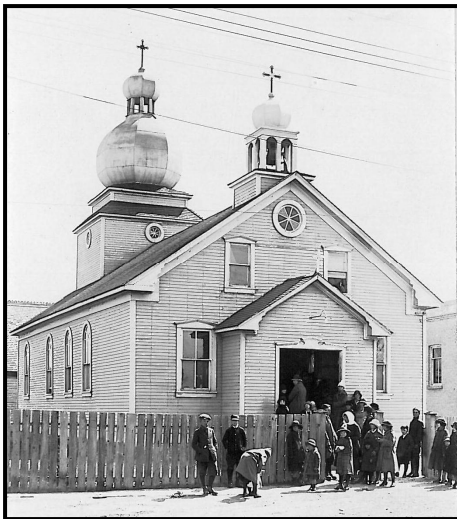


## Elmwood/East Kildonan

Ukrainian immigrants from Galicia and Bukovyna began to settle in Elmwood, a heavily industrialized working class district at the southern edge of East Kildonan, east of the Red River opposite the North End, between 1905 and 1914. By the early 1920s, 700-1,000 Ukrainians lived here in small privately owned workmen's homes built on 30 foot lots. Most of the men and women were employed by the railway companies and in nearby meat packing plants, lumber yards, breweries, machine works and box factories.

Prior to the conclusion of the First World War, the only Ukrainian organization in the district was a small branch of the **Ukrainian section of the Social Democratic Party of Canada** (or the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada as it was also called) that always seemed to teeter on the brink of extinction. First established in May 1912 by Ukrainian party organizers from Winnipeg's North End, the branch consisted of 24 men and 6 women who held meetings in private homes and subscribed to 4 Ukrainian radical and socialist newspapers. By 1913 the branch had collapsed because too many potential members feared that all socialists would go to hell, while at least some actual members left after their expectations of free beer and sausages at party meetings were unfulfilled. Renewed in March 1914 with 11 members, the branch survived for more than 4 years until the SDPC and USDPC were banned in September 1918. Membership, which consisted primarily of young, single people, reached 28 in the spring of 1915, hovered between 13 and 25 during the next few years as individuals left the city in search of employment, and climbed to 34 by the summer of 1918. In addition to participating in SDPC meetings, electoral rallies, and May Day parades, branch members commemorated the anniversaries of progressive Ukrainian writers like Taras Shevchenko, organized Ukrainian workers' meetings at which the need to organize unions and to avoid drinking and gambling was stressed, and attended lectures on a variety of popular, historical, literary and political topics delivered by Ukrainian socialists from the North End. Unable to build or rent their own premises, the branch continued to meet in private homes; public lectures and mass meetings usually took place in facilities like Morrow Hall on Talbot Avenue, which were rented for the occasion, or outdoors, most frequently on the empty lot at the corner of Montrose (now Larsen) Avenue and Watt Street, in the heart of Elmwood's Ukrainian district.



**The first Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic church (UCEC)**

Older immigrants with families, who tended to be more sedentary and conservative, began to organize shortly before the end of the war. On 2 April 1918 a small group met in the home of Stefan Kisil, struck a committee, and resolved to establish the **Taras Shevchenko 'Prosvita' Reading Club** and a Ukrainian Heritage School (*ridna shkola*) for their children. A building at the corner of Munroe Avenue and Brazier Street was rented from a Roman Catholic organization for \$7 a month and Ivan Diuk, a St Boniface College student who lived at the Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky Ukrainian Greek Catholic Student Residence, was hired to teach. By June, the Reading Club had 44 adult members, while 53 children, whose parents were charged 50 cents tuition monthly, had enrolled in the Heritage School. To attract more members and pupils, and to make the school financially viable, a second meeting was held on 7 July 1918. On this occasion, several hundred dollars were

raised and within a month, after consulting with Father Petro Oleksiv, the young pastor at Ss Vladimir and Olga, the committee decided to establish a parish. Several lots were purchased for \$1,200 at the corner of Watt Street and Montrose Avenue, and construction of **Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic church**, with space for the Heritage School in the basement, commenced. A year later, in July 1919, a small wood frame church, the third Ukrainian Greek Catholic church in the city, was completed and the recently ordained, Canadian-born Father Michael Pelech appointed pastor. By the summer of 1921, the Taras Shevchenko 'Prosvita' Reading Club, which was affiliated with the parish, was housed in an adjacent brick building valued at \$8,000. The new building had a hall that could seat 300 comfortably, a stage for plays and concerts, a library of 500 volumes, and space for the Heritage School classes, now attended by 90 children and taught by the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate. Reading Club members had also organized a dramatic and choral society in 1919 that performed in the new hall and in North End theatres to help settle parish debts. Somewhat later, in 1930, a **Sick Benefit Society**, that soon boasted 330 members, was also established.

Not to be outdone by Ukrainian Catholics, leftist veterans of the defunct USDPC followed in the footsteps of their comrades in the North End and established a branch of the **Ukrainian Labour Temple Association** (renamed Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association in 1924) in December 1920. At least 34 men and women joined, establishing a Worker Children's School, attended by 50 pupils, a few months later. By the spring of 1921 plans to erect a Ukrainian Labour Temple building in Elmwood were well underway. To raise funds for the project, Ivan Tohobochny's play *Bortsi za mrii* (Fighters For Dreams) was staged in the North End and an appeal for donations was issued. Construction, involving much volunteer labour, commenced in late May and the building at the corner of Watt Street and Jamieson Avenue was formally opened on 17 September 1921 at a well-attended ceremony involving prominent ULTA leader Mathew Popowich and a girl's mandolin orchestra from the North End. During the next few years, the Elmwood branch added a 25-member Women's Section in December 1922; a 17-member children's mandolin orchestra in 1923; a 40-member choral and dramatic society in the fall of 1923; a 50-member Youth Section in 1924; and a branch of the **Workers' Benevolent Association** in early 1925 that had more than 100 members by 1928. In the summer of 1927 the mandolin orchestra toured Ukrainian rural colonies in the environs of Winnipeg Beach, and in 1926-7, two Ukrainian folk dancing courses, taught by graduates of Vasile Avramenko's School of Ukrainian Dance, attracted 83 youthful enthusiasts to the Elmwood Labour Temple. On the eve of the Depression, the Elmwood building and its inventory were valued at \$12,000 and most debts had been settled.

-- Orest T. Martynowych

### **Books and articles**

Anna Maria Kowcz-Baran, *Ukrainian Catholic Churches of Winnipeg Archeparchy* (Saskatoon, 1991).

*Almanakh Tovarystva ukrainskyi robotnycho-farmerskyi dim v Kanadi i bratnikh organizatsii, 1918-1929* (Winnipeg: Robotnycho-farmerske vydavnyche tovarystvo, 1930).

"Elmwood," *Providnyk* (Winnipeg, 1934).

## **Website**

Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic Church East Kildonan

See the brief history on the "About" page and the parish photo archive  
<http://heucc.wordpress.com/>