

# Ukrainian Men's Club preparing to celebrate 50 years

The men's club has served the people of its Whitney Pier parish in times of need as well as times of plenty

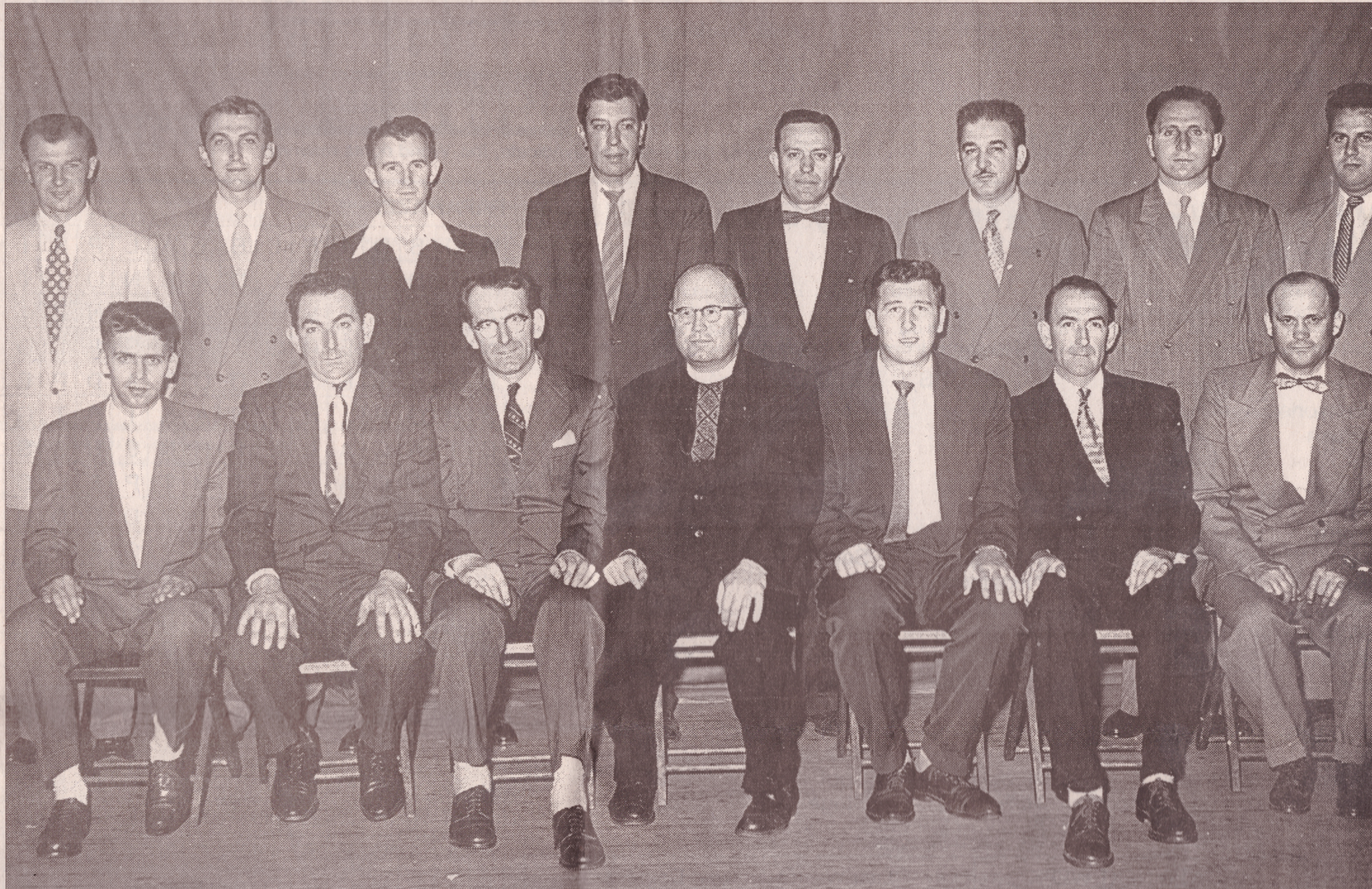
BY T.J. COLELLO  
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SYDNEY

The history behind the Ukrainian Men's Club in Whitney Pier is one of necessity – for that of the Holy Ghost Ukrainian Parish and its community.

“It was started by Joe Furdas, Mike Mahalik and myself,” said John Huk, one of the founding members of the club. “The parish was falling apart - there were rumours of (Sydney Steel) closing and people were moving away to Ontario.

“This was more or less to try and hold people together with the parish and the church



nd apparently it worked."

There have been 28 presidents of the club in the last 50 years, each of whom has a picture hanging on the wall of the parish hall. To get members elected in the early going, however, was difficult.

But there was a solution. "Everybody was afraid to be elected as one of the executives, so we'd have a lobster dinner with free lobster and beer," said Huk. "Once they saw me, they couldn't refuse being put on the executive."

The old parish hall where the club was based was located on Swan Street, where the parking lot of the new hall is now. The current hall was officially opened in 1962.

The construction of the new hall was a project of the men's club to keep the youth in

Members of the 1956 Ukrainian Men's Club. Front, from left, are Joe Horechuk, Bill Ojoleck, John Ojoleck, Ft. Constantine Zarsky, Buddy Bobyk, Harry Ojoleck, and Fred Elyshyshn. In the back, from left, are Joe Furdas, Ray Witko, Peter Hrynicky, Max Dilney, Bill Tetanish, Peter Melnick, Walter Hewak and John Huk.

Whitney Pier. Currently, the Ukrainian Men's Club has about 24 members, but used to boast up to 40 in the past.

"All of the money was all raised by the community," said Huk. "We tried to get money from other places, but people had their own problems."

Most of the money raised came from both the men's and women's club.

"They'd put on dances and suppers - the women would make food and the men would serve liquor."

The club hosts a number of events during the year. On Labour Day, the deceased members of the club are commemorated with a church ser-

vice.

That day was originally selected because everyone worked at the steel plant and that was the only day community members knew they would have off.

"We go to the graves with flowers and say a prayer," said Huk. "Then we go back to the hall and have a breakfast and reminisce about the deceased members."

This year, the lives of 41 deceased members over the 50-year period were celebrated.

The club also sponsors groups within the community as well, while members in the group also work various committees of the church.

Another major activity is

the celebration of the Ukrainian New Year's - Jan. 14 - known as 'Malanka'.

"We get quite a big crowd - it's an annual thing - and have had that for the past 10 years," said Huk.

This year, the club is celebrating in conjunction with the 90th anniversary of Holy Ghost.

They were involved in a number of projects like a perogy and cabbage roll sale, as well as a picnic at Two Rivers Wildlife Park.

"We make enough off of small little projects to keep our heads over water," said Huk. "Most of our income is given to the parish."

In conjunction with Action

Week, the club and parish organized a reunion for the community.

"A lot of people came from away - California, Western Canada, Toronto and locally," said Huk. "The project went over very well."

The future of the parish and the club, said Huk, is bright. He believes that the arrival of the current pastor, Father Roman Dusanowskyj, was the main reason.

"He's a saviour for us," said Huk. "He perked everything - he got things organized, we got back on our feet and are starting to make a little bit of money - people are coming back to the church."

Huk said before their cur-

rent priest, who is Canadian born, the church would have priests from the Ukraine doing the sermon, who knew little or no English.

"When priests came from the Ukraine, no one would come because no one understood what was going on," he said. "Now we can (understand), and people are coming back because of it."

"With his help, we're doing well - he's done a lot for our church."

Huk, who has written a book on the Ukrainian community in Cape Breton, said the Holy Ghost Ukrainian Church is the only one of its kind east of Montreal.

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