

CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

A Newsletter on Carpatho-Rusyn Ethnic Heritage



FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

"Why in the world would anyone want to run a dance group?" People (even family and friends) still ask that today, six years after the birth of Rusyny, Carpatho-Rusyn Folk Ensemble based in Mc Keesport, Pennsylvania. To attempt an answer, we offer a brief personal account of the development of one Rusyn-American folk dancer.

Most folk dancers in America are not born with an ethnic awareness, rather they evolve under the influence of many factors. My own evolution began in 1961, when I and some friends joined the Saint Nicholas Folk Dancers. We were asked to participate and represent our parish in the first Mc Keesport International Village. Being a teen-ager, I was concerned more about the social aspects of the ensemble than with any thoughts of preserving my heritage. As a member of the group, I was having fun and learning at the same time. The challenges of performing before an audience, doing the proper steps in the dances, and remembering the words to songs that I did not even understand — all of these activities were helping to develop my confidence and lead me to adulthood. Being just a member, without the responsibilities of leadership, was relatively easy.

Three or four years later, our "teacher" (Marylin Fulem) retired in order to continue studies at college, to marry, and to raise a family. We, nonetheless, continued the group, and all the members managed to share the responsibilities of running it. We were like a family of twenty teens, sharing the joys and sorrows of growing up.

That original group continued for another three or four years, but eventually we all went on to school, to jobs, and to families. In the spring of 1978, some of us from the "old" group watched our own children perform in a school show at the Saint Nicholas parish, directed at the time by Jerry Jumba. Watching our children performing Carpatho-Rusyn dances and once again hearing familiar music touched us deeply and inspired the formation of a new group. Within three months — and with help from our parish, our pastor, and the United Societies fraternal organization — Rusyny was born.

Being on the managing end of a group like Rusyny did present some problems. First, we wanted to be a family-oriented group, so we needed to develop material for young children, teens, young adults, and even parents. To accomplish this, we challenged Jerry Jumba, and he responded with a well-organized training program which continues to this day.

Yet, even with material, musicians, and other human resources, there is still the ever-present problem of scheduling. Trying to arrange practices and shows for sixty people of all ages is often extremely difficult. There are so many other functions to compete with: school activities, scouts, work schedules, and vacations. Performing at International Village at eight in the evening, then going to work in the mill at midnight has happened more than once in the last six years. Recent conversations with John Righetti and Jerry Jumba, who studied in Užhorod last year, show that the situation there is entirely different. With government-sponsored folk groups, time provided for practice, travel time

provided for shows and tours, and even rubles for costumes, it is easier to be a member of an ensemble there.

Rusyny has nonetheless managed to survive. This August will be our seventh International Village performance. We have already been involved in over forty shows. Is it worth the trouble? Yes and no!

Running a group like ours is a lot of work. For us, it is all volunteer work — no pay, long hours practicing, teaching, arranging show orders, even printing programs. Ed Jones (my brother-in-law and co-director), Helenka Robertson (our finance person), myself, and our spouses have occasionally even questioned our own sanity.

But then we do a show and something magical happens. We see our young people authentically recreating the spirit of our people in dance. We hear eight-year-olds sing in Rusyn as if it were their native tongue. We witness the qualities of leadership, showmanship, and the development of self-confidence in our young. We see tears of joy in our baba's faces, as they see and hear the things from their youth that they had left behind so long ago. We hear the audience respond with cheers and applause and know that we have captured them with our performance. These are the things that make it all worthwhile!

Fortunately, we are not alone in our efforts to promote the Carpatho-Rusyn heritage. There are other groups sponsored by both Orthodox and Catholic churches and by fraternal societies, which perform at various festivals and concerts. For example, in Pennsylvania, there is Slavjane, sponsored by Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in McKees Rocks and by the Greek Catholic Union; the Carpathian Youth Choir and Dancers of Saint John the Divine Orthodox Church (OCA) in Monessen; SS. Peter and Paul's Rusin Group in Windber (Johnstown Diocese); the Holy Ghost Byzantine Choir and Dancers in Philadelphia; and Karpaty at St. John's Orthodox Church in Ambridge (Johnstown Diocese), which is in the process of re-organizing. In Ohio, there are groups like Kruzok, affiliated with the Byzantine Diocese of Parma and co-sponsored by the Greek Catholic Union; the Carpathians in Barberton; and Krajane in Dayton. Farther west in Michigan, there is the Beskydy in Livonia and St. Basil's Krajane in Sterling Heights, while back east, in Wayne, New Jersey is the choral group Verchovina. These are only groups that we have heard of or seen, but there are many other parish clubs, craft organizations, and study groups as well that are continuing to provide outlets of education and understanding for our people.

Is it worth it? If Rusyny can do even a little to develop understanding and awareness among our own people, and if we can contribute even in small measure to develop leaders among our youth, then it is worth all the effort we can afford to give.

OUR FRONT COVER

Rusalja customs from the Carpatho-Rusyn village of Kurov in the Prešov Region, as presented at the International Folk Festival in Strážnice, Czechoslovakia, 1979. Photo by Ivan Nováček.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Subcarpathian Rus' attracted the attention of many outstanding writers. The most important of them was Ivan Olbracht, a Czech writer whose depiction of the Rusyn land and its people was the most sensitive. Olbracht was the son of a Czech writer and lawyer, and of a wealthy Jewish landowner's Christian convert daughter. The young Olbracht's university studies toward a law degree were interrupted by his involvement in the Social Democratic party. He was often persecuted and imprisoned by the Austrian authorities for his political activities, in part because he was an editor of the Czech Social Democratic periodicals *Dělnické listy*, published in Vienna, and *Právo lidů*, published in Prague.

In 1920, Olbracht illegally visited Soviet Russia, which then had no diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia, and after a six-month stay he returned home a convinced Communist. He became a co-founder of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia in 1921; however, he was expelled from the party in 1929. From then until the end of World War II, he devoted himself exclusively to literary activity. In search of new themes, he set out in 1931 to visit the Prešov Region of Eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus' where he spent several months. He returned there again in the following years. Most of the time he spent in the village of Koločava, the birthplace of Nikola Šuhaj, the legendary latter-day "Robin Hood" of the Rusyns.

As early as 1931, Olbracht began to publish a series of reportages entitled "The Cultural Struggle in Subcarpathian Rus'," reprinted in 1932 in book form under the title *Země bez jména* (Land Without a Name). This work is a precise analysis of the economic, political, ethnic, and cultural situation in the area based on a comparison of the historical development with the present.

In 1933, Olbracht published his most famous novel *Nikola Šuhaj loupežník* (Nikola Šuhaj, The Brigand). This is a balladic story of a man deeply rooted in the Subcarpathian land, a man searching for freedom and justice, a man of passionate loves and hates. The novel enjoyed enormous popularity and went quickly into several printings. Liberal literary critics welcomed it enthusiastically. Conservative circles, however, demanded that it be banned, and eventually they succeeded in having it removed from school libraries in Subcarpathian Rus'.

Despite the continuing polemics about the merits of this novel, Olbracht, together with his writer-friends Karel Nový and Vladislav Vančura, wrote a screenplay for a full-length film "Marijka nevěrnice" (Marijka, the Unfaithful), which was produced in the summer of 1933 in the village of Koločava. The film was remarkable for its exclusive use of local villagers as actors — Subcarpathian shepherds, lumberjacks, raftsmen, and village youths. Olbracht himself played the role of a Czech tourist. Present-day criticism regards the film as one of the most successful on a social theme ever made in Europe.

Olbracht's experiences from his journey to Subcarpathian Rus' in 1934 are reflected in six extensive reportages published in book form in 1935 under the title *Hory a staletí* (Mountains and Centuries). They are largely dramatic stories based on real-life events.



Ivan Olbracht with the daughter of Nikola Šuhaj — Anna — photographed in Koločava, 1935.

The only openly political work of Olbracht during the 1930s was an article, "Who is Responsible for the Events in the Eastern Part of Our Republic?," dealing with a strike by lumberjacks in Jasinja in Subcarpathian Rus', as well as with the peasant rebellions in Čertižné and Habura in the Prešov Region of Eastern Slovakia. Olbracht's last book on a Subcarpathian theme was a collection of three short stories from the Orthodox Jewish milieu, entitled *Golet v údolí* (Golet in the Valley) and published in 1938.

After World War II, during which he lived in a sort of self-imposed voluntary exile in a small village in Southern Bohemia, Olbracht rejoined the Communist party of Czechoslovakia and returned to political life. However, his age and health did not permit him to return to literary activities. He took part in the film adaptation of *Nikola Šuhaj, The Brigand*, but it is generally agreed that the film hardly compares with the original novel.

The fiction of Ivan Olbracht based on Subcarpathian themes is unanimously regarded as the peak of his literary career. His fiction has also met with a remarkable response abroad. As of 1981, *Nikola Šuhaj, The Brigand* has been translated into nineteen languages and *Golet in the Valley* into ten languages. We are not aware of any English translation of Olbracht's works, with the exception of the now rare edition of *Nikola Šuhaj* published in Prague in 1954. We have no doubt, however, that a new translation of *Šuhaj* as well as Olbracht's other remarkable literary creations would meet with a hearty response, especially among Rusyn Americans.

Mykola Mušynka

DISCOVERING THE SOURCE OF FOLK DANCE ART IN TRANSCARPATHIA

The author of this article, Klara Kerečany-Balog, is well known by every folk art ensemble in Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus'). Her work is most closely connected, however, with the famed Zakarpats'kyj Narodnyj Anseml' (the Transcarpathian Folk Ensemble) in Užhorod, for which she is balletmaster. Ms. Balog began dancing in 1945, and since 1951 she has been given several honors, including the title, National People's Artist (1974), the highest award for an artist in a Soviet republic. This article was written specially for the Carpatho-Rusyn American and was translated from Ukrainian by Margarita S. Mikhalyova and Jerry Jumba.

Folklore plays a major role in the development of the inner cultural characteristics of a people. Folk dances are an integral part of all branches of folklore in Transcarpathia, and therefore choreography has an important social function. Although for centuries the people of Subcarpathian Rus' tended to be isolated from their Eastern Slavic brothers, they still preserved their native language and customs and developed their own rich choreography and folk art. Today, Soviet Transcarpathia is divided into thirteen districts. Each district is clearly different from another, not only in music but also in clothing. It is the duty of those who keep this culture to develop and enrich it. The village feeds us not only with bread, it also gives us the treasure of a spirited and moral expression. In those areas of Transcarpathia whose population is Rusyn — the Hutsul, Boikian, Lemkian, and Verchovyna regions — we find a Rusyn character in the music, dancing, and customs. On the other hand, the districts bordering Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania are influenced by those neighboring cultures. Moreover, in the southern parts of the Berehovo, Vynohradiv, and Užhorod districts within Transcarpathia, some of the inhabitants are Hungarian, while in certain villages of the Tjačiv district there are Romanians.

The ethnographer who seeks certain almost forgotten Transcarpathian dances provides a great service to the development of our folk arts. In order to find unique dances, songs, costumes, ornaments, instruments, and customs, it is necessary to know the people and to visit individual villages several times. The choreographer-artist must understand a body of characteristics before preparing material for performance. Specific musical accompaniment, singing, costumes, time, place, and the nature of the occasion, all provide unique human characteristics that bring the substance and structure of life to an artistic creation.

Take, for example, the Iršava district, which is a treasure of original folklore in Transcarpathia. The village of Velykyj Rakovec' has given us dances which are now well known among many European folk groups, such as the Rakovec'kyj Kručenyj (crossing), Rakivčanka, Starovinnyj Tanec (old fashioned dance). When I visited Velykyj Rakovec', the watchman at the local grocery store recalled how they did the Old Fashioned Dance when he was young. A boy held a girl's right hand, and standing face to face they stamped and hopped. They held each other's right hand during the whole dance. I wondered why they also called this dance the "Ardjal's'kyj." Other dance specialists later discovered that in the nineteenth century, when Transcarpathia was under Austro-



Klara Kerečany-Balog

Hungarian rule, the people of Velykyj Rakovec' went to *Er-dely* (the Hungarian name for Transylvania) in order to work on a seasonal basis. There, they imitated some Romanian steps, and when they returned home to Velykyj Rakovec', they added this new element to their dances, varying it according to their own style of movement.

Four years after meeting the watchman, I met two old women in the Chust district who had left Velykyj Rakovec' when they were young. They helped me reconstruct the Ardjal's'kyj dance. The young men and women arrive at an open flat area near a home. It starts without music, because the boys invite the girls to dance with these verses:

1. *Ta mý sobi zatancujme, divočki, divočki,
Tak až by sja zemlja trjasla, myli frajiročki.*
2. *Totu im sobi poljubyv ja, ščo fajno tancuje,
ščo ručkamy obnimaje i v rotyk ciluje.*
3. *Oj, idu ja tancjuvaty, beru divku z kraju,
aby ljudy ne kazaly, ož ja výbyraju.*
4. *Zahudaj mi hudačenku taj u jednu strunu,
ta naj sobi z bilavkoju malo potancuju.*

- (1. Girls, girls, let's dance together
Until, dear friends, the earth will shake.
2. I fell in love with the girl who dances so well,
Who hugs me and places a kiss on my lips.
3. Oh, I am going to dance and take the last girl
in the line
So people won't say I especially chose her.
4. Then play for me fiddler on one string
And I will dance a while with the flaxen-haired girl.)

The girls stand in one row, the boys in a row opposite them. After the first bang of the drum, the boys stretch their right hand forward. The second bang signals the girls to put their right hands into the outstretched hands of the boys. The third bang signals the orchestra to play. Holding the right hand is the rule of the dance, and only when the drum bangs the last time will the hands separate.

While collecting folk choreography materials, the specialist has to be well informed of the geographic location of the dances and the folk costumes of the performers. Through-

out Transcarpathia the native clothing is deeply connected with nature, the character of the environment, and the artistic sensibility of the people. In the mountain environment, the girls have narrow skirts; consequently, in dances, the steps tend to be short and the arms are held close to the body. Generally speaking, there is less dance space available so that there is more accentuation of the vertical character of the dance. The leather shoes (*postoly*, *bočkory*) are light and closely bound to the feet, encouraging light, quick steps and dancing on toes. On the other hand, in the warmer lowland valleys, the general character of the dance is affected by the availability of more space. The girls have wider skirts and arm movement tends to be broader. Sometimes the light *postoly* are replaced by boots (*čoboty*, or *čizmy*) which encourages more stamping.

Folk dance enthusiasts can find the real beauty of dances when they can participate in the ideas drawn from the natural creativity of the people. This creativity springs out of the depths of the earth to be enjoyed and shared with the people. This is our noble aim.

Klara Kerečany-Balog

FOLK CUSTOMS OF CARPATHO-RUSYNS THE PASTORAL FESTIVALS: PENTECOST/RUSALJA

Pentecost has also been called *Zeleni svjata* (festival of greens), *Trijcja* (Trinity), and *Rusalja*. It is the most important festival after Christmas and Easter, beginning on the fiftieth day after Easter. Like all other holidays in Transcarpathia, Pentecost is also closely connected with agricultural activities, especially with cattle-breeding. Perhaps in keeping with the time of the year, it also has strong erotic overtones. The celebrations started on the eve of Pentecost when each cowherd wreathed the horns of his cattle with green twigs and returned his decorated herd to the village. Green twigs (mostly lime or hazel) were also used for the decoration of houses, both inside and outside. Green was likewise predominant in churches, where the floor was covered with grass, and in other public places.

A typical custom was the raising of maypoles by young men on the eve of Pentecost. First they would sink a common maypole in the middle of the village. Usually it was a tall fir tree stripped of branches and bark, leaving only a few branches at the top left to be decorated with flowers, wreaths, and paper ribbons. Having done this, the boys would “fortify” themselves with a slug or two of homemade brandy and split up into smaller groups to set up individual maypoles for the village girls. If a boy wanted the maypole to be a symbol of love for a particular girl, he would set up the maypole by himself, usually on a rooftop, where he guarded it against the attempts of his rivals to pull it down. Very often the guardians of the maypoles and their rivals even got involved in skirmishes. The custom of raising maypoles for girls is retained in many villages still today, though in some places it has been transferred to May Day.

Midsummer night (June 24) was one of the few occasions during which the village community tolerated excesses which it would otherwise proscribe. The boys especially took advantage of certain extraordinary liberties: they would exchange the entry gates of different houses, cover with straw the paths between the houses of couples in love, carry a

chicken coop or even an outhouse from one backyard into another, and so on. Perhaps the crowning event of the midsummer night fooleries might be the lifting of a hay wagon onto the crest of a roof (it would be brought there in parts and reassembled on the roof).

Until the end of the nineteenth century, many Rusyn villages in the Prešov Region of northeastern Slovakia retained the custom of “walking with the scarecrow (*džadko*).” The shepherds would produce a wood or straw effigy of a male figure with a conspicuous phallic part, and they would walk from house to house asking for cloth to dress the scarecrow and for food (grain, bread, bacon, and eggs) to feed “him.” The cloth and grain would then be exchanged in the tavern for brandy, and the remaining foodstuffs taken to the woods where the young shepherds would have a feast lasting three days and two nights. The feast, also known as *pastyrské Rusalja* or “herders’ Rusalja,” has much in common with the “diabolic games beyond the villages in which the young folk sin,” described by the Old Rus’ historiographer Nestor in his eleventh-century *Primary Chronicle* covering the history of early Kievan Rus’. These were the only three days in the year when the herders (both boys and girls) would not bring the cattle back to the village, but would spend the night together with them in the forest where they would pass the time in various skits and games, often with an erotic undertone. The most popular of the skits was the “herders’ wedding” — an imitation of a real wedding, including all the folk customs usually accompanying it. The liberties of the midsummer night festivities included even a certain tolerance of sexual freedom, otherwise strongly condemned.

However, Rusalja was not free from more serious concerns and activities. The wish for a good crop was expressed in the form of prayers and processions. It was usual for priests in the course of the processions to consecrate wells in the fields with holy water; also, husbandmen would stick green branches into their fields to protect them from natural disasters.

A special phenomenon connected with the celebrations of Rusalja was the so-called “girls’ fair” held at the Rusyn monastery in Krásny Brod near Medzilaborce (Prešov Region) from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The famous Czech nineteenth-century writer Božena Němcová described it in her travelogue *Pictures of Life in Slovakia* in this way: “The Rusyn men had in the previous century the custom of choosing their brides at fairs especially held for that purpose. One of the best-known “girls’ fairs” (in Hungarian *Leány-vasar*) was held at the St. Basil monastery in Krásny Brod. There would gather the prospective brides — single girls and widows — with their relatives on the one hand, and the prospective bridegrooms with their relatives on the other hand. The young brides had their heads covered with small wreaths of periwinkle and ribbons, and the widows with kerchiefs. Visitors to this fair numbered in the thousands. Some of the young lads knew beforehand which girl they would choose for their bride and many of the girls knew who their intended would be, but there were also many young people who met there for the first time. The customary procedure was that the bridegroom addressed the girl of his liking and shaking her hand would say: *Ked’ ti treba chlopa, pod’ do popa* (If you need a husband, come to the priest). If the girl accepted the handshake, the bridegroom would then

negotiate with the girl's relatives about the 'gift' they required for agreeing with the marriage. Once the agreement was reached, the couple was wed in the monastery. There followed a customary feast consisting of eating, drinking, and dancing, and then the bridegroom took the bride to his home. There were occasional fights at the fair when the girl rejected the proposing bridegroom, and/or when her relatives would not agree to the marriage contract. Should the bridegroom be a wealthy man, however, the girl's family usually forced the girl to marry him even against her will. There were other cases when two young people had agreed to wed, but could not obtain the assent of the parents. In such cases, the bridegroom would 'kidnap' the bride, and her parents had no other choice but to agree to the wedding. This custom was practiced until 1720 when it was officially banned, and since then the wooing and marriages are arranged in a more agreeable manner."

This Rusyn custom described by Božena Němcová appeared to many outside observers as exotic and unnatural. For many Rusyns, however, it was quite natural and inevitable. As we have pointed out before, the main economic activity of the Rusyns was the breeding of cattle and sheep and related agricultural work. Rusyns lived mainly in small villages or in scattered settlements in the mountains, largely in isolation from the outside world or even from neighboring villages. It is obvious that meetings of young people from all over large areas, such as the "girls' fairs" in Krásny Brod, were organized in order to avoid inbreeding and to eliminate the risk of subsequent genetic degeneration.

As we have seen, the Pentecost or Rusalja festivities of the Rusyns were regarded as feasts of love and merriment, and they are documented in a number of Rusalja songs. However, not all social strata of Rusyn society had the same chance to enjoy the good side of these festivities. As one of the Rusalja songs recorded in the Prešov Region village of Kurov says:

*Rusalja, Rusalja, bohate Rusalja,
A moje chudobne, bo nemam grajčara.
Pri čudžich voloňkach dňuju i nočuju,
Neraz sja hirkyma slyzami umyju.*

(Rusalja, Rusalja, rich Rusalja,
My Rusalja is poor, for I am penniless.
I spend my days and nights with other people's cattle,
And more than once I wash myself in bitter tears.)

Though many of the Rusalja customs are no longer practiced today, it is significant that the first folk festivals of Czechoslovakia's Rusyns held in Medzilaborce and Svidník after 1945 took place exactly in the Rusalja period, thus uniting the spirit of modern times with the old traditions.

Mykola Mušynka

RECENT PUBLICATIONS 1980 (continued)

Gardner, Johann von. "A Few Words on Church Chant in Carpatho-Russia," *Orthodox Life*, XXX, 1 (Jordanville, N.Y., 1980), pp. 46–50.

This brief article by a native of Serbia (and former teacher and Orthodox bishop in Subcarpathian Rus' during the inter-war years) discusses a few aspects of Subcarpathian plain chant and its relationship to historic chants in other parts of medieval Kievan Rus'.

Halajda, Illja, ed. *O. A. Ljubymov 1898–1976*. Prešov: Kul'turnyj sojuz ukrajins'kych trudjaščych, 1980, 132 pp.

This popularly-written comprehensive work is the first biography of Oleksandr Andrijovyč Ljubymov, a Russian-born teacher and musician who was active as a director of various choirs and folk ensembles in the Rusyn-inhabited Prešov Region from the 1930s until the 1960s. Fifteen essays, most by those who remember Ljubymov, trace his cultural activity. Numerous photographs and a bibliography of Ljubymov's language textbooks and songbooks is appended.

Kol'esarov, Julijan D.M. *Ukrajinski nacionalizem i rusnaci* (Ukrainian Nationalism and the Rusnaks), Vol. 2. Montreal, 1980, 101 p.

This volume is written in the language of and deals with the Vojvodinian (Bačka) Rusyns/Rusnaks of Yugoslavia. The author, a native of the Bačka now living in Canada, is concerned primarily with criticizing those members of the local Yugoslav Rusyn intelligentsia who supposedly favor associating their people with the Ukrainian nationality. Despite the author's often emotional and even slanderous tone, this second volume is like the first (which appeared in 1975) particularly valuable for its long quotations and photographs of title pages of rare Rusyn journals and almanacs from the Vojvodina.

(Available gratis from Julijan Kolesar, 4875 Bourret Avenue, No. 203, Montreal, Quebec H3W 1L2.)

IN MEMORIAM

On Friday afternoon, January 27, 1984, Bishop Emil J. Mihalik fell asleep in the Lord. His initiative to bring the Cultural Roots Program to the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Parma will not be forgotten. His direct support, by financing adult workshops, research, publishing, and teaching, has helped religious, cultural, and social growth. Bishop Emil saw that the cohesion of religion, culture, and social activity builds a strong spiritual church.

The work of the Cultural Roots Program included a cantor's school and a methodical cantor's manual; Carpatho-Rusyn Christmas carols (koljady) and customs; interviews with our immigrants and their descendants; printing cultural information brochures; teaching Carpatho-Rusyn singing, dancing, and customs in our schools; establishing the Kruzhok Ensemble; and taping experienced cantors to preserve their interpretation of the liturgical cycle.

This activity is a tribute to Bishop Emil's foresight, dedication, and love of his people. Our condolences to his family and relatives. *Vičnaja jemu pamjat'*.

Jerry Jumba

SEARCH FOR ROOTS

Part II — The National Archives

The National Archives in Washington, D. C. is the repository for some of our country's most treasured documents. Our nation's Constitution is painstakingly preserved in a sealed case and lowered into a vault each night or in case of emergency. However, few people realize the extent of the collection which is stored in the National Archives. Some of what has been preserved is of great value to those people searching for their family's past, particularly an immigrant past. Each year, thousands of amateur and professional genealogists throughout the country come here to use the vast research facilities.

The entrance to the research section of the National Archives is located in the rear of the building. After signing in with the security guard, you will be allowed access to the facilities. You will then be able to obtain free publications on which documents are available, including a booklet entitled *Getting Started: Beginning Your Genealogical Research in the National Archives*. This publication is invaluable as a guide and should be read before you begin your search. Records stored in the Archives which contain genealogical information are: Census Records, Military Service and Pension Records, Passenger Arrival Records, and Federal Land Records. These documents are recorded on microfilm and trained consultants are available to help you use them in your search.

The Census records are helpful only to those who have ancestors who lived in the United States between 1790 and 1910. Due to the privacy of information laws, the 1920 Census will not be available until 72 years after it was taken, that is, not until 1992. To use the records now available, it is important to know the full name of the head of the household and the state, county, and county subdivision in which the family lived. Military records are available for those who served in the United States military before World War I. If you have an ancestor who acquired land directly from the Federal Government in a public land sale, you can find the records here. But perhaps the records nearest and dearest to my heart—and the ones that caused the most pain/pleasure—are the Passenger Arrival Records. If you have an ancestor who immigrated to the United States by ship to an eastern or gulf coast port between 1819 and the 1940s, you should be able to find the Ship's Manifest. As this pertains to the greatest number of us, I will concentrate on this area in detail.

The Manifest will provide you with the names of individual passengers, their age, sex, marital status, occupation, whether they could read or write, country of citizenship, nationality, last permanent residence, nearest relative or friend in the country they came from, their final destination, by whom the passage was paid, how much money they had with them, whether they had ever been in the United States before, the name, address, and relationship of the person they were coming to join, general health and appearance, and the place of birth. To find the arrival records it is helpful to know the full name, date of entry, and port of entry. How-

ever, possessing only the names of my relatives and the knowledge that most of our Rusyn ancestors came through New York City, I was able to find the records of all four of my grandparents by using the so-called Soundex Coding System.

Soundex, an index developed by the Works Project Administration in the 1930s, is a system of grouping names according to the way they sound rather than by the way they are spelled. It is sufficient to say that each name has a code, and by using this code, along with the full name of the relative, it is possible to learn the location of the roll of microfilm containing the appropriate list. Soundex is easy to use and it is explained fully in the Archive's publications.

My own research was at times trying and at other times amazingly easy. Finding my maternal grandmother Theodora Nosal would have been, I felt, my most challenging task, for I had no other information other than her name. However, the simplicity of her name and my growing expertise in using both the system and the equipment allowed me to find her within an hour. Her husband-to-be, Peter Baysa, was a different story. The date he had claimed to be his arrival day was incorrect by more than a year; he was listed as Petro Bajsa (Soundex made the name change no problem); he was described as a seventeen year-old female (!); and the first digit of the microfilm number was wrong. However, the other information given about him confirmed what we already knew, so I realized that I had found the right man. Difficult, but not impossible.

My paternal grandmother, Paza Onufrak, had left us with her exact arrival date, so I went straight to the microfilm rolls and looked for her list by list. My search took three hours. Had I used the Soundex, I could have found the number of the microfilm frame the list was on and reduced my search time. But in the end, it was well worth the effort. The family legend was true. She did have only five dollars in her pocket. And among all the people coming from her village—which was known to be predominantly Rusyn—she was the only one who had listed her nationality as Ruthenian and not Slovak. (We were diehard Rusyns even then!) John (Iwan) Onufrak listed a brother Nikolai as his closest relative rather than his wife whom he left behind. Although I strongly feel that I have found the man I was looking for, further research is needed to erase any doubts. As I left the National Archives with my copies of the Ship's Lists, I felt appreciation for my difficult (by American standards) to pronounce name. Its very scarcity made it easier to locate, and I came to pity all the Smiths (Smyths) because of the long search that they would have ahead of them.

Searching for Passenger Arrival records is not an easy task. However, the thrill you experience when you locate your ancestors among the millions of names makes it all worthwhile. It is a very emotional experience when you realize that you have found the first record of their arrival in the New World. My successes in the National Archives make me anxious to continue this odyssey into my family's past.

Patricia A. Onufrak

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