

## EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

## Commemorating Taras Shevchenko in the Month of March

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

In Ukraine, as well as in the Diaspora, the month of March has been dedicated to Taras Shevchenko (March 9, 1814 – March 10, 1861), a great poet, artist and the national bard of Ukraine. His poetry greatly influenced the growth of our national consciousness and inspired his people to a cultural and political rebirth. The impact of his works remains a powerful influence upon Ukrainians to this day.

To honor the poet's life and works, Ukrainians, throughout the years have coordinated various commemorative undertakings. Among them there were scholarly conferences, concerts, theatrical presentations as well as printings of new, uncensored editions of the poet's *Kobzar* with commentaries and illustrations of noted artists.

The Ukrainian Museum and Library is very proud to have among its library holdings quite rare Shevchenkiana items. First and foremost, we have the very first publication of Shevchenko's poetry, *the Kobzar*. It was published in 1840 in St. Petersburg and contains 8 poems. Another rare item is a volume entitled *Poezii T. Hr. Shevchenka, Zaboroneni v Rossii* (Poetry of T. Hr. Shevchenko) published in Geneva in 1890 with the subtitle "Forbidden in Russia". This edition of *the Kobzar* was published through the efforts

of Mykhailo Drahomaniv (brother of Olena Pchilka and uncle of Lesia Ukrainka). Mykhailo Drahomaniv (1841-1895) was exiled by the Tsarist Russian government because of his political writings. While in exile he lived for some time in Geneva and later in Sofia, Bulgaria. In 1863 and 1876 the Tsarist government issued two decrees (Valuyev and Emsk decrees, consecutively) which stated that the Ukrainian language never existed, does not exist, and will never exist and therefore it is forbidden, under penalty of law, to publish anything in Ukrainian. According to the decrees it was also forbidden to import any publication in Ukrainian from abroad. Olena Pchilka, upon visiting her brother, wanted very much to bring a copy of the Geneva edition of Shevchenko's poetry back home to Ukraine. Knowing full well her luggage would be searched by the Russian police upon her return, she hid the volume of poetry in her hoop skirt and thus managed to bring it safely home to Kyiv.

Ukrainian immigrants in America, from the very beginning, held fast to their Church, cherished and adhered to their traditions, paid tribute to significant Ukrainian historical events, honored the memory of prominent historical and cultural personages. In our archival col-

## The Forgotten Nation And Its Prophet

By ANTONY CURKOVSKY

Among the various Slavic races the Ruthenians, or as they call themselves the Ukrainians, take the second place according to number.

Thirty-five million in number, they inhabit the land from the River San and the Carpathian Mountains to the banks of the Don River, and Black Sea, and north to the Neman River.

This nation from the earliest ages has always occupied itself with tilling the soil and its history is extremely rich. Nevertheless, the civilized world of to-day, knows little of this old, cultured nation, perhaps even less than of some small tribe occupying an unfrequented corner of the world. This is due to the fact that to-day the Ruthenians (Ukrainians) do not possess an organized Kingdom of their own.

At a very early stage, as in the 14th and 17th centuries respectively, they lost their political independence and were erased from the map of Europe as a political power.

The very beginnings of the organized Ruthenian Powers of which mention is made in the Byzantine and Arabian chronicles, reach back to the 9th centuries, B. C. Their capitol was the pre-historic city Kiev situated on the majestic River Dniepr.

Through centuries the Ruthenian Knights of Kiev expanded their power over all the surrounding Ruthenian townships and in

Brochure, 100 Anniversary, May 30, 1914, NYC, fragment.  
The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

**Program**  
PART I.

1. March. The following Ukrainian Societies and Brotherhoods of New York and its vicinity, with bands of music, and headed by their banners, will parade through the streets of the city :

Zaporozska Sich, Aurora, Unity, Freedom in America, Brotherhood of St. George, Brotherhood of St. Michael, Brotherhood of St. Vladimir, Ukrainian Chorus, Aid in Foreign Land, Brotherhood of St. Andrews, Ukrainian Besida, "Shashkewich" Society, Zaporozska Sich from Long Island, Haydamaka, Freedom, "Shichynski" Society, Bukovina, Sich, Podolian Sich, Young Ukraine, "Kotliarevsky" Society, Holohory, Knowledge Society, Free Cossacks of Lemberg, Union of Countrymen, "Shevchenko" Society, Zaporozze Abroad, Bohorodchany.

The march will end in Webster Hall, Nos. 119-125 East 11th Street, where the remainder of the program will take place.

PART II.

1. Forword .....Rev. N. Pidhorecky  
2. Addresses by the Delegates of various Nationalities.

PART III.

**GREAT CONCERT**

1. Shevchenko-Verbicky : "My Last Desire,"  
United Choruses of Ukrainian and Ukrainian Besida Societies.

Program, 100 Anniversary, May 30, 1914, NYC, fragment.  
The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

lection we have a fascinating collection of concert programs. These programs are an invaluable source of information about the work and activities of Ukrainian communities in America. One of such concert programs illustrates and documents one of the most magnificent presentations in America commemorating the 100th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's birth. This event took place May 30, 1914 in New York City. Prior to the concert a march-parade took place down the streets of the City. Many Ukrainian Societies and Brotherhoods of New York City and its vicinity, participated in this parade. In the June 4th, 1914 issue of the *Svoboda* newspaper a description of the parade and concert was given which was as follows: The march began at 4 PM from 7th Street which went up Fifth Avenue. Members of the 28 organizations were marching with their emblems, flags and informative signs. At the head of the parade was a contingent of young men on horseback dressed in Cossack costumes. Four white horses pulled a float with a portrait of Taras Shevchenko. Sixteen girls dressed in Ukrainian folk costumes carried a sign upon which were written words from Shevchenko's Testament: "And in the great new family, The family of the free, With softly spoken, kindly word, Remember also me". There

were 6000 participants marching to the music of 8 Ukrainian orchestras. 10,000 brochures about Ukraine, about the life and works of Taras Shevchenko, were distributed to onlookers. After the parade, in the evening, a concert was held in Webster Hall on 11th Street in Manhattan with an audience of 4000. More wanted to attend but had to be turned away because there was no room. The opening speech was delivered by Father M. Pidhoretsky, pastor of St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church. Then came official greetings. A Polish delegate delivered a greeting in the name of 87 Polish societies. An address in English was delivered by Andrew Shipman, a New York lawyer and a very good friend of the Ukrainians. He helped Ukrainians in various legal transactions. He also translated the Ukrainian Liturgy into English which was published in 1911. The concert consisted of choir and solo singing, piano and violin recitals and poetic readings.

This is one of the many ways Taras Shevchenko was commemorated by the first and second emigration wave of Ukrainians in America. Archival documents about such events, which our library collects and preserves, help us learn about and appraise the dedicated work of these first immigrants. ❖