

Spruce Siding: A Ukrainian Heritage

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Originally established in the early 1910s, Sadlow—located east of Winnipeg—was among the first Ukrainian settlements in Manitoba. Named after the Sadlowski family, it was more than just a rural community; it stood as an architectural landmark in Southwestern Manitoba. Today, it is known as Spruce



Siding. The name “Spruce” reflects the abundance of spruce trees in the area, while “Siding” refers to the railway siding built along the Greater Winnipeg Water District (GWWD) main line, which was crucial to the region’s growth.

While its story began with Ukrainian settlers in search of a better life, what truly set Sadlow—now Spruce Siding—apart was the distinctive character of its architecture. Rooted in Ukrainian tradition and adapted to the realities of Prairie life, the community’s buildings embodied the values, faith, and resilience of its people. This architectural tour revisits the cultural landmarks of Sadlow, beginning with the most prominent: its Ukrainian Catholic church.

Built between 1920 and 1921, the Saldow Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church served not only as a place of worship but also as a central hub for the community. Constructed through the voluntary labour of Ukrainian settlers, the Greek Catholic church embodied both faith and unity. Shortly after its completion, the church was blessed by Bishop Nykyta Budka in 1922, and later by his successor, Bishop Basil Ladyka, in 1937.

The church was primarily used for mass, weddings, and funerals, though it is believed that other Greek Catholic traditions were also practiced within its walls. Painted in yellow and blue—the colours of the Ukrainian flag—the building proudly reflected the cultural roots of its congregation. One of its most striking features is the onion dome, a signature element of Ukrainian Catholic architecture, which rises prominently above the modest log structure.



Though no longer in active use since the early 1970s, the church still stands today. Over the years, the roof has been replaced several times, and while the exterior shows signs of wear, the interior remains largely intact. Inside, several original artifacts still sit in place, offering a quiet glimpse into the spiritual life of the community that once gathered there.

On the northwest side of the church lies a small cemetery, quiet and overgrown with time. The first recorded burial took place in 1917, and the last in 1951, marking over 75 years since it was last used. Today, the passage of time is evident in the tall grass, faded

markers, and sunken graves—nature slowly reclaiming what was once a carefully tended resting place. Despite the neglect, the cemetery remains a solemn reminder of the pioneers who lived, worked, and worshipped in Sadlow.

While the church and cemetery reflected the spiritual and eternal aspects of life in Sadlow, the nearby schoolhouse spoke to the everyday hopes for the next generation. Education was essential to the children of Ukrainian settlers, who balanced traditional values with the desire to integrate into Canadian society. Just down the road from the church stood Spruce School—a modest building that became a centre of learning, gathering, and identity for local families.



Spruce School was operated under the Birch River Municipal School District No. 1502, which later became part of the Agassiz School Division following provincial school district consolidation. The one-room schoolhouse served as the educational centre for children in the area, offering basic instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, and English to the children of Ukrainian farm families. In 1962, after the school was closed, the building was renovated into a private residence. Despite the changes, traces of its original function remain. The most recognizable feature is the old well—still visible near the structure—serving as a

quiet reminder of the building's role in the community's daily life.

As education helped shape the future of the community, communication helped sustain its present. Beyond the walls of the schoolhouse, daily life in Sadlow relied on more than just farming and faith—it depended on staying connected. That connection came through the local post office, a humble but essential piece of infrastructure that kept Sadlow in touch with the wider world.



The Sadlow Post Office, later known as the Spruce Siding Post Office, was a cornerstone of rural life in the community. It officially opened on June 1, 1924, with Max Sadlowski as the first postmaster. Over the years, the post office saw a series of postmasters, often local residents who served their neighbours with dedication. Among them were Mike Sposito, Anton Turkavitch, and Alex Jakowyshin, followed by his wife, Mrs. Katy Jakowyshin. Perhaps the most notable name was Maksym Sadlowski, who served for nearly 17 years after a brief acting period in 1942. He was succeeded by Mrs. Annie Kushniruk, who oversaw the post office until its closure on August 8, 1969.

After nearly 45 years of operation, the post office was officially closed, marking the end of an era for Spruce Siding. Today, the building no longer stands, and only historical records remain to remind us of its once central role. The closure mirrored a broader trend across rural Manitoba, as depopulation and modernization led to the disappearance of small, local institutions. Still, for decades, the post office was a hub of connection—a place where letters, parcels, and news tied this remote Ukrainian settlement to the rest of the province and beyond.

Though little remains of Spruce Siding today, its story is far from forgotten. From the humble church with its onion dome to the overgrown cemetery, the quiet schoolhouse, and the long-closed post office, each piece of this community tells a chapter of perseverance, faith, and identity. Built by Ukrainian settlers with their own hands, Sadlow was more than a dot on the map—it was a vibrant place where families lived, worked, worshipped, and grew. While time and change have worn away its buildings, the memories remain—held in the land, in the records, and in the hearts of those who still remember. This paper is just one small effort to ensure that Spruce Siding's place in Manitoba's history is not only preserved, but honoured.

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UM_pc019_A80-044_003_0004_014_0001, *Field near Sadlow showing Red Top, Timothy, and White Dutch Clover*, July 1960, photograph.

UM_pc019_A80-044_003_0004_012_0001, *Church and Bell Tower*, photograph.

UM_pc019_A80-044_003_0004_011_0001, *Sadlow Post Office*, photograph.

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School Inspectors Photographs, GR8461, A0233, C131-2, page 129, photograph.