

ON THE HUNGARIAN FOLK MUSEUM IN PASSAIC (N. J.)

The Hungarian Folk Museum first opened in February, 1981. Its founding and maintaining body is the *American Hungarian Folklore Centrum* (AHFC), established in 1978 for the organized preservation and dissemination of Hungarian folk culture. The chief activities of the AHFC are the organization of folk dance courses, festivals and the creation of a forum for the presentation of Hungarian ethnic related culture in the United States.

The *Hungarian Folk Museum* is housed in the old rectory building of St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church in Passaic, built in 1903. The area has been an important industrial center since the second half of the nineteenth century. The silk and textile industries, in particular, have attracted Ukranian, Slovak, Polish and Hungarian immigrants in great numbers. Of the approximately 70,000 Hungarians living in New Jersey about 15,000 reside in this region.

In spite of the fact that the Hungarians of the area can, in a physical sense, be less and less characterized as a cohesively functioning community, the religious and social organizations, founded by Hungarian groups that settled in various waves, still play a significant role in uniting the life of Hungarians living in clusters across Northern New Jersey.

The *Hungarian Citizens' Club* and *Hungarian Scout Home* in Garfield; a *Hungarian Saturday School* in Passaic; two churches, one Roman Catholic, one Reformed; and a Dance Group, separately and collectively, provide a continuing basis for keeping Hungarian ethnic life active. A wide variety of activities are undertaken: formal dances at Carneval time, Easter egg making and Easter Monday Watering of the girls, church services in Hungarian, religious processions, film and cultural programs, picnics, to name a few.

Multi-ethnicity is a typical feature of American society. Familiarity with, respect for and harmonization of the various component cultures are its essential features. The fostering and diffusion of American-Hungarian history and living culture have become the chief goals of the *Hungarian Folk Museum*. So far, its exhibits have included authentic Hungarian material folk art, such as potteries, embroideries, furniture and household items on one hand, and documentation of the local community's history and works of local folk artists, on the other.

Among the functions of the *Hungarian Folk Museum* are the stimulation of local Hungarian life with its own special means and the expansion of the interested public's knowledge about Hungarian culture. The method and selection of programs to achieve these ends were analyzed and summarized in a "Self Study Planning", supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In accordance with the results of the study, the Museum regularly presents lectures, courses, workshops in various areas of Hungarian folk culture.

Membership in the Hungarian Folk Museum and the Folklore Centrum totals about five hundred. It publishes "*Karikázó*" *Folklore Newsletter*, issued four times a year in English. (Last issue published is Vol. XI. No. 2—3, October 1985 — January 1986.)

Under the aegis of the AHFC, the *Hungarian Folk Museum* has established an active and fruitful relationship with other cultural organizations on the county, state and federal levels. It is a member of the *Association of Passaic County Museums* and the *Museum Council of New Jersey*. The National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of Congress and Smithsonian Institution are aware of its activities.

The tasks of the *Hungarian Folk Museum* are carried out by a small, dedicated and knowledgeable staff that has been and will continue to be an essential component of its successful activities.

The *Hungarian Folk Museum's* major production during the 1982–1983 season was an embroidery exhibit entitled "Old Traditions in the New World", partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. A course and an English language publication on Hungarian embroidery completed this program.

Between April and December 1983, the Museum presented a travel exhibition in six Passaic County libraries and was responsible for assembling an exhibition which was presented for six months at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton. Through it, thousands made contact with the culture of New Jersey Hungarians and learned about the existence of the Hungarian Folk Museum. The exhibition at the New Jersey State Museum was accompanied by a series of programs, lectures, demonstrations and performances featuring the history, folk music, dance, art and customs of Hungarians.

From October 9, 1983, the *Hungarian Folk Museum* presented a new exhibition, featuring the artistic life work of Joseph Domjan, woodcut artist and Evelyn Domjan, whose scope of creativity extends into several media.

On May 1, 1985, in a general meeting, a new Board of Directors was formed, which is hoped to participate actively in matters concerning the Museum. The immediate tasks at hand are to obtain incorporated, non-profit status and to purchase of a building for the museum.

The American-Hungarian Folklore Centrum is located at 217 Third Street, Passaic, New Jersey 07055. Tel.: (201)473-0013 or 836-4869.