

# Russians in New Hampshire

## Century of Immigration to America (1820-1924)

- Most of years in program's focus, 1850-1920, were part of Russian Empire period (before 1917); Communists ruled "Soviet Union" from 1917-1991; since 1991, nation reverted to former name, "Russia"
- About half of "Russian immigrants" are members of the Russian ethnic group; scores of other ethnic groups lived under the Empire and the Soviet Union, including but not limited to Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Tartars, Jews
- 1880-1914, poverty in western provinces led to emigration of Russians from lower economic strata; imperial regime's policy limiting non-Russian languages, cultures and particularly poor treatment of Jews increased emigrant numbers; by 1914, more than 3 million immigrants from Russia in U.S.
- After Bolshevik, or Russian, Revolution of 1917, Soviet government rejected religion; thousands of Russian Orthodox leaders and worshipers fled, many to US; most professionals and wealthy; did not get along with earlier, working class immigrants; often took over leadership of church and secular organizations; dismayed that second-generation Russian-American workers not concerned with overthrowing Bolsheviks
- Russian immigrants prominent among labor strikers and socialist movements in America; reputation for radical and anti-capitalist politics; many only looking for better pay and working conditions; in 1919, US Attorney General Palmer ordered arrest of suspected "reds," communists; feared take-over of US government; in Nov., 1919, and Jan., 1920, "Red Scare" led to raids and some 10,000 arrests of Russian labor union and communist party members across America

## Russian Immigrants

- Mostly young, healthy, farm people; opportunity, good wages enticed them; to Claremont 1907-08; found work in mills and shoe shops; saved money and brought families to settle permanently; wrote home to bring others to Claremont
- Sullivan Machinery Company one of main employers; famous as manufacturer of mining, industrial and quarrying machinery; Russian employees worked there for many years, a number in responsible positions; Claremont Paper Company another employer; made Kraft paper

- During “Red Scare” raids, 1919-20, Russian immigrant social clubs targeted; in Claremont, Nestor Mezelski, owner of Russian Baths, taken into custody; during arrests, “anarchistic literature” seized which, when translated, proved to be religious pamphlets and newspapers; Claremont Daily Eagle reported that innocents were arrested, likely due to their unfamiliarity with the English language; of 23 arrestees in Claremont, 3 were deported; the same 3 were returned to US and came back to Claremont because considered American spies; arrests and releases without public trial resulted in continued suspicions, damage to reputations and businesses; affected labor movement in NH: in Claremont, an American Federation of Labor (AFL) organizer driven from town; many workers would not support labor reform for fear of being labeled communists or socialists

## Russian Orthodox Church

- By 1914, 25,000 members in U.S.; czarist government aided missionary activities in America; most common faith of Russians in America; about 200,000 members today
- Attempts to preserve Russian culture; unlike other Christian faiths, follows oldest traditions and marks holydays by the Julian calendar; Russian Orthodox priests can marry; no organs in churches because believe God should be praised only with the human voice; in recent years, services mostly in English
- Brotherhood of the Holy Resurrection organized by Claremont Russians in 1909; in 1914, Russian priest to serve the needs of the Resurrection Russian Orthodox Church; services held in local Episcopal church for six months; Brotherhood bought 2-story house for temporary church and living quarters for priest; in 1941, church building completed in traditional style, with 7 onion-shaped cupolas surmounted by crosses; adult membership then was 82
- Played dominant and cohesive role in lives of Russians in Claremont; some students attended Russian Church School every night after public school

## Other Russian Institutions

- Russian-language, socialist newspapers in America, *The Banner* (1889-1892) and *Progress* (1893-94), contributed to view of Russians as radicals and anticapitalists
- “World’s oldest Russian newspaper” is the only Russian-American daily paper that survives today, first published in 1910: New York’s *Novoe russkoe slovo* (New Russian Word)
- Russians who fled Bolshevik Russia established philanthropies or supported old ones; ex., Russian Brotherhood Society, started in 1900

## **FYI**

- Today, about 750,000 people of Russian descent in the US and 50,000 in Canada
- Russia under communist rule and center of the Soviet Union empire for only 74 years (1917-1991) of its 1,000 years of existence; first state to experience communist rule; its example was followed by many nations
- Other waves of Russians emigrated during the 1920's and 1930's, after communist takeover; 1945 to early 1950's, after WWII; 1970's to present; prompted by events in Russia such as economic hardship, religious persecution, civil war, communist government, foreign invasion

## **History of Russians in New Hampshire Communities**

- Numerous Russians resided in Nashua in early 1900's
- In 1919-20 Red Scare raids, arrests, in NH: in Berlin, 40 Russians arrested; Derry, 21; Lincoln, 20; Manchester, 63; Nashua, 101; Portsmouth, 7; many Slavic-Americans lost their jobs; most NH people arrested were released; of 161 arrestees in Nashua, over 100 released; in Manchester, the Lenine Club raided; suspects questioned all night by federal officials
- Generally, in industrial areas of NH, Red Scare resulted in hostility to labor unions, organizers

## List of Sources Used

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