

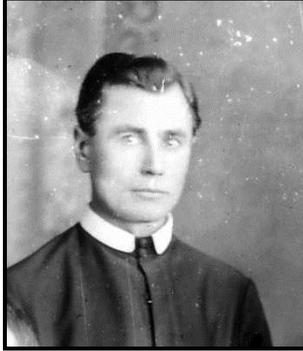
St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic church

Winnipeg's first Ukrainian parish was established in the fall of 1899. In November, at a meeting called by the itinerant Basilian missionary Father Damaskyn Polivka, some 150 Ukrainian Catholic immigrants, who had been worshipping at Holy Ghost and Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic churches, decided to build a church of their own. On 8 December 1899 three lots were purchased on the north eastern corner of McGregor Street and Stella Avenue for \$450 and the following day the **St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic parish** was formally established. In spite of protests by Fathers Waclaw and Albert Kulawy, the Polish pastors at Holy Ghost who were determined to hold on to all of their parishioners, the construction of a small chapel was completed in the spring of 1900. By this time, Father Polivka had left and Father Ivan Zaklynsky, an American secular priest, celebrated the first liturgy in the church and briefly shared pastoral duties with Father Vasyl Zholdak (1901-03), who had been dispatched to Canada as an Apostolic Visitator by Andrei Sheptytsky, the Ukrainian Catholic (or, as the church was then called, Ruthenian Greek Catholic) Metropolitan of Lviv. Unwilling to incorporate their property with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St Boniface, as requested by Archbishop Adelard Langevin, in August 1902 the parish executive applied for a provincial charter in the name of the "Congregation of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church of St. Nicholas in Winnipeg, Province of Manitoba." Several months later, three Basilian missionaries dispatched by Metropolitan Sheptytsky established a monastery near Mundare, Alberta, and became the first resident Ukrainian Catholic priests in Canada. Shortly before Easter 1903, their Superior, Father Platonid Filias, conducted a mission at St Nicholas church and by November of that year, two more Basilians - Fathers Matei Hura and Navkrytii Kryzhanovsky - had been dispatched to Winnipeg from eastern Galicia. Fr Hura became the first in an unbroken line of Basilian pastors at St Nicholas, while Fr Kryzhanovsky visited Ukrainian Catholic parishes in all parts of rural Manitoba.



The large new St Nicholas church and bell tower built in 1904 (UCEC)

During his brief tenure (1904-06) as pastor of St Nicholas, the young and energetic Father Hura and his rapidly growing congregation laid the groundwork for the parish's growth and longevity.



Fr M Hura (PAA)

By December 1904, with generous financial assistance from Archbishop Langevin, a new, large St Nicholas church, had been constructed at a cost of \$25,000 on the north western corner of McGregor Street and Stella Avenue. While the Basilians recognized Archbishop Langevin's authority and thanked him for the aid he had rendered, the new church building and all parish properties were incorporated with the Basilian Order. That year, Father Hura also organized a Marian sodality for women, and a night school for adults that offered Ukrainian literacy classes and elementary English-language instruction. In January 1905 he became the first chairman of the **Ukrainian Reading Association "Prosvita"** (*Tovarystvo Chytalni Prosvity*), a reading club that traced its origins to 1903 and only admitted St Nicholas parishioners. Nine months later, Father Hura with Volodymyr Karpets and Mykola Hladky, two immigrants

who had belonged to a branch of the Ruthenian National Association in Buffalo, New York, organized the **Ukrainian Mutual Benefit Association of St Nicholas**, the first Ukrainian fraternal sickness and death benefit society (with membership again restricted to Ukrainian Catholics) in the city and in Canada.



Members of the Ukrainian Mutual Benefit Association of St Nicholas 1906 (UCEC)

In January 1905, also with Father Hura's assistance, the city's first Ukrainian Heritage School (*ridna shkola*) opened its doors to children on weekday evenings. Housed in the small, vacant church building that had been erected in 1900, the school attracted 50 pupils who were taught by Wasyl Kudryk. Then, in September 1905, just months after two Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, a Ukrainian Catholic monastic community, took up residence in the city, Father Hura helped them to establish the **St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic day school**. Classes were held in a Ukrainian hall on the southeast corner of Selkirk Avenue and McGregor Street for several months, and then in the basement of the new church for 5 years. At first, the Sisters only taught their pupils the Ukrainian language, catechism, church music, singing and handicrafts, all the while broadening their own education by visiting nearby Roman Catholic schools and working to improve their English. By the fall of 1911, when the school relocated to a handsome two-storey, eight-classroom brick building constructed on the southeast corner of Flora Avenue and McKenzie Street with financial assistance from Archbishop Langevin, some of the Sisters were qualified teachers able to teach their pupils subjects required by the Manitoba Department of Education.



St Nicholas School 1911-1963 (UCEC)



**Fr A Fylypiv
(PAA)**

From 1907 until 1933, the stern Father Atanazii Fylypiv was pastor of St Nicholas. By 1911, in addition to the usual round of church suppers, bazaars, teas and school concerts, parishioners also had the option of joining devotional societies like the Apostleship of Prayer, which recited short prayers every day and offered them for a specific intention every month; the Confraternity of St. Barbara, for the visitation of the sick; and the Sodality of St. John the Almsgiver, which was dedicated to charitable work among the poor. Girls and young women were encouraged to participate in the Marian sodality while boys could serve as altar boys. Parish membership grew steadily during Fr Fylypiv's term at St Nicholas but non-devotional societies affiliated with the parish did not flourish. Relations between the Ukrainian Mutual Benefit Association of St Nicholas and the Basilian Fathers became acrimonious after the Mutual Benefit Association elected a lay chairman in place of Father Hura. When the Basilians suggested the new chairman entertained 'dangerous views' and was leading the Association in a 'godless' direction, the executive moved the Association's office from the basement of the new St Nicholas church into the old vacant church building on the other side of McGregor Street. From 1908 until 1942, it would be affiliated with Ss Vladimir and Olga Ukrainian Catholic parish, which was established in 1907.

The Ukrainian Reading Association "Prosvita" also failed to grow and evolve. Although Father Fylypiv provided the Reading Association with space in the basement of his church and later in St Nicholas School (1910-13), his efforts to control and supervise all of its activities caused much internal discord and alienated members of the Reading Association's drama circle to such an extent that they abandoned the Association and the parish in 1912. During the ensuing decade the Reading Association's relations with the parish would become increasingly tenuous and cultural activity in the latter diminished.

In 1920 the parish purchased 26 acres of land, 7 miles north of Winnipeg, for the Holy Family Cemetery, and the artist John Sych was commissioned to paint the church interior for \$2,150.



St Nicholas School Grade 3 & 4 class 1925 (UCEC)

-- Orest T. Martynowych

Books

June Dutka and Athanasius McVay, *St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church: Celebrating 100 Years, Together For Tomorrow* (Winnipeg: St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, 2006).

Orest T. Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Years, 1891-1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta, 1991).

Maria N.B. Wasylkewycz, "Three case studies of mutual aid in the Ukrainian immigrant community of Winnipeg, 1900-1918," MSW Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1987.

Websites

St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church

See the pages on "History" and "Basilian Order"

<http://www.stnicholaschurch.ca/>

Immaculate Heart of Mary School Winnipeg (St Nicholas School prior to 1963)

See the "Student and Staff lists" 1920-present, "History of the School," and "Vintage photos" on the "Archive" page

<http://www.ihms.mb.ca/>

Ukrainian Mutual Benefit Association of St Nicholas

See the "History and Photos" page

<http://ukranianmutual.com/>