

## EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

## The Establishment of the Ukrainian Nation (1917-1921) - Part III

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

Another artistically and symbolically special banknote, which was commissioned by the Government of Hetman Danylo Skoropadsky and issued in the last days of the Hetman's regime, was the 1000 *karbovantsi* banknote. This banknote continued to be used by the ensuing regime of Symon Petrlura – the Dyrektor, Hryhorii Zolotov, a noted painter and graphic artist, was its designer.

Soon after coming to power, the Government of Central Rada gave the Ministry of Finance the duty of organizing a graphic art branch. It was to undertake the designing of banknotes, postal stamps, state coat of arms, government stationary, etc. Over twenty artists were members of this branch.

tumultuous days.

The design or visual content of the 1000 *karbovantsi* note, which was commissioned by Hetman Skoropadsky, reflects the glorious days of Ukraine's Independent Hetman State of the 17th and 18th centuries by the use of expressive symbols and cultural styles of that era. The face side of the note has centrally placed a highly decorative medallion filled with appropriate identifiable wording. The top of the medallion is crowned with a Hetman's *bulava* (mace) and the Cossack colonel's symbol of authority, a *pirnach*. On both sides of the medallion are ellipses with appropriate wordings, security features, and warnings. In the right ellipse is a depiction of a Cossack warrior with a mus-

ket. The reverse side has an ornate medallion centrally placed, on both sides of which are two young maidens elaborately attired in *Baroque* style fashion. The maiden on the right hand side holds a Hetman's *bulava* (mace), symbolizing authority of the ruler; and the maiden on the left hand side holds in her hand a horn of plenty, symbolizing the wealth and abundance of the land.

In Ukraine, the *baroque style*, especially in architecture, was one of the highlights of the cultural achievements during the era of Ukraine's Hetman's State. Sometimes this style is called the *Cossack Baroque*. Hetman Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709), was one of the most generous patrons, who financed the renovation of over 20 churches and monasteries in the *Cossack baroque* style. Because the populace associated this style with the triumphant Cossack days of independence and freedom, the Russian Tsarist and later Soviet governments either destroyed many of these edifices, or vulgarized them by adding inappropriate Russian architectural features.

The designer of the banknote described above, and especially those notes which were designed by Heorhii Narbut, used historically meaningful symbols and images in their art works.

bottom corners. Heorhii Narbut placed his initials on the face side of the 100 *bryvnia* note below the wreath. How did the Ukrainian populace react to the appearance of Ukrainian banknotes? An eyewitness to these events (Mykhailo Obidny, d. 1938) writes as follows: "the appearance of Ukrainian currency brought about among the people great enthusiasm. One could hear the populace on the streets of Kyiv and around the country, intoxicated with happiness, exclaim "Our, our Ukrainian money". People cried from joy, prayed and kissed the banknotes... The new money with images, not of tsars and tsarist insignias, but with images of Ukrainian people and wheat, gave them confi-



1000 *bryvni*, H. Zolotov,  
Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

They advertised contests for designs, and a special committee accepted or rejected the proposed projects. This group of graphic artists actively worked for all three regimes. In the brief period of three years (out of the hundreds of samples received) it accepted only 23 banknote designs. The haste at which they had to work on this project in order to have the banknotes printed, and at the same time not to allow the artistic or technical quality of the product to be diminished, is truly amazing. Teamwork, mutual collaboration and the cooperation of these artists was at its best during these exciting, yet

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This was done for the purpose of reawakening memories of the glorious past and thus evoking pride, self-confidence, and vigor in the people. Although we know the names of the artists who designed the various banknotes, only two of the notes, which were described in the previous article (in the March issue of the Sower) were signed. The two *bryvnia* note was signed by the artist Vasyl Krychevsky. He placed his initials V.K. on the face side of the note in the two opposing

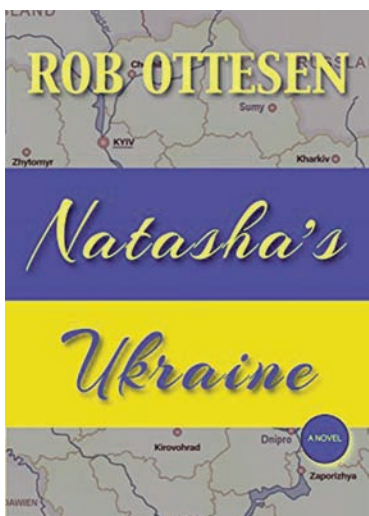
dence and faith into the firmness and solidity of the new life".

The designers of the banknotes, for the newly established free and independent Ukraine (1917-1921), understood full well the importance of the visual content of these notes, and what a unique opportunity this was to represent the values, culture, and achievements of their people. They placed images and symbols meaningful to the Ukrainian people, and at the same time presented and made them part of Ukrainian identity in the world. □

TO BE CONTINUED

## Book Review by Museum Director

Msgr. John Terlecky



NATASHA'S UKRAINE by Robert A. Ottesen. Ashland, Oregon: Hellgate Press, 2018. (ISBN 978-1-55571-899-2)

About once a month, I sit at my computer, I call up Amazon Press and I scroll up English-language books connected to Ukrainian topics. I was surprised to find this title. It caught my attention because I know someone named Natasha well. My first guess was that it was another guidebook to contemporary Ukraine. The cover design contains a current map of Ukraine with English transliteration of cities according to their contemporary Ukrainian spelling.

I was surprised when I read the small print sub-title: "a novel". I ordered the book and discovered that it fits the categories of both historical fiction and/or soap operas. The main

character is obviously Natasha Dubrova, a young lady from a village in central Ukraine, who has a college degree in economics from Black Sea University. She has big dreams of life in the city (in this case, Mykolaiv in Eastern Ukraine) and winds up penniless and a loser in love relationships with two different men. She abandons the city to return to her parents' farm.

It is here that the story really begins to unfold on her future life on two different continents – her family's life amidst the contemporary conflicts in Ukraine and her life drastically changing as, by luck, she meets an American who she has had increasing contacts through Skype and winds up leaving her

simple farm life for a glamorous life in Miami, Florida.

As with a lot of common themes found in romance novels, the lives of Natasha, her brother Alexander, her parents Dimitri and Tatiyana, and her American paramour Carl Christensen are mixed with joys and tragedies. Some of the happenings in their lives are intertwined with the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv and the current civil war in Ukraine. Others take place in the world of the rich and famous of Miami Beach. In the end, to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare – all's well that ends well!

I found the first third of the book to be drab and slow in reading. The other two thirds of

the book woke up my emotions amidst the hardships that the family living in Ukraine underwent. I thought the heroine's luck in America a wee bit "hard to believe". I guess that is what fiction allows us to do – to share the story of dreams. I can recommend this book, especially to readers of romance novels.

There is one thing that I would complain about to the author and his editor. The front cover of the book contains cities of Ukraine according to their Ukrainian nomenclature. The book, however, uses Russian nomenclature throughout its text. I found this to be distracting as a Ukrainian-American and as an oversight by the author in this twenty-first century. □