42. Peno

Saint John the Baptist Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Peno, an anglicized version of "Pan'ko," derives its name from a post office established north of St. Michael in 1909 by homesteader Panko Michalchuk (Michalczuk), who managed it until 1926.

The inception of a Ukrainian Orthodox congregation in Peno arose from the disenchantment of some residents with the sectarian intolerance exhibited by Basilian priests serving the community from Mundare. The Basilian fathers' refusal to give absolution to individuals who confessed to reading *Ukrains'kyi Holos* or *Vistnyk,* and their assertion that it was better to stay home and play cards than attend a Russo or Ukrainian Orthodox Church, only fueled greater interest in these "forbidden" denominations.

Until 1924, most Christian faithful in the Peno area were members of the local Catholic church. However, when a Ukrainian Orthodox priest visited nearby Bruderheim, a small delegation of disaffected Peno farmers met with him to learn more about the newly formed Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada (UGOC). Impressed by what they heard, they resolved to pursue membership in the UGOC.

The first Ukrainian Orthodox service in Peno took place in 1925 at the home of Mykhailo and Teodosia Onyschuk, officiated by Reverend D. Seneta. Similar to the neighboring settlement of Jaroslaw, where former Catholics were transitioning to the UGOC, Peno residents were deeply moved to hear the liturgy sung in their native language rather than Church Slavonic. Subsequently, Orthodox supporters in the Peno district attended services in Jaroslaw, though some were also held in local homes, particularly that of Mr. and Mrs. Nykola Rudko.

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In 1936, an executive committee was formed to officially organize a Ukrainian Orthodox congregation in Peno. The committee's first goal was to establish a cemetery on one acre of land donated by Trofim Michalchuk, located a quarter mile south of the future church site. The parish's inaugural church service was held on April 7, 1937, with Rev. T. Horbay celebrating Divine Liturgy at the Rudko residence. The burial ground was subsequently blessed by Fr. Horbay on July 25, 1938.

Community Building and Church Acquisition

Following the establishment of the cemetery, the congregation directed its efforts toward building a National Home to serve as a hub for religious and cultural activities. As early as 1934, a youth group, organized by Volodymyr Kupchenko, hosted concerts and bingos to raise funds for a *Narodni Dim* (National Home). Construction of the building began in 1940, with a basement excavated using horse-drawn scrapers. Wood for the frame was donated and partially purchased from Nick Rudko, and the building's exterior was completed by 1941.

That same year, the still-unfinished hall was incorporated as the Ivan Franko Educational Society of Peno, Alberta. Several more years were required to complete the interior, and the facility was officially opened on May 25, 1942, when Rev. Stratychuk celebrated a Divine Liturgy to bless the dedication. The Ivan Franko National Home became the site of numerous religious services until the Peno congregation acquired a dedicated church.

In 1950, the members of St. John the Baptist parish purchased the former Huwen United Church, believed to have been constructed in 1917, for $350. They also acquired a half-acre of land adjacent to the Ivan Franko Hall from John O. Zazula, where they relocated the sanctuary and modified its interior to suit Orthodox worship. An Orthodox cross was added to the steeple, though the exterior retained its Protestant appearance.

The Ivan Franko National Home continued to host cultural and social events, also serving as the parish hall for church-sponsored functions. In 1964, a dining and kitchen area was added to the building, with further improvements made as funds became available.

Saint John the Baptist Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Priests

D. Seneta (1924-1926)

T. Horbay (1926-1932)

H. Hrycyna (1933-1937)

T. Horbay (1937-1938)

D. Stratychuk (1932-1938)

I. Hykawy (1938-1940)

L. Berezitsky (1941)

L. Diachyna (1942)

S. Symchych (1943-1944)

H. Wasyliw (1945-1948)

D. Luchak (1953-)

A. Shcherban

O. Olekshy (1969-1971)

P. Hnativ

S. Semotiuk

S. Soroka (1980-1981)

P. Bodnar (1981-1982)

Y. Puk (1988-1994)

Location and Feast Day

West of Andrew, on the south side of Highway 45, at NW 31-56-18 W4, County of Lamont. *GPS Coordinates:* 53.890001, -112.677852 Their *Feast Day* is July 7.

Founding Members

Nick Rudko

Trofim Michalchuk

Pawlo Maciuk

Cemetery

Established in 1938 at SE 34-56-19 W4.

Cemetery Coordinates: 53.886559, -112.678935

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