20. Egremont

Saint John Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Discussions about establishing a church in the Egremont community began in 1926 during the wedding of a local farmer's daughter, K. Pawluk. Several guests, already involved in founding a district cemetery dedicated to St. George, resolved to send a delegation to Rev. Dmytro Seneta in Edmonton. They sought his blessing for the site and inquired about the possibility of holding Ukrainian Orthodox services for Egremont residents. Among the most committed proponents was Harry Buhay, who donated the land for the cemetery.

On August 10, 1926, Ukrainian Orthodox supporters met at the Buhay home and learned that Rev. Seneta was willing to assist once the Consistory and Archbishop Ioan Theodorvich were officially notified. A formal meeting followed at the nearby M. Hrushevsky Hall, built in 1921. There, Fr. Seneta's agreement to hold a service on the Feast Day of the Elevation of the Cross was announced. The first liturgy took place at Tom Plupek's home on September 27, 1926, coinciding with the cemetery's consecration.

The decision to establish a Ukrainian Orthodox presence led to heated debates among the Greek Catholic, pro-Soviet, and Orthodox inhabitants of the Egremont district. This controversy persisted for nearly three years, with tensions continuing even after the factions split. Despite this, Ukrainian Orthodox priests conducted regular services at Hrushevsky Hall, gradually strengthening the Orthodox presence.

On July 27, 1929, following a liturgy officiated by Rev. T. Horbay, a dinner was held where a large number of attendees formally organized a Ukrainian Orthodox congregation. Ten community members stepped forward to lead the initiative. On August 9, 1929, the congregation

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officially affiliated with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. St. John was chosen as the patron saint, and $35 was raised for constructing a sanctuary. When the Ingleside School became available for $350 in March 1930, it was purchased, relocated to Tom Plupek's homestead near St. George's Cemetery, and converted into a place of worship. The first liturgy in the modified building took place on April 7, 1930. Soon after, the sanctuary was vandalized, but over time, tensions in the district eased.

A significant milestone in the congregation's early history was Archbishop Ioan Theodorvich's visit on August 2, 1932. He celebrated a liturgy alongside Reverends Horbay and Mayba.

In 1938, recognizing the need for a larger church, parishioners contributed $25 each to fund the construction of a new sanctuary. Two Ukrainian brothers with church-building expertise designed a cruciform structure featuring a large central dome and two smaller domes on the towers flanking the porch. The interior, painted by Peter Lipinski, includes distinctive faux block walls. The ikonostasis is attributed to Philip Pawluk. The new church quickly became a landmark for the community.

In 1958, St. John's Church, St. George's Cemetery, and M. Hrushevsky Hall were legally incorporated under parish ownership. The congregation celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1979, the same year its large antique bell—originally brought from Ukraine—was stolen. In 2001, a new bell tower was erected to replace the earlier one.

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Priests

D. Seneta (1926-27)
T. Horbay (1927-29)
T. Kisiliuk (1929-32)
D. Stratychuk (1932)
T. Kisiliuk (1933-36)
P. Sametz (1936-38)
M. Fyk (1938-43, 1945-51)
H. Wasyliw (1943-45, 1980-83??)
M. Flak (1958-61?)
D. Stratychuk (1961-)
I. Kulish (1967-70)
A. Shcherban (1971-74)
H. Fil (1974-75)
M. Sawchenko (1975-1980)
A. Palmarchuk (1993)
M. Kryschuk

Location and Feast Day

Northwest of Egremont, one mile west of Sec Hwy 827, on the west side of RR 220, north of Twp Rd 590, at SE 1-59-22 W4, County of Thorhild. *GPS Coordinates:* 54.071060, -113.150709 | Their *Feast Day* is July 7.

Founding Members

L. Gawalko
M. Dmytryk
M. Bilida
M. Hryniuka
J. Wasylynka
T. Plupek
H. Buha
H. Chizen
B. Korotash
M. Yachimec
S. Hunka
T. Stepank
M. Wakaruk,
E. Nedelko

Cemetery

St. George's Cemetery was formally established on May 12, 1913, following a meeting at Hrushevsky Hall. The first burial, Mary Stemkowski, took place on March 5, 1913. Initially, Harry Buhay donated one acre of land. In 1915, the cemetery group decided to purchase it along with an additional acre for $13. In April 1916, the cemetery was incorporated as a non-denominational community initiative. Provincial law later mandated church affiliation, leading to its incorporation under St. John's Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Although Rev. Seneta blessed the cemetery in 1926 before the church's official establishment, it remains dedicated to St. George.

Cemetery GPS Coordinates: 54.071923, -113.150451

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