

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF UKRAINIAN HERITAGE

# First steps on the Canadian steppe: Two men – one vision



Iwan Pylypiw.

continued from the previous issue

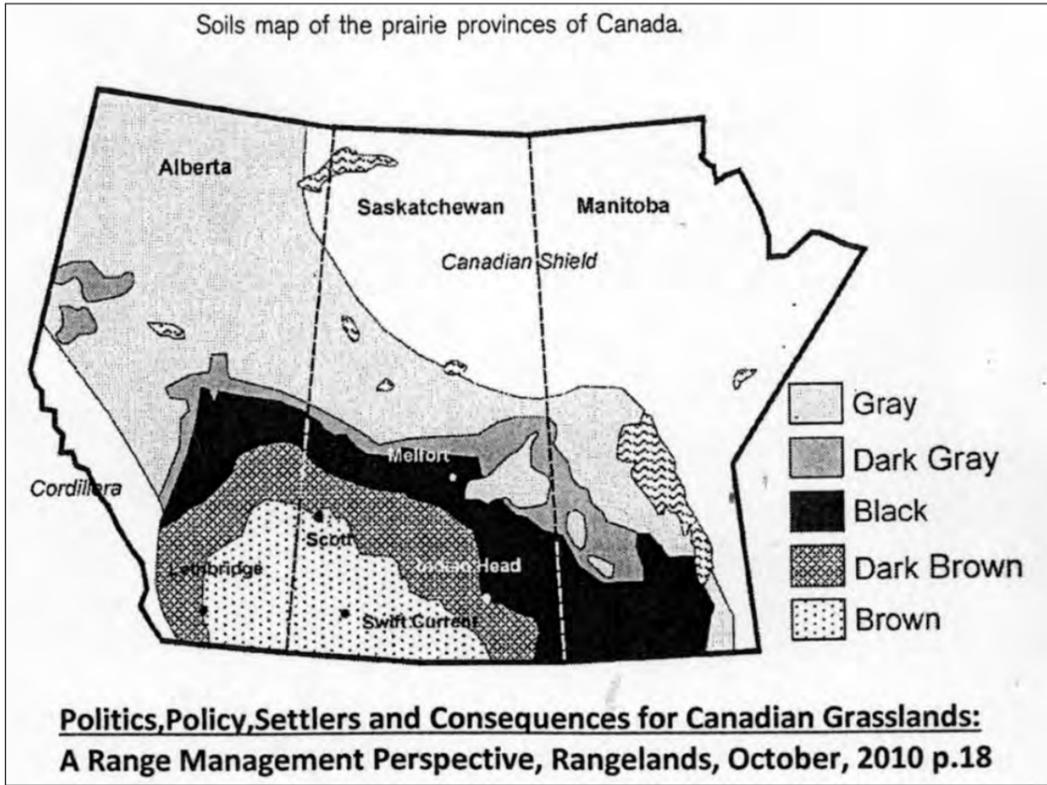
—Luba Fedorkiw

■ Unskilled labourers, many young single males, preferred to stay in urban Winnipeg where they constructed buildings, dug ditches, asphalted roads and found menial jobs. Young women worked as domestics and also sought unskilled jobs to earn simple subsistence. Their social and economic development differed from the rural homesteader. Nevertheless, they too suffered from the initial abject poverty until they established themselves financially, married or moved on to homestead.

Multiple rural church communities were established in Manitoba. Some were smaller than others. Some bore Ukrainian names. Others did not. They provided the kinship and security much needed on the open prairies. Reading societies provided the same companionship in the city.

Let us firstly follow WasyI Eleniak's life in Canada, subsequently, Iwan Pylypiw's. WasyI Eleniak and his extended family lived and worked in Gretna for a total of six and a half years. The three Eleniak brothers yearned for their own farms and migrated to Edna/Star, Alberta. WasyI recalls leaving **Gretna** in late 1898 after cancelling an application for a homestead in Stuartburn, the year prior. "I took 2 cows, a team of oxen, a wagon and a plow. My brother, Iwan did the same. We paid \$40.00 for a railway car to take our belongings from Winnipeg to Edmonton." The cost included passage for family members, 30 chickens, personal food provisions—12 sacks of flour, 8 hams and some cloth to make clothes for the children.

On May 23, 1898, in Edmonton, the two Eleniak brothers registered their homesteads located a short distance from Iwan Pylypiw. Petro, the third brother had already built a burdei (shelter covered with turf). WasyI states: "I immediat-



WasyI Eleniak.

ely started to cut down trees for logs and by next year [1899] had our own [two-storey] house built. The same one that I lived in for well over fifty years."

In contrast to **Gretna**, the first years of homesteading at Edna/Star, later called Chipman, Alberta were most difficult. "How we suffered—up-rooted trees—dynamited roots

and cleared the land."

WasyI's prime vocation was to farm. It gave him satisfaction to grow and sell cereal crops and raise domestic animals. "I was always fond of cattle and raised quite a few head." As a herdsman from early childhood, he humbly took pride in his life's purpose. He loved horses and was a skilled horse whisperer.

WasyI Eleniak and his family prospered. He loved his adopted homeland, Canada and never returned to his village of birth. While the first years of homesteading were difficult, however, they were "not as hard as living in Galicia" under Austro-Hungarian rule. The Eleniak brothers raised large families and contributed to early Canadian pioneer life.

He was a true Canadian patriot.

On January 3, 1947, WasyI was chosen by the Canadian Government to receive Honorary Canadian Citizenship at the First Citizenship Ceremony held at the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario. His memorable photograph was captured by the re-known Canadian photographer, Jousuf Karsh, also an honorary recipient of the same historic event.

WasyI Eleniak died on January, 1956 at the age of 98.

Iwan Pylypiw returned to Winnipeg from Galicia along with his wife, Maria and four children WasyI, Yurko, Nykola and baby Anna (6 months) in May, 1893. The families from Nebyliv that preceded him attempted to connect with WasyI Eleniak in **Gretna**. Unfortunately, due to a small pox outbreak, **Gretna** was under quarantine. These families turned back to Winnipeg and headed west to Beaver Lake, Alberta. Iwan's family lived in rented quarters in Winnipeg's immigrant section while he departed to work in both **Gretna** and North Dakota.

After several months of work, he stated: "I returned with some German people who were going to Athabasca. In Winnipeg, I bought a yoke of oxen, a cow, a plow, a wagon, a sack of flour, salt and sugar. I took all these commodities to the railway and loaded them into a boxcar. The freight charges for the shipment were forty dollars, and the shipper could travel free of charge. Thus, I journeyed to Edmonton and from there to Bruderheim where I took a homestead. I stayed there six months and then moved to the Star district (Edna). I acquired a farm the location of which is described thus: township 56, range 19, section 22, southwest quarter, 160 acres, west of the fourth meridian in Alberta."

Iwan Pylypiw and his family lived and prospered. They multiplied land holdings from the basic 160 acres and acquired "four more quarters, so that I have five, all paid for and registered in my name..."

He died tragically on October 10, 1936 at the age of 77 and was buried in Chipman, Alberta. His farmhouse has been designated as an historic site.



E. Penner & Co. on Seventh Street. Firemaps indicate the small building on left is Customs Office. P#575



Seventh Street in Gretna circa 1900. P#1451-F.



Seventh Street lined with Wahn's shipment of threshing machines around 1890. Charles Wahn, centre. P#663