

Ukrainian Settlements in Manitoba

Manitoba, especially its capital city Winnipeg, will always have great historical significance in the settlement of Ukrainians in Canada. This was the first stopping place for groups of Ukrainian immigrants who dispersed from here to their final destination, the homesteads. Even though only one hundred years have passed since the accepted date of the first wave of Ukrainian settlers which was initiated by Ivan Pylypiw and Wasyl Eleniak (as opposed to individual immigration at earlier dates), Canada, Manitoba and especially Winnipeg were much different than they are at present.

The name Manitoba is derived from the Indian words "Manito waba", which probably refer to the echoing sounds produced by the waves as they dash against the rocks in a narrow straight of Lake Manitoba. Manitoba encompasses 251,000 sq. miles of which 26,789 sq. miles is covered by water. The northern region of Manitoba is dotted with many lakes, forests and peat bogs. Its two major rivers, the Churchill and the Nelson, are utilized for hydro electric power. The central region, the so called interlake region, contains three very large lakes Winnipeg, Winnipegosis and Manitoba and is prolific with fish and wildlife, although the soil is mainly of poor quality. The fertile plains extending from the Red River contain some of the finest agricultural land in western Canada. The southwestern part of the province consists of rolling hills and contains many forests and lakes which are highly suitable for recreational use. The western uplands are blessed with fertile, black soil which is ideal for agriculture. Manitoba is also rich in mineral resources, notably nickel in the Thompson area and zinc and copper near Flin Flon. Untold deposits of minerals, including gold, silver, and iron in the northern regions are yet to be mined. In areas of the north which are unsuitable for farming, forests, which thrive in this continental climate, contain trees of commercial value.

In 1891, the year of the first wave of settlement, there were 4,833,000 souls in Canada and 152,506 in Manitoba. At that time Winnipeg had a population of 25,638, two large train stations, the C.N.R. and C.P.R., and a large immigration home with about 150 smaller ones in the vicinity.

At the time of the first large wave of Ukrainian immigration, the areas that were the most heavily populated were in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic provinces and along the Pacific Ocean in British Columbia. The vast expanses between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains remained undeveloped and reserved mainly for hunting and trapping of wild animals.

In 1870, the Canadian government took control of the territories which belonged to the Hudson Bay Company. On July 15 of that year Manitoba joined Confederation and when British Columbia joined a year later it became apparent that to maintain communications within the vast country, a railway would have to be built. Also in 1870, attempts to develop a variety of wheat that would mature before the frosts of the continental climate in the prairie regions set in were successful due to the introduction of Galician origin wheat named "Red Fife". This development made wheat growing in Manitoba and the prairie provinces possible. What was needed now, however, both for the building of the railway and for the cultivating of the land were willing and capable hands. Besides the pockets of settlers of British origin in the prairie regions, a Scottish colony near the Red

River between Winnipeg and present day Selkirk was established in 1912. There was an influx of Mennonites mainly from Ukraine in 1874; Icelanders in 1876, and Germans and Hungarians in 1886. Even though these settlers were allotted the choicest sections of land free of charge, and received financial assistance from the government, in most cases the harsh continental climate drove them to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Intensive settlement of the prairies began only when Clifford Sifton, the minister of internal affairs under Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, turned his attention to obtaining settlers from central Europe, especially from Austro-Hungary. The result was a clandestine agreement in 1899, renewed in 1904, with the North Atlantic Shipping Co. based in Hamburg to pay the company \$5 for the procurement of every head of a family of settlers and \$2 for every family member. The outcome was a massive immigration campaign.

The immigration propaganda fell upon very fertile grounds. At this time, western Ukraine, which was the focus of the campaign, was experiencing severe political and economic oppression. When the peasants heard of the virtually free parcels of land and the political and religious freedom offered in Canada, they eagerly applied for immigration in great numbers. Contributing factors were two booklets written by Joseph Oleskiv, "About Free Lands" and "About Emigration", which redirected the emigration thrust from Brazil called the "Brazilian fever", where our people were sorely manipulated by unscrupulous agents and suffered greatly in a climate to which they found difficulty adapting.

The first booklet was written by Dr. Oleskiv before his departure to Canada on July 25, 1895; the second was written upon his return and was published in December of that year. Within a month of his return, Dr. Oleskiv was instrumental in establishing an Emigration Assistance Committee whose responsibility was to ensure that there would be individuals in each emigrating group that would report to the committee. In this way Dr. Oleskiv could track the progress of the groups and confirm that the assistance he had arranged while he was in Canada for their settlements was utilized. It should be mentioned here that Dr. Oleskiv met with representatives of the Canadian government in Ottawa to formulate a memorandum regarding the immigration of Ukrainians to Canada. In Winnipeg he met with the Commissioner of Dominion Lands and in Edmonton with the Minister of Internal Affairs. He also tried to arrange for the spiritual guidance of the people which will be dealt with elsewhere in this book. Unfortunately, the assurances made to Dr. Oleskiv during his stay in Canada did not safeguard our immigrants, especially in the early years, from unscrupulous agents and immigration officers who were in charge of settlement. In addition, changes in governmental and ministerial officers contributed to harsh grievances and long remembered suffering in the first years of settlement.

The Ukrainian immigrants arrived by boat in Halifax or Montreal and then continued their journey by train to Winnipeg where they were detained in an immigration home. It was here that the location of their homestead was decided. Up to 1895, the immigrants were able to choose the location for their homesteads. After this year the decision was made by the immigration officers which often led to unpleasant and dramatic confrontations. (See the settlement of Saltcoats, Fish Creek. Saskatchewan and elsewhere. M.N. Marunchak, The History of Ukrainian Canadians, vol. 1.) Compounding these difficulties was the lack of financial resources which would enable the immigrants

to buy more productive land, or land near rail lines which often was not available in the 160 acre homesteads offered by the government for a cost of \$10. This sum did not include farming equipment essential for the cultivation of the land. The government offered no financial assistance and long term loans were not available at that time. The Ukrainian pioneers, abandoned to their own resources had no choice but to leave their families on the bleak homesteads, most often in temporary dugout shelters without even the basic necessities for survival, and seek summer employment at more established homesteads or with the railroads. These and other intolerable circumstances were often the cause of the staggering number of human tragedies, some of which are recorded in memoirs, while others are buried forever in the many prairie graves of the pioneers.

Two men who laid the foundation of Ukrainian immigration were Wasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypiw from the village of Nebyliv, District of Kalush in Halychyna. On September 7, 1891, they disembarked from the steamship "Oregon" in Montreal. On September 10, they arrived in Winnipeg, and after a short stay they found employment in Gretna, a colony south of Winnipeg. Eleniak continued to work in this area while Pylypiw left on December 15, 1892, to bring his and Eleniak's wife, Anna, and children back to Canada. In his village of Nebyliv, Pylypiw's was punished for his efforts to recruit immigrants to Canada. He returned to Canada in May of 1893 with his wife Maria and their four children, (the fifth being born in Canada). Shortly after his return, he settled in the Edna Star area, Alberta. He died in a tragic accident on October 10, 1936, in his 77th year and was buried in Chipman. Wasyl Eleniak returned to Ukraine for his family in 1893. Even though they experienced great financial difficulties, they were able to immigrate to Canada in 1894 and settled in Chipman, Alberta. There were seven children in their family. Eleniak died in Edmonton at the age of 98 on January 12, 1956 and was buried in Chipman.

Following these first groups of immigrants, which paved the way for massive immigration and small groups of settlers, was the first large transport of 107 persons which set out for Canada on April 30, 1896. Almost all of these immigrants settled in Edna, Alberta, which was renamed Star, and began the oldest Ukrainian colony in Canada. (Marunchak, Vol. 1, pg. 46) A large group of immigrants from the steamship "Sicilia", monitored by Kyrylo Genyk, arrived in Winnipeg in July, 1896, and settled in Manitoba. This group which was comprised of 27 families and a few single men mainly from the village of Senkiw, in Borshchiw county, set out to establish a colony south of Winnipeg which they wanted to name "Rus" (Ukraine). Thus was begun the oldest colony in Manitoba. However, the name "Rus" was superseded by "Stuartburn", called "Shtombury" by the Ukrainian settlers, which was the name of the post office and railway station in the area. From this initial group developed 15 church communities, whose present day administrative centre is Rosa. Among its oldest communities are Stuartburn 1898; Tolstoi 1902; Caliento 1907; Zhoda 1909; Lonesand 1913; Sopiwnyky 1913-1915 and others. Another group mainly from the villages of Zavalia and Berezova in the Terebovlia county, under the leadership of Wasyl Ksionzyk, settled north-west of Winnipeg in the Dolphin Lake region near the Drifting-River (south-west of the town of Dauphin which was established in 1898) and named it "Trembowla" (Terebovlia). The name of the railway station, "Valley River", which was located about 6 miles from the colony, was chosen over the name given by the colonists. Thus, this historic name of the church district was used only to designate a school district, "Trembowla School No.

1040" which was organized in the fall of 1897 and survived until the 1960's. The settlers in the area of Terebovia joined in the building of the Church of the Holy Trinity which was blessed on April 12, 1897 by Father Nestor Dmytriv who also oversaw the erection of the Cross of Freedom and blessed the Holy Trinity cemetery which remains to this day. (In 1908, a part of the congregation, along with the church building, was assimilated by the Russian Mission, and separated from the Ukrainian Catholic Church.) In 1898, St. Michael's Church became the centre for communities from the Terebovia area which settled near Mink River, and it still stands today as a historical monument. (See Mink River Volkvitsi.) In 1906, in the area south of the two above mentioned church communities, a congregation was organized at Ashville which was preceded by a congregation in Keld in 1902, Mink Creek in 1903 and others who make up the eight parishes under the present day jurisdiction of Gilbert Plains.

In February of 1897, approximately 1100 Ukrainian immigrants arrived in several steamships. Some found jobs and remained in Winnipeg, others continued on to Alberta while 475 of these immigrants joined the settlers in the Dauphin area. Here at Sifton they built a chapel upon their arrival in 1897, which grew to a large centre presently encompassing nine parishes. In time, congregations were established at Ethelbert and Venlaw in 1900, Zoria in 1903, and Ukraina in 1917. There was a great influx of immigrants in May of 1897; 672 from Halychyna on the steamship "Prussia"; 558 on the "Arabia" and 672 on the "Armenia". These immigrants settled in the Dauphin area, and called the area and the school "Kosiv" because it reminded many of them of the terrain of their villages in the Carpathian Mountains. At that time a large community was formed at Winnipegosis, north of Dauphin, which presently encompasses 9 church communities and parishes. Among the first to incorporate were Winnipegosis in 1905, Toutes Aides in 1910 and South Bay in 1913.

Further north and somewhat later, communities were established in the Pine River area, with 7 church groups including those at Garland in 1910-1911; Fletcher in 1914-1915; Pulp River, Cowan and Selater in 1918. In June of 1897 a group of settlers comprised of eleven families, formed a community at Pleasant Hope located about 40 miles north of Winnipeg near Lake Winnipeg. Presently under the church jurisdiction at Gimli are ten church communities that were first organized at Foley North in 1900, Gimli farms in 1903, Fraserwood farms in 1906, Arnes in 1910, Zbruch in 1912, Komarno in 1914, and elsewhere. These settlements further strengthened the Ukrainian communities which in 1898 numbered 150 families, (as reported in "Svoboda" no. 8, 1903) and encouraged additional immigration. Although this Interlake area, between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg, was heavily forested and had poor stony or swampy land, the settlement increased to several thousands of Ukrainian settlers who were eager to join established settlements regardless of the condition of the land. Thus about 15 communities were established further north near Fisher Branch where the people joined in the building of churches at Chatfield in 1910, Poplarfield in 1913, Rembrandt in 1915-1917, Silver in 1918, Meleb and Sylvan in 1918 and elsewhere.

In the spring of 1899 groups of Ukrainian immigrants began settling along the slopes of the Riding Mountains in the vicinity of Shoal Lake, call "Shoylyk" by the settlers, and Sandy Lake. First among the eight communities that formed here were Ozerna in 1904, Sandy Lake in 1911, Horod in 1917 and others. In the area of Rosburn 11 church

communities were organized. Among these were Rossburn-farms in 1901, Olha and Lakedale in 1904, and Dolyny in 1907. At the time of settlement Oakburn was the centre of the colonies and the name given to the area. To the east of these settlements near the town of Neepawa evolved seven more communities, the oldest to be established were Mountain Road in 1904 and Glenella in 1909. The transport of settlers in 1899 is especially significant in the history of Ukrainian settlement because of the terrible tragedy that befell it. (See graves of the 40 children and some adults along the shores of Lake Patterson.)

The settlements spread in Manitoba to the Saskatchewan border where, in the area of Roblin, ten communities evolved; the first being Zelena in 1910, then Merridale in 1923, Shortdale in 1933, Roblin-farms in 1935, Petlura in 1936 and others. Directly west of Winnipeg a Ukrainian community was established in 1906 at Portage la Prairie which gave rise to a small Ukrainian farming community at St. Claude. Further west the settlers joined in the building of a church at Brandon in 1903-1905, nearby at Rivers in 1909 and at Menzie in 1947.

Ukrainian immigrants settled also near Winnipeg. To the oldest communities belongs Goner where the church dates back to 1899, followed by the Beausejour area with the church at Ladywood built in 1903, Brokenhead in 1904 and then Thalberg in 1913 and six others which presently belong to this area of parish communities. The district of Selkirk has five parishes of which the oldest dates back to 1908 in East Selkirk. The district of Rossdale-“Parky” consists of seven church parish communities of which the oldest is St. Norbert established in 1906, Elma in 1909-1912 and Hadashville in 1911. Later settlers seeking employment moved to the northwest and far north. In 1937 a church community was formed in The Pas, in 1949 in Flin Flon and in 1972 in the northern city of Thompson. Many settlers remained in Winnipeg from the onset of immigration and formed communities around their churches. Thus in 1901, a congregation was established at St. Nicholas Church which was called the "small church" and in 1906 the "big church" was built. In 1916-1917 the church in Winnipeg-Transcona was built; the first church at Winnipeg-Boyd was built in 1926 and others followed which presently total 16 church parish - communities.

Subsequent transports provided a continuous influx of immigrants to established communities, and also formed new communities in the northern areas as already mentioned. The organization of a community which centred around the building of a church, school or cultural centre will be dealt with in the individual histories. Generally speaking, this did not coincide with the date of settlement but was determined by the ability of each settlement to ensure that the basic needs were met for the individual families, most of whom began with virtually nothing. Statistics indicate that from the time of the accepted date of formal Ukrainian immigration in 1891 to the First World War in 1914, between 100 to 170 thousand Ukrainian immigrants arrived in Canada. (Conflicting data is a result of confusion between place of birth and ethnic origin.)

Most of the immigrants settled in the three prairie provinces; the largest number going to Manitoba. In the rest of Canada, Ontario received the largest number. Between 1915 and 1925 there was negligible immigration because of the war and difficult economic conditions in Canada. However, between 1926 and 1929 approximately 50 thousand Ukrainians immigrated to Canada with an additional 16 thousand in 1939. The next large

wave of Ukrainian immigration occurred after the Second World War. In one year alone, between 1948 and 1949, 10,500 immigrants, mainly displaced persons from refugee camps in Germany, entered Canada. The number of immigrants during the post war years of 1945-1954 totaled 34,232. In the 1951 census there were 14,004,429 people in Canada. Of these, 395,043 were of Ukrainian origin. Manitoba at that time had a population of 776,541 of which 98,753 were of Ukrainian origin; half of whom lived in the cities and the other half on farms. Winnipeg had a population of 354,069 of which 41,337 were of Ukrainian origin. The latest statistics in 1988 gives the population of Canada as 25,334,000. Of these, 754,980 persons indicated their origin as being Ukrainian. Manitoba's overall population was 1,071,000, with 130,285 single origin Ukrainians. Winnipeg had a population of 265,000, with 84,565 of single origin Ukrainians.

Through hard work Ukrainian settlers in Manitoba transformed much of its wilderness into productive fields bringing an ordered beauty to the land and wealth to the province and Canada as a whole. They contributed a lion's share of the labour that carved out roads, built railways, developed commercial enterprises, established cultural educational centres and enhanced the political life of the nation. Though downtrodden and forsaken in the early years of settlement, Ukrainians were able to ignite the life-giving spark of holy faith, and with their unceasing prayer and hard work overcame the scorn and hostility all around them to emerge strong and confident in their sound husbandry of the Canadian entity, their adopted homeland. The descendants of these pioneers continued to contribute the finest elements of their cultural and artistic expression which has its source in spiritual communion with Ukraine. In the one hundredth anniversary of Ukrainian settlement they stand secure in their contributions to the development of Canada and their share in the responsibility of shaping its future.

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