

UKRAINIAN CHURCHES OF MANITOBA

An Architectural History Theme Study



**Neil Bingham &
David Butterfield**
Historic Resources Branch

Manitoba 
Culture, Heritage and Tourism



On the cover: Tabernacle at Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church, Merridale. The tabernacle, which sits on the altar, is a miniature Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral.

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PREFACE

This booklet has been adapted from a larger publication developed in 1987 by the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism. That study, *Ukrainian Churches of Manitoba: A Building Inventory*, should still be available in public libraries.

That original study was intended to assist church hierarchies to gain a better understanding of the architectural heritage of this building type, and thus to undertake better educational, tourism, designation and conservation programs. To that end, this original work also contained a substantial inventory of 314 buildings in the province. A pdf copy of the original study and another of the inventory are available by contacting the branch:

Historic Resources Branch
Main Floor, 213 Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1N3
Email: hrb@gov.mb.ca

This present extract from the 1987 report contains the contextual essay that was developed after a close review of the inventory results, and an examination of documents and information from the various church archives. This essay presents the many important and interesting themes that have attended the development of Ukrainian church architecture in Manitoba, and will be useful for anyone interested in this important story.

DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN UKRAINE

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN UKRAINE is complex and rendered even more complicated by the constantly shifting political boundaries that define the individual regions that comprise Ukraine. To begin, it is necessary to understand why there are two major Ukrainian religious groups—Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic.^Ψ A synopsis of the development of the Christian church in Ukraine, and its offshoot in Manitoba, clarifies this historical division.

A gradual introduction of Christianity into the areas bounding Ukraine probably occurred in the first century A.D. But it was not until 988, when Prince Volodymyr initiated mass baptisms, that the Christian religion was formally established in Ukraine. A major schism of the Christian church occurred in 1054, dividing leadership of the Christian world between Rome and the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople. The princes of Ukraine accepted the Greek Orthodox or Eastern Rite, thus securing strong ties with the Byzantine Empire. Initially, the Orthodox church gave a new unity to Ukraine. In the succeeding five centuries, however, Ukraine was fractured by political turmoil.

^Ψ For purposes of clarity the descriptive terms for these two dominant groups – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Catholic Church – will be used most frequently in this report. In the account of Ukrainian church history that precedes the architectural analysis, the various major name changes that have affected these two church groups will be discussed. The welter of specific legal church entities within the two church families – which changed over time and according to place, but which nevertheless still pursued the basic tenets of Orthodoxy or Catholicism – will be avoided in the text thereafter, so that the broader discussion of church architecture is not complicated by the specific theological differences that affect any large ecclesiastical organization.

By the fourteenth century Ukraine, and adjoining territories—including Romania, whose northern inhabitants had close ethnic ties with Ukraine—had been conquered and divided amongst a number of foreign powers. Eventually, the major portion of the Ukrainian territory, that is Central and Eastern Ukraine, fell under the sway of the Russian Tsars. The religious autonomy of the central and eastern areas was also compromised, especially after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. The Tsars, who were the titular heads of the Greek Orthodox Church, claimed that Moscow was the “Third Rome” and the Greek Orthodox Church fell more clearly into the sphere of authority of the resurgent Russian Empire. In the western Ukrainian provinces of Galicia and Bukovyna—homeland for the majority of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—political control fell to Poland (Figures 1 and 2). As in central and eastern Ukraine this political imposition unfortunately brought with it religious strife. After 1500, Ukrainian religious autonomy in the western provinces had been thwarted with Polish kings exerting their authority over the church.

Lower Left: Figure 1.

Europe, ca. 1200, indicating the location of Ukraine within the continent.

Below: Figure 2.

Ukraine, ca. 1500. Galicia and Bukovyna are located in the western half of Ukraine, stretching between Poland and Romania.



Orthodoxy and Catholicism in Ukraine

Political intervention was not the only threat to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. Religious pressures, including the rise of Protestantism, and, in Constantinople, a waning interest in the Ukrainian church, forced a major ecclesiastical rupture. At the synod of Berestia in 1596 the Greek Orthodox Church in Ukraine was split, especially in Polish-dominated Galicia. A new church, the Uniate Church, which aligned itself with Rome rather than Constantinople, was formed. Bukovyna, which was not controlled by the Poles, remained Orthodox. Thus, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, the history of Ukrainian Christianity is dominated by the Greek Orthodox Church throughout Ukraine, and by the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church (subsequently known in Canada by the middle of the twentieth century as Ukrainian Catholic) in Galicia.

While the Uniate church retained much of the Eastern rite and liturgy, it was hoped that the union with Rome would offer protection from the interference of the Orthodox hierarchy in Moscow. Actually, the union was an attempt by the Roman Catholic Polish authorities to convert the inhabitants of Galicia. The formation of the Uniate Church was thus perceived by the Polish government as a first step in drawing Ukrainians away from regional religious traditions and into the Polish Roman Catholic fold. But this attempt failed. Indeed, the Uniates in Galicia reacted to Polish influences by reinforcing a Ukrainian nationalistic attitude.

Ukrainian Immigration to Canada and New World Influences

While religious and political differences may have played a role in the late nineteenth century migration of Ukrainians, it was primarily the economic and social conditions that forced many to seek a new home in North America. In the late nineteenth century poverty drove many of the Ukrainian peasants to emigrate from Bukovyna and Galicia: small land allotments had been subdivided with each generation; taxes were high; wood for fuel was scarce and expensive.

Immigration from Ukraine to Canada had begun quietly in 1891. By 1897, a Ukrainian immigration boom was on, encouraged by the open immigration policies of the Canadian government. When war broke out in 1914, there were 170,000 new Ukrainian-Canadians in the three Prairie provinces (Figures 3 and 4).

To some extent, the religious situation for the new Ukrainian immigrant to Canada proved almost as complex as it had been at home. Having not been accompanied by Ukrainian Catholic or Orthodox priests, many of the first Ukrainian pioneers in Manitoba were reliant upon traveling American priests from the more established Eastern Rite dioceses for the occasional service. And, often, it was to the already established local denominations that the Ukrainians found themselves forced to turn for spiritual guidance.

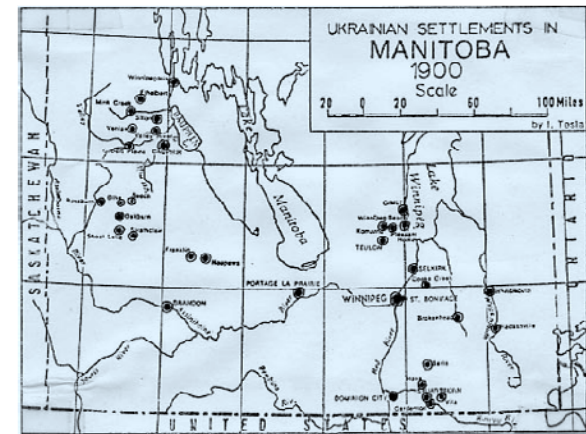
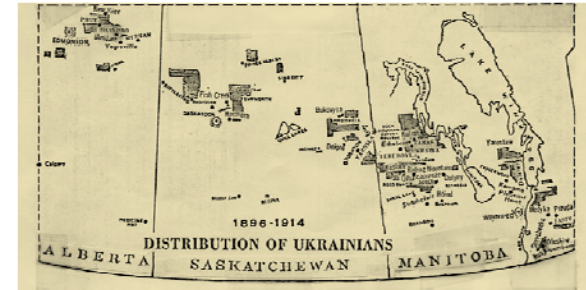


Figure 3. Distribution of Ukrainian pioneer settlement in Western Canada. (Marunchuk, *The Ukrainian Canadians*, p. 48.)

Figure 4. Ukrainian settlements in Manitoba. (Kaye, *Dictionary of Ukrainian Canadian Biography*, 1975, p. xxii.)

Ukrainian Greek Catholics thus found it necessary to petition Rome for priests through Archbishop Langevin in Winnipeg. But, because the Roman Catholic Church opposed the introduction of married Greek Catholic priests into Canada, many years passed before Ukrainian clergymen arrived in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the settlers. In the meantime, several Roman Catholic priests were designated to serve the Ukrainian settlers. Ukrainian requests for their own priests finally received support from Count Andrie Sheptytsky, the Ukrainian Catholic Metropolitan of Galicia, who toured Western Canada in 1909. He was instrumental in having Rome appoint the first Greek Catholic bishop in Manitoba, Bishop Nykyta Budka, in 1912.

Ukrainian Greek Orthodox immigrants were likewise uneasy with the new situation. Alarmed by the actions of a self-proclaimed bishop and metropolitan from the United States, a large group of Orthodox Ukrainians broke away to form the Independent Greek Church. While this group retained the Eastern rite and liturgy, they were encouraged and supported by the Presbyterian Church. The Independent Greek Church declined after 1907 when the Presbyterians encouraged the new church to accept Protestant reforms. Most members returned to Ukrainian Orthodoxy while a few joined the Presbyterians.

A large group of Catholic Ukrainians, who were disillusioned with the religious situation in Canada, and who refused to recognize the Pope as their spiritual head, organized the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada in 1918. This new religious organization was, of course, not associated with the Greek Orthodox Church in the old country, although some Greek Orthodox Bukovynians later joined them. In several cases whole congregations, whose members were formerly Catholic, joined the new church. In some instances, where the two had once worshipped together, the construction of a second church in the community was necessary.

The years following the initial readjustment period of settlement have witnessed the gradual establishment of Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches as the principal Ukrainian Churches in Manitoba. In spite of the distinct character of their individual religious expression, the architecture of the two faiths exhibits many more similarities than differences. In Manitoba, the designs of Orthodox and Catholic churches are often difficult to distinguish from one another. In this study, therefore, the architecture of the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches will be discussed together.