

# Crowning Glory: A Feast of Slovak & Moravian Headdresses

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"Crowning Glory: A Feast of Slovak & Moravian Headdresses" from 100 villages will be on display for six months at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, IA.

The headdresses were collected over 50 years and are part of the Baine/Cincebeaux Collection. The exhibit will be our Crowning Glory! It is dedicated to my mother Helen Zemek Baine. We had so much fun visiting over 3,000 villages, sitting in kitchens and learning about the customs and traditions.

When we asked about what women in the village wore to their wedding – the men would say "that garbage, burn it"! Many treasured heirlooms were burned when someone died as it was a custom – their things were piled in the courtyard and ignited - a form of purification.

But as we went from village to village, the women gathered round us and smiled and went home to bring a wedding photo or a headdress and before we knew it we were surrounded by women in kerchiefs/caps or cepec - showing us how their wedding headdresses and caps were made and worn, trying them on and modeling them for us. It always turned into a riotous happening and then we would be invited to visit from home to home. We feasted on heavenly bread blessed and cut from huge loaves and not just buttered but with actual triangles of butter sitting upright - unforgettable! It was the perfect opportunity to ask about traditions and their wedding day, some weddings lasted three and four days.

Young girls learned to sew at a young age taught by their mothers, aunts, godmothers and grandmothers. They began to set aside things for their "vybava" or dowry. Everything from folk dress for their wedding to ritual cloths (lace trimmed and embroidered ones) were made to hang from the beams when a woman had a baby to segregate her behind the curtain for six weeks. Her godmother was the only one who could touch her and brought her special soup made from rooster for strength and special noodles in special ceramic containers (this was brilliant as it protected the mother and new born babe from infection. With large families of 10 or more living in small log homes this was a necessity.)

Just before her wedding the bride would parade thru the village; often she sat atop her truhla or decorated dowry chest while a horse and cart pulled her and her bridesmaids through the village to show off her wealth. Many weddings lasted several days. Once a girl married she went to the groom's home to live and was subservient to her mother-in-law and welcomed at her new home with a kerchief!

The author (standing, far right), her mother (seated) with their family in heirloom pieces from their own private collection.



The author (standing, far right), her mother (seated) with their family in heirloom pieces from their own private collection.

When my son was getting married the village women asked me if my daughter-in-law minded (obeyed) me - how to explain that she ran her own design company in San Francisco? – truly, a cultural divide!

Many village women never cut their hair and had long, long braids they tied up under their cepec or wound around metal or wooden forms they called grgula or rohy (horns). This made for some spectacular headgear! Women kept their heads covered not only when outside but also at home.

Some treasures in the Baine-Cincebeaux Collection were rescued from children playing with them in the street, literally, or were snatched away from being burned in a funeral pyre. Some treasures were viewed in precarious attic lofts, or in damp dower chests in the barn or the pantry after the chickens were shooed off the lid. Others were given with love as the *babička's* eyes shone and said "It's going to America!" I know all the Slovaks who made and wore these treasures will be smiling down from heaven on the glory they created! And I know my mother will be too! The gorgeous creations – beaded, embroidered, woven, felted, lace-trimmed, etc. – are incredibly varied from village to village and express the love of beauty in the hearts of women who wanted to sparkle and shine on their wedding day and after! A glorious tribute to the creativity and ingenuity of Slovak villagers with beauty in their souls!

I am planning to publish a book to record all the gorgeous headdresses in the exhibit and in our collection. There is so much tradition involved in head covering in Slovakia. Young girls wore ribbons in their hair and later wreaths of flowers.

But when your wedding was planned, your godmother sold a field or a cow to pay to have your elaborate wedding headdress made. It might be a confection of embroidery or lace or woven or embellished with gold or silver thread, or sparkling beads or mirrors to ward off evil spirits, for if they saw their reflection they would flee.

## "Crowning Glory: A Feast of Slovak & Moravian Headdresses"

*August 28, 2021 -  
February 27, 2022*

National Czech & Slovak Museum,  
Smith Gallery

Slovak folk dress (*kroje*) is stunning, each segment more beautiful than the last. This exhibit will focus on the crowning glory: the headdress. Nearly 100 Slovak headdresses will be on display. Hours of labor and generations of meaning, mystique, and creativity are infused in each unique piece of art.

- As posted on ncsml.org



## "Treasures of Slovakia: 1,000 Years of Slovak History & Culture"

*September 18, 2021 -  
March 20, 2022*

National Czech & Slovak Museum,  
Petrik Gallery

Experience the rich history and culture of Slovakia going back more than a thousand years. Rare and significant artifacts will be on loan from the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava; many which have never left the country before. This newly-curated exhibition will share Slovakia's treasures in four parts: history, art, folk life, and nature, with each topic developed and supplemented by Slovak National Museum resources.

- As posted on ncsml.org



Hair was considered magic and so at your wedding the bridal wreath was removed by your godmother to the tune of a traditional song and your hair was wound up and then covered the rest of your life! Many recall their grandmothers or great grandmothers wearing a kerchief called a *babuška* and that

morphed into the name for grandmother, *babička*!

The collection has been seen in exhibits in some 20 states and featured in the book "Dowry" after being on display for a year at the prestigious Mingei Museum of Interna-

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Crown from Važec in the Liptovský Mikuláš District of northern Slovakia's Žilina Region, at the foot of Kriváň in the High Tatras Mountains.

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tional Folk Art in San Diego CA. The treasures that simple village people created live long beyond them and inspire awe at the variety, ingenuity, elegance and charm.

## About the Exhibit

A special day for "Crowning Glory" is Saturday, Sept 18, 2021, to coincide with another exhibit that will at the Museum that will have its grand opening that day, "Treasures of Slovakia: 1,000 Years of Slovak History & Culture." Helene will do a gallery tour in the morning, and show a film on how the makers of the headdresses used materials from nature and at hand to create beauty. She also will share images of a variety of the many headdresses created not only for women, but also for children, babies and men. Then ... enjoy a gorgeous and live parade of kroj! Hope you can join us for this once in a lifetime event - it will be memorable! More info contact Helene at [helenezx@aol.com](mailto:helenezx@aol.com), 585 342-9383, or check out the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library information at [ncsml.org/exhibits/#future-exhibits/](http://ncsml.org/exhibits/#future-exhibits/)



Front and back views of a headpiece from Vikartovce in the Poprad District of northern Slovakia's Prešov Region.



An example of a typical insert that could be included in a groom's wedding hat.



Beaded cap from Poniky in the Banská Bystrica District of central Slovakia.



Headdress from Lendak in the Kežmarok District of northern Slovakia's Prešov Region, an area traditionally inhabited by Gorals or "highlanders."



Beaded hat from Ábelová in the Lučenec District in the Banská Bystrica Region of central Slovakia.



Cepiec or cap from Prenčov in the Banská Štiavnica District of the Banská Bystrica Region.



Headdress from Veľký Lom in the Veľký Krtíš District of the Banská Bystrica Region of southern Slovakia.



Beaded hat from Bzovik in the Krupina District of the Banská Bystrica Region.



Head piece from Torysky in the Levoča District in the Prešov Region of central-eastern Slovakia.