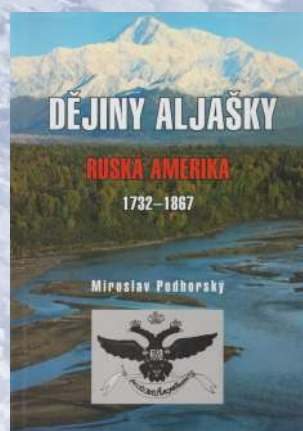
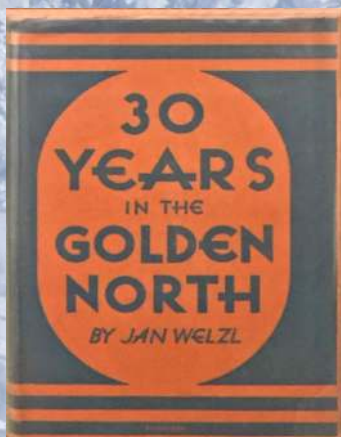


Zdeněk Lyčka
Jaroslav Olša, Jr.



Czechs and Alaska

From the Heart of Europe
to the North Edge of America



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to the Northern Edge of America**

Zdeněk Lyčka and Jaroslav Olša, Jr.



Consulate General
of the Czech Republic
in Los Angeles



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*It might appear that the inhabitants of the Czech Republic
– a not particularly populous Central European country lacking an ocean –
would have little interest in events
happening in the far corners of the globe,
to say nothing of the Arctic Circle.*

*But it turns out that the reverse is true,
with accounts attesting to significant Czech activities around the world,
spanning exploration, discovery, scientific research and sports.*

*The aim of this publication is to present information
on the activities of Czechs in the US state of Alaska and its Aleutian Islands,
as well as on the numerous discoveries and observations
made by Czechs over the centuries
with respect to this remote part of the United States.*

The First Czechs in Alaska

The very first person from the Czech lands to visit the territory of today's Alaska was the botanist

Thaddäus (Xaverius Peregrinus) **Haenke**

(1761–1816 or 1818), known back home as

Tadeáš Haenke, or as Tadeo Haenke in the

Spanish-speaking regions. Born in the small

northern Bohemian town of Chřibská,

Haenke went on to study mathematics,

physics, astronomy and botany at Charles

University in Prague. Soon after, he estab-

lished himself as a noted naturalist, moving

to Vienna, the capital of the Habsburg mon-

archy. From there Haenke maintained pro-

fessional contacts with numerous col-

leagues across Europe, including in Spain.

The Kingdom of Spain then formally invited

Haenke to apply to partake in a planned

round-the-world expedition by Admiral

Alejandro Malaspina. Following a recommen-

dation by Joseph II, the Austrian Emperor, Haenke

was accepted in the Malaspina Expedition. Although it

departed in July 1789 from the southern Spanish port of Cádiz without Haenke, the

naturalist, following a slew of travel-related issues, finally joined the team in Chile.

The twin expedition ships *Descubierta* and *Atrevida* sailed around South America

and up its western coast. At each port of call Haenke carried out botanical research,

albeit with varying results. In Yakutat Bay, Alaska, the plants he collected were dis-

appointingly similar to those found in Europe, and so he shifted his focus instead

onto native “Indian” culture, particularly its music. Several of the artifacts acquired

by Haenke from the Tlingit

people in 1791, including

a unique hat featuring a paint-

ing of a beaver, are now part

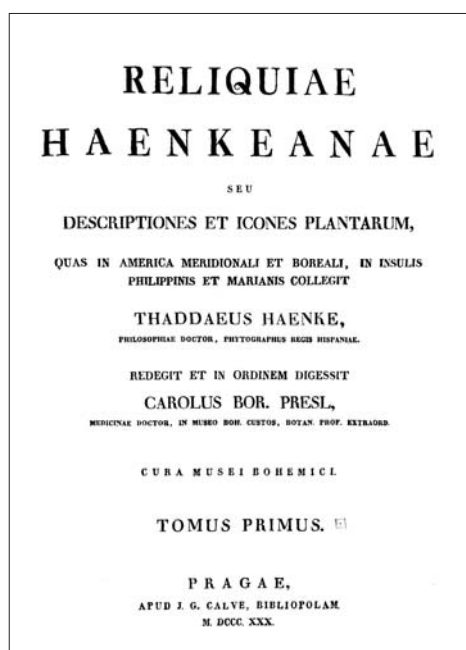
of the Náprstek Museum of

Asian, African and American

Cultures in Prague.



Of considerably greater significance are Haenke's botanical collections from the Pacific island of Guam and the Philippines – all samples of local



flora collected by him were sent to Prague and are today part of the city's National Museum collection. Czech botanist **Karel Bořivoj Presl** (1794–1852) spent nearly fifteen years arranging botanical specimens collected by Haenke and produced a multi-volume work *Reliquiae Haenkeanae: seu descriptiones et icones plantarum, quas in America meridionali et boreali, in insulis Philippinis et Marianis collegit Thaddaeus Haenke* (Haenke's Collection, or Description and Drawing of the Plants, which were Collected by Thaddaeus Haenke in South and North America, the Philippine Islands and the Marianas, 1825–1835). Even though Haenke is most often associated with the study of the vegetation of Latin America – indeed, following his departure from the Malaspina Expedition in 1793, Haenke remained in Peru for

twenty-five years – his short stay in Alaska was scientifically important. And he is also remembered there until this day, as Admiral Malaspina named in his honor a small uninhabited island and an adjacent glacier in the Yakutat Bay area.

Prague native **Heinrich W. Klutschak** (1848–1890) was an adventurer and explorer, who as a draftsman and surveyor partook in an 1878 northern expedition headed by US army lieutenant Frederick Schwatka. Klutschak set off for Alaska and the northern Arctic region at the behest of the American Geographical Society in order to look for written records thought to have been left on or near King William Island by members of Sir John Franklin's lost expedition, which met with disaster in the Canadian Arctic in 1848. The group traveled north from Hudson Bay utilizing three sledges pulled by over forty dogs. With relatively few provisions, except for a large quantity of arms and ammunition, they failed to find the documents. Klutschak described the expedition in his book *Als Eskimo unter den Eskimos – Eine Schilderung der Erlebnisse der Schwatka'schen Franklin-Aufsuchungs-Expedition in den Jahren 1878–1880*, published in 1881 (An Eskimo Among the Eskimos – A description of the Experiences of Schwatka's Expedition in the Search for the Franklin Expedition from 1878–1880), which was only translated into English more than a century later by University of Toronto Press as *Overland to Starvation Cove: With the Inuit in Search of Franklin, 1878–1880* (1993). Alas, news of this expedition failed to make its way back to the Czech lands; a Czech version of the aforementioned book has yet to be published.

Similarly, the wider public also remained uninformed of another, far less ambitious trip by Duke **Josef Jeroným** (Joseph Hieronymus) **von Colloredo-Mannsfeld** (1866–1957) to Yukon and Alaska in 1904–05. Only a single detailed itinerary of this

trip has been preserved, along with a number of animal trophies and ethnographic materials, today housed at the family cha-teaux in Opočno as well as within the collection of the Náprstek Museum in Prague. Various local newspapers in Canada published articles about the trip, in which Coloredo-Mannsfeld was quoted that “Alaska is certainly a sportsman’s paradise, even in the wintertime, when hunting is not supposed to be at its best.”

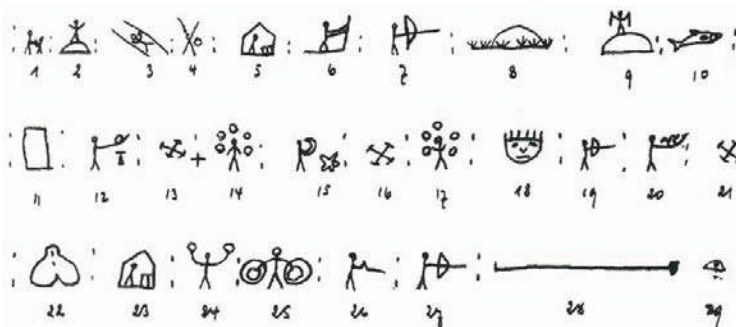


Philipp Jakob Oberländer (1875–1911) is another example of a Czech hunter who visited Alaska. As the son of rich businessman from the Czech town of Hronov, Oberländer greatly enjoyed hunting and undertook expeditions across the world’s continents. In 1905 and 1907–8, he traveled across North America including Alaska and Greenland. During part of one of the trips, he was accompanied by the famous British traveler and African explorer Frederick Selous – who praised Oberländer’s hunting abilities. Oberländer donated many of his trophies to various Austrian and Czech museums. He also self-published the book *Jadfahrten in Nordamerika* (Hunting Trips in North America, 1910), which was translated into Czech as *Lovecké jízdy v severní Americe* (1911, authored by “Filip z Oberlaendru”). Oberländer met with tragedy when he was stampeded to death by a buffalo in Southern Sudan.

Thus, Czechs were largely only able to learn about Alaska from popular contemporary geographic publications, largely sourced from analogous German-language publications. The first expansive text to focus on the then still Imperial Russian territories of America spanned five printed pages within a more than 800-page publication named *Wšeobecný zeměpis* (Universal Geography, 1850), authored by **Karel Vladislav Zap** (1812–1871). A description of Alaska’s flora and fauna was published in the Czech book *Přírodnické poměry Ameriky* (The Natural Conditions of America, 1864) by **Jan Palacký** (1830–1908), the son of the noted Czech historian František Palacký, who also writes of these lands in the book *Spojené obce Severo-Americké = United-States of North-America* (1884). The most detailed nine-page description titled “Zemiště Alaška” (Alaskan Lands) was published as part of an expansive work by German cultural historian and geographer **Friedrich Anton Heller von Hellwald** (1842–1892), titled *Země a obyvatelé její*, 1882 (*Die Erde und ihre Volker*, or The Country and Its Inhabitants, 1877–78), and focused on the American continent. A similar focus was also to be found in the most notable Czech encyclopedic publication of its time, *Ottův slovník naučný* (1888). All contemporary Czech forms of the word “Alaska” are listed here, namely – “Aljaska, Aljaksa, Alaska and Alaška” – with the exception of the common modern form of “Aljaška”.

The Moravian Brethren and Alaska

The works of an individual named **Uyaquq** (aka Uyaquk or Uyakoq, circa 1860–1924) can be considered a notable example of a “Czech footprint” in Alaska. As a member of the indigenous Yup’ik people, Uyaquq transformed himself from an illiterate adult hunter into a maestro of linguistics. At first, he created pictograms before developing a yugtun script that converted the sounds of the Yup’ik language. This then enabled a translation of parts of the Bible, which have been preserved to this day.



Uyaquq was a member of the former Hussite Moravian Church or Unitas Fratrum (Unity of the Czech Brethren), created after the burning at the stake of Jan Hus in the German town of Konstanz in 1415. The new reli-

gious order was founded in the Czech lands in 1457; by the early 16th century, during the time of the reformer Martin Luther, more than 200,000 Brethren lived in the Czech Lands. Following the end of the Thirty Years’ War in 1648, the majority of them were forced to emigrate. Many exiles from Moravia and Bohemia called themselves the “Moravian Brethren”.

In 1722, a smaller group of adherents came across the demesne of the young, religiously tolerant count Nicolaus von Zinzendorf and began to build a new colony in the Upper Lusatian town of Herrnhut, around fifteen kilometers north-west from the town of Zittau on the Czech-German border. The name of a new municipality named Herrnhut (Ochranov), meant that it was “under the Lord’s protection”. In 1727, a new order of the Unity of the Brethren was established in Herrnhut. Count Zinzendorf then sent its members on Christian missions around the world, for example to Southern Africa and the Gold Coast (today’s Ghana), to Central America and the Caribbean (the order continues to flourish in Nicaragua and the Virgin Islands), as well as to Greenland, Labrador and other places in Northern America. Many members of the Unitas Fratrum would learn of the denomination’s ties to Moravia – from where the founders of Ochranov had come – and considered it a kind of “Promised Land” to visit at least once during their lifetimes. Some missionaries in the Arctic were of Czech descent, even if German was their mother tongue. These included Matouš Stach and Christian David, who traveled to Greenland in the first half of the 18th century in order to promote the largely hitherto unsuccessful work of Lutheran pastor Hans Egede.

Uyaquq was born around 1860 to a shaman family in the valley of the lower parts of the Kuskokwim River in central Alaska. In Yup'ik, his name meant “neck”, leading to English speakers nicknaming Uyaquq “Helper Neck”. He was very short, even by the physical standards of the time, and immediately after reaching adulthood he became a shaman. Very soon after this, however, Uyaquq and his father both converted to Christianity. His father joined the Russian Orthodox Church, while Uyaquq himself became a missionary of the Alaskan Moravian Brethren.¹

In his role as a missionary, Uyaquq managed to convert entire Yup'ik communities in the Kuskokwim basin area to Christianity. It is believed that his calm nature and ability to speak well proved very useful for this task. Uyaquq was fascinated by the idea that English-speaking Moravian Brethren were able to repeatedly quote parts of the Holy Scriptures verbatim, which led to the realization that this was only possible because they were literate. Uyaquq in turn became enraptured by the possibilities of the written word, and began to craft a written record of the Yup'ik language, namely yugtun, of which he was also a speaker.

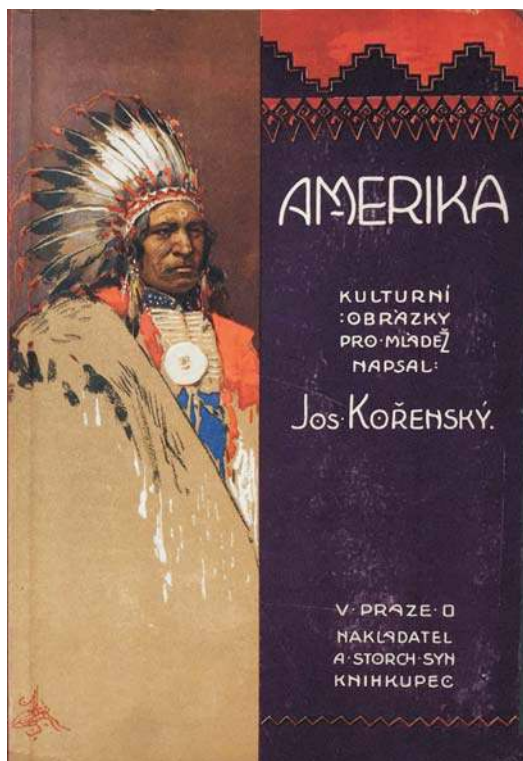
Reverend John Hinz, a missionary of the Moravian Brethren in Alaska, as well as an eminent linguist, was truly astonished by the first version of Uyaquq's script. As a result, he invited Uyaquq to the Bethel Mission so that the budding linguist might continue to develop his newfound talents. Uyaquq sought to use the new script to record as many Biblical stories as possible, assisted in his reading by Hinz. However, Uyaquq refused to perfect his English-language skills, fearing that proficiency in this language could undermine his cultural identity as a Yup'ik. Over the ensuing five years, Uyaquq's scripts describing yugtun were developed from a pictographic form into a syllabic one.

Uyaquq then taught this new script to missionary assistants so that they could use it during their religious work. However, most of the inhabitants of Alaska were adherents of the Roman alphabet as taught by Hinz. By 1979, the vast majority of the population assumed the writing format preferred by the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. Uyaquq's system was nonetheless of great interest to linguists, representing an evolution from illiteracy to a protoslabic syllabary similar to the logograms utilized in numerous ancient written languages, including Chinese and Egyptian, albeit in this case compressed into a timeframe of a mere five years. Even though eventually the church itself ultimately replaced Uyaquq's syllabary with the system of written words adopted across the Canadian Arctic, to this day there are people in Alaska able to read Uyaquq's written works in their original form.

1 Numerous publications have been published on the subject of the Moravian Brethren and Alaska, for example: Drebert, Ferdinand: *Alaska Missionary*. Bethlehem: Moravian Books Shop 1959; Gapp, Samuel H.: *Where Polar Ice Begins, or The Moravian Missions in Alaska*. Bethlehem: Moravian Church in America 1928; Hamilton, John Taylor: *The Beginnings of the Moravian Mission in Alaska*. Bethlehem: Comenius Press 1890; *ibid.*: “The Moravian Mission in Alaska”: *Magazine of Christian Literature*, 2, 1892; Schwalbe, Anna Buxbaum: *Dayspring of the Kuskokwim – The Story of Moravian Missions in Alaska*. Bethlehem: Moravian Press 1951, and others.

Gold Rush and the First Czechs to Settle in Alaska

It is entirely possible that some Czechs already made their way to Alaska before 1867 when it was still part of the Russian Empire. However, no such information has yet come to light. Nor have mentions of early Czechs living permanently in Alaska been uncovered in notable expat publications of the day such as *Dějiny Čechův Amerických* (1908, transl. as *The History of Czechs in America*, 1996) by **Jan Habenicht** (1840–1917) or *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America* (1920) by **Thomas (Tomáš) Čapek** (1861–1950). In his work, Habenicht writes that “a number of Czech-Slavs strayed there. The longing for gold, of which there is a considerable amount in the local mountains, lured such people to the harsh and cold terrain of Alaska,” also adding, “Sister Cyrilla [real name **Růžena Houdková** of Veseleyville, ND] has spent her life adhering to asceticism and tending to the ill at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Fairbanks.” A series of letters describing her journey to and subsequent arrival in Alaska in 1907 were published in the fall of the same year by the Czech Catholic newspaper *Hlas* (Voice) in St. Louis. Evidently, the only other Czech-American to purposefully leave news of a trip to Alaska in the period press is **Frank J. Pranca**. In the 1927 jubilee 50th annual edition of the *Amerikán* yearbook, Pranca published an article describing a trip from “Sunny California to Icy Alaska”.



In his publications on Czechs in America, Czech-American historian Miloslav Rechcigl notes, without much detail, that as early as 1895, brothers **Bedřich** and **Edward Mareš** had traveled to the extreme north of Alaska in the search for gold. Three years later, a small group of gold prospectors made their way to Alaska at the behest of Czech merchant **František** (Francis) **J. Korbel** (1831–1920) of California. Today, the company Korbel established has become one of the most renowned US producers of sparkling wines. František’s son **Josef Korbel** sought to keep the mining company alive in the growing Alaskan community. However, in his book *Amerika: Kulturní obrázky z Ameriky severní* (America: Cultural Pictures from Northern America, 1923), **Josef Kořenský** (1847–1938), the traveler and author of a number of popular (in both senses) science books for

young readers, wrote that, “...for three years, around sixty persons worked for the firm, but only enough gold was mined to barely be able to pay for the cost of the mining expeditions.” Kořenský also added that the company was later sold to the Pacific Gold Company. Kořenský goes on to devote more than twenty additional pages to Alaska in his book, albeit the local Czech-Americans he identifies are only described in the barest of detail: an **Otto K. (Otokar) Štrížek** (1873–1937), owner of a gold mine in Fairbanks (presumably the Koyukuk mine), is mentioned, who later became a successful banker and served as Czechoslovak Honorary Consul in Seattle from 1927 until his death; as well as Mrs **Kateřina Našincová**, who operated a fashionable clothing store in Fairbanks; and also messers **Morávek** and **Mikuta**.²

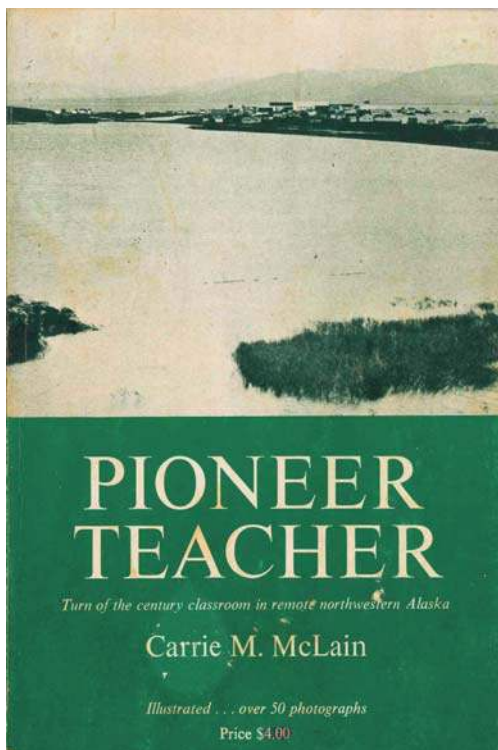
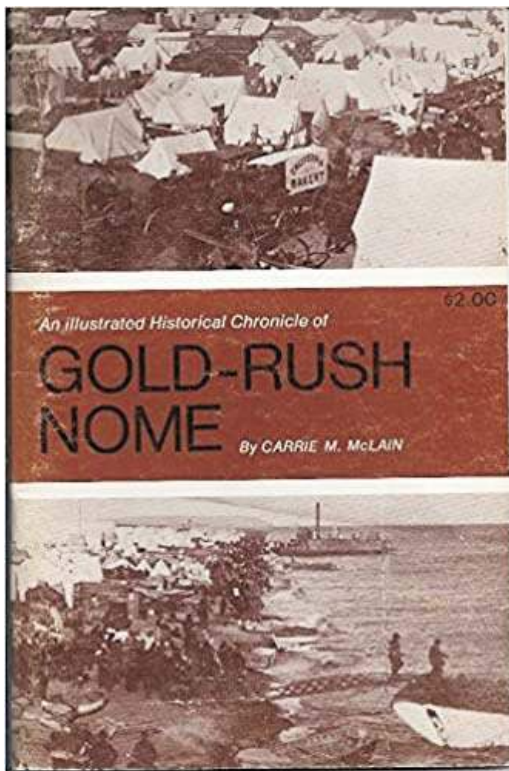


Úřadovna a kuchyně zlatonosných dolů založených bratry Korbely v Nome na Alasce. Počáteční písmena P. G. Co. znamenají Pacific Gold Company, t. j. Pacifická společnost pro těžbu zlata.

Kořenský also mentions a gentleman by the name of Štípek, who sells stationery in Nome. This is undoubtedly **Václav (William) Štípek** (1869/70?–1952),³ a native of the village of Sedlice near Kutná Hora, who wrote of his fate on a number of occasions in letters to the Czech-language *Newyorské listy* (New York Daily) and *Hlas lidu* (People’s Voice). He set out for the Klondike region of the Yukon as early as 1897, only to soon return to New York to his wife and five children. However, Štípek was lured to Nome again with news of rich gold deposits, writing in 1905 that: “[I worked] initially in my profession, but gradually, after saving up enough money, I finally took a leap into the world of mining. I worked for four years with the alternating levels of success of a gold-digger, sending throughout all the sums of money back home to my wife and children. Only in the most recent year have the Heavens smiled on me and I have come across a rich deposit. Today, I own a large number of shares in a Nome mining company; aside from that, I have interests in thirty other gold-bearing deposits that are paying out handsomely.” Štípek’s partner was the Slovak **Jan Kotovic** and the pair, unlike countless other prospectors, found considerable success. Their activities are, for example, described by the US Geological Survey’s *Mineral Resources of Alaska* (1918) report, which describes that dump from one of the shafts on the divide between the Rock and Glacier creeks “...is said to assay \$8.50 a ton in gold, and stringers in sulphides are said to have assayed as high as

2 Kořenský’s article “Čechové na Alasce” (Czechs in Alaska) in *Zvon*, 1910, No. 42 merely repeats the same names.

3 In some reports, incorrectly identified as Josef or Karel, and even Stypek.



\$150 a ton.” Aside from this, Štípek also writes that he also had claims on deposits in Auville, Hot Air Rock and Lumblum Creek.

In 1905, following the death of Štípek’s wife in New York, the gold prospector took his five children to Nome. One of these was his daughter **Caroline Štípek** (1895–1973), known in Alaska as **Carrie McLain**. Although unknown back in the Czech Lands, McLain authored two books, *Gold-Rush Nome* (1969) and *Pioneer Teacher* (1970), notes Jan Kopka in his book *Ve spárech Aljašky* (In the Claws of Alaska, 2007), where he writes: “She lived during the time of the Gold Rush in Nome. When people started to move away from this region after 1914, she collected mementoes from the departing populace. These period items, reflecting the rise and fame of this small town, were ultimately placed on display in a museum bearing McLain’s name.”

Of the entire Štípek family, only Carrie McLain remained in Alaska. In 1918, after a brief sojourn in local politics, where he ran as a candidate for the Socialist Party, her father Václav moved to Tacoma in Washington State. Three years later, he married, thereafter continuing to visit Alaska, maintaining contacts with old friends and colleagues from the time of the Gold Rush. Also of note is his daughter **Barbara Štípek**, who married **Joe Bursík**, evidently the son of one of the Bursík brothers, who (along with a Louis Kern – perhaps this is Václav Krenka, see below), according to local newspapers, owned a large dredger in the Snake River. The aforementioned US Geological Survey report notes that they had eight claims across the divide between the Anvil and Dexter creeks.



Alas, far more Czechs also made their way to Alaska during this time. This is propably attested to, for example, by a store on Main Street, Nome called “BOHEMIA”. But evidence suggests that the most of them only remained in the region for a limited period and thus did not meet with long-term success as gold prospectors. Indeed, Štípek ultimately went on to own a painting and wallpapering company, turning his back on his former passion. Aside from Jan Kotovic, Štípek’s other business partners evidently subsequently included **Frank** (Josef?) **Petrík** and **Antonín Navrátil**, who also served as a gravedigger in Nome. Brief reports from the Omaha-based periodical *Pokrok západu* (Western Progress) and *Osvěta americká* (American Enlightenment), along with testimonials by the traveler Jan Welzl (more below), make only brief reference to two groups of additional Czech gold prospectors,⁴ namely publican **Josef Křeček**, barber **Wm. Suchý** and also **Jan Otahal** and his aunt, who operated a steam laundromat. The town was also home to postmaster **Kalaš/Kolash** as well as a journalist called **Moravský**, albeit both apparently were no longer Czech speakers.

4 Newspaper reports note **Ad. Hala**, **Fr. Koudela**, **Václav Krenk**, **Karel Miláček**, **Václav Sedláček** and **Vávra**. Jan Welzl also mentions additional names: “**Jan Lang** from Starý Moletín, cabinetmaker **Christ** from Šumperk, **Anna** and **František Červenkovy** from near Hodonín, **Langer** from Mikulov, **Růžička** from Kroměříž, and my compatriot **Josef Kisling** from Zábřeh”. He also mentions an unnamed Czech who lived in Teller, north of Nome.

Nome, Alaska. – Above all, please accept a warm compatriotic greeting from us Czech Eskimos of this distant northern region. We are all healthy in this icy and snowy land, which is nowhere near as ghastly as many might imagine. In terms of your request for me to send you some pictures of Czech stores, I should point out that we Czechs here have been pretty backwards in the field of commerce. Although there are sufficient numbers of capable compatriots, and although we naturally have had the same opportunities as members of other nationalities here, I nonetheless feel that we Czechs have lacked sufficient resolve to go into business. The same can be said of ownership opportunities. Some fellow countrymen have been here since 1900, when many opportunities still remained to acquire potentially profitable gold deposits. Some did indeed take advantage of such deposits – albeit, after a time, they gave up. Others then came in their footsteps, such as the Irish, managing to discover what the Czechs had failed to exploit. Those of our compatriots who have missed out this chance to become wealthy then continue to toil away, seeking out other opportunities that will ultimately likely again be properly exploited by others! There are skilled workmen among these, who work diligently all summer and then spend the winter prospecting – meaning looking for gold deposits. But in most cases they are disappointed. And this is an expensive enterprise. For example, a boiler costs \$150; add to that around five tons of coal at \$20 per ton; as well as food, tools and equipment. That is a basic picture of gold prospecting, so that readers might be able to imagine the cost of such an expedition. In terms of my job as a barber – well, in winter I work with two laborers and with three during the summer. In total, there are ten hairdressing establishments in this town. Some proprietors work alone, or only have one other laborer on staff. Wages here tend to be high. In the winter, a laborer is paid \$30 per week guaranteed, with a 65 percent work regime in summer, with no guarantee.⁵ (...)

In terms of the weather, in November it tends to be freezing, with huge snowstorms coming after the New Year that rage with an indescribable ferocity. Anyone wanting to get an authentic impression of this is advised to experience it for himself. Frequently, snow then falls up to 25 or 30 feet high, particularly along snowdrifts. Last winter, some of the houses were almost completely snowed over. And people happily dug tunnels in the snow. The main street here – known as Front – was snowed over right up to second-floor-window level in many places. As I write this, on May 24, patches of snow remain in several places, with a considerable amount still present in the tundra regions – enough to be able to ride by sleigh. The sea ice is still thick and one must traverse out about half a mile in order to reach a vessel. We are now waiting for the first ship to arrive, which I believe will be the *Korvin*, set to bring us fresh eggs, vegetables and beer. The worst thing about the long winters is that there is no fresh food to eat. Meat is about eight months old. If the Eskimos didn't take care of us – bringing hares, fish, wild ducks and geese – then times would be considerably more difficult.

Letter of Wm. Suchý

Osvěta americká, 15, 1907-08, August 7

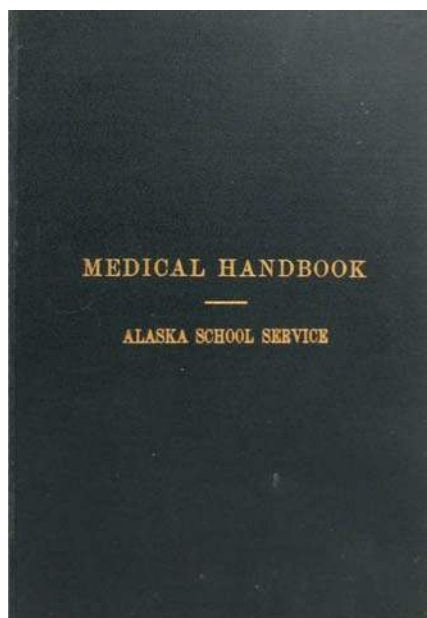
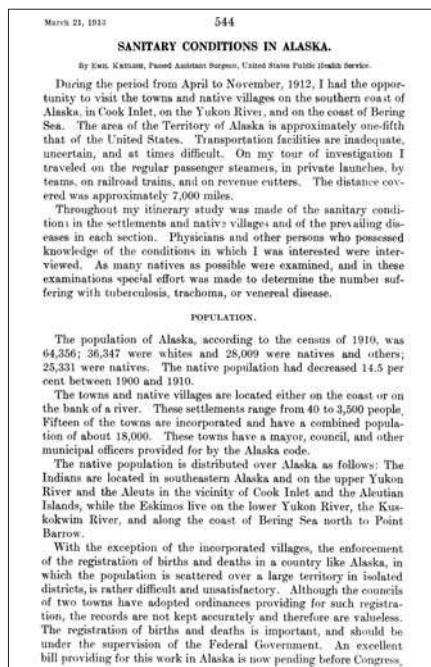
5 “Guaranteed” means that during the slow winter business season the laborer was paid a flat fee of \$30 per pay period regardless of the number of haircuts the laborer gave as it was the slow season for gold miners. In contrast in the busy summer mining season the laborer took on some of the business risk so he was paid 65% of the price for each of the many haircuts he gave & the owner kept the other 35%.

Alaska became a Territory as a result of the Organic Act of 1912, giving it representation in the federal government. Soon after, a team led by New York-born Czech-American **Emil Krulish** (1878–1965), an Assistant Surgeon of the US Public Health Service based in Galveston, was sent to supervise the healthcare situation and to assist with the sanitation requirements of the communities in the Territory. After seven months travelling across Alaska promoting sanitation and hygiene principles, Krulish published a series of reports, including one titled “Sanitary Conditions in Alaska”. The report concluded that 15 percent of the native population of Alaska was infected with tuberculosis; trachoma, rheumatism, and venereal diseases were also prevalent in many native villages. Furthermore, “At least \$125,000 is needed to establish an Alaska medical service with an efficient organization,” as the diseases could, “be eradicated if funds are provided for the establishment of well-equipped hospitals in important centers and for the employment of a sufficient number of physicians and nurses.” Krulish also recommended the establishment of a native hospital in Nome, similar to the existing one in Juneau.

“There is no question of there being an imperative demand in Alaska for legislation relating to public health and certainly no reason for this territory to remain out of the ranks of other civilized and progressive communities in the field of preventive medicine and sanitation,” Krulish wrote in a letter to the mayors of several key Alaskan towns.⁶ Following an appearance before the House Committee on Appropriations, in 1913 Krulish set about working on a sanitary code for Alaska. That same year, the Alaska School Service published his *Medical Handbook* (co-authored with Daniel S. Neuman), aimed at local teachers who, according to Krulish, “Must have a pretty thorough knowledge of medicine as well as pedagogy,” as in large parts of Alaska, “it often becomes the duty of government school teachers to render first aid to the injured or sick native, and sometimes to care for him throughout the entire course of a severe illness without the aid of a physician.”⁷

6 Valdez Daily Prospector, 1912, October 2.

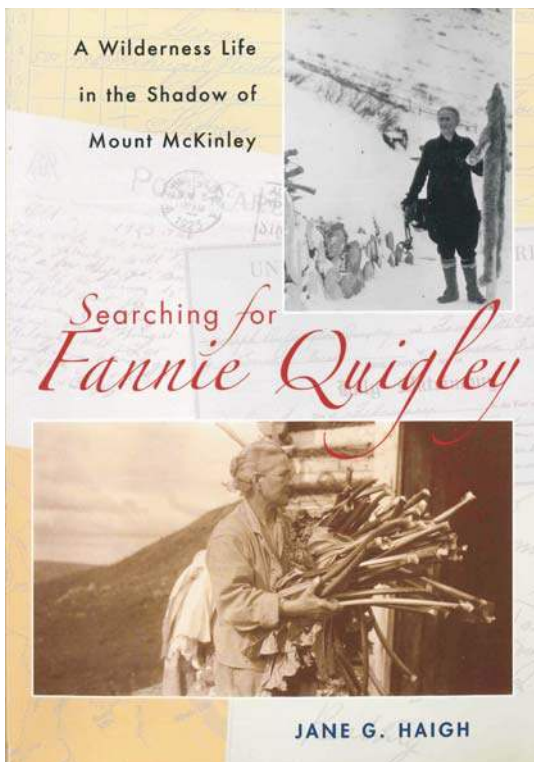
7 Douglas Island News, 1913, October 24.



Krulish ultimately remained in Alaska for five years, acting in an advisory capacity to the governor in matters concerning public health. His career was keenly followed by the contemporary Czech-language American-based press – and on several occasions, Krulish himself contributed letters for publication. Krulish had a distinguished career in the public health service, working in such places as Ellis Island in New York and also on several occasions at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Oklahoma. He also briefly served at the US Legation in Czechoslovakia during the 1930s.

The daughter of Czech parents, **Frances Sedlacek** (1870–1944) of Wahoo, NE can be counted among the legendary pioneers of Alaska. Later going under the married name of **Fannie Quigley**, in 1897, aged twenty-seven, she traveled to a Klondike in the grips of Gold Rush fever. Sedlacek would pull a sled loaded with tents, Yukon stoves and supplies by herself, gaining the nickname “Pilgrim Fannie” and being awarded a license to freely mine local gold. In 1900, she laid a claim to a mine near Clear Creek, at the confluence of the Stewart River, 125 miles from Dawson. It was here that she met trapper Angus McKenzie, whom she would ultimately marry. In 1903, however, Sedlacek left her husband, traveling 800 kilometers along the Yukon to the tiny community of Rampart. From there, she continued along with a group of fellow gold prospectors to the central Alaskan city of Tanana, finally settling in the east Alaskan town of Chena. In 1906, Sedlacek set off for a newly discovered gold deposit in the community of Kantishna, discovered by Joe Quigley and his colleagues. With the aim of topping off her considerable efforts in the field, she hoped to meet

with success in this gold mining effort, investing her mining interests into the enterprise. Despite never having shot an animal prior to her arrival in Katishna, Frances Sedlacek nonetheless became a legendary and resilient hunter, known across all Alaska. She spoke in a coarse foul-mouthed manner, full of English-language mistakes, and wore unkempt men’s clothing. In addition, Sedlacek also gained notoriety as a prolific drinker. In a sense, she never managed to adapt to civilization and far preferred a rugged life in the wilderness. In 1942, Sedlacek met American explorer and cartographer Bradford Washburn following his successful ascent of Mount Denali, the highest mountain peak in North America. Thirty years prior, she had already greeted British mountain climber Hudson Stuck and his group, who became



the first to climb to the summit of Denali in June 1913. Fannie spent the rest of her years alone, dying in 1944 in her hunting lodge.⁸

Anna Jansa is another example of a later Czech pioneer in Alaska, becoming a naturalized US citizen in 1931. In 1938, the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* noted that Anna “...lived 27 years in Fairbanks [...] She formerly owned a ladies’ ready-to-wear store [...] and she used to own the Riverside Hotel.” The paper also mentions Jansa’s recent, more than year-long trip to her native Czechoslovakia, also describing the country’s preparations for war. Seven years prior, the same paper noted a months-long stay by a **Charles O. Tulka** (1906?–1982?), “...the vagabond reporter,” who arrived in Fairbanks “...after traveling 63,000 miles through 22 countries since he left his home in Czechoslovakia in 1928.” The paper added that Tulka planned to spend the winter in Nome – albeit it appears unlikely that his promised “book on his varied experiences” ever materialized. Tulka returned to Czechoslovakia in 1938, only to witness the German occupation of the country’s German-speaking borderlands – and promptly returned to the United States, where he ultimately settled in California.

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The Second World War brought more Czechs to the northernmost parts of America. The Aleutian Islands, forming an arc eastward into the Bering Sea, became a strategic location during the war, with battles taking place there against Japanese Imperial forces. This led to a large number of troops being stationed on the islands, including some of Czech origin. Evidence of this is found in contemporary Czech print publications, for example reports of the stationing in the Aleutian Islands of a **Bart Svrček**.⁹

8 Viz Haigh, Jane G.: *Searching for Fannie Quigley: A Wilderness Life in the Shadow of Mount McKinley*. Athens: Ohio University Press 2007; and also Rechcigl, M.: “Bohemian Pioneers to the American Northwest”. *Zprávy SVU*, 55(4), 2013.

9 His letter was published on June 11, 1944 in the Chicago-based daily *Svornost*, quoted by Polách, Vladimír P.: *Krajané v USA a druhá světová válka* (Czechs in the USA and the Second World War). Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého 2017.

Eskimo Welzl – The Most Popular Czech in the Arctic

At the start of the 20th century, the most famous Central European Arctic explorer, the “Moravian Eskimo” **Jan Welzl**, undertook a visit to Alaska. Welzl, (formerly Jan Velcl, 1868–1948), presented himself as a “Czech of Moravian heritage”, and was not just an explorer, but an adventurer, hunter, gold prospector, storyteller, author and also served as the highest judge on the New Siberian Islands, in the extreme north of Russia. Welzl is usually known by his nickname “Eskimo Welzl”, but was also referred to as the “Arctic Bismarck” and the “Bear Eater”.

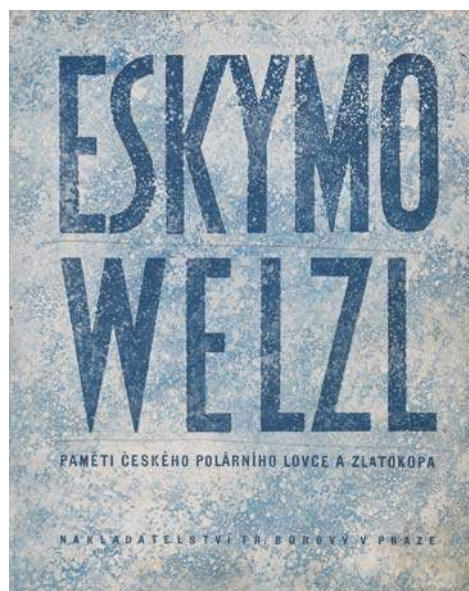
After finishing grade school in his native Zábřeh in Moravia, Welzl trained as a locksmith. From 1892, he began working as a laborer in the Russian-controlled Chinese Port Arthur (today Dalian) not far from the border with Korea. The following year, Welzl departed for Irkutsk in southern Siberia, where he worked on the Trans-Siberian Railway. However, he left this work after only a few months, setting off on foot across Yakutsk, Verkhoyansk and Nizhnekolymsk to the New Siberian Islands, where he is said to have spent the ensuing 28 years as a fur hunter, merchant and finally a “civic leader” – and an unofficial justice of the peace. In terms of tackling local criminality (particularly burglaries incurred by fur hunters and also the sale of adulterated liquor), Welzl’s judicial activities were more of a personal crusade and even included lynching offenders.



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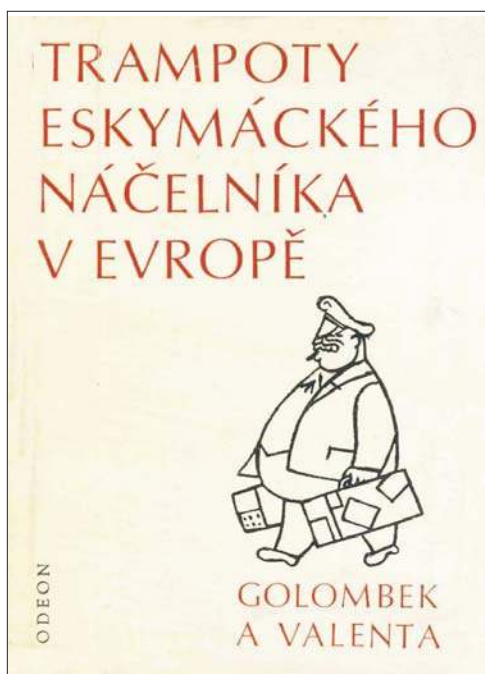
The scope of Welzl’s trading activities are said to have extended from the territories of the Habsburg Empire all the way to Alaska and Canada, where he helped to equip hunters, gold prospectors and polar researchers with food, medicine, ammunition and other necessary goods. He also claimed to use a dog sled to distribute post. Welzl maintained friendly ties with the native Inuits and other tribes of Canada and Alaska, treating them as equals and without prejudice. However, little evidence of his contacts with the native inhabitants on the extreme north has survived. As a result, it is far from clear if Welzl could speak the local native language, as the samples of the “Eskimo” language presented in his books are linguistically dubious, to say the least.

In 1924, Welzl became shipwrecked on the western shores of the United States during a merchant trip on the ship *Seven Sisters*. He was detained by US customs agents, and because he was unable to provide the necessary paperwork for his trading activities, faced subsequent expulsion. Welzl was left with no choice but to return to Europe, initially trying to earn a living in Hamburg, from where he sent a number of letters to Czechoslovakia. Among these was an exchange of correspondence with the notable Czech journalist and writer **Rudolf Těsnohlídek** (1882–1928), who later republished the exchanges in his book *Eskymo Welzl – Paměti českého polárního lovce a zlatokopa* (Eskimo Welzl – Memories of a Czech Polar Hunter and Gold Prospector, 1928, repr. 2009), albeit the two never actually met in person.



Welzl only made his way to Czechoslovakia during his second trip to Europe. He even met Czechoslovak president Tomáš G. Masaryk in Prague in November 1928, with Masaryk playfully calling the northernmost Czech “*kolego*” (“colleague”). The adventurer then returned to his native Zábřeh, from where he contacted the Czech newspaper *Lidové noviny*, hoping to make contact with Rudolf Těsnohlídek. Alas, Welzl learned that the writer and poet had tragically died earlier that year. And so the “Moravian Eskimo” instead related the stories of his time in the Arctic to journalists **Edvard Valenta** (1901–1978) and **Bedřich Golombek** (1901–1961). This testimonial led to the publication of *Třicet let na Zlatém severu* (1930), translated into English as *Thirty Years in the Golden North* two years later courtesy of renowned publishers Macmillan in New York and Allen and Unwin in London. As of 1998, the Czech version had gone through five editions, with a total print run of 70,000 copies. In the book, Welzl relates fascinating stories of traveling along the River Yukon from its source to its mouth – which was the adventurer’s longest Alaskan journey, made during a single summer.

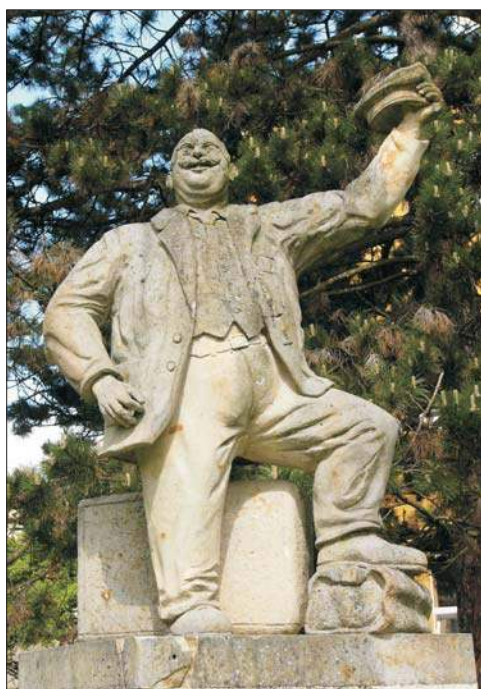




During 1928, *Lidové noviny* also chronicled Welzl's adventures across the entire Arctic region. This led to the gradual publication of a number of additional books: *Po stopách polárních pokladů* (1932; in English as *The Quest for Polar Treasures*, 1933), *Trampoty eskymáckého náčelníka v Evropě* (The Challenges of an Eskimo Chief in Europe, 1932), *Ledové povídky Eskymo Welzla* (The Icy Stories of Eskimo Welzl, 1934) and *Strýček Eskymák* (Uncle Eskimo, 1941). During the late 1930s, Welzl also published serialized, and largely-since-forgotten, versions of his travelogues in *Lidové noviny* under the title *Hrdinové Ledového moře* (The Heroes of the Icy Seas). These stories were collated in a single book in 2004.

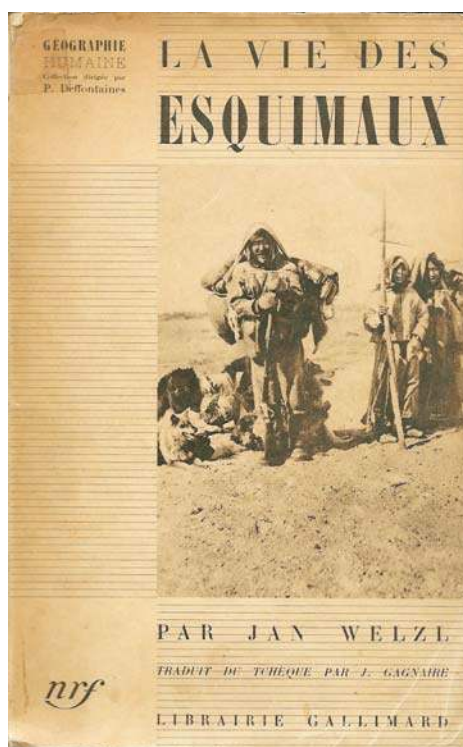
Jan Welzl departed Czechoslovakia in June 1929, traveling via Hamburg to Canada, and settling in Dawson City in the Yukon Territory. Alas, his desire to return to the New Siberian Islands was thwarted by the Soviet regime. And so Welzl lived out his final solitary days trying to build a perpetual motion machine. He died in 1948, as evidenced by his death certificate, as well as by a report in the local *Klondike Sun*. However, the exact location of his grave in Dawson City remains a mystery today, which is why the gravestone of this Czech polar explorer is located in the presumed location of his final resting place.

In 1998, a statue was unveiled in Welzl's native Zábřeh honoring the explorer. Sculpted by Stanislav Lach, the memorial can be seen by the town's train station. Furthermore, the local museum contains a room dedicated to Welzl's artifacts, and a street in Zábřeh has also been named after the explorer. One additional honor is found up in the heavens – asteroid “15425 Welzl” (scientific designation “1998 SV26”), discovered in our Solar System on September 24, 1998 by Czech astronomer **Petr Pravec** of Ondřejov Observatory.



Interest in Welzl's adventures has not subsided even a century on. As far back as the 1930s, Czech books detailing his adventures were translated into languages including English, German, French, Swedish, Estonian, Japanese and Esperanto; and subsequently into Hungarian, and in 2010, into Korean.

Welzl also remains a subject of academic research – in 1997, Professor Rudolf Krejčí of the University of Alaska in Fairbanks (more below) translated a Czech-language version of the manuscript *An der Reise um die Welt 1893-1898* (issued as *Cesta kolem světa 1893–1898*), the only work truly written in Welzl's own hand. In the German-language original, the author offers a roughly similar geographical and time span of exploration as is found in *Třicet let na Zlatém severu*, albeit with differing details and also a different storytelling style (alternating first-person narratives). The text is continuous, without chapter breaks.

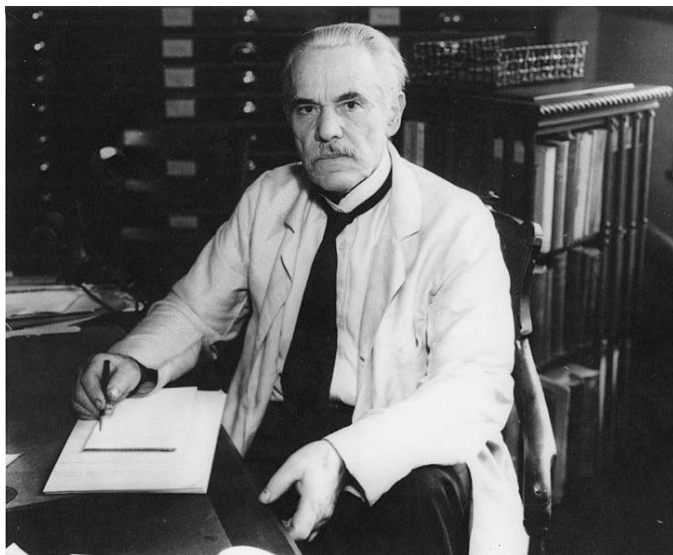


Jan Welzl's exploits undoubtedly helped to inspire the legendary fictional all-round Czech genius Jára Cimrman, providing a factual underpinning for this cult character. Perhaps unsurprising, as the English translation of Welzl's book met with considerable skepticism upon release, with critics viewing many of his exploits as both improbable and unrealistic.

In 1990, “Welzlologist” **Pavel Voda** published in Zurich an exceptional synthesis of a personal and literary quest in the footsteps of Jan Welzl, titled “Omyly kolem osobnosti a literárního díla Jana Eskymo Welzla” (Misconceptions Surrounding the Persona and Literary Works of Eskimo Welzl).¹⁰ Furthermore, publisher Paseka issued a work by **Svatava Morávková** (born 1953) and **Anna Nováková** (1921–2005), titled *Čtení o neobyčejných cestách Jana Eskymo Welzla* (A Reading of the Unusual Journeys of Jan Welzl, 2003). TV documentary director and cameraman **Martin Strouhal** (born 1965) also wrote a book on Welzl, titled *Svoboda pod bodem mrazu* (Freedom Under the Freezing Point, 2009, revised and expanded in 2014). Together with Strouhal, director Marcel Petrov produced the documentary *Svoboda pod bodem mrazu aneb Perpetuum mobile Eskymo Welzla* (Sub-zero Freedom, aka Eskimo Welzl's Perpetual Motion Machine, 2006), examining the life of Welzl. Welzl also became an inspiration for Czech writer and artist **Pet(e)r Sís** (born 1949) based in New York, who wrote the youth-oriented *A Small Tall Tale From The Far Far North* (1993), subsequently translated into a number of languages including the author's native Czech as *Podivuhodný příběh Eskymo Welzla* (1995).

¹⁰ *Česká literatura*, 1990, 2.

Alaskan Studies by Czech-American Anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička



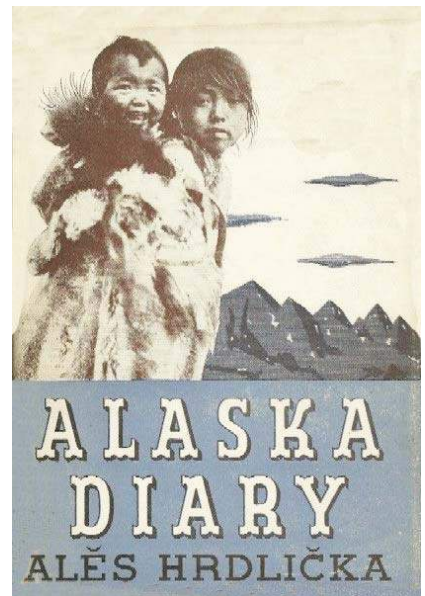
Aleš Hrdlička (1869–1943) was a noted Czech anthropologist and archeologist, with a particular interest in Alaska. Born to a wood joiner at Humpolec, Hrdlička was the eldest of seven children. In 1882, the entire family immigrated to the United States where Hrdlička attended New York medical school. In 1892, he began practicing medicine as well as continuing with his clinical-based academic studies. Aleš Hrdlička began

working as an anthropologist in the pathology department of a New York state hospital; he then went to Paris to pursue a higher education before working in clinics in Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Germany and England. In 1903, he was appointed assistant curator of the Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution) in Washington, D. C., where he founded an anthropology department. In 1910, he became curator of this institution. During Hrdlička's professional life, he collected and maintained one of the foremost collections of human skeletal materials in the world, and authored more than 400 scientific publications, including around twenty books.

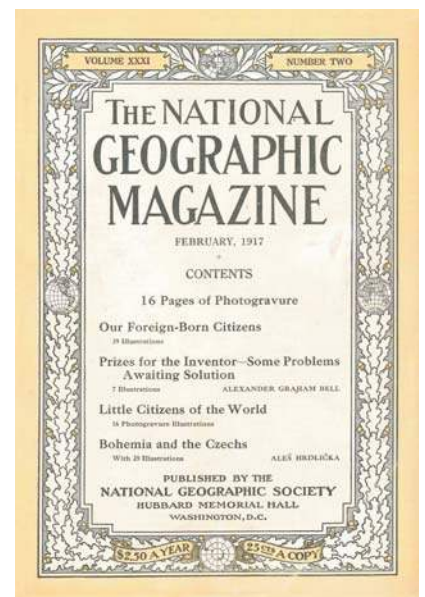
Aleš Hrdlička played a key role in the founding of the American Association of Physical Anthropology, becoming its first president and the editor of the first 23 volumes of its *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*. He also served as the secretary of the National Science Foundation and held numerous additional honorary posts, including membership of National Academy of Sciences. In 1927, he was awarded the Huxley Memorial Medal, awarded by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and also gained honorary doctorates from Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno.

Hrdlička first traveled to Alaska in 1926 – and the state remained a passion for the rest of his life. Between 1929 and 1938 Hrdlička spent nine summers exploring the rivers of Alaska, as well as Kodiak and the Aleutian and Commander Islands. His pioneering expeditions and studies yielded a huge amount of artifacts, including mummies, as well as the formulation of a widely accepted theory on the Asian ori-

gins of the Native American population.¹¹ Thanks to his studies in Alaska and neighboring Siberia, Hrdlička was able to document the ancestral links between the Asian Chukchi people and Eskimos. He also unearthed links between the morphological types of Neolithic Siberians and many of today's Native American Indians. Conversely, he also uncovered fundamental anthropological differences between the Aleuts and Eskimos – crucial in mapping the ancient migration of Asians to the Americas. Hrdlička authored around thirty academic papers and popular articles on this very subject.¹² After his untimely death from a sudden heart attack in 1943, the Philadelphia-based Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology posthumously published his *The Anthropology of Kodiak Island* (1944) and *The Aleutian and Commander Islands and Their Inhabitants* (1945), which remain recognized to this day as Hrdlička's most voluminous sources on the anthropology and archeology of the Aleutian and Commander Islands. Hrdlička's *Alaska Diary, 1926–1931* (1943) was also published in book form shortly after his death.

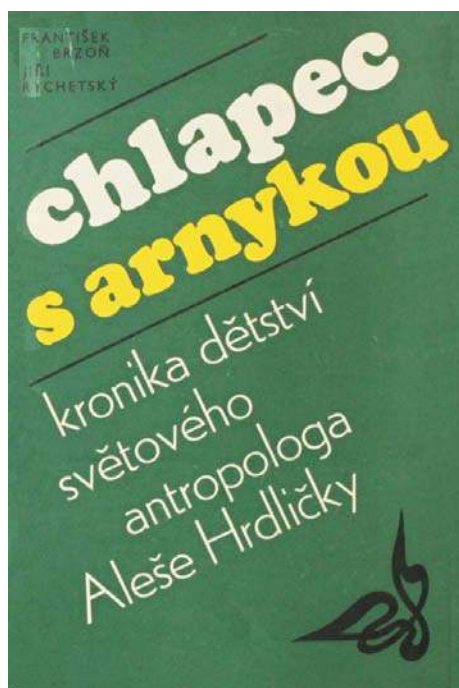


Aleš Hrdlička was a noted advocate of an independent Czechoslovakia, authoring articles in the United States in support of the cause, from prior to the country's independence and during the Nazi occupation. He also kept a keen eye on anthropology-related developments back in his homeland. This led, for example, to his backing the founding of the Czech *Antropologie* magazine, as well as the establishment of three funds to provide financial support for research and study trips by Czech scientists. In 1929, Hrdlička donated one million Czechoslovak crowns for the construction of the Muzeum člověka (Museum of Man) in Prague, today renamed as the Hrdličkovu muzeum člověka under the Charles University Faculty of Natural Sciences. Even his native Humpolec has created a small museum in Hrdlička's honor, namely the Muzeum Dr. Aleše Hrdličky.



11 These studies are described in Czech by Prokopec, Miroslav in: "Výzkum Dr. Aleše Hrdličky na ostrově Kodiak na Aljašce" (Research on Kodiak Island, Alaska by Dr. Aleš Hrdlička), *Antropologické symposium. II.* Dobrá Voda: Aleš Čeněk, 2003.

12 Two of his texts on Alaska were translated into Czech in the Chicago-published year-book *Amerikán*: "Aljaška a tajemství původu amerických indiánů" (Alaska and the Secrets of the Origins of American Indians), *Amerikán*, 1928, vol. 51, and "Mumie na Aleutských ostrovech" (Mummies on the Aleutian Islands), *Amerikán*, 1943, vol. 66.



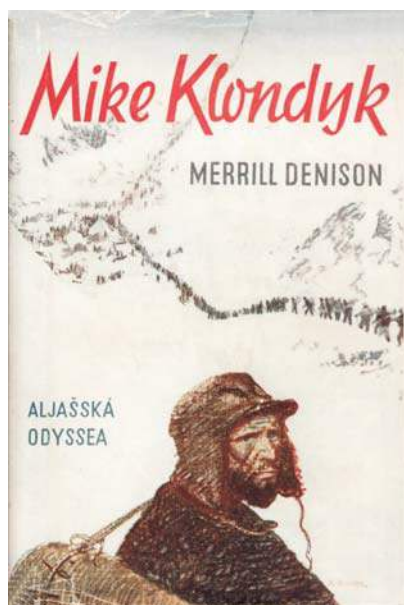
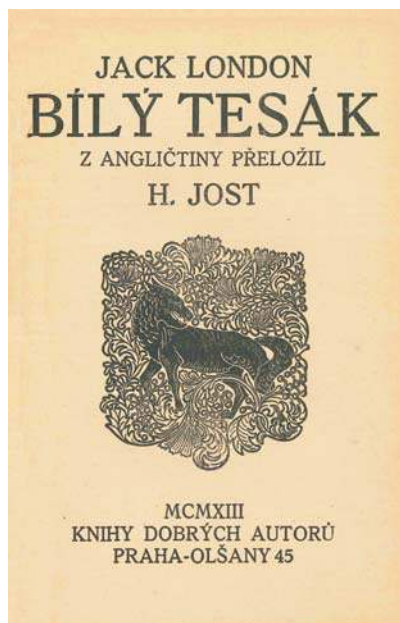
Chlapec s arnykou (A Boy With an Arnica, 1983) by **František Brzoň** (1923–2004) is a novel that provides a fictionalized account of Hrdlička's youth. Furthermore, the original Czech book series *Kdo je kdo*, featuring concise biographies of notable Czechs and foreigners, featured Aleš Hrdlička in 1947 in a booklet written by **Viktor Palivec** (1908–1989). Additionally, more than a dozen collections have been published during various anniversaries associated with the natural scientist's life;¹³ Humpolec has in recent years also begun to hold conferences and publish proceedings of conference scientific meetings inspired by one of its most famous sons.¹⁴

- 13 Even during Hrdlička's life, collections were published on the occasion of his 60th birthday: *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička Anniversary Volume* (Prague: Charles University Department of Anthropology, 1929) and his 70th birthday: *Sborník prací věnovaných Dr. Aleši Hrdličkovi ve Washingtoně D. C. k sedmdesátým narozeninám*, or *Anniversary Volume Dedicated to Dr. Aleš Hrdlička, Washington, D.C. on His 70th Birthday* (Prague: Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1939).
- 14 To date, the most recent collection is Bláha, Pavel (ed.): *Aleš Hrdlička – The 140th Anniversary of His Birth* (Prague: Czech Anthropological Society – Charles University in Prague – Faculty of Science, Dept. of Anthropology and Human Genetics – Humpolec: The Town of Humpolec, 2009).

Early 20th Century Impressions of Alaska in the Czech Lands

For Czech readers, a picture of Alaska was painted by translations of various literary works, chiefly those by novelist **Jack London** (1876–1916). London played a significant role in shaping impressions of the far northern parts of America for several generations of readers. His experiences in the Arctic regions inspired the novels *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902); *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906). The first Czech translation of *White Fang* appeared in 1913 as *Bílý tesák*; over time, three different translations of this work appeared on the market in an extraordinary 25 different editions. *The Call of the Wild* was also translated three times, with more than a dozen editions published between 1918 and the present day, under the Czech title of *Volání divočiny*. Similarly, *Burning Daylight* (1910) was translated four times under a variety of titles (*Zářící den*, *Bílý den* and *Muž vysoké hry*) from 1920 onwards yielding twelve different editions. London was one of the most popular foreign authors in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period – he is referenced here again in a subsequent chapter with respect to a number of extraordinary illustrations created for Czech editions works during the communist era.

During the interwar period, Czechoslovak readers had additional opportunities to read the works of authors that had a connection to the state of Alaska. Of the oldest translations from English into Czech are novels by US authors, including one by **Thames Williamson** (1894–1961) relating a dramatic Eskimo love story set in the remote Alaska tundra, *The Earth Told Me* (1930, in Czech as *Země vypravuje*, 1936; repr. as *Země mi to řekla*, 1950); by **Edison Marshall**'s (1894–1967) *Child of the Wild, a Story of Alaska* (1926? in Czech as *Trosečník v divočině, Příběh z Aljašky*, 1928); and by the Canadian **Merrill Dennison**'s (1893–1975) *Klondike Mike: An Alaskan Odyssey* (1943, in Czech as *Mike Klondyk, Aljašská odysea*, 1947). The youth



novel *Reindeer Trek* (1935) by Canadian author **Allen Roy Evans** (1885–1965) was issued multiple times in large print runs (in Czech as *Sobi táhnou*, 1938, 1948, 1968). The book tells the story of a five-year-long trek by Lapps and Eskimos herding 3,000 reindeer from Buckland Bay in Alaska along the northern coast and to the other side of America. A number of books by British author **George Goodchild** (1888–1969) set in the far north of America were also translated into Czech, for example the novel *The Alaskan* (1921, evidently as *Napříč Aljaškou*, 1938) published in a serialized form within editions of the *Rodokaps* pulp magazine anthology series, and later reprinted in Czech in 1991; *Colorado Jim, or The Taming of Angela* (1920, in Czech as *Kolorádský Jim*, 1928, 1995) and its sequel *Jim Goes North* (1926, evidently as *Zlatá horečka* 1929, 1995). A (hitherto unknown) novel by **Ottwell Binns**, alias **Ben Bolt** (1872–1935), an author of popular novels set in the American wilderness and Oceania, was translated into Czech as *Drama sněhových pustin: Román ze zlatonosné Aljašky* in 1930. Another curiosity is *Na lyžích zemí zlata a kožešin* (On Skis in the Land of Gold and Furs), a short work translated into Czech from German, authored by an A. Asten – evidently **Anthony Aston** (?–1731).

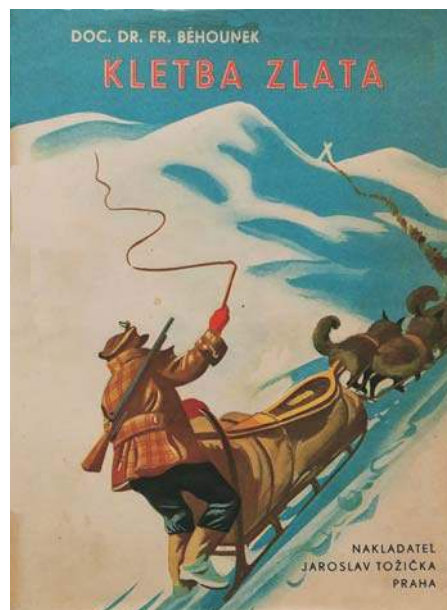
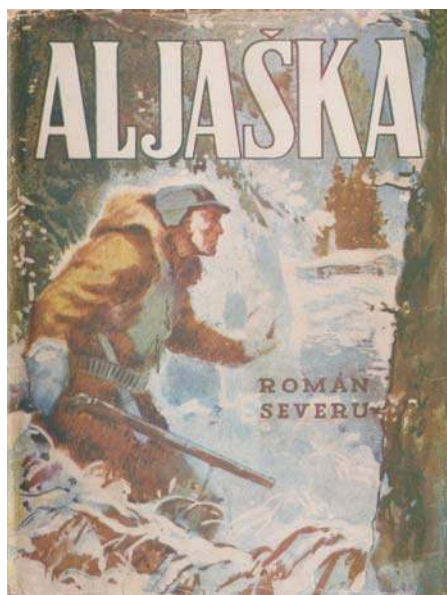
Of the oldest translations from Danish pertaining to Alaska we find two novels by **Ejnar Mikkelsen** (1880–1971), *Norden For Lov og Ret* (1920, in Czech as *Eskymák Sachavachiak: kulturní románový obrázek z Aljašky*, 1924 – the English translation was published as *Frozen Justice: A Story of Alaska*); and *John Dale – En Roman fra Polhavets Kyster* (1921, in Czech as *John Dale, admirál: román ze života Eskymáků na Aljašce*, 1926). Furthermore, a work by **Knud Rasmussen** (1879–1933), *Den store slæderejse* (The Great Sleigh Ride, 1932, in Czech as *Cesta bílým tichem: 18 000 kilometrů eskymáckým severem Ameriky*, 1938, 1942, and 1965).

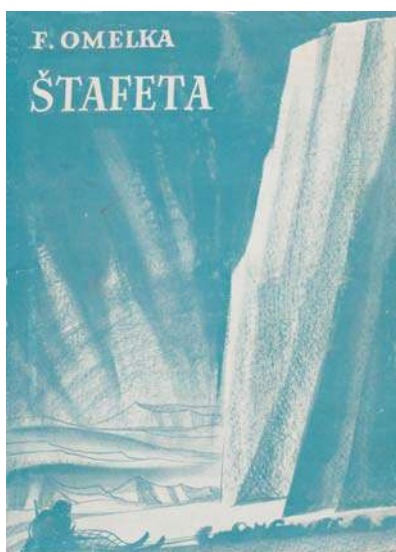


A book by polar explorer **Roald Amundsen** (1872–1928) was translated from Norwegian, namely *Nordvestpassagen* (Northwest Passage, 1907, in Czech as *Severozápadní průjezd*, 1922). The book describes the 1903–1906 journey of the vessel *Gjøa* through the Northwest Passage from eastern Canada to the Alaskan port of Nome. The novel *Le Grand Silence blanc* (The Great White Silence, 1921) by **Louis-Frédéric Rouquette** (1884–1926), was translated from French as *Velké bílé ticho* in 1925. Finally, the German-language *Goldgräber in Alaska* (Gold Diggers in Alaska, 1913) by **Carlo Alisat** (1876–?) was translated into Czech as *Zlatokopové na Aljašce*, jointly published with excerpts from *The Romance of Mining* (1905) by **Archibald Williams** under the title of *Eldorado severu* (Eldorado of the South, 1921).

The unwavering appetite of Czechs for books on the northernmost reaches of the Americas is also attested to by Czech-authored works that are set in Alaska. Perhaps the greatest curiosity in this regard is the novel *Aljaška* (Alaska, 1944) by **Wilibald Yöring** – a penname for one of the most prolific writers of Czech interwar paraliterature, or pulp fiction, **Sláva** (Václav) **Jelínek** (1905–1967). Another prolific writer was **Vláda Zíka** (1900–1971), whose young adult novel *Šest hrdinů z Nome* (Six Heroes from Nome, 1939), also published in a Slovak translation (1948, 1992), describes the work of the Alaskan airborne police service in battling smugglers, illegal whale hunting and other criminality. The protagonists of a number of westerns, penned by the pulp magazine *Rodokaps* author **Viktor Böhnell** (1910–circa 1941–45), also headed out to the far northern reaches of the Americas. Böhnell wrote under the penname **Will Mac Khiboney**, authoring *Zlato Aljašky* (Alaskan Gold, 1936) and *Královna Dawson City* (The Queen of Dawson City, 1939). The Gold Rush era was also covered by Czech scientist and author **František Běhounek** (1898–1973) in his short-story collection *Kletba zlata* (Gold Curse, 1942, 1944, 1977).

Another exceptional Czech storyteller with an interest in Arctic regions was **Otakar Batlička** (1895–1942), the author of several dozen adventure tales set in locations all across the globe first published in the popular youth magazine *Mladý hlasatel* (Young Newsreader) at the turn of the 1930s–40s. Numerous legends would emerge concerning Batlička's fantastic traveling exploits – but evidently the most adventurous was his time as a radio telegraph operator for the Czechoslovak anti-Nazi underground, for which he was ultimately arrested, sent to a concentration camp and executed. Batlička's stories were rediscovered during the





1960s, and have been collected and published in large print runs since that time. Published in the collection *Na vlnách odvahy a dobrodružství* (On the Waves of Courage and Adventure, 1987, 1989, 1997), Batlička's stories include a number set in Alaska, including "Dvojitý Nanuk" (Double Nanook) on the origins of Nome and "Nahluchlý Sandy" (Hard-of-hearing Sandy), which tells the story of a risky ice crossing in the Yukon (later also issued as a comics).

Perhaps the most notable historical work by a Czech author set in Alaska is the standalone novella *Štáfeta* (Relay, 1946) by the lesser-known young adult author **František Omelka** (1904– 1960). The story covers a famous 1925 serum run to Nome, involving the transport by 150 dog sleds and 20 mushers of a diphtheria antitoxin, in the midst of an epidemic, 674 miles across Alaska. Omelka's work was also translated at the time into German, Esperanto, Icelandic, Dutch and Frisian, and later also into Chinese and Japanese.¹⁵ In 2010, the book was also published in English, albeit via a Czech publisher.¹⁶

15 Published in German as *Die Stafette* (Wien: Zwei Berge Verlag 1949, Köln: Michael Winkler Verlag 1957, Wien: Obelisk Verlag 1972), and also as *Stafette in Alaska* (Berlin: Der Kinderbuchverlag 1950, 1951); in Esperanto as *La Alaska Stafeto* (magazine *Revuo Esperanta Internacia*, 1-12/1951, book: Rickmansworth: The Esperanto Publishing Company 1952); and later in numerous other languages, for example in Icelandic as *Bodhlaupid í Alaska* (Reykjavík: publisher unknown, 1955), in Dutch as *Estafette* (no details known), then itself translated into Frisian as *Alaska - estafette* (Drachten: Drukkerij en Utjowerij Laverman 1961). Evidently, the most recent translations are a bilingual Esperanto-Chinese edition, 阿拉斯加 接力赛 (Xi'an: Xi'an-a Esperanto-Asocio b.d.) and a Japanese edition アラスカの駅伝 対訳 (Kakegawa: Kakegawa-Esperanto-Grupo 2012).

16 *The Relay* (Uherský Brod: Jaspis 2010).

Post-WWII Czech Exiles in Alaska

Following the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the new regime dramatically curtailed contacts with the West, including the United States. Despite being behind the Iron Curtain, tens of thousands of people managed to escape Czechoslovakia over the ensuing decades. Many of these settled in Europe, Canada and the US. Of those ending up in North America, evidence suggests that some ended up in Alaska, at least in the short term. Only a handful of noted exile Czechs are known to have permanently settled there.

One such Alaskan exile is the lawyer and legal anthropologist **Leopold Jaroslav Pospíšil** (born 1923).¹⁷ Following his studies at Charles University, Pospíšil emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1948, traveling across Germany and Italy to the United States. He ended up studying sociology and philosophy at the University of Oregon, followed by anthropology at Yale University in Connecticut, where he would later work as a curator of the university's Peabody Museum of Natural History. Pospíšil's studies of the Nunamiut people of Alaska, the Hopi Native American tribe, the Ekari people (Kapauku) of New Guinea and of farmers in the Tyrol region of southern Europe laid the foundations for the field of legal anthropology.

Aforementioned professor **Rudolf Krejčí** of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (aka Rudolph W. Krejci, 1929–2018)¹⁸ was born in the village of Hrušky not far from the southern-Moravian town of Břeclav. Krejčí began to take an interest in philosophy during his high school studies in Kroměříž and Brno. After being expelled from Masaryk University's Faculty of Natural Sciences (and all higher education institutions in the country) for so-called anti-communist activities, Krejčí fled to Austria in 1949. He went on to study philosophy and psychology in Innsbruck. After departing for the United States, Krejčí worked as an engineer for Bechtel in San Francisco, gaining a place at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF) in 1960 – where he would remain for the rest of his life. It was at UAF that Krejčí founded Philosophy and Humanities Programs. In 1969 he achieved the title of Professor. Krejčí worked with many globally renowned psychologists and philosophers, chiefly longstanding was his collaboration with noted Austrian-British philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994). He published numerous academic studies and lectured around the world in places such as China, Japan, Korea, Australia and Taiwan. During the final years of his life, Krejčí primarily focused on the fields of the humanities and natural and social sciences; he also conducted academic studies of Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and of his colleague Karl Popper with the framework of

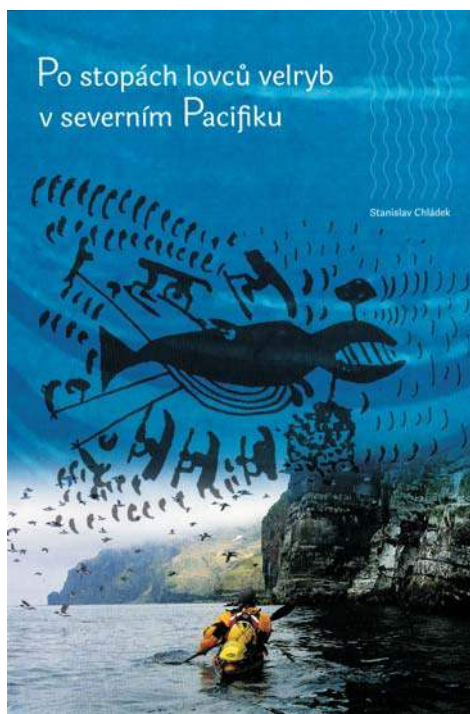
17 For example, Pospíšil, Leopold: "Law and Social Structure Among the Nunamiut Eskimos," In: *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

18 Two texts have been published in the Czech Republic on the life of Rudolf Krejčí – Kato, Takashi: "Filozof pod půlnočním sluncem" (Philosopher Under the Midnight Sun), *Studia philosophica*, 2014, 61(1); and the autobiographical "Zpověď starého filozofa" (Confessions of an Elderly Philosopher), *Studia philosophica*, 2010, 57(1).

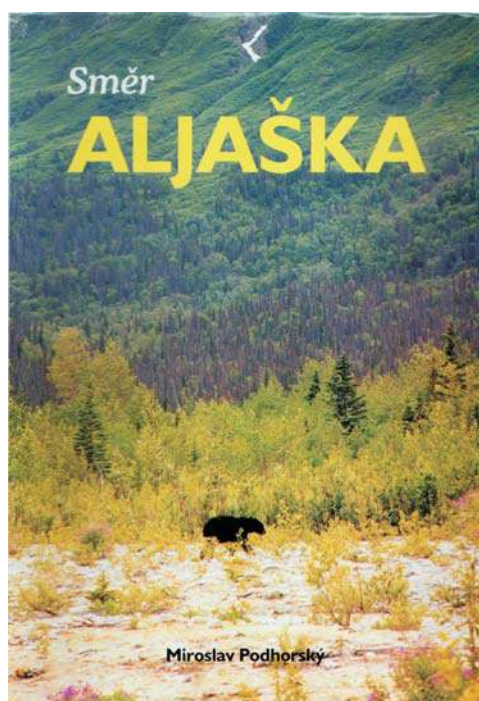
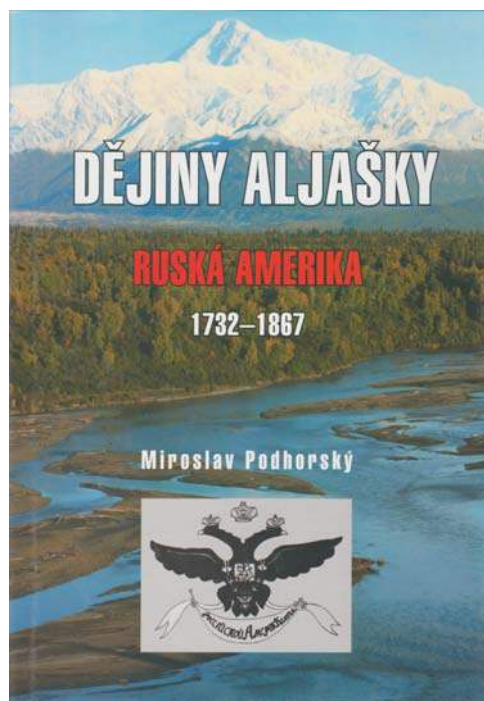
understanding the two leading philosophers of democracy. Among his personal pursuits were an effort to preserve and enable public access to the literary works of famed Czech adventurer Jan “Eskimo” Welzl.



Stanislav Chládek (1937–2020) graduated in 1960 from the University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague. Following this, he took a three-year postgraduate course at the Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry of the Prague Academy of Sciences, where he gained a Ph.D. Chládek’s sports career blossomed through 1965–69: he was a member of the Czechoslovak national kayak slalom team, and both a multi-national champion and a world champion in his field, also gaining the national “Master of Sports” title. In 1969, following the Soviet-led invasion, he fled the country along with countless other compatriots. Chládek continued with his concurrent burgeoning career in science and research, working at universities in Texas, Michigan and in Germany. He also partook in a number of expeditions by sea kayak, including to the Aleutian Islands, where he undertook studies of native cultures, as well as work with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. centered on studies of Aleutian burial caves. Chládek is the author of a notable Czech work *Po stopách lovců velryb v severním Pacifiku* – *Kronika ztraceného světa aleutských kajakářů* (In the Footsteps of Whale Hunters in the Northern Pacific – A Chronicle of the Lost World of the Aleutian Kayakers, 2016). The book describes the lives and customs of the Aleutian people and their language (Unanghan), as well as those of the Alutiiqs (Pacific Eskimos), and their neighbors to the north and east (Alegmiut Eskimos and the Native American Tanaina, Eyak and Tlingit) and the Siberian tribes to the west. The sub-title of the book – *Aleutská kajakářská odysea* (Aleutian Kayak Odyssey) – underscores the fact that Chládek visited most locations on his sea kayak.



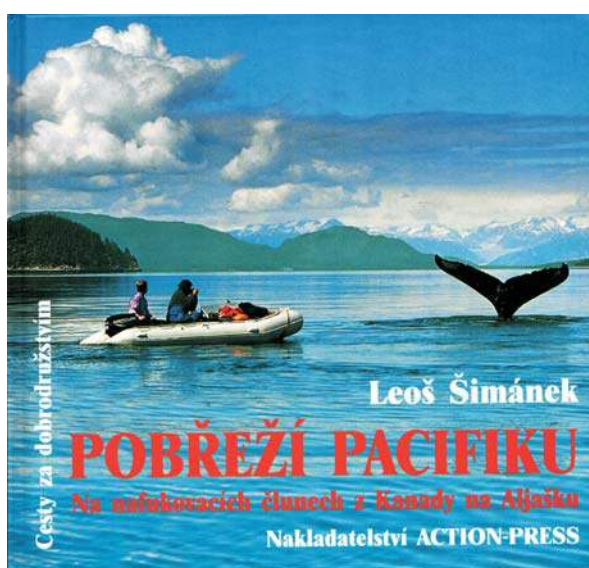
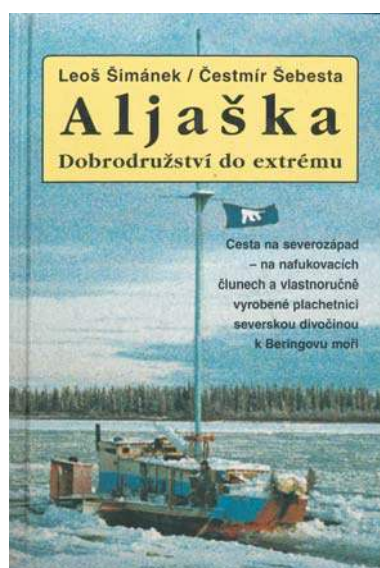
Miroslav Podhorský (born 1945) of Havlíčkův Brod also fled Czechoslovakia following the 1968 occupation. A Prague technical studies graduate, Podhorský spent the ensuing twenty years at universities in Germany and the US, returning to his native land after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Back home, he began publishing travelogues and popular educational works. During the past fifty years, he has made repeated trips to Alaska, traversing its waterways by kayak and canoe – through lakes, rivers and along shorelines. But it was only in 2002 that he published his first book, *Směr Aljaška* (Direction Alaska, 2002), followed by a further eight works (of which only one was not dedicated to the Northern American state. These are: *Aljašskou divočinou* (Alaskan Wilderness, 2003); *Ledová perla Aljašky: Glacier Bay* (Glacier Bay: The Ice Pearl of Alaska, 2007); *Aljašskou a kanadskou divočinou* (Through Alaskan and Canadian Wilderness, 2010); *Aljaška – Yukon: Ráj to na pohled* (Alaska – Yukon: A Paradise for the Eyes, 2014); *Yukon – Aljaška: Ten, kdo je navštíví, jásá* (Awestruck: Yukon – Alaska, 2016); and *Aljašské fjordy* (Alaskan Fjords, 2019). Podhorský's life-long fascination with Alaska also led to his authoring the historical work *Dějiny Aljašky – země na východ od slunce: Ruská Amerika 1732–1867* (The History of Alaska – A Land to the East of the Sun: Russian America, 1732–1867, 2018).





Over the past two decades, the travel-ogues of Choceň native **Leoš Šimánek** (born 1946) have found particular favor with Czech readers. Šimánek has authored more than thirty books, most of which are devoted to the US – the country to which he fled following his escape from communist Czechoslovakia, subsequently spending considerable time traveling there. Similarly to Podhorský, following his post-1989 return to Czechoslovakia, Šimánek authored – and largely issued via his own publishing house – countless richly illustrated Alaskan travel-

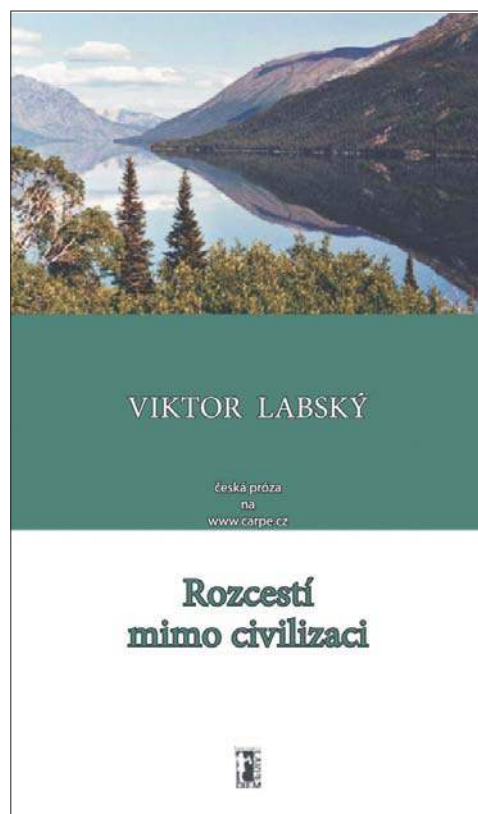
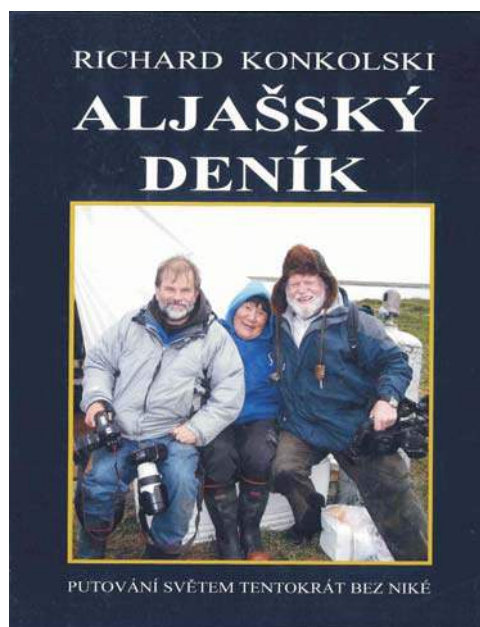
ogues, including: *Kanada – Aljaška: Dobrodružství v divočině* (Canada – Alaska: Adventures in the Wild, 1996); *Aljaška: Dobrodružství do extrému* (Alaska: Extreme Adventures, 2003, with **Čestmír Šebesta**, born 1949); *Pobřeží Pacifiku: Na nafukovacích člunech z Kanady na Aljašku* (Pacific Coasts: On Inflatable Dinghies from Canada to Alaska, 2006); *Severskou divočinou – Stavba srubu u jezera Clark a plavba po řekách na Aljašku* (Through the Northern Wilderness – Building a Log Cabin by the Lake Clark, and Traversing to Alaska by Rivers, 2014) and *Z Kanady na Aljašku: Na člunech panenskou přírodou podél pobřeží severního Pacifiku* (From Canada to Alaska: On Dinghies Through Virgin Wilderness Along the Coasts of the Northern Pacific, 2017). Several books by Šimánek were originally published in German. Most recently, his travelogue autobiography was issued under the title of *Život plný dobrodružství – Světem křížem krážem* (A Life of Adventure: Criss-Crossing the World, 2020).



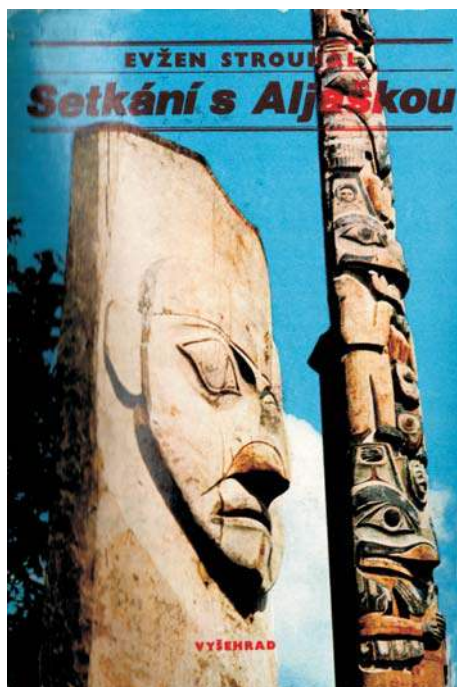
Aljašský deník (Alaskan Diary, 2010), describing the extreme environment of the Alaskan coastline, is another significant work of its kind. The book, authored by **Richard Konkolski** (born 1943), is filled with information about Alaska's past and present. In 1975, Konkolski became the first Czech to sail around the world by yacht. However, following his escape to the United States in 1982, he was erased from history by the Czechoslovak communist regime. After his post-Velvet Revolution return, Konkolski authored half-a-dozen books on his global travels.

Another post-1989 publishing effort came by **Jindřich Švec** (1931–1982), namely *Vidina zlata na Yukonu* (Dreams of Yukon Gold), issued jointly in 2005 with *V sandálech za emigrací* (Emigrating with Sandals) by author **Jan Pikous** (1929–2017).

Naturally, the picturesque settings of Alaska also did not escape the attention of Czech novelists living in exile. One such Czech author of stories set in the Arctic reaches, including Alaska, is **Viktor Labský** (born 1951). Following his graduation in 1983, Labský fled Czechoslovakia for Canada, going on to write for the exile press. After 1989, an anthology of his works, titled *Rozcestí mimo civilizaci* (2007) was published – an English translation, *Trips Out of Civilization*, followed in 2012.



Seeing Alaska Through the Iron Curtain



During the communist era, only two original books were published in Czechoslovakia that exclusively focused on Alaska – and authored by two very different figures. The first, *Setkání s Aljaškou* (Encountering Alaska, 1981) was authored by noted anthropologist, archeologist and medical doctor **Evžen Strouhal** (1931–2016), who otherwise devoted much of his writings to ancient Egypt. The book was written on the basis of a months-long trip across the United States at the invitation of Hrdlička’s Smithsonian Institution foundation in 1972–73. The book is not so much a travelogue as a historical, archeological and ethnographical examination of Alaska, albeit with some descriptions of the author’s travels.

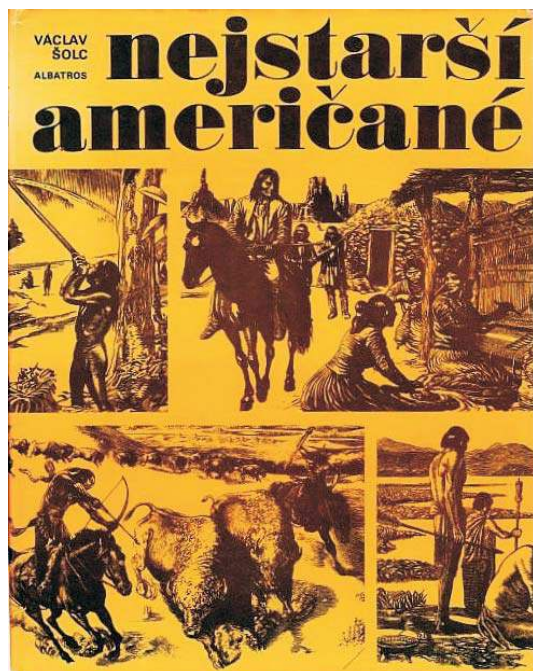
In their travelogues *Americké putování* (American Journey, 1988) and *V zemi Jacka Londona* (In the Land of Jack London, 1989), husband and wife team **Jana Rovenská** and **Dušan Rovenský** (1928–2017) could barely conceal the fact that, being long-standing US-based correspondents for the main Czechoslovak communist daily *Rudé právo*, their writings were naturally tinged with political commentaries on various injustices in the United States.

Vladimír Paulišta (1922–2017), a professional hunting guide and author of a number of hunting-themed fictional works, as well as non-fiction works based on his assorted global travels, also managed to visit Alaska on several occasions. Alaskan hunting experiences can be found in the majority of Paulišta’s seven books, the most popular being *Za zvěří kolem světa* (Game Hunting Around the Globe, 1985, rev. 1990).

Among the most notable publications featuring Alaska is the German-published book by noted Czech traveler, ethnographer, and expert on Indian and Pacific cultures, **Miloslav Stingl** (1930–2020)¹⁹ *Kunst der Indianer und Eskimos Nordamerikas* (The Art of North American Indians and Eskimos, 1990).

19 For more on his life see Chroust, Adam: *Miloslav Stingl: Biografie cestovatelské legendy* (Biography of a Traveling Legend, Brno: Jota 2016).

Václav Šolc (1919–1995) was another expert on Native American cultures, also serving as the director of Prague’s Náprstek Museum from 1970–79.²⁰ Among his works are *Nejstarší Američané* (The Oldest Americans, 1968, rev. 1988), which tells the story of the history and lives of the native inhabitants – the Eskimos and American Indians – of Northern and Southern America. The book was also published in German as *Die ältesten Amerikaner* (1988). Another Šolc book to focus on American Eskimos is *Indiánské historie* (Indian Histories, 1977, 1989); he also authored a number of articles describing the Indian and Eskimo-related collection of the Náprstek Museum.²¹ Its main treasure in this respect is a precious collection of Nuniwagmiut hunting weapons from Nuniwag Island dating from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, presented to the Náprstek Museum by the Local History Institute of Olomouc; the identity of the former donor remains unknown.



In March 1987, not long before the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, a six-person expedition set out on a Tatra 815 GTC (Grand Tourist Caravan) truck on a round-the-world trip. Its members traveled through 67 countries, reaching as far as Alaska, and clocking-up around 200,000 kilometers. They returned home on 1 May 1990 to a newly liberated post-Velvet Revolution Czechoslovakia. Prior to his departure on this trip, the nuclear physicist, interpreter, translator, and traveler **Stanislav Synek** (born 1937) was implored by the editors of the daily *Zemědělské noviny* to serve as the “eyes” of his readers. His “Postcards from my distant travels” were published in the Saturday edition of the paper, and later formed the basis of the first volume of *Tatra kolem světa* (Tatra Around the World, 1989), which covered the first half of the expedition, namely Europe, Northern and Central America. In the book, the author includes the following description of an otter encounter in Alaska:

“I strongly recall traversing by dinghy in Alaska. We were captained by an amateur sailor, who was evidently navigating waters for the first time. He took us to glaciers from which icebergs were breaking off. It was a life-threatening situation. Suddenly we heard a loud bang and crashed, as he didn’t know how to navigate. I recall this

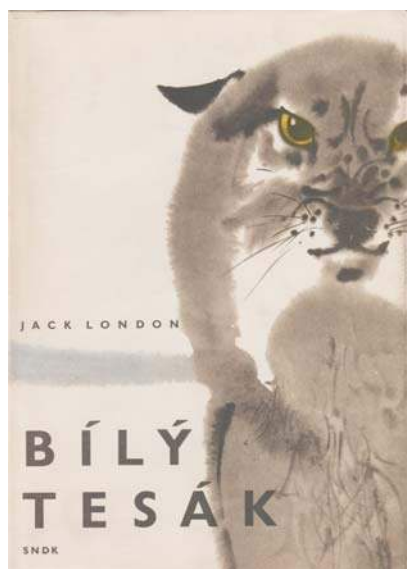
20 For more on his life and works see Černý, Miroslav: *Život s indiány tří Amerik* (Life with the Indians of Three Americas, Prague: Akropolis 2019).

21 For example, in *Dějiny a současnost* 7/1966 (History and the Present) and *Umění a řemesla* 3/1967 (Art and Crafts).

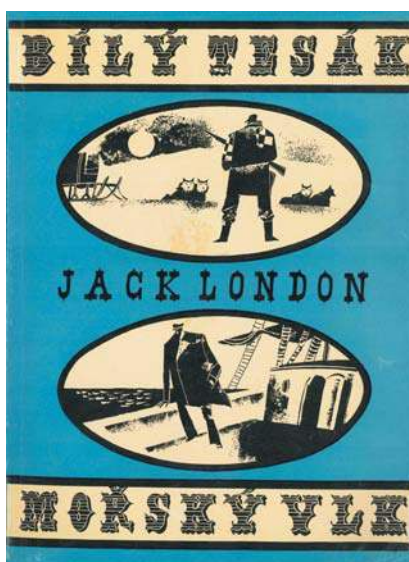
very powerfully; as do I the otter I saw turning in the water and smashing oysters for itself. It lies on its back, places the oysters on its chest, and leaves the shells lying there. So as to avoid a build-up, it occasionally does a 360-degree turn in the water.”

These adventures also yielded two feature-length documentary films. Alaska is featured in the first of these – *S Tatrou kolem světa I*. (Around the World in a Tatra I, 1991, 95 min., dir. **Jiří Stöhr** /1939–2019/).

However, undoubtedly the greatest impression of Alaska was created for Czechs by none other than everyman **Jack London**, whose novels and short stories were published in more than 70 different editions during the forty years of the communist re-



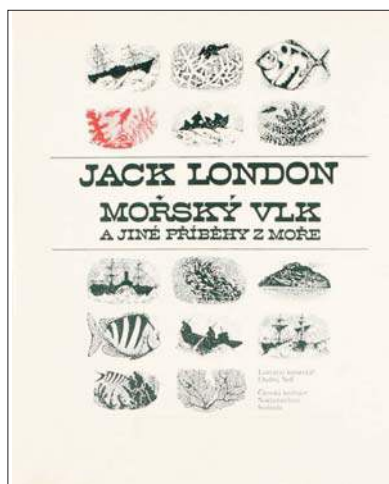
gime, with each print run routinely numbering in the tens of thousands. Of London’s “Alaska books” the following Czech anthologies are of note: *Volání divočiny a povídky z Aljašky* (The Call of the Wild and Short Stories From Alaska, 1968), *Odyssea severu* (Northern Odyssey, 1969), *Aljaška* (Alaska, 1972 – volume III of the Collected Works of Jack London), *Mezi zlatokopy* (Among the Gold Diggers, 1974) and *Ztracená tvář* (Lost Face, 1977). Many of London’s works were translated by **Alois Josef Šťastný** (1901–1979), who very likely himself traveled to Alaska, having lived in the United States during the 1920s and joined the US Army, leading to postings, for example in the Philippines.



Many Czechoslovak editions of London’s works were also accompanied by superb original illustrations, for example by **Zdeněk Burian** (1905–1981), known for his realistic style marked by faithful reproductions of ethnographic features. Another illustrator highlighting the beauty of Alaskan nature and wildlife was **Mirko Hanák** (1921–1971) – the most famous of his distinctive works are found in the repeatedly reissued *Bílý tesák* (*White Fang*), whose first edition (with illustrations by Hanák) was published in 1967. Another illustrator of note was **Josef Hochman** (1913–1999), with his works found in *Volání divočiny a povídky z Aljašky* (1968); additionally, *Bílý den* (*Burning Daylight*), published in 1974, features unusual surrealist cover art by **Zdeněk Ziegler** (born 1932).

Also worthy of mention are the large-format and heartily illustrated editions of London's works issued by publisher Svoboda from the late 1960s until the late 1980s. These expansive publications were supplemented by detailed commentaries as well as dozens of illustrations by noted Czech artists of the time. **Adolf Born** (1930–2016) illustrated editions of *Bílý tesák* and *Mořský vlk* (*The Sea-Wolf*, 1967) as well as the later collection *Láska k životu* (*Love Of Life*, 1977); **Oldřich Kulháněk** (1940–2013) illustrated the collection *Mezi zlatokopy* (*Among the Gold Hunters*, 1988); **Vladimír Novák** (born 1947) illustrated the novel *Mořský vlk a jiné příběhy z moře* (*The Sea-Wolf and Other Stories*, 1989).

During the 1960s-80s, a number of other Alaskan-themed works were published in Czechoslovakia, translated from a number of languages. Canadian writer **Pierre Berton** (1920–2004) authored *The Golden Trail* (1954; in Czech as *Zlatá horečka*, 1976); **Lois Crisler** (1896–1971) described filming wildlife in Alaska in the books *Arctic Wild* (1958; in Czech as *V arktických pustinách*, 1967) and *Captive Wild* (1968; in Czech as *Life with Wolves / Život s vlky*, 1976). Another book of note is *No Room for Bears* (1965; in Czech as *Adventure with Alaskan Bears / Dobrodružství s aljašskými medvědy*, 1980) penned by **Frank Dufresne** (1895–1966). Additionally, the biographical work *V súhvezdí severu* (*In the Northern Constellation*, 1974; in Czech as *V souhvězdí severu*, 1988) represents an unusual entry, charting the life of Alaskan-based Slovak doctor **Alexander Liška** (1883–1941), authored by a Slovak named **Ján Martiš** (1931–1990).

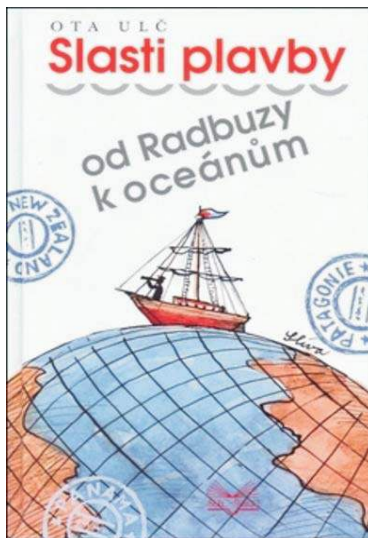
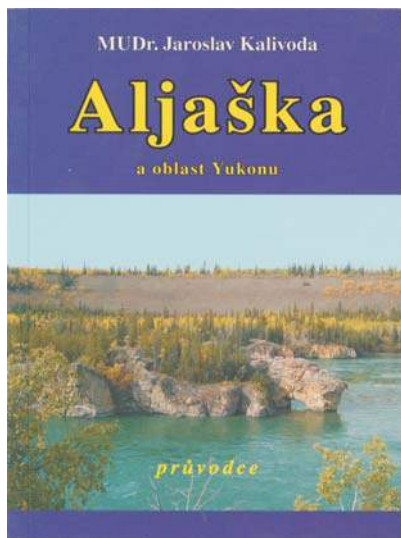
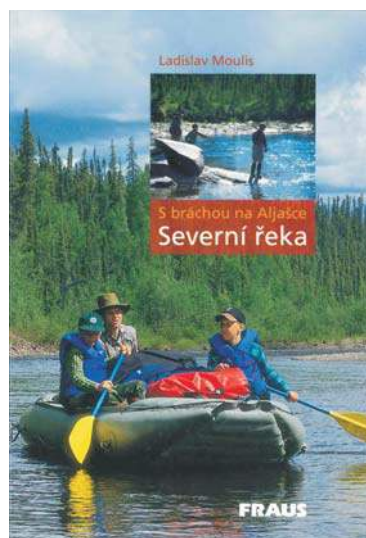
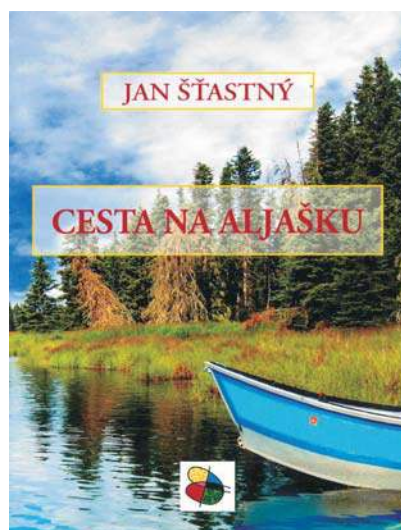
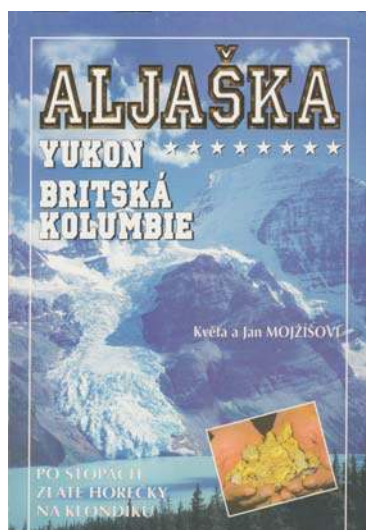
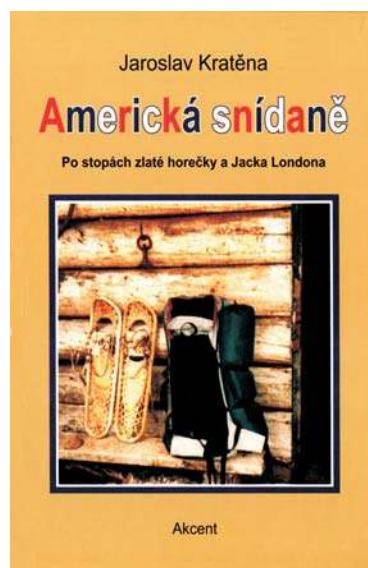
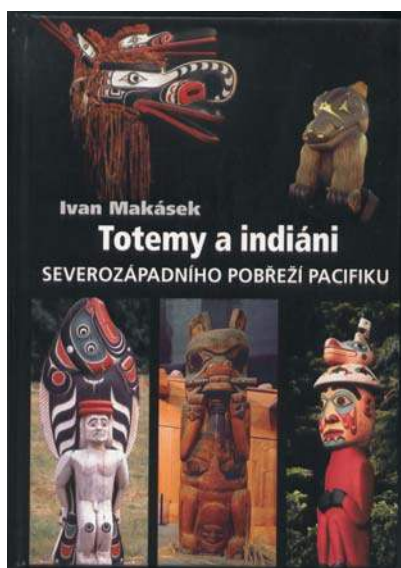
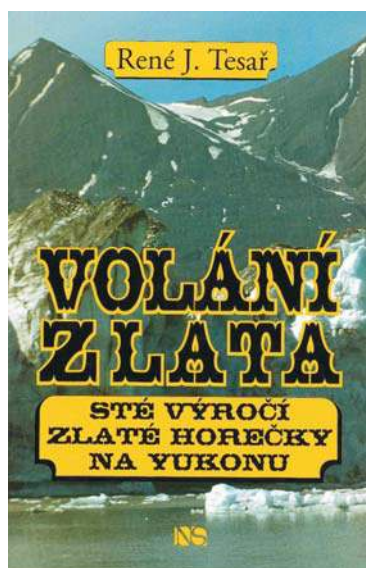


The Fall of Communism and the Return of Czechs to Alaska

With the Velvet Revolution of 1989, and the resulting fall of the Iron Curtain, many Czechs set out to re-explore a world from which they had largely been barred for forty years. The United States naturally became a favored destination, with some of the Czechs braving a visit to the northernmost reaches of the Americas, including the state of Alaska. This in turn led to the publishing of countless new works. One such publication of note is the historical work *Volání zlata – Sté výročí zlaté horečky na Yukonu* (The Call of Gold – The Centenary of the Yukon Gold Rush, 1999) by **René J. Tesař** (1930–2012). Tesař either authored or translated a number of books primarily devoted to the events of the Second World War. He traveled to Alaska on several occasions, promising to publish no less than four works on the far north. Ultimately, only one additional work was published, namely the travelogue *Vzhůru na sever I. Aljaška* (Up to the North, I. – Alaska, 2000). Also of note is the richly illustrated non-fiction work *Totemy a indiáni severozápadního pobřeží Pacifiku* (Totems and Indians of the North-west Pacific Coast, 2010), authored by **Ivan Makásek** (born 1944), who published the book at his own expense. Makásek, who has authored a dozen books on the history of Czech scouting and “tramping”, traveled through a large part of Alaska, following in the footsteps of local native cultures and describing their history, art and traditions.

Meanwhile, the traveler **Jaroslav Kratěna** (born 1947) has devoted a number of books to Alaska, namely *Americká snídaně aneb Po stopách zlaté horečky a Jacka Londona* (An American Breakfast, or In the Footsteps of the Gold Rush and Jack London, 1997, repr. 2016) and *Americká snídaně III. – Zpátky na Aljašce aneb Otevřený účet* (American Breakfast III – Back to Alaska, or Open Account, 1999), in which he describes his experiences in the extreme far north, supplemented with historical accounts from more than one hundred years prior.

A number of Czech books on Alaska have been published in quasi-diary formats, describing journeys across the state, often self-published or issued through small publishing houses. Such examples include *Aljaška – Yukon – Britská Kolumbie* (Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia, 1997) by **Květa Mojžíšová** and **Jan Mojžíš**; *Severní Amerikou s děravou kapsou: Turistické putování národními parky západu Kanady, Yukonem, Aljaškou a USA* (Through North America With a Hole in One's Pocket: Tourist Journeys Through the National Parks of Western Canada, the Yukon, Alaska, and the US, 2001) by **Libor Chvojka**; *Cesta na Aljašku* (Journey to Alaska, 2016) by the Germany-based **Jan Šťastný**; *Ráj, který Kolumbus nedobyl: Aljaškou nejen za medvědy a zlatokopy* (The Paradise Columbus Never Conquered: Alaska – Bears, Gold Diggers and More, 2006) by **Milan Brychta** (born 1960) and **Petr Větrovský** (born 1970); *Poslední dobrodružství před kremací – Kanada-Aljaška* (A Final Adventure Before Cremation – Canada-Alaska, 2008) by **Jiří Zachariáš** (born 1940);



Ve stopách zlatokopů (In the Footsteps of the Gold Prospectors, 2009) by **Jiří Roupec** (born 1947); *Na sever* (To the North, 2015) by **Martin Lipina** (born 1983); and the collection *Příběhy půlnočního slunce* (Adventures of the Midnight Sun, 2019) by **Jiří Havel** (born 1938). The only Czech female author to feature in such a list is **Magdaléna Radostová** (born 1962), whose photographic *Aljaška divoká a krásná* (Wild and Beautiful Alaska, 2012) presents not just the beauty of Alaskan nature, but primarily its wildlife, as seen during her personal travels through the region.

The cameraman **Ladislav Moulis, Sr.** (born 1960) and **Antonín Kusbach** (born 1958) jointly authored the book *S kamerou po Aljašce* (With a Camera Across Alaska, 2001) on filming in the Arctic Circle. Additionally, the Moulis-authored young adult book *S bráchou na Aljašce – Severní řeka* (With My Brother in Alaska – Northern River, 2002) ended up added to the recommended reading sections of Czech secondary school libraries.

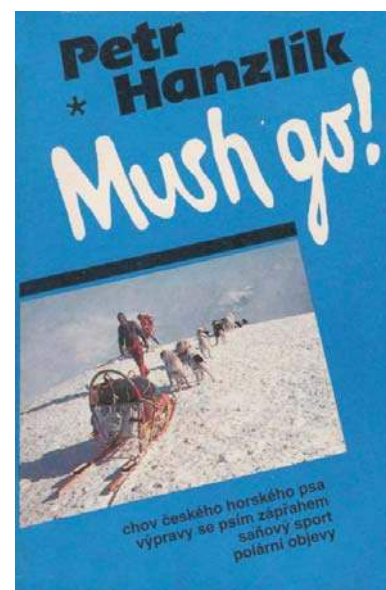
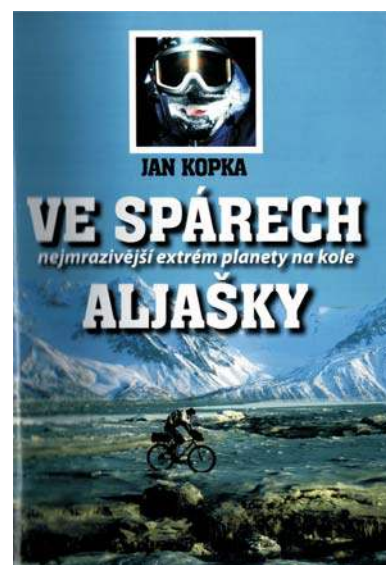
In addition to translated works, two original Czech-language Alaska travel guides have also been published. The first, *Poznáváme USA: Washington, Oregon, Aljaška* (Discovering the US: Washington, Oregon and Alaska, 1996) is part of a six-volume series of encyclopedic travel guides on the US authored by **Jindřich Bradáč**. The second, *Aljaška a oblast Yukonu* (Alaska and the Yukon Region, 2006) is part of a twelve-part global travel guide by diabetologist **Jaroslav Kalivoda**.

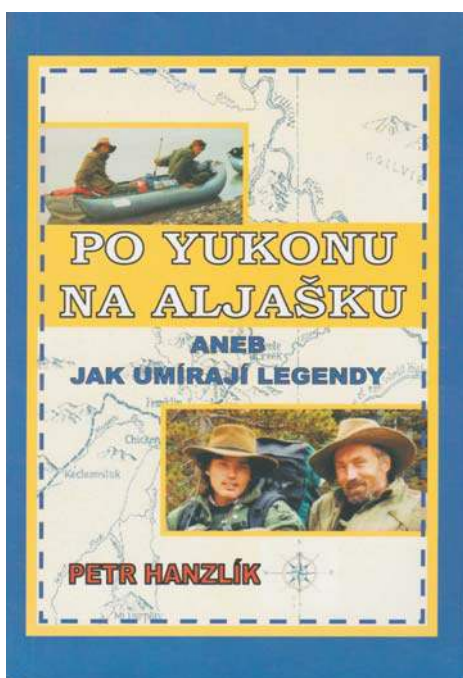
Stories from Alaska are also contained in the global or pan-American travelogues of many Czech authors. One notable example is the richly illustrated coffee-table book, travelogue and tourist guide *Pozpátku kolem zeměkoule: 484 dní na cestě – Příběhy, Mapy, Tipy* (A Reverse Trip Around the World: 484 Days of Travel – Stories, Maps and Tips, 2016) by **Kateřina Krejčová** and **Petr Ptáčník**. Also of note is *Amerika – Cestování s Olinkou* (America – Traveling with Olinka, 2008) by **George Knessl**. An example of amusing anecdotes from travels around the world, including Alaska, can be found in **Matěj Balga**'s (born 1990) *Saudade: Na kole a v kajaku kolem světa* (Saudade: Around the World on Bicycle and Kayak, 2018), as well as courtesy of travel writer **Martin Mykiska** (born 1966) in his *20 tisíc mil dlouhý podzim: Stopem z Aljašky do New Yorku* (A Twenty Thousand Mile-long Autumn: Hitchhiking from Alaska to New York, 1996; expanded edition, 2001). Prolific travel writer **Ota Ulč** (born 1930) has also covered Alaska, for example in the book *Slasti plavby – Od Radbuzy k oceánům* (Delightful Voyages – From the Radbuza to the Ocean, 2009). Numerous photographs of Alaska can be found in the photographic publication *Oči dokořán – Eyes Wide Open* (2006) by **Martin Klíma** (born 1966). Short travelogues and reports from Alaska have been regularly published in Czech magazines, for example more than two dozen over the past twenty-five years courtesy of the authors of the country's most popular geographic monthly *Lidé a Země* (People and Earth).

Countless Czech mountaineers continue to visit Alaska. The first Czech woman to climb the summit of Denali (then Mt. McKinley) in 1976 was Písek native **Věra Komárková** (1942–2005) – who lived in the US and Switzerland from 1968. In 1978,

Komárková also became the first woman in the world to climb the Annapurna Massif and Cho Oyu in the Himalayas. Other notable Czech mountain climbers to reach the summit of Denali include **Miroslav Šmíd** (1952–1993) in 1989, 1991 and 1993; **Martin Minařík** (1967–2009) in 1995; and **Soňa Bošířková** (born 1971) in 1997. In 2016, a group of ten Czech climbers reached the summit of Denali, including the 62-year-old **Leopold Sulovský** (born 1954) – the first Czech to climb the world’s highest mountain, Mt. Everest, in 1991. During that same year, **Radek Jaroš** (born 1964), also climbed Denali, becoming the first Czech to climb all the world’s 8000-meter-plus mountains without the use of supplemental oxygen. Jaroš went on to describe his adventures in *Severní polokoule naší koule - Mont Blanc, Mount Everest, Denali, Elbrus* (The Northern Half of Our Globe – Mont Blanc, Mount Everest, Denali, Elbrus, 2019).

Also of note are a number of extreme Czech sportspersons, for example **Jan Kopka** (born 1963), a 2007 victor of the traditional annual 1,100 mile-long Iditarod Trail Invitational bike marathon through the Alaskan wilderness. Kopka described his exploits in the book *Ve spárech Aljašky* (In Alaska’s Claws, 2007, repr. 2015) and *Cyklistickým peklem: Tři největší bikové extrémy světa* (Cycling Hell – The World’s Three Greatest Extreme Cycling Challenges, 2006). Inspired by his experiences in Alaska, Kopka has organized one of the Czech Republic’s most extreme annual cycling races, titled 1000-Mile Adventure, from the far west of the country to the easternmost village in neighboring Slovakia – or vice-versa. Renowned Czech polar explorer **Miroslav Jakeš** (born 1951) has also journeyed along the route of Iditarod, albeit on foot. But the first Czech to participate in this event was **Petr Hanzlík** (born 1947), the author of the book *Mush, Go!* (1991), which is the first Czech publication to focus on the training of Czech mountain dogs. As a noted advocate of Czechoslovak dog sled racing, Hanzlík provides a detailed description of the Iditarod event. He also covered his own experiences of traveling





to northern Canada and Alaska in the expansive travelogue *Po Yukonu na Aljašku* (Along the Yukon to Alaska, 2004), which contains numerous additional information on the region's history. Additionally, in *Yukon sólo – Na kánoi napříč Aljaškou* (Yukon Solo – Across Alaska by Canoe, 1994, 2003) author **Karel J. Dohnal** (born 1942) chronicles his experiences traversing the wild waters of Alaska.

In recent years, a series of translated titles on Alaska have also been issued. For example, Alaska is among the subjects covered in the popular scientific book *Sjæl gør dig smuk – Om inuitterne i Grønland, Kanada og Alaska*, 1993; in Czech as *Duše, buď krásná*. 2018 /Soul, Be Beautiful/), with a subheading that translates as “About the Inuits in Greenland, Canada and Alaska”, authored

by Danish artist **Ole Jørgensen** (born 1943). Another such example is a travelogue by German author **Klaus Bednarz** (1942–2015), titled *Östlich der Sonne – Vom Baikalsee nach Alaska* (East of the Sun – From the Lake Baikal to Alaska, 2002; in Czech as *Na východ od slunce – Od Bajkalu na Aljašku*, 2004).

Reporter and mountain climber **Jon Krakauer** (born 1954) offers a fascinating reconstruction of a tragic true story set in Alaska, titled *Into the Wild* (1996, in Czech as *Útěk do divočiny*, 1999, 2007, 2016). Meanwhile, autobiographical works include **David Fletcher**'s (born 1945) *Hunted* (2002; in Czech as *Šťvanec*, 2004), telling the story of the author's battle with a wild bear. Furthermore, **Ed Hommer**'s (born 1955) *The Hill* (2001; in Czech as *Osudová hora*, 2007) relates the author's ascent of the highest mountain in Alaska. A memoir by **Gary Paulsen** (born 1939) describes dog sled riding techniques in Alaska in *Woodsong* (1990; in Czech as *Divoká pustina*, 2020) as well as in *Winterdance: The Fine Madness of Running the Iditarod* (1994; in Czech as *Závod bílou divočinou: nádherné šílenství účastníků Iditarodu*, 2003). Dog sled racing is also the subject of **John Firth**'s (born 1953) *Yukon Quest* (1998; in Czech, 2005); **John Balzar**'s *Yukon Alone* (2000; in Czech as *Hrdinové Yukonu*, 2001); and **Ann Mariah Cook**'s (born 1955) *Running North* (2000; in Czech as *Po zavátých pláních*, 2003).

Alaska as an Inspiration

The aforementioned traveler **Jaroslav Kratěna** also used Alaska and its surroundings as the backdrop to his novel *Poslední zlato z Yukonu* (The Last Gold of Yukon, 2009) and its sequel, *Zlatá hora* (Gold Mountain, 2012) – featuring detective tales set around the Alaskan-Canadian border. Meanwhile, the author **Leoš Šimánek** was inspired by real-life experiences to write the novel *V zajetí polární zimy* (In the Grips of a Polar Winter, 2000). **Zdeněk Šmíd** (1937–2011) is the author of the humorous travelogue *Starci na Aljašce aneb Proč bychom se nezmrazili* (Seniors in Alaska, aka Why We Wouldn't Freeze, 2009). Meanwhile, **Renata Schritterová** is the author of the lighthearted fictionalized travelogue *Z gauče vzhůru do divočiny* (From a Sofa into the Wilds, 2017). In the story, the female protagonist – the author's alter-ego – sets out on a trip to Alaska to visit her best friend. *Vlci severu* (Wolves of the North, 2015) is a science fiction tale that takes place in the interior of Alaska, and forms one part of a larger series, authored by **Libor Machala** (born 1970), on the exploits of a former special services captain known as “Agent JFK” (namely John Francis Kovář). Also set in Alaska is the illustrated children's book *Míša z Aljašky* (A Bear from Alaska, 2008) by **Zuzana Samková**, issued in a special Czech-English bilingual version.

The extreme wilderness of the polar north serves as the backdrop to a number of other prosaic foreign-language books published in the Czech Republic. These include *The Great Alone* (2017; in Czech as *Velká samota*, 2019) by **Kristin Hannah** (born 1960), which tells the story of a Vietnam veteran who lives with his family in an Alaskan cabin. A number of romance-themed works, mostly via women's fiction publisher Harlequin, have also been published.²² Several Alaskan-set thrillers can also be found in translated literature, including *The Quality of Silence* (2015; in Czech as *Dokonalé ticho*, 2016) by British author **Rosamund Lupton** (born 1964); *La Loba* (A Cold War) (2015; in Czech, 2016) by **Alan Russell** (born 1956); and *Terminal Freeze* (2009; in Czech as *Ledová kletba*, 2009, 2012) by **Lincoln Child** (born 1957), dramatizing the work of a scientific expedition to Alaska. Meanwhile, horror works include, comics by **Steve Niles** (born 1965) and a work by Australian author **Ben Templesmith** (born 1984) set in the Alaskan town of Barrow, namely *30 Days of Night* (2002; in Czech as *30 dní dlouhá noc*, 2003). Also of note is the booklet *Ledové pláně Aljašky* (Ice Plains of Alaska, original title unknown; Czech, 2012, 2019), by the German author of numerous westerns, alias **Lex Lane**.

22 Including *Wife by Contract* (1997; in Czech as *Osudná záměna*, 1998) by **Raye Morgan**; *Wanted in Alaska* (2009; in Czech as *Píseň Aljašky*, 2010) by **Kate Bridges**; *For Mike's Sake* (1979; in Czech as *Ta pravá*, 2001) by **Janet Dailey** (aka Janet Haradon, 1944–2013); and *A Bride for Ransom* (1993; in Czech as *Nevěsta pro Ransoma*, 1993) by **Renee Roszel** (born 1946). Two novels written by **Debbie Macomber** (born 1948) were also published in Czech translations: *Love in Alaska* (?) (in Czech as *Láska na Aljašce*, 1998) and *Fortune in Alaska* (?) (in Czech as *Štěstí na Aljašce*, 1998).

Alaskan Writers in Czech Translations

Literature from Alaska's Native American inhabitants has occasionally been translated and published in various anthologies and collections. For example, a few such poems were published in the anthology *Písň Vrbovýho proutku – Eskymácká poezie* (Songs by Willow Twig – Eskimo Poetry, 1965), compiled by **Ladislav Novák** (1925–1999). Furthermore, Native American folk literature is found in the collection by ethnographer **Kateřina Klápštová**, titled “Příběhy doby snění” (Stories From the Dreamtime), published in the magazine *Světová literatura* (World Literature) in 1993. Another example is the youth-oriented book *Indiánské báje a mýty* (Indian Stories and Myths, 2015), compiled by **Vladimír Hulpach** (born 1935).

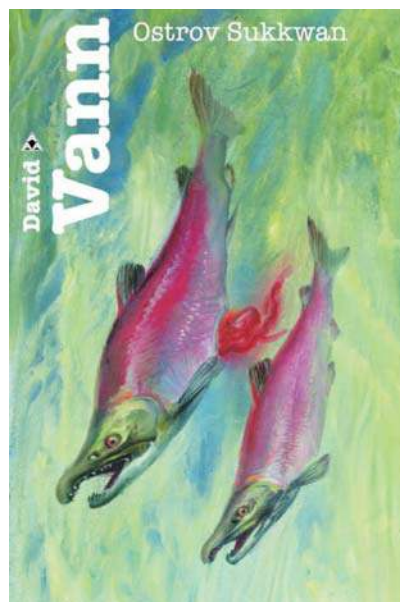
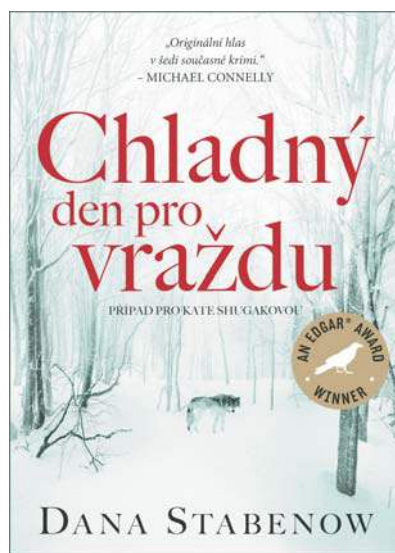
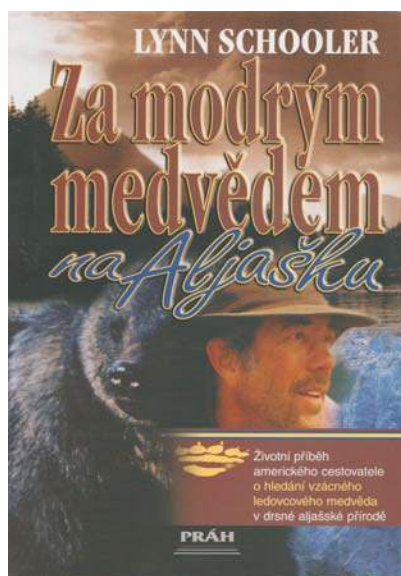
In recent times, interest has been growing in the Czech Republic with respect to Alaskan literature, partly inspired by successful efforts to introduce readers to authors from Greenland and the Arctic Canada. Such “Arctic” literature is found in a special edition of the global literature monthly *Plav* (7/2017) devoted to Inuit literature. An introductory essay therein by **Klára Kolinská** (born 1967) and **Zdeněk Lyčka** (born 1958), titled “Úvod do literatury původních obyvatel Arktidy” (Introduction to the Literature of the Original Inhabitants of the Arctic) contains a sub-heading titled “Aljaška a Aleutské ostrovy” (Alaska and the Aleutian Islands), which discusses the roots of Alaskan literature, the educational role of the Russian Orthodox Church during the era of “Russian America” and the efforts of Protestant and Catholic missionary schools that followed the 1867 Alaska Purchase by the United States. The essay covers the first texts by native authors writing in English, and the boom which occurred following the opening of the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks in 1972. It also provides information



on the first novel written in central Alaskan Yup'ik and the reasoning behind numerous native authors deciding to write in English in an effort to better shape perceptions of indigenous cultures by their fellow citizens. In a special edition, the literature monthly *Plav* featured a sample of indigenous Alaskan writing in English by contemporary Inupiaq author **Lela Kiana Oman** (1915–2018) from her *Eskimo Legends* trilogy, specifically three stories from *The Epic of Qayaq: The Longest Story Ever Told by My People*, 1995: “Odkud přišli Eskymáci” (From Where the Eskimos Came), “Qayaq pomáhá dětem na svět” (Qayaq Helped Children into the World) and “Qayaq a jednohý pták” (Qayak and the One-legged Bird).

Increasingly, novels and travelogues by American authors born or living in Alaska are being published in the Czech Republic. For example, a gripping adventure story by American traveler **Lynn Schooler** (born 1954) following the search for a glacial “blue” bear in the unforgiving Alaskan wilderness is the subject of *The Blue Bear* (2002, in Czech as *Za modrým medvědem na Aljašku*, 2003). The pages of the book are imbued by an unmistakable love of the Alaskan wilderness, as well as the wisdom gained there, as experienced first hand by Schooler during her numerous years in the state. Meanwhile, Alaskan journalist **Jim Rearden**’s (1925–2017) *Arctic Bush Pilot* (2000, in Czech as *Arktický Bush Pilot*, 2011) covers the early years of airplane supply flights into the Alaskan interior, as well as one of its pioneers, pilot James “Andy” Andersen. Belatedly reaching Czech bookstores was *On the Edge of Nowhere* (1966, in Czech as *Mým domovem je Aljaška*, 2009), the Alaskan-based inspired-by-a-true-life story of the son of a Native American mother and white trapper, **James Huntington** (1854–1935), authored by **Lawrence Elliott** (born 1924).

The writings of **David Vann** (born 1966), a native of the Aleutian Islands, reflect those of Jack London. His short story *Sukkwān Island* (in Czech as *Ostrov Sukkwān*, 2011) was published within the pages of a collection of the author’s works titled *Legend of a Suicide*, 2008. Finally, Alaskan author **Dana Stabenow** (born 1952) has authored a number of detective stories set in Aleutian communities, namely *A Cold Day for Murder* (1992, in Czech as *Chladný den pro vraždu*, 2019); *A Fatal Thaw* (1992, in Czech as *Devátá oběť*, 2019) and *Dead in the Water* (1993, in Czech as *Pod hladinou*, 2020).



Alaska as a filming location

Ladislav Moulis, Sr. is a filmmaker for public broadcaster Česká televize (Czech Television). A graduate of the FAMU film school in Prague, he has spent a quarter century presenting, promoting and propagating the state of Alaska. In 1994 – at a time when European tourists were just discovering Alaska – Moulis undertook his first filming expedition to the state, with a plan to undertake a north-to-south trek. The Czech documentary crew faced the additional difficulties associated with using celluloid film. The results were a series of the first Czech “Alaskan” films, namely *Brána Arktidy*, *Denali*, *Aljaška a zlato*, and *Kodiak* (Gates of the Arctic, Denali, Alaska and Gold, and Kodiak). In 2000–2004 Moulis joined forces with natural history expert **Antonín Kusbach**, to create the unique Czech Television program *S bráchou na Aljašce* (Alaska With My Brother), which sought to present the American extreme north’s natural environment to young Czech audiences. Traveling with his own children – then aged ten and eleven – Moulis spent eight months exploring the Alaskan outdoors. The result was four one-hour documentary films, titled *Severní řeka* (Northern River), *Srub na Taylorově jezeře* (A Log Cabin on Taylor Lake), *Stezkou zlatokopů* (Gold Prospectors’ Path) and *Inside Passage*. The individual episodes presented taiga and tundra landscapes, northern rivers, mountains, Gold Rush mountain trails, and also the sea and coastline of south-east Alaska. *S bráchou na Aljašce* enjoyed several repeat screenings on Czech Television, and – inspired by viewer queries about how the children in particular coped with the filming – led to the broadcasting of the behind-the-scenes making-of film *Aljaška – film a realita* (Alaska – Film and Reality, 2010). Additionally, Moulis’ *Dotek arktické řeky* (The Touch of an Arctic River, 2009) took viewers on a trip along the Sheenjek River from the Romanzoff Mountains in the Arctic to Yukon.

Czech Television also screened two educational films as part of its “Zeměpis světa” (Global Geography) series, namely *Severní Aljaška* (Northern Alaska, 2005) and *Jižní Aljaška* (Southern Alaska, 2005). Two documentary portraits focused on the aforementioned extreme cyclist and two-time participant of the Iditarod cycling marathon, Jan Kopka, namely *Hráč bez limitů* (A Player Without Limits, 2012) by Ladislav Moulis Sr. and **Ladislav Moulis, Jr.** (born 1988) and *Mrazivou Aljaškou na kole* (Through Icy Alaska on Bicycle, 2015) by Libor Kubeš and Jan Kopka. A 27-minute documentary *1000 mil Aljaškou na kole s Pavlem Richtrem* (1,000 Miles Through Alaska by Bicycle with Pavel Richter, 2015) by director **Tomáš Mähring** covered similar ground. Ladislav Moulis, Sr. also directed *K Pacifiku přes Coast Mountains* (To the Pacific Across the Coast Mountains, 2016) and *Alsek – ledová řeka* (Alsek – Ice River, 2020), which document Czech boating expeditions from Canada to Alaska. *Na cestě po Aljašce* (A Journey Through Alaska, 2016) and *Divočinou Aljašky* (Alaskan Wilderness, 2017) are two travelogues directed by **Jiří Horčíčka**. Other such travelogues include *Aljaška v prašanu – extrémní Aljaška* (Alaska in the Powdered Snow – Extreme Alaska, 2010) by **Jakub Frey** and *That’s Alaska, Man...* (2011) by **Martin Vrbický** (1986).

Škoda Auto and Kodíaq on Kodiak

Most recently Alaska inspired the naming of an automobile model from Czech automaker Škoda. On May 6, 2016, as the firm unveiled its new “Kodíaq” SUV, the Alaskan town of Kodiak, situated on Kodiak Island, renamed itself – for one day only – to “Kodíaq”. The Škoda-orchestrated marketing stunt was part of a global promotion campaign, and included some very detailed etymology on the roots of the word, thus documenting a connection between the new SUV Škoda Kodíaq, Kodiak Island in southern Alaska, and even the native brown Kodiak bear. Indeed, it was the Kodiak bear that inspired Škoda’s naming of their new car – the name is used to describe this entire brown bear subspecies, of which around 3,500 live on the island. Kodiak Island, with an area of 9,311 km², is roughly the size of Corsica, with the majority covered by the protected Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, where the famous bears live. The native Alutiiq people call the bear *Taquka’aq*. Škoda used this native use of the “q” letter for its SUV as a way of honoring the natives. The result was the creation of a distinctive new word.



The authorities in Kodiak participated in the Mladá Boleslav-based Škoda marketing campaign. On the official launch day of the SUV, locals participated in re-labeling the town's street signs as well as those on police cars, firefighting vehicles, fishing boats and on billboards. Even the town's official website <https://www.city.kodiak.ak.us> temporarily changed its "k" to a "q". Add to that, a film crew from Škoda Auto recorded the event, documenting how the people – from the mayor and sheriff down to local loggers – all took part.²³



²³ https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/auta/zajimavosti/aljasske-mesto-kodiak-se-na-jeden-den-zmenilo-v-kodiaq_382925.html and Baborský, Jiří: "S Kodiaqem na kodiaky na Kodiak." *Lidé a Země*, 2018, 67(10).

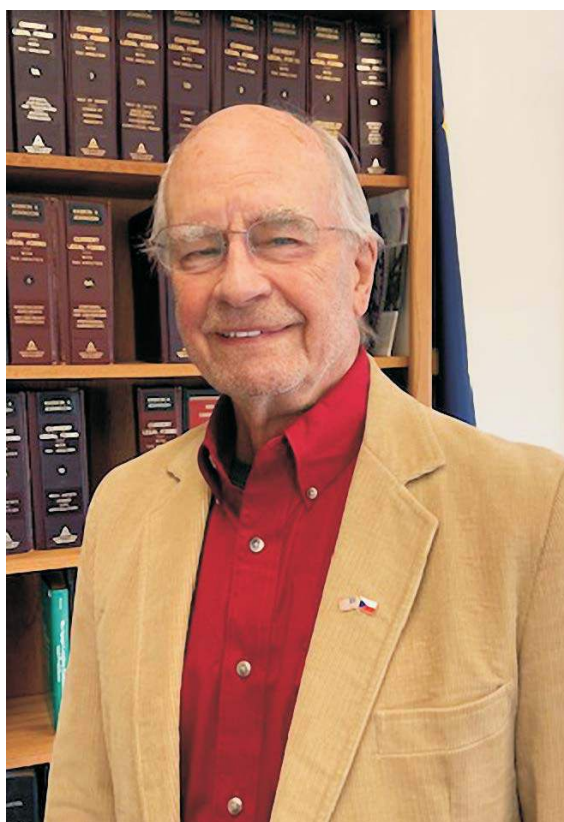
Czechs and Alaska – Now and Beyond

Three decades after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia only about 3000 Alaskans claimed Czech heritage or citizenship during the 2010 census. The majority of those claiming Czech heritage are descendants of Czech immigrants to the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries.

One such Czech-Alaskan is **Francis** (Frank) **J. Nosek** (born 1934), whose maternal great-grandfather František Tomka was among the first Czechs to depart for America already in 1845. His granddaughter subsequently married a stone mason by the name of František Václav Nosek, who came to Chicago in 1890 at the age of 16. Their son, Francis John Nosek, was a Chicago lawyer. Nosek's namesake son decided to follow in his father's footsteps and "knew from about eighth grade," as he later recalled, that "he was going to settle in the Territory of Alaska." After graduating from law school, Nosek "drove in a 1949 Nash Rambler up the unpaved Alaska Highway, settled in Anchorage, and has practiced law privately ever since." After the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, Francis J. Nosek's relationship with the land of his ancestors began to deepen. He recalled:

"Recruited by Czech friend Jan Mašek, we traveled to Czechoslovakia in late 1989. There, I had several opportunities to meet with Václav Havel – who was leading the effort to build a new [post-communist] country. Over the next ten years I did an increasing amount of legal work in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as in Poland, Hungary and even Ukraine. I ended my work in the Czech Republic when I realized I was spending more time over there than attending to my law practice in Anchorage."

Given that Francis Nosek had been instrumental in bringing a number of US companies and engineers to the Czech Republic to partake in environmental clean-up efforts, it came as little surprise that he was asked to become an honorary





I was always an adventurer, but my first trip to Alaska in the summer of 2002 was the wildest I had ever experienced. From the small village of Morávka not far from Frýdek-Místek in the Czech Republic I suddenly found myself in a fish cannery in the Alaska town of Cordova. Only through long hours of hard toil did I manage to discover Alaska's treasures – amazing salmon, unlike any found elsewhere in the world. This led to a small adventure turning into a lifelong passion.

I began to travel to Alaska every summer, climbing the ladder while working every position in a salmon processing factory. This meant that I was able to learn everything that one needed to know about salmon, from the quality of its processing to the signs of freshness, to correct packaging and freezing. In 2005, I set out to fish salmon for a full season. To spend some time as a member of an Alaskan fishing community was an experience that continues to serve me well, not just in terms of experience gained, but crucially also in terms of gaining the contacts of the best salmon fishermen in the northern Pacific.

In 2010, I set out to run a salmon processing factory myself in Bristol Bay, including running the fishing part. In addition, I also began to gradually invest into fishing boats. Each year, tens of millions of sockeye salmon are caught in Bristol Bay – and it is this species that is globally renowned for its taste, quality and appearance.

More than ever before I believe that the salmon has a future; it is the healthiest form of protein that we could wish our bodies to consume. To be right in the epicenter of this business among the toughest fishermen and the best salmon in the world is amazing. However, throughout my entire Alaskan career I continued to have a dream – to import these unique salmon into my home country of the Czech Republic. Now my dream has become a reality.

Vojta Novák, owner of *Alaskan Fisherman*



consul in 1996. Initially refusing citing time commitments in Alaska, in 1999 Nosek ultimately accepted and was appointed Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic in Anchorage.

Although, as Consul Nosek says, “heritage Czechs” still outnumber “immigrant Czechs,” the number of Czechs settling in Alaska – often after repeated visits – nonetheless continues to grow. Indeed, many long-established Alaskans are married to Czechs. Around five hundred Czechs regularly travel to Alaska for employment-related purposes – working on fishing boats or in fish-processing plants; others work on oil platforms or in forestry. For some of these Alaska has become either a temporary or often even a permanent home. One such example is **Vojtěch (Vojta) Novák**, founder of the firm Alaskan Fisherman, who alternates his time between Alaska and the Czech Republic.

Another notable group are Czechs who have become enamored with Alaska’s natural beauty and rugged wilderness. For example, Czech-American **Misha Wiljes** (born 1968) lives in Alaska and regularly partakes in the Iditarod dog sled racing competition. To this day, **Milan Šindelář** (born 1958) – having gained the necessary experience as a dog manager and musher in Eagle River, Anchorage – organizes dog sled racing competitions in the Ore Mountains town of Abertamy in north-western Bohemia. Scientist **Jan Lukačević** (born 1992) of the Cosmic Physics Department of the Czech Academy of Sciences has also set out on dog sled across Alaska. Lukačević’s scientific team works to develop experiments for some of the major space missions of both ESA and NASA.



And it was with the aim of further increasing the interest of Alaskans in the Czech Republic and vice-versa that Frank J. Nosek launched a new organization, the Czech Alaska Society. One of the aims, according to Nosek, is to offer Czechs and Czech-Americans in Anchorage and the rest of Alaska a better way to connect with their heritage. Headquartered in Anchorage, the Czech Alaska Society was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2006. It serves as an informal organization with no dues. Along with the website czechalaskasociety.org, an email list several hundred strong, the Society also organizes a number of events each year, such as the Spring and Fall Polka Dance, summer picnics, and hosts visiting Czech officials and dignitaries. Furthermore, as no Slovak or Hungarian honorary consuls presently exist in Alaska, Consul Nosek, working in cooperation with his Polish counterpart, have organized a joint Visegrád dinner (the so-called Visegrád Four countries being the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary). Perhaps unsurprisingly, in 2010, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs promoted Frank J. Nosek to Honorary Consul General.

The Czech Republic and the State of Alaska may be on opposite sides of globe. But 230 years after the first visitor from the historical Czech Lands set foot on Alaskan soil, the interactions among their peoples, as well as the mutual knowledge of each other's histories, cultures and natural beauties, continue to increase.

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Czech(oslovak) Consular Officers in Charge of Alaska

1920	Jaroslav F. Smetánka	Consul	Chicago
1920–1921	Otakar Suchan	Vice Consul	San Francisco
1921–1926	Stanley Šerpán	Consul	Omaha
1927–1937	Otokar Strížek	Consul (Honorary)	Seattle
1930–1932	Karel Brejška	Consul	San Francisco
1938–1941	Chester J. Chastek	Consul (Honorary)	Seattle
1942–1948	Bohuš Beneš	Consul	San Francisco
1995–1999	Ivana Hlavsová	Consul General	Los Angeles
1999–2001	Zdeňka Gabalová	Consul General	Los Angeles
1999–2010	Frank J. Nosek	Consul (Honorary)	Anchorage
2002–2006	Margita Fuchsová	Consul General	Los Angeles
2006–2011	Daniel Kumermann	Consul General	Los Angeles
2010–today	Frank J. Nosek	Consul General (Hon.)	Anchorage
2011–2015	Michal Sedláček	Consul General	Los Angeles
2015–2020	Pavol Šepelák	Consul General	Los Angeles
2020–today	Jaroslav Olša, Jr.	Consul General	Los Angeles

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Czech Institutions in the US covering Alaska

Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C.

Field of Activity: diplomatic jurisdiction of the territory of the United States, bilateral relationships between the Czech Republic and the United States

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary: H. E. Hynek Kmoníček
3900 Spring of Freedom St. NW
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: (202) 274-9100
Fax: (202) 966-8540
E-mail.: washington@embassy.mzv.cz
Web: www.mzv.cz/washington
Facebook: Czechembassydc
Twitter: CzechEmbassyDC
Instagram: CzechEmbassyDC

Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Los Angeles

Field of Activity: consular jurisdiction over the states of the West Coast, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, CNMI and American Samoa

Consul General: Amb. Jaroslav Olša, Jr.
10990 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1100
Los Angeles, CA 90024
Phone: (310) 473-0889
Fax: (310) 473-9813
E-mail: czechconsulatela@gmail.com
Web: www.mzv.cz/losangeles
Facebook: CzechConsulateLA
Instagram: CzechConsulate

CzechInvest USA - San Francisco

Field of Activity: support of trade and investments

Director for West Coast Operations: Anna Hight
44 Tehama Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: (415) 605 2633
E-mail: california@czechinvest.org
Web: czechinvest.org
Facebook: CzechInvestSF

Czech Center New York

Field of Activity: public diplomacy, support of the Czech culture and creative industry

Director: Miroslav Konvalina
Bohemian National Hall
321 E 73rd Street
New York, NY 10021
Phone: (646) 422-3399
Fax: (646) 422-3383
Email: info@czechcenter.com
Web: new-york.czechcentres.cz
Facebook: CzechCenterNewYork
Instagram: CzechCenter
Twitter: CzechCenter
YouTube: Czech Center New York
Linktree: CzechCenterNY

Czech Tourist Authority – CzechTourism New York

Field of Activity: support of tourism to the Czech Republic, building awareness about destinations and activities in the Czech Lands

Director: Michaela Claudino
26 Broadway, 8th floor
New York, NY 10004
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Web: czechtourism.cz
YouTube: Visit Czech Republic



It might appear that the inhabitants of the Czech Republic – a not particularly populous Central European country lacking an ocean – would have little interest in events happening in the far corners of the globe, to say nothing of the Arctic Circle.

But it turns out that the reverse is true, with accounts attesting to significant Czech activities around the world, spanning exploration, discovery, scientific research and sports.

The aim of this publication is to present information on the activities of Czechs in the US state of Alaska and its Aleutian Islands, as well as on the numerous discoveries and observations made by Czechs over the centuries with respect to this remote part of the United States.

