

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS – ROADS TO DISCOVERY by Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

Although there is a reliable number of publications dealing with the history of Ukrainian immigrants in America, the topic is far from being comprehensively covered. Authors of these works relied on material that was available to them at the time. But, there is always room and



need to augment the information at hand especially if, as often happens during research, new data and archival material turn up unexpectedly. It is amazing how one small document, even one inconspicuous pamphlet, can add valuable insight and understanding of a subject matter and enhance its historical data base.

The first two waves of Ukrainian immigrants to America laid the foundation of religious, organizational, and social life for us – Ukrainian-Americans, or American-Ukrainians, born here, recent or long time ago arrivals. These foundations were so well laid that even now it is possible for us to benefit from them in many aspects. It is truly a wonder how these early Ukrainian immigrants, members of a downtrodden nation, from the lowest social classes, illiterate or semi-literate, with just a handful of civic and religious educated leaders, were able to do so much and to do it so efficiently.

Through observation of the democratic and organizational American systems, the new immigrants adapted some aspects of these structures for the benefit of their own communities, namely, in order to strengthen them in their work for a common cause, to teach them the advantages of cooperation, to instill in them a sense of civic and social responsibility, and to guide them to a better way of life without abandoning their ethnic identity or cultural heritage.

The first organizational units that were formed by the first immigrants were related to religious needs. They established parishes, built churches, organized choirs,

ethnic schools, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, and the like. Next came the founding of various civic, political, and social clubs. All of these organizational units, prepared by-laws in order to achieve their goals more effectively.

Recently, our Museum and Library received a small publication, the By-laws of the *Ruskyi Molodechyi Klub Postupovyi* (The Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Progressive Youth Club) in Jersey City, NJ, which was organized on October 22, 1902. This By-law booklet was published in 1910 at the Svoboda printing house which was then located on Hudson Street in New York City. The booklet has a moving and inspiring forward reflecting the responsibilities, nuances, dilemmas, and stumbling blocks which young Ukrainian immigrants had to face at that time while trying to maintain their religious, ethnic identity, and national dignity. It was written by Stefan Milanowycz

President of the Club in the years 1909-1910. In the reports of the Ukrainian National Association Convention we find that Stefan Milanowycz had been elected to the

UNA Board as a member of the Auditing Committee and also as the Recording Secretary in the 1920s and 1930s. His daughter Melanie had worked at the UNA Headquarters for many years. She was a member of the Ukrainian Youth League of North America (1933-1971) and had participated in many cultural events of the Ukrainian community.

We read in the introduction: "Dear Friend! Come to our meetings and bring a friend with you, knowing that by doing this you will snatch away not one, but many sons of our enslaved people from the hands of our enemies or their ideologies (moscophilism, orthodoxy (meaning the Russian Orthodox church), polonophilism, hungarianism)... Only through such actions can we depend on the development of our society and at the same time the future of the next generations... Be guardians of our national rights... Be patriotic brothers who are not separated by envy, but who together in unanimity plough the neglected national field... So friend, be an outspoken and a brave Ukrainian

patriot... Stand strong for your national and organizational rights; do not allow anyone to make fun of or scorn all that is dear to us... The author quotes Mykhailo Hrushevsky "fight for the good and conquer all that degrades our way of life, which subdues our national development".

The Club chose as its patron the Archangel Michael, so that all members like the Archangel would dedicate themselves to fighting evil, darkness, enemies of God and our church, and the enemies of our downtrodden, enslaved nation.

The By-laws state who can be a member – any young man between the ages of 16 and 40. It also lists the goals of the Club which are: a) Moral, b) Material, c) Political, d) Social.

These goals are explained as follows: The Moral category included the organization of libraries and schools, lending books, developing theatrical performances, initiating lectures, conducting

singing rehearsals, supporting one's Greek Catholic Church, and punctually contributing monthly church donations, and aiding members in legal matters. In the Material category, members

should help each other in case of illness, encourage members to take out life insurance in the Rusky Narodny Soiuz (Ukrainian National Association), help members to find employment, encourage members to join unions, and disseminate information about temperance. In the Political category, members should actively participate in political activities especially during elections, organize political rallies and meetings, help members become American citizens. In the Social category members should seek mutual acquaintance during club meetings, etc.

There are ten parts to the Club's By-laws which enumerate the privileges and responsibilities of its members. In the last part it states that in case of the Club's dissolution, its monetary resources are to be equally distributed between the Greek-Catholic Church in Jersey City and the community needs. The booklet also includes an application of intention to become an American citizen, and questions and answers about American history and its government needed by every applicant when applying for citizenship.

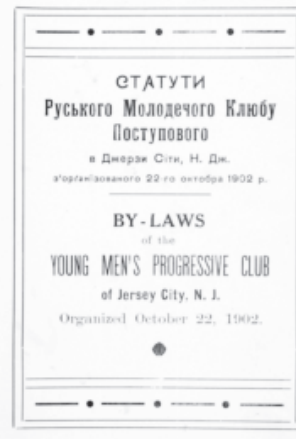
As to how long this Club was in existence (except for Stefan Milanowycz) and how many members it had, we do not as yet know. The important point is that a Club of this merit actually existed with such distinguished ideals and noteworthy purposes even though it was founded 113 years ago.



Some of the stumbling blocks which they had to face in 1902, we are still facing in 2015. The founders of this Club and similar societies and brotherhoods of those days, notwithstanding their limited education, and limited resources, were motivated by the following: a great sense of social responsibility and generosity of spirit always remembering the general welfare of their Ukrainian community, its future generations, and the importance of preserving their identity, their ethnic and cultural heritage. As a result, they built churches, schools, national homes, founded political and cultural institutions and societies, and did all this in quite adverse and risky days. Even today we must make use of this inheritance which they have left us. Sad to say, instead of preserving and maintaining this legacy, some of it we neglect and sometimes even destroy. Our predecessors were guided by ideals of devotion, mutual cooperation, responsibility, sacrifices for the common good of the community in the present day and in its future, and not by self-interest, selfishness or greed. Can we do as much today? What kind of legacy will we bequeath to the next generation?



С.Б. АРХАНГЕЛЪ МИХАИЛЪ



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