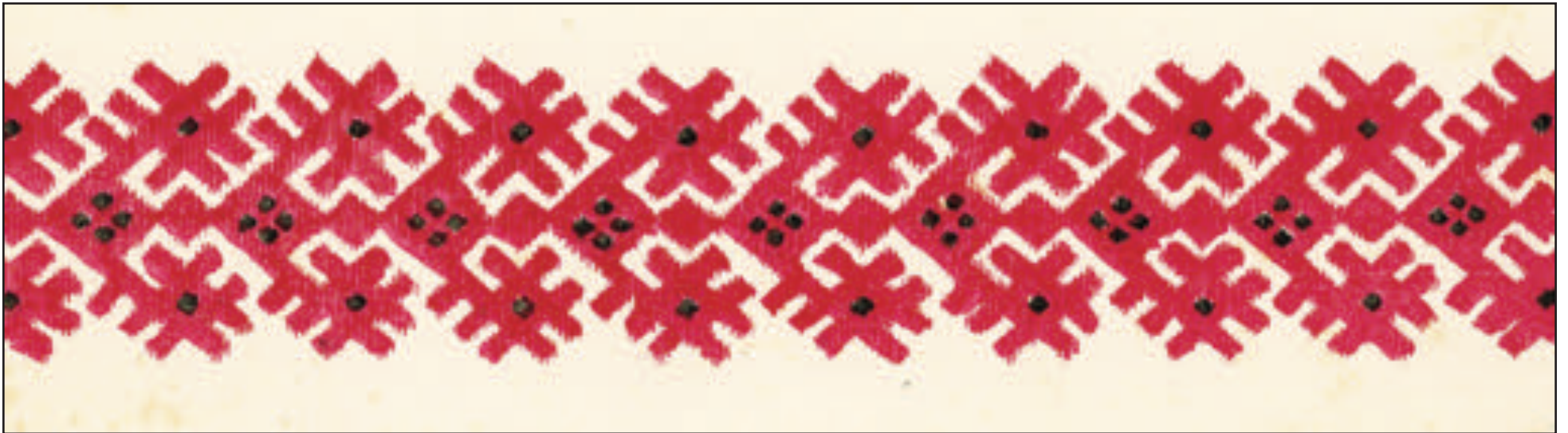


EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

## A Rare Publication by a Unique Individual

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



A sample of NYZ embroidery drawing from "Tulchynshchyna - Vyshyvky Nyzziu," The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

The Ukrainian Museum and Library takes pride in its unique collection of museum artifacts and extensive library of books and archives. Within our library holdings, we have a separate section consisting of a number of rare publications, some of which were miraculously saved from destruction. The book in question is the work of Volodymyr Hahenmeister, 1887-1938, (artist, folklorist, scholar, cultural activist, publisher, pedagogue) - "Tulchynshchyna - Vyshyvky Nyzziu" (Tulchyn district (Eastern Podillia region) - Nyz Embroidery) of which only 100 copies were printed in 1929 in Kamianets-Podilskyi. The book's importance lies not only in its subject matter but also in the life and work of its author as well as the political situation of that period.

Eastern Podillia as an ethnographic region preserved much of its traditional folk art longer than other areas thanks to the work of dedicated teachers, scholars, artists, folklorists, and community activists. From the early 20th century the city of Kamianets-Podilskyi developed into an important cultural and scholarly center. Already in 1905 an art school with residence for peasant children had been established. This school later evolved into an art trade workshop and finally into the Kamianets-Podilskyi Art Trade School. Its director from 1916 to 1933 was Volodymyr Hahenmeister. The aim of the school was to produce a new generation of well qualified art and folk-art specialists, artisans and craftsmen for facto-

ry and hand craft trade production. The students had to master many technological aspects of various folk crafts, their ornamental compositions, motifs, etc. The instructors believed that fundamental understanding of these arts is necessary to understand and uplift the aesthetic aspects of new craft products. The school also organized ethnographic field trips for the students into Podillia villages. They had to collect artifacts, study traditional folk culture, gather information about folk costume, embroidery, ceramics, mural paintings, house construction, create drawings of everything, etc. This material served as valuable source of information for museums, for scholars for further study, and material for publications. In the aftermath of World War I and Soviet takeover the work of the school, although limited because of economic difficulties and totalitarian regime tactics, thrived on the enthusiasm and dedication of both the teachers and students. The school had its own lithographic printing workshop, producing over 127 items which consisted of albums, brochures, booklets, posters, postcards, leaflets, drawings, etc. The issuing number of most of the published items was very small, averaging from 10 to a 100 copies at the most and for this reason they have become a bibliographic rarity. Hahenmeister, as the director of the school, prepared and edited most of these publications.

Volodymyr Hahenmeister's book on NYZ embroidery consist of a short

introduction and 25 hand drawings of NYZ embroidery designs. The drawings were done by a student under the guidance of his instructor. In the introduction, Hahenmeister gives a detailed description of a woman's folk shirt - the cut, the placement of embroidery designs and exact terms and local names used for the various parts of the shirt and its *décor*. He also explains the technique of NYZ embroidery and includes specific local terms used for individual motifs within each ornamental design. The 27 NYZ designs in the book were copied from samples done by a woman from the village of Orlivka. Her mother taught her this stitch and she in turn passed it on to her daughter. The technique of this type of embroidery and its many ornamental designs came down to us thanks to many anonymous village embroiderers who preserved this art form. Hahenmeister also mentions the fact that in some areas of Podillia the NYZ stitch embroidery is being abandoned and substituted by cross-stitch because it is an easier technique. He also bemoans the fact that some embroiderers in adapting cross-stitch technique also adapted commercially produced designs that have nothing to do with the traditional folk ornaments and motifs and thus negatively influence the aesthetic tastes.

The 1930's in the Soviet Union are known as the years of the Great Purge. Stalin began the destruction of intellectuals, artists, writers, poets, cultural, activists. Most of the innocent victims,

accused of fictitious crimes, were either sent to the GULAG or shot. He especially focused his attention on Ukraine and Ukrainian intellectuals. In 1933, the Kamianets-Podilskyi school was closed and Volodymyr Hahenmeister was dismissed from his position. He moved to Kharkiv, then to Kyiv and continued with his scholarly work. In 1938, he was arrested accused of espionage and nationalistic activities and on January 20th 1938 was shot in the vaults of one of the buildings used for execution in Kyiv. His works were confiscated and many destroyed. His crime, in Stalin's eyes, was "excessive popularization of Ukrainian culture".

For many decades totalitarian regimes tried to destroy Ukrainian culture and those who adhered to it, preserved it and popularized it. Notwithstanding these attempts, Ukrainian culture survived thanks to people like Volodymyr Hahenmeister and many others. In doing so they risked their lives and well being, but persevered.

The Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford for over 80 years has been collecting and preserving Ukrainian cultural heritage for posterity. Help us in our endeavors to continue this important work. By being generous donors you will play an important role as benefactors, guardians, and caretakers of such valuable cultural treasures which our Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford have been preserving for many decades. ❖



NYZ embroidery designs from L. Wolynetz' sampler, The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford



A shirt with NYZ embroidery from Eastern Podillia, The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford