

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Ukrainian Song Postcards

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

The use of postcards, as a method of communication and correspondence between family, friends, and the transmission of brief messages, began in earnest towards the end of the 19th century. Its practicality and popularity speeded up its development, and very quickly from a plain rectangular card it progressed to become a picture postcard with more refined and sophisticated illustrations depicting a great variety of subjects and themes. Then, another trend developed, and songs (lyrics and music) were added for an additional emotional impact and became known as song postcards. Postcards of this type, with an appropriate image and song, expressed and conveyed more and much better the objective that the sender had in mind, than just a written note. As the demand for more sophisticated postcard illustrations grew, it became quite prestigious and admirable for noted artists to produce art works specifically for picture postcards.

In our Museum and Library we have a large collection of postcards with images, the work

of noted artists which also included songs.

One of the finest examples of Ukrainian song postcards is the work of the artist Amvrosii Zhdakha, 1855-1927. He was born in the city of Izmail, but most of his life he had lived and worked in Odessa. His father descended from the "Beyond the Danube Cossacks" (These were Cossacks who had escaped the destruction of the Cossack fort on the Dnieper in 1775, ordered by Empress Catherine the Great, and who had sought protection and asylum with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Most of them had settled in the area which is now Rumania, but at that time had been part of the Ottoman Empire.) Young Amvrosii grew up hearing many interesting stories from his father about the Cossacks, their history, their traditions, their valor, and listened to his parents sing folk songs about the bravery of the Cossacks in their struggle for freedom, as well as the suffering which a mother, a young maiden had to endure when their loved ones had died in bat-

tle, etc. This instilled in Amvrosii a great interest in the history, traditions, and folklore of the Ukrainian people. Throughout his travels in Ukraine he collected historic and folk artifacts, listened to peoples' tales, songs and made sketches of their dress, homes, villages, and landscapes.

At a very early age Amvrosii manifested an artistic talent. His efforts to study at a certified Art Academy were not successful, not for a lack of talent, but because of poverty. He took lessons here and there, but mostly studied on his own and became, even though self-taught, a great artist. In Odessa, for his livelihood, Amvrosii worked as a bank clerk and in his spare time painted. His works caught the attention of publishers in Kyiv, and commissioned him to do book illustrations for P. Kulishe's *The Black Council*, and others. Since in the beginning of the 20th century postcards were in great demand, Amvrosii, in his love for the Ukrainian folk song, decided to prepare a series of watercolors for song postcards. This would not only raise interest and popularize the songs, but would also illustrate the historic past, and bring back to memory the days of yore. Two series of these song postcards were published. However, World War I interrupted the publication of the other series. These postcards were also sold as a fund-raiser for the building of a Shevchenko monument in Kyiv for the 1914 centennial celebration, which never took place because the tsarist government had forbidden all commemorative celebrations in Kyiv.

The Amvrosii Zhdakha's song postcards in our collection present songs about Ukrainian

historical events of the Cossack day, grief and sadness for fallen heroes, and lyrical songs of love. As an example we have a song about the heroic Cossack Suprun, the folk hero Karmeliuk, Cossacks in captivity, a mother devastated by her son's death, Cossacks going into battle, the loneliness of a maiden on one, and a wife on another, waiting for their loved ones safely to return home. In each illus-

tration the artist, through the use of color, facial expressions, background scenery, traditional symbolic elements, and folk ornamental motifs, successfully conveys the mood, the essence of the song. Every detail faithfully reflects the subject matter and adds a deeper understanding of the text. On the whole, each of Amvrosii Zhdakha's song postcards is a magnificent work of art and a rare cultural treasure. ❖



Amvrosii Zhdakha, Postcard,
Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford



Amvrosii Zhdakha, Postcard,
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A Celebration of Ukrainian Culture and Cuisine

Connecticut State Ukrainian Day Festival

Sunday, September 8, 2019

The Connecticut Ukrainian Day Committee is pleased to sponsor its 52nd consecutive Festival, attracting both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians from Connecticut and the surrounding New York area for this event celebrating Ukrainian culture and cuisine.

This Festival is successful due to the steadfast support and labors of the laity and clergy from the ten Ukrainian Catholic parishes of Connecticut. Some members of the State Committee have worked hard at every Festival held since 1965. There always is room for new members and volunteers.

More than half a million dollars has been raised by these Connecticut festivals since their



Close to two thousand people arrived to the Connecticut State Ukrainian Day Festival this year. Many of them listened with a great enthusiasm to the festival program hosts, Roman and Olena Stanislavskyy, who presented the participants, among whom: Iryna Lonchyna, Kalynonka Dance Ensemble, Valeriy Zhmud, Victor Sydir and others.

During the opening ceremony the Mayor of Stamford David Martin greeted the guests of the Festival.

inception. Last year, \$11,000 was awarded by the Committee for the benefits of the Stamford Eparchy, Saint Basil Seminary, the Ukrainian Museum & Library of Stamford, The Catechists (Institute of the Sacred Heart of Jesus), as well as Ukrainian charitable causes.

Initiated by the late +Bishop John Stock fifty-two years ago at Saint Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church in New Haven, the Connecticut State Ukrainian Day Committee had been led by the following General Chairmen: +Sir Roman Hezzy, KSG, +Myron Dmyterko, +Michael Rudy, +Lubomyr Czubytyj and Donald Horbaty. The present Festival Chairman is Roman Stanislavskyy of Stratford. ❖

For more pictures see PAGE 15 and PAGE 5 (the Ukrainian section).