

## Park buildings continued from page 10

Another idea was the carving of carnations -- a traditional Slovenian symbol -- into the wood of the kozolec.

Snedic visited the land of his ancestors in Europe in the early 1970s, but said he did not pay much attention to the kozolec of the landscape. He did notice, though, when a teacher from what is now the heart of Slovenian country in Europe today visited Willard a few years ago. He had written about and photographed the unique structures, and that inspired Snedic's recreation of a kozolec for Settlers' Park.

"That really got me started on the hay-drying idea," he said.

After the pieces were ready and the kozolec erected in 2003, Snedic turned his attention to other structures in the park. The outdoor grill canopy he designed and dedicated to his parents -- John, a renowned local artist who painted the depiction of Willard's main street in 1913 that graces the cover of the 1982 history book, and Ann, a fine cook who helped keep alive such Slovenian culinary favorites as potica. The grill shelter is adorned with grape vines carved into the support poles and a cupola in the roof.

Snedic also designed and built the small structure that covers the well casing in the park, and a grape arbor that sets along a rock wall.

They, too, incorporate various wood design techniques, although they are not necessarily of Slovenian heritage.

One of the final projects in which Snedic was involved was the carving of a huge white oak log for the main park sign. It was cut on county forest land near Bruce Mound, and hauled to a Willard Amish sawmill for trimming. Snedic then carved the park's name and the years "1907" and "2007" into it and sealed it with several coats of treatment. The massive log was lowered into place with a crane last winter.

Asked for an estimate of how many hours of work have gone into the park projects, Snedic chuckles as he recounts the days spent in his shop and on-site.

"That's hard to say because there were so many people involved," he said.

Snedic imagines that the time and energy spent for the heritage park doesn't come even close to the work that went into shaping early Willard.

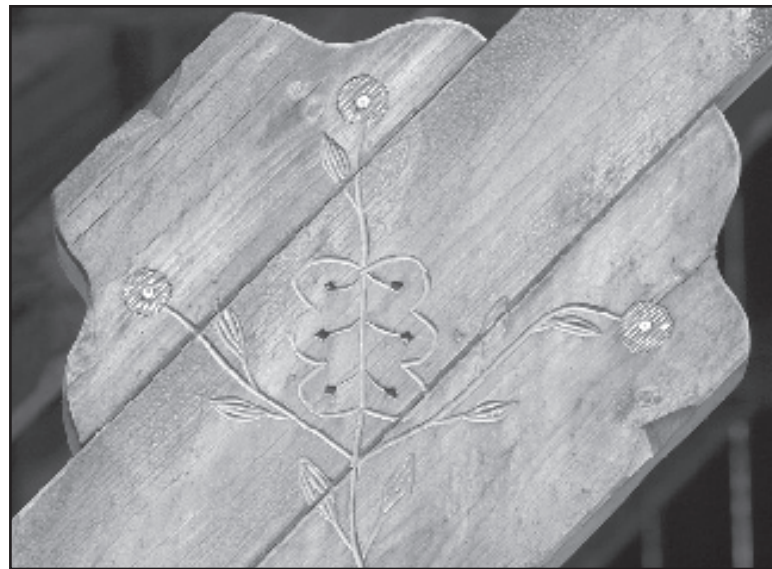
His own grandfather, John Sr., first came to America in 1906, after serving three years in the Austrian army. He settled at Rockdale, Ill., first, and sent money back to Austria to bring over Mary Krnicar, Snedic's grandmother. They were married in 1907 and bought a farm in Willard

in 1914.

According to Willard historical accounts, the Snedics were a typical early area family who cleared land of trees, stumps and rocks for a farm. Bill Snedic's parents were both children of the first settlers and were married in 1933. John spent World War II as a camouflager and painter at a Seattle shipyard, and after the war bought a bulk fuel distributorship. The family lived in Greenwood (where John served as mayor) for a number of years, and John and Ann retired in rural Willard. Ann will turn 99 this November. John passed away several years ago.

Bill Snedic can still recall spending time with the generation of his family that left a world in Europe to settle another in Wisconsin that was yet mostly untamed. His grandmother never did learn much English, he said, and he remembers her thickly-breaded chicken meals and homemade noodle soup. His grandparents told him a few things about the old country, but were too busy building a new life to dwell on an old one.

"They would bring back memories of the winters and the different birds and animals of the area, and they would try to compare them to the animals of this area," Snedic said. "I think they got so



**A carnation, the traditional flower of Slovenians, is carved into the wood of the Settlers' Park kozolec.**

wrapped up in what they were doing, they forgot."

He knew from listening and observing that the life of the settlers was no picnic.

"Mother used to tell us that Grandpa used to walk to Greenwood and get flour and other groceries. He'd carry a 50-pound sack of flour all the way. That's seven or eight miles."

Not only were the settlers coping with the hardships of their new life, Snedic said they also must have missed their families back in the old country.

"When they said goodbye to their parents and siblings and never

returned, I don't know ...." Snedic said.

It was those types of hardships for which Snedic said he was willing to put so many hours into the Settlers' Park projects.

"You've got to give them a lot of credit for hacking out what they did in this wilderness," Snedic said. "I don't have any family, any children, at least I can do something for them (settlers). I felt honored that I could do it for them. It might have been a chore, but when you look back at what they went through, this is a piece of cake. You'd be whittling on a piece of wood, you'd be thinking about them."

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