

sołtys: derived from and equivalent to German *Schultheiß* (later *Schultz*), a bailiff or village headman/mayor.

wiardunek: an ancient Polish coin, worth a quarter of a *grzywna*, also called a *ferton*.

włoka: a unit of land measurement used in Poland, used more or less interchangeably with the term *łan*; it comes from the root in the verb *włóczyć*, "to drag, harrow," thus referring to a field with soil plowed and harrowed and ready for planting. The *włoka* was generally about 30 *mórgs*, but this can vary depending on what part of Poland and what time-frame one is concerned with. Generally 30 *mórgs* was considered a full-sized farm, big enough to support a family.

Droga Krzyzowa (Cross Roads) WIARA OJCOW ZYJEMY (The Faith of our Forefathers Keep Us)

By David Shulist and Martin Shulist

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When immigrants from Poland settled in the Wilno area, they brought with them not only a rich cultural heritage, but also a deep religious tradition. They settled in some very rugged land. Travel was very difficult – road conditions were poor and journeys were long. Those settlers longed for a place to worship. There was no Catholic church close by. The nearest church was in Brudenell, built in the 1860's. It was near impossible for the pioneers living near Paugh Lake to make it to church in Brudenell. And even those living closer found that the terrain, the weather and the distance hindered their ability to worship in church.

To satisfy their strong need to pray to Our Lord the settlers erected large wooden crosses at the intersections of main roads. This was a tradition they borrowed from the motherland. On Sundays and Holy Days the pioneers close to each intersection would gather at the crossroads and celebrate their Faith. These crosses were not used, however, for regular service. The prayer at the crosses was private prayer. Rosaries were recited and the appropriate Sunday litany was recited. The worship that occurred at the crossroads was a very special religious experience - different from attending church. Our forefathers here took nothing for granted. They had no communication, no reliable transportation and no secure income. Yet they were grateful for every step they took in life. And they thanked our Lord.

It became tradition to make the sign of the cross when one passed a cross at an intersection. Gentlemen would remove their hats also. And not only were the crosses a place of worship for our ancestors, but they were a stopping place for those making the long journey into town. It was a place for the pioneers to stop and thank the Lord that he saw them that far into a journey. It was also a place for settlers to meet and to plan (e.g., meeting to organize a barn raising, etc.) and to pass on information and the news of the day.

From the Opeongo Line where the first Polish pioneers settled, northward to the Hamlet of Wilno, and up to the Paugh Lake area you can still see some of these crosses; the symbol of how strong and how important faith was to our ancestors.

It has been noted that there were approximately 20 crosses erected originally in this area. With the exodus of the young from the farms in the 1950's, many of these crosses decayed and were never seen again. There are currently only 6 original pioneer crosses still standing in the Wilno hills and two modern crosses which were erected more recently. One of these modern crosses was erected by Fr. Wilowski in 1933 and stands proudly atop Shrine Hill.

It is important that our generation remember the hard lives our ancestors lived. It is important to resurrect the crosses of Wilno and with them the strong faith of our forefathers. Our enjoyment of this great land we live upon today is possible only because of the hard work and the strong faith of our pioneer ancestors. It was their faith in God that kept them going through difficult terrain and even-more difficult economic times. We must do what we can to keep that faith alive.

THE STRENGTH OF A PERSON LIES WITHIN THE STRENGTH OF THAT PERSON'S FAITH.