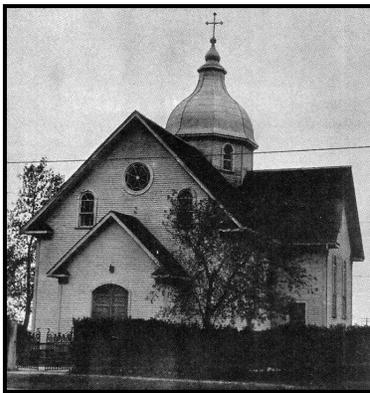


Transcona

Ukrainians started settling in **Transcona**, the site of Grand Trunk Pacific and National Transcontinental Railway repair shops, some 10 km east of downtown Winnipeg, shortly after the town was founded in 1909. By the early 1920s, when both lines were amalgamated into the Canadian National Railways, Ukrainians constituted more than 10 percent of Transcona's 7,000 inhabitants.

The first Ukrainian organization in the town was a small and fragile branch of the Ukrainian section of the Social Democratic Party of Canada (also known as the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada), established initially in May 1912 by party organizers from Winnipeg's North End, and renewed twice, in March 1913 and again in March 1915. Membership grew from 22 to 57 members in the summer of 1915, peaked at 85 members late in the year and fell precipitously to 11 members by the spring of 1916, hovering at that level for more than 18 months and finally stabilizing at about 30 members in mid-1918. Party meetings, propaganda rallies, Ukrainian workers' meetings, lectures delivered by visitors from the North End, May Day parades and Red Week celebrations, and quite a few dances and picnics in 1917-18, represented typical branch activities, usually held in private homes and rented halls. From September 1916 until the SDPC and USDPC were outlawed in September 1918, the branch also organized and ran a Sick Benefit Society (*Narodna kasa khvorykh*) that had over 75 members.

During the winter of 1913-14 an organization initially called the 'Sich' Prosvita Reading Club (*Prosvitna chytalnia 'Sich'*) but soon renamed the Taras Shevchenko Prosvita Society (*Tovarystvo 'Prosvity' im Tarasa Shevchenka*) was established with the assistance of prominent North End national populists including Taras Ferley. Until a small building was purchased in early 1916, members met to read books and newspapers and listen to occasional lectures in private homes or rented premises. Several months later, in the summer of 1916 St Michael's Ukrainian Catholic parish was established. This constituted the second attempt to establish a Ukrainian Catholic parish in Transcona, the first, initiated in 1913, having run out of steam when the First World War broke out. Three lots were purchased on Wabash Street at Harold Avenue in the north eastern part



St Michael's church 1917

of the town and a church building valued at \$9,000 was constructed in 1917. Up to 200 people attended services during and immediately after the War and in 1929 more than 80 families belonged to the parish. By the early 1920s relations between the parish and the Taras Shevchenko Prosvita Society, which had been amicable, took a turn for the worse when the Society began to favour the newly established Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church. As a result, about 60 Catholics withdrew from the Shevchenko Society and in 1925 established the Ivan Franko Ukrainian Association (*Tovarystvo Ivana Franka*) which affiliated with the nearby St Michael's parish. A building in which concerts and plays could be staged was purchased and named the Ivan Franko People's Home (*Narodnyi dim Ivana Franka*); by 1929 a Ukrainian Heritage School attended by 60 pupils was also located in the building. Meanwhile, in 1927, the Taras Shevchenko Prosvita Society had also erected a new

building of its own on Transcona's main street where it also offered Ukrainian Heritage School classes to 30 pupils.

By 1919-20, most members of the defunct USDPC branch also belonged to the Taras Shevchenko Prosvita Society. The following year they voted to affiliate the Society with the new Ukrainian

Labour Temple Association and, although the Shevchenko Society survived as a distinct entity, most of its property fell into the hands of the Labour Temple. By the time a Ukrainian Labour Temple was erected in Transcona in 1924 its total membership approached 200 and encompassed a Women's Section that organized literacy and handicrafts courses, a Worker Children's School, a mandolin orchestra, a choral and dramatic society, and a Youth Section. In 1925 a branch of the Workers' Benevolent Association, which soon grew to 154 members, was added, and two Ukrainian folk dancing courses were held in 1926-7.

-- Orest T. Martynowych

Books and articles

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Website

[St Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church Transcona](#)

See the brief history on the "Our Parish" page and the parish photo archive <http://stmichaelsparish.wordpress.com/>