

In 1918 members of the GCU met in Perth Amboy to establish a new organization that would be geographically closer and more responsive to the needs of New Jersey's Rusyns. The new fraternal, the Greek Catholic Carpatho-Rusin Benevolent Association Liberty / Svoboda, gained new lodges and members throughout New Jersey. In 1993 it merged with the United Russian Orthodox Brotherhood of America, a Pa.-based Rusyn fraternal, to form the Orthodox Society of America.

### The Rusyn American Press

The first newspapers for Rusyn immigrants were published in Pennsylvania, and they quickly found their way to the homes of Rusyn immigrants in New Jersey: *Amerikansky Russky Vestnik* (later the *GCU Messenger*), *Svit/The Light*, and *Pravda/The Truth*. The Liberty Association's *Vostok / The East* was published from the organization's Perth Amboy headquarters from 1919 until 1950. The Lemko Association's newspaper, *Karpatska Rus' / Carpatho-Rus*, was published for many years in Yonkers, N.Y., but today is published in Allentown, New Jersey.

### Secular Institutions and Cultural Life

Halls and clubs were important means for the immigrant Rusyns to strengthen their social ties. The Russian National Home of Passaic and First Russian National Home of Singac were established by and served the local Carpatho-Rusyn communities. Others included the Carpatho-Russian American Citizens Clubs of Bayonne and Newark, and the Carpatho-Russian/Rusyn Citizens Club of Carteret. These buildings hosted commu-

nity meetings as well as theatrical performances – mock weddings and plays reflecting the Rusyn experience in the homeland and in America.



*Traditional Rusyn Christmas carols, Trenton, 1940s*

In 1929 the Lemko Association was founded, and New Jersey branches were founded in Passaic, Elizabeth, Jersey City, Bayonne, Singac, Clifton, Garfield, and Linden. Many New Jersey members would gather at Lemko Park in Monroe, N.Y., for the annual "Rusalja" (Pentecost), Talerhof Day, and Carpatho-Russian Festival summertime gatherings until the park's closing in 1997. The Lemko Association still sponsors Talerhof Day at an Orthodox church in Jersey City or Passaic in early August.

During the 1960s the Carpatho-Russian Choir of Passaic,

directed by Michael P. Hilko, cultivated Carpatho-Rusyn liturgical plainchant and folk singing tradition and had several records to its credit. In the 1970s, some New Jersey Rusyns were



*Recent Rusyn immigrants to New Jersey take pride in their traditions*

members of the Metropolitan New York Byzantine Choir, directed by Gabriel Zihal, which also recorded a number of records of Rusyn folk and church music and performed widely in New Jersey.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Society, a national cultural organization, formed in Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1994 and many of its members were from New Jersey or had New Jersey roots. A New Jersey Chapter was established in 1999 and serves the entire state.

The chapter's social and educational activities have reinvigorated the cultural life of Rusyns statewide.



Americans of Carpatho-Rusyn descent have contributed much to the rich ethnic mosaic of New Jersey. Their religious and cultural institutions play an important role in the lives of their Rusyn members as well as those of other backgrounds. And the Carpatho-Rusyn Society's New Jersey Chapter looks forward to continuing to make the rich culture, heritage, and history of Carpatho-Rusyns better known in the state and throughout the U.S.

*We welcome you to join us!*



**CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY**

21 LORD WILLIAM PENN DR. • MORRISTOWN NJ 07960

[www.c-rs.org/Chapters/NJ/](http://www.c-rs.org/Chapters/NJ/)  
[njpublicrelations@c-rs.org](mailto:njpublicrelations@c-rs.org)

**Text/Layout: Richard D. Custer**

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# Carpatho-Rusyns

*in New Jersey*



*Carpatho-Rusyn wedding play, Passaic, 1930s*

Carpatho-Rusyns, also known by various names such as Ruthenians, Carpatho-Russians, Lemkos, "Slavish", or even (inaccurately) as "Russians," are one of the major ethnic groups of the state of New Jersey.

From the time they settled New Jersey's small towns and industrial cities in the late 1870s until the present time, Carpatho-Rusyns have left an indelible mark on the state with their "onion-domed" churches, rich cultural traditions, and devotion to their roots.

**Carpatho-Rusyns** live in the very heart of Europe, along the northern and southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains. Their homeland, known as Carpathian Rus', is situated where the borders of Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland meet. Smaller numbers of Rusyns live in Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. In no country do Carpatho-Rusyns have an administratively distinct territory. However, Rusyns are recognized as a distinct people in most of the countries where they live, including the United States.

**Settlement**

Carpatho-Rusyns began to settle in the industrial cities of north-eastern New Jersey in the late 1870s, in close proximity to the Port of New York where so many of them were arriving on immigrant ships through Castle Garden and later Ellis Island. Cities like Passaic, Jersey City, Bayonne, and Perth Amboy were among the first places Rusyn communities started to appear. About the same time, a Rusyn community began to develop in Trenton, where they found work in local factories and the iron & steel industry.

Over the next three decades, during the great waves of immigration from east central Europe that brought tens of thousands of Carpatho-Rusyns to America, New Jersey became home to more Rusyns than any other state except Pennsylvania and New York.

Rusyns found economic opportunities in many parts of the state. In northern New Jersey, colonies of Rusyns could be found in Mahwah, where they worked at the American Brake Shoe Company, and in Rockaway and nearby Wharton, where they found work in iron mining and furnaces. In southern New Jersey, in addition to Trenton, Rusyn immigrants were drawn by Roebling's steel mill and Millville's glass industry. In western New Jersey, the railroad and cement plants made Phillipsburg and Alpha into small but significant Rusyn centers. And in central New Jersey, the Johns-Manville Corp. and related industries helped Manville, Bound Brook, Raritan, and Dunellen develop

into a center of Rusyn community activity.

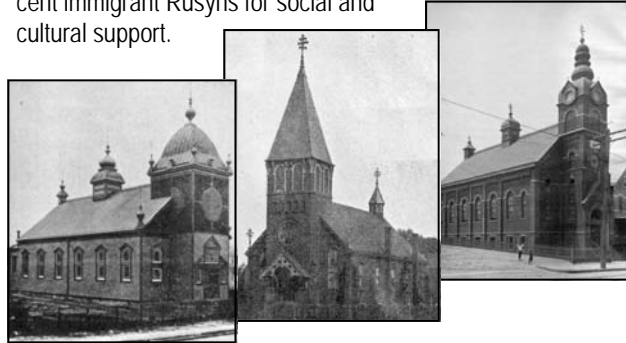
In the years after World War II, many of these communities



*Immigrant Rusyn dock workers, Jersey City, early 1900s*

were enriched by Carpatho-Rusyn families from various parts of Pennsylvania moving to New Jersey in search of employment. Also, Rusyn immigrants from New York City moved to the Manville area (Belle Mead, Whitehouse Station) and Flemington and established farms and small businesses.

Since the fall of communism in the Rusyn homeland in 1989-1991, many new Rusyn immigrants have settled in New Jersey, particularly in Passaic/Clifton/Garfield, Jersey City, Bayonne, Manville, Whitehouse Station, and Flemington. These immigrants have generally become part of existing Rusyn communities, especially churches, but also rally around their fellow recent immigrant Rusyns for social and cultural support.



**Establishment of Rusyn Churches**

The church, be it Byzantine/Greek Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, has traditionally been the heart of the Rusyn community. So it was not long after they came to the United States that Rusyns would establish their own churches. The first was built in Shenandoah, Pa., in 1884. In 1887, Sts. Peter & Paul Greek Catholic Church was founded in Jersey City. In the years that followed, numerous other Greek Catholic churches were founded: Passaic (1890), Trenton (1891), Bayonne and Perth Amboy (1897), a second parish in Passaic (1902), Elizabeth (1906), Carteret (1907), Rahway (1912), Roebling (1914), a second parish in Jersey City (1916), Manville (1917), and many others.

Because some particular traditions of the Greek Catholic Church, such as a married clergy, were unfamiliar to the already-established Roman Catholic Church in America, conflicts arose between immigrant Greek Catholic clergy and the American Roman Catholic hierarchy. In protest, a pioneer Rusyn priest, Fr. Alexis Toth, joined the Russian Orthodox Church in 1891 in Minneapolis, Minn. He thereafter preached extensively in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, convincing many American Rusyns to follow his example and join the Russian Orthodox Church. The next thirty years would see new Orthodox parishes established in the state: Garfield (1898), Bayonne (1903),

Jersey City (1907), Newark (1909), Singac (1915), Alpha and Elizabeth (1916), and many others. One Greek Catholic parish, in Passaic, joined the Orthodox Church in 1910.

This turmoil resulted in a divided Rusyn American community, and many Rusyns in New Jersey, especially those who had joined the Russian Orthodox Church, came to consider themselves "Russians."



The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, which formed in 1938, gained a strong foothold in New Jersey, with Greek Catholic parishes in Perth Amboy and Rockaway joining the diocese and new churches being established in Bayonne, Elizabeth, and Manville.

Passaic, with its huge Rusyn population, was eventually chosen as the seat of a Byzantine Catholic eparchy (diocese) and its St. Michael's Church was raised to cathedral status in 1963. Bishop Michael Dudick moved the diocesan center to West Paterson in the 1980s. Also at the diocesan center he established the Heritage Institute, one of the largest collections of Carpatho-Rusyn books, religious artifacts, traditional costumes and other cultural artifacts in the United States.

**Rusyn Fraternal Organizations**

Rusyns also established "brotherhoods" or burial societies (today known as fraternal organizations) to pay death benefits to the surviving family members of workers killed in industrial accidents. Most Rusyn fraternal groups got their start in the coal-mining districts of eastern Pa. but quickly gained a large membership in New Jersey. These included the Greek Catholic Union (GCU), the Russian Orthodox Catholic Mutual Aid Society, and the Russian Brotherhood Organization, all founded by and for Rusyns.



*Rusyn women's church sisterhood, Singac, 1930s*