

THE SLOVAKS AND THE RUN

The story of the Slovaks begins long, long ago while Jesus Christ was teaching his apostles in the far-off part of the Roman Empire called Jerusalem. The place that Greenfield's Slovaks would one day call "the old country" was then a mountainous land coated with pristine forests filled with wild animals. Roaming tribes of Celts—the same tribes that would one day come to Greenfield and call themselves Irishmen—called this country home. Hundreds of years went by before the Celts were forced out by new tribes, Germanic tribes invading from the north. They in turn were conquered by the Huns as they swept across Europe. Three centuries after that, the first Slavic tribes arrived from the east, banded together to form the Empire of Samo and captured the region that would be called Slovakia.

Slovakia became part of the Great Moravian Empire, which also included Moravia, Bohemia, Silesia, and parts of Hungary and Austria. The country was changed forever when two Greek missionaries, St. Konstantine and St. Methodius, converted these Slavic tribes to Christianity. Slavic priests were ordained, and Slovak joined Greek, Latin and Hebrew as a liturgical language.

When the last king of the Moravian Empire passed away, Magyar tribes from Hungary invaded and took over Slovakia. Slovakia remained part of Hungary for a millenium, while castles and basilicas were built and fell, cities grew and universities were founded.

The Magyars made Bratislava their capital throughout the religious wars that ensued when they were threatened from the south by Turks.

While Slovakia was occupied by Hungary, the Slovaks were no longer allowed to speak their own language. Fiercely proud of their heritage, they refused to comply with this edict and kept their language alive by secretly speaking it at home. Around the fire, late at night, grandparents passed on the stories they were told when they were children. These were exciting and lurid tales, guaranteed to bring squeals from the children and promise nightmares for all. They passed on legends of the old castles in the region and their rulers. They told of forest creatures who were human by day and

