

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Honoring Taras Shevchenko in the Month of March

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

The greatness of the poetry of Taras Shevchenko, the impact it has and continues to have on each new generation of Ukrainians is as powerful today, as it was for centuries, beginning with the first publication of his poetry, the *Kobzar* in 1840. It is his poetry that has awakened in Ukrainian people their national awareness and national identity; it instilled in them patriotism toward their land, their people, their cultural and historical heritage. During the many trying years of political oppression and attempts at national annihilation, it was Shevchenko's poetic legacy that sustained Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom, in the preservation of their history, and in their identity. Leaders of Ukrainian communities, and especially educators, used all pos-

sible means to teach the populace about Shevchenko – to instill a reverence for him, to imbue the people with Shevchenko's ideas, and to inspire them to continue Shevchenko's testament.

In the late 19th century and early years of the 20th century, Western Ukraine experienced a massive movement of enlightenment and the rebirth of national consciousness. Members of the educated and higher social classes were especially concerned about educating the masses of illiterate or semi-literate Ukrainian peasant population in the villages. They focused their attention on the village children by organizing a 1st and 2nd grade school for starters. Since Ukrainian children's literature and schoolbooks were a scarcity in those years, Ukrainian educators in the cities

began to work on producing the necessary material. They printed readers and began the publication of a children's magazine, *Dzvinok* (1890-1914). Noted writers began writing stories, poems, and songs for children. They printed postcards which depicted certain aspects of Shevchenko's life and works and which served as excellent illustrative material. Ukrainian women were permitted by the government and in some ways by society, to obtain a higher education, many of whom finished teacher's colleges. (In those years teaching was considered to be the only respectable profession for women). This development increased the number of professional teachers and made it possible for them to travel to the villages and staff the schools there.

Our Museum and Library has a unique collection of publications, including the first edition of the *Kobzar* of 1840, and many other pertinent works and studies on Shevchenko, his poetry, his ideology, and the power it has had on the Ukrainian nation. Among our *Shevchenkiana* collection we also have some interesting ephemeral material on the subject of Shevchenko, e.g. postcards from the years 1904-1906. We likewise have the children's magazine *Dzvinok* from the years 1906 and 1911. Many well-known writers, poets, and artists contributed to this magazine. One of these contributors was an outstanding teacher and writer, Konstantyna Malyska, 1872-1947, who used the literary pen name of Vira Lebedova. She taught in schools in Halychyna and Bukovyna, was active in the women's movement, and various cultural organizations. She founded the aid society for Ukrainian Sich Riflemen in 1914, and, did much more. She wrote many stage plays for children commemorating important national events and personages especially Taras Shevchenko. She was the author of many popular Sich Riflemen's and children's songs.

In 1915, when the Russian tsarist army occupied Halychyna, Konstantyna and many other social leaders, activists, educators, and writers were taken as hostages and sent to various cities in Siberia. Even though they lived there in semi-confinement, they still were able to correspond and to move freely within the city limits. Even there Konstantyna continued to work as a teacher, organizing school rooms, giving lectures, etc. In the city of Krasnoyarsk, to which many political activists (Russian and non-Russian) were exiled—many Ukrainians began to settle in that area in the 19th century,

and Konstatnytn Malyska, after coming to that city, immediately organized a proper school for the children of the Ukrainian settlers. Most of the children, although of Ukrainian parents, were semi-russified and unable to speak Ukrainian. She managed to have them speak Ukrainian, taught them Ukrainian history, revived their national consciousness, etc. In 1920, Malyska was finally able to return home to Lviv, where she continued to be a social activist and an educator.

One of the postcards that we have is from the year 1905, and it depicts a group of children from the village of Mylovanie (Tovmach region, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast) performing a play written by Vira Lebedova entitled *A Wreath for Taras Shevchenko's Grave*. The walls of the stage are decorated with long woven textiles, with the traditional Tovmach linear designs, used in village homes as bench and bed covers. Another postcard from 1904, but mailed in 1906, depicts Taras Shevchenko with a lira (a folk musical instrument) in front of him and surrounded by laurel branches. Below the portrait is a heraldic shield with a rampant lion which is the traditional heraldic symbol of Halychyna. In Western Ukraine, the minstrels playing the lira were more prevalent, while in Eastern Ukraine minstrels played on the bandura or kobza. Since this postcard was published in Western Ukraine Shevchenko is depicted with a lira.

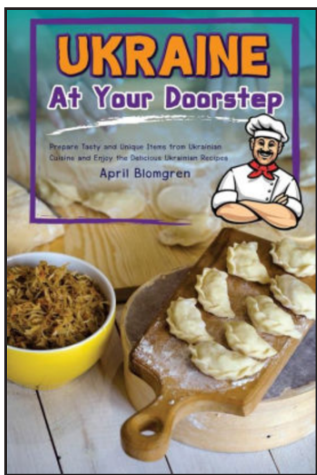
All of the above gives us another example of the importance of the preservation of every Ukrainian item, even the smallest item. We really never know how much interesting and significant information can be gleaned from the item, and then preserved for future generations. ❖



A Wreath for Taras Shevchenko's Grave, Postcard, Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

Book Review by Museum Director

Msgr. John Terlecky



Ukraine At Your Doorstep by April Blomgren. (April Blomgren, 2018, \$12.95)

Cooking is one of the main subjects that you can find in bookstores and online book services. So many cooking episodes can be found on cable networks and public television. Even though this is

a real popular subject, I, nevertheless, was surprised to find out how popular Ukrainian cooking books in the English language exist. There was a total of nine such books published in 2018 alone and two already in 2019. I guess that makes Ukrainian cuisine a profitable venue in the marketplace.

One such book states that “*dishes of Ukrainian cuisine are considered to be among the most satisfying, elegant, and unique in the recipe world*”. I provide a list of nine books that were published in 2018 and I consider to be among “*a dime a dozen*”; inexpensive in paperback and usually free in a Kindle edition:

Popular Ukrainian cuisine recipes: 40 step-by-step recipes for preparing traditional Ukrainian dishes and drinks plus cooking tips by MaryAnn Marfield;

My favorite Ukrainian: my stash of best recipes from the Ukraine from Yum Treats Press;

Real Ukrainian cookbook: 50 national dishes collected in the villages by Anna Melher;

The modern Ukrainian kitchen: 70 contemporary recipes by Anna Melher;

The best recipes of traditional Ukrainian cuisine for your health by Oleg Scribe;

Dishes of Ukrainian Carpathians (Hutsul cuisine) by Attila Barat;

Meat dishes of Western Ukraine by Attila Barat;

Real Ukrainian borsch by Mari Novikovska.

Of recent books on this topic, I chose *Ukraine At Your Doorstep* by April Blomgren. The author is an experienced writer who has composed over twenty books on world cuisine. In this book of thirty recipes, you will see a lot of different and unique Ukrainian meals that are simple and easy to make. She even mentions a recipe for *kysilytsia*. She provides Ukrainian names for each dish. A number of dishes are devoted to Christmas and Easter specialties. Her purpose in writing this particular book was to heap praise on the fact that “*Ukrainians strive to eat a lot of organic foods due to fertile lands and growing*

crops.” Wow! – I never thought of Ukrainians being in the forefront of organic foods. I was disappointed that the author did not use colored appearances for each dish—they appear only in black and white. Yet, that may be a reason for the inexpensive paperback edition and free for kindle users.

I purchased ten copies of this book to give to my friends and siblings who want to prepare their remembrance of “*Mom's dishes*”. They understand English to be their primary language, even if their roots are Ukrainian.

Looking for a really good Ukrainian cookbook that has just been published in the Ukrainian language. I recommend *Spadshchyna Chotyrok Hospodyn* (The Heritage of Four Housewives) by Yaroslava Zelynska-Johnson and recently published by “*Staryi Lev*” printing house in Ukrainian. It comes in a cloth edition and sells for \$39.95. I was able to purchase it from a third-seller on Amazon's list – *BeeUkrainian*. ❖