

Genealogical Resources at the State Central Archives in Prague

By Eduard Kovalda

When we speak about researcher's work in the Czech archives, we cannot omit the entire range of archive resources housed today at the State Central Archives in Prague. In this article I would like to mention those files which are kept and housed in the so called First department, located in the center of Prague.

For a better perspective, we can divide archive files into several thematic sections:

- 1) Financial administration and authorities:
- above all concerning income and expenses of state authorities
- 2) Judicial administration and authorities:
- registers of purchases, sales and property disputes of nobilities, kings and queens
- 3) Jewish files
- 4) Church files - registers and documents that formerly were maintained by authorities of the Prague Archbishopric and monasteries
- 5) Maps, plans, photographs
- 6) Genealogical files - notes of different researchers, focused mainly on the genealogy of nobility who lived / settled in the Bohemian Kingdom (e.g. files of Wunschwitz, Voříšek, Vašák, etc.)

From the sections mentioned above, public genealogical researchers are interested mainly in the following files:

Financial administration and authorities:

- *Berní rula*; *Tereziánský katastr*; *Josefský katastr*;
Robotní seznamy; *Stabilní katastr*

Jewish files:

- Jewish registers of births, marriages, deaths; lists of Jews; books of Jewish familiants

Maps, plans, photographs:

- *Indikační skicy*; *Plány a nákresy budov a měst do r. 1850*; *Sbírka map a plánů 16.–20. století*

We could describe what researchers can expect from these resources. The resources are important mainly for the genealogists, who are not satisfied only

with the information recorded in vital registers, but seek answers to a question, such as: "How did my Czech ancestors live?"

Brief description of selected resources:

Tereziánský katastr (The Land-Registry of The Empress Maria Theresia)

The land-registry was drawn up during the rule of the empress Maria Theresia (the Queen of Bohemia in 1740–1780). Collecting the data for the registry had started already in 1713 (during the rule of her father, Charles VI). In all localities were conducted so called "fasse", meaning tax returns (recorded on sheets of paper). The "fasse" that concerned peasants and craftsmen was called "*rustikální fasse*". A final registry was completed in 1748 when it was agreed how to tax the yield of serfs. Not only land property was registered, but town houses, crafts and Jews as well. This version from 1748 was included with the revision in 1757.

The "*rustikální fasse*" from 1713 consists of an extract of first and last names of the heads of households from 1654 and how many fields they cultivated.

In the registry from 1748 were recorded:

- a) first and last names of the heads of households
- b) yield from fields, meadows, heathland, hay, aftermath, bushes

Josefský katastr (The Land-Registry of The Emperor Joseph II)

It is a list of land-property, in 1785 ordered by Emperor Josef II for tax purposes. The basic unit of tax was the so called "*katastrální obec*" (= cadastral locality). Tax was to be levied by state clerks (not by lord's clerks as in the past).

Land-property was divided according to a type of culture (field, meadow, grassland, vineyard, forest) and yield. Every piece of land was registered under a topographical number, with the name of occupant, location (nearby occupants), width, length and surface of a site, yield, and contribution. In this land-registry houses were already recorded with house-numbers.

Robotní seznamy (Lists of manorial labour duties)

The necessity to adjust conditions of manorial serfs was discussed at the imperial court already in 1771–1775. The serf-uprising in 1775 caused the Charter of manorial labour to be issued on August 13, 1775. For geneal-

ogy the most important are manorial labour duties which were mentioned in item number 7 of the Charter. The maximum amount of manorial labour (both manual and with aid of animals) was 3 days per week. The manorial labour was assessed according to taxes from 1773. All serfs were divided into 11 classes (7 classes performed manual manorial labour, 4 classes with the aid of animals).



Building of State Central Archives in Prague on Milady Horákové Street.

Stabilní katastr

In 1806, the collection of records had begun on the new cadaster. By virtue of the order, declared by Emperor František II in 1817, all land property had to be registered in the cadaster. For that purpose the following were recorded:

- a) geometric size with a detailed description
- b) the purpose of use
- c) classification of cultivated fields (based on soil quality)

Maps were created for all localities (using the trigonometrical method), providing detailed information on real estate (see the "*Indikační skicy*" below). For tax purposes, final yields on land property were recorded. Information collected on the cadaster was completed in 1843. The cadaster became valid in 1860.

Soupisy židů (Lists of Jews 1724–1811):

In the lists we can find information on names of fathers of Jewish families who obtained permission for marriage (lists were kept for the years 1724, 1729, 1783, 1793, 1799, 1811). The list from 1724 was kept for the purpose of reduction of all Jewish inhabitants in the monarchy, the others for better recording an outline of Jewish taxes. The information recorded included; year of settlement, special permission for settlement, name of Jewish father and his occupation, name of his wife and her place of origin, their children (with information about their marital status).

Knihy židovských familiantů (Books of Jewish familiants 1823):

By virtue of the decree of 1797 the number of Jewish families was restricted to 8,000 in the whole monarchy. Only the eldest sons (familiants) obtained permission to marry, others had to wait until "a number" was released for them. In 1799 and 1811 two censuses of Jewish inhabitants were conducted, but they were inaccurate. Then, in 1823, the new lists (books) of Jewish familiants were kept, containing information on: manor, number of family in the monarchy, number of family in the list from 1725, name of previous famulant, parents of current famulant, his wife, date and a number for the marriage permit, birthdate, names of children, entries about an abolishment of the right for famulant's "number".

Indikační skicy

The coloured maps became a part of "*Stabilní katastr*". The government recorded details of all buildings and land property in a recorded locality. Plots and house-numbers were marked by red or black numbers, sometimes by a occupant's name. Maps of localities were drawn on a scale of 1:2880.

Continued on page 72

Color Coding Used:

red = stone and brick houses

yellow = wooden houses

umber (yellowish brown) = cultivated fields

dark green = gardens and meadows of good quality

light green = grasslands and barrens (unproductive land)

grey = forests

blue = ponds and watercourses

brown = roads

pink = railroad

Plány a nákresy budov a měst do r. 1850 (Plans and drawings of buildings and towns up to 1850):

It is an extract from inventories, catalogues and lists of files kept by the State Central Archives in Prague. Different plans can be found here, regarding localities, towns, roads, streets, enclosures to land disputes, land-partitions, building ground-plans.

Sbírka map a plánů 16.–20. století (Collection of maps and plans from the 16th–20th century):

Different maps of historical countries of the Bohemian Kingdom, districts, cadastral localities, towns, dioceses, counties, castles, manors and their parts, tourist maps. In addition, you can find here some plans of state buildings.

To work in the mentioned files, the majority of foreign researchers will probably need the assistance of a researcher, who is knowledgeable in Czech genealogy and history, and able to read in German, Czech and Latin. Nevertheless, thanks to articles and studies of genealogical resources in the Czech Republic, combined with copies of original documents, you can acquire knowledge useful in making a decision on how to enrich your family history and what to expect from Czech genealogy.

Address:

Státní ústřední archiv, I. oddělení

Milady Horákové 133

160 00 Praha 6

Public hours:

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Mon–Thu 8:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m., 1:00–6:00 p.m.

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About the Author:

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