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now what?

Answers for the beginner, the befuddled and anyone hitting a brick wall.

Searching for Slovaks

Q. I read that Catholic Church records in Slovakia were destroyed during World War II. How can I find baptismal records for my father and his siblings?

A. Actually, most Slovak Catholic records are intact. You have especially good odds of finding baptisms for people born before the mid-1890s. But first, it's important to know which kind of Catholic—Roman or Greek—your family was, as present-day Slovakia is home to people of both religions. Signs your family might have been Greek Catholic include attendance at Byzantine or Carpatho-Russian (sometimes referred to as Carpatho-Rusyn) Orthodox churches, and documents (such as passenger arrival records) listing Ruthenian as the nationality.

Some Catholic parish registers of both varieties date back as far as 1649; others don't start until the late 1700s. In 1950, the Czechoslovakian government declared all church registers state property and began gathering those more than 100 years old into regional archives under the Ministry of the

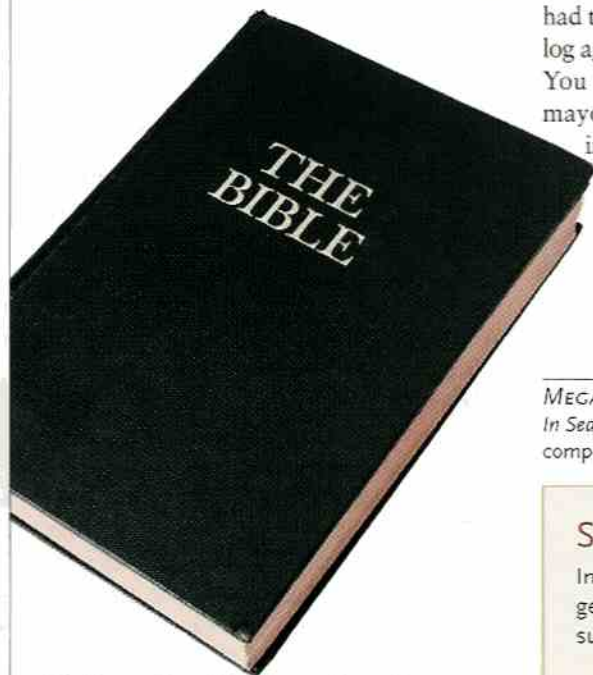
Interior. These regional offices generally have records at least to 1895. With some exceptions, more-recent registers are at local village offices and churches. In fact, to meet official requirements, many churches have copied their records annually and retained a second set.

The best source for pre-1900 records is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Family History Library (FHL) <www.familysearch.org>. Go to the Web site and click the Library tab, then Family History Library Catalog. Select Place Search and enter your ancestral town's name. A search for *Plavec*, for example, brings up microfilms containing Roman Catholic Church records for 1743 to 1896. You can borrow microfilm for viewing at your local FHL branch Family History Center (see page 66).

If you can't find the records you want, search on neighboring villages (not all towns had their own churches) and check the catalog again every few months for new releases. You also could write to the church or the mayor (have your letters translated and include a small donation), hire a local researcher or contact the Slovak Ministry of Interior. Visit the Web site <www.centroconsult.sk/genealogy/resources.html> for mailing addresses and additional details.

—Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak

MEGAN SMOLENYAK SMOLENYAK is the author of *In Search of Our Ancestors* (Adams Media, \$10.95), a companion to PBS' "Ancestors" TV series.



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In every issue, our genealogy gurus answer general research questions—learn how to submit yours on page 7.