

Bramble, Minnesota Orthodox Church

Celebrates Centennial

On Saturday, August 18, St. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church will celebrate its Centennial starting with Liturgy at 10:00 a.m., served by Father Radomir Plasyic from St. Basil of Ostrog Serbian Orthodox Church in Chisholm. The afternoon will include the blessing of graves, a BBQ, family games and entertainment.

St. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church is located in the unincorporated community of Bramble, Minnesota, in South Koochiching County, Minnesota, about 35 miles northwest of Hibbing near the small communities of Orr and Rauch. The church was founded by Rusyn immigrants from the Carpathian Mountains, today's Southern Poland, Northeastern Slovakia and Western Ukraine. The sign on the church reads: *built by the Lucachick and Sorokie families and many other neighbors. The church land was donated by the Lucachicks and the cemetery land by the Sorokies.*



The church building itself was built in 1917-1918. The iconostasis was installed in 1926. The first Liturgy was celebrated by the Orthodox priest from St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church of Chisholm. The church started with a nucleus of 20 families. At its peak there were about 30 families. The Church did not have a regular priest. The priest from St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Chisholm would come once a month to serve Liturgy.

The active life of this parish was short-lived, as many of the people who had settled in the area for land left as they realized that the conditions of northern Minnesota only make for marginal farming. The church fell into disuse in the 1930's, but in the early 1960s Paul Berg,

an Episcopal minister in Grand Rapids discovered the church and organized an effort to restore it. The discovery of the church generated much interest, and the property subsequently was refurbished and saved from becoming a historical museum.

On July 21, 1968, the church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with Archbishop John of Chicago attending and St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral Choir singing at the commemorative service. Until the early 1980's, faithful from Minneapolis, including parishioners of St. Mary's Cathedral, and Minnesota's northern Iron Range would gather at the church every July for the celebration of the feast of St. Peter and Paul. For a number of years, Archbishop John presided at the annual celebration, bringing with him the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God. The last pilgrimage occurred in 1978. Since then there has been only one yearly Liturgy on the First Saturday in September.

Karen Varian

The best information on the Bramble Church is in the book – Galician-Rusins on the Iron Range by John D. Goman. Thanks to Todd Lukachick for sending me some articles on the church and our member Joan Stewart for the pictures.