

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

EPHEMERAL TREASURES by Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



A few months ago, our Museum and Library received from Dr. Junij Rybak and Anna Ortynsky a number of rare and interesting objects of ephemera i.e., organizational member ribbons with badges, and special event commemorative medals produced and used by Ukrainian immigrants in America. This gift augmented and enriched our valuable collection of these items, for which we are most grateful. Ephemera of this nature supply interesting additional information to written material about the activities of Ukrainian organizational life (religious and secular) in America. Sometimes these items, if there is no documentation, are really the only evidence of the existence of a particular association, club, or the occurrence of an event, movement, etc.

The use of various insignia like badges, ribbons, and sashes to indicate membership in a particular group, or to show presence at an event, or to display awards and tributes has been in existence for cen-

turies. Its use increased tremendously with the ease of production due to technological innovations which in turn made it inexpensive and affordable, even for the economically disadvantaged. Ukrainian immigrants in America very quickly adapted the use of these insignias in their community life.

They took as an example how American society was using insignias, as well as how other ethnic immigrant groups adopted them. This popularity of insignias can be attributed to the fact that it gave the individuals wearing them a sense of belonging to a special and distinct group devoted to particular and noble ideals. It evoked pride and devotion and obliged persons to honor the goals of the organization or club. For us, at present, these insignias give valuable information, i.e., the date



and the location where the organization was founded or where an event took place, whom and what they held in esteem, and data that this group actually existed.

The artistic design of these ribbon insignias almost always included both American and Ukrainian national symbols, namely the following: the American flag or just red, white, and blue colors; the bald eagle; the Ukrainian flag or just blue and yellow colors; the trident, a "lion rampant" on blue and yellow field (often symbolic of Western Ukraine); the depiction of the patron of the organization, often in the shape of a medal or a plastic pin with a reproduced illustration and set into a metallic bezel. The lettering identifying the organization was often done in both languages and sometimes just in one language. The ribbons were reversible. One side had all the pertinent information and was also colorful. The reverse side consisted of a black ribbon, upon which the name of the organization and a three-bar cross were printed in silver. This reverse side in black was used on the occasion of funerals.

Let us look at some examples of such ribbon insignias:

1. A ribbon of a delegate to the 13th convention of the "Little Russian National Union" which was

held in September, 1914 in Buffalo, NY. It was at this convention that the name was officially changed to the Ukrainian National Association. (Gift of Dr. J. Rybak)



2. A ribbon identifying the Ukrainian Society "Bohorodchany", which was organized on June 12th, 1910 in New York City. The name of this organiza-

tion is printed on a blue and yellow ribbon. Above the name, a medal with the depiction of Taras Shevchenko is suspended from a red ribbon. Bohorodchany was a town-like village which in 1931 had a population of 3,000. Quite a few inhabitants must have emigrated to America at the beginning of the 20th century if they had decided to form their own society. As to how long this society existed and what was its history, we do not as yet have any additional information. (Gift of Dr. J. Rybak)



3. A medal (the ribbon was apparently lost) given in 1914 as an award for "dedicated organization work". The face of the medal, on blue and yellow field, has a "lion rampant" and an embossed seal with the letters "PHC" (Rusky Narodnyi Soyuz) and "LRNU" (Little Russian National Union). (These were the first names of the Ukrainian National Association.)

In the center of the seal are two clasped hands above which is Lady "Prosvita" holding up in one hand a book and in the other hand a torch. On the reverse side in the center are two clasped hands encircled by a wreath and the slogan "In union there is strength" in two languages. This was a very popular slogan among Ukrainian immigrants of the first and second waves in order to stop destructive in-fighting and to unite. (Gift of Dr. J. Rybak)

4. A member's ribbon of the Ruthenian Brotherhood of Archangel Michael founded November 10th, 1912 in Stamford, CT. It was founded 4 years before the establishment of St. Vladimir's Church in Stamford, whose 100th anniversary we are currently celebrating this year.



5. A member's shoulder to hip sash of red and black satin of the Ukrainian "Sich" Society in Stamford, CT, which was probably organized in the early 1920s.

6. A membership ribbon of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Brotherhood of Archangel Michael in Yonkers, NY, whose founding dates back to 1894.

7. A member's ribbon of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic St. John Society in Yonkers, NY, founded in 1904. This was an independent Society which in 1936 had 100 members and \$15,000 in savings.

8. A member's ribbon of the Sisterhood of St. Ann in Olyphant, PA, founded in 1911.

9. A member's ribbon of the Greek Catholic Brotherhood of SS. Peter and Paul in Cohoes, NY, founded in July of 1906.

We have many more similar membership ribbon insignias of Church brotherhoods, sisterhoods, branches of the Ukrainian National Association, of the Providence Association, civic societies, important conferences, etc. Of course, there are still many of these items that have been lost. However, if you happen to have similar membership insignias, regardless of their condition, please



send them to our Museum and Library to be preserved for posterity.



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