THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE
OF THREE ETHNIC GROUPS IN MANITOBA:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Manitoba as a partial requirement for a Master of Arts degree in the Department of History

Gwendolyne Edna Dowsett
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by

Gwendolyne Edna Dowsett

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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wise reproduced without the author’s written permission.
The Home provides an image of the past. Moreover, in an ideal sense home lies at the centre of one's life.

Yi-Fu Tuan.
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Studies of architecture traditionally have dealt primarily with civilizations' public, religious or monumental edifices. Monumental and public architecture, however, was representative of only about five percent of the known population at any given time. This five percent was made up of the extremely wealthy nobility and the aristocratic or religious elite of society. Public and monumental architecture does not, then, typify the building of the vast majority of civilization. Within the past few decades an increasing interest has been shown in domestic or vernacular architecture. This field had previously been either ignored or given only cursory attention. Recently social, economic and architectural historians have begun a study of the buildings of the common man in order to determine how the great majority of people lived and worked. Buildings such as houses, barns, early educational centres and industrial factories are being closely examined as sources of this information. Of all of these building types, the home was the most important, for the home was indicative of the stability of a civilization as it remained constant throughout political upheavals and the downfall of empires.

Homes which best exhibit the culture of their builders on the Canadian prairies are those of ethnic groups. For this reason this research paper will provide information on the vernacular or "folk" architecture of three ethnic groups in Manitoba. They are the Mennonite, Icelandic and Ukrainian groups. Through a comparative analysis of these
three groups a study has been made of the manner in which their vernacular building expressed the sense of community which was existent at the time.

Certain thematic lines became evident in studying the building techniques employed by each of these three groups. The resemblance of the sites to their homeland, the availability of building materials, the import of traditional old country building methods, the use of familiar materials, the adoption of new materials, all played their part. Use of the same ethnic architectural styles gave a sense of community to those who were in close proximity but also resulted in isolation from the main stream of Manitoba society. Ethnic groups who did not adhere to traditional styles were more quickly assimilated.

Although secondary sources were used to supply information on the genre of vernacular housing and the historical backgrounds of the three groups studied, the main body of this thesis is based on information acquired from primary sources. Two summers were spent conducting Field Trips which involved travelling several hundreds of miles throughout Manitoba and eastern areas of Saskatchewan which border the town of Roblin, Manitoba. Approximately three hundred photographs and slides of various buildings were taken for study and analysis. As often as possible oral accounts were obtained from senior citizens and local residents who were knowledgeable about building methods. In order to give a more complete depiction of how life was lived within these houses many women were interviewed as to the furnishings, utensils employed and life styles of the inhabitants.
INTRODUCTION

The fundamental, primitive need for shelter is well expressed by Fiske Kimball, a noted architect and leading figure in the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. In his book, A History of Architecture, he asserts that "The primary, compelling need which brought and still brings the majority of buildings into existence is of course the need of enclosed space sheltered from the weather. A roofed area surrounded by walls requires also certain other elements for practical usefulness—doors, windows, chimneys. In all but the simplest buildings, there must be interior partitions separating rooms intended for various uses in their size and relationships." 1

The roof, which covers the space enclosed by the walls, is of such prime importance that it has been considered by many to be "the home." The design and material of the walls are incidental to that of the roof. In climatic conditions such as those which exist on the Canadian Prairies, the roof must have sufficient slope to either shed heavy winter snowfall or to support the added weight which its burden creates. In order to protect the interiors of the enclosed space the roof pitch must also be of sufficient inclination to shed the heavy rainfalls which occur during the spring and summer seasons.

Kimball's professional observation on simple roof designs is that "... a pitched or sloping roof requires relatively narrow and uniform

buildings if the ridge is not to rise wastefully high, and the form is not to become overly complex.\textsuperscript{1} The paucity of building materials available to the pioneers and early immigrants on the Canadian prairies, of necessity, limited the choices of roof shape and size. Consciously or unconsciously, their early buildings fulfilled Kimball's architectural observations. The first homes across the prairies conformed to these requirements. They were rectangular in shape, with roof ridges just high enough to ward off the destructive elements of snow and rain. No material or space was wasted. Design was very basic.

The buildings of common people, known as domestic, vernacular or folk architecture, were influenced by several factors other than availability of materials, choice of design or climatic conditions. Geographic location, isolation of individuals or ethnic groups, adherence to traditional customs and languages, poverty, illiteracy or degree of education of the builders and religious control over certain groups of people, were all factors which influenced, in varying degrees, the types of homes which these people built.

Conversely, one might also ask what effect did the domestic architecture of these groups have upon the people who dwelt in them? How were they able to adapt traditional designs and materials to suit them to their new environment? How did the orientation of their buildings on their new sites, i.e., in nucleated groups facing in one direction or in isolated, widely dispersed areas, effect or influence their assimilation or integration into the surrounding districts? How did all these factors effect the sense of community which specific

\textsuperscript{1}Kimball, p. 5.
groups had in their own locality? The answers to these questions can best be found by studying the vernacular architecture of specific groups, for cultural transfer and adaptation are usually overtly expressed in an ethnic groups' vernacular or folk architecture.

For this study, three different Manitoba ethnic groups have been chosen. They are the Mennonite settlements of the East Reserve in the area of Steinbach, and the West Reserve in the Morden, Altona areas; the Icelandic settlements in the Gimli area and the Ukrainian settlements in the Roblin or northwestern area of the Riding Mountains. These settlements are considered in the chronological order of their occurrence in Manitoba.
CHAPTER I

In the field of architectural history and theory studies have traditionally been concerned with monumental architecture. This, as Amos Rappoport writing in *House Form and Culture* points out, is only right. But it is a very limiting area of study in that it has emphasized solely the "work of men of genius, the unusual, the rare," and neglected the built environment of common man. This neglect has resulted in two standards of comparison for architecture--"one for 'important' buildings, especially those of the past and another for 'unimportant' buildings and the environment which they compose." This approach, Rappoport indicates, is misleading for if only the smallest area of a field is observed then that area tends to arrogate inordinate importance. Further, if this small area is looked at in isolation, its relationship to the whole is distorted. The "unimportant" or vernacular buildings, as a result, are neglected and consequently deteriorate.¹

Many fields of study such as music, religion, medicine, literature and others are, according to Robert Redfield, divided into great tradition and little tradition or "high culture and low culture; classic culture and folk culture; the learned and popular tradition; hierarchic and lay culture." This division, however, has not occurred to any extent in the field of architecture.²


One may consider or define monumental architecture—built in the grand design—as having been built to either, "impress the populace with the power of the patron, or the peer group of designers ... with the cleverness of the designer and the good taste of the patron." At the opposite end from grand design lies the folk tradition. It may be considered as, "a direct unself-conscious translation into physical form, of a culture ... the environment of a people expressed in buildings and settlement with no designer, artist or architect," involved. Rappoport points out that "the folk tradition is more closely related to the culture of the majority, and to life as it is really lived than to the grand design tradition which represents the culture of the elite." The folk tradition can, therefore, be said to represent the mass of the built environment.¹

The term folk tradition may be further subdivided into primitive and vernacular building, with the latter being made up of preindustrial vernacular and modern vernacular.² Eric Mercer points out that the term vernacular is also thought of as being a social as well as an architectural phenomena when used in reference to houses. When used in this context it is generally considered to have three distinct but related meanings:

First, vernacular houses are of traditional form, are built in traditional ways with traditional materials, and use traditional ornament; secondly, they are common within and peculiar to, one or more limited parts of a country; thirdly, they are small and mean in comparison with some of their neighbours.³

¹Rappoport, p. 2.
²Ibid., pp. 2, 3.
Mercer further elaborates by stating that vernacular buildings belong to a specific kind which is common in any particular area at a given time. Such houses tend to be small and therefore limiting in the inference that one is able to draw about their function and status. It is only when they are examined in large numbers over a wide area that any particular significance emerges. Mercer concludes from this that, "it is the prevalence of a type as much as the details of its form which reveals its owner's background."  

The term primitive, when used in reference to architecture, is, according to Rappoport, an easier word to define than vernacular. He explains primitive building as that which is produced by societies which the anthropologists define as being primitive. Included in its terms of reference are certain technological and economic levels of development as well as certain aspects of social organization. The term primitive refers more to the society in which the builders live rather than their intentions or abilities.  

Other authors, such as James Marston Fitch and Daniel P. Branch, state that the term primitive "describes the buildings of preliterate societies, whether historical or current, whose general knowledge comes by word of mouth, whose training is by apprenticeship, whose industry is handicraft and whose tools are pre-Iron Age." They also point out that civilizations' iron tools of measurement, when used for building immediately introduce such factors as modular building materials, i.e., bricks,

1Mercer, Introduction, pp. 1, 2.
2Rapoport, p. 3.
tiles and dimensional lumber. The primitive builder on the other hand must use natural materials which are locally available.1

In primitive societies, the knowledge of how to build is diffused among all the members. There is no technical vocabulary, and little specialization of labour beyond that determined by age and sex. In terms of building "everyone is capable of building his own dwelling - and usually does." There is little differentiation, if any, in trades. The average family can and usually does build the building which they need. As the average family builds their own house, they understand their needs and requirements and deal with any problems which arise by themselves, if they occur.2

The term pre-industrial vernacular building, referred to earlier by Mercer, is frequently synonymously used with the term peasant building. The difference between the latter and primitive buildings is succinctly pointed out by Redfield as follows:

Primitive is defined as isolated and self-contained--if not in terms of other primitive cultures, then in terms of some high culture--while peasant cultures (i.e., vernacular) must be seen in the context of coexisting high cultures. They are replenished and influenced by the high culture because they are aware of it, and the high and low cultures are interdependent and affect each other . . . . There is a connection between vernacular and high-style buildings (although casual connections are difficult to establish), while this connection does not exist in primitive cultures which have no knowledge of an outside high culture.3


2Redfield, pp. 72-73. See also Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformation as quoted in Rappoport, pp. 3, 4.

3Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture, pp. 68-69, as quoted in Rappoport, p. 4, fn. 8.
A close relationship also exists between the culture of the builders and their folk architecture. Peirce F. Lewis writes that if the "folk architecture of two adjacent regions is fundamentally different, then the folk culture of those regions is also likely to be different . . . if people migrate to a new land they will carry their home types with them." The persistence of their culture can be traced by the continuity or discontinuity in the types of houses migrants build in their new locations. Peirce contends that no major changes in domestic house-types occur in most cultures without basic shifts in the culture itself. One's house, then, is more than a mere shelter; "it is a personal and social testament."\(^1\)

The term "popular," or the French architecture "populaire," has also been suggested as an alternative definition of vernacular.\(^2\) A. Gowans sums up the term popular as being representative of buildings which "are products of common, general, 'popular' taste in their time and place, rather than works of individual genius." He further points out that anyone writing on Canadian architecture must concentrate on this 'popular' form, for it is the type of architecture . . . "in which the past exists most concretely and vitally, and as a record of cultural history is most meaningful."\(^3\)

Regardless of which form of housing, primitive, peasant, vernacular or popular, as it is sometimes referred to, is being studied, two themes remain constant throughout: tradition and lack of differentiation.

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\(^2\)Rapoport, p. 3, fn. 3.

Tradition figures very prominently in primitive housing. Such societies tend to resist change. Certain forms of their building are taken for granted and persist over long periods of time. The model chosen is considered to provide and satisfy most of their needs. The model is uniform and for this reason all buildings in primitive societies are basically identical. The design of such building is based on the premise that "a common task should be performed in the simplest most unobtrusive and direct way possible." The building types reflect a common heritage and hierarchy of values within the society itself. Few changes occur, and those which do are within the framework of the accepted model. This, as Rappoport points out, can only occur in a society which is tradition bound.¹

Some examples of these identical models are: the dome shaped huts of the Mbuti Pygmies in Africa; the North American plains Indian tepee, the Eskimo snow house and the felt covered Yurts of the Mongolians. Each exhibits a typical form representative of the society within which it is built, but may at the same time exhibit a few individual variations within the typical form.

The construction of the traditional primitive house, Rappoport points out, is clear and simple. The aesthetic qualities are handed down from generation to generation. Tradition thus acquires the force of a law which is honoured by everyone through their collective assent. Because this approach is effective, there is a shared image of life. The result, in primitive and peasant societies, then becomes far reaching, for

¹Rappoport, pp. 4, 5.
tradition, once accepted and obeyed, sets as a collective means of control and thus becomes a discipline.\(^1\)

In North America today, tradition as a regulator, with the exception of the Mormons, Hutterites and the Amish, virtually has disappeared. Rappoport asserts that its demise is due to three factors. First, the greater number of building types which have been made possible with the advent of pattern books, dimensional building materials and mechanization, make the variety of possibilities too complex to adhere to any tradition. Secondly, the loss of accepted and shared goals has resulted in the disappearance of a spirit of joint cooperation. Loss of this spirit results in lack of respect for the right of neighbouring people and their buildings, which leads ultimately to loss of respect for the settlements as a whole. Thirdly, North American culture puts a premium on originality, which causes society to become dissatisfied with traditional forms, and results in the loss of tradition as a regulator. Conversely, in most traditional cultures originality or novelty was not sought after. It was, in fact, regarded as an undesirable quantity.\(^2\)

The second constant theme, lack of differentiation in use of space, is very common in primitive and peasant building. It not only influences their building but other aspects of their life, as well. Redfield asserts that lack of differentiation in use of space and labour permeates other areas of their life and thought. "There is no separation among man's life, work, and religion, and very little differentiation, 

\(^1\)Rappoport, p. 6.

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 6, 7.
if any, between the sacred and the profane. Carl Jung points out that there is also no sharp boundary between man and his animals in the primitive world.

Examples of this can be found in areas where man houses animals and himself in the same room, or in different rooms under the same roof, or in separate spaces but in close proximity. In Japan, for instance, these are places "where living, stabling of horses and rearing of silkworms takes place in the same space." A more extreme example can be found in eastern Africa where, J. Middleton writes, livestock keepers not only share housing but have what is termed as a marked "cattle complex," with cattle being given a social and religious importance which is far in excess of their economic value.

Although differences exist between Eastern and Western culture in their concept of interior space, examples of similar lack of differentiation can be found in North America. Eskimo and Indians shared their living space with dogs upon which they depended for their transportation of goods, and at times, their food. Accounts are given by early Canadian settlers of Ukrainians sharing their homes with poultry, pigs and cattle. The Mennonites had animals under the same roof but in different rooms. The first separate spaces occur with two buildings, one for house, the other for animals, but are still in very close proximity. This type of spatial differentiation can be found in French Canadian farmyards.


3Rappoport, p. 9.

Studies of the medieval house show how differentiation evolved through three different phases or steps. Gianni Pironne described them as follows:

At first work and living became somewhat differentiated in three respects with separate shop and house entrances; then the sleeping quarters for apprentices and workers, on the first floor, became separate from family sleeping and living, which take place in a large room on the second floor; finally, a separation of living from sleeping rooms takes place in the family quarters.¹

As civilization became more complex greater differentiation in types of buildings and inner space developed. In contemporary times there is a concerted effort to build stables, granaries and work shops well apart from the house. Peasant and primitive cultures, however, in outlying areas still show a combination of home and economic unit in one place with little differentiation in form or interior.

Climate, which is defined as the range of temperature and precipitation throughout the world, is of vital importance in determining house form. At its simplest, writes Ettore Camesasca, "the whole history of the house is embraced in the necessity of finding protection from sun or snow by the ever-improving use of materials available for its construction."²

It is the two extremes of heat and cold which have presented primitive builders with the most difficult problems. Fitch and Branch point out, one cannot but be impressed with man's ingenuity in coping, since the beginning


of time, with all varieties of climate.

In culture after culture the solutions he has found show a surprising delicacy and precision. Since thermal comfort is a function of four separate environmental factors, ambient and radiant temperatures, air movement, humidity; and since all four are in constant flux, any precise architectural manipulation of them demands real analytic ability, even if intuitive on the part of the designer. In the North American Arctic and in the deserts of America, Africa and the Middle East, he has produced two 'classic mechanisms' of thermal control: the snow igloo and the mud-wall hut.¹

Using the igloo as an example, Fitch and Branch state that it would be difficult to conceive of a better shelter against arctic gales than the Eskimo snow house. Both its dome shaped form and the materials from which it is built contribute to its excellent performance. At the opposite extreme in climate are the great deserts with high daytime temperatures, coupled with very low temperatures at night. To combat such fluctuations in temperature buildings need to be built with materials which adsorb solar radiation during the daylight and give off heat during the night. Materials which fulfill these requirements are clay and stone, both of which are plentiful in desert areas and are used by primitive and peasant builders to combat fluctuations in desert temperature.

Between the two extremes of arctic cold and desert heat is a third type of climate which, although not as severe as the first two mentioned, also poses problems for the primitive builder. This is the inner tropical zone which combines very heavy rainfall with high humidity. To achieve comfort in this type of climate the builder must strive to reduce the heat holding capacity of the walls, and allow maximum space for air flow across

the interior. In these areas primitive builders solve the climatic problem by either building very low walls or no walls at all. Floors are usually raised on stilts to provide better exposure to breezes and to protect them from the wet ground. The roof becomes the main part of the building. It is steeply sloped to shed the heavy rains. The outer edges of the roof extend far beyond the living space to protect the open interior. The roofs are usually made of thatched grasses supported on light weight bamboo frames. These materials make them opaque to solar radiation and minimize heat retention.

Although the three types of climate mentioned are considered to be classic examples of extremes with which primitive and peasant peoples have to cope in their building, there are many other variables, within these types, to be found throughout the world. In each example a close relationship exists between climate, house form and use of materials. Although other factors such as the culture of a society, its traditions, religion and economics may also influence house form, survival is the predominant factor. The primitive and peasant builders, because of economics, must use the materials which are available at the site. Over the centuries they have acquired incredible expertise in doing this. Fitch and Branch comment that, "limited to what, for us would be a pitifully meager choice of materials, the primitive architect often employs them so skilfully as to make them seem ideal."

Excellent varieties of form and use of existing materials can be found in different regions of Africa. Vegetable fibres, such as grass, reeds, twigs, saplings and palm trunks are used either independently or

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1 Fitch and Branch, pp. 136-140.
2 Ibid., p. 139.
as reinforcements in mud and clay structures. For example in Egypt, which has little, if any, rain, house forms have flat roofs. Walls built of mud, support beams made of palm trunks. Over these beams are placed mud slabs which have been reinforced with palm branches to form a flat roof.

Other regions, although very dry, have seasonal rainfall. In these areas house forms exhibit sloping roofs for water-shedding. One of the most beautiful examples of this type of form is the beehive hut, built on a conical frame of bent saplings. The resultant beehive shape is either covered with water-repellent thatch or mud plaster worked into wattle. On the Baushi Plateau in Nigeria the builders use a double shelled dome—the inner one of mud and the outer one of thatch separated by wooden pegs. This form accomplishes three things. The thatch sheds the water and protects the clay during the monsoon season; the air space between the two roofs acts as insulation against the heat, and the mud dome conserves and radiates warmth during the cool night.1 Other examples of climate affecting roof form are to be found in Europe in mountainous regions such as the Alps where heavy snowfall has led to the development of very steep wooden roofs to shed the weight of accumulated snow.

House form is also influenced by the occupation of the inhabitants. The types mentioned have been examples of stationary cultures. Means of subsistence determine whether or not shelters will be permanent or mobile. If cultures are hunting and gathering ones such as those of the North American Indians, or herding ones such as the nomadic people on the Asiatic steppes, then the house forms must be demountable and portable. They cannot, however, be disposable as new building materials are frequently

1Fitch and Branch, pp. 139-140.
not available on the prairies or the steppes. These types of occupations led to the development of the tent, the invention of which, as a structural form, has been termed ingenious. It is:

... light in weight, composed of small members and easily erected, dismantled and packed. At the same time, if we judge it by the modern structural criterion of 'the most work from the least material,' the tent (like all tension structures) ranks as a very advanced form of construction. The basic type has been modified to meet a wide variety of climates. The American Indian covered the skeleton with skin; the Australian Aborigines with bark; the nomads of northern Asia with felted hair; the nomads of the Middle East with woven cloth.¹

Throughout the world the tent, in its various forms, has provided nomadic peoples with a house form which shelters its inhabitants from severe climates. At the same time, it is a house form which is demountable and portable, thus fitting it to the transient life style of its occupants.

Closely tied to the association of climate and form are choices of building materials and construction techniques. In an architectural situation, writes Rappoport, they can greatly influence and modify the form of the building. Whereas climate requires house form to meet the physical stresses of heat, cold, humidity, radiation and light; structurally it must also be able to withstand the mechanical stresses of gravity, wind, rain and snow.

The spanning of space is one of the principal problems of architecture and construction. Materials with tensile strength as well as weight strength are prime requirements. "Under primitive conditions, these are limited to organic materials either animal in origin (bone, skin and felts) or vegetable (timber or plaited, woven or twisted vegetable fibres in such forms as matting, textiles and rope). In the preindustrial vernacular the additions of small amounts of metal are occasionally found.

¹Fitch and Branch, pp. 141-142.
In areas where such materials are not available or are very scarce, special forms, such as those mentioned earlier, i.e., the African beehive vaults and domes, have been developed to supply the necessary strength. "While scarcity does not determine form it does make some solutions impossible, depending on the severity of the limitations." This, together with the limitations of technology, reduces the variety of possibilities and thus affects the house form.

As the constraints become more extreme the variety of choice diminishes. Rappoport asserts that primitive builders, because they have detailed and precise knowledge of the behaviour and characteristics of materials, are able to conserve materials. This applies not only to climate and construction but to weathering as well. They are able to determine how building materials and fabrics will stand up to weathering and the "ravages of time." The understanding of the materials, which the primitive builder uses, leads to clear, simple solutions to the problems of gravity, tensile strength and weathering as they affect the form of his buildings.¹ Under such conditions builders will work up to the technological limits at their disposal, while we with almost unlimited means, tend to work well below ours.²

The importance of the building site for primitive and peasant builders must not be underestimated. Although site may not have any determining factor on house form, its significance is evident in the almost mystical attachment of primitive and peasant cultures to the land. This is overtly expressed by the care with which the land and the houses

¹Rappoport, pp. 104, 105.

which are placed upon it are treated. Such an attachment can lead to the retention of sites, because of tradition, when the site has become unsatisfactory in economic terms.

Orientation of the house on the building site is usually determined by wind direction or topography. For example, the doors of the houses are usually placed on the side of the house which is away from the wind. Where the topography is steeply inclined, such as in Switzerland, houses are usually orientated with their backs to the mountains and the doors facing out over the valleys.¹ (Plate 1).

Factors, other than physical ones, which also strongly influence the orientation of houses on their sites are mystical or spiritual beliefs. In India, for example, houses on steep hillsides are so strictly oriented to the East that the doors face up the slope.² The Hogaku system of orientation in Japan determines the location of houses on their sites regardless of topography, while in China the forces of the Universe influence the orientation. In Lithuania, stones and hillocks have stronger earth powers than lowlands, with the result that their buildings are placed with consideration to this belief. Other beliefs such as non-use of land because of graves, historical sites, sacred water resources or groves of trees are taboo. Even the shade of trees, by some societies, such as the Cham, is considered unlucky to the extent that streets are left open to the burning sun and trees are never planted. In Cambodia, as well, it is considered unlucky to have tree roots growing under the house, thus a similar abhorrence of shade trees.

¹Rappoport, p. 28.
House in Provence protected against north wind.

Houses located for maximum protection against cold winds in Switzerland.

Windpoles in Switzerland, used to protect the house against the force of the wind.

Plate 2. Switzerland. Orientation of houses for protection against the wind.
In other societies trees are representative of good spiritual forces. The Cantonese peasants believe that orientation of houses to aspects of environment is of prime importance. Their success is believed to relate to supernatural forces which flow from the hills. To them, groves of trees act as filters for these forces and are planted first, then when the trees are tall enough buildings are built. In this way, the trees guide the flow of forces into their homes. To them, the layout of the house and even the placement of furniture within it affects this flow.

In Africa, geomancy and the belief in the Cosmos are very strong. Roads, bridges and entries to houses are never straight due to a belief, common among primitive and pre-industrial cultures, that there is a relation between evil spirits and straight lines. The entrance to their houses never face in what they believe to be unlucky directions.\(^1\) In the Mbuti Pygmy culture the houses are built entirely by the women. The placement of the entrance, which may be merely a gap in the withes (saplings stuck in the ground in a circle and secured together at the top), is a matter of great import. She places it facing a group or individual for whom she has great esteem. The exact degree of placement depends upon the warmth of her regard. The reverse also applies. If she is irritated with a person she places her entrance pointing away from them.\(^2\)


These beliefs are not confined to primitive or peasant cultures. Americans, building offices in the Far East during contemporary times in places such as Hong Kong, find that oriental beliefs in Fung shui are very strong. Fung shui, an ancient Chinese art, is a belief in the universal concept of duality. It translates the yin and yang into matters of dwelling and design to the point that it governs the direction of roads, bridges, the height of buildings and even the placement of desks within a business office. "Fung shui is the art of adapting the residences of the living and dead to conform, as far as possible, with the local current."1

Other spiritual or religious beliefs influence the choice of materials used for building. For instance, the Egyptians gave more importance to their after life than to their life on earth. This lead to their choice of permanent materials such as stone and granite for their tombs, temples and the pyramids. Their dwellings and even palaces were constructed with cheaper non-enduring materials such as sun dried mud-brick and wood. As a result, sacred buildings survived but the remains of secular buildings have rarely been found.2 Some religions even prohibit the use of certain materials. In areas of India brick and tile were prohibited for houses whereas, except for the door, wood was forbidden in the temple. It was thought that materials which required a great deal of effort and labour to produce, may have carried a prestigious value and therefore were favoured by rulers and priests.3

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3 Rappoport, p. 109.
For many primitive and peasant peoples religion also influences not only their choice of building site, but their attitudes to the land and their house, as well. They believe, as did the French philosophes, that there is spiritual harmony between man and nature. The Pygmy is taught from early childhood to revere the calm of the forest as a model of ethical behaviour. Because of their physical size, they must work together in order to kill enough game or gather sufficient food to survive. "This principle is articulated, however, not as mere economic necessity but on grounds of religious and moral order." The Kalahari bushmen, Fraser pointed out, unlike the Pygmies, knew the concept of centre or axial separation in their building. Their werfs (shelters) were aligned axially to express social and religious values. In every instance studied by Fraser, social relationships and religious beliefs, rather than geometric order were seen as the major determinents in site locations of primitive peoples throughout the world.¹

All their beliefs influenced the spiritual not the physical placement of houses on the site. There was a general attitude of respect and reverence for the site. Redfield asserts that the effect of primitive man, and perhaps to a lesser extent peasant people, on the landscape is minimal. "The relation of man with nature and thus with landscape and site is personal; there is no sharp distinction between man and nature." It is a concept of mutuality. Man is in nature and therefore one cannot speak of man "and" nature.² The primitive and peasant house blends into the landscape. The environment is dominant to their shelters and in their

¹Fraser, pp. 12, 15, 47.

²Redfield, pp. 9, 11, 105-107, as quoted in Rappoport, pp. 74-76.
religious and cosmological beliefs, they see themselves and their homes
as one with their surroundings.

The strong influence of tradition on form has already been dis-
cussed. The same tenacious adherence to traditional types of building
materials is also evident among people who have relocated or emigrated to
other climates. This adherence applied not only to primitive and peasant
peoples but to upper classes as well. Because of climatic conditions in
the areas in which they relocated, being very different from those which
they had left, their traditional materials proved most unsuitable. An
example of this was evident in South America. Whereas the settlers
in tropical rain forest areas got the local Indians to build their first
houses for them, the Rubber Barons imported their traditional prestige
ideas of using brick and marble to construct their thick walled mansions.
The result was that these materials were most unsuitable to the new
climate. They absorbed and retained moisture, mouldered and led to
disease. Their ruins still stand, inhabited only by squatters who have
nothing better to shelter them.

In Fiji, Malaya and Japan, Europeans replaced their local thatch
with galvanized iron as a roofing material in an attempt to achieve more
permanence. This type of roof, although considered a mark of European
power and prestige, absorbed the heat, dripped condensation and rusted.
Yet it was, and still is today, widely used. Use of traditional materials
for building persisted even in areas where more permanent and suitable
types were available. Examples of this can be found in North America
where Spanish settlers in northern California used adobe, the Ukrainians
used logs and the early Americans built with frame construction. Little
or no stone was used by any of them in spite of its availability.¹

¹Rapoport, pp. 21, 22, 109, 110.
In some areas of North America, building materials and forms were frequently modified to adapt them to the extremes of heat and cold. In New England, for example, early settlers built with timber frame and wattle and daub infill as had been the custom in England at the time. This proved to be no protection from the icy winter winds. The exteriors, as a result, were later covered with siding which led to the evolution of the Cape Cod type of building which has clapboard siding.\(^1\) Another example is the French Canadian house in Quebec with its bell shaped eaves. The eaves were later extended to become verandas offering shade in the summer and acting as snow galleries in the winter. In Louisiana and Australia, as well, verandas were developed to add shade to the exterior walls and windows, allowing the house to be ventilated even during inclement weather and, in general, keeping the interior cool.\(^2\)

Wherever these primitive and vernacular houses were built, whether on traditional sites with traditional materials or in new locations with differing climates; whether partially traditional with some adaptations; whether primitive igloo, thatch roofed cottage or jungle hut; whether built by primitive hunters and gatherers, herdsmen, gardeners or labourers—their buildings have no known names. Little has been written about the history of the ordinary house. It disappears. It is either demolished or crumbles from neglect. It leaves no reminder of itself. It is as if it had never been. Yet "house" is probably one of the most frequently used words in most languages. Throughout time it has been a refuge and a dwelling place for man.\(^3\) It is his genre de vie.


\(^2\)Rappoport, pp. 86, 87.

\(^3\)Camesasca, pp. 6-10.
The possibility of man building his own house on land which belonged to him, was one of the predominant reasons for the coming of the first settlers to North America.\(^1\) In the countries from which they had come, the likelihood of achieving this dream was remote, if not an impossibility. Upon arrival in the New World, the first and most obvious need of the settlers was for some sort of temporary shelter which would suffice until they could secure their own land and build their first permanent houses.

It is the first permanent houses which these settlers built and their social, cultural and historical significance with which this study is concerned.

The study of vernacular housing is, as Eric Mercer points out, often difficult. Because these early houses were built of natural materials which were available on or close to their chosen site, their life span was often limited.\(^2\) As a result, very few have survived for the purposes of study, especially in areas with extremes of climate such as that encountered on the Canadian prairies.

Also, for purposes of study, a sufficient number of particular house types in a specific area should be examined in order to draw a representative example, to assess their cultural significance and to draw any conclusions.

Manitoba, the first of the prairie provinces to be settled to any degree provided an opportunity for this type of study because of the ethnic diversity of pioneer settlements. Although the first immigrants to this province were mainly of French or Anglo-Saxon descent, the groups which


\(^2\)Mercer, pp. 1, 2.
followed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Mennonite, Jewish, Ukrainian, Icelandic and other Scandinavian peoples.

Of all the peoples who came, the Mennonite and Icelanders were the only groups who were offered blocks of land by the government in order to encourage them to settle in Manitoba. Although the Ukrainians were not offered similar blocks of land reserved for their exclusive settlement, the tendency of the Ukrainians to live together and the actions of the Immigration Officers in placing Ukrainians on homesteads led to the creation of large blocks of ethnically homogeneous Ukrainian settlement. Thus, though the circumstances behind the creation of Ukrainian block settlement were unlike that of the Mennonite or Icelandic block settlement the results were much the same insofar as the grouping and density of settlement were concerned.

Although the geographic dispersion of these three groups in Manitoba included several areas in the province, the ones chosen for this study were the Mennonite settlements in the East and West Reserves of southern Manitoba, the Icelandic settlements in the Gimli area and the Ukrainian settlements in the Roblin or Northwestern areas of the Riding Mountains.

These areas of study were selected for the following reasons. The Mennonites of the East and West Reserves and the Icelanders of the Gimli area were settled on the original blocks of land allotted to them. As these areas were the first permanent locations of these groups in Manitoba, they would be the ones most likely to provide examples of cultural and social transfer from the Old World to the New. The Ukrainian settlement in the Roblin area was chosen because it was established later than other Ukrainian settlements, such as those in the Stuartburn and Vita areas.
It consisted of settlers who, originally settled elsewhere in Manitoba, had been dissatisfied and relocated in the Roblin area, as well as settlers who came later than the initial groups. The reason for choosing a later settlement, such as this, was to determine whether or not it would exhibit the same degree of transfer of traditional house forms and use of materials as had earlier settlements.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE THREE ETHNIC GROUPS STUDIED

In order to understand fully the architecture of the three groups chosen for this study a knowledge of their social, political and religious backgrounds is necessary. This information will provide a better comprehension of the physical, geographical and psychological situations from whence they came. It will also illustrate their reasons for leaving the Old World countries and their hopes and aspirations in the New World.

**Mennonites**

The origin of the Mennonites had its beginnings in the Anabaptist religious movement which began in Europe in the sixteenth century. This movement grew out of the social and religious reforms which were spreading across northern Europe during the period of the reformation.

The advent of the printing press hastened these reforms, and resulted in the mother tongues in each area being used as the literary medium. Thus literary Dutch, German or English were used by the press. In order to communicate, folk groups were forced to become bilingual. For literary purposes these groups were described as being Dutch, German or English without implying that they were loyal to any specific nation state.¹

¹Lawrence Klippenstein, Julius Toews, Editors, Mennonite Memories, Settling in Western Canada (Winnipeg: Centennial Publications, Printed by Friesen Printers, Altona, Manitoba, 1977), p. 2.
These individuals, now having access to knowledge, could make more complex decisions for themselves. Hitherto the Church had been the centre of knowledge and as such was one of the strongest authoritarian agencies. Now, the Church found itself being severely criticized. Its reaction to this criticism was to retaliate with passionate religious wars against the Protestant Reformation groups led by Luther, Calvin and Zwingli.¹

To understand better the position of the Anabaptists in this period of reform, one can divide political thinking into "Right, Centre and Left along the scale stretching from extreme capitalism to extreme socialism," with the Catholic Church being considered as the extreme "right" and the Lutherans "right of centre." The Calvinists in the Netherlands became the State Church and could be thought of as "left of centre." Although this is a simplistic description of the position of the various churches, it provides a brief overview of the situation which led at the time to violence. It was against the parties of this extreme left that all other groups reacted with vehemence. They were seen as the parties which most threatened the long established authority of the Church.² The religious communities or groups which constituted the extreme Protestant left wing were known as Anabaptists because of their belief in adult baptism. This group considered the more moderate reformers, under Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, as incomplete reformists, whereas the principles of the Anabaptists "were in reality the principles of the Reformation carried to its logical conclusion."³

¹Klappenstein and Toews, pp. 2, 3.
²Ibid., p. 2.
The term Anabaptist means simply to baptize again. Because the printing press enabled individuals to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, many, as a result, interpreted Christ's message as meaning that "belief was a personal rather than a social thing. There could be no centralized conscience." A congregation must consist of adults who would be able to differentiate between right and wrong. Children, for obvious reasons, could not be considered as part of this group, therefore, infant baptism was rejected. Only voluntary adult believers should be baptised and called Church members.

A thousand years of church history and tradition were rejected by the Anabaptists. To them, "the only true church was the community of those who had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, a brotherhood of saved and saints bound together by the precepts of the sermon on the mount," as set out in the New Testament. It was this interpretation of the Church of Christ which led to their adoption of adult baptism, based on profession of personal faith. They denied both the doctrine of original sin and the sacramental Character of Baptism as well as that of the Lord's Supper. The ceremony of baptism was considered as only a symbol of rebirth, a commitment to discipleship and as a rite of admission to God's visible church.

Although they considered the state as an institution of God which must also be obeyed, it was, in their thinking outside the Church. Thus they considered government, police and military force as necessary for sinners only. As a result of these beliefs Evangelical Anabaptists refused to participate in public affairs or to hold any civil office.

1Klippenstein and Toews, p. 3.

Their refusal to take up arms and their pacifist beliefs are based on a literal translation of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, "swear not at all." Because of this interpretation of Christ's words they refused to take or "swear to" any oath, even a civil one. The fifth commandment which contains Christ's words, "Love your enemies and resist not evil," is the basis for their principle of non-resistance, and pacifist stand in times of war. Further, "they claimed the scriptures to be the highest authority, greater than any church or church leader."2

These new beliefs of the Anabaptist groups were, at the time, considered so radical that believers in them were labelled heretics. Anabaptists, as a result had many enemies and were viciously persecuted. To escape this persecution and death they fled to the east and north of Europe.

The main centres of the Anabaptist movements were in Switzerland, Austria, South Germany and the Spanish Netherlands. It was in the Spanish Netherlands that Menno Simons, a defecting Catholic priest, became in 1536 one of the outstanding evangelical leaders of the Anabaptists. His vigorous leadership was of such a high calibre that European Anabaptists, in time, became known as Mennonites. These Mennonites who originated in the Netherlands are often referred to in America as the Russian Mennonites, because they came to America by way of Russia.3

1Francis, p. 11.
3Julius G. Toews, Lawrence Klippenstein, Manitoba Mennonite Memories (Altona and Steinbach: Manitoba Mennonite Centennial Committee, 1974), pp. 3-5.
The presence of Mennonites in Russia occurred as a result of the counter-reformation in 1544-1572 under the Duke of Alba. This counter-revolution caused such suffering and horror for the Mennonites that they fled along the Baltic coastline into the Danzig and Vistula regions. It is interesting to note that the feudal lords of these regions issued them invitations to come, as they valued the Mennonites as drainers of marshes and as artisans. They were given a charter of rights as a group or colony. "They were discouraged from fraternizing with the serfs of the feudal lords" and still they prided themselves as "never having suffered serfdom in their long history." A similar group contract was later issued to them in Russia, with the result that there was relatively little infusion of new blood into their group. This charter or contract also provided, within the group, a strong disciplinary method of social control, namely excommunication. "Once banned, the individual lost all rights contracted to the group," and was often ostracized from them as well, which was tantamount to social death. This became in time as severe a means of control as that of the state churches from which they had originally broken away.1

Under their own strict internal discipline the Mennonites flourished in Prussia and became influential in agriculture, trade and crafts. At the time of Frederick the Great's rule, the Mennonites appeared to have been regarded in much the same way as the Jews. "They were both needed and feared." Although their charter was honoured, leniency was countered by the levying of special taxes against them. They were also forbidden to extend their land holdings and plans were in progress to change their

1Klippenstein and Toews, *Settling in Western Canada*, pp. 5, 6.
group contracts.\footnote{Klippenstein and Toews, p. 7.} Frederick's successor, although honouring the original privilege of military exemption, in 1787 required the payment of a five thousand dollar per year fine from the Mennonites to support the new military Academy of Kulm. Further, they were ordered to pay tithes to the established Lutheran churches on all the land which they had purchased from Lutherans. These political and economic changes were interpreted by the Mennonites as a "challenge to the integrity of their religious life."\footnote{Francis, p. 17.}

In 1786, Catherine the Great of Russia, searching for people to colonize and resettle vast tracts of land which she had acquired from the Turks during the Turkish wars, issued the Mennonites an invitation to colonize these depopulated lands.\footnote{Ibid., p. 17.} This invitation, coupled with the unfair political and economic treatment being given the Mennonites in Prussia, prompted over half of them to migrate to the Ukraine during the next fifty years.

On arriving in Russia, the Mennonites were allotted land in a territory which was "only partly liberated from warring Tartar and Turkish tribes. They suffered raids at the hands of the dispossessed natives."\footnote{Klippenstein and Toews, p. 8} To protect themselves against these raids the Mennonites developed the farm-village, open field system. This method of locating in villages and sharing the land communally provided them with a system of mutual defense against the marauders.\footnote{Klippenstein and Toews, p. 8} This was the origin of the village settlement pattern which they later brought with them to Canada.
Both Polish and Prussian lords were reluctant to let the wealth and expertise of the better established Mennonites leave for Russia. As a result, the first settlers to arrive were the landless city dwellers who were mostly from the Danzig area. As many of them had urban backgrounds they knew nothing of farming and found the new beginning very difficult. In later years, wealthier groups followed them and settled in the Ukraine north of the Crimea and the Black Sea. The group contract given them by the Russians required that the Mennonites have model farms, one of 175 acres per family. Again, they were not to mingle with the serfs. In the mid-1800's, a capable man, Johann Cornies, modernized the farming methods of the group. This resulted in a change from animal husbandry to grain farming. Consequently, as farms became larger, land grew more scarce. Since the Mennonites were a prolific group many families became landless, which automatically disenfranchised them. To remedy this, the original colonists bought up new tracts of land in order to form new colonies. One of these colonies was Bergthal, "founded in 1836 by the landed Chortitza."¹ It was from this colony that members emigrated to Manitoba and founded the Bergthal colony in the East Reserve at the confluence of the Rat and Red Rivers on August 3, 1874.²

There were several events which influenced the Mennonites' emigration to Canada, but the event which ultimately led to the final decision was the freeing of the Russian peasants in 1861. As a result of this, Russian colonial laws were changed. With the changing of these laws came new intellectual movements in Russia, that of the "Westerners" and the "Slavophiles." The Westerners advocated liberal and democratic

¹Klippenstein and Toews, p. 8.
²Mennonite Mirror, p. 14.
ideals concerning the rights of man, and participation in state affairs, while the Slavophiles wished to preserve traditional values and institutions and to purge Russia of all foreign influences. Neither of these groups were favourable to corporate rights which had previously been granted to segregated groups.

Thus the Mennonites with their self-contained colonies, separate laws and administration, were seen as an "anachronism." Their abstinence from public affairs was contrary to conventional ideals, their schools were church-controlled and particularistic, their refusal to participate in or contribute to national defence was considered to be unjust and even subversive. A decade after the freeing of the peasants, the Russian Council of State decided to dissolve the separate administration under the Department of Crown Lands and incorporated the Mennonite colonies. This would require them to pay regular provincial and state taxes, to be compelled to teach Russian in their schools, and to employ Russian teachers.

Further to these events, the final factor which contributed to the Mennonites decision to emigrate, was the abrogation of their privilege of military exemption. This cancellation of their rights, in the light of their sacred traditions and beliefs could not be accepted. They commenced at once to make plans to leave the country.1 "They felt that a sacred trust had been broken."2

Although the first Mennonites in Canada emigrated from the United States to Ontario before 1800, they were for the most part of Swiss-German

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1 Francis, pp. 30-35.

stock. However, it was those from the Ukraine who emigrated to Manitoba in the period from 1874-1881 about whom we are concerned. These immigrants preferred Canada as their new location because of the "religious freedom, economic opportunity and favourable cultural climate." In Canada, their request for military exemption was granted without exception.¹

As a result, during the 1870's, Bergthal, the first daughter colony of the Chortitza Colony in southern Russia which consisted of 500 families, emigrated en masse to Canada. They located in the Steinbach area of Manitoba in what was then called the East Reserve and established the Manitoba colony of Bergthal, named for its predecessor in Russia.²

Public opinion expressed by the existing community, as to their suitability as settlers, was somewhat mixed. One criticism from the Toronto Globe, reprinted in the Manitoba Free Press, September 2, 1881, entitled "Our Mennonite Settlers," pointed out a concern for their lack of hygiene. This criticism was based on the fact that the Mennonite house and stable were joined under the same roof, and that the fuel for their huge brick stoves was made of animal dung and straw. Even though this was an efficient and economical method of heating, its odour was thought to be offensive to the "Puritanical sensitivities" of those outside the Mennonite community. Later, on January 11, 1879 the Manitoba Daily Free Press revised its original opinion and wrote that "they have proved themselves to be industrious, hardworking and useful citizens."³

Lord and Lady Dufferin on the occasion of an official visit to the East

¹Mennonite Mirror, p. 8.
²Ibid., p. 9.
³Francis, pp. 78, fn. 30, 31.
Reserve in August 1877 spoke very favourably of the Mennonites and their progress in settling the new land. A quote from Lady Dufferin's diary, August 21, 1877 expressed their general impression. "The Mennonites are most desirable emigrants: they retain their German characteristics, are hard working, honest, sober, simple, hardy people; they bring money into the country, and can settle in a woodless place which no other people will do." Over the ensuing years her comments were proven to be a very accurate summation of the Mennonite settlement as a whole.

Much of the land in the southern part of the East Reserve proved unsuitable for agriculture and the traditional village settlement pattern of the Mennonite villages. The soil was found, when cultivated, to be very stony. This, coupled with religious dissent among themselves, led to many of the original settlers leaving the East Reserve and settling in the West Reserve, west of the Red River, which was formed by Order-In-Council, April 25, 1876. Today, the West Reserve is the only area in which the remnants of traditional Mennonite villages may be found in Manitoba.

**Icelanders**

The settlement of Iceland began in 874. It occurred as a result of the unification program of King Harold Hairfair of Norway. Harold, who in 860 succeeded his father as sovereign of several small scattered kingdoms which had been acquired through conquest and inheritance, sought to unify these kingdoms into one sovereign state.

In ancient Norway, previous to that time, each small district was settled under its own king. These small districts were known as "fylke."

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About twenty-nine "fylker" existed in Norway during this era. The king of each "fylke" possessed a company of warriors, sworn to his service, who were known as a "hird."1

When Harold came to power he introduced a feudal system into the "fylkers," and all land owning families, who considered "odel" or inherited property as their own, bitterly resented being forced to pay taxes or dues to Harold.2 In the great battle of Hafsfjord, in 872, he crushed his enemies, extended his territories and made himself the first King of Norway. His rule lasted from 872 to 930. Because his rule coincided with that of the settlement of Iceland it has been assumed by most historians that the landowners emigrated to Iceland rather than submit to Harold.

Others, such as Rev. T. Ellwood, consider this reason for emigration unproven. He points out that:

The colonization of Iceland was a part of a general movement of emigration and the founding of colonies in the western islands (the British Isles) began long before the Hafsfjord battle was fought . . . . Few are known to have left Norway because of their opposition to the king, though his victory over Chieftans naturally tended to increase immigration to the West.3

It cannot be denied that bitterness against Harold was part of the reason for colonization of Iceland. An alternate reason, as suggested by Ellwood, was a movement prevalent at the time to found colonies. Both are somewhat general interpretations of what originally occurred, but


are important to the understanding of why the Icelandic peoples emigrated to remote areas. These reasons have later been accredited to the development of the concept which historians refer to as the "Icelandic mind."

The Book of Settlement of Iceland, "Landnámabók," was written by Ari the Learned, born 1067, and had been translated into English by Ellwood, in 1898. In this book Ari cites the reasons for emigration as being part of the Viking "spirit," they were "borne along by a youthful restlessness and an uncontrollable yearning for what was far away."¹ He enumerated settlers as being about four hundred people travelling thirty to forty persons per ship with almost all the settlers being "jarls," Earls of Norway, or the aristocracy. Later studies of The Book of Settlement of Iceland, by Johannes Brondsted, writing in 1960, and Professor Guomundur Hannesson, writing in 1925, show that all the settlers did not come from Norway. They indicate that "percentages based on the book were as follows: 84 percent from Norway, 3 percent from Sweden and 12.6 percent from the British Isles."²

One of the most interesting and exhaustive investigations on the origin of the settlers of Iceland was conducted by Professor Jón Steffensen of the University of Iceland. He based his findings on studies of skull measurements, colour of hair and eyes, and blood groupings. He arrived at a significant conclusion. In Britain, "Scots and Northern Irelanders have blood classifications very similar to that of the Icelanders, but Englishmen especially in the South of

²Lindal, p. 39.
England are in this respect closer to Scandinavian." He concluded from this research that there is much more Irish blood in Icelanders than is indicated in The Book of Settlement.

Steffensen points out that many of the wives of the Norsemen were of noble Irish blood. One of them, the wife of Olaf the White, was the daughter of the great Irish King Aedh.\(^1\) Another wife, who was purchased in a slave market in Denmark, proved to be the daughter of Irish King Muirkertagh (Myrkjartan in Icelandic). She had been kidnapped at the age of fifteen. The royal Irish blood is assumed to have come to Iceland as a result of Viking raids on this country made during Erin's Golden Age.

It was a time when Ireland was rich, not only financially but intellectually, as well. Today, in Iceland, many people proudly claim to be descended from the aforementioned union of a Norse Jarl with the daughter of an Irish King. This union with royalty and nobility is thought to have had a great influence on the calibre of intelligence of the Icelandic people.\(^2\) Through matrilineal descent, a large infusion of this royal Celtic blood entered Icelandic veins and was brought to Gimli, Manitoba by some of the first immigrants.\(^3\)


\(^2\)Lindal, p. 39.

\(^3\)Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th Edition, Volume XII, as quoted in W. Kristjanson, The Icelandic People in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Wallingford Press, 1965), p. 2. Mrs. Gudjon Arnason, daughter of Captain Baldi Anderson, one of the original Icelandic settlers is still living in the Betel Home, Gimli, Manitoba. Mrs. Arnason claims direct descent from the original Irish king's daughter and estimates the amount of Irish blood in Icelandic people today to be about sixty percent. Personal Interview, October, 1982.
After the settlement period (874-930) an unusual combination of heredity and environment developed. Although these two elements combine to form every nation, in Iceland their combination was unique. The reason for this was that, geographically, Iceland was far out in the North Atlantic. Following the initial period of settlement there was virtually no movement of large groups of people to or from the island. There were "no invasions such as the Norman Conquest; no armies marching through, no Genghis Khan."¹ They were isolated in a small world of their own.

Despite this isolation, or perhaps because of it, the Icelanders became fearless explorers and navigators. Eric the Red founded a settlement in Greenland, Leif the Lucky and others explored the north-east coast of North America, which became known as the Vinland of Icelandic Sagas. In 1003 Thorfinn Karlsefni attempted to establish a settlement there but failed and returned to Iceland. His son, Snorri, is reputed to have been the first white child born in America. The Icelanders travelled widely and were known and respected for their feats of navigation abroad, to the extent that in 1477 Columbus visited there to gain information about their visit to Vinland, before he sailed to America in 1492.² Throughout the translations of Icelandic Sagas runs a somewhat romantic theme which credits the Icelander's Viking ancestry with providing the impetus for their far-flung travels. It has been described as an

¹Lindal, p. 28.

²Kristjanson, pp. 4-6. See also Lord Dufferin, Letters from High Latitudes (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1910), p. 49, as quoted in Kristjanson, p. 6, and Lindal, pp. 43-54. The discrepancy in time between Columbus visiting Iceland in 1477 and his actual discovery of America in 1492, may have been due to the amount of time needed to raise financial support for his journey.
inexplicable "call of the sea" and resulted in the "Vikings being the first people in history to visit four continents of this globe."¹

The isolation of Iceland is also credited with the development of what historians refer to as the "Icelandic Mind." The remoteness of Iceland fostered a "backward looking" scholarship, which studied the past of its peoples. This past, which had been committed to memory and passed down by word of mouth throughout previous generations, was written and recorded by Icelandic writers in the form of Eddic Poems. They contained the Scandinavian histories and genealogies. Concurrently other Icelandic writers were composing and recording the Icelandic Sagas.² By looking back on and studying these Eddic Poems and Sagas the Icelandic people found strength to withstand adversity and inspiration for new achievements. The authors of the time not only preserved the old literary forms of their forefathers but developed new forms as well. This led to the Golden Age of Literature in Iceland. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries in this small remote island were without equal anywhere in Europe. Taken as a whole, the Icelandic sagas are considered by G. Turville-Petre to be the richest and most varied form of literature in medieval Europe. Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, a distinguished literary historian, attests that they constituted the greatest literary contribution compiled in the twelve centuries between Virgil and Dante.

Two of the most remarkable writers during this period were Ari the Learned and Snorri Sturluson. The Sagas, which had been preserved orally until the eleventh century, were committed to writing by Ari Thorgilsson


²Lindal, pp. 56-58.
the Learned, who was a meticulous historian, Snorri Sturluson, considered one of the foremost historians of the time and others.\(^1\) Locked into their isolated island, withstanding the forces of nature and catastrophes the Icelandic people were inhabitants of a very singular environment. This, coupled with the fusion of their hereditary Nordic-Celtic blood, is cited as being the source of the "Icelandic Mind,"\(^2\) which was so influential in the development of their social and political life, as well as their great literary achievements.

The early religion of the people stemmed from the same beliefs as that of the Norse. They believed in many gods who represented human qualities which were most highly valued. These values were generally—power of intellect, courage and physical strength. Also worshipped were gods of war, peace and beauty. These beliefs "exerted a strong influence on the imagination and outlook of the Icelandic People."\(^3\) In the year 1000 A.D., Christianity was introduced in Iceland. The advent of a new religion caused a serious rift among the people on the Island. Many preferred to adhere to their old religion, which caused the formation of two separate states within Iceland, one Heathen and one Christian. A crisis was averted when the two divergent states agreed to refer the issue to an arbitrator. The result was that Christianity was decreed as the official religion, but persons who wished to retain their loyalty and right to worship their old gods were free to

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\(^2\)Lindal, pp. 27, 56, 57-59.

\(^3\)Kristjanson, p. 2.
do so. This arrival at a peaceful solution to their differences was possible because of the strong Icelandic belief in constitutional methods and in the rights of the individual. The Catholic Church in Iceland was unique in that members of the lay society were high church dignitaries and played an important part in community as well as national affairs.¹

In 1537 Protestantism was introduced by a Royal Proclamation. It was enforced by Danish Rulers. There was opposition to it which resulted in the beheading of Bishop Arason and his two sons. As "the Roman Catholic Church, however, had lost much of its spiritual strength in the country the majority of the people soon accepted the new faith."²

After a period of time the Reformation in Iceland led to a religious revival. Bishops were appointed from among native men. A complete Icelandic translation of the Bible was published. A book of hymns entitled, The Passion Hymns, published in 1666 was of such poetic and noble religious simplicity, that it provided spiritual sustenance to the people for over two hundred years. A book of sermons, "Jonsbok," was used for reading scriptures in family homes. These three literary works, the Bible translated into Icelandic, the Passion Hymns and Jonsbok, provided the Icelandic people with a very high standard of religious works to sustain their faith over long years of hardships and physical suffering.³

Politically, when Iceland was first settled, a type of government was set up which consisted of a large group of politically independent districts, each with its own temple, and a chieftain of rank who was a

¹Kristjanson, p. 4.
²Ibid., p. 6.
³Ibid., pp. 6-8.
temple priest. In 930 a republic for the whole island was formed. The government consisted of a national assembly which had both legislative and judicial function, and met annually for a fortnight in June. The assembly was held near the present site of Reykjavik.

Social laws in ancient Iceland were advanced and included price control and a form of social insurance. If a farmer lost his buildings or stock the neighbours were obliged to reimburse two-thirds of his loss. The same applied to loss of health. If a citizen became incapacitated the relatives or the community must support him. Laws were made, not with the idea of vengeance but for the protection of the individual and society.¹

An age of civil war weakened Iceland politically and economically, providing an occasion for Norway to attack and conquer it in 1264. In 1397, after the union of Norway and Denmark, Iceland was placed under Danish rule. National independence was, over a period of time, worn away until in 1662 Denmark established absolute rule.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a series of great calamities struck Iceland. These included the Black Death, periodic eruptions of volcanoes and terrible epidemics. By 1500 it was estimated that nine thousand people had perished due to hardships. These difficulties continued for two hundred years and were climaxed in 1627 by an Algerian raid, which carried many of the inhabitants off to slavery. The gloomiest period in Icelandic history occurred in 1707, in the form of a smallpox epidemic which killed one third of the population. As well, a violent eruption of the Skaptarjokull volcano, 1783-1784, killed nine thousand people, 28,000 horses and 190,000 sheep. The Danish

¹Kristjanson, pp. 2-4.
government added to these hardships by levying taxes which increased fivefold between 1700 and 1800. Due to undernourishment caused by poor food, such as weevilled flour received from Denmark in trade, a further five thousand people died of hunger. The Danish bureaucratic control became unbearable for the Icelanders.

In the early Nineteenth Century, a long campaign, under the political guidance of Jon Sigurdson, resulted in Denmark granting a constitution establishing self-government for Iceland in 1874. Gradually the lot of the Icelandic people began to improve. The political gains, however, were offset by another series of terrible calamities. An epidemic killed off 200,000 sheep, the weather reversed itself and arctic ice turned summer into winter. This was followed by another disastrous volcanic eruption which in 1875 devastated the countryside.¹

The hardships and suffering caused by these disasters were, in part, responsible for Iceland's emigration movement which began in 1863. The first of these groups were converts to the Mormon faith and went to Utah in the United States. Later groups went to Brazil. In Canada, early settlement attempts were made in Nova Scotia, and in the Rousseau River and Kinmount areas of Ontario. The Settlement at Kinmount proved unsuitable. It was decided, under the leadership of John Taylor, that they should relocate this settlement to the south-east area of the Northwest Territories which in 1881 became part of Manitoba. It was this latter group who formed the first Icelandic settlement at Willow Point, later known as Gimli, Manitoba.²

¹Kristjanson, pp. 5-10.
²Lindal, pp. 85-105.
Factors contributing to the emigration of the Icelandic people, other than those of hardship, have been cited by historians as being a result of: general movements towards freedom in all aspects of life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, availability of vast lands in America, a retention of a sense of cultural aristocracy which had been maintained through the Sagas and Eddas, but was inhibited in Iceland because of financial circumstances, and finally a revival of the "utbrrá," a yearning of the Icelandic mind to reach beyond and find a country where their children might fare better than they themselves had done.¹

To a great extent the Icelanders were less prepared for emigration to America than any of the other groups who had preceded them, or of many who followed in later years. The reason for this was their life style in Iceland. They were:

... unfamiliar with grain farming, industrial life, mining, and lumbering ... unaccustomed to machinery ... unused to war, and military life, for there was not a soldier in the land; unused to regimentation of any kind, for as late as the first decade of the twentieth century there was only one policeman in the country; unused to group employment except for life on small fishing boats or fall sheep roundup.²

Despite these drawbacks, or perhaps as Toynbee asserts, because of them,³ the Icelanders possessed an inner strength drawn from their life of hardships, and a deep faith in themselves which had been instilled in them by their own history of survival. Although an island people, they had followed world affairs with interest. Their intellectual heritage

¹Lindal, pp. 98, 100.
²Kristjanson, p. 11.
³Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History (Abridgment of Volumes I-VI by D. C. Somervel) (1946) p. 80. Toynbee asserts that, "it is in an environment of adversity that the human mind is most active and develops the most."
and knowledge of their ancestry gave them the needed impetus to meet what awaited them in America. Their reception upon arrival in Manitoba was commented upon very favourably by local newspapers of the time.

Arriving in Winnipeg aboard the stern-wheeler "International" the Icelanders were described by the Manitoba Free Press, October 12, 1875 as a "smart-looking, intelligent people and a most valuable acquisition to the population of our province. Their Icelandic experience supplemented with some experience in our mode of life, is quite sufficient to give them that peculiar offhand manner of overcoming obstacles, and an energy of character which will ensure their success here. . . ." The Plaindealer of Grand Forks, North Dakota, defined them as "the best and neatest appearing batch of immigrants that have gone down the river into Manitoba this season."

From Winnipeg, the steamer Colville transported them to the Keewatin district of the Northwest Territories, which was, in 1882, incorporated into the province of Manitoba. The Icelanders landed at Willow Point which later became the town of Gimli. A tract of land known as the Icelandic Reserve had been established there for them by Order-In-Council No. 987, October 8, 1875 and approved October 10, 1875. It was bounded on the south by the Manitoba provincial boundary of that time and on the north by Seventh Base Line, or the northern margin of Township 24 North. In addition, all of Hecla Island was included. The Reserve was a narrow strip along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg, eight or ten miles in width. The area of the tract was somewhat more

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1Manitoba Free Press, October 12, 1875, and The Plaindealer, October 12, 1875, Grand Forks, North Dakota, U.S.A. as quoted in Lindal, p. 117 and Kristjanson, pp. 31, 32.
than 450 square miles.¹ This reserve became the first Icelandic settlement on the Prairies, and was to become the largest one outside Iceland itself.

Ukrainians

The history of the Ukrainian people dates from the end of the Eighth Century. They are descendants of the Slavic tribes which were called Antae and Ros by the Greeks, and Ruthenes by the early Roman writers. Their country originally was known in the Slavic tongue as Rus, which was not to be confused with the name Russia.² In 862 the Northmen or Vikings, who came from Scandinavia, consolidated these tribes around Kiev, the Capital, and imposed their rule on them. The name for this Kievan state was "Rus." It lasted until the Thirteenth Century.³

Geographically the state of Rus "extended from the Black Sea to the Baltic and from the Danube and the Carpathians to the Volga River and the Urals." In 988 it accepted Christianity from Constantinople in the East. Under the reign of Volodimir the Great (980-1015) and later his son Yaroslav the Wise (1019-54), it is reputed to have become one of the foremost states in Europe.⁴ Kiev, its capital, was an eminently


⁴Yuzyk, p. 7.
cultured city considering its location, far inland in Eastern Europe. The level of its culture prompted the Polish historian Zakszewski to write that in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries Kiev was to Ukrainian cities at the time what Rome was to the Germanic tribes in its time.\(^1\) It was reputed, as well, to have reached equality with the resplendent and powerful Byzantine Empire. Thietmar of Meresburg, the German Bishop who in 1017 visited Kiev, described it as a city of "four hundred churches, eight market-places and countless masses of people."\(^2\) During this golden age, the elite of Kievan Rus, because of their great wealth and power and their high level of civilization were able to develop through marriage, wide dynastic and diplomatic relations. Some of the countries connected through these relations included Sweden, Byzantium, Norway, England, France, Germany and Poland.\(^3\)

The first of these marriages was by the ruling prince of Kiev, Vladimir, to a Byzantine princess. It was stipulated in the marriage that the nation was to be "converted" to the Greek rite of the Christian Church. This event had very far reaching effects for by it "the feet of the Ukraine and all Russia were thus definitely set in the tradition of the East for nearly one thousand years."\(^4\) As a result the Ukrainian Church, thereafter, assumed the title of Greek Orthodox.

The Patriarch of Constantinople organized the first Ukrainian Church, and also the metropolitan see at Kiev. In so doing, the

\(^1\)Marunchak, p. 2.

\(^2\)V. Sichinsky, Chuzhyns' pro Ukrajinu Foreigners on Ukraine (Augsburg, 1946) n.p., p. 18, as quoted in Yuzyk, p. 7.

\(^3\)Yuzyk, p. 7.

\(^4\)C. Young, The Ukrainian Canadians, A Study in Assimilation (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Limited, 1931), p. 17.
theological beliefs, rites and practices of the Byzantine Church, coupled
with the advanced culture of the Greeks, were modified to suit the
local conditions. This led to Kiev becoming in splendour, power and
cultural leadership the equivalent of a second Constantinople. Kiev
thrived, as well, because of its rich agricultural land and its access
to world trade routes. It was known during this golden era as the bread
basket of Europe.

Kiev's era of plenty began to decline under Yaroslav when he
decided to divide his empire among his sons. "This led to continual
warfare among the princes for supremacy at Kiev." Polish, Hungarian
and German rulers attempted to intervene. These events, coupled with
attacks by "barbarous hordes" from Asia, began to undermine the stability
of Kiev.

Beginning in 1223, the warriors of Ghengis Khan, in several
ferocious attacks under their leader Batu, brought about the downfall
of Kiev Rus. In 1240 the city was captured and almost destroyed. The
attack and slaughter were so terrible that the Ukrainians did not
recover from this catastrophe until three centuries later. Following
the downfall of Kiev, the northern slavs, known as Muscovites, took
advantage of the Ukraine's weakness and established themselves as ruler,
and claimed Rus as their own. These people appropriated the land,
people, culture and history of the ancient Ukraine. When Kiev fell,
the Kievans were being ruled by Prince Daniel, who later became king
of Galicia and Volynia (1237-64). It was these western provinces
of Kiev which perpetuated the political culture and social tradition

1Yuzyk, p. 67.
2Ibid., p. 7.
of Kievan Rus. Daniel, son of Prince Roma, received the crown in 1253 and did a great deal for the welfare of his people and his state. Daniel's son Lev (1264-1301) continued his father's work and extended the domains to include Sub-Carpathia Rus (Ruthenia). Descendants of the Ukrainian immigrants from these areas of Galicia and Ruthenia later emigrated to Canada in the Nineteenth Century.

In 1349, the western Ukraine was conquered by Poland. The Lithuanians at this time succeeded in driving the Tartars from the Ukrainian lands and in 1350 Kiev came under Lithuanian rule. The Ukrainians were allowed to maintain their institutions, laws, customs and language. This privilege was short-lived for Poland united with Lithuania and came to dominate the Kievan state. Under Polish government, the Ukrainians lost their former privileges and masses of them were forced into serfdom. To escape the bondage, many fled to the East.

The persecution of the Ukrainians, under the Tartars, Turks and Poles, led to the development of a unique method of self-preservation and defence. The Ukrainian peasants, hunters, fishermen, artisans and trusted gentry organized themselves into a military group similar to a contemporary commando organization. This group of men met and formed their organization on the islands below the cataracts in the Dnieper River. From this hardy, fearless group, in the Fifteenth Century, emerged the band of men known as the Cossacks. Their order adhered "to democratic individualism, elected their officers and officials including their leader, The Hetman. The Hetman was given the powers of life and death over the Cossacks. At the end of his term he was, nonetheless, held accountable for his actions." The Cossacks set down their own law

1Yuzyk, pp. 7-10.
and would permit no interference in their affairs. In actuality, they maintained a state within a state, which later revived the greater Ukrainian state.

Through constant, zealous training the Cossacks developed incredible skills in horsemanship, marksmanship, fighting with the sword, and navigation of their boats. They excelled in the art of attack and defence. They became widely known for their feats of daring and many foreign states sought their services. In all their endeavors they supported the cause of freedom for the Ukrainian people and at the same time defended the Christian faith. By continuously attacking the Tartars and Turks along the coast of the Black Sea, as well as in Asia Minor and Constantinople, they were able to liberate thousands of Ukrainians from captivity and servitude, leaving towns and cities in smouldering ruins.

Their great leader, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnitsky, achieved with the support of his Cossack forces, complete freedom and independence from their Polish landlords. He was considered a military genius.\(^1\) The Ukrainian historian Doroshenko cites him as a man of exceptional stature, gifted beyond the ordinary, who organized single handed the "army, finance, administration, national economy and relations with foreign powers."\(^2\) Having defeated the Poles, he unfortunately did not invade their territory and in time, after Kmelnitsky's death, they again invaded the Ukraine.

Having defeated Pland Kmelnitsky sought to ensure the Ukraine's new found independence by entering into an offensive, defensive treaty

\(^1\)Yuzyk, pp. 10, 11.

with the Muscovites in 1654. This was to prove fatal to the Ukraine for over the ensuing years the Muscovite rulers began to interfere in the affairs of the Ukraine. At this time Kmelnitsky died and with his death the Cossack leaders engaged in internal strife to ascertain who among them would replace him. Russia and Poland allied against the Ukraine. The Ukrainian Cossack's insistence on democratic rights and individual freedom was seen as a very real menace to the feudalistic systems of Russia and Poland. Taking advantage of the internal strife among the Cossack leaders, Poland and Russia invaded, conquered and divided the Ukraine between them by the Treaty of Andrusiv in 1667. They "re-established the feudalistic aristocratic order with the accompanying serfdom and severe restrictions of liberties."\(^1\) This again resulted in constant revolts, the last of which was in 1775. Thereafter Russia, using Kmelnitsky's unfortunate treaty, pursued a policy of absorbing the Ukraine into the Russian empire. In the years that followed, the Russian Tsars attempted not only to absorb the Ukraine but to eradicate all differences between the two countries. They forbade use of the words "Ukrainian" and "Ukraine" as well as the Ukrainian language. The territory of the Ukraine was officially designated as "Little Russia, and retained this title until the First World War."\(^2\) "The partitions of Poland in 1772, 1792 and 1795 brought all parts of the Ukraine under Russian domination except the western-most Galicia, which was ceded to Austria."\(^3\) In Galicia, the Ukrainians joined the Austrian regiments to fight against the Poles. In so doing

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\(^1\)Yuzyk, p. 12.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 13.

\(^3\)Young, p. 20.
they were treated as favoured people by the Austrians. As a result, eastern Galicia became an area in which not only the Austrian Ukrainians, but the Russian Ukrainians as well, rebuilt their nationalism.¹

As mentioned earlier, from its inception at the end of the Eighth Century until the end of the Nineteenth Century, the Ukraine suffered economic, political and social harassment from external forces, notably the Tartars, Turks, Russian and Polish nations. During this period its religion also suffered. The Greek Orthodox Church which had been established as a result of the dynastic marriage between Vladimir, Prince of Kiev and a Byzantine Princess, had become the predominant religion of the Ukraine. During the Thirteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, when the country was being plundered and subjugated by its various conquerors, the Greek Orthodox Church was also weakened. It became so disorganized that by the end of the Sixteenth Century it had reached a very low ebb. At this time the western part of the Ukraine was under the domination of Poland.

This period of disruption in the Greek Orthodox Church coincided with a time when the Roman Catholic Church was undergoing an era of great revival and activity to strengthen itself against the Protestant Reformation. The Jesuits, who established and conducted the educational systems, were influential in the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. The hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ukraine was very impressed with what they saw, and since their own church was in a state of chaos, some of them turned to Rome and expressed their desire to have the Pope as the head of their church.

As a result, by the Act of Union at Brest (Litovsk) in 1596, the

¹Young, p. 22.
The Uniat Church was formed. "It accepted Roman Catholic Dogma, but retained the Greek (Byzantine) rite, Old Slavic liturgy, and the right of priests to marry before ordination." The majority of Ukrainians did not support or agree to this union for they feared it would not only Latinize but Polonize their people. Despite their objections, which were loudly voiced at the time, the union was officially proclaimed. "The new church in reality was to serve as a bridge by which the Orthodox Church could ultimately be brought into the Catholic fold."2

The Polish government's plan of supporting Greek Catholicism in order to convert the Ukrainians to Roman Catholicism and assimilate them failed because they did not adhere to their promises as laid out in the 1596 Act of Union. The Greek clergy were not, in practice, given equality with the Roman ones. The Ukrainian bishops were not allowed, as promised, to sit in the assembly. Further, the Ukrainian secular clergy, who were allowed to marry, held fast to the Eastern rite. As a result, the Greek Catholic Church emerged as the national church of the Ukrainians in Galicia.3 The Church Union divided the Ukrainians and caused a deep rift.

"Most of the Ukrainians who migrated to Canada came from Galicia in the Western Ukraine and were adherents to the Greek Catholic Church."4 Thus two major Ukrainian churches were transferred to Canada by the immigrants who came—Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox, depending upon

2Yuzyk, pp. 68, 69.
3Ibid., p. 69.
4Woycenko, p. 9.
the area of the Ukraine from which they came.

During the 111 years following the Napoleonic wars (1820-1831) 63,000,000 people emigrated from Europe to North America. Three major factors contributed to this exodus. They were: over-population of comparatively poor land in various regions of Europe, the industrial revolution, and the attraction of vast tracts of almost free land in America. The largest Slavic group to come was the Ukrainians. Although Ukrainians had been in America since colonial times, they did not appear in any great numbers until the 1870's. Those who came to Canada came in three major groups between 1892-1914, 1920-1930 and 1945-1950. It is the first of these groups that this paper is concerned with.\(^1\)

Of the Ukrainians who came to Canada in the first major immigration, the great majority were from the provinces of Galicia and Bukovinia which were under the Austrian Empire. Almost all their land had been appropriated by Polish or Rumanian aristocrats who subjected the Ukrainian peasants to serfdom. After the abolition of serfdom the land which they received was barely enough for a subsistence. As population increased, plots became too small to support families. It was reported that eighty percent of agricultural properties were less than twelve and one-half acres in size. Heavy taxes, by state landlords and the Church, were further burdens. Once in debt the peasant could easily lose what little land he had.

Coinciding with the political and economic supression in the Ukraine was a situation in Canada which called for an opening of the vast prairie regions in the West. The building of the railway and the advent of new agricultural machinery, mechanical grain elevators, fast maturing

\(^{1}\)Yuzyk, pp. 24, 25.
seed grains such as Red Fife (crossed with a fast maturing Ukrainian variety) and acres of free land all contributed to the urgent need for settlers who could withstand the harsh life on the prairie. These two situations, the lack of land and long years of persecution in the Ukraine coupled with the availability of vast tracts of land and political freedom attainable in Canada, resulted in the arrival of the first groups of Ukrainian immigrants to Manitoba. The earliest rural settlement of these was established at Stuartburn, southeast of Winnipeg, in 1896.

Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior and Dr. Oleskiw, a Ukrainian from Galicia, were responsible for bringing the first large group of immigrants to western Canada. Their arrival in the West was met with very mixed feelings as to their suitability as immigrants. Most of Sifton's attention was centred on the Ukrainians of Galicia and he was convinced that these people would make desirable Canadian citizens. Opponents of Sifton's program, however, called these people "Sifton's pets," "the scum of Europe," and sometimes "Sifton's Sheepskins." They denounced his policy of settling the west with people of an alien culture and a low standard of living. In retrospect Ol'ha Woycenko, 1967, spoke of these first immigrants very favourably. "Physically, the Ukrainians were a hardy lot, capable of endurance; stamina and optimistic outlook, and a ready sense of humour enable them to meet adversity." Many accounts exist of their adaptability, courage and resourcefulness. "They were an ideal

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1Yuzyk, pp. 27-29.

2For a full account of the work of these two men, including correspondence, see V. J. Kaye, *Early Ukrainian Settlements in Canada* 1895-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press for The Ukrainian Canadian Research Foundation, 1964), pp. 45-103, 122.

3Yuzyk, p. 41.
people to settle the Canadian West.\textsuperscript{1} The controversy as to whether or not the Ukrainians were preferred immigrants will be more fully dealt with in the following chapter.

The varied nomenclature given to the Ukrainians when they arrived in Canada was very confusing. They were called "Galicians," "Bukowinians," (also spelled Boukovinians), "Ruthenians," "Austrians" and even "Gallatians," with the term "Galician" being the most commonly used on the documents of the time. Following World War I, the term Ukrainian became the common one.\textsuperscript{2} In this paper, for purposes of clarification, the first two and the latter terms will be the ones most frequently used.

Each of the three study groups, the Mennonites, Icelanders and Ukrainians, upon their arrival in Manitoba, were treated differently. The first two received large government loans while the third, as a group, did not. The Dominion Lands Survey System, in use at the time, also made special concessions to the first two but not the third. All of these factors had an effect on the settlement patterns of the three ethnic groups.

\textsuperscript{1}Woycenko, pp. 3, 4.

\textsuperscript{2}Kaye, Introduction, pp. XXIII-XXVI.
CHAPTER III

THE DOMINION LANDS SURVEY SYSTEM AND ITS INFLUENCE

ON THE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF THE THREE

ETHNIC GROUPS STUDIED

Of first importance in this study is an understanding of the type of land survey system which was used in Manitoba and the Northwest Territory to allot homesteads to the three groups in this study upon their arrival. This survey system and the resultant types of soil chosen by or given to the settlers was very influential in their settlement patterns. It was of paramount importance to the amount and variety of building materials which would be easily accessible for the construction of their new homes.

The Survey System in Manitoba, between the years 1871 and 1881, divided the land into sections, townships and ranges, (with the exception of the northern, northwestern and eastern areas of the province). Each township was six miles square and consisted of thirty-six sections of land, each one mile square or 640 acres. The sections were numbered from one to thirty-six beginning at the lower right-hand corner of the township

Sections numbered eleven and twenty-nine were reserved for school lands, sections eight and three-fourths of twenty-six were owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, and odd numbered sections were C.P.R. lands. The even numbered sections were Dominion Lands and were, at the time, available as free land to settlers. Each township could, presuming no pre-emptions, thus accommodate sixty-five homesteaders. Each square mile was divided into four quarter sections of 160 acres, the unit allotted as a homestead.

To enter for title to a homestead, a registration fee of $10.00 was required. Before receiving full title, or a patent, to his homestead, the settler was obliged to build a livable house on it and to prepare twenty-five acres of land for seeding. He was also expected to live there for at least three years and to become a Canadian citizen within those three years. If the homesteader failed to apply for the patent within five years, he was liable to lose his land. These were the conditions with which the immigrants were expected to comply upon their arrival on the prairie.

Settlement Locations of the Three Study Groups

The first of the three study groups to arrive in Manitoba were the Mennonites. Their arrival in Winnipeg in 1874 coincided with the birth of Winnipeg as a city. "From 1874 to 1881 approximately 7,000 Mennonites


A PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

- Free homestead lands
- School lands
- Railway lands
- Hudson's Bay Co. lands

Plate 3
moved from Russia to Manitoba settling on two blocks of land set aside for them by the Canadian government.¹ These blocks of land were the East Reserve which lay to the East of the Red River, consisting of seven townships and were coextensive with the present Municipality of Hanover in the Steinbach area; and the West Reserve west of the Red River, established some years later, and corresponding roughly with the present Municipalities of Rhineland and portions of Stanley. The latter included the present towns of Winkler, Altona and Gretna. (Plates 4a & b). The East Reserve was established in 1874 and the West Reserve, by Order-in-Council, in April, 1876. The term "Reserve" in the context in which it is used with reference to Mennonite settlements "refers to a contiguous tract of land set aside by the Dominion Government for a certain number of years by a homogeneous group of settlers to be divided according to their own plans."²

The land acquired by the Mennonites had been passed over by earlier settlers who had wanted either wooded lands or river lots. James Trow, probably the greatest expert on conditions in Manitoba during the early period stated clearly: "Canadians and others who settled in the province, rejected the lands now occupied by the Mennonites owing to the scarcity of timber."³ The settlement location values expressed by Anglo-Saxon groups were not necessarily those which appealed to immigrants of other European backgrounds. Although early Anglo-Saxons and later the Ukrainians valued

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³James Trow, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories (Ottawa: 1878), p. 24, as quoted in Francis, p. 61, fn. 18.
ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT OF
West Reserve, Manitoba

- River
- Slough
- Drainage canal
- Main trail (Fort Road)
- Railroad
- Beginning of slope of Pembina Mountains
- Hudson's Bay Company or school sections
- Boundary of Reserve (original grant)
- House row - village O Township

Limits of village area
where exact boundaries could be established
Constituted
Village name
Most were Bergthal village

Large Capitals Underlined
Railroad towns

Place names having no symbol for
village site indicate scattered habitation
or that site could not be located.

Plate 4b
wooded lands, the Mennonites, who came from the Russian steppes, were used to open grasslands. They also possessed the techniques of survival needed for this type of land. "They knew how to strike living water from the level ground, how to build comfortable huts and to heat them, too, without a stick of wood; they also knew how to plant shelter belts for protection against the icy winds of the northern plains."¹ As well, the traditional Mennonite settlement plan, that of the village open-field system or Gewandorf, was a communal one. Because it provided sociological and economic advantages for them, it was their desire to transfer this system, which they had used in Russia, to the new land. The open-field system, unknown to other settlers on the prairies, did not require wood for fences to enclose pastures or widely scattered homesteads.² The initial needs of the group, it was hoped, would be met by the mixture of open land and bush areas in the East Reserve.

In later years, however, through successive periods of drought, this type of land was found to have a shallow soil texture which was often stony and did not retain moisture. Over a period of time, this resulted in many settlers from the East Reserve moving to the West Reserve, which contained mainly grassland and marshy areas that extended west as far as the Pembina mountains. It proved to be extremely fertile, and under the Mennonites' agricultural practices "became the first permanent agricultural settlement ever established in the open prairies of Western Canada without direct access to a major body or current of water."³ It was estimated that by 1881, "the West Reserve had siphoned off one-half of the 3,500 or

¹Francis, p. 62.
²Ibid., pp. 62-66.
³Ibid., p. 61, 62.
so residents of the East Reserve."¹ The decreased population, which remained, subsisted on mixed farming which this soil-type supported and over the years prospered. It did not, however, maintain for any sustained period the Mennonite open-field system of farming, which survived for a much longer period in the West Reserve.

The way in which the government of the time dealt with the allotment of land to the Mennonites, contained advantages and disadvantages which were evident over the ensuing years. The legal homestead requirements, in use at the time, were waived by the government to accord with the prerequisites of settlement as set out by Mennonite leaders, such as J. Y. Shantz. These prerequisites included the right to maintain their traditional village open-field system, religious freedom and exemption from military service. To meet these needs the Manitoba Municipal Act in 1880 "modified the homesteading provisions of the Dominion Land Act so as to permit the formation of traditional villages."² Although each settler was required to file for his particular homestead, because of the Mennonite request for permission to build in their village system, they were not required to reside on their respective homestead for the normal three years in order to qualify for the legal patent.³ They were also exempted from clearing the required twenty-five acres of land in preparation for sowing. Added to this, the federal government assisted them with a loan of


²Ibid., p. 19.

³Ibid., pp. 17-19. For a complete account of "The Agreement With the Dominion of Canada," see Francis, pp. 44-49.
100,000 dollars to finance the necessities of settlement.\(^1\)

There were, however, some errors in the information given concerning the land survey. J. Lowe, writing in 1873, omitted, either intentionally or unintentionally, the fact that the land given to the Mennonites included in the township sections which were reserved for the Hudson's Bay Company, the Railway and school lands.\(^2\) In order to overcome these discrepancies, the Mennonite pioneers "had to do some careful surveying and figuring so as to fit the precise number of prospective villages into the available surrounding area measured in terms of quarter-sections, to be taken up by each of them."\(^3\) The location of the village site had also to take into consideration the availability of materials for building, fuel and a source of water. The individual claims for homesteads were then entered haphazardly, as legal ownership of any particular quarter-section held no significance to the Mennonite open-field system of communal fields and pastures.\(^4\)

The Mennonites did not choose the land offered to them in southern Manitoba without first looking further afield. Before making their final decision, they, like the Ukrainians much later, went to the western area of the Riding Mountains. Although the soil in this area was more preferable than that of the East Reserve, "they were concerned

\(^1\)Abe Warkentin, Reflections On Our Heritage A History of Steinbach and the R. M. of Hanover from 1874 (Steinbach: Derksen Printers, 1971) p. 27.

\(^2\)Francis, pp. 46-47. This did not apply in the West Reserve, since the country did not offer natural obstructions. The settlement pattern there was much more regular than in the East Reserve. Because of this, territories occupied by different villages were contiguous to each other, leaving vacant only the Hudson's Bay and school sections. See Francis, p. 67.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 65.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 65.
about its greater distance from Winnipeg and the markets,\(^1\) for this, along with their traditional settlement pattern, was also imperative to their subsistence.

Their choice proved to be a wise one for the East Reserve, coupled with the later West Reserve (which contained some of the best farmland in Manitoba), enabled the Mennonites to become prosperous landed immigrants. The extent of their holdings is pointed out by E. Francis who wrote that land "set aside for the exclusive use of the Mennonites from Russia by Order-In-Council of April 25, 1876, included twenty-five townships of half-a-million acres, that is about six per cent of the total area of Manitoba up to 1881,"\(^2\) Comparatively, other large land reservations recorded in the province in 1877 were, "1,900,000 acres of railroad land, 43,000 acres of Hudson's Bay land and 400,000 acres of school lands,"\(^3\) At this time, also, a large reservation of land was set aside for the Icelanders. It, however, lay in the Keewatin District which was then outside provincial territory but contained approximately 460 square miles of land.\(^4\)

The Icelanders, who comprise the second ethnic group in this study, arrived in 1875, one year later than the Mennonites of the East Reserve. Their land reservation lay outside the surveyed area, therefore the Icelanders were faced with a problem which did not confront the earlier Mennonites or the later Ukrainians. (Plate 5). They had to provide their own

\(^{1}\) A. Warkentin, p. 16.

\(^{2}\) Francis, p. 62.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 62.

Plate 5. The New Iceland Settlement. (Manitoba Provincial Archives.)
provisional survey of their homestead sites, as only "the two southern most townships in the reservation had been surveyed before the colonists arrival."¹ Six miles to the south and twelve miles to the north of Gimli, the settlers, in what was the unsurveyed area, chose their own homesteads. As the settlers did not arrive until late October, the impending winter necessitated hasty land site choices. As land was snow covered, their selections were not always wise.² The land reservation had been chosen previously by a committee of six Icelanders, so doubtless the colonists, when they arrived, trusted in the judgement of the committee.

It is interesting to note the variance in land site preferences among the three ethnic groups of settlers and their value judgements. Walter Lindal, in his book, The Icelanders in Canada, points out that Icelanders "had been shown flat treeless open land further west, but it did not appeal to them . . . throughout the whole period of homestead settlement, with very few exceptions, [the Icelanders] avoided the flat open treeless and hayless prairies and selected areas where hay was available around sloughs in lowlands. Raising stock loomed larger in their minds than producing crops. They sought to become what later were called 'mixed farmers,' held by many of them to be the ideal type of farming."³

The leaders of the party, J. Taylor and S. Jonasson, were convinced in their final decision for the settlement location by reports of the availability of timber for constructing houses, and long grass (in between)


²Ibid., p. 38.

for hay, as well as a lake teeming with fish. Of the nine advantageous reasons listed by this settlement report, which included availability of game, fish, hay and climate, the one which appeared first and was, therefore, presumably of most importance, was the availability of "ample timber for the construction of buildings," thereby indicating that site location was closely tied to shelter needs.\

Much has been written about the type of soil which the ethnic groups chose or were assigned for their settlement locations. Most of the controversy centered around the Ukrainian immigrants. It concerned not only the suitability of the soil given them, but the suitability of the Ukrainians to the settlements as well. Strong feelings existed in Anglo-Saxon communities at the time with regard to encouraging Slavic settlers. Probably the most quoted source on this dispute is Clifford Sifton, "a Brandon lawyer who assumed the immigration portfolio in the new Liberal administration of 1896."\[^2\] He was the person most responsible for the Ukrainian immigration to Western Canada.

Sifton, by seeking out immigrants from the agricultural hinterland of central and eastern Europe, "redefined the attributes of high quality immigrants for Canada, shifting the emphasis from national character to agricultural skills and endurance."\[^3\] His oft quoted statement, "I think a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers

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\[^1\] Lindal, pp. 110, 111.


\[^3\] Lehr and Moodie, p. 88.
have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half dozen children is good quality,"\(^1\) although made in 1922, which was somewhat after the fact, aptly described his opinion of the suitability of these immigrants to the prairies. Sifton pointed out that Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan contained vast tracts of land, suitable for settlement, which were not the soil types which Anglo-Saxons would choose, but were fit for peasant settlement.\(^2\) He asserted that, "if the western prairies were to be of use to Canada and remain Canadian, it was necessary to settle them on a large scale."\(^3\)

Hon. James A. Calder, in a speech introducing in the Dominion Parliament the Immigration Act of 1919, supported Sifton's initiatives. He pointed out that nine out of ten rural Ukrainian colonies in Manitoba were established within five years after the mass Ukrainian immigration after 1897. By this time, asserted Calder, most of the good lands in Manitoba had already been taken up, a small number of settlers acquired secondary lands along newly laid railway lines, "the great majority, however, took up homesteads or company lands in the hinterland. Without aid and without guidance, they were dumped into the West ignorant of conditions, laws, and methods of farming."\(^4\) C. Young, author of The Ukrainian Canadians, also points out that the Ukrainians were located in places where "Anglo-Saxons have been lothe [sic] to go and more anxious to leave."\(^5\)

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\(^2\)Manitoba Free Press, (February 27, 1923) as quoted in Yuzyk, p. 40.


\(^5\)C. Young, *The Ukrainian Canadians* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Limited, 1931), p. 77. See also B. Kolodiejchuk et al. "It Was
The poor quality of the land given to the Ukrainians for site locations was evident to some of the Ukrainians as well. Peter Humeniuk, writing in *Hardships and Progress of the Ukrainian Pioneers*, states that the Ukrainians came to Manitoba too late to find any good homestead land. "The free land still available was submarginal, usually stony and swampy."\(^1\) But Humeniuk goes on to say that this type of land was usually well treed, and that the Ukrainians preferred to settle on this type of land in order to have trees for their buildings and for fuel.\(^2\)

The Ukrainian preference for treed land, as opposed to open prairies, explains their choice of location on either side of the Riding Mountains. This area, being heavily wooded, reminded them of the Carpathian Mountains in their homeland. They chose it rather than open prairie land, which was also offered to them. Harry Piniuta's book, *Land of Promise Land of Pain*, points out the reason for this preference. He writes, "The Ukrainian preferred bushland, which would provide them with wood for building and for fuel, to treeless prairie which was so unlike their old home."\(^3\) A personal account of one of the earliest pioneers supports this. He commented, "I was so happy when I got my quarter, I couldn't believe I could have so much land, so much bush. Anyone having so much bush in the Old Country would be a rich man."\(^4\) He

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\(^1\)Humeniuk, p. vii.


\(^4\)Mike Novakowsky, personal commentary quoted in Keywan and Coles, p. 55.
went on to relate that, when it came time to clear the trees to build his home and plant his crops, it took him three years to get used to destroying the surplus wood, for wood in the Old Country was so precious.\footnote{1}

Interest has recently been aroused by the frequent location of the Ukrainian pioneers in the park belt and forest fringes of the prairies, often in areas of poor quality soil, which supposedly had been passed by or vacated by other settlers.\footnote{2} This interest is well pointed out by H. Schlichtmann. J. Lehr also supports this locational decision of the Ukrainians in treed areas, as well, and feels that, "they were influenced by the need for timber and for a wide resource base in the interest of traditional self-sufficiency, by erroneous land evaluation and by sentimental attachment to wooded land."\footnote{3} Lehr felt that the Ukrainians were not totally unaware of the relatively poor quality of the land but accepted it in order to secure the social benefits of group settlement.\footnote{4}

The hypothesis that the government of the day did not give the Ukrainian immigrants submarginal land but that the Ukrainians purposely chose it because of its different resource and cultural values remains to be proven. That they valued the wood on their forested property for building purposes and fuel, however, is well documented. The site

\footnote{1}{Keywan & Coles, p. 55. See also Kaye, p. 139.}


\footnote{4}{Lehr, as quoted in Schlichtmann, p. 13.}
location of the Ukrainians, then, was highly influenced by the availability of trees for building. Hence their location in the Western Riding Mountain and Duck Mountain areas near Roblin, in the early 1900's.

Financial assistance from the government was made available to two of the ethnic groups to assist them in their early settlements, but not to the third. The way in which the government of the time administered these loans and dealt with the repayment of them caused bitterness in later years, especially among the Ukrainians who were the only group of the three who did not receive financial aid.

As mentioned earlier, the Mennonites in 1875 received a loan from the Federal Government of $100,000 to assist them in financing the necessities of their settlement. Comparatively the Mennonites were a wealthier group of immigrants than either the Icelanders or Ukrainians. On their arrival in Winnipeg in 1874 they paid for their supplies in gold. Their presence in the province at the time contributed considerably, in a financial fashion, to the existing economy. "The account book of the Bergthal congregation, still preserved in the Chortitz Waisenamt in Manitoba," according to Francis, "gives a very conservative estimate of their total contribution to Manitoba's wealth, at over one million dollars or an average of more than $150 per person . . . repayment of debt was a doctrine of Mennonite faith . . . and no one should make himself liable for over one-tenth of the value of his property."¹ Their government loan was repaid in sixteen years (1891) which, with interest, amounted to $130,386.58.

A similar loan was given in 1883 to the Icelanders in the Gimli area. "This loan, however, was soon written off as a complete loss for

¹Francis, pp. 54-56. See also Mennonite Mirror, p. 16.
early disasters prevented repayments, although in later years the community became one of the most prosperous in Manitoba. This instance moved Mr. Lowe to suggest in 1884 that immigrants should be given free grants rather than interest bearing loans."¹ (Mr. Lowe was the Deputy Minister of Agriculture at that time.) Francis points out that the suggestion was not followed and "all further assistance to colonists was left to railroad companies and other private organizations, so that the unique experiment with the Mennonites was never again repeated."² When future requests were made by later groups they were refused. Government reasoning is reported to have been that the more money given to immigrants the less they did to assist themselves to become established.

The way in which the Dominion government dealt with the repayment of its loans to two different ethnic groups within the short period of one year, 1874 to 1875, was a cause of later contention. Michael Ewanchuk, writing in Spruce, Swamp and Stone, points out this discrepancy. He felt that the denial of government assistance at that time was unfair to later groups, such as the Ukrainians, who were equally as much in need of aid, if not more so. Ewanchuk asserts that the financial assistance given to the Mennonites of the East Reserve and to the Icelancers of Gimli (especially the latter, as their debt was written off) gave these two groups a better start in the new country than that given to the Ukrainians.³ Although it could be argued that the circumstances in 1890 were different compared to those in the 1870's, if Ewanchuk's assertion

¹Francis, p. 57.
²Journals, 1884, appendix 1, as quoted in Francis, p. 57.
is valid, it did not appear to have any visible effect on the types of
housing or choice of building materials chosen by the three ethnic groups.
If the Mennonites and Icelanders had surplus money it appears to have
gone for supplies rather than into commodious dwellings.

Upon their arrival in Manitoba each of the three ethnic groups
turned to the task which was paramount to their survival in the new
world. This was the building of temporary shelters which would provide
protection for them until they could find a suitable location on their
land, gather the materials and build their first permanent homes.
CHAPTER IV

FIRST TEMPORARY SHELTERS

The housing of all three ethnic groups, in its early forms, represented very frugal use of design and materials. Distinctive aspects of the material culture of ethnic groups are exhibited in their vernacular or "folk" architecture. To study their designs and use of building materials more closely let us turn first to historical descriptions, personal accounts and early sketches or illustrations of the first shelters built by these immigrants.

Beginning with the Mennonites of the East Reserve, who were the first of the three groups to arrive in Manitoba, one finds their first shelters to be rectangular wooden immigration sheds. J. Y. Shantz, the Mennonite leader from Ontario, "had built four of these sheds, twenty feet by one hundred feet in size at the northwest corner of section 17 (Township 7, Range 4 east). These sheds had no foundations, no floors and no shingles. The inside was partitioned into numerous small rooms with a large dining area in the middle."¹ (Plate 6). They protected the inhabitants from the wind and sun, but, because of lack of shingles, only partially from the rain. The immigrants stayed from one to three weeks in these sheds, depending on the length of time it took them to select their village sites. When the sites for their village had been

SKETCH OF AN IMMIGRATION SHED

Bill Schroeder.

Plate 6
decided upon, the settlers began to build their first temporary homes with any materials which were readily available.

Most Mennonites chose the sod house type of shelter as it was one with which they were familiar. The first Mennonites to leave Prussia for Russia, in 1789, had used this type of housing. The sod house, called semlin, is also known as simlin, semlinki or sacrai but each name means the same type of house.¹ A. Warkentin in his book, Reflections On Our Heritage, gives a concise description of their construction. As winter was fast approaching, there was little time to build permanent dwellings. Semlins were chosen as temporary shelters.

A hole three feet deep was dug and sods piled up another three feet around the hole. Sods were some 16 inches wide. Windows were inserted at ground level. The roof was built by laying poplar tree logs across the walls and covering these with earth, hay or both. The size of these huts varied but the average dimensions were 15 by 35 feet. If part of the shelter was to be shared by livestock, the inside would be partitioned off.²

Materials for roofing tended to vary according to availability. Some used thatch, either of long grass tied in bundles or reeds if available. Others used sods laid grass side up on poplar poles.³ Interiors are described by some to have been lined with tarred paper which kept out the wind, and were covered with rough shiplap siding.⁴ A personal account by one of the first immigrants who actually lived in

¹William Schroeder, p. 14. (Semlin derives from the Ukrainian zemlya (earth) - zemlin - semlin).
²A. Warkentin, p. 24.
one of these semlins, part of which was shared with the livestock, is given by Klass W. Reimer, who came with the original Mennonites in 1874. He was then thirteen years of age and recounted the following: "As the weather turned even colder, the livestock started suffering from the cold in the inadequate shelter . . . the bought hay was depleted . . . we had no choice but to bake bread for the cows and oxen. So in a way we ate with the livestock out of the same bag. The winter became steadily colder. To protect the livestock, we took and hung a big piece of tarpaulin in front of the cows and then regularly opened the door so that warmth from the house could go into the barn." The animals suffered to such an extent in some of these shelters that they had to be slaughtered because of frozen forefeet.

Everything is relative however; for the Reimers the semlin was a comfortable shelter as compared to the tent which they lived in on their land after leaving the immigration sheds built by Shantz. In this tent they not only cooked, ate and slept, but found a warm dry place to care for their bedridden mother as well, while building their semlin. Food for the first winter in their sod house was XXXX flour, known as 4X flour or fourth grade. It was dark textured. The bread was often made with just salt and water if yeast was not available. Instead of coffee they drank "prips," which was not made from grain but of dried bread crusts. It was not drunk from cups, but spooned from a common bowl. Lard was scarce. One five pound box lasted ten people for the winter. Potatoes were fried in salt water, not lard. Money was carefully hoarded to buy seed for the spring crops, not to purchase winter food.2 The thrift

1A. Warkentin, p. 25.
which enabled these people to survive is better realized in dollars and cents if one compares it to today's values. A house such as Mr. Reimer lived in, partially built beneath the ground, represented, for the windows, doors and poles, etc., a cash outlay of $3.50.¹

For all the hardships involved in living in a semlin, it did, however, provide shelter which was similar to that which the Mennonites had known. They knew how to build it and survive in it. "The building materials were the natural resources of the land: soil, sod, wood and grass. Its appearance blended with the surroundings. It was simply designed and served its inhabitants by keeping out the wind and rain."² It was also shared with their most precious possessions, their livestock. It therefore fulfilled the immediate needs of the people who built them. An accurate replica of this type of housing can be seen today on the grounds of the Mennonite Museum at Steinbach, Manitoba, the centre of the original East Reserve.

If the lot of the Mennonites, persevering through their first Canadian winter on the prairie, was a difficult one, that of the Icelanders who arrived the following year, was, if possible, even more difficult. As mentioned earlier, the Icelanders of the Gimli area arrived in Winnipeg on the steamboat "International." The Free Press, at the time, welcomed their arrival and appearance. Regardless of their neatness and obvious intelligence they were still housed in the immigration sheds in Winnipeg for the required five days. Here they became alarmed to hear "that no preparation had been made for them at their point of destination on Lake Winnipeg. They had expected to be given some stock, at least a few cows,

¹Cornelius Fast, as quoted in A. Warkentin, p. 37.

² Mennonite Village Museum, p. 5.
so that the children would have some milk. No hay had been put up, and as winter was approaching the thought of getting some cattle had to be abandoned.\textsuperscript{1}

As with the Mennonites the Icelanders' first shelter in Manitoba was an immigration shed; but unlike the Mennonites they received no livestock to provide them with meat or milk for the winter. A further hardship which they experienced, with which the Mennonites did not have to contend, was the arduous trip down the Red River to Lake Winnipeg and then on to the Gimli location in the autumn of the year.

Because of the lateness of the season and the impending freeze-up of the Red River, it was suggested that the women and children remain behind for the winter in the Immigration Hall until the men had time to build shelters. This idea was quickly rejected as the immigration shed was totally unfit for winter accommodation.\textsuperscript{2} The steam-tug, in order to transport the estimated 285 travellers, would have to take them in relays which meant that those who were left behind would be in the open air. At this point the owners of the steam-tug announced that the cost would be $1,200 for transportation. This amount was out of the question for the Icelanders.\textsuperscript{3} "Fortunately an alternative was discovered: flat bottomed boats or scows could be bought. They were thirty-six feet deep and were partly covered. Each one could carry about thirty to forty people with their belongings."\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1}Lindal, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{2}Kristjanson, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{3}Lindal, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 118.
\end{flushright}
These scows, with the addition of one York Boat, provided the first shelter for the Icelanders after they left the Immigration Hall in Winnipeg. They floated down the river, carried by the current, as far as the rapids at St. Andrews. The Icelander's leader, John Taylor, arranged for the steamer Colvile to meet them at St. Andrews and to tow them the remaining way.¹

The scows, which the Icelanders purchased to travel on, became a very useful acquisition. The settlers continued to sleep on them until John Taylor was able to borrow tents from the Hudson's Bay Company. This was a doubtful blessing as many of the tents were badly worn or had holes in them. However, as soon as the tents and sufficient houses became available "the scows were wrecked and the lumber used for doors and as foundations for the stoves in the huts that did not have floors."²

Stoves played a very important role in the Icelandic building which then took place. "The number of buildings was limited by the number of stoves in the settler's possession . . . this entailed the crowding of two or more families into some of the houses."³ Beset by malnutrition and scurvy during the first winter, this overcrowding, combined with lack of ventilation, was to prove a very serious health hazard.

For their first shelters the Icelanders were forced to adapt the building materials which were available in the Gimli area. Unlike the Mennonites who were able to transfer their temporary shelter design, the semlin and its sod construction, to their new country, the Icelanders, who had been accustomed to building with stones and sods, adopted instead

¹Lindal, pp. 119, 120.
²Ibid., p. 122.
³Kristjanson, pp. 34, 35.
horizontal log construction. Photographs in the National Museum at Copenhagen, however, show that the Icelanders did practice transfer of building design and materials to areas where the terrain was similar to their homeland. These photographs show that in Greenland, where earlier Icelandic settlements were attempted, stone and sod were used.¹ Evidence, then, exists that design transfer was practiced but their geographic location site in Gimli prohibited its adaptation to Manitoba.

The site which they chose for their building in Manitoba was thickly wooded and about three miles from their landing place. The woods offered shelter from the cold winds off the lake. Two of the settlers had worked in the Ontario woods. They, and Taylor, were familiar with log houses.² Their difficulties with construction techniques are pointed out by Ewanchuk.

The Icelandic group must be viewed with sympathy and understanding as the first group to live in the Gimli area experienced considerable privations, difficulties and sadness. In the first place these people landed in a bush country, and since in their native land there were no trees, they, consequently, lacked the requisite skills of using the axe. So disadvantaged they were forced to erect small 12 by 16 foot cabins to accommodate two families. They lacked the needed knowledge of properly insulating cabin walls against the Gimli winters.³

He does not, however, acknowledge the way in which lack of stoves limited the number of dwellings, thereby contributing to the overcrowding. Kristjanson puts the count of stoves at thirty, and states that it was "a village of thirty log-houses . . . this entailed crowding of two or three families in some houses."⁴

¹Kristjanson, p. 42.
²Ibid., p. 34.
³Ewanchuk, p. 23.
⁴Kristjanson, pp. 34, 35.
The first few days after arrival were spent in unloading the scows to the building site. A log warehouse was then built to store the provisions and household goods. The home of Fridjon Fridriksson was the first privately owned building to be erected, probably because he had been placed in charge of loan allotments and all bookkeeping accounts. This would have made him a person of importance in the community.1 "His house was divided in two, one-half for his residence and the other half a store from which household goods could be distributed."2 It is of interest that a photograph of his original house exists. The picture, when viewed, makes one visually aware of just how small these houses were. The roofing has been replaced and it also shows an added lean-to or summer kitchen attached at the rear. This addition was later to become an identifying feature of Icelandic houses in the Gimli area. (Plates 7a & b).

As great haste was required in building these homes, logs were often left unpeeled and the cracks between them filled with mud or clay. Being freshly cut, the logs were still green and over the winter shrank from the drying influence of the stoves. The clay chinking then cracked and became inadequate as insulation against the winter winds. "Glimpses of Gimli," a booklet put out by the Women's Institute of Gimli, reports that "By Christmas, most of them (settlers) were housed in log cabins 12 by 16 feet in size, built with amazing rapidity by men unused to axe work."3 John Taylor, their leader, after living in a tent for some time appears to have had the wherewithal to build for himself a more spacious dwelling, but one which also showed lack of knowledge regarding insulation.

1Lindal, p. 121.
2Ibid., p. 121.
Plate 7a. Gimli
First log house built in Gimli by Fridjon Fridriksson.

Plate 7b. Constructed in 1876 by Fridjon Fridriksson. This log house, a photograph of which appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press in 1950, was cited as being the oldest house in Gimli.
Taylor's house was a storey and a half. "It had double walls, the space between being filled with clay, and this type of building was later copied by some settlers. They proved to be just as cold as single wall dwellings for the obvious reason that the space between the walls was filled with a conductor of heat." It is possible that Taylor was imitating the Norman House structure still in use in England today. It was the practice in that type of construction, to fill the spaces between the upright timbers with clay and wattle (willow) daub. This, when it decayed, was replaced with targeting (mortar or coarse plaster), then still later with bricks. An instance of an old frame house in Manitoba is known also to have been filled with brick between the inner and outer walls as an attempt at insulation. Taylor could have been transferring this known building technique, and been unaware that conduction qualities of the clay were in the reverse of what he had hoped for insulation.

The Icelanders, then, in their first temporary shelters were unable to transfer their traditional building designs and materials to their new site locations. They adopted instead the horizontal log construction methods in use in Manitoba at the time. All available writings on their settlements support this hypothesis.

In studying the third ethnic group, one finds that "the pattern of Ukrainian settlement in Western Canada was established in the period 1896-1905." As mentioned earlier, these people were given or chose forested and often submarginal land rather than the open prairies. The

1Lindal, p. 122.
3Lehr and Moodie, p. 88.
group which this study involves were geographically located in the area south and west of the Duck Mountains and in the area north and west of the Riding Mountains, near the present town of Roblin. St. Michael's was the earliest settlement of Ukrainians in this area. Among the first families were the Kulyks, Stybas and Yakimishyns.¹ This settlement was one of the later ones to take place in Manitoba, and the first people, who arrived in 1904, came from other earlier settled districts such as Ethelbert, Sifton, Ukrainia, Gimli and Selkirk. Some of the communities which they established were Deepdale, Makaroff, Zebna, Shortdale and Postup. (Plate 8). They arrived in the Roblin area by train from Ethelbert.² Since their arrival was two decades after that of the Mennonites and Icelanders, one might presume that their lot, in terms of hardships encountered, would have been easier than that of the other two groups. However, such was not the case.

Their first shelter in Manitoba, as with the Mennonites and Icelanders, was the Immigration Hall in Winnipeg. Its construction was much superior to that of the ones erected by Shantz for the Mennonites in 1874. "One of the earliest firsthand accounts by a competent observer of the lot of the Ukrainian immigrants in Canada,"³ is written by a Ukrainian priest, Rev. Nestor Dmytriw. He "recorded his impressions in 1897, after a tour of the principal Ukrainian settlements in Canada. His

¹Descendants of the Styba family still live in the Roblin area. Mr. and Mrs. M. Styba provided invaluable assistance in locating many of the houses used for this study.

²Brian Kolodiejchuk et al., "It was No Easy Life," A History of Ukrainian Pioneers of The Roblin District, (unpublished, n.d.), pp. 20–29. See also Young, p. 72.

observations were published as a series of articles in Svoboda, the oldest Ukrainian daily in North America."¹ His observations are typical of accounts and opinions at the time. Of the Immigration Hall he wrote:

The new administrative staff, with its very energetic chief (W. F. McCreary) deals with immigration matters promptly, efficiently and with bureaucratic formality. It includes persons who speak different languages. Among them is a Swede, a Frenchman, a German and our Ruthenian, Mr. Genyk. The building itself is kept very clean, and, for an immigration home is quite comfortable, especially for our people. They get free lodging which is clean and comfortable, a kitchen for common use, and fuel.²

The written accounts of the visual appearance of these people, however, differed greatly from those of the Icelanders or Mennonites. The Telegram, at the time, noted that the "Icelanders, and in fact all northern European peoples who are of the same racial stock as the Anglo-Saxons, make excellent immigrants. They are industrious, learn our language quickly, and readily adapt themselves to our institutions."³ By contrast the Telegram was most scathing in its condemnation of the Ukrainian immigrants. They were labelled as riffraff, moral lepers, ignorant and vicious foreign scum, immoral, dishonest, irreligious, superstitious, uncooperative, lawless and stupid.⁴ Few vitriolic adjectives were left unused. It is interesting to compare this with Rev. Dmytriw's views of his own people as he saw them in the Immigration Hall. He wrote of them as a disgrace to their own nation, dirty wretched still wearing their old clothes and long haired. "These people are looked down upon as something worse than Indians, since Indians here are considered to be

¹Dmytriw, p. 37.
²Ibid., p. 37.
³Lehr and Moodie, p. 93.
⁴Ibid., p. 93. (The Telegram was a Tory paper and bitterly attacked McCreary on many issues.)
civilized people . . . one official suggested to me, quite seriously, that a few of our people be sent among the Indians for instruction . . . ill-clad, half-naked, barefoot, dirty, destitute, they come to the immigration home like beggars."

The Ukrainians' habits of sanitation were so appalling that the administrators of the Hall were, according to Rev. Dmytriw, wringing their hands in despair. The children crawling up and down the stairs made nuisances of themselves and urinated on the steps or beside the door. The administration in turn, cursed the government, but the government, because it had no other source of immigrants at this time, tolerated the Ukrainians as 'malum necessarium' (a necessary evil).2

Rev. Dmytriw, it is reported, "focused his attention on the seamy side of the immigrants social life, rather than on economic conditions."3 It is interesting that for centuries these people, oppressed in their homeland appeared there the same way, perhaps Rev. Dmytriw was not aware of their pitiful appearance until he saw them in a new context. He was, however, aware of their plight for in the conclusion of this diatribe he wrote that the lifelong bondage and oppression of the Galician peasant in his homeland had made a slothful, unconcerned slave out of him. He was demoralized. He not only lacked the necessities of life but also the qualities possessed by other ethnic groups to work and to earn money to support himself in America.4 Sifton, however, was adamant that the Ukrainians' "industry and hardiness, their cooperative nature, intelligence

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1Piniuta, p. 39.
2Ibid., p. 39.
3Ibid., p. 38.
4Ibid., p. 40.
and honesty would make them qualified to pioneer in the West.¹ In retrospect, Sifton's words and beliefs were to prove far more true than those of Rev. Dmytriw and the then current attitudes of the Telegram with regard to the Ukrainians' adaptability to the West.

After leaving their first shelter in the Winnipeg Immigration Hall, the settlers moved out into the surrounding hinterlands. Chronologically in order of settlement, the northwestern Riding Mountain region, in the area of Roblin, was seventh in the sequence of Ukrainian settlement.²

Upon their arrival the first temporary shelters, built to house themselves while waiting to erect more permanent homes, were indeed primitive. They ranged from tents to palisades of vertical logs or in some cases bank or root houses. The palisade type of shelter was constructed by digging a pit about three feet deep and eight wide by sixteen feet in length. In the middle of each end a thick pole was set up vertically and across the top of these was secured a ridge pole. Then thin poplar poles were leaned against this ridge pole on either side to form walls. This resembled a roof resting on the ground. Both ends and the sides were covered with sods. On flat land, this type of shelter tended to fill with water in the spring.³

Mr. A. Styba, now living in the Roblin Senior Citizens' Home, is the son of the original pioneer Styba family mentioned earlier who came with the first Ukrainian group of settlers to Roblin, Manitoba.

¹Lehr and Moodie, p. 93.
²Young, p. 72.
³Humeniuk, p. 61. See also Stashyn Mykhailo, "Moi spohady za sorok lit zhyttia v Kanadi"/"My Memoirs of Forty Years in Canada," Illustrated Calendar of the "Ukrainian Voice" (Winnipeg: 1938), p. 76 as quoted in Kaye, pp. 139, 140.
During a personal interview with him in August, 1982, he gave an account of his family's arrival. He was nine years of age. The family travelled from Ethelbert to Roblin by ox cart in 1904. The land, at the time, was not surveyed but they were told to take whichever piece they wanted from what was available and to build their house wherever they liked. As there were no roads, many of these houses today lie in the centre of fields quite some distance from later surveyed roadways. The roof of Styba's first temporary house was made of poles and was covered with hay and dirt. Five or six families slept under their wagons. Mr. Styba recalled that there were a great number of snakes and that the settlers existed on rabbit and "chicken prairie." His father broke two or three acres with oxen and they broadcast the seed on the soil by hand. The seed was then covered by dragging a poplar pole with the branches still on it over the ground. To earn cash they sold wild strawberries or worked for other farmers. Mr. Styba's father earned ten cents a day doing this and walked six miles each way to his place of employment.¹

Others spent their first few days under makeshift tents constructed of wooden poles and a blanket, under wagons or under the stars.² Root houses, which were dug into banks, were also common. One such shelter was described as being ten by twelve feet, more of a cave or hovel, and in it there were "two small beds and a small iron stove. In this hole there were now fourteen persons - four adults and ten children. All of us ate and slept in this space, since eating and sleeping outdoors was out of the question because of the mosquitoes. We stayed in this

¹Personal Interview, Mr. A. Styba, Roblin, Manitoba, August 1982.
²Keywan, p. 48.
place until father built us a house.\footnote{Piniuta, p. 86, see also J. Lehr, "Ukrainian Pioneer Architecture in the Prairie West," The Society For the Study of Architecture in Canada, Annual Meetings (1975-1976, pp. 8-21), p. 10.} The construction of the house could take from a month to several years depending on the finances of the occupants.

Having examined the construction techniques of the first temporary shelters built by each of the three ethnic groups in question, their first permanent homes, erected once their homesteads had been secured, will next be examined as to details of construction, design and use of materials.
CHAPTER V

FIRST PERMANENT HOMES

Mennonites

After the Mennonites left their first temporary shelters, they established a very unique type of settlement, briefly referred to earlier, which was known as the village open-field system or Gewanndorf. This system which the Mennonites brought with them from their homeland, dates back to Mediaeval Europe and is "characterized by a combination of line village with open-field economy."¹

Each holding included a Hauskörgl (messuage, toft) along the village street and one strip in each Gewanne (open-fields) into which the total area belonging to the village was divided. The toft provided space for house and farm buildings, a barn yard, a flower and vegetable garden, an orchard and a small piece of plowland to be used for bulkier crops for home consumption, such as potatoes or cabbage. The fields were larger areas of plowland selected in such a way that the value of all the land in each field as determined by distance, soil quality, moisture, etc., was uniform, providing an equitable share in the available arable land to each villager.²

In this system all the land was classified as arable, meadow or woodland, etc., with each farmer in the village, theoretically, receiving

¹Cf. Charles P. Loomis and J. Allan Beegle, Rural Social Systems (New York, 1950), p. 232. Gewanne is the German word for open-field. The open-field system is identical with champion husbandry as described by George Casper Homans, English Villages of the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1941). There are, however, two differences between the Mennonite village, on the one hand and the colonial Gewanndorf as well as the mediaeval English champion village, on the other. Champion husbandry in Western Europe has been closely associated with the manorial system, while the estate of the Erbenschulze (hereditary successor of the original locator of the colony) was typical of its Northeast German counterpart. The Mennonite villages, however, as all other foreign colonies in Russia, did not include any feudal or other large estate, but only the holdings of individual farmers, each of equal size. Fn. 20, Francis, p. 63.

²Francis, p. 63.
an equal share of the allotments.\(^1\)

As the name open-field system indicates, there were no fences or other systems of enclosure. All livestock belonging to individual villagers was pastured on common land under the care of a herdsman.\(^2\) The arable land was divided into strips called Kagel. These Kagel were separated from each other by narrower strips of uncultivated ground, about one ploughshare wide, called Raine. Over the years drifting soil and dust accumulated on the uncultivated Raine forming very visible ridges three to four feet in height, giving the strips of cultivated land inbetween the appearance of a long shallow trough.\(^3\)

In the East Reserve, one mile south and two miles west of the present village of Grunthal, is the site of the old village of Bergfeld deserted since the early 1940's. Remainders of the Raines, which divided the Kagel, are still visible there. Because much of the village land has not been cultivated since its desertion, scrub and trees have grown in the dust built up on the Raines.\(^4\) Bergfeld was the last village to be occupied in the East Reserve. No original buildings are left on the site. All that remains is a small cairn which has been erected to mark the graves of the first settlers of the village who are buried there.\(^5\) In the West

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\(^1\)Mennonite Mirror, pp. 40-42, (for exact amounts of acreage, see Toews and Klippenstein, pp. 325, 326).

\(^2\)Francis, p. 63.

\(^3\)Mennonite Mirror, p. 42.

\(^4\)Field Trip, Bergfeld, August 1982.

\(^5\)R. H. Vogt, "Bergfeld an Original East Reserve Village," Mennonite Mirror, January/February, 1974, p. 42. Early pioneer graves were often marked with wooden tablets or stones from the fields, simply carved often with only initials and date of death. The remaining stone in the Bergfeld cemetery marked P.K., 1877, was regrettably bulldozed
Reserve, in the village of New Bergthal which is still occupied, a good example of a grass covered Rain can be seen in a field on the west side of the village. In most of the present villages in the West Reserve and on the cultivated sites of the demolished villages the Raines are no longer visible. They have been levelled through cultivation with large modern farm machinery. (Plate 10).

In the East Reserve, during the first year of settlement in 1874, twenty-one villages or Gewandorf were to be found.\(^1\) The houses in the villages were all orientated to face the street. Most villages had only one row of houses facing the street but Bergfeld and Blumenort were exceptions—they had houses on both sides of the street.\(^2\) In the West Reserve the opposite type of house location occurred. There the majority of villages had houses on both sides of the street.\(^3\) The reason for this is thought to be due to many villages in the East Reserve being located on poor ground for agriculture and as a result were incomplete villages. Many were abandoned as the West Reserve, opened in 1875-76 on superior land, deterred later arrivals from joining established villages in the East Reserve. This caused depletion rather than growth of villages.\(^4\) A further factor which could have contributed to buildings being placed on only one side of the street was access to water. If a village was laid out alongside a creek, to which all farmers wished to have access, the

\(^1\)J. Warkentin, p. 55.
\(^2\)Mennonite Mirror, p. 40.
\(^3\)Francis, p. 68.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 66.
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Plate 10. New Bergthal.
Grass covered Raine formed by buildup of drifting soil on the original division line of the Kagel.
farm buildings would appear on both sides, with lots reserved for school and church. Hence they were known as Strassendoerfer, street villages.\footnote{Mennonite Village Museum, p. 7. This latter reason is not always applicable, as illustrated on original settlement maps of the Reserves which show single and double house rows. The single row of houses are sometimes not on creeks, i.e., Original Settlement Maps of East and West Reserves prepared by E. K. Francis, pp. 51, 68.} Regardless of which side or sides of the street the houses were located on, they were in addition orientated in such a way that "the front of the house practically always faced either to the South or the East and all front doors in a village faced the same direction."\footnote{A. Warkentin, p. 29.} As well as a village plan with a standardized orientation of the houses, the buildings themselves exhibited a type of architecture which was also unique to the Mennonites. This was the house-barn combination. It is believed that this unusual "house plan with attached barn came from Northern Europe and the Netherlands. The earliest house-barn combination goes back to Danzig, where the Mennonites settled during the 1700's." The Vistula River dams, along which the settlements were located, frequently broke in the spring, flooding the houses and barns. To overcome this flooding the buildings were moved to mounds of earth to protect them. As time went on the two buildings were joined together on one mound. This custom was transplanted to the Russian steppes and thence to Canada.\footnote{Mennonite Village Museum, p. 8.}

The joining of buildings which had two separate functions proved to have many advantages. It provided greater warmth and protection for both humans and animals in winter, and economy of time in commuting to care for the livestock. Its construction, with one less wall than two
separate buildings, was also a more economical use of materials. In the
country of its origin, it also protected the animals from roving thieves
who were endemic.\(^1\) It did, however, prove to be hazardous because of
fire, and was unhygienic according to today's standards of sanitation. The
Mennonites, however, were noted for their cleanliness. Some reports of
these barns say that tar paper was placed on the walls behind the animals
and replaced when it became dirty.

The barns were a very important part of the house-barn architecture.
They housed the animals and provided storage space for grains and fodder,
two vital commodities to the existence of the villagers. For this reason
the barns were built with strength to withstand the elements and to provide
a secure shelter for its contents. Huge beams and wooden pegs, both
usually of oak, were used in the construction. The support beams measured
8" to 10" and the pegs were usually 2" in diameter. The length of the pegs
varied according to the width of the material which they were used to join.
Support beams and joints were dovetailed for strength. Some barns exhibited
quite ornate joinery and beam ends.\(^2\) (Plates 11a, b).

The dimensions of the barn were usually two feet wider and the
ridge two feet higher than that of the house. The roof pitch retained the
same degree of slant as that of the house. The barn section of the house-
barn was always attached to the end of the house which was away from the
street. The front faced the same direction as that of the house. The
interiors of the barn usually followed a standard plan. The building
itself was much longer than the adjoining house, with a full width narrow
lean-to or shed built on the back side. There was generally an aisle

\(^1\) Mennonite Village Museum, p. 8.

\(^2\) Field Trip, August 1982.
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Plate 11a. Reinland.
Ornate joinery used in barn beam support

Plate 11b. Reinland.
Oak pegs used to secure inset support beams to cross barn beam.
running down the centre of the barn from the door of the house to the
door at the opposite end which was the haymow. Stalls for the horses
were usually built along one side of the central aisle and for the cows
along the other. If poultry and pigs were kept they were generally
housed in the outer lean-to shed at the rear. Doors into the barn in
the section where the horses were kept were usually double to allow
passage for a team of horses. At the end of the barn where the hay was
stored the doors were also double but much larger. They were constructed
wide enough and high enough to allow passage for a team of horses drawing
a loaded hayrack. The doors on the side and end of the barn, because of
their size and weight, were strengthened with support pieces of narrow
lumber placed on the diagonal. ¹ Thus positioned they formed a criss-
cross pattern and were painted a contrasting colour to the barn. The
barn was most often painted red with white trim on the patterned doors
and around the windows.

The windows as well as the doors are a traditional identifying
feature of the Mennonite barns. Two types of windows were used in
construction.

.... the one, a continuous band of small windows in between supporting
members, directly below the ceiling, and in between the joists, allowing
a rhythmic quality of light to enter interior space. As the light falls
on the structural elements space is structured. The other, punched
holes in the wall, which originally adapted itself to the character-
istics of adobe brick bearing wall construction, as in some barn
structures in Russia and now adapted to wooden structures in Canada.
The quality of light is weak and the space less. ²

Of the barns examined for this study the majority contained windows

¹Mennonite Village Museum, p. 9 and Field Trip, August 1982.
²Harold Funk, "The Darp West Reserve Village Design" The Mennonite
Mirror, January, February, 1974, p. 46. Prof. Funk is a former lecturer
in Architecture at the University of Manitoba.
of the former description, that of a continuous row of small windows just below the ceiling. A rare, if not the only remaining, example of the type of adobe brick mentioned in the latter type of structure was found on a wall joining an old house to a somewhat newer barn. This house-barn was one of the oldest located in the study and was thought to have been built circa 1875-76.\(^1\) The old original house, which will be described more fully later, now forms a link between the barn and a newer house built in the traditional manner, in the early 1900's. (Plates 12a, b, c).

After the barn was completed, the initials of the builder and the date of completion were customarily chiselled into one of the beams. An example of this could be seen in the last barn left standing in the village of Bergfeld in the East Reserve, Sec. 2-7, 5E. The initials read B. M., and the date 1877.\(^2\) In 1981, the barn was destroyed by wind and has since been burned. This was the last house-barn in existence in the East Reserve. As the land in most of the villages has been sold to farmers in the area many of the barns are no longer used for livestock. Instead, they store machinery, cars and trucks. In dusty corners one can still find old sleighs, cutters, hand-turned mills for cleaning grain and beautifully handmade wooden implements, assembled with wooden pegs rather than nails, used to harvest the crops by hand. In autumn the dry airy spaces are still used to store vegetables and grain.\(^3\) In

\(^1\)Mrs. H. G. Ens, present owner, Personal Interview, Reinland, August 1982.

\(^2\)A. Warkentin, pp. 31, 32. See also Mennonite Village Museum, p. 8. Several barns examined for this study were searched for dates and initials but none were found, either the custom was not continued or age and dust had made them difficult to discover.

\(^3\)Field Trip, August 1982.
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Rare example of adobe brick plaster in old house wall, as viewed from within the barn.

Plate 12b. Reinland.
Exterior of log and adobe brick house shown above, now covered with lumber siding, and used as a link to join barn to newer house. Note differences in roof elevation.
Plate 12c. New Bergthal.
Barn showing traditional row of narrow windows and crisscross pattern on barn doors.
one such barn in the village of Reinland the virtually lost art of making brooms by hand from local grasses is still being practiced by Mr. Jacob Ens. These were also hung to dry, as they had been traditionally for centuries, in the barn.¹ (Plates 13a, b, c).

The early house-barns were built of logs. Although milled lumber was available as early as 1877 it was usually too expensive for common use. By the late 1800's purchased lumber was more commonly available. Some builders used lumber to side the exteriors of the original log structures. Others, for new construction, laid 2" x 6" lumber flat on the side, stacked up to ceiling height, thereby providing tremendous strength and insulation in the structure of the walls. An example of this interesting type of construction can be seen in the house-barn on the grounds of the Mennonite Museum at Steinbach. It was built in 1892, near Winkler in the village of Chortitz, in the West Reserve. The building was later moved to become part of the restored Strassendoerfer at the museum.²

Traditionally, in Russia, the building material of the Mennonites was handmade brick. When they arrived in Manitoba they quickly learned to adapt to log and used the Red River style of building which was common in that province at the time.³ J. Warkentin writes that it is generally agreed among the pioneer East Reserve Mennonites "that the first settlers adapted their building methods from those of the Metis and the earlier Anglo-Saxon Clearspring settlers. Some of these Clearspring farmers

¹Mr. Jacob Ens, Personal Interview, August 1982.
²Mennonite Village Museum, p. 8.
³J. Warkentin, p. 27.
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Plate 13a. Reinland.
   Braided onions hung to dry.

Plate 13b. Handmade wooden fork and rake.
   Mr. J. Ens holding a rare example of a 3-horse whipple-tree (swinging bar to which traces or tugs of harnesses are hitched,) or troika commonly used in Russia.
Plate 13c. Grass for handmade brooms, bundled and bound for drying.
helped them build their homes, showing them how to prepare logs, how to cut the notches and so forth."¹ Originally this type of building was brought to Manitoba by the French Canadians when they came west to the Red River. It was called piece sur piece, but became widely known as post on sill or Red River Frame. The Scots, who had no previous experience with log construction, adopted the French Canadian style when they came to Manitoba. Later, the Hudson's Bay Company used Red River Frame for most of the architecture in its western posts.² One of these buildings, the Hudson's Bay store at St. Anne's, still exists. The Clearspring settlement was just north of Steinbach in the East Reserve. Its settlers, who reputedly aided the Mennonites with their log construction, were of Scottish origin and had quite probably learned the method from local Métis.

Log buildings were used in this area until 1900. The Mennonites needed substantial large structures that would not soon have to be replaced. For this reason they chose to adopt the log structure and follow the examples of Red River houses or buildings in the area. J. Y. Shantz, the leader of the Mennonites in the East Reserve, in his Narrative describes the Red River style in detail:

... for a house 16 feet by 24 feet the sills are laid, six posts are hewn square, one for each corner and one in the middle length-wise, grooves of two inches are cut in the posts in which plates are placed to hold the posts - then timbers are cut to the proper lengths

¹J. Warkentin, p. 111, A. Warkentin, p. 27.

²Museum of Man and Nature, Pioneer Exhibit, Example of Red River Architecture Placard. Very early log construction was sometimes also placed in a vertical position. This was known as "Poteaux-sur-sole" technique and is shown in a reconstructed house in Fortress Louisburg. See William C. Wonders, "Log Dwellings in Canadian Folk Architecture," Annals of the Association of American Geographers Volume 69, Number 2, June 1979, pp. 194, 195.
and a two inch tenant made at either end to fit the groove in the posts - these timbers so prepared are slipped in between the posts in the grooves, one on top of the other, until the spaces are filled up to the plates, which are from eight to ten feet above the sill — thus forming the sides and ends of the building; the cracks and openings are all plastered over on the inside and outside and whitewashed... buildings thus constructed afford a warm house, and I would recommend settlers with limited means to adopt this plan for their houses, where the timber is so small that they cannot make them in the old Canadian style.¹

Although the Mennonites adopted the log construction type of building which existed in their area, they did make some changes and adaptations. In their later houses, they excavated basements about ten by twenty feet and three feet deep which they lined with boulders. The foundations on which the sills were laid were made of field stones. (Plate 14). Joints and plates were fastened with wooden pegs, six to ten inches long and one inch thick, through holes which had been bored in the joists. Although nails were available at the time they were probably too costly and it was thought that they did not have sufficient strength to hold the thick heavy timbers.² "Instead of cutting a slot in the uprights, as was done in the true Red River style, the Mennonites just jammed logs between the uprights blocking up the walls in this fashion. The logs were about four inches in diameter, and just the top and bottom edges, which had to fit snugly against each other, were smoothed."³ In later houses nails were used to hold them in place.

In the 1883 Bergfeld house, which Warkentin examined, all the timbers were hand hewn. The rafters used in all Mennonite houses were extremely strong, some measuring 8 x 8 inches. They were laid on top

¹J. Y. Shantz, Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1873), as quoted in J. Warkentin, p. 111.

²J. Warkentin, p. 113.

³Ibid., p. 113.
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Field stone foundation supporting sills.
of the plates and supported by the partitions of the interior walls. These rafters were built strongly for a purpose. It was the custom in Russia to store one's grain in sacks in the attic to protect it from robbers. If it was close at hand it could not be readily stolen. The church on the ground of the Mennonite Museum at Steinbach exhibits this same type of structure. The congregation in pioneer days did not have cash to donate. Instead they brought sacks of grain in lieu of money which were stored in the attic of the church. (Plate 15).

The roof, in contrast to the massive frame of the buildings, was just a light structure made of poplar spars, long enough to give the roof a steep pitch and placed four feet apart. Wooden laths were nailed across these spars about ten inches apart. This was covered with thatch made from bundles about three feet long and two and one-half inches thick which were tied together. These thatched roofs, if made well, are reported to have lasted for twenty-five years. As soon as farmers could afford to, the thatch was replaced with shingles.

The finishing of the house is well described by Warkentin. He writes as follows:

Both the inside and outside of the houses were lined with a mixture of clay and chaff, the chaff acting as a binder. In some houses lathes were nailed on the logs then plastered with the mixture. This was then white-washed with lime, prepared in kilns from limestone's erratics [rocks not indigenous to the area, which had been carried in by glaciers]. The interiors of the houses were occasionally lined with air-dried brick blocks, 4 x 4 x 8 inches, made of a mixture of clay and chaff. As saw mills became more common the sides of the Mennonite houses were covered with clapboard siding.

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1 J. Warkentin, pp. 113-116.
3 J. Warkentin, p. 116.
4 J. Warkentin, p. 117. (Bracketed information not included in quote.)
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Plate 15. Reinland.
Cross section of oak beams and pegs from the oldest church in the West Reserve. Presently being restored in Reinland.
The arrangement of the rooms within these houses was practically identical. Although the method of construction was learned in Manitoba, the floor plan, which was traditional, was transferred almost unchanged from Russia. This is demonstrated in Plate 16, which shows the plan of a Mennonite house in Russia, and the plan of a Mennonite house in the East Reserve.¹

C. L. Toews and J. C. Reimer of Steinbach have prepared the latter plan which is considered by contemporary historians to be absolutely complete. It combines many features found in different houses and, therefore, shows the highest development of the Mennonite house.² Approaching the house from the street one would enter the front hall area called the Vorderhaus (front of the house). This area had four doors including the entrance. The door at the opposite side of the Vorderhaus led into the Sommerstube (Summer Room) which was the boy's bedroom. The fourth door, opposite to a person coming into the building, led to the Hinterhaus (back of the house) or dining room. The kitchen was a comparatively small room in the centre of the house with a large window on two sides to let in light. The house also contained, off the entrance way to the the barn, a pantry with very steep stairs leading to the attic and root cellar. Other rooms were the Kleine Stube (small room) which was the girl's bedroom and the Eckstube (corner room) which was the master bedroom. A further standard feature of this type of house was that each one contained four windows of equal size on each side, and two at the end,³ trimmed usually with exterior shutters. The shutters were constructed of four

¹J. Warkentin, p. 118.
²Toews and Klippenstein, p. 300. See also A. Warkentin, p. 30.
³Toews and Klippenstein, pp. 301, 302.
MENNONITE HOUSE PLANS

a. Large Room
b. Corner Room
c. Small Room
d. Front Room
e. Kitchen
f. Back Room
g. Pantry
h. Summer Room
i. Brick Oven
j. Hearth
k. Large Kettle
l. Stairs
m. Trap Door
n. Passage To Barn
o. Horses
p. Cattle
q. Well
r. Lean-To
s. Barn
t. Machine Shed
u. Garden
rectangular panels, grooved around the edges and set into a frame. The houses, as well as the barns, were painted a common colour. The shutters and trim were usually green or sometimes blue, which over the years has faded to grey. "Unity of mind and unity of aspiration within the village community tend toward use of the same colours to express visual values."¹ (Plates 17a, b).

Of greatest importance to the home and its inhabitants was the large brick heater in the centre of the house. It was built next to the kitchen and extended through the wall into the living room. Toews and Reimer give a concise description of its working mechanism:

Though used primarily for heating the house, it had a return flue and a space on the top of the fire box which could be used for cooking. The fire box itself was regularly used for baking in winter time when the brick heater was in use. Because of the heater's size and construction, it usually kept the house warm continuously if heated twice a day morning and evening. The heater fired from the kitchen and worked well with a variety of fuel.² (Plate 18a).

Each room, built around the central stove, had a small iron door in the wall, about three feet above the floor, which led into the stove. When this small door was opened it provided heat for that particular room. (Plate 18b). If the house had a second story an opening in the floor, covered with an iron register, allowed heat which had risen to the ceiling of the room below to rise into an upstairs bedroom and warm it as well.

¹Funk, Mennonite Mirror, January, February, 1974, p. 46. The standardization of colour choice was very evident in the villages of the West Reserve which were examined for this study. Although the houses and barns were not painted when originally built, the shutters of the houses were traditionally always painted light blue as was the plaster on the interior of the houses. Paint was added to all exteriors in later years as the circumstances of the owners permitted. See J. Warkentin Thesis, p. 115.

²Toews and Klippenstein, p. 302. The bricks used to build these stoves were handmade. The exterior was covered with plaster and periodically whitewashed.
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Plate 17a. Gnadenhal.

Plate 17b. Hochfeld.
Examples of both blue and green traditional shutter colours.
Plate 18a. Construction detail of Mennonite brick heater.

Plate 18b. Reinland. Section of plastered brick heater showing small black iron door which, when opened, allowed heat into room. The top of the heater extends to just below the top of the door frame.
Thus the stoves were a very early form of central heating and a very efficient method of providing warmth to all rooms during bitterly cold prairie winters.¹

The stoves could be fueled with either wood or manure. To prepare the latter, an area of sod was removed from the ground to provide a shallow basin approximately twelve feet by sixteen feet and about one foot deep. Into this depression moist manure and straw were spread to a depth of about one foot. Horses were then walked over this to mix and compact it, or according to one old-timer, children in bare feet were also used.² After a few days, when partly dry, the mixture was cut into squares with spades and stacked two or four together in a little triangle to dry. When sufficiently dry to handle they were stacked in larger beehive shaped piles for storage. When available a machine, which was worked by hand, was also used. The manure and straw, after it had been mixed by the above method, was poured into the top of the machine which compressed it and squeezed it out the bottom of the machine into a long narrow strip of fuel. As the strip emerged from the machine it was chopped, by dropping an iron blade, into regular sized pieces (similar to chocolate bar sections) which were caught on a large plank. The use of the plank facilitated carrying large strips of sections to a drying area.³ A machine such as this can still be seen working at some of the Pioneer Day displays in the Mennonite towns of southwestern Manitoba. Samples of this fuel can be seen and handled at the Mennonite Museum in Steinbach. It is light in weight and completely odourless. It provides slow but adequate heat. (Plates 19a, b).

¹Field Trip, August 1982.
³Personal Interview, Vita, 1982. (Name withheld.)
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Plate 19a. Steinbach.
Fuel made from compacted moist animal dung and straw. Steinbach Museum.

Plate 19b. New Bergthal.
The method of stacking fuel in a traditional beehive shape is still practiced with wood-piles.
These stoves were so unique at the time that non-Mennonite farmers expressed an interest in them. It was hoped that if they were adopted for general use, "they could utilize coarse prairie hay, reeds and rushes for fuel. Some Dominion cabinet ministers touring the East Reserve in 1877, thought that this was the greatest contribution that the Mennonites had made to the settlement of the West."\(^1\) Although the stoves were never adopted by anyone outside the community of Mennonites, it was felt that interest in them at least showed outside appreciation of Mennonite inventiveness.\(^2\) As iron cookstoves became available the old brick stoves were no longer used. Because they were an integral part of the construction of the house their removal was difficult. As a result they have been, in some instances, sealed over and in others simply left with the pipe from the cookstove being fed into the existing chimney. This was fortunate for many would otherwise have been demolished. As it is several excellent examples can still be found in the better maintained house-barns that are still inhabited.\(^3\)

The interior walls of the house were faced with one by six horizontal boarding when lumber became available. The floors which were originally of compacted dirt were later covered with boards, generally of oak, laid flat, directly on the earth without any supporting floor joists as in the usual method of construction.\(^4\) An example of this type of flooring is still in use in the house mentioned earlier, built circa 1875-76, which contained the example of adobe brick and stands in the village of Rineland. The

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\(^1\) J. Warkentin, p. 119.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 119.

\(^3\) Field Trip, August 1982.

\(^4\) Funk, Mennonite Mirror, January, February 1974, p. 46.
flooring, in use for over one hundred years, is still in remarkably good condition with little evidence of rot. In this same house, which is now used as a shed to link the newer house to the barn, is also an excellent example of the original very steep ladder-like stair to the loft. This type of stair with the same angle of pitch is a standard feature in even the newer houses.¹ Another architectural feature, built into the existing wall in the living room or Grossestube of all the houses, is a "built-in cabinet of wood about three feet wide and as tall as the ceiling. This was called a Mauerschrank (cupboard) and consisted of a chest of drawers or wooden doors in the lower half and shelves and glass doors in the upper half."² These cupboards, which resemble today's china cabinets, were obviously a treasured part of a woman's home. In all houses visited they were still in good repair and some, beautifully maintained, contained treasures from the past. Also, doors opening into the living room frequently were made with the lower half of wooden panels and the upper half with glass in corresponding panel openings. These glass panels were covered with hand-made curtains for privacy. As well traditional in each Mennonite home was a wooden bench with a back on it which served as a seat by day and opened out into a bed at night, thus conserving much needed floor space. (Plate 20).

In the kitchen was a small cupboard which was used as a sink for washing one's hands. It was quite low and had two doors at the bottom. One door concealed a "slop" pail to catch the water from the basin which held the water, the other stored supplies such as soap and scrub brushes. The top of the wash stand had a circular hole cut in it, in which the

¹Field Trip, August 1982.
²Mennonite Village Museum, p. 9. Also Field Trip, August 1982.
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Plate 20. Reinland.
A beautifully maintained Mauerschrank (cupboard) built into the livingroom wall. Note small black door on right which allows heat into the livingroom. These cupboards were traditional and were almost identical in every home examined.
basin sat. This hole served two purposes. It kept the basin stable and prevented it from tipping while being used; when necessary to empty the basin it was lifted out of the hole and the water was poured through the opening into the pail below. Directly above the basin, attached to the wall was a galvanized tin container called a Russian water saver. This container with one flat side next to the wall and a curved side facing out, resembled a pail cut in half lengthwise. On the bottom of the water saver was a simple valve which was similar to a nail pushed through a hole. The pressure of the water in the container kept the valve in place. When one wished to wash one's hands you pushed the protruding end of the valve upwards with the palm of your hand. A small amount of water flowed down the valve into your hands providing enough water to cleanse the dirt, but no more. For this reason it was called a "water saver." The container, about half the size of a ten pound pail, provided enough water to last a day. (Plate 21a). Soap for washing was homemade from a mixture of rendered animal fat and lye made from wood ashes. (Plate 21b). The soapy water, caught in the slop pail, was emptied with the laundry water onto the flower beds at the front of the houses. Wood ashes, which were used in the making of the soap, contain potash—a valuable nutrient for the soil. The Mennonite women, who introduced the dahlia to the prairies, also added to their household income by selling roses from their flower gardens which had been watered with and thrived on this soapy water. Many of the villages were named for the notable gardens which the women grew at the front of their houses. These, to mention a few, were Blumenfeld (field of flowers), Blumenort (Place of flowers), Rosengart (garden of roses), Rosenort (place

1Personal Interview, Mrs. H. G. Ens, Rineland, Field Trip, August 1982. This particular house did not, in 1982, have plumbing. The Russian water saver was still in use.
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Plate 21a. Reinland.
Russian water saver still in use above handmade washstand. Black iron door on left is where brick stove is fueled. Small heat door in wall above has been painted white.

Plate 21b. New Bergthal.
Rounds of homemade soap cooling on concrete floor of basement.
of roses), and Schoenfeld (field of beauty).¹ Their names can be considered a tribute to the memory of the pioneer Mennonite women. (Plate 22a).

Immediately after settlement was established, wind breaks of trees were planted. Although maple, poplar and balm of gilead (black poplar) were used for this purpose, the most common tree planted was the cottonwood which reaches a massive height at maturity. The trees were planted in long rows lining both sides of the village street. Although many were cut down when the villages were serviced with electricity² others such as those in New Bergthal remain intact. The giant cottonwoods standing today are an identifying feature of the old Strassendoerfer. Those that remain are a landmark and proud reminder of the now extinct village open-field system and few remaining house-barn architectural examples of the early Mennonite peoples in Manitoba. (Plate 22b).

The Mennonites, in constructing house-barn dwellings in their newly organized Strassendoerfer in Manitoba, exhibited in their building methods direct architectural transfer from the Old World to the New. Their structural designs of joined buildings, heavy ceiling beam supports, window and door placement, consistent floor plans and furniture designs were all brought with them. Most important of all to their existence on the prairie were their methods of stove construction and fuel manufacturing modes from readily available materials. The only change made in their building procedures was the adaptation to log or milled lumber in place of their traditional handmade brick, as an exterior construction material.

¹Mennonite Village Museum, p. 7.
²Funk, Mennonite Mirror, January, February 1974, p. 45.
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Plate 22a. Gnadenhötel.
Example of a traditional flower garden at the front of a Mennonite house-barn.

Plate 22b. New Berghötel.
Row of giant cottonwoods lining the street of an old Strassendorfer.
Icelanders

The second or permanent home of the Icelandic settlers followed the same general type of log construction as that put up for their first winter's lodging. When they reached their individual homesteads, they copied this type of construction but enlarged it, usually by making it a storey and a half and adding one or two gabled windows. A lean-to addition at the back was also a common feature. It protruded beyond the width of the main house enough to allow an opening for the door. In hot weather, cooking, baking and the heating of water for laundry were all done on an iron stove in this lean-to. This kept the heat from the fire out of the main house during the summer.

Each of these features will be described more fully but first an examination of the indigenous architecture of the Icelanders will be provided. The vernacular or folk architecture of Iceland is said to have had its origin in Norwegian forms. Individual long houses were built and used for different functions, one for cooking, one for sleeping and one for meetings. They were constructed of log and wood placed in vertical positions. Eaves and gable ends were ornamented in Viking designs.

When the original settlers came to Iceland, there was sufficient wood available to transfer and use this type of building method. (Plate 24a).

By the 14th Century, timber had become very scarce in Iceland. The original Norwegian long house form with its separation of functions into isolated buildings was modified. Subterranean group houses replaced the separate spacious rooms of the long house and reduced individual functions into a smaller unit. (Plate 24b). Later in the 18th and 19th Centuries the homes built by the Icelanders reflected a growth in prosperity and better trade, although the buildings still consisted of a series of five
Plate 24a. A reconstructed tenth century Viking long house. When the Norse people arrived in Iceland they were able, because of available timber, to construct similar dwellings.

Plate 24b. Subterranean group houses were a series of small structures built of stone, turf or sod, with earth floors and grass-covered roofs.
or six small grass-roofed structures.\textsuperscript{1} If the type of farm home, common in Iceland during the same time period as the Icelandic emigration to Manitoba, 1875-1900, is examined, one readily sees the striking lack of any design transfer from Iceland to Manitoba.

The first notable difference is in the type of building materials which were used. "Apart from driftwood washed up by the Gulf stream from the Caribbean Sea and by the East Greenland current from Siberia, the island had no wood of any kind. Until the beginning of our century they used to build their houses of volcanic rock and sods."\textsuperscript{2} If wood was used at all it was solely on the gabled ends of the houses.

The second striking difference is seen in the design of the farm houses. "About two-fifths of the Icelandic nation made their living by means of agriculture."\textsuperscript{3} Their farms, unlike those of the early Mennonites, were dispersed, not in villages. Churches for the surrounding community were built on larger farms close to the farm houses. Although the farm was owned by one family, as many as twelve hired helpers, both male and female, also made their homes there—thus it was a small community contained within the farmstead.\textsuperscript{4}

The usual type of farm home consisted of a series of about a half

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{1}Edward M. Ledohowski and David K. Butterfield, Architectural Heritage: The Eastern Interlake Planning District Department of Cultural Affairs and Historical Resources Province of Manitoba, 1983, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{2}Trip to Glaumbar/Vidimyri in the north of the island, (n.p., n.d.) Photocopy, Manitoba Archives.

\textsuperscript{3}Trip to Glaumbar, Fig. 195.

\textsuperscript{4}Personal Interview, Stefán Stefansan, Gimli, Manitoba, August 1983. Mr. Stefansan is the former Chief Sheriff of the Province of Manitoba. He retired in 1981 and now conducts charter tours of Iceland out of Winnipeg. He is also a co-founder of the Gimli Cultural Corp. Museum.
dozen wood-fronted gables, separated by walls of rock and turves but
joined by interior tunnels. The turves or sods which were used to separate
these houses are a type of sod which is unique to Iceland. The roots of
the grass which form the sod have a peculiar growth pattern which has
been described as "architectural couch grass." These roots have an exceed-
ingly tenacious binding quality which endures for centuries. Their root
pattern is still visible in the sods in some houses which are over 400
years old, and are still standing today. The sods were also used for
burning in order to smoke meat. Their toughness gave a prolonged even
fire.

The turves for the walls were cut and stacked in rows similar to
the method of building a sod hut or semlin, which the Mennonites and other
early pioneers used. When the stack was a few feet high, however, it was
sliced down in vertical cuts resembling a multi-layer cake. These cuts
of several layers were dried, then stacked at an angle for one row on the
wall. The angle of stacking was reversed on the next row thus producing
a herringbone effect. The tenacious root system coupled with the method
of cutting and stacking produced a very enduring wall.¹

Each of the gabled sections of the farm home was a room in itself.
"... one for porch and one for guest-room... one for stores and one
for kitchen, here the smithy, there the dairy; over the storeroom lies
the Bathstofa, ... on each side runs a line of bed-steads heads and
tails throughout."² Such was the description of one of these gabled farm

¹Personal Interview, Stefán Stefansan, August 1983. Mr. Stefansan
has visited Iceland seventeen times and conducted many tours of historic
houses which have been made in this manner.

²Icelandic Pictures, (n.p., n.d.), p. 68, photocopy, Manitoba
Archives.
houses as written by a traveller in Iceland, in 1890. His account of the heating of this series of rooms was as follows: "Nowhere in the house is there a fireplace except in the kitchen . . . but in the family room the crowd supplies the heat by day, and the two great beds of eiderdown which form the couch, by night. Nor would a fire be possible for its fumes of dried sheep's dung or clouds of peat smoke where it burns."¹ The kitchen or the one area of the house which had a fireplace was very basic. One such room reproduced on a postcard shows huge iron pots suspended from ceiling beams over open fires. Tea kettles for heating water rest on little iron stands over open coals. Simple shelves or tables are placed along the walls under the eaves. (Plates 25a, b).

Although the appearance of these farm homes changed throughout the years, one feature was retained, that of the sod roofs. Accounts state that their roofs covered with grass made them appear "as one with their surroundings in the truest sense of the word . . . Under grass-grown roofs the Icelandic people have lived for a thousand years."²

The only known instance of an attempt at transfer of gabled row-house design from Iceland to the Gimli area is found in an old photograph of a frame house or series of houses. These, although made entirely of sawed lumber, exhibit the same type of gabled ends, (Plate 26) but the building materials were those available in the area, wooden walls and shingled roofs. Other than this one example, no evidence exists of any attempt at transfer of design from Iceland.

¹Icelandic Pictures, p. 68.

²The Island, (n.p., n.d.), p. 101, photocopy, Manitoba Archives. The descriptions of these houses were corroborated by Dr. H. Bessasson, of the University of Manitoba Icelandic Department, who was born in a similar one in Iceland.
Plate 25a. Iceland.
Old kitchen showing wall of volcanic rock, open fire and pots suspended from ceiling.

Plate 25b. Traditional Icelandic houses with turf roofs.
Plate 26. Riverton.
Gabled frame row house similar to those constructed of rock in Iceland.
After they had passed the first winter, 1875-76, in the rude, crowded, temporary shelters which had been hastily erected on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, and shared by several families, the Icelanders who wished to farm or settle in the townsite began to build their first permanent homes. As mentioned earlier, they had arrived in late October when the ground was already frozen. Because of this, the subterranean houses with which they were familiar could not be hastily constructed. Neither of their known building materials, volcanic rock nor turves, were available. Thus their first shelters were of log. Using these as a basis of design their first permanent homes, built as soon as possible after reaching their own land, were also of log. No examples remain of their first temporary shelters and very few of their first permanent ones exist for study. Therefore, of necessity, information had to be obtained by examining old photographs and interviewing senior residents who remember how the buildings were constructed.

Most of the houses appeared to consistent in size. They were generally one and a half stories high with gable roofs and contained two rooms, one on the main floor and one upstairs. The main floor room was the kitchen dining area, the upstairs the sleeping area. Smaller versions of only one storey had the stove in the centre and beds on either wall. Two methods of horizontal log construction were used; round logs notched and saddled and squared logs dovetailed at the corners. (Plates 27a, b).

Fortunately, the Gimli Cultural Corporation Museum has had the foresight to salvage and restore a portion of one of the oldest homes in the district. It was built in 1913 and although not an example of a first permanent home it was built by Johann Vilhjalmur Johnsson, one of the first Icelandic settlers. Its historical significance to the Gimli
Plate 27a. Round log saddle and notch construction.

Plate 27b. Squared log construction with dovetailed cornering.
area is that it was the home of Jon Olafur Johannsson, the first Icelandic baby born in Manitoba on the night of their arrival, by scows, to Willow Point.¹ Mrs. Olla Stefansan, granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jonsson, described the house as she remembered it in its original location.

The house, built of squared logs dovetailed at the corners, had one room with a stove in the centre and double beds along both walls. The furnishings were simple and sparse. Each family, however, brought a chest or small wooden trunk with their personal belongings in it from Iceland. These chests, consistent in design, were small and rectangular in shape and had diagonal bars attached on either end. Each bar had a single hole bored through it. It appeared to have had a rope attached through the holes long enough to suspend the chest over one's back for carrying. The unusual positioning of the bars in a diagonal rather than horizontal manner made the chest rest in an upright rather than a slanted position on the back of the person carrying it. As well, each family member had a small wooden container, similar to a squat tankard with a carved hinged lid, called an Askar. The owner's initials were carved on the top. This container held each person's supply of food for the day. Each family also brought a spinning wheel and carders. As space was very limited, complete beds were not brought, just the headboards. These were ornately carved and put into position when new beds were constructed. Of all the household possessions books were the most cherished. Each first permanent home contained a shelf with a few books.² In the 1870 census in Iceland every man, woman and child over the age of eight could read and

¹Lindal, p. 119. Lindal mentions the birth of this baby aboard one of the scows on the first night of their arrival at Willow Point.

²Personal Interview, Mrs. Olla Stefansan, August 1983.
write. A book was considered a treasured object. To give or receive a book was an honour.

Only one light, a lantern, was brought with the first group of settlers who arrived at Willow Point and it too has been preserved in the museum. The reason for such a large group of people having only one light was also traditional. It was considered a position of high esteem to be appointed a reader. Although all could read, the frugality of the times and the long hours of darkness in Iceland had resulted in the electing of an honoured person as a reader who read to the assembled people. Thus only he had a lantern for the journey. The Icelander's avid desire to read and to have something to read was evidenced by the fact that they carried the type letters for their printing press on their backs from Minneapolis to Manitoba to ensure that they would not be lost. Two years after their arrival they published their first newspaper. In the interim they posted handwritten bills on trees to be read. Thus, although traditional house styles were not transferred, a few cherished traditional household items and the necessary materials for learning and printing their newspapers were.¹

During a later period, 1885-1905, the economy of New Iceland improved as a result of the development of the fishing industry. Because of this a better form of log house appeared. Although simple and similar in design, they were larger and showed more care and workmanship in their construction. As before, the logs were hewn and dovetailed at the corners. A sawmill began operation in Riverton in 1882 and made rough-cut lumber

¹Personal Interview, Mr. Stefan Stefansan and Mrs. Olla Stefansan, August, 1983.
and wooden shingles available. Unlike the Mennonites and the later Ukrainians, Icelanders did not use thatch. The earliest houses used sod which was later replaced with shingles when they became available.

An intensive study by E. Ledohowski and D. Butterfield has recently been conducted in the Eastern Interlake area for the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba. They describe the transition of the first log houses into frame covered structures.

Over the years, as their economic situation improved and the size of their families grew, a number of improvements were usually made to the settler's homes. The first of these was the construction of a lean-to addition; initially these were of log but were later more frequently of wood frame. This addition typically became the new kitchen area, freeing the original section to be used as a bedroom or living area. At this time, the cookstove would have been moved into the new kitchen and a brick chimney constructed . . . Another typical improvement was the application of wooden drop siding to the exterior walls and wallpaper to the interior walls. Sometimes the interior walls were first covered with a layer of flush board siding before wallpaper was applied. New tongue and groove siding was often installed over the original rough planking in many of the homes.

Ledohowski and Butterfield's study implies that the lean-to became a permanent kitchen. Originally this was not so, it was a seasonal addition. The cookstove was moved into the lean-to in spring as soon as weather permitted. When late fall and cold weather returned the stove was moved back into the main house. The lean-to in its simplest and earliest form was not lined. It was papered with layers of newspaper between the studs to keep the wind and dust out. (Plate 28). Newspaper was the cheapest material available. It was applied with a paste made from flour and water or corn starch and water. The latter type of paste had to be cooked. It was freshly done each spring. If the kitchen was lined with a layer of flush board it was sometimes interlined with a layer of tar paper to keep

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1 Ledohowski and Butterfield, p. 22.

2 Ibid., pp. 24, 25.
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Plate 28. Newspaper used as wallpaper in a lean-to summer kitchen.
out the wind. It still however, was not insulated. In winter it was extremely cold and virtually uninhabitable as compared to the main house, the log construction of which provided an extremely warm natural insulation, keeping it cool in summer and warm in winter. For this reason, the lean-to was called a "summer" or "back kitchen." If the walls were lined with boards they were often whitewashed or painted with a coat of Kalsomine. (Plate 29a). This was a very cheap type of powder paint which, when mixed with water, was applied with a wide brush to wooden or plaster walls. It provided an economical, temporary and clean surface but could not be washed as it dissolved in water. This resulted in repeated coats having to be put on which built up, chipped and peeled badly. It then had to be scraped off. If possible, ordinary wallpaper was not used in kitchen areas as it stained too readily. Instead, oilcloth was used. This was a fabric with a thin canvas-like backing, the surface of which was coated with paint and decorated with a floral or geometric design. It was durable, did not crack easily and was waterproof and washable. It was also sufficiently pliable to use for tablecloths but the patterns usually wore off after one or two seasons' use. (Plate 29b).

When insulation became available either sawdust or wood shavings were used. To install these materials the top board of the interior siding was removed and the sawdust or wood shavings were poured down the wall in between the studs. Small areas above and under windows had to be done separately or were often left uninsulated. Of the two materials wood shavings were the better. The sawdust, over the years, tended to settle and become compacted in the lower parts of the wall leaving the upper areas empty. Wood shavings, because of their structure and lightness, remained evenly dispersed up the wall thus providing a more consistent
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Montgomery Ward & Co.'s Kalsomine Colors.

1st. It is the only strictly Sanitary Kalsomine in the world and contains the best Hygienic disinfectant known to science.

2nd. It is prepared dry, and made ready for use by simply adding hot water. Full directions on every package, and can be applied by an inexperienced person.

3rd. It can be applied to old, hard finished walls, and make them as good as new. It can be used on iron, wood, brick, stone or plaster walls, or, wooden partitions, etc.

4th. Our White, of which no sample is shown, is a purer white than ordinary kalsomine, and will remain so much longer.

Will always make a perfect finish, one package covering about 400 square feet.

16 Kalsomine Tints and White.

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4 Fresco Colors, for Bordering, Striping, Etc.

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<td>No. 33, per ¼ lb.</td>
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Write us for Kalsomine Color Card.

Oil wood-stains, for re-staining furniture and woodwork.

Imitation mahogany, oak, walnut and cherry, ½-pint tins, 15c; 1-pint, 25c; 1-quart, 40c each.

No. 21. Varnish stains, in imitation mahogany, rosewood, oak, walnut and cherry, ½-pint tins, 18c; 1-pint, 35c; 1-quart, 60c each.

Prepared kalsomine, blue, flesh, cream, green and terra cotta colors, 5-lb package, 90c each.

“G” furniture polish not only cleans, but gives the furniture a beautiful and lasting gloss, 4-oz bottle, 10c; 8-oz, 20c ea.

Plate 29a. Adds for Kalsomine, available from catalogues and hardware stores.

Plate 29b. Example of oilcloth used as a wall covering.
protection. When the lean-to or summer kitchen became insulated it could be used year round, although the ceiling which was difficult to insulate because of its shed type structure was often left uninsulated. It and the floors were extremely cold. In winter hoar frost formed on the ceilings and dripped off after the morning fire was started. Before floor coverings were used the boards were painted. Women sometimes decorated them with stencil designs around the border. Mats for the doorway and work area were made from worn out clothing, cut into strips and braided. The braids were then sewn into an oval or circular shape to form the mat. Furnishings in the lean-to were also sparse and simple. All were free-standing and portable to facilitate being moved, if necessary, back into the main house. They generally consisted of a wooden table with drop leaves on either side, one or two chairs and a long bench or two for the children, a wood box, broom and dust pan, a kitchen cabinet to hold dishes and utensils and a washstand with a slop pail. In the early days all of the furnishings, with the exception of a stove, were hand-made.

On the wall beside the washstand was a "roller" towel for drying the hands. It was made from either old bed sheets or bleached flour sacks cut and sewn together into a long narrow rectangle about one foot by six feet. The narrow ends were sewn together to form a circle. This was then suspended from a horizontal wooden dowel made from a foot length sawed off an old broom handle. The ends of the dowel were supported by wooden brackets attached to the wall in such a manner that the dowel could turn freely. The circular towel was rotated on the dowel as people used it until all the clean areas were soiled, hence the name "roller" towel. It was then slipped off the dowel to be laundered. No new
materials were used. The most common source of cloth for household necessities was bleached one hundred pound flour or sugar sacks. When the sacks were empty, the seams were unravelled. The string with which they were sewn was rolled into a ball and saved. The opened sack was laundered with handmade soap and spread on the grass for a few days to bleach in the sun. The opened sacks provided a piece of strong new cotton about one yard square for household use. Several of them sewn together provided a bed sheet, singly they were used for tea towels, aprons, curtains, diapers, underclothing and tablecloths. Although the Icelanders spun great quantities of wool for knitting and weaving heavy outer garments and mitts the sacks were used for all other household needs. This practice was not unique to the Icelanders. It was common on the prairie to all early pioneers and the practice continued through the depression years of the thirties until after World War II.

The custom of building the main house of log continued until around 1915. "Settlers who could not afford new wood frame houses or who were new arrivals from Iceland continued to use log for building "until before World War I. "In the older areas of the colony along the lakeshore and the Icelandic River as far as Geyser, the era of log construction was generally over by the early 1900's." In the area studied by Ledohowskí and Butterfield "only two log structures from this period were known to have survived to the present day; one is near the village of Hnausa and the other near Arborg." The structure at Hnausa closely resembles early photographs of log houses built during this later period. Logs used in its construction were roughly squared on four sides and dovetailed at the corners. Chinking between the logs was made from a mix of sand and mortar. Traces of whitewash were found on both the interior and exterior walls.
(Plate 30a). The second house found near Arborg was built by Gester Oddliefson in 1890. Its original location was in the Geyser settlement near to the site of the Borgfjord family homestead. (Plate 30b). Both its appearance and situation suggest that it is a typical example of the architecture of that period. The only structural difference noted was that the gable ends were of squared logs placed horizontally rather than boards or vertical logs. It, too, had the typical lean-to kitchen added to the end. It has since been removed and stands apart from the building. The structural details of it have been drafted and illustrated. (Plate 30c).¹

Although in the area studied by Ledohowski and Butterfield only two log structures were known to have survived to the present day from the 1885-1905 period, one, outside their study area, was located for this comparative analysis. It is situated northwest of Lundar and is representative of the Icelandic housing of those who came somewhat later than the first 1875 group. This was the home of Mrs. Helga Magnusson, formerly Christjanson, who was raised in it. Originally it was built by Mr. A. Johnston, circa 1905, who came down the Red River on a barge. It is notable in that it is built of round poplar logs rather than the more common dovetailed timbers used in construction closer to the lakeshore areas. This was probably because poplar was the only available material in that location. As with the Oddliefson house, its gable ends were also constructed of horizontal log, they too were round rather than squared. The corners have been covered with vertical corner boards. It is a storey and a half structure. The typical lean-to, added later, still stands at the back. Unfortunately the windows have been sawed through to ground

¹Ledohowski and Butterfield, pp. 25-27.
Plate 30a. Hnausa.
Sniefeld house, Circa 1890.

Plate 30b. Arborg.
Oddliefson house, Circa 1890.
**Dimensions**

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<tr>
<td>Width:</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 metres</td>
<td>3.0 metres (10 feet)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceiling Height: 2.0 metres</td>
<td>Ceiling Height (rear): 1.8 metres (6 feet)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Height: 4.7 metres (15½ feet)</td>
<td>Ceiling Height (front): 2.6 metres (8½ feet)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Building Materials**

1. Roofing: split wooden shingles
2. Roof sheathing: 25 mm (1") unplaned lumber; 125-350 mm (5-14") widths
3. Rafters: 65x95 mm (2½x3 3/4") unplaned lumber
4. Ceiling joists: 100 mm (4") square sawn timbers
5. Nailing laths: 25x50 mm (1x2") strips
6. Exterior sheathing: 150 mm (6") drop siding
7. Walls: 200 mm (8") logs, hewn on two sides
8. Floor joists: 50x150 (2x6") planks
9. Floors: 115-165 mm (4½-6") tongue and groove planking
10. Interior sheathing: 225 mm (9") ship lap
11. Shanty roof sheathing: 25 mm (1") planks; 100-200 (4-8") widths
12. Shanty rafters: 50x100 mm (2x4") planed lumber
13. Wall finish: 90 mm (3½") tongue and groove; over paper and sheathing
14. Wall paper: patterned; over paper and sheathing
15. Shanty wall studs: 50x100 mm (2x4") unplaned lumber
16. Shanty exterior sheathing: 150 mm (6") drop siding

**Connections**

A) Rafter seat notched into top plate
B) Ceiling joists notched and dowelled into side walls
C) Corner joint: dovetail

Plate 30c. Oddliefson house construction details.
level to allow free access and exit for cattle in the pasture where it now stands. Mrs. Magnusson's memory of it was identical to the description given for the Johannsson house of the same period. The interior consisted of one room upstairs which contained double beds along both walls. The main floor, also one room, was the kitchen dining area.1 (Plate 31).

One storey shed-roofed shanties of frame construction began replacing the early log homes in most areas of Icelandic settlement in the years 1895-1905. The small frame lean-tos had been common additions to the log houses in the 1890's and later this same type of construction was built free-standing as a main structure. It was known as a shed-roofed house. "Small and simple in design, the popularity of the shed-roofed residence was due to the ease and inexpense [sic] with which it could be constructed. A settler did not have to be a skilled carpenter to build such a house and construction took little time. Early photographs and remaining examples indicate that shed-roofed residences varied in size and plan."2 It must be noted that the lean-to or free standing shed-roofed style of building was not a style devised by Icelandic settlers. It was a common form of architecture in all early settlements on the prairie. Its predominance in the Interlake and Gimli areas probably was due to its economy of building costs and simplicity of construction.

The Interlake area, after its initial settlement, proved to be unsuitable for agriculture because of its marshy or rocky terrain. Its general economy which relied on hay, cattle raising and the fishing industry, was relatively much less rewarding than that of the rich grain belts to the

1Personal Interview, Mrs. Helga Magnusson, Lundar, Manitoba, October, 1982.

2Ledohowski and Butterfield, p. 29.
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Plate 31. Lundar, Circa 1905.
Early log Icelandic home with a lean-to summer kitchen. Window has been cut to ground level to allow access for cattle. Gable end was of horizontal log construction. It was typical of early storey and a half construction with one room downstairs and one up.
South and West of Lake Manitoba. For this reason the shed-roofed house became a popular style of building. It was within the means of many who could not otherwise afford more costly construction and became the prevalent mode of construction in the Icelandic districts. (Plate 32a).

A form of construction used in the shed-roofed house and the small early frame houses of the same era was called balloon framing. This type of framing differed from later platform framing in that the joists of the former were notched and rested on a horizontal ribbon of 2 x 4 lumber set into the vertical stud. This early method of framing may have evolved from log structures, the ceiling joists of which were placed in the same manner but made of log. Later platform framing was much sturdier and would support larger room areas. The joists rested on the girt which was a 2" x 4" laid on its widest side and supported an additional sole plate secured into a 2" x 6" or 2" x 8" header. (Plate 32b). The small early frame homes built with the balloon method of structure had an identical floor plan to the early one and a half storey log dwellings.

In later years, 1905-1930, frame shed-roofed and gable-roofed houses were often connected. This type of construction evolved in two ways. "Either the earlier shed was enlarged with a one and a half storey addition or a completely new house, -with the one and a half storey section and the shed built at the same time." Ledohowski and Butterfield point out that this style was common in many areas of the province at the time but the ones constructed by the Icelanders in the Eastern Interlake had a number of distinctive elements which separated them from the rest.

A typical example consisted of a five or six roomed, 1½ storey gable roofed section, with a single storey shed at the rear. This shed portion invariably extended about 1000 (3') to the right side of the gable portion, just enough to accommodate a front facing door. The main entrance of the building was usually located on the right front of the gable-roofed section. Floor plans varied only slightly
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Plate 32a. Arbourg.
Around the turn of the century simple shed roofed shanties, such as this, were the common form of housing for Icelandic settlers.

Plate 32b. Settlers generally relied on balloon framing, before 1890, for the construction of their houses. After 1890 platform framing became more common.
in the remaining examples. The larger structures had three bedrooms in the upper level, while two bedrooms were more common in the smaller ones.¹ (Plate 33).

Window, door and chimney locations were nearly all identically located, as well. Over the years a number of changes or additions were made to the basic gable- and shed forms such as the construction of a wraparound veranda with a second storey balcony.²

Although Ledohowski and Butterfield point out that the identical elements found in these house structures are common to the Icelanders in the Interlake area, it must be noted that the era of self-built homes was ended. Patterns and plans were available from Eaton's catalogue and local lumber yards. It was also possible to have total prefabricated houses shipped from Chicago to Winnipeg.³ The local carpenters in the Interlake area may very well, in fact most likely did, supply the standard floor plan and house style in vogue at the time. Although commonly used by the Icelandic district throughout this study, the design cannot be said to be common to the Icelanders as an ethnic group.⁴

If there was an identifying feature which could be termed an Icelandic style it was the distinctive decorative trim on the gable ends of Icelandic houses. These were the prominent eave returns which were decorated with fan, sunburst or oak leaf motifs. (Plates 34a, b). Eave facings cut from bargeboard in the pattern of creasing waves were also

¹Ledohowski and Butterfield, p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³C. Hall, A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba (London: W. W. Allen and Co., 13 Waterloo Place, Pall Mall S.W., 1884), p. 41.

⁴Personal Interviews, August 1982. See also Ledohowski and Butterfield, p. 35.
Plate 33. Floor plans usually ordered from local lumber yards or Eaton's Catalogue.
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Plate 34a. Riverton.
Decorative eave returns.

Plate 34b. The sunburst pattern was the most common form of decorative trim found on the gable and shed eave returns. Alternatively several featured an oak leaf motif. In this instance the oak leaf motif is accompanied by a decorative bargeboard cut into the shape of cresting waves.
The upper ends of the gables were decorated with shingles trimmed in pointed and arced shapes. These were nailed in alternating rows to form a pattern. Ridgeboards were also decorated on the more ornate homes. A frequent design was made by attaching small wooden circles cut three inches in diameter with one inch centres removed, to long one inch by one inch boards, with shingle nails. The long boards, with the circles standing upright on it, were then nailed to the peak or ridgeboards of the roof and dormer windows.¹

Several examples of these distinctive decorations can still be found. An unusual house, found during this study, contains all of these features in its design. This house, Vindheimer (The Windy Home), was built in 1914 by Halli Bjornson on the banks of the Icelandic River southwest of Riverton. It was the house he built to replace his original log cabin. Bjornson was involved in the fishing and freighting trade on Lake Winnipeg and at one time employed over fifty men on a fleet of eighteen fishing vessels. This spacious home contained five bedrooms, two staircases, and a wrap-around veranda with a second story balcony. It was best known for its decorative features. Besides the decorations already mentioned it had stylized wooden dragon heads, similar to those on early Viking ships on the gable peaks of the house. (Plates 35a, b, c). Its most interesting feature is seven hand painted murals on the dining room walls depicting scenes of Iceland. They are painted directly onto the plaster and may have been done when the plaster was still damp, a method used in doing frescoes. The living room in the same house has oval shapes framing

¹Field Trip, October 1982. Examples of return gables and ornamented eaves can also be seen in Winnipeg in areas where Icelandic people settled after leaving the Glumli area to work in the city. Arlington Street is a good example.
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Plate 35a. Vindheimer 1914. (The Windy Home.)
Traditionally Icelandic people named their homes. Built by Halli Bjornson on the bank of the Icelandic River, it shows ornamental ridge boards, dragon heads on gables and eave facings cut in the pattern of cresting waves.

Plate 35b,c. Vindhiemer.
Decorative hand painted scene of Iceland and floral mural painted into the plaster.
bunches of flowers painted in the same manner. Although the plaster on the rest of the walls is deteriorating badly the areas where the paintings are is in remarkably good condition.\footnote{The H. P. Tergeson house, now occupied by Mr. & Mrs. J. Tergeson, which was built in 1908 in Gimli has similar paintings in the plaster. They are reputed to have been done by an Icelandic artist who was in the Gimli area at the time.} The roomy kitchen, 15' x 26', had a pressed tin ceiling. In the basement is a precast concrete cistern which held water for a plumbing system. Also in the basement is a fully set up Delco plant complete with sixteen glass wet cell batteries. Delco plants were used in more pretentious homes at this time to supply 32 volt electricity for lights and small motors. When rural electrification came to Manitoba after World War II, these plants were removed and demolished. It is most unusual to find a complete unit still in a home.\footnote{Field Trip, October 1982. See also Rural Buildings No. 68 The Manitoba Cooperator, Winnipeg, August 19, 1982, pp. 1, 3, and Ledohowski and Butterfield, pp. 44, 45, 47.} (Plate 36a). The floor plan of the house (Plate 36b) closely resembles that of the smaller gable with shed-type residences mentioned earlier. The kitchen area replaces what is the shed addition in the earlier styles but protrudes past the wall on the right hand side to allow entry from the outer area.\footnote{Ledohowski and Butterfield, p. 45.}

A region included in the original land reserve given to the Icelanders in 1875 was Big Island, better known today as Hecla Island. This area was not included in the Interlake Planning District Study conducted for the Historic Resources Branch by Ledohowski and Butterfield. This was unfortunate as Hecla still contains a few quite unusual house designs peculiar to the Island.
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Plate 36a. Riverton.
Delco Plant in basement of Vindheimer house. Before rural electrification, these plants were used to generate 32 volt electricity which was stored in 16 glass wetcell batteries.

Plate 36b. Floor plan of Vindheimer house.
Hecla was settled in 1876 in the year following the Icelanders' arrival at Willow Point. People who settled there were primarily interested in fishing and small mixed farms. Although a causeway has now been built to join Hecla to the mainland, originally the only transportation was by boat. In the years between 1878-1880 the water level on Lake Winnipeg rose to such a height that much of the land was flooded and many of the original settlers left to find employment in Winnipeg or to settle elsewhere. When the waters receded a few of the original people returned, accompanied by other settlers from later groups who had recently come from Iceland.

The first houses built on Hecla, as in other areas of Icelandic settlement, were of log. Only one is known to still exist; it is of the early 1900 era and is therefore a second rather than a first log house. Its basic difference from a first log house is its size. The timbers used in its construction are much larger and longer, measuring eight to ten inches in width and twenty or more feet long. They are of squared spruce, dovetailed at the corners. The second storey has a much higher elevation than the usual storey and a half, making it more spacious. Its roof is gabled. The house has been stuccoed over so that only portions of its log structure are visible where the stucco has fallen away. Now vacant, the house has been moved away from the main road and into a treed area where many do not know if its existence.

The first houses which followed the early log ones were very small, of frame, a storey and a half high and orientated to face eastward towards the lake shore. They have, however, an unusual roof shape which is singular to the island of Hecla. The end of the house which faces the lake is gabled with one or sometimes two side by side windows in the gabled end. They feature the same eave returns, almost
out of proportion for such small houses, as other larger ones discussed earlier. The upper end of the gable immediately under the eaves is faced with decorative shingling. The lean-to kitchen common to the early frame era is also present, again on a much smaller scale. What is peculiar about the houses are their roof shapes. Although gabled on the end which faces the lake, the opposite end facing in a west to northwesterly direction from which the prevailing winds originate, is hip-gabled with no openings, giving the houses an unusual appearance. The few remaining elderly people living in the area do not recall why this particular style was built. It could, as with other areas, have been the plan devised by the local carpenter.

Consciously or unconsciously the shape resembles a house form common to Normandy where early farm houses with thatched roofs were built in a shape which resembled the inverted hull of a ship, with the bow facing into the prevailing westerly wind and the stern towards the calmer east. (Plate 37a). In windy hilly areas of the world, such as parts of Canada, Mexico or Switzerland, "bank" buildings which are houses or barns built into the banks of the hills have one storey on the "hill" side of the house, with few or no openings facing the prevailing winds, and two storeys facing in the opposite direction, away from the wind.¹ (Plates 37b,c). On Hecla Island the hipped gable ends of the roofs without openings facing the prevailing winds have this structural feature in common with those in other parts of the world. It is, however, a feature which is not common to the rest of the Icelandic settlement in Manitoba or indeed to any other particular area of the province. It is peculiar to Hecla Island building forms. The comparative geographic isolation of Hecla's settlement on an

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Plate 37a. Farm home in Normandy with roof shaped in the form of an inverted boat hull. The bow faces the direction of the prevailing wind.

Plate 37b. Similar roof shapes peculiar to Hecla Island.

Plate 37c. Vertical ends face the lake, sloping ends face the prevailing winds. Foundations are of field stone.
island may have limited contact with other areas and also have been a contributing factor to the development of this particular structural form.

Beginning in 1969 and continuing until 1974, the Province of Manitoba instigated and carried out a programme to develop Hecla Island into a Provincial Park. All the land was expropriated and most of the residents left. Very few examples of this type of frame architecture remain. A plan was in formation at the time to restore a few examples of these buildings as part of the park programme. It has since been shelved and nothing at present is being done. The houses are vacant and rapidly deteriorating. It appears that if the plan is reinstigated it will be too late to preserve this small remainder of a unique type of Icelandic heritage.

In the original settlement of Gimli and its surrounding areas, the lack of traditional building materials such as volcanic rock and turves was obvious. As a result the Icelanders chose log as a construction material because it was readily available and in use in the area at the time. In later years when modular materials were used, ornamentation of gable ends, eaves and ridgeboards was sometimes added to the Icelandic homes as a token reminder of their past. Other than that, except for one rare example in the Riverton area, (Plate 26), no evidence exists of any transfer of either building designs, materials or floor plans from Iceland to their new settlement in Manitoba.

Ukrainians

The Ukrainians, like the early Mennonites, were basically village orientated people. The system of land survey, discussed earlier, required that a settler reside on his land for a term of three years. This, in 1874, was waived for the Mennonites in deference to their village settlement tradition. The Ukrainians, however, were not given this exemption.
Being unable to recreate their traditional village-style settlement they followed the North American method of location. This was a building site which usually placed the home and out-buildings in the shelter of an existing tree belt, preferably on a rise of ground to provide drainage away from buildings. Availability of water was also an important consideration. These prerequisites of location values, especially for those who chose their sites before the land was surveyed, resulted in fairly isolated homesteads away from later surveyed roadways. Today, to find remaining examples of these houses, one has to search in remote pastures or clumps of trees which hide them from view. Many have been forgotten and frequently local people do not know of their existence. Few good examples for study remain.

This is a general description of homestead locations on quarter sections which existed in the area under study, south of the Riding Mountains and in the Sandy Lake area. In other areas in Manitoba, subdivision of quarters, according to C. Young, was quite prevalent. He writes: "In the Municipality of Ethelbert, for example, we found fifty cases of it, and in the vicinity of Vita, in the Stuartburn district, we were informed of cases where as many as eight families are found on a quarter section."

Another settlement pattern, common among Manitoba Indians and poor Anglo-Saxons was "squatting." The Ukrainians also practised this and in districts such as the northern part of the Rossburn Municipality "squatters" could be found living on and using the land, without any claim to it. The opposite extreme to this was a wealthy Ukrainian in Vegreville, Alberta who bought a 5,500 acre ranch for

1Young, p. 97.
seventy-five thousand dollars,¹ and lived on it with just his family.

In 1908, a further pre-emption privilege was re-enacted. This was brought about by the great influx of Ukrainian immigrants which began in 1896. It entitled "any homesteader who had not already obtained a pre-emption the right to purchase a quarter section adjoining his homestead or separated from it by a road allowance, the purchase price being three dollars per acre."² Thus, the Ukrainians, although denied the desire to locate in nucleated villages had, on the other hand, a very wide choice of house site locations.

Regardless of which part of their quarter section they chose to build on, their houses were always orientated to the south. J. Lehr points out that this could be partly due to the environmental factor of more exposure to the sun but asserts that it was more likely to be "founded in religion and unvarying floor plan of the house. Traditionally, the interior end wall of the larger room (the room without the stove) was decorated with icons and religious calendars, and always faced east. This ensured the house's southern orientation."³ (Plate 39). In vacant houses examined for this study a small paper flower or similar token was often left on the wall long after its owners had ceased using the house. Elderly people, in Senior Citizen Homes, continued the practice hanging a religious picture or cross on the eastern wall of their apartment.⁴

¹Young, pp. 96-97.
²Ibid., p. 96.
⁴Field Trip, August 1982. This practice could be connected with the Greek Catholic Church's origins in Byzantium or Eastern beliefs, hence the use of the East wall for religious icons. The Jewish religion, as well, has similar customs.
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Religious wall, traditionally facing the East.
Step by step construction techniques used in building the Ukrainian house are described by Zonia Keywan in her book *Greater Than Kings*. She saw the building of the first permanent home of the pioneer as the foremost tangible reward for the family's long period of privation and hard work. The day construction began was one of joy. "It marked the immigrant's first step towards the better life for which they had come to Canada."¹

Building began with the laying of foundation stones where the house was to rest. Lehr found, in his study of Ukrainian houses in Alberta, that foundations were rarely used in Ukrainian folk houses. "In almost all cases the house rested upon a series of large stones placed under the lowest log, raising the log away from contact with the ground and preventing subsequent rot."² This is not specifically a Ukrainian feature, but one which was employed by all pioneer builders of log houses, and indeed some early frame ones, as well. It is still a common practice for many outbuildings such as sheds and granaries in rural Manitoba. The houses of all three ethnic groups studied were built in a similar manner, only the type of stone varied, according to what was available, i.e., fieldstone or boulders.

The wood which was at hand was that which was chosen for building material. Poplar or aspen poles were generally used because of their plentiful supply in prairie regions. Some who wished for better quality logs such as oak, spruce, pine or tamarack, and had a means of hauling them, would bring them from longer distances. Tamarack logs, when used

¹ Keywan and Coles, pp. 70-72.

for building, are identifiable by their spiral cracks thus giving it the common name of "twisted tamarack." This type of log was also highly valued for fence posts because of its strength and lasting qualities.\textsuperscript{1}

Logs for building were, if possible, usually cut one year in advance, peeled and allowed to dry to avoid shrinkage after caulking. The settlers in the Roblin area had close access to the northern slopes of Riding Mountain where wood was usually plentiful. Sawmills producing milled lumber provided a good quality of wood. The town of Roblin, itself, had its origin as that of a "mill-town."\textsuperscript{2} The early Ukrainian settlers, however, lacked the finances to purchase this material and used instead natural logs and smaller poles for all construction except window and door frames. (Plate 40b).

Wherever possible, logs of eight to ten inches in diameter were used. After this size was depleted smaller sized or inferior logs were used. If the logs were large they were often shaped by flattening two sides with a broad axe.\textsuperscript{3} These two flat sides were laid one on top of the other making a very close join. If smaller logs were used they were often left round. The latter method required more chinking. Horizontal log construction was employed in all houses examined in Lehr's study of Alberta homes. In Manitoba a few examples of vertical or palisade type buildings did exist. An illustration of one of these is given by Ewanchuk,\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Twisted tamarack was found used as a building material in a very old Ukrainian log house near Gardenton, Manitoba. The logs, above those used for sills, were still quite well preserved although the house was originally built in the 1890's. The twisted or spiral cracking was quite evident. Field Trip, August 1982.

\textsuperscript{2}Personal Interview, M. Ewanchuk, 1981.

\textsuperscript{3}Lehr, Uk. Vern. Arch., p. 12.

\textsuperscript{4}Ewanchuk, p. 35.
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Plate 40a. Gardenton, Circa 1895.
Saddle and notch, twisted tamarack log wall in an early Ukrainian house. The tamarack log is identifiable by its spiral crack formation.

Plate 40b. Drifting River Area.
Example of squared log construction with dovetailed corners resting on a fieldstone foundation. Smaller poles have been used to fill spaces between the logs before chinking with clay and dung plaster.
built in the inter-lake region. Near the town of Vita, in southeastern Manitoba, an incredible example exists which combines both horizontal and vertical log construction with a section of Red River Frame. The windows are of French Canadian style with a pointed board across the top of the exterior window casing. It is a delightfully eclectic mix of all early log construction methods combined in one house. Remnants of horizontal willow lath with cow-dung plaster clinging to it identify the structure as Ukrainian in origin. The gable roof indicates that the builder was from the province of Galicia who, limited to logs of varying lengths, sensibly used them in many styles to fill the open wall spaces.¹ (Plates 4a, b).

In the Roblin area all houses examined were of horizontal log construction, a few had palisade or vertical logs filling in the gable ends. Stables and out-buildings on the same grounds also contained a mix of vertical and horizontal logs. These buildings were of Galician origin. In general, the horizontal method was the most common.

Several theories on the origin of horizontal log construction in North America exist. Many of the English and French pioneers are credited with bringing their particular styles of architecture to Canada in the early colonial days.² Brunskill, a noted British writer on vernacular architecture, states that, "the great vernacular tradition of the hewn horizontal log construction appears to owe nothing to English influence though it may speak volumes for English adaptability."³ C. F. Innocent, writing in "The Development of English Building Construction," supports

¹Field Trip, August 1982.


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Plate 41a. Vita
Combination of horizontal and palisade log construction in a Galician home near Vita. Small pent, on gable end, protected plaster. This feature is common on all Galician buildings. Remnants of traditional plaster over willow remain.

Plate 41b. Construction detail showing poplar poles in a horizontal position held in place by vertical strips used to create a notch similar to Red River frame method.
this in an earlier writing and states that, "There is no satisfactory
evidence that this form of building was ever in use in England in any
of its forms."¹ Fiske Kimball asserts that this method of building with
logs was brought here by Swedish and Finnish settlers. It was first
evidenced in America on the Delaware in 1638.² M. Fahrni, daughter of the
noted Manitoba historian, W. L. Morton, writes in The Third Crossing, that
the style known as Red River Frame was brought in from Quebec. The "notch
and saddle" style of construction with full length logs laid horizontally
was derived from the seventeenth century Swedish colonists of Delaware.³
Although Brunskill credits this commonly used type of early American
construction to English "adaptability," perhaps the assumption is due, as
A. Gowans asserts, only to those "who find it incredible no Englishman,
in a land covered with trees, ever thought of laying one log on another,
and they invented the form independently."⁴ Horizontal log-built construc-
tion was the normal, universal frontier type used in forest areas. It
was built, if necessary, entirely with one tool, the axe. According to
Gowans, it therefore best expresses America's Iron Age.⁵

Lehr's findings, based on writings of Samojlovych and Kusela, are
that "both types of Horizontal log construction and post and fill were

¹C. F. Innocent, "The Development of English Building Construction"
(1916), pp. 109-111, cited by Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture of the
American Colonies and of The Early Republic (New York: Dover Publications,
1922), p. 7.

²Fiske Kimball, p. 8.

³Margaret Morton Fahrni, and W. L. Morton, Third Crossing (Winnipeg:

⁴Alan Gowans, Images of American Living: Four Centuries of Furniture

⁵Ibid., p. 6.
widely used by peasant builders in the Western Ukraine around the turn of the century." Lehr asserts that:

There is no evidence to suggest that the post and fill method despite its popular Canadian name of Red River Frame was copied from settlers already in Western Canada when the first Ukrainians arrived. Indeed all three methods of building were transferred from the Ukraine. It is clear, furthermore, that the pioneer builder preferred to use horizontal log construction; the other methods were less satisfactory alternatives and were used only if necessary in areas notably deficient of good timber.

These two opinions on the original source of this type of architecture are divergent. A possible explanation is that the Scandinavian method and those of the Ukraine evolved separately in the old country. An alternative assumption is that the method was brought by early Vikings and Norsemen to northern Europe and thence to the Ukraine. Whatever its origin, it became the most accepted and widely used form in North America long before the Ukrainians came.

In construction of the walls, nails were rarely used. The Ukrainians (as did the earlier Mennonites) strengthened the walls by drilling holes through the logs and fitting them with wooden pegs. (Plate 42). If round logs were used in construction the corners were finished in the "notch and saddle" method. If squared logs were used the corners were dovetailed (made with a tenon shaped like a dove's tail). Doors were made by fastening several thick planks together with cross pieces of wood. Small windows were cut in the walls after the logs were fastened together with wooden

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2 J. Lehr, "Ukrainian Pioneer Architecture in the Prairie West." The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, p. 10. See also Fedir Wowk, Studies in Ukrainian Ethnography and Anthropology (Prague: (N.D.), Passim), as quoted in Ewanchuk, p. 34.
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Plate 42. Drifting River Area.
An example of horizontal log construction.
The small poplar logs available in the area were strengthened by the use of vertical pegs approximately 2" in diameter and 8" in length which were inserted through the horizontal logs.
pegs. Glass window panes had to be purchased.\(^1\) The windows were small because of the cost of glass. They usually consisted of four panes placed "two on two." The Elasiuk house, in Roblin, had a row of '3' small ones over '1' larger or using architectural terms "3 on 1."\(^2\)

Doors were supported by metal hinges, provided money was available with which to purchase them, but if money was lacking, strips of thick leather were used in lieu of hinges. Frequently hand made wooden latches were used rather than door knobs. Door "pulls", rather than knobs, were made by boring a hole through the door and threading a thick short length of rope through it. The rope, knotted on both ends, could be pulled from either the outside or inside to open and close the door.\(^3\)

The roof on the Ukrainian settler's house was inclined at a very steep pitch with a rise of approximately nine inches to the foot.\(^4\) "A thatched roof necessitated a high roof pitch for rapid run-off. Shingles gave greater flexibility as to high, low, or medium pitch, whereas a turf or sod roof required a low pitch in order to keep the sods on the roof."\(^5\)

Roof shapes, as well as pitch, were of importance. "Gabled roofs were more common among areas of Galician settlement; hip or hipped gable among the Bukovynians."\(^6\) The gabled roofs were more easily constructed and although more difficult to thatch, they were easier to adapt to the later roof covering of shingles.

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\(^1\) Keywan, p. 71.
\(^2\) Field Trip, August 1982.
\(^3\) Personal Observations.
\(^4\) Keywan, p. 72.
\(^5\) Lehr, Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Alberta, p. 12.
Roof overhang as well as roof pitch were further distinguishing features. Bukovynians had a wide picturesque overhang which gave them a heavy-roofed appearance. This overhang or wide soffit was supported at the corners and sometimes on either side of the door, with logs from the upper wall left extended beyond the corners in graduating lengths, shortest at the bottom and longest directly under the soffit. Thus positioned they supported the wide overhang. They were plastered in the same method as the walls. (Plate 43a). A hook was sometimes placed on the underside of the upper stepped log, providing a place to hang a lantern used for exterior lighting of the doorway and for doing outdoor chores in the evening.¹ In Galician houses the overhang was much less pronounced. A feature common to the Galician house, because it did not have a roof overhang on the gable ends, was a small single pent extension usually shingled and running the width of the end walls on the gable ends. It provided a narrow "roof" where the plastered log wall ended and the gable end began. This pent was to deflect rain or snow from the join of the plastered wall below,² (Plate 43b), thus preserving the plaster. Galician houses did not have stepped soffit supports.

Many early houses were built without chimneys. Smoke from the fire entered the attic and filtered out through the thatch. This was thought to give it preservative qualities. Old thatch impregnated with soot, when it was removed, was ploughed into the ground. It was found when used in this way to make excellent fertilizer.³ Some houses showed eyebrow

¹Field Trip, Roblin area, 1982.
³Personal Observation, July 1977. Houses without chimneys were not unique to the Ukrainians. The Scots in northern Scotland also had houses,
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Plate 43a. Wroxton, Saskatchewan.
Stepped soffit supports common to Bukovinian construction.

Plate 43b. Roblin.
Pent extension on gable end which provided protection for plaster. This pent is an identifying feature on Galician homes.
vents on the south slope of the roof through which the smoke escaped. It is interesting that the southern location of the vents, traditional in the old country, was also very practical on the prairies where the north wind was the prevailing one. Examples of such eyebrow vents in Manitoba are extremely rare. It is thought that as chimneys came into use the eyebrow vents developed into dormer windows. Only one house with a smoke vent was found in Manitoba. This was a very old log house in the Poplar Field area in the inter-lake region. The house, which was more spacious and ornate than either the Galician or Bukovynian design, was built by Mr. Kost Marykuca from the province of Dabowetz in the Ukraine. It had a north entrance with double doors, which was most unusual, and a southern entrance with a single door, covered by a dormer roof with a circular hole in it, which may have originally been a smoke vent. On the northern slope of the roof, which was again unusual, there was a single rectangular smoke vent. An excellent example of eyebrow vents was found in the Roblin area but just a few miles inside the Saskatchewan border in the Wroxton district. This old house contained the traditional round eyebrow vents on the southern slope of the roof. People from the highlands of the Ukraine are reputed to have traditionally built houses without chimneys.¹ (Plates 44a, b, c).

not only without chimneys, but without windows as well. These were commonly called "black houses" because of the lack of illumination and the accumulation of soot. A few such houses may still be seen in the area of the Isle of Skye. "Black houses chorna khata were also common in the Carpathian region in the 18th Century but seldom encountered by the end of the 19th Century. The dugout used by the Ukrainians as a first temporary shelter was similarly based on an earlier folk form - that of the mountain hut or staya of the Hutsul shepherds." Zenon Kusela, "Folk Architecture," Ukraine: A concise Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 306 and Kaye, p. 139, as quoted in Lehr, "Ukrainian Pioneer Architecture in the Prairie West" The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada p. 10, fn. 8 and 9 respectively.

¹Field Trips, Wroxton, Saskatchewan, and Poplar Field, Manitoba, August, September 1982.
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Plate 44a. Wroxton.
Eyebrow vents used in Bukovinian houses, built without chimneys. Smoke vented into the attic escaped through the eyebrow vents. (This rare example found in Wroxton, Saskatchewan, has since been destroyed by fire.

Plate 44b. These vents later developed into dormer windows as shown in this house of typical Bukovinian design.
Plate 44c. Poplarfield.
Rare example of a single rectangular smoke vent.
Its builder was from the province of Dabowitz in the Ukraine.
If chimneys were built they were constructed of various materials. Early ones were made of woven-willow or heavy homemade rope, coiled upwards in diminishing circles, and both of these types were plastered inside and out. Local stones or homemade adobe type brick were also used. When iron cook stoves became available, the tin stovepipe was often threaded up through the existing woven-willow chimney. Pictures of the latter exist but examples of the original ones are virtually non-existent. None were found in the Roblin area but a very good example was located in the Stuartburn area which was the location of the first Ukrainian settlement in Manitoba. The plaster covering had disintegrated leaving the woven-willow framework exposed. The ends of the woven-willow were set into holes bored in a frame of oak. The frame, wider at the base than the top, was square. (Plates 45a, b). Rods were sometimes pushed through the framework to suspend meat for smoking inside the chimney. The house itself was very badly disintegrated but the chimney remained standing. It is, quite probably, the only one in existence. If chimneys were of stone they were built from the ground up, but most of the brick ones seen began about two thirds of the way up the wall or just under the ceiling. They were supported at the base by a pole or timber frame. The open area beneath the chimney was walled in and formed a high narrow cupboard with shelves in it and a door. It was called a chimney closet or cupboard.

1 Lehr, Personal Commentary. A photo in the Glenbow Institute in Calgary, Alberta shows this early type of rope chimney.

2 Field Trips, 1982. This type of chimney construction was not unique to Ukrainian building. It was the common method of chimney construction in kitchens in most early prairie buildings. Economically it required fewer bricks than one built from the ground up. A tin pipe from the cookstove, with an elbow section in it, fed into the chimney.
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Plate 45a. Stuartburn, 1902.
Chimney of woven willow construction on a very old house with some remaining thatch on the roof.

Plate 45b. Detail of willow chimney construction technique.
The floor plan of these houses followed a set plan laid down by tradition. Usually it was divided into three rooms. The two room division also existed, but it was found chiefly in the Galician settlements, while the three room was more common in Bukovynian areas. "In both cases the house plan gave one large room on the eastern half of the house with the western half being the entrance hallway and kitchen/living area. The latter, the smaller of the two major rooms, was called mala khata, the larger room the Velyka khata, literally the little house and the big house respectively.”¹ (Plates 46a, b).

Variations in descriptions of the left, right orientation do exist, however. Keywan, Paximadas and Lehr, all agree the houses faced south. But Keywan writes, "... it had three rooms; the room on the west side was always the kitchen. Because it was the centre of activity, this was the largest room.”² Paximadas writes, "The entrance led into the storage room. The kitchen was to the right of the storage room, and the dining room to the left.”³ Humeniuk writes that, as you entered the house, you came to the first room, the kitchen. It contained the homemade clay oven for cooking and baking. "The second, larger room was a combination living, dining and bedroom.”⁴ This is either confusion over left right, east west directions, or variations did exist. It is generally agreed, however, that the plans almost invariably, "were oriented east-west longitudinally with the front elevation facing south and containing the only exterior door and the

¹ Lehr, The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, p. 11.
² Keywan, p. 74.
⁴ Humeniuk, p. 53.
Plate 46a. Typical plans of houses built by Ukrainian settlers from the provinces of Bukovinia and Galicia.
majority of window openings."¹

Central to each of these houses, and indeed the very "heart beat" of the home, was the clay stove, pich (peetch or pietz). This stove or clay oven occupied the whole of one side of the kitchen. It was usually made by the women.² On this stove the meals were prepared, water heated, and food baked in its oven. Because of its clay construction, it continued to radiate heat long after the fire was out. The top of it, which measured about thirty inches by five feet, was quite spacious. It was used, after the fire had died down, as a sleeping place for the small children or a very elderly member of the family.³ "For cooking or baking the oven was pre-heated with a good fire. As the fire died out, the coals were raked out. Food in cooking utensils was pushed inside. The front oven-hole and smoke-hole were closed to retain the heat inside."⁴ From experience, the women knew how long to cook their different foods in the oven. The oven was white washed. At least once a year it received a fresh coat, usually at Easter.⁵ The stove, made by plastering clay over a framework of woven willow or handmade adobe type brick, was quite large in comparison to the size of the house. When a cookstove became available the pich was usually demolished in order to make room for the new stove which, in early days, was also very large. Because of this no remaining


²Keywan, pp. 74, 75. See also Olynyk, p. 2.

³Keywan, pp. 74, 75. See also Lehr, The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, p. 12.

⁴Humeniuk, p. 53.

⁵Keywan, p. 74.
examples of the old pich are reputed to exist. One very old photograph showed a frontal view of their construction. For this study, one preserved in excellent condition was found in a tiny vacant house in the Gardenton area. The original cookstove stood beside it with its tin stove pipe feeding into the existing pich chimney. The two stoves combined took up the whole of the wall space in the house and are an excellent and only example of the transition from pich to wood burning cookstove. The only change made in the pich itself during the transition was the plastering over of its oven door to seal it off. It had been constructed of brick, piled in a somewhat mounded shape. It was then built up and coated with thick layers of plaster to form a rectangular shape with a flat "sleeping-top" shelf. Part of its brick construction protruded through the wall of the little house at the rear. The plaster coating had disintegrated as a result of exposure, thus leaving the brick construction visible for observation. This exposed part, when originally coated with plaster, would have been contained in the second room of the house which had been removed for some reason. The part containing the two stoves which remained was likely used as a summer house for cooking on hot days.¹

(Plates 47a, b, c).

The ceilings of the house were constructed of poles laid horizontally across the width of the house, and chinked with clay, then plastered. They were also whitewashed. Floors, if money was available, were made of wood, but most commonly they were of beaten earth. This was periodically, about once a week, treated with "a wash of manure and/or clay with water and milk to give it a smooth, durable veneer."² This practice was continued, in

¹Field Trip to southeastern Manitoba, 1982.

²Olynyk, p. 2. See also Lehr, Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Alberta, p. 23.
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Plate 47a. Gardenton.
Last remaining example of a hand built pich and cookstove within the same room.
Plate 47b. Calder, Saskatchewan.
Example of hand plastered stovepipe hole.

Plate 47c. Upper chimney of hand built pich, pictured in Plate 9a.
houses without floors, as late as the 1940's. Mrs. M. Styba, of Bukovynian
descent now residing in Roblin, as a young girl cleansed the floors of her
parents home in this method. Fresh cow dung was collected in a pail and
mixed with water and milk to the consistency of paste floor wax. It was
applied by hand with a cloth to the floors. When it hardened it provided
a clean glazed surface. If the cattle had been eating clover or some such
prairie flower mixed with the pasture grass the floor coating emitted a
pleasant odour after it had been applied.¹

The exterior of the Ukrainian log houses, unlike those of the
Mennonites, Icelanders or other early pioneers, were plastered and
whitewashed. This task was usually done by the women and children, although
at times a "bee" or toloka was held for the purpose. The house was first
plastered on the inside until the mixture oozed out between the logs. When
this had dried the outside was begun.² Round log walls generally did not
require any preparation for the plaster; "the undulations of the log-wall
surface afforded sufficient purchase. In the case of square logs, addi-
tional purchase was afforded by the attachment of wood lathes [sic] to the
wall, usually at a 45° angle."³ These laths were made of small branches
of red willow scrub common on the prairie, known as dogwood. (Plate 48).

In Lehr's study of Ukrainian folk architecture, it was found that
much disagreement occurred among the pioneers whom he interviewed, as to
the composition of the plaster. The general consensus was, however, as
follows:

¹Personal Interview, Mrs. M. Styba, Roblin, Manitoba, 1982.
²Paximadas, p. 18.
³Lehr, Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Alberta, p. 18.
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Plate 48. Photo shows details of squared log construction with dovetailed cornering and use of small poles placed between larger logs as chinking, before plaster was applied. Weathering has exposed the interesting method of plaster application. After chinking was completed, diagonal rows of dogwood willow sticks were applied to provide purchase for the first layer of plaster. The final layer was mixed with lime to which laundry bluing had been added in order to provide whiteness. The bluish white tinge is still evident in the unweathered area which was protected by the overhang of the eave. This plastering method was common to Ukrainian and Polish construction.
The majority of all pioneer builders held strong views on the constituents of mud plaster, specifically concerning the type of animal dung added in order to impart cohesive properties and diminish cracking upon drying. It was generally found that the Galicians, and those of Galician ancestry, favoured the use of horse dung; the Bukovynians of cow dung. This difference may have originated in the type of draught animal commonly employed in their province, as in Halychyna the horse was predominant, in Bukovyna, the ox. As a primary objective of the employment of animal dung was the achievement of cohesive properties, the Galicians deprecated the employment of cow dung as it failed to contain the amount of straw residue found in horse dung.¹

The mud plaster was basically a mixture of clay and water. This was "puddled" together by the bare feet of the women and children or by walking horses or oxen through it to break it down. The straw and dung were added later. The straw, which was finely chopped, along with the dung, provided the ingredients which prevented the plaster from cracking when it dried. The plaster usually was applied in three separate layers. First the mixture of clay and straw dung was roughly smoothed on. When this had dried a layer of clay and water mixed with sand was smoothed over the first coating. This provided a fairly even surface for the final application of lime and water, which was applied after the second layer had dried and any small cracks had been filled. Often a little laundry blue or skim milk was added to bring out the pure whiteness of the lime.² Care was taken by the women not to apply too much blue as "a blue plaster to the peasant occupants was indicative of Jewish occupants."³ Traditionally, however, the door of the Ukrainian house was blue and sometimes

¹Lehr, Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Alberta, p. 42.


some ornamentation of the plaster also contained blue colouring.

The plaster was freshly limed each year, traditionally just before the Easter celebration, as part of a general preparation for the festival. The "two great hazards to the plaster were children and fowl, the former damaging the interior and the latter pecking at the lime on the lower reaches of the exterior. To prevent this, many houses had sawn shiplap laid over the plaster up to the level of the window sill."\textsuperscript{1} Fowl frequently lack lime which results in their pecking at things which contain it, and sometimes eating their own egg shells. Children in early days often were lacking in minerals due to their diet and were known not only to pick the plaster off the wall and eat it, but also from between bricks as well. This accounts for the peculiar attraction of chickens and children to lime plastered walls. An old folk cure: feed the chickens crushed oyster shells and the children lime water.

The combination of log and mud plaster provided a good form of insulation, keeping the house warm in winter and cool in summer. Other means of insulation are found in personal accounts. One writer, in referring to her father making the house warm enough for winter, described it in the following way, "... he insulated it from the outside ... he cut enough two to three-inch poplar trees about nine feet in length. He sank each one four inches in the ground, standing them up vertically. Each pole was fastened at the top under the eave of the roof. They were placed ten inches apart and ten inches away from the wall. Then he filled the space between the poles and the wall with dry hay."\textsuperscript{2} This was reported as

\textsuperscript{1}Lehr, Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Alberta, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{2}Humeniuk, pp. 60, 61.
having kept the house very warm. It was doubtless an excellent primitive form of insulation.

The most common form of winter preparation is found mentioned briefly, only once, in any of the books used in this study. Paximadas states that when the house was finished "the plaster was whitewashed and a bank of earth piled against the walls to keep out the cold."¹ This was a very common practice on the prairies with all houses which were built without foundations. This practice, known commonly as "banking" the house, was a seasonal one. The Anglo-Saxons used earth for this purpose. It was banked up against the lower part of the house in the fall just before freeze-up in order to prevent icy winter winds from passing under the floors of the house making them impossible to heat. The banking had to be removed each spring to allow free flow of air under the floors in order to prevent rotting from collected moisture.

The common practice among Ukrainians was to use manure for banking. This had a two-fold purpose. It not only kept the winter drafts from under the house, but because manure generates its own heat, its use provided a warmer type of banking. Of the two materials manure was the superior. It was not aesthetically acceptable to people other than the Ukrainians because of its odour and unhygienic properties; therefore, other nationalities tended to use earth, straw, or snow, shovelled up over the straw.

Olynyk mentions that in the Fedoryshyn house study earth had to be excavated to reveal the large boulder used as a footing for the corner foundation. He also writes that the base logs in the wall sat below grade, and all were badly decayed.² This writer suggests that the earth which

¹ Paximadas, p. 18.
² Olynyk, pp. 16, 24.
had to be excavated and made the building appear to sit below grade was the banking which had not been seasonally removed during the building's years of vacancy, hence the serious rotting of the sills. A very early illustration of a Ukrainian house, 1909, also shows the use of sacking or heavy cloth tacked along the bottom join of the windows. This feature was probably a preventative measure to combat cold drafts. It was thus a form of insulation as well.1

The roof, because it covered and protected the enclosed space, was of prime importance. It was an identifying feature of the Ukrainian folk house. Lehr found that in Canada, "styles varied widely in accordance with roof styles in the homeland. Gabled roofs were more commonly found among areas of Galician settlement; hip and hipped gable, among Bukovynians."2 Although the hipped style was more easily thatched, the gabled type was easier to build and shingle.3

Materials for thatch were reeds if available but there was also a strong preference for rye straw because of its durability. More commonly used was the easily obtainable "slough grass" which was found to be quite resistant to the elements. Methods of tying the thatch and securing them to the framework varied according to traditions of family or locality.

Excellent illustrations of the method used in making one type of thatch are to be found in "The Fedoryshyn Cottage at Caliento Manitoba." It illustrates bundles of slough grass, bent over and secured at the top, then tied to a horizontal pole (purlin) which ran horizontally across the

1Keywan, p. 74.


3Ibid., p. 11.
rafters.\textsuperscript{1} Another form of thatch was simply a small bundle of slough grass about one to one and a half feet long, blunt cut at both ends, and tied together in a bundle similar to a small sheaf of grain.

In both bundling and securing no manufactured rope or nails were used. The bundles were bound and fastened to the purlin with a continuous length of rope, hand made from spliced lengths of twisted slough grass. Beginning on the outer side of the lower edge of the roof (eave), the bundles were attached to the lowest purlin allowing enough thatch to extend past the eave to provide a protective overhang. They were lashed with the twisted rope to the purlins in an alternate fashion, once around the bundle of thatch, twice around the purlin and once around the next thatch and so on to the end of the eave. The next row overlapped the first and the pattern continued until the peak of the roof was reached. Outside edges of thatch were secured with wooden stakes. Across the top of the roof a row of thatch was cross-lapped to cover and give double protection to the peak. This final cross-lapping was secured with stakes about one metre in length lashed together at the top and wedged over the peak of the roof. The tips of these formed an attractive crisscross pattern against the skyline.\textsuperscript{2} (Plates 49a, b).

The booklet, "The Fedoryshyn Cottage at Caliento Manitoba" was prepared by an Extant Recording Team working for Parks Canada. "This was done upon request from the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs for

\textsuperscript{1}Olynyk, p. 3. See also Lehr, "Ukrainian Pioneer Architecture in the Prairie West.: The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, pp. 19, 21. For one of the last full colour photos taken of the Caliento cottage see Ronald Woodall and T. H. Watkins, Taken By the Wind: Vanishing Architecture of the West, (Ontario: Don Mills, General Publishing Co., Ltd. 1977) Fig. 121-123.

\textsuperscript{2}Field Trip, Elaschuk house, Roblin, Manitoba, 1982, 1983.
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Plate 49a. Elaschuk House, 1911, Roblin. Details of roof construction showing crossed sticks used to anchor ridge thatch, horizontal purlins to which thatch was bound and rafters made of poles.

Plate 49b. Cover layer of thatch, placed to protect corner join, is laced in place with twisted grass roping. The row of thatch is further supported by a vertical stick or "horn" placed at the lower corner of the roof.
the Province of Manitoba. The purpose of the request was to provide an architectural record of the cottage sufficiently detailed as to permit possible reconstruction in the future and to serve as a resource base for Ukrainian Vernacular Architecture in Manitoba." The house, located near Caliento, was considered to be the last remaining example of a thatched Ukrainian house in this province. The study project was instigated by the sale of the house to Mr. Henry Panych who planned to dismantle it, move it to Chipman, Alberta and restore it to its original condition (August, 1979).\(^1\) Alberta, with its generous heritage fund, has many excellent examples of Ukrainian houses in and around the area of Vegreville, one of the largest Ukrainian settlements in Western Canada. It is unfortunate that what was considered to be Manitoba's last remaining thatched Ukrainian cottage could not have been preserved and restored in the province of its origin by the Manitoba Historical Society or some similar heritage group. It is fortunate, however, that a record of its method of construction was made before it was dismantled.

It is also fortunate that one other thatched Bukovynian cottage does at the time of this writing, 1983, still exist in Manitoba. This is the Elaschuk house northwest of Roblin, Manitoba which was located and used for this study. "In spite of the fact that it was given top priority in Manitoba's 1966 building survey, the Elaschuk house remains empty and vulnerable to deterioration."\(^2\) The reason for this appears to be that at the time of the report the estimated cost of $24,000 for restoration was to be equally divided among the provincial government,

\(^1\)Olynyk, p. 1.

\(^2\)Christina Southam, Architectural Analyst, CIHB, "Elaschuk House, Roblin, Manitoba," Parks Canada Prairie Region Report #290741, p. 3.
the federal government and the V. Starchuk family (great grandson of the
original builder who now owns the house). The family did not have that
amount of money. For this reason the house has been left unrestored. Its
roof is now partially gone, the plaster is crumbling and the general
structure is in a very fragile condition.\(^1\)

The interior of the house follows the traditional Bukovynian floor
plan but is somewhat more spacious than many examined measuring sixteen
by thirty-two feet. Floors, now covered with boards, were originally
compacted earth and the east room contains a trap door in the floor which
leads into a root cellar with earthen floor and walls. The walls were
supported against crumbling by poles. The walls of the house itself were
of round logs as were the interior partitions. All joints were notch and
saddle. Extra stability in their construction was provided by the custom-
ary wooden pegs. Ceilings were of smaller round poles. The house was
plastered inside and out with the traditional mix of clay, straw and
animal dung. Doors were low and wide, measuring 2'8" by 5'10". These
dimensions are common in most of the houses examined. (Plates 50a, b).

Mrs. G. Starchuk, granddaughter of the Elaschuks, described the
house as it was originally. As a child she often stayed in it when she
dug seneca root which was sold to supplement the family income (commonly
called snake root because of its crooked form). She confirmed that in
former times the animals shared the house in winter. This could explain
the extra width of the doors.\(^2\) The cattle were housed in the west room,

\(^1\)Personal Interview, Mrs. George Starchuk, granddaughter of the
original builder, August 1982.

\(^2\)Doors were also made wider than normal to allow passage for the
homemade coffins of the deceased which were traditionally brought home
for family rites. Personal Interview, Mrs. M. Styba, August 1982.
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Plate 50a. Roblin. Detail of pole ceiling construction and plaster which has deteriorated from weathering.

Plate 50b. Elaschuk House. Small trap door and ladder leading down to earthen basement. Crumbled plaster on floor shows how quickly the interior disintegrates when roof thatch is destroyed. Handmade wooden table and three benches, common in living areas.
chickens in the middle and the family of eight children, mother and father in the east room. They ate xxx flour and had fish for Christmas. The family came first to Saltcoats, Saskatchewan in 1892, then to Roblin. They purchased 160 acres for ten dollars. On this land, in the early 1900's, the Elaschuk family built their first permanent home. Their barns and sheds, built somewhat later, were immense, by Ukrainian or indeed by any pioneer standards. The barn measured sixteen feet by sixty feet in length. Its roof was thatched. A photograph of it taken in the 1940's shows well over eighty crossed stakes holding the eave thatch in place. A smaller animal barn measured fourteen feet by forty-five feet with an attached eighteen foot pen on the end.

The buildings sat facing the Shell River Valley on the south. They were sheltered from the west by a grove of poplar and from the north and the east by rolling hills dotted with small groves of spruce. The Elaschuks built their home, as did other pioneer Ukrainians, from materials which were at hand--logs, poles, straw, animal dung, clay and grasses for thatch. The materials were shaped and joined by hand using simple tools--a saw, hammer, axe, auger, and adze. When finished, the buildings blended in with and became part of the surrounding landscape. Their few fragile remains are true examples of the early vernacular architecture of Manitoba's Ukrainian settlers.

Although Ukrainian settlement in the Roblin area of Manitoba was established later than others such as those in the Stuartburn, Vita and Inter-lake regions, the Ukrainian people still adhered to their European styles of architectural design and choice of building materials. Their Bukovynian and Galician construction methods exhibited transfer of traditional floor plans and site orientations until after World War I.
Rather than destroy their original home when their second and third houses were built, they frequently retained the original house as a shelter for small animals or poultry. Sentimental attachment to their original home in the New World was strong. Some, such as the Styba family of Roblin, retained the old original log house within succeeding building additions. It is an integral link with the past contained within a very modern, beautifully maintained home on the original site homesteaded by the Styba family's grandparents. (Plate 52).
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Plate 51a.  
Bukovinian Design transfer from Old World to the New.

Plate 51b.  
Galician, with roof pent.

Plate 51c.  
Bukovinian with eyebrow vents.
Plate 52. Modern home built around original log house.
CONCLUSION

Having discussed site locations, building orientation and styles, use of materials and methods of construction and evidence of culture transfer within the three ethnic groups, let us now observe some of the results of their settlement patterns. What was the impact on each group's assimilation or integration into the surrounding community? To begin with, this study demonstrates that one geographic factor was common to all three groups and that was block settlements. To each of the groups, however, this meant different things.

To the Mennonites it meant government recognition of the village open-field system by granting permission to build their homes in villages rather than on their individual homesteads. This enabled the Mennonites to continue as a tightly knit community within the confines of which they shared common interests. It was self-regulating and self-sufficient. "Its solid subsistence basis was the open-field system which required strict social controls, and a considerable amount of collective management."¹ As well as this, between 1874 and 1883, they were allowed complete school autonomy wherein the children could be instructed, "according to the principles of our creed."² This led to a very insular type of education and sense of community. The village system was also supported by their religious leaders, for it was felt that its compact layout gave them better

¹Francis, p. 96.
²Ibid., p. 163.
control over their people. The typical Mennonite house-barn living quarters, with the same floor plans and simple basic furnishings, was intended to de-emphasize material possessions and personal gain. It reinforced their ideology of equality and sharing of land, cattle and produce equally among the community.

The greatest weakness of this system was that the buildings and land had no legal basis. As soon as mechanization brought about changes in agriculture, it was observed that Mennonites in the West Reserve, many of whom did not live in a village system, as well as Anglo-Saxons in neighbouring communities, began to thrive. In the East Reserve, however, "many of the villages succumbed because the land was too poor to support the inhabitants. In the 1920's the last of the strips were abandoned."¹ The house-barn architecture was demolished over the years, no examples of it exist today in the East Reserve. The West Reserve, which had been settled by the Bergthal and Fürstenland groups still contains some excellent examples of the old villages. The reason for this is that the two groups of people who settled the West Reserve split over religious differences. The Bergthal group being more independent and less strictly controlled by their church, left the villages and moved onto their own land and adopted Anglo-Saxon building methods. The Fürstenland group, generally referred to as Altkolonie or Old Colony people were strictly controlled by church authority.² Threatened with excommunication the Altkoloniers retained the village open-field system with its traditional form of architecture for a much longer period. As a result several excellent examples of this type of village can still be found in the areas

¹J. Warkentin, p. 1
²Francis, pp. 87-90.
south and east of Winkler and Altona in the West Reserve. Reinland
and New Bergthal are the best examples which still exist. Although no
longer farmed by the open-field system the village house-barns are still
occupied by people who reside in the villages and are employed elsewhere,
or by older retired people such as Mrs. P. Hamm of New Bergthal who
prefer to live in and maintain their home as it was originally.¹ Thus,
"the Mennonites' unique settlement pattern did not survive in Canada."²
Their original geographic site location did not provide adequate
economic support for the transfer of their traditional settlement patterns
in the East Reserve, religious differences caused its decline in the
West Reserve. The advent of mechanization and the imposition of public
education forced them to accommodate to the outside community and change
and adapt to the majority model.

The Icelanders, in contrast to the Mennonites, did not have a
planned village system with regard to the physical layout of their buildings
along traditional lines. They did, however, have a background of tradi-
tional desire for isolation and their own government. Their backgrounds
were not of the European peasant class but rather, as Barthi Guthmundson
in The Origin of The Icelanders points out, they "had a heritage of
government wherein assemblies were composed of free men equal before the
law . . . the culture they had inherited . . . had been activated origin-
ally by contact with the classical world."³ The settlers of Iceland "were
men of more than usual force of will and love of liberty, the best of the

¹Field Trip, 1982.
²J. Warkentin, p. 2.
Norwegian aristocracy," with a high proportion of well-born, well-educated people. Women, as well, were well educated, held positions in government and owned property.

All these attributes were evidenced in the attitudes of the first Icelandic settlement in Gimli "... before the clay with which they caulked the first log cabins was dry," they made plans for setting up a constitution. They adopted a form of democracy which became virtually a republic or sovereign state. This event was unique and has no parallel in Canadian history. At the same time they set up and published a newspaper, "The Framfari" so that all the settlement would be aware of and share in what was being done. "This form of local government remained in effect until 1881 when the boundaries of Manitoba were extended and New Iceland finally became a part of the province of Manitoba." It was then replaced by local municipal government. Evidence that the community's high respect for their women had been transferred to the new settlement was indicated when, in 1890, the Icelandic women founded the first pioneer suffrage movement, not only in the province, but in western Canada. This event later resulted in suffrage petitions being presented to the Manitoba Legislature and was the beginning of a movement to gain for Manitoba the precedent of being the first province in Canada to grant

1 Lindal, prologue, n.p.
3 Ibid., pp. 6, 7.
full political rights to women.¹

Thus the Icelandic community's cultural ties were not centered around traditional settlement patterns and building forms. Their pre-requisites were liberal education, democratic self-government and rights for women. They quickly adopted existing building designs and materials. Rather than being village orientated they soon became part of the outside community sending members of their ethnic group outside the original nucleated settlement to become leaders in the fields of politics, medicine, law and education.

The Ukrainian immigrants, like the Mennonites and Icelanders before them, were usually located in block settlements. They, like the Mennonites, were also village orientated people. Unlike the Mennonites, however, they did not receive permission to locate in nucleated villages but were required, instead, to adhere to the regulations as set out by the Dominion Lands Act, and build on their own homestead sites. Despite this, public opinion towards their being in block settlements was very negative. Fears of Balkanization in the west were expressed. They were accused of bringing in undue proportions of crime and disease, even the "so-called Christian clergy" labelled them as "dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling, unpreferred continentals."² Unlike the Icelanders, they were to a high degree illiterate. "The Ukrainian leaders themselves estimate that at least fifty percent of their people were illiterate when they came to Canada."³ In 1921 they were the most illiterate people in the


²Young, p. 5.

³Tbid., p. 179.
Dominion. This, however, was not the fault of the Ukrainians, for in their homeland education of the peasants was forbidden. "Statistics show that in 1908 of the seven and one-half million population in Galicia district over four and one-half million were illiterate. Even those who could read and write had not received any learning in school, since in most villages there were no schools."¹

The Ukrainian's inability to read and write then was a product of European repression not lack of ability. Its effect on his assimilation in the new land was evident. When the public school system was set up and education, buildings, books, etc., were left in the hands of each school district, it was found that in one inspector's area, of "his three Ukrainian trustees, none could read or write English, and one could not read or write Ukrainian."² It was almost ten years before most Ukrainian rural colonies considered the organization of school districts³ of their own.

The effect of the Ukrainian's illiteracy was seen in his sense of community. From its inception "the community life of the Ukrainian settlers was insular: the people looked inward and backward . . . within their homogeneous colonies, the settlers stuck together. They continued to speak their own language. They relied on each other for help, for companionship, for entertainment. The social and religious customs of the Ukrainian village were perpetuated."⁴ Even though their physical buildings were

¹Marunchak, p.161. Although this fact is now being contested in recent research, it was an allegation frequently made when referring to the cause of a high illiteracy rate among Ukrainian immigrants.

²Woodsworth Survey, p. 35, as quoted in Young, p. 180.

³Keywan, p. 103.

⁴Ibid., p. 102. See also Ol'ha Woycenko [sic] (Voitsenko), The Ukrainians in Canada (Winnipeg: Trident Press Limited, 1967), p. 19.
separated, they adhered to traditional building materials, designs, construction methods and site orientation for a long period of time in the new country. Though the succeeding generation built new homes, the old one was frequently retained as a link with the past.

It must also be pointed out that the ethnic groups were not the only ones who sought to locate together. Others, in non-block settlements, such as those of Anglo-Saxon descent also sought, to a lesser degree, to locate within the same areas for "social contact and assistance in an alien physical and social environment, often with the support of public or private settlement organizers."¹ Ukrainian assimilation, in the context in which it is used here, is with reference to their assimilation into the surrounding Anglo-Saxon community.

In conclusion, the three ethnic groups studied were all found to have been given or to have chosen land blocks. These land blocks were chosen with two prime requisites in mind: availability of materials with which to build their homes and soil conditions which were traditionally thought suitable for the production of food for their subsistence. Each group tended to choose site locations similar to those they had had in their homelands. The Ukrainians chose wooded areas which were reminiscent of their homelands near the Carpathian Mountains. The Mennonites chose grasslands which resembled the Russian steppes; while the Icelanders chose an area in the proximity of water and fishing, with wooded areas for fuel and building materials.

The vernacular of folk architecture of each of the three groups progressed through three distinct stages. After the initial time spent in immigration sheds each group built primitive, temporary shelters

¹Schlichtmann, p. 11.
consisting of dugouts, sod houses, pole shacks, or as in the case of the Icelanders, shelter from buffalo hides and boards salvaged from scows. All of these shelters were built from materials found at hand.

The second or permanent buildings, with the exception of those of the Icelanders, exhibited individual group differences in their use of traditional designs, materials and construction techniques as well as site orientation and location.

The Mennonites chose nucleated village settlements. They were traditionally accustomed to building with brick, but because it was not available, they adopted the Canadian Red River log type of architecture. Although they were forced to change their type of building material, they adapted the use of wood into the construction of their typical house-barn design with its standardized floor plan and unique stove for heating.

The Icelanders, accustomed in their homeland to building materials of lava rock and sod, were unable to carry on this tradition. They, too, adopted the use of logs and were instructed in construction techniques by early surveyors in the area. Unlike the Mennonites and later the Ukrainians, they did not adhere to any specific floor plan from their homeland. The exterior of their houses, however, exhibited a similarity in that their later storey and a half buildings usually had one or two gabled windows in the roof and almost consistently showed a "lean-to" or back-shed with a stovepipe through the roof attached to the rear of the house. Decorative features on eaves and gable ends were the only evidence of design transfer from Icelandic architecture, and these did not appear until their third house of frame construction using modular materials was built.

The Ukrainians, unable to settle in nucleated villages, retained their traditional architecture by being able to build with the same
materials which they had used in their homelands. These were logs, clay plaster and rye straw or slough grass thatching materials. They used traditional floor plans, site orientation and roof shapes. Of the three groups, the Ukrainians were the only ones who were able to transfer completely the use of traditional materials, designs and construction techniques.

Each group in the study, generally after the second World War, built their third house. This was usually contemporary in design and often a bungalow. The advent of rural electrification at this time enabled even those living in remote areas to have modern conveniences in their homes such as refrigerators, stoves and electric washing machines. The old designs were discarded and new building materials such as stucco, ornamental brick or stone, with asphalt roofing became popular. Tradition was replaced with acceptance of new styles and materials.

Two of the three groups, the Mennonites and the Ukrainians each of whom retained strong traditional building techniques, required a much longer period of assimilation. Of these two, the Mennonites, until the time of the Second World War, living in compact settlements in predominately Mennonite communities, "did not to any considerable extent mingle with Canadians of different backgrounds, mainly because their colonies and towns had, if anything, become more homogeneous ethnically than they had been twenty years earlier."\(^1\) The Mennonite Reserves were large enough to provide all basic needs and enabled the people to stand aloof from the outside community. Francis cites region, church and family, in that order, as the three basic elements which contribute to the continuance of

\(^1\) Francis, pp. 275, 276.
Mennonite group solidarity. Their well organized communities, which originated in the village house-barn open-field system, provided long lasting social and psychological group security and a very strong and enduring sense of community.

The Icelandic people's vernacular architecture did not exhibit any transfer of traditional style or locational patterns. It is suggested that their well-educated, intellectual, liberal thinking backgrounds or "Icelandic mind" facilitated their assimilation into the majority community where many became leaders and professionals. Of the three groups studied the vernacular architecture of the Icelandic people had the least influence on their cultural ties and their sense of community. Their third houses of frame construction were built by carpenters or trained craftsmen using modular materials. They, therefore, cannot be considered as vernacular architecture in the sense in which the word is used in this study.

The Ukrainians, forced by the government to locate on individual homesteads, were at first, because of their high rate of illiteracy and poor standards of living, frequently not accepted by the outside community. They retained their language and customs and married within their own communities. The complete transfer of their traditional building styles and methods enabled them to maintain strong cultural ties in this environment until the external forces of public education and government health regulations brought about social changes within their communities. The second generation soon broke away from the old community and became assimilated with the outlying areas of different nationalities.

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1Francis, pp. 6, 7, 276.
As in primitive, peasant or preindustrial societies throughout the world, religion or spiritual beliefs played a major role in the buildings of two of the three groups in their new settlements. It was overtly expressed in their adherence to traditional forms and site orientations. This was most evident in the homes of the Ukrainian settlers who retained the East wall of their house as a religious wall and orientated their houses with the door facing south. The Mennonites retained a strictly identical house-barn form of building in a village open-field system of settlement. Their houses were orientated to face the central road of the village. Non-materials things and lack of ornamentation were emphasized. Their religion stressed this type of house form and settlement pattern as a means of social and religious control. By contrast the Icelandic religion emphasized the nurturing and maintenance of an inner strength which was not overtly expressed in adherence to any traditional house form in their settlements. Although a few Icelandic features appeared as trim or roof ornamentation, no specific floor plan or use of traditional building material was evident.

A study of the history of the three groups, prior to their coming to Manitoba, revealed that each had left the Old World for varying reasons. The Mennonites left because of religious persecution and loss of their group contract which guaranteed their exemption from military service. The Ukrainians left because of centuries of oppression by overlords and lack of land. The Icelanders, by contrast, left because of geographic calamities as opposed to severe political or religious causes. A consistent cause of departure which was common to all three groups was the underlying hope for a better life for themselves and their children. In coming to the New World, each group brought their own religious beliefs
and strong social and cultural ties. Paramount for all of them was the dream of building their own home on land which would be theirs.

The purpose of a study such as this is that one can learn from observing a part of history which is, as Rappoport defines it, "the built environment." Indeed, the fundamental reason for studying all of history is that one can learn from the past. G. E. Hutchinson adds a further reason by pointing out that "we need the rich time dimension to help us avoid the all too common triviality of living in the moment as a continuous prelude to rushing thoughtlessly into the future."¹ By studying the houses of others in different time periods than the present, Rappoport continues, we are better able to understand our own and realize that our ways are not the only ones or that they are necessarily any better than those of others. Also, buildings such as those erected by primitive and peasant societies blended in with and tended towards a state of balance with nature, rather than dominating it as so many of ours do, today.² Aesthetically and ecologically, they were very much a part of the land.

There is a trend in today's society towards a back to the land movement--to own a piece of property in the country and to build one's own house on it. The economy and simplicity of the designs used by the builders of primitive and peasant homes, the use of materials found at hand, and their methods of heating and insulating their homes could well be studied for possible solutions to today's prohibitive costs of building materials and fuel sources.


²Rappoport, p. 13.
Today's society is, as well, very aware of and concerned with the problems of third world countries. An awareness of the reasons for their strong traditions in house form and use of materials as it pertains to their particular environments would make us realize that our ways of building are not necessarily better than or more suited to either their geographic locations or life styles than their own. We would then be less zealous in imposing our standards, which we consider to be superior, on peoples of other races and lands, the results of which have often proven negative. Fitch, in his recent book, "Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World" points to the fact that participation of people in the act of saving desirable parts of their habitat deepens their understanding of its importance and helps them to regain a sense of identity with their own origins of which they have been robbed by the sheer process of poorly managed urbanization.1

In our own country and in our own province we should be aware of and study our own vernacular architecture as a guide to our future building and as a part of our very "impermanent" heritage. Cultural transfer and adaptation are exhibited through the vernacular architecture of ethnic groups. In Manitoba, it was most evident among pioneers who arrived before 1910 and were of Mennonite or Ukrainian nationality. The simple, solid and functional architecture of their homes was indicative of their will to survive and of their traditional ties to the land.

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