



Larry Goga and Joe Parimucha

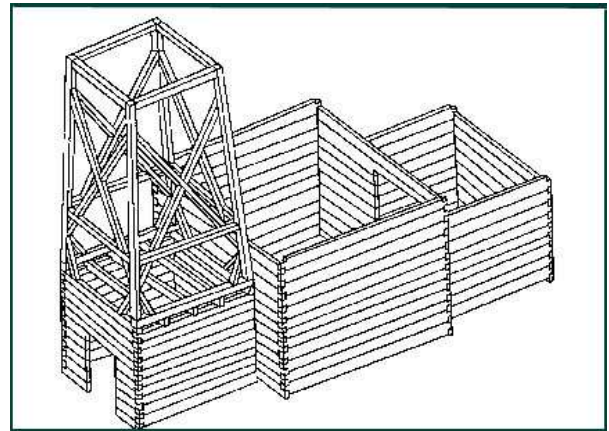
Wooden Churches of Eastern Slovakia

By Joe Parimucha

The visited churches were distributed in mostly remote small villages over an area roughly 35 miles from east to west and 20 miles from North to South. As the primary landmark for each community, each had its own unique but humble identity with prominent locations on hillsides or crossroads where they could be seen from anywhere in the village and surrounding farmlands and forests. But to enter the building to appreciate the beauty within required that the village be explored to find the keeper of the Entrance Key, who might be the Mayor, the Priest or even one of the “Babas” working in the fields, or “Gidos” with his cows.

A fence, usually wooden, surrounded each sacred piece of land including the church and often the community cemetery with its elaborate family graves and headstones, some as close as the front door of the church. Wooden gates with roofs defined the entrance to the grounds while many, but not all, had separate freestanding low bell towers. All exterior wood was stained dark brown. One had an open porch similar to the design proposed for Camp Nazareth while another porch was open only on one side. Most

churches had the traditional 3 building volume elements consisting of the Sanctuary/Holy of Holies (Sujatlisce), central Nave/Ship (Korabal) and Narthex/Entrance (Babinec).

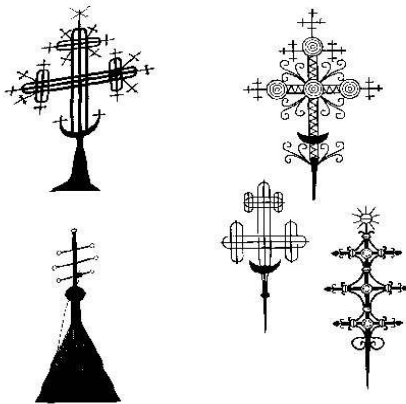


Narthex --- Nave ---Sanctuary

Others functioned in the same way internally, but some had a more simple box enclosure with pitch roof and single cupola. Some had very small balconies. But, all had low door heads and large thresholds through which it was necessary to bow and make a conscious symbolic step out of the secular outside world and into the sacred interior.

Just two of the visited 25 churches had heavy log construction with notched corner details exposed to the exterior. It appears that exposed logs are more common in the South and in the Ukraine. Further investigation found that probably all were built of logs with no nails in the basic structure, according to tradition, but covered either with vertical board and batten siding or a special wooden shingle (Shindla) which were fastened in some fashion. These narrow overlapping handmade shingles often covered the entire building. Their narrow width allowed them to follow the various rounded pyramid roof forms and the complex shapes of the many cupola designs. One edge of the long shingle was pointed and the other grooved to provide a watertight fit. All churches had symbolic iron crosses on each cupola, which also served as lightning rods with heavy cable

connections to the ground to minimize the chance of fire from lightning.



Examples of Iron Crosses on Cupolas

Interiors ranged from simple to ornate, from formal symmetrical Iconostasis' to random appointments relocated from other churches. Many had been vandalized with only the frames of icons remaining on the walls. All had multiple banners. None of the inside walls were fully painted, but most had either hand painted images, words or stencils on the wall.

Ceilings were also unpainted, be they low and flat or pyramids up into the pitch of the roof. Most square naves had a single crystal chandelier with electric light bulbs. Very few candles were used, again for fear of fire. Windows were all tiny with iron security bars. There were no stained glass windows. (Many had elaborate new electronic security systems.)

Seating also varied with some having benches, a few pews and various combinations. Since some were Orthodox, some Greek Catholic and others Roman Catholic, each had specific appointments relevant to the specific services and denomination. The interiors of some had been relocated to museums while some entire Churches had been moved from their original villages to outdoor "Skansen" museums in the larger cities of Svidnik, Bardejovske Kupelle, Kosice and Humenne. One "Cerkva" was

January-June

physically brought to the village of Jedlinka, Slovakia from Poland by its parishioners. The oldest of the 25 was built in approximately 1500 AD while the newest were built in 1943 and 1938, near the Dukla Pass into Poland where heavy fighting during the First and Second World Wars had taken many casualties.



Church in Jedlinka, Slovakia

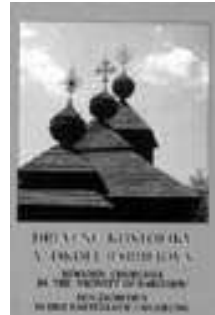
Built in 1763 and reconstructed in 1954 and 1969. According to legend, the church was relocated here from Poland and replaced an older building from the 17th century.

The experience generated thoughts of the difficult life that had prompted our Grandparents a hundred years ago to journey on foot, by horse and wagon, and eventually primitive trains across Europe to Hamburg, Germany and by steamship to seek a new quality of life for their families in America. The proposed Wooden Carpathian "Cerkva" for Camp Nazareth is to be a Living Tribute to all of our courageous but humble ancestors who brought little monetary wealth, but great volumes of spiritual character and dedication to hard work and personal values which has guided our individual lives and served our generations well. They were called by many names: Carpatho-Russians, Rusins and Ruthenians, to list but a few, and their nationalities often overlapped between

Slovakia, Poland, the Ukraine, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and many others. Their numbers may appear small by current standards, but the impact that their life's decisions have made on hundreds of thousands of us in the United States and Canada must not be forgotten by the youth of our church and our extended ethnic relatives. It is toward the ongoing spiritual and cultural education of our future generations of families through the landmark programs and facilities of Camp Nazareth, that this symbolic wooden Carpathian "Cerkva" and its Heritage Center will be dedicated. And to those who have already preceded us in life, VICHNAJA JEM PAMYAT.

Joe and his wife Barbara live in Alexandria, Virginia and are members of the Holy Resurrection Church in Potomac, MD, a simple wooden church which Joe designed over 20 years ago, where they married in 1991 (see www.HolyResurrection.com). Joe is an architect whose career began with apprenticeships in Sharon, Pennsylvania following an Architectural Degree from the former Carnegie Institute of Technology, now Carnegie Mellon University. Ten years with the Air Force Surgeon General's office included 5 years of international assignments and travel including visits to Mount Athos in Greece and an audience with the former Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul, Turkey. He has designed a variety of churches of many denominations, but is best known for his design of over 300 healthcare facilities, including St. Jude Children's Research Hospital for the late Danny Thomas. He is a founding member of the American College of Healthcare Architects and has recently been elevated to the honorary title of Archon in the Orthodox Church by the current Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople at the recommendation of Metropolitan Nicholas of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese. They can be contacted at 703.838.8414, by e-mail at JParimucha@aol.com or their corporate web site at www.healingdesign.com.

If you would like further information on the wooden churches of Eastern Slovakia there is an excellent book Wooden Churches in the Vicinity of Bardejov by Jana Božová and František Gutek (1997) 192 p. with color illustrations. It is available for \$22.50 (no shipping charges) through the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center Inc., 7380 SW 86 Lane, Ocala, Fl 34476-7006.



If you are interested in Rusin humor, a compilation of Fedor Vic's political-social cartoon serial *II'ko Sova from Bajusovo* has just been published in a 128-page book. "II'ko Sova" represents the typical Rusin guy in Slovakia trying to cope with the questions of identity, everyday life, and the political realities of being a minority people in both communist Czechoslovakia and the post-communist Slovak Republic, all the while using sophisticated humor to reveal the Rusin psyche. The 223 cartoons presented in the book – with Rusin texts translated into English and Slovak- span over 25 years of Vic's brilliant career and are interspersed with essays about the artist and the history of the II'ko Sova series. This illuminating and entertaining 128-page paperback book is available for \$14.95 (no shipping charges) per copy from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 7380 SW 86 Lane, Ocala Fl. 34476-7006

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