

MACEDONIAN APRONS – a hidden treasure



A new NSW Migration Heritage Centre project, in partnership with the Port Kembla Macedonian Welfare Association Inc., with advice from heritage consultant Meredith Walker and the Illawarra Migration Heritage Project Inc., will do a "search" for old Macedonian aprons in the Illawarra region.

Many Macedonian migrants come from a village background where self-sufficient farming was a way of life for centuries. Clothing too was made by the women from wool shorn from their flock, which is then cleaned, dyed, spun and turned into yarn before being woven on a loom to make cloth. Young women were expected to make their wedding dress this way which always included an apron. The apron is an integral part of the dress and one can tell from which part of Macedonia people come from by looking at the colour and pattern of the apron. Some women wore traditional dresses in their village up to the moment they migrated to Australia 30 to 40 years ago. Once in Australia these original dresses and aprons were hidden, only to be seen on special occasions. Many of these aprons are captured in old photographs shown in 'Kompas' magazine, published by the Macedonian Welfare Association Inc. It was these photographs that caught the attention of Meredith Walker, a heritage consultant and admirer of aprons.



Meredith wanted to know more about Macedonian aprons brought to Australia and with her assistance, the Macedonian Welfare Association Inc. has formed a partnership with the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, with advice from the Illawarra Migration Heritage Project Inc., to do a "search" for old Macedonian aprons in the Illawarra region. The Association will be holding a workshop, in Macedonian, at Port Kembla to document aprons and migration and settlement memories with support from Powerhouse Museum Regional Services. It will also scan private and community owned photographs of people wearing aprons in Macedonia and Australia. *(continued over)*

2008 MHP MEETINGS

The MHP Committee meets the first Thursday of the month (February-December) at 5.30 pm, Meeting Room 1, Level 10 Wollongong City Council Administration Building, Burelli Street, Wollongong. Members and other interested people or groups are always welcome. The meetings scheduled for 2008 are as follows:

1 May, 5 June, 3 July,
7 August, 4 September, 2 October,
6 November (AGM), 4 December

(Venue for meetings provided through the Wollongong City Council Multicultural Services)

MHP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman

Franca Facci

Treasurer

Mendo Trajcevski

Secretary

Fidelia Pontarolo

Committee:

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Rina Montgomery

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Don't forget to visit our
website

www.mhpillawarra.com

The project aims to document the story of each apron, how it was made, by whom, the significance of the colours and pattern, when was it worn, by whom, the region or village it comes from and how it came to Australia and the Illawarra. The Association hopes to collect information about the design of as many village aprons as possible. Information collected, and photos of the aprons, will then become a web exhibition produced on the NSW Migration Heritage Centre's website. It will include an illustrated essay comparing and analysing the aprons. *(Written by Mendo Trajcevski, Director, Port Kembla Macedonian Welfare Association Inc and Treasurer, MHP).*

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'DOIN' THE TOMATOES'



"I'm doing the tomatoes", is the telephone call my sisters and I can expect to receive around the end of January/early February which means don't make any plans for the weekend, we're going over to Mum's - it's tomato time!

It is relatively easy to buy the tomato sauces used in spaghetti dishes today, but that is really only a recent development. And even though the availability and variety of sauces are there for the taking, nothing really tastes the same as the sauce made from scratch at home. The tradition of 'doing the tomatoes' goes back to my two sets of maternal great grandmothers who both arrived in Australia in the 1920s. My grandmother continued the tradition with her daughters and now my mother continues it with us. Oddly enough our brother doesn't get called in for 'tomato duty' but does reap the rewards of our efforts...how Italian is that!

The tomatoes are homegrown. Depending on the season, the amount may need to be supplemented by a bulk buy of the fruit from the local 'fruit and veg' or else it's hitch up the trailer and off to the local farms we go. There are two schools of thought on how to go about doing the sauce - do you boil the tomatoes first or don't. My grandmother insisted on boiling first, but she

is no longer with us, so a mutual decision was made not to 'go the boil' before. Expediency was our motivation and really, we have done the taste test and there is no difference. The tomatoes are cut in half and the stalks removed. They are then put through a machine that extracts the pulp. They can go through two or three times depending on the quality of the tomatoes. Back in the 'old days' the tomatoes would be put through a sieve that was turned by hand which was pretty 'hard yakka'. Now we pretty much have gone '21st century' and have an electric machine.



We then pour the pulp into the bottles which have a leaf or two of basil inserted into them. The basil is homegrown too and that is my job, putting the 'basil in the bottles'. The bottles are those old brown beer bottles. I am not too sure if you can still buy them today, but ours go back to my grandmother, and no doubt, through the efforts of the generation of men in my family, we have an abundant supply. The bottles are capped with gold bottle tops and then placed in a 40 gallon drum and boiled.



This method of boiling is another venture into the 21st century. Back in the 'old days' the drum would be placed over an open fire, which had to be continually watched and stoked (which no doubt helped increase the quota of bottles available for the following year's batch of tomatoes as the men kept watch over the

flames). The fire today is provided by a 40 ring gas burner – no constant surveillance required. The bottles remain in the water until it has cooled and then they are stored in the cellar.



So there we have it, another year, another tomato day 'done and dusted'. My grandmother and great grandmothers are hopefully smiling down at us and nodding their heads in approval, although I am sure my grandmother is likely to be yelling out "you gotta boil the 'tomati' first" and probably, on a sad note, enjoying it while it lasts, as this tradition will likely stop with our mother.

UKRAINIAN DECORATED EASTER EGGS (PYSANKY)



Ukrainians at Easter time are hard at work creating beautiful works of art - preparing decorated Easter eggs – the PYSANKY. The eggs are decorated raw and the yolk is blown out through pinholes when they are finished. The process is intricate and each design is drawn onto a white egg and progressively covered in bees wax using a hollow-nibbed stylus, batik style. Then, beginning with light colours the egg is dipped in food (colour) dyes, dried and more wax patterns are applied. This process is repeated with gradually darker

colours and with each dye the ornate patterns emerge. Finally the wax is removed by warming the egg over a candle.

Funding: The Ukrainian community received a small cultural grant from the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission to revive the egg painting tradition in late 1980s. Electric nibbed styluses were also purchased to improve the application of the wax.

History: In keeping with tradition this ancient craft is passed from generation to generation. Archaeological evidence shows the pysanka tradition dates back to pre-Christian celebrations of spring when the eggs were made as offerings to ward off evil and bring prosperity in the year ahead.



Easter Food Basket: Nowadays the eggs symbolize the rebirth of Christ and form part of the blessing of the food basket. Families present a basket of pysanky, ham, cottage cheese, salami, salt, butter, horse radish, boiled eggs and decorative homemade paska bread to be blessed by the priest at Easter mass.

Ukrainian Easter

After Easter Sunday Mass people greet one another with the traditional Easter greeting:

“CHRYSTOS VOSKRES “- CHRIST is risen to which the reply is:

“VOISTYNU VOSKRES”- Indeed He is risen.

It is also the custom to exchange or give Easter eggs with this Easter greeting.

Families return home to break the long fast with an Easter breakfast of consecrated and other food. The meal begins with Easter grace and then a ceremonious serving of the blessed (boiled eggs), which the head of the family divides into portions. One portion for each person, greeting the family with the customary Easter greeting of “Chrystos Voskres” and extends to every individual the very best wishes. This particular ritual symbolises family unity and expresses hope for a happy and prosperous year.

Easter Monday is marked with a quaint custom, the origin is obscure, of dousing young females with water by the village young men. Usually the most popular

girl gets the greatest share of dousing. The girl is obliged to pay for her freedom from dousing with her very best PYSANKA Easter egg.

XPUCMOC BOCKPEC - CHRYSTOS VOSKRES

(Story and photographs courtesy of Ludwik Ihnat, OAM and Erika Ihnat)

MHP PROJECT UPDATES

Migration to Wollongong Publication

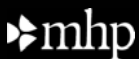
A substantial amount of information was collected during the research phase of this project. The task of editing the material to conform to the project's funding limitations was undertaken by heritage consultant Meredith Walker. This huge job is now complete and in the first week of March the MHP received from Meredith the volume of work that now needs to be edited and designed for the printers. This is another enormous and time consuming task.

Animating Heritage

The animating heritage project has faced a numbers of technical glitches which weren't anticipated in the early design of the project. The technical hiccups have however resulted in delays to project deadlines. For this reason the project will be re-evaluated by the committee and a decision made on the best way forward. The main issue will be to ensure the MHP has the capacity to copy the material loaned to us and store it appropriately for future use. Donations of film are still welcome as are new records that form part of the film register. The committee hopes that the register might be available online sometime in the future.

Places Project

Louise Thom, Meredith Walker and Glynis Cummins, the Place Project Researchers, completed the project and officially handed over the research documents to the MHP, Wollongong City Council and the Migrations Heritage Centre on Monday, 25 February 2008. More information about the completed project will follow in the next newsletters.



www.mhpillawarra.com

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Joining Fee: Individual \$5.00 (Pensioners \$2.00) Organisations \$10.00
Annual Fee: Individual \$10.00 (Pensioners \$5.00) Organisations \$10.00

Joining fee + Annual Fee payable within fourteen days of receipt of advice of membership approval. Membership renewal annual fee payable by 30 June of each year.

We would love you to join but you don't have to be a member to participate

