

Ukrainian Four Corner Settlement Gardenton, Manitoba

If you blink when driving past this intersection in rural Manitoba, it is easy to miss the Four Corner Settlement. The crossroads community near Gardenton is what remains of a 110-year old farming settlement, built by the sweat and devotion of immigrants from Bukovina and Galicia, Ukraine.

Time has taken its toll. On the northwest corner, the Korol house has fallen in; it is a pile of logs. On the northeast corner, the Denischiuk house and homestead are abandoned, but intact. Peeking through the window, you can see jars of pickles, a hat, and the old stove. It is as if someone might arrive home at any moment.

St. Demetrius Orthodox Church (built in 1904), on the southeast corner that belonged to the Zyha family, has fared much better. The church has been well-cared for by the local Ukrainian community. The fourth quarter-section, the southwest corner, was the Teron family homestead.

Bill Pohaychuk, 80 years old, grew up on a nearby homestead several kilometres down the road. Like other immigrants from the Ukraine, his parents arrived in Canada with few possessions. They brought a single trunk, packed with the tools they would need—a saw, an axe, a small machine for extracting oil from seeds, and a honey extractor. During the first months on their homestead, the couple slept in a cave dug in the ground, until they had built their house.

The four corner settlement pattern was particular to Ukrainian pioneer communities. Under the *Dominion Lands Act* (1872) homesteaders had to build a house and live there at least six months every year. To get title to the land, they had to make



St. Demetrius Orthodox Church

Photo: Jean Charney



Easter celebration, St. Demetrius Orthodox Church

Photo: Jean Charney

improvements to the land and cultivate a minimum number of acres. By locating their homes and farm buildings on the four inner corners of each quarter-section, Ukrainian families were able to overcome the isolation imposed on them by the *Lands Act*.

Bill Pohaychuk is one of the few descendants of original homesteaders who remain in the area. Most people have moved away. He and his wife Anne attend St. Demetrius Church at Four Corners regularly.

With a beautiful silver onion dome on the roof, the church is a graceful building. The interior walls are painted shades of lilac. Handmade rugs cover the floor. The religious icons were brought from the Ukraine by settlers.

For the Pohaychuks, St. Demetrius, which Bill's parents helped to build, is a place of worship where they practise the rituals of their faith. The church is also the heart of the community, where they connect with history, tradition, friends and family.