



Slovaks on the Hudson: Most Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, & the Slovak Catholics of the Archdiocese of New York, 1894-2000

Thomas J. Shelley

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Among the descendants of the Slavic immigrants to the United States today, only the Poles outnumber the Slovaks, but the Slovak presence in this country has been largely unnoticed and unstudied. This book traces the evolution of one Slovak Catholic community in Yonkers, New York, over the course of the last century by focusing on the role of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, the single most important institution in the local Slovak Catholic community. The church served not only as a religious center but also as a social and cultural focal point, and it formed an indispensable link between the local Slovak Catholic community and an extensive network of national fraternal organizations. The history of this Slovak national parish is inextricably linked with the history of the whole Catholic community in Yonkers. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, repeated waves of Catholic immigrants transformed the city into a microcosm of the Catholic Church in urban America. For that reason the history of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity has been placed in this larger context. Because Yonkers was also a quintessential industrial city filled with smokestack industries, a subsidiary theme that runs throughout the book is the long struggle of the industrial workers of Yonkers, many of them Catholic immigrants like the Slovaks, to obtain better working conditions from their employers. The early years of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity coincided with the awakening of long-dormant cultural and political national consciousness among the Slovak people, both in Europe and in America. Parishes such as Most Holy Trinity played a crucial role in the formation of this modern Slovak national consciousness. For that reason alone, the history of this parish has significance far beyond the boundaries of Yonkers, New York.

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