

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

FOLK ART COLLECTION AT OUR MUSEUM (Part One)

by Curator Lubow Wolynetz

The Folk Art Collection at our Museum numbers close to eight thousand artifacts. The earliest and initial collection of these artifacts was accumulated in the 1930s through gifts and purchases from sources in Western Ukraine.

Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky, soon after purchasing the Quintard Estate in Stamford, CT, made plans to open a minor seminary and a cultural center which would include a museum and a library. The Minor Seminary opened its doors in 1934 and the task of organizing the museum and library was given to Father Leo Chapelsky. Father Leo contacted museum directors, collectors and scholars in Lviv, Ukraine in order to build up a representative folk-art collection.

In these efforts, first and foremost, Father Leo was aided by Sister Severine Parylle, OSBM, a professor of history, Ukrainian language and literature at the Sisters of St. Basil the Great Girls High School in Lviv, a high school known for its high standard of academics. Most of the school graduates continued their studies at universities, many of whom became prominent civic and cultural leaders.

Sister Severine was born in 1884 in the village of Nastasiv, Ternopil oblast into a Jewish family. Her nanny was a Ukrainian peasant woman about whom she always spoke affectionately and tenderly. She attended the village primary school and throughout her life held fond memories and cherished the warmth and friendship of her Ukrainian school-

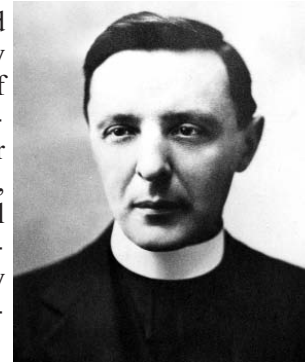
mates. After completing the Teacher's Seminar in Sambir, she converted to Catholicism and entered the Order of the Sisters of St. Basil the Great. She continued with her studies and received a degree in philosophy and history from the University of Lviv. After receiving her University degree, she became a teacher at the Basilian Sisters High School, a position she held from 1919 until 1940, when under the Soviet occupation she left Lviv and shortly thereafter died in 1941 in the village of Strusiv.



Even though Sister Severine came from a non-Ukrainian background, she developed

a profound love and a serious interest in Ukrainian folk-art, especially in folk costume and embroidery. While a teacher at the High School, she began to collect folk-art items and she con-

vinced the school authorities to allow her to organize a folk-art museum on the premises of the school. She stimulated interest in this project among her students and inspired and encouraged them to help her collect and build the school museum of Ukrainian folk-art. She organized successful exhibitions for which she received acknowledgment and high praise. This encouraged her to go with a representative part of her collection on a tour of the United States and exhibit it there among the Ukrainian immigrants and the general American public. This she did in 1933. For this trip and project she received the generous financial support of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky.



While in the States, at the request of Bishop Bohachevsky, she left part of her collection for the future Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford. Firmly believing in the importance of having a museum among the Ukrainians in America, she continued to collect artifacts at the request of Father Leo Chapelsky, the first curator of the Museum, and up to 1937, she was still sending many unique and now rare items to Stamford.

Among the items our Museum received are folk costumes, many embroidered shirts, and especially embroidery samples.

Here are some of the items our Museum has, thanks to her and Father Chapelsky's efforts.



Embroidery samples from Hutsul region

Explore and Experience Our Past

SOWER

JULY 24, 2011