently tell my own students, knowing what you don't want is as important as knowing what you do want. Dr. Albright helped me find what I wanted to do and helped me get to the end point. And last, though certainly not least, Dr. Don Quick. Don's door was always open to me and his input, editing skills, and friendship have helped make this project what it is today. He is an incredible helpmeet to graduate students in the School of Education and I thank him for all of us.

In my own department, Dr. Chris Melby, my department head, gave me constant support and encouragement. Dr. Susan Baker came by my office frequently to make sure my head was still above water and encourage me to keep swimming. The rest of the faculty and staff were always ready with the encouraging word.

On the home front, I need to thank my parents who have been totally supportive of me; financially, emotionally, logistically, as I worked my way through a number of college degrees. They believed in me from the beginning and have been ready to provide all types of support. Right to the end, when they read this manuscript and offered helpful suggestions, they were always there for me.

I saved the biggest thanks for last. To my wife, Nora, thanks for keeping everything going while I went to class at night, spent the better part of a summer in Wilson, and cloistered myself to write. Without her support, this would have never happened. She allowed me the time and space to get this done. She cheered me on when I was down and gave helpful input when I was stymied. Her support was paramount.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Place of Stone.....	1
The Problem.....	4
Importance of the Study.....	5
Background of the Study	7
Rationale for the Study	8
Social Identity	10
Economics and Small Towns.....	12
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Identity	15
Personal and Social Identity.....	15
Ethnic Identity.....	17
The New Ethnicity	24
Food and Identity	27
Heritage Tourism	32
CHAPTER 3 – METHOD	38
The Research Questions.....	41
Formulation of the Research Design.....	42
Epistemological Stance	43
Researcher Perspective	45
Conceptual Framework	46
Ethnography	48
The Importance of Fieldwork	50
Site Selection	51
Data Collection	53
Interviewing	53

Participant Observation.....	56
Material Artifacts.....	57
Theoretical Sampling.....	58
Selection of Participants.....	59
Grounded Theory Analysis.....	61
Constant Comparison.....	62
Coding Procedures.....	64
CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS.....	68
Expressions of Czechness in Wilson, Kansas.....	70
The Modern and the Traditional.....	74
Czech Foodways in the Personal Sphere.....	77
Health Concerns with Traditional Czech Foods.....	77
Modern Tastes and Traditional Czech Foods.....	79
Preservation of Traditional Czech Foodways in the Personal Sphere.....	82
Czech Food and the Public Sphere.....	84
Food at the Czech Festival.....	88
Making Kolache.....	88
Making Jiternice.....	92
The Meal at the Parish Hall.....	99
Czech Food as Expressed Through Cookbooks.....	101
The Midland Hotel.....	111
CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION.....	115
Ethnic Identity in Wilson.....	115
Historical Identity in Wilson.....	118
Tradition in Wilson.....	120
Ethno-Historical Identity in Wilson.....	121
Suggestions for Further Study.....	124
The Midland Hotel.....	124
Other Czech Towns in the Midwest.....	126
Sausage Makers of Rural Kansas.....	127
REFERENCES.....	129
APPENDIX: PILOT STUDY.....	143

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

“Kansas is the most quintessential of American states. It is, after all where Superman and Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz grew up, and all the towns I went through had a cozy, leafy, timeless air to them.”

The Lost Continent, Bill Bryson, 1989, p. 213

A Place of Stone

Underlying much of north-central Kansas is a thick layer of Greenhorn limestone. When you extract it from the earth it will fracture in smooth angular pieces. In a frontier landscape devoid of trees, this easily worked rock became the building material of choice. The pale limestone became grand buildings, humble sheds, roadbeds, even fence posts. As you drive the county roads of north-central Kansas, it is not unusual to be driving on road made from the crushed rock, the road demarcated by the square limestone fence posts and flanked on both sides by the ghosts of the prairie, the four-square stone houses once proudly occupied by farmers or ranchers, now abandoned, but still standing, defying the elements after more than one hundred years. When the road takes you into one of the towns connected by these dusty roads, often many of the commercial buildings are made from the local stone as well. The buildings are usually designed in a style known as American Vernacular. According to Kemp (1987), American Vernacular refers to a type of architecture common in late nineteenth and early twentieth century rural America. Stylistic influences popular in urban areas came more slowly to rural America and were often amalgamated in a single structure. When a building is not purely of one

style or another, it is referred to as vernacular. In this part of Kansas, one building may show the influence of as many as a half dozen styles of architecture including late Victorian, Richardson Romanesque, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Italianate (Historic District Application, 2003.)

When you leave Interstate 70, as it crosses the plains of Kansas, at exit 205, you turn south through a microcosm of the central Kansas landscape. Stone fence posts mark out fields that hold grazing cattle, fields planted to the main cash crops of Kansas – milo, wheat, soybeans and corn, fields given over to oil crickets lazily pumping out a few barrels of crude a day, here and there a modest farmhouse or two. About two miles from the interstate, you see the trees that define the boundary of a town. In this part of the prairie, trees tend to be a sign of the presence of humans. A few cottonwoods and willows grow naturally in the stream beds and the occasional hillside will hold a bit of scrub oak or sumac in its lea, but most of the Great Plains is dressed only in the native grasses and shrubby low plants that have symbolized this rippling land for eons. Humans are the bringers of trees and where they do not plant them, they are few.

Sheltered beneath these trees is the town of Wilson. As you turn off the state highway leading from the interstate you pass a sign that reads *Vitame Vas*.¹ True to the identity of the region, vernacular stone buildings make up most of the business district. Buildings have stone lintels supporting windows, stone foundations, and large limestone steps worn concave by generations of footsteps lead into them. As you drive the two main arteries of Wilson you begin to notice subtle differences from other small towns around it. Most of the buildings are occupied, not vacant. Some of the signs in the businesses in town are written in Czech. There is a steady stream of people in and out of the bank, the

¹ *Vitame Vas* is Czech for “We Welcome You”.

grocery, the gas station, the post office. Noticeable in their restored state are the *fin de siècle* Midland Hotel and the Czech Opera House (known locally as the *Sokol*), both hewn from Greenhorn limestone quarried just outside of town. The town is tidy, and while the pace is relaxed, there is a palpable vitality to the town.

While Wilson is luckier than many of its neighbors in exuding a certain level of vitality, it faces most of the challenges that small areas far from urban aggregation face. The lack of employment opportunities, centralization of means of distribution, amalgamation of financial institutions and infrastructure organizations, channelization of transportation arteries, shrinking tax bases, and stagnant (or even negative) growth in agricultural incomes in outlying areas, what Ray (1998) refers to as the polarization of economic power in favor of the urban, are examples of the problems that lead to shrinking populations in small towns distant from the American urban agglomeration.

Wilson has experienced all of these problems to one degree or another. When the railroad no longer stopped in town and America's main east-west highway, US 40, was decommissioned, they were not replaced with the interstate. The planners of the interstate chose to route the superhighway two miles to the north, avoiding the construction problems proximity to population brings. The closing of the local lumberyard and hardware stores did not bring a Home Depot. In fact, very few business closures in the town have been met with some replacement of like kind. Wilson doesn't have a drug store, a shoe store, a hardware store, a grain dealer, a lumber yard, or many other of the businesses it once had, the businesses that keep a small town in an agricultural area viable. Population has declined by about twenty percent, from a high of around 1200, in

the middle of the twentieth century, to the current level of approximately 950. School enrollments continue to decline, even with consolidation.

The Problem

The question then arises, why do towns like Wilson deal better with the vicissitudes of the global economy and demographic/economic realities than other, similar towns? Wilson faces as many challenges as most sub – one thousand population towns, possibly more. So why is this town surviving and thriving in the face of what are certainly overwhelming odds?

Most state governments express an interest in helping maintain the viability of the smaller communities within their borders. Resources of various types are made available to these communities in an attempt to foster their economic development. Various agencies of state government channel these resources through their departments of agriculture, councils on economic development, and state tourism boards (Moser and Wessen, 1999.) While these resources can be helpful to most communities, they vary in their effectiveness. What may be able to make the critical difference is what these communities bring to the process themselves.

The general goal of this dissertation is to study how various factors related to food, society, and identity are utilized in the sustenance of community in a single town. Using the ethnographic case study approach, I propose to examine how one small rural community in north-central Kansas uses the resource of food to symbolize their cultural identity and attempt to increase understanding of how it is used as a preservation mechanism against outside forces, as a way to give the community a source of internal cohesion, and as a way to stimulate economic activity by bringing in dollars from outside

the community. In doing this, I intend to examine issues of identity, ethnicity, food, and heritage tourism to see how these issues interplay in the community of Wilson.

Importance of the Study

Eating is not purely a biological act. Food does more than sustain a physical body. Food provides symbolic nourishment to the eater as well. Food is an important element in a person's construction of a meaning and a context for themselves (Shortridge & Shortridge, 1998.) Couhnihan and Van Estrik (1997) go so far as to claim that food "holds the key to any culture" (p. 2). While these authors may be using hyperbole to make a point, it is not far-fetched to claim that food is a fundamental part of cultural identity. Mintz (1996) tells us that consumption is always conditioned by meaning. The foods we eat and the manner in which we preserve, prepare, and serve them are all invested with meaning at some level. The study of what food is eaten and how it is prepared, served, and consumed gives us valuable insights into the community that performs these acts.

For much of the twentieth century food scholarship was conducted primarily in the realms of anthropology and nutrition. The study of food practices has been a mainstay in anthropology for most of its existence as a discipline. One of the great scholars of the early part of the twentieth century, Margaret Mead, worked in both nutrition and anthropology and in many ways her scholarship represents the beginning of the food studies movement. Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century scholars from other disciplines began to use food as the lens with which to view the structures of society (Levi-Strauss, 1965; Bourdieu, 1984), politics, (Mintz, 1985, 1996), material culture (Braudel, 1973), and cultural systems (Douglas, 1975.) Scholars are now starting

to approach food from multidisciplinary points of view and present their work under the banner of food studies.

Scholars in many disciplines have explored food as a signifier of power, communication, social relationships, and ethnicity. One area in which a good deal of work has been done recently is on foods in the context of identification (Fischler, 1988; Gabaccia, 1998, Wilk, 2002.) Scholliers (2001), in his book *Food, Drink, and Identity*, enumerates the large number and wide range of disciplines in the social sciences where important work has been done regarding food and identity. Much of this work on food and identity is attributed to the “cultural turn” in the social sciences that began in the last two decades of the twentieth century. The cultural turn in the social sciences is an outgrowth of the postmodern approach to research and analysis. Rather than relying on grand unifying theories, meta-narrative, and empirical enumeration, more emphasis is placed on the “minutiae of everyday life ... and a willingness to engage with issues of personal identity and culture” (Fitzgerald, n.d). Cultural identity is expressed through a multiplicity of practices such as religion, literature, art, music, social ritual and activity, language, and, of course, food (Bhugra, 1999.) Atkins and Bowler (2001) describe this cultural turn, as it relates to food, as an acknowledgement of the “socially, culturally, politically, and economically imbedded nature” of food practices. By observing cultural practices and preferences revolving around food we may be able to gain valuable insights regarding personal and collective identity (Koc and Walsh, 2002.) Fischler (1988) argues that “food makes the eater” (p. 282) and that food allows us to realize who we are, who we are not, and who we would like to be. Food scholar Cara De Silva (1996) put it quite eloquently when she said,

Food is who we are in the deepest sense, and not because it is transformed into blood and bone. Our personal gastronomic traditions – what we eat, the foods and foodways we associate with the rituals of childhood, marriage, and parenthood, moments around the table, celebrations – are critical components of our identity. (p. xxvi)

Background of the Study

Czech culture, heritage, and foodways² have not been comprehensively documented in American scholarship. Emigration from the Hapsburg Empire to America was not as extensive as it was from other areas of Europe. Emigration from the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Italy, Russia, Germany, and Poland all outweighed the relatively small number of immigrants from Austro-Hungary. By the time the Bohemians and Moravians (as people from the Czech Republic were then known) began to arrive in significant numbers, the large wave of emigration from the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Germany was beginning to fade. The industrial revolution began providing more jobs in these countries after the middle of the nineteenth century, relieving land pressures, so there was less reason for people from these countries to seek livelihoods across the Atlantic (Prchal, 2004.)

Stirrings of independence began in Bohemia and Moravia in the early 1800's and climaxed with the European wars of independence in 1848. When these uprisings failed, people began to lose hope and many, especially the landless, began to emigrate to the United States. Political problems within the Hapsburg Empire continued until the end of World War One, though some reforms in the 1870's slowed the pace of emigration for about twenty years. Emigration picked up again in the 1890's and continued steadily

² Foodways is a term used to describe the selection, preparation, and consumption of food in the group(s) being described. Camp (1989) argues for the broadest possible use of the term, using it to refer to all cultural aspects of food.

until Czechoslovakia was declared an independent state in 1918, which signaled the end of significant emigration from that country to the United States. (Shortridge, 1995.)

After 1870, the largest numbers of Bohemian immigrants came to the Midwest. Prior to this most Bohemian immigrants settled in urban areas like Chicago, which became known for its concentration of Czechs, whose late nineteenth century presence can still be noted in a few, but significant, extant place names like Pilsen and Cermak. In the second wave of Czech migration, post-1870, the pattern generally was to come to Chicago or St. Louis and then fan out to various Bohemian colonies across the upper and lower Midwest. While the largest number of second wave Bohemians eventually settled in Nebraska and in Texas, there were several significant colonies in Kansas as well. The best documented studies of Czechs (Bohemians) immigration to the United States are of the groups in Nebraska and Texas; Kansas has fared less well (Biroczi, 2003.)

There were two major concentrations of Bohemian settlement in Kansas. The first area of Bohemian settlement was in far north central Kansas in Republic and Washington counties along the Nebraska border. The second, in Ellsworth County along the Kansas Pacific railroad, is Wilson. Wilson eventually became the largest Bohemian colony in the state and, along with the neighboring communities of Holyrood and Ellsworth, has become the center of Czech (Bohemian) heritage in the state of Kansas today (Shortridge, 1995.)

Rationale for the Study

From the historical perspective, documentation is always important. Since the promoted heritage of Wilson is Czech, and Czech foods are well outside the trio of ethnic cuisines most familiar to American eaters (Chinese, Italian, and Mexican), it becomes

even more important to document the foodways of this community and understand how this culinary heritage fits into the warp and weave of the daily life of its citizens, both personally and in the realm of business. As mentioned earlier, the cultural turn in the social sciences has shown us the importance of understanding what goes in everyday life and what happens in specific times, locations, and situations. Globalization can have the effect of displacing local cultural heritage and traditions. Preserving local culture and heritage must become a priority. Tradition is significant, as Mihaly Hoppál (n.d.), the director of the European Folklore Institute says, “cultural traditions and folklore have preserved the elements necessary for expressing the identity of many ethnic groups” (§ 3). In addition, he says that customs and rites of various groups “make up a treasure trove of common knowledge for mankind” (§ 2)

Wilson is unusual in its setting, history, and ethnic background. Documenting the small and specific is a useful exercise in that it adds evidence for analysis of larger issues by focusing on actual individuals and communities. Meta-narratives have lost much of their power to convince in the postmodern era. By focusing on local contexts we can experience much more of the diversity of human experience.

As noted earlier, some research has been done about the Czech communities in places like Pennsylvania (Vasek, 1996), Illinois (Bicha, 1971), Texas (Hannan, 1996) and Nebraska (Screws, 2002). Literature about the Czech experience in Kansas is virtually non-existent. With the exception of a few references in historical surveys (Shortridge, 1995) and the occasional personal history (Swehla, 1915), there is little documentation of the town of Wilson and the Czech influence on its development and current status. While this dissertation is not meant to be a comprehensive historical survey, nor a quantitative

survey of food consumption or tourist behaviors, it should fill a need in recording oral history in the town and give future researchers some assistance in understanding the ways in which a town such as Wilson can use food and other elements of their culture as a way to preserve their cultural identity and perhaps even use that identity as method for helping to preserve a unique cultural outpost. In order to try to come up with an understanding of how Wilson uses food and ethnicity as a mechanism for cultural preservation, it will be necessary to look at a number of areas in relation to food, identity, small town economics, and heritage tourism.

Social Identity

I felt issues of identity would be fundamental when examining the community of Wilson. Since Wilson promotes itself as the “Czech Capital of Kansas” it is crucial to examine this community in the context of a group identity. Issues of identity are central to people’s lives. Identity is a complex concept, but one that is critical in self-understanding. Levine (2003) describes it as a collection of characteristics that make us self-aware of who we are. It has been theorized that without a firm sense of identity, most people lack a sense of autonomy and agency (Côté and Levine, 2002). Erickson (1980), a well-known mid-twentieth century scholar in the area of identity, championed the idea that identity is a construct with many aspects, including internal and external perspectives. One of the important concepts to arise from Erickson’s work is the idea that people have both a personal (internal) and a social (external) identity. This idea has been accepted widely in the field, though the term group identity has come to supplant the term social identity in the works of later authors (Schwartz, 2001).

Personal identity consists of value sets, beliefs, and other similar aspects that distinguish us from others. Social, or group, identity is the internalization of elements that have been gathered from the group or groups to which a person belongs (Erickson, 1980). Content areas within the constructed group identity are often referred to as domains (Grotevant, 1992). Ethnic identity is frequently recognized by scholars as one of the domains in the group identity of an individual (Phinney and Rosenthal, 1992). Ethnicity is a product of acknowledged difference between groups (Mintz and Dubois, 2002.) Food products and cuisines are significant aspects of ethnic identity formation.

Food and Identity

This issue goes to the heart of my second research question, which examines the question of gastronomic identity. One of the most significant badges of identity is food. We make many assumptions about people's diets based on who they claim to be and, conversely, we make many assumptions about who people are based on what they eat. Webster's dictionary (1995) defines gastronomy as "culinary custom or style." Richards (2002) asserts that "gastronomy has become a significant source of identity formation in postmodern societies" (p.3.) It should not surprise us that food is one of the most common markers of identity, as Sidney Mintz has noted, "The drive for food is more powerful than the sex drive, but we don't pay attention to it, because we're fed three times a day" (Ruark, 1999, p.A-7.) Food is used as a marker of gender, religion, nationality, class; in short a marker of almost any way we choose to identify ourselves or others.

Food is a typical marker of one's ethnicity or ethnic identity. Food associations are one of the easiest ways to mark a person's membership in the group. Where

populations of ethnic or national groups gather outside their native land, one of the first institutions that appear are those that provide food, either in raw form – groceries, or in prepared forms – restaurants. Often these institutions are among the last survivors when a population moves on or assimilates. Obvious examples of this abound in metropolitan areas like New York City where the restaurant Rao's survives in a part of Harlem that was at one time Italian but is now occupied by Hispanics and African-Americans. The Lower East Side of New York may not have been an enclave of Jewish people of Eastern European origin for some time, but a good number of what might be termed signature Jewish food stores (bagel stores, pickle merchants, kosher delicatessens) still dot a neighborhood that has become home, since the dispersion of Jewish residents to the various boroughs, to a number of different immigrant groups, youth counter-culture groups, and now, colonizing professional New Yorkers looking for some of the last stands of affordable real estate in Manhattan.

Identity foods are used in many ways in the rapidly globalizing marketplace. While the spread of chains like McDonald's has typified the spread of a homogenized global style of food products and consumption habits, indeed spawning a new adjective, McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993), the typical foods of most cultures are far from being permanently swept away in its wake. These foods provide a link to people's cultural heritage even if they no longer are eaten as a primary source of nourishment or consumed regularly.

Economics and Small Towns

With the loss of important infrastructure such as schools, small businesses, and other standard symbols of identity in a small town, having a unique cuisine can be a

marketing tool that continues to focus attention on the community. Across America, rural economies face the problems of loss of existing businesses, concentration of retail in larger communities, shortages of human resources and training for workplace development, and a shortage of institutional leadership (Mosser & Wessen, 1999). Agriculture is being consolidated with the number of farms shrinking and their size growing. In the last two decades nearly a fourth of the farms in America have either gone out of production or been merged into a larger property (Barkema & Drabenstott, 1996). These factors are causing demand for elements of the rural infrastructure to fall below sustainable levels in many areas as larger farms bypass local trade centers to do business in larger, regional trade centers and economic resources become concentrated in these centers.

While many small towns cope with the loss of precious resources and infrastructure, some towns are able to maintain levels of service, investment, population, etc. more effectively than other towns. On the surface it would appear towns that do not enjoy obvious advantages in this situation, i.e. the presence of a county seat, proximity to a large extractive resource, proximity to a major transportation hub, etc. are all playing on an approximately level field. Yet some of these towns are coping with the adversity of the situation better than others. Some towns are able to maintain a certain level of public services (e.g., schools, shopping, etc.) better than others that are similar in resources, geography, and demographic profile. By examining these problems and Wilson's response to them, we may be able to learn valuable lessons that may have wider application.

Cultural and Heritage Tourism

Since I looked at how the community of Wilson promotes its gastronomic identity as a bridge to the outside world through promotion of tourism, it was necessary for me to look at tourism as creator of income. I specifically examined the growing phenomenon of cultural or heritage tourism as a potential mechanism for the community to bring more dollars into the community.

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (Hughes, 1995.) In 2000, travel and tourism contributed \$584.3 billion to the U.S. economy. Travel and tourism is the third largest retail industry in the United States after automobile dealerships and food stores. Tourism supports nearly 8 million jobs directly and another 11 million jobs indirectly (National Trust, 2004). Within the tourism industry, heritage and cultural tourism are among the fastest areas of growth (Chhabra, 2001). Heritage tourism is defined as trips for the purpose of exploring “culture, arts, history, or heritage” (Hartley, n.d.) Interest in traveling to spots that offer some sort of historical, cultural, artistic, or religious points of interest, as opposed to traditional “sun and sand” destinations, is growing. Between 1996 and 2003, cultural and heritage tourism grew 10% in the United States (Hartley, n.d.). Rural America with its small towns of unique character lend themselves well to the promotion of heritage tourism. In this dissertation, I examined the character of Wilson to see how Czech identity is used in relation to heritage tourism.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

“Tell me what you eat and I shall tell you what you are.”

Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1949, p. 1

The review of literature will focus on areas of identity, ethnicity, food as a signifier of ethnicity and identity, small towns in America (particularly in the Midwest) and the economic problems they face, and the burgeoning phenomenon of heritage tourism.

Identity

Personal and Social Identity

Identity is a complex concept related to a person's internal knowledge of their self and their external social role. Adams and Marshall, define identity as “a social-psychological construction that reflects *social influences* through imitation and identification processes and *active self-construction* in the creation of what is important to self and others” (cited in Serafini & Adams, 2002, p.433). Serafini and Adams go on to state that identity performs five functions in humans. These are “(a) the structure for *understanding* who one is, (b) to provide *meaning and direction* through commitments, values, and goals, (c) to provide a sense of *personal control* and free will, (d) to provide *consistency, coherence, and harmony* between values, beliefs, and commitments, and (e) to provide the ability to *recognize potential* in the form of future possibilities and alternative choices” (p. 362 – 363, italics in original).

Issues of identity are central to people's lives. Freud was one of the first scholars in psychology to address issues of self-definition. Freud posited that most issues of identity were settled by the end of the oedipal conflict, during the creation of what he termed the super-ego. Later scholars, such as Erikson, extended identity formation beyond the childhood years suggesting that there are a number of facets to identity and that identity was not a fixed construct but rather a moving one, one that has any number of inputs both conscious and unconscious (as cited in Schwartz, 2001.)

Erikson's (1968) concept of identity has numerous aspects. His theory includes the idea that there are cognitive, moral, social and cultural domains of identity. Schwartz (2001) uses the term *social-structural* to describe the domain of identity that is influenced by social aspects of society and culture. When a person integrates elements from groups to which they feel they belong into their own vision of themselves, they are said to have begun to form a *social identity*. Scholars such as Côté (1996) describe a similar phenomenon, calling it *group identity*. In Erikson's work, the development of a social (or group) identity is an important part of identity consolidation that is part of a workable adult identity.

Snarey and Bell (2003) emphasize the importance of environmental influences in a person's identity. They argue that cultural influences are one way that a person makes sense of life experience and therefore aid in the formation of identity. Berzonsky (2003) supports this argument by noting that identity is formed, in part, by "the self interacting in the world" (p.238).

Adams (1997) feels that the process of becoming part of a larger group, i.e., a family, society, or culture, a process he labels *integration*, is part of a process of healthy

identity development. Schwartz (2001) discusses the literature of choice in making the decision to integrate elements from groups in the formation of an individual's identity. Schwartz cites a number of reasons to select elements of group identity to incorporate into an individual identity including desire to individuate, self-determination, and the desire to belong.

Brown (2000), in his discussion of social identity theory makes the point that theoreticians in this area start from the assumption that social identity is "derived primarily from group memberships" (p. 747). He goes on to state that a favorable comparison between the desired in-group and other out-groups is a powerful motive for an individual to identify with a group. We interact in the world by participating in groups. Group participation comes from various areas in our lives. We interact at work and school, we interact with friends in a social capacity, and we interact with family and others we perceive to be like ourselves via some sort of heritage connection. (This list is not meant to be exhaustive by any means, but rather illustrative of the ways in which we can choose group affiliation and interaction.)

Individuals often define themselves in terms of ethnicity. Individuals form a part (either large or small) of their identity based on their perceived membership in an ethnic group (Schwartz, 2001). Most individuals, at some time in their life, participate in some type of exploration of their ethnicity that in turn leads to internal consolidation of ethnic identity (Kester & Marshall, 2003).

Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity is one of the central themes of the modern American experience (Alba, 1990). As globalization and homogenization of culture create a feeling of uneasiness

with life in the present, people look backward for mental comfort and find comfort in their ethnic roots. Esser (1998) theorizes that as our society becomes more mobile, both socially and geographically, traditional perceptions and expressions of ethnic identity become eroded. As people become third, fourth, fifth, and higher generation immigrants there may be a return to one's ethnic roots as a form of expression of identity. Marcus Hansen, one of the earliest theorists in the area of the revival of ethnic identity among later generations, was quoted by Herberg (1960) as saying "what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember" (p.30).

This view is echoed in current discussions regarding ethnicity and is often expressed as a reaction to loss. While early generations (typically the first and second) are concerned with becoming Americans, later generations feel comfortable with their identity as Americans and feel a sense of loss at the discontinuance of the ethnic practices that marked the original immigrants and their forebearers in the old country. To assuage this feeling of loss, they attempt to reclaim their ethnic identity and the rituals, practices, and objects that go with them (Kvisto & Blanc, 1990).

Some scholars go so far as to claim that positive attitudes regarding a person's own ethnicity are critical to a healthy psychological profile. Phinney (2003) states, "The concept of ethnic identity provides a way of understanding the need to assert oneself in face of threat to one's identity" (p. 73).

The term *ethnic* is derived from the Greek words *ethnos*, meaning race or people and *ethnikos*, meaning custom or culture. Both of these roots are important when defining ethnic groups. Generally speaking, when we discuss ethnic identity we are referring to an individual perception and experience of a real or perceived common origin

and the distinct culture (either currently existing or believed to have existed in the past) that is associated with it.

In academic research, the term *ethnic identity* is used in different ways by different scholars. Some authors offer a broad definition of the term, while others offer a more limited one. Epstein (1978) defines ethnicity as “a sense of collective identity, the consciousness of belonging to a group that exists in time” (p. 122). This definition of ethnicity does not require an individual to have some type of linear credential to participate in a feeling of ethnic identity. Other researchers take a more restrictive view of ethnicity. Fearon and Laitin (2000) write that ethnic identities are “understood to be defined mainly by descent (natal) rules of group membership and content typically composed of cultural attributes, such as religion, language, customs, and shared historical myths” (p. 848). A good middle ground definition is that offered by Max Weber in his classic treatise, *Economy and Society*. Weber defines an ethnic group as one where members “entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because memories of colonization and migration” (1968, p. 389). Weber emphasizes the subjective nature of ethnic identity by saying that an “objective blood relationship” need not exist for an individual to claim the identity (1968, p. 389). While ancestry is still considered to be one of the stronger indicators of ethnicity, “ethnic identity need not be coterminus with ancestry” (Alba, 1990, p. 37) to be a valid identification.

There are various models for understanding how ethnic identity is formed within an individual. Two standard approaches are typified by the Isajiw model and the Bernal and Knight model. Isajiw (1990) uses a two-dimensional framework to describe the

formation of ethnic identity. The two dimensions in Isajiw's theory are internal and external. The internal dimension is comprised of the affective, cognitive, and moral aspects of a person's ethnic self-image. The affective aspect relates to an individual's attachment to the ethnic group in question. The cognitive aspect refers to various images (history, values, etc.) the individual has of the ethnic group they identify with. The moral aspect refers to any sense of moral obligation the person feels toward the group. In Isajiw's model, external dimensions of ethnic identity refer to discernible behaviors such as use of language, participation in ethnically themed activity, and consumption of ethnic products and culture.

Bernal and Knight (1993) use a multi-dimensional model to define the formation of an individual's ethnic identity. In the Bernal and Knight model, three variables come together to define the ethnic identity. The first of these is self-identification. A person must make an active identification with the ethnic group in question at some level. The second variable in this model is a person's knowledge about the ethnic culture. Included in this base are knowledge of traditions, behaviors, customs, and values. A favorable assessment of these characteristics will predispose the person making the consideration toward making the ethnic identification. The third dimension is how the person balances positive and negative attitudes toward the group with whom they want to identify. This can be influenced not only by internal factors, but through external factors such as societal prejudices and opinions that the identifier feels are exhibited toward people of that group. Alba, a scholar in what has been termed the "new ethnicity", points out that for much of the twentieth century research in the area of ethnicity was focused on

differences and inequalities between ethnic groups and not the “voluntary commitments” (1990, p. xiv.) that arise from a self-consciousness about a person’s place in society.

In the first three quarters of the twentieth century, ethnicity and ethnic identity were primarily viewed through two lenses, the assimilationist and the pluralist (Yancey, Ericksen & Juliani, 1976.) The older of these two schools, the assimilationist, was preeminent through the first half of the twentieth century. This view, given its name in popular culture from the title of the 1908 stage play, *The Melting Pot* (Zanger, 1922), voiced the idea that differences between American immigrant groups would melt away, giving rise to a “homogenous new creature called the American” (Schnell, 1998).

Later theorists in ethnicity, the pluralists, asserted that ethnic groups hold on to various elements in their culture while participating in the larger identity of the American. Glazer and Moynihan (1970) argued that the earlier assimilationist viewpoints were not credible, stating “The point about the melting pot...is that it did not happen” (p. xcvi). Barth (1969) argues that ethnic identity is not a fixed, unchanging construction, but rather that it changes all the time, depending on time, interpreter, etc. While Barth argues for the inclusion of the descent element, there is a highly selective element to this view, i.e., people can select elements of ethnicity as it suits them and can create their own individualized ethnic identity based on the pieces they have selected.

Increasing interest in ethnic heritage since the 1960’s may give credence to the pluralist point of view. What Hoeschler (1998) refers to as “today’s exploding interest in ethnic heritage,” may have its roots in various causes, but it is a bonafide phenomenon. In the 1980 census people were asked, for the first time, to identify their ancestry. Eighty-three percent of non-black, non-Hispanic respondents gave “some kind of ethnic

response” (Waters, 1990). The question was repeated in the 1990 census, and in that decennial accounting 89% of non-black, non-Hispanic respondents claimed an ethnic affiliation (Farley, 1991). Conzen (1990) states that “ethnicity has become fashionable” (p. 245) and Harvey (1989) contends that ethnic heritage is a critical component of the postmodern condition. There is disagreement among scholars as to the cause for this upswing in ethnic identification. Glazer and Moynihan (1970) emphasize the political aspects of the rise in white ethnic identification, noting that revived interest in the topic appeared to rise at the same time as the civil rights movement of the 1950’s and 1960’s and suggest it may have to do with racist sentiments/fears on the part of white Americans. Schnell attributes the phenomenon to the desire to counteract globalization, suburbanization, and other displacements of place-based signifiers of identity, what has been termed the “roots phenomenon” (1998, p. 12).

Toward the end of the twentieth century, scholars on ethnicity began to focus more closely on the aspects of choice in ethnic identity. One of these perspectives has been termed *circumstantialism*. One of the theorists associated with this perspective, David Bell (1975) explained the increased emphasis on ethnic identity as a result of social circumstance. Bell felt ethnic identity was “a strategic choice by individuals who, in other circumstances, would choose other group membership as means of gaining some power and privilege” (1975, p. 17) that the existing social structure has somehow denied them. This phenomenon of active identity choice has been noted in areas other than ethnicity. In her examination of early American evangelical religion, *Southern Cross, The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, Christine Heyerman (1997) examines the way in which early converts to the Baptist and Methodist faiths chose an active family identity within

their new church to the detriment of existing natal family connections. Peterson (1980) describes this as an organizational impulse to get some economic or political privilege that is distributed based on some types of criteria. This may be a practical viewpoint if one views race and ethnicity together or if one examines ethnicity from the political perspective.

When Cornell and Hartmann (1998) describe the circumstantialist school, they emphasize the utilitarian nature of the association with ethnic identity on the part of the participant. Social and historical situations, they feel, cause people to band together under the banner of ethnic identity. Participants feel they can promote their own self interest more effectively under this banner. While this is an intuitively appealing perspective, it can be criticized as a too passive viewpoint in examining ethnic identity. It suggests a simple cause and effect mechanism for creation of an ethnic identity and leaves little room for discussion of degrees of ethnic identification.

What may also be helpful when looking at the construction of ethnic identity in the twenty first century is the idea of *constructivism* in the creation of collective identity. Studies in identity in the last quarter of the twentieth century focused increasingly on the importance of agency and self-direction (Cerulo, 1997) especially in the examination of types of collective identity. The constructionist approach sees ethnicity as a variable product of interactions between circumstances groups encounter and the actions and conceptions of the group members regarding these circumstances. In this view, ethnic groups actively make and remake their identities continuously (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). Rosenthal and Cichello (1986) support this concept, describing ethnic identity as “dynamic, fluctuating in intensity, importance, and evaluation, depending on context” (p.

487). While the constructivist view of ethnicity is gaining momentum in many academic fields, it is not without its critics. Yang (2000) objects to it claiming it ignores the natal or ancestral element which is integral to definitions of ethnicity. The constructionist view of ethnicity, based primarily in an interactionist footing, may give inadequate attention to external elements such as politics and economics, which have shaped more traditional definitions of ethnic identity. One of the sterner critics of the constructionist viewpoint, Hiebert (2000), feels that the large amount of flexibility and variability in this model make it impossible to develop a systematic account of ethnic identity.

The New Ethnicity

A number of scholars have commented on the “ethnic revival” that has been occurring among white Americans of European descent since the 1960’s (Alba, 1990, Gans, 1979, Steinberg, 1989, Stein & Hill, 1977). Among the skeptics are Stein and Hill (1997) who used the phrase “dime-store ethnicity” (p.22) to dismiss the phenomenon and Herbert Gans (1979), who claimed that there has been no ethnic revival of substance. Stein and Hill claimed that the new ethnics choose a grandparent to identify with, thus they are shopping for an ethnicity much as one would make a purchase at a dime-store. The assertion is that the dime-store ethnicity is spurious because it is chosen and displayed self-consciously. Gans makes the argument that the new ethnicity is a token or symbolic nod to the past. Gans characterizes this alleged revival in identity as:

nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation ... a love or and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior, ...(but is) cleansed of the complexities that accompanied them in the real past. (p. 9)

In the Gans thesis, the new ethnics may parade their ethnicity at holidays and festivals, but the invocation of it is a voluntary act, the donning of a subjective identity

for chosen occasions. For Gans, and the other critics of the ethnic revival among descendents of white European immigrants, this “nostalgic allegiance” is of little importance socially and behaviors resulting from it are not authentic due to their voluntary and subjective natures.

Waters (1990) and Alba (1990), noted researchers in the area of ethnicity, agree with the idea that a portion of the new ethnic revival for whites of European descent is symbolic and that it is subjective and voluntary. But they do not dismiss it lightly merely because it is symbolic. Waters (1990) finds it an important phenomenon to investigate because a) it stems from two cardinal (and paradoxical) dimensions of the “American character” – a quest for community and a desire for an individual identity and b) it is an ideological ‘fit’ with racist beliefs (p. 147). Steinberg (1981) wrote in support of the second part of the phenomenon, arguing that much of the ethnic revival among white Americans was in reaction to the consciousness-raising racial and ethnic activities (festivals, etc.) by non-white Americans as well as the civil-rights movement in general. While the second part of Waters’ thesis is fascinating and deserving of much study, this study is concerned not with the racist origins of white ethnicity, nor with the vagaries of the concept of authenticity, another topic that could launch a thousand dissertations. What I will explore is the importance of the quest for community and the desire for individual identity. It is in this realm that the examination of symbolic identity becomes important. While many may argue about the tenor and depth of the symbolic nature of ethnicity, it is from this point that I will narrow the discussion of identity.

While Gans and others use the term symbolic in a denigrating fashion, there is much to be learned from the symbolic nature of identity. Since identity is so often

marked by “translation, interpretation, and, often, negotiation” (Kravva, p. 3), an examination of the symbolic aspects of it can yield valuable clues as to how people perceive themselves, others, and the interrelationship between the two. Most discussions of the term identity, as we have seen earlier, include elements of synthesis when examining identity formation. Selection of elements to use in this synthesis are often made because of their symbolic value to the chooser. Cassirer (1944, cited in Strauss, 1995) makes the case that humans live entirely in symbolic universes because they screen all experience through language which post-modern philosophers tell us is primary in our perceptions of the world.

Symbols have more importance than mere representation; they also allow people to create and interpret meaning. As Geertz (1975) asserted, “man is an animal suspended in the webs of significance he himself has spun” (p. 5). The symbols associated with ethnic identity allow people to have a sense of belonging. Communities are important repositories of symbols and a person’s participation in a community allows them access to these symbols. While each person may attribute different meanings to these symbols, the fact that all members of the community are using them is an important part of the cohesiveness of group identity.

Cohen (1985) states that symbols fuse the practical and the meaningful. In his book, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Cohen argues that the symbolic nature of community may be the most crucial aspect of the concept of community. To a large degree a community is defined by its boundaries. When the boundary is threatened, people resort to symbolic behavior to reconstitute the boundary. Given the fragmented nature of the postmodern era, understanding the ongoing nature of boundary construction

via symbolic behavior will remain important. Cohen's view of community as a transactional body as opposed to a structuralist body supports the views of the scholars of ethnic identity noted earlier in this review who argue for the interactionist view of ethnicity.

Food and Identity

Most groups have internal markers or definitions to help identify members. Food, food products, and consumption of food are one the primary sets of products and practices that bind members of groups together. The study of the eating habits and the cultural practices that surround them has been given the topical name foodways. The study of foodways allows us to ask (and hopefully answer) questions about the relationship between food and culture.

Foodways allow members of a group to express identity and cohesion through common consumption and performance of ritual, distinguish in-group from out-group, and celebrate cultural cohesion (Brown & Mussell, 1984). Food acts as both a symbol and an emblem for participants in the group (Bessiere, 1998). Barer-Stein (1999) writes that "food is not only a nostalgic and persistent part of our cultural baggage, but also a symbol of what we are today" (p.ix). Food as a connection to a group can be illustrated in a number of contexts, but the connection made between food and ethnicity is one of the most common.

Sociologists and nutritionists have assumed a link between food and ethnicity for decades (Good, Theopano, & Curtis, 1984). Early anthropologists like Margaret Mead made the food and ethnicity connection as well. As early as the 1940's, nutrition researchers in the United States were focusing on ethnic groups as units of research

analysis in studies of American food consumption habits. Despite the overall growth of personal income and availability of food in the twentieth century, certain parts of the country, especially those hit hardest by the great depression, were grappling with serious nutritional problems. In an effort to solve this crisis there was a good deal of collaboration between nutritionists, anthropologists, and sociologists. These researchers understood that unless sound dietary principles could be aligned with cultural practices and preferences, efforts to improve the American diet would come to naught (Camp, 1989). Much of this research, termed *functionalist* by Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo (1992), was motivated by practical issues such as the allocation of social welfare benefits and food distribution. These early investigations into the diets of the poor and disenfranchised made natural collaborators of sociologists, anthropologists and nutritionists. Functionalists concentrated primarily on food preferences of different cultures, but did some research into the role food played in the maintenance of social structures within various groups.

In the 1960's and 1970's, Claude Levi-Strauss and Mary Douglas opened up the area of study of food as signifier, classifier and identity marker (Scholliers, 2001). Levi-Strauss and Douglas along with Barthes and Fischler (among others) worked in a scholarly vein known as *structuralism*. Structuralists treat food as a sort of language that can be decoded to reveal some "deep structure of thought" (Symons, 1994).

Barthes is a good exemplar of scholars in this vein. As Waters (1990) points out, Barthes enlarged the focus of research from merely inventorying cultural practices to examining the ways in which people constructed and maintained ethnic boundaries. Barthes (in Counihan & Van Estrik, 1997) described food as a "system of

communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior” (p. 21).

Barthes goes on to say that if we are to understand a group we must understand the symbolism they use in relation to food. This body of work, rooted in anthropology, delved into the idea that tastes were culturally shaped and controlled in a relatively structured manner.

Structuralists looked for patterns of food consumption that could be decoded to help us understand particular cultures and societies. Structuralists asked specific questions like why is pork taboo in some cultures and general ones like how some foods attain ritual status. While these are valuable questions to ask, sometimes the answers arising from the structuralists were based in primordial universals, answers that are not always satisfactory given the different ways in which societies view the same foods. One of the most important concepts that came out of structuralism was the idea that food consumption and commensality “express hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries” (Mennel, et. al., 1992). Frequently these boundaries were assumed to be those of social structure, i.e. class. While structuralism expanded the boundaries of the way we look at the food and culture connection, it is somewhat rigid in its structural approach and is limited in its basis in class orientation and social stratification. One of the major deficiencies of this approach is the one-way, top-down determination that food is given meaning. This type of approach may exclude the idea that eating may preclude thought, rather than the opposite.

More recent scholarship in food studies has evolved in what has been termed the *developmentalist* context. Murcott (1988) examined the works of authors taking issue with structuralist approach and described the approach these authors took as

developmental. This view suggests that while food has definite symbolic meanings, these meanings have not developed arbitrarily nor in a broad global manner that can be described by meta-narratives, but rather through specific mechanisms and situations. The developmentalist approach is historical in nature. Scholars in the developmentalist arena ascribe many of the identification aspects of food consumption to historical developments that may have occurred for various ecological, social, or political reasons, but have since become institutionalized as part of an ethnic group's food code. Developmentalists went beyond description and classification to examine the process of eating and drinking. They examined "the preparation, the organization, the taboos, the company, the location, the pleasure, the time, the language, the symbols, the representation, the form, (and) the meaning" (Scholliers, 2001, p.7) of food as ways that people expressed their identities. The developmentalist approach is an important step forward in the area of food studies because of the range of options it offers in analyzing the types and numbers of origins and perpetuations of the symbolic meanings of food in the social context.

The literature on food in the context of identification has grown substantially in the past two decades (Fischler, 1988, Harbottle, 1997, Wilk, 1999). Claude Fischler (1988) makes the statement that "Food is central to our sense of identity" (p. 275). Fischler argues that the principle of incorporation is key to understanding this sense of identity. Fischler's thesis is that as we eat, we nourish our identity. When we eat the foods of the ethnic group we identify with, we create a sense of belonging, a sense of group identity. By eating certain foods we hope to become (or remain) part of the group. When Fischler says "the food makes the eater" (p. 282) he is telling us that incorporation of food into our body helps us realize who we are and what we would like to be. Fischler

goes on to suggest that changes in the current food system (globalization, commoditization of food products, biotechnology, etc.) are causing a crisis in this traditional identification via food, and as result people are suffering a crisis of personal identity. A retreat to the comforts of ethnic food is a way of dealing with this crisis.

Somers (1994) supports the idea that consumption can play a critical part in the creation of a personal identity. In Somers' view, the consumption of goods allows us to locate ourselves in the narratives of the group. When we consume the goods that are identified with a certain group, we act to include ourselves in the group, which in turn helps us find our individual identity.

The folklorist Charles Camp (1989) states that food "is one of the most, if not the single most, visible badges of identity" (p. 29). The literature of food and identification can be found in many disciplines. Studies have been conducted on this topic in anthropology, sociology, nutrition, gender studies, history, folklore, philosophy, geography, American studies, social economy, and material culture (Lentz, 1999; Mintz, 1996; Valentine, 1999; Counihan and Van Estrik, 1997; McIntosh, 1996; Theophano, 2002; Curtin and Heldke, 1992; Pietrykowski, 2004; Korsmeyer, 1999; Yoder 1990 Belasco, 1989; Brown & Mussel, 1984; Braudel, 1973). These authors voice support for the idea that food can be a strong component of identity. Lentz (1999), writing from the discipline of anthropology, makes the claim that food and drink are strong markers of social boundaries. Valentine, a sociologist, feels that consumption of food "plays a critical part in the production of our identities because goods can be used to locate ourselves within narratives that are not of our own making – electing us to a shared form of identification" (p. 491). Writing from the perspective of social economy, Pietrykowski

(2004) writes “food consumption communicates ethnicity, regional affiliation, values (and) aspiration” (p. 311).

The synthesis of these ideas and disciplines was expressed succinctly by Pierre van den Berghe in his 1984 article for *Ethnic and Racial Studies*:

Through the communal and ritualized ingestion of food, we reinforce social bonds and express at the most fundamental level the unity of nature and culture. Our cuisine is the symbolic expression of our sociality, first in the intimate domestic sphere, and by extension with the larger group that shares our specific culinary complex: the inventory of food items, the repertoire of recipes and rituals of commensalisms. Along with language, the food complex thus becomes a basic badge of identity. (p. 392)

Since the 1950s, researchers have been attuned to the importance of the cultural significance of food. Spiro, writing in 1955, made the observation that food preference was one of the earliest signifiers of a group and was one of the most lasting signifiers of a group as well, often standing after other cultural markers had eroded. Richard Alba, in his 1990 exploration of the state of ethnicity in America, *Ethnic Identity*, reported that the eating of “dishes of your ethnic background” was the most frequently reported indicator of ethnically based activity among American born whites in his survey, leading the second most common indicator by nearly twenty percentage points (p. 79).

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing parts of the tourism industry (Kneafsey, 1998; Chhabra, 2001; Hargrove, 2002). The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.” Hall, et al. (1990) describe heritage tourism as “a subset of cultural, ethnic, and educational forms of special interest tourism which includes many aspects of touristic

behavior ranging from the examination of the physical remains of the past to the experience of contemporary cultural traditions.” This boom in heritage tourism coincides with an increase in historical topics and titles available in the mass media. Magazines like *Smithsonian*, *American Heritage*, *Historic Preservation*, and *Early American Life* proliferate on the newsstand. Many cable channels offer large amounts of historical programming, and there is even an entire channel devoted to history, *The History Channel*. In this, the age of specialty journalism, there is even a magazine devoted to heritage tourism specifically, *Historic Traveler*. The combination of the renewed interest in history and the ability of ever greater numbers of people to travel have made heritage tourism a high-growth industry segment (Confer, Pennington-Gray, Thapa & Holland, 2002).

Heritage tourism is a new direction in an industry that has traditionally been devoted to more leisurely pursuits. While tourism has never been strictly about relaxation and leisure, i.e., the sun and sand model, the cultural aspects of tourism are no longer limited to going to museums of fine art, hearing operas or symphonies, and dining at palaces of *haute-cuisine*. Tourists in search of a culturally rewarding holiday are turning in increasing numbers to the local, small, and “authentic” experience. Tourists are visiting smaller and more specialized locales in order to participate in local cultural/heritage events, visit specialized museums, sample the local cuisine, purchase local products, or even just soak up the local atmosphere (Richards, 1996; Ilbery & Kneafsey, 1998).

Heritage tourism destinations tend to be different from more traditional tourist destinations because they occur at places where the object/event of interest is somehow

indigenous, rather than created. Resorts and destination vacations are exemplified by their exogenous creation, laid in place simply to generate tourist revenue. Examples of this would include Disney World and any number of similar attractions. Heritage tourism relies on some type of cultural, historical, or artistic phenomena that is already in place and that is part of the local environment. Hollinshead (1988) describes it as a phenomenon that includes folkloric traditions arts and crafts, ethnic history, social customs, and cultural celebrations. Examples of activities that would come under the heading of heritage tourism include quilt festivals in Utah (Hartley, n.d.), Scottish Highland Game Festivals in North Carolina (Chhabra, 2001), riding the Grand Canyon Railway in Williams, AZ (Davis and Morais, 2004), eating red or green chile in New Mexico (Bentley, 2004), shopping for dala horses in Lindsborg, Kansas (Schnell, 1998), visiting a coal-mining museum in Pennsylvania (Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission, 1995), or participating in folk-dancing at the dance and music festival in Rexsburg, Idaho (Rexsburg Chamber of Commerce, 2005). While a certain amount of heritage tourism activity may happen as an adjunct to more standard forms of tourism, it is also becoming the focus of tourist activity in its own right.

Heritage tourism is based in a combination of desires on the part of many travelers to experience places, landscapes, and environments that are associated with the past. Nostalgia likely plays a large role in the rise of heritage tourism (Zeppel & Hall, 1992). Heritage sites allow people to connect with the past. One frequent reason for undertaking heritage tourism is “seeking connections with ancestors” (Ray, 1998, p. 142). People are also nostalgic about what they perceive as vanished ways of life. There is a common strain in nostalgic thinking that the small town American past was somehow

more virtuous and more cohesive than the urban present. Visiting a heritage tourism site is way to relive some part of this vanished life and leave behind for a time the uncertainties of the present. Crompton (2000) writes that heritage tourism “reminds people of what they once were, who they are, what they are and where they are” (p. 65). While this feeling may be exacerbated by the events of September 11, 2001, and therefore benefit heritage tourism specifically, it is a persistent theme across other parts of the tourism industry as well. Many of the prominent destination travel names such as Disney and various casinos in Las Vegas build replicas of heritage sites as ways to attract visitors to their facilities (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 2002; Hargrove, 2002).

Heritage tourists are desirable captures. According to data compiled by the Travel Industry Association of America and reported by the National Trust (2004) in their Heritage Tourism Report, visitors to historical and cultural attractions spend more per trip (\$631 vs. \$457) and spend more time at the site of visitation (4.7 nights vs. 3.4 nights) than do travelers to more traditional tourist destinations. Heritage tourists are also desirable because they travel year-round, instead of just in traditional vacation periods. This fills in business during off-periods. Heritage tourists also tend to travel to less visited areas and attractions, adding tourist dollars to areas that do not traditionally experience them (Kidd, 1998). In addition, surveys indicate that visitors interested in cultural and historic attractions tend to be more highly educated (54% have completed college and 18% have some sort of postgraduate degree) and have a higher average annual income (\$42,133) than general travelers (Kerstetter, Confer & Graefe, 2001).

Heritage tourism can be particularly valuable to rural areas. Dollars for preservation are difficult to obtain in smaller, more rural areas. Heritage tourism may therefore be able to generate the dollars needed to engage in historic preservation activities. Heritage tourism may also be a generator of employment in these areas that tend to have more unemployment and underemployment. Douglas Baker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism in the U.S Department of Commerce, estimates that every 1000 tourists to a heritage area can create 10 jobs (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 2002.) Heritage tourism is also less asset intensive to inaugurate than traditional resort tourism as the attractions already exist. While some restoration or preservation may be needed and interpretive materials developed, this tends to be less expensive than developing new attractions (Hargrove, 2002).

Heritage tourism may have a cohesive effect on communities. The development and ongoing operation of a heritage tourism site can bring together disparate elements in a community. Clapp (1993) states, “heritage tourism brings together diverse groups and organizations that feel they do not have a common denominator” (p. 3). Feehan (1992) notes that participation in the process of developing and maintaining a heritage site can “regenerate crumbling senses of place identity” and provide communities with “the occasion for a new self reflection: a cultural examination of conscience” (p. 21). Heritage tourism may also provide a valuable tool for reevaluation of a community’s identity. As various pressures – financial, demographic, etc. - take their toll on a community, tourism may provide a way for local identity to be renegotiated allowing for needed progress to occur while maintaining identity aspects needed for cohesion (Black, 1996, Cohen, 1988).

Food is one of the great keys to understanding who people are. As the structuralist school of scholarship in food studies points out, food is often used as a form of communication. One of these forms of communication is the construction and maintenance of social boundaries. Food may be used as a symbolic way to communicate status within the group and as a way to communicate membership in the group to others. While both of these signifiers may at first seem easy to identify and explain, on closer inspection, the boundaries and symbolism may be highly flexible and dependent.

The contributions of the developmentalist school of scholarship in food studies are important to understanding the way individuals and smaller groups used food as an expression of identity. As for the developmentalists, consumption of food is a key to the creation of both personal and social identities. Using the approaches of the structuralists and the developmentalists, researchers investigating small ethnic groups may be able to provide valuable insights into the uses of food within that group. In the end, these insights will enrich our understanding of the communities studied and may be of use to the communities as they evaluate their economic futures.

CHAPTER 3 – METHOD

“Ethnography is about finding stories we did not know were lost.”

Ruth Behar, 2003, p. 17

This section describes the methodology used for the study and the rationale for choosing these methods. A qualitative design was chosen, with grounded theory underlying the interview and analysis process. In-depth interviews, observation, and artifacts, such as documents and photos were used to collect the data. The final form of the dissertation is an ethnographic case study. Merriam (1998) describes a qualitative case study as an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, a process or a social unit” (p. xiii). The grounded theory method was chosen as a means of generating theory as it allows the researcher to form and explore new research questions as data are collected and new material is revealed.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the methodological approach to a research project should be determined primarily by the circumstances of the research and the kinds of material needed and secondarily by whether the research is intended to generate new theory or validate existing theory. This idea is reiterated by Laurie and Sullivan (1991), who point out that determination of a research design for a project must stem from the approach that best fits the research questions.

Greenhalgh and Taylor (1997) declare that “researchers who use qualitative methods seek a deeper truth” (p. 1). While this claim may be a bit exaggerated and overarching, it attempts to explain the attraction of qualitative research. Qualitative

research is concerned with the why; why people act as they do, not just that they do or do not. The holistic approach to research in the qualitative paradigm not only preserves, but helps to explain human behaviors, emotions, insights, and relationships in a specific context. In contemplating this study, I felt the use of qualitative research methodology was appropriate as it has the potential to explain phenomena, to preserve variations in human behavior, and to explore things that may not come to light using solely using observation, such as emotions and meanings (Achterberg, 1988).

Qualitative methods tend to be useful when the researcher is interested in observing phenomena and processes in their natural settings. There are many approaches to qualitative research, but it is important to find the methodology that best fits the research questions posed. When performing qualitative research, it is the explication of meaning that is the most important issue. Lincoln and Guba (2000) feel the “meaning-making activities themselves are of central interest ... because they shape action (or inaction)” (p. 167). Merriam (1998) makes the point that observations and interviews bring us closer to the participants’ reality than research conducted through some type of mediated instrument.

While research in the positivist and post-positivist veins are highly concerned with issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability, in qualitative research these issues are superseded by complexity, authenticity, and local meanings (Creswell, 1998; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Today, many qualitative researchers are re-examining the whole concept of validity. Laurel Richardson (1997) writes that the traditional idea of triangulation is based on some idea of neutrality in the observer and that none of us is able to have that kind of neutrality and distance when our practice as researchers keeps us

in such intimate contact with our respondents. She suggests that evaluation of results should be based on the concept of *crystallization*. She proposes that the:

Central imaginary for “validity” for postmodernist texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with the infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Crystallization...deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. (p. 92)

Credibility in the presentation of a narrative comes from attempting to portray member meanings as honestly as the researcher feels they can, from spending enough time in the field to become a seasoned observer of the situation, from having an audit trail, and from the transparency of the research process. The result of these actions should yield a text that is rich enough for readers to make sense of the circumstances being described and expand our knowledge of a social situation, while pointing to the ways those texts are constructed, incomplete, and situated (Scholl, 2000).

Qualitative research is “*interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6, italics in the original). In the words of Valerie Janesick (2000), “Qualitative research depends on the presentation of solid descriptive data, so that the researcher leads the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the experience itself” (p. 390).

For this study, a qualitative method was chosen due to my desire to understand a specific situation, in this case how Czech identity, especially that part related to food

products and food consumption, is used within a community to facilitate local cohesion, preserve identity, and to attract attention from without. As noted in the introduction, little ethnographic research has been done in ethnically Czech communities in the United States. My hope is that this dissertation enhances understanding of how food is used to preserve ethnic identity and promote community cohesion in a small rural ethnic community and will add to the limited scholarship on Czech communities in the United States.

Qualitative methods allow a researcher to study social interactions and process them in a systematic fashion in a natural environment. In this study I was looking to discover the participant's perspective, i.e., the emic, as opposed to going into the community to try and find evidence that will support my own theories that may or may not fit the situation. Qualitative methods fit my goals for discovery since, as Marshall and Rossman (1989) say, "the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (p. 82).

The Research Questions

In a qualitative research investigation, all questions need to be open (Maso, 1996). Researchers need to formulate initial questions that will start them broadly toward the interpretation of the phenomenon they are investigating. Still, there must be enough flexibility in the approach to allow freedom to deeply explore the phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1990) instruct the researcher to start out formulating research questions broadly, then have them become "more progressively narrowed and more focused during the research process, as concepts and their relationships are discovered to be relevant or irrelevant" (p. 37 – 38). They go on to state that the research questions in a grounded

theory study identify the phenomenon to be studied, but should be oriented toward action and process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Creswell (1998) adds that grounded theory questions are broad and may change during data collection and analysis process as new data are uncovered and theses are proved or disproved. While I intend to keep my focus narrowed to issues of food and culture, other issues may arise that need to be investigated in order for the research to have coherence and depth.

The specific research questions are:

1. How does this small rural community use food to symbolize its identity?
2. How is this gastronomical identity used a source of internal cohesion?
3. How does this community use gastronomical identity as a preservation mechanism against outside forces?
4. How does this community use gastronomical identity as a way to stimulate economic development by bringing in dollars from outside the community?

Formulation of the Research Design

The research design for this dissertation was formed using the methodology suggested by Crotty (1998). Crotty suggests using a four-tiered approach where methods and methodology are derived from the epistemology and theoretical perspective of the researcher. Crotty presents these determiners in a hierarchal fashion, with each decision following from the one that precedes it. The four levels of determination are:

1. What epistemology informs the research? (positivism, subjectivism, constructivism, etc.)

2. What theoretical perspective or philosophical stance is behind the methodology? (positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, interpretivism, etc.)
3. What methodology links the methods used to the outcome? (experimental research, survey research, ethnography, etc.)
4. What methods and/or techniques does the researcher propose to use?

The answers to these questions as presented in the sections that follow, guided by my research design.

Epistemological Stance

The researcher's epistemological stance is important to define early in the research design process. Knowledge is not a definable, finite set of information, theories, or characteristics. Knowledge changes from knower to knower based on their experiences in life and perspectives. Epistemology is defined by Webster's dictionary as "the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge, esp. with reference to its limits and validity" (p. 390). Going beyond a simple dictionary definition, Crotty (1998) describes epistemology as "what is entailed in knowing, that is, *how we know what we know*" (p. 8, italics in original). Cunningham and Fitzgerald (1996) explain epistemology as the branch of philosophy that considers "what can be counted as knowledge, where knowledge is located, and how knowledge increases" (p. 36). They go on to say that by examining the epistemological foundations of our research, we are able to "bring to light presuppositions and assumptions that might otherwise go unquestioned" (p. 36).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have a simple, yet effective, way of approaching the question of the researcher's epistemological stance. They ask, "How do I know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?" (p. 157). The epistemological stance of the researcher is important to bring forward because it provides

the “philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Maynard (1994, p. 10) as cited in Crotty, 1998). Using these concepts, it is easy to see how a researcher’s epistemological stance would influence his or her theoretical perspective and therefore his or her choice, and use, of methodology.

My epistemological foundations are in social constructivism. In the constructivist view, meaning is not a discovery, but, as the name suggests, a construction. The constructivist point of view recognizes that everyone uses their own experiences to establish meaning. Individual experiences and perceptions will cause individuals to attribute their own meaning to the understanding of any phenomenon, event, or relationship. As Lincoln and Guba (2000) point out:

Constructivists and participatory/cooperative inquirers take their primary field of interest to be precisely that subjective and intersubjective social knowledge and the active construction and co-construction of such knowledge by human agents that is produced by human consciousness. (p.177-178)

Lincoln and Guba (2000) go on to point out that constructivist research tends toward to what they term the antifoundational. Antifoundational is a term used to “denote a refusal to adopt any permanent, unvarying (or foundational) standards by which truth can be universally known” (p. 177).

What we strive for as constructivist researchers is a dialogue that moves beyond arguments about objectivity, truth, and validity, and toward a “communal test of validity through the argumentation of the participants in a discourse” (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 178). This validity will never be fixed and monolithic. There will be various interpretations based in the members of the community and the “temporal and historical conditions that gave rise to the community” (Rorty, 1979, as cited in Lincoln and Guba,

2000, p. 178). As Crotty (1998) says, “what kind of world is there before conscious beings engage with it? Not an intelligible world, many would want to say. Not a world of meaning. It becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it” (p. 10). It is this world of meaning created by the citizens of Wilson that this dissertation explores.

Researcher Perspective

As Merriam (1998) says, in “all forms of qualitative research...*the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis*” (p. 7, italics in the original).

When presenting the data it is inevitable the researcher will have to provide commentary that frames the key findings in the study. Edensor (2002) comments, “it is well to admit that any ethnography is bound to be affected by the culturally specific responses of the researcher” (p. 162). In order for the reader to be able to thoughtfully analyze the data (and commentary) presented, it is necessary for the researcher to announce their own role, so the reader can understand the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Janesick, 2000).

Qualitative research does not attempt to separate the researcher from the research in hopes of some demonstrable level of neutrality. In fact, some types of qualitative research explore the role of researcher in the community and others (such as auto-ethnography) are all about the researcher. What is critical to the process is an acknowledgement of the researcher’s location in the study. “Because qualitative research recognizes early on the perspective of the researcher as it evolves through the study, the description of the role of the researcher is a critical part of the written component of the study (Janesick, 2000, p. 389). Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) enumerate areas for

researchers to consider illuminating, including power relationships (both observer/observed and between members) and what the situational identity of the observer is going to be. I did not expect to join the group in any kind of meaningful way, that is, I did not expect to assume any role in any group or participate in any kind of group activity outside of observation, but I remained open to participant observation. My primary role was as interviewer, but I was constantly observing as well. I took advantage of all opportunities for a non-stationary role. How my role ultimately was shaped depended on my relationship with participants in the field. Because I was able to develop relationships in the community, I was able to participate in the production of various ethnically Czech foods. Yin (2003) tells us that the fieldworker must be adaptive and flexible so that as situations change, the researcher can turn changes of situation and reversal into opportunities.

As with any type of research, the researcher brings certain perspectives into the observational arena. Things that affected my researcher perspective included the fact that I am a member of a related group, a Kansan of central European descent, the grandson of German immigrants to an area close to the area of study. In addition, I had done prior work in this community and have forged friendships among members of the community. While these perspectives undoubtedly affected my observations, they may have brought unique insights as well as facilitating communication with participants.

Conceptual Framework

The research in this dissertation was based in the constructionist school of ethnicity and the structuralist and developmentalist school of food scholarship. As described in the literature review, the constructionist school focuses on the element of

self-direction in the creation of collective identity. In the constructionist view, ethnic identity is always in flux, being created and recreated as the needs for and demands on the collective identity change. In patterns of American immigration, the needs of ethnic communities have changed along with the circumstances of the times. Early immigrants to a place tend to band together for communal support, but assimilationist tendencies begin to pull communities apart physically after a period of time. As the physical distance between members grows larger, the mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of the group change. If Spiro (1955) is indeed correct, that foodways are one of the longest lingering ties to one's ethnic group as one assimilates, then the study of the foodways in Wilson should give us insight into how this ethnically Czech community uses its food products and patterns of commensality to retain their ethnic identity, or least certain vestiges of it, and how this identity has changed over the years.

This dissertation will attempt to explore the symbolic nature of food products and related patterns of commensality in the community of Wilson. Upon entering the community, I suspected that the importance of traditional Czech food products is highly symbolic in nature, in line with Cohen's (1985) contention that the symbolic nature of iconic products, ideas, images, etc. are some of the most crucial aspects of any community. Cohen argues that given the fragmented nature of the postmodern era, ongoing boundary construction via symbolic behaviors gives people a sense of security. I hope to explore this theme via my work in the community.

To explore these issues in greater depth I used approaches developed by the two schools in food studies known as structuralist and developmentalist. The structuralist approach to the understanding of food practices is to look for patterns in food

consumption that are then decoded to help us understand a community. This proved to be a useful tool in looking at the symbolic nature of food in Wilson. The developmentalists took the ideas of the structuralists and made them more locally specific. The developmentalists took into account many factors associated with food products and patterns of commensality and tried to come up with theories of how people used food as a way to express their identity. The developmentalist approach offers many possibilities in creating theory about the symbolic meanings of food in the social context. Using this locally specific approach of the developmentalists it was possible to generate theories about the use of food to create meaning in locally specific context in Wilson.

Ethnography

I chose ethnography as my form of research and reporting because I felt it was the best way to tell the story of what is happening in Wilson. Ethnography in its largest sense is the act of describing culture (Clair, 2003; Fetterman, 1998). “Ethnographies re-create for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 3). The ethnographer attempts to “document the cosmology, that is, the knowledge and belief systems that contribute to the coherence of the group” (Potter, 1996, p. 51). When a researcher wants to study a group that can be defined by some sort of cultural boundary, ethnography becomes one of the best choices for a research method. Blumer (1969) goes so far as to make the claim that the ethnography is the best choice of research methodology when one wants to gain the deepest insight into “the real operating factors in group life, and the real interaction and relationship between factors” (p. 138).

By the use of observation and interview, ethnographers attempt to explicate the meaning of actors and situations. While observation cannot be discounted in importance, the ethnographer must ask questions for fullest understanding. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) assert there are three principle questions that guide ethnographic fieldwork. The first is, what is happening in the setting? Second is, who is engaging in what activity? Third, why are they doing what they are doing? (p. xv). By taking these points as guidance in asking location specific questions, the ethnographer begins to arrive at an understanding of a situation.

The term ethnography can be thought about in two ways. First, ethnography can be viewed as a process. The process involves the fieldwork, the data coding, and the analysis. Second, ethnography can be thought about as an outcome. This is the final report –the book, the essay, the dissertation – that arises from the process (Creswell, 1998; Tedlock, 2000, Schwandt, 2001). The success of the latter depends on how well the researcher conducts the former. The final product should be acceptable to other scholars and to those who form the group that is under study. While there may not (and there likely will not) be total agreement with all of the researcher's conclusions, the descriptive part of the research should feel true to those being studied and by other scholars (Fetterman, 1998). Jacobson (1991) warns readers of ethnographies that ethnographic writing is not a type of unfiltered journalism or reportage that is supposed to be without bias. He warns that there is an element of interpretation based on theoretical framework that the researcher has used in their research design. He goes on to say:

the picture of the people, society, or culture that the ethnography presents must be understood from the perspective of (1) the question or problem that it addresses, (2) the answer, explanation, or interpretation it provides, (3) the data it includes as

evidence for the problem, for the interpretation, or both, and (4) the organization of these elements (problem, interpretation, evidence) into an argument. (p. 2)

The practice of ethnography cannot be divorced from its interpretive nature. Given the dialogic nature of the process, it is inevitable that an element of interpretation will be present. Like the participants in the situation being studied, the researcher's point of view will depend:

upon their prior research frames, biographies, and interests as well as the research context, their relationships with the research participants, and the modes of generating and recording data...their resulting theoretical analyses provide interpretive renderings of a reality rather than an objective reporting of reality. (Charmaz, 2000b, p. 6-7)

The Importance of Fieldwork

While there are numerous ways to approach ethnographic research, fieldwork is a common feature in most ethnographies. Fieldwork involves actually going to the locus of interest and, in most instances, both observing and interviewing, as well as looking at other visual and written sources. Studying a situation *in situ*, gives the researcher a chance to observe interactions and observe visual clues not available in literature. Fieldwork is important because ethnography "is the study of lived experience. Ethnographers observe everyday life on the assumption that individuals see themselves in terms of a group (or groups) to which they belong (or wish to belong)" (Brodkey, 1987, p. 83).

There is a story, possibly apocryphal, that when Tip O'Neil, the one time speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States, was asked why he spent so much time on local politics when he was one of the most powerful political figures in the country. His reply was that all politics are local. A similar claim might be made for ethnographic research. Situations change from locale to locale, rendering a need to study as many specific situations as we can. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) tell us,

“Ethnography takes the position that human behavior and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their worlds and their lives are highly variable and locally specific” (p.1).

Site Selection

I like to think in some ways the site for this research selected me rather than the other way around. A chance turnoff from the interstate to investigate the possibility of discovering an unknown (to me at the time) sausage led to the discovery of a community that led me to ask, initially in a much more general way, the research questions that have led to this dissertation. A number of factors have led me to choose Wilson, Kansas as the site for my research. Primary among these was an interest in foodways in rural America. The unique foods of rural America are a distinctive part of our national heritage, and I feel research into their place in communities is important to document. A town the size of Wilson (under 1000 population) can provide an excellent site for research in this area. While some research has been done on the foodways of ethnic groups in larger metropolitan areas, little has been done on this topic in rural areas, leaving gaps in the scholarship. As Wilbur Zelinsky (1977) says:

each of major metropolises has generated its own iconography and body of writing – some of them quite masterly- and although a corps of cultural geographers, distinctly rural in their leanings, have told us much about the look of the American countryside, systematic knowledge of the morphology of what lies between, several thousand smaller cities and towns, remains exceedingly scrappy. (p. 127)

The town of Wilson is located in north-central Kansas. It is in Ellsworth County, though it is not the county seat, a distinction that belongs to the town of Ellsworth, ten miles to the east. The 2000 census puts the population at 791.

As has been noted earlier, Wilson is a community that has Czech ethnic roots. Settlement began in the area in 1865, when the Butterfield Stage Lines built a station approximately one half mile south of the current town site. Czech settlement began in 1874 when an immigrant from what was then the Kingdom of Bohemia (encompassing what is today the Czech Republic) by the name of Francis Swehla arrived in Ellsworth County with the express idea of founding a Bohemian colony. He rode into what is now Wilson, then known as Bosland, in a wagon with a banner reading "*Ceská Osada*", which means Bohemian Settlement, attached to the side of his wagon. After correspondence with various Bohemian immigrant aid societies, Bohemians began to settle in the town and surrounding county (Swehla, 1915).

While the town of Wilson has never been exclusively a Czech enclave, it has always had a strong Czech culture, one that could be described as the dominant culture of the town. In the 2005 telephone directory approximately half of the listings are names that are recognizably Czech/Bohemian in origin (Wilson Telephone Company, 2005). The main festival in the town is the After-Harvest Czech Festival which is held every year during the last weekend of July. The festival is sometimes called the Harvest Festival by older residents of the community, but it is advertised and promoted as a Czech festivity. It sometimes serves as a homecoming for members of the community who have moved elsewhere, and members of Czech communities in Nebraska often attend and participate by performing traditional Bohemian folk dances while wearing traditional costumes.

There is little of the Disneyland effect in Wilson, that is to say there is no building in an artificial European vernacular as in some communities touting their European

heritage such as the ersatz-Swiss buildings of New Glarus, Wisconsin or the faux-Danish storefronts of Solvang, California. What Wilson offers is a strong Midwestern flavor within a Czech-oriented community. There is a *Sokol*, the traditional Czech community center that was a combination of gymnasium, library, and meeting hall, but it too was built in the limestone vernacular architecture of the community (Spencer, 2003b).

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of interviews, participant observation, and document/artifact analysis. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection, but observation was an important tool as was looking at local histories. I attempted to gather information from the local newspaper archives (Wilson had a local paper until 2003), the local historical society, and the county historical society; photos and other visual ephemera were analyzed as well.

Interviewing

Interviews are a type of social interaction where the researcher works with a participant, or participants, to get information with a specific goal in mind (Maso & Wester, 1996). Interviews are a useful tool “to bring to light the meanings people give to certain matters” (Maso & Waters 1996, p. 11). Many authors put forward the claim that interviews are the best conduit to information in qualitative research (Allen-Meares & Lane, 1990; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). As Rubin and Rubin (1995) explain,

People who live or work together or have similar racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds develop shared understandings that are communicated to others in their group and constitute their culture. In-depth qualitative interviewing helps explain how and why culture is created, evolves, and is maintained. (p. 3)

Interviewing is an effective technique in qualitative research because each participant in the study has a uniquely subjective and personal interpretation of situations, events, and relationships. These interpretations are best explained in the participant's own words. Authors of qualitative research instructional materials regularly invoke Geertz's paean of "rich, thick description." Interviews provide the rich and detailed experience that is grounded in the experience of the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Fontana and Frey (2000) group qualitative interviews into three primary categories, the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, and the unstructured interview. In the structured interview, the interviewer asks every respondent "the same series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 649). Questions are asked in the same sequence, and there is little or no flexibility on the part of the interviewer. Semi-structured interviews feature open-ended questions that allow the respondent to fashion answers that relate more directly to his or her own experience. This type of interview also allows the interviewer to follow up on points raised by the respondent that might not be explored during a tightly structured interview. While the interviewer and the interviewee are allowed to place a great amount of material upon the table for discussion, a semi-structured interview is focused, and the interviewer will try to lead the interviewee back to the topic if the conversation goes too far afield.

Unstructured interviewing allows for the widest range of conversation and discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. The unstructured interview allows this large range of topicality because the object of the interview is to "understand the complex behaviors of society with imposing any *a priori* categorization that may

limit the field of inquiry” (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 653). For my dissertation, I chose to use a method that most closely approximates the unstructured interview (with some elements of the semi-structured interview) because I hoped to have the least number of limitations on the data available for my consideration. Unstructured interviewing or active interviewing fit with my constructivist stance because it privileges members’ meanings.

In the previous paragraphs on this topic, I have referred to the interview as a type of conversation. Warren (2002) leads off her discussion on qualitative interviewing by telling us that interviewing for qualitative research is “based in conversation” (p. 83). Qualitative interviews and conversations have a number of points in common. One of the most important of these points is the idea that there is a back and forth in the questioning and answering. Questions follow answers in a logical fashion based on what information is given in the answers. What is different in the qualitative interview is the intensity in which the researcher listens to the content of what is being said in the replies to the question. Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe this as careful listening in order to “*hear the meaning*” in what is being said (p. 7, italics in the original). The purpose of this specialized form of conversation is to be able to make cultural inferences, provide the “rich, thick description” that forms the basis of ethnography, and to make available the raw material for later analysis (Warren, 2002).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) like to make use of the term *conversational partner* to describe the person being interviewed. They say the term emphasizes the link between interviewing and conversation and the active role of the interviewee in shaping the discussion. Considering the interview to be a specialized form of conversation allows the

conversational partner (the interviewee) to become an empowered participant in the process. Having an active partner in the process makes the process of interviewing a true dialogue, which in turn will create richer data and a greater understanding of the situation under research.

Nievaard (1996) tells us the central problem of the qualitative interview is “How can the researcher so organize the interview that the data collected is both meaningful and valid, while at the same time, remaining within manageable proportions?” (p. 42) As in so many things, preparation is a key issue in interviewing. But preparation takes on a slightly different meaning in the qualitative interview. One of the basics of preparation, according to Nievaard (1996) is researching the literature around the topic. Examination of the literature surrounding the topic ideally gives the researcher “theoretical sensitivity to the phenomenon of study by gaining familiarity with the literature and drawing on professional or personal experiences” (Venkatesh, 1995, p. 119).

Participant Observation

Participant observation is an important part of any ethnographic research. Observation can lead to insights that are not available through dialogue. Not all knowledge is constructed via speech. What people say does not always match what they do for humans are inherently contradictory beings. By using observation as a component of my data collection technique, I will be able to add extra depth and dimension to the data available for analysis. The experiential nature of participant observation will add to the richness of the description that is an integral part of any ethnography. Observation of the participants and the social setting fit in with my epistemological position which suggests that “knowledge or evidence of the social world can be generated by observing,

or participating in, or experiencing ‘natural’ or ‘real-life’ settings (and) interactive situations” (Mason, 2002, p. 85). Participant observation occurred in a transparent manner, that is, I asked permission of participants in a situation to observe and was candid about my motives for doing so.

Material Artifacts

Hodder (2000) refers to written texts and artifacts as the mute evidence of qualitative research. In his chapter on the interpretation of documents and material culture, he makes the observation that what people say is often different than what they do. Therefore, he says, it is important to study the “material traces of behavior” when attempting to gain an insight into a culture (p. 705).

Material culture is the umbrella term given to the study of physical artifacts of a culture. While it can pose a challenge to the interpreter to explain the meaning of these artifacts, the attempt to do so may add richness and depth to the data available for analysis. What is a physical artifact? The answer is that it can be nearly anything the researcher feels may contribute to the understanding of the topic being examined. Written documents, records, and visual records (i.e., photographs and video recordings) are among the items often used by researchers to intuit additional meaning from a situation (Hodder, 2000; Harper 2000).

In the case of Wilson there were physical artifacts that I was able to gain access to in the course of my research. The local historical society maintains a Czech museum in the basement of the old *Sokol* building. While the amount of material was limited, it offered additional clues to food and culture in the community. In addition there is a

county historical society at the county seat in Ellsworth and the Kansas State Historical Society museum and library in Topeka where I consulted additional materials.

Theoretical Sampling

In qualitative research many forms of respondent selection are legitimate. Respondents may be chosen based on *a priori* research design, particular respondents may be sought out based on a desire to have certain key respondents, or theoretical sampling may be used (Warren, 2002).

Theoretical sampling was used both to select interviewees and to generate theory. “Using a theoretical sampling strategy, the interviewer seeks out respondents who seem likely to epitomize the analytic criteria in which he or she is interested” (Warren, 2002, p. 87). As new information is received and analyzed, more interviews are done, either with former interviewees or with new ones, depending on informational needs. While the use of theoretical sampling may increase the number of people interviewed, its purpose is not to increase sample size, but rather to enhance the refinement of data.

In grounded theory research, theoretical sampling is used to develop emerging categories of data and to make them more useful. The process is controlled by constantly comparing data from interviews and observation to emerging data theories and properties. Theoretical sampling is a cumulative process; each sampling episode builds from the one that precedes it. The sampling process becomes more specific with time because the researcher is directed by the emerging theory. Theoretical sampling continues until all categories are saturated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Selection of Participants

Participant selection was based on the needs set out in the conceptual framework. I sought respondents who were able to “epitomize the analytic criteria in which (I) am interested” (Warren, 2002, p. 87). To this end I felt my pool of potential respondents was best gathered from inhabitants of Wilson who are of Czech descent and those who have actively participated in production of traditionally Czech food products. Wilson has a regional reputation as a producer of traditional Czech food products such as the sausage known as *Jiternice* and the pastry known as the *Kolache*. The local grocery store is known as a purveyor of the sausage and I included the former owner responsible for its production in my interviews. There are several Wilsonians who make *kolaches* for local stores and events; they too were interviewed.

The annual Czech fest is probably the largest public event of the year in Wilson. There is a public meal in the parish hall of the local Catholic Church, St. Wenceslas, featuring traditional Czech foods held in conjunction with the Czech fest. I felt the people who produced that meal would add valuable insights into local food culture, and they were interviewed and observed in the preparation of the meal. Virtually all my interviewees were at least middle-aged (fifty years of age and up), and many were older. My key informants for the study were all above the age of seventy, and two were over 90. I did not interview anyone under the age of eighteen because I felt I need the extended perspective the older informants offered.

I have an acquaintance with a number of members of the community from my past visits to the town as a tourist. As a self-acknowledged sausage aficionado, one of my earliest contacts in the town was the local butcher. I initiated contact because of my

desire to purchase local specialty sausages and gain insights into the manufacture of my own sausages. In the course of staying at the local hotel during my sausage-finding visits, I became acquainted with the members of the Midland Hotel Foundation who were responsible for the renovation and restoration of the property to its *fin de siècle* state. The local butcher who used to own the store and the board of the Midland Hotel Foundation acted as gatekeepers for me and allowed me to gain contact with members of the community who are keepers of the local food traditions.

Invitations to participate in the study were made via direct contact with participants. Since I know a number of members of the community, I made these approaches directly and in person. It was necessary to have members of the community who I know directly introduce me to other members of the community who were interested in participating.

The size of the community (small) facilitated me making the requisite contacts and it is my feeling that enough contacts were made using the method described above. The size of the community required me to carefully guard confidentiality when requested. High standards of ethical conduct are of the utmost importance when conducting research. To this end I coded responses for confidentiality, when required, in the final manuscript and offered all respondents' copies of transcripts of interviews, giving them the opportunity to omit, revise, or restate data; as well as having the option of rescinding permission to use any of their material entirely.

Grounded Theory Analysis

In qualitative research, theory can be generated in a number of ways. Most of these methods of theory generation can be placed in three categories along a continuum. The first of these categories is where theory comes first. The theory is not derived from the data, but hypotheses are advanced and then the analyst attempts to prove or disprove the theory based on the data collected. At the other end of the spectrum is where all data are collected and then theory is generated based on analysis of the data accumulated. In the middle is the idea that theory can be generated in a relatively simultaneous process with collection. This dialectical process occurs while moving back and forth between data collection, analysis, and theory construction (Mason, 2002).

Mason's description of the dialectical process is a good two sentence introduction to the idea of grounded theory. Grounded theory is an inductive approach to theory generation using a methodology that ensures that the themes and theories that emerge from the research are grounded in the data. Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the 1960's to facilitate their research into the experiences of dying cancer patients. Grounded theory has its origins in the symbolic interactionist theories of sociology. Symbolic interactionism is concerned with the meanings that people give to actions and events and the manner in which they use symbols to communicate that meaning. Meaning, the interactionists claim, is developed through either experience or interaction, hence the name (Baker, Wuest, and Stern, 1992). Blumer (1969) put forward the idea that human behavior is a result of "a vast interpretive process in which people, singly and collectively, guide themselves by defining objects, events and situations" (p. 132). Chenitz and Swanson (1986) expanded this idea by explaining that meaning is

constantly being revised in social groups. Therefore the researcher needs to understand how groups create meaning and what symbols they use to display it, both within the group and to people outside the group.

It is Glaser's contention that grounded theory is a useful tool for discovering meaning in situations. He argues that grounded theory can help explain what is happening in a given situation by identifying the core and subsidiary processes occurring in it. Therefore, a grounded theory method can use inductive processes to provide theoretical explanations of social situations and relationships (Glaser, 1978).

Grounded theory is an efficient and effective approach to the analysis of ethnographic research materials because it offers a fairly explicit and transparent set of strategies. The strength of grounded theory comes from the fact that (1) the process guides the researcher in a step-by-step fashion, (2) the data collection process is self-correcting if used with diligence, care, and thoughtfulness, (3) the methods used in grounded theory are naturally inclined toward the development of theory, and (4) the use of constant comparison to verify, cross-check, and update data (Charmaz, 2000a).

Constant Comparison

In grounded theory, data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. This continuous evaluation of the data and generation of theory is a result of the use of the constant comparative method. "The constant comparative method calls on the researcher to seek verification for hypotheses that emerge throughout the study (in contrast to other qualitative approaches that might see this as the role of follow-up quantitative research)" (Mertens, 1998, p. 171). As data is gathered, it is coded with words that are descriptive of the setting, action, and situation (Hutchinson, 1986). While the descriptive data is not

theorization, it acts as a basis for theorizing later in the process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). As more data are gathered, the codes are revised and the data recoded to better reflect the emerging themes. From the revised codes, more research is conducted and the process is refined with each iteration. Comparisons are continually made at all levels of research and coding. Some of the comparisons made can include across people, within a person (is their story the same at different points in time?), comparing situations or incidents with similar situations and incidents, comparing data within a category, and comparing categories against each other (Charmaz, 2000a).

As the coding proceeds, it becomes more focused and conceptual. Categories for synthesizing and explaining data are products of these focused codes (Charmaz, 2000a). Categories that emerge from the data are combined into groups that seem to fit together, and these groups are constantly compared with each other to see which ones fit into larger groups and which ones do not. Conceptual coding is the next step on the way to being able to theorize about the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

This inductive approach, the process of constantly comparing data to emerging themes, leads to the materialization of primary themes for analysis which eventually provide the framework for analysis. The theory that emerges from this process is “delimited and integrated by memo writing and theoretical coding” (Baker, Wuest, and Stern, 1992, p. 1358). Theoretical coding is the process of coding to examine data theoretically rather than descriptively. Memos are used to record the theory as it develops and to integrate additional material collected and considered during the research process (Baker, Wuest, and Stern, 1992, p. 1358). Charmaz (2000a) enumerates the reasons a researcher should engage in memo writing as:

a) to grapple with ideas about the data, b) to set an analytic course, c) to refine categories, d) to define the relationships between the various categories, and e) to gain a sense of confidence and competence in their ability to analyze data. (p. 517–518)

Coding Procedures

Coding is the process of tagging all our bits of data with the aim of managing them and condensing them into analyzable units. Codes are heuristic devices that link the original material like field notes, interviews, memos, etc. with the researcher's theoretical concepts (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Coding in grounded theory begins as soon as we begin to collect data. The coding process is an essential component in defining and categorizing data (Charmaz, 2000a). Coding for grounded theory should progress in a systematic fashion in order to correctly construct the analytical framework for the development of theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) outline three levels of coding – open, axial, and selective.

The coding process begins with open coding, also known as initial coding or description (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Each line of data is examined and the researcher notes each action or event within it. The purpose of the initial coding is to conceptualize and categorize data. The coding established at this level becomes the basis for more theoretical interpretations of data at the next levels of coding. At this stage in the coding, there is little attempt to explain the whys of behavior or events. The categories established during the initial coding allow the researcher to organize various conceptual elements. Categories are determined by their properties and dimensions. Properties are defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990) as “attributes or characteristics pertaining to a category” (p. 61), while they define dimensions as “the location of properties along the continuum” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 61). Initial coding is also useful since it builds

theory inductively and deters us from “imposing extant theories or our own beliefs on the data” (Charmaz, 2000a, p. 515).

Axial coding, the intermediary step in the coding process, makes connections between the categories and sub-categories developed during the initial coding. It is given the name axial because “coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 123). “The *purpose* of *axial coding* is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 124, italics in the original). At this stage in the coding process the researcher is attempting to identify conditions, actions and interactions, and consequences that are associated with a phenomenon. From these statements and categorizations the researcher can begin to see how categories are related to each other.

The connections made at this level of coding are made using a specific coding paradigm that examines conditions, context, action/interaction strategies and consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Researchers are looking for the what, when, where, how, and why questions during the axial coding process. Use of the axial coding process provides answers for many of these questions to gain an understanding of the phenomena while allowing for conceptual density and richness of concept development in advance of theory development through discovery of the ways in which the categories relate to each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The final step in the coding process is selective coding. The selective coding process attempts to integrate the material produced by the axial coding process and begin to produce and refine theory. This is an integrative process that integrates concepts

formed at the axial level at a higher level of abstraction. Ideally, the researcher has a central concept around which to group all the subsidiary concepts that have arisen in the prior step. Once this central concept has been established, previously established categories are related to it by a series of explanatory statements of relationships. If a copy of this finished work is presented to the participants and if it is recognizable by them (though not every aspect of the theory may not be applicable to every participant) it can be validated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

This third step is not the goal of all researchers using the grounded theory method. Charmaz (1995) and Creswell (1998) both cite instances where the methodology may be used for other purposes. These include a desire to produce as richly a descriptive report on a phenomenon as possible or as a way to collect presently unrecognized research data, variables, etc. that might be used in future research.

Questions in qualitative interviewing take different forms. The initial questions are essentially descriptive in nature. Strauss and Corbin (1998) call these *sensitizing questions*. Questions of this nature “tune the researcher into what the data might be indicating” (p. 77). In research relating to cultural insights, these questions “encourage interviewees to begin describing what is important in their cultural arenas” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 146). Spradley (1979) refers to these as the *grand tour* questions, denoting their importance in gaining access to the imagery of the conversational partner.

When researchers get a response that needs clarification or appeals to the researcher’s specific interest a *probe* or *prompt* is asked. These questions get the interviewee to examine a topic more thoroughly and specifically. Probes and prompts may be spontaneous or planned, depending on how thorough the answer has been on the

part of the respondent. Probes and prompts get to the heart of modes of expression, jargon, and cultural meanings of the interviewee (Nievaard, 1996; Rubin and Rubin, 1995) and can be used to help the researcher understand practical and structural issues regarding the situation. Information received through the previous styles of questions then forms the basis for follow-up interview questions that form the basis for the theoretical concept formation.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

“The Bohemians are hard-working conservative people and they know how to put everything to good use.”

Herter and Herter, 1963, p. 37

This study was conceived to look at how the community of Wilson, Kansas uses Czech food as a way to symbolize its identity. Related to this was the idea that Czech foodways might be used as a preservation mechanism for the community and as a way for the community to market itself as a heritage tourist destination. Together these concepts speak to the idea that the community is looking for ways to sustain itself and that Czech food and foodways might be a significant part of that sustenance.

Wilson bills itself as the Czech capital of Kansas, and the identity of Wilson as a Czech community is central to how the town presents itself to the outside world. My research on Wilson originally was suggested by visits that I had been making to this community over a period of years, during which I became interested in Czech food and how it fit into the community's idea of its own identity. On the surface, the whole ethos of the community appears to be bound up in a sense of Czechness. From the advertising billboards along the interstate, to the welcome signs at the town boundary welcoming the visitor in Czech, to the numerous signs in local businesses using Czech words, phrases, and illustrations, the town exudes an aura of Czechness. The largest annual public event in the community is the After-Harvest Czech Festival, which is held each year on the last weekend in July.

What I set out to accomplish in this study was find out how Czech food functioned in the community as a component of identity. I was curious how Czech food related to the sustainability of the community and where it fits into the community as it evolves. Wilson is positioning itself as a heritage tourism destination and with my research I hoped to ascertain how much the Czech gastronomical identity might be used as a component of this positioning as well as acting as a sustenance mechanism for individuals and the community as a whole.

While the initial research questions didn't change in the course of this research, what did change was my understanding of the community. Given all the outward expressions of Czechness in the town, I expected a deeper rooted ethnic identity among townspeople than I actually found. While some residents expressed a deep concern for the preservation of Czech ethnicity, it was not as common a theme as I had predicted going into the research process. As I analyzed the data collected in the field, I began to understand that central to this process of sustenance through ethnic identity, i.e. Czechness, was a tension between the modern and the traditional. This tension was apparent in both the public and private spheres, and these two often overlapped. Rather than the maintenance of traditional foodways and a traditionally conceived cultural identity, the identity that sustains Wilson appears to be a synthetic one, one that synthesizes the traditional and the modern, using historical elements of the traditional Czech identity while incorporating other historical elements of the community and modern elements of production and consumption to create functioning social and personal identities.

Expressions of Czechness in Wilson, Kansas

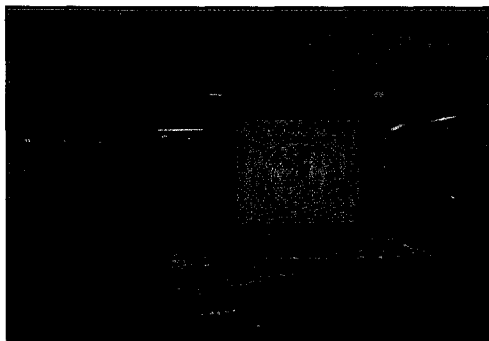


Figure 1. Town welcome sign.

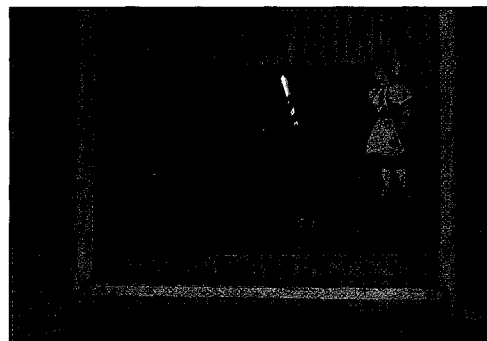


Figure 2. The bowling alley.

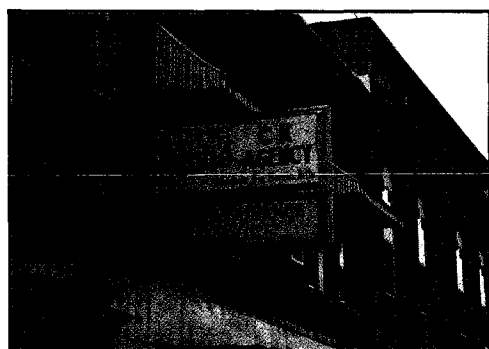


Figure 3. The insurance agency.

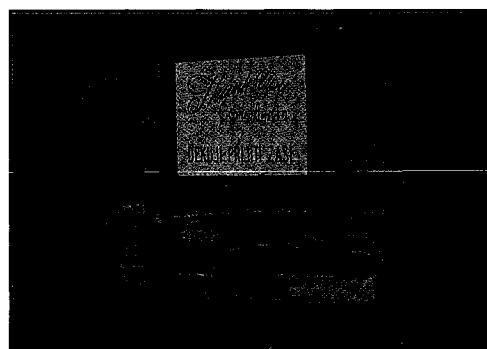


Figure 4. Back of town welcome sign.

This synthesis of elements might seem as if it is pointing to a “dime-store” variety of ethnic identity as theorized by Stein and Hill (1997) or Gans (1979). These researchers feel the adoption of ethnic identity by later generations is token or symbolic, that it is of little importance socially, and that the behaviors resulting from it are not authentic. But I feel the notion of a synthetic cultural identity, constituted and performed to some degree by the use of food and foodways, does not imply that this identity is somehow less “real” or “valid”. Inquiry into the everyday interactions through which community and family members recreate, alter, and adapt traditional foodways adds to our deeper understanding of the meaning making that occurs in the on-going process of sustaining a community identity. That people make a choice and expend considerable energy (and sometimes money) to perform an ethnic identity, means that there is considerable meaning attached to this choice. Ethnic identity may not have the same meaning in the twenty first century that it had in the nineteenth or twentieth but the meaning it does have will be as important as earlier iterations.

In entering Wilson, I had the notion that the community would be using traditional foodways as a way to keep ethnicity alive with the side benefit of usefulness as a marketing tool to keep the community economically vital through the promotion of heritage tourism. I expected the community to be following patterns explicated by traditional researchers in ethnicity such as Esser (1998) and Kvisto and Blanc (1990) whereby food would be used as a some type of mechanism to reclaim a past or to provide some type of comfort as people attempted to deal with perceived discontents of post-modern society such as the geographic mobility of younger generations or a sense of loss

at discontinued traditions. What emerged from the data was a much more functionalist picture of how the community uses components of the Czech ethnic identity to form an identity unique to this community and its needs as it moves forward into the twenty first century.

Other components besides Czechness are important elements in how the people of Wilson are creating this synthetic cultural identity. During the course of this research, community members often related their perception that historical aspects of the community other than Czechness were also important in communicating the town's identity. The heavy stone buildings of the business district are trenchant reminders of the historic nature of the community. Most of the downtown has been given status as an historic district by the United States Department of the Interior, and much of the cooperative work that has been done in the community revolves around its historic architecture. One of the important components of this district is the Midland Hotel, a late nineteenth century hotel that sits in the middle of town, both literally and metaphorically. In fact, the hotel serves as an excellent metaphor for the tension between the historical and the modern in Wilson.

Originally known as the Hotel Power, after its builder, the Midland is an impressive stone building built in 1899. The hotel has been in nearly continuous use since its construction. The hotel's primary purpose in the first half of its existence was to cater to the railroad and the people that it brought; the visitors and the drummers³. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of prosperity for the hotel. Occupancy

³ Drummer is a term used for a traveling salesperson in the early twentieth century. Drummers were an important part of the clientele at the Midland Hotel and a large portion of the basement was reserved for their use. The drummers dealt at primarily the wholesale level and are representative of a model of wholesale marketing that largely disappeared after World War II.

consistently ran at nearly one hundred percent during the hotel's first decade, leading to the construction of an addition on the back side of the building in 1915 which increased the capacity of the hotel to its current twenty eight rooms. As long as the train and the two-lane highway were the primary modes of transit in America, the hotel did well.

After the demise of passenger train travel in the heartland (Wilson lost passenger service in 1972) and the construction of the interstate, two miles to the north of town, the hotel, like the town, began a descent into economic difficulties. Rooms were hard to fill, and at one point the owners of the hotel closed off the third floor and converted it into a poultry operation, raising the chickens that were used in the fried chicken dinners for which the hotel was well-known.

The 1970's and 1980's were tough times for the old hotel and it closed in 1988, a victim of its declining fortunes. The lack of travelers, the change in how goods are marketed to merchants, and the overall decline in the status of Wilson as a regional center of commerce all were complicit in the lack of profitability needed to keep the hotel open. The hotel was shuttered and stood empty until 2002. The intervening years were not good ones for the building itself. Lack of maintenance caused the roof to leak in many places, damaging the floors and other structural elements of the hotel. Had not fortune, in the form of the Midland Hotel Foundation, intervened, the hotel was likely a few years from collapsing in on itself.

The Midland Hotel Foundation is a group of concerned citizens of Wilson who each contributed \$10,000 of their own money to purchase the property in the mid-1990's and stabilize the building. With the elements held (however tenuously) at bay, they began to seek assistance in renovation of the property. Good fortune struck in the late

1990's when the group was able to obtain a Department of Transportation grant for approximately three million dollars to aid in the renovation of the property. The renovation project took nearly three years, but the property has been immaculately restored to reflect its glory days.

The hotel has been restored internally to meet the building codes of the present and to give guests all the amenities they require in the twenty first century. Externally, the hotel reflects its greatest era, the first half of the twentieth century. Most of the original woodwork has been preserved, and furnishings, while new, were chosen to reflect an early twentieth century ambience. At first glance the hotel would seem to be a perfectly preserved gem from another era, but a closer glance at the details will tell the careful observer that the infrastructure that supports it is new. Modernity and tradition stand in contrast and in harmony in the restored Midland Hotel.

The Modern and the Traditional

Wilson is a community negotiating the space between modernity and tradition. These seemingly contradictory orientations need to coexist in order for Wilson to find its niche in twenty first century. Every town needs to have the *accoutrement* of modern life in order to retain its viability. Wilson is no different in this regard. Wilson has many of what are considered the necessities of everyday life. There is high-speed internet access available in every building that has a phone line connecting it with the Wilson Telephone Company. Cable television is available to anyone who cares to pay for the service. You can get a good bottle of wine at the local liquor store, and the local grocer has a reasonable assortment of produce appealing to the upwardly mobile. To be sure, there are significant gaps in the assortment of consumer goods available. There is nowhere to

buy shoes or clothing, no drug store, no hardware store; but there are good schools, places to eat, and most of what is missing is available within a reasonable drive by rural standards. But as well as the requirements of the modern world, Wilson needs its traditions to remain viable. Every town has to deal with this issue on some level; traditions are an important part of the makeup of any community. The issue is of special importance in the case of Wilson, because the main thing Wilson has to market to the outside world are its architectural heritage and Czech traditions.

The marketing of its heritage is one of the primary instruments Wilson has in its economic development toolbox. The above-mentioned information infrastructure keeps the town ready for traditional development, but the reality is that Wilson is not likely to attract the type of businesses that will expand the community and create a large number of twentieth century type jobs, that is, jobs in manufacturing or distribution or information. This type of capture would be considered desirable by the local community, and Wilson would work with any employer wishing to bring some type of economic development of this kind. But the likelihood of such an event is small. Wilson does sit on one of the main east-west rail lines in the United States, and trains go through the town at all hours of the day and night, but none stop, and there is not a logical reason for them to do so. The distribution industry needs closer proximity to junctions and existing infrastructure and is unlikely to expand in areas where some infrastructure does not already exist or where the population is not growing rapidly enough to make such an investment profitable. Neither of these conditions describes Wilson. Wilson is likely to remain a bedroom community for the regional towns that are the beneficiaries of rural consolidation. It is situated too close to these communities to warrant being a secondary

outpost of commerce, yet too far from them to benefit from overflow expansion. This leaves heritage tourism as one of the primary economic development engines that the town can exploit.

Heritage tourism is a good metaphor for the tensions of modernity and tradition. Tourism is a creation of the modern era. Prior to the expansion of the middle class and disposable incomes in the twentieth century, tourism was a prerogative of the wealthy. Travel for pleasure was not a common characteristic of the lower classes or even the lower middle classes. As the middle class grew and the opportunities for travel, both via expansion of income and improved modes of transit, grew as well, the tourism industry became one of the largest industries in the world, an achievement that took less than a century. As society changed and population became more concentrated in the *urb*, small towns like Wilson lost their economic vitality and became stagnant in terms of both economic and physical growth. But this lack of growth and retention of an atmosphere of “a day gone by”, however real or imagined this characteristic is, made some of the places where modern growth and development have not occurred attractive places for people who seek to reconnect to their roots and spend some time in the imaginary past of front porches, rocking chairs, and chatting to one’s neighbors over the clothesline. Tourism of this nature is bred from the conditions that made the marginalization of rural communities happen. Towns like Wilson would like to grow and participate in other types of economic expansion, but if they do, they chance losing what makes them attractive in the eye of the heritage tourist: slow, small, and sleepy.

Czech Foodways in the Personal Sphere

When I went into Wilson, I expected that Czech food would play a large part in the retention of identity in families. If one follows traditional models of ethnicity, then food should be the last thing that people cling to as a signifier of their identity. But what I found was a low level of consumption of traditionally Czech foods with the exception of kolaches. Most interviewees said that Czech foods were not consumed regularly, that is for regular meal consumption as a part of the normal meal pattern. A number of reasons were cited for this lack of consumption.

Health Concerns with Traditional Czech Foods

One of the reasons for this decline in the consumption of Czech foods was health concerns. Traditional Czech foods tend to be high in fat. The most common meat in traditional Czech cuisine is pork. Today's pork is bred to be lean, but pork traditionally has been a fatty meat and still carries that perception to some degree. Modern eaters tend to consider poultry and fish to be lean and mammalian meat products to be fattier. While modern fats have supplanted the traditional use of lard in many traditional dishes, the fat content of many of these dishes has not been reduced.

Jiternice, the traditional Czech sausage, is a good example of this. One of my informants related the traditional way of making jiternice, the way it was made on the farm when she was growing up in rural Ellsworth County:

That's an old thing from way back, jiternice. My mom and dad and everybody butchered their own hogs back then. And the head is what they always made the jiternice out of. That was cooked with some liver in it and barley and Dad always put bread in it. And I said to him, I said, Dad, why do you put that bread in there for? And he said, because the head has so much fat on it, it kinda soaks that fat up. They had the remedy I guess.

The same informant talked about her family's way of making sauerkraut, not preparing sauerkraut for preservation, but sauerkraut for serving as a side dish on the table:

I don't think I've ever served it but what somebody comes and wants to know how that sauerkraut's made. Because I make it different than anybody else. The way my mom always made it and that's just the only way I ever make it. I cook it and then you put a thickening, like you're going to make gravy, chicken gravy, you know, flour and some fryins or something. You pour that in there and let that cook and that thickens that juice all up. And then I put some sugar in it.

She goes on to describe some other things that make up part of the traditional Czech meal:

And then I have seasoned green beans. I put, I cook bacon and onion, and I put that in my green beans, and then let's see what else. Oh, and then I have creamed cucumbers.... I just use like half and half and then you put vinegar and sugar in it.... (or) I use Miracle Whip with milk, I put it in, and thin it down and use that and I put a little vinegar and a little sugar in it. That's what I always have on the table....but I did forget dillied potatoes. That's one thing I always make every year for my son, seeing as he has, his potatoes are about that big around (uses her thumb and forefinger to indicate a diameter approximately the size of a half dollar). We make dillied potatoes....you make like a white sauce and then you cook the potatoes and take the peelings off and put them in that white sauce and then you put in fresh dill. I mean it takes a bunch of it too. But it's good. It's good.

One informant described the traditional Czech diet for me:

I guess we just ate stuff mostly, but it seemed to me like it was mostly always fried...you know people would fry (jiternice), like sausage, fry it down and then pour lard over it and that's supposed to keep it. When you wanted some, why you dug it out, fried it away.

Lard is a recurrent theme when talking to the older people. One informant told me that when she was growing up, her family used "lard like people today use butter, we cooked a lot of stuff in it. We even spread it on bread when there wasn't butter."

Given the current concerns over diets high in saturated fats and the vogue for foods low in carbohydrate, it is not hard to see how the traditional Czech diet would not be attractive to modern eaters. The meal described above would probably be delicious, but not in accord with current health concerns.

Fat is not the only health concern that was noted by interviewees. The increase in diabetes has an influence on what people choose to eat (or are allowed to eat). Kolache, the sweet roll that is one of the iconic Czech foods, is one of the most consumed Czech foods in the community, but even it can be influenced by health factors. Mrs. Mattas described an occasion where one of her kolache customers asked her to make the kolaches with Splenda® instead of sugar due to the diabetic condition of a patient. So sometimes the urge to eat the product is strong enough that health concerns are the cause for an adaptation of the product.

Modern Tastes and Traditional Czech Foods

Another reason given by interviewees for the decline in the consumption of traditional Czech foods in the home is the change in tastes of modern eaters. Like other aspects of consumption, eating is subject to changes in fashion. What is in fashion to eat changes not only from generation to generation, but even within generations. The residents of Wilson are no different in this regard. Most interviewees told me that Czech food had given way to American foods on the everyday dinner table, with Czech foods being reserved more often for special occasions, if consumed at all.

One sidenote that is of interest here, though not directly to the topic at hand, is that a number of foods that they mention as being regular things to eat in the home, such as spaghetti and chili and hamburgers, are, in fact, foods that have their origins in other

immigrant foods and have been assimilated into the American repertoire. But Czech food has not made this leap into the repertoire, even in Wilson. As one informant told me:

...they kinda eat what they like, you know. It's, it's different, you know. They have such choices and all that...like uh, they do a lot of barbecuing which we Czech's didn't... (Czechs did) more just roasting and frying.

Referring to her family:

(My daughter-in-law), she's Spanish, so (her husband) likes Mexican. So they eat a lot of Mexican. It's just what they, what they like....They eat a lot of soup...they all like chicken or beef noodle soup, or vegetable soup. They are soup eaters. I like soup. I could live on soup. I like soup.

Another respondent echoed the sentiment that Czech food has fallen out of favor for other flavors. Here the Mexican theme rises again. "I know the people nowadays don't serve food, you know, like that. Oh, a couple of years ago, at Christmas, the kids came up and were like, well, let's make Mexican. Everyone bring a Mexican dish."

A number of respondents said they grew up eating Czech foods, but their children did not, so there must have been something that caused the change, but I was not given any information that related to specific reasons. The reasons for the falling away of traditional foods remain somewhat cryptic to me. As one respondent informed me:

We just grew up with it. I mean, a lot of people don't like it because they never grew up with it. Now my husband, he never cared for it at all. But uh, my youngest daughter, she doesn't like it. But I think the other kids pretty well (like it) cause I used to make it all the time. But I just kinda got out of it...I just quit making it.

There is some remorse expressed by the older generation about the younger generation not knowing enough about the Czech food traditions. An expression of this from a woman in her late 70's. "(The) younger generation haven't uh, a lot of them don't know anything about it. And like I said, I wished I knew lots more about it now. Like with my Dad's family and stuff." But it seemed there was a conscious effort on the part

of older generations to assimilate, which may partially explain the falling away of Czech food traditions. This informant goes on:

But you know, that's something you didn't talk about....Peppy Joe (Joe Vocasek, deceased) who used to be down here in the barber shop, well anyway, he always said, he'd say to his dad, 'Dad, who was this and who was that?' And (Peppy Joe's father) said, oh they're over there, just forget about it, we're not talking to them no more. And (Peppy Joe) said, you know, that's just kinda the way it is.

Assimilation was important to older generations because of a strong desire to be American. Czech food and language were possibly downplayed in an effort to be American. The informant continues: "And a lot of the kids, you know, they couldn't only speak Czech, well the kids all laughed at them and made fun, until the later years it got to where everybody just quit." Czech foodways may have followed in this pattern and fallen away as Wilson Czechs attempted to become American.

Some of the falling away of the Czech tradition can be attributed to the fact that patterns change quickly when people marry outside of their own ethnic group and traditions have to blend, merge, and become part of a larger repertoire. When I asked one interviewee if there was much Czech traditional food eaten in homes today he said:

I don't think so. I think we are too many generations from the pack. In each generation the blood gets thinner. I don't, there might be a few of the population that are one hundred percent Czech blood. But very few.

Later in the interview he commented:

...as far as trying to keep it authentically Czech, I think that will go away. One reason is population. We don't live close enough to a populated area that still has a lot of ethnic people in it, German Czech. Like I said, the blood is getting thinner here. If we lived close to Omaha, Des Moines, Iowa, Chicago, then I think it would really stick in there...because there is enough demand so that's where you would cater to that demand.

Relating the idea to sausage making, his specialty: "I think what they'll eventually concentrate on is just producing a good sausage, and it will eventually probably become

good American sausage. That's kind of maybe a little sad, in a way, but I think that is what is going to happen."

Modern time constraints and priorities have led to the falling away of Czech food traditions as well. The same informant told me:

In this day and age, in a household, cooking is not a priority. A microwave is a priority. Prepared foods are priorities. You can go to the grocery shelves and tell that. You see it in boxes, you can go to the freezer section in the store and see how many bags of complete meals there are. And with most households they are two income families. There isn't time to cook. If you don't have time to cook, a lot of these things are going to go away. You can't go out and buy a meal that's got jiternice and sauerkraut in it.

Preservation of Traditional Czech Foodways in the Personal Sphere

Because daily foods and foodways are in flux in Wilson does not mean that all traditional foodways are being abandoned. There are a number of traditions being preserved in the local sphere, but this preservation is happening in a selective manner. The preservation is selective in the sense that it is being carried on by a limited number of families within the community and with a limited number of food products.

The making of sauerkraut is an example of a traditional Czech food product that is continuing to be produced by families in the community. For the most part it is being produced and preserved in the traditional manner, but some modern improvements have crept into the process. The annual fall ritual of the making of the sauerkraut for the year persists among some of the people I interviewed and their families. The making of sauerkraut was once a major event in Wilson. Nearly every interviewee I spoke to that was over the age of 60 had vivid memories of large scale sauerkraut making when they were young.

The amount of sauerkraut that used to be preserved was prodigious. Examples like the following were common in recollections:

My folks bought like 300 pounds (of cabbage) and made sauerkraut...they did it in a vinegar barrel...a humongous thing, like this (indicates a barrel easily five feet high). And they'd put up them three hundred pounds and we'd eat off of that for a while, then later, oh probably like November, or late November, they'd buy another three hundred pounds. And Mother canned what was left out of that three hundred.

Another interviewee related a similar story:

They used to make sauerkraut out of the core even. Grind it up and pack it down in the jars with salt on it.... I think we made up to about 500 pounds of cabbage cause I always had to have 250 pounds of it and so did Mom....when it gets as sour as I want it, then I cook it...put it in these big canner kettles and cook it...in quart jars and seal it shut. But Mom and Dad never did that. They kept this big old jar down in the cellar. When she wanted sauerkraut, she went down there and scraped off the mold from around the top of it, dug down in there and got sauerkraut and bring it in for the meal. She never did can any of it.

Today the quantities have changed. Sauerkraut is made in smaller batches and the preservation methods aren't always the same, but sauerkraut is still being made in a number of families. The making of the sauerkraut is still a family (both nuclear and extended) activity practiced in Wilson.

I told my youngest son, I said, you guys are going to have to learn to make that sauerkraut. So, him and his wife, they pitched in. So now they know how to do it. So, they've been making it. Then we usually just make 50 pounds apiece now. Usually that's all we make. But, yeah, we make our own.

Another person told a similar story:

It's work, but it's fun. We get a group of us together and maybe make for three or four families and set it and let it ferment. And when it's ready we just bag it and freeze it. It's easy. Instead of putting it in jars and canning it. That's the work.

I asked this person how they sliced it up prior to fermenting it, assuming they used an old fashioned kraut slicer. "We used to, the last time we did it even a lazier way.

We used a Hobart grinder with a shredder attachment on the front and that's the way we did our last one." I commented on the old ways that people shred their cabbage, using a traditional kraut slicer. "Well, that's good, but there are more people that lost fingernails and the tips of their fingers on those, because they have to be sharp, they have to be really sharp or it's hard work. If they are sharp, it's easy work." The amounts and the technology have changed, but the tradition lives on in a modified form.

Czech Food and the Public Sphere

Czech foods and foodways in the public arena was another area where I found less of what I expected in terms of the Czech ethnic identity. Czech food was featured heavily at two or three meals during the Czech fest but there was a lack of availability of Czech foods during other times, and this paucity of Czech food was especially noticeable in what one might term regular public foodservice venues. Food is available in Wilson in the ways it is available in most other places; that is to say you can go to the grocery store and buy raw supplies and prepare your own food or you can go to one of a number of prepared food venues and get food to take with you and eat in another location or you can eat the food where you purchase it.

Wilson has one full line grocery store and one convenience store. The convenience store, while not branded as one of the major chains in America (e.g., 7-11) is much what one might expect for such an operation, with the addition of a prepared food window in the rear of the store. I did not expect to find any Czech themed foods there and that is what I found. I did expect the grocery store to carry Czech themed items and there I was disappointed. The grocery store in Wilson is located on one of the main

corners in the downtown area and occupies two storefronts along the main street and a third on the side street. It is well stocked for a small town grocer and on my regular visits to Wilson, seemed to carry a relatively full line of products. One of the claims to fame of the market has always been the meat counter in the back. When the building was first owned by Klema, who ran an IGA grocery store there for many years, and later, when it was owned by Malcolm Shaw, the meat counter was renowned for fresh cut meats and especially for processed meat products such as sausages and house-smoked bacon that

Shaw's Grocery



Figure 5. Shaw's Grocery.

was sliced to order. What is lacking is any sort of nod to traditional Czech food, especially in any kind of semi-prepared form. Where there was once jiternice in the case and head cheese and kolbasy, there is now a limited selection of German-style sausages, albeit mostly made in house and of good quality. According to my interviewees, when Shaw had the store, kolache was regularly available, but I was unable to find any in the store on numerous visits. The only place to purchase kolache for retail sale is the gift shop on E Street known as Sincerely Yours. Sincerely Yours regularly advertises kolaches via a sign on the sidewalk during the times that the store is open for business. Kolaches are a small part of a business that is otherwise dedicated to traditional gift shop items and fresh flowers. The kolaches are sold frozen from a small chest type freezer in the center of the store.

For prepared foods the options are the Snack Shack or the convenience store for what might be termed fast-food options. The Snack Shack is a mom-and-pop hamburger stand and the convenience store has a prepared food area with hamburgers, various sandwiches, and pizza. For more complex foods there are three options. One is Al's Bar and Grill, which serves a traditional bar menu. Another option is Made from Scratch, a traditional small town café, open for all three day parts and serving American blue-plate special type food. The third option is the dining room at the Midland Hotel. The dining room at the Midland Hotel serves traditional Middle American food with a menu leaning toward steaks, chicken fried steak and sandwiches. What all of these dining options have in common is that none of them regularly serve food that would be considered traditionally Czech. The dining room at the hotel intermittently serves a Czech item or

two on a buffet for special occasions, but there are no Czech themed items on the static menu.

The fact that a prepared Czech meal was not available in the community on a regular basis surprised me quite a bit given the deliberate aura of Czechness created through visual means. When I asked where I could get Czech food in the community, the answer was almost always, nowhere. Sometimes I was told that I could get a beirock at Made from Scratch. While beirocks are not a traditionally Czech food, they are one of the two most commonly available central European ethnic foods available in the community, the other being the kolache. The beirock has been fairly conclusively traced to Russian German origins by Isern (1998) in his article *Bierocks and Back for More Bierocks*⁴. They have been adopted as Czech ethnic food, even though most of the locals acknowledge their German origin if quizzed about it. As one of my interviewees put it when I asked about Czech ethnic foods available in the local restaurants, “well, there’s bierocks, but they’re German.” How bierocks came to be an accepted part of the Czech repertoire in Wilson is not clear. Interviewees could not provide an answer to my query. Interestingly in the Czech cookbook available locally there are two recipes for bierocks, one of which is given the Czech name of *zeliniky*. I was unable to determine the source of this name. There are three possibilities that stand out. One is that *zely* is the Czech word for cabbage, and sometimes it is baked with dumplings on top, which is a similar combination. Another explanation is that the Czech term for dumpling is *zelo*. It is not a

⁴ Bierocks are commonly found across the Great Plains. Bierocks are a filling of cabbage and ground beef, lightly seasoned and wrapped with a soft dough, then baked. They resemble a hamburger baked in the bun. The term *bierock* is a corruption of the Russian *pirogi*, a generic Russian term for any stuffed dough. In Nebraska, this dish is referred to as a *runza*, again a Russian corruption, this time of the term *runsa*, which means belly, which the *runza* is said to resemble. These terms would seem to place the product in the Russian repertoire. Russian-Germans were among the most numerous and widely scattered settlers across the wheat growing areas of the Great Plains which would contribute to the wide distribution of the bierock geographically.

far stretch to imagine the beirock as a baked dumpling. It could also be derived from the term *verinika*, another Russian dish popular with Mennonites, of whom there are large concentrations across the Great Plains, which is the name for another stuffed dough item, though usually made by stuffing soft dough with cheese and potatoes and steaming or boiling. It would not be inconceivable that there was some type of dish like one of these that got named *zeliniky*, which later was given to bierocks in order to enhance its Czechness or that these concepts became amalgamated during the process of assimilation or intermarriage. My research and communication with Peter Trnka, a Canadian expert (ethnically and nationally Czech) could not reveal a satisfactory answer to this conundrum. As to how it became a Czech food, this would not be problematic when we consider the extent of the Russian-German population on the Great Plains and it's proximity to Czech centers of population. Between intermarriage and the general cross-fertilization of ideas and foods among groups who live in proximity to each other boundaries become permeable, and it would be easy for the dish to cross the cultural boundary from one group to another.

Food at the Czech Festival

Making Kolache

My quest to learn more about the kolache, what was turning out to be the most iconic of traditional Czech food products in Wilson, led me to conversations with some of the older participants in public meal preparation. I was told that if I wanted to learn more about how kolaches were made, that I should come to the meal preparation at St. Wenceslaus parish hall as they made all the kolaches for the meal served at the Czech

Fest. I felt I could not refuse the invitation, so at 8 a.m. on a summer Tuesday I presented myself at the parish hall and was put to work.

The parish hall is a modern gymnasium like building next to old main church building. The kitchen is in the center of the building and has windows opening on all three of the public rooms, one very large one on the east end, where the meal is served and two smaller ones on the west. The kitchen is fitted out with an amalgam of commercial and homestyle equipment. The north wall is lined with a bank of commercial four burner gas ranges with large ovens. The center of the room is filled with work tables on casters that can be moved where needed to accommodate the work to be done.

When I arrive, women are at work in all parts of the kitchen. Mrs. Mattas, whom I have interviewed in preparation for this, and the only one of the ladies present I have gotten to know well, is in place in front of the large standing mixer, a place I will find her for most of the rest of the day, making sweetened dough for kolaches. I must have been a little late, for the first batch of dough is already rising on top of the stoves. I am offered coffee, which I accept, and am introduced to the rest of the women who are working. This is definitely "ladies work". The few men who stop by during the day are almost sheepish as they enter the kitchen and even the parish priest who stops in briefly stays only a few minutes.

The organization of the work is fascinating to watch. Much of it happens totally without instruction or even a need to call workers to the table. As the dough is emptied out of a large stainless steel bowl onto a side table, the table is surrounded by workers

ready to do their task. One of the women sits at the middle of this circle of helpers and begins to cut dough off into small balls that are tossed out for the rest of us to shape and

Making Kolache and Rohlicke



Figure 6. Rohlicke

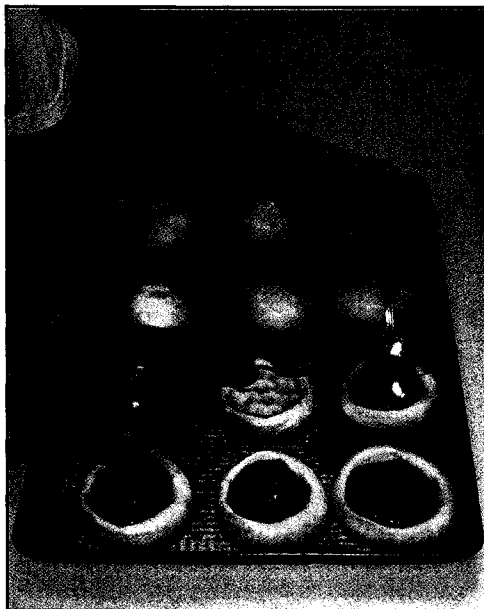


Figure 7. Filling kolache.

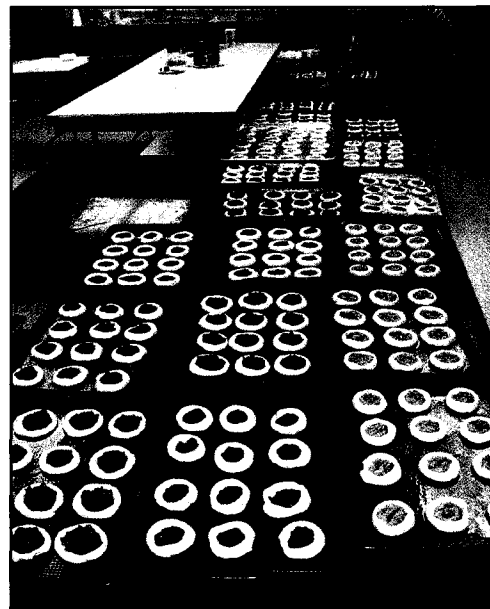


Figure 8. Kolaches rising.

pan. A large stack of greased baking dishes is at the ready. When a baking sheet has twelve shaped balls of dough on it, it is whisked away to the center table for “greasing” and rising. “Greasing” is the term used by the women for buttering the dough, both before the first rise and when it comes out of the oven.

When rise is deemed sufficient⁵, the pans of risen dough are moved to another table where again they are instantly and wordlessly surrounded by workers who have now become shapers and fillers. I join in this process and we fill the kolaches with apricot, cherry, cheese, and poppy seed fillings. Each worker is given a tray of a dozen kolaches. With just the index finger of each hand, the kolaches are shaped. The index fingers deflate the ball of dough, then deftly shape it into a ring, or doughnut, shape with a layer of dough left on the bottom. The fillings are added, and the tray is taken away from the worker and removed to the center table for the second rise.

After baking and a second greasing, the kolache are cooled on folding tables in the main room of the parish hall, the one where that day’s meal will later be served. After working in the hot kitchen on a sizzling July day, the main hall seems positively arctic. After the kolache cool, they are packed on foam meat trays, labeled, packed in cardboard boxes, and taken to the local grocery store where they are “quick frozen”. This day we have made about 80 dozen kolache before lunch.

When the last batch of kolache is filled and rising, we start on the second product of the morning, rohlicky. Rohlicky are rolled white dough rolls that are slightly crescent shaped, reminiscent of croissant. The process for these is similar to that for the kolache, as women gathered around at the first sign of work. The shaping is different for the

⁵ The testing of the rise is accomplished by sticking a finger into the dough and seeing how much of a depression is left. There is quite a bit of debate over this by two women who the others defer to in this matter. I was not good at this estimation evidently, but I don’t have 25 years of experience at this task.

rohlicky. After the dough is rounded they are rolled out into oblongs with the rolling pin and formed into pinwheel shapes which are slightly curved before placing onto the pans for rising.

Greasing for both the kolache and rohlicky is done using a little handmade brush made from goose feathers. The brushes are made by Mrs. Mattas who told me that the best ones are made from feathers from the vee of the wing. There are two brushes in use; one made from short brown feathers and one from longer white feathers. Mrs. Mattas told me they can be made from either domestic goose or wild, but that domestic is preferable. The brushes are made from 26 feathers tied together using a over and under weaving pattern to give it the correct shape and loft. I greased several batches of the rolls with these brushes and had to concur with Mrs. Mattas that these were superior instruments. The little individual tines of the feathers wrapped themselves intimately around the rolls, giving the surface a light even coat of the butter. Mrs. Mattas was pleased that I enjoyed using her brushes and that I found them superior to the store bought brushes and told me that the store “charged five or six dollars for a pastry brush, you know”, using a conspiratorial tone of voice that suggested criminality in charging that price for such an inferior instrument.

Making Jiternice

Helping with the prep at the Czech fest allowed me to participate in the making of jiternice, the pork, liver, and barley sausage that is the centerpiece of the meal served at the parish hall during Czech fest. Again prep started early. Again the kitchen is hot, and numerous simmering kettles on the stove make it hotter.

Handmade Brushes

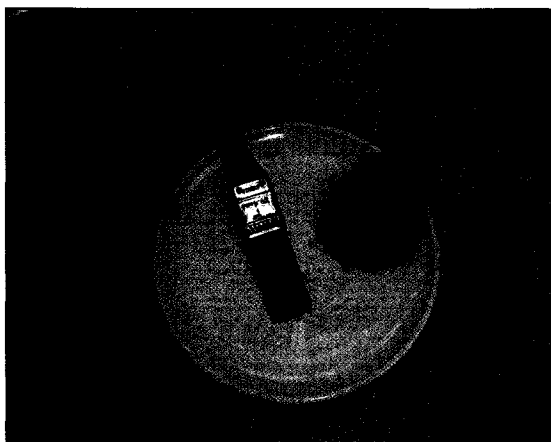


Figure 9. Traditional and modern brushes.



Figure 10. Goose feather brush.

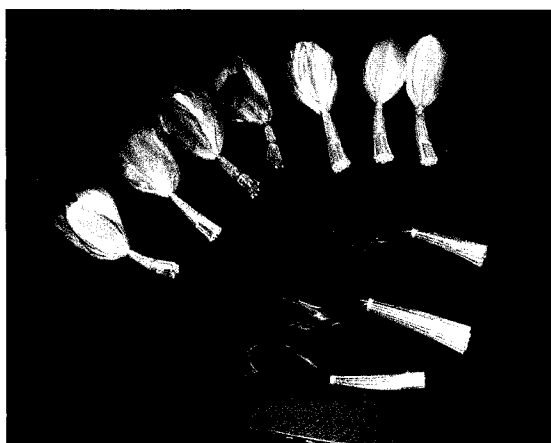


Figure 11. Goose feather brush assortment.

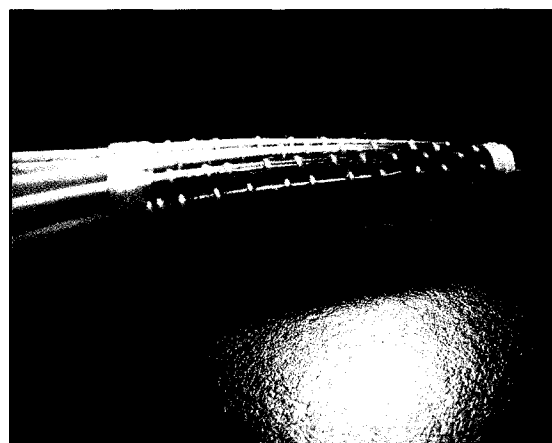


Figure 12. Goose feather brush—detail.

Barley has been cooked the day before in order that it cool off before it goes into the Jiternice. Several ladies are there as well as a couple of gentlemen. Yesterday for the Kolache there were no men in the room. Maybe the working of the meat is more of a manly pursuit. I am assigned work at the big table in the center, cutting the pork shoulders and legs into smaller portions.

There is a box of pork shoulders and legs that weighs about 100 pounds. The meat is cut into pieces that are roughly 3 inches by 3 inches, but there is not an attempt to make them perfectly square, a number of the chunks have bones in them and they go into the pot with some meat attached to them. There are some pig legs that are smaller than my forearm, and some meat is peeled off of them before immersion in the boiling pots of water. There are three of us working the meat cutting station. As we get the meat cut into appropriate sized pieces, we put them into standard grey dish tubs of the commercial variety, grey plastic boxes approximately 18 inches long, 12 inches wide, and about 8 inches deep. The meat is then transferred to the simmering salted kettles of water. The salt used is ordinary table salt. The meat is fatty, but there is no attempt to cut the fat off of the meat. From my experience making sausages, this doesn't surprise me as I know how much fat generally goes into the process.

The stove is set up with about 10 kettles of simmering water. This has contributed to the heat in the room, and the door to the main part of the parish hall, which seems to have the best air conditioning in the building, is opened with a large fan on a stand blowing into it. There are two ladies minding the stove who obviously have seniority in the matter. Their judgment is deferred to in all matters regarding the cooking and processing of the jiternice. The meat must be cooked until "it isn't pink any more, but is still moist". The meat is not supposed to dry out in the cooking process, but they are concerned about having it done. I assumed that it would cook more in the process and that leaving it slightly pink would be an asset to keeping it moist, but that is not the case. I do not offer this opinion as I am here to observe and learn. After a bit, about 30

minutes of the meat simmering, there are some tentative probes into the smaller pieces of meat and some are fished out and cut into to ascertain tenderness.

When the meat is judged to be done by one of the two ladies in charge, it is returned to the meat cutting table, which has been cleaned of raw meat after the last raw chunk has gone into the kettles, where the cooked pieces are cut into chunks roughly two inches square so it can be run through the meat grinder which is set up in the corner of the kitchen. This is a slow process, and two or three cutters can keep up with the slow, but steady stream of meat that returns to the table.

While the chunks of pork have been simmering, the grinder is set up, and the first batch of meat is run through the grinder. The grinder is set up by an older gentleman who participated in the process the year before to judge by his comments. The first batch of meat is a small baking sheet of pork livers and hearts that have been cooked prior to the arrival of the workers. (I am assuming they were cooked on the previous day, but I did not ask and ascertain this for sure.) The livers and hearts are run through the grinder with a small die plate in place. This creates small, yarn size strings that come out of the grinder. The organ meat is reserved, and a pint jar of peeled garlic cloves are run through the small plate of the grinder. The garlic is reserved, and the grinder is cleaned in preparation for the grinding of the simmered pork meat. The room takes on the smell of chopped garlic, and a number of comments are made about the pungency of the odor. A

Making Jiternice

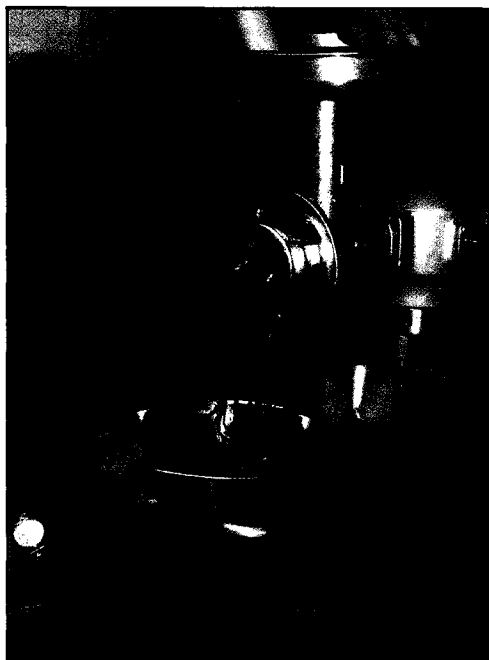


Figure 13. Grinding liver.



Figure 14. Jiternice ready for mixing.



Figure 15. Jiternice ready for mixing.

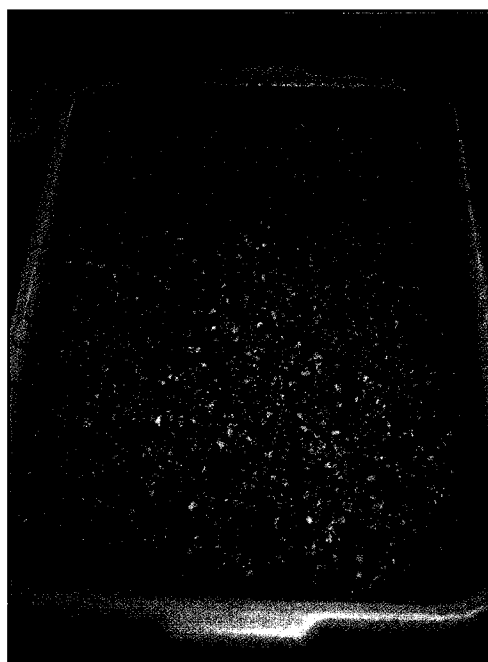


Figure 16. Jiternice ready to cook.

second man who is helping says he likes garlic, but not raw like this. Someone says how do you like it? And he replies, sautéed. I found it interesting that no men participated in the preparation of the kolaches, but were present for the making of the jiternice, though there were far more women than men. I wondered if baking was a gendered activity that community mores discouraged men from participating in and if working with meat somehow realigned this genderedness and was acceptable for men to participate in.

As the pork shoulder is cooked and cubed, it is sent to the grinder where it is ground using the larger plate, giving a coarser grind of meat and fat. While the pork grinding is occurring, the barley which has been cooked the day before and is stored in four of the grey plastic dish tubs is set out on the prep table. Two more tubs are placed on the table, and one of the women in charge makes sure that the barley is roughly evenly distributed between the six tubs. After all the pork is ground, it is distributed between the six tubs. After the pork is distributed, then comes the reserved hearts and livers, then the garlic. The more senior of the jiternice ladies (in rank though likely not in age, it is hard to tell) then goes along with her spices, distributing them among the six tubs. The main seasoning is allspice, and she empties two tall, grocery store size containers of allspice over the six tubs. The room becomes redolent with the scent of allspice mixed with the garlic. Salt and pepper are added to the mixture.

The jiternice is now ready to be mixed. I am given the job of mixing up one of the dish containers. This is accomplished by hand. After washing my hands, I step up to one of the containers and dip my hands in and begin to blend the mixture. I am checked once or twice by the ladies in charge to make sure that I am getting the blending right, and, after a little gentle correction, my batch is judged to have been mixed acceptably.

Once the mixture is judged to have been blended correctly broth from the kettles in which the pork has been simmered is added to the bins. At first about half to three-quarters of a gallon is added to the mixture in the bins and then the mixing process is repeated. For the most part the mixture has been pretty cool up to this point because of the refrigeration of the barley. While the broth has been turned off since the removal of the final bits of meat, it is still relatively hot. We mix in the pour of hot broth, and the mixture is gauged by one of the women to see if it is "loose" enough. It is not, so another, smaller, measure (probably one-third to one-half gallon) is poured over the jiternece.

After the second dose of broth, the jiternece is of the appropriate looseness. The jiternece is then tested for spicing. The two senior cooks test the mixture for spice levels. This is done by tasting the product in its raw state. (The product is not really raw, all the ingredients added to this point, except the garlic are cooked.) The rest of us taste it, and there are a few comments about the spice level, but it is agreed that the spice level is appropriate.

At this point the jiternece production is complete. The group breaks for lunch, and a small lunch buffet is set out as one member of the group scoops out some of the jiternece and begins to heat it in a small cast iron skillet. What surprises me is the consistency of the jiternece. All my research to this point has led me to expect a tight, sausage-like mixture which can be packed in a casing if so desired. Recipes I have consulted prior to going to the parish hall have suggested packing it in a casing. On previous visits to Wilson, I have seen it in the store, packed in casings like traditional sausage.

Earlier in the visit I had been talking with the woman who is the caretaker at the Czech museum in Wilson. When I had asked her about jiternice, she had told me that she didn't make jiternice at home, but that she did make hash. She described a process of using leftover meats, potatoes, vegetables, and gravy and baking it. I hadn't really made the connection between the two until I saw what was being cooked up at the parish hall. Indeed, it was a kind of hash.

The Meal at the Parish Hall

The Czech meal served at the St. Wenceslaus Parish Hall is not only the largest public meal served in the community in the course of a year, it is one of two meals served during the year where the public is able to reliably get Czech food, the other being the public meal served at the same time at the Czech Sokol, also known as the Opera House, downtown. Czech fest begins on the Friday night of the last weekend in July. The main kickoff event, though, is the parade through downtown on Saturday morning. The parade features old cars and tractors, political candidates, beauty queens, family floats, marching Czech dancers, and, oddly for this part of the world, art cars.⁶

As soon as the parade is over, many people head to the parish hall for the traditional Czech meal. Actually, those in know begin to head over to the hall before the parade is over in order to beat the crush that develops as soon as the parade is over. The year I did my research, the women of St. Wenceslaus parish served approximately 600 meals for Czech Fest. The meal is served buffet style, and people line up for as long as a

⁶ Wilson is located 11 miles from Lucas, Kansas home of the Kansas Grassroots Art Museum and an important folk art site known as the Garden of Eden. These off-beat art attractions attract tourists looking for outsider art. As a result, a few "art types" have moved into the area and one of the products of this are the art cars in the parade.

The Meal Sites

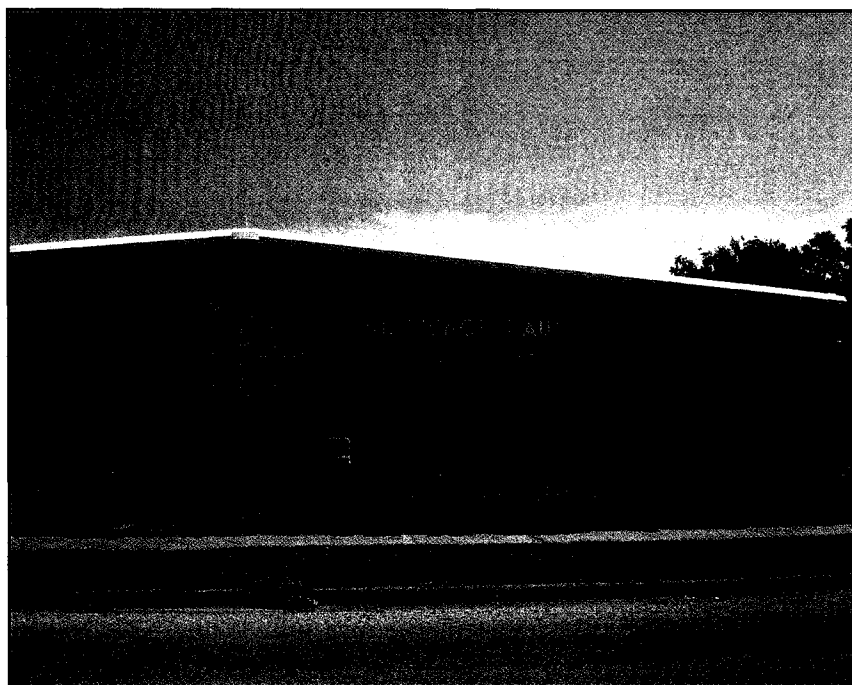


Figure 17. The parish hall.

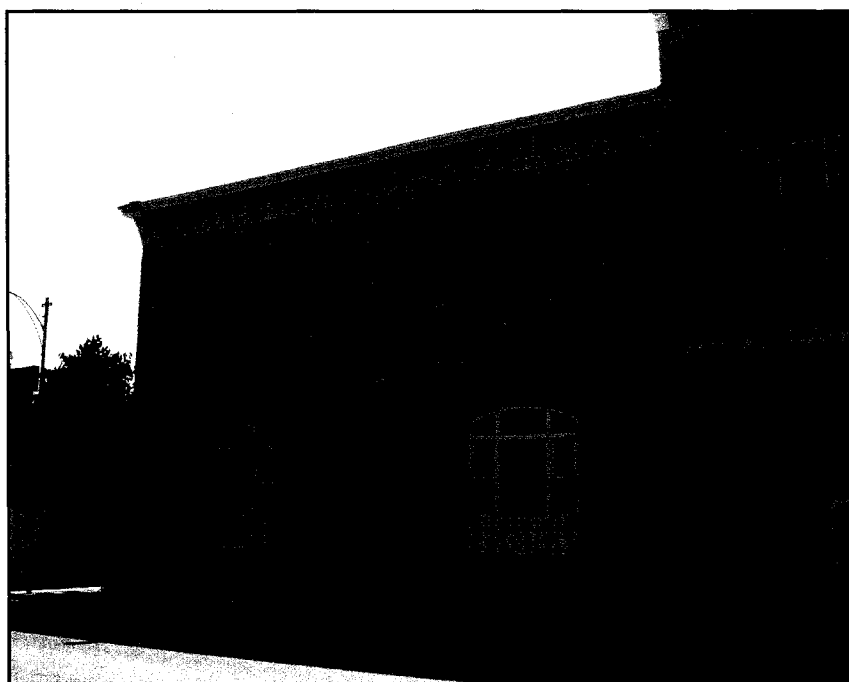


Figure 18. The Sokol.

half hour in order to go through the line to get served. The line starts at the entrance on the south side of the building, winds around past a carved Styrofoam model of the parish church in a glass case and then curves into the head of the buffet line.

The menu doesn't vary from year to year. It is always jiternice, potatoes with a dill cream gravy, roast pork, coleslaw, green salad, bread and margarine, ice tea or water, and kolaches. What surprised me was how many people came for a meal whose main course was a liver and barley sausage, two items that on their own are not considered culinary favorites in the American repertoire.

Czech Food as Expressed Through Cookbooks

The idea that one of the prominent central European ethnic foods in the community, the bierock, was a dish that has been fairly conclusively shown to originate with the Russian German immigrants to the Midwest, and not with the Czechs, led me to question what could reasonably be considered a traditional Czech food and what would not. In an attempt to better understand what was considered to traditionally be part of the Czech and Czech-American repertoire, I decided to examine Czech cookbooks as a form of document analysis. Cookbooks are a useful tool for examining the public and private spheres of a community as they are public expressions of private traditions. In this way, they form a bridge between the public and private spheres. What I discovered was an interesting negotiation of the traditional and the modern, expressed in recipes and the anecdotal notes included these Czech cookbooks, both in terms of food products and prepared foods.

The cookbooks I examined represented Midwestern Czech cooking over the span of approximately one hundred years. The first of these, *Národní Domáci Kuchařka* by

Marie Rosická, was originally published in 1904 in Omaha, Nebraska. I feel it can reliably represent the style of cooking and ingredients used by the early Czechs of Wilson as the original Czech colony in Wilson was an offshoot of the southern Nebraska Czech colonies, which themselves grew out of the immigration to the Omaha area by the first wave of Czech immigration in the second half of the nineteenth century. The edition I was able to obtain was a reprint of the original, translated by ethnically Czech residents of Texas and published by the Fort Bend (TX) County Historical Society in conjunction with the First Annual Czech Fest in Rosenberg, Texas. The second and third cookbooks are from Wilson and are compiled by local residents. The first of these *Cooking the Czech-American Way* was compiled in Wilson by Antonin Dvorak and the Luna J.C. D. & P (the women's auxiliary of the Sokol). This cookbook carries no publication or copyright date and the local residents I talked to were unsure when it came out. I was allowed a photocopy of it by one of my interviewees and by checking the advertisements by local merchants against some materials in the local public library I was able to put the date in the late 1960's or early 1970's. The second of the local cookbooks, *Dobre Chutnání, Good Eating From Wilson "Czech Capital of Kansas"* compiled by the Kansas Czechs of Wilson is also undated, but it is of recent vintage, and interviewees were able to place the date fairly firmly in the early to mid 1990's. As an outside reference, I used the cookbook, *The Best of Czech Cooking* by Peter Trnka, a Czech immigrant to Canada and now university professor in Newfoundland, as a way to see how the Midwestern Czech repertoire compares to the Czech cuisine of the homeland.

Cookbooks and Poppy Seed Grinder

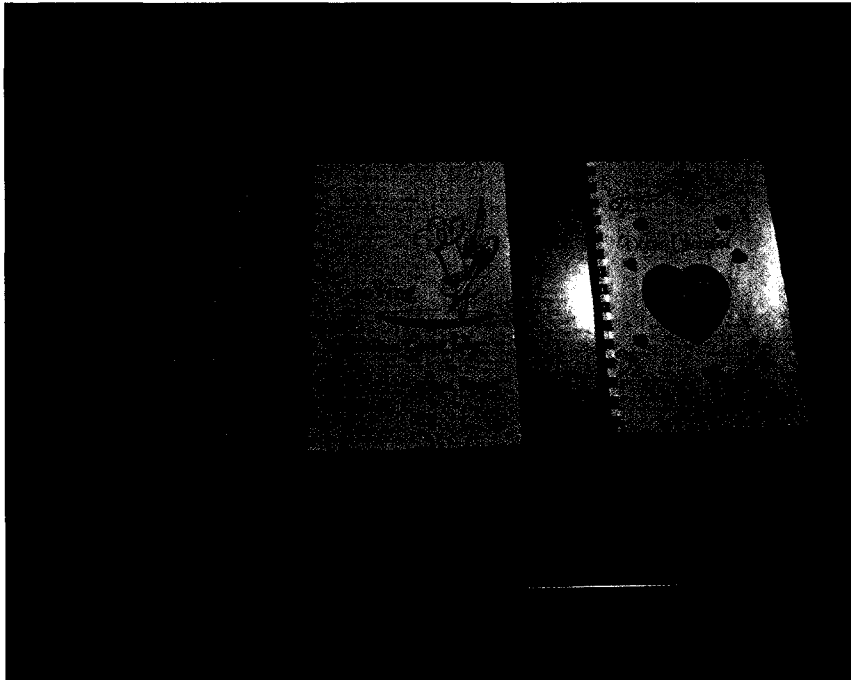


Figure 19. Czech cookbooks.

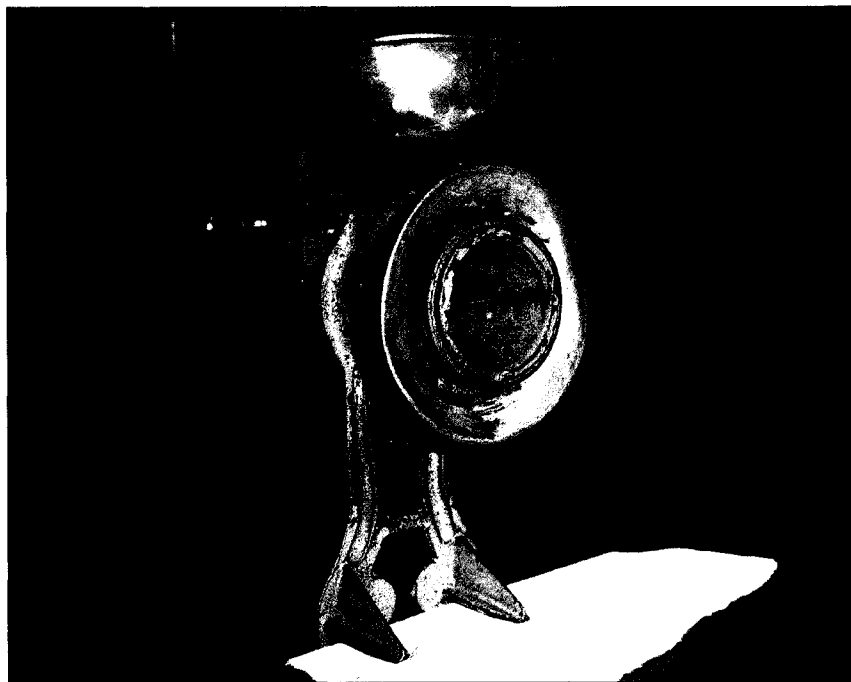


Figure 20. Mrs. Mattas' poppy seed grinder.

Using these cookbooks and the model set out by Lynne Ireland in her work, *The Compiled Cookbook as Autobiography* (1981), I looked for ways that the recipes in these books expressed food habits and food fashions. Ireland uses frequency of inclusion and exclusion of recipes and ingredients as one way to determine food habits. In her work she examines community cookbooks published at roughly the same time to determine what food fashions of a period are. Her theoretical stance is that the recipes can tell us what people eat, or at least what the authors would have us believe that they eat. I felt I could modify her model slightly and use the foods presented as traditionally Czech, look for changes in when they are presented in the timeline, how ingredients and preparation methods change, and what is added to the repertoire to see how Czech food and foodways in Wilson respond to the conflicting pressures of adaptation and preservation. In addition to the printed material in the cookbooks, I analyzed recipes, techniques, and use of food products as related to me by my interviewees.

The Rosická cookbook served as a baseline for examining the other two cookbooks. This cookbook has about sixty five recipes, of which forty five or so I could place (fairly safely) in the Czech repertoire. I did this by checking recipes against the Trnka cookbook, maintaining an e-mail correspondence with Mr. Trnka to ask about recipes (who would query his Czech mother when he was unsure), and looking for other sources as I could find them. Beyond the Trnka resource, it was difficult to find resources about traditional Czech foods that were published in English. (As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the Czech immigrant population has not been studied in detail and their foodways hardly at all.) I was hesitant to rely on internet sources for this information, as most of the web sites I could find were not well documented. I felt the

Rosická cookbook served as a good baseline due to its date of publication, 1904. The Nebraska Czech immigrant community at this time was still concentrated in regional geographical strongholds and little assimilation had taken place by this point due to the relative newness of the immigrant community. The recipes in the Rosická cookbook are simple and do not use convenience ingredients, nor are there exotic ingredients in the recipes. Recipes from the Rosická cookbook rely on ingredients that would have been available to cooks in the central United States before the transportation revolution brought kiwi and mango to every whistle stop on the prairie. The most exotic ingredients in the cookbook appear to be the nutmeg and ginger used in a few of the baking recipes. Given what I was able to ascertain about Czech foods and foodways, this book seemed to represent early Czech-American immigrant food adequately.

The analysis of the cookbooks was not done in an attempt to establish what is authentic and what is not. Authenticity is a concept that is misrepresented in most contexts. Authenticity is, at best, a snapshot. To say what is authentic in a cuisine is to say where it was at any given moment in time. To compare a cookbook compiled in the 1990's and condemn it as inauthentic compared to one written nearly a century before is to miss the point of both cookbooks. Cookbooks are a snapshot of what is happening at any given time or place in a culinary field. They are valuable to us as documents for precisely this reason. In this research, I used the Rosická cookbook as a way to determine what might have been common in Wilson at the beginning of the twentieth century and then compare that to current foodways.

The Czech cookbooks of Wilson illustrate how people preserve their heritage, or at least how they would like us to believe that they preserve their heritage. One of the

interesting inclusions in the two cookbooks published in Wilson is the inclusion of many processed meat products made in the traditional style. Recipes for these products include jiternice, the iconic liver and barley sausage; press burst, a dish made from an organ stuffed animal stomach (the recipe doesn't specify what type of stomach, I assume if a person conversant with Czech culture were to actually make the dish, that person would know what kind of stomach to buy); jellied pork, a form of souse or head cheese; jelita, blood sausage; and kolbasy, a pork sausage seasoned with wine. Of all of these products, the only one that I could find to taste was jiternice, and that only at the Czech meal served at the parish hall during the one meal served during Czech fest. With one exception, Mr. Shaw, who ran a local grocery store for many years and was a master sausage maker⁷, no one I interviewed could confirm that they actually made any of the traditional sausages anymore. Most interviewees told me that the younger generation doesn't really like the old styles of processed meats, and therefore they don't make them anymore. They also noted that it was too much work for people today and that no one has the desire to set aside the time to make these products. One recipe in the latest iteration of the Wilson cookbooks, mock jiternice patties, finds a way to present a traditional item in a form that allows the tradition to be kept while bowing to the modern needs of time and taste. The recipe omits the liver, one of the prime flavor constituents that is not widely enjoyed by modern eaters, but uses allspice to add a traditional flavor to the dish.

There are other examples in the cookbooks of items included that lent an old-timey flavor to the volumes but had little likelihood of being produced by most readers of

⁷ Shaw, now retired, is currently building a private sausage kitchen on his property for the use of his family. While this project will preserve, for a time, Shaw's sausage legacy, his style of sausage making would be characterized as more of a German style of sausage making than a Czech style.

the cookbooks. In the latest iteration of the Wilson cookbooks, there are several recipes for soap. These recipes call for strained cooking fats and lye (and other ingredients in some cases). When a recipe calls for a large pickle or sauerkraut vat, a heavy wooden broomstick or paddle, and a recommendation not to breathe the fumes as you mix it; it is likely that this recipe will not be attempted by many readers of it (including this one). A recipe for homemade cottage cheese was another of these recipes. The recipe called for rennet tablets and warns the reader to be careful about getting the mixture too hot, without specifying what that temperature is, so the cheese doesn't get rubbery. I felt from what I learned from my interviewees that the recipes for sausages, processed meat products, and other products mentioned in this section were included as a preservation mechanism, rather than expression of what was currently being practiced in the community.

Another area in the cookbooks that shows the differences between the modern and the traditional is in the sections on desserts. The most traditional of the Czech sweets served in Wilson are kolache and fruit dumplings. Both of these items are included in the cookbooks, but as the cookbooks are updated many of the desserts that are included reflect the changing tastes of modern dessert eaters. In the earlier iteration of the Wilson cookbook desserts such as Zip Pound Cake, Waldorf Astoria Red Cake, and Lazy Daisy Cake join the traditional Czech desserts. These desserts reflect the tastes of the time in which the cookbook was published, making it relevant to the cooks of the time. In the later iteration of the cookbook, the above mentioned desserts are replaced by Dump Cake, Quick and Easy Chocolate Cake, Wacky Cake, Fruit Cocktail Cake and Tunnel of Fudge Cake. These desserts are all either one-bowl cakes or renditions of cakes that have

were universally popular across the country at the time the cookbook was published. The popularity of one-bowl cakes reflects the growing idea that time was a precious commodity that needn't be squandered on baking, while still allowing some baking to be done with the concomitant representations that home baking implies. While the differences in what is presented as a dessert is a time capsule view of how a community changes, the fact that kolache and dumplings and jelly rolls show up again and again over a hundred-year period show us the continuity and cultural cohesion in the community as well.

The balance between the modern and the traditional is well illustrated by the way in which modern ingredients have replaced traditional ones in traditional dishes. Mrs. Mattas, my oldest interviewee, told me that when she was young and living in a Czech immigrant family on the farm, lard was one of the primary fats. The Rosická cookbook features mostly butter as a fat, and by the time of the two Wilson cookbooks, various shortenings and margarines have taken center stage as the fats of choice. In talking with Mrs. Mattas, she shared with me that she uses margarine as the fat when making her kolaches because she feels she gets the best results with it. She is quite active in preserving the Czech traditions in Wilson, working at the Parish Hall meal every year even though she is in her nineties, but she adapts recipes to give the best results, not staying with traditional ingredients for the sake of tradition. When she finds an adaptation that she feels gives her a superior product, or saves money with no loss in quality, she is happy to make the change.

Within the paradigm change for fats, the authors of the recipes show their loyalty to brand names by actually specifying which brand of fat creates the best product in their

estimation. It is interesting to see how the brands change in the different editions of the cookbook. Change may not come as quickly to Wilson as it does to more urban places, but it does come. In the earlier version of the cookbook there are references to Spry, a cooking fat that was produced by Lever Brothers as an alternative to J.M. Smucker's Crisco. In the 1950's and 1960's there was no hint that hydrogenated shortenings may have harmful health effects due to the physical process of hydrogenation. They were considered healthful and convenient, in some cases vastly superior, alternatives to lard and the other animal fats they replaced. In the later version of the cookbook, Crisco has appeared to have won the hydrogenated shortening battle (as indeed it did nationally, Spry has joined the rank of products only to be enjoyed in old time advertisements, while Crisco has gone on to be the universal name brand of the product, available in multiple forms for consumer convenience). Wesson Oil joins the roster of desirable fats as well. Wesson Oil was the subject of intensive advertising in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a "light" alternative to heavy cooking fats. As in the rest of the country, cooks in Wilson freely adapted their recipes to the products that were felt to be the most modern, either for the health benefits or for some perceived performance benefit. Even a product as humble as margarine has brand preferences. In Wilson on a number of occasions I was told that you need to use Parkay brand to achieve the highest quality results in baked goods, though one dissenter insisted the brand of choice was Blue Bonnet.

Convenience products make frequent appearances in the Wilson cookbooks. Cake mixes and pudding mixes appear in the recipes for cakes. Even in traditional products like Kolache, ingredients like apricot Jell-O are sometimes used in order to make a more palatable (to modern palates) or more cost effective dish. Some

convenience ingredients may serve more than one function. Evaporated milk shows up as a substitute for heavy cream. This is a convenience for the cook, because it allows there to be a substitute at all times in the pantry without the fear of spoilage. It is generally cheaper than heavy cream and, if this is requirement, lower in fat and therefore likely healthier. Being allowed to peruse a copy of the Wilson cookbook actually used by a resident (herself one of the oldest Czech ladies in Wilson) was enlightening. Mrs. Karban, whose copy it was, had penciled-in notes here and there giving into the modifications she thought were acceptable. In one of these notes, she has penciled in how much instant mashed potatoes successfully replace the required amount of regular prepared mashed potatoes. In addition, many of the convenience foods that have been a part of the standard American repertoire for so long that they almost no longer seem like convenience foods like canned tomato and mushroom soups and canned beans are present in these pages as well.

Of course, not all convenience ingredients are acceptable to all cooks. Poppy seed kolaches are one of the most traditional, and still very popular, flavors of kolache. Most cooks have long since abandoned the cumbersome task of grinding poppy seeds from scratch and simmering or soaking in milk to achieve the right texture. Most cooks use Solo brand poppy seed filling from a can, but not all. In my conversations with Mrs. Mattas, we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of poppy seed preparation. She let me taste some filling from the can and then some that she had ground herself⁸. She convinced me that grinding your own was superior. Mrs. Mattas has two poppy seed grinders, one that she got as a wedding present from her mother when she was married in

⁸ Mrs. Mattas has a lively sense of humor. As she fed me the poppy seed she warned me they had opium in them and that I might not pass a drug test for work, but laughingly told me that she never felt anything.

1934. The other was a modern version from the Czech Republic, which dates its manufacture to some time after 1990. Mrs. Mattas prefers the older one, which, as she showed me, continues to work quite well after more than seventy years. Sometimes quality trumps all; Mrs. Mattas' motto is "I work for perfection."

Another interesting feature of these cookbooks are the non-culinary interludes that are sprinkled throughout the text. These are dedications to mothers and grandmothers who were the original prairie pioneers, the State of Kansas, recipes for a happy home, homilies to the old woodstove, making floral sachets for drawers, rocking chair medicine, and paeans to homemaking. These interludes contribute to the sense of home and heritage that make up the ethno-historical identity of Wilson.

Community cookbooks are often written as a way to preserve some sort of ethnic or historical legacy. This is certainly the case in Wilson, but by examination of them we can see how they function as markers of what is happening at the time of their publication as well. Certainly not everything that is written about in these cookbooks represents the way in which the average Wilsonian Czech eats on a daily basis, but they do reflect how the people of Wilson see their own heritage, and therefore how they want us to see it.

The Midland Hotel

The Midland Hotel is an important part of the created ethno-historical identity of Wilson. As noted to the introduction to this chapter, the hotel was an important part of the face the community put out to the world at large. In an era when the passenger train was a large part of extra-regional travel, a hotel that was important on the regional and

The Midland Hotel

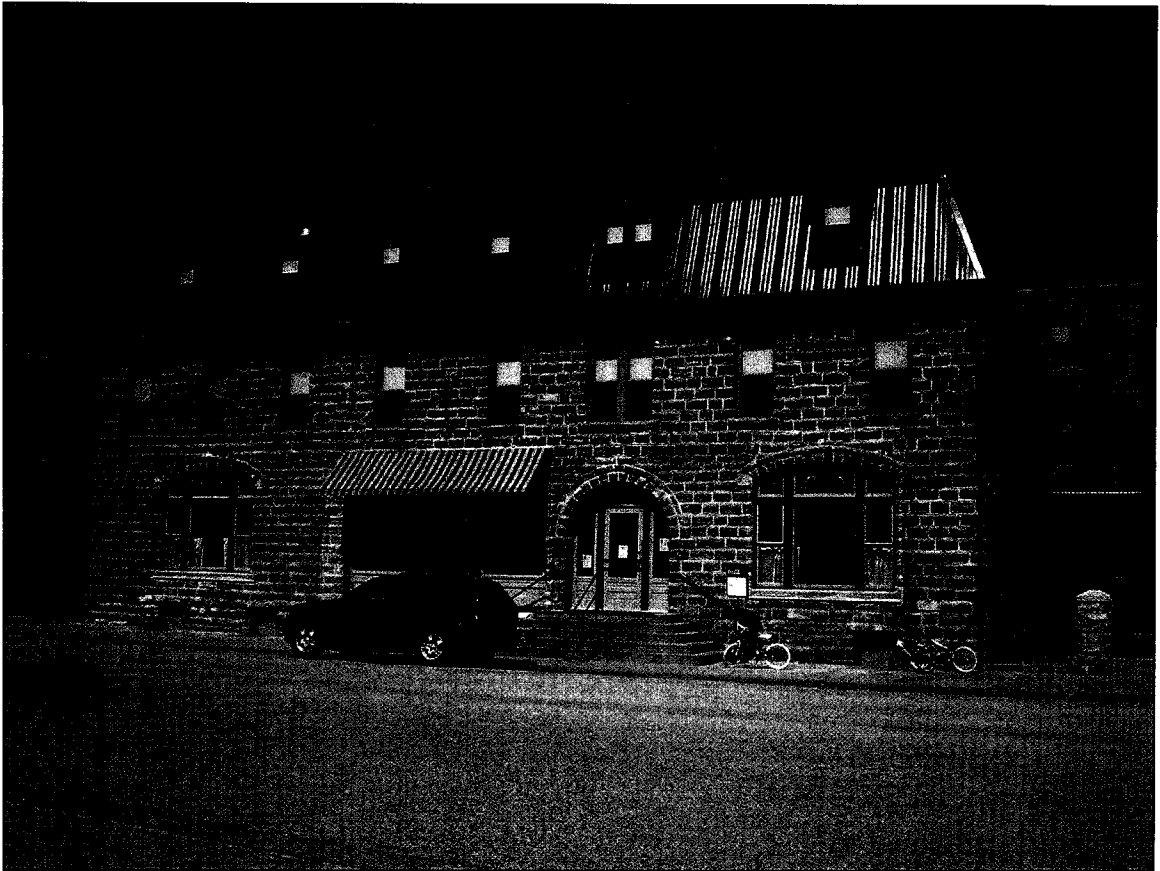


Figure 21. The Midland Hotel.

extra-regional travel circuits was bound to be a significant edifice in the community. The fact that the hotel was such an important element in the wholesale merchandising scheme of the times, gave Wilson status as a community by association. When the hotel closed, a victim of the transportation revolution, the town became a victim as well.

The Midland Hotel stands at the heart of town, both literally and figuratively. The substantial stone structure stands across 26th Street from the Union Pacific railroad tracks that were, in a sense, the veins that brought the lifeblood to the town and the hotel. It is a striking example of the late Victorian vernacular style popular

in the Midwest at the time of its construction. The hotel is three stories tall with graceful high narrow windows offsetting its squat muscular design. The windows of the third floor stick out from a red metal mansard roof like eyes searching for travelers who likely never again will alight from a passenger car on the Union Pacific.

It is hard to say when the hotel looks the best. In the early and late parts of the day, when the sun is at that angle so coveted by photographers, the limestone takes on a warm glow and radiates strong colors, reflective of the landscape from which the stone building blocks were wrought. At night, the hotel is lit from ground level by high-wattage halogen bulbs that cast shadows deep shadows above architectural protrusions, giving the viewer a feel for the angular strength of the structure. Even in the unflattering light of high noon, the structure exudes a cool strength, inviting the traveler to enter and escape the heat and wind of a central Kansas summer. While not the tallest structure in town, that honor goes to the old Soukop grain elevator complex a block to the west, the height of the hotel ensures that it can be seen from most places in town.

While the restored hotel reflects the ambience of the era of its greatest prosperity, under the surface it is a modern facility. The entire facility is furnished in the Mission and Arts & Crafts styles, but all the mechanical elements of the property have been brought into the twenty-first century. Rooms that once relied on a breeze or old cage-style revolving fan for coolness now have air-conditioners. Phones that once connected hotel guests to the outside world via a human operator can now connect the traveler to the internet for checking e-mail and other twenty-first century chores. The kitchen has all of the latest equipment for preparing, serving, and storing food. A modern tilt-skillet has replaced the cast iron pans where chickens were once fried. Where there was once a

broom closet, an elevator connects the three floors of the hotel. Hot water is abundant, beds are firm, you can rent a room with a Jacuzzi tub, and the amenities in the rooms are of a high quality. While the hotel promotes itself as step back in time to a more gracious era in travel, the reality is that few hotel properties can continue to attract the modern traveler without the amenities they expect from any hotel. The amenities that appeared so modern to the traveler of the early twentieth century seem hopelessly antiquated to the traveler in the twenty-first century. The Midland Hotel caters to tastes both modern and traditional.

A thread that ran through most of my interviews was the idea that the hotel was central to the revitalization of the community, and nearly every interviewee offered an idea about how this resource would best be utilized in that process. There was a great deal of disagreement about how the hotel would best be run to benefit the community. There were some interviewees who thought the hotel was going to be the salvation of the community and others who thought that it would become the municipal albatross once the foundation was no longer able to support it. But almost everyone had an opinion on the matter, pointing up the symbolic importance of the building. Unfortunately, I came upon this vein of opinion late in the interview process and was unable to explore it in depth. While I was unable to follow up on this last thread due to time constraints, the centrality of the hotel to identity in Wilson was obvious. The fact that people could be so passionate about an edifice where many of them never cross the threshold points up the importance of the hotel in the community.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

“Remarkable now is the breadth of ethnic reawakening among the countless small communities across rural and small town America as the depredations of decades of dilution and neglect are countered with campaigns to reinvigorate, at least commercially, the ethnic presence on the American landscape.”

The Making of the American Landscape, Michael Conzen, 1990, p. 245

This study arose from a desire to find out how one small rural community used Czech food to symbolize its identity and how this symbolic identity was used in the town’s attempts to keep itself viable. My expectations of how food was being used as a mechanism for the preservation of identity turned out not to be the case, but I found that Czech food still has an important role to play in the community. What I found was that Czech food has assumed an iconic and ceremonial capacity in the community that is very reflective of Wilson as a community that is negotiating the traditional and the modern. Wilson is negotiating its place in the twenty first century by creating a synthetic identity, one that incorporates the traditional and the modern by incorporating factors from both areas to create a working ethno-historical community identity. Foodways in the public sphere make a contribution to this larger identity.

Ethnic Identity in Wilson

The issue of identity in Wilson turns out to be more complex and individualistic than the representations of the formation of later generational ethnic identity as posited in

standard models (Gans, 1979; Kvisto & Blanc, 1990; Stein & Hill, 1997; Esser, 1998). In these models, the retention of ethnic identity follows a linear pattern where groups assimilate, then disperse, and what remains, often the consumption of food, is a symbol of some idealized ethnic identity that existed in the past. The identity that is being generated in Wilson is indeed symbolic, but it is different than the one that is depicted in the models cited.

Symbolism is often used in its negative connotation in the linear models of ethnicity, a mode of expression that says this is not real, this is not authentic. But how can an immigrant ethnic identity be the same in succeeding generations if these generations are not forced into some type of ghettoized existence? As succeeding generations take advantage of social and geographical mobility they will, of necessity, form an identity that allows them stability and success in their new situations and new perceptions of themselves. As I noted in the last chapter, authenticity is a nebulous concept. It can be used to describe a certain thing that happened at a certain time but even that is hard to nail down in absolute terms. In the instance of Czech food in Wilson, is the kolache with apricot Jell-O in its ingredient list less authentic than the one made only from stewed, dried apricots? Beyond its use as a way to measure the state of something at a point in time, authenticity has the most value as a marketing term, not an analytic one. To denigrate an identity as symbolic because it does not meet parameters set in an earlier time and place is misplaced criticism.

Kolache and jiternice stood out as products that represented the traditional Czech ethnic identity in the community. Kolaches were regularly consumed in the community and have found a comfortable role in the newly formed ethno-historical identity. From

what my respondents told me, kolaches were the most consumed Czech item in daily life. I suspect that the kolache has retained its relatively high level of consumption because it is relatively accessible to modern day American palates. The kolache is not so different from a Danish and other forms of sweet rolls with fruit fillings. This makes them easy to eat for the average American who generally has a taste for sweet baked goods. While kolaches have a symbolic role in the community identity of Wilson, they remain a relatively regularly consumed part of the ethnic tradition. In a sense, they represent the living part of the traditional Czech ethnic pattern of foodways.

Jiternice's role, on the other hand, is not a living one. There are a few people in the older generation who continue to consume it, but their numbers are falling and their frequency of consuming it is declining as well. The product is rarely available in the community that uses it as one of its symbols. The product is most readily available in the town of Lucas, about ten miles away, a town that has a low concentration of ethnic Czechs. Jiternice is made for the Czech fest, but that is the primary context for its consumption in Wilson. It is much more of a symbolic product for Wilsonians than are kolache.

The symbols that people adopt to represent them are a "text" that we can use to read the inner nature of those who adopt them. In one sense, the symbolism of a community describes social orders and values. These symbols are used in the maintenance of community. But symbols are also representative of what people would like to be. Viewed in this way symbols themselves can be transformative. When these two aspects are viewed together, they can be read as a powerful statement about those who use them to represent themselves. In the case of Wilson, the symbolism of the

community points to the ethnicity of its residents and the historic nature of its public buildings.

Czech identity works in two spheres in Wilson, the public and the private. The performance of ethnicity in the public sphere differed from the performance of ethnicity in the private sphere. Residents of Wilson understand the need to keep elements of their ethnic heritage alive, but their maintenance of tradition is selective and pragmatic. The public sphere is where Czechness is presented to the outside world. The public face of Czechness is obvious from the moment an outsider drives into the community. From the sign reading *Vitame Vas* at the edge of town to the various signs on local businesses with Czech words and phrases in them to the limestone signs in yards with Czech family names carved into them, Czechness is exuded on nearly every street in town.

The private sphere is harder to locate. Time has diluted the strong Czech ethnicity factor in the community. While Czech names abound in the community, most of the informants I spoke to were either of mixed ethnic parentage or were in marriages where one of the partners was not of Czech descent. To identify with Czechness for these people is a conscious choice, a choice that many in the community choose to make. While there are easily as many people in Ellsworth County that are of German heritage, if not more, than of Czech descent, Czechness has remained the dominant heritage of identification.

Historical Identity in Wilson

But Czechness is not the totality of identity in Wilson. Wilson's historic past, though partially rooted in Czechness, also has antecedents in the patterns of commerce and transportation of the early part of the twentieth century. The Midland Hotel is the

building most emblematic of this past, though it is not the only historic structure in town. The architectural heritage of the historic district is as important to the people of Wilson as their Czech heritage. There is a concerted effort among the residents of Wilson to maintain the architectural heritage of their community. Creative reuse of historical buildings has led to the use of the old hardware store as an antique mall, the mortuary is now Al's Bar and Grill (complete with a ghost), and the old elementary school has been converted for use as an assisted living facility.

To the outside world what is most noticeable, and notable, about Wilson, aside from the beautiful *fin de siècle* limestone buildings, is the public display of Czechness. While this display of ethnicity is noticeable any day of the year, it is at its height during the After-Harvest Czech Festival. Festivals of this type do not turn heads in America. We have become used to displays of ethnic identity in America, to the point where we do not consider them unusual events. They may be criticized as inauthentic or ersatz by some, but short of original conditions of life, now unavailable, indeed often undesirable, the ghetto or its psychological equivalent, how could these displays remain "authentic"? The whole process of ethnic display in a town that is solidly middle-American in the twenty first century illustrates the tension between the traditional and the modern. Hoelscher (1998) writes that there are twin (and often opposing) forces at work in the modern world, globalization and traditionalization, which he colorfully refers to as the struggle between McWorld and Jihad. McWorld refers to impulse (in our context) toward the creation of the artificial, understandable to a global audience, like the Epcot Centers of the world, where the environment is constructed to replicate, in a highly commoditized fashion, the images of ethnicity and nostalgia that appeal to consumers

wanting to get a sanitized heritage experience. These places give us a globalized version of a local identity. Jihad refers to the conservative urges for there to be no change, an impulse likely based in the fear of change and the unknown. Jihad is the tendency to the traditional as a way to keep at bay the modernizing, globalizing outside forces. This tension is at work in many places, including Wilson. These seem to be contradictory ideas, possibly irreconcilable ones, but they are not. Most people can, and do, hold contradictory notions in their brains. Indeed, humans are not likely to be successful in the post-modern era if they are unable to do so. Performance of ethnicity allows people to speak to the traditionalizing feelings within themselves, while still participating in the modern world, the world of consumption, construction, and (in the case of this performance) celebration.

Tradition in Wilson

A good deal has been written about the invention of tradition (Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983; Giddens, 1994). While we tend to think of social tradition as something fixed in a dim, misty past, possibly arising wholly formed from the primordial ooze, traditions all have a starting point. This starting point is often much closer to the present than we imagine. Traditions become ritualized as reaction to change. Uncertainty causes the human animal to embrace the known. In times of great uncertainty and rapid social change, traditions are often invented (or at a minimum ritualized) as a way to remain anchored to some perceived island of stability. To paraphrase Raymond Williams (1997) traditions connect us with our past, but ratify the present. While the Czech Fest is only forty five years old, it has, in a sense, reinvented Wilson as an old ethnic place. While Wilson can honestly claim early origins with a Czech majority, the Czech Fest is a

reinvention of this heritage, not a continuation of an original event, and is an example of the idea of the invention of tradition. It also serves well to illustrate the tension between modernity and tradition in the community. The festival was invented as a vehicle for consumption and cohesion and provides a forum for both the performance of ethnicity and history. It is unlikely a festival one hundred years ago would have been aimed toward these modern goals. It is more likely the iteration of a century ago would have been a Czech cultural display aimed at preservation of ethnic identity within the community, not the newly invented ethno-historical place that Wilson is today.

Traditions are another tool with which we shape our identities. That this identity can be social, political, or commercial shows us the powerful nature of the performance of these traditions.

Ethno-Historical Identity in Wilson

Wilson is an example of the persistence and performance of identity common today. It is an ongoing cultural construction that aids the community considerably in dealing with the economic realities of the twenty first century. Wilson continually recreates itself depending on the social, political and economic needs of the time. When the mercantile and transportation institutions of the twentieth century demanded small regional cores centered on agricultural activity and a transportation infrastructure based on steel rails and wooden ties, Wilson constructed itself in that image. The changes in economic patterns have caused the town to reinterpret what its identity is. What Wilson has come up with is an ethno-historical identity that fuses components in two significant areas of visibility, the performance of Czechness and the architectural based historical display in the community, to create an identity that will make the most of resources in

hand to identify themselves (the community collective) as a desirable place to live or visit.

The self-consciousness of this newly invented identity serves to place Wilson in the new tradition of the commodification of place. The old ethnic identity was pre-historical in the sense that what is now the history on display in the architecture and ethnic ethos of the town, was everyday Wilsonian life. In this pre-historical period the historic buildings downtown were being used for traditional commercial uses like pharmacies, car dealerships, hardware stores and the like, not their ability to bring the travelers dollar into the community. Today more and more of these buildings are oriented to the consumption needs of the heritage tourist, not the standard retail uses of the twentieth century. Wilson probably no longer has the ability to evolve naturally as a community with economic development and commerce of normal daily exchange based in conventional retailing, manufacturing, etc. The structures of society and economies in the twenty first century have likely left Wilson outside of its main theaters of action. What is left for the community is the commodification of its ethno-historical identity.

The fusion of these factors of identity has expanded who is allowed to participate in the community as well. Participation in the traditions of Wilson is not limited to those of Czech natality. Anyone can choose to participate in the After-Harvest Czech Festival, in the ongoing renovation of the historical district, and in any other related municipal activity. This was evidenced by the invitation extended to me to participate in the preparations for, and celebration of, the Czech Festival. Outsiders who come to participate in the economy and daily life of the community tend to be accepted into the fabric of the daily life of the community regardless of origin. The manager of the locally-

owned telephone company is from Maine, and Al, the owner of Al's Bar and Grill, most recently a transplant from the Los Angeles, California area was nearly elected Mayor in the most recent election. The vote was tied and when a recount verified the tie, Al lost only when the flip of a coin decided the election against him.

The period of social change that can be measured in Wilson by the existence of the Czech festival and the renovation of historic buildings has wrought not only physical changes but changes in how Wilson views itself, its identity. For better or worse, the ethno-historical identity of Wilson has become the one recognized by local citizens and outsiders alike. Heritage has become a big business globally, and Wilson may be able to ride the coattails of the phenomenon to a new era of viability. What makes Wilson a strong contender for viability is the fact that much of the new identity was a local creation based on local needs and conceptions. The locality of the creative mechanism has not meant local unanimity. As in any community there are varied ideas about how this heritage should be consumed and promoted. The Midland Hotel project has had both strong promoters and strong detractors. The After-Harvest Czech Festival is not organized to every Wilsonian's liking every year. But in the end, these issues are resolved (or not) at the community level making the community a stronger organism as a result.

What is most interesting about Wilson is not so much the fact that they have arrived at a functional identity, that is bound to happen in most situations where the desire to retain viability is a strong enough determinant to influence the site, but how the citizens of the town are continuously retaining, rejecting, and adapting the elements they need to maintain this identity. The process of seeing how they do this is valuable to

document. This process is likely happening in hundreds of communities struggling to maintain themselves in the face of the social, economic, and demographic pressures of the twenty first century. But each town is unique in how they select and use these elements of identity. This dissertation's value will come in adding an as yet undocumented piece to the larger mosaic. Don Yoder (1972) puts it eloquently when he says that every ethnic cuisine contributes to an "elaborate stratigraphy of diverse historical layers combined into a usable and evidently satisfying structure" (p. 334). This is an excellent framework to consider what is happening in Wilson as it combines elements of its heritage into its own satisfying structure.

Suggestions for Further Study

The limited scale of this study leaves many openings for further research. A longer time frame would have allowed for a larger number of participants and observations. Both of these would have given more depth and breadth to the study. A continuation of this study with more time for interviews would allow the researcher to seek out more participants and see how their stories compare to the ones I was able to collect.

The Midland Hotel

More research on the role of the Midland Hotel in the community would be especially valuable. It was not until the end of the study that comments began to emerge on the conflict in public opinion on the contribution of the hotel to the identity of Wilson and how it would best be used as a resource in the community. There is conflict in the community on how it will benefit or burden Wilson. From what I could gather from my limited research in this area, some of the problem appears to stem from a lack of

communication between the members of the foundation and members of the community on this issue. Some interviewees felt that there would come a time when the community would take over the management and maintenance of the property, to the detriment of city coffers. They felt this would impose a burden on the taxpayers of Wilson.

The Midland Hotel is a special icon in the community. It is more than just a hotel; it is, in many ways, the great hope of the community. The hotel gets much of the attention directed at the community from out of town visitors and media. The hotel and its renovation have received considerable regional media attention and the property has received an historic preservation award from the state of Kansas. Most informants that I talked to about the hotel expressed the opinion that it would be the catalyst for any revalorization of the community. Where opinions differed was on how this should occur, how the hotel should be managed and how it should be marketed to the outside world. A study of how the foundation brought the project to fruition, how they kept the community informed, and the effects of the reinsertion of the property into the local economy would be valuable research in both the areas of community studies and hospitality research. A deeper understanding of the tensions arising from the tendentious feelings about the hotel might make clearer the ways in which the town is negotiating the divide between the modern and the traditional.

Very little examination of small town historic properties has been done in the area of lodging research. If the research that shows heritage tourism as one of the fastest growing areas of the tourism industry is valid, then a closer examination of the characteristics that make these projects successful or unsuccessful would be of value in the hospitality research community. The Midland Hotel is struggling to break even

financially. More research into the ways that the hotel is marketed and the types of customers that do choose to stay at the property could have implications for other operations in this category as well as being of immediate value to the Midland Hotel.

Other Czech Towns in the Midwest

While most stories are unique to individual and place, it could prove useful to compare the creation of identity in Wilson to other communities in similar situations to see if common themes arise. There are a number of ethnically Czech communities in the Midwest, notably in Nebraska and Texas. The original colony in Wilson was an offshoot of the group of Bohemians who settled in Nebraska in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many of the communities that contributed population to Wilson have remained strong Czech ethnic enclaves. According to Garver (1980), the Nebraska communities of “Wilber, Milligan, Clarkson, Prague, Bruno, Dwight, and Abie have remained almost entirely Czech” (p. 152). The community of Wilber, in central Nebraska, has retained and marketed a Czech identity. It is well known in the Midwest as a “Czech town”. There are strong ties between Wilson and Wilber and the Czechs of Wilber often come to the After-Harvest Czech Festival in Wilson to participate in the traditional dance program. In the days when the Sokol served its original purpose as a cultural hall, Czech bands from Nebraska regularly made Wilson a part of their circuit. It would be valuable to conduct similar investigations in the Czech enclaves of Nebraska to see if identity formation was occurring in similar ways to Wilson.

Sausage Makers of Rural Kansas

The aspects of food production that were revealed in my conversations with Malcolm Shaw were of special interest to me. During our talks, Mr. Shaw referred to many local meat producers who were no longer in business for various reasons, but also to several who were managing to stay in business in spite of the trend to consolidation in the grocery business and the problems with being a small scale meat processor.

My visits to the area took me to Lucas, approximately ten miles northwest of Wilson, to visit the Brandt Meat Market. Brandt's Meat Market has been in operation, and run by the same family, since 1921. The grandson of the founder is now operating the market and produces sausages (and jiternice) in house. The facility is a reflection of another era in American food retailing. His store, on the main street of Lucas, is a narrow storefront typical of the era. When you go into the store, the original wooden refrigeration cases hold the product and there is a brass foot rail running in front of the display case of meats. While Brandt stocks a few groceries for the benefit of the travelers who come to the federal reservoir, Wilson Lake, a few miles to the south of town, his primary business is sausage and he is famous for his ring bologna, marketed as Brandt's Bologna.

Brandt is just one example of small producers that Mr. Shaw referred to when I was interviewing him about the sausage business in Wilson. Shaw's knowledge of the regions small scale meat processors, the businesses like Brandt's, was encyclopedic. He mentioned many towns in the area that had or have small sausage makers. As I noted earlier in this document, my acquaintance with Wilson came about from my "sausage-tourism". As far as I know, no one has documented the sausage makers of north-central

Kansas and this will likely be research that I conduct in the near future. Many small town sausage makers are likely in the same situation as some of the operations discussed by Mr. Shaw. It would be valuable to see how some are able to remain viable while others lose their viability.

Mies Van Der Rohe is reported to have coined the phrase, "God is in the details." I think the story of Wilson is in the details. I hope by recording all that I could in a short amount of time, I have answered Geertz's call for a thick description of this community at this point in time. Wilson is a town struggling with many of the consequences of the ever-shortening cycles of societal and economic change. The repercussions of change come just as quickly to America's small rural towns as they do its large urban areas. What comes more slowly to our country's rural core are the benefits of change. As more and more of America's population streams out of the rural heartland and to the urban centers of the nation, more communities will have to deal with these repercussions. Perhaps some communities will deal with the issue by creating their own ethno-historical identity. More likely they craft their own unique response to the challenges that face them, or alternately, they will lay down the gauntlet and fade into history. By writing this, I hope I have given the citizens of Wilson the chance to add their voices to the world and that others may learn from the lessons offered by them.

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APPENDIX: PILOT STUDY

WILSON, KANSAS; HARVEST OF HOPE

Jeffrey P. Miller
Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition
Colorado State University

And

Lynn Safarik
School of Education
Colorado State University

ABSTRACT

As America becomes more urbanized and the means of production, distribution and communication become more centralized, small towns across the country are facing a number of crises that imperil their existence. Tourism is one way that a small town can remain viable in the face of the hardships that many of them face. There is no one key to success when developing and promoting a small town tourism industry. A number of factors must work together in order for a community to be successful in the pursuit of tourist dollars. This paper examines how one town is maintaining economic viability and population levels through the development of heritage tourism.

KEY WORDS: RURAL TOURISM, SMALL TOWN, HERITAGE TOURISM, ARCHITECTURE

INTRODUCTION

Towns that once had reasonable size populations, access to goods and services, strong community infrastructures, quality educational systems, opportunities for meaningful employment, etc. are finding all these things falling away from their communities. For major producers of goods and services it has become more economically feasible to concentrate resources in central locations, outsource production to other countries, and make more consumers come to the goods, rather than bringing the goods to the customer. If a person lives in a small town that is not close to, or a part of, a major transportation or commercial network, then chances are that many of the goods and services urbanites take for granted are not available in their community.

When America's small towns empty out, access to good and services leave with the emigrants. What was once provided on the old main street of many towns is now being offered up in the new main street of the suburbs, the cornfield mall. While there appears to be no imminent reversal of this trend, not all small towns are giving up the fight for their existence. Some people value their existence in these rural towns and are willing to work very hard to keep their particular small town alive and, hopefully, vibrant and attractive.

A case in point is the town of Wilson, a small town of approximately 900 people in north-central Kansas. A town that has been left behind by the interstate, has no large manufacturing or service sector industry, no transportation hub, no high-tech information infrastructure; Wilson could easily be another statistic in the grim tale of the urban century. But it is not. Population remains relatively constant, the town has a number of small employers, the available housing stock is full, the town is clean and proud and there are projects afoot to increase the profile of the town. The question then becomes, what makes Wilson different? Why is Wilson maintaining and trying to prosper when other towns in its situation "are drying up and blowing away" (to use the words of one of the interviewees.)

The answer, in part, lies in Wilson's ability to attract tourists who come and augment the economic base through the expenditure of tourist dollars. On the surface, Wilson appears to be similar to many towns in this area of north-central Kansas, but Wilson thrives while many others do not. How does Wilson successfully attract the tourist trade while other towns around it do not? How does Wilson function as a community so it can be successful while other communities around it continue to shrink and are unable

to attract the tourist revenues needed to augment the local coffers? These are the questions we will attempt to answer in this paper.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Rural areas of the United States often find themselves not sharing in the economic boom that boosts the fortunes of urban America. Financial pressures have caused residents of rural areas to consider alternate strategies of economic growth (Gunn, 1974.) Tourism is often promoted as a way of creating economic opportunity in rural areas. Nearly every state has organizations to promote tourism. In recent years, rural tourism has become a larger part of many states' efforts to attract tourists (Frederick, 1992.) It has been estimated that ten to twenty percent of all tourism activity is rural tourism (Roberts & Hall, 2001.) Some states have organizations that specialize in agricultural and rural tourism. These organizations function on the theory that people want to connect with rural life and are willing to pay for a chance to experience the rural way of life (Pignatello & Cobb, 1994.)

Tourism is seen as a good fit with rural areas because many of the jobs associated with it are low-skill which is a good fit with many of the job skills of rural residents. Tourism fits the budget realities of many rural areas by providing an income stream without excessively straining the local tax base. One of the latest categories within rural tourism is "heritage tourism." Heritage tourism is defined as tourism "that has as its primary purpose, the experiencing of places and activities that represent the past (Brown, n.d.) Sites of historic interest and pleasant surroundings are easy to promote and can bring positive returns with little outlay on the part of local or regional government (Frederick, 1993.)

Qualities of successful entrepreneurial communities have been categorized by researchers. These traits include willingness of local citizens to invest in private initiatives, willingness to tax themselves, ability to network both horizontally and vertically, a long term emphasis on education, and a diverse set of leaders within the community (Flora & Flora, 1988.) The survival of social, civic and business institutions is key to the long term survival of rural communities. Especially important are schools, banks, hardware stores, fueling facilities and food outlets such as grocery stores and restaurants (Bennett, 2001.)

Not all citizens of rural communities feel that encouragement of the tourist industry is a positive objective. Some residents of rural communities have indicated they feel the jobs created by tourism to be less desirable than jobs created by other means. They also cite as negatives increased noise, crime, litter and environmental impacts. Citizens who are not elected officials, government employees or who do not own a local business are less likely to be convinced of the economic benefits of tourism development (Lankford, 1994.)

METHODOLOGY

This research attempted to determine which physical, social and emotional qualities made Wilson, Kansas a desirable candidate for the development of a rural tourism program. A qualitative approach to data collection and analysis were used. The primary methods of data collection were participant observation and key-informant sampling. The researchers opted for the use of participant observation and unguided interviews in order to preserve the emic perspective as much as possible. A constant, grounded theory approach to data analysis was used. Observations were made with the full knowledge of the participants as to the purpose of the study, and the researchers attempted to play no role in the events, but merely observed. The researchers undertook to dress and act in an inconspicuous manner in order to influence the events around them as little as possible. Observations were made in a number of community settings, encompassing a variety of social and economic groups. Observational settings were public events, private meetings and local businesses.

Interviews took the form of one-on-one unstructured interviews. Interviewees were informed as to the nature of the study and were allowed to speak on the topic as they desired, with interviewers intervening as little as possible to keep the interviews topical. Interviews lasted an average of one hour. Subjects interviewed came from a number of local occupations including grocer, banker, telephone

company manager, lawyer, accountant, various small business owners, plumber and doctor. Interviewees were selected by the researchers from a pool made available via introductions by a local gatekeeper.

Analysis of the data was performed by transcribing field notes and interviews and coding the data. The initial analysis was performed by coding all fieldnotes and interviews, then categorizing them into eighteen initial classifications based on the nature of the comment or observation. For the purposes of the study, the eighteen initial coding classifications were collapsed into five primary thematic groups. These five groups are:

- A) History, Ethnic Heritage and Architectural Heritage
- B) Commercial/Economic Activity and the Future of the Community
- C) Native/Non-Native people, Status Quo vs. Change, and the Inclusion of Outsiders
- E) People, Educational Issues, and Family Issues
- F) Citizenship Behaviors

After the five thematic categories were established, content analysis was performed using associative techniques to see which of the areas contributed to a local ethos favorable to the development of tourism and the ways in which they interacted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History, Ethnic Heritage and Architectural Heritage - The most obvious features that are favorable to the development of the tourist industry in Wilson are the history, ethnic heritage and the architectural legacy of the town. Wilson was initially settled by people who were of Czech ethnicity. While the town has residents of other ethnic extractions, it is still primarily a Czech community. It styles itself the "Czech Capital of Kansas." Many of the local businesses are still owned by people of Czech heritage and this shows in the names on the businesses. Czech food is still featured in the local restaurants and grocery store. One of the billboards outside town is for the local grocer who features Czech sausages and other specialties like kolaches (a traditional Czech pastry) and travelers frequently leave the interstate to make purchases.

The architecture of the town is another feature that would be favorable to the development of the tourist trade. While many Kansas towns feature an historic building or two, Wilson has a whole district of distinct turn of the twentieth century multi-story stone buildings that reinforce the historic character of the town. The architecture is a blend of the Gothic and the Romanesque. Most of the buildings have large Palladian arched windows, heavy stone lintels over the sash windows, and decorative iron cornices. The old jail, a silo shaped stone structure still stands. A few of the downtown buildings are vacant, but many are restored. An important local landmark, the Midland Hotel, is in the process of being completely remodeled in an historic recreation with modern amenities and should prove to aid the tourist business. The hotel has many ties with the historical past of Wilson as well as with the Union Pacific Railroad, which once featured the hotel as both a meal and overnight stop. In addition, the old Czech Opera house has been restored and is open for tours and special events in the community. Special Czech meals can be arranged for group tours in the basement of the opera house.

Proximity to a large, popular federal reservoir project with state parks has contributed to the development of the tourist industry in Wilson. The reservoir is host to activity for three seasons and hosts not only campers and boaters, but is an integral hub for local hunting activities. Users of the recreational facilities surrounding the lake use Wilson as a supply point and contribute to the tourist economy through lodging, food and fuel purchases. In addition to the temporary recreational users of the lake, there is an influx of upper middle class residents who are building full time homes and vacation lodging on the north shore of the lake. These people patronize the services of the town as well.

Commercial/Economic Activity and the Future of the Community - Wilson has extensive commerce for a town of less than one thousand people. There are four eating establishments (soon to be five upon completion of the hotel project), a bar, a grocery store, three gas stations, a custom furniture maker, several gift shops, a fabric store, a bowling alley, a liquor store, a hardware store, a bed and breakfast and a locally owned and operated bank. One of the features that makes Wilson unique in regional

tourism is the lack of national chains and franchises. All the business, including the phone company, are locally owned and operated. For a tourist who usually sees the same shopping wherever their travels may take them, this phenomenon could be exploited as symbolic of authenticity.

Although Wilson has a better retail base than many towns of similar size in the region, there are items that are not available locally and this causes concern in the business community. Examples of items that shoppers are forced to leave town for include necessities like prescriptions and shoes. According to one of the interviewees, "One of my fears is that people, especially the younger generation, get in the habit, get in the mindset, of well, if I want to buy clothes, I'll go to Salina to the mall or to Wichita to the mall." One of the goals of the Chamber of Commerce is to convince people to spend their money locally.

The merchants of Wilson understand the importance of bringing outside money to the community. One person commented, "There is a Czech word, *umlaut*, which means over and above. The business I get from tourists coming down (from) the interstate and people who are staying at the lake makes the difference in profitability. I could survive with just the local business, but the tourist business is what makes the difference." Advertising the ethnic nature of the community to tourists pulls dollars into the local economy that might not be inserted into the local economy otherwise.

Native/Non-Native people, Status Quo vs. Change, and the Inclusion of Outsiders - Wilson has another positive feature in their ability to absorb outsiders and have them be an effective functioning part of the community. Examples of this include the manager of the phone company and the president of the Wilson State Bank, outsiders who have chosen to relocate to Wilson and who have been successfully integrated into the fabric of the community. Both men work to improve the financial success of the community and are active in the development of the tourist industry.

People, Educational Issues, and Family Issues - What may prove to be the most valuable asset Wilson can use to develop a thriving tourist industry are the local citizens. Wilson is home to the largest educational complex in the county and is well regarded by the regional education community. Local citizens are very active in maintaining the quality of local education. This will aid in providing an educated workforce for the development of the tourist industry.

Citizenship Behaviors - Another, and possibly the most important, feature of the local citizenry are the citizenship behaviors demonstrated by the people of Wilson. In Wilson, there are many people who are actively taking a role in the development of the tourist industry. Often this includes taking on tasks that are not directly related to their jobs, but are performed on their own time and of their own volition. The best, though not only, examples of this are the Wilsonians who have created the Midland Hotel Foundation. This foundation was founded by local business people who have used their talents to purchase and renovate the Midland Hotel. They spend many hours each week on this endeavor and this work has resulted in a \$3,000,000 grant for the renovation of the hotel building and grounds. Many local citizens also take part in putting on the Czech After-Harvest Festival, an annual festival that brings thousands of regional tourists to the town each summer. The festival is rooted in the agricultural background of the county, but has come to represent the new harvest, that of the tourist dollar.

While the citizens of Wilson generally express positive sentiments toward the development of the local tourist industry, not everyone is in favor of a major tourism development effort. One of the attractions of a town such as Wilson is that it maintains many of the desirable characteristics of small town life. Knowing most people one sees in town, low levels of traffic, easy access to facilities and services; all are attributes of small town life that could change with increased tourism. The challenge for a community like Wilson is to preserve the balance between these opposites. The people interviewed for this study all recognized the importance of these features and understand the need to balance the growth needs of the town with the need to preserve the qualities that make the town attractive to rural tourists.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had a number of limitations. The largest being the limited number and type of people the interviewers were to secure in-depth interviews with. Most of the interviewees were local business

owners and people active in various civic groups such as the Wilson economic development council and the Chamber of Commerce. In the restricted amount of time the researchers were able to spend in the town, we were unable to secure a similar number of interviews with people of contrasting viewpoints, people who may feel that tourism is an undesirable avenue of economic development of the town. More interviews and observations are needed to get a wider range of data to analyze. With a larger amount of data more in depth analysis would be possible, perhaps even statistical analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Wilson has overcome many obstacles to enjoy a modest measure of success in staying viable as a community. It uses an uncommon historical heritage to position its future. There is not total accord as to the direction and scope of the future of the tourist industry in Wilson, but citizens of the town are willing to work together and take risks to ensure that the town has a future and does not become another rural casualty. While Wilson may have a number of noteworthy features that make it an ideal candidate for rural or heritage tourism, it is not unique in having an amalgam of properties that could lead to the development of a tourist trade. Other communities could benefit from the categorization of variables that make this community attractive to tourists.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jeffrey P. Miller is a graduate student in the School of Education at Colorado State University and is an instructor in the Restaurant, Resort Management Program in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition.

Lynn Safarik is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University and is the director of the Educational Leadership Graduate Program.