

Potton: Yours to discover

Vorokhta

St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Chapel



*Main Altar of the
St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Chapel*



Potton Heritage Association
PO Box 262, Mansonville (Québec) J0E 1X0
info@pottonheritage.org
www.pottonheritage.org

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Not far to the north of Vale Perkins on chemin du Lac is a modest sign on the right announcing : Vorokhta (Ворохта in Ukrainian).

It is here that in 1954, Ivan and Stefania Telishewski, immigrants from Ukraine, established themselves and invited other Ukrainian immigrants to share their 230 acre farm. The Telishewskis named their new home "Vorokhta" in honour of their native village.

The topography of our region is somewhat similar to that of Vorokhta in Ukraine, which became a popular ski destination when rail service began in 1884, and is now a popular spa on the Prut River, at 880m elevation, in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine. Vorokhta was named to honour Michael Vorokhta, a famous Ukrainian artist of the late 1500's.

Over time, about 30 Ukrainian families came to the Telishewski farm, with several establishing homes here; however, most were seasonal visitors. Vorokhta became popular, due in large part, to the Bodnars, the Monczaks and the Telishewskis.

The 50th anniversary of the founding Vorokhta in Potton was celebrated on July 3, 2004 by a religious ceremony, picnic and music, presided by Wolodymyr Bodnar, one of the original Ukrainian immigrants to Potton in 1956, who now lives with family in Ontario.

Although the population of the Vorokhta community has declined steadily, three roads bear names to recall the Ukrainian presence in Potton : *Vorokhta*, *Vitayemo* and *Odessa*. Vorokhta is the place name. The second, Vitayemo, Ласкаво просимое in the Ukrainian language, means Welcome. The third, Odessa, Одеса, is named for the port city on the Black Sea in Ukraine, often called the Marseille of Ukraine.

Another area in Potton bears a Ukrainian name, although no boundary or sign defines it. The back sides of *Sugar Loaf* and *Hog's Back* mountains are very imposing rock

faces, about 660 meters high, which, together, form a horseshoe curve surrounding a saucer-like plateau. For reasons long forgotten, this area is called *Sebastopol*, Севастополь. Why? Perhaps it is for the port city of the same name in the Ukraine, made famous in the Crimean War, where an alliance of English, French, and Ottoman Turks opposed the forces of Russia; or, perhaps it is that our cliffs are reminiscent of the impregnable cliffs found at Sebastopol's harbour in the Crimea.

St. John the Baptist Chapel

Following the religious tradition of the Eastern Rite Catholic Church, the Ukrainians of Potton soon built a modest Chapel, which was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Quebec, of Ivan (John) Hawryluk, Curate General for the Ukrainian Church in Quebec, and of Ivan (John) Telishewski, owner. To complete the Chapel, a bell was needed for calling the faithful to worship. Appeal was made to the Canadian Pacific Railway which was retiring its steam locomotives, each equipped with a bell. The CPR quickly obliged and sent a bell to Highwater Station. When Father Hawryluk went to retrieve the bell - he found that three strong men were needed to lift it!



The bell tower

In 1985, to mark the millennium of the Ukrainian Church in Kiev, the people

of Vorokhta decided to enlarge their Chapel in the architectural style of the wooden churches of Carpathian Ukraine. Myron Monczak (1924-2010), engineer, and an original Vorokhta immigrant, patterned building plans from the 17th century Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in Vorokhta, Ukraine. In addition to designing the Chapel, Mr. Monczak made all its decorative embellishment and furnishings. Four volunteer carpenters toiled six days a week for a month to build the structure. A separate bell tower was built to house

the famously heavy bell, baptized Andrew or Andriy, Андрій. This is a typical characteristic of wooden churches in Ukraine.

The new Chapel was consecrated by Mgr Isidor Boretsky on the feast day of St. John the Baptist which fell on July 7, 1985, according to the Ukrainian calendar. Numerous religious and civic dignitaries were present on the happy occasion.

Because Vorokhta's Chapel is privately owned, it may not be accessed except by permission; however it may be admired from chemin du Lac. The following description will provide some appreciation for the beauty of this building.



Interior of the Chapel with Wolodymyr Bodnar

The Chapel faces west, parallel to the road, and sits atop the hill just north of Vorokhta. Prior to 2007, an arched wooden gate or brama - брама welcomed visitors to the Chapel, however expropriation for road construction altered that, and the charming brama is no longer standing. The Chapel, kaplytsya - церкву is framed to the left, by a large cross or khrest - хрест, and to the right, by the bell tower, dzvynytysya - вежа, for the bell Andriy - Андрє.

Vorokhta's Chapel is a sturdy building, square in form, of wood construction and simple embellishment. From the four planes of the main roof, rise three triangular roof elevations. From the center of these, rises an octagonal tower bearing a rounded cupola, adorned with a dome. Angles incorporated into the roof are of typical Ukrainian design, and serve to draw the eye toward the cross, atop the dome.

Seven steps lead to a narrow porch. Double doors open to the Chapel. Inside, finely matched cedar sheaths the interior walls and ceiling. An iconostas, or tall panel bearing icons, separates the sanctuary from the nave. Behind the altar, three doors lead to the sanctuary. The outer doors are used by the deacons; the center or royal door, by the priest. Nine icons depicting the life of Christ adorn the interior. Another honours St. Nicholas, protector of Churches. Above the main altar, is an icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Portraits of Queen Olga and St. Volodymyr the Great, sovereigns of the 10th century Kiev empire, are displayed on either side of the Chapel. Six stained glass windows in the octagonal tower allow natural light. Two crystal lamps suffuse soft lighting. Ceremonial objects donated by the congregation include Byzantine rite candelabrum, inlaid crosses, as well as hand embroidered chasuble and altar cloths of typical Ukrainian design.

Potton has a richly diverse religious heritage of which Vorokhta's St. John the Baptist Chapel is a magnificent example.

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Production team :

Research and French text : Jean-Louis Bertrand

Research and English text : Sandra Jewett

Revisions : Jacqueline Robitaille

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