Footprints of Lithuanians in America
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Foreword
This narrative is dedicated to all those Lithuanian Americans who did not live to tell or to those still living and wondering about their roots and experiences their ancestors had to endure in the hope of creating a more meaningful and better life for themselves and their future generations. Unlike fragmented narrations of limited in time events that currently exist in the English language literature about Lithuanians in America, this presentation weaves together an overall picture of their struggle, perseverance, triumphs, and care for their subjugated homeland under circumstances that at many times seemed hopeless. This story might be of interest also to a broader English speaking audience about survival and growth of a determined people under seemingly doomed to failure conditions.

Introduction
Lithuania is a small European nation that was ripped apart in the XVII and XVIII centuries by Russia’s invasions and, subsequently, by more than a century of on and off wars on its soil between Germany and Russia. As a result, a significant part of its population has vanished either as war casualties, purposeful atrocities by occupiers, deportations, fleeing terror, and emigration. These unfortunate events and Russia’s brutal occupation of Lithuania for over 120 years since 1795 and then again for 50 years, caused nearly a third of Lithuania’s population to escape to the west. A majority of them eventually immigrated to the United States, where they found, after a few very difficult years, a chance to live in peace and freedom and more lasting economic opportunity.

Immigration waves from Lithuania to the United States can be best summed up in four time spans:

1) From 17th century to end of WWI (Part 1)
2) From end of WWI to end of WWII in 1945 (Part 2 in development)
3) From 1945 to 1990 (Part 3 in development)
4) From 1990 to present time (Part 4 in development)

This narrative (Part 1) provides an overview of the characteristics, dynamics, and accomplishments of different waves of Lithuanian immigrants arriving in America. Unlike Lithuanians, newly arriving immigrants of most other nationalities were assimilating with relative ease into their related existing ethnic structures. In contrast, the Lithuanians of the first wave,
hardened by long years oppression and not certain of their national origin, found on arriving nothing that they could associate with, except extreme hostility in a world that spoke a strange, incomprehensible language and had no interest in their presence. Cast into a sea of uncertainty, their own kind began in time to coalesce based on their common language and for many on their common Catholic faith. The isolation, forced them into developing self-confidence, formation of self-help organizations, self-improvement through learning to read and write, and eventually voicing concerns over the plight of the homeland left behind.

Also of significance are two other immigrant groups that came to the United States from Lithuania related areas. One was made up of Jewish settlers that began immigrating into America at the break of the seventeenth century. They called themselves Litvaks. The other consisted of mostly nineteenth century ethnic Lithuanian immigrants of Lutheran faith from a region immediately to the southwest of Lithuania proper, called Lithuania Minor or Lithuanian East Prussia. The latter was controlled since the thirteenth century first by the Teutonic Knights and then by Kaiser’s Germany, but not by Russia.

This publication is not meant to be a history book meeting scholarly and rigorous literary standards. Rather it aims to provide a reasonably clear, but not a detailed overview about generations of immigrants from a small country, called Lithuania, based partly on documented events and partly on excerpts from articles of a variety of publications covering that time period. The author hopes that it will help those Lithuanian Americans searching for their ancestral past to understand better the historical forces that molded their character in an 800 year long struggle in a sea of hostile neighbors. It is hoped that narration about their brave past and dedication to their homeland will be an inspiration to current and future generations of America’s Lithuanians and help them to retain pride in their national heritage short of disappearing without a trace in America’s melting pot.
Table of contents

Geographic Location of Lithuania in Europe................................................................. 5
Brief History of Lithuania (1,2,3).................................................................................. 5
  Formation of the Lithuanian people in early history................................................. 5
  Lithuania ascending as a Grand Duchy to the largest country in Europe in the XIII and XIV centuries................................................................. 5
  Lithuania’s gradual decline after Vytautas the Great death in 1430...................... 7
Demise of the Lithuania-Polish Commonwealth and Lithuania’s disappearance at the end of the XVIII century................................................................. 7
  Lithuanians in futile rebellions in the 19th century.................................................... 8
  Rebirth of national consciousness............................................................................ 9
  Lithuania’s fight for and reestablishment of independence in 1918...................... 10
Occupation by the Soviet Union in 1940, restoring independence in 1990, and joining NATO and the European Union......................................................... 11
Part I - Lithuanian immigration to the United States, settling and life prior to end of 1919...... 13
  Lithuanians in America up to 1860-s (4,5)................................................................. 13
  Significant milestones in the life of Lithuanian Americans between 1860 and 1919........ 15
  The first wave of mass immigration of Lithuanians beginning in 1860-s (8)............ 18
  Escaping hopelessness (9).......................................................................................... 18
  The Lithuanian immigrant – lost and despised (12, 13, 14)..................................... 20
  First steps in the Pennsylvania coalmining region and beyond (17,18,19).............. 22
  Coming into their own............................................................................................... 24
  Coalescing and maturing in Lithuaniness.................................................................. 25
  New found treasure: learning to read, write, and publish....................................... 25
  Birth of Entrepreneurship......................................................................................... 27
  Searching for self-esteem and diversity.................................................................... 28
  The Bellringers for Awakening Lithuanian Consciousness in America............... 28
  Dr. Jonas Sliūpas (John Szlupas-anglicized)(29,30, 47).............................................. 28
  Rev. Aleksandras Burba (31, 32).............................................................................. 32
  Breaking away from poverty and ignorance............................................................. 33
  Lithuanians in the novel “The Jungle”...................................................................... 35
  Out of quagmire through education....................................................................... 36
  First steps in organized education of Lithuanian American children.................... 36
  Drive to self-sufficiency (41, 42, 43, 44).................................................................. 37
  Reaching out within and beyond U.S. borders (45, 46, 48, 49)............................... 38
  The Paris Peace Conference (50, 51, 52, 53)............................................................ 42
  Lithuanian American organizations.......................................................................... 43
    The Lithuanian Socialist Federation of America...................................................... 43
    The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation .......................................................... 44
    Lithuanian National Federation (Nativists-Sandara) (57)....................................... 45
    Major Alliances for beneficial purposes (55, 58, 59, 60)........................................... 45
Significant nation-wide societies, associations and personalities.............................. 47
  Lithuanians In America’s Military Service................................................................. 47
  Lithuanian Americans organizing exhibition at the 1900 Paris World Fair (64-65).... 49
  Organizing for politics and labor issues................................................................... 53
  Personalities (68, 69, 70)........................................................................................... 54
Sports.............................................................................................................................. 54
Stepping into the World of Music

Start of organized musical life

Organists

Cappellas and musical bands (orchestras)

Operettas and operas

Publications

Books

Newspapers and journals

Medical professionals and health care

Enterprising

Knights of Lithuania

Epi-Prologue

Sources and literature
Geographic Location of Lithuania in Europe

Distances (km) from Vilnius, Lithuania’s capital, to various European cities

Brief History of Lithuania (1,2,3)

Formation of the Lithuanian people in early history

It is believed that Lithuanian ancestors arrived at the eastern part of the Baltic coast about 2,000 BC. However, not much is known about them except that their land was a source of amber and that they were heathen. Tacitus in Germania described inhabitants of the south-eastern Baltic Sea shores as Aesti people (presumably Balts around 97 AD). Among many versions, the most widespread believe is that the name Lithuania is derived from the name of Lietauka, a small river that flows into the river Neris near the town of Kernavé.

Linguists believe the Lithuanian language became differentiated from Latvian around the 7th century. However, numerous tribes living in the Southeast region along the shores of the Baltic Sea, while speaking in a general Lithuanian dialect, did not necessarily call themselves Lithuanians and their land – Lithuania. They identified themselves as Žemaičiai, Kuršiai, etc. Lithuania’s name (Lituae) first surfaced in the Quedlinburg annals (Saxonicae Annales Quedlinburgenses) in 1009, noting of beheading the missionary Saint Bruno of Querfurt (Bruno Querfurtensis, Bonifacus) by the pagan population.

Lithuania ascending as a Grand Duchy to the largest country in Europe in the XIII and XIV centuries

The first recorded Lithuanian state, known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was created in the middle of the 13th century. Subsequently, its first ruler, Mindaugas, adopted the Christian faith and became “king” by pope’s decree in 1253. Mindaugas was assassinated in 1263. Inasmuch as the king’s subserviants became automatically of the same faith as the king, upon Mindaugas death, with the new rulers being pagan, their constituents, not by choice, became pagans again.

In 1316, Lithuania was united again by Grand Duke Gediminas. During his reign, Lithuania grew strong by expanding into Ruthenian and Ukrainian lands. He made Vilnius the country’s capital and encouraged artisans from other parts of Europe to settle in Lithuania.

His son, Algirdas, upon becoming the Grand Duke in 1345, proceeded to expand further eastward and southward into Ukraine and Polish lands. However, Lithuania began facing growing threats from the Teutonic order from the west and Livonian Knights from the north.

In 1377, Jogaila, Algirdas’ son, upon declaring himself the Grand Duke of Lithuania (GDL),
captured and imprisoned his rival uncle Kęstutis and his son Vytautas. Kęstutis was murdered in the Krėva Castle prison in 1382, while Vytautas escaped and sought help at the Teutonic order.

In 1385, Grand Duke Jogaila married the Polish princess Jadwiga and became ruler of the combined Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. Jogaila returned to Lithuania in, accompanied by Polish priests to baptize the pagan population into Christian faith. This action included wholesale destruction of their ancient worship places and anything related to paganism. Inasmuch as Christianity came to Lithuania only in Polish language, it had devastating effects on Lithuanians for the next five centuries.

Jogaila made peace with his cousin Duke Vytautas in 1392, granting him the title of the Grand Duke and ruler of Lithuania (GDL), on condition that he would recognize Jogaila as his king, and the GDL title would revert to the king upon Vytautas death.

Under Grand Duke Vytautas, Lithuania extended its reign far into Ruthenia beyond the city of Smolensk and into Ukraine, including Kiev and as far as the shores of the Black sea. Under Vytautas' reign, Lithuania became the largest country in Europe. Vytautas died in 1430.
rebellion in secret. In a battle in 1410 at Tannenberg (also known as Gruenwald, or Žalgiris), the combined Lithuanian and Polish forces defeated the Teutonic knights and ended their existence as a military power.

**Lithuania’s gradual decline after Vytautas the Great death in 1430**

In 1447 Casimir Jagiellon, the son of Jogaila, Duke of GDL, was elected by the Polish nobility as the King of Poland. Since that time, the Poles began to usurp influence and predominance in the affairs of the GDL. Lithuania’s ruling nobility, mimicking their Polish counterparts, adopted Polish as their court and Catholic faith language. Servitude, in which the peasants lost any rights and became the property of nobility, became the law of the land.

**Demise of the Lithuania-Polish Commonwealth and Lithuania’s disappearance at the end of the XVIII century**

Not being able to fight off the rising power of the Turks in the south and Moscovia (Russia) in the east, the GDL began to lose power and control of its peripheral lands. In the treaty of Lublin in 1569, Poland forced the GDL to submit to the rule of the Polish king thereby greatly diminishing the powers of Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The treaty allowed the two states to keep their own armies, prohibited making treaties with foreign countries without the other’s consent, and to retain their own laws. The countries adopted a common currency and a joint nobility based parliament (Sejm-Seimas) meeting in Warsaw and being ruled by a common king, seated in Cracow. This set in motion the domination of Polish culture and language in all facets of life in the GDL.

One of the most important GDL documents in the XVI century was the issuance of Lithuanian Statutes in 1522, with revisions in 1566 and 1588. It eliminated numerous tribal laws, updated applicable old and current laws, and codified the rights of nobility and of their peasants in a single document.

In the 16th century, protestant reformation reached and made huge inroads in Lithuania. The authorities in Lithuanian East Prussia decreed that their protestant faith must be taught and explained in the language of the people, which was Lithuanian. As a result, the very first book in Lithuanian language was published in Karaliaučius (Koenigsberg) in the form of Catechism by Rev. Martynas Mažvydas in 1547. While protestantism in Lithuania was sent into retreat by catholic counter-reformation in the late part of the 16th century, the people’s public profession of
faith and printed publications in the Lithuanian language flourished only in East Prussia.

The Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth was initially somewhat successful against bellicose Moscovian Russia. In 1611-1612 war, the Commonwealth troops even occupied Moscow. However, in 1651, Moscovian Russians successfully invaded and devastated all of the Grand Duchy territories. Nearly 40% of the population perished in this assault. Thousands of captives were driven-off into servitude to the far eastern parts of Russia.

By clever Russian infiltration and bribery, the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania declined in the 17th and 18th century and effectively became a Russian satellite. In 1773, Prussia, Austria and Russia agreed between themselves to absorb large segments of territory in the periphery of the Commonwealth. A second partition, shrinking the Commonwealth to a miniature entity, took place in 1793. In the third partition in 1795, the Commonwealth ceased to exist.

![Third and final partition of Lithuania-Poland Commonwealth in 1795](image)

**Lithuanians in futile rebellions in the 19th century**

Russia controlled the GDL and part of Poland by the tip of bayonets of their soldiers. In 1830, the Poles rebelled against the Russians. It spread to Lithuania in 1832. By 1833, the Russians crushed the uprising followed by massacres and deportation of thousands. The Statutes of Lithuania were replaced in 1840 by Russia's judicial system. The territory of the GDL was now called the Northwestern Territory.

In 1863-4, the Poles and Lithuanians rebelled unsuccessfully again. The aftermath, were mass executions by public hanging, followed by deportation to Siberia of more than 25 thousand people. Catholic religion in Lithuanian language was outlawed, but not in Polish. Inasmuch as Lithuanians strongly resisted conversion to the Russian orthodox faith, it made easy and very convenient to polonize Lithuania's religious life. Polish speaking priests explained to the people that God understood prayers only in Polish, but not in Lithuanian. Lithuanian books in Latin script were banned and teaching in schools was allowed only in the Russian language. All public service, police and educational institution employees had to be Russian nationals and of the orthodox faith. Russian was the only official language allowed, and enforced by whips of the occupier's Kazak battalions.
Rebirth of national consciousness

In contrast to Czar’s oppression, Lithuanians in German controlled East Prussia were encouraged in their daily lives to speak and pray in own native language. Extensive social, cultural and literary organizations developed, including the operation of 400 schools and a Lithuanian language faculty at the University of Koenigsberg. From it and from the pulpits of the Lithuanian Lutheran churches, literary master pieces in and research studies of the Lithuanian language began to emerge. The Lithuanian language was hailed as one of the oldest and most important in the development of languages spoken in the northern part of Europe. The emergence of Lithuanian cultural development in East Prussia was the fuse that triggered the revival of Lithuanian consciousness in Lithuania proper.
Russia’s iron rule created in Lithuania a nationwide hate of the oppressors. At the same time, rising nationalism in Western Europe caused a growing consciousness and interest by the people in Lithuania about its past, its culture, and the dream of being free of the Russian yoke. Lithuanian mothers began to teach their children to read and write secretly at home while working at the spinning wheel.

Prayer books, printed in Lithuanian, began to flow through underground channels from East Prussia. In 1883, a small group of intellectuals launched the first Lithuanian periodical Aušra ("The Dawn"), printed in East Prussia in the traditional Latin script. It was meant to awaken the consciousness and pride in Lithuanians. Lithuanian-minded activists began to emerge in Western Europe, in the United States, and even in Russia. They began to raise the notion of freedom of their country from Russia.

**Lithuania’s fight for and reestablishment of independence in 1918**

Tsar Nicholas II, frightened by the rising wave of resurrections, repealed in 1904, the ban on Lithuanian language publications in the Latin script, and issued on October 1905, a manifesto in which he vowed to recognize fundamental democratic freedoms and organize elections to the State Duma (Parliament). As a result, over 2,000 Lithuanian activists legally convened in Vilnius in December 1905 demanding autonomy for Lithuania.

During the WWI, the Germans expelled the Russians and occupied Lithuania in 1915. In 1917, they allowed to form an assembly of Lithuanian activists called “Taryba” (Council). On February 16, 1918, the Taryba declared Lithuania’s independence with the country’s capital Vilnius.

However, on October 10, 1920 the Poles, violating prior agreements, occupied Vilnius and about a third of Lithuania, before being stopped by a ragged army of Lithuanian volunteer fighters. Occupation of Vilnius created a great deal of tension with Poland in the next 20 years. In 1923, Lithuanian volunteers recovered the Klaipėda region by forcefully evicting the French military administration. Also in 1922, the U.S. recognized Lithuania’s independence.

In the 1926 army coup, Antanas Smetona, after ousting the communist and socialist leaning government, became Lithuania’s president and retained that position until fleeing the country from an occupying Soviet Russia’s army in June of 1940. While Lithuania under Smetona made considerable progress in economics and rebuild the nation to a strong nationalistic consciousness, it also became a mild dictatorship. In March 1939, Germany forced Lithuania to
relinquish the Klaipėda region. Upon fall of Poland in 1939, the Soviet Union returned a part of the Vilnius region to Lithuania, with a provision of stationing soviet military garrisons on Lithuania’s territory.

**Occupation by the Soviet Union in 1940, restoring independence in 1990, and joining NATO and the European Union**

The Soviet Union occupied Lithuania in June 1940, and incorporated it in a staged election into the Soviet Union as one of the Soviet republics in August of 1940. Reign of terror followed by mass arrests, executions, and deportations to Siberia of tens of thousands suspected of disloyalty to communism.

Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, and in less than a week had captured all of Lithuania. Their occupation lasted 3 years. During their rule, self-government was not allowed, farm production confiscated, many young people were force-shipped to work in Germany, and most local Jews were killed and/or sent to concentration camps.

![Soviet troops invade Lithuania in 1940](image)

In July 1944, the Soviet army fought its way back into Lithuania and completed its occupation by the end of the year. More than 100 thousand Lithuanians fled west to escape the returning Communist terror. Remaining farmers were forced to give up their land and join the state mandated collective farms (kolkhozes). Mass arrests, imprisonments, executions, and deportations of hundreds of thousands of undesirable people, followed.

Underground Lithuanian defenders (partisans), at the peak about 30,000 strong, fought the occupying armed forces for more than 10 years to prevent unhindered subjugation of the Lithuanian people and influx of Russian settlers. Only after Stalin’s death, the reign of terror eased somewhat. Slow reconstruction of industry, transportation infrastructure, and educational system resumed, but all in the glory of building a communist enslaved society.

Finally, in late 1980s, the Communist system began to crumble. In 1988, a popular front of activists, called Sąjūdis (Reform Movement), came into being. In late spring of 1989, Lithuania was granted by Moscow some economic autonomy, but that did not satisfy the people’s thirst for real freedom. In December of 1989, the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) declared its independence from the CP of the USSR.

In February of 1990, Sąjūdis won popular elections to the Lithuanian Supreme Council, which in turn declared Lithuania’s independence on March 11, 1990. Moscow tried to stop these events by issuing ultimatums to the Lithuanian government. Moscow also launched its propaganda
machine. To intimidate the Lithuanian people, it started endless military “maneuvers” by frequently traversing the streets of Vilnius with heavy combat vehicles. An economic blockade, imposed soon after the declaration of independence and lifted several months later, was aimed to persuade the people that they could not survive on their own. Upon considerable increase of food prices in early January 1991, a small, but aggressive pro-soviet group attempted in a stormy “protest demonstration” to force entry into the parliament building. However, their belligerence was repelled by volunteer citizen guards spraying them with high velocity water through fire hoses.

Finally, in the night of January 13, 1991, a special operations detachment of the KGB, backed up by units of the Soviet army with tanks and machine-guns, launched a bloody assault against the unarmed defenders of the Lithuanian Radio and Television Buildings and the TV transmission tower facility. Even artillery was used to intimidate the people. As a result of the onslaught, 14 Lithuanians sustained fatal injuries and over 700 were wounded. A self-proclaimed “committee for national salvation”, using airwaves of occupied TV and Radio facilities, announced of having taken power to restore “peace and order in the republic”. However, in fact, the “committee” had no power at all; the Parliament and the Government of Lithuania, defended by masses of its unarmed citizens, remained in place and retained control over the country. Moreover, the pro-soviet TV broadcast, without control of relay stations, was seen only in small area of the country. Almost concurrently, the Free Lithuanian Radio began broadcasting from its facility near Kaunas. Soon thereafter, upon equipment installation in the Parliament building, the Lithuanian TV telecasting was revived. Its programs were retransmitted by relay stations and seen all over Lithuania.

Iceland was the first country to extend Lithuania de-facto and de-jure diplomatic recognition on February 11, 1991. In August of 1991, during the vacation of USSR's president M. Gorbachev, his closest “comrades” isolated him and attempted a coup-d’etat in order to impose martial law and thus prevent imminent collapse of the USSR. The coup failed. On September 6, 1991, the USSR recognized Lithuania as an independent country, and began withdrawing the Soviet troops from Vilnius.

In September of 1991, Lithuania was admitted to the UN. By the end of 1991, nearly all of the nations in the world had recognized Lithuania’s independence. The last Russian troops of the former Soviet Union left Lithuania in 1993. Lithuania structured itself as a parliamentary democracy. However, its economy needed to be restructured to function as a market based economy. Severe austerity measures had to be instituted. They were followed by extreme economic hardships. As a result, thousands of Lithuanians began emigrating to the West.

In 2004, Lithuania joined NATO and the EU. A very serious worldwide recession in 2009 brought
extreme hardships to the recovering Lithuania, requiring again the imposition of very tough economic and fiscal austerity measures. Lithuania's economy recovered within the next two years and is now continuing on a steady path of growth as one of the best in the entire EU. In 2015, Lithuania adopted the Euro as its monetary unit and became member of the Eurozone.

Part I - Lithuanian immigration to the United States, settling and life prior to end of 1919

Lithuanians in America up to 1860-s (4, 5)

The first known Lithuanian to come to the North America's shores in 1659, was dr. Alexander Carolus Curtius (Aleksandras Karolis Kuršius). He is mentioned in the New York City records as “Nobilis Lithuanus Carolus Curtius”. He was a nobleman and a scholar in Latin language, hired in 1659, by Governor Peter Stuyvesant to establish a Latin school in Nieuw Amsterdam (current New York City). He was the headmaster of the school for two years. A memorial plaque in his honor may be found on One Broad St./Exchange Plaza, Manhattan, New York.

Historical literature hints of a group of Lithuanian Calvinists coming to New Amsterdam in 1688, upon being evicted by England from the island of Tobago, in the Caribbean. Initially, several hundred Calvinists fled from Lithuania to Courland (current Latvia) to escape the terror of counterreformation. Subsequently, around mid-1650s, Lithuania's Courland duke, Jokūbas Kettleris, resettled them on the island of Tobago, which he bought from the king of Spain.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko, born in Grand Duchy of Lithuania, after moving to North America in 1778, took part in the American Revolutionary War as a colonel in the Continental Army. An accomplished military architect, trained in France, he designed and oversaw the construction of several state-of-the-art fortifications, including those at West Point, N.Y. In 1783, in recognition of his services, the Continental Congress promoted him to brigadier general. Jurgela (6) notes also of another nobleman, lieutenant Mykolas Grabauskas, fighting in the Continental Army.

Prince Gallitzin, a nobleman of Lithuanian origin, upon arrival in Baltimore in 1792, became in 1795 the first Catholic priest to receive all his sacred orders in the United States. He gave up his titles and spent $150,000 of his own funds to further Catholicism in North America. He established the first American Catholic parish in the wilderness of Allegheny Mountains. State of PA named an 820,000 acre forest in the Allegheny Mountains as the Gallitzin Forest. (6)

More than a dozen Lithuanian names can be identified in the records of having participated in the second war of America's independence in 1812-1815. (5)
In the next few decades, after the Russians occupied Lithuania in 1795, the oppression became unbearable. Lithuanians and Poles revolted against Russia in 1831, but lost the fight. Thousands of the defeated revolutionaries sought refuge in the Kingdom of Prussia. In as much as they refused to return to their home countries under Russian rule, they were eventually allowed to be deported to the United States. While it is difficult to distinguish with certainty all of the deported Lithuanians because of misspellings of their names, at least 25 of the arrivals are listed as being born in Lithuania. Of these Aleksandras Bielaski(7) (Bieliauskas) and Henrikas Korvins Kalusauskas are of more historical prominence. Bieliasukas later resided in Illinois, became friends with the future President Abraham Lincoln, served as Capitan in the Civil War under Ulysses Grant and was killed in battle in 1861 near Cairo, Illinois.

Escaping the 1831 unsuccessful revolution, Henrikas Korvins Kalusauskas came to the U.S. from France in 1838. He worked for a while in the Land Office and later at the U.S.Treasury Dept. During the Civil war, he tried unsuccessfully to form a Lithuanian-Polish (LP) Legion. Also during the 1863 insurrection in Lithuania and Poland, he served in various capacities as the political agent of the LP revolutionary government in the U.S., with the right to use the seals of GDL and the crown of Poland. The Polish Foreign ministry named him as the first diplomat of Poland (7).

Union and Confederate war records show hundreds of participants in the U.S. Civil War with names resembling Lithuanian origin. However, due to distortions and peculiarities in the way Lithuanian names were recorded, it is difficult to ascertain their true nationality. Virtually nothing is known about their background and how they arrived and settled in the United States.
Significant milestones in the life of Lithuanian Americans between 1860 and 1919

The following timeline highlights the more important milestones in the lives America’s Lithuanians and maturing as an important national minority:

1868 – First arrival of economic Lithuanian immigrants settling in New England and Pennsylvania
1869 – Traces of first Lithuanian clusters in Danville, PA
1871 – Formation of a first joint Lithuanian-Polish St. Albert Mutual Assistance Association
1874 - First Lithuanian language publication in North America printed as a church song booklet in Shenandoah, PA, (Wieszpaties sawo szauiuos)
1874 - Lithuanians build their first Catholic St. Casimir church in Shenandoah, PA, which subsequently was lost in a dispute to Polish co-parishioners
1875 - First Lithuanian language book in North America printed as a 158 pg. English/Lithuanian dictionary by Mykolas Tvarauskas in Shamokin, PA, (Tlumoczius arba Słownikas Angielckaj)
1875 - First Lithuanian grocery (Bobinas) and meat product stores (Simanskis) in Shenandoah, PA
1877 - First Lithuanian fraternal organization in America, known as St. George’s Beneficial Society (Šv. Jurgio pašalpinė draugija), formed in Shenandoah, PA
1879 - First Lithuanian newspaper in the world “Gazieta Lietuviszka” published in New York City by Mykolas Tvarauskas
1884 - Publication of the second American Lithuanian newspaper “Unija” advocating for the first time in America independence for Lithuania (“kai įsigaus stipri Lietuviszka dvasė lietuwiszkoje gimtinėje”)
1885 - First Lithuanian Catholic Church opened in Pittston, PA
1886 - St. Joseph’s Temperance society established in Shenandoah, PA. The society was responsible for creating the first Lithuanian brass band-orchestra lasting nearly over 40 years.
1886 - Jonas Šliūpas, upon arrival from Lithuania in 1884, was instrumental in the formation of General Alliance of all Lithuanian societies, which in 1901 split into two branches, the Catholic and the National
1889 - Three Lithuanian newspapers are published in U.S: Vienybė Lietuvninkų, Saulė, and Lietuviškas Balsas
1889 - Four Lithuanian Catholic parishes are on record in: Brooklyn, NY, Mahanoy City and Pittston, PA, and Baltimore, MD
1889 - Rev. Burba arrives from Lithuania. Both he and Šliūpas are the principal movers of Lithuanian Consciousness in America
1889 -“Lithuanian Education Society” is founded in Baltimore urging Lithuanian immigrants to seek freedom and self-identity through education and enlightenment
1892 - A. Olszevski (Oliševskis) begins publishing weekly newspaper Lietuva; by 1910 it is the largest Lithuanian language newspaper in the world
1894 – Lithuanian American Committee, known as “Ivinskis Society”, is formed to explore representation of Lithuania at the Paris World Fair in 1900
1894 – First Lithuanian parish school opens in Pittsburgh, PA
1895 m. – Attorney Adolfas Taboras of Shenandoah, PA, becomes the first elected mayor of Lithuanian origin in the U.S. Lithuanian mayors in that city continued for the next 40 years

1896 – Dr. Šliūpas organizes Friends of the Homeland Society (Tėvynės Myletojų Draugystė) for the purpose of publishing books in Lithuanian language

1896 - A. Olszevski establishes the first Lithuanian bank in Chicago

1897 - First known Lithuanian “Kestutis Savings and Loan Association” in Chicago, subsequently as Union Federal Loan Association, It was followed later by eight more Savings and Loan Associations in Chicago, and others in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Kearny, NJ, etc.

1900 – Lithuanians from multiple countries, mostly supported by Lithuanian American financing, organize and participate at the Paris World Fair with exhibit about life in a Lithuanian farmstead, and Lithuanian publications throughout the world

1900 - Lithuanian Catholic Educational Society, "Motinele", is founded

1900 – Dr. Šliūpas establishes Association of Lithuanian Freethinkers

1905 - Echoing the revolution in Russia, Lithuanians form in Newark, N.J. the Lithuanian Socialist Alliance, from which the Lithuanian Communist Federation split off in 1919

1875-1904 - Within this time frame, Lithuanians in America published 553 books consisting of 474,200 printed pages, while none where printed in Lithuania due to prohibition of Latin script

1906 – American Lithuanian Catholic Congress convenes in Wilkes-Barre, PA, to support education of Lithuanian youth and expansion of the Lithuanian-based school system. Follow-up Congresses in 1907 in Scranton, PA, 1913 in Pittsburgh, Pa, and 1914 in Chicago, IL

1906 – For the first time, the broad American public becomes aware of tragic plight of Lithuanians living in the Chicago stockyard district in the novel “The Jungle” by Upton Sinclair

1906 - First politically oriented meeting of 169 Lithuanian representatives convene in Philadelphia, PA, calling for Lithuania’s independence

1907-41 Lithuanian Catholic parishes are in operation and 5 newspapers in publication

1908 – The first Lithuanian women convention in America, with delegates from all the principal settlements, took place in Brooklyn

1907 - Rev. Antanas Staniukynas founds the Convent of Sisters of St. Casimir in Scranton, PA for training teachers to conduct instructions in the Lithuanian language; transferred to Chicago in 1911.

1909 - Association of Lithuanian Priests is established in New York. In 1920 renamed as Alliance of Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priests in America

1909 - Formation of Lithuanian Catholic Temperance Association. In 1911 a large number of members secede and form a separate Confederation of Total Abstainers

1909 - Roman Catholic Priests Association, begins publishing the newspaper "Draugas" (The Friend) in Wilkes Barre, PA, It moved to Chicago in 1913

1910 - “Lithuanian Arts Society” is established in Philadelphia, PA

1910 - Lithuanian journalists meet in Brooklyn, N.Y. and establish its first Press Association with A. Olshevski as the president

1910 - A Lithuanian American delegation is received by the President of the United States with a petition to list Lithuanian Nationality in the next population census
1910 - Mikas Petrauskas forms in Chicago the Lithuanian Music Conservatory, moved to Boston in 1915

1910 - Formation of Association of Lithuanian Parish Choirs (1910), American Lithuanian Guild of Organists (1911), Association of Students (1912), Association of Lithuanian Medical Doctors (1912), Association of Lithuanian Catholic Women (1914), Association of Benevolent Organizations (1914), Association of Workers (St. Joseph) (1915)

1911 – Establishment of Lithuanian American funded Information Bureau in Paris by Gabrys moved in 1915 to Switzerland due to WWI; closed in 1917

1912 - Lithuanian Catholic Beneficial societies form an alliance at their convention in Newark, N.J., followed by the establishment of the Lithuanian Young People Federation in the New England states

1912 – First Lithuanian Theater “Lietuva” opens in Chicago for motion pictures and vaudeville acts

1913 – Mykolas Norkūnas founds Knights of Lithuania (Lietuvos vyčiai). Initially known as Lithuanian Falcons in Lawrence, MA., to develop conservative and patriotic values in Lithuanian-American youth

1913 - First Lithuanian College and a College Fund is established in Pittsburgh, PA

1914 - Ludwig van Beethoven music conservatory established by Lithuanians in Chicago

1914 - Lithuanian Nationalists split away from the American Lithuanian Socialist party and in 1915 form a Lithuanian National Coalition

1914 - Lithuanian National Catholic Church breaks away from Rome with 8 parishes in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Massachusetts. By mid-20th century all dissolved

1914 - Second American Lithuanian Catholic Congress meeting in Chicago with 300 delegates establishes the Lithuanian National Council. It calls for autonomy for Lithuania, and creates a Lithuanian National Fund

1914 – The Second All Lithuanian Congress takes place in Brooklyn, N.Y. Delegates from 275 organizations create a Lithuanian Rescue Fund for War victims; draft a resolution demanding autonomy for Lithuania

1914 - First Lithuanian daily newspaper "Naujienos" begins publication in Chicago

1915 - Erection of 1200 seat Lithuanian opera house “Milda” by A. Olshevski & Co. in Chicago

1915 - Establishment of formalized Lithuanian American National Council

1915 – Ninety five Lithuanian Roman Catholic parishes are on record

1916 - Lithuanian Central Committee is received by President Wilson, who in turn designates Nov. 1 as the Lithuanian Day, to allow a nationwide public collection of funds

1917 - J. O. Širvydas elected to lead the Lithuanian American National Council

1917 - Lithuanian American National Council meets in Pittsburgh and subsequently, presents to president Wilson a Declaration for Lithuania’s Independence

1918 - Third Lithuanian American Congress convenes at Madison Square Garden in NYC with 1200 participants from 1,101 organizations urging U.S. to recognize Lithuania’s independence

1918 - President Wilson receives the Lithuanian Political Executive Committee petitioning him to support Lithuania’s independence
1918 - Ten thousand Lithuanian Americans demonstrate in NYC demanding freedom for Lithuania

1919 – 20 thousand Chicago Lithuanians demonstrate against Polish army assault on Vilnius

1919 - In a meeting in New York City, all Lithuanian American organizations agree to work jointly for Lithuania’s independence with funding of $60,000.00 to advocate recognition of Lithuania’s independence by the U.S. government

The first wave of mass immigration of Lithuanians beginning in 1860-s

Lithuania, upon disintegration of Lithuania (DLK) - Poland Commonwealth in 1795, was occupied by Russia and incorporated as its province. The country was mostly agricultural, with the countryside owned by Polish or polonized nobility who controlled very large estates. They were also legal owners of all people, called peasants, living on their property. The landlord, by Tsars laws, had in his hands control over the life and livelihood and even death of any peasant. The peasants within the DLK -Lithuania territory were mostly Lithuanian nationals. They were tied to the landlords as serfs with no legal rights of their own. The Tsar, due to swelling of nationalism and socialist ideas, and after several uprisings within his empire, abolished the serfdom and bondage in all of Russia in 1861, but in 1864 prohibited any Lithuanian language publications in Latin script.

Upon release of the bondage system, the Lithuanian peasants started feeling a sense of freedom they had never experienced before. But the liberated families were still depending on the goodwill of the landlord for survival. Over the next few years small farm homesteads began to spring-up as a result of the landlords granting a few acres of land to their peasants in return for work on the landlord’s estate. The homesteads were small in size and had difficulty supporting a family with several children. Usually the oldest child had the right to remain and inherit the homestead, while the younger children, when grown up, would either need to go away and find work someplace as farmhands, or marry into someone else’s one child homestead. A few who could afford entered a seminary to become priests. Most young men were force drafted into the Russian army for 25-years of service. The service for non-officers was very harsh and demeaning under very primitive existence conditions. Lithuanians, as a rule, were sent to distant locations deep inside Russia. It meant not seeing the homeland for the entire service time. And even those, lucky not to be inducted into the army, were facing at home in most instances extreme poverty and near serfdom-like life. The future looked rather hopeless.

The start of exodus from Lithuania proper was precipitated by two events. In 1863, the subdued revolt against the Russian oppression, resulted in severe repressions, mass executions and deportations to Siberia. Concurrently, major portions of Europe including Lithuania experienced in the mid-to-late 1860's a very severe famine. It forced peasants and numerous unemployed others to leave their homes in search of food. The majority of those leaving were either young bachelors or young married men who could not support their families. Rumors reached their ears of work opportunities in the far distant England, Scotland, and America. The more daring ones began to leave believing on returning home with some earnings to rescue their families from disastrous living conditions and famine.

Escaping hopelessness

European-wide railroad boom started in 1850-s, upon completion of interconnecting lines between Germany and Belgium/ France. In late 1850-s, railroad construction reached Lithuania and, in 1862, the opening of the rail tunnel in Kaunas provided a direct rail link between St. Petersburg and Berlin. The railroad provided some young men a daring capability of breaking away from their landlocked environment and somehow reaching England and Scotland.

Indeed, England and Scotland were undergoing industrial revolution. There were opportunities
for menial laborers in coalmines and in iron and steel industries, particularly in Scotland. Rumors also spread that even better job opportunities were available in America. Some expected, upon earning sufficient moneys, to pay their way to that distant land. In the meantime, those who began to establish themselves in Scotland, urged in letters to their kinfolics at home to leave their homeland. While some newcomers remained in Scotland, most, upon earning sufficient funds for the ship fare, embarked on the voyage to their dreamland America. By 1868, mass exodus began to take shape also from Lithuania.

For nearly the next couple of decades, their journey to America was in sail ships. It would take from a month and a half up to three and sometimes four months to cross the Atlantic Ocean depending on the season and weather conditions. Inasmuch as most Lithuanian travelers could barely pay for the lowest class fare, they would be accommodated in the forward and aft parts of the ship that were used for cargo transport. Ship owners converted those spaces to sleeping quarters by crowding low cost travelers onto double bunked wall mounted wood shelves with no cushions or any kind of body covering. These parts of the ship are subject to highest amount pitching and heaving, particularly, when traversing oceans. In any stronger winds, most individuals in those ship locations experienced serious motion sickness. These spaces were also in total darkness as there were no windows and no ventilation.

Food was handed out once a day. Typically, it consisted of several large crackers, a piece of meat, a couple of raw potatoes, several spoonful’s of rice, a cup of ground oats, and a quart and a half of water. Cooking and preparation of meals was an individual responsibility. Dysentery, infections and inability to handle motion sickness usually began to take a high toll in the second week of being on the high seas. Famine would set in, if the ship’s journey were prolonged beyond two months. Of the passenger carrying sailing ships crossing the ocean, the records indicate that on the average around 10% of the passengers have lost their lives due to sickness, shipwrecks in violent sea storms, and other maritime disasters. Voyage conditions improved gradually as steam ships began to replace sail boats in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.
It needs to be noted that the first Lithuanian economic immigrants to America were not from Lithuania proper, but from Lithuania minor, the Gumbinė area, which was governed at that time by Germany. A family named David and Dora Scholze settled in Texas in 1862 in the vicinity of Yorktown of DeWitt county. They were joined by 1874 by some 70+ Lithuanian immigrants from the same area. It is known that they arrived through the ports of Galveston and Indianola. Being Lutheran and knowing German, they fairly quickly established rapport with the nearby German Lutheran church and over the next century submerged into the neighboring German community. Further details are scarce, but a number of still standing gravestones with inscribed Lithuanian names in a nearby Lithuanian named cemetery attest to their former presence.\(^{(10, 11)}\)

**The Lithuanian immigrant – lost and despised\(^{(12, 13, 14)}\)**

The first arriving Lithuanian immigrants in 1868 were mostly illiterate peasants, dispossessed farm folks, menial laborers, escapees from Russian persecution and prisons, young men avoiding forced 25 yearlong service in Russia’s army, a few political dissenters, etc. Most were not even certain of their national origin, since the regions they lived in were known only as a north-west province of Russia, and not as Lithuania. All of Lithuanian speaking regions were by that time for more than 80 years under Russian occupation, and the Tsar’s regime did its utmost to suppress anything resembling Lithuaniness. Inasmuch as the Catholic faith was delivered in churches in the Polish language, the baptized infants were signed in the parish books with polonized names. At the time, the church was the only institution holding a written record of an individual’s birth event.

Exhausted from long voyage, the new arrivals in Boston and New York City, and not knowing English, were confused before the immigration officials. Not comprehending of their nationality, most responded to the immigration officials that they were “catholic”. With their names and birthplaces difficult to understand, the immigration officials would record them by their country of origin, such as Russia or the governorship of Warsaw or Poland, as a province of Russia. Accordingly, most Lithuanian immigrants’ names and countries of their origin from that era appear in U.S. immigration records in the Polonized or Russianized versions.

Upon being released by the immigration office, they were literally dumped onto the port’s city streets. Confused, and bewildered, not speaking English, they wandered through the streets being jeered and openly scorned by local residents as if they had arrived from another planet. However, it was also their day of deliberation from the oppressive Tsarist Russia.

Their first worries were search for work and shelter. In as much as they were Catholics, most
have sought temporary shelters around already established Polish or German parishes and neighborhoods. Most of the areas they entered were hostile. In many neighborhoods, they were looked down even by the Catholics, particularly the Irish, calling them scum of the earth, Polaks, Slavs, Hunkies and Greenhorns.

Fortunately, the industrial revolution was underway. Beckoning for cheap labor were railroads and brickyards in New York, coal mines and steel mills in Pennsylvania, textile factories and metal works in New England, and a few years later the slaughterhouses in Chicago.\[15\] Many of the early Lithuanian immigrants, because of their work experience in Scotland, tended to migrate to the west looking for work in Pennsylvania's coal mines and steel mills. Some stayed behind in the neighborhoods of ports of entry as menial laborers in road and railroad construction, freight loaders, in textile factories, as farm hands, etc.

Pennsylvania's anthracite coal region was one of the first areas that attracted Lithuanian immigrants with a greater opportunity to find work.\[16\] Shamokin, Mount Carmel and Shenandoah towns in the Schuylkill County were the first arrival points in 1868-9. They found work in railroad construction and in the coalmines. Farther North in the Luzerne County, in towns such as Wyoming, Scranton, Pittston, Plymouth and others, the Lithuanians began to arrive for work in the coalmines a couple years later.

The Pennsylvania Anthracite region - home of many Lithuanian coalminers

A highway plaque at entrance into Schuylkill County, PA
By the end of the first decade in 1900-s there were well over 100,000 Lithuanians in the state of Pennsylvania. The Schuylkill County (Shenandoah) had the densest Lithuanian population in the entire region and until about 1920 it was considered to be the capital of America’s Lithuanians.

First steps in the Pennsylvania coalmining region and beyond \(^{17,18,19}\)

Life in the coalmines is well described in VilNews.\(^{16}\) “When our ancestors arrived in Pennsylvania, newspapers were quick to pass judgement. The press complained about the coal mining counties being afflicted by a new, mixed population. As the newcomers passed through the town speaking in their native tongues or broken English, they soon became the blunt of jokes and laughter. Children were abused and tormented, contacts with young adults avoided.”

Most Lithuanian male immigrants were unmarried. Because of poverty, they were forced to live in small huts or shacks, built from scrap lumber and tin sheeting on the hillsides near the mines. Others would crowd into cheap make-believe living quarters such as stables and barns converted into dormitories.

Sometimes over a dozen men would rent an abandoned store. For a few dollars per month, they slept on bunks or mattresses arranged along the walls. The owner’s wife would wash the men’s laundry, perform household chores, and cook her tenants a basic meal each day: bread, meat and coffee. This became known as the “boarding house” system and continued for decades.

The 1900 United States census files for Shenandoah reflect the prevalence of such a lodging system within the Lithuanian community. Some 70% of Lithuanians took in boarders. Families, to make ends meet, picked huckleberries in the mountains and grew cabbage, potatoes, and other vegetables in their tiny plots of land right next to the house. If financially able, they kept some livestock. Because it was difficult to save enough money to purchase a stove, rye bread was baked in community-owned large outdoor oven.

Even with limited earnings, miners were beginning to raise families and looking for ways to educate their children. They strived to assure that the next generation would not have to follow their footsteps into the bowels of the earth, where mining was one of the most, if not the most, dangerous occupation.

Children employed in 1890s to remove slag from coal

Death in the mines was a frequent occurrence. Fine coal dust was always heavy in the damp air of the coal mines causing untold breathing miseries and condemning thousands to death by the "black lung disease." However, the biggest fear were explosions caused by methane gas build-ups in the crevices of the mines. Whistles would blow whenever a mine explosion occurred. Wives and children would wait in fear until the names of the victims were circulated. Then, there
was silence. Life was difficult, death tragic.

Coal mining deep underground In the PA anthracite region

Peaceful protests over pay and working conditions resulted on September 10, 1897 in a wholesale shooting of coal miners, known as the **Lattimer massacre**. Of 19 killed, five were Lithuanian protesters, and some 20 or more wounded by deputies of the local sheriff.¹⁹

Those who could break away from the mines, ventured farther west looking for work in the steel mills of Pittsburgh, at slaughterhouses in Chicago, as farm hands, salt miners and wood choppers in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and some as far away as the fields in Nebraska.¹² In time, they would send money and/or paid travel tickets to relatives left behind in the old country, inviting to join them in the New World.

Young women began to arrive several years later: some to join their husbands, others to marry their inviters, or to take jobs as housemaids, cooks, seamstresses, etc. Marriages mushroomed. As a result, numerous small tightly knit ethnic clusters began to grow into settlements. By the end of 1870-s such could be found in Pennsylvania’s Wyoming, Schuylkill, Shenandoah, Scranton towns, in Pittsburgh, New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and a number of southern New England locations. Soon thereafter, new Lithuanian immigrants spread into Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and particularly Chicago. After about 1915, the Chicago area with more job opportunities began to rival Pennsylvania as the main concentration of Lithuanian immigrants.

Conservative estimates place the number of **Lithuanians** in the **United States** by 1912 at about 600,000, including immigrants and native-born.¹⁴ It was roughly one third to one quarter of the
population of Lithuania.

Coming into their own

Being mostly on their own and not finding much in common with other ethnic groups, a handful of immigrants of similar background and interests, started forming self-help groups based either on social or religious needs. While the minority of Lithuanian Protestants turned for help to their Lutheran German churches, the Lithuanian Catholics either gravitated in the beginning toward existing Polish parishes or found common interest to form joint parishes with newly arrived Polish immigrants. Such association was quite understandable, Lithuanians had grown up in a Church that was mostly Polish spoken. Many Lithuanians understood Polish and some even could say their prayers better in that language than in their native tongue. At the same time, they had only vague consciousness of their own ethnicity as evidenced in immigration and census records. In early partnered parishes with the Poles and even in their own established parishes, Lithuanians initially designated their churches in official records as "Polish". When Polish-Lithuanian quarrels erupted over who had the final word in the parish, the resolution of the dispute often shifted to the county courthouse. Because of the “Polish” designation, the Lithuanians lost most of the lawsuits. But they quickly learned that the courthouse was the best way to ascertain their rights. By engaging in and winning some of the disputes, the Lithuanian immigrants began to gain confidence in their self-perception and ability to ascertain their right. (14)(20)

As the number of Lithuanian settlements increased, lay people, interested in covering their spiritual needs in their native language, started organizing on their own initiative pure Lithuanian parishes. Committees were formed, a parish patron chosen, fund drives conducted, and land for a place of worship purchased. The first purely Lithuanian parish, organized in 1885 in New York, ceased to exist the following year due to disagreements between its organizers. Within the next several years, more churches were built by parishioners, without involving local bishops, such as in Ansonia and Bridgeport, CT, and South Boston, MA. Only upon their completion, they approached the local bishop to appoint a resident priest. But all encountered two vexing problems: 1) shortage of available Lithuanian-speaking priests and 2) most parishioners were reluctant to hand over the ownership of the property to the bishop. (14)

Handing over the property to the bishop was bewildering to them. Emerging Lithuanian socialists and freethinkers taunted their fellow countrymen for giving away their hard-earned real estate to the Irish bishop. They stressed the importance of their ethnic roots and social needs over religious beliefs. Several parishes in Pennsylvania became a battleground among pastors, people, and church superiors. (12) Even after parishioners were persuaded in most cases to comply, the parish committees sought to dictate the parish policy. Pastor-parishioner tensions, in the early years spilled over into courts. Several disputes lasted for months and even years, such as St. George parish in Shenandoah, PA, and St. George church in Chicago. Their lengthy litigation is evidenced in hundreds of court recorded pages. (18)(20)

As confrontations became widely known and unsolvable, some lay insurgents, similar to their Polish neighbors, struck out independently and build national Catholic churches without any affiliation to the local bishop. Such break-aways took place around 1900 in Pennsylvania’s Shenandoah, Dubois, Harrisburg, in Springfield IL, and a decade later in the Town of Lake and Bridgeport sections of Chicago and in Lawrence, MA. It was done all within the framework and protection of civil law. A study of this phenomenon shows that there were at least 15 independent Lithuanian parishes of varying life spans, but none survived over the long run. (13). In spite of these diversions, there were 21 exclusively Lithuanian Roman Catholic parishes by 1913 with resident Lithuanian priests. (14)
Coalescing and maturing in Lithuaniness

In taking initiatives in their religious life and invoking the aid of civil law, Lithuanian immigrants were acting more American than they realized. Religious separatists were not the only ones who sensed an ally in the arm of legal power. Two central figures, Mykolas Mockus and Anthony Bimba, circulated in Lithuanian communities advocating socialism and belittling religious believers. Mockus mocked religious beliefs wherever he traveled. In contrast, Bimba was a committed Marxist who linked religion and capitalism as enemies of labor.

Mockus was arrested in New England for blasphemy in 1919. He was found guilty and sentenced one to two years in state prison. However, he soon escaped to Mexico for a five-year self-imposed exile. On return to the Chicago area, he eventually faded from the public eye and died in Oak Forest, IL in 1939.

Mykolas Mockus convicted of blasphemy

Bimba was arrested six years later and his trial took place in Brockton, Massachusetts. One of the two feuding church factions, capitalizing on a typical Bimba speech, filed charges of blasphemy and sedition. Bimba was fined $100 for sedition. He appealed the verdict to Superior Court in Plymouth, MA, and after three years of litigation, the case was dropped.

Recourse to the court system against Mockus and Bimba showed that the immigrants understood, appreciated, and used the legal system of their adopted country. Beside constant attention to religious creed or hostility to it, another facet of American life that was appreciated by the Lithuanians, was freedom of the printed word. Some of the immigrants would use the press not only to bolster their national identity, but also to promote or attack religion, propagate socialism, freethinking, and later communism.

New found treasure: learning to read, write, and publish

Upon experiencing their first steps of freedom, but for lack of knowledge in English, even the most uneducated Lithuanian immigrants wanted to know with more certainty what was happening around them, what was going-on in their home country. As a result, many individuals wanted and began to learn how to read and write, particularly in the language that they could understand the issues that concerned them. Within a short time, several of the more gifted ones began to print single pages of prayer songs and news items.

Rudimentary Lithuanian American journalism started around 1879. It was based on the desire by some printed word enthusiasts to inform their local kinfolks through one pagers about events within their communities with little or no ideological bend. Gradually they expanded into inclusion of news about poor working conditions, abuses at their workplaces, discriminations by their Irish and Anglo-Saxon neighbors as well as discords with their Polish-oriented Catholic church hierarchy. Advocacy for justice was egged on by rapidly spreading Marx's ideas of eliminating impoverishment through reforming the society by socialism.
The first Lithuanian newspaper in the U.S., *Gazieta lietuviska*, appeared in New York City in 1879. It was edited and published by Mykolas Tvarauskas. It was followed in 1886, by the publication of *Vienybė Lietuvninkų* (later *Vienybė*). It became one of the longest running Lithuanian language newspapers in America. Subsequently, publications informing about local events became widespread, but most, initiated by inexperienced enthusiasts, were short lived. The socialist *Keleivis* (1905-79) in Boston, *Naujienos* and communist *Laisvė* (1905-1973) in Chicago developed over the years into long-time large-volume newspapers, until their ideology-based membership dwindled away after WWII.

Only around 1890s, upon arrival of Rev. Aleksandras Burba and his pointed concern about lack of Lithuanian language Catholic press, the church began to react. Examples of the first publications were the weekly *Valtis* with Sunday Scripture readings by Rev. Burba, and weekly *Rytas* by Rev. Juozas Žebris. Rev. Vincas Varnagiris started publication of weekly journal *Žvaigždė* in Brooklyn, N.Y in 1901. Rev. Antanas Milukas bought it in 1903 and continued its publication as a monthly journal in Shenandoah, PA, and then in Philadelphia in 1909. The publication continued for 43 years and included offerings to their readers of hundreds of booklets, almanacs, and chronicles. Rev. Milukas and his sister Julė Pranaitytė are known to have been at the time the largest publishers of Lithuanian language literature amounting to some 150 different book titles with a total volume of about 230,000 copies. Several priests at other Lithuanian parishes bought and operated print shops to provide prayer books and devotional literature. Rev. Milukas and Baltramiejus Žindžikus of Elizabeth, New Jersey, bought in 1898 a print shop in Minersville, PA, and transferred the equipment to their own parish to continue publishing the newspaper *Garsas Amerikos Lietuvių*.

The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priests Association was established in 1909 primarily for the publication of Lithuanian Catholic newspapers and literature, and to promote education of children. It started a weekly newspaper *Draugas* (The Friend) in Wilkes-Barre, PA, in 1909. It was subsequently transferred to Chicago in 1913. In 1916, it became a daily and is continuing as a three times a week issue under Marian Fathers sponsorship.
Darbininkas began publication in the eastern region in 1915.(7) Rev. P Saurusaitis of Waterbury, CT published for a number of years a bulletin "The Apostleship of Prayer". Due to the bulletin’s popularity in own parish, it soon became available in many other New England Lithuanian communities.

Lithuanian language publications in America in the second decade of 1900 flourished to unprecedented heights far exceeding in quantity and variety anything that was available anywhere in the world. A bibliography, published in Kaunas in 1991(26), lists as of the end of the 1800-s, descriptions of as many as 143 publications in Chicago alone. Publications in other settlements included 48 in New York City, 47 in Brooklyn, 44 in Boston, 21 in Cleveland, and 103 in Pennsylvania.(8) Although many were short-lived, their numbers attest thirst for news and knowledge by America’s Lithuanians in their native language.

**Birth of Entrepreneurship**

While most Lithuanians over many centuries were oriented towards working as farm hands, laborers and small service craftsmen in their native country, a handful, upon arriving in America, became entrepreneurial bent. Slowly, as more definable, stable Lithuanian American communities began to take shape, enterprising individuals started establishing within their own communities small scale businesses of their own.

Historian, Vincentas Liulevičius, has compiled an overview of them in a publication called *Amerikos Lietuvių ekonominė veikla* (Economic Activity of Lithuanians in America, Chicago 1980).(27) He observed that one of the first businesses established by the newcomer entrepreneurs were saloons and boarding homes, followed by a sprinkling of small time grocers, tailors, barbers, bakers, funeral homes, travel agents, etc.

Upon formation of first purely Lithuanian Catholic parishes, some young idealistic priests, seeing the plight and despair of their kinfolks in alcohol soaked saloons, began to seek ways of improving their lives. The New England pioneer priest, Rev. Juozas Žebris, advised readers in his newspaper *Rytas* in 1895, on how to start cooperatives. When initially there was little interest, he took on to set up cooperative ventures with his own funds. He set up a bakery and a shoe store. In early 1900s, Rev. Simonas Pautienius in Mahanoy City, PA, organized the Merchant Banking Trust Company, an electric company, and a butcher shop to generate jobs for the Lithuanian immigrants. In later years, he also organized the Shenandoah Trust Company to aid parishioners and other fellow Lithuanians to more easily obtain loans. In 1905, Rev. Aleksandras Skripkauskas established with other entrepreneuring individuals in Chicago a very successful clothing and furniture cooperative.(12) In addition to these examples, some clergy, like Rev. Juozas Lietuvnikas of St. Alphonsus in Baltimore, acted as a private banker, holding large sums of money for his parishioners. A number of pastors frequently borrowed funds from individuals and societies to build churches and rectories.

Rev. Fabijonas Kemėšis, in his doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University in 1924, (28) notes that many Lithuanian settlements attempted to set up various types of cooperatives and, in larger cities, money-lending institutions, such as the Kestutis Loan and Savings Association in 1897, which in later years became one of the more important financial institutions in the entire Chicago area.

To strengthen the faith of his parishioners and to slow down their assimilation into America’s melting pot, Rev. Petras Abromaitis of Shenandoah, PA, bought in 1895 several thousand acres of land near the Morattico River in Virginia, hoping to create a farm-based settlement of some 15,000 fellow Lithuanians. He intended to build a church and a monastery and establish a secluded Lithuanian community. Abromaitis found only a few takers. The project never took off. In one other instance, a real estate speculator tried to lure Lithuanian immigrants from urban Chicago to settle in the prairies of Arkansas. By January 1895, the first Lithuanian colony
 bearing the name "Lietuva" took temporary root in the town of Hazen, AR. Ten families relocated, and another 24 bought property at $6 to $8 an acre. Rev. Jonas Balsevičius ministered briefly to this immigrant cluster in the diocese of Little Rock, AR.\(^{(12)}\)

As a whole, the Lithuanians were far more successful in establishing and operating financial institutions than getting involved in commercial and business activities. Nevertheless, by 1918, the Lithuanians in Chicago had more businesses and various types of commercial as well as professional ventures, than those existing in all of Lithuania.

**Searching for self-esteem and diversity**

A huge impact on Lithuanian immigrants' life in the last half of the nineteenth century played mostly the unfriendly social environment and the strange new culture and customs of their host country. Many detested the attitude of the Anglo-Saxon and Irish populations of treating them as Polaks and Slavs. Furthermore, continuous disputes with Poles on language use in Lithuanian religious matters, hurt them deeply. Slowly, it precipitated resistance and search for their own national identity by better understanding their past and the value of their native language and customs. The disputes and determined interest to stand on their own caused the church going members to search for Lithuanian speaking priests for their parishes and to form their own self-help organizations. These activities expanded into self-education circles, interest in organizing and participating in Lithuanian cultural events, developing their own small scale commercial support activities, and later-on attempting to influence U.S politics on behalf of Lithuania. In addition to these processes, some of the Lithuanian emigrants seeing many wrongs that they and their kinfolks were subjected to in public life and at their work places, began to turn towards radicalism fostered initially by socialist ideology and later by communist propaganda.

Sister Vytell in her Lituanus article\(^{(29)}\) notes that Jonas Šliūpas, upon arrival from Lithuania in Brooklyn, NY in 1884, began a powerful drive to awaken the Lithuanian Americans from passivity. He urged them to strive for self-respect, underscoring the power of their great national heritage. Šliūpas saw the polonized holy mass imposed on them by the dominating Polish Catholic Church hierarchy as one of the greatest barriers to revive in Lithuanians their ethnic consciousness and pride in their nationality. He urged the Lithuanians to build churches separate from the Poles and to conduct services in their own language. The newspaper *Aušra* (The Dawn) was established to promote this rebirth.

In a nearly parallel path, a young priest, Aleksandras Burba, arrived from Lithuania in 1889. He came to Shenandoah, PA. at Šliūpas' invitation, to serve religious needs of the Lithuanian community. Within a year, Burba became the leader of the Lithuanian-oriented clergy in America, a powerful voice and a catalyst for many priests and their parishioners urging them to break away from the Poles, to express their faith in their native tongue, and to feel pride in being Lithuanian.

**The Bellringers for Awakening Lithuanian Consciousness in America**

*Dr. Jonas Šliūpas (John Szlupas-anglicized)*\(^{(29,30, 47)}\)

Born in Lithuania in 1861, in a family of enlightened farmers, the day after the Russian Czar abolished serfdom in Lithuania. Speaking five languages by the time he graduated from secondary school (gymnasium) in Latvia, he enrolled at Moscow university to study history and philosophy. While there, he engaged in anti-Czarist activities agitating for a free Lithuanian language press. Under threat of arrest, he fled to the University of St. Petersburg to complete his education, and then to Switzerland, again to avoid arrest by the police. Finally settling in Lithuania Minor (East Prussia), he helped found and became editor of the newspaper *AUSZRA* (Dawn). Because of the Tsar's prohibition of Lithuanian script, the paper had to be continuously smuggled into Russia's occupied Lithuania. Upon Russia's complaints to the German
government about the subversive content of the paper, Šliūpas was now also pursued by the German police. He fled to America in 1884.

Arriving penniless and without knowledge of English, he toiled as a farmhand north of New York City and became acquainted with Lithuanians working in the area. He realized that these simple, uneducated people were abused and losing their Lithuanian identity. Šliūpas was fired up in his desire to help these people retain their heritage and pride.

As one of the first brightest, energetic and well educated new immigrants to appear in the midst of a still forming Lithuanian life in America, Šliūpas was admired and looked up as their leader. He urged Lithuanians to break away from the dominating Polish church, to unite in pure Lithuanian communities through help and friendship to each other, and not being afraid to display their ethnic identity. In his first public patriotic speech in 1884 in New York City, he urged his fellow countrymen to distance themselves from the Poles. For dissidents of the polonized parish in New York City, he helped write the bylaws for creating the first purely Lithuanian church.

By scraping up the sum of $95, Šliūpas persuaded Mykolas Tvarauskas, a polonized boyar, who had a printing press in Brooklyn, to accept him as partner for the publication of a Lithuanian newspaper "Unija". It would be a vehicle to promote enlightenment and national awareness among his country's fellowmen. But such ideas soon irritated the Poles. Under pressure, Šliūpas was dismissed by Tvarauskas, but not for long. To continue his work, he founded "Lietuvių Mokytojų Draugija" (Friends of Lithuania Society). The first members were New York's Lithuanian tailors. They supplied him modest dwelling and a printing press for the publication of the "The Lithuanian Voice," (Lietuviškas Balsas), with the first issue appearing in 1885\(^{14}\). But due to abrasive Šliūpas' language on religious matters, the subscribers dwindled down within a year from initial 500 to 100.

During the 1887 celebration of 500 years of Lithuania's Baptism into Christian faith, Šliūpas noted in his speech to the mostly polish speaking audience that the Polish rulers inflicted great harm by using Christianity as a pretext to annex Lithuania to Poland. By this act, the Lithuanian people were deprived of their language and of most of their land. He accused the Poles and their organizations of injustice to Lithuanians, but exempted the Polish Socialist Party, because of its support of Lithuanian separatism. Subsequently, the pro-Polish newspaper, "Lithuanian Unity" in Plymouth, PA, accused Šliūpas of anticlericalism and urged the Lithuanian Catholics to remain united with Poles to retain their Catholic faith.

Šliūpas moved to Shenandoah, PA. in 1888, hoping to find a more receptive audience for his publication Lietuviškas Balsas among the coalminers. While in Shenandoah, he enhanced his reputation as a "freethinker" who dared to address issues with the polonized Lithuanian clergy. This did not help his paper to increase readership. Its publication was discontinued in 1889 when the printing press was seized by the creditors. Šliūpas departed that same year to study medicine in Baltimore at the University of Maryland.

Upon arrival of Rev. Alexander Burba from Lithuania in 1889, Šliūpas and he agreed to cooperate writing articles in the newspaper "Wienibe Lietuwninku". Burba tried to convince Šliūpas that Lithuanians had enough to contend with in their efforts to regain their ethnic identity without arguing in the paper about religious matters.

While in medical studies, Šliūpas became involved with the Baltimore Lithuanians. In a large gathering on December 22, 1889, he urged his listeners to seek freedom and assert self-identity through education and enlightenment. He proposed and received support to establish the Lithuanian Education Society.

Through very hard work and perseverance in his medical studies, Šliūpas was awarded a
medical doctor's diploma in 1891. Before graduation, a new arrival from Lithuania, Rev. S. Pautienis, attacked Šliūpas and his Education Society as a nest of atheists. The resultant hostility impeded Šliūpas' initiative once again to begin raising the consciousness of the Lithuanian people and their need for education as means to escape from their deprived conditions. He was not understood or appreciated by many of his initial supporters.

Not discouraged, Šliūpas established, through cooperation of Rev. Alexandras Burba, J. Andžiulaitis and J. Paukštys, branches of the Society in 1891 in Plymouth, PA, and later on in Pennsylvania's Shenandoah, Pittston, Mahanoy City and Philadelphia. The periodical Apšvieta (Enlightenment), the Society's first news-bulletin, appeared in 1892. Its purpose was to change the thinking and attitudes of the people, and to motivate them to seek freedom and enlightenment as well as to support independence for Lithuania. The young doctor envisioned a bright tomorrow for Lithuania in which truth and justice would prevail in domestic and international relations.

Jonas Šliūpas succeeded on August 15, 1886 in persuading most Lithuanian American societies to unite in one joint organization: the Federation of all Lithuanians in America. In a powerful address, Šliūpas invited all Lithuanians of good will to join the Federation. To prevent losing influence in the Lithuanian American population, the pro-polish newspaper "Lithuanian Unity", offered the free-thinkers Andžiulaitis and Šliūpas co-editorships, providing that both refrain from disparaging remarks against the polonized clergy. Both refused.

Not satisfied with the Federation of all Lithuanians in America, Rev. Burba organized on November 22, 1891, a Central Alliance of all Lithuanian Catholic Societies totally free of Polish influence. At a convention of the Lithuanian Alliance at Plymouth, PA, on November 23, Rev. J. Žilius, the next president of the Lithuanian Alliance, succeeded in keeping the Central Alliance within the Federation by avoiding religious questions and arguments pertaining to faith. But the compromise failed ten years later. On May 21, 1901, at the 16th convention in Wilkes Barre, PA, members of the Federation separated into two organizations, one as The Lithuanian Catholic Alliance, and the other as The Lithuanian Alliance of America. The latter became in time the largest Lithuanian cultural and insurance organization in America with over 20,000 members at its peak.

Šliūpas interest in Socialism, embedded during his early student days at Moscow, surfaced in 1897 at the occasion of the Lattimer Massacre where unarmed coalminers were shot during a peaceful demonstration. In a fiery speech, he urged Lithuanians to fight these injustices by forming a Lithuanian Socialist Branch. Soon thereafter, chapters were established in Scranton, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Waterbury, CT.

Šliūpas organized the Lithuanian Freethinkers Alliance and held its convention in New York City on June 3, 1900. It was packed by delegates from New York City, Jersey City, Passaic, Elizabeth and Newark, N.J., Scranton and Plymouth, PA, Baltimore, MD., and Brooklyn, N.Y, and supported by telegrams from Pittston, Minersville, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, PA, and Torrington, CT. It adopted a platform calling through enlightenment to free people from religious prejudice and political and material slavery. It stated that morale and ethic do not come from religion, but from necessity and experience. It supported the politics of the Socialists, demanding freedom of speech and assembly, and equality and justice to all humanity including material equality for Lithuanians in America.

Šliūpas was disillusioned somewhat when Lithuanians were not invited to the Socialist Congress at Hague in 1904. J. Širvydas, upon arrival from Lithuania, motivated Šliūpas to call a Socialist Convention in Newark, N.J. on May 21 1905, in order to centralize Lithuanian Socialist activities. First called the Lithuanian Socialist Party of America, the name was changed to The Lithuanian Socialist Federation. However, within a short time due to disagreements over
Disillusioned with socialists, Šliūpas joined in 1915 a newly formed Lithuanian American Patriots organization. He became its leading speaker, promoter, and fund-raiser. While successfully practicing his medical profession in Shenandoah, PA, Šliūpas travelled to numerous Lithuanian settlements trying to convince the people to take their destiny into their own hands and to work for the homeland’s freedom. He received good attention and support from his listeners on the need to fight for Lithuania’s independence.

Šliūpas had been poor most of his life, and in spite of his medical doctor’s practice, he did not seek wealth or worry about his own welfare. Rather he worked to pull out of ruts the lives of his many kinfolks. Those who understood, hailed him as a symbol of hope, a restorer of Lithuanian consciousness in America, and a fighter for freedom for Lithuania. Those who opposed his ideas, labeled him a fanatic, freethinker-atheist, and intolerant of other opinions.

On April 24, 1917, he traveled to San Francisco, sailed across the Pacific, then by train through Siberia and again by boat across the Baltic sea to Stockholm. There, as the only Lithuanian American, he attended the October Conference of a number of patriots from Lithuania searching for ways to free their homeland after WWI ends. Šliūpas affirmed the loyalty and support of Lithuanians in America in the quest for independence by Lithuanian people. While in Sweden, he wasted no time to publicize Lithuania's approaching freedom. He reprinted in a new 162 pages book his former speeches on such topics as “Lithuania's Freedom” and "The Past, Present, and Future of Lithuania.". He also presented at the Conference his vision of a "The Lithuanian-Latvian Republic, and the Union of Northern Nations." Soon thereafter, most of the Stockholm participants, upon returning to Lithuania, met to formulate and proclaim in Vilnius the Declaration of Lithuania’s Independence on February 16, 2018.

On March 13, 1918, representatives of the Lithuanian Catholic and National Councils (LCNC) met in a show of unity at the Madison Square Garden in New York City. The main agenda called for complete independence for Lithuania and its participation at the forthcoming Peace Conference. The LCNC formed a joint “Executive Committee and Information Bureau” with Tomas Norus-Naruševičius as chairman, Rev. J. Žilius as secretary, and J. Šliūpas among the ten committee members.
As soon as news of Lithuania having declared its independence on February 16, 1918, reached Šliūpas, he rushed to Washington, D.C. to urge the Wilson administration to provide *de jure* recognition of Lithuania’s independence. In response to the speech by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of August 23, 1918, in which the senator formulated the goal of the United States to make the post-war world safe for democracy, Dr. Šliūpas presented him a memorandum requesting U.S. assurance of independence for Lithuania and Latvia. The memorandum was printed in the Congressional Record of August 29, 1918. Šliūpas returned to reside in Lithuania in 1922.

*Rev. Aleksandras Burba* (31, 32)

While the establishment of parishes for Lithuanian immigrants was of primary concern to most of the early polonized Lithuanian Catholic church in America, young priests arriving from Lithuania were embarrassed and deeply offended by having to serve their countrymen’s religious needs in the Polish tongue. Many of the arriving young priests were already infected with Lithuaniness. Rev. Aleksandras Burba (1854-1898) saw the devastating effect of Polishness on the Lithuanians and with Šliūpas encouragement became one of the most important leaders in galvanizing the Lithuanian minded clergy to seek separation from Polish influence. (33)

Escaping Tsar’s relentless persecution for his Lithuanianiness, he arrived in America in June 1889. Rev. Burba was assigned duties as pastor of a mixed Lithuanian-Polish St. Mary’s parish in Sheandoah, PA, on August 22, 1889. He had been instructed by Bishop O’Hara to use in church services both the Polish and Lithuanian languages, which he did. This angered the Polish parishioners. They locked him out from his rectory. On October 24, 1889, a split between the two nationalities became permanent. Instead of one parish, there were henceforth to be two. Not only did the Lithuanians secede, but they also elected Rev. Burba to become their new parish’s founding pastor.

The first person to come to the assistance of Rev. Burba, thus giving him the needed courage, was Father W. Donahue, the Pastor of St. Vincent’s parish in Plymouth, PA. He invited him to conduct services in St. Vincent’s Auditorium. There, on October 27, 1889, the Lithuanians held their first church service in their native tongue.

Together with his Lithuanian parishioners, Burba bought a parcel of land in Plymouth, PA in 1890, on which to construct a pure Lithuanian St. Casimir’s church. After a great deal of work and hardship, but amid great joy, their new church was blessed by Bishop O’Hara on January 1, 1891. In fiery sermons and by publishing a weekly journal Valtis (The Rowboat), which included...
the Sunday Gospel as well as brief news items about nearby Lithuanian immigrant clusters, he developed a large following.

Burba travelled widely to numerous Lithuanian settlements in the Northeast spreading the radical notion that Lithuanians needed to separate from the Poles and rediscover their national consciousness. Initially, he tried to do this jointly with freethinker Šliūpas, but soon realized that the rise in Lithuanian nationalism needed to be framed within the Roman Catholic Church. Differences in opinion caused a split in their cooperation.

While Barba’s life in America was just 10 years long, his legacy to America’s Lithuanian Catholic Church was revolutionary and long lasting. Barba’s call for awakened Lithuanian nationalism served as a powerful inspiration for creation of Lithuanian parishes and fraternal social organizations in numerous regions of the U.S. By example, he set the path for vigorous promotion of Lithuanianess over the next several decades for a number of other Lithuanian like-minded pioneer priests in America such as Reverends Andrius Strupinskas, Juozas Zebris, Jonas Žilinskas, Antanas Milukas, Vladislovas Dembskis, Antanas Staniukynas, Jonas Kasakaitis, Juozas Karalius, Juozas Kaulakis, Antanas Kaupas and numerous others. Burba died in Plymouth, PA, in 1898.

Breaking away from poverty and ignorance

The newly arriving Lithuanian immigrants were like uprooted seedlings that were blown across seas and oceans, and deposited in a murky sea of strange and rather unfriendly shores, but on a fertile soil. The only thing they could cling to was vague knowledge of religious belonging and commonality with similarly destitute kinfolks that spoke in their native tongue. It was a powerful drive to find something they could associate with. For most, it was the Polonized faction of the Roman Catholic Church for the first 20 to 25 years. It provided a basis for starting groups in which they could share their fears, needs and experiences. In time, such common concerns
developed into a variety of fraternal societies and associations. Once formed, they would discover that their most important interests and strength was their Lithuanian heritage. Their religious organizations would be called by names of Saints known in Lithuania, such as Kazimieras, Juozapas, Vincentas, Jonas, etc. When immigrant women began to arrive, they started forming their own societies naming them by saints of their own gender, like Maria, Ona, Morta, etc. Still later, some groups, under secular and nationalistic influence, chose to identify their associations by names of their honored medieval heroes, such as Vytautas, Algirdas, Gediminas, Birutė, etc. Titles that included the word "Free" were mostly expressing either religious neutrality or freethinking leanings.

The acclimation of Lithuanians of other than Catholic faiths took a slightly different path. Lithuanian Protestants turned to Lutheran neighbors in their German churches. Eventually, they established a small number of their own congregations such as those in Philadelphia, PA, and in Collinsville, Illinois, led by the Evangelical minister Pastor Martians Keturakaitis. Those coming from Lithuania minor were absorbed within a couple generations into German parishes and disappeared. As to Lithuanian Jews (Litvaks), they tended to band together in synagogues where their common spoken Yiddish served as a bridge. While not having much in common and rapport with the mainstream Lithuanians in America, they were often quite fond of declaring themselves as Litvaks.

While most of the first waves of Lithuanian immigrants tended to flock to the Pennsylvania anthracite region, a significant shift began to take place at the turn to the twentieth century. A reasonably good indicator of concentration of Lithuanians is the distribution of dates of launching new parishes compiled by A.Kučas. Up to 1900-s, seventeen of the 33 Lithuanian parishes were located in the coal and steel making regions of Pennsylvania. Eleven parishes were in New England, in New York and the mid-Atlantic region. Only five parishes were west of Pennsylvania. While at the beginning of the twentieth century establishment of new parishes in Pennsylvania was still considerable, their numbers were exceeded by the sum of new parishes being formed in New England, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Wisconsin, and as far away as Nebraska. Establishment of nearly a dozen new parishes between 1904 and 1914 in the Chicago area was a good indicator of that region's upcoming dominance in the life of America's Lithuanians.

![St. George's Lithuanian Catholic Church in Shenandoah, PA](image-url)
Lithuanians in the novel “The Jungle”

The setting in which immigrants experienced their new found life and existence in the Chicago stockyards is well depicted in the 1906 novel titled The Jungle, written by the American journalist and novelist Upton Sinclair (1878–1968). (35)

The novel, in a dramatic and deeply moving story about the live of Lithuanian immigrants, exposed brutal conditions in the Chicago slaughterhouses at turn of the nineteenth century. It brought into sharp moral focus the appalling odds against which immigrants and other working people struggled for their share of the American dream. In vivid scenes, it described the often hostile and exploiting environment that the host society provided for the likes of Lithuanians and their fellow immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Still, as a barely known minority, the Lithuanians were seldom a specific target for hostility. When they suffered prejudice, they were lumped together with others in an umbrella phrase such as “Slavs, Polaks, Hunkies”, etc. Besides having a place to work and a roof over their heads, the next most challenging task for the Lithuanians was to find a sheltering affiliation either within some existing religious structure or a socialist-oriented organization. Yet, their thirst for recognition as being part of a valuable ethnic community went unfulfilled for a number of years until their homeland became free.
Out of quagmire through education

Most Lithuanian immigrants clustered for shelter and economic survival for a number of years in ghetto-type closely knit poverty ridden communities. Yet, this isolated environment motivated them to interact very frequently with their own kinfolks, in some instances as boozing friends in local saloons, in others as members of their own polonized Catholic church. In case of church goers, after group activities began to develop, they began asking, egged on by Sliupas and Rev. Burba, why their faith could not be expressed in their own language. It led to the establishment of Lithuanian language based religious clubs, social circles, associations, and societies interested in self-education opportunities. Many of the formalized organizations, however insignificant, required that their officers know how to read and write. It promoted interest in self-education, because those knowing to read and write were held in great esteem and were looked upon to lead. The Chicago based newspaper „Lietuva“ in the Feb 23, 1883, edition notes of an „Aushra“ school in Chicago starting once-a-week education classes in a small bookshop at 438 So. Canal Street. „It will teach in English and in Lithuanian languages to read and write and the knowledge of arithmetic“.[14][38]

A few more ambitious individuals, after becoming better versed in English and realizing the value of education, began to enroll in the higher American education system. By late 1880s, a number of them were enrolled in colleges, universities and seminaries (St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Detroit and later in Orchard Lake, Michigan, at the St. Mary’s College in Chicago, Valparaiso, and Niagara universities). Some of these institutions also started offering Lithuanian-language courses.[37] Valparaiso was one of unique universities offering education opportunities starting at the grammar school level and to those enduring and capable, a chance to earn even college degrees. It was a birth place for numerous Lithuanian student organizations, particularly important in the development of a new generation of Lithuanian oriented intellectuals. A.Kučas (Kuchas) estimates some 1000 Lithuanians graduating from this university. Many of them became major movers and contributors not only to America’s Lithuanian community life but also working towards restoration of Lithuania’s independence.[20,38]

First steps in organized education of Lithuanian American children

Primary education of Lithuanian immigrant children before the end of 1890s were mostly in the hands of parish organists. Where available, they were also taught by nuns and priests, unfortunately most Polonized. While many of the parents spoke in a highly distorted Americanized Lithuanian tongue, they had difficulty tolerating their children being taught in Polish. To provide education in Lithuanian, Rev. P. Abromaitis of Mahonoy City, PA, established a Lithuanian parish school in 1888, which may be regarded as the forerunner of an extensive Lithuanian parish school system in America, which by 1914 could boast of 21 Lithuanian schools.[38] Rev. A. Milukas noted in one of his articles that to support Lithuanian language instructions, a total of 37 teachers arrived from Lithuania in the 1899-1914 time frame. J. Olekas established in 1910 a private Lithuanian school in Chicago. It probably was the longest lasting Lithuanian school in America, closing its doors in 1960. Olekas teaching methodology was simple – it is easier for students to learn the English grammar if they are proficient in Lithuanian grammar. Other Lithuanian clusters began to provide educational opportunities by offering either part time Saturday/Sunday not only Lithuanian language instructions, but also conversational English, to read and write, and to prepare for citizenship examination.[39]

In 1907, Bishop J. F. Shanahan of Harrisburg, PA, at the askance of Lithuanian Catholics living in the anthracite region, received permission from the Vatican to establish in his diocese the Institute of St. Casimir for development of nun teachers for Lithuanian parish schools, and to care for Lithuanian orphans. Rev. A. Staniukynas of the Holy Cross parish in Mount Carmel, PA, the primary instigator for establishment of the institute, was subsequently given responsibility for
its planning and organizing. To launch the institute, three novices of Lithuanian origin arrived at Mount St. Mary's Seminary of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart in Scranton, PA, from Ingenbohl, Switzerland. Within couple of years, the seminary began to graduate nun-teachers. More proficient ones were sent to help start grammar schools at other Lithuanian parishes in the region, while others remained for training newly arriving aspirants.

In 1911, the Sisters of St. Casimir moved to Chicago into a newly-built mother-house at the corner of West 67th and South Rockwell Streets. The relocated institute began to provide trained Lithuanian language nun-teachers for the growing system of Lithuanian parish schools in the Chicago region. By 1913 there were 17 professional teacher-nuns, 25 novices, and 25 postulants and aspirants working in the Lithuanian parish school system. Ten of the 24 schools included also lay teachers. Records of 1916 indicate 27 Lithuanian parish schools operating in the U.S. with nearly 5,000 children attending them.

![Sisters of St. Casimir mother-house in Chicago, IL](image)

**Drive to self-sufficiency**

Lithuanian immigrants, because of their meager economic status, required only the most basic goods to survive. Small Lithuanian owned storekeepers and various types of local handyman began to spring up to serve their neighborhood needs. By knowing not only Lithuanian, but also Russian, Polish and other Slavic languages of their other next-door neighbors, some became quite successful in serving also their needs. As expanding Lithuanian settlements began to evolve into more defined communities, need for broader services provided incentives for more people to develop new skills, such as undertakers, bakers, plumbers, notaries, travel agents, etc. More educated ones began offering professional services in healing arts, law, banking, etc.

Cooperative merchandizing movement began to evolve. The pioneer among the Lithuanians in America was Rev. J. Zebris, pastor of the Lithuanian Catholic Church in Waterbury, CT. He was one of the foremost oriented promoters of socially based self-help activities among Lithuanian immigrants. Besides publishing a weekly paper, "Rytas", beginning in 1896, his parish’s Lithuanian St. Casimir Benefit Society opened a bakery and a shoe store. Motives for doing so were described by him in "Rytas": 1) to secure for the Lithuanians availability of rye bread to which they were accustomed in the old country; 2) to provide work for several Lithuanians; 3) to supply free bread to poor families (every day about forty loaves were distributed free of charge to the poor, unemployed, and strikers). The enterprise proved to be very popular and accomplished a great deal of good will.

Between 1899-1914, when immigrants from Lithuania began being recorded, the U.S. Immigration Department files list the arrival of 255 Lithuanians with intellectual skills, among
which were 61 musicians, 37 priests, 37 teachers, 18 engineers. By 1916, among Lithuanian Americans were 40 physicians, 10 lawyers, 25 newspaper editors and publishers, 120 priests, 30 bankers and financial professionals, 3000 grocery stores, 2500 saloons, over a hundred tailor shop owners, and about 10,000 various kinds of craftsmen and skilled workers.

Inasmuch as the bulk of Lithuanian immigrants were little or not conversant in English, they were essentially prevented from moving away from districts in which they had a job and felt at home. Even those, finding jobs somewhere more distant, wound up living within or in close vicinity of a nearby Lithuanian community.

Just before America went to WWI, Lithuanians in America began experiencing their "golden age" as a series of self-contained communities matured and became confident of their value in America’s kaleidoscope. Their strength was manifested through numerous religious, fraternal, cultural, educational, and social organizations. Concurrently, more than ever, they also looked for ways to help their homeland gain support for freedom.

Anticipating need to help Lithuania liberating itself from Russia’s occupation, the Lithuanians formed in 1888 in Pittston, PA, the first volunteer military type guard unit with the aim of helping Lithuania when the time came to fight the Russians. Within several years there were 14 such units in the United States. Reverends M. Pieza and Zebrys published even a manual called “The Lithuanian Soldier”. It outlined individual member’s responsibilities and duties, as well as sufficient preparedness when time came to shed blood for Lithuania’s freedom. The guards would stage parades in city streets, with individuals dressed in elaborate military outfits such as horse riding hussars accompanied by marching orchestras and cheer leaders.

As the Lithuanian settlements became more and more self-sufficient, gained confidence and began to feel that they could influence America’s public opinion, they started raising public attention about their enslaved homeland including writing memorandums to the U.S. presidents and their congressional representatives.

**Reaching out within and beyond U.S. borders** (45, 46, 48, 49)

At the beginning of the XX-the century, Lithuanian American organizations, immersing themselves in their local issues and faraway homeland issues, numbered at about a dozen. To acquaint other nationalities with their homeland concerns, such as Russian oppression and the need to break away from captivity, Lithuanian Americans rallied numerous times in many U.S cities with protest demonstrations and proclamations calling for freedom for their homeland. The
first mass demonstration occurring nearly in all Lithuanian American communities was against the Kražiai massacre in 1893 by the Tsar's Cossacks. Soon thereafter, their efforts concentrated in securing acceptance to participate with exhibits at the World's Fair in Paris in 1900, aimed at bringing attention to the world about Lithuania's rich culture and its quest for independence.

Widely spread unrest over the years and unsuccessful mini revolution in Russia in 1905 compelled the Czar to open civil liberties to its inhabitants and eliminated the prohibition of Latin script in Lithuania. Sensing dawn of freedom for their home country, 169 delegates from Lithuanian organizations in the United States convened in 1906 in Philadelphia for the first politically oriented meeting. After lengthy discussions, a resolution was adopted to coordinate political activities between their organizations. A joint resolution was issued calling for Lithuania's Independence.

The second Lithuanian American Congress took place in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1914. Delegates from 275 primarily but not exclusively socialistically oriented organizations convened. The Congress created a Relief Fund for Lithuanian victims of war in Europe, drafted demands to establish autonomy for Lithuania, and created a rescue fund for Lithuania. But the meeting also ended up in serious disagreements, with several parties splitting away on ideological basis, and subsequently continuing in a separate meeting in New York City. The latter gathering gave birth to the nativist (homeland) political faction.

Inasmuch as there was considerable disagreement on where to hold the 1914 Congress and who would dominate it, the mid-west faction led by activists mostly of right wing ideological orientation, held a concurrent political Congress in Chicago. 250 delegates convened. Among numerous resolutions, the Congress issued demands for: 1. Political autonomy for Lithuania, 2. Separation of the Suvalkai region from the governorate of Warsaw and its return to Lithuania, 3. Support the Latvians in their search for autonomy and to offer them establishment of loose federation with Lithuania, 4. Inclusion of Lithuania in any future European peace negotiations.

As the war progressed, and Russia was beginning to disintegrate, representatives of Lithuanian organizations from various parts of the world convened in June 1916 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and adopted resolutions demanding complete freedom for Lithuania. Concurrently in America, the nationalist faction, seeing the All Lithuanian Congress controlled by socialists and dragging their feet on demands for Lithuania's full independence, broke away from the coalition. The Catholic faction, upon failing to receive support for Lithuania's independence, established for that purpose a National Council of its own. Delegates to the National Council, meeting in Wilkes Barre, PA, on August 17, 1916, created a Lithuanian Central Committee. Its primary purpose was to secure an audience with President Wilson seeking his support for Lithuania's independence. Such a meeting took place on November 1, 1916. President Wilson promised to look into the matter in more depth. With apparent understanding of the plight of Lithuanians in their own war-torn country, he proclaimed the day of the meeting as the Lithuanian Day in
America. On that day, all Americans could contribute to victims of the war in Lithuania. Heartened by such acknowledgement, American Lithuanians conducted a fund raising campaign resulting in a contributed sum of $130,000. The funds were transferred to the American Red Cross, which in turn added its own contribution of $100,000. Due to war activities on Lithuania’s territory, the funds were transferred to Lithuania only in 1919.

Lithuanian Liberty Bonds sold in the United States

In January 1917, 33 most prominent American Lithuanians convened in Pittsburgh, PA, and formed the American Lithuanian Council. It drafted and issued a declaration of Lithuania’s Independence in the name of seven largest Lithuanian Catholic organizations. It was presented to President Wilson by Rev. J. Zilius and Dr. J. Bielskis and its copies distributed to all European ambassadors based in Washington.

As WWI was approaching its end, Lithuanian Americans began a very close watch on political events in and financial needs of their homeland. Not being aware of Lithuania having declared independence in Vilnius on February 16, 1918, the US Lithuanian organizations convened in Madison Square Garden, NY, on March 13-14, 1918, the third and the largest Lithuanian American Congress (LAC). It asked the U.S. to help freeing the Baltic states from occupying forces and support Lithuania’s quest for independence.

With 1101 delegates participating, it drew considerable attention of the press, the diplomatic corps, and the Wilson administration. The LAC reissued its originally drafted Declaration of Lithuania’s Independence and sent a plea to President Wilson to extend diplomatic recognition to Lithuania. It also asked the President to support attendance of a delegate from the still unrecognized Lithuania at the forthcoming Peace Conference. Concurrently, the LAC sent
greetings to the Pope, and notified him of America’s Lithuanian support of Lithuania’s independence.

The entire New York press praised the Lithuanian Americans for demanding freedom for its homeland. The Associated Press and the United Press dispatched long worded telegrams of the event to its press clients all over the world. Indeed, the LAC effort created a deep and nationwide impression on the American public about Lithuania and its righteous thrust for independence.

To assure sufficient attention for Lithuania’s freedom by the U.S. government, the Lithuanian American Council established an Information office in Washington, D.C., headed by very capable and influential Washington jurist Esq. B. Mastauskas. He arranged a meeting on May 3, 1918, with President Wilson. Reminding that some 70,000 American Lithuanians are participating as soldiers in U.S. wartime military services in WWI, they asked the President to support Lithuania’s independence. Wilson promised to study this request and to take into account Lithuania’s interests at the future peace conference. As a follow-up to this meeting, the President appointed two history professors, Frank A. Golder and Sidney B. Fay, to study this issue and provide him with a recommendation. The resulting document covering Lithuania and Latvia issues, known as Inquiry, was included as a part of the Paris Peace Conference transactions in the research-information section.

The day Germany asked the Western Allies for armistice on November 8, 1918, the LAC established for coordination and pursuance of political goals, a Washington-based Executive Committee. As the War ended on November 11, 1918, Lithuanian Americans assumed that the victorious Allies would understand the sufferings of their war-torn homeland and would support its quest for independence as promised to all freedom seeking nations by Wilson 14 Points in the World Peace Declaration. Short of a response, the Executive Committee decided on December 4, 1918 to send its own delegation to the forthcoming Paris Peace Conference to observe the proceedings and to assure that Lithuania’s interests would be taken into account.
The Paris Peace Conference  

The peace conference in Paris started on Jan 18, 1919. It was attended by eight prominent American Lithuanians as observers. President Wilson at the departure to the conclusion of the conference in June 1919 was presented a memorandum entitled “Independence for the Lithuanian Nation”. It was subsequently published in 100,000 copies by the U.S. Congress Printing office.

Unfortunately, due to many cross-purpose interests and the heavy influence of France on keeping a powerful Poland as an eastern buffer state and hoping that the White Russians will prevail over the Bolshevik revolutionaries, independence for the Baltic States was not addressed in the treaty of Versailles of June 28, 1919. The treaty was subsequently rejected by the U.S. Senate as infringing on U.S. sovereign rights, and President Wilson, upon becoming seriously ill, was in no position to fight for its ratification.

In spite of these developments, LAC did not give up. It delegated in 1919, Balutis, T. Narutavičius, T. Avietenaite, K. Račkauskas, and J.Šliūpas to go to Paris to facilitate the establishment of Lithuania’s diplomatic service and provided a stipend of $50,000.00 to cover the expenses. In addition, Rev. V. Bartuška was sent to Switzerland to facilitate in the operation of the Lithuanian Information Service.
Lithuanian American organizations

Lithuanian Americans began to sharply differentiate along ideological lines in latter part of 1880. It was initiated primarily by Šliūpas by advocating socialism and subsequently, by Rev. Burba promoting Catholicism-based society. While both groups were Lithuanian oriented, pure nationally minded faction started emerging only about 30 years later.

The Lithuanian Socialist Federation of America

A large segment of Lithuanians, particularly those doing menial labor, were sympathetic to socialist ideas as a way of attaining equality in America’s life. The Lithuanian Socialist Federation of America (LSFA) was organized in 1905. It held its first convention in May of 1905 in Newark, NJ, with J.O. Sirvydas presiding.

The Lithuanian socialist faction grew rapidly by a massive wave of Marxism-infected emigrants from Russia’s occupied Lithuania following the suppression of the Socialist Revolution of 1905 in Russia. However, in the following decade, the LSFA experienced a series of factional struggles with various nationalist and anarchist elements leaving the organization.

Nevertheless, LSFA grew from a membership of 1100 in 1905 to 6700 by 1919. It developed a sizeable cultural activity by publishing several newspapers, promoting formation of and participation in choirs, drama groups, literary clubs, and libraries. Frequent discussion circles involved educating the workers to understand principles of socialism and supporting policies of the U.S. Socialist party, fighting the influence of clergy, working towards the socialist revolution, opposing U.S. military involvement in WWI, etc.

To support the goals of socialism, it established in 1915 a semi-autonomous publishing arm, the Lithuanian Workers Literature Society (LWLS), for producing books and its own newspaper designed to raise workers’ class consciousness, socialistic intellect, solidarity to Marxism, and understanding that ideology.
At the September 1916 LSFA convention, the majority decidedly supported the anti-militarist 'Internationalist' camp that was advocated by Lenin and his communist followers.

In September 1918, the headquarters of LSFA was served search warrants by the FBI and evidence taken. LSFA leaders Shukys and Stilson were subsequently prosecuted under the Espionage Act for allegedly inhibiting military conscription. This and the communist faction’s separation in 1919 began the decline of LSFA.

*The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation* (55, 56)

Every Lithuanian parish has one or more Catholic societies involved in beneficial and/or religious activities. Sensing benefits of their intercooperation, Rev. Varnagiris of Plymouth, PA, initiated in 1886 the formation of the Association of Lithuanian Parish societies. Over the next decade, the Association expanded to include parishes in Chicago, IL., Waterbury, CT, Pittston and Plymouth, PA. Their initial purpose was to help the parishioners in need during unemployment, providing Catholic literature, and facilitating the formation of new Lithuanian parishes.

Finally, seeing the benefits of such cooperation, the Catholic leaders decided to form a nationwide organization. They met in April 1906, in Wilkes-Barre, PA, and established the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation (LRCF). Its purpose was stated to promote, support and coordinate activities of Lithuanian parishes and their parishioner societies. This first Congress was organized by Reverends V. Vizgirda, J. Kudirka, A. Kaupas of the Scranton, PA diocese and attended by delegates from New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The second LRCF Congress in 1910 in Scranton, PA, produced little if any mentionable conclusions.

The third LRCF congress convened in June 1913, at Pittsburgh, PA, Presiding Rev. J. Kaulakis of Philadelphia, PA, and Rev. A. Kaupas of Chicago, IL, stressed the need to expand the 24 Lithuanian school system, to embed patriotism and moral values in children of Lithuanian immigrants, and strengthen their Catholic faith. It decided to provide further financial support to the Congregation of Sisters of St. Casimir for the development of increased numbers of nun-teachers and to establish a fund for developing Lithuanian language schoolbooks. It also established a national budget to help Lithuanian American Catholics in distress. A loan stipends fund was set-up for college studies including support of needy students from Lithuania at some European universities. Urged by LRCF constituency, the Federation started raising funds for the establishment of a Lithuanian College. Formation of a Lithuanian Catholic Women Association was endorsed.

The fourth LRCF Congress took place in September of 1914, in Chicago. Items of discussion included help to victims of war, developing demands for political autonomy for Lithuania and Latvia, establishment of an Information Bureau in Washington, and inclusion of delegates from Lithuania at the next Peace conference.

Subsequently, the LRCF held Congresses on a yearly basis, during which it established the Lithuanian National Council and the Nation’s Fund, including the financing of an Information Bureau in Switzerland. The donations to the Nation’s Fund and the Homeland Rescue Fund collection reached an unprecedented $300,000 in 1919 dollar value. The funds financed a series of LRCF activities. It sent in 1916, its emissaries Rev dr. V. Bartuška and dr. J.Bielskis to war torn Lithuania to assess the needs there and to explore with local activists coordination of activities for freedom for Lithuania. In 1919, it established and funded in Washington, D.C. an information Bureau and a Publications and Press Center in New York City. It sent the Washington-based jurist B. Mastauskas and three other delegates first to Switzerland and then to Paris to coordinate with delegates from Lithuania on ways to gain international support for
Lithuania’s independence. In the same year, the Nation’s Fund established a supporting affiliate of Lithuania’s Red Cross for collection of and shipment to Lithuania of several hundred tons of donated clothing. One of its largest expenses in the amount of some $120,000 was to save Lithuanian prisoners of war from starvation in German captivity.

*Lithuanian National Federation (Nativists-Sandara)*

As early as 1909, J. Sirvydas, J. Šliūpas, and M. Petrauskas were contemplating of organizing a patriotic Lithuanian Nationalist Party. Final opportunity came at the Lithuanian American Congress in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1914, when the socialists rejected consideration of Lithuania’s independence. The separating group calling themselves The Lithuanian National Federation of America (LNFA “sandariečiai”) prepared organizational statutes, which were adopted at the second Congress in Philadelphia in 1916.

At the third LNFA congress in December of 1916, a Central committee was elected and goals were outlined for a liberated, patriotically-oriented Lithuania. It would need to focus on promoting patriotism and act as a magnet for return to homeland of its war-dispersed people. Rev. Kibortas was the first chairman of the Federation.

The Federation found broad support and by 1916, had 40 chapters. Collected funds exceeded $14,000 to finance the LNFA activities through the Lithuanian American Council. By 1918, the Federation’s Autonomy Fund published several books related to Lithuania’s statehood and national issues.

In 1918, the Federation headquarters was transferred to Chicago. By 1919, the Federation, vigorously promoting to fight for recognition of Lithuania’s independence, grew to more than 100 chapters and a membership to several thousands. They engaged in staging cultural events, patriotic rallies, concerts, theatrical productions, and in case of Racine, WI, operation of a school. To facilitate the publication of its three newspapers (*Vienybė Lietuvininkų, Ateitis,* and *Lietuva*) including books and pamphlets, the Federation acquired the Boston Lithuanian publisher *Ateitis*.

*Major Alliances for beneficial purposes* (55, 58, 59, 60)

The first all-encompassing organization, the Alliance of All Lithuanians in America, intended to unify the activities of all beneficial associations for the purpose of providing help for its members in sickness and death, was started by Šliūpas in 1886. But due to Šliūpas’ ideological controversies, the Catholics under the leadership of Rev. Varnagiris split off in 1889 as a separate organization known as the Lithuanian Alliance of America (LAA). The Šliūpas organization, due to lack of membership, disappeared within the next two years. The LAA continued as an organization for all Lithuanians. However, during the next dozen years, differences between church goers and those enthralled with socialistic-freethinker convictions kept resurfacing.
At the 1901 LAA Congress in Wilkes-Barre, PA, the organization finally split into the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America (LRCAA) and the Lithuanian Alliance of America (LAA). The former would encompass members with more conservative religious affiliation while the latter would include more liberal-minded Catholics, members oriented toward nationalism, and those supporting socialistic views.

The LRCAA continued expanding its membership without much controversy over the years. In contrast, the LAA operations during the first decade of the 1900-s were in turmoil due to disputes between the nationalists and socialists. The latter were highly influenced by Marxism but disillusioned by unsuccessful revolution in Russia in 1905. Only by the end of the first decade, the troubling differences subsided, and the LAA started to grow again. By 1910, both organizations had memberships of about 10,000 each. LRCAA operated from its headquarters building in Brooklyn, NY, and LAA conducted its business from the headquarter building in Manhattan, NYC.

Both fraternal organizations grew in membership and wealth as new chapters and branches opened up in more sizeable settlements in America. The Alliances provided life, accidental injury, and limited sickness insurance for their members. Both participated with financial aid to Lithuanian public events and offered loans for Lithuanian home buyers and business. They also contributed significant funds to support Lithuanian American educational institutions, set-up scholarships for university studies, established a high school and a teachers seminary in Lithuania proper, helped to finance the start of Lithuania’s diplomatic activities and the first year of government operations, created a fund for widows and orphans, provided partial funding for temporary sheltering newly arriving Lithuanian immigrants in New York, etc.

One of the largest and most notable LAA-sponsored event was the commemoration parade in downtown Chicago in 1910, celebrating the 500 years anniversary of Lithuania’s conclusive defeat of the Teutonic Order at Žalgiris in 1410.

The parade, preceding the LAA’s convention, included 8 marching bands, members of 37 societies, four four-horse drawn flower decked carriages, 20 automobiles, 37 carriages topped with choirs and singing groups, and a Lithuanian crowd of well-wishers numbering over 20,000. The participants subsequently crowded the Chicago Armory hall to hear a concert of Lithuanian music and songs including the playing for the first time the future Lithuania’s national anthem. The concert was interspersed by fiery speeches by dignitaries of the State of Illinois and prominent Lithuanian activists demanding freedom for Lithuania.
During the first two decades of 1900, a number of specific purpose organizations emerged to cover many segmented society needs such as: the Lithuanian Young People's (men and women) Federation in the New England; the Lithuanian Catholic Temperance Association; Confederation of Total Abstainers; The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priest Association; Lithuanian Catholic Education Society, and numerous others.

About one half of active Lithuanian Americans were not directly affiliated with religious organizations. They participated in less centrally organized groups, societies and associations focusing on socialistic, atheistic, educational, cultural, ideological and nationalistic issues, devoid of any religious character.

**Significant nation-wide societies, associations and personalities**

**Lithuanians In America's Military Service**

Kostas Jurgela notes that Lithuanian born Tadas Kosciusko is widely known to have participated in America's revolutionary war, first as colonel and later as brigadier general, under the command of George Washington. In the study of America's civil war records, Jurgela found names of 373 Lithuanians fighting on the Union side, and 44 on the side of the Confederacy. During the Civil War, Veronika Klimkeviciute became the first female U.S. Army nurse – a position that was entrusted up to that time only to male medics.
A group of American Lithuanian troopers, on the way to China to quell the Boxer Rebellion\((62)\), are known to have participated in the American-Philippines war in 1898. While in service in China in 1899-1901, they met their Lithuanian speaking counterpart soldiers in Russia’s Tsar army. To the surprise of the Lithuanian soldiers in Russia’s service, the American Lithuanians not only spoke their language, but also had Lithuanian language newspapers in Latin script. Inasmuch as Latin in Lithuanian language newspapers was banned in Russia, the American Lithuanians gladly gave away those newspapers to their kinfolks from Lithuania.

At the outbreak of WWI, thousands of Lithuanian immigrants and/or their adult children were men of draft age. Most of them were called into service even though many hardly understood English and in great part were illiterate. The vast majority of these young men were told to fight for a country they barely knew. Ironically, many had fled Lithuania to escape a 25-year conscription into service in the Russian army. Their first service destination usually was training in the infantry and their second in Flanders to fight the Germans.

While on one hand their casualty rate in combat was very high, on the other, those who survived, the military service was a blessing in disguise. In the army, they escaped the ghetto mentality, had to learn quickly basic English and at least the ability to read. Some of the more ambitious learned even to write. They returned from the service as a different breed of men, more knowledgeable about the wider world and themselves and with more confidence on how to proceed as full citizens within their adopted country.

Official documents indicate that more than 25,000 Lithuanians served in the Army of the United States during WWI.\((63)\) In reality, the number might have been between 50,000 and 70,000, since most of them had severely altered names, were barely aware of their nationality, and during enlistment were entered by their country of origin as Russia or Poland, since Lithuania at that time did not exist as a known entity.
This remarkable number of WWI participants was later leveraged to lobby President Wilson for diplomatic recognition of Lithuania’s independence. The young veterans were by the end of the war much more conscious of their Lithuanian heritage and were eager to help Lithuania to become a free nation.

Searching for a stronger leverage against Poland's military and political pressure to reestablish the joint Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the American Lithuanian Congress asked the US government in 1919 for permission to form an American Lithuanian volunteer military brigade to help protect Lithuania's independence. While permission was denied, several dozens Lithuanian Americans subsequently arrived in Lithuania on their own to facilitate structuring its military force and to participate in its independence war. The Lithuanian American Congress also floated in 1919, bonds to help Lithuania financially. The bond sale provided Lithuania $1,925,442.00 in 1923 dollars.

Lithuanian Americans organizing exhibition at the 1900 Paris World Fair

In 1894, several Lithuanian priests in the United States, among them A. Kaupas, J. Žilius, A. Burba and others, established the “Laurynas Ivinskis European and American Lithuanian Friendship Society” aimed at elevating Lithuania issues to an international level. They thought that an exhibition at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris with focus on Lithuania, was a reasonable opportunity to highlight Lithuania’s search for freedom. The Society presented its thoughts to the Fair organizers in 1896. It would highlight Lithuania's past and present to the people of France and visitors to the Fair from other countries, and particularly stimulate discussions about Lithuania’s history, heritage, and its cultural oppression at the world’s academic and cultural circles. The organizer’s first political goal was to force Russia through international pressure to abolish the prohibition of Latin script in Lithuanian language publications.

The issue of Lithuanian participation at the Fair was raised again in 1899, in Zurich, Switzerland, by the Society of Lithuanian Youth. In conjunction with this meeting, a proclamation was published stating that participation at the Fair is of utmost importance for demonstrating the vitality of Lithuanian people and restoration of Lithuania as a sovereign nation. The Committee of Zurich was short lived, because some members aligned themselves with the Poles, even though it received considerable financial support from America's Lithuanians.

Within this timeframe, editorials in most Lithuanian American newspapers urged a meeting of existing organizations to support and prepare for the Fair. Lithuanian organizations elected an influential committee headed by P. Žitkevičius. The American Lithuanian public was enthused and contributed significant funds to support preparations for the Fair. P. Žitkevičius moved to Paris to join a committee of East Prussia Lithuanians consisting of J. Strėkys, M. Jankus, and J. Vanagaitis. Dr. Daumantas, living at the time in London, was invited to come to Paris and help to
promote acceptance of Lithuanian participation by the Fair organizers.

The final Fair organizing committee included P. Žitkevičius (U.S.), K. Dobkevičius (France) and J. Pautienius from Tilžė (Tilsit a city in East Prussia - Lithuania Minor). According to FAIR regulations of the time, an exhibit had to be sponsored by a sovereign nation or at least by a publication agency. Inasmuch as no sovereign nation would sponsor the Lithuanian exhibit, after exhaustive search, the French Ministry of Culture’s Ethnographic Museum in Trocadero Palace agreed to support it. It would allow only a general Lithuanian ethnographic exhibit with inclusion of a section containing an array of books and newspapers published around the world in Lithuanian language and folk art. The French Ministry of Culture also required that the exhibit not be used for any political purposes.

Entrance to the 1900 World Fair in Paris

For exhibits, ethnic materials were brought in secret across the border from Lithuania to Tilžė in Lithuania Minor (East Prussia) by J. Lozoraitis, D. Zaunius, and his daughter M. Zauniūtė. Most other exhibits were gathered in Lithuania Minor, the Suvalkai area (Warsaw Governorate), and from other locations in Europe. Rev. Žilius had the task of providing a collection of Lithuanian books and newspapers published in the United States. Similar collections were gathered by the East Prussia committee: Zauniūtė responsible for Lithuanian publications printed in Prussia in Latin script, and Skėrys for those printed in Gothic letters.

A catalogue of books collected for the Fair was published in French: “Catalogue des Livres Lithuaniens”. It was accompanied by a small, limited-issue brochure describing Russia’s prohibition of publications in Latin script in Lithuanian language. The brochure was prepared by a Lithuanian student Bernys studying the French language in Switzerland. The publication was quickly distributed in confidence to sympathetic and trusted people, because for political reasons the French government did not allow its access to the public.

The Committee selected from among three offered sites to place the exhibit in the center of the Trocadero Palace, in a niche, near the right side of the stairs to the Palace’s second floor. The exhibit’s location was in a good spot. It was easy to see and did not require large expenditures to prepare. Its only shortcoming was that it was not spacious: it was 10 meters long and five meters wide, raised on a platform one step above the floor level.

On the platform was a Lithuanian cottage 12 feet long, 9 feet wide, and 7 feet high, bounded by three walls. The fourth side provided an open entrance. Above the entrance of the cottage, hung a huge woven banner with the name "Lithuanie" written on it. The columns along the sides of the niche were decorated with colorful woven banners and paintings depicting Lithuania’s historic rulers and leaders. The interior decorations of the cottage are described in the publication Albumas as follows:
"In the cottage itself, the wall and ceiling beams were decorated with moss. On the back wall were two painted on windows: one with six panes and the smaller one, with four, both with painted flower trimming. Above the windows, just below the ceiling, hung six portraits of saints, some in frames and others without them. Between the windows was affixed a beautifully carved wood towel rack. On it hung a clean, long towel with tasseled ends. On the wall near the back of the room was a rack on which hung the farmer's clothing. On the right wall was a third painted-on window, and near the window was a cupboard with bowls, dishes, spoons, and alongside a churn. Near the left wall, in the corner, was an old-fashioned multi-colored basket; and closer in, hung on springs, a reed cradle covered with small pillows. Also near the back wall stood a large farmer's stove with a bread oven leading to a chimney.

Near the far wall, stood a cloth covered table with a pitcher and a bowl on it. Around the table human mannequins were arranged to depict a matchmaking scene: the bride, the bride's parents, the groom, the matchmaker, and a bit further to the right sat a male servant. The mannequins were dressed in the farmer's Sunday clothing, and the women, in national folk costumes. The servant wore work clothes, and on his feet were bast shoes.

The Lithuania cottage exhibit at the Paris Fair from "Albumas Lietuviškos Parodos Paryžiuje" (N.Y. Public Library)

On both sides near the entrance to the cottage, in glass cases, were Lithuanian publications: books and newspapers with captions beneath them in French. Lithuanian newspapers published in 1900 were hung on wires. Books published in Lithuania Minor were in a bookcase suspended against a wall on the opposite side of the hall. A case with handicrafts and decorations stood near the entrance to the cottage. The products of cottage industries, miniature models of farms and their buildings, and associated tools and accessories were displayed in several glass cases farther away from the cottage, in the Museum's passageways. There were also displays of farm products: a variety of grains, yarns, spinners, and similar items. The walls along the entrance to the cottage were decorated with various woven pieces and sashes, and photographs depicting farm and cottage work: plowing, sowing, harvesting, weaving, and other activities."

Several maps in the display highlighted Lithuania’s historical, ethnographic, and economic profiles. There were also maps of countries in which Lithuanian books and newspapers were printed in Latin letters. Colored ribbons indicated the routes those publications had to follow to get into Lithuania: for example, from Prussia's Lithuania Minor, the United States, Switzerland,
The cottage's decorations and the arrangement of the entire Lithuanian exhibit were planned and set up by art-minded Žitkevičius. He even painted the emblem Vytis, which for some unexplained reason was on blue background. The Vytis was hung alongside the "Lithuanie" inscription. The mannequins, each costing 200 francs, were prepared to replicate images supplied in photographs to the Museum's sculptor Herbert.

The Fair lasted from April 15 to November 1900. Preparations of the Lithuanian exhibit were completed a few weeks late, but there were countries whose exhibits were displayed even considerably later. At times there were no Lithuanian representatives at the exhibit, because of shortage of people to staff it.

Of $3000 spent to cover the costs of the exhibits, more than two thirds were Lithuanian American contributions. When the Fair ended, part of the books and newspapers collections were donated to the French National Library. Some publications and a few of the handicrafts were gifted to the Ethnographic Museum as a sign of appreciation for the assistance the Museum provided with the Exhibit preparations. The ethnographic part of the exhibit was returned to Tilze (Tilsit). Items from Lithuania were hand carried in great secrecy across the Russian-patrolled border.

During the Fair, several lectures were held about Lithuania. While the general public showed little interest, the presentations attracted a number of academics from several countries. The French press wrote about the Lithuanian exhibit, condemning the prohibition of Latin script and favorably reviewing the Lithuanian exhibit. One of those was Le Realiste, a biweekly, which expressed surprise and dismay at the prohibition of print in Latin letters. The Polish language Glos Wolny, published in Paris, wrote that the Lithuanian lectures had generated significant interest among academics and intellectuals. The exhibit was also mentioned in the daily Tilsiter Zeitung, published in Tilsit.

The Lithuanian exhibit in Paris did not create public condemnation of Russia in Western Europe. The French government considered it to be a politically sensitive issue and did not wish to aggravate Russia. However, some of the academics and intellectuals attending the Fair expressed dismay at the prohibition of Latin script and called for its end. The exhibit was intensely disliked by the Tsarist government. It reinvigorated persecutions in Lithuania of
suspected helpers during and after the Fair.

On the positive side, the exhibit, thanks to the initiative of Lithuanian Americans, made for the first time Lithuania visible and better known in the world. It vividly demonstrated to the French, Russian, German, and particularly the Polish people that the Lithuanian nation was not dead, but alive and rising. The exhibit demonstrated to Lithuanians and particularly its upcoming educated generations that they were able to present their case for freedom without regard to religious and ideological differences between them, no matter where they happened to live. The exhibit demonstrated that with shared effort, the Lithuanians can aspire and achieve even far greater tasks towards attaining national identity and eventually freedom for the nation.

Organizing for politics and labor issues

Much of the initial political activity of Lithuanian Americans was confined to the immigrant community itself. Immigrants sought to define themselves first in terms of the rising tide of Lithuanian consciousness that dominated the latter part of the nineteenth century. Slowly, the immigrant community began to look outside itself, toward the wider American world. Subjugating working and living conditions drove a number of Lithuanian immigrants, particularly those who could not tear away from their destitute, poverty smothering environment, to seek hope and remedies in socialist ideas. Gradually, as integration into the working force began to take shape, they saw help in forming labor unions.\(^\text{(17)}\) As a result, Lithuanian worker activists were leading in the formation of the United Mine Workers of America, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. For some, this activity grew into a wider push for socialism (a political and economic doctrine espousing collective rather than private ownership of property), particularly upon formation of the Lithuanian Socialist Party of America in 1905.

In other industries, such as steel and meat packing, union organization was slower, but Lithuanian workers were an omnipresent force in labor agitation. A number of nationalist, Roman Catholic and socialist immigrant organizations joined in support of this labor movement. The pre-WWI socialism collapsed in U.S. after 1918, as the so-called "Red Scare" and prosecutions of their leaders put great pressure on all socialist groups to fade away.

The first major push into politics among Lithuanian Americans came first in 1916 and became its primary focus in 1918 and later years, when attempting to influence America’s foreign policy in support freedom for Lithuania. At that time, the American Lithuanian community was at the peak of its consciousness of being Lithuanian, particularly with high expectation, after the announcement of the Wilson 14 points, that its homeland would become free from Russia’s subjugation. The Lithuanian Americans were ready not only to help achieve this through political influencing the Wilson administration, but also through diplomacy in Europe, financial assistance as well as by forming their own military expeditionary volunteer force to assist the struggling homeland to ascertain freedom and independence.\(^\text{(66, 67, 71a)}\)
Personalities \(^{68, 69, 70}\)

1. **Alexander Bruce Bielaski**, director of the FBI, from 1912 to 1919

   ![](image1.png)

   A. B. Bielaski, head of FBI


   ![](image2.png)

   V. Brenner’s one cent design

Sports

Arrival of the 20\(^{th}\) century heralded the beginning for young Lithuanian to participate in public sport events such as basketball, baseball, boxing, etc. They were progressing in quality and quantity at local and regional levels, but none ascended onto the national scene until arrival of Antanas Kandrotas in the early years of 1900.

Born in Lithuania in 1883, he arrived in Brooklyn, NY, and began to demonstrate his enormous weight lifting power.\(^{71a}\) On tours throughout the United States, he exhibited to masses of amazed onlookers his ability to lift at one time a cluster of several young women. By 1908, he became a professional weight lifter and wrestler and was known as the strongest Lithuanian in the world. After a decade in the limelight of sports, he became one of the founders of the U.S. Athletic Club.\(^{71b}\)

From 1912 to 1921, two Lithuanian American Pennsylvania born brothers became significant factors in the U.S. boxing scene at the national level. Jurgis Čepulionis (**George Chip**) became the World middle weight champion in 1913 and 1914. Upon losing his title in 1914, he continued as a professional boxer to the end of 1921.\(^{71c}\) His brother Juozas (Joe) Chip, also a professional boxer, fought for the U.S. national boxing championship in 1921, and lost.

Stepping into the World of Music

Young immigrant couples upon marriage, in order to help pay rent for their meager apartments, would usually lease some of their rooms to paying bachelor lodgers.\(^{72}\) On Sundays and other holidays, friends and acquaintances would gather for talks and a few drinks. Many times they would end up singing, someone playing a musical instrument, playing games, and dancing.
Such frolicking events were called in Lithuanian “vakaruškos”. As Lithuanian population in some sections of a town or city increased, entire streets on the neighborhoods would be filled Saturday nights and/or Sundays with Lithuanian songs and tunes, well heard through open windows. Their non-Lithuanian neighbors listened to these musical turmoils, and sometimes praised those "Polaks" for bringing life into their dreary existence (in those days no one even knew what Lithuanian was, thus the name “Polak” stuck in many places for almost half a century).

In time, as small apartments could not continuously accommodate such free-time noisy activities, more enterprising Lithuanian immigrants began to lease some empty storefronts as a place to gather, eat, drink, and sing. They were named “saliūnas” (saloon). This was of particular importance to bachelors who found difficulty being confined within someone else’s apartment. Also, by not conversant in English, they found little else to do or to go to. The saloons provided them a Lithuanian language environment, a likable atmosphere of similar people, and an opportunity to expend their energy, sometimes a lot harder and bolder. For lonely bachelor immigrants, the saloons were the only places where they could feel comfortable and speak out without being misunderstood. It was also the place where they spent most of their earnings. In numerous mining towns in Pennsylvania and Illinois, particularly in the districts near the stockyards in Chicago, there were more Lithuanian-owned saloons than those of any other nationality. Only after beginning of formation of pure Lithuanian Catholic churches after mid-1880s, their parishes began to provide alternate opportunities for individuals to participate in different and expanding activities than those offered in saloons.

Musical turmoil in the streets of PA, coalminer towns

Start of organized musical life (73, 74, 75)

Immigrants from any nationality bring with them different social manners and customs. Similarly, Lithuanians brought from their native country their deep-rooted customs, favorite hymns, folk songs and dances, and ability by some to use musical instruments. The more gifted ones began to sharpen their skills by learning to play from notes, while a few others arrived with skills from playing in bands of the Tsar’s army. First, they began to play as individuals in family type get-togethers, weddings, and saloons. With time, musical groups began to form by playing in picnics, in churches, and other memorable events. It was the beginning of Lithuanian entertainment sounds in exile.

Organists (76)

As Lithuanian immigrants grew in numbers, and started forming own Lithuanian parishes, their
need for cultural, social and self-education activities and organizations began literally to explode. With the formation of Lithuanian language churches, parishioners needed someone to lead them in singing and provide instrumented music. Similar to other non-Lithuanian churches, the parishioners desired organ music, but that was very difficult to organize. There were just very few Lithuanian organ players, and most had also jobs in factories, or were working for polish parishes. To overcome such scarcity, parishes would invite organists of other nationalities to teach them Lithuanian language songs. Inasmuch as there were no Lithuanian music notes, the non-Lithuanian organist listened to someone sing or hum a hymn. Then he would translate whatever heard into musical notes to be played in the church.

An insight into the shortage of Lithuanian organists for the church that was just built in 1888, can be glimpsed from a letter by Rev. M. Juodišius of Freeland, PA. He writes to his Lithuanian pastor friend: “You noted in the last letter of a possible availability of an organist. I would be very glad to receive him at my church, but please let me know just a little more about him. Does he know how to sing from musical notes and also teach people to sing?”

In this early time span, the musical needs of Lithuanian parishes were served mostly by immigrant organists, because the next generation of locally born potential organists were still of early childhood age. Of great encouragement to any organist was the fact that young immigrants very eagerly joined forming church choirs and singing groups just to have an opportunity to participate in Lithuanian musical activities. Some of them walked for choir practices as many as 7 to 9 miles.

Organists coming from Lithuania found themselves in a bind: no notes for Lithuanian hymns and songs. As a way out: some Lithuanian texts were adapted to musical notes of non-Lithuanian churches. Others began "compositions" of their own, based on memorized tunes from Lithuania, giving rise to new kind of hymns and songs.

Andrew Dičkauskas (1867-1924) arrived in Scranton, PA, in 1892, where he began serving as an organist at the Lithuanian church. He beautifully harmonized a series of hymns and songs that became widely circulated throughout the mining region. In the same year, Stasys Rakauskas (1877-1950) wrote songs and hymns for his church choir. J. Žemaitis (1868-1932), of Shenandoah, PA, released as many as 26 different musical notebooks. He was not trained in music, but used others to transcribe his conceived melodies into musical notes. To this day, his song “Vilniaus kalneliai” is one of very popular songs even in Lithuania. He was the first Lithuanian to produce and distribute dozens of thousands pianola strips. L. Ereminas formed in Brooklyn, NY, the first secular choir “Milda”. Subsequently, he put together a book of selected songs, called “Dainos”. Upon publication in 1902, some of them became popular even with the English speaking population.

Musical notes for the future Lithuanian National Anthem
In early part of 1900-s, several more notable organists arrived, such as A. Pocius in 1905, and soon thereafter J. Čižauskas. They were followed by graduates A. Aleksis and V. Niekus from the Warsaw Music Conservatory. The latter organized in 1914 the Beethoven Conservatory in Chicago which successfully operated for several decades.

In 1911, Lithuanian American organists formed an independent association. The association began to promote and organize Lithuanian regional song festivals attended by many thousands. Encouraged by success, local church choirs and independent musical groups began staging operettas (similar to current day musicals), local drama plays, and comedy shows, mostly embracing Lithuanian themes. It was hardly a Saturday or Sunday without one or several such performances taking place in more numerous Lithuanian immigrant communities.

In general, the primary leaders of Lithuanian musical life were the church organists. They led religious and secular choirs, organized song festivals, wrote musical compositions and operettas, and published music related periodicals, music sheets, and recordings. Church organists made choral art in America quite popular and contributed greatly to the preservation of the Lithuanian culture. This activity inspired a lot of young Lithuanians to enter and excel in the art of music. A number of them became popular singers, conductors, instrumental performers, or composers.

Cappellas and musical bands (orchestras) (77)

Some of the immigrants who played in the Tsar’s army orchestras bravely took on organizing small musical groups, along the lines of their army experience. They would be hired to play at weddings, church events, funerals, and public dances. Due to their popularity, some of them began to grow into larger more formal musical units, sometimes mistakenly being named cappellas, and then entire bands. The bands were favored, because their members were dressed in parades and exhibitions in beautiful uniforms, played at well-known and important Lithuanian events, and were the pride to point out to the non-Lithuanian on-lookers.

The first orchestra was established in Shenandoah, PA, in 1885, known as St. Joseph Temperance Society's First Lithuanian Band. By 1887, other bands were formed in Mahanoy City and Scranton, PA. In 1897, Chicago Lithuanians had several “cappellas” and marching bands. Cleveland’s National Lithuanian band, organized in 1909, was known as the largest Lithuanian marching band and orchestra in America with over 60 musicians.
Most orchestra and band members were required to pay a one dollar member entrance fee followed by 50 cents monthly dues to cover the leader's salary and on-going expenses. Cappellas, bands, and orchestras in their numerous annual concerts playing Lithuanian tunes were the pride of Lithuanian Americans of their heritage and culture. Most of these musical organizations collapsed as the U.S. began to prepare for entry into WWI, with the army calling many of the players into service.

*Operettas and operas* (78)

Amateur operettas started developing in America's Lithuanian life in the late nineteenth century, usually as comedies spiced up with songs by either an individual or a group of singers. Comedies were especially popular, as they provided hard-working people with laugh, relaxation, and a way of socializing with each other. The performances were of benefit to the Lithuanian immigrant community by bringing it more cohesion. (46)

Comedies with musical interludes opened the way for a more genuine operetta. The first one, "Lobzovėnai", a translation from the Polish, was staged in 1901. Organist D. Bačkauskas wrote 8 songs for it, but with a strong influence of Polishness. The situation began to change rapidly upon arrival from Lithuania of composer Mikas Petrauskas. (79) His operetta "Kaminkrėtys ir malūnininkas" (Chimney Sweeper and the Miller) in 1907 became one of the most liked stage events.
Although the artistic level of early operettas was low, their producers, many stage player associations, and choirs tried to please their audiences with ever new musical compositions. By the end of WWI, the operetta repertoire contained over 100 titles. While some of them had little to do with Lithuanian themes, the majority focused on Lithuania. Particularly liked were plays about Lithuanian country life, historical events, folk customs, weddings, etc. Of highest popularity were well staged plays by immigrant conductors and composers S. Šimkus, M. Petrauskas, J. Žilevičius, A. Pocius, A. Vanagaitis, J. Kovas, A. Alekasis, and later by U.S. born E. Ratkevičiūtė, B. Šalinaitytė, Latvaitis, D. Judzintavičienė, Ed. Gutoskis, etc. There was hardly a Sunday without an operetta being staged at some Lithuanian settlement.

Even though many operettas were soon forgotten, several of their songs were on people’s lips for many years and even sang in Lithuania. Many times children were included in the production of operettas, which in turn raised their and their parents’ enthusiasm for Lithuanianess. Some operettas were based on popular musicals of other nations, with their librettos translated into Lithuanian and the main personages receiving Lithuanian names aiming to retain their Lithuanian character.

Operettas led some more ambitious composers into translating the text of existing operas into Lithuanian language. The first attempt was made in 1911 by the production of the first act of “Faust” at the Ramova theater house. Over several following years, M. Petrauskas staged in Chicago a very popular opera „Birutė“, which was composed by him and first produced in Lithuania in 1906.

The Ramova Lithuanian Theatre House in Chicago

Poster in Kaunas, Lithuania, of staging the melodrama “Birutė”
In 1914, A. Olshevskis built and opened in Chicago a new 1200 seat theater named Milda. Mikas Petrauskas's staged there to a sold-out house his premier operetta “The Enchanted Duke”. However, after several years and with the production of one more opera, „Eglė - žalčių karalienė”, enthusiasm for new opera productions, principally due to war mobilization, waned. However, performers with talent did not limit themselves only to a Lithuanian audience. They sought and found recognition in America’s wide world of music. A number of them succeeded on the world stage of opera such as A. Kaskas, P. Stoska, Al. Brazis, Paraliūtė, B. Ramoškaitė and a number of those lesser known. Lithuanian opera revived again in Chicago some 40 years later.

Publications

Books

The first Lithuanian immigrants had either none or only very modest education, but most of them being young, were full of energy and striving to better their meager living and working conditions, particularly by learning to read and write. Many became avid readers in spite of very hard working conditions for long hours (six days a week, 10 to 12 hours daily). Upon appearance of the first Lithuanian language pamphlet on April 30, 1874, in Shenandoah, PA, under the title “Wieszpaties sawo szaukiuos”, publications began to appear an unprecedented pace. Between 1874 and 1904, Lithuanians in America had published 553 different Lithuanian language books with a volume 474,200 book units. Some were bulletins, calendars, small booklets; others were several hundred pages long, covering all facets of life, art, history, politics, technology, religion, philosophy, etc. One of the more informative books about the multifaceted profile of Lithuanians in America was published by V.K. Rackauskas in 1915. At that time, Lithuanian language books printed in America far exceeded anything available in Lithuania itself, where print in Latin script was prohibited until 1904, and new publications thereafter were only slowly emerging.

Newspapers and journals

The first Lithuanian newspaper in America, named simply “Lietuwiszka gazeta”, was published in New York in 1879 by Mykolas Tvarauskas. He was a teacher, before his departure from Lithuania. The newspaper lasted only about six months for lack of subscribers.

Another short-lived weekly was Unija (Union), published from Oct. 26, 1884, to April 25, 1885, in New York City by Tvarauskas and Šliūpas. The latter wanted to give the paper a political character based on nationalistic and socialistic thought. This brought him into conflict with Tvarauskas and the paper was discontinued. Šliūpas started to publish his own newspaper “Lietuviszkais baisas” (Lithuanian Voice), of which 96 issues appeared between July 2, 1885, and February 1889, first in New York City and subsequently in Shenandoah, PA. The Šliūpas’ paper was politically oriented. It championed Lithuanian national rights and was very critical of Russian oppression. However, the Lithuanian readers were not yet ready for a political paper with long articles, few entertaining features, and controversy with the Catholic clergy. Other less controversial newspapers survived longer, such as Vienybė lietuvininkų (Lithuanian Unity), founded in 1886, by J. Pauksztys in Plymouth, PA. It was transferred in 1907, to Brooklyn, N. Y. and continued publication until 1961.

Saulė (Sun) – a weekly, published in Mahanoy City, PA, (1888-1959), was a typical miners paper. Its publisher also printed more than 200 books of easy reading, sentimental stories, fables and legends, etc. As Lithuanian immigrants became more educated, A. Olshevskis began publishing in Chicago in 1892, the weekly Lietuva (Lithuania) and it continued until 1920. The paper took a middle-of-the-road line, did not offend religious groups, and did not propagate socialist theories. It offered its readers liberal nationalistic thoughts intertwined with news, affairs and events at the diaspora level, and stories about developments in their former homeland. Of
similar character was Amerikos lietuvis (America’s Lithuanian), a weekly published in Worchester, MA., from 1907 to 1955. Amongst other long-lived papers were a socialist-oriented Keleivis, published in Boston (1905-1979), and communist Laisvė in Chicago (1905-1973).

Between 1892 and 1974, about 90 Lithuanian newspapers and magazines were published in Chicago alone. Of the two surviving newspapers from the early 1900s to recent times is 1) Draugas (The Friend), established by Lithuanian Catholic Press Society in 1909, in Wilkes-Barre, PA, and now in Chicago, and 2) Dirva, published since 1916 in Cleveland, OH, expounding Lithuanian nationalistic views and interests.

The following is a list of more significant Lithuanian-language newspapers published prior to WWI:

1. Darbininkas (Worker), est. in 1915, in Brooklyn, NY, by Franciscan Fathers (defunct); 2. Dirva (The Field), est. in 1916, in Cleveland, Ohio, by American Lithuanian Press Association "Viltis", currently in circulation; 3. Draugas (The Friend), est. in 1909, in Chicago, IL, by Lithuanian Catholic Press Society. currently in circulation; 4. Garsas (Echo), est. in 1917, in Wilkes-Barre, PA. Publisher: Lithuanian R. C. Alliance of America (defunct); 5. Keleivis (The Traveler), est. in 1905, in So. Boston, Mass, by Keleivis Publishing Co. (defunct); 6. Laisvė (Liberty), est. in 1911, in Ozone Park, N. Y. by: The Lithuanian Cooperative Publishing Society (defunct); 7. Naujienos (News), est. in 1914 in Chicago, II. by The Lithuanian News Publishing Co., Inc. (defunct); 8. Sandara (The League), est. in 1914, weekly in Chicago, IL, by: Lithuanian National League of America (defunct); 9. Tėvynė (Homeland), est. in 1908, in New York City by Lithuanian Alliance of America; 10. Vienybė (Unity), est. in 1886, in Brooklyn, NY, by Valerie Tysliava and Co., claiming to be the oldest Lithuanian newspaper in the world (defunct); 11. Lietuva (Lithuania), by A. Olshevsksis in Chicago from 1892 to 1920 (defunct).

The list of other short-lived minor Lithuanian newspapers in the United States is long. Frank Lavinskas lists titles of some 170 newspapers and journals, published between 1879 and 1955. [25]

Two major Lithuanian American nation-wide journals and magazines are known to have been published prior to WWI:

1. “Moterų dirva” (Women's Field), est. 1914, in Chicago, IL, by American Lithuanian Roman Catholic Women's Alliance (in English and Lithuanian) (defunct):
2. Vytais (The Knight), est. 1915, in Chicago, IL, by The Knights of Lithuania (in Lithuanian and English), still in publication.

Most of the publications paid little attention to America’s domestic issues and politics. If mentioned, politicians were judged not so much on their merits as public servants, but on how much they supported Lithuanian causes.

Medical professionals and health care (84, 85)

Formation of Lithuanian American settlements at the end of the nineteenth century raised the need for physicians who could provide medical care to people in the language they understood. Self-help fraternal and benefit societies, social and charitable organizations that provided help for sick or injured Lithuanian Immigrants, were insufficient. Because most Lithuanian immigrants had little or no formal education, there was virtually no one even training in the medical arts to fill such needs for the first thirty years since mass immigration started. The first known Lithuanian medical doctor Matas Kasakauskas graduated from the University of Michigan in 1884. He was followed by Šliūpas from John Hopkins in 1892. Available immigration records indicate six medical doctors from Lithuania entering the United States between 1899 and 1904.
Other records indicate several Lithuanian medical students (by root of their names) being enrolled at the University of Baltimore in 1898. More than a dozen Lithuanian medical students are noted to have been enrolled in medical studies at the Valparaiso university in 1908-1909 and, subsequently, at the Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery. Several Lithuanian medical doctors and dentists are known to have graduated also from other medical schools in the eastern part of the United States. Before WWI ended, Lithuanian medical doctors and dentists could be found in almost any larger size settlement.


The association aimed to provide information to Lithuanian newsprint on health issues and sanitary living, as well as to warn the readers about fake medical doctors and distributors of medications deceptively promoting cure and steps into restoring well-being.

Most of the Lithuanian medical doctors were very community and freedom for homeland minded. They vigorously supported the quest of Lithuanian people for independence. Many assumed leadership positions in Lithuanian-American National organizations. In 1919, they were instrumental in forming the Lithuania Rescue Committee. In a short time, under the leadership of Drs. S.Biežis and A.Graičiūnas, the committee raised and sent to Lithuania a sum of $60,000 for humanitarian needs. Also in 1919, the association was formally registered in the state of Illinois as the "American Lithuanian Doctors Association" (ALDA).

Enterprising

As the growth of Lithuanian business enterprising began slowing down in the Eastern part of the United States in early part of the 20th century, it began to expand substantially in the Midwest such as Cleveland, Oh., Detroit, Mi., and particularly in the Chicago region. By the end of the first 1900 decade, the Bridgeport and Town of Lakes districts in Chicago became the key centers of Lithuanian activity. *Lietuvos kalendorius*, published in 1910 in Chicago, shows reasonably extensive Lithuanian based small business infrastructure in the Chicago region. It lists over 500 businesses of which 180 were saloons, 80 grocery and butcher stores, 30 barbershops and hair salons, 14 travel agencies, 10 printing shops, 7 each funeral homes and bakeries, 6 each notary publics and fire insurers, 4 pharmacies, one bank and nine savings and loan associations, and a great number of small scale entrepreneurs. The same *Kalendorius* indicates existence of more than a dozen of Lithuanian savings and loan associations in other parts of the United States at that time.

Antanas Olshevskis, the first prominent Lithuanian business leader between 1890 and 1920 in Chicago, became a large scale homebuilder responsible for most of the early buildings in the Bridgeport and Town of Lakes districts. Among his more notable constructions for the Lithuanian community purposes was the Lithuania Theater building in 1912, for motion pictures and vaudeville shows, and a 1200 seat Lithuanian operetta house “Milda”, for staging of operas, musicals, and large public and political events.
While, undoubtedly, large number of tailor shops was a predominant Lithuanian enterprise in the eastern half of United States, financial institutions and numerous small scale business enterprises flourished in the Midwest, particularly in the Chicago area. Their support of notable events was of significant importance to Lithuanian communities. One of those was a successful implementation of idea of a gift from Lithuanian Americans of a ton heavy Liberty Bell to their ancestral homeland. Its manufacture and the festivities associated with the public presentation of the Liberty Bell were documented in a first ever Lithuanian motion picture film. The Bell was subsequently transported to and paraded at numerous Lithuanian settlements. For an opportunity to ring the bell once, an individual had to donate one dollar. This exposure created not only heightened interest in Lithuania, but also raised sufficient funds to pay for the manufacture of the bell, its exhibition as well as transportation to Lithuania. The Bell’s ringing was heard for the first time by the Lithuanian people from the tower of Lithuania’s War museum in Kaunas on February 16, 1922.

Anticipating Lithuania’s independence, Lithuanian Americans formed in 1914, The Lithuanian Development Corp. with funds over $690,000 compiled by the end of 1919, through sale of
45,000 shares. For similar purpose, a group of entrepreneurs formed in 1919 an America’s Lithuanian Trading company with an initial capital of $100,000. Both entities were responsible for establishing in subsequent years major manufacturing facilities in Lithuania.

**Knights of Lithuania**

The Knights of Lithuania (KoL) is a nationwide youth organization of Roman Catholic men and women of Lithuanian ancestry and their spouses. Adhering to the motto: "For God and Country", the Knights aim to keep alive an appreciation of Lithuanian language, customs and culture, while also stressing the importance of Roman Catholic beliefs. St. Casimir is the organization's patron saint.

Its origin was at the 1912 annual convention of the Lithuanian Catholic Alliance in Boston, Massachusetts. At the meeting, Mykolas Norkūnas called for the establishment of a new patriotic youth organization to combat a decline in national consciousness, rise in ethnically-mixed marriages, and growing tendency towards political radicalism among Lithuanian-American youth. This call was subsequently echoed in the pages of other conservative Lithuanian-language publications. It soon gained support of a number of prominent Catholic leaders, that inspired Norkūnas in further pursuit of his efforts.

A two-day convention was called at a church hall in Lawrence, Massachusetts on April 27–28, 1913, to launch a new Catholic organization along the lines advocated by Norkūnas. Ten delegates gathered and a new organization, called the Lithuanian Falcons, was born. A report on formation of the new group was delivered to the 1913 Congress of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation. The proposal was approved, except it recommended that the new group change the name to a more historically oriented moniker, the Knights of Lithuania (Lietuvos Vyčiai), with St. Casimir as the organization’s patron saint.

KoL grew significantly during its first year of existence. By its 1914 convention, the organization was made up of 12 local councils. By 1916 there were 60 councils with a membership of more
than 4000. The KoL activities included establishing personal improvement circles, such as to boost work skills, literary reading groups, promotion of talents to develop theatrical acting, organizing art exhibits, outings without alcohol, providing stipends for extremely gifted but support-needed students, etc. KoL of Chicago even organized a Savings and Loan Association to help its members secure loans to buy homes.

A periodical, named *Vytis* (The Knight), was launched for distribution to KoL members. With a pair of Lithuanian-American students handling editorial duties, the journal was quite instrumental not only in addressing issues and events within its own organization, but also promoted Lithuania’s quest for independence and activities to secure U.S. diplomatic recognition.

KoL at that time was divided into the five districts: 1. The Amber district containing chapters in NY and PA; 2. The Mid-America district with chapters in IL, WI, IN, and NE; 3. The Mid-Atlantic district with chapters in NYC, NJ, and D.C.; 4. The Mid-Central district with chapters in Western PA, OH, and MI; and 5. The New England District with chapters in MA, CT, and RI.

The KoL strives to keep the Lithuanian heritage active through cultural presentations, lectures, trips, choral and dance groups. Through efforts such as the National Scholarship Fund, the organization is able to help talented members to further their education. In addition, it encourages all councils to form Junior Councils for the younger members.

Knights of Lithuania at Schuykill County Lithuanian days

**Epi-Prologue**

The period from 1860 to 1920 was one of the harshest and one of the most successful in the history of America’s Lithuanians. Starting from destitute, poverty stricken and lost in the world at the time of arrival and ending up with a well-organized ethnic and patriotic communities’ network, as well as helping their homeland to attain freedom and independence, have few parallels in the civilized world’s history. However, after reaching the pinnacle, the Lithuanian American communities had to take a stalling breath as WWI changed the understanding of their world. Generations of now native American-born individuals were continuously pulled away into assimilation into America’s mainstream and while cheering for Lithuania’s freedom, they began to realize that it was not always in the image of what they thought and imagined it would be.

Part II of this historical narrative deals with events in Lithuanian American diaspora life and intersection of interests with and events in the home country from 1919 to the end of 1945.
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