NOT A MELTING POT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SWEDES AND CZECHS IN SAUNDERS COUNTY, NEBRASKA, 1880 - 1910

by
Raymond D. Screws

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Saunders County, Nebraska was a magnet for Czech, Swede and German immigrants. Many of these ethnic groups settled throughout the county. Though the Germans seemed to have blended into American society early on in the county, the Swedes and Czechs maintained a strong hold on their culture and ethnic identity. This ethnic pride still exists today in the county. As elaborated in both popular culture and historical studies over the past century, the melting pot process basically means that assimilation is taking place. In other words, new arrivals from distinctive cultures are becoming one with the existing people and are absorbing the dominant culture. Under these definitions, the Swedes and Czechs in Saunders County between 1880 and 1910 did not participate in the melting pot process.

Another important factor to understand is ethnic identity. Just because a person or a society belongs to an ethnic group does not necessarily mean they have an ethnic identity. In order to possess an ethnic identity an ethnic group must have it impressed upon them. If a group of people live in an area where the only people they are influenced by are of the same culture, speak the same language, and probably practice the same religious beliefs, they will not contemplate their ethnicity. In other words, they are a group of people who are the same, who entertain no outside influences from another culture. They may know that they belong to a certain group, but they will not possess a deep-rooted ethnic identity because they never had to fight for it. However, when another cultural group, such as the German influence over the Czechs, invades groups of people, they well be forced to think about and understand their ethnic identity.

Raymond D. Screws has been the Program Officer at the Nebraska Humanities Council since July 2001. Prior to that he was the Curator/Director of the Saunders County Historical Society in Wahoo, Nebraska. He is a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

When immigrants arrived in America, they were forced to inherit an ethnic identity whether they owned one before or not.

The components of assimilation and the melting pot theory are important to diagram. Peter Salins explained that the melting pot metaphor made both the immigrants and the existing American population indistinguishable from each other. "The greatest failing of the melting-pot metaphor," argued Salins, "is that it overreaches. It exaggerates the degree to which immigrants' ethnicity is likely to be extinguished by exposure to American society."[1] Rather than a melting pot, Salins visualized an American society whose culture was continually changing, via immigration.[2]

The term "melting pot" was coined by Israel Zangwill's 1908 play by that name. Frequently, assimilation and the melting pot idea are regarded as synonymous. However, the melting pot theory not only involves assimilation but acculturation as well. In the simplest terms assimilation means that one group is absorbed into the existing society (although the new group does change the old group), but cultural identity may still be retained. On the other hand, acculturation occurs when a group loses their culture to another group (although ethnic identity may still be observed). Hannibel Gerald Duncan wrote during the 1930s that assimilation was a "cultural process."[3] But Duncan was really speaking of acculturation without differentiating it from assimilation. Salins recognized the distinction between assimilation and acculturation. He argued that one could happen without the other. Salins wrote that "Except for the need to speak English, acculturation, in the American historical context, may be meaningless because the base culture to which immigrant communities may be expected to relate is so fluid." He continued: "It is not clear what it is that immigrants should be acculturating to." Salins believed that America was closer to being a melting pot than most scholars were "willing to concede."[4] In other words, what Salins was arguing was that immigrants could assimilate, but not really acculturate, because they were adding to the culture.

Richard Bernard saw the melting pot as a "concept" rather than a theory. He argued that "the term 'melting pot' means an assimilated society in which people from a variety of cultural backgrounds have so intermingled as to form a new people, distinct from their forebears."[5] In reality, this, in part, is what occurred. But, as explained above, the melting pot "concept" or "theory" means that a group of people are assimilating and acculturating into the existing society. Nancy Green argued that the term melting pot has historically had at least five

definitions. Three of these definitions are explained here. She translated Zangwill's view to mean that immigrants became Americans. "More literally, the term has symbolized a process of homogenization, and it has been used as a synonym for assimilation." Green also demonstrated that the term has become "a substitute for the history of immigration to the United States." What she found interesting about this usage of the term was that it limited "diversity rather than homogeneity."[6] Clearly the definition of melting pot (and of assimilation and acculturation) is confusing and debatable. Many are proprietors of their own concepts of what melting pot means. Regardless of the correct definition, Maxine Seller argued that, in America, the melting pot is a myth, and she was correct.[7]

If the melting pot concept is not accurate in America, then determining what is correct is vital before continuing. Michael Kammen explained that many historians saw American society as "pluralism within a consensus." He also attested that Americans sustained their "identities while sharing a common set of assumptions about" American values. "Perhaps the melting pot," pondered Kammen, "was in reality a mosaic? A patchwork quilt? A salad bowl?"[8] James Ronda expressed a similar view when he said that America was more like a "crazy quilt" than a melting pot.[9] Theodore Maynard, writing in a similar vain, stated that the melting pot was not a "porridge" but rather a "goulash."[10] These are astute metaphors. Instead of melting pot, the immigrant influence of American society is more akin to a stew. In a stew, all the ingredients and their flavors blend together, but most of them are still distinguishable when it is done. The mixture yields the unique flavor of the country but the ingredients are still perceptible. This may be called cultural pluralism, but the "stew theory" may extend it a bit further. And as the stew cooks, the original or base ingredient, the water, (which represents English culture), becomes indistinguishable.

Although it would compose an interesting study, this essay will not attempt to conclude why Czechs and Swedes in Saunders County remained separate and distinct, and why they did not readily assimilate into American society. There have been many studies about Czech immigrants, Swedish immigrants, and immigration in general. However, little has been written regarding these two ethnic groups in Nebraska, or in comparing the Swedes and Czechs. There have been some important books and articles published as well as a few dissertations and theses. In addition, some local town and church histories have

been compiled which express some limited insight into Czech and Swedish culture in Saunders County.

Past and Present of Saunders County, Nebraska, 1915, edited by Charles Perky, a prominent Wahoo banker, revealed more by what it neglected to say than what it did say. For example, there is a section in the book about Swedish settlement in Saunders County, but there is nothing about the Czechs. In the village histories of Swedeburg and Malmo, Perky described the Swedish settlers who were instrumental in building those communities. Conversely, the histories of Prague and Morse Bluff failed to mention the strong Czech heritage. Perky wrote that the small town of Weston was founded by a Bohemian, but then he ignored the Czech element of the village.[11] The history of Touhy simply explained that the major "portion of the population is Bohemian in nationality."[12] There are two explanations for this omission: first, that Czechs were considered second-class people, or second, that the Czechs chose not to participate in the book project. More than likely, it is a combination of both.

Rose Rosicky explained how Czechs primarily settled specific areas of Saunders County. Rosicky wrote: "The little town of Prague on the Burlington & Missouri, named for the Capital City of Bohemia, is so entirely Bohemian that for many years (and probably now [1929]) the only person of any other nationality was the depot agent." Although this is not a categorical statement about the lack of assimilation among the Czechs, it does reveal the perception that, even by the late 1920s, Czechs in this part of the county were still well defined in their ethnicity. The author also explained that Saunders County was one of the most heavily settled in Nebraska by Czechs.[13]

In *Saunders County History,* published in 1983, several of the contributors wrote about Czech and Swede customs such as common foods, music and, especially, holiday traditions.[14] What this revealed was, that even as late as the 1980s, the traditions, customs and ethnicity of both groups were still alive and well in Saunders County. Even the languages are still spoken by some of the older Czechs and Swedes.

Gordon M. Riedesel recognized that the Czech and Swede ethnic groups remained distinct and were slow to assimilate in Saunders County. In his study of the geography of rural cemeteries, he argued that "European settlers . . . maintained culture-group ties in the slow process of acculturation and, therefore, lived in relatively culturally homogenous areas."[15] Riedesel revealed, through cemeteries, that the Czechs and Swedes existed as separate groups. He

explained that about 60 percent "of all rural cemeteries in Saunders County are associated with a church, a culture group or a combination of the two."[16]

Terrence Jon Lindell showed that in some aspects of life Swedes assimilated, but in others, the process was extremely slow. He explained that it was highly unlikely between 1870 and 1900 in Kansas and Nebraska for Swedes to permit Americans into their families. However, Lindell never explained if this extended to other ethnic groups, including the toleration of other Scandinavians. He also explained that "Swedish immigrants lived in two worlds. In their public world they sought assimilation into and acceptance by American society. But they also had a private world, bounded by church and family, where the Swedish language and heritage prevailed."[17] Also, Lindell showed that, although Swedes sent their children to public schools, they also attended Sunday school and Swedish summer school, which kept their language and culture alive. In addition, Luther Academy in Wahoo continued to preserve Swedish heritage during the 1880s.[18]

Many of the local town and church histories in Saunders County neglect the rich ethnic background of their communities. The *History of Prague,* Nebraska, however, presents a strong Czech identity.[19] The church histories better convey the ethnic history of their congregations. The St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Wahoo, Czech Presbyterian Church of rural Weston, and the Swedeburg Covenant Church printed fine histories that are laden with the ethnic background and pride of their churches.[20]

This study is comprised of two sections. The first part compares Czechs and Swedes in Saunders County and the second section looks at evidence of assimilation and acculturation and the reluctance of these two groups to stir themselves in the melting pot of American society. Both sections utilize the marriage records and the 1910 census.

Figure 1

Year of marriage*nationalist of husband crosstabulation

Count

		Nationality of husband			Total
		Czech	Swede	Other	
year of marriage	1880	20	16	1	37
	1885	20	25	1	46
	1890	31	22	2	55
	1895	29	22		51
	1900	30	22	3	55
	1905	45	25	4	74
	1910	42	8	4	54
Total		217	140	15	372

year of marriage*nationality of wife crosstabulation

Count

		Nationality of wife			Total
		Czech	Swede	Other	
year of marriage	1880	20	16	1	37
	1885	20	23	3	46
	1890	32	22	1	55
	1895	29	22		51
	1900	32	21	2	55
	1905	42	27	5	74
	1910	46	7	1	54
Total		221	138	13	372

Figure 2

nationality of husband*language of husband crosstabulation

Count

		language of husband				Total
		English	Czech	Swede		
nationality of husband	Czech	70	92		10	172
	Swede	136		8	5	149
	Other	7			1	8
					22	22
Total		213	92	8	38	351

Nationality of wife*language of wife crosstabulation

Count

		language of husband				Total
		English	Czech	Swede		
nationality of wife	Czech	61	110		1	172
	Swede	104		30	6	140
	Other	6				6
					33	33
Total		171	110	30	40	351

COMPARISON

Marriages

In comparing the Czechs and Swedes in Saunders County, the marriage records will be analyzed first. The study looks at marriage certificates at five-year intervals, beginning with 1880 and ending in 1910. In all, seven years of marriage licenses are analyzed over this thirty-year period. In these seven years, 372 marriage licenses were studied. Of these marriages, 225 involved at least one Czech and 147 at least one Swede. Figure 1 shows, by gender, the year by year numbers of how many Czechs and Swedes were married. The

category "other" are people of other ethnic backgrounds who married Czechs or Swedes. The year 1885 was the only one in which more Swedes were married in Saunders County than Czechs. Obviously, as more and more Czechs and Swedes came into the county, there were more marriages involving these ethnic groups. In 1875 there were five Swedish marriages and only one Czech marriage. In 1880 that number grew to twenty Czech and sixteen Swedish marriages in Saunders County.[21] The marriage records reveal when Czech and Swede immigration into Saunders County escalated. It appears that during the five-year period between 1875 and 1880 is when this jump transpired.

In 1885 there were more Swedes married in the county than Czechs. There were twenty-five marriages involving Swedes and twenty Czechs. In 1890 there were thirty-one Czechs and twenty-two Swedish marriages. In 1895, twenty-nine Czechs and twenty-two Swedes. In 1900, there were thirty Czech and twenty-two Swede marriages. In 1905 there were forty-five Czech and twenty-five Swede marriages, with one of the marriages involving both ethnic groups. Finally, in 1910 there were forty-two Czech and only eight Swedish marriages. Again, as in 1905, there was one marriage between a Czech and a Swede. On average, there were thirty-one marriages in those seven years involving at least one Czech and twenty Swede marriages, for a differential of slightly more than 33 percent. And even if the large disparity of 1910 is thrown out, the number of Czech marriages remains significantly higher than Swede marriages. Without 1910, there were 29.2 Czech and twenty-two Swede marriages per year. Still there is a difference of slightly more than seven.[22] By this single analysis, it can be determined that there were probably more Czechs than Swedes residing in Saunders County. And there were definitely more Czechs of marriageable age in the county than Swedes.

In the seven years studied, Czech men married 212 Czech women, one Swede, and four of other nationalities. Swedish men married 130 Swedish women, one Czech and nine women of other nationalities. Besides the 212 Czech men that Czech women married, they also wed one Swede and eight men of other ethnic backgrounds. In addition to the 130 Swedish men, Swedish women married one Czech and seven men from nationalities other than those from Sweden or Bohemia and Moravia.

When analyzed on a yearly basis, a determination can be made when the Czechs and Swedes married out of their ethnic group. In 1890, one Czech woman married a man from another nationality other than a Swede and in 1900

two Czech women did the same. In 1905, again there was only one marriage that involved a Czech woman and a man who was not Czech or Swede. In 1910, of the forty-six Czech women who wed, one married a Swede and four married men of other ethnic backgrounds. Turning to Swedish women during 1880, one woman married a man of another nationality who was not Czech. As in 1880, the year 1885 saw one marriage, which involved a Swedish woman and a man of another nationality. In 1890, again one Swedish woman married a non-Swede or Czech. During 1895, there were no marriages involving Swedish women and men of other ethnic backgrounds. In 1900, one Swedish woman married a Czech and three wed men of other nationalities. Finally, in 1910, all seven Swedish women who were married in Saunders County wed Swedish men.[23]

In 1905, one Czech man married a Swedish woman. Also that year three Czech men married women of other nationalities. In 1910, only one Czech man married a women who was not of the same ethnic group, or a Swede. In 1880, a Swedish man married a non-Swede or Czech. During 1885, three Swedish men married women of other nationalities who were not Czech. In 1890, one Swedish man wed a woman of another ethnic background who was not Czech. In 1900, and again in 1905, two marriages took place in Saunders County between Swedish men and women of other nationalities who were not Czech. In 1910 one Swedish man was united in marriage with a Czech.[24]

It is easy to see that most Czechs and Swedes married within their own ethnic group up to 1910 in Saunders County. Although the numbers were small, the rate of exogamy grew through the years. Nonetheless, by 1910, Czechs and Swedes in the county were still practicing endogamy. The simple charts in Figure 1 demonstrate this analysis. For men, the rate in which Czechs and Swedes married outside their ethnic group grew very slightly between 1880 and 1910. The women, however, did not experience a steady climb. For both men and women among the Czechs and Swedes, 1895 was a year of 100 percent endogamy. For men, in 1880, there was one marriage outside their ethnic group, in 1885 there were three, 1890 there was one, 1900 proved to be two, 1905 there were six and 1910 witnessed two. Among the women, in 1880 there was one marriage outside their own nationality. In 1885, there was again one such marriage, in 1890 there were two, in 1900 there were three such marriages, in 1905 there were five, and in 1910 there were five marriages outside their own ethnic background. Swedish men married someone from another nationality ten

times. Czech men married non-Czechs five times. Swedish women married non-Swedes eight times. And Czech women married men of other nationalities on nine occasions.[25]

Of the Czech husbands born in Europe, 31 were from Moravia and 97 from Bohemia. In all, 128 of 217 Czech men were born in Europe, or 59 percent. Thirty-three Czech women were born in Moravia and 84 came from Bohemia, for a total of 117 out of 221. This was 53 percent. Out of 140 Swedish men who were married in Saunders County, 72.1 percent or 101, were born in Sweden. Eighty-seven Swedish women out of 138, were born in Sweden. This constituted 60.9 percent. Among the Czechs, many more came from Bohemia than Moravia. For Czech husbands, 1905 was the year in which the most came from Moravia, with six. The year 1905 was also when the most Czech wives were born in Moravia, with nine. It is clear from this data, that a higher percentage of first generation Swedes were getting married in the county between 1880 and 1910, than Czechs.[26]

The average age when Czechs and Swedes married reveals a possible cultural difference between these two ethnic groups. The average age of Czech men married in Saunders County between 1880 and 1910 was 25.8 and the average age for Czech women was 21.3. The age difference between Czech husbands and wives was 4.5 years. The average age for Swedish husbands was 30.5 with their wives average age at marriage at 25.2 with a differential of 5.3 years. The difference between the ages of Czech and Swedish husbands and wives of less than one year is not important. However, the age in which the Czechs and Swedes tended to marry is significant. On average, between 1880 and 1910, Swedish men were 4.7 years older than Czech men when they married. It was similar with the women as the Swedes were almost 4 years older than the Czechs when they got married. In fact, Swedish women were almost as old as Czech men when both married .[27]

Census

The 1910 Saunders County census also reveals much information about the Czechs and Swedes. To draw a sample of these ethnic groups in the county, two precincts and two towns or villages were chosen for the study. The precincts are Bohemia, in the extreme northwest corner of the county, and Richland, excluding the town of Ceresco, in the southern, middle section of the county, with Lancaster County bordering on its south. The towns chosen are

Prague and Malmo. The precincts were elected to provide a sense of Czechs and Swedes in a rural setting and the villages were chosen for the same reason, but in a town setting. Bohemia Precinct had a total population in 1910 of 488. The Czech population was 475, or 97.3 percent of all the people in the precinct. There were no Swedes in Bohemia Precinct. In Richland Precinct, again excluding Ceresco, there were 778 people with a total Swedish population of 605. This number constituted 77.7 percent of the population in rural Richland Precinct. This precinct supported no Czechs. In the town of Prague, the total population in 1910 was 394 with 384 being Czech, or 97.5 percent. There were four Swedes in Prague, but three of those were half Czech. These three people have been counted as both Swedes and Czechs. In the village of Malmo, there were 214 residents, with 138 of them being Swedish. This was 64.5 percent of the total population. Only 14 Czechs lived in Malmo, but four of them were half Czech and Swede. These four people have been counted as both Czechs and Swedes.[28]

In Bohemia Precinct in 1910, 79 Czech men were married to Czech women or 91.9 percent within the husband's nationality and 95.2 percent with the nationality of the wife. In the town of Prague, 75 Czech men were married to Czech women or 93.8 percent within the nationality of the husband and 89.3 percent of the wife's nationality. In Richland precinct, 98 Swedish men married Swedish women, which came to 83.8 percent within the nationality of the husband and 96.1 percent within the nationality of the wife. In the village of Malmo in 1910, twenty-four Swedish men married Swedish women or 75.0 percent within the nationality of the husband and 64.9 percent within the wife's nationality.[29]

Looking at Bohemia Precinct again, one Czech man was married to someone other than a Czech or Swede. There were six Czech men who were not married and had no children living at home. Czech women in Bohemia Precinct married two men other than Czechs or Swedes and two Czech women were single with no children living at home. In Prague, one Czech man was married to a Swedish woman and four Czech men were single with no children at their residence. One Czech woman married a man other than Czech or Swede, and eight were not married with any children living at home. In the precinct of Richland, three Swedish men were married to women of nationalities other than Swedes or Czechs. Sixteen men were single without any children at home. Among the Swedish women, two married non-Swedes or Czechs and

two were single with no children at home. In the town of Malmo, two Swedish men married non-Czechs or Swedes and six were single with no children living at their residence. Of the Swedish women, one married a Czech man, two married men of nationalities other than Czech or Swede and ten were not married with any children living at home. Of the men and women of both nationalities who were counted as married, some were actually single. But because they had children living at home, the census listed where their fathers were born. Hence, it was determined what nationality the spouses had been before they had died or left.[30]

The 1910 census, and again examining Richland (excluding Ceresco) and Bohemia Precincts and the towns of Malmo and Prague, reveals where Czechs and Swedes were born and where their spouses were born. Of Czech men born in Moravia seven married women from the same Czech region, and one married a Bohemian. Two Moravian men had wed women who were born in Nebraska. Of the Bohemian men, 80 married women from Bohemia, one married a woman from Moravia, 17 married women born in Nebraska and five married women born in other states. Of course the Czech women's numbers are the same except that two women born in Bohemia married men born in America outside of Nebraska and eight married men born within the state. No Moravian women married men born outside of Europe. Eighty-four Swedish men married women also born in Sweden. In addition, men born in Sweden were married to 15 women born in Nebraska and one woman born in another state. Swedish women born in Sweden were married to two men born in Nebraska and one man born in America outside of Nebraska.[39]

MELTING POT

Utilizing much of the same data, which has already been interpreted in this study, and adding some new evidence, the next section of this paper demonstrates that the melting pot process in Saunders County, Nebraska did not characterize the Czechs and Swedes up to 1910. A group of people may assimilate, for instance, in politics or learning to speak English, but they are only becoming Americanized in one or two aspects. Being involved in the melting pot is more than a single involvement in American society. Also, it must be remembered that a group of people who have a similar ethnic background can retain their ethnic identity and still assimilate. One of the reasons that they still

identify themselves as an ethnic group is because few are marrying outside their own background. In order to assimilate and acculturate fully into American society, the practice of endogamy should decline. However, just because a group of people of the same ethnicity are keeping their traditions and customs alive, and are not marrying other people does not mean they are not citizens or even patriotic Americans. It just means they have never fully entered the melting pot.

Both Czechs and Swedes in Saunders County were practicing endogamy. Czech men married Czech women 97.7 percent of the time and Czech women married Czech men 95.9 percent of the time. Swedish women married Swedish men 94.2 percent of the time and Swedish men married Swedish women at a rate of 92.9 percent. It did not matter if Czechs or Swedes were first or second generation: they still, as a whole, refused to practice exogamy. And when they did marry someone from another ethnic group, Czechs and Swedes rarely married each other. In fact, in the seven years sampled between 1880 and 1910 in the marriage records, only one Czech woman married a Swede man and one Swede woman married a Czech man. These marriages took place in 1910 and 1905, respectively. Understandably, more Czechs and Swedes married into other groups as the twentieth century emerged, when more second-generation men and women of these two groups began to become adults. In the four years studied between 1880 and 1895, a combination of nine Czechs and Swedes married out of their ethnic group. In the last three years investigated in this study, between 1900 and 1910, twenty-one married someone other than their own nationality, and this number includes the two Czech/Swede marriages. Despite the fact that more Czechs and Swedes married out of their ethnic group after 1900, the overall numbers during the first ten years of the century were still too low for exogamy to be considered. The numbers, all well over 90 percent of Czechs and Swedes' practice of endogamy, demonstrate that, in regards to marriage, these two groups were not assimilating in Saunders County through 1910. The fact that a few more Czechs and Swedes were beginning to marry others after 1900 may show a trend that, in another generation, they did begin to practice exogamy.[31]

This same conclusion can be confirmed by the 1910 census. In Richland Precinct, 98 men were married to Swedish women and only three married someone from another background. Only two Swedish women were married to non-Swedes in Richland Precinct. In the town of Malmo, 24 Swedish men

married Swedish women. Only two Swedish men were married to non-Swedes and three Swedish women had married non-Swedes. In Bohemia Precinct, 79 Czech women were married to Czech men and only two married non-Czechs. Only one Czech man was married to a woman outside his ethnic background in Bohemia Precinct. In the village of Prague, 75 Czech women had married Czech men and only one married a non-Czech man. This one Czech woman was Nettie Bowers, who was married to the Burlington depot agent, Joseph Bowers. As explained above, Rose Rosicky, in her study published during the late 1920s, explained that possibly the only person in Prague who was not a Czech in 1929 was the depot agent. Prague was not that much different in 1910 than it was during the 1920s. Only one Czech man was married to a non-Czech, and she was Swedish. Just as the marriage records revealed, the 1910 census shows that Czechs and Swedes in Saunders County were not marrying outside their own nationality. Even in a town like Malmo, where Swedes were living in close proximity to many non-Swedes (non-Swedes made up 35.5 percent of the population), most Swedes married Swedes.[32]

Of course, when people lived mostly around those of their own nationality, they were more likely to practice endogamy. But living around people of one's own ethnicity, with few other nationalities around, is another example of non-assimilation. As the 1907 plats of Bohemia and Richland precincts reveal in Maps 1 and 2, Czechs and Swedes clustered in their own areas.[33] The 1910 census conveys the same information. Bohemia Precinct, and the town of Prague both supported just under 100 percent Czech populations. In Richland Precinct, excluding the town of Ceresco, over three-fourths were Swedish and the village of Malmo maintained a Swedish population of almost two-thirds.[34]

The final example is the language spoken by each group. According to the 1910 census, of all married Czech women and those single but head of their household, 110 spoke the Czech language (meaning they did not speak English) and 61 spoke English. In all, 64.0 percent of Czech women spoke only Czech. Ninety-two Czech men spoke Czech, or 53.5 percent, and 70 spoke English. With more than 50 percent of the Czech husbands and wives speaking only Czech or not speaking English, this group was not assimilating. A much higher rate of Swedes were speaking English than Swedish. Only 30 Swedish women spoke Swedish with 104 speaking English. In other words, 21.4 percent spoke Swedish. Among the men, eight spoke only Swedish, or 5.4 percent, and 136 spoke English. This reveals that the Swedes had learned to speak English at a

higher rate than the Czechs. Swedish men spoke English at a rate of fifteen percent more than Swedish women.[35] This may be because, in 1910, the men usually were heads of the household and responsible for making the family's money. Because of this, the men would have had more dealings with merchants and other businessmen. Of the Czechs and Swedes who spoke English, more than likely, most also spoke their native tongues, especially the first generation.

Through 1910 in Saunders County, Nebraska, Czechs and Swedes did not jump into America's melting pot. Most Swedes were learning to speak English, but that was only one aspect of the process. Just as the Czechs, Swedes still practiced endogamy, no matter what language they spoke. In addition, both groups lived in communities, whether rural or in towns, which were predominantly Czech or Swedish. By investigating marriage records between 1880 and 1910, the 1910 census, and the 1907 plats of Richland and Bohemia Precincts, through quantitative methods, the statistics prove that Czechs and Swedes, as groups, did not assimilate. But it is possible that this is a reflection of American society as a whole. Historian Melvyn Dubofsky wrote that "Although the American melting pot has been cooking since the nation's founding, it has never had heat and pressure sufficient enough to blend diverse human strains into one indistinguishable mass of American humanity."[36] As mentioned above, there may have been aspects in which these groups began to Americanize, but not in every area. In order to become fully American, the Czechs and Swedes needed to become involved in every phase of the melting pot process, and clearly, they did not.

NOTES

1. Peter D. Salins, *Assimilation American Style* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 48.
2. Ibid., 56.
3. Hannibal Gerald Duncan, *Immigration and Assimilation* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1933), 520.
4. Salins, 56.
5. Richard M. Bernard, *The Melting Pot and the Altar: Marital Assimilation in Early Twentieth-Century Wisconsin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), xvii.
6. Nancy L. Green, "*Le Melting-Pot*: Made in America, Produced in France," *The Journal of American History* 86, no3 (1999): 1192.
7. Maxine Seller, *To Seek America: A History of Ethnic Life in the United States* (n.p.: Jerome S. Ozer, 1977), 8.
8. Michael Kammen, "A Nation of Nations," in *American Issues: Understanding Who*

We Are, ed. William T. Alderson (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976), 11.

9. James P. Ronda, "Lewis and Clark: Who Cares? Why Brother," address delivered at "Navigating through 'Lewis and Clark'" Planning conference, St. Joseph, Missouri, 7 September 2001.

10. Theodore Maynard, *The Catholic Church and the American Idea* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1953), 113.

11. Charles Perky, ed, *Past and Present of Saunders County Nebraska: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement.* Vol. 1. (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing, 1915), 130.

12. Ibid., 132.

13. Rose Rosicky, *A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska.* (Omaha: Czech Historical Society of Nebraska, 1929), 98-99.

14. *Saunders County History*, (Wahoo, Neb.: Saunders County Historical Society, 1983), 13-15.

15. Gordon M. Riedesel, "The Cultural Geography of Rural Cemeteries: Saunders County, Nebraska" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1979), 18.

16. Ibid., 66.

17. Terrence Jon Lindell, "Acculturation Among Swedish Immigrants In Kansas And Nebraska, 1870-1900" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1987), iii-iv.

18. Ibid., 148-156.

19. *The History of Prague, Saunders County, Nebraska, 1887-1937.* (The Prague Herald, 1937), passim.

20. *St. Wenceslaus Parish of Wahoo, 1878-1978*, (N.p., n.d.), passim; *Czech Presbyterian Church: Centennial, 1882-1982.* (N.p., 1982), passim; *Swedeburg Covenant Church Centennial, 1876-1976.* (N.p., n.d.), passim.

21. Saunders County, Nebraska, Marriage Certificates, 1880-1910. The significance of the statistics throughout the essay is .05 or less.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. 1910 Federal Census, Saunders County, Nebraska.

29. Ibid.

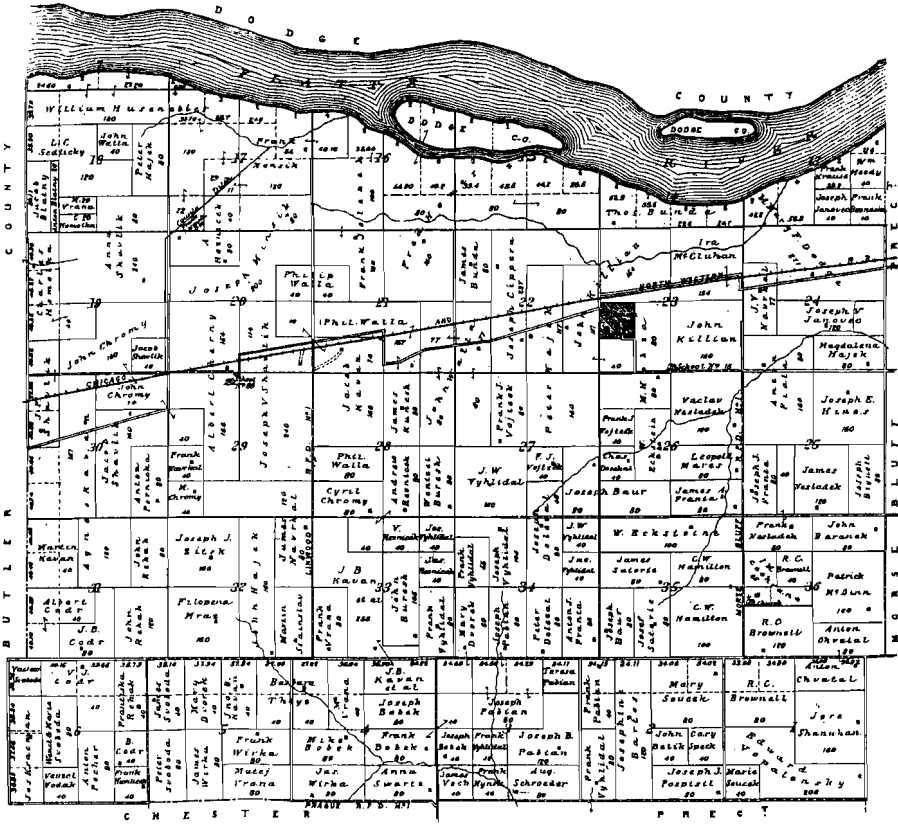
30. Ibid.

31. Marriage Certificates.

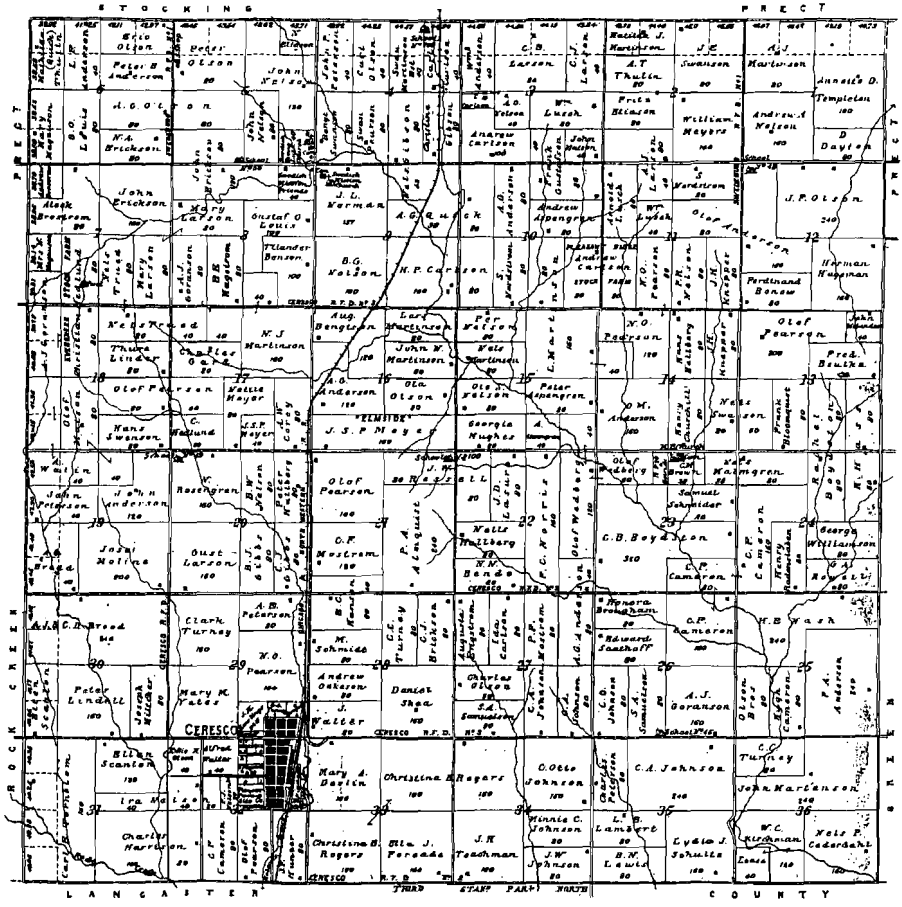
32. 1910 Census.

33. *Saunders County, Nebraska Plat Book.* (Des Moines: The Brown-Scoville Publishing Co., 1907).

34. 1910 Census.
35. Ibid.
36. Melvyn Dubofsky. *Industrialism and the American Worker, 1865-1920.* (Whelling, ILL: Harlan Davidson, 1996), 10.



Map 1 1907 plat, Bohemia Precinct



Map 2 1907 plat, Richland District