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Skeleton of Settlement: Ukrainian Folk Building in Western North Dakota

The Ukrainian immigrants who settled in western North Dakota during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created a distinctive architectural landscape using Old World building forms and construction techniques that visibly separated them from their Anglo-American neighbors. Throughout a 360-square-mile area of ranches and marginal farms located just east of the remote Badlands, Ukrainian-built houses and outbuildings are distinguished by an archaic wall construction consisting of a skeletal frame of earthfast vertical posts and horizontal lath that was packed with earth infill and covered with mud plaster (Fig. 1). This essay explores the continuation and adaptation of traditional Ukrainian building practices during the settlement period by comparing the folk architecture of the immigrants' home region with surviving domestic, agricultural, and religious buildings in western North Dakota.

The main causes for the mass emigration of Ukrainians to North America between 1895 and 1914 were overpopulation, low wages, religious persecution, military conscription, and reports of opportunities abroad. During this period, it is estimated that at least 264,000 Ukrainians came to the United States. Without the necessary capital to start farming, the majority chose work in the factories and mines of the East and Midwest. Most Ukrainians in search of farmland went to available lands in central Canada, but about twelve hundred made their way to North Dakota before 1915.¹

North Dakota's Ukrainians were composed of two distinct groups. Ukrainian Catholics from the western province of Galicia settled primarily in western North Dakota, while Protestants from the central Ukraine near Kiev located in the north-central part of the state. This study focuses on the Galician group that came to North Dakota by way of Winnipeg in 1896. Within a short time relatives and countrymen came directly from Galicia and established the communities of Ukraina, Gorham, and Snow on lands north of Belfield in the western part of the state. By 1930, there were approximately 240 Ukrainian households in this area, with a total population of about two thousand.²

Galicia at the time of the emigration was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is a rolling, semi-forested area located east of the Carpathian mountains and just north of the Romanian border. Most of

I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Agnes Palanuk, Director of the Ukrainian Cultural Institute in Dickinson, North Dakota.

1. Wasyl Halich, *Ukrainians in the United States* (1937; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1970), 150–53.

2. Wasyl Halich, "Ukrainians in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 18 (1951): 219; *Ukrainians in North Dakota* (Belfield, N.D.: Ukrainian Pioneer Days Committee, 1974), 2. For a comprehensive history of North Dakota's Ukrainian groups see Theodore B. Pedeliski, "Ukrainians," in *Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History*, ed. William C. Sherman and Playford V. Thorson (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1988), 261–94.



Fig. 1. Remains of the Peter Zagursky house. (Author)

western North Dakota's Ukrainians came from the small villages of Boryskivtsi, Bilivtsi, and Okopy, near the confluence of the Dniester and Zbruch rivers in southeastern Galicia. The immigrants were poor peasant farmers who owned plots of land of less than five acres. Many worked as laborers on the larger five-to-seven-hundred-acre estates of Polish nobles. In an interview conducted about 1940, Peter Zagursky detailed his landholdings, the method of farming in Galicia, and his reason for coming to America:

I owned about 3 morgs or about five acres and the taxes on this land was 2 goloens per morg. The method of farming was rather crude and quite a few of the farmers had oxen to pull their implements with and yet others were fortunate in that they used horses. We used plows which was pulled by two or four horses and large wooden drags which evened the land after it was plowed. The seeding was done by hand, but many of the nobles or the large landowners as they were known had seeders. The harvesting was done with a cradle and the grain raised were wheat, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, beets and millet. I had quite a bit of stock and raised some sheep, cattle, and horses as well as poultry, such as chickens, geese and ducks. The surplus produce raised on the farms were sold on the open market in Zvyniachka. . . .

The reason I came to this country was because the country where I lived was getting quite crowded and was getting hard to make a living. I heard quite a bit about the United States and it had more to offer than any other country. I expected to be able to get more land and see less lords.³

Paul Kordon, who was sixteen years old when he left Boryskivtsi for the United States, provided vivid descriptions of Ukrainian construction methods and the relationship between social class and building materials in his area:

I lived with my parents in the village of Boryskivtsi. Our house was built by digging poles into the ground. Between the poles we constructed a grill-like framework and filled it with earth. Rafters on [the] roof supported shingles which we made from bundles of rye. In the event of fire, a bell rang and everyone, including the children, came with pitchers of water.

The rich pani [Polish nobles] had houses of lumber. Their other buildings were constructed of stone.⁴

Nick Rodakowski, who was born in Boryskivtsi in 1879, provided a similar description of house construction in his home area:

3. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writer's Project, Peter Zagursky interview, undated, 1, typescript, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck.

4. *Echoing Trails: Billings County History* (n.p.: Billings County Historical Society, 1979), 165.



Fig. 2. Petro Demianiw house, built in 1908. (Author)

Our homes were made with poles set up in the ground and fastened smaller poles to the upright posts and the cracks were filled or plastered with mud mixed with hay or straw. They were finished with mud alone so it would be smoother. The roof was covered with rye bundles for shingles. The barns were made of rock with the same covering as the houses.⁵

The poor Ukrainian farmers from Galicia brought this post-and-earth construction technique to North Dakota and adapted it to the local environment according to their specific needs. Nearly forty post-and-earth structures have been identified in western North Dakota. They are built with earthfast cedar posts, each about six inches in diameter and placed in the ground three to four feet apart, outlining perimeter and interior walls. Horizontal willow laths nailed to both sides of the posts form a skeletal wall frame filled with what residents call “gumbo,” a mixture of earth and dung with a straw binder. These dwellings, known locally as “gumbo” or “mud” houses, were finished on the exterior with two courses of mud plaster and limewashed to a bright white color. The Petro Demianiw house, built in 1908, is the survey region’s best-preserved house with the original wall construction remaining visible (Fig. 2).

Several older members of the Ukrainian community remember their houses being built. Steve Baranko and Mike Filkowski, both young boys at the time, recall that one or two horses tethered to a pole walked in circles to mix the gumbo filler and that sometimes the women tramped the mixture with their feet.⁶ Wall details suggest that the lath was nailed progressively from bottom to top as the gumbo was rammed into the frame from the top. Small rocks were sometimes placed at the bottom of the walls to deter erosion. Nick Rodakowski’s son, Joe, who still lives in his father’s wood-sided post-and-earth house, noted that the wall fill settles over time and has to be replenished from the top.⁷ Using clay taken from nearby hills, Rodakowski repairs not only his house but also the nearby Demianiw house.

5. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writer’s Project, Nick Rodakowski interview, 29 March 1940, 1, typescript, State Historical Society of North Dakota.

6. Steve Baranko, personal interview, 25 March 1987; Mike Filkowski, personal interview, 8 January 1988, archive, North Dakota Council on the Arts, Fargo.

7. Joe Rodakowski, personal interview, 22 July 1986, archive, North Dakota Council on the Arts.

In addition to the post-and-earth construction method, three other variant techniques were discovered in the survey area. In several cases, the earth-filled skeletal frame was covered with machine-cut lath and mud-plastered in the usual way on the inside, but originally covered with weatherboards nailed to the lath and posts on the outside.⁸ In three examples, exterior clapboard siding was nailed directly to the vertical posts and no lath was used on the outside wall. In two houses, the cedar posts were spaced only about twelve inches apart, with the clay-straw mixture rammed between the posts. It is significant that early builders who covered house exteriors with weatherboards preserved the original post-and-earth concept, which served as an excellent insulating system in a region where winter temperatures often reach twenty degrees below zero.

In the Ukraine, traditional building techniques vary from region to region; log construction is common in the forested areas of the north and extreme west while variations of earthen construction are found in the flatter central and southern areas. The post-and-earth technique used in Galicia and brought to North Dakota is related to other Ukrainian techniques in which horizontal riven slats were slotted between the posts, or flexible wattles or rushes were woven around the posts before being covered with mud plaster. The woven wattle technique was commonly used in the fences of the western Ukraine. Although no surviving buildings in the survey area illustrate either of these techniques, a house with slotted interstices does appear in the background of an early photograph of the Nick Maslowski family.⁹ Recollections from the Hrihory Kopichuk family provide a variation of the usual earth-infill technique with rushes as filler: "Cedar poles were dug into the ground and parallel poles were attached. Small poles and rushes filled the spaces. Gumbo mixed with horse dung and straw filled the spaces and gave the walls smoothness."¹⁰ This evidence suggests that nail-less techniques may have been used on some of the area's early houses.

Western North Dakota's high concentration of post-and-earth buildings is unique among eastern European immigrant communities in the midwestern and plains states. North Dakota's Ukrainian Protestants also built with earth, but these immigrants favored sun-dried clay bricks and coursed, rammed earth.¹¹ In Saskatchewan, a similar Ukrainian version of the post-and-earth method has been reported, but Canadian scholarship has shown that the majority of Ukrainian settlers in Canada built mud-plastered horizontal-log dwellings.¹²

While it is possible to identify concentrations of post-and-earth construction in eastern Europe, ample evidence indicates that similar methods were used in other parts of the world and in different historical periods as well. In Nevada, for example, a strikingly similar wall-construction method, possibly with American Indian origins, has recently been identified.¹³ African and Caribbean traditional architectures contain versions of post-and-woven-wattle techniques.¹⁴ References from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland attest to the frequency of woven wattle-and-daub, which survives on the interior

8. In one example, shown in a historic photograph, a weatherboarded house was plastered with mud over the boards on the facade only, thus maintaining a traditional appearance. See *Billings County History*, 399.

9. *Ibid.*, 184.

10. *Ibid.*, 341.

11. These techniques are also found in the German-Russian communities in both North and South Dakota. See William C. Sherman, "Prairie Architecture of the Russian-German Settlements in the United States," in *Russian-German Settlements in the United States*, ed. Richard Sallet (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1974), 185-95; Michael Koop and Stephen Ludwig, *German-Russian Folk Architecture in Southeastern South Dakota* (Vermillion: South Dakota State Preservation Center, 1984).

12. John Lehr, *Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Alberta* (n.p.: Alberta Culture Historical Resources Division, 1976), 11; John C. Lehr, "Ukrainians," in *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1986), 161-65.

13. Blanton Owen, "Nevada Log Architecture," paper presented at the Vernacular Architecture Forum Meeting, Salt Lake City, 9 May 1987 (see the Abstract included in this volume).

14. For photographs and illustrations see Susan Denyer, *African Traditional Architecture* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1978), 100; John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978), 127.

Fig. 3. Wasyl Palahniuk house in Boryskivtsi, as it looked in 1903 when the family emigrated to western North Dakota. The form and materials of this house are typical of Ukrainian folk housing in southeastern Galicia. (Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Zilkowski)



partition walls of many standing houses.¹⁵ Implications for the detailed study of post-and-earth technologies are more immediate for American vernacular architecture when we remember that primitive dwellings made of earthfast posts and riven clapboards were quite common in the seventeenth-century colonies of New England and the Chesapeake.¹⁶

Roofs on the survey area's Ukrainian buildings were primarily constructed of manufactured, dimensional lumber, although in several instances long cedar poles were nailed across the tops of the wall posts to serve as plates. More commonly, boards measuring $1\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ inches were used for plates and joists. The rafters were slightly lighter and joined without a ridge pole. Wire nails were used to secure the roof assembly. While thatching was traditionally used in the Ukraine, no physical evidence of thatching has been found in North Dakota. However, some residents remember rough early roofs of sticks and straw bound with a hard gumbo covering, and rough straw roofs remain on a few cattle barns, so it is possible that thatching existed on some of the earliest houses.

House interiors also combined traditional and commercial materials. Interior walls were made with two coats of fine mud plaster and finished with a lime mixture. All ceilings and many floors were of narrow tongue-and-groove boards. Some floors were originally of packed earth. Five-panel doors and plain window and door trim were standard. White or sky blue were common interior wall colors, with blue, shades of green, or mustard yellow as the most common interior trim colors. Although oral accounts report that clay ovens were used in Galicia, the post-and-earth houses in North Dakota had iron stoves for cooking and heating.¹⁷ In the surveyed houses, brick chimney stacks were supported by a wooden base fitted with shelves for storage.

Traditional house forms in the Ukraine remained relatively constant, with minor variations from region to region in construction techniques and stylistic details. A one-story, two- or three-room house type with a hipped, clipped gable or, more rarely, a gabled roof was

15. For photographs see Kevin Danaher, *Ireland's Vernacular Architecture* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1975), 66, 68, 81.

16. These dwellings, some with earthen wall variations, were generally intended as temporary structures that would eventually be replaced by frame houses. One description of the colony of New Albion in 1650 mentions "an Irish house of posts walled and divided with close wattle hedges, and thin turfed above, and thick turfs without below," and "a mud-wall house thatched or tiled." Cary Carson, Norman F. Barka, William M. Kelso, Garry Wheeler Stone, and Dell Upton, "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," *Winterthur Portfolio* 16 (1981): 155.

17. Nick Rodakowski, in his interview, describes a clay oven in his Galician house measuring $3 \times 3 \times 4$ feet.

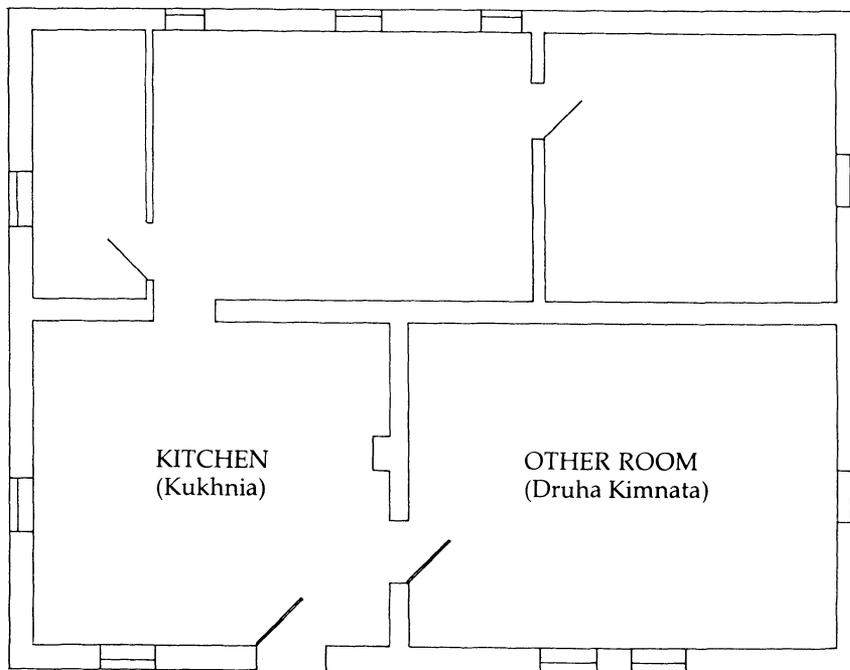


Fig. 4. Floor plan of the Petro Demianiw house. The "other room" was used as a sleeping/living room. The rear rooms, under a shed roof, are part of the original house. (Author)

most common (Fig. 3).¹⁸ In the North Dakota survey, most houses have gable roofs, but a few have a clipped gable or a hipped roof. Of nearly forty surveyed houses, only five have the three-room core, while the balance have the two-room core. The houses are quite small, averaging about 16 x 32 feet for the two-room type and 16 x 44 feet for the three-room type.

The two-room type consists of a kitchen, locally called the *kukhnia*, and an adjacent room on the right side known as the *druha khata*, or "other room" (Fig. 4), which was both a bedroom and a living room. The kitchen was sometimes used for sleeping in addition to cooking. In the two-room house, the right-side room is usually slightly larger than the kitchen room, although a few two-room examples have rooms of equal size. Many examples of the two-room type were originally built with one, two, or three back rooms under a rear shed roof. Other two-room houses had a string of rear rooms added over time. These back rooms, sometimes with thinner walls than the main block, were used for storing food and coal and occasionally as additional sleeping space.

As in the two-room type, three-room houses were entered through the kitchen; the right-side room was used as the primary sleeping chamber, and the left-side room was used for sleeping and storage. In three of the five three-room examples, the kitchen is slightly smaller than the equal-sized rooms on either side. In one example, the kitchen and left-side room are the same size, with a larger sleeping room on the right side. Another house was built with the kitchen and right-side room of the same size and a small bedroom on the left side.

18. V. P. Samojlovych, *Ukrains'ke Narodne Zhytlo* (The Ukrainian Folk Dwelling) (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1972) and "Architectural Peculiarities of the Ukrainian National Dwelling," *Ethnologica Slavica* 5 (1973): 63-73; Dr. V. Karmazym-Kakovsky, *Ukrains'ka Narodna Arkhitektura: Khaty i Derev'iani Tserkvy XVIII Torichchia* (Ukrainian Folk Architecture: Houses and Wooden Churches of the 18th Century) (Rome: Vydannia Bohoslovii, 1972); Z. Kuzela, "Folk Architecture," in *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia, Volume 1*, ed. Volodymyr Kubijovyc (1963; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 303-9. Kuzela notes that, through time, the three-room type has become more common than the two-room house, which is still built in the remote areas of the western Ukraine. He also suggests that the gable roof is a recent adaptation, possibly introduced by German colonists migrating to the Ukraine.

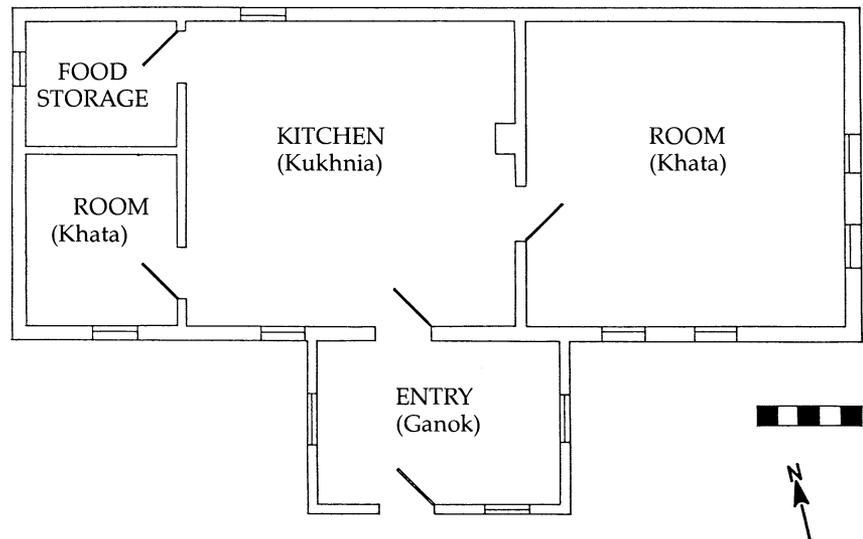


Fig. 5. The Maxym Logosz house, built in 1903, with its original floor plan. The “rooms” were used for sleeping/living. The wall dividing the kitchen and left-side rooms was moved from its original location, shown in the plan, to the right about two feet. (Author)

The Ukrainian community in western North Dakota did not have labels denoting specific functions for core interior rooms other than the kitchen. Rooms to either side of the *kukhnia* were simply known as a *khata* (translated literally as “house”) and were usually multifunctional.¹⁹ Often, room functions were related in personal terms. Seventy-eight-year-old Matthew Logosz, who was raised in a three-room house (Fig. 5) with four sisters and four brothers, recalled that his parents and sisters slept in the right-side room (“Dad’s room”), while the boys slept in the left-side room or in the attic. Logosz also explained: “We always stayed mostly in the kitchen [during the day], and then in the summertime we [all the boys] used to sleep in the granary because there was no room in the house.” In the Logosz house a large iron stove in the kitchen was used for cooking and a smaller iron burner heated the right-side room. Following the pattern of other Ukrainian dwellings, the east wall of the right-side room was adorned

19. Because of this terminology Lehr suggests that the Ukrainian folk house evolved from a simple, one-room dwelling. See “The Landscape of Ukrainian Settlement in the Canadian West,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 2 (1982): 102.

with religious items: "On the wall to the east there was all kinds of religious pictures, . . . of Jesus, the Apostles, the Virgin Mary."²⁰

An entryway (*ganok*) was included in three of five three-room types. In at least two of these examples the entryway was a later addition. Even though winters are extremely cold, a front entry was curiously absent on the majority of the surveyed two-room types. In a few two-room types, an entry was originally built against the side of the *kukhnia* toward the left rear corner of the house. The reluctance to build an entry onto the front of the two-room house may be due to a preference for a remembered Old Country arrangement that did not usually have a front entry.

The existence of only two principal house types in the Ukrainian settlements reveals a unified concept of spatial arrangement within the community. Steve Baranko, born in 1902 and now living in a retirement home, recognized the consistency in house form and noted that it was customary for neighbors to help each other build when a new house was needed. After a house was finished, an informal celebration was held with food and music.²¹ The Hrihory Kopichuk house, built in 1909, was also remembered as the result of a cooperative effort: "Helping with the building were neighbors Elko Anheluk, Alex and Constantine Kordonowy and Alex Gowrylow. A party followed. A bouquet of wild flowers made by Wallace Palanuk centered the table. Singing and dancing followed the pork supper."²²

Before building the familiar post-and-earth house, many Ukrainians first constructed a one-room sod house or dugout. Although the remains of only one sod house were found in the survey area, early homestead claims reveal that such houses were once quite common. A few accounts also note that "native sod" was combined with spaced earthfast posts, resulting in a combination of old and new techniques.²³ Dugouts were either built into the sides of hills, in a manner also familiar to non-Ukrainian pioneers of the American West, or dug into flat ground. Roofs were generally of limbs, rushes, and earth. These types of dwellings are known to have existed throughout the Ukraine, and accounts from German-Russian settlers in central North Dakota also mention them.²⁴ A dugout was known locally as a "bor-day" (*burdej*), a living place dug into the ground.

Western North Dakota's Ukrainians generally viewed post-and-earth houses as permanent dwellings. Many accounts report that the transition from a dugout or sod house to a post-and-earth house occurred immediately before or within a few years of marriage. For example, Petro Demianiw's daughter remembered that her father lived in a sod house for six years and built his post-and-earth house immediately after marriage, because "his bachelor sod shanty was not good enough for his bride."²⁵ Peter Zagursky came to Ukraina in 1906 from Pleasant Home, Manitoba; he was joined one year later by his wife and three children, only after he was established and had completed his two-room post-and-earth house.²⁶ Indeed, the post-and-earth house was perceived as an ideal that fulfilled cultural tradition and family needs.

20. Matthew Logosz, personal interview, 30 December 1987.

21. Baranko interview.

22. *Billings County History*, 341.

23. *Ibid.*, 267-68.

24. Sherman, "Prairie Architecture," 186.

25. *Billings County History*, 286.

26. Zagursky interview, 1-2.

Fig. 6. Eighty-six-year-old John Filkowski standing beside the dugout he built in 1943. (Author)



Other family histories reveal the complexity of settlement patterns by reporting that sod houses and even dugouts could be lived in for many years. The Alex Stefanishen family provided an example:

Our home was a dugout on the side of a hill. The front wall was made of sod and the roof was made of poplar poles, willows, long swamp grass, and dirt on the very top. The walls on the inside and outside were plastered with mud. When the mud was dry, mother whitewashed the walls with gumbo mixed with lime. We lived in this house for twenty years.²⁷

Thus, various types of dwellings—the dugout, the sod house, and the post-and-earth house—were lived in concurrently during the settlement period. Most dugouts were eventually abandoned, but one—Mike Filkowski’s—was used as a dwelling until 1960 (Fig. 6). Mike Filkowski was raised in his father’s post-and-earth house and built his first dugout in 1919 in the nearby Badlands. His second dugout was built in 1943 as a workshop, but when his frame house burned in 1945, Filkowski, a bachelor all his life, moved into the dugout and lived there until 1960. His one-room dwelling measuring 20 x 20 feet was dug about four feet into the ground. The front wall, facing south, was made of horizontal cedar logs, and the sides and rear walls were made of earthfast posts spaced about two feet apart with infill composed of one-quart oil cans bound with gumbo. The top of the dugout was covered with a thick mound of earth and pieces of tin sheet metal that were held in place by assorted bits of scrap iron.

The Ukrainians generally claimed small quarter- or half-section homesteads of 80 or 160 acres.²⁸ With little or no money for farm implements and cattle, they turned to various sources for income before they started farming. Many worked on state highway construction or track construction for the Northern Pacific Railroad. Others worked as laborers for neighboring German and German-Russian farmers or for area sheepmen and ranchers. At first agriculture was limited to a few acres of crops and a garden plot for the house, and initial farming methods did not vary greatly from those of the Ukraine.

27. *Billings County History*, 225.

28. Pedeliski notes that 40 percent of the Ukrainians claimed virgin land, while 60 percent settled on lands abandoned by Anglo-Americans. See “Ukrainians,” 262.

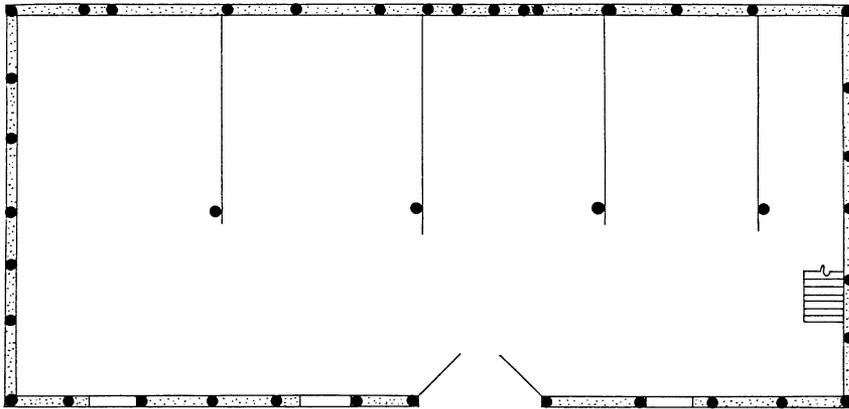


Fig. 7. Floor plan of the Peter Zagursky granary, built about 1915. The building utilizes the same post-and-earth construction technique as the Zagursky house (Fig. 1). Interior bin partition walls have been moved over the years. (Author)



Fig. 8. Wallace Osadchuk cattle barn. The barn originally had mounds of straw packed loosely around the earthfast frame. (Author)

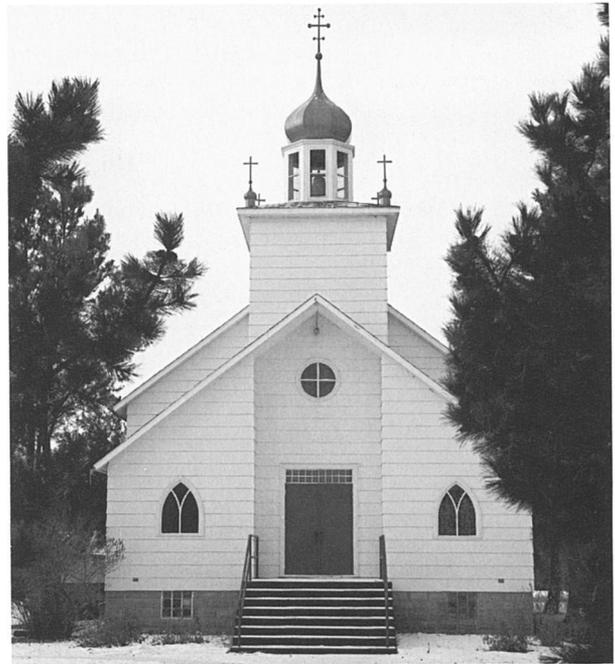
Ground was broken with a walking plow and seed was sown by hand and covered with homemade harrows. The wheat was cut with a hand scythe, raked and bunched, threshed with a homemade flail, and fanned with sieves. Peter Zagursky described his initial farming in North Dakota:

When I first started out it was pretty tough going, but I finally began collecting implements and cattle. I first had one bronc, one old saddle horse for a team, a walking plow, hand made brush drag, and I sowed the grain by hand as I did not have a drill. I threshed the wheat by hand as I only receive 30 bushels which I kept for the next year for seed. . . . I have found that wheat farming and cattle were the best money makers.²⁹

Surviving farm buildings from the initial settlement period are rare. Recorded buildings with earthfast frames included a few cattle barns, some horse barns, one granary, and a chicken coop. The granary was built by Peter Zagursky in about 1915 (Fig. 7). Measuring 42' 6" x 20' 3", the structure displays the same post-and-earth wall techniques visible in the remains of the Zagursky house (see Fig. 1). The Wallace Osadchuk cattle barn (Fig. 8) is the best surviving example of a common cattle barn type built with mounds of flaxstraw packed loosely around an earthfast frame with horizontal wall laths. Since the walls were not filled with earth, lath was nailed only to the insides of the posts. Several existing barns of this type have straw roofs and clap-

29. Zagursky interview, 2.

Fig. 9. St. Demetrius Ukrainian Catholic Church, built in 1930. The church was moved from Ukraina to its present location in Fairfield in 1949 and is the settlement's only surviving church. (Author)



board exterior walls. The roof framing consisted of a system of stringer poles nailed to the posts with smaller willows nailed or loosely laid across the stringers to support the straw.

Straw-roofed animal shelters also exist in Anglo-American areas of southwestern North Dakota and in various other parts of the western United States.³⁰ However, it is rare to find them still in use. Joe Rodakowski's ranch in the northwestern corner of the Ukrainian settlement contains the only working straw-roofed cattle barn in the survey area. Originally, the walls of this structure were similar to those in the Osadchuk barn, but Joe has replaced many of the cedar posts with railroad ties and covered the front and back sides with clapboards. The roof and sides remain covered with loose flaxstraw in the traditional manner, aided by fence wire to help contain the straw. Joe explained that the main purpose of his range barn was to keep the wind and snow off the cows, and he usually leaves the front door open so that the animals are not exposed to extreme temperature changes.³¹

Churches in the settlement's three main communities of Ukraina, Gorham, and Snow were the geographic and cultural centers of the Ukrainian region. The early immigrants were Byzantine-rite Catholics. In 1902, local Ukrainians placed a large, handmade wooden cross on top of a hill near Ukraina as the first place of worship outside of individual homes. Today, the St. Demetrius Catholic Church, built in 1930, is the region's sole survivor of fire and remodeling (Fig. 9). It replaced the original St. Demetrius Church, built in 1905–1906 in Ukraina. Builders of the present church repeated the rectangular plan, onion-shaped dome, and icon-laden interior used in the earlier one.

30. See David R. Lee and Hector H. Lee, "Thatched Cowsheds of the Mormon Country," *Western Folklore* 40 (1981): 171–87.

31. Rodakowski interview.

In 1917, a religious division occurred within the Ukrainian community and the area's first Orthodox Church was built in Ukraina, directly across from the original St. Demetrius Catholic Church. Although no Orthodox churches survive in the survey area, the cemeteries of both Catholic and Orthodox churches provide additional evidence of the area's cultural past. Many of the earliest grave crosses were made of wood, but both Catholic and Orthodox cemeteries contain decorative, blacksmith-made iron crosses with designs similar to that of the main cross atop the St. Demetrius Church dome. The iron crosses usually share the trefoil cross ends and a central, symmetrical element at the cross's intersection.³²

It was customary in the predominantly Catholic section of the western Ukraine to build crosses or shrines along roads for travelers, and this tradition was also carried to western North Dakota. In 1904, Maxym Logosz placed a large cast-iron cross, reportedly ordered from Europe, at a prominent intersection on the corner of his property.³³ The cross honored his deceased father and served as a roadside shrine for the community. Once a year the local Ukrainians gathered at the cross, sang Ukrainian songs, and ate beneath the cross as they visited. The Matthew Logosz family, like many other Ukrainians in this community, built a small, cement-and-stone shrine prominently in their front yard. These shrines, locally called "grottos," hold various religious statues and are usually adorned with flowers.

The Ukrainian settlement in western North Dakota remains architecturally and culturally distinct from neighboring ethnic communities. Early Anglo-American ranchers in the Badlands built houses of horizontal logs with saddle notching, while neighboring Bohemians, German-Russians, and German-Hungarians to the east and south built one-story houses of mud-plastered stone. The Ukrainians' best social relations were with neighboring Bohemians to the east because of similarities in their Slavic languages. The Anglo-American ranchers and sheepmen, who often provided temporary work for the immigrants, were often hostile to their new neighbors and have always viewed them as "foreign." Rose Demianiw Tomchuk, daughter of Petro Demianiw, recalled that when the American ranchers realized her father was serious about homesteading, they harassed him during the night: "Some nights he would leave the [sod] shanty and sleep in a ravine in the Badlands. Upon his return, he would find his shanty rifled with bullet holes."³⁴

Despite social, economic, and climatic adversity, the Ukrainian immigrants in western North Dakota not only survived but intensified their ethnic solidarity as their settlement grew. Ukrainian Galicia's identity is clearly revealed in the community memory and is visibly projected on the material landscape. After initially sheltering themselves in dugouts or sod houses, sometimes using technologies borrowed from Anglo-Americans, the Ukrainians reaffirmed and adapted Old World traditions by building familiar two- or three-room post-and-earth houses. The high concentration of these houses confirms the strong cooperative building tradition remembered by the area's elders.

32. The tradition of the decorative iron cross, found also among German-Russian Catholic settlements, was present among other Slavic communities in eastern Europe. See Timothy J. Kloberdanz, "Iron Lilies, Eternal Roses: German-Russian Cemetery Folk Art in Perspective," in *Iron Spirits*, ed. Nicholas Curchin Vrooman and Patrice Avon Martin (Fargo: North Dakota Council on the Arts), 104–11.

33. Logosz interview.

34. *Billings County History*, 286.

The scarcity of surviving earthfast farm buildings reflects the economic hardships of initial farming attempts. Although the community was poor, its strong religious faith was richly expressed in the landscape—inside and outside the home, along the roadside, and at once-numerous churches.

The fragile post-and-earth houses are increasingly threatened by factors such as rural depopulation, neglect, and oil exploration in the Badlands. Many young Ukrainians have moved out of the state, and the continuing migration of older residents to nearby towns contributes to a steady population decline in the settlement area. However, the second and third generations that remain in western North Dakota have maintained and revived other aspects of their Ukrainian heritage, including religious feast days, *pysanka* egg decoration, cross-stitch embroidery, and traditional foodways. Musicians from the area play at traditional Ukrainian wedding celebrations and at local and national ethnic festivals. This community has recently formalized its preservation efforts by establishing a Ukrainian cultural-heritage center. With the heightened awareness of western North Dakota's Ukrainian culture, this community's traditional architecture serves as an important symbol of ethnic identity for Ukrainians across the country interested in their rural roots.