

## SERBIAN SOKOL SOCIETY IN PENNSYLVANIA (STEELTON)

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### SUMMARY

Serbian Sokol Societies were based on the idea of a new form of physical exercise originated in the Czech lands in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After first initiatives, this idea soon spread to all Slavic as also countries where Slavic nations lived. That is how since 1907 this way of physical exercise appeared among Serbs who lived in America (USA). The Sokol idea in state of Pennsylvania started by the local Serbs in Steelton in the middle of 1912, when, following the initiative of the orthodox priest Teofil H. Stefanovic, they founded the Serbian Sokol Society. The subject of this research is Serbian Sokolism in America (USA) with the aim to explore when this society was founded, who took part in those and other activities until June 1914. During research authors used historical method.

**Key words:** Serbian Sokol, society, Steelton, Pennsylvania, sokolism.

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### INTRODUCTION

Sokolism appeared in the Czech lands in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and soon after it spread to all Slavic countries, as well as to other countries where Slavic nations lived. That is how in 1907 this way of physical exercise began to spread among Serbs who lived in the territory of United States of America (but in

this paper it will be addressed as America). The Sokol idea in Steelton was started by the local Serbs in the middle of 1912, when on the initiative of the priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church Teofil H. Stefanović, they founded the Serbian Sokol Society in Steelton (Pennsylvania).

## **SUBJECT AND GOAL**

The subject of the work is Serbian Sokolism in America (USA) and the goal is to explore when the Sokol Society in Steelton (Pennsylvania) was founded, who took part in its founding and all its activities until June 1914.

## **METHOD**

During writing authors used available primary and secondary historical sources and used historical method.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The establishment of the Serbian Sokol Society and its work until the end of 1912**

From May 30<sup>th</sup> 1909, when the first Serbian Sokol Society (SSS) in America was founded in Cincinnati, the Sokol idea spread throughout the United States where Serbs and other Slavic people lived. In this way, the Sokolism came among the Serbs in Steelton.

One of the main initiators for the establishment of SSS in Steelton was the priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), Father Teofil H. Stefanović who spread the sokol idea among the Serbs there. On Sunday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1912, local Serbs were gathered by Father Stefan, they held a meeting and decided to establish SSS in Steelton. The work of the meeting was supervised by an Orthodox priest who spoke about the significance of the Sokolism for the Serbian people, read and interpreted the Sokol rules, etc. At that time, 29 members, 25 regular and 4 supporters were enrolled in the newly formed society. The first management of the Society was also selected. The Administrative Board was elected: Đorko Milosavljević, Elder; Mihajlo Bogdanović, deputy chief of staff; Dimitrije Kajganić, Secretary; Jandre Linta, treasurer and Panta Fišić, economist. Simo Ivošević was elected President of the Supervisory Board, and as his assistants Simo Zuber and Jandra Lint. Mile Molić was elected Leader and Mihajlo Bogdanović as his deputy. Đuro Aralica and Dimitrije Kajganić were elected as frontmen, the leaders of the departments during the exercise.

Slovaks gave at the disposal their gym so they already started with exercise. SSS Secretary Dimitrije Kajganić sent a letter to *Soko* journal by which they were informed about the establishment of the Society, and in which, among other things, he wrote: „Our brothers understood the concept of the importance of Sokol idea, and the flower of youth, pioneers and Serbian patriots gathered in this young circle, and soon we hope to quadruple the membership.”<sup>1</sup> The Editorial Board of the *Soko* journal commented the establishment of the SSC in Stilton and the letter of the Secretary with following words: „It is particularly pleasing to us that our brothers in Steelton have gone the right way, working together, and they can be congratulated on every national work up until today. Their work was crowned by the founding of the Sokol.”<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after the founding of the Society Jovo Jovanović, a member of the newly founded Society, sent a letter to the Administration of Serbian Sokol Parish in America (SSPA) in his name, in which he asked them to send them „... the sokol rules, petitions, signs and one solemn suit.”<sup>3</sup> The letter was read at the SSPA's meeting held on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1912, in Chicago, and was decided that the Secretary of SSPA will respond and send them what they requested for.

In the minutes of the SSPA's meeting, held on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1912 in Chicago wrote: „We read letters from Charles City, Iowa, Kimberly, Nv., And Steelton, Pa. in which they report that they want to establish Sokol societies, and therefore demand, petitions, rules, and command.”<sup>4</sup> When writing minutes, it was probably mistakenly written „... and Steelton, Pa.” because SSS in Steelton, as mentioned above, was founded on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

In the second half of September 1912, the dministration of SSS from Steelton sent a letter to Parish in which she asked for more Sokol suits, 12 ceremonial and some training suits (the number was not stated), and also some Sokol badges. They shipped \$ 134.20 for suits, as a down payment, and the rest will be sent after

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<sup>1</sup> Српски Соко у Стилтону, Па., *Соко, лист Српских Сокола у Америци*, год. 2, бр. 7 и 8, Њујорк, 1. август 1912, стр. 117. [Serbian Sokol in Steelton, PA. *Soko, journal of Serbian Sokols in America*. New York, August 1<sup>st</sup> 1912: 2(7-8), p. 117.]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник прве сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржане 7. јула у „Српској Читаоници“ у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, лист Српских Сокола у Америци*, год. 2, бр. 9, Њујорк, 1. септембар 1912, стр. 131. [Porović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the first assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America held on July 7<sup>th</sup> in “Serbian Reading room” in Chicago, IL. *Soko, journal of Serbian Sokols in America*. New York, September 1<sup>st</sup> 1912: 2(9), p. 131.]

<sup>4</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник друге сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржане 21. јула о.г. у „Српској Читаоници“ у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, лист Српских Сокола у Америци*, год. 2, бр. 9, Њујорк, 1. септембар 1912, стр. 132. [Porović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the second assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America on July 21<sup>st</sup> t.y. in “Serbian Reading room” in Chicago, IL. *Soko, journal of Serbian Sokols in America*. New York, September 1<sup>st</sup> 1912: 2(9), p. 132.]

receiving them. With the contents of the letter the Administration of the Parish was acquainted at its session on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1912 in Chicago.<sup>5</sup>

In the beginning of October, the Steelton Sokols through the letter sent a \$ 30-check to the Parish for the items they ordered. The letter was read and the check was received at the Parish session on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1912, in Chicago.<sup>6</sup>

At the SSPA session held on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912 in Chicago, a letter from Steelton sokol Voja Jovanović, who was in charge of the purchase of Sokol suits, was read out, in which he informed them that the ordered suits did not arrive and asked them to answer what happened with them. They decided to check in the post office what happened because they had sent the suits, „... and therefore fix this situation.“<sup>7</sup>

In the reviewed sources, we did not find the date when the Steelton sokols sent SSPA application for membership. It is known that at the SSPA's session, held on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912 in Chicago, it was decided to „accept Serbian Soko from Steelton, Pa. in S.S.P.“<sup>8</sup>

### **Work of the Society from the beginning of 1913 to the end of June 1914**

During the next year, 1913, Steelton sokols continued with their activities. In the first half of January of that year they sent a reply to a letter sent by SSPA in which they informed them that they are not able to provide financial assistance for the maintenance of the Serbian Sokol Slet (Gathering) in Denver (Colorado). They also informed the Parish that they received the ordered items, horizontal bar and the *Yearbook of the Serbian Sokols in America*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник пете сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржане 4. октобра 1912. у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, лист Српских Сокола у Америци*, год. 2, бр. 12, Њујорк, 1. децембар 1912, стр. 179 – 181. [Popović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the fifth assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1912 in Chicago, IL. *Soko, journal of Serbian Sokols in America*. New York, December 1<sup>st</sup> 1912: 2(12), pp. 179 – 181.]

<sup>6</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник шесте сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржате 16. октобра 1912. у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, орган Српских Сокола у Америци и лист за народно просвећивање*, год. 3, бр. 1 и 2, Њујорк, 1. фебруар 1913, стр. 25 – 26. [Popović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the sixth assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America on October 16<sup>th</sup> 1912 in Chicago, IL. *Soko, organ of Serbian Sokols in America and journal for national edification*. New York, February 1<sup>st</sup> 1913: 3(1-2), pp. 25 – 26.]

<sup>7</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник седме сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржате 15. децембра 1912. у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, орган Српских Сокола у Америци и лист за народно просвећивање*, год. 3, бр. 1 и 2, Њујорк, 1. фебруар 1913, стр. 27. [Popović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the seventh assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1912 in Chicago, IL. *Soko, organ of Serbian Sokols in America and journal for national edification*. New York, February 1<sup>st</sup> 1913: 3(1-2), p. 27.]

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник осме сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржате 31. јануара 1913. године у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, орган Српских Сокола у Америци и*

At the beginning of February 1913, the Serbian Charitable Society „Sv.O. Nikola“ S.P.S.S. from Steelton enrolled SSS from that place as the founder and in that cause paid \$ 25 to the Society.<sup>10</sup>

Steelton Sokols regularly performed their financial and other obligations towards the Parish.

More information about the work and activities of the Serbian sokols from Steelton by the end of June 1914 was not found in the reviewed and available sources.

## CONCLUSION

Authors in this research at the very beginning set the goal to explore and present establishment of Serbian Soko Society in Steelton, with the main idea to save from oblivion this interesting and so-far un-researched field of Serbian Sokolism. Therefore based on the available sources they reconstructed establishment, activities but also names of the most important persons regarding this Society.

After the formation of Steelton Sokol Society on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1912 up until the last data available, in the text above is visible that its members performed all their duties towards the common sokol idea and towards the Serbian Sokol Parish of America. Besides, they were also gathering local Serbs and therefore saving their national identity and connection with their motherland.

At the end we can conclude that, although not existing for more than two years, with their work they contributed to the achievement of common sokol goals and in that way gave significant contribution to development of Serbian Sokolism in America (USA).

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*лист за народно просвећивање*, год. 3, бр. 3 и 4, Њујорк, март – април 1913, стр. 54 – 56. [Popović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the eight assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America on January 31<sup>st</sup> 1913 in Chicago, IL. *Soko, organ of Serbian Sokols in America and journal for national edification*. New York, March-April 1913: 3(3-4). p. 54 – 56.]

<sup>10</sup> Поповић, Б. Душан и Јокановић, Милош: Записник девете сједнице Српске Соколске Жупе у Америци, одржате 28. фебруара 1913. год. у Чикагу, Ил., *Соко, орган Српских Сокола у Америци и лист за народно просвећивање*, год. 3, бр. 3 и 4, Њујорк, март – април 1913, стр. 56 – 59. [Popović, B. D. & Jokanović, M. Minutes from the nine assembly of Serbian Sokol Parish in America on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1913 in Chicago, IL. *Soko, organ of Serbian Sokols in America and journal for national edification*. New York, March-April 1913: 3(3-4). p. 56 – 59.]

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## СРПСКО СОКОЛСКО ДРУШТВО У ПЕНСИЛВАНИЈИ (СТИЛТОН)

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### САЖЕТАК

Српска соколска друштва почивала су на тада новој идеји телесног вежбања која је настала на простору Чешке у другој половини 19. века. Убрзо после првих иницијатива ова идеја проширила се на све словенске као и на земље где су живели словенски народи. Из наведеног разлога од 1907. године ова идеја појавила се и међу Србима који су живели у Америци (САД). Соколска идеја у Пенсилванији појавила се од стране локалних Срба у Стилтону средином 1912. године, када су на иницијативу православног свештеника, Теофила Х. Стефановића, основали Српско соколско друштво. Предмет овог истраживања је српско соколство у Америци (САД) са циљем да се истражи када је Друштво основано, ко је учествовао у његовом оснивању као и у осталим активностима до јуна 1914. године. Током истраживања аутори су користили историјски метод.

**Кључне речи:** Српски Соко, друштво, Стилтон, Пенсилванија, соколство.

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## СЕРБСКОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО «СОКОЛ» В ПЕНСИЛВАНИИ (СТИЛТОН)

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### АННОТАЦИЯ

Сербские общества "Сокол" были основаны на идее новой формы физических упражнений, зародившейся в чешских землях во второй половине XIX века. После первых начинаний эта идея вскоре распространилась на все славянские страны, а также на страны, где проживали славянские народы. С 1907 года этот способ физических упражнений появился у сербов, проживавших в Америке (США). В штате Пенсильвания идея "Сокола" зародилась у местных сербов в городе Стилтон в середине 1912 года, когда по инициативе православного священника Теофила Х. Стефановича они основали Сербское общество «Сокол». Предметом данного исследования является сербский Соколизм в Америке (США) с целью выяснить, когда было

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основано это общество, кто принимал участие в деятельности до июня 1914 года. В ходе исследования авторы использовали исторический метод.

**Ключевые слова:** Сербский «Сокол», общество, Стилтон, Пенсильвания, Соколизм

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