



Ukrainian Genealogy Group

National Capital Region

The Ukrainian Genealogist

September 2003

913 Carling Avenue Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4E3

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Events Calendar at: <http://calendar.yahoo.ca/uggncr>

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Introduction

The Ukrainian Genealogy Group - National Capital Region is a self-help group which was formed to identify genealogical resources in the National Capital Region, to help those who wish to research their family tree, to share resources, information and ideas, to invite guest speakers to share their knowledge and expertise on genealogical subjects and generally to develop and promote the field of genealogical studies among Ukrainian Canadians.

Meeting Schedule 2003 - 2004

Our meetings take place on the fourth Tuesday of the month, at 1930h (7:30 pm) and are subject to change. There are no meetings in December and in the summer months, June, July and August. The Ukrainian Genealogy Group meets in the St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Shrine Hall, 952 Green Valley Crescent, Ottawa. Everyone is welcome.

Proposed meeting dates and speakers:

- September 23, 2003 - B/Gen.(ret'd) Joseph Romanow on researching his family history.
October 28, 2003 - Ron Sorobey on Philip Konowal, VC.
November 25, 2003 - Frank Cedar on Research at the Ukrainian Archives in Lviv, Ukraine.

This Month's Speaker - B/Gen (ret'd) Joseph R. Romanow

General Romanow was born in 1921 and raised in Saskatoon where his parents settled after immigrating from Ukraine. The Second World War broke out while he was completing high school and at nineteen, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. After pilot training, he flew on submarine and convoy escort missions along the Canadian eastern seacoast. He continued his pilot training in England. He was then posted to India and Burma where he transported men and material to the combat zones in the war against the invading Japanese army. After the end of the Second World War, he was stationed in England where he continued his air transport duties to European destinations. This experience led to contacts with Ukrainian Displaced Persons and refugees. He also became an active member of the Canadian Ukrainian Relief Bureau which assisted the Ukrainian refugees.

While in England he met his wife, Lieutenant (N.S.) Josephine Luba Sawchuk who was stationed there as a military nurse. After they returned to Canada, they married and Joseph completed his degree in Mechanical Engineering. Joseph returned to the RCAF as an Aeronautical Engineer and later worked on the Avro Arrow project. Joseph completed his Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering and during his career was stationed in the United States, Germany and Canada. In 1971 Colonel Romanow was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. He retired from the Armed Forces in 1976 as Director General of Manpower and Organization for the Canadian Military. After retiring from the Canadian Armed Forces, he served as the President of the Machinery and Manufacturer's Association until his retirement in 1987.

In 2003, he published his family history, *A Family Story, The Coming Together of Four Ukrainian Pioneer Families in Canada*.

Toronto Ukrainian Genealogy Group

The Toronto Ukrainian Genealogy Group (TUGG) began its fifth year of meetings on September 9th, 2003. The TUGG meet in the Board Room of St. Vladimir Institute, 620 Spadina Avenue, on the second Tuesday of the month, from September to June from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

The members are first to fourth generation Canadians, and they are researching their personal family histories in Canada, the United States and also in Ukraine or Poland. All meetings are held in English. The TUUG have an interesting slate of speakers lined up for this coming season:

September 9, 2003: Reports on summer finds and problems

- Marta Horban: Director of St. Vlad's
- Halyna Ostapchuk: Librarian at St. Vlad's
- Lidia Bortnyk: Ukrainian language classes
- Alex Dolnytski: genealogy computer programme and cyrillic fonts

October 12, 2003:-Oleh Iwanisiw: trips to Ukraine; news from the Lviv Archives

November 11, 2003:-Jim Onyschuk: How to Develop a Chronology of your Family

December 9, 2003 : Member's successes & problems with Ukrainian archives and Mormon Library Searches;-Christmas party

Those who wish to receive further information can contact St. Vladimir Institute - (416)923-3318 or svi@stvladimir.on.ca or Sonia Tkachuk van Heerden - (416) 461-2104 or soniavanheerden@hotmail.com

Inaugural Lecture (Chair-Ukrainian Studies)

On October 8, Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM., the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa invites you to an Inaugural Lecture by newly appointed Chairholder Prof. Dominique Arel. Reception follows. Chapel at Tabaret Hall, University of Ottawa, 75 Laurier Street East. For further information please contact: Irena Bell, 562-5800 ext. 3692.

British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa Family History Conference

September 26-28, 2003; Annual Conference opens at 7:30 p.m. on Friday evening. Weekend 9:00 to 4:00 p.m. There will be 21 presentations, market place, Family-Tree-Maker seminar. This event will be held at the Library and Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington Street. The Conference is open to all. Members \$60.00, non-members \$75.00. Pre-Conference Seminar \$30.00. For further information www.bifhsgo.ca/conferences.htm or call (613)234-2520.

GENE-O-RAMA 2004 (March 26 - 27, 2004, Ben Franklin Place, Ottawa, Ontario)

The Ottawa Branch of The Ontario Genealogical Society, in partnership with the Ottawa Public Library are once again planning an outstanding weekend of genealogy lectures and fellowship in the Nation's Capital.

This event sold out early last year... book soon to avoid disappointment. Global Genealogy & History Shoppe will have it's traveling bookstore on-site (if there is a particular title that you would like to see, let them know by email and they will bring it along). More information on GENE-O-RAMA 2004 at: <http://www.ogsottawa.on.ca/>.

Josef Oleskow Centenary

The one hundredth anniversary of the death Dr. Josef Oleskow, aka Osyp Oleskiv, will occur in a month's time on 18 October. While not exactly a household name in Canada, Oleskow nevertheless must be credited for the important role he played in steering Ukrainian immigration to this country. His contribution should be noted.

'Emigration fever' (*emigratsiina hariachka*) had gripped Galicia in the early 1890s. The most prominent destination for those abandoning their meager plots was Brazil, which at that time was experiencing a labor shortage in the wake of its abolition of slavery in 1888. Unscrupulous steamship agents had whipped up interest in this South American destination with promises of cheap land and inflated accounts of the comfortable life to be led there. The reality was considerably grimmer: most emigrants ended up on sub-standard plots or on plantations, where they paid off—or tried to pay off—their subsidized passage as indentured workers.

This state of affairs troubled the idealistic Oleskow (1860–1903). In March 1895 he wrote to the Canadian Department of the Interior requesting information about that country's suitability for mass agricultural emigration and indicating his willingness to go there to survey potential settlement sites. His request was greeted with enthusiasm, for Canada had long been seeking to populate its prairie provinces with only marginal success to that time. Oleskow obtained an endorsement from the Prosvita Society for his fact-finding mission and prepared a brochure, *Pro vil'ni zemli* (About Free Lands, published by Prosvita), which provided a detailed account of the suitability of Canada for emigration based on materials he had received from the Canadian government. As well, he argued that Canada seemed like the best location for departing Ukrainian peasants to seek a better future and requested that potential emigrants wait for one season until he could assess the situation first-hand and provide a fuller account.

On August 12th Oleskow, accompanied by Ivan Dorundiak (a well-known peasant that the Prosvita Society had recommended join in the tour so that a separate opinion could be offered), arrived in Montreal. He toured mainly in the

prairie provinces, but managed also to visit several sites in British Columbia. In addition to meeting with Canadian government officials, he also had the opportunity to visit German-speaking Mennonites and some of small number of Ukrainians who had emigrated to Canada earlier in the decade. He was favorably impressed with what he saw and heard. On 5 October 1895 he set sail back to Ukraine from Montreal.

Upon his return Oleskow organized a public meeting in Lviv on 14 November 1895 to discuss the vexing emigration problem. Although not well attended, the meeting included among its participants such notable figures as Ivan Franko (writer-scholar-activist and a personal friend of Oleskow), Teofil Okunevsky (parliamentarian and lawyer who would later serve as defense counsel for Myroslav Sichynsky), and Andrii Chaikovsky (writer of popular historical fiction who would later help establish the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen). The meeting succeeded in establishing an emigrant aid committee which was short-lived, but all the same undertook some valuable work. More importantly, it brought to the foreground how bad matters had become and helped to focus public debate about how to deal with the mass of humanity setting off blindly 'into the unknown world' ('*u svit za ochi*').

Oleskow also prepared an account of his journey, *O emigratsii* (About Emigration), which he had published in December 1895 by the M. Kachkovsky Society, Prosvita's Russophile rival, in a bid to get his message out to the broadest public. It was a sensation, in effect the 'book of the year' in Galicia. The results of Oleskow's efforts soon became clear. On 30 April 1896 the first group of emigrants following his advice arrived in Quebec. They would be followed by thousands upon thousands more in the years to come.

While Oleskow did not stop the emigration to Brazil entirely, he did manage to redirect the majority of it to Canada. In addition, he was instrumental in shaping the nature of the early phase of mass immigration, offering his own advice to numerous departing peasants and having the Canadian government procure the services of Cyril Genik (Kyrylo Genyk) as an Immigration Branch agent in Winnipeg from 1896 to 1911 and Rev. Nestor Dmytriv (Dmytriv) as an interpreter in the critical year of 1897.

Oleskow never lived to see the full fruits of his labor. He died in 1903 at the age of forty-three. Popular knowledge about his role in facilitating Ukrainian immigration to Canada quickly waned. Even though Oleskow's activities were noted in accounts by authors such as Zygmunt Bychynsky, Vera Lysenko, and Paul Yuzyk, his place in the popular imagination of Ukrainian Canadians was eclipsed by the notion that the immigration had been largely spontaneous and followed directly upon the footsteps of the "first" Ukrainians in Canada, Ivan Pylypiw and Wasyl Eleniak. In 1964 a seminal study by Vladimir J. Kaye which finally clearly established Oleskow's rightful place in history was published.

To date Oleskow has not received a great deal of public recognition for his undertakings. A rural school district near present-day Mundare, Alberta was named after him; a post office and its adjacent crossroads settlement in southern Manitoba was briefly named after him (until it was transferred to Tolstoi in 1905); and a subdistrict in southwestern Edmonton was named after him—but only after some serious lobbying. In 1998 the Minister of Canadian Heritage designated Oleskiw as a person of historic significance; further to this the Historic Sites and Monument Board of Canada will place a memorial plaque in his honour in Dauphin in the summer of 2004. Let us hope these are a sign that appreciation for Oleskiw's efforts will continue to grow in the future. Meanwhile, we too may wish to pay him some respect.

Sources: Kaye, Vladimir J., *Early Ukrainian Settlements in Canada, 1895–1900: Dr. Josef Oleskow's Role in the Settlement of the Canadian Northwest* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964); Swyripa, Frances and Makuch, Andrij, *Ukrainian Canadian Content in the Newspaper Svoboda, 1893–1904*, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Research Report No. 7 (Edmonton, 1985); and Martynowych, Orest, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891–1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991).

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