

63. Warspite

Saint John Ukrainian Orthodox Church

The roots of Orthodox congregational life in Warspite trace back to 1936, when local residents—primarily immigrants from western Ukraine—mobilized efforts to build a Ukrainian National Hall. The hall was completed in 1942, serving as a focal point for community gatherings and cultural preservation.

Concurrently, the establishment of a Warspite branch of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada by Mrs. L. Feniak, along with the formation of a local CYMK youth organization, paved the way for the eventual introduction of regular religious services.

The first recorded liturgy in Warspite was celebrated by Rev. H. Wasyliv during his tenure as a missionary priest in east-central Alberta. In December 1947, Rev. M. Fyk of Radway convened a meeting with National Hall members to discuss the formation of a church.

By February 1948, the consistory was approached to obtain the necessary documentation for the new congregation. Thirteen families supported this initiative, led by key figures such as P. Danyluk, P. Wynnyk, J. Lopatynski, and P. Timoshenko. By July of the founding year, the first elected executive reported having ten fully paid-up members.

To finance renovations for transforming the National Hall into a sanctuary, the hall was rented to the Smoky Lake School District in 1948 for \$25 per month, increasing to \$31.50 in later years. This arrangement continued until 1952. The simple one-room facility was then remodeled to better serve as a place of worship, with Rev. P. Satsevich officially blessing the sanctuary.

In the early 1950s, the congregation held four to five Divine Liturgies annually. Despite their dedication, the number of adherents never expanded beyond the original circle of families.

By the late 1950s, the dwindling rural population undermined efforts to sustain the church. By 1959, fewer than ten families remained active, leading to financial difficulties. By 1961, discussions emerged about the potential closure of the church, a prospect that members feared as it could affect their standing in the community, particularly among supporters of rival denominations.

For another decade, the congregation struggled to sustain itself, gradually reducing services to an annual patron saint's day commemoration. In the spring of 1971, members ultimately decided to cease operations. The remaining religious artifacts were donated to other churches within the Smoky Lake district. Many former St. John's members joined the Holy Ascension congregation in Smoky Lake, where most of the church's contents were relocated.

The Warspite church remained unused for several years before an opportunity arose to sell the structure. However, complicated legal issues delayed the resolution of its fate.

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Priests

M. Fyk (1948)
D. Senishen (1949)
D. Foty (1949–1950)
F. Kulchynsky (1950–1951)
P. Satsevich (1951–1961)
S. Hrebeniuk (1961–1962)
Y. Rybalka (1962–1965)
Y. Turzhansky (1965–1970)
S. Hredil (1970–1973)
L. Diachina (1973–1975)
L. Kubin (1975–1977)
S. Semotiuk (1977)
L. Kubin (1978–1988)

Location and Feast Day

Warspite, County of Smoky Lake (NW 10-59-18 W4). Their *Feast Day* was July 7.

Founding Members

George Semeniuk
Wasylena Bodner
Nettie Timoshenko
Joe Lopatynski

