

Czechoslovak Mission Monument

Karlštejn, Czech Republic

The first LDS missionary to the Czech lands, in what was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was Thomas Biesinger. In February 1884 Elder Biesinger preached in Prague and was arrested and put in prison, where he remained for two months before being brought to trial. He was then sentenced to a one-month term. Just before his departure in June 1884, he baptized Antonín Just, a fur dealer, who had been his accuser at his trial.¹

In 1913, a year before the start of the first World War, Frantiska Vesela Brodilová was baptized in Vienna. She and her two daughters would become the only members of the Church in Czechoslovakia for nearly a decade. In 1918, at the end of the war Czechoslovak was created out of the dismantled Austro-Hungarian Empire and one year later Sister Brodilová moved with her two daughters back to Prague, the new Czechoslovak capital.

When Elder Thomas Biesinger returned on a mission to the Czechoslovakian region in early 1928 at the age of 84, he requested and was granted permission to preach the gospel in the country. However, he left a few months later, and no replacement was sent when he returned to Utah.

Sister Brodilová wrote to President Heber J. Grant and requested that missionaries be sent to the Czechoslovakian region. This opened the door for Arthur Gaeth, a 24-year old missionary serving in Germany, to be called to preside over the newly created Czechoslovakia Mission. At that time, only the Brodilová family were members of the Church in Czechoslovakia. On July 24, 1929, the European Mission president, John A. Widtsoe, in the presence of sixteen missionaries, dedicated the land for the preaching of the gospel and officially established the first mission in Slavic Europe. This he did on a wooded knoll known as Knei Horá (Priest's Hill) not far from the Karlštejn Castle. Before Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Nazi Regime, 128 individuals joined the Church.

In 1944, then under Nazi occupation, several members of the Church returned to the site of the dedication and constructed a stone monument. Since the renewal of freedom in 1990, Church members have continued to gather there every July 24th to commemorate the event. The location continues to be a significant place to the Saints of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

SOURCES

¹ William G. Hartley, "A Missionary's Two Months in Jail," *New Era*, Nov. 1982, 8.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Address:

Karlštejn, Czech Republic

Hours of Operation:

Daylight to Dark

Admission:

Free

ADDITIONAL READING RESOURCES

Marvin K. Gardner, "Witnesses through Trial and Triumph," *Ensign*, December 1999, 27.
William G. Hartley, "A Missionary's Two Months in Jail," *New Era*, Nov. 1982, 8.
Kahlile Mehr, "Czech Saints: A Brighter Day," *Ensign*, August 1994, 46.

