

A Subjugated People Are Imported to Populate the Land

In 1871, British Columbia joined Confederation on condition a railway would be built to connect BC with the rest of the provinces within 10 years. As an incentive to the CPR, the government granted vast tracts of land and title to any mineral resources therein. Building the railway required labour. As well, the vast open prairie needed to be populated for the railway from coast to coast to be a viable and profitable venture.

In the late 1870's, Canadian Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, drew up an agreement with Hamburg Steamship Company to recruit immigrants from Eastern Europe for settlement in Western Canada. Shipping agents were paid \$5 for each head of family and \$2 for each additional family member that was recruited.

Conditions in Galicia in Western Ukraine were ripe for people to be lured by the opportunity to own 100's of times more land than they could ever dream of owning in Ukraine. They held no hope of improving their circumstances while their land was dominated by the Austro-Hungarian overlords. All young Galician men were obliged to submit to 3 years of compulsory military service, essentially becoming cannon fodder for the imperial military adventures of the Austrian nobility.

The trek to Canada was a long, arduous journey. The official point of departure was Lvov. From Lvov they travelled overland to Hamburg. In Hamburg, they boarded a steamship to begin their three week voyage across the Atlantic. Since their destination was a British Colony, there was an obligatory stop in Plymouth for final clearance.

The limited possessions they took with them were packed in large trunks, sometimes hand crafted wooden ones they called "skrynia". Bedding, clothing and a few basic tools were all they brought with them.

When they reached Canada in the 1890's or early 1900's most disembarked in Halifax although there were occasions when some travelled to Montreal. From there they traveled by train to their North West Territory destinations. My ancestors claimed land in the area north and east of Edmonton in what was to become the County of Lamont.

The County of Lamont claims to be the Church Capital of North America, with 47 churches, there are more churches per capita in the region than anywhere else in North America. A booklet listing the churches has the following dedication:

*The strange new world did not deter them
To build a church they could ill afford
Their way of life was not complete
Without an edifice to the Lord.*