

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

# Gleaning History from Documents

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Rev. Lev Levytskyi, *Financial report, fragment*. Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford.

A great deal of recent attention has been paid in various media outlets, describing in detail the attention and the care with which the American government observes the collection and preservation of official documents. It is considered disgraceful and, in some cases criminal, to wantonly destroy such documents, whether this be done deliberately, from a lack of understanding or from sheer indifferent neglect as to their value for posterity. Not only are official government documents essential as artifacts to be preserved, but so are a myriad of other various forms of records and archives of individual organizations, societies, political and cultural activities, and the accomplishments of notable individuals. Every scrap of such

archival material, of great or minor importance, from handwritten notes, comments, editorial corrections, notifications, event programs, all have a historical, cultural and a moral need to be preserved. These materials serve as important resources for researchers and scholars for their future studies. The analysis of specific historical events, assessing the activities and accomplishments of various organizations and individuals, would be impossible without vigorous archival preservation. It might be difficult for scholars to even attempt to assess an objective or accurate view of history without archival materials and documentation. Original documents serve as the most reliable sources of information about different events and activ-

ities. They corroborate facts, whereas memoirs and recollections, although also important sources of information, reflect the subjective and often personal views of their authors which might occasionally be colored by an agenda. We know from various testimonies that human memory and personal impressions can limit the objective recreation of events. Among the many responsibilities of state governments, societies, organizations and individual persons is the preservation of as much of their primary documentation as possible. These records often serve to confirm their existence and validate their accomplishments. Without careful documentation, hostile and destructive powers can easily convince the uninformed that such events never took place, that it's all fiction. Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation have for centuries been threatened by hostile forces who have tried to undermine that a nation such as Ukraine even exists. They claim that there never was a Ukrainian independent state and that there is no Ukrainian history, culture or language. In order to bolster this theory, these malevolent forces actively destroy the nation's documents and archives which confirm our historical truths. Recently when museums in Ukraine were preparing exhibits commemorating the 100 hundredth anniversary of Ukrainian independence the organizers had to borrow historical artifacts and documents from Ukrainian diasporan museums around the world, including from our Museum and library. The necessary artifacts for the exhibits could not be found in Ukraine, as many were destroyed by the Soviet regime in an ongoing attempt to destroy all Ukrainian historic memory.

One must admire Ukrainian immigrants who for close to 150 years have, with ardent devotion and care, preserved their Ukrainian heritage in America. Our existence and our heritage in Ukraine is once again being threatened with annihilation and destruction. Our Museum and Library preserve significant archival collections of various social, political, cultural and religious organizations as well as personal documents of notable individuals, political and cultural events. Every document in the collection is of varying quality and value and has its unique worth from which fascinating and important facts can be gleaned. As an example lets look at a financial report of the United Ukrainian Organizations of America from 1927. This organization was founded in 1922 and ceased to exist in 1940 when Ukrainian Congress Committee was founded and continued the work of the UUA. The aim of the organization was to unite the various societies into a unified body and to more effectively help the development of Ukrainian diasporan communities. In their published agenda they contin-



Rev. Volodymyr Spolitatevych, *Financial report, fragment*. Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford.

ued to take measures for the recognition of Ukrainian State and published books on Ukraine and Ukrainian affairs in English. They issued directives for Ukrainian heritage schools. They continued to help financially their brethren in Ukraine. The presidents of the organization were Rev. Lev Levytskyi, Rev. Volodymyr Spolitatevych and later Dr. Luka Myshuha. The financial report of 1927 submitted a very accurate account of all the moneys collected and their distribution. One must admire the generous donations (remember this was 1927) and the economy of expenditure for office needs. It is an interesting read to see who in Ukraine received the donations and in what amount.

Independent nations, without any impediments, as a matter of course, preserve their archives and documents, their cultural heritage. The Ukrainian nation was not so fortunate because for centuries they lived under foreign oppression. What was preserved came at the sacrifices and martyrdom of determined and fervent individuals in Ukraine and through the work of the first three waves of Ukrainian immigrants in America. Dark clouds are again gathering over Ukraine. Our duty and our collective responsibility for living in the free world is to continue the work carried by our predecessors. Help us to preserve our heritage for generations of Ukrainians yet to be born. ❖

ЗВІТ ЗА ПІК 1927.

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Financial report, fragment. Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford.

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**ФІНАНСОВИЙ ЗВІТ ОБ'ЄДНАННЯ**  
**ЗА ПІК 1927.**

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