

## The Kovalak Family

### (A Pictorial History)

My name is Thomas James Kovalak, Jr. and I was born in Ann Arbor, MI on October 15, 1968 to Thomas James Kovalak and Patricia Richardson. I became interested in genealogy in 1989. I started with my mother's family. After spending about four years on her side, I began my father's side.



My father, Tom Sr. was born in Willis, MI on January 16, 1941. His parents were George Kovalak and Mary (Adamova) Kovalak. They also had Nancy (1933), James (1943) and Georgeanne or Jeanie as we call her (1946).

George Kovalak was born in March of 1906 in Punxutawney, PA. His parents were Mikulas (Mike) Kovalak and Anna (Kovalcik) Kovalak. Mike and Anna Kovalak had 11 children. Michael, John, Steve, Elias (Elic), Joseph, George, Anna, Mary, Julia, Susan, and Martha. Some of the boys and girls spelled their last name Kovalak and others Kovalyak. The actual spelling in Slovakia was Koval'ak. It was pronounced Ko-VAL-yak.

Mikulas Kovalak was born in Circ, Slovakia in 1863 and Anna Kovalcik was born in Orlov, Slovakia in 1867. Mikulas immigrated to the US in 1885 and Anna in 1887. They both left the German port of Bremen, and I even have a copy of the [passport](#) for Mikulas. A cousin of mine in Indianapolis has the original. They both settled near Punxatawney, in Anita, PA.

My grandfather, George, moved to Detroit around 1928. He soon married a Rusyn-American, my grandmother Mary Adam(ova). She was born near Pittsburgh in 1907. Mary's parents were both born in the Gorlice region of Southern Poland (Lemko). Her parents were Jozef Adam and Paraskeva (Pearl) Ropicky. They came to the US around 1903. My grandmother Mary could not speak English when she first went to school. Her teacher ended up changing her name to Adams, and she kept that until she got married.

I went to Circ in August of 1994 at the age of 25. I was living in Orlando, FL at the time. No one in Slovakia knew about me or that I was coming there. I was now three generations away from Slovakia. I started learning Slovak about 3 months before I left. Helen Rudzik, a recent immigrant from Slovakia, taught me from a book on the weekends. I would practice everyday, and I did learn enough to get by. I bought a round trip ticket from Orlando-New York-Vienna for \$766.

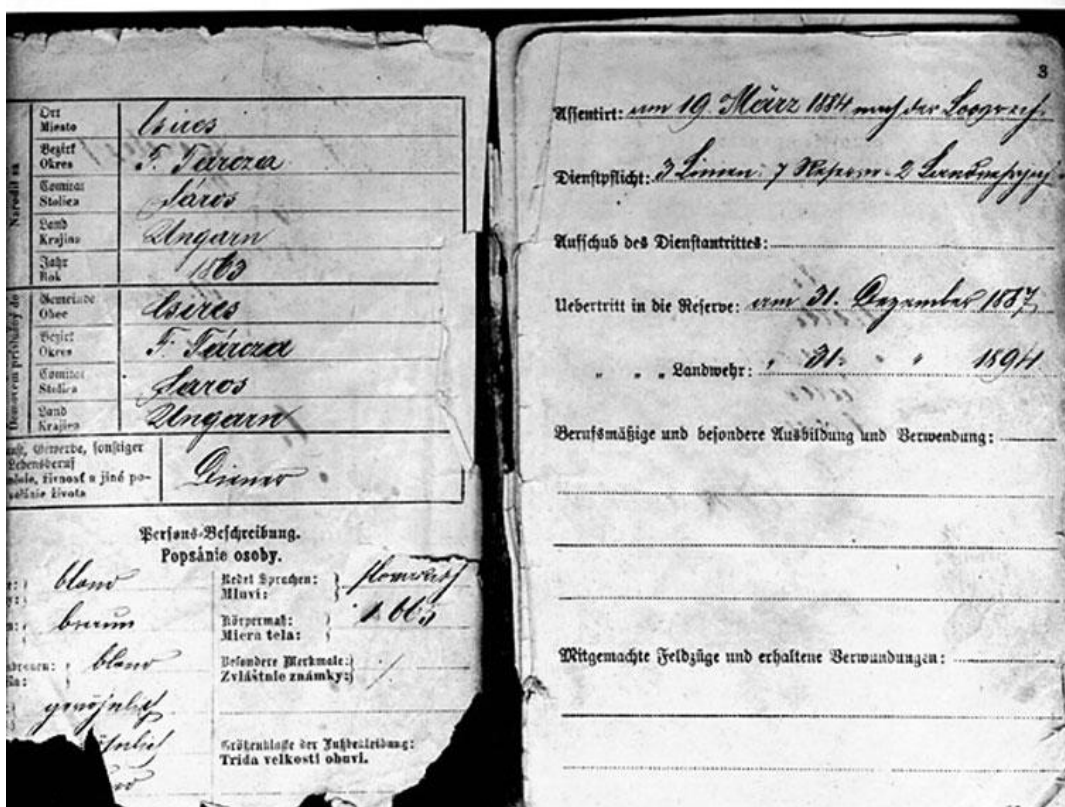
When I arrived in Vienna (I was alone by the way), I drove about eight hours in my rental car to the village of Circ. It was around 5pm when I arrived on August 18, 1994. I found a man herding sheep on the main road into the village. I said to him in my pathetic Slovak "Ja hladam pre rodina Kovalak. Moje meno je Tom Kovalak od Amerika". I guess he figured out that I was some American Kovalak, so he got in my car and told me "do l'ava, do prava" etc, until we got to this old house near a log cabin. It was the home of an old woman named Anna Kovalak. After some introductions, a little kid ran next door to get a young blond woman who could speak some English.

We visited for several hours, and they fed me some meat and a salad. They were very kind and hospitable. Communication was extremely difficult, but it didn't matter. These people were my

relatives! I could even see the resemblance between my older relatives and them. It was like looking right at some of my relatives I had always known, just now a million miles away.

I visited the cemetery (cintorin) and took pictures and videotape. I also went to Orlov on my journey and found many tombstones of the Kovalciks too. I was only in Slovakia for 5 days, but it was a wonderful experience. I would recommend that if anyone out there knows the actual village of their ancestors that they take the time and money to visit. You will not regret it!!

### Passport



Great-Grandfather Michael Kovalak



Great-Grandparents Michael & Anna Kovalak



Great-Grandmother Anna (Kovalcik) Kovalak 1890s



(L to R) Anna Kovalyak Kallas,  
Kallas Volt, & baby Karen Volt.



Anna Kovalcik Kovalak, Phyllis

Anna (seated) & Mary (standing) Kovalak



Susan (standing) & Anna Kovalak (sitting)



Steve & George Kovalak 1920s



Grandfather George Kovalak & his brother Joe



Great Aunt Martha Kovalak 1930s



Great Uncle Steve Kovalak in the US Navy



Grandparents George & Mary Kovalak Wedding Photo



Grandparents George & Mary Kovalak 1930



(Back row, L to R) Anna Kovalyak Kallas, Anna Kallas Kovalyak, Anna Kovalcik Kovalak, & Mary Kovalyak Kolesar. (Front row, L to R) Martha Kovalyak Quashnock, Julia Kovalyak Kallas, & Susan Kovalyak Savel.



Aunt Nancy Kovalak

1940s



Dad Tom Kovalak

1949





Grandparents George Mary Kovalak

1975



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Tom Kovalak, Jr.  
Vice President, Marketing and Sales  
Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative  
125 Minnesota Valley Electric Drive  
Jordan, MN 55352  
952-492-8295 (office)  
612-719-0902 (cellular)  
800-282-6832, ext. 8295 (toll-free)  
952-492-8281 (fax)  
[tkovalak@mvec.net](mailto:tkovalak@mvec.net) (email)  
[www.mvec.net](http://www.mvec.net) (MVEC Website)  
MVEC -Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative