

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

ORNAMENTS FROM SEED BEADS – THE COTILLION OR BOUTONNIERE

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An important part of Ukrainian folk costume was the use of a variety of ornaments such as necklaces, earrings, wreaths, floral bouquets, sprays, festoons, boutonnieres, etc. They were made from diverse types of materials, and used or worn according to traditionally-prescribed rules and regulations.

The so-called cotillion (a boutonniere) which was used in Ukrainian tradition is really a misnomer. The term actually came from a very popular dance in Western Europe and in Poland, especially in the 19th century. From this dance there evolved the famous cotillion balls where young ladies were introduced to society for the first time; and some form of corsage, boutonniere, or spray was an important feature in the selection of partners for dances during these balls.

The cotillion in Ukrainian tradition was a small rectangular (approximately 6 x 2 inch) ornament with an angled top part. It was worn by young men on the shirt, shirt pocket, or jacket lapel. It was made out of multicolored seed beads using a weaving technique, and had an eyelet or a metal clasp at its angled top which was used to attach it to clothing.

Traditionally in villages, young girls made these cotillions for young men

whose affection they wanted to win and keep. Once a young man accepted the cotillion from a girl, he was considered to be her sweetheart. This was in lieu of a formal announcement. Moreover, it was understood by the whole community as a communication to other girls not to interfere or attempt to win the young man for themselves, which some nevertheless tried to do, most likely with a cotillion of their own making.

The ornamental composition of these tokens of affection usually had floral and sometimes geometric designs. It occasionally had initials and a specific year woven into the design.

In the early 20th century, cotillions of this nature gained popularity in the cities of Western Ukraine, in Galicia (Halychyna). Both young and mature men wore them on their jacket lapels, or attached to the chains of their vest pocket watches. Only now have these cotillions gained additional and even a different symbolic meaning with their ornamental design also hav-

ing been changed.

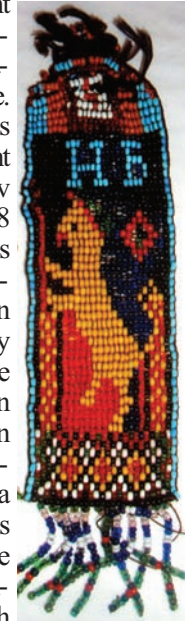
At the beginning of the 20th century world events and political movements brought about a national awakening to many subjugated nations and revitalized their aspirations for freedom and independence. Foremost among these nations was Ukraine. The formation of an independent and sovereign Ukrainian Republic in Kyiv in 1917 and in Western Ukraine in 1918

aroused high hopes for a united independent Ukrainian State. But quickly these hopes were shattered. Eastern Ukraine was taken over by the Bolsheviks and Galicia (Halychyna) was made a part of the Polish Commonwealth. The Polish government, after their takeover of Galicia, fearing some kind of revolutionary movement on the part of Ukrainians, not only repressed all kinds of Ukrainian national activities, but also persecuted, jailed, and severely punished the following: anyone proclaiming and demonstrating patriotic feelings; exhibiting Ukrainian national insignias; signing patriotic songs; or writing political appeals to the

Ukrainian people to maintain and uphold their national consciousness.

In the face of such governmental intimidation, pressures, and tyrannical behavior toward all national and patriotic activities, the Ukrainian people were powerless. Nevertheless, wanting to take a stand and give expression to their patriotic feelings but not incur the wrath of the authorities, the Ukrainian people, especially the youth of Halychyna used the cotillion as their political statement. It was an outlet for their emotions, a subtle way of manifesting and affirming their national identity and their desire for a free and independent Ukraine. They could not place the trident on the cotillion, because that was an obvious symbolic sign of a free

Ukraine. Instead they used a rampant-crowned lion which for Galicians was a symbol of freedom. However, the Polish authorities did not see it as such. They even used the colors of the Ukrainian national flag – blue and yellow – in all kinds of combinations which to the onlooker seemed to be a colorful ornamental design. For Ukrainians, however, these were the colors of the Ukrainian national flag, a symbol of independence, a way to make a political statement of their own.



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OCTOBER 30, 2012