

# The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

## FOLK ART COLLECTION AT OUR MUSEUM (Part Two) *by Curator Lubow Wolynetz*

Another group of fascinating folk art items with which our Museum has been enriched through the efforts of Sister Severine, OSBM are embroidered women's and men's shirts. She gave them to the Museum during her visit to the United States in the 1930s.

Before her trip to America Sister Severine studied English. This enabled her to give lectures in English as well as in Ukrainian to the public at large, on the topic of Ukrainian folk art in conjunction with the traveling collection of artifacts she was exhibiting.

In every city she also visited museums and admired the extent to which the cultural heritage of many nations of the world was preserved and made accessible to viewers through exhibits, lectures, and a variety of programs. This encouraged her even more to continue the task she had begun years before in organizing a Ukrainian Folk Art Museum at the Girl's High School in Lviv and in helping Ukrainian immigrants to organize a representative museum and cultural center in the United States. She was determined to have the world learn about Ukrainian folk art, an art which could be produced only by a highly culturally-developed peoples.

Sister Severine, perhaps because she had come

from a non-Ukrainian background, realized more than her Ukrainian contemporaries what a cultural treasure Ukrainian folk art really is, and how important it is to preserve, exhibit, and study it in order to appreciate, value, and bequeath it to future generations.

She also had a very personal reason for such a deep devotion to this work. On visiting her native village after many years of absence, she discovered that her nanny and most of her schoolmates were no longer among the living. She visited their gravesites, and in her memoirs she wrote as follows:

"I went to the cemetery, prayed and reminisced. My whole happy childhood passed before my eyes which I spent living among these good, sincere and honest people. My childhood dreams emerged about folk costumes. I remembered my promise to come back to visit my elderly nanny and friends. Forgive me, my dear ones, for not keeping my word. I never decorated my hair with maiden's wreaths like you did, nor did I wear your beautiful folk costumes, and I did not return to the village of my childhood days. But I had never forgotten your sincere warmth and friendship with which you surrounded me in my youth. I did not forget the tranquil beauty of your village homes which you decorated with embroidered ritual cloths. I followed a different path in life. My love for you, I will instill into the hearts of future toilers in this work whom I have been preparing for a good number of years. My past dreams about your folk costumes, I will realize in a somewhat different way. As long as I live, I will collect your beautiful costumes in order to show to the world your

talented artistic spirit, so that future generations will be proud of you. I think and reminisce a lot about the past, while sitting alone in this room decorated with folk costumes. Someday an art-specialist will come and admire your aesthetic tastes. A scholar-archeologist will come and search for influences in your art from different epochs. But I am able to tell more about you, because I knew your joys and sufferings which are as dear and near to me as my own."



*Village of Serafiyntsi, Horodenka district, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, early 20th century*

*Body-length shirt of home-woven hemp cloth. The sleeves, cuffs and bottom hem are decorated with multi-colored embroidery employing a variety of stitches and using wool thread.*

*Village of Rusiv, Sniatyn district, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, early 20th century*  
*Waist-length shirt of home-woven linen. The sleeves and cuffs are decorated with embroidery employing a variety of stitches and using wool thread of orange color. The embroidery on each sleeve is divided into three parts: the shoulder inset, under inset, and main sleeve.*

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**The Sower**  
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