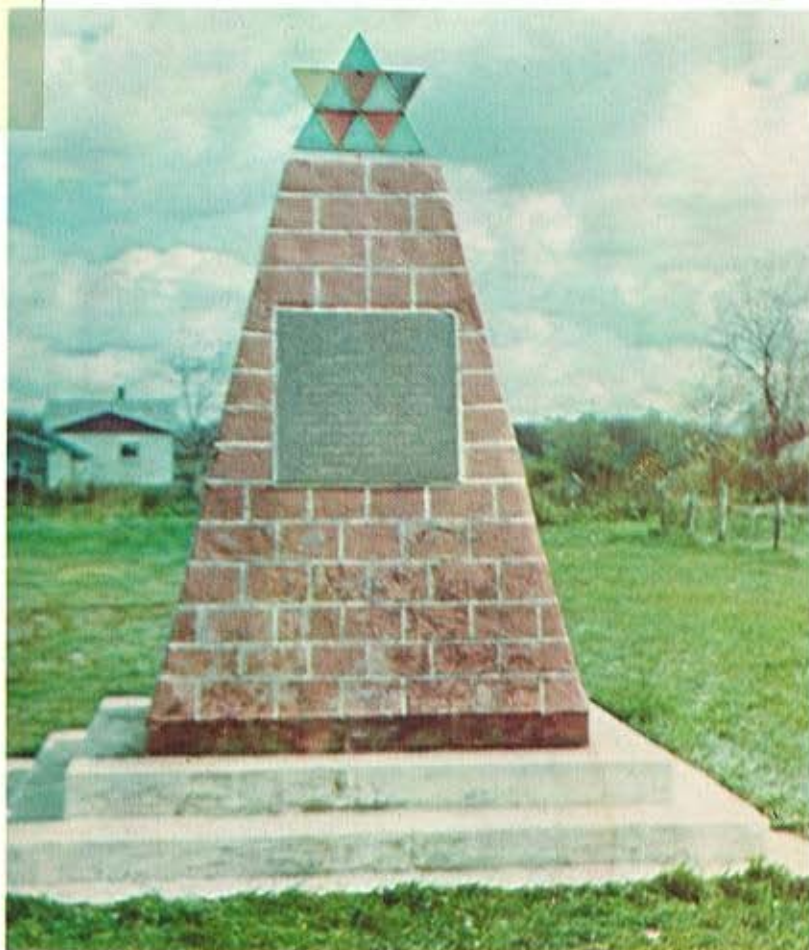


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# VITA



1867 — 1967

THIS MONUMENT, ERECTED IN PERMANENT COMMEMORATION OF THE UKRAINIAN PIONEERS AND OTHERS WHO SETTLED IN THE VITA AND DISTRICT AREA IN THE YEAR 1897, WHO THROUGH TOIL AND SACRIFICE CARVED OUT A RICHER HERITAGE FOR THEIR DESCENDANTS. IT IS DEDICATED IN THEIR MEMORY THIS CENTENNIAL YEAR OF THE CONFEDERATION OF CANADA.

**A UKRAINIAN  
COMMUNITY  
BOOK THREE**



**MANITOBA MOSAIC**

# VITA

## A Ukrainian Community

Book Three: Vita Today

Michael Ewanchuk

Prepared for MANITOBA MOSAIC, an Ethnic Studies series designed for use in upper elementary grades and first printed for the Boundary School Division under the auspices of the Department of Education.

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## I. GRANDFATHER TALKS ABOUT FARMING

"The Vita of today still remains as a mixed farming area and that is why the community made the progress it did. Since the people were engaged in mixed farming, they were able to live through the depression years".

As Grandfather Michael was about to continue, he was interrupted by Grandmother Maria.

"Listen", Grandmother scolded, "You talk like a politician. It's all right to talk like that to grown-ups, but the children cannot understand you."

However, Orest - interested in what his grandfather was saying - asked, "What kind of farming is mixed farming?"

"All right", Grandfather said, "although we have discussed mixed farming before - particularly the type carried out during the early years - I shall try to explain mixed farming to you again. I have a newspaper clipping here, which should help. This is what the *Free Press Prairie Farmer*, wrote in 1942 about farming in the Vita area:"

So little grain is shipped from the district around Vita in Southeastern Manitoba that there is no elevator in that busy little town. The Ukrainian farmers there are making a living from products other than wheat.

The soil is light but they are making good use of their resources. Grass crops hold down the soil and this year over 300 farmers in that territory seeded 10,000 pounds of brome, alfalfa and crested wheat grass, the agricultural representative of the Manitoba government, J. Negrych, reported.

Sheep are increasing. A survey through the schools in the neighboring country this spring showed that 364 farmers had 7,740 sheep. This gives an average of 21 ewes and their lambs per farmer keeping sheep, but most of the flocks were smaller. Five of the larger sheepmen had an average of 90 head. Lambs that brought \$6 to \$6.50 per 100 pounds five years ago are now bringing \$11 to \$12. Wool that brought five cents a pound in 1936 now sells at 26 cents.

Honey is chiefly sold locally. It used to bring 60 cents for a 10-pound pail, now 90 cents to \$1.00. Not much garden stuff is sold from the district except potatoes toward spring.

"Everybody worked on the farm, especially the women who looked after the chickens, milked cows and devoted much time to gardening. Very often they would get together to help each other out and worked in groups. Of course, the main task to the women was to take care of their family and some families were large.



3 - 1. Picture showing nine of the ten children of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Jaman of Sirko, Manitoba.



3 - 2. Ukrainian women working in a vegetable garden. Public Archives of Manitoba



3 - 3. Vita woman feeding a flock of hens. W. Kolisnyk Collection

Gardening is difficult back-breaking work and the farm hoe still remains one of the most useful tools. Some of the farm work has not changed much. With all the equipment on the farm, some women still wash dishes, hang out clothing to dry, weed their vegetable and flower gardens, feed the chickens and those who only keep one or two cows do the milking by hand."



3 - 4. A farm woman milking a cow.  
Public Archives of Canada



3 - 5. A little Vita girl had to help on the farm to feed an orphan lamb.  
W. Kolisnyk Collection

"Not so very long ago the Winnipeg paper had this to say about the changes taking place:"

They are improving the quality of their poultry. They bought through poultry clubs last year, 4,000 chicks, this year 13,000. They sell their fattened cockerels to a Winnipeg department store and can get about \$1.25 per bird. The young male birds bring 23 cents a pound and the fowls that have finished their usefulness as layers sell at 16 cents.

But the main source of income is the cream cheque. In the first six months of last year the Vita creamery took in 141,000 pounds of table cream priced from 32 cents to 38 cents a pound.

"Since the farmers continued with dairying, many tons of hay were needed to feed their herds. They could not depend on oxen or horses to do their haying and started to use the tractor. One man was able to put up a lot of hay with the tractor. Now people in the district raise beef cattle and instead of stacking hay put it up in bales. In Fig. 3 - 6 we see how the hay was stacked, and in Fig. 3 - 7 we see hay stacked in bales."



3 - 6. The late William Kolisnyk stacking hay in 1942.



3 - 7. Baled hay on a feedlot.

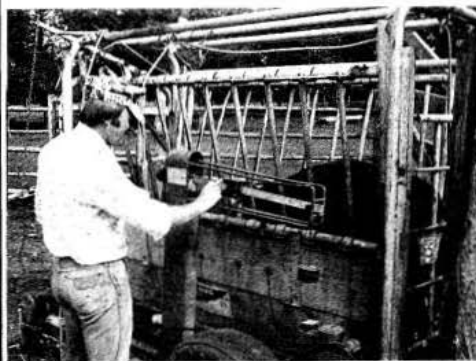
"I think that this is the right place to include my report", said Orest. "I got my information from the local agricultural representative. He told me that at this time the important farm industry in the Vita area is the cow-calf operation. Farmers keep large herds of cattle, some have 100 to 250 beef cows - the average size being 50. Some farmers are getting new breeds of cattle like the Simmental and others are improving their Hereford herds.

I was also told that the number of turkey farmers is not increasing, but some farmers are beginning to raise more swine.

Here is something new: huge milk trucks come to the farms and pick up fresh milk that is taken to Winnipeg to be pasteurized, but many farmers still ship cream to the Vita Creamery."

"This is true", said Grandfather as he continued to talk about farming: "Things have changed and the farmers have learned how to take better care of large herds of beef cattle. The agricultural representative who lives in Vita helps them. There is also a veterinarian here, too.

The animals need plenty of good drinking water and the farmers blast out dugouts for their Hereford herds."



3-8. Showing weighing of beef cattle.  
W. Happychuk



3-9. A dugout is being blasted out.  
W. Happychuk

"It looks like war", said Orest looking at the picture.

"In the stony areas that is the easiest way to get a good dugout", Grandfather explained.

"Not only do animals require good food and water, they also must receive good health care. Here we see the Hereford herd being sprayed against warble flies, and a Hereford bull getting the needle."

"I wonder if he cried," said Orest and he began to laugh. Grandfather Michael laughed also as Orest buried his face in the cushion to smother his laughter.



"What's the joke?" Grandmother asked as she placed a tray with freshly baked buns and glasses of milk for the children on the coffee table.

"Oh, that Orest, he's always asking silly questions." And then Orysia got the giggles also.



3-10a. Showing a Hereford herd being sprayed for warble flies.



3-10b. The Hereford bull gets the needle.  
W. Happychuk



3-10c. Type of automatic livestock waterers found in the Rosa area.



3-10d. Showing the buildings of a smaller livestock farm found in the Vita area.

## II. EDUCATION

Orest and Orysia had been working hard in collecting information about Vita and made good progress with their project. One day as they alighted from the school bus, Orest said to his twin sister, "Orysia, we have collected material how the Ukrainian people settled in the area and the progress they have made, now we should collect many pictures to show what Vita looks like today, and remember what Mother and Dad said that we should make a note someplace that at the present time there is a small number of people living here who are not of Ukrainian extraction."

"How are we going to show what Vita looks like today?" Orysia asked. She was getting tired and wanted to complete the project.

"I think that we should start with the schools," Orest replied. He was now taking over the lead. "You know that the Ukrainian people always believed in education . . . I like that small school we used to attend. Things have changed, too - at one time children could learn to read and write in Ukrainian by attending after-four and Saturday classes, now they can learn to speak and to read in Ukrainian in school."



3 - 11. Shevchenko elementary school.



3 - 12. Shevchenko (4 - 12) school.



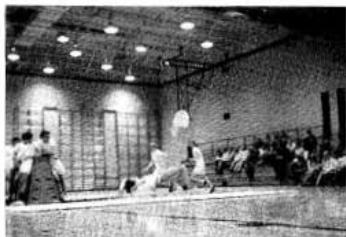
3 - 13. Mr. M. DREWNIAK teaching a Ukrainian class in grades four to six.



3 - 15. Mr. L. KURDYDYK and high school students in a Ukrainian language class.



3 - 14. Principal, Bob Cesmytruk in the (4 - 12) school office.



3 - 16(a) Vita students at play



"I like our big new Shevchenko School, particularly the library. The Collegiate, the principal, and the large number of teachers show how the community has grown. Once there were two teachers in Vita and now there are six in the small school and 28 in the large school"

And we have to show in our report that the students in our school are able to learn other languages besides English. French, German and Ukrainian languages are studied, some up to Grade XII."

Orest continued to show pictures which he thought could be included in the project. "Orysia, I think we should also have pictures of Ukrainian classes and pictures of children at play. I mean these:"

"But, Orest," you know we can't ask Grandfather for more help. It has to be our own work."

"I agree," said Orest. "Starting with the next chapter it will be 'Orysia's and Orest's Report'.

### III. CHURCHES AND TRADITIONS

There are two Ukrainian churches that have been in the Vita community for over half a century.



3 - 17. *The Ukrainian Orthodox church in Vita (C-N)*



3 - 18 *The Ukrainian Catholic church in Vita (C-N)*

Through the years the Ukrainian Orthodox and the Ukrainian Catholic parishioners alike have shown close attachment to their churches, and their devotion was recognized when the hierarchy of each church made special arrangements for the ordination of new clergymen in Vita.

Reverend Olynek grew up in Komarno, Manitoba, where his father was the parish priest. Reverend Michael Skrumeda grew up in the Vita district and received his high school education in the Shevchenko Collegiate and the St. Andrews College.

Both the Ukrainian churches in the hamlet are very attractive inside. They are nicely decorated and have fine icons. The women of each church see to it that the tables in the church and the altar have beautifully embroidered coverings.

There are two other churches nearby. One of them a Roman Catholic church and the other a Baptist church, but they are not located in the hamlet.



3 - 19a. Ordination of Gregory Elias Olynek by Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Vita, Manitoba, August 7, 1969.

"Now, Orest I want to add a part about the life of the people exactly as Mother told me. Of course, you didn't hear it you were too busy playing!

"Although people get-together less often to such organized cultural activities - as concerts, dramatics and lectures - which were once very popular in Vita - interest in the church remains high. Both children and older people attend church. Christmas and Easter Holidays continue to be celebrated in the traditional manner and are important in the life of the people. Though some of the traditions have been modified, and during Christmas, the floors are covered with straw less often, the religious holidays continue to bring hope and joy to the people.

Many new dishes have been introduced into the traditional cooking, and others have been changed - the Christmas turkey is nearly a must in most homes now. When Easter approaches, the amount of baking done has increased. Easter "paska" and other Easter breads are beautifully baked and nicely decorated and Easter eggs are wonderful in design: the women have a little more time to do things nicely than did the pioneer Ukrainian women; and they have more money with which they can buy all the things they need for their fancy baking.



3 - 19b. Archbishop Boris Yakowkevich ordains Michael Skrumedas a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Vita, Manitoba, May 23, 1973.

The Ukrainian Women continue to take their "paska" and other Easter food to church to be blessed. Their Easter baskets are lined with beautifully embroidered linen and the food is covered with fine "rushnychky", napkins. To see these baskets arranged in church is a real delight. It is interesting that the younger women are the ones who want to see these traditions maintained.

Most homes have stereo sets and people are able to listen to Easter music and songs like, "Why aren't you dancing, Hallia?" or "The Zelman is coming." On Easter Sunday they sing "Khrystos Voskres" with the charm and feeling of their grandparents.

## Traditional Ukrainian Embroidery, Recipes and Costumes



3 - 20a. A display of the Ukrainian embroidery and ceramics at the Vita mini-festival, 1974.

(Carillon News).



3 - 20b. A young woman looking over Ukrainian recipes, and a Ukrainian Easter Paska.

(C.N.)



3-20c. Showing holiday dress of Ukrainian girls and women. Pictures hanging on the wall are icons still found in some homes of Ukrainian people in the Vita area.



3-20d. Young man's linen clothes that used to be worn in the Ukraine in the summer time and the loom on which the clothe was woven. Hanging behind the loom are sheepskin coats brought to Canada by the early settlers.

(Gardenton Museum)

#### IV. POLITICS

From the very start of the Vita settlement, the Ukrainian settlers found that they had to depend on their own efforts and leaders to be able to succeed. Their first political achievement was the organization of the Rural Municipality of Stuartburn. This municipality was run by a reeve, councillors and a secretary-treasurer who through the years were of Ukrainian extraction. Mr. Ivan Storoschuk was elected as the first reeve and, later, Mr. Theodosy Wachna became the first secretary-treasurer. As time went on, they saw that there was a need to have a representative of their own to the Legislative Assembly in Winnipeg. In 1922 the people of the constituency of Emerson — of which Vita was a part — elected Mr. D. Yakimischak as their member. Mr. Yakimischak came to Canada with his parents in 1898. They settled in the Pleasant Home district north of Winnipeg. After his defeat, the district did not have a member of Ukrainian extraction until 1941 when the people elected a Gilbert Plains-born, young Winnipeg lawyer, now Justice J.R. Solomon, as their representative.

For eleven years, Mr. John Tanchak of the Rosa district was the first member who was raised in the district to represent the Vita people. And then in the 1973 election, Mr. Stephen Derewianchuk was elected.

Mr. Mark Smerchanski was the first member of Ukrainian extraction to represent Vita in the House of Commons, Ottawa. He is a professional engineer and born in Malanton, Manitoba, not far from Pleasant Home.

Mr. D. Yakimischak died in 1958, Mr. Derewianchuk lives in Vita, the other three live in Winnipeg, but visit Vita very often.



(a) D. Yakimischak, M.L.A. (1920 - 1927)



(b) J.R. Solomon, M.L.A. (1941-1957)





(c) John Tanchak (1957 - 1968)

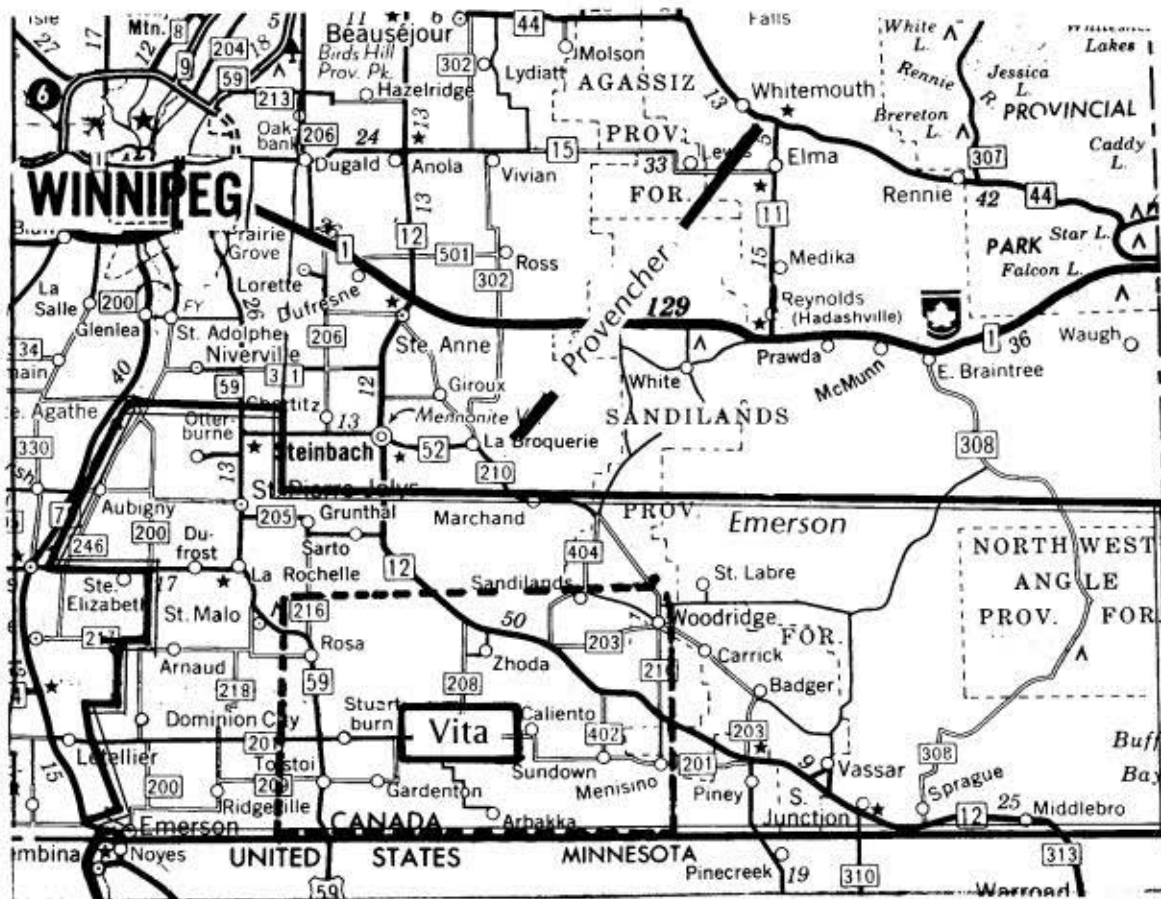


(d) Mark Smerchanski,  
M.P. for Provencher  
(1968 - 1972)



(e) Steven Derewianchuk  
(1975 - 1977)

3-21 Showing the five Ukrainian politicians who represented the Vita people.



3-21a. Vita is the centre of the Ukrainian settlement found in the constituencies of Emerson and Provencher.

## V. WAR SERVICE

Young men from Vita area served in both wars. During the Second World War, the young women joined the ranks also. When the war was over, many of them settled in various parts of Canada, others returned to live in Vita and are now actively engaged in farming, business and the professions. Mrs. Anne Chubey, John Eliuk, and William Matichuk are some of those who returned to live in the Vita area.



*Mrs. Anne Chubey  
(nee Gushaliuk)*



*John Chalaturnyk*



*William Matichuk*

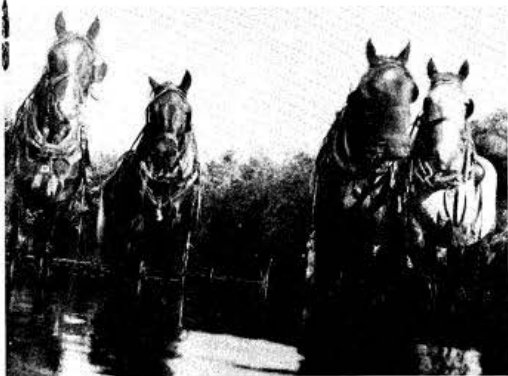


*John Eliuk*

3-22. Showing young people of the Vita area in active service, World War II.

## VI. FLOODS FIRES FLIES AND TORNADOES

If you trace the Roseau River from its source, you will find that it starts in the United States and flows from the south to the north-west and passes Vita on the South-west side. Another river north of Vita flows more or less from east to west. It is the Rat River. Since the channels of the two rivers are not deep, often they were not able to take care of the spring run-off or the very heavy summer rains and flood the country. When this happens, the floods cause serious damage to the Vita farms. In recent years drainage has been very much improved and chances of flooding reduced.



3-23. Showing horses crossing a flooded area (L) and Mr. Dmytro Mihaychuk standing in floodwater beside his garage in Vita in 1934.

(Public Archives of Manitoba).



3-24. Mr. William Kolisnyk's tractor stuck in the mud hole (Public Archives of Manitoba).

One of the worst hazards in the Vita Area has been fire. It is said that in the early days some unscrupulous ranchers used to set fires to burn out the settlers' buildings so that they would move elsewhere and leave the rancher more clear pasture land by the river. At times lightning started fires; or some careless settler, in trying to burn down the brush on his farm, would start a fire also. If the grass and the underbrush were dry, the fires would burn down wide tracts of land.

There are pioneer settlers' reports of several large fires that burned on the east side of the Roseau River. Mrs. Anton Figus (Anna Cesmystruk) recalls that when she was a girl someone started a small brush fire which when fanned by the northwest wind, burned dry grass, shrubs and trees as it raced toward the south-east. The wild animals ran ahead of it not knowing where to escape.

I remember how frightened I was by this fire as it approached our home. I had to help my parents soak sheets, blankets and bedspreads to cover the roofs of our buildings to prevent the thatch from being set ablaze by the flying sparks. The cattle were frightened and ran into the yard and had to be put in the stable; but as we were about to close the stable door, virtually hundreds of rabbits escaping from the fire crowded into the stable to save themselves. They nearly stampeded the animals. It was fortunate that the fire did not reach our home; and once the smoke cleared, the stable door was opened, the rabbits made a wild dash for the unburned bushes."

Not all the settlers were as fortunate as Mrs. Figus' parents. Many lost their buildings and much valuable building material was also destroyed. In many places beside the peat moss, good topsoil (humus) burned also leaving the settler with only a poor type of clay soil that was underneath. Problems with burning peat moss in the areas around Vita seem to persist to this day.

3-25. A family fighting a peat moss fire close to Vita.





3-26. Vita store on fire.

During some dry years, fires burning in the bush lands to the east and lack of blueberries often forced the bears to seek food further to the west. They used to follow the Roseau and the Rat Rivers and often came close to the Vita settlement.

As there was no fire fighting equipment in the village, and since the people depended on wood stoves for heat and coal oil lamps for lighting, there were many fires. The mill, the creamery and several stores were destroyed by fire as the people were helpless in putting them out. Vita now has a volunteer fire brigade in the village and this makes it possible to control smaller fires.



3 - 27. Horses had to be covered with blankets to protect them from the flies.

(Kolisnyk Collection).

The settlers and the farm animals had also to face the torment of flies and mosquitoes that bred in the swamps. The mosquitoes tormented the animals and the people in the spring, then during the summer the flies used to become very bad. The cattle could not graze in the pasture and it was also difficult to work with horses. The mosquitoes and the flies are still bothersome. In the evening children built smudges which kept the mosquitoes away. At times fires were started by these smudges.

## THE 1955 DISASTER

*On June 19, 1955 Vita was nearly totally destroyed.* The peaceful Sunday afternoon was first disturbed by the appearance of black thunderheads in the sky. Then it began to rain, followed by some hail. The people who watched the sky saw a dark cloud like a long sock reaching down to the ground. They got frightened and ran for shelter. Suddenly the whole village was wrapped in darkness: the windows cracked, walls began to collapse, roofs were torn off, chimneys crumbled and telephone and hydro wires were broken and electricity failed. The darkness in the village was pierced by fires as hail and rain driven by a fierce wind continued to batter the ruined village. Soon it was all over and citizens who were able to get out on the streets saw ruin, destruction and smoke everywhere. Vita was struck by a tornado.



3 - 28. Vita after the tornado struck.

(Carillon News).

Rescue crews were organized immediately — and when it was safe to move, with electrical power being turned off — began to dig through the debris to help the people who were trapped in the ruins.

Although the hospital was damaged, Dr. Harold Waldon and his staff were busy at work looking after the people who suffered cuts and those who were badly hurt. Fortunately no one was killed.

Soon help began to arrive from neighboring towns, and the farm areas not in the path of the tornado.

On Monday June 20, Vita people were at work rebuilding after the second tornado in twenty-seven years.

Very early on Monday morning the principal of the school, Mr. P.J. Olchowecki, was busy trying to find examination papers sent out by the Department of Education which the high school pupils were to write. But finding that they were "gone with the wind," ordered a new set. The pupils in the junior grades started their summer vacation early. For the high school students it was business as usual: the trustees made arrangements for them to complete writing their final examinations in Kupchanko hall.

Though the Vita area has been plagued by tornadoes through the years, the settlers would not leave the district on that account. There was a small twister in 1921 and then another one in 1923. All the twisters did not come from the same direction. Mrs. C. Petrowsky remembers the 1947 tornado which damaged their garage and Dmytro Podolsky's barn. It came from the north-west. In 1959 a twister coming from the south-west did some damage at Zhoda. In 1960, a man travelling west by car had his car picked up, spun around and he found himself going east instead of west. There was no loss of life as a result of tornadoes except in 1977 when the tornado hit the Rosa area.



3 - 29. P.J. Olchowecki.



3 - 30. Dr. Harold Waldon.

## VII. KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH UKRAINE

Although interrupted by two world wars, the Ukrainian settlers continue to keep in touch with their relations in the Ukraine and so do some of their descendants. Contact is being maintained through visits and letter writing.



3 - 31. Visitors from Vita in the native village of their parents taking a ride in a one-horse wagon in use in the Ukraine.

Some people feeling that they are too old to make a return trip to the Ukraine continue to keep in touch through letter writing.

Here is a letter written in the Ukraine on March 30, 1977 which starts as follows:

Dear Anna,

Fly from our Native Land, my message,

And bowing low express:

In native words my greetings:

Khrystos Voskres! Khrystos Voskres!\*

This year February was a warm month here in the Ukraine. March was warm too, but cooler than February. But we have a fine spring.

The sweet and sour cherries and the peaches are all in full blossom on top. It is rather chilly today, but we have planted the tomatoes in the hotbed. Right now we are getting ready for Easter —whitewashing and doing all the cleaning. The holidays come as suddenly as older age — so rapidly that I can hardly believe it....You are asking me about the earthquake in Bucharest? Yes, we heard about it here and in our village the earth trembled so that everything seemed to swing around. I was watching television and the sound suddenly became louder and the screen began to roll like it does when the aeroplane flies over. There was a humming sound and my chair began to sway so I went outside, other people in the village came outdoors also. The tremor reached quite far into our country.

Be of good health and write and tell me about your holidays and whether your children visited you.

Irene.

\*Ukrainian Easter Greeting: Christ is Risen!



## VIII. PEOPLE RECEIVE GOOD CARE

Before the coming of the first doctor to Vita, people had to go to Dominion City and Emerson to get medical help. At times people with serious illnesses lingered a long time receiving only the care of the home. Vita, however, was fortunate when the United Church took over the missionary hospital and operated it with Dr. Harold Waldon in charge. He was a good man and a good physician. He gave the Vita people excellent care. His ability as a doctor was recognized and even people from the south of the "Boundary" came to the Vita Hospital.

People not only came to the Hospital, but Dr. Waldon also travelled to the farm homes to help the sick. Before the days of the car travel, and during the winter months travel was difficult and he went long distances with his horse team using the buggy and the cutter in winter. At present, Dr. Laszlo Toth is in charge of the Vita Hospital.



3 - 32. Vita Hospital



3 - 33. W. Yakimischak, proprietor of first Vita Pharmacy.

Medical services were further improved when William Yakimischak opened a drug store which he operates to this day.

At the present time the village of Vita has a new district hospital replacing the one damaged in 1955.

In order to provide better care for the senior citizens in the community a Personal Care Home was built adjacent to the Hospital. Citizens in the area made donations to help build this home and headquarters as donations were established in Vita.



3 - 34. Mr. Michael Bially presents a cheque for the building of a Personal Care Home to John Machula, in the presence of Don Stotski. (Carillon News).

Senior citizens have always received good care in the Vita district and, in spite of hard work, lived to a ripe old age. The younger generation recognized their contribution to the development of Canada and the Vita Community and honored them in a suitable manner.

One of those honored was W.J. Jerowsky, who served as teacher in different schools in the area for 46 1/2 years. Included in the honored list was Mr. Joseph Kulachkowsky who served as postmaster for nearly 45 years. Mr. and Mr. D. Uhryniuk came to Vita from Winnipeg for the occasion. Mr. Uhryniuk did much to develop music in the district, particularly in the training of choirs. There were many who did much in the cultural development of the district: The Julian Cesmystruks, Anton Figuses, J. Kulachkowskys, Bodnarchuk families, the Podolsky families, Luchianchuks, Feschuks, Kolisnyks and Kadyniuks.

Only a small number of pioneers attended the special occasion arranged in their honor when the chairman of the meeting J. N. Cesmystruk, presented each with a certificate and Mrs. Doris Kolisnyk and Mrs. Mae Negrych paid tribute to the pioneers for the good work they had done.



3 - 35. Pioneer Vita school teacher M. Kadyniuk was on a float with some of his early pupils: Mike Storożuk, Mrs. Steve Fosty, Mrs. John Strembicki, Mrs. Harry Pichlyk, Mrs. Wasyl Bilawsky, Mrs. Sofia Holod, Nick Kyrzyk, Nykola Dolynchuk, Peter Farina, Mike Dolynchuk, Wm. Oryschak, Mrs. W. Picklyk, and Wasyl Baziuk, August 30, 1970. (C News).



3 - 36. The Vita and surrounding area pioneers over 75 years of age who were presented with centennial medallions at the Vita centennial celebration Sunday noon, August 30, 1970. (C News).

## SENIOR CITIZENS



3-37. The late Pawlo Lychkun (R) donated \$15,000 to the annual scholarships to be awarded to one girl and one boy in each grade, 4-12, in the Shevchenko school for highest standing in Ukrainian. (D. Mihaychuk Collection).



3-38a. Shevchenko Low Rental Home



3-38b. Personal Care Home

Many senior citizens now live in the Shevchenko low-rental home or the personal-care home adjacent to the hospital, others like Mr. William Moroziuk (Lower L.) and Mrs. Wasylyna Gorman (Lower R.), — who is in her ninety-fourth year — continue to live in their own homes and keep active in their gardens during summer months.



3-37a.



3-37b.

## IX. HOMES

There has been a marked change in the style of homes built in Vita. The thatched-roof house has disappeared. There is still an odd white-washed house that replaced the pioneer home and the cottage type of homes not destroyed by the tornado are being rapidly replaced by modern bungalows and split-level homes.



3 - 39. White-washed home of Mr. and Mrs. Anton Figus.



3 - 40 Modern type of home replacing older buildings.

The farmers have been able to improve their homes, too. Electricity has made it possible for them to have waterworks and other conveniences. Electricity helped to provide the housewife with electrical appliances and the electric stove, the refrigerator and the washer made life a little easier for the farm woman. Radio and T.V., telephones and better roads help to make the people more satisfied to maintain their homes on the farm.



3-40a. A cottage type of a home that was commonly built to replace the log and mud-plaster home seen in Fig. 3-39.

## X. PUBLIC BUILDINGS

For many years the people and businessmen of Vita had to do their banking in other towns. In 1967, however, the new Credit Union Building was opened. It is said that Mr. Nestor Podolsky, who cut the ribbon during the opening ceremonies, was one of those who started the organization.

Mr. George Eliuk, who presided at the ribbon cutting ceremonies said:

This is a proud moment for us. We started only seven years ago and today we have our own building. We need a financial institution where people can help each other when the need arises.

Mr. John Tanchak, former M.L.A. for Emerson, who took part in the opening ceremonies stated:

The opening of the Credit Union Building is another progressive step made by Vita. The other steps taken that show that Vita is a progressively growing centre that tries to improve living conditions for its citizens was the opening of the curling rink, the paving of streets and the selection of Vita as one of the school centres in Boundary School Division.



(a) Vita Credit Union Building



(b) Agricultural Office located in the Local Government District of Stuartburn Building.



(c) Present Ukrainian National Home



(d) Curling Rink



(e) Vita Hotel

3 - 41. Important buildings in the village

## XI. THE BUSINESS CENTRE

Vita continues to be the business centre of south-eastern part of Manitoba. Larger businesses, like the Smook garage, seem to thrive well, but small businesses and repair shops have a harder time to make it profitable to remain in operation.



3 - 43. Vita stores.

Some businesses still carry the names of the fathers who started them. Others have changed hands and have been taken over by younger people moving in from the farms and by new residents in the community. New businesses are being opened in the village each year.

Vita is also important because the office of the Local Government District of Stuartburn is located in the village. It serves a large area. The elected officials for the district are: Ed. Dolynchuk, Reeve, John Eliuk, Bill Jaman, Jarvis Podolsky and Don Stotski, Councillors. L.A. Procyshyn is the Resident Administrator. Recently Mr. J. M. Podolsky retired from that post after serving for many years.

Another important building in the village is the Vita Post office. At the present time it serves a large rural area. The Postmistress is Mrs. Peter Smook, the daughter of the original Postmaster Joseph Kulachkowsky. Her mother, Mrs. Wasylyna Kulachkowsky, served as Assistant Postmistress at Vita for forty-five years. She passed away recently.

The largest building in Vita is the Shevchenko (4-12) School. Though the principal, Mr. R.E. Cesmystruk, is in charge here, the school is part of the Boundary School Division. The business office of the Division is in Dominion City.



3 - 44. Boundary School Division no. 16 Board of Trustees

Left to Right Front (seated) Mr. H. Enns, Mr. Wm. Tkachuk  
 Middle Row Mrs. A. Schultz, Mrs. Halloran, Mr. Wm. Wightman, Mr. M. Bially,  
 Mr. S. Smook.  
 Back Row Mr. Wm. Lobur, Mr. T. Steg, Mr. W. Polischuk, Mr. W. Eliuk, Chairman.



3-45

Pupils in Vita primary school studying Ukrainian— some not of Ukrainian extraction—  
 with teachers Mrs Nellie Chobotar (rear left) and Mrs Mary Chubey (right).



## XII. BEFORE THE NEW YEAR

When Grandmother Maria and Grandfather Michael returned home from the city where they spent Christmas, Orysia and Orest came to see them. Before coming they had practised singing a Ukrainian carol, Christ Eternal, Boh Predvichneyj. Their mother helped them by playing the music on the piano and their father helped them with the pronunciation of Ukrainian words.

As the twins stepped into the kitchen, Orest started to ring the small bell he was carrying.

Grandmother: Come here quickly, Grandfather, the koljadnyky, carollers have come.

(Orysia and Orest sing the traditional carol. On finishing the first verse, Orest gives the traditional greeting.)

Orest: Khrystos Rodyvsja!<sup>1</sup>

Grandfather: Slavim Eho!<sup>2</sup>

Grandmother: It is customary to treat the carollers (She gives Orest a dollar bill).

Grandfather: You can't treat just one. Both should receive something. (He gives Orysia a dollar bill).

Orysia: Grandmother and Grandfather, we have come to thank you for the lovely Christmas gifts St Nicholas brought us, particularly for the book, *The Flying Ship and other Ukrainian Folk Tales*. We both enjoyed reading it and so did Mother and Father. Those illustrations by Peter Kuch are wonderful.

Orest: Are there any books about Vita that we could read and recommend to the other children?

Grandfather: I am glad that you like reading. The children these days spend too much time watching T.V.

Grandmother: Did you not tell them about the book written by that school teacher who grew up in Stuartburn?

Grandfather: Oh yes, you should be able to read Mr. Peter Humeniuk's book, *Hardships and Progress of Ukrainian Pioneers*.

Grandmother: How about the book published by the Wachna family?

Grandfather: You must have, *Look Who's Coming* in your library. It is about the life of a Ukrainian family in the Stuartburn district. I can't find my copy. Someone borrowed mine and forgot to return it.

Grandmother: Why don't you tell the children about the artist who illustrated the Wachna book. You read about him in the *Ukrainian Voice* and the *Free Press*.

Grandfather: Yes, and in the *Postup* and the *Tribune*. William Kurelek is a great Canadian artist.

Orysia: Does he come from the Vita area?

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1. Christ is Born!

2. Let us Praise Him!

Grandfather: No, but he grew up on a farm in Stonewall, Manitoba similar to that in which the parents of your school friends grew up. He is of Ukrainian extraction like you, and is recognized as the leading Canadian artist. I shall not tell you more. You will have to read about him in your library.

Grandmother: Next Christmas, Grandfather could remember *A Prairie Boy's Summer* and *A Northern Nativity*.

Orest: I think I like art. Maybe I shall try to draw some picture about pioneer settlers and become an artist.

Orysia: Well. . . , but you say you want to be a lawyer.

Grandmother: Then there is a book about the Ukrainian settlements by the lawyer who grew up in Gardenton. He writes about the Gardenton people. He now lives in the United States.

Grandfather: Mr. John Panchuk has collected many fine pictures of the pioneers in the Gardenton area who came from the Ukrainian province of Bukovina. He also claims that the first Ukrainian church built in Manitoba was built in Gardenton.

Orest: All these books you mention have been written by people who have moved out of the district. Has no one who lives in Vita written about our community?

Grandfather: We forgot to mention the most important book which is now being prepared for publication.

Orest: What is the name of the book, Grandfather?

Grandfather: (smiling) *Vita: A Ukrainian Community*, of course.

Orysia: Orest, we must not forget. We also came to thank you both for helping us with the report. We should also thank all the people who gave us information and pictures. Let us thank everybody now. Let us do it together, Orest.

Orest and Orysia: We wish to thank all the people and specially to wish our grandparents a *Mnohaja Leeta!*<sup>3</sup>

Orest: You may also expect two people to come to wish you a *Schaslyvoho Novoho Roku!*<sup>4</sup>

Orysia: Take out your *Dijd*<sup>5</sup>, and bring you greetings in a traditional Ukrainian manner by sprinkling wheat kernels.

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3. Many Happy and Healthy Years!

4. A Happy New Year!

5. "Dijd" a sheaf of wheat brought into the house on Christmas Eve and carried out on New Year's morning. This was part of the Ukrainian tradition connected with harvest festival.

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