

# Explore and Experience Our Past at the Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

Curator Lubow Wolynetz shares the treasures of Taras Shevchenko's Kobzar



Within the Ukrainian community the month of March is always dedicated to Taras Shevchenko (March 9, 1814 – March 10, 1861) a great poet, artist, and national bard of Ukraine. His poetry greatly influenced the growth of national consciousness and inspired the people to cultural and political rebirth. The impact of his ideas has a powerful influence on Ukrainians to this day.

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford is very proud to have among its library holdings quite rare Shevchenkiana items.

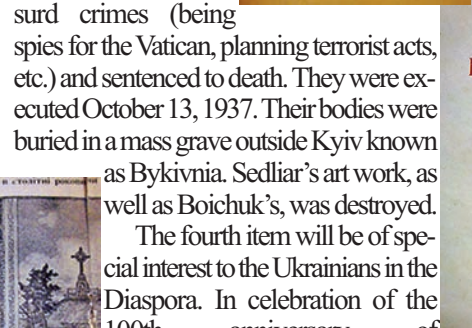
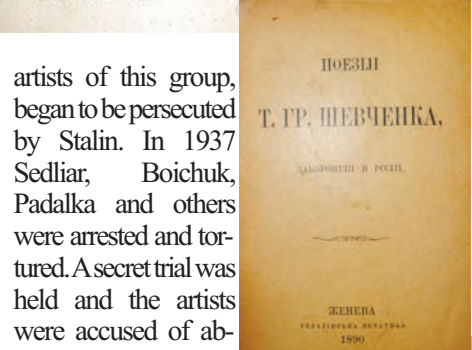
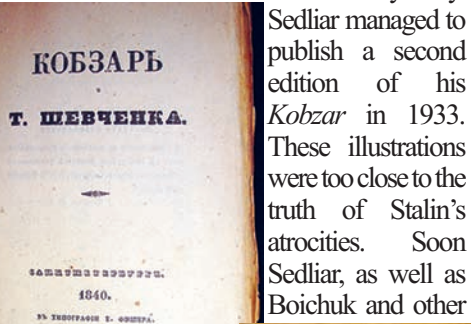
First and foremost, we have the very first publication of Shevchenko's poetry, the *Kobzar*. It was published in 1840 in St. Petersburg and contains 8 poems.

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 book was published through the efforts of Mykhailo Drahomaniv, brother of Olena Pchilka (mother of Lesia Ukrainka). Mykhailo Drahomaniv was exiled by the Tsarist Russian government because of his political writings. While in exile he lived for a

few years in Geneva and later in Sofia, Bulgaria. In 1863 and 1876 the Tsarist government issued two decrees (*Vahyev* 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. 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.

A third item of interest is the *Kobzar*

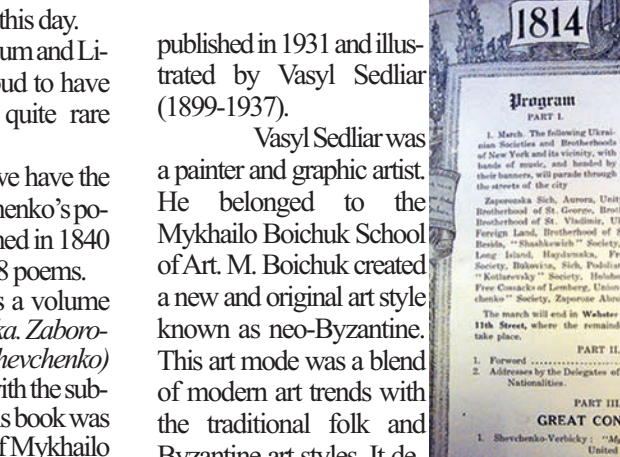
artists of this group, began to be persecuted by Stalin. In 1937 Sedliar, Boichuk, Padalka and others were arrested and tortured. A secret trial was held and the artists were accused of absurd crimes (being spies for the Vatican, planning terrorist acts, etc.) and sentenced to death. They were executed October 13, 1937. Their bodies were buried in a mass grave outside Kyiv known as Bykivnia. Sedliar's art work, as well as Boichuk's, was destroyed.



fering under tyranny. These illustrations, in reality, reflected very graphically the abuses suffered by the people under the Soviet system of Stalin's tyranny. Sedliar managed to publish a second edition of his *Kobzar* in 1933. These illustrations were too close to the truth of Stalin's atrocities. Soon Sedliar, as well as Boichuk and other

Opening remarks at the concert were delivered by Rev. N. Pidhorecky, pastor of St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church in New York City. 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 5th 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 in the parade marching to the music of 8 orchestras. 10,000 brochures about Ukraine and Taras Shevchenko, in English, were distributed to on-lookers; 4000 attended the concert. Many were turned away because there was no room. Besides the main address there were other important speakers. 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.



published in 1931 and illustrated by Vasyl Sedliar (1899-1937).

Vasyl Sedliar was a painter and graphic artist. He belonged to the Mykhailo Boichuk School of Art. M. Boichuk created a new and original art style known as neo-Byzantine. This art mode was a blend of modern art trends with the traditional folk and Byzantine art styles. It developed into the "style of simplified monumental forms." Sedliar illustrated the *Kobzar* using contemporary depictions of Shevchenko's heroes enduring abuse and suf-

