

# *UKRAINIANS IN ILLINOIS*



**UKRAINIAN BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This year, in which Americans celebrate the Bicentennial of their independence, also marks the centennial celebration of the settlement of the first Ukrainian immigration in America. But the basis of Ukrainian identification with the American Bicentennial extends beyond the coincidence of their respective anniversaries, for the issues of freedom and independence that were resolved for Americans when they repudiated their colonized status — an act which Americans today can be justifiably proud of and look upon with nostalgic satisfaction — are still very much alive in the hearts and minds of most Ukrainians not only because of their own recent past history but for the continued plight of their countrymen in the Soviet Union.

*But who are the Ukrainians?* Some Americans became aware of this ethnic group through the occasional publicity given to the celebration of their religious customs during the major holidays, or anti-Soviet demonstrations protesting the suppression of freedom in the Ukraine. But most Americans do not know who Ukrainians are or where Ukraine is.

The purpose of this booklet, therefore, is to acquaint Americans with the Ukrainian ethnic group in America: to provide some historical facts about its past and present, its culture and community, and its political consciousness and objectives, so Ukrainians might also be recognized for their contribution to the evolving pluralistic character of American society, and for their continued commitment to the values of freedom and independence which both the American and Ukrainian celebrations commemorate.

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## *Ukrainians in Ukraine*

Ukrainians are an East Slavic people inhabiting nearly 300,000 square miles, north of the Black Sea, in Eastern Europe. The population of Ukraine (now the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) is about 50 million and over half of it resides in urban areas.

Archaeologists discovered traces of human habitation in Ukraine from the Paleolithic Era and the Trypillian culture of the Neolithic time shows that ancestors of Ukrainians cultivated the soil and were skilled potters.

The successive waves of migrations from the Asiatic steppes, in the first millenium, forced the native population to form tribal coalitions to protect their existence from the invaders. The Antes federation of the sixth century A.D. is considered to be the first political organization of the Slavs which culminated with the formation of the Kievan State (Kievskia Rus') in the ninth century.

The Kievan State encompassed not only the territory of Ukraine today, but also a large part of Eastern Europe, controlling two great trade routes to Constantinople and the East. The rulers of Rus': Sviatoslav, Volodymyr the Great and Yaroslav the Wise extended its frontiers, transforming its character from a tribal confederation into a state leading to its prominence among the Christian community of nations.

But the turbulent history of Kievan Rus resulting from its exposure to constant pressure from the Asiatic invaders and incessant civil wars among the descendants of the first Kievan rulers eventually led to its disintegration in the thirteenth century.

The Galician-Volhynian state (13-14 centuries) which became its successor state in Ukraine, chose to develop closer relations with Western Europe to the neglect of its ties with the eastern principalities of the former Kievan Rus. Upon the extinction of its princely line, Galicia became annexed by Poland and the eastern Ukrainian lands joined Lithuania in the Rus-Lithuanian Commonwealth (14-16 centuries).

Upon the removal of strong central authority, the southern Ukrainian areas were exposed to plunder and destruction by the Tartars. In time, the protection of these areas was undertaken by an indigenous group known as the Cossacks whose organization evolved from mere frontiersmen into a complex society. They joined the Ukrainian religious and lay leaders

and contributed to the rebirth of Ukrainian intellectual life in Kiev, in the first half of the seventeenth century.

In 1648, the Cossacks spearheaded a national uprising against the Poles under Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and organized a Ukrainian-Cossack state, the Hetmanate. It encompassed the eastern half of Ukraine and became weakened by wars with its neighbors. The Cossacks accepted the protection of the Russian Tsar and the Russians gradually managed to reduce the Hetmanate's autonomy. An attempt to throw off the Russian rule by Mazepa failed in Poltava, and the Hetmanate was doomed. It survived until the end of the eighteenth century at which point the Russians reduced the population into serfs and stamped out all vestiges of Ukrainian political life. In the 19th century, a rebirth of Ukrainian political consciousness was started by poets and writers, especially Taras Shevchenko, leading up to a reawakening of national aspirations.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Ukrainian National Republic under M. Hrushevskyi was proclaimed on January 22, 1918. However, Ukrainian independence was short-lived and it fell before the onslaughts of the Bolsheviks, leading to the formation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic which exists until today.

# UKRAINIANS IN AMERICA

## *Immigrations*

While the main thrust of Ukrainian immigration was to occur later, the pages of American history record the presence of Ukrainians as early as the 17th century, for example, the physician Lavrenty Bohun, who accompanied Captain John Smith of Jamestown, and who is mentioned in Smith's memoirs. Most notable of the Ukrainian names which appear on the records of those who fought in the United States War of Independence and Civil War was General Wasyl Turchin.

Another prominent Ukrainian of the early period was the Reverend Ahapius Honcharenko who settled in San Francisco in 1865 and started the publication, the "Alaska Herald" in 1868, which was distributed in Alaska and California, printing articles that included an English translation of the "freedom poetry" of Ukraine's greatest poet, Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861).

The first mass immigration of Ukrainians to America began around 1876 mostly from the Western Ukrainian territories of Halychyna and Carpatho-Ukraine, which was that time under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Identified as "Austrian citizens," Ukrainians did not have their separate nationality recorded until 1899, and even then, they were often recorded as Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians or Russians due to U.S. Immigration unfamiliarity with Ukrainians.

Under these circumstances, no accurate account of the size of this immigration is available, although by 1914 it was estimated to be at least 500,000. Most of the first immigration of Ukrainians consisted of peasants whose limited economic opportunities at home caused them to look toward America. Those immigrants who wished to continue farming settled in Canada, Virginia, N. Dakota, Georgia, Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan, but the bulk of the population (85%) settled on the East Coast in Pennsylvania, where the greater majority went to work in the coal mines, laboring hard hours, under hazardous conditions, as well as in New York and New Jersey. By 1914, sizeable Ukrainian populations could also be found in Massachusetts, Michigan, Connecticut, Ohio and Illinois. Those who settled in cities took jobs in flour mills or glass, rubber, shoe, furniture and automobile factories.

Because of the new U.S. immigration laws, the second Ukrainian immigration to America within the period between 1920-1939 totaled no more than 40,000 usually coming from

sections of Ukraine not included in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic since few Ukrainians were permitted to leave the Soviet Union after 1920.

The third immigration of Ukrainians occurred after World War II and more than any other was for political asylum. Better educated than their earlier counterparts they included doctors, lawyers, professors, writers and political leaders and other politically and nationally conscious intellectuals who refused to accept Soviet oppression. Previously acclimated to urban life, they tended to settle in the metropolitan areas of the East and Midwest where they founded various movements and organizations for the defense of human rights and freedom of the Ukrainian people.

Of the 12-15,000,000 people of Slavic origin in the U.S., Ukrainians presently constitute about 1,500,000.

### *Ukrainian-American Communities*

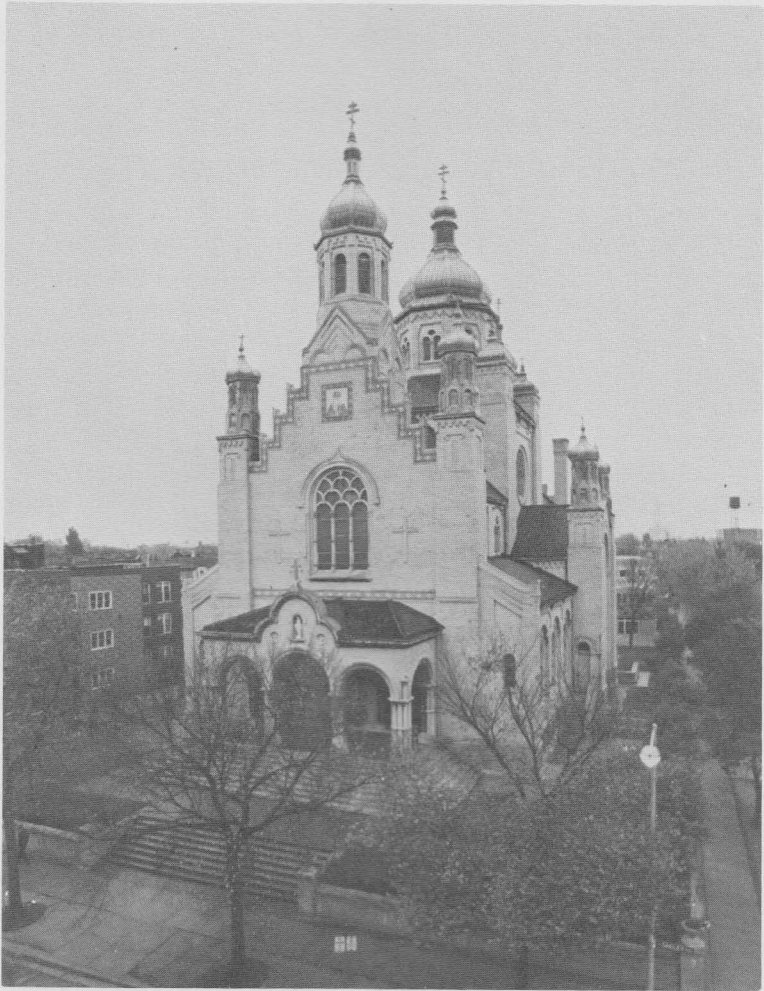
For most Ukrainians the church traditionally served as the principal means of preserving their heritage. So in America the church became the basic institution around which communities were first organized. The first such community began in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania in 1884, the same year that the first Ukrainian Catholic priest, Father Ivan Volansky, came to America. The first Ukrainian church, St. Michael the Archangel was completed a year later in Shenandoah.

Ukrainian Orthodox parishes were organized mostly after 1920, inspired by the establishment of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Ukraine in 1920, and coincidental with the arrival of immigrants from eastern Ukraine (mostly after 1914) where most Ukrainian Orthodox lived.

Ukrainian Protestants were in America as early as 1892 leading to the establishment of a Presbyterian parish in Newark in 1909, and Baptist congregations in Scranton in 1904 and in Chicago and Chester, Pennsylvania in 1915. In the Chicago area the Ukrainians have four bishops.

### *Ukrainians in Chicago*

Chicago presently contains one of the largest Ukrainian ethnic communities in America. At the beginning of the century Ukrainians inhabited the area of Division, Racine, Orleans and 12th Street, but later moved to the near northwest side of the city. In 1906 at Bishop and Superior Streets the first



*ST. NICHOLAS UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL  
at Rice and Oakley*





*ST. VLADIMIR'S UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
at Oakley and Cortez*

St. Nicholas Catholic Church was established but ultimately proved to be too small leading to the purchase of land at Rice Street and Oakley Boulevard where construction began in 1913 and where the present St. Nicholas now stands. Other earlier Catholic churches on the South Side where Ukrainians were then living were Blessed Virgin Mary Church and St. Michaels.



*ST. NICOLAS CATHEDRAL YOUTH ENSEMBLE*

The present St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral was the first and oldest Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America, acquired in 1916. Originally located at Erie and Damen, was subsequently moved to Cortez and Oakley to a more suitable edifice that previously belonged to German Lutherans.

In 1940, the members of the Baptist Church moved their worship services to a church building on Augusta Blvd. just west of Damen Avenue. It was here, in 1946, that the Ukrainian Missionary and Bible Society in the United States was incorporated in Illinois.

Other churches were established in accordance with the movement and growth of the Ukrainian population, for example, the Fourth Ukrainian Catholic Church of St. Basil in 1940 at Burnside, and following the third large Ukrainian immigration after World War II in 1950, two new Ukrainian Orthodox Churches: St. Sophia's at Artesian and Potomac and St. Mary's Protection, at Iowa and Washtenaw, as well as another Ukrainian Catholic Church, St. Joseph's on the city's north-west side.

Most recently established was the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Sts. Volodymyr and Olha at Oakley Boulevard and Superior Street dedicated in 1974 by the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Patriarch Joseph Slipyj, for those Ukrainian Catholics who preferred to celebrate their holidays according to the traditional Julian calendar.



*STS. VOLODYMYR AND OLHA UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH  
at 2245 West Superior Street*



*SATURDAY SCHOOL OF UKRAINIAN STUDIES  
Sponsored by Ukrainian Teachers Association in Chicago*

While the several Ukrainian churches can be said to have been fundamental to the emergence and sustenance of community life and instrumental to the preservation of the Ukrainian heritage and their respective faiths, they are aided immeasurably by the tremendous activity generated by other Ukrainian organizations. Foremost among these are the schools, like the regular parochial elementary school at St. Nicholas, but also the church-affiliated 10-year Saturday Ukrainian Studies School at St. Vladimir's and the secular Saturday School of Ukrainian Studies that was organized by the Ukrainian Teacher's Association in 1950, both of which teach elementary and high school levels, and from which graduates are awarded "Certificates of Merit" by the Superintendent of Cook County Schools which count as credits in the universities. Incorporated within the recently constructed Sts. Volodymyr and Olha Church was a center of Ukrainian and religious studies, to be an affiliate of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome.



*UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION BUILDINGS  
841-45 North Western Avenue*

In the year 1940 a central Ukrainian-American organization, the League of Americans of Ukrainian descent, was founded and for more than thirty years was the center of information, representation and cooperation with the city, civic, cultural and other activities. The Ukrainian community has been active in the support of U.S. Government bonds war effort during World War II. It has been instrumental in the resettlement of 20,000 Ukrainians.

Three youth organizations have been established: PLAST, SUMA and ODUM. The basis for the foundation of all three of these organizations is to preserve the Ukrainian heritage and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, and hand them down to the future Americans of Ukrainian descent. All three youth organizations exist in addition to the U.S., in Canada, West Germany and England, with members also in Belgium and Australia.

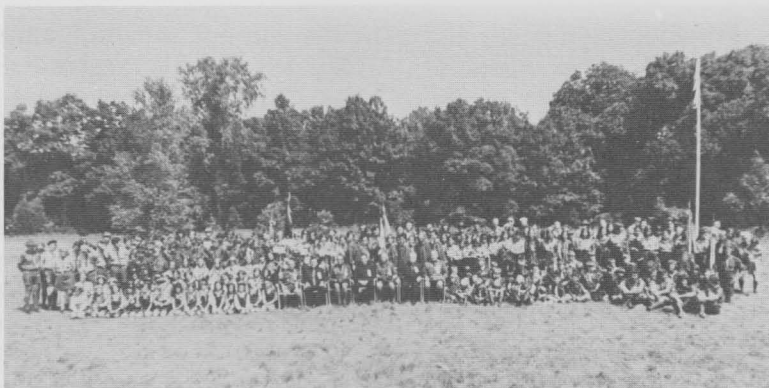


*UKRAINIAN AMERICAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION/SUMA/  
2457 West Chicago Avenue*

PLAST was initially established in Ukraine in 1911 based upon the standards of English scouting but with the takeover by the Soviet regime was unable to function there and was disbanded. The organization was revived outside Ukraine and started in Chicago in 1948. By 1956, it had acquired enough funds to purchase its own building and run a summer camp each year. In addition to educating its members in the principles of scouting, PLAST also takes part in cultural activities.

SUMA, which stands for Ukrainian Youth Association of America, was originally founded in Ukraine in 1925 and was established in Chicago in 1949. In addition to its location on Chicago and Campbell Avenue, SUMA also exists on the near and far South Side of Chicago, in Palatine and on the far north-west side of the city.

Like ODUM and PLAST, SUMA runs a summer camp each year. SUMA has an extensive sports program, has its own



*SUMMER CAMP OF CHICAGO  
PLAST in Wisconsin*

soccer team called the "Wings," and organizes and develops many different kinds of cultural events.

ODUM, which stands for "Organization of Democratically Oriented Ukrainian Youth" strives to develop a sense of Ukrainian identity among its members, to publicize knowledge of Ukraine and issues of vital interest and concern to Ukrainians, to cultivate religious and political tolerance and respect for the convictions of others. ODUM has a bandura ensemble, a string ensemble and a dance group.



*ODUM BANDURA ENSEMBLE*

The Ukrainian National Museum of 2453 West Chicago Avenue also plays a significant role preserving the Ukrainian heritage in providing visible evidence of the cultural accomplishments of Ukrainian people and securing valuable and irreplaceable artifacts of Ukrainian cultural history and social life, both past and present.

Also within the Chicago community is the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art whose goal has been to represent

the work of nationally and internationally acclaimed Ukrainian artists such as Alexander Archipenko, who influenced the art world with the innovative concept of sculpto-painting and spatial sculpture as well as others who have been working with contemporary art forms. The institute also sponsors lectures on art, literature, film and other contemporary expressive media.

In addition to the youth organizations there exist three women's organizations in metropolitan Chicago. The oldest one—The Ukrainian Gold Cross—was established in 1930 and besides cultural work and sponsoring exhibits is involved in welfare work, such as aiding those Ukrainians abroad who need financial or other aid. Another women's organization is the Ukrainian National Women's League. The members of this largest women's organization (8 branches) participate in a variety of community projects such as operating a kindergarten and sponsoring cultural events. Finally, there is also the Women's Organization for the Defense of Four Freedoms of Ukraine.

Within the past three decades, "Lions," a sports club, emerged on the Chicago scene.

Indispensable of the financial stability of the Chicago Ukrainian community has been the Ukrainian Selfreliance Federal Credit Union, established in 1951 by Ukrainian immigrants, which has been instrumental in helping people help themselves in achieving their economic goals. Starting with



*SELFRELIANCE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION*

nominal capital, it soon attracted over 6,000 members and acquired over 16 million dollars in assets. Its recent growth of over two million per year over the last year has established Selfreliance as a vital economic force in the community.

Security Savings and Loan Association, the only Ukrainian savings association in Chicago, has provided needed mortgage financing for construction and purchase of properties to many of the local organizations and churches and generally made loans available to people in the community. The assets of Security Savings and Loan Association are in excess of 26 million dollars and has been essential in sustaining the Ukrainian community within the inner city.

While it is impossible to list all of the groups that contribute daily to the vitality of the Ukrainian community, a measure of their activity is partially reflected in the statistic that there are presently in Chicago, ten radio programs, numerous Ukrainian periodicals, four major publishing houses, and hundreds of various businesses. There are ninety-six civic, professional and political organizations that are grouped and represented by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. Just to mention the Ukrainian Medical Association with a membership of 130; the Engineering Society with 180 and there are professors in the academic field at various universities and colleges. The total number of Ukrainians is between ninety and one hundred thousand.



SECURITY SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION  
932-36 North Western Avenue



## *Ukrainian Themes*

To better know a group is also to understand those dominant themes that underlie what could be called a Ukrainian perspective or consciousness and which invariably have the capacity to stir passionate interest and discussion and define for many Ukrainians the political objectives of their respective organizations.

One principal objective is the preservation of Ukrainian heritage and identity both within and outside the Soviet Union. In this regard, as already mentioned, Ukrainians develop a sense of pride in their ethnic heritage through the various churches, schools and organizations that operate within the Ukrainian-American community but also promote it outside the community at Universities, such as at Chicago and Illinois, and at Harvard, where the community considers it an accomplishment to have made sufficient contributions to permanently subsidize three academic chairs in Ukrainian studies. Just as Ukrainians would be against that aspect of assimilation that would lead to the loss of ethnic pride, language and culture here in the United States, they are also strongly opposed to the forced assimilation of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union by the dominant Russians, a process called "russification" leading to the systematic suppression and eradication of the Ukrainian language and culture.

Another unifying objective for Ukrainians is the political and cultural (national) independence of Ukraine and other nations held captive by Russian imperialism, such as, in addition to Ukraine: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Byelorussia, Armenia, Georgia and others. Thus, each year on January 22, officially proclaimed Ukrainian Independence Day by both Chicago and the State of Illinois, Ukrainians celebrate their own brief period of independence. They also take active part in the Captive Nations Day parade, support the Captive Nations Resolution passed in Congress, and publicize through the press and occasional public demonstrations the suppression of Ukrainian dissidents within the Soviet Union, both men and women, such as Yuriy Shukhevych, Svyatoslav Karavansky, Valentyn Moroz, Vyacheslav Chornovil, Iryna Senyk, Stefaniya Shabaturova, Nina Strokata, Nadia Svitlychna and many more who have been sentenced in closed courts without their presence and whose only crimes were insisting upon official adherence to the Declaration of Human Rights to which the Soviet government has itself ostensibly subscribed, and protesting the rights of Ukrainians to speak their own language and study their own history.

One method the Russians have traditionally used to facilitate russification and weaken nationalist resistance has been to redistribute or systematically destroy the various national populations within the Soviet Union. Thus Ukrainians frequently recall the artificially created famine of 1932-1933 selectively imposed by Stalin on Ukraine to break Ukrainian resistance where it has been estimated that nearly 6,000,000 Ukrainians died from starvation and another 1,500,000 were deported from the Ukraine to other areas of the Soviet Union.

Another common goal of Ukrainians in America is to gain public recognition of Ukraine as a national state and a recognition of Ukrainians as a distinct national as well as ethno-cultural identity. Remember the Soviet Union is not Russia, even though dominated by the Russians, and Ukrainians are not Russians.

### *Ukrainian Cultural Events*

While lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian language might limit the extent of which non-Ukrainians could enter into a Ukrainian political discussion or participate in some of the more ritualized aspects of community life, no such obstacle presents itself between Ukrainians and the public when it comes to sharing in the celebration of Ukrainian cultural events, for here the media of expression are the universally understood forms of art, music, song and dance.

It is quite often that when five or more Ukrainians get together, it should be no surprise to find that choir groups of a professional caliber can be found in almost all parishes and youth organizations within the community. Especially notable as a choir was the Ukrainian National Chorus under the direction of Alexander Koshetz who introduced Ukrainian music to America some years ago, and from whose rendition of the Ukrainian carol, the American Christmas classic "Carol of the Bells" was taken and translated.

A traditional Ukrainian folk instrument is the sixty-stringed bandura, and many organizations have bandura ensembles, like that of ODUM, which was formed by the world-renowned Ukrainian composer and bandurist Hryhory Kytasty, which served as a model for groups formed in the United

States and Canada and which has given many concerts throughout the United States and abroad.

Folk dance groups, string ensembles, theatrical groups and orchestras, also attest to the active cultural life of Ukrainians with performances given for Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians alike.

Traditional Ukrainian art is represented by the architectural style of churches, either Byzantine or Baroque, with elaborately decorated interiors—a most recent example being the architecturally splendid Byzantine-style church of Sts. Volodymyr and Olha at Oakley Boulevard and Superior Street—as well as by folk art, most notably, embroidery, wood carving, and the increasingly popular art of Easter egg painting known as *pysanka* with its perfect delicate, lace-like designs and brilliant colors.

So we have shown how Ukrainians, through their culture and community life, have become established as an integral yet identifiable part of the ethnic mosaic of American society. Someday, they would hope to have an independent voice in the world community of nations as well.



