



St. Michael the Archangel in Winter

March 2008

Dear family, friends and Peregrymka village area descendants,

I am writing to you to ask your support for a very special project to preserve the history of our ancestors. Three years ago, I asked for help for a restoration project in the Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Pielgrzymka, Poland (known as Peregrymka to our ancestors). St. Michael's is a very special tiny wooden church which supported our ancestors through the joyful and sorrowful times in their lives. It has miraculously escaped the destruction which overtook many other Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches in our Carpathian area. Over \$4610 was generously contributed through this appeal and used to support the church belfry re-shingling, new electrical wiring and a new roof. The project also financed the restoration of a 1605 icon—the Holy Mother of God – which has, through the ages, been thought to have miraculous healing powers. This restoration is pictured on our website, avillagecluster.com.



Mother of God Icon



St. Michael the Archangel Icon

Through a partnership with Father Roman Dubec of the Holy Trinity Church in Gorlice, who serves liturgy every two weeks in the small parish of St. Michael's, we have been able to continue a legacy of support for the preservation of this church—efforts which were begun by Peregrymka immigrants as early as 1915.

A dedicated historian who recently completed his doctoral studies, Fr. Roman has undertaken a project which he calls a Museum of Memories. The small museum is being created in the belfry of St. Michael's to house centuries-old church books, vestments and other church artifacts as well as photographs and written records of the Pielgrzymka area which includes Kłopotnica, Folusz, Wola Cieklińska and Huta Samokleska. The attached newspaper article, translated from a Polish newspaper, describes the project in greater detail. As you know, Peregrymka villagers were deported to Ukraine in 1945 and to Western Poland in 1947 by the former

Communist government. Few remain to protect and preserve the history of our brave ancestors.



Father Roman reviewing collection in his office

Begun in 2005 with a government grant, the project continues. Father Roman has overseen the initial restoration of the “polychromy” (wall paintings and decorations) and the painted icons on the walls and ceiling of the museum area. Display cases for the church artifacts have been purchased and are now at hand. He has recently obtained a second grant (\$3000) from the Polish government which has to be matched with \$3000 worth of funds for this project. An initial contribution of \$600 has been

made and our goal is to raise the additional \$2400 which he needs to complete the museum.

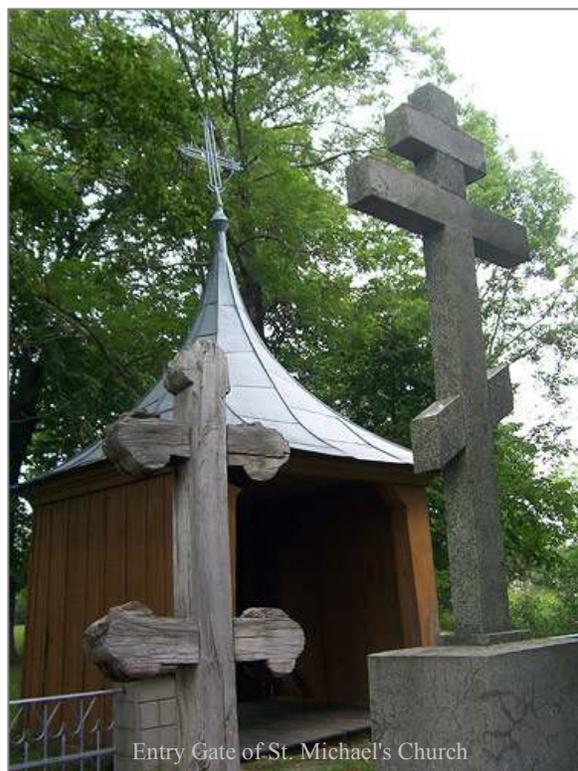
All contributions to this project will be gratefully accepted. Contributions may be sent to me and I will send them together or they can be made to Father Roman (I will provide his address if requested.). We will list all contributions on our *avillagecluster.com* website as well as document the progress of the project. These gifts may be made in honor or memory of a family member or for general support of the “Belfry Museum Project.”

I hope you will join with me to preserve the history of the church and villages of our ancestors. Father Roman also will gratefully accept any artifacts which your village ancestors might have brought to the new world from the old country. Please feel free to contact me if you might have any memorabilia for the museum or any question about this project or appeal. I can be reached at 973- 785-1842 or at bacsiknj@aol.com.

Gratefully,

A fellow Peregrymka descendant,

Maryann Dubowchik Bacsik
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Entry Gate of St. Michael's Church



Belfry

An unusual museum in Pielgrzymka will show the history of Lemkovyna and the Orthodox Church - by Piotr Skubik

(Translated from *Pejzaz Polski* (the Saturday-Sunday Magazine Section), page 20 of *Dziennik Polski* (The Polish Daily), Krakow, 24-25 September 2005, by Natalia Malecki, Urszula Green, Krystyna Piatek-Krantz. Edited by A. J. Smith with explanatory notes in brackets.).

Recently, Fr. Roman Dubec, the priest of St. Michael's Orthodox Church in Pielgrzymka, and the head of the parish council, Eugeniusz Dziadosz, realized that if the inhabitants of Pielgrzymka were asked about the history of their village, only a few of them would remember dates, people, or events of that history. However, there is much there to remember and much to talk about.....

Perhaps the village should be called Perekhymka, as the Lemko people who lived there before the second world war and were the majority of the inhabitants, once called it. The name Perekhymka is a Lemko word derived from the lightning and thunder of the many storms in that area. After the Lemko deportations the name Perekhymka was changed to Pielgrzymka, Polish for *pilgrimage*. That name is misleading, however, because there is no place to pilgrimage to. Only in nearby Mrukowa, high in the mountains, is there a wayside chapel that marks where the Virgin Mary was said to have stood and to which people still make pilgrimages. For that reason the name of Mrukowa should likewise have been changed because of that wayside shrine. [ed. note: Pielgrzymka is the name of the village appearing in records for almost the last two centuries. Perekhymka was the name used by Lemko inhabitants of the area.]

There is an old orthodox church in Pielgrzymka, with a belfry enclosed in scaffolding for renovation, that is slowly changing into a local museum.

Inside the church, it is chilly. On the vestibule's walls the polychrome [brightly-colored and painted designs] is marked by water stains. Against the walls are a baptismal font, which in the eastern church rite was used for baptisms by immersion, or perhaps it was a stone receptacle for coal for incense; a plaque with names of family descendants (from the USA) who made monetary contributions to the church, and on one side a wooden door behind a heap of scrap lumber from the renovations. "This is going to be the entrance to the museum," says Fr. Roman Dubec, the priest of St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox parish, as he points to the steep staircase leading to the loft above where the museum will be located.

"Belfry Full of Mementos," will be the name of this unusual museum. It is also the name of a social-educational project to be conducted by the parish. *Fundacja Wspomagania Wsi* (The Foundation for Assisting Villages, a private philanthropic foundation in Poland) liked this project and gave money to help put it into effect: 10,000 *Zloty* [about \$3500].

Eugeniusz Dziadosz, an amateur historian, has some notes of former priests of the church, and if they are to be believed, the current church is now the fourth church in this location in Pielgrzymka. "The first was more to the south, the second one nearby, where the old trees now grow." Supposedly, "...the present (larger) church was built over the previous much smaller church which was then dismantled....," he says. That information is likely true because that is the way churches were built in many others villages in Lemkovyna.

Pielgrzymka is also famous for a miraculous Holy Mother icon [which dates from the 16th century] that commemorates the appearance of the Holy Mother in a linden tree there. The icon is currently undergoing restoration. It is expected that the museum, in this village which is a small island of the Orthodox religion, will showcase the culture [of the earlier inhabitants], teach tolerance, and convince people that coexistence of different religions is important for the good of society.

Only a few church faithful attend services there every Sunday, including a few people from nearby Klopotnica and Brzezowa. "Usually twenty people attend a regular church service, but sometimes fifty if it is a special church holiday," says the head of the parish council.

Fr. Dubec saw that the church is too large for so few church members, so he decided to convert the mighty, two-story high church belfry into a memento room.

The Dziadosz family that has lived here for generations were not included in the Lemko deportations. So Eugeniusz Dziadosz decided to write down the history of the village as he was a continuous witness of its history.

So far, Dziadosz's history of Pielgrzymka, from its beginning to the Second World War, consists of only a few dozen pages, handwritten in pen. Whether he will be successful in finishing and publishing it is not known. He is engaged in many jobs and activities: he runs a business, looks after his grandchildren and writes in his free time. He has already informed his children that if he is unable to complete this "undertaking of his life," it will be their duty to finish it for him.

He has a lot to write about because archive records he has say that the village has existed from the beginning of 15th century. It is possible that it existed even earlier but there are no written records to confirm that. It is also known that in the past the village was the property of the Mniszech family and that Maryna Mniszech, the wife of Dymitr Samozwaniec (pretender to the throne of Russia), and who supposedly hid in the nearby forest after she escaped from Moscow, gave the parish two [priests'] vestments embroidered with gold thread.

It is known from the history of the village that before the [second world] war there were two hundred houses in Pielgrzymka and that only about twenty families living there were not Lemko. "People got along well, respected one another, went to parties, attended one school, learned both languages [Lemko and Polish], and helped each other when needed," says the amateur historian.

Today the relationships between people there, are the same as years ago, except the proportions of the inhabitants have reversed: only a few families are Orthodox, while the majority are Catholic. But there are some Baptists and Jehovah's witnesses, as well. "We continue to live in peace, and say hello and bow our heads to each other when we meet while going to the Orthodox or Catholic church on Sunday," says Dziadosz. "And the Catholic church is just (on the opposite side of the street) to the old wooden Orthodox church".

Many of the planned work items in the Belfry Full of Mementos Project have already been accomplished.

On the border of the village near Samokleski, in a (small) cluster of trees, a cemetery from an early cholera epidemic was found that almost no one knew existed. Except for some [low, barely discernible] earthen embankments that mark its border, all that remains is one lone tombstone to mark the spot, that of Lew Paryłowicz, the priest [of St. Michael's] at the time. The inscription on it says: "*Wicznaja mu pamiat.....*" (.....eternal memory to him) [ed., the beginning words of a prayer for the dead: The full, barely visible inscription, written in Lemko, says: "Fr. Lew Paryłowicz, priest of this village, died in the time of cholera, 29 August 1831, eternal memory to him."]

In the regular parish cemetery the graves of other former parish priests, Jan Myszkowski, who was the first (of three) priests in his family ([serve at St. Michael's] and that of his grandson, Marian, who died during the second world war, were also cleaned. The grave of Jan's son (the second of the three priests, also named Jan) was not found. He may be buried in a second cholera cemetery that is believed to exist, but has not yet been located. On the outskirts of the village [near the known cholera cemetery] there is a [small, similar] characteristic cluster of trees [that may be the location of the second cholera cemetery] but so dense with brush that it is impossible to penetrate it before autumn.

The Talerhof Monument in Pielgrzymka was also cleaned and renovated. The monument honors the known and alleged Lemko Russo-phils who were considered enemies of Austria at the time of the first world war, and who suffered and died in the Austrian concentration camp near Graz in Austria.

Another more recent monument, from the time of the second world war, will also be restored. The monument commemorates Józef Wójcik, the leader of the guerilla army, *Gwardia Ludowa* [People's Guard], [that fought the German army in that area of Poland]. The monument is located along the way to Gorlice [along Route 993 near Kłopotnica] but it is difficult to see from the road. The monument is now overgrown with brush and covered with moss.

Some of the church artifacts to be displayed in the "Belfry of Mementos" will be some old yellowed liturgy books that have been somewhat destroyed by time and mice, like the XVIII century book of psalms from *Drukarnia Bracka* (Bracka Printing House) in Lwow and the later-published similar book, "*Izbornik*", edited by Tytus Myszkowski, a professor from Jan Kazimierz University (in Lwow), and of the same respected family of Myszkowski's [as that of the former priests of the church].

"We will also show letters from diocese officials to the priests as well as early icons from the iconostasis," says Fr. Roman Dubec. We will also show an unusual tomb of Christ [from the 15th century], still used in the church at Easter time, consisting of a columned-canopy and beneath it a painted image of sleeping Roman soldiers. There will be also numerous old photos [of early church members].

Descendants of earlier church members that emigrated to America years ago have also promised to donate items that were used in the daily lives of their ancestors from Pielgrzymka, for display in the museum.

Maybe it will also be possible to find the vestments given to St. Michael's by Maryna Mniszech, that were lent for exhibition in Lwow [in the late 1800's] and have never been returned.

Also included in the exhibition will be old, hand-made square, wrought iron nails that were removed from the belfry structure and from its shingled-siding, during the recent renovations.

There is much confidence that this project will be a success, because Fr. Dubec who is also a director of *Diecezjalny Ośrodek Kultury Prawosławnej* (ELPIS) ([he Orthodox Diocese Cultural Center] in Gorlice, has extensive experience in historical renovation. For several years now, he has been working with a youth group to restore forgotten Lemko cemeteries in the Gorlice area.

He is very optimistic and when he looks at the church belfry getting more and more beautiful, he believes that the museum will reflect not only the life of the Orthodox people in Pielgrzymka, but also that of the rest of the faithful living there. "We are not dividing the village into two parts; we are treating it as a whole, although the basic premise of the museum is to show the history of Lemkowyna and of the Orthodox faith. It is common knowledge that the Catholic inhabitants of Pielgrzymka won't come to renovate the belfry and nor do we expect them to. However, it is certain, that they too have articles at their homes of the village's history that can be included in the display".

Eugene Dziadosz adds that, "It is the everybody's duty to preserve the memory of the past. If we didn't respect our traditions, our ancestors would turn over in their graves, and even in the other world they would not forgive us for that".

The local elementary school has joined this initiative because the project's initiators intend to prepare a brief history of Pielgrzymka, based on information available in the parishes, the school library, the archives, and interviews of older residents and postwar settlers, that can be used as a teaching aid in the school.

All of the work is in progress and time is running out, because the money from the foundation has to be spent by the end of the year

The priest would like the museum to be ready even earlier, by the end of November, because at that time there will be a church festival [*Odpust* and *Kermesz*] in Pielgrzymka honoring St. Michael the Archangel, the patron saint of the church. "It would be wonderful if the exhibits would be available as soon as this year's *kermesz*," he says.

Photo 1: Fr. Priest Roman Dubec with a psalm book published by *Drukarnia Bracka* (Bracka Printing House in Lvov) in 1763 that will be part of the exhibit.

Photo 2: The miraculous Holy Mother icon that is now undergoing restoration.