

Fodchuk, Roman Paul. *Zhorna: Material Culture of the Ukrainian Pioneers*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006. \$34.95. ISBN 1-55238-197-8.

This recent publication on Ukrainian material culture in Canada has been causing waves of interest and enthusiasm, both within the Ukrainian community and outside. The book's author, Roman Paul Fodchuk (currently of Cochrane, Alberta), is not a stranger to the story of Ukrainian immigration in Canada, and specifically the settlement of these pioneers in east-central Alberta. An insider to this community, Fodchuk grew up near the hamlet of Hairy Hill in the immediate post-World War II era. Not only were his own family members among the very people he was trying to document and write about in this book, but Fodchuk, himself, had even further direct experience with many (if not most) of these processes, techniques and materials. In the 1950s Fodchuk worked as a district agriculturalist in east-central Alberta, the hotbed of Ukrainian bloc settlement in the province. Part of his job as district agriculturalist was to photograph the old homesteads in the areas of Shandro, Myrnam, Hairy Hill, Two Hills and Willingdon, and it is many of these stunning photographs that grace the pages of *Zhorna*. In his preface, Fodchuk very clearly states his motivation for writing the book: "to arrest the time that I'd experienced 50 years ago...to bring together a lifetime's accumulation of photographs, illustrations and knowledge regarding a widely dispersed and disappearing material culture; to document symbols expressed by folk architecture that summon boyhood memories" (ix). Drawing largely on familial memories and elaborating upon them, Fodchuk capitalized on his knowledge of and ties to the history and work of Peter Svarich (one of the first Ukrainian agriculturalists in the area and notable figure in the story of Ukrainian settlement in Alberta) and included several excerpts and sketches from Svarich's memoirs in this book. Fodchuk's unique approach of coupling his nostalgic and relevant professional experiences in material culture have taken the research in and presentation of the topic to a new level.

The publication is organized into six chapters, beginning with a two-part introduction by notable scholars in the field, Dr. Robert Klymasz (a leading authority on Ukrainian Canadian folklore and immigrant folk culture) and Dr. John Lehr (professor of geography at the University of Winnipeg). Each chapter is illustrated with photographs from Fodchuk's collection, as well as superb illustrations of the pioneer tools and utensils (drawn by daughter Kathryn Fodchuk Dobbin and Jean

Paul Rioux, during their time as students at the Alberta College of Art). The first chapter, entitled “The Journey,” deals with the topics of “Leaving the Homeland,” “The Voyage,” and “Arrival and Settlement.” Providing a concise yet informative background to the complicated and often times lengthy story of immigration, Fodchuk focuses his attention on the memoirs of the aforementioned Peter Svarich, who led a group of such immigrants across the ocean and across the country to settle in Alberta. In particular, the author includes a detailed map and chart of the core of the Ukrainian bloc settlement in the early period, showing early trails, schools, post offices, churches, and other aspects of rural community development.

Chapter Two, entitled “Surviving,” continues with the story of settlement and touches on the limited material items with which the immigrants arrived and survived in the beginning. Fodchuk discusses the construction of the chests that contained the priceless possessions of the settlers, the carpenter’s and cooper’s tools they arrived with and began to work with immediately (including various clamps and planes), and of course, the *zhorna* – quern mill. This chapter, more so than any other, makes use of Svarich’s early construction sketches – for everything from a wagon, to a house and accompanying farm buildings, to a skein winder.

Chapter Three, “Building the Little House on the Prairies,” focuses on the steps the early Ukrainian pioneers took to lay down permanent roots in the new land. Beginning with temporary housing, Fodchuk describes the *burdei* (dug-out), *zemlianka* (sod house), and *khatyna* (one-room house) that were commonly built upon immigration, providing drawings and photographs of the interiors of such temporary dwellings. He goes on to describe that once the pioneers were settled, they focused their attention on building a permanent house or *khata*. It is in this portion of the chapter that Fodchuk’s penchant for architecture and photography take centre stage, depicting various types of regional folk architecture that were transplanted in Alberta, thatching crews and detailed roof construction, various oil presses used, and the *pich* (clay oven) in the interior.

The fourth chapter, “One Hundred and Sixty Acres,” continues the description to other parts of the traditional homestead and accompanying daily responsibilities, including haying, threshing, gardening and livestock. Fodchuk pays particular attention to the process of haying and the tools required therein. The photos included in this chapter highlight how much of a community effort such agricultural processes were, and how neighbors banded together to assist one another in the farm work.

Chapter Five takes a closer look at the construction of fences (woven, in many cases), pressing oil (often hempseed oil) and the tools needed for this process, textile production (the sewing/spinning/weaving of hemp, wool and flax), and the building of roads, bridges and other municipal services. Fodchuk highlights a unique oil press at the Shandro Museum and the loom brought to Canada in pieces by his grandmother.

The sixth and final chapter discusses the topics of food and celebrations in the pioneer communities. Organizing his discussion seasonally, Fodchuk highlights the importance of a *toloka* (community cooperation, work bee) in building socio-cultural bonds in the new land. Here, the author focuses more on the traditions brought from the Old Country by the early Ukrainian immigrants, and their maintenance up until the Second World War. The photographs of various celebrations and rituals (many taken from Fodchuk's family archive) are ideal in conveying the color and spirit of these early communities.

Perhaps nowhere are the author's true motivations for putting together this publication more clear than in his epilogue – a letter to his grandchildren. Here, Fodchuk beautifully ties together the old and the young, the relevance of the hardships of the past with the hope and progress of the future. Even though the reader may forget these nostalgic reasons throughout the chapters, in the epilogue Fodchuk reminds us all to learn from the past and that through hard work and integrity, even the impossible becomes possible.

A well-rounded, reader-friendly publication, *Zhorna* is appropriate for scholars, students and enthusiasts alike, providing those interested with a beautiful, professional, engaging and informative resource on Ukrainian material culture.

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