

Keweenaw National Historical Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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## FINDING AID

# Croatian Fraternal Union records 1898-2004 (bulk dates: 1906-1971)

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National Park Service  
Keweenaw National Historical Park  
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## HISTORY

In late autumn of 1893, a young newspaperman, Zdravko V. Muzina, came to Pittsburgh from Chicago to organize a mutual benefit society for all Croatians. Thirty people attended a meeting on January 14, 1894 and began paying dues to provide life, protection, accident, and health insurance for themselves and their families. With the assistance of Petar Pavlinac and Franjo Sepic, Muzina arranged a meeting on September 2, 1894, of six independent societies, which formed a new organization called the Croatian Association (Hrvatska Zajednica). In 1897, with just over two thousand five hundred members, the Croatian Association received a new charter, changing their name to the National Croatian Society (Narodne Hrvatske Zajednice, NHZ). The society was originally organized as a secret society open only to men. By 1896, women were admitted and meetings were open.

In 1912 the National Croatian Society had over thirty thousand members represented at the National Convention in Kansas City, Kansas. At the 1912 convention the delegates adopted a Table of Rates, which prescribed rates for annual dues, based on the age of the member and the amount of insurance requested. This was an improvement over the old assessment principle utilized previously even though the old way demanded considerably less in dues. The low dues would only last as long as younger people were joining in great numbers but once the membership started aging, it would mean higher assessments because of increased payments of death benefits.

At the 1915 Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio, Supreme President Josip Marohnic noted that emphasis should be placed on the Croatian youth and founded the Junior Order Department of the organization was founded. Local junior chapters were called nests instead of lodges.

In 1921 the delegates of the Convention began proceedings for the merger of all Croatian organizations. The merger was finalized at the 1926 Convention, when the current name of the organization, the Croatian Fraternal Union of America (Hrvatske Bratske Zajednice, HBZ), was adopted. By the beginning of World War II, there were one hundred thousand active members of the Croatian Fraternal Union in the United States.

The first Slovenian benefit society was founded as early as 1882 in Calumet, Michigan. Called the Society of St. Joseph, it became the parent organization of the Slovanic Croatian Union (Slovenska Hrvatske Zajednice, SHZ), which merged with the Croatian Fraternal Union in Pittsburgh in 1939.

The Slovene National Benefit Society (Slovenska Narodna Podpora Jednota, SNPJ) was founded in Chicago, Illinois in 1904. From its inception, the SNPJ was based on a fraternal, class-conscious, "workingman's" foundation. All members have equal rights, including sick and death benefits. It has grown over the years and has become the largest Slovenian fraternal organization in America.

In the beginning, the SNPJ admitted only men into its ranks, but by 1909 provisions were made for women to become members with equal rights. Three years later, children were granted membership and the first youth circle was organized in 1937.

In 1992 there were two hundred thirty-seven lodges and almost fifty-five thousand active members.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

Croatian Fraternal Union records  
1898-2004 (bulk dates: 1906-1971)

CATALOG NUMBER KEWE 40506

VOLUME [Count] 46 [Extent] [Type of Unit] EA.

### DESCRIPTION

The Croatian Fraternal Union records are comprised of membership and financial ledgers, meeting minutes, and various other materials pertaining to the administrative aspects of the Croatian and Slovene Lodges that were part of the Calumet and Quincy communities from 1897 to 2004.

The lodges represented in the collection include St. Rok Red Jacket Lodge, No. 48; St. Trojstvo, Quincy Lodge, No. 262; Slavonic Croatian Union St. Rok Lodge, No. 9; Vinodolac Lodge, No. 153; Ahmeek Lodge, No. 270; and Slovene National Benefit Society Lodge, No. 136. The St. Rok lodges, Vinodolac Lodge, and St. Trojstvo/Quincy Lodge were eventually absorbed into the Ahmeek Lodge.

It appears that some records from the other local Croatian and Slovene Lodges were acquired by the Ahmeek Lodge when the other lodges were dissolved.

The strengths of the collection include the membership records and financial records dating from 1897 to 2004. The membership rosters and dues ledgers would be of interest to genealogists for the lists of members. The dues ledgers and membership rosters could also be used by researchers to trace the rise and decline in lodge membership in Calumet and Quincy, as well as provide insight into other aspects of the social history of the community. Also of note in the collection is the meeting minute book of Slavonic Croatian Union Lodge, No. 9 dating from 1932 to 1946, because it covers the years in which the lodge changed its affiliation and number twice.

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ORGANIZATION	<p>[Organization]The Croatian Fraternal Union records are divided into seven series, one for each of the lodges represented in the collection and a miscellaneous series for the ledgers of uncertain provenance. The seven series are organized chronologically based on lodge establishment date and the miscellaneous series comes last. Subseries headings within each series include administration, membership, financial, and publications, in that order, as applicable. [Arrangement]Materials within each subseries are generally arranged in chronological order; any discrepancies are caused by similar materials from different accessions having a range of dates that somewhat overlap or fill in gaps.</p>
PROVENANCE	<p>The Croatian Fraternal Union records are comprised of materials from two accessions. The primary accession is accession number KEWE-00351, containing material which belonged to the Ahmeek Lodge, No. 270 and was donated to Keweenaw National Historical Park on June 16, 2008.</p> <p>Materials from accession number KEWE-00051 were salvaged from the Union Building by former owner Ray Ostermyer. The materials were purchased by Keweenaw National Historical Park from Mr. Ostermyer on August 20, 2002.</p>
RESTRICTIONS	NO
ASSOCIATED MATERIALS	CFU Ahmeek Lodge, No. 270 maintains active records

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## HIERARCHY

- I. SERIES 001: AHMEEK LODGE, No. 270, 1957-1958
- II. SERIES 002: ST. ROK LODGE, No. 9 [S.H.Z.], 1915-1949
- III. SERIES 003: ST. ROK, RED JACKET LODGE, No. 48 [H.B.Z.], 1898-1971
- IV. SERIES 004: ST. TROJSTVO, QUINCY LODGE, No. 262, 1903-2004 (bulk dates: 1903-1926)
- V. SERIES 005: VINODOLAC LODGE, No. 153, 1909-1914
- VI. SERIES 006: JUNIOR ORDERS, 1924-1974 (bulk dates: 1928-1940)
- VII. SERIES 007: SLOVENE NATIONAL BENEFIT SOCIETY LODGE, No. 136, 1914-1933
- VIII. SERIES 008: MISCELLANEOUS LEDGERS, 1903-1988 (bulk dates: 1903-1965)

## CONTAINER LIST

### Box 1

#### **SERIES 001: Ahmeek Lodge, No. 270**

Folder 1. 00016/001-001 Account Ledger (1)

#### **SERIES 002: St. Rok Lodge, No. 9 [S.H.Z.]**

Folder 2. 00016/002-001 Account Ledger, Meeting Minutes (2)

Folder 3. 00016/002-002 Miscellaneous (2)

#### **SERIES 003: St. Rok, Red Jacket Lodge, No. 48 [H.B.Z.]**

Folder 4. 00016/003-001 Membership Dues Ledgers (3)

Folder 5. 00016/003-002 Account Ledger, Membership Account Ledger (2)

Folder 6. 00016/003-003 Miscellaneous (6)

#### **SERIES 004: St. Trojstvo, Quincy Lodge, No. 262**

Folder 7. 00016/004-001 Membership Register Ledger, Membership Dues Ledgers (4)

Folder 8. 00016/004-002 CFU Business Transactions Report (1)

Folder 9. 00014/004-003 Account Ledger (1)

#### **SERIES 005: Vinodolac Lodge, No. 153**

Folder 10. 00016/005-001 Account Ledger (1)

#### **SERIES 006: Junior Orders [Nests]**

Folder 11. 00016/006-001 Nest Membership Dues Ledgers, Nest Membership Account Ledger (3)

#### **SERIES 007: Slovene National Benefit Society**

Folder 12. 00016/007-001 Membership Dues Ledger, Sick Benefits Ledger (2)

Folder 13. 00016/007-002 Receipts, Correspondence, Death Certificate (5)

**Box 1 (cont'd)****SERIES 008: Miscellaneous Ledgers**

Folder 14. 00016/008-001 Membership Account Ledgers (3)

Folder 15. 00016/008-002 Records Books (2)

Folder 16. 00016/008-003 Membership Account Ledger, Loose items from Ledger (5)