

Collection #
P 0885

**SLOVENE NATIONAL BENEFIT SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPH,
CA. 1921**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 Flat File folder

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1921

PROVENANCE: Gift from Lois A. Gorka Bennett of Westfield, Indiana, 2018

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2018.0144

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The France Prešeren Lodge 34 was established in 1905 by the Slovenian community in Haughville, a neighborhood on the west side of Indianapolis. It was founded as a mutual aid society and named for the nineteenth-century Romantic Slovene poet, France (or Franc) Prešeren.

Slovenian immigrants arrived in the Haughville area in the 1890s. They worked in foundries and factories, and some started their own businesses in the bakery, grocery, hardware, dry goods, tailoring, and saloon industries.

By World War I, this Slovene community numbered approximately 1,200 people and began to form mutual aid societies. The first was St. Aloysius Lodge, followed by St. Joseph Lodge and the socialist-oriented France Prešeren Lodge. Members' attitudes regarding religion distinguished one lodge from another. The popular quip was that St. Aloysius members always prayed, St. Joseph members frequently prayed, but Prešeren members never prayed.

Slovene immigrants who were less interested in religion – socialists, freethinkers, and anti-clericals – organized the Slovenski Narodni Dom (Slovenian National Home) as an alternative to the nearby Holy Trinity Slovenian Catholic Church. Four hundred stockholders invested ten dollars each to finance the club, which opened on 26 May 1918. The wood structure was located on the east side of North Holmes Avenue, south of St. Clair Street. The older generation called the club “The Home,” while the younger generation called it “The Nash.” It served as a meeting hall on Sunday mornings for the local mutual aid societies and was otherwise used for recreation. In 1940 a new building was erected at the corner of 10th Street and Warman Avenue.

The Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota was founded on 6 April 1904 in the Chicago area. Known in English as the Slovene National Benefit Society, the organization retains its Slovenian initials, SNPJ, in honor of its founders. In 1933 the organization moved its headquarters to the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area. The SNPJ is a nonprofit fraternal insurance organization with more than 225 lodges across the United States. It continues to offer life insurance and other financial services. The Franc Prešeren Lodge has more than three hundred members.

Sources:

Bennett, Lois. Personal communication, 8 March 2023.

Divita, James J. “Slovenes” in *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*
<https://indyencyclopedia.org/slovenians/> Accessed 29 May 2024.

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Slovene National Benefit Society. “History of SNPJ: Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota” <https://snpj.org/about/history-of-snpj/> Accessed 29 May 2024.

“SNPJ Lodge #34” <https://sloveniannationalhomeindy.com/slovenian-partners> Accessed 29 May 2024.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one 10x36-inch reproduction print of a black-and-white panoramic photograph taken ca. 1921, which shows approximately 180 members of the Slovene community in the Haughville neighborhood of Indianapolis, posing outdoors with wooden buildings in the background. The location is believed to be the lot of the original Slovenian National Home in Haughville, founded in 1918, on the east side of North Holmes Avenue, south of St. Clair Street. Individuals in the photograph are not identified.

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Reproduction of a black-and-white panoramic photograph taken ca. 1921, shows approximately 180 unidentified men, women, and children posing outdoors with wooden buildings in the background [the location is believed to be the Holmes Avenue lot of the original Slovenian National Home in Haughville, founded in 1918]. Two flags are being displayed: an American flag and one for the Slov. Nar. Podp. Društvo / France Prešeren [Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota, France Prešeren lodge].

Handwritten caption at top states: "Društvo, France, Prešeren, ST.34. S.N.P.J. / Ustanovljend, 15 Sept. 1905 / Indianapolis – Ind." ["Društvo" translates to "Society" and "Ustanovljend" means founded or established. France (or Franc) Prešeren was the nineteenth-century Romantic Slovene poet this lodge was named after.]

CONTAINER

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