

## From Czech California

*František Blecha in a terrible way stabbed his wife Anastázie and then hanged himself.*

The Czech public was still not at peace after the latest events, when yesterday at 9:00 am news started to circulate that at 2727 South Turner Ave a crime happened between husband and wife. It was an attempted murder and suicide.



František and Anastázie Blecha moved about 8 years ago from Podmokly to Chicago and bought a house at 2452 Turner Avenue. From the beginning, they lived happily and comfortably. Older children started to earn money and the family was happy. An old Czech proverb says that Good living will burn you, and so Blecha also started to be unsatisfied. He stopped working and often initiated quarrels in the family. This was happening when children were not at home, and then he tormented his wife, who aged prematurely from work and worries. This poor woman, who didn't want to cause shame to herself and her children, suffered and endured her husband's angry explosions. She cried unseen on the side regularly. Blecha went so far in his rage, that by false pretending cajoled from her a signature to collect \$500 from an assistance association, and then he kept the money. A short time after this, he even sold the house for \$2400, and after paying \$1000, which was owed, he gave his wife \$600 for her half (of the house). He left her here with eight children and carelessly ran away to Czech. After 4 months, he returned back to his wife, who in the mean time had bought the house at 2727 South Turner Avenue, where the drama occurred and where he lived with her for some time. Then he ran away again to the farm of his sister Anna Pechova in Youngstown, North Dakota, where he stayed one and half years and didn't take care of his wife or children. Several months ago, he returned back to Chicago and only after long persuasions Mrs. Blechová decided to live with him again when he promised to her he would reform himself. Yesterday's tragic case is a witness to how well he reformed himself. Quarrels were again happening daily, because his wife didn't want to sign over to him half of the house and enter with him into half of a milk shop, which he wanted to start with the rest of the money. When he saw that his wife would not agree to it, he threatened her with divorce and in time he abused her again. On Wednesday, March 13 he went with his son Frantisek to a funeral of unhappy lovers Adolf Jerling and Františka Součková, who killed themselves with gas. They had come from the same village as he did. At the funeral, he stated that he also will end it, but not alone. Somebody else had to go [die] with him. His son tried to talk his father out of this, and at the end left him, thinking that his father would not do such thing. But the father didn't gave up his idea, but considered it seriously, which was confirmed when he bought a revolver, and played with it often in front of the whole family. About two weeks ago,

nineteen year-old son Václav hid the gun in a safe place, told his mother about it and advised her to say that he brought the gun to a police station. Blecha quickly noticed the gun missing, but he never mentioned a word about it.

Yesterday after the children left for work and for school, Blecha asked his wife if she would agree to a divorce. When he heard a positive answer, he left the kitchen for the room and didn't say a word. In the room he started to close all sliding curtains on all windows. Mrs. Blechová didn't pay attention to it and started to wash the floor in the closet [alcove] next to kitchen, which they were using as a kitchen in the summer. Blecha closed the sliding curtains in the kitchen and tacitly entered the closet [alcove] and locked the door. Suddenly he took the bottle with modřička [blue violet disinfection] and hit his unsuspecting wife, who was kneeling on the floor, on the right temple. He threw himself on her and, he kneeled on her stomach and started to stab her in the head, chest and hands with a kitchen knife as if he were crazy. At the end, he was also strangling her. The poor woman remembers only the first hit, because she fainted. Blecha saw his wife lying down, bloodied and not moving, and thought he had killed her. He ran to the attic, connected the clothing rope to the beam near the chimney, stepped on the wash tub, put his head into a noose, kicked the wash tub away and hanged himself. After a half hour in a coma, Mrs. Blechová woke up. Stained with blood, with her last strength and leaving a blood trail behind her, she unlocked the door and pulled herself, holding on to the fence with her hands, to her neighbor, Mrs. Mina Zoubková, 2729 South Turner Avenue. Mrs. Zoubková could not even recognize Mrs. Blechová and didn't want to open the door for her, thinking that she is some vagrant woman, as a whole lot of such women are running around Czech California. After she knocked on the door repeatedly, she recognized her and opened the door. The poor woman showed her the wound from which the stream of blood was running and she fell into her arms. Mrs. Zoubková, with her mother, first provided her help. She helped her to bed and then ran into Mr. Honsik's pharmacy to make a phone call to Doctor Wedeles and to her son Václav, working for Mr. Hatajík on 27<sup>th</sup> street and Clifton Park Avenue. Doctor Wedeles came there quickly and provided medical help for Mrs. Blechová. During his treatment, he found a stab-wound on her chest, on the right temple, on her right hand near her elbow, on the palm of her right hand, and a lot of smaller wounds on her left hand and face, neck, chest, and right breast. He declared the injuries of Mrs. Blechová as minor, if an inflammation of brain matter does not start as a result of the wound on the right temple, which was done with the bottle of modřilka. He ordered total rest and advised that she should stay for now with Mrs. Zoubková, because transporting her could endanger her. In the mean time, son Václav hurried back home and when he heard that his mother's situation was not very bad; he let himself into the house and looked for his father. He didn't find him in the whole house and was afraid to go to the attic; therefore he called from the pub of Mr. Smetana for police, which found Blecha hanging in the attic. Doctor Wedeles tried to bring him back to life in many ways, but after all tries, he stated his death a short time ago. The body of the suicide man was brought to the funeral home of Mr. Chrástka on 26<sup>th</sup> street, where this morning at 10 a.m. will take place the inquest. On the suicide man was found \$286 in cash and different receipts for money he lends out.

Mr. and Mrs. Blecha have 8 children , František, 27 years, married and living at 2452 South Trumbull Avenue, Rudolf, 24 years, Marie, 21 years, married three months ago, Josef Havliš, 2846 Hoyne Avenue, Václav, 19 years, Jan, 17 years, Antonín, 13 years, Blanka, 11 years, and Josef, 9 years. Blecha also had a brother Adolf, living in Chicago on 31<sup>st</sup> street and Turner Avenue, sister Anna, married Pechová, in Youngstown, North Dakota and two brothers in Czech.

### Footnote on **Czech California**:

Czech immigration to Chicago began in the 1850s, after the [railroads](#) had linked the city to the East Coast. In the following two decades the cost and duration of emigration from Europe decreased markedly, as the transatlantic journey dropped from an average of 44 days in 1850 to an average of 9.7 days in 1875. Czech emigration swelled as faster railroads to port cities like Hamburg facilitated that leg of the journey as well. Chicago's Czech-born population reached its peak in the 1870s, and the Czech immigrant community remained important in the city long after immigration restrictions were imposed in the 1920s.

Chicago's Czech community followed a common pattern of migration from inner-city working-class neighborhoods to middle-class areas further out and on to the suburbs. This gradual movement followed the economic progress of many Czech immigrants and the influx of other ethnic groups. In the 1850s and 1860s many Czech immigrants settled on the [Near West Side](#). The neighborhood, known as "Prague," centered on the [Roman Catholic](#) parish of St. Wenceslaus at DeKoven and Desplaines Streets and was largely spared by the Chicago [Fire of 1871](#). Movement south and west in the 1870s and 1880s generated a second working-class Czech community, dubbed "[Pilsen](#)," which included the Czech congregation of St. Procopius, founded in 1875. By the 1890s, Czechs were colonizing middle-class neighborhoods like [South Lawndale](#) (popularly known as "Czech California"), where they established several churches, [schools](#), and Sokol halls. As the Czechs continued to move south and west, other immigrant groups moved into the neighborhoods they left, with immigrants from [Poland](#), [Croatia](#), [Slovenia](#), [Lithuania](#), and other Slavic areas settling in Pilsen around the turn of the century. By the 1930s many Czechs were moving into such suburbs as [Cicero](#), [Berwyn](#), and [Riverside](#).