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Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

MR. STEVEN SYNCZYSZYN (UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANT)

AUGUST 15, 1976

TRANSLATED AND TRANSCRIBED BY

MRS. NATALIA B. MCDONOUGH

AUGUST 4, 1977

Interview with Mr. Steven Synczyszyn

804 East Avenue

New Castle, Delaware

August 15, 1976

Interviewer: Mrs. Natalia B. McDonough

Q: When were you born?

A: On the 19th of July, 1893.

Q: Where?

A: Near the Austrian border, in Galicia.

Q: What was the name of your village?

A: Molodovichi.

Q: What was the name of the nearest large town?

A: Przemyśl.

Q: Did you know that Mr. Zanickowsky is also from that area?

A: He's my cousin. His mother and mine are sisters.

Q: Mrs. Markow is from the Przemyśl area too.

A: I think so, but I don't know for sure.

Q: I've talked to her and that's where she's from. But I don't remember what village she's from. I'd have to listen to the tape to check that. Were your parents also from Przemyśl?

A: Right.

Q: Were they born there? And did they live there?

A: Right.

Q: What profession did your father have?

A: He was a farmer.

Q: Do you remember how much land he owned?

A: Oh, he didn't have much. Maybe about five morgens.

Q: Did you attend school?

A: No. Everything I know I learned without school.

Q: How was life in the village different from life in America?

A: That's hard to answer.

Q: Yes, I agree with you. You were in the village there and worked on the farm....

A: Yes, I lived in the village and worked in the field.

Q: And here you came.....

A: Yes, I came here in 1912. We came to Ellis Island, New York. We came late on the eighth of May. Then I went to Newburg New York, to Columbus Street. My brother lived there, so I went to him. There were a lot of them there.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had five sisters and there were three of us brothers.

Q: Did they also come to America?

A: Yes, they did and they both died here. I'm the only one left.

Q: Then only the brothers came over. The sisters stayed home in the Ukraine?

A: Right.

Q: Did your brothers come over together with you?

A: Mykola came over when I was little, I don't remember when, so did Iwan. Mykola died in Chicago, about two years ago. And Iwan died in Newburg, N.Y. in 1918 from the flu.

Q: When you arrived, then, you went straight to them. Did your brothers pay your way over?

A: No, my parents gave me money for passage.

Q: How did you first hear about the United States and about the possibility of going there?

A: Oh, the people in the village were talking about it, some of them went there and Zanickowsky went there. There were others that went before him. Zanickowsky and I were the same age, the one that died in Newburg.

Q: Then you heard about America from friends through letters?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they write that it was nice here? That you could find work here?

A: Yes. I came to Newburg and found work here in a felt factory. They manufactured topcoats and hats from it. Also it was used for pool tables. It's interesting that Mr. Zanickowsky also worked there.

A: Yes, he did.

Q: What was the reason that you came to the U.S.?

A: The reason was very simple. We didn't have anything to live on. All we had was what we could grow on our land. We had no money for buying salt, no money for oil for the lamps. If a chicken laid an egg, we had to sell it. Life was very difficult. It's much easier here.

Q: Then you knew a few people here when you came over?

A: Right.

Q: When you came over, did you come alone or with someone you knew?

A: They all died.

Q: How many were there from your area?

A: Four or five. My parents paid my passage over and as soon as I had a job, I paid them back.

Q: What transportation did you use when you began your journey?

A: We went first to Przemysl. There we took a train that went to Krakow and from there to Myslowic, Germany. We had some sort of che-up there for sickness and those of who were not detained, boarded a train that took us to Hamburg. And from Hamburg we went by boat. The boat first went to France, then to England, and then to New York, to Ellis Island. The voyage took fourteen days.

Q: Did you have any problems on your journey like sickness?

A: No, except that I was seasick.

Q: Was your ship German or American?

A: I can't tell you that. Myshlar was our agent. And he was in charge of us. When we got to Hamburg we spent two or three nights there and then boarded the ship.

Q: Then you had an agent who picked you up in Germany?

A: No, he picked us up all the way back in Molodovich.

Q: Did he get paid for doing this? Was this his business?

A: I don't know.

Q: Did anyone meet you in New York?

A: No. I came by myself all the way to Newburg by myself and my brother came to meet me at the station there.

Q: Then your brother wrote to you how to get to Newburg and you followed his instructions.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember your first impressions of America?

A: Well, you could earn some money here. Then the war broke out. They wrote to me that I should come home, but I didn't want to go to war. So I stayed here, later I got married, and we've been living here ever since.

Q: Did your brother in Newburg help you find a job?

A: Yes, he did. He got me a job in the same factory where he worked.

Q: Did you like your job there?

A: Yes, the work was fine.

Q: Do you remember how much you earned at the beginning?

A: Nine dollars a week.

Q: And you lived with your brother, so you didn't have to pay rent.

A: Oh, yes, I did, because he had to pay rent himself. He didn't have his own place.

Q: When you came here your life became quite different from what it was in the Ukraine. Can you tell me how it differed?

A: It was much better. I had a job and made nine dollars. That was money!

Q: So you liked being here. Was there anything you didn't like?

A: I came to Newburg, New York. To Wilmington I came in 1913.

Q: Was there anything that you didn't like at that time?

A: No, everything was fine.

Q: How did you learn English?

A: I went to school at night. When I wanted to get my citizenship papers, I went into town to school. There was a school near where Zaniczkowsky lived. A lady professor came and taught us immigrants English.

- Q: That's how I learned English too. Were there any people who took advantage of the fact that you were a foreigner?
- A: Maybe there were, but we didn't know about it, so it didn't bother us.
- Q: You said that a year after your arrival in the U.S. you moved to Wilmington. What was your reason for coming here?
- A: Because Zanickowsky was here.
- Q: Did he find you a better job here?
- A: Yes, I worked for the railroad. I kept the job for 43 years, seven months and twelve days.
- Q: What did you do at your job?
- A: I was a "hustler".
- Q: Did your job pay well?
- A: Not really well. If I worked two weeks or a month I made about \$45.00. Earlier they didn't pay so well at the railroad, but after the Second World War it got better.
- Q: Where did you live when you first came to Wilmington?
- A: On Towson Street in south Wilmington, beyond the third bridge.
- Q: That was near the church, right?
- A: Yes. The church was on Heald and I was on Towson.
- Q: And when did you move to your present address?
- A: I lived in Wilmington, that's in the state of Delaware.
- Q: So, when you came to America there were already many Ukrainians in Newburg and Wilmington?
- A: Yes. And there were churches. The Catholics have their own church and so did the Orthodox. Both congregations sold the churches on Heald Street and built new ones.
- Q: Were there any organizations in the Ukrainian community?
- A: Yes, the Ukrainian National Association. Then there was the National Aid Society. Plus there was the church at 610 Heald St.
- Q: How did you meet your wife?
- A: Oh, there was a lot of visiting back and forth among our people.
- Q: Did she live in Wilmington as well?

- A: No, she worked at a place in Philadelphia, but she came to visit here. She came here for some holiday and we met through mutual acquaintances.
- Q: Did you like it here in Wilmington from the beginning, or did you have problems.
- A: I liked it fine and had no problems here.
- Q: You just came right into the Ukrainian community and more or less stayed, is that right?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Was housing easy to get when you first came to Wilmington?
- A: Oh, yes. You could rent a place for ten, twelve or fifteen dollars. It wasn't like it is today! Now you need hundreds of dollars.
- Q: After you came to the states, did you maintain contact with friends and family in the Ukraine?
- A: No, I had no direct contact with anyone except through my brother who wrote home to our parents.
- Q: Did your sisters ever want to come to America?
- A: They didn't have the means. Also, they had to work on the farm back home.
- Q: Did you say you had ten sons?
- A: No, ten children. There were seven boys and three girls.
- Q: What professions do they have now?
- A: One son is in Florida with the Navy; he's been in for twenty-seven years. One used to work for General Motors, but now works for Chrysler. One was a city fireman; he's already retired. The one in the Navy is on a pension also. Iwan worked for thirty years at the railroad but is also retired now. One works for a construction company; he drives a bulldozer. Our youngest son works as a policeman.
- Q: I think I forgot to ask you when you were born.
- A: July 19, 1893. So, I'm 83 years old.
- Q: After you came to the states, were others from your area in the Ukraine that came here?



A: Yes, they did. There is a woman called Katherine Zaichkiwska. She is the sister-in-law of my cousin Mychailo Zaniczkowsky. (Tr. note: name was changed somewhat to facilitate spelling.)

Q: Well, thank you very much. Would you like to listen to the tape a little?

A: In 1913, when we got married, and after we already had this one son, we moved to 1228 Forest Street.

Q: So you moved from one address to another, but it was all in the same general area?

A: Yes, it was. It was all in the Wilmington area.

Q: Were you constantly moving into larger quarters?

A: Yes. We rented places, we didn't have one of our own.