

The Interior Plan of the Folk Abode in Transcarpathia of the 19th and First Half of the 20th Centuries*

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Vernacular architecture of the Transcarpathian Ukrainians is an integral part of the Ukrainian people's tangible national cultural heritage. At the same time, it has a lot of local features. The internal layout of a traditional folk dwelling has been one of its ethnic identification characteristics.

A three-section house, which consisted of living quarters, a porch and a storehouse (komora), was the most common type of a peasant house in the Ukrainian Carpathian Mountains region in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. A two-section type of housing is found more rarely, such as house+“seny” (a kind of porch). A larger part of the family life was spent in heated living quarters (“hizha”) where they worked, cooked food, enjoyed their rest and welcomed guests. Such quarters could house quite a large family, including some domestic cattle in winter.

The living quarters were conventionally divided into the following

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parts: 1) a kitchen (a place for cooking) with a stove, a “misnik” or a cupboard (sometimes used for keeping foodstuffs), and a cutlery holder; 2) a table, benches, chairs and a wooden bin for grain storage. According to the functional use, everything in the house was divided into three large groups consisting of furniture, dishware, decorative objects and devotional articles. The first group included beds, tables, benches, a cradle, a chest, a clothes and towel rail, a “misnik” and a cutlery holder.

The second group comprised bowls and pans, pots, spoons, salt-cellars, piggins, mugs and tubs for soaking cheeses. The third group included icons, decorative bowls and plaques.

The internal layout, the interior and the use of the living space had much in common in the Ukrainian Transcarpathia, in the region of the Ukrainian Carpathians and in the whole of Ukraine. Some differences, particularly regarding the location of the stove and the direction of its mouth, were found in some areas of the province. A farmer always relied on the principle of rational and the most complete and convenient use of the interior space of his house, resulting in a clear and very strong tradition of its planning and usage. However, despite the traditional folk forms of dwelling and its design, it was continuously changing.

Keywords

Vernacular architecture, folk dwelling, interior, stove, bed, table, furniture, dishware.

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