

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Each and Every Document Serves a Purpose

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

President Thomas Jefferson (3rd president of the US, 1801-1809) said that it is “the duty of every good citizen to use all the opportunities which occur to him for preserving documents relating to the history of our country... Memory is the core of history and shared memories constitute the core of a common national past... Documents were created by individuals as well as by a group... They reflect the private side of life as well as the public... Together they make a richly textured tapestry... They constitute a road map for discovery”. (Thomas Jefferson to Hugh P. Taylor, Oct. 4, 1823; *The Thomas Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress: Series 1*)

These thoughts expressed in the early 1800’s are still pertinent to this day, elucidating and underscoring the importance of archival preservation, to which our Museum and Library is devoted.

Recently, our Museum and Library was fortunate to have received just a few documents belonging to the Sieminowicz and Ulanysky Families. But what wealth of information can be gleaned from them! Their great grand nephew and grand nephew donated them to our institution for preservation. From these documents we learn not only about some aspects of their lives, family devotion, and concerns, but also about World War I situations, hardships, and tragedy.

The story is as follows: The Family of Oswald Sieminowicz from the city of Nadwirna had a few daughters and a son, Zenon, who became an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I. When the tsarist Russian army occupied Western Ukraine, Zenon, as well as other soldiers, was captured and sent to a POW camp in the Saransk ter-

ritory, Penza city. (A note of interest is the fact that Penza as a fortress city was built in the 17th century by Ukrainian Cossacks forcibly sent to do the job by the tsarist government). From this POW camp, Zenon wrote postcards to his Family who resided either in Nadwirna, the city of their residence, or in Vienna. Two of these postcards, the Sieminowicz Family was able to preserve and donated them to our Library. These postcards are of great interest, because they were specially produced for POW correspondence used by the tsarist government. No other form of correspondence was allowed and this was stated on the card. The postcards were dated August 18th and August 25th, 1917. They were written to Zenon’s father and Zenon’s Family. In the postcards Zenon expresses concern for the Family,

and is relieved when he finds out that they are all together and safe in Vienna. He asks them to write much and often and not to worry about him, because “*maybe we will live to see the end of this, if the end will ever come*”. Both postcards were written in perfect Ukrainian and in beautiful handwriting, which reflects the educational and intellectual level of the writer. Months after the Russian Revolution of March 1917, the POW’s were set free. Some of them went to Kyiv and remained there, and formed or joined Ukrainian Army units to defend the newly formed Ukrainian National Republic; others went home. Zenon returned to western Ukraine, and served as a second lieutenant in the Hetman Mazepa regiment of the Galician Army. Sometime later, he was wounded and died from his wounds, probably in the 1920s.

With these two postcards we also received a small publication (almanac style) entitled “*Sichova Zoria*”, (Sich Star), with the sub-heading “*illustrated Ukrainian Chasoslov for the year 1919, for the use and study of Ukrainian youth and adults*” published in 1919 in Kolomyia. All proceeds from the sale of this publication were to go to help fathers, mothers, widows, and orphans of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, who perished in the fight for freedom for the Ukrainian nation. On the inside of the title page of this booklet is a dedication to Zenon Sieminowicz, written by his Stanyslaviv high school professor, Prokip Rybchuk, who was also the editor of the booklet. The publication contains a monthly calendar, information about weights and measures, religious and patriotic songs, and the history of Ukraine. Among the patriotic songs, foremost is the Ukrainian anthem. Interestingly, the editor decided to change the words of the first stanza to a

most positive tone, since this was the time of Ukrainian independence and the formation of the Ukrainian National Republic. In place of the original words:

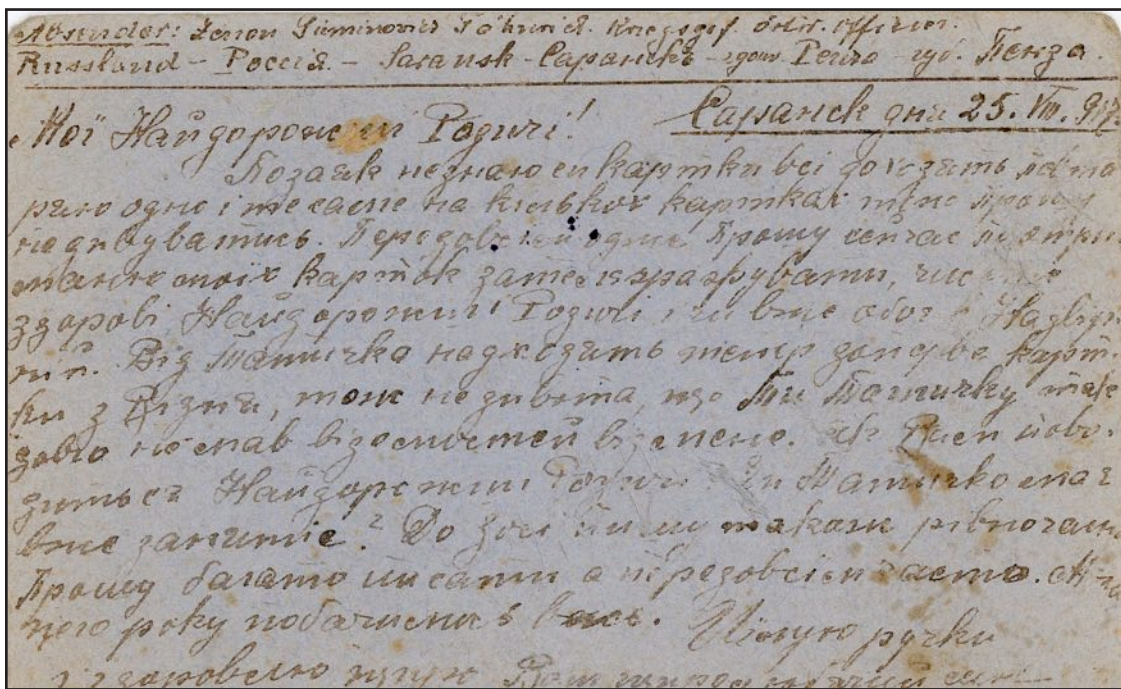
“*Ukraine’s glory has not yet died, nor her freedom,
Upon us young brethren fate shall yet smile,*”

he changed to:
“*Ukraine and her glory and freedom have already been reborn,
Upon us young brethren fate has already smiled,*”

thus stating a definite fact of achievement, not just a wishful maybe.

How did these documents end up in America? One of Zenon’s sisters married Reverend Antonin Ulanysky. In 1913 the Reverend, his wife and children emigrated to the US. Father Ulanysky served in many parishes in PA, some in NY, NJ, CT. In 1927 he was even sent to Vancouver, BC, to organize a parish. Apparently, Family members in Ukraine and America were in contact with each other. More than likely, during the interwar years, some members of the Ulanysky Family might have visited their homeland and brought some family keepsakes with them back to America. As partial proof of this might be a pressed flower in a glassine envelope inserted in the 1919 publication with a note written below it “*flower from grandfather’s and grandmother’s grave*”. Apparently, on one of the visits to their homeland descendants of the Sieminowicz Family brought back to America the booklet, family photographs, and some documents. Thanks to the foresight of certain descendants of these two Families, all of these items are now preserved for posterity.

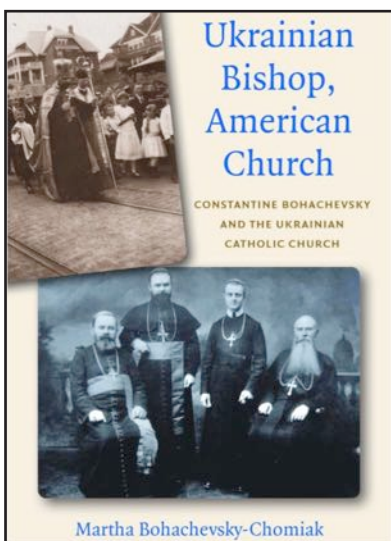
This is yet another example of how important it is to preserve family documents, because they are also a valuable part of our historical legacy. ❖



A postcard Zenon Sieminowicz sent to his “dearest family” from Penza, Russian Empire, dated August 25, 1917. Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

Book Review by Museum Director

Msgr. John Terlecky



Ukrainian Bishop, American Church: Constantine Bohachevsky and The Ukrainian Catholic Church by Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018, \$75.00)

This is an exemplary work of scholar-

ship on the life and legacy of Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky of Philadelphia, who was the only bishop-eparch of our Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States from 1924 to 1956 (the time of the separation of the Stamford Eparchy from that of Philadelphia), and its first Metropolitan-Archbishop of Philadelphia from 1958 to his death on January 6, 1961 (Christmas Eve on the Julian Calendar). It is written by his niece in fine respect of the character and work of her uncle – the author herself is known in academic surroundings as an American University professor and a Fulbright Scholar. It is this latter fact that provides the book with relentless hours of scholarship using archival resources that were available to her from resources in Stamford, CT and Washington, DC, from the Vatican, and from state archives in Lviv and Poland.

This book far outweighs any previous works written on the history of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States. Other books seem like mere historical surveys in comparison to this work formatted as a critical biography.

The book serves as both a biography of Bishop Bohachevsky, as well as an assessment of the trials that he underwent in service to the Church and to a fledgling immigrant community far from Eastern Galicia, in a country where to be Catholic meant you were Latin or Roman Catholic.

The book presents the formation of the character of this gifted churchman from his early priestly years of service in Lviv and Peremyshl (presently called Przemysl on worldwide maps of Poland) during the 1910s and 1920. It particularly captures his relationship with Bishop Iosafat Kotsylovskyyi of the Peremyshl Eparchy as his vicar general from 1918 to 1924. In 1924, he was secretly consecrated a bishop and sent to a new missionary territory: to serve as the jurisdictional exarch/bishop for Ukrainian Greek Catholics whose roots were from Eastern Galicia.

Thus begins over thirty-five years of dedicated service to his Church and his people in the United States – a time when he inherited a church that was chaotic in its structure. He faced great opposition

from both clerical and lay circles in this new land and survived with a steady hand and an unflinching spiritual character. It was only in the 1930s that structure began to take shape of his vision for this church in a new and foreign land. New crises arose with the suppression of the Mother Church in its homeland both under the Polish rule of pacification of Galicia and the two Soviet occupations of the same territory, separated only by the Nazi invasions of Eastern Europe and World War II. He became the main voice of our Church in the diaspora following its forced suppression in the homeland in 1945. He had to meet the needs of displaced refugees (both priests and laity) in German and Austrian camps and preserved for many a lifesaving existence.

There is so much that can be said of the character of this noble churchman in scanning through a book of over five hundred pages and six decades of ministry that cannot be adequately addressed in this review.

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