

59. Thorhild

Saints Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church

The origins of congregational activity in the Thorhild area date back to 1931, when missionary work began in the Tudor district. However, as was common in much of rural Alberta, the focus of church activity gradually shifted from the countryside to the nearest town. Thorhild, being the county seat and regional commercial center, became the natural location for a permanent congregation.

A meeting was held on March 18, 1945, at the home of Anna and Evsey Kovalenko, where sixteen representatives of local families gathered to discuss the formation of a full-fledged parish. Until then, Ukrainian Orthodox faithful in Thorhild had attended services at St. John's Ukrainian Orthodox Church near Egremont, in family homes, at the Tudor Narodnyi Dim north of Thorhild, or in the Thorhild School. Clergy such as Reverends T. Horbay and E. Olendy traveled to Thorhild by train and were transported to services by horse and buggy, sleigh, or Model T Ford, fostering early congregational life.

Although Ukrainian Orthodox residents of the Tudor district had previously obtained land for a cemetery and constructed a Narodnyi Dim, they chose to forgo building a rural church and instead partnered with Thorhild residents to erect a sanctuary in the village. In April 1945, a lot was purchased in Thorhild from Evsey Kovalenko for \$338. Construction began in 1947, and the completed church was formally blessed on August 22, 1948, during a visit by Archbishop Mstyslaw Skrypnyk—who would later become the first Patriarch of Kyiv in 1991.



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Fundraising and Community Efforts

To finance the construction of the church, parishioners engaged in various fundraising activities, including:

- Dances
- Bazaars
- Box socials
- Winter carnivals
- Masquerades
- Whist drives
- Catering banquets and weddings
- Christmas caroling, which became an annual tradition.

In 1963, the church basement was developed into a space suitable for dinners, meetings, and cultural events. The following year, the sanctuary was refurbished.

Notably, the investment in the basement proved beneficial when, during the 1966-67 school year, it was used to accommodate an elementary school class due to overcrowding in Thorhild schools. The space was also used for church school and Ukrainian language classes.

By 1976, the congregation introduced the Harvest Ball, which became a popular annual social event in Thorhild.

Tragic Loss and Fire

On February 28, 2015, tragedy struck when Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church was destroyed in an electrical fire while being cleaned in preparation for Sunday services. Although six members of the congregation were inside when the fire began, they were unable to save anything from the interior.

Lost in the fire were:

- The ikonostasis created by Vera Senchuk
- Chalices
- Banners
- Other interior furnishings

At the time of its destruction, the congregation had 24 members.

See photo of church that burned below.



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Priests

M. Fyk (1945–1951)
F. Kernesky (1951)
H. Wasyliv (1951–1955)
W. Senishen (1955–1956)
O. Flak (1956–1961)
D. Stratychuk (1961–1965)
I. Kulish (1965–1971)
A. Scherban (1972–1974)
H. Fil (1974–1975)
M. Sawchenko (1975–1978)
A. Scherban and H. Wasyliv (1978–1983)
A. Palamarchuk (1983–2002)

Cemetery

Located at SE 6-60-21 W4, within the town of Thorhild.

Cemetery GPS: 54.15877, -113.13566

Location and Feast Day

Town of Thorhild, 805 2nd Street,
County of Thorhild. *GPS Coordinates:*
54.160934, -113.125147
Their Feast Day is July 12.

Founding Members

M. Bilak
D. Borko
S. Dowhan
E. Kovalenko
I. Olinyk
A. Ostafijchuk
T. Pinchuk
O. Samycia
I. Shewchuk

Prominent Members:

Isidore Goresky, an executive member from 1950-1959.



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