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Review of We're Czechs

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Czech Protestant community in central Texas during the 1920s and 1930s. The community of Snook (originally Šebesta) in Burleson County is located between Austin and Houston. Physically isolated, the town continued to experience during these decades what occurred in pioneering times: close-knit families, community spirit, and personal honesty.

Unlike the majority of Czechs in Texas, who were Catholics, almost all of the Czechs of Snook were Protestants belonging to the Unity of Brethren, which was established in Bohemia in the fifteenth century by the spiritual heirs of John Hus. Nevertheless, Snook Czechs were not publicly overt about their religion as were their American neighbors. The typical Czech lifestyle of the old country prevailed.

"We're Czechs; they're Americans," the author's father and other older Czech settlers often said to connote the difference between the Czechs and the English, Scots, and Irish settlers. The tone of the book emphasizes that the Czech way of doing things—"our way"—was much better in the minds of the older generation. It is of interest that these attitudes persisted some sixty years after the founding of the community. The traditional lifestyles, however, inevitably weakened, as the author discovers when he revisits the community fifty years later. Almost total acculturation has occurred, in spite of recent resurgence of interest in the Czech heritage. Skrabanek concludes with a revision of the older generation's comment: "Well, you see, since they're not Czechs, they think and do things differently from us sometimes."

The bibliography is particularly good and indicates there is no dearth of historical writing about Czech Texans in English. One of the more important books on this subject listed in the bibliography is by Clinton Machann and James W. Mendl, *Krásná America—A Study of the Texas Czechs, 1851-1939*.

We're Czechs. By Robert L. Skrabanek. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1988. Illustrations, preface, bibliography, index. xiii + 240 pp. \$16.95.

Robert L. Skrabanek, a professor emeritus from Texas A & M University, reminisces about growing up in a small, rural, almost exclusively

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