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Chapter

Slovenian Settlements in the USA since 1870s till Present

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Abstract

Ethnic settlements represent cities or parts of them where one of the ethnic organizations are or were present, i.e., ethnic parish, national homes, or at least one fraternal organization. This is a result of the long historic processes which took place after a certain group immigrated. It normally took more than 10 years before a settlement is established and they lasted until another group prevailed or the members of community assimilated. Nevertheless, the traces of the remnants of these communities can be found also more than a century after these settlements were established. There were 800 cities, towns, and villages where Slovene settlements were established. The first was Ebeneser in Georgia. It was erased in the civil war. St. Stephen was established 150 years ago and there are still people who know their ancestry. We recently discovered that a Slovene flag was flown at the cemetery. The second largest Slovenian city worldwide after World War 1 was Cleveland, OH and the city with the largest percentage of Slovenian population in the USA is Ely, MN where more than half of the population has Slovene ancestors. Slovenian Americans were successful also in professional life and in politics.

Keywords: ethnicity, settlement, ethnic parishes, national homes, fraternal organizations

1. Introduction

An ethnic settlement represents a part of a settlement with a concentrated settlement core of an ethnic community, in which at least one of the ethnic organizational structures existed: a lodge of fraternal benefit society, a Slovene or a national home of another ethnic group, a Slovene or of another ethnic group’s or mixed Catholic or Evangelical ethnic parish or a mosque and/or the editorial office of an ethnic newspaper. Of course, we distinguish between larger and smaller ethnic settlements, and this definition is very broad and also allows us to classify as places of ethnic settlements of a certain ethnic community also places that have only a single lodge or publish an ethnic newspaper in it, which sometimes depends on the place of the issuer of the print publication or online publication ([1], pp. 613–622).

This is a result of the long historic process which took place after a certain group immigrated. It normally took more than 10 years before a settlement is established and it lasted until another group prevailed or the members of the community
assimilated. This applies to virtually all communities that have settled in the United States since the Mayflower Pilgrims. Even the first settlers in the United States had to deal with similar problems as emigrants from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Thus, all ethnic communities had to be organized into an ethnic settlement. In the social sciences, they have been called colonies, but I think the term is not appropriate for immigrants who were not at the same time conquerors of territory on behalf of some power. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, we can talk about ethnic communities that settled in an already organized society in which, as individuals, members of an ethnic community wanted to survive socially and economically, but at the same time they wanted to preserve the characteristics of their community and individuals wanted to preserve also the awareness on where they and their ancestors came from.

We can conclude in general that the remains of these communities have been preserved until today in the form of inscriptions in churches and cemeteries, in the languages of the communities, regardless of whether they were Protestant or Catholic, or Orthodox ([2], pp. 169–180). After many years, descendants will also find for example material remains, of Bosniak community in St. Louis, Missouri, where over 30,000 Bosniaks settled after the Dayton Agreement. This agreement ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 1995. As it is today, the great Catholic churches of New York can be said to be part of the Irish heritage. This also applies to Slovones. Nevertheless, the traces of the remnants of these communities can be found also more than a century after these settlements were established. There were 800 cities, towns, and villages where Slovene settlements were established more than 170 years ago. The first was Ebeneser in Georgia. It was erased in the civil war. St. Stephen 60 miles NW of Twin Cities, MN was established 150 years ago and there are still people who know their ancestry who live there. We recently discovered that a Slovene flag was flown at the cemetery. The second largest Slovene city worldwide after World War 1 was Cleveland, OH and the city with the largest percentage of Slovene population is Ely, MN where more than a half of the population has Slovene ancestors.

As far as methodology is concerned, we used the methodology of historical science as well as methodology of ethnic studies. It means that we gathered data based on historical sources i.e., archival sources of Slovene organizations, ethnic newspapers, structured interviews, literature, and data of US censuses of population. We also compared Slovene organizational structures with the structures of other ethnic groups.

2. The historic settlement of Slovones in the USA and their geographical distribution

Slovene immigrants in the United States settled mainly in compact Slovene settlements, in many of them they still live today. Most of them immigrated to the USA in the period between 1870 and 1924 ([3], pp. 1–71). Before this period, mainly Slovenian adventurers and missionaries settled there [4]. The period of the main Slovene settlement coincides with the strong development of industry and mining in the USA, which saw a great boom, especially after the end of the civil war. When prof. Matjaž Klemenčič showed a map of Slovene settlements in the USA to Prof John Bodnar, the famous researcher of the so-called new ethnic communities in the USA and the author of the book The Transplanted [5] he said that on the one hand, it is a
map showing the settlements of virtually all immigrant communities which immigrated to the USA in the same period, as Slovenes and on the other hand it shows a map of the industrial and mining establishments of the time (Interview with John Bodnar 2011).

According to the data of the US population census, which are also recognized by the profession, in 1910 there were 183,431 Slovene immigrants and their children (according to their mother tongue) living in the USA, and in 1920, according to these data, there were already 208,552 of them ([6], pp. 595–1019; [7], pp. 967–1007). For the year 2010, American statisticians calculated, based on a 5% sample, that 185,645 people of Slovene descent lived in the USA in 2010 [8]. Considering the objective measure of ethnic origin, this number seems a bit too low, so the estimates of those researchers who estimate the number of people of Slovenian origin in the USA at around 500,000 are more likely, although this number also includes those who have only a quarter or even only an eighth of Slovenian ancestry. In this regard, it should be added that American statistics allow for a subjective measure. For the years 1910 to 1930, when it was possible to examine the primary materials of the population censuses, on the one hand, in addition to the Slovene mother tongue, we also have found the “Carniolian language” recorded among the Slovenes, and between the two wars, also the “Yugoslav or Austrian language” ([9], pp. 150–159). Similar findings could be made for the periods after 1980 when the ancestry of the population was determined. In doing so, they often confused ethnic ancestry with national origin (i.e., from which country they came) so that, for example, Slovenes wrote that their ancestry is “Yugoslav”, which of course means mixing of pears and apples.

On the already mentioned map “Places of Slovene settlements in the USA” ([9], p. 122), we can see areas of Slovene settlement in the USA. Thus, it is worth mentioning in first place the industrially developed Northeast with the metropolis of New York and Bethlehem (eastern Pennsylvania), and Bridgeport (Connecticut). In addition to Bethlehem, there are a few places with larger Slovene settlements also in eastern Pennsylvania (Forest City is the most important), there are many places with Slovene settlements in western Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Cannonsburgh, etc.), the northern part of West Virginia (e.g., Trinity) and in the Southeast (Lorain, Akron) and Northeast Ohio (Barberton, Cleveland, Euclid, Lorain, etc.). The places where Slovene immigrants formed their settlements are also in southern Michigan (Detroit) and in the so-called Copper district on Michigan Peninsula (Calumet). In central Wisconsin, the farming settlement of Willard should be mentioned in particular. The majority of Slovene settlements in this state are located in the cities along the shores of Lake Michigan (Milwaukee, Sheboygan, West Allis, etc.). The area of Slovene settlements continues south to the state of Illinois, where Chicago and Waukegan are located on the shores of Lake Michigan. Joliet, south of Chicago, and La Salle, west of Chicago, deserve special mention. In the central and southern parts of this US state, Springfield should be mentioned along with the many other Slovenian settlements. East of the Mississippi River, it is also worth mentioning the concentrated area of places with Slovene settlements in Minnesota, especially on the so-called “iron range” (Ely, Tower, Eveleth, Hibbing, Chisholm, etc.), and St. Stephen in central Minnesota, which is considered one of the oldest Slovene settlements in the USA. In the Mississippi lowlands, there are several places with Slovene settlements in the extreme southeast of Kansas (Kansas City, Frontenac, and Pittsburg) and in the northwest of the state of Arkansas (Jenny Lind). In the extreme southeast of the USA, there is a noteworthy place in southeast Florida, where the Slovene settlement of Samsula was founded by Slovenian farmers.
From the Mississippi River to the Pacific coast, most places with Slovene settlements are located in the mining areas of the Rocky Mountains. In the state of Colorado, Pueblo, Denver, Leadville, Trinidad, Walsenburg, Aspen, and Crested Butte are particularly noteworthy. There are also a few places with Slovene settlements in neighboring Utah (Sunnyside, Helper) and Wyoming (Rock Springs, Diamondville), while in mountainous Montana, Anaconda, East Helena, Butte, and Bear Creek are particularly noteworthy. In the northwest of the USA, there are also places with Slovene settlements in the states of Washington (Enumclaw, Black Diamond) and Oregon (Oregon City, Portland). Slovene immigrants also settled in California, with the Slovene settlements in Fontana and San Francisco being particularly noteworthy. Slovenian immigrants also settled in other areas of the United States, which are not specifically mentioned in this short review, but those are mainly scattered settlements (especially in agriculturally developed areas).

In the following text, we will show the organizational forms that are typical or were typical of ethnic communities that settled in the United States, especially from Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe.

3. Slovene fraternal benefit societies

Fraternal benefit societies represented the basic form of organization for Slovene as well as other immigrants in the USA. These are insurance companies that were created in a period when the United States did not yet know any form of health insurance and have basically remained as such until today. First, such organizations among Slovene immigrants were organized already at the beginning of the 1880s. It concerns the insurance of workers in the event of accidents at work or in the event of illness, as well as attempts at pension insurance. The introduction of so-called “Obama care” was the first step in the right direction toward universal healthcare European style and it took till March 2010 to implement in the USA as a whole.

With the profits of ethnic fraternal benefit societies, these organizations supported the cultural and publishing activities of immigrants in the US in general and Slovene Americans in particular. The majority of these are centralized organizations consisting of individual lodges that operated or are still operating in Slovene settlements. Among the most important was the American Fraternal Union based in Ely (Minnesota), which had around 15,000 members at the time of its merger with Catholic United Financial ([9], p. 255). The American Mutual Life Association with headquarters in Cleveland (Ohio) with around 30,000 members still operates today, and the Slovene National Benefit Society/with headquarters in Imperial (Pennsylvania), and more than 50,000 members operates even today. Zapadna Slovenska zveza/Western Slavonic Association (WSA) with headquarters in Denver (Colorado) and 6500 members, which still operates today, and American-Slovenian Catholic Union with headquarters in Joliet (Illinois) and with around 30,000 members, which still operates today. The relatively large number of umbrella organizations is the result of the dispersion of Slovenian settlement in the USA, as well as ideological differences, which were partly brought from the old homeland and partly stimulated by the conditions in the new homeland. The American-Slovenian Catholic Union once called the Carnelian-Slovenian Catholic Union, required its members to be active Catholics, while the Slovene National Benefit Society has the loyalty or disloyalty of individual members to the Catholic Church for their private matters. Although the
Slovenian National Benefit Society was liberally oriented, its members were active in the socialist labor movement in the United States ([10], pp. 21–44).

4. Slovenian ethnic parishes

A special form of organization of immigrants in general, as well as Slovene Americans, are ethnic parishes, the creation of which dates to the end of the nineteenth century. Since the problem of apostasy among emigrants in America was becoming more and more urgent, the Catholic Church in Europe organized a meeting of the Catholic Congress on December 9 and 10, 1890 in Lucerne, Switzerland, which was actually a gathering of European national societies of St. Raphael. The result of the wishes of this meeting was the so-called “Lucerne memorandum”, which the general secretary of the German Society of St. Raphael Paul Cahensly presented to Pope Leo XIII on April 16, 1891. In it, they proposed to the Pope the establishment of ethnic parishes for each ethnic community, with the condition that their priests must be members of the same ethnic community and religious instruction must also be conducted in the language of the ethnic community. They also proposed the establishment of parish schools for each ethnic community separately and a guarantee of equal rights for all priests, regardless of ethnicity. They also advocated the establishment of Catholic fraternal beneficial organizations and demanded that American bishops should be members of different ethnic communities ([9], pp. 180–181). Let us emphasize that the members of the Catholic church hierarchy at that time were mostly Irish. Among the members of the Slovenian ethnic community before the First World War, we can count as many as five bishops who were of Slovene origin. These were Frederick Baraga, Ignatius Mraks, John Vertin, James Trobec, and John Stariha ([9], p. 186; [4]). The first three bishops were in Baraga’s diocese, while the other two were appointed by John Ireland, who liked Slovenes because they were not Germans but knew German. In the Lucerne Memorandum, some more incentives were proposed to the Pope. They advocated the establishment of branches of the Society of St. Raphael in all European countries. In Lucerne, they also advocated the equalization of the rights of priests of ethnic parishes and priests of territorial parishes. Ethnic parishes were established exclusively for members of certain ethnic communities, while territorial parishes were bound to a certain territory. Given that immigrants from individual ethnic communities initially settled in a certain territory, they easily mixed both types of parishes. At the same time, individual ethnic communities were tied to ethnic settlements. The development later led to ethnic parishes becoming territorial parishes, and then the former ethnic parish served all the communities in a certain territory with its buildings. For example, today, the formerly exclusively Slovene parish in Joliet today serves mainly the Spanish-speaking community, but they also have masses in the Slovene language. The once entirely Slovene church of St. Stephen’s in Chicago today serves primarily Spanish-speaking immigrants.

In the USA, the demands written in the Lucerne Memorandum sparked a lot of debate in the 1890s, especially the fact that the European St. Raphael Societies addressed their demands directly to the Pope and not to the American bishops. That this action was not acceptable to the American church authorities is shown by the case at the investiture of Archbishop Frederick Katzer in Milwaukee, when Cardinal James Gibbons also spoke about the need for “… American Catholics to take into account the fact that they are American citizens and as such owe loyalty only to America...”. In the
continuation of the speech, he mentioned that “…Catholics must live in harmony with the American political institutions…” ([9], p. 181) Despite these objections, it was the “Lucerne memorandum” that most stimulated the movement, the result of which was the establishment of ethnic parishes in the USA, including many Slovenian parishes. Thus, with the support of the Catholic Church, 40 Slovene or Slovene-mixed ethnic parishes were established in the USA alone in the period from 1871 to 1923. Among these, the history of ethnically mixed parishes is particularly interesting, but with a few exceptions, they soon split into several ethnic parishes. Within the framework of ethnic parishes, where a sufficient number of believers allowed for this, parish schools were also organized. At first, the language of the liturgy was only Slovene, but later masses were held in Slovene as well as in English. In the parish schools, the language of education was English, and Slovene was often a subject of study in these schools. Priests and teachers in these schools were usually of Slovene ethnic background. So, attending schools and organizing ethnic parishes had a positive effect on preserving ethnic consciousness among Slovene immigrants and their descendants ([9], pp. 167–234; [11], pp. 131–177; [12], pp. 279–315; [13], pp. 203–257).

Regarding consciousness, researchers must be aware that this is the consciousness of ancestors or ethnicity, which is always accompanied by the consciousness of belonging to the country in which the immigrants lived, in this case the USA. Thus, we are talking about Slovene Americans who, in terms of awareness of their belonging, have developed from American Slovenians, who were usually members of the first generation or immigrants themselves, while the children of immigrants, i.e., the second generation of immigrants and beyond, developed into Slovene Americans ([14], pp. 899–922).

5. Slovene national homes

A special form of organization for Sloven immigrants in the USA is represented in Slovene national homes. In 1990, according to data from the Slovenian National Directory, 69 Slovenian national homes were operating in the USA. They began to appear at the beginning of the twentieth century, before the First World War, when it was already clear to many Slovene-Americans that they would permanently stay in the United States. The establishment of the first Slovene national homes coincided with the establishment of the first fraternal benefit societies, reading rooms, libraries, music groups, and sports clubs. There was a natural need for a meeting place for Slovene immigrants, where various cultural, social, and also political events of Slovene Americans would be held. Many activities and events took place in the national homes, which with their events attracted many members of the Slovene ethnic community in the settlement, where the national homes operated, and also from other nearby settlements.

They were mostly built with contributions from community members or the for-profit activities of fraternal benefit societies. If it was not a rented or old building, they voluntarily helped to build it themselves, as was the case, for example, in Collinwood, in what is now a suburb of Cleveland. The national homes were mostly made of bricks or were simple wooden buildings. They were mostly two-story buildings that had their own central space, a hall with a stage, and a kitchen for preparing food. There were rooms where various activities of the societies took place. The larger the homes were, the greater number of smaller rooms they occupied. The most important events were dances and entertainment events, which attracted many
visitors. Concerts, especially of choirs, also attracted many listeners. In parallel with parties and cultural events, political manifestations and collection of contributions for various humanitarian activities were also carried out.

The peak of the building of national homes was the period after the First World War. At that time, due to the changed political situation in Europe (establishment of the new Yugoslav state) and the active political participation of Slovene Americans in the local community, awareness of their ethnic belonging increased among the members of the Slovene ethnic community. In 1924, in Cleveland on St. Clair Avenue, with a big celebration and a street parade, the largest Slovenian national home that still exists today was opened. It has an auditorium that seats 1000 with an additional 324 seats in the balcony. In it, many Slovene associations found their premises, and important political manifestations and conventions of the Democratic Party took place at the same time as local and national elections were held. It should be mentioned that in the St. Clair Slovene National Home two extremely important political events took place. The first was in 1942 when the Slovene National Congress was held and established the organization Slovene American National Council. It endeavored for Political Assistance and Reconstruction of the Old Homeland in connection with the events in the old homeland during World War II. The second was the meetings of the organization United Americans for Slovenia, which between June 1991 and April 1992 sent appeals to American politicians, including President George Bush, on behalf of all Slovene Americans, in which they demanded that the USA recognize the independence of Slovenia, which at that time had gained independence from Yugoslavia, as soon as possible.

In addition to the national homes in the already mentioned Cleveland, national homes also appeared in other Slovenian settlements in the USA. This happened most often in mining settlements, such as in Rock Springs, Wyoming (1913), Ely, Minnesota (1911), Frontenac in Kansas (1910), Herminie in Pennsylvania (1908), and elsewhere. It is worth noting that the establishment of national homes was opposed by some Slovene Catholic priests who led Slovene ethnic parishes. They believed that the money for building national homes could be used for the maintenance of churches and the construction of new schools that would nurture the Slovene language and culture. In addition, church halls could also be used for the purposes for which homes were built. Thus, the national homes became gathering places for liberal-oriented Slovenian Americans, as they were mostly built by societies with a more liberal and socialist-oriented Slovene Americans. An exception to this rule is the Slovene National Home no. 2 on East 80th Street in Cleveland. After the First World War, ethnic communities from the Yugoslav territories began to unite in some places. This is how national homes were created, which were built by Slovene, Croatian and Serbian Americans together. Thus, for example, the American-Yugoslav Center in Euclid (Ohio) and the Slovenian-Croatian Club in Escanaba (Michigan) were created. It often happened that Slovene national homes were rented out to associations of other ethnic communities and locals who organized their own events, parties, and cultural events.

In the 1960s, when the members of the community of Slovene Americans began to slowly move from the once compact settlements to the suburbs and other places, due to the decline in the number of events and people, the Slovene national homes began to decay or simply close their doors. By this time, the younger generations had mostly already assimilated, so they did not need special spaces and gathering places for members of the Slovene ethnic community to socialize. During these times, in Cleveland, the national homes began to join together in a federation so that they could operate
smoothly. It is interesting that in the 1970s two new Slovene were built national homes in Florida for the needs of Slovenian retirees who moved there because of the favorable climate. Thus, the Slovene national homes in New Smyrna Beach and Miami were created. At the end of the twentieth century, after 1991, new national homes were also opened in Detroit, Michigan and Imperial, Pennsylvania, where the headquarters of the Slovene National Benedikt Society was opened and the Slovene Cultural Center was built in Lemont near Joliet, Illinois. National homes represent an important Slovenian cultural heritage. Thus, in all national homes, pictures of Bled and the island of Bled are painted on the walls, as a kind of symbol of Slovenes in the USA. Some national homes, however, have very rich objects of cultural heritage. In the Slovene National Home in Cleveland a painting of Slovene cultural figures painted by Maksim Gaspari hangs on the wall. Even today the Slovene National Homes fulfill their mission of bringing together people who are aware of their ethnic affiliation and Slovenian origin. ([11], pp. 219–263; [12], pp. 336–337, pp. 362–365; [13], pp. 269–272; [9], pp. 278–290; [15], pp. 26–28).

6. Slovenian ethnic newspapers in the USA

In the definition of ethnic settlement, we also mentioned the seat of the newspaper publisher or newsletters as a possible element for the formation of an ethnic settlement. Newspapers and newsletters, which were aimed at the local needs of Slovenian-Americans in the settlement or were sent by the editors to members of Slovenian organizations in some or even most of the states of the USA, also contributed significantly to the preservation of ethnic consciousness among Slovene immigrants in the USA. Newspapers and periodicals represented one of the most important expressions of the life of an ethnic community. In order to publish a newspaper, certain basic conditions had to be met: an editor had to be appointed, reporters and other writers had to be chosen, an agreement had to be made with a printer and a distribution system had to be provided. Nevertheless, this was usually not enough to publish newspapers. Another “important condition” had to be fulfilled - the Slovenian community had to be “full of life”, something worth writing about had to be constantly happening in it. Slovenian newspapers usually began to be published in the USA about 10 years after the beginnings of the formation of the Slovene ethnic community in a certain place. This is how much time passed before the Slovene immigrants gathered and ensured the existence of the (previously mentioned) basic conditions for the publication of the newspaper. Of course, this was not a completely smooth process, as the need for spiritual food (and also the press) among Slovene immigrants, especially after the Second World War, was greater, and their educational level was also higher. The technical possibilities were also better, so many started publishing a newspaper immediately after settling. ([16], pp. 112–126) In the twenty-first century, the conditions for publishing a newspaper, and even an ethnic newspaper in general, are easier, as there are so-called newspapers that are only accessible online or in digital form. It does not require a lot of money or a lot of infrastructures. Therefore, for example, after the cessation of publication of Ameriška domovina in 2008 in Cleveland, which is still today the largest Slovene settlement outside the Slovene ethnic territory, very quickly started publishing online form of the newspaper “Slovenian Times”, which took over certain elements published by “Ameriška domovina” such as a. “Rooster of Slovenian organizations”.

Slovene newspapers in the USA played a leading and leadership role among Slovene immigrants. It not only recorded events in the Slovene community but also promoted political and economic developments among Slovene immigrants. We can claim that the mentioned newspapers are not only an excellent source for the historian of Slovene immigration to the USA, but also that the editors of these newspapers encouraged Slovene Americans to active and passive political participation.

During the century (1891–1991), individual newspapers began to be published in a wide variety of places across America (the places mostly also represent the main settlements of Slovenes in the USA). The place of publication also (sometimes) depended on the editor’s place of residence. Nevertheless, we can conclude that newspapers were not only read in the places where they were printed but were often read throughout almost all of the United States. This is especially true if it was a newspaper that represented the newsletter of a certain fraternal benefit society [17].

Some newspapers were still published in the USA in the twenty-first century. Among them, it is worth mentioning in the first place Ameriška domovina, a local newspaper aimed at Slovenians in Cleveland. It served also as an organ of political emigree organizations after World War 2. It was published in 2008. Today, the Slovene ethnic newspapers are published primarily as newsletters of fraternal benefit societies: Amerikanski Slovenec—Glasilo Kranjska-Slovenska katolikške jednote as the successor of the first Slovenian newspaper, which was published in the USA since 1891, and as a newsletter of the American-Slovenian Catholic Union, Glas/Voice as a newsletter of the American Mutual life association, newsletter of the WSA, and Prosveta/Enlightment as a newsletter of the Slovene National Benefit Society. Many stopped publishing. Among them, Glas Naroda is particularly noteworthy, which at its peak, just before the First World War, had over 10,000 subscribers and was published in New York until 1957 ([18], pp. 98–117).

7. Professional careers and political participation of Slovenians and their descendants

Slovenian Americans were also relatively successful in liberal professions (lawyers, doctors) and as entrepreneurs and managers. They established themselves both as small entrepreneurs (shoemakers, tailors, innkeepers, grocers, etc.) and also in somewhat larger companies such as the hotel industry, banking, and funeral services. ([11], pp. 108–130; [9], pp. 93–109; [12], pp. 259–278; [13], pp. 176–203).

Together with the organizations of Slovene immigrants in their settlements, this also represented the basis for the inclusion of individuals from the ranks of the Slovene community in politics—first at the level of city districts, and then at the level of cities, counties, US states, and the entire United States. It is worth noting that members of the Slovene community and their descendants even became members of the US Congress (both the House of Representatives and the US Senate). In almost all settlements that historians have researched so far (Cleveland, Leadville, Rock Springs, Ely, Pueblo, Calumet), the degree of political participation of Slovene immigrants was always greater than the numerical strength or share of members of the Slovene community in the city or district. Until the twenty first century, Slovene-Americans mostly voted for Democrats. The exception was George Voinovich in Cleveland as well as Chuck Novak in Ely, Minnesota. Since 2020 Democrat Roger Skraba is the mayor of Ely.
In Ely in northern Minnesota, in which Slovene Americans were the relatively largest ethnic community from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Thus, shortly before the First World War, when the secret ballot was established in Minnesota, the first Slovene Americans were already elected. City councilors the first Slovene American to become the mayor of Ely, was George L. Brozich. He was elected on the ticket of the Democratic Party during the First World War. From this period onward and into the twenty-first century, Slovene-Americans as democrats have played an important role in city politics to the present day, as they have held the office of mayor for more than half of the time since the First World War. They were mostly elected on the ticket of the Democratic Party. The most important Slovene-American local politician in Ely was Jack P. Grahek, who served as mayor of Ely for 27 years on and off. The fact that he was on friendly terms with Congressman John Blatnik is not unimportant, as the latter helped him obtain federal funds for many projects. As the mayor of the city with the largest percentage of the Slovene population, Grahek attended the funeral of the president of the SFRY, Josip Broz Tito, in 1980. Of course, John Blatnik also played an important role in this. At the turn from the first to the second decade of the twenty-first century, Republican Roger Skraba, who served as mayor from 2008 to 2012 and from 2020 to 2022, won the battle for mayor. In 2020, 50% of Slovene-Americans also voted for Donald Trump in the presidential election in Ely. In this, the fact that Trump is married to the Slovene Melania Knaus also played an important role ([19], pp. 104–197).

In Cleveland, for example, Slovenes and their descendants have been actively present in the city’s political life since the beginning of the twentieth century (before the First World War, Doctor Frank Javh Kern was almost elected, running on the ticket of the Socialist Party), and in 1925 John L. Mihelich was finally elected to the city council as the first Slovene-American in Cleveland. Slovene Americans remained actively present in city politics until today. It is worth noting that in the 1930s Slovene Americans of the first generation, and their descendants, had as many as four members out of 25 in the city council, and in the period from 1941 to 1944, the mayor of the city was Frank Lausche. George Voinovich, whose mother was of Slovene descent was also elected mayor of the city at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Both Lausche and Voinovich continued their political careers and became governors of the state of Ohio and US senators from Ohio (Lausche from 1957 to 1969, Voinovich from 1999 to 2011) ([19], pp. 362–373). Amy Klobuchar who became a member of the US senate in (2007 is still a member of the US Senate,) was one of the six candidates for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party, later Joe Biden had shortlisted her for the vice-presidential position, but he chose Kamala Harris. Among the members of the House of Representatives, we should also mention John Blatnik from northern Minnesota (from 1947 to 1974), [19], pp. 198–215) Joe Skubitz from Kansas (1963–1979) and Phillip Edward Ruppe from Michigan (1967–1979), in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as three members of the American Congress of Slovenian origin in 1980s: Cleveland’s Dennis Eckart ([11], pp. 341–344) (1981–1993), Colorado’s Ray Kogovsek (1979–1985) ([13], pp. 280–281), Minnesota’s James Oberstar ([19], pp. 205–210) (1975–2011). To this day, Paul Gosar (2011 - present), a member of the Republican Party and a staunch supporter of Donald Trump, is a member of the House of Representatives US Congress. [20].

8. Conclusion

The majority of Slovenian immigrants in the USA settled in areas where they continue to live today. During two decades of research, the author has developed a
map of Slovenian settlements that he uses as the basis for his discussion of the geographic distribution of Slovenian immigrants in the USA. The paper also discusses the 1910 and 1920 U.S. census reports. In 1910, there were 183,431 immigrants and their children in the USA who defined Slovene as their mother tongue; in 1920, there were 208,552 Slovenes according to the U.S. census figures.

Organizations of Slovenian immigrants in the USA played an important role in maintaining Slovene ethnic consciousness among them. The organizations, which are discussed in detail in this work, were comprised of fraternal benefit societies, Slovenian national homes, and Slovenian ethnic parishes. Slovenian Americans were actually over-represented in the political life of the United States; election results on municipal, county, state, and national levels are also discussed. There were half of dozen members of Congress and two US senators who were and claim they were of Slovenian descent. Currently, Amy Klobuchar serves in US Senate and Paul Gosar serves in the US House of Representatives.
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