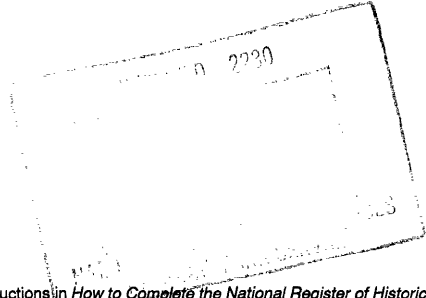


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall

Other names/site number Crete Sokol Hall / SA01-176

2. Location

Street & number 12th St and Norman Ave

Not for publication

City or town Crete

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Saline

Code 151

Zip code 68333

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lawrence Sommer
Signature of certifying official

10/14/03
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall

11.26.03

Jan
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall

Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- X Private
Public-local
Public-state
Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- X Building(s)
District
Site
Structure
Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (Buildings, Sites, Structures, Objects, Total). Values: Contributing (1, 0, 0, 0, 1), Noncontributing (0, 0, 0, 0, 0).

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater, auditorium, music facility, sports facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater, auditorium, music facility, sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete, brick
Walls Brick
Roof Metal over wood
Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HISTORY: European

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1915-1953

Significant Dates

1915

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Anton Daniel & Sons, Crete, Nebraska

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Benne Memorial Museum
- Author's private library;

Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	672370	4498840	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet L. Jeffries Beauvais, Independent Historian

organization Adj. Instructor in History, Doane College

date August 13, 2003

street & number 841 Forest Ave

telephone 402-826-5270 / 402-826-8234

city or town Crete, NE

state NE zip code 68333

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title T.J. Sokol Membership c/o Bruce S. Cerny, president

street & number 328 County Road 2250

telephone 402-826-2973

city or town Crete

state NE zip code 68333

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall

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DESCRIPTION

The Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall, constructed in 1915, was built as a multi-use facility by, and for, Bohemian and Moravian emigrants. The two-story brick structure is in near original condition, and exemplifies subtle design elements that represent the transference of the esthetics and culture of the Czech Lands to the Great Plains. A product of Anton Daniel and Sons, a family of architects and builders from Moravia, the building was designed and equipped to serve as a theatre, gymnasium, dining hall, dance hall, meeting space, and general social gathering place, functions still appropriate and taking place today.

Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall, located in Crete, Nebraska (2000 pop. 6,026), is a two-story, 8,712 square-foot brick building, with a 45' by 96.8' rectangular footprint. The hall, built over a raised basement, was erected in 1915. It is situated on the northeast corner of 12th Street and Norman Avenue, just one block west of one of the main intersections in the Crete business district.

Exterior

The "T.J." Sokol Hall is straightforward in design, and the exterior window and door placement in the building is virtually symmetrical. The windows are accented only by sill courses. The basement windows are placed at grade level, and are large to provide daylight to the raised lower level. Main public entry to the building is gained via a centrally located, recessed doorway in the south (frontal) façade. An arched opening in the exterior wall – in this case a simple reference to the Renaissance Revival style -- frames the entrance space. On the north, or alley, façade is a raised service door placed at stage floor level for easy delivery of props and equipment. Two fire escape doors are placed at each side (east and west) of the main hall space on first floor, and iron stairways descend from these doorways along those facades of the building.

Piers, that provide a simplistic design feature in addition to their structural obligation, equidistantly break the exterior wall plane of the hall. A low parapet tops the three public facades of the building, shielding the gable roof from view. The parapet is taller atop the piers that flank the front entrance, and the entire frontal portion of the parapet is capped with a course of concrete. Masonry urns crown the four frontal piers in another reference to Renaissance motifs. A stone on the southwestern corner of the building states 'T.J.S. z *budovano* (laid or placed) 5/22 1915.'

The tower at the rear of the building above the stage, houses fly space for the theatre curtains within. This is one of few Czech halls in Nebraska to utilize this feature, as most houses rolled their curtains rather than raising them up completely flat. This architectural amenity facilitates a speedy changing of scenery, and reduces wear and tear on the curtains themselves. The tower is built of wood. The low-pitched roofs of the tower and the hall are covered with metal.

Interior – Main Level

The interior of the building was designed to accommodate a variety of activities. The present floor plan has deviated only slightly from the original, just as the current functions of the hall are virtually unchanged from the initial activities for which the hall was designed.

Upon entering the building at the main (south) entrance, one finds a small foyer area with a wide stairway rising north into a reception space. Two narrower stairways on either side (east and west) of the entrance foyer lead down to the basement level of the building. At the top of the wide stairs, in the reception area, are entrances to several small service rooms. There is a kitchen and snack counter in the southwest corner, and a ladies restroom and coatroom in the southeast corner. Two ticket booths are also found in the reception area. A set of large double doors leads into the main 'house' or auditorium space. This area, used historically and currently for dancing and gymnastics, utilizes approximately 50 percent of the main level square footage. The large expanse of floor space can be used for gymnastics practice and competitions, and dances, but is easily transformed into an auditorium for stage performances with the addition of rows of chairs. This area has also often been used as a banquet space. The ceiling in the house angles to follow the lower chord of the roof trusses, and is covered with decorative pressed metal. A variety of rings are permanently anchored in the

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ceiling to support gymnastic apparatus as necessary. The lower portions of the walls are clad with wooden wainscoting, and hardwood trim frames all door and window openings and the stage proscenium. The original maple floors were covered with tile in 1967.

Stage/Theatre

At the north end of the 'house' space is the stage. The proscenium doors on either side of the stage open to stairways that provide the only interior access to the stage and dressing rooms. The proscenium opening is a rectangular shape as opposed to the arch found in many theatres. The stage is enlarged by an apron that extends out toward the audience. To the west of the apron is a small platform, surrounded by a solid, low wall representing a balustrade, that historically provided space for one or two musicians, or a speaker. In more recent years, it has been the location of the hall piano. The Sokol gymnastics logo featuring a falcon perched on the Sokol shield is painted above the proscenium opening.

The "T.J." Sokol Hall stage is virtually unchanged, and in effect, a time capsule for students of theatre designs. As in many Czech theatres, the floor plan of the stage area is quite simple and practical. Dressing rooms are found in either corner at the rear of the stage, flanking the rear service door off the alley. Catwalks to access equipment are found along the east and west walls of the stage, and the near original, and functional, lighting box is located near the west proscenium entrance. Footlights are housed in the apron, and at center stage front in the apron is a below floor level prompter's box.

The west catwalk is accessible via a narrow wooden stairway. From this catwalk, one is able to operate the proscenium curtains, and the scenery backdrop curtains and wings housed in the fly space above by using the original pulley and rope system. There are seven curtains, and/or curtain and wings sets in the hall depicting the variety of settings needed for most any play. Most, if not all, of these unique and exquisite curtains were painted by Nebraska artist Jack Ballard, and others were stock designs. Because of the fly space storage system, the curtains in the Crete Sokol Hall were never rolled and, except for some water damage on two of them, they retain their original integrity. Scenery flats, some also painted by Ballard, were also used on this stage, and they are currently stored in the balcony.

Costumes and Bohemian playbooks were also stored along the west catwalk in cupboards. The space below the west catwalk was used for prop storage during performances, and in later years, the prompter stood backstage in this area rather than sitting under the stage floor. The east catwalk is narrow, and can be accessed only via built-in ladder. This catwalk was used for equipment adjustments.

A gallery, or balcony, is located at the rear of the 'house' over the service rooms and main entrance. It is accessed from the reception area via two sets of stairways located directly above the stairways leading to the basement. The floor of the gallery slopes toward the stage, giving the balcony audience greater viewing capability for theatre performances and activities taking place on the 'house' floor. The north end of the gallery floor has a concave curve, mirroring the apron of the stage. Round metal pipe, about 3 inches in diameter, was used to create a balustrade.

Lower level

The completely finished, raised basement of the building provides nearly equal floor space to the first floor for activities, and also houses the mechanical systems. This level of the building was designed to house various activities of the Sokol organization, and also to serve as home to other Czech organizations and community functions.

At the base of the two stairways leading into the basement from the front (south) entrance, is a hallway. From this hallway, one may access a large kitchen in the southeast corner, a storage room between the stairway that was once a women's restroom, men's and women's restrooms, and the furnace room in the southwest corner, and two large meeting rooms to the north. The meeting rooms are situated under the main level 'house' floor space. Two sets of large double doorways topped by transom windows are located along the north-south wall separating the two rooms, allowing for traffic flow back and forth from both rooms during large events. Pressed metal ceilings and original hardwood trim enhance the design of this space. The east room retains its original hardwood floor, but the west room floor is now covered with tile.

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At the north end of the basement, under the stage, is the original Sokol gymnastics apparatus practice room. One gains entry to this room via a stairway on the east side of the stage under the catwalk, or from the lower level service area. The practice room is excavated about two feet down from the basement floor level to allow for large gymnastics equipment, and movements that require a great deal of space. In an area between the meeting rooms and the practice room are various service rooms including the original boiler room, a restroom, and apparatus storage room. This room also features a pressed metal ceiling, but has concrete flooring.

Conclusion

"T.J." Sokol Hall is still home to local Sokol gymnastic societies, and area members of all ages train here for competitions that take them all over the United States, Canada, and sometimes the Czech Republic. The hall also serves as the location for activities such as flea markets, Z.C.B.J. (Western Bohemian Fraternal Life Association) Lodge meetings, special events, and dances. Until recently Sokol members hosted regular bingo nights in the building. The hall is also rented out to community groups for events.

"T.J." Sokol Hall virtually retains its original 1915 appearance on both the exterior and interior, and is in good repair.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall in Crete, Nebraska, has played a major role in preserving Czech culture and sense of Czech "community" in this area for nearly 90 years. The building is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Czech ethnic heritage, and social history for its position as home to one of the oldest Sokol gymnastic organizations in the state of Nebraska, and as an ethnic community center. The hall has been an important gathering site for numerous Czech heritage activities including Czech language and history classes, Czech language theatre productions, Czech lodge meetings, dances, band concerts, "free thinker" funerals, and dinners since its 1915 completion. The building's period of significance begins in 1915, its date of construction, and extends to 1953, fifty years prior to this nomination.

The building is perhaps one of the most ambitious projects of Moravian builders/architects Anton Daniel and his sons, Edward and Charles, a multigenerational firm of builders that constructed several buildings, including homes and barns in the Crete area. Because of their own Czech heritage and Sokol membership, the Daniels were the ideal builders to create an ethnic inspired space for their fellow countrymen, and ensure the proper setting to preserve the Czech culture in the New World. The fine work of pictorial artist Jack Ballard, who painted the curtains and flats for the theatre stage, added much to the cultural stage ambiance, and greatly enhanced the Czech theatre productions. The Crete "T.J." Sokol Hall continues to serve as a multifunctional community center for the Czech-American people in this region, and as an educational center for teaching Czech culture to new generations. This well-proportioned and handsome multi-functional Czech hall retains its historical and architectural integrity.

The Czechs in Nebraska

The first Bohemian and Moravian immigrants came to eastern Nebraska soon after the area became a territory in 1854. By the middle 1860s, prompted by the Homestead Act, permanent Czech settlement began to occur in the state. Czech immigrants from the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia came to Saline County in 1865, and soon this area boasted the largest rural colony of Czechs in the state.¹

Most of the Czech immigrants in Nebraska came from small farming villages and were used to living in close proximity to one another in the Old Country. In this country, they naturally assembled in cultural "communities," particularly in expansive, rural areas, as a means to stay in touch and retain their identity. The Czechs developed "community" by forming fraternal organizations and building halls to serve as Czech culture and heritage community centers wherever they settled in the United States. Two of the most significant 19th century organizations, still active today, are the American Sokol Organization and the Western Bohemian Life Association, formerly *Západní Česko Bratrská Jednota*, (Z.C.B.J.). The Sokol units often share hall space and interact for activities, particularly in rural areas of the country.

The Sokol Movement

The Sokol movement was founded in Prague in 1862 as a fraternal organization to build community and patriotism during a time of class and nationality conflicts in that country. Advocating the mottoes "let us strengthen ourselves," and "a sound mind in a sound body," the organization uses the falcon, which, in Czech, translates into *sokol*, as its symbol of prowess. The intent of founders Jindrich Fugner and Miroslav Tyrs was to build the self-confidence of members through physical and intellectual dexterity, love of country, and commitment to community service.²

The Czechs in America embraced the idea of Sokol, and founded the American Sokol Organization in St. Louis in 1865, just three years after the Prague Sokol was created. The educational mission of this group, still strong today, includes these goals: 1.) To build a healthy and beautiful human body; 2.) To cultivate a harmonious and total individual;

¹ Rose Rosicky, *A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska*, (Omaha: Czech Historical Society of Nebraska, 1929.), 70.

² Bruce Garver, "The Roots of Sokol," *Magazine of the Midlands*, (Omaha: *Omaha World Herald* newspaper, 1986)

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3.) To develop firm character, a well-rounded disposition with a love of truth and justice; 4.) To produce strong, lovely and honorable citizens of the United States of America. The Sokol movement is the only Czech fraternal order in the United States that was created in the Old Country and brought here. Other Czech groups were founded in this country.³

During the 19th century, every state with large Bohemian and Moravian populations organized Sokol units. American Sokols emphasized ethnic camaraderie and the preservation of old world cultural traditions, while at the same time, promoting good citizenship and dedication to service leadership in this new country. This differed slightly from Sokol mission in Bohemia and Moravia that urged nation-building and national sovereignty.⁴ The feeling of solidarity that came via the American Sokol movement did much to reassure the Czech immigrants already here, and those who followed, that life in this new land would allow the Czechs to keep their important traditions while embracing the challenges in this country.⁵

The Sokol doctrine nurtured teamwork, and the success of this teaching was, and still is, evident in the most spectacular event in Sokol gymnastics -- the *slet*, or rally. Each year, there are local, regional and national slets that bring together units for competition. Every four years, an international slet is held in Prague at Strahov Stadium, an arena as large as six football fields. The stadium can hold 16,000 gymnasts. The significance of the solidarity movement in the Sokol mission is exposed during each slet, no matter the number of participants. All Sokol units, worldwide, rehearse certain drills, and when they come together, all gymnasts in attendance perform them in synchronized time. Audience members have been awed for decades by these mass calisthenics, often performed at the culmination of large national celebrations in addition to the slets. In Prague, there are literally thousands of gymnasts moving as one body during these exercises, a tribute to teamwork and a harmonious lifestyle.⁶ A large slet, held in 1964 in Crete at the Sokol Hall, and also on the Doane College football field, boasted impressive displays of mass calisthenics.⁷

The founders of Sokol in America were called "free thinkers." They were immigrants who had severed all ties to organized religion, and cultivated fellowship activities and community service projects via fraternal organizations like Sokol, replicating the types of activities characteristically found in churches. These associations, including Sokol, provided fellowship and mutual protection for members from birth until death. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these free thinkers indeed recognized that they belonged to a unified, nation-wide community of Czechs, as evidenced by their regular communication with friends and relatives in the Old Country and in other American Czech settlements. The immigrants formed strong bonds with one another, and met regularly, socially and formally, via fraternal associations within their settlements.⁸

The Czech Hall

In order to carry out the missions of the Sokol organization and other Czech fraternal organizations, it was an important goal of the immigrants to secure permanent housing for their activities. Czech halls built in rural areas and small towns were generally designed to serve many functions. These halls were truly the community centers or gathering places for the Czech people, and numerous activities and events took place, and continue to take place, in these halls.⁹

Czech-American halls are symbolic of the late 19th century cultural renaissance in Bohemia punctuated by the

³ Janet Jeffries (Spencer), "Brush Creek Sokol Hall," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Nebraska State Historical Society and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1985.

⁴ Garver, "Roots."

⁵ Stan Barcal, *History of the American Sokol Organization, 125 years*, (Oak Brook, Illinois: privately printed, 1990),

⁶ Ronald Jaros, *Sokol: Gathering in the New World*, (Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, KNA Press, 1992.) 59,60.

⁷ Western District of American Sokols, Sokolsky Slet program booklet, (Crete: *The Crete News*, 1964.

⁸ Bruce Garver, "Czech Freethinkers on the Great Plains," chapter in *Ethnicity in the Great Plains*, Frederick Luebke, editor, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980) 155.

⁹ David Murphy, "Gathering the World in Local History: The Kollar Hall," *Nebraska Humanities*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, Nebraska Humanities Council, 1992.)

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construction of the National Theatre in Prague. This theatre opened in 1881, and marked the first time after many years of cultural oppression, that a major Czech drama was staged.

Czech halls in America were just as important to the Czech Americans as was the National Theatre to people in the Old World. These "stand alone" Czech halls symbolize the importance the immigrants placed on cultural activities in their adopted American towns. The Czechs did not want to place their halls in the second level of commercial buildings, in the mode of American opera houses, although Czech halls were often in, or near, business districts. The Czechs desired easy access to their facilities, and felt that the limitations imposed by a second floor theatre/hall location would have been impractical for the activities held within.¹⁰

Activities and events typically held in Czech halls include Sokol gymnastic practices, drills, meetings, and competitions; theatre performances in the Czech language; social events such as weddings, wedding receptions, banquets, band concerts, and dances; Czech language and culture classes, funerals, Sokol and Z.C.B.J. lodge meetings, and any number of non-Czech community activities, including elections, graduation ceremonies and lectures. Czechs did not prohibit non-Czech use or participation in their halls. A simple design plan that allowed a "house" space for seating, dancing, gymnastics, and dining; a stage on one end; service rooms on the other end; and kitchen and meeting rooms in a basement, proved to be a successful solution to meet the needs of these varied activities.

Crete T.J. Sokols and the Sokol Hall

The Crete Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol unit, founded in the 1870s as a reading club, was the first unit to appear in Nebraska. This organization was more formally organized in 1884 when it became federated with the American Sokol Organization. After meeting in rented space, and holding gymnastic practices outdoors for several years, the Crete Sokol members built their first hall in 1891, a wooden structure situated three blocks west of the present hall.¹¹ This relatively small hall was constantly in use, and not only by Sokol members. Crete High School held basketball practice and games there and the local YMCA met there, showing that multiple use was taking place from the beginning. After 20 years of service, the wooden hall was destroyed by fire in 1913.¹² The Sokol members decided to rebuild as soon as possible. The present, much larger, brick hall was completed two years later, closer to the Crete business district.¹³

The Daniel Family, Architects and Builders

Anton Daniel and Sons, builders of the "T.J." Sokol Hall, were members of a well-known Czech immigrant family that included several contractors. Three brothers, Anton, Tomas and John, who had learned the building trade in their homeland came to this country in the late 19th century. All are listed as architects and/or carpenters on immigrant lists,¹⁴ and in time, second generation family members also became engaged in the building trade.¹⁵ Anton Daniel, the principal designer and contractor of the "T.J." Sokol Hall, was born in 1862, in Sazava, a small town in extreme western Moravia, near the Bohemian border.¹⁶ He came to America in 1881 to join his older brother, John. Other family members, including Tomas followed, and soon a large extended family of Daniels resided in and near Crete. From the 1880s, until well into the 20th century, fine, sturdy houses and barns, of simplistic, yet well appointed designs, were erected by various combinations of Daniel family builders. At least six Daniel family members, from three separate families, and two generations, were builders. Several houses in an area southwest of Sokol Hall in Crete, in addition to numerous rural

¹⁰ David Murphy, "Dramatic Expressions: Czech Theatre Curtains in Nebraska," *Nebraska History*, vol. 74, Nos. 3 and 4, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1993.)

¹¹ J.W. Kaura, *Saline County, Nebraska History* (Lincoln: Nebraska Farmer Co., 1962) 126, 127.

¹² Western District of American Sokols, *Sokolsky Slet* program booklet, (Crete: *The Crete News*, 1964.

¹³ Kaura, 127.

¹⁴ Margie Sobotka, comp., *Nebraska, Kansas Czech Settlers, 1891-1895*, (Omaha: privately printed, n.d.)

¹⁵ Daniel family records in possession of Allison Daniel Petersen and Donald Daniel.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Atlas, Česká Republika, (Germany: Marco Polo, 1992.)

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houses and barns, are products of this firm. Some of these homes were built as residences for family members. The Daniels had a reputation for their fine building skills that is still recognized today. Current residents of "Daniel" homes are very much aware of the construction legacy left by this family.

Anton Daniel and his construction team used the public building model, rather than the commercial one, in the design of the Crete hall. The new "T.J." Sokol Hall allowed for easy transformation of the house space from gymnastic practice area to dance hall, theatre audience seating, or banquet hall. The service rooms, including the coat room, snack bar, and rest rooms are located, and designed, to provide proper amenities for even the most sophisticated event, yet also be a proper home to utilitarian activities such as the gymnastic practices.

The interior floor plan, and subtle exterior design elements, reflect the transference of Czech architectural design, particularly the Renaissance Revival style, to the Great Plains of America. The arched front entrance, the parapet along the roof line, and especially the masonry urns that top the piers on the front façade of the building reflect the flavor of the Old World.

Anton Daniel's sons Edward and Charles helped build the Sokol hall. Anton was a charter member of the Crete Sokol unit, and most probably, so were his brothers. Anton served as Sokol treasurer for 25 years, and also belonged to the Crete Z.C.B.J. lodge. Other family members, including the women, were also long-time Sokol members. Many Crete Sokol records were destroyed in the 1913 fire, so it is difficult to verify certain facts.

Anton Daniel died in 1941, and in true free thinker fashion, his funeral was held in the Crete Sokol Hall.¹⁷ He outlived his brothers, and was a well-respected family patriarch and Sokol "elder" at the time of his death.

The Sokol Hall Theatre

Czech immigrants brought their love of theatre to this country, and arduously pursued that artistic venue. The Crete Sokol members were very active in producing Czech plays. For decades, Czech drama performances were a major activity in the hall. From the completion of the building in 1915 until the 1940s, Czech language plays were regularly staged in the building. In fact, all of the play books, and several props and costumes still survive in good condition. These productions were well publicized via posters and area newspapers, and drew large crowds. An evening of theatre at the Crete Sokol Hall was often capped by a dance in the hall after the drama production.¹⁸

The "T.J." Sokol Hall stage area is significant as a near original, working example of an early 20th century theatre stage with the pleasing addition of Czech design influences. The original pulley and rope system that drops the backdrop curtains and their corresponding wings is in good working order, and the light box still operates the stage and foot lights, with original controls. A fly space over the stage houses the curtains, a sophisticated feature in the building's design, allowing the curtains to hang freely. This unchanged theatre has been the recent subject of study by theatre technology students enrolled in a University of Missouri, Kansas City theatre history class.

Jack Ballard, Artist

One of the most important design elements in the "T.J." Sokol Hall is the collection the theatre curtains and flats painted by Nebraska native, Jack Ballard. Ballard created proscenium curtains, seven backdrop and wing sets, and flats for the theatre stage that allowed for a good variety of scenes to complement the plays.

Byrl Jack Ballard was born in Iowa in 1878 and came to Nebraska in 1883. The family settled in Diller, Nebraska, that interestingly, was the home of two other notable Nebraska muralists, Danish immigrants, Charles Hansen and James Willer, who painted residential and commercial decor.¹⁹ It is not known if Ballard was acquainted with these artists,

¹⁷ Anton Daniel obituary, "Death Ends Illness for A. Daniel," *The Crete News*, October 30, 1941.

¹⁸ Elmer Pomajzl, Crete Sokol member, interview by Janet Jeffries, 1997.

¹⁹ Gilkerson, Joni, "The Andrew H. Coleman House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Nebraska State Historical Society and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1982.

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however, is it an interesting coincidence that they lived in the same very small town. It is possible that their periods of residence in Diller and their itinerant life styles may have found them in the same locales.

Nineteen-year-old Ballard came to Crete in 1897. It is possible that he joined family members in the firm Ballard and Cramer, Painters when he moved to Crete, but this has yet to be proven. Ballard and Cramer advertised as sign painters, decorators, and carriage painters in an 1898 Crete newspaper.²⁰ Jack Ballard married a Czech woman named Emma Kolarik in 1899, and had a lifetime career as a pictorial artist. He painted circus posters, signs, stage scenery, church frescoes, and did other specialized painting. During most of his career, he found himself in the role of itinerant painter, taking his family with him as he worked in several Nebraska towns, Colorado, Wyoming, and California. From 1942 until his death in 1952, Ballard was a designer for a Lincoln, Nebraska, neon sign company.²¹

Ballard, who signed his paintings Jack Ballard, painted several other Czech Hall theatre curtains in Nebraska, including those in the Clarkson Z.C.B.J. Opera House and the Wilber Opera House.²²

Conclusion

The importance of the "T.J." Sokol Hall to the Crete community is evident in the lavish celebration held in September 1915 when the building was completed. The numerous and varied participants in the day-long event included Czechs and non-Czechs. *The Crete News* detailed the activities of the celebration in a lengthy news article. The story compares the day to a Fourth of July celebration with people coming in by train and wagon to participate. Bands from Wilber and Crete marched in an afternoon parade that included several floats made by Crete businesses. The parade, led by several firemen, began at City Hall, four blocks from Sokol Hall, and proceeded along a route through downtown Crete. Hundreds of men and women involved with the Sokol order marched, and the businesses displayed the Bohemian national colors and flags. After the parade, participants arrived at the new hall, where a program was held. The bands played on stage to a standing-room-only crowd, and each set of stage curtains were raised and lowered so that the audience could admire them. Dignitaries included the mayor of Crete, president of the Crete Sokols, Editor Kutak of the *Pokrok Zapadu*, a leading Czech language newspaper published in Omaha, and former Attorney General George H. Hastings, a popular orator. Hastings and Kutak were featured speakers -- Hastings in the English language, and Kutak in Czech. Their addresses followed a short speech given by builder Anton Daniel, who gave the Sokol president a large wooden symbolic key to the hall. This key is still in the building. Additional musical entertainment, several skits, and a traditional Sokol flag drill were also presented. The evening ended with many people offering monetary donations toward the price of the hall.²³ That an entire town and other visitors from the vicinity, Czech and non-Czech, would be interested

²⁰ "Crete's Business Men and her Worthy Institutions," *Crete Vidette*, June 9, 1898.

²¹ "Obituary of Byrl J. Ballard," *The Crete News*, August 7, 1952. Family records in the possession of Dorothy Kupka Rejcha.

²² David Murphy, "Dramatic Expressions: Czech Theatre Curtains in Nebraska," *Nebraska History*, vol. 74, Nos. 3 and 4, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1993.)

²³ *The Crete News*, September 30, 1915.

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and eager participants in this dedication celebration speaks volumes as to the importance of this building and the organization to the Crete area.

From its inception, the Sokol organization in America has played a major role in the daily lives of Czech Americans. Through Sokols and other Czech fraternal organizations, the Czechs united to preserve their culture and speak their native language. The Crete Sokol Hall represents the national solidarity and the strength of the Czech people as they transferred their allegiance from one country to another. The Czechs were particularly successful in preserving the heritage and culture of their homeland while embracing a new culture, and Czech halls nationwide were instrumental in this accomplishment. This phenomenon of cultural solidarity still occurs across the nation in areas heavily settled by Czechs.

The "T.J." Sokol Hall is a fine example of a Czech community, multifunctional hall, and a tribute to Anton Daniel and his family team of builders. Over the years, a variety of social, educational and recreational activities as mentioned above, have taken place here, and the building continues to be utilized regularly for two of its original, main purposes – Sokol gymnastics and dancing. Crete Community Theatre used the stage as recently as the 1970s and 1980s. The hall is still an important hub of Czech culture and recreation in the community, and serves as an educational center for teaching Czech heritage and Sokol traditions to new generations.

Today, there are about 45 gymnasts in the girls' Sokol division, and 15 in the boys' unit. They compete regularly, regionally, and nationally, proudly shouting *Zdar* and *Nazdar* as they complete their movements. Membership in the men's Sokol unit, the entity that oversees the hall, has dwindled, although there is now renewed interest among younger Czech Americans in the community. The group has plans for the future that include making cosmetic improvements to the building's interior, and the reestablishment of some of the popular social activities that have been discontinued in recent years.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property is described as all of lot 10, and the west 10 feet of lot 11, Block 1, Original Blue River City, Crete, Saline County, Nebraska.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries include all of the property historically associated with the Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall in Crete, Nebraska.

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Photos -- Crete Sokol Hall

The following information pertains to the first ten of 11 photos:

Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall /Crete Sokol Hall
Saline County, Nebraska NeHBS #SA01:176
Photographer: Janet Jeffries Beauvais, Crete, Nebraska
August 2003
Negatives in the collection of the photographer.

Photo #11 is a copy of photograph in the possession of Allison Daniel Petersen, Walton, Nebraska.

<u>Photograph #</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>View (looking...)</u>
#1 of 11	Front façade, Crete Sokol Hall	N
#2 of 11	View of Crete Sokol Hall	NE
#3 of 11	Front entrance	N
#4 of 11	View of main level/"house" space	NNE
#5 of 11	View of main level/"house" space	S
#6 of 11	Main proscenium curtain	N
#7 of 11	Village scene backdrop curtain	N
#8 of 11	Courtyard/garden backdrop curtain	N
#9 of 11	View of prompter's box in stage floor	SSW
#10 of 11	View of west catwalk and curtain riggings on stage.	WNW
#11 of 11	Architect/Builder Anton Daniel (1862-1941)	n/a

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Supplemental Photos:

The following information pertains to the supplemental photos accompanying this nomination:

Tělocvičná Jednota "T.J." Sokol Hall /Crete Sokol Hall

NeHBS #SA01:176, Saline County, Nebraska

Photographer: P. Michael Whye

1992

Negatives in the collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The photos itemized below, although more than 10 years old, still give accurate illustrations of the Crete Sokol Hall theatre curtains. The condition of the curtains remains virtually the same today, as can be seen by comparing the 1992 photos to the 2003 photos.

Photograph #	Description	View (<i>looking...</i>)
#S1 of 8	View of main level "house"	N
#S2 of 8	Detail of proscenium curtain	N
#S3 of 8	Advertising curtain	N
#S4 of 8	Village scene backdrop curtain	N
#S5 of 8	Courtyard/garden backdrop curtain	N
#S6 of 8	Courtyard/garden backdrop (2 nd curtain)	N
#S7 of 8	Mountain scene backdrop curtain	N
#S8 of 8	Woodland backdrop curtain	N