

Podcast Transcript: Granddaughter of Immigrants

Episode Title: The Wedding Photograph - Episode 7

Host: Erika Hanchar

Transcript

[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]: A chair digs into the muddy ground as they sit in front of their handmade homestead, in a playful and coy pose for the camera. Probably the only image taken that day. Not much else is known about the wedding, aside from the few details we can ascertain from the photograph.

(soft piano music plays)

By 1941, the eldest daughter of Anastasia and Peter was married. Natalia married Eugene Lasko, on the homestead, in Saint-Paul-des-Métis, Alberta.

I'm Erika Hanchar, and this is *Granddaughter of Immigrants*. Episode 7: The Wedding Photograph.

In the old country, weddings were multi-day celebrations, with religious ceremonies in churches, betrothal customs, ceremonial breads, the *korovai* so elaborate it looked like a modern-day wedding cake, with symbolic clothing like the embroidered *vyshyvanka* and floral crowns. Dancing the *hopak* on the front lawn of your family home was about as Ukrainian as you could get. In Canada, diaspora weddings in the 1930s were a mix of old world traditions and new world adaptations. And as the new world moved in, so did a more simplistic celebration style, prompting the diaspora to accommodate to smaller communities, agriculture schedules, and finances. In the hybridization of the old and the new world traditions, where a wedding cake would eventually replace ceremonial breads, and ribbons on a floral crown were replaced by white veils, an assimilation into Canadian life would in some ways phase out old customs. The weddings on the homesteads of Alberta were no less charming.

(soft piano music plays)

She was 18 years old and wearing a silk white gown that gathered at the waist. The satin puffed sleeves were only outdone by the semi-traditional floral crown, or *vinok*, with the modern veil in place of a traditional ribbon. Her new husband wore a modern pinstripe suit with wide-legged pants, almost a zoot suit type, if you know what I'm talking about, the type of gangster might wear in an old shoot-'em-up movie. His boutonniere was larger than normal and adorned with ribbons. He looked like he'd just won first prize at the fall fair, rather than had just become someone's new husband. In the only photograph from the day, Natalia sits on Eugene's lap, in a chair that looks as though it was taken from an indoor dining room set. Her legs are crossed, showing off what we can only imagine were her once-pristine white wedding shoes, now

traced in mud.

(soft piano music fades out)

As a photographer, I know that back in the day, it wasn't always common to have candid-style photos taken. Especially if you only had one photo taken per year. I know—can you imagine a world where you only get one chance to have a photograph taken per year? And you would often only get one photo. That's it, no do-overs. Over the years, there were a few portraits taken outside of their homestead, and it seemed to become an annual event where professional photographers would travel to these small isolated Canadian communities and photograph settlers. Their expressions, like that of a Soviet archetype, that miserable peasant passport expression. Often the images were stark on barren landscapes, people with wind-swept clothing and hair, looking almost like they were living during the Dust Bowl. Back in the day, a photograph wasn't casual; it was annual. And that's if a traveling photographer even visited your settlement village.

Sidebar: if anyone out there knows more about these traveling photographers who went to homesteads and photographed Ukrainian settler families, I would love to know you. I'm truly fascinated by their role in shaping my family's memories and archives.

But over the years, as immigrants built up their properties, much like my family did, they began to look more and more put together in their photographs. More intentional and proud to be photographed by their homes, at their weddings, or family events. For the Radomski family, over the years, their images went from looking Dust Bowl chic to one of a proud family with traditional farm-fresh flowers, pressed clothes, and beautiful patterned linen tablecloths. What I wouldn't give to watch a video clip of that time. Not just some AI render of an old photograph I have, but the real scene.

(soft piano music plays)

(nature and bird sounds)

Natalia is sitting on Eugene's lap in her wedding gown and white satin shoes. The chair is digging into the mud under their weight, and it shakes a little underneath them, almost tipping over. And they start laughing, and he picks her up, feet deep in the mud, and he kisses her, and all the guests cheer. The photographer snaps the photo.

(old camera flash bulb sound)

Even though the photograph captured a moment of joy, it was short-lived. Within the year, the homesteads were completed; a success with working farmland, a house, a barn, and a shed on each lot. They welcomed baby Eugene Richard Lasko, who wasn't even a year old when a husband who drank too much and left too often finally raised a hand at her. Natalia made the choice that no married woman wants to make, one as bold as her parents leaving Ukraine for the prairies: she left him.

Natalia divorced Eugene, standing firm on her requests for two fake marble tables, a thousand dollars, the baby, and the baby carriage. Now a divorcee, Natalia at 20 years old with a baby on her hip, she and her family set off for Ontario, to Fort William, for a new Canadian dream. It wasn't ideal, leaving the place that they had spent 20 years building. But something tells me that Anastasia and Peter were not the type of parents to stay too long in a place that was no longer serving them or their daughter. The logical next steps: upgrade, take the money from the sale of their two farms, and move to the city.

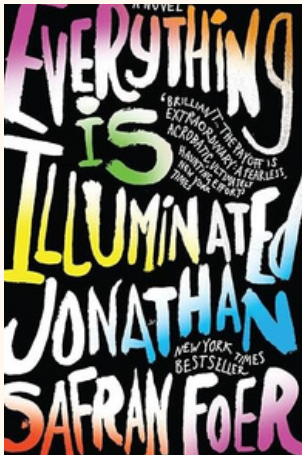
(soft electronic music plays)

I don't know why Natalia kept the photo from her wedding, the one with the chair and the legs sinking into the dirt, all these years. But I know why I like it. It's almost like a metaphor for a sinking marriage, and a woman who never toppled.

This episode of *Granddaughter of Immigrants* was written by me, Erika Hanchar..

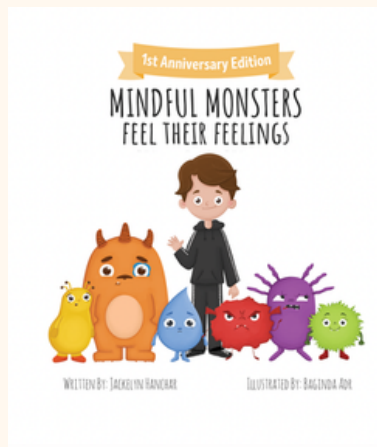
Sound engineering and design for *Granddaughter of Immigrants* by Colin Thompson and me, Erika Hanchar. Music for this episode by Semo and Out of Flux. For the full transcript and links to books mentioned in the episode, please see the show notes. *Granddaughter of Immigrants* is brought to you by Main Character Creative, a digital media agency.

Book RECOMMENDATIONS



**EVEYTHING IS
ILLUMINATED**

JONATHAN SAFRAN-FOER



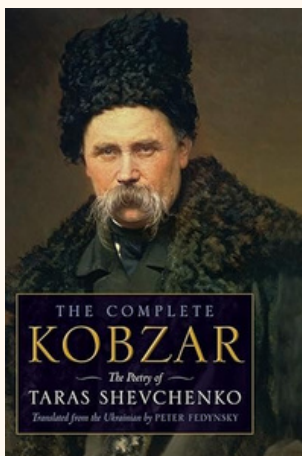
**MINDFUL MONSTER FEEL
THEIR FEELINGS**

JACKELYN HANCHAR



THE GIFT OF THE SHIFT

**ANN PAPAYOTI &
TRACEY MACDONALD**



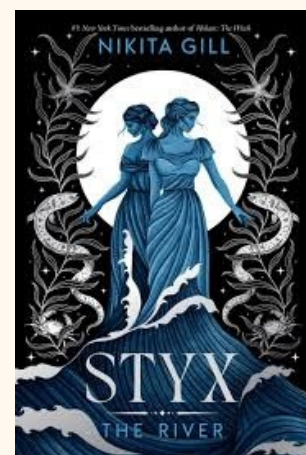
THE KOBZAR

TARAS SHEVCHENKO



**SALT AND BRAIDED
BREAD**

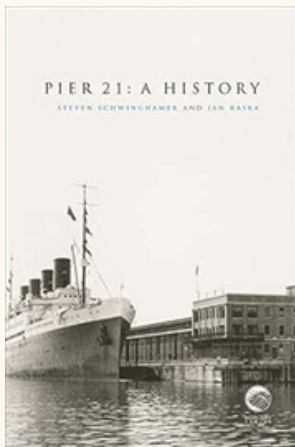
JARS BALAN



STYX : THE RIVER

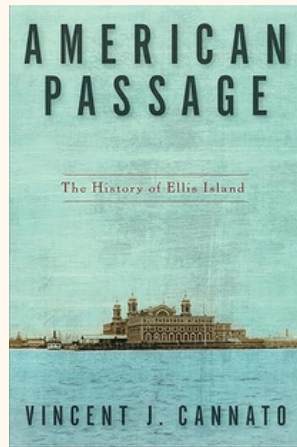
NAKITA GILL

Book RECOMMENDATIONS



PIER 21 : A HISTORY

JAN RASKA
STEVEN SCHWINGHAMER



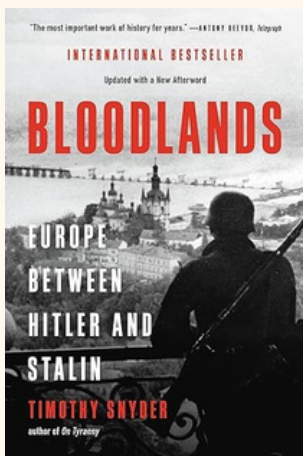
AMERICAN PASSAGE

VINCENT CANNATO



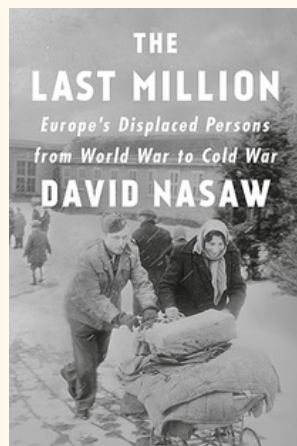
BABYN YAR

A. ANATOLI
ANATOLY KUZNETSOV



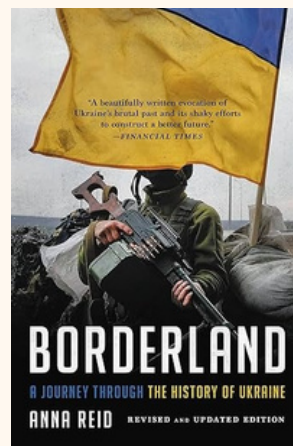
BLOODLANDS

TIMOTHY SNYDER



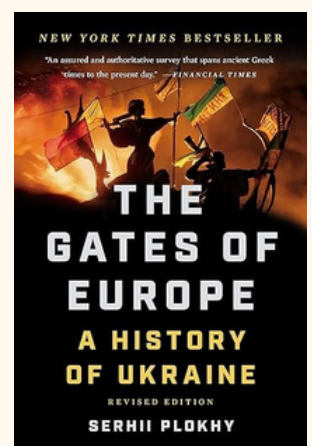
THE LAST MILLION

DAVID NASAW



BORDERLAND

ANNA REID



THE GATES OF EUROPE

SERHII PLOKHY

ABOUT ME

I'm Erika Hanchar, a **Writer, Director, Podcaster** in Ontario, Canada. I got my start in the film industry as a Stills Photographer on a **YTV children's television** production back in 2005.

In 2016, I received the Kobzar Scholarship to the **Humber School for Writers** in Toronto, and have participated in several readings at **Toronto's Arts & Letters Club** in 2018 and 2019.

In 2022, my manuscript *The Warsaw Servant* was named a finalist at the **Palm Beach International Book Festival**. More recently in early 2025, I wrote and directed a **PSA commercial** with the Women in Film & Television in Florida, USA.

My Podcast **Granddaughter of Immigrants** 2026 is a creative storytelling experience of my families immigration journey to Canada. With expert guests from **University of Alberta**. Museum Director of Shevchenko Museum in Toronto and my psychologist, who all breath history, story and clarity into the narravtive.



"(Erika) you really have your senses down, I could taste, feel, see and hear what the characters were going through. The taste of gravel was in my mouth. Honestly."

Lois Cahall on the manuscript for; *The Warsaw Servant*
Founder and Creative Director
Palm Beach Book Festival

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