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# VITA



A UKRAINIAN  
COMMUNITY  
BOOK ONE

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# VITA

## A Ukrainian Community

Book One: Its Background and Beginnings

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 in 1977.

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Vita

## I. WHO ARE THE UKRAINIANS

Orysia and Orest are twins. They, their parents and grandparents were born in Canada yet they know the Ukrainian language and speak it. Though they live on the farm they go to a town school. In their grade 5 social studies class they were discussing the different settlers who came to Manitoba and each was to report on a different group.

"I read here," said the teacher, "that the Ukrainian settlers came to these parts of Manitoba in August 1896. This is September and it means that they have been here for, how many years? — that's right, about 80 years. Who are the Ukrainians? I am sure we all would like to know. Now, who would like to report on the Ukrainians?"

Of course, Orysia and Orest volunteered to do so.

When they came home they asked their mother and father to help them with the project. However, as their parents were busy, the twins were directed to speak to their grandfather.



1 - 1. A group of Ukrainian settlers waiting for a train to leave for their Manitoba homesteads.

Public Archives of Canada

## GRANDFATHER'S STORY

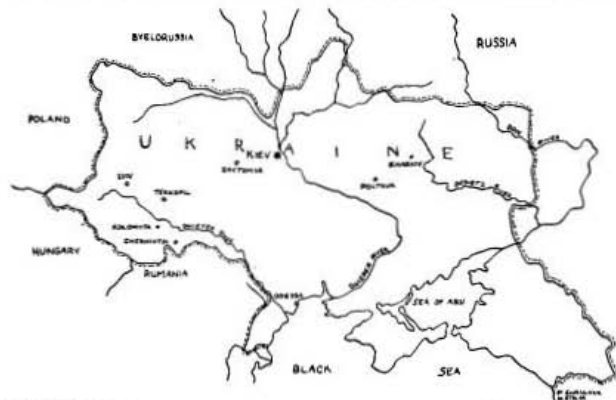
"Grandfather," said Orysia, "tell us, who are the Ukrainians? We know that they came to the Vita area more than 80 years ago."

"That is so, and your great-grandfather was one of them."

"Were you one of those who came, too?" Orest asked.

"No, I was born here on this farm where we live."

"The Ukrainians," Grandfather continued, "live in a rich country situated north of the Black Sea. When your great-grandfather came to Canada, there were about 40 million Ukrainians living in Europe."



1-2. Map of Ukraine

Grandfather continued: "They were people who have always loved their native land. One of our writers said that they always felt that their future was very closely tied with the soil, they would say:

"Our destiny is the soil; forsake it and you are lost, cling to it and it will develop all your powers . . . We love the beauties of nature. We love music and we like to sing. Our homes and dress have always been rich in color. Our homes and churches are beautifully built."

Grandfather became excited, but noticing that Orysia found it difficult to make notes, stopped. "Now I shall dictate a few more sentences and you may have all you need."

"You said they liked freedom, but did they want other people to be free?" Orest asked.

"Yes, they did, for never in their long history did they ever try to conquer other countries."

"But how did they feel about things?" Orysia started to question her grandfather.

"I would say that the Ukrainians are good honest people who love beautiful things and believe in good moral living."

"We study in school that the English people have a great history, a great language and have had good leaders. Have we Ukrainians all these?" Orest inquired.



Princess Olha  
1 - 3. Rulers of Ukraine



Volodymyr the Great



Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky

"Orest," grandfather Michael continued, "one thousand years ago the Ukrainians had Princess Olga to rule their country. She was the first Ukrainian ruler to become a Christian. She was followed by Prince Volodymyr the Great who established Christianity in all of Ukraine in 988 and started to make the capital city of Kiev the centre of learning in Europe."

"You see, Orest, that women are just as able as the men."

"Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky was a great Kozak chieftain who worked hard to keep Ukraine independent and free from the Russian and the Polish kings. When Ukraine lost its independence, it was men like Skovoroda, the great thinker, and the poets Markian Shashkevych, Ivan Franko and Taras Shevchenko, who encouraged the Ukrainian people to strive to attain the freedom Ukraine had when it was ruled by the Kozaks.

1 - 4. Ukrainian Writers  
Gregory Skovoroda



Markian Shashkevych



Ivan Franko



"When you children study history, you will learn that the Ukrainian people have had a great past, that some of their leaders were great men, that they have fine traditions, that their language is beautiful and that it has been preserved for us by such men as Taras Shevchenko.



1 - 5. Taras Shevchenko, the greatest poet of the Ukrainian people.

Учітесь, брати мої!  
Думайте, читайте,  
І чужому научайтесь, —  
Свого не цурайтесь:  
Бо хто матір забуває,  
Того Бог карає,  
Чужі люде цураються,  
В хату не пускають,  
Свої діти\*), — як чужі,  
І немає злому  
На всій землі безконешній  
Веселого дому.

Gain knowledge, brothers! Think and read,  
And to your neighbours' gifts pay heed,—  
Yet do not thus neglect your own:  
For he who is forgetful shown  
Of his own mother, graceless elf,  
Is punished by our God Himself.  
Strangers will turn from such as he  
And grudge him hospitality—  
Nay, his own children grow estranged;  
Though one so evil may have ranged  
The whole wide earth, he shall not find  
A home to give him peace of mind.

1 - 6. Taras Shevchenko's poem often quoted by the early Ukrainians in Canada (Translation by Andrushyshen - Kirkconnell).



## II. UKRAINIANS WHO LEFT THEIR HOMELAND

When the Ukrainian people did rule their country, they loved the land, its moderate climate, the forests and streams and its beautiful hills and valleys. However, they lost their freedom. The Ukraine became occupied by Russia and Austria. These new rulers took away the freedom the people enjoyed and the landlords took possession of large tracts of land leaving the peasants with small plots to live on. Even when serfdom<sup>1</sup> was abolished, wages were low and land was difficult to buy. The farmers had to work hard on their small plots of land to support their families. There was little opportunity to make progress and there were no schools for their children. When the Ukrainian people failed to free their country, they started to leave for other lands.

### EAST TO SIBERIA

The first Ukrainians to leave were the Kozaks. They left Ukraine for Siberia where they became hunters and fur-traders. In their search for better hunting grounds reached Alaska. Others turned farmers in the Kuban and other regions of Asia.

### FAR TO MANCHURIA

The Russian government wished to hold the lands the Kozaks reached on the Pacific Ocean. They, therefore, encouraged the farmers to settle in Manchuria. There the Ukrainians, who sailed by way of the Indian Ocean, established a colony with Harbin<sup>2</sup> as the main centre.

### TO THE COAL MINES OF UNITED STATES

As early as 1870 many Ukrainians along with Czech, Slovak and Polish laborers left for work in the coal fields of Pennsylvania. They wrote letters to their relatives at home saying that land was expensive in the new country and that those who wanted to farm should go to some other country.

### SOUTH OF THE EQUATOR TO ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL

Brazil and Argentina wanted settlers to turn their land into productive farms and sent out agents to encourage the Ukrainians, the Poles and the Czechs to come to South America. Just before 1890 many

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<sup>1</sup> When the people were serfs, they had to work three or more days for the landlord without receiving pay.

<sup>2</sup> Now called Pinkiang.

Ukrainians sold their fields and orchards and on receiving free transportation went to Brazil. A smaller number of them went to Argentina. However, they found land expensive and the climate in Brazil too hot. Many died of disease and others found life in the jungle most difficult. Their letters home were far from encouraging.

### TO THE LAND OF SUGAR CANE — HAWAII

In 1897-98, while some settlers were on the way to Canada, agents in the German ports got them interested in going to Hawaii to work in the sugar cane fields. They signed five-year contracts for a salary of \$15.00 a month. In Hawaii they were treated life serfs. This settlement was a failure: by 1902 most of them left for the United States and Canada.

### TO CANADA — TO THE "VILNI ZEMLI"<sup>3</sup>

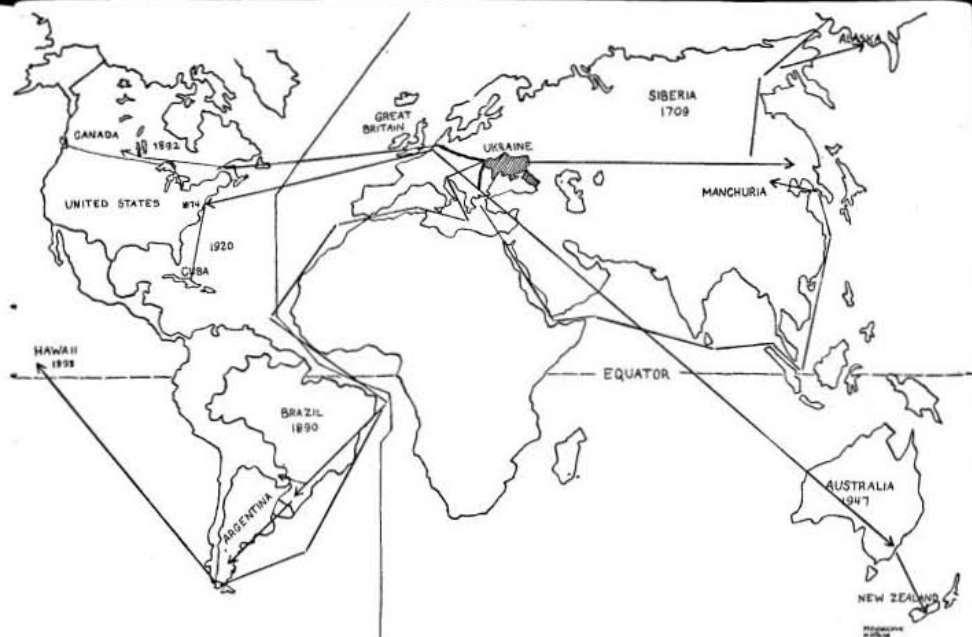
Though some Ukrainians came to Canada in 1874 with the Mennonite settlers, the first groups came on their own in 1892. Their letters home were encouraging. After Reverend Ivan Volansky's unfavorable report on conditions in Brazil and Dr. Oleskow's information about free lands in Canada, an emigration fever spread among the Ukrainian settlers. They began to leave for Canada where farming possibilities seemed very good.

### TO OTHER LANDS

Some two hundred years ago the Ukrainians formed a colony in the country now known as Yugoslavia. Later others on their way to North or South America stayed in England settling mainly in Manchester. Immigration to Australia and New Zealand did not commence until after the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>3</sup> "Vilni Zemli," Free Lands



1-7. Map showing continents and countries to which Ukrainians emigrated.

### III. DR. JOSEPH OLESKOW

Dr. Oleskow was a professor of agriculture in the Ukraine. He was interested in improving the living conditions for his countrymen. However, he was disturbed by reports that the immigration agents were directing the Ukrainian farmers to settle in countries where their living conditions became worse than they were in their homeland. On getting in touch with the Canadian authorities, he was invited by the Canadian High Commissioner, Sir Charles Tupper, in London to visit Canada.



1-8. Dr. Joseph Oleskow  
(P.A.C.)

## DR. OLESKOW COMES TO CANADA

Dr. Oleskow landed in Montreal on Monday, July 12, 1895. After meeting the official of the Canadian Government in Ottawa, he travelled across Canada all the way to the west coast. Along the way he visited farmers and talked to many people in each area where he stopped. He also visited a group of Ukrainian settlers in Alberta who came there in 1892.

He returned to Winnipeg from the West on Monday, September 16, and on Tuesday he left Winnipeg by train to go to Morris and Gretna in the southern part of Manitoba.

Dr. Oleskow was a hard-working man and you will agree if you follow on the map the places he visited in Manitoba.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1895.** Dr. Oleskow left by train on his way to Morris, Manitoba. On the way the official who was his guide pointed out to him the Mennonite community of Rosenort.

From Morris he travelled by horse and buggy west to Lowe Farm and visited the Mennonite settlers there. As he knew the German language, he was able to talk to the Mennonite farmers and got much information from them about farming on the Canadian prairie.

His party returned to Morris and after getting fresh horses travelled to the east side of the Red River to view the land there — it was all open prairie. That same day he was in Gretna and also visited two Mennonite villages, Neuberghthal and Sommerfeld.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18:** He viewed the land on both sides of the River where he was told the settlers could get homesteads.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19:** Dr. Oleskow travelled on the east side of the Red River as far south as the American border and then came to the Dominion City area.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20:** He viewed the land to the northeast of Dominion City around the Roseau and Rat rivers, and left for Winnipeg by train from either Arnaud or Dufrost.

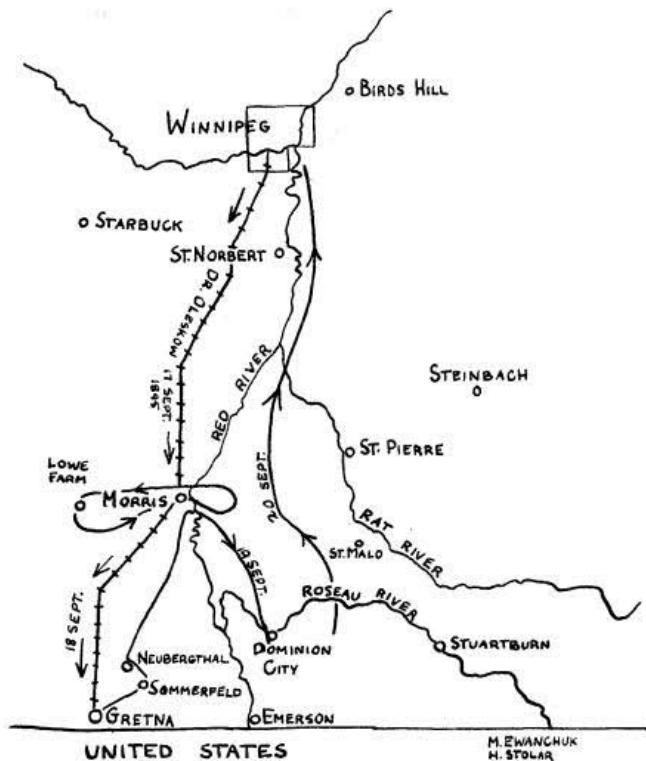
**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21:** Dr. Oleskow visited with a few Ukrainian settlers living in Winnipeg who were part of the 1892 group. They reported very favourably on life in Manitoba.

He left Winnipeg to visit some friends in the United States and then returned to Ottawa on the first of October.

In a postscript to his letter he wrote: "I leave to Europe per 'Parisian' of Allan Lines, sailing October 5th from Montreal."

(signed)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> L.S./24719 by Oleskow to Minister of Interior, Ottawa.



1 - 9. Map showing Dr. Joseph Oleskow's visit to Southern Manitoba Sept. 17-20, 1895.

Upon his return to Western Ukraine, he wrote articles in the newspapers about opportunities for settlers in Canada. This discouraged the emigrants from going to Brazil and thousands started to come to Canada. Dr. Oleskow never visited Canada again to see the success of his venture.

## LEAVING FOR CANADA

"The pioneer settlers coming to Vita, Manitoba were brave people to leave their native Ukraine and come to a distant land across the Ocean," said Orest.

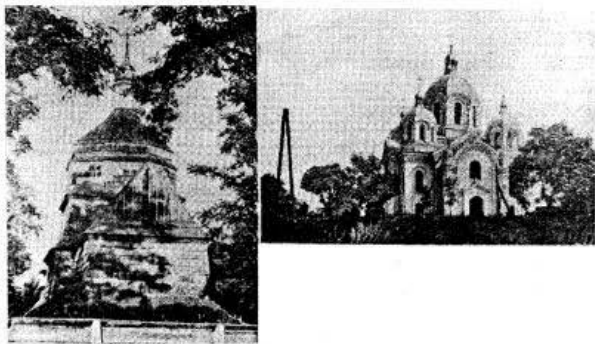
"Grandfather, were the people not sad to leave their homes, their relatives and their friends? Are there any of the early settlers here that we could ask?" Orysia enquired.

"I am afraid that it would be difficult to find many in this district who came here in 1896; therefore, I shall try to tell you the whole story as I remember it from conversations with my parents and our neighbours. Some time ago one of our friends received a letter from a man who came from the same village they did. In this letter he wrote about his leaving the 'old country'. It is a sad story, but I shall try to tell you what I remember of it.

## LEAVING THE VILLAGE OF POSTOLIVKA

My parents sold their fields, their orchard and their home. They sold the cows, horses and all the chickens. Things they could not sell or could not take with them they gave to their relatives and friends. Then they were ready to leave for Canada. However, they decided to wait a few days to celebrate Easter in their native village of Postolivka.

On Easter Sunday<sup>3</sup> for the last time, I sang "Christ is Risen!" with the cantors and when I got out of the church at the end of the service



1-10. The old Hetman church and the new church in the village of Kopychentsi close to Postolivka in 1896.

(M. Ewanchuk Collection)

<sup>3</sup> April 26, 1897

boys and girls encircled me to bid me farewell. Already I looked different than they did for my parents bought me clothing that the boys and girls wore in the large town of Kopychentsi. They all asked me to write to them from Canada, and one little boy, Mykola said, "Paul, when you train some of those wild horses of the Canadian steppes, you will be able to come and visit us at Christmas."



1-11. — Showing the type of homes some of the Ukrainian settlers left in the Ukraine in 1896.  
(from Fedir Wowk, Table VIII-f)



1-12. Showing a Ukrainian couple in holiday attire.

(from Fedir Wowk)

On Monday the wagons were loaded with trunks, crates, hand-trunks, wicker boxes and duffel bags and many women and children who had bid farewell to their dear ones sat waiting in the wagons, many of them in tears. Then the parish priest, Rev. Barwinsky, drove past each wagon and sprinkled Holy water on the emigrants. When he reached the lead wagon, he stopped and spoke briefly:

"My Dear Children, you are departing from your native hearths like birds from their nests. May God guide you and guard you from all evil. Learn to love your new country and your neighbors. I am bidding you farewell from your parish, your village and your kin. Do not leave your church and your traditions. Don't forget your native land. Maintain your language as you learn yet another. Don't forget about your parents, your brothers and sisters. We pray for your safety and happiness. May the Lord lead you!"

When he made the third sign of the cross and said, "Amen", his driver, *Fiacre*, guided the team in front and a large procession followed him. One man carried a cross and others carried banners. The lead wagon and the other wagons began to follow them. As we passed along the road leading out of the village the people stood at their gates and waved us their farewells. Soon we reached the end of the village and Reverend Barwinsky's buggy disappeared on the side road, the people who led the procession stopped and lowered the banners as each wagon passed.

We were out in the open fields and as I was walking beside the wagon that was taking us to the railway station, I turned around to look yet once more at our village: it never looked more beautiful to me. And I, a carefree 12-year-old village lad, broke into heavy sobbing.

After a while my Mother called to me and asked me to climb up and ride. I sat beside her for a while and then leaning my head on her shoulder, I fell asleep.

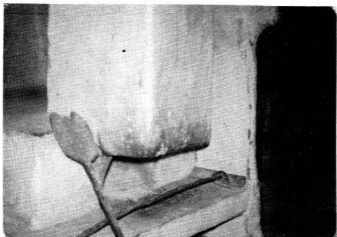
It was dark when I was awakened by the hissing sound of the steam locomotive and heard one waggoner call out in a loud voice, "Peter, hold the horses!"

It was very dark when we left the Ternopil station and I came to sit beside my mother. "You are hungry," she said. After satisfying my hunger with cold fried chicken, buttered paska<sup>4</sup> and an apple I fell asleep and left Ukraine forever.

We reached Hamburg from where we took a small steam-boat to Liverpool in England. We crossed the Atlantic in two weeks. Many people were seasick, but I managed to stay well. On reaching Halifax we travelled by train to Winnipeg. When we were going through some of the rocky country many women began to cry. Finally we reached Winnipeg and all seemed happier.

<sup>4</sup>Paska, white Easter bread.





1-12. An indoor bake oven with a peel (*lopata*) and a rake (*kotsuba*). A child could step on the warm platform at the left.

(M. Ewanchuk courtesy of D. Negrych)



1-13. One type of hand trunk used by the settlers to carry their clothing and tools.

(M. Ewanchuk - Man. Museum)

## IV. THE FIRST GROUP OF OLESKOW'S SETTLERS

The journey of Oleskow's settlers under the leadership of Cyril Genik was not an easy one. As they crossed from one part of Europe to another, they had problems with various officials. There were all kinds of agents who tried to get their money and followed them like the sharks follow a boat. At sea many were seasick.

When they finally started to travel through the wooded rocky country of Ontario, they were worried. However, when they approached Winnipeg and saw land suitable for farming they became happier. The Genik party of settlers arrived in Winnipeg on July 25, 1896. It was Saturday.

### LOOKING FOR LAND

In Winnipeg the Oleskow settlers were joined by others who arrived in Winnipeg on their own. Mr. John W. Wendelbo, who spoke German, was assigned to help the new settlers find homesteads. Three groups were formed to look for land suitable for homesteads. Mr. Cyril Genik led one party to Whitemouth, another group went to St. Norbert, and Mr. Wendelbo and six men left by team and wagon for southeastern Manitoba.

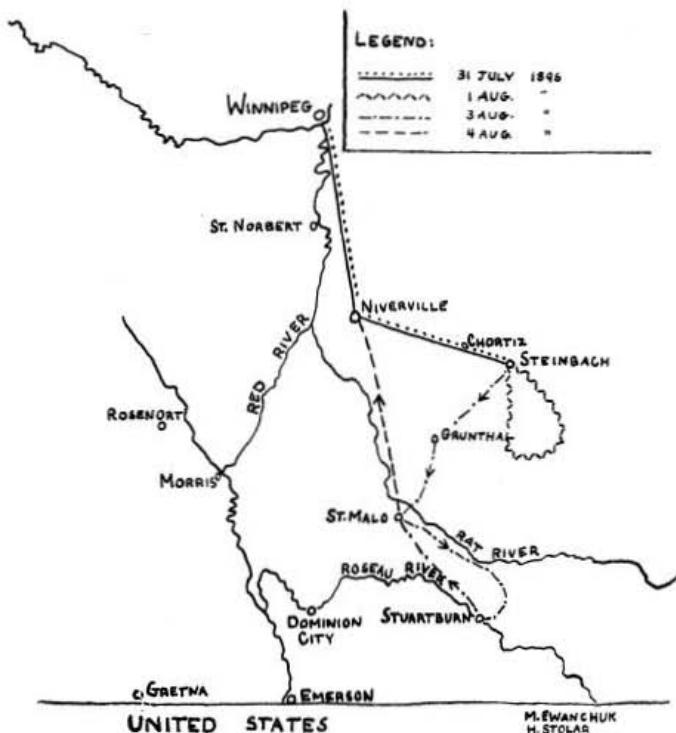
FRIDAY, JULY 31: the Wendelbo party travelled to Niverville and from there to Steinbach.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1: The men could not find suitable land south of Steinbach, and returned to the Mennonite settlement, leaving the next day for St. Malo.

MONDAY, AUGUST 3: Mr. Wendelbo and his men travelled on the east side of Roseau River until they reached Township 3, Range 6 East where he wrote: "... We found land very satisfactory, mixed with Poplar groves, scrubby Prairie, and Meadowland and enough vacant homesteads for about 35 or 40 families; the delegates in my company expressed themselves very much pleased and satisfied with the land."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wendelbo Report to H.H. Smith in Winnipeg. Imm./371399.



1-14. Map showing the route of the Wendelbo Ukrainian settlers' party, August 1896.

## REPORTS FROM DELEGATES

### Genik's Party Report

The men who examined the land and conditions in the Whitemouth River area did not consider it suitable for settlement.

### The St. Norbert Group

Half of the delegates who went to St. Norbert wanted to settle there. They had been encouraged by a Roman Catholic priest they met to go there.

## The Wendelbo Party

When, however, the men who went out with Mr. Wendelbo to look at the land in the Stuartburn area returned to the Immigration Hall in Winnipeg, all were anxious to hear what they had to say and gathered around them. "Tell us, men, what you saw."

"We looked at a lot of land, but the area that we selected is the only place where you are able to get 113 morgen (160 acres) of land for ten dollars. They call these farms 'homesteads'."

"What is the land like?" asked Maksym, a tall powerful farmer, anxious to get out of the city, who changed his plans and instead of going to Brazil came to Canada.

"The soil on the land we examined is rather light and sandy. There are not many large trees except along the river, but there are enough trees for building purposes and plenty of fuel. Each homestead has some open meadows where there will be plenty of hay for the settler's cattle. The water supply is very good."

"But is there a village where we may buy our supplies? How about a church and a school, where will our children have a chance to learn the new language?" Anna, who seemed to have her mind made up to go elsewhere, inquired.

"There is a small store owned by a French merchant, but there is no church and we will have to build a church and a schoolhouse ourselves. We can buy many of our needs in the small store and if we want to go to a larger town, it is on a railway line only 12 kilometers away. They call it Dominion City."

"That is too far to walk to that Mini city. One of us women should have gone along. You needed a woman to look into things properly. That bush country is too far and I think that our family is going where the priest wants us to go. We can get good land only 12 kilometres from here. Why go into the bush?" Anna finished what she wanted to say and moved away.

"Do tell us more," several men urged the delegates.

"There are English ranchers and farmers to the west, French farmers on the heavy land to the south and Mennonite people nearby. There is a good gravel road to the Mennonite main community, and there are Indian people in the area. From these people we will be able to buy cattle, hogs and poultry. When spring comes we may buy seed grain from the Mennonite settlers also. They came from the Ukraine and some speak our language."

"How about those Indians," inquired Maria. "Are they friendly people?"

"There is no danger from them. Mr. Wendelbo assured us that they are good people. We saw them digging some kind of roots which they sell in the store."

The men finished their reports and the group began to discuss how the people could settle to form one large colony. Not all the settlers agreed to settle in southeastern Manitoba. A small group that went with Anna and her husband selected river lots south of the present St. Norbert. These strips of land were equal to about 10 morgens and were the size of holdings they had back in their homeland. The heavy gumbo soil, too, was much like the land they left at home. Here they became neighbors of the French settlers.



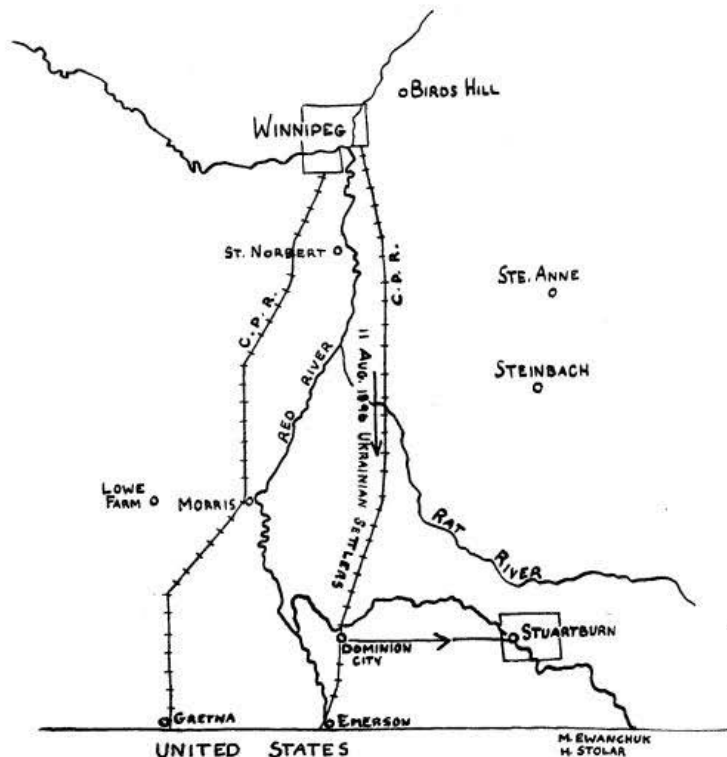
1-15. A little Ukrainian girl waiting to leave Winnipeg to go to Stuartburn.  
(V. J. Kaye - Ernest Brown Collection)

## V. THE FIRST SETTLERS

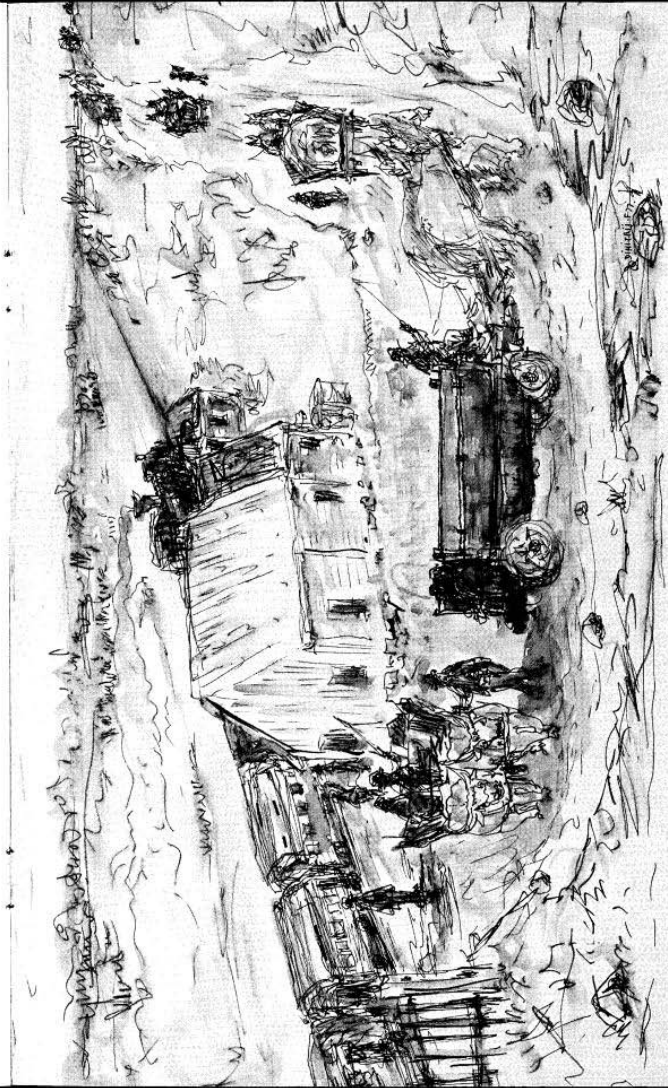
When the C.P.R. train stopped in Dominion City on August 11, 1896, one hundred and twenty settlers, men, women and children got off the train. Thirteen farmers that arrived with wagons drawn by horses waited for these people and as soon as the baggage was placed on the station platform the men began to load trunks, crates, hand trunks and duffel bags into the wagon boxes.

Some of the settlers, also went into the stores and bought cooking utensils, bags of flour and other supplies such as sugar, salt, pepper, tea and matches. Once all was ready Mr. Genik's wagon drove ahead and the other wagons followed him to the east.

Arrangements were made that the settlers would stop at Mr. Dodge's farm, a mile west of the present Stuartburn, and remain there until the men selected their homesteads.



1-16. Map showing route of first 120 Ukrainian settlers travelling into the Vita area 11, August, 1896.



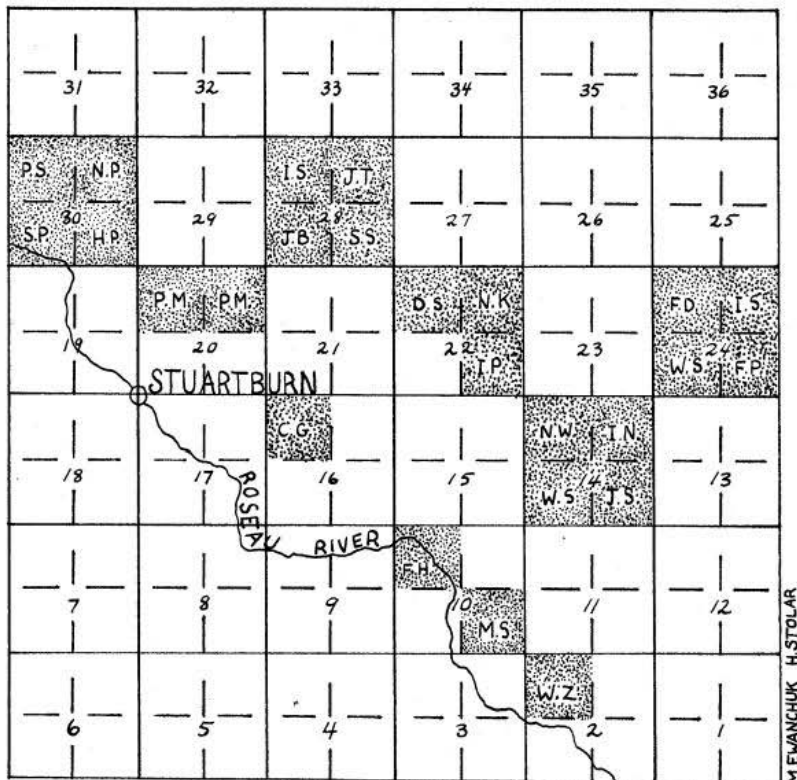
1-17. Ukrainian settlers leaving Dominion City for Stuartburn, Manitoba, August 1896.

## SELECTING THE HOMESTEADS

Early the next morning the men crossed the Roseau River at Houle's store and went to select their homesteads. While the men were away the women were busy. We have this record:

We slept indoors, but all housework was done outdoors. There the laundry was washed, the bread was baked, the meals were cooked, and we, the children, played near our mothers.

Each evening Mr. Wendelbo and Mr. Genik marked a map to show what land was selected that day. The settler tried to copy the map on a scrap of paper so that he would know where his neighbors lived, and be able to select a homestead close to his relations.



1-18. Homesteads selected by the Oleskow settlers in Township 2, Range 6, East of the Principal Meridian.



## THE FIRST PROBLEM

The settlers did not like the idea that they could select only homesteads in even-number sections. They looked at the map and saw that they were too far removed from each other. In the "old country" they were used to living close together in villages.

They held a meeting with the agent Mr. Wendelbo, and he, through the interpreter Cyril Genik, promised to help them so that the odd number sections would be made available for homesteads.

Help did come and by April 1897 and new settlers were able to take up land in odd-numbered sections also.

410595

Ottawa, 14th April, 1897

TO HIS EXCELLENCY  
THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL.

The undersigned has the honor to report that a number of settlers are applying for permission to make homestead entry for portions of odd-numbered sections in Townships 2, Ranges 6 and 7, East of the First Dominion Lands Meridian. It appears desirable in the public interest that their wishes should be met, and the undersigned accordingly recommends that the odd-numbered sections in the two townships mentioned be opened to homestead entry in so far as the same may be vacant and available.

Respectfully submitted  
(sgd) Clifford Sifton  
Minister of the Interior

The Hon. Clifford Sifton more than any other Canadian made it possible for the Ukrainian settlers to come to Western Canada and, like the other immigrants, the Mennonites and the Icelanders did well in the new country and helped to develop agriculture in Western Canada.

1-19. Men who helped with the development of the Vita Settlement.

Cyril Genik

Hon. Clifford Sifton

Rev. Nestor Dmytriw



(P.A.C.)



(P.A.C.)



(Dr. V.J. Kaye)

## VI. HOME BUILDING IN THE BUSH

The settlers wanted to get on their land as soon as possible and left the Dodge farm as soon as they were able. To start with they lived in tents or in hurriedly built crude huts. They cooked on the open fire, or used the steel stoves they had bought.

Men, women and children, with each family on its own or in groups, cut poplar poles, carried them on their backs and built log houses. When the roof was covered with turf or thatch of dry hay and a well was dug, some men left their families to daub the houses with mud plaster and went to work in the harvest field, west of Dominion City. These first houses looked like the Peter Smuk home in Senkiw.



1-20. Peter Smuk (Smook) pioneer house built in Senkiw, Manitoba

(P.A.C.)

An odd settler was forced to live in a tent or a cabin.

Settlers who had more money hired those that wanted to earn a little bit of cash and started to build homes like the ones they had in the "old country". They bought oxen and cows. They also built a stable for the animals.



1 - 21. Showing an old house and a stable no longer in use like the buildings the first settlers erected in 1896 and after. (D. Mihaychuk)

A Mrs. Anna Wachna who now lives in Windsor, Ontario, and who came to the Stuartburn-Vita district with her parents in 1896, and related in 1966 how as a 15 year-old girl she helped her father with the building of their first home in Canada by peeling the bark off the logs. She also stated that:

"A farmer was hired to cut a supply of hay for the two oxen and two cows that my parents bought when they arrived in Stuartburn. As my father was busy building a house my sister Paraska and I raked the hay with wooden-pegged rakes that my father made and piled it into small haycocks."

Harvesting being over, the men started to return to their families in the bush. With the money they brought from the old country and the money they had earned, they bought and brought back to their homesteads, hens, piglets, a cow or two and even a yoke of oxen and a new wagon. Some fathers brought puppies for the boys and kittens for the girls.

Michael Stashyn who also came to the Vita-Stuartburn district in 1896 when he was seven years old wrote:

My father had fifty dollars available and bought a cow as the children needed milk. The cow cost twenty-five dollars. She was a good milker and provided enough milk for seven families. . . . The cow used to go into the thick bushes during the day but always came back at milking time.



1 - 22. A Ukrainian woman milking a cow

(Public Archives of Canada).

While the men were away harvesting, the women and the children were busy, too. Boys were clearing land and the girls were helping their mothers to daub the house or build an out-door bake oven. The girls were mostly busy taking care of the younger children. Some mothers who learned about the digging of seneca roots from the Indians, went out digging. With the money they earned from the sale of these roots, they were able to buy flour, groceries, clothing and shoes for the children.

## VII. FIRST WINTER

During the first winter, life was particularly difficult for the settler's wife. Providing the family with ample food was not easy as all produce had to be bought. Vegetables were hard to obtain and they were expensive. Mothers also found it hard to keep house in their new homes: some cabins were small and there was always another settler arriving in the colony who had to be provided with shelter and food. There were many homes in the settlement that were crowded.

The men were busy, however, cutting wood which the farmers from around Dominion City area came to buy. They were also getting logs in readiness for the building of bigger and better homes, stables and sheds. Many settlers brought their tools along with them from the old country and during the long evenings were busy making beds, benches, tables, hand-made wooden rakes, flails, forks, pails and shovels.

The bigger boys used to set snares to catch rabbits which provided the settlers with fresh meat. A few bought shotguns and were able to hunt partridges and even an odd deer. This provided the family with fresh meat.

Some evenings neighbours came to call and they talked about the old country and discussed their plans for the future.

### FIRST CHRISTMAS

The first Christmas found the settlers lonesome and sad because they could not be with their dear ones who were so far away. One little girl, who had learned to read and write in Ukrainian in her native village, wrote a letter to her friend.

Canada,  
Stuartburn, Manitoba  
(27 December, 1896)<sup>6</sup>

Dear Marika,

Our first Christmas in Canada was not a very happy one. We are away from our village and feel alone without you, our dear ones. Our Christmas Eve dinner was traditional. We had plenty of mushrooms and white bread and butter and varenyky, but Mother did not have many vegetables to make good borscht. Although we had hay on the floor and found candy and nuts in it, we had no fresh fruit. On Christmas Day we also had a very tasty roast rabbit. We burned the hay out on the trail and make a black cross in the snow. We children were happy, but Mother cried, but Father is not worried. He says things will be better next year. The neighbors got together to sing carols, but we did not go to church. We have no church or school.

I miss you. Write to me.

Olena

<sup>6</sup> By the Canadian calendar it was the 9th of January, 1897.

In December, 1896 Hugo Carstens from the Department of Immigration visited the new colony and report on thirty six heads of families and single settlers. This is what he said about twenty of those living east of Stuartburn:

9. A. Jaremowietz (Jaremowicz)—no land, lives with the above, 4 souls, has now \$120, settled in November, is O.K.

10. Wasyl Zahara—NW $\frac{1}{4}$  2-2-6E, 6 souls, has fair house, is building, owns 1 cow, 1 calf, and 1/3 interest in yoke of oxen, good well and water, had \$200.00 but says spent all means, has 4 families living with him in same house, is O.K.

11. Andrej Glowatsky—no land, 4 souls, settled in Nov., lives with the above, has about \$45.00, is O.K.

12. Iwan Sandul—no land, 4 souls, settled Nov., lives with the above, has about \$50.00, is O.K.

12. Iwan Sandul—no land, 4 souls, settled Nov., lives with the above, has about \$50.00, is O.K.

13. Iwan Mukanyk—no land, 4 souls, settled in Nov., lives with W. Zahara, has about \$45.00, is O.K.

14. Michael Zahara—no land, 4 souls, settled in Nov., lives with W. Zahara, has about \$220.00, is O.K.

15. Michael Sokolowsky—SE $\frac{1}{4}$  36-2-6E, 6 souls, settled in Oct., lives on SE $\frac{1}{4}$  2-2-6E, no house, no stock, had no money when settling, oldest boy 26 years, earned \$50.00, has now 5 sacks of flour left, head of family old, needs some assistance in January. X

16. Joseph Kuchinsky—SW $\frac{1}{4}$  36-2-6E, 5 souls, settled in Oct., lives on SE $\frac{1}{4}$  2-2-6E, no house, no stock, had \$80.00 when settling, claims to have no money, has 3 sacks of flour, oldest boy 19 years, needs assistance. X

17. Ilasz Prokopczak—NW $\frac{1}{4}$  12-2-6E, 6 souls, settled in Aug. 96, lives with Jacob Szelep in 14-2-6E, no house, owns 1 cow and 1 calf, had only \$37.00, old man, oldest boy 17 years, no means, needs provisions, supplied for December. (X)

18. Jacob Szelep—SE $\frac{1}{4}$  14-2-6E, family in Austria, has a house, 2 cows and 1 calf, is O.K.

19. Fedor Pidherny (Pidhirnyj)—SW $\frac{1}{4}$  24-2-6E, 5 souls, settled in Aug. 96, had \$20.00, has house 12x12, no stock, worked on threshing machine but got no pay, has now no provisions, needs provisions, supplied for December. (X)

20. Fedor Dymianyuk—NW $\frac{1}{4}$  24-2-6E, 3 souls, settled in Aug. 1896, had \$20.00, no house, no stock, lives with the above, earned \$12.00, all expended, has 1 sack of flour, needs assistance, provided for December. (X)

21. Wasyl Salamandyk—SE $\frac{1}{4}$  24-2-6E, 3 souls, settled in Aug. 96, had \$20.00, has no house, stock, means and only 1/2 sack of flour, old man 56 years old, daughter of 14 years, needs assistance. X

22. Michael Michanuk (Michael Michaniuk)—no land, no house, no stock, 5 souls, settled in Oct. 1896, had 25 cents only, worked out and earned \$80.00 with which he repaid his debts, children small, needs assistance. X

23. Peter Strubicki (Petro Strumbicki)—NW $\frac{1}{4}$  30-2-7E, 8 souls, small house, children all small, no stock, no nothing, needs clothing and assistance very badly, supplied for December. (X)

24. Michael Cysmystruk—no land, 5 souls, settled in October 96, lives with No. 23, had no means, earned \$22. on Railway, has nothing, children small, 9, 5 and 3 years, needs assistance bad. X

25. Sawka Perun—SW $\frac{1}{4}$  30-2-7E, 5 souls, small house, has no stock, settled Aug. 96, had no money, worked out but received no pay, needs provisions and clothing, supplied for December. (X)

26. Iwan Sokolyk—no land, arrived in Nov., 4 souls, had \$8.00, has now 1.50 and 1/2 sack of flour, enough for one week, needs assistance badly, has one foot frozen. X

27. Matij Probizansky—no land, arrived in November, 3 souls, has \$30.00, needs assistance, for the present is O.K.

28. Konst. Didiuk—no land, arrived in Oct., 6 souls, worked on M. and NW Ry. claims to have earned only \$3.50, has now no means and only 1 sack of flour, lives with No. 25, needs assistance. X

29. Josef Bzowy—SW $\frac{1}{4}$  28-2-6E, 4 souls, has house 12x14, and 1 cow, had \$80.00, all expended, has 2 sacks of flour, may need a little assistance.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Kay V.J., Early Ukrainian Settlements in Canada 1895-1900.

## AN ECHO FROM THE PAST

Mr. Michael Stashyn, who came to Canada in 1896, recently wrote the following letter telling about the first year in the new settlement.

7350 Prince Edward St  
Vancouver B.C.  
23 April 1976

М. Еванчук,  
528 Barabank St  
Winnipeg Man.

Дорогий М. Еванчук,  
У відповідь на Ваше листове повідомлення про інформацію:  
Я приїхав до Стуртберн з родиною Максимом і Софією Сташин (Стасимович)  
в липні 1896 року, коли мав бути село  
всім разом.

Ми поселилися на фермі ділянка 10-та.  
Першу зиму ми жили в хатині.  
Збудував нам Павлик Генік. Він приїхав  
з того села що і Киріло Генік. Киріло Генік  
був інтерпретером переселенців нових, потім  
один з тих нових поселенців.

Пізніше ми побудували нову хату.  
Вона була назовні дороги до Шкарибо тоді  
як набуло в той час.  
Життя тоді для роду було важке.

Здоров'я Вам,  
Михайло Сташин



1-23. Picture of Michael Stashyn on his 87th birthday, 17 November, 1975.

In translation the letter reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Ewanchuk:

In reply to your letter, I am sending you the following information:

I came to Stuartburn with my parents, Maksym and Sophia Stashyn (Stasyshyn), in August, 1896. I was eight years old then.

We settled on a farm in Section 10, and during the first winter we lived in a cabin which was built for us by Mr. Nykola Genik. He came from the same village as Mr. Cyril Genik, who acted as our interpreter, and then became a land settlement agent helping to place new settlers on their homesteads.

Later we built a new house. I did not have a chance to go to school as there was no school in the district.

Life for my parents was difficult.

With best wishes, I am  
Michaylo Stashyn

## VIII. THE FIRST CHURCH SERVICE

When the settlers came to Canada no clergyman accompanied them. They, therefore, were not able to have any church services. However, on Sundays or Holy days they used to meet in some homes to sing hymns and carols. There were men among the settlers who were good church cantors and they were able to sing the whole mass without a clergyman. In the spring, however, they had a visit from a clergyman. He was Reverend Nestor Dmytriw, the first Ukrainian clergyman to visit the colony east of the Roseau River. This is what he wrote about his first service:

The Ukrainian Palm Sunday in Stuartburn, Manitoba, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1897

Toward evening [on Saturday] our people erected a cross and made an altar. They were happy as they thought that on Sunday they would be able to have an open air church service, a procession, and celebrate their [first] Palm Sunday. During the night, however, there was a storm and there was thunder and lightning and then toward morning the snow began to fall. The storm increased and the frigid northern wind whirled the snow into drifts.

It was a bitterly cold winter day that Sunday, a day the like of which I had never before experienced in my life. One could feel the chill cut his flesh to the bone: it was impossible to get warm. All of us, although stiffened by the cold, managed to reach the store where I sang mass and had 87 people come to confession. Due to the bitter cold, many, however, did not come.

### МОЛИТВА ГОСПОДНА

Оче наших, иже еси на небесах: да стытєса имя твоє, да приидєтє царствє твоє, да вѣдєтє воля твоє, яко на небесах и на земли. Хлѣбъ нашъ насѣбный даждь намъ днесь: и остави намъ долги наша, якоже и мы оставляемъ должникомъ нашимъ: и не введи насъ во искушєніє, но избави насъ ѿ лукаваго.

Возгласє. Иже твоє єсть црєво и сила и слава, Оца и Сна и ст҃аго Духа, нѣмѣ и присно, и вѣки вѣкѣхъ. Аминь.

### МОЛИТВА ГОСПОДНЯ

Молитва на вечерю Господнюю, бо и начина Своихъ ученикѣмъ Самъ Господь Іисусъ Христосъ.

Отче наш, що еси на небі! Нехай свигнеться имя Твое; нехай приїде царство Твое; нехай буде воля Твоя, як на небі так і на землі. Хліб наш щоденний дай нам сьогодні; і прости нам провини наші, як і ми прощаємо винуватцям нашим; і не введи нас у спокусу, але визволь нас від лукавого.

Бо Твое є царство і сила і слава, Отця і Сина і Святого Духа, і нині і повсяк час, і на віки вічні. — Аминь.

### The Lord's Prayer,

This is called "The Lord's Prayer", for it was taught to the disciples by our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: the first column is from a prayer book like the ones used by the early settlers. Columns two and three, from the prayer book of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church.

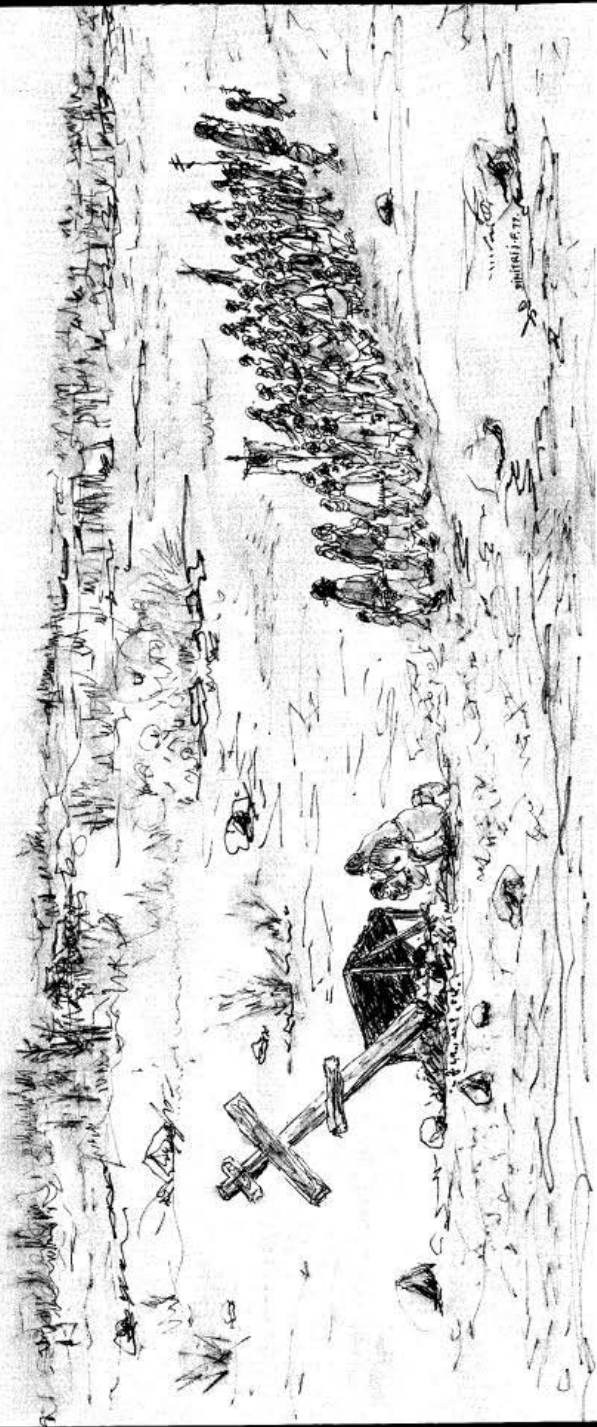
<sup>10</sup>Date in Dr. Kaye's Book, p. 163 is given as April 17. This is an error.



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1-24. First Palm Sunday in Stuartburn.



1-25. Young Ukrainian couple and child arriving in Canada.

(Courtesy Dr. V. J. Kaye and D. Hryhorovich)



1-26. Wasyl and Wasylyna Zahara (seated) in 1920, two of the original group of Ukrainian settlers to arrive in Stuartburn in 1898. (Photo: courtesy John Panchuk - V. J. Kaye)

## IX. LIFE GOES ON

### THE SECOND VISIT OF REV. N. DMYTRIW

Rev. Dmytriw visited the colony again. This time the settlers made considerable progress. Michael Stashyn writes:

It is likely that I attended the first service with my parents, but I cannot remember the details. I do remember when he came again. He came to our home with my father. Mother and Father then made a bed for him on a trundle-bed which stood under a window. When we got up the next mornint, Rev. Dmytriw gave me a prayer-book in which he wrote the day, month and year. Now I cannot find it. It is very likely that I donated it to the library with my other books. Then we dressed and went to the service without breakfast.

There is no doubt that Rev. Dmytriw was very unhappy over the fact that there was no Ukrainian clergyman in the settlement. Dr. Oleskow's plan to have a married Ukrainian Catholic clergyman settle on the grant of land made available by the government for the clergyman's residence did not meet with success.

Two churches were built in the new colony very soon after Rev. Dmytriw's second visit to Stuartburn. The first was the St. Michael's Church, built in 1899, which served the settlers of the Orthodox faith, and then the Ukrainian Catholic Church was built some three miles east of Stuartburn.

### YOUNG PEOPLE GO TO WORK

As the new homesteads did not bring the settlers much income, the people had to go to work to earn some money to pay for the cattle and equipment they bought. Young people went to work to help the parents. It was easier for the boys as they could earn good wages during harvest, then they would return home for the winter. The girls, however, had a more difficult time. They went to work for farmers around Dominion City, Emerson and Morris and received little pay. They were hired by the year and were lonesome, not being able to visit home very often. Mrs. Gorman of Stuartburn, who was 93 in 1976, was one of these girls. She says that even in Winnipeg all a girl could earn was from \$1.50 to \$3.00 a month. That was one reason, she says, why she married early.

Mrs. J. Kulachkowsky, who started school in her native village of Senkiw, did not get a chance to go to school in Canada. She first went to work for a farmer who had a large family and received little pay. The farmer paid her only \$20.00 a year; but, she says she was happy to learn to speak the Mennonite language.

The next went to work in Emerson for the Forresters. Mr. Forrester was an M.L.A. In the evenings when the work was done and when the

Forrester children did homework, she was able to study with them and made good progress in English without ever having been to school in Canada.

She, like other Ukrainian girls, liked to wear colorful Ukrainian costumes and wore the blouses she embroidered when she would return to visit in her home in Tolstoi.

## CHANGE IN LEADERS

When Cyril Genik left to live in Winnipeg to work as land agent for the government, a young man, Theodosy Wachna arrived in the community in 1897. He came to Canada from the United States where he worked in the mines in Pennsylvania and had a chance to attend school to learn the English language.

In Stuartburn he first helped to place the new Ukrainian settlers on land, then went farming for some seven years before becoming a businessman and secretary of the Municipality of Stuartburn. He helped the settlers as interpreter and letter writer.




1-27. Showing wooden cross marking the grave of a Ukrainian pioneer, Hryhorij Kohut, who died in 1905 and was buried on the land he donated for the Oleskow Pioneer Cemetery. He was born in 1830 and was eighteen years old in 1848 when serfdom was abolished and the Ukrainians once again became free men.

## DESIRABLE SETTLERS

The President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Sir William Van Horne, was interested in immigration from Europe to Canada, and after the arrival of the first groups from the Ukraine, he praised the government and Dr. Oleskow for making it possible for the settlers to come to the west and expressed the hope that it:

*will lead to a great many more from that direction, and they seem to be very desirable people.*

*Yours very truly*  


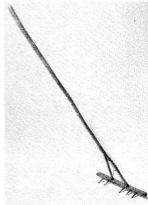
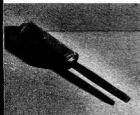
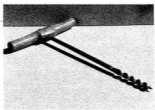
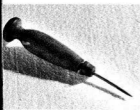
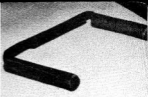
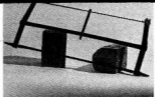
Sir William Van Horne<sup>9</sup>

In 1899 after making a five-week trip to Western Canada, Sir William again cited some facts to show the desirability of the Ukrainian people as citizens, pointing out that, "they paid the C.P.R. in full for their transportation to their homes in the West". And although the railway company was only paid to transport the new settlers to Winnipeg, it had carried them the rest of the journey on credit. He continued:

"We had little hopes of ever getting what they owed us, but they have paid up every cent. Don't you think people whose sense of honesty is so keen that they will pay the railroad corporation a debt that they could easily have got out of are a good class of colonists to get hold of?"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> i. Imm/29503

<sup>10</sup> ii. Imm/109679



1 - 30. Type of hand tools and equipment brought and used by Ukrainian settlers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photo: 1 - 25 from *Dictionary of Ukrainian Canadian Biography*, courtesy of the Ukrainian Research Council and Dr. V. J. Kaye, author.

Photo: 1 - 26 from *Early Ukrainian Settlements in Canada 1895-1900*, with the kind permission of Dr. V. J. Kaye.

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