

DELHI-TILLSONBURG, ONTARIO

The town of Delhi, with a population of about 400, is in southern Ontario, north of Lake Erie and about halfway between Buffalo and Windsor.

The first Lithuanian in the area was Vilius Šneideris. Juozas Dumša, Vincas Treigis-Treigys, Edvardas Pakėnas and other Lithuanians were already working in the area's tobacco farms in 1930 and 1931. Jonas Stanaitis and J. Dumša started growing their own tobacco in 1932, as did Julius Strodonskis, Mykolas Bliskis and V. Treigis. By 1938, Jonas Janušauskas and Osvaldas Gutauskas had bought tobacco farms. C. Matelis, W. Bikus, J. Dadurka, W. Klemka, B. and A. Tamašauskas, Antanas Mažeika, S. and R. Augustanavičius were also farming in the area. J. Strodonskis and V. Treigis were still living in Delhi in 1982 and were active in Lithuanian affairs. At the start of World War II, there were about a hundred Lithuanian families and individuals in the Delhi area, most involved in farming. These Lithuanians used to organize picnics in the summertime.

LCC. The number of Lithuanians in the area increased dramatically after the War, and various organizations were established. Efforts to organize a Lithuanian Canadian Community had begun in Canada's larger cities. On 27 May 1950, a Delhi Provisional Organizing Committee (POC) was formed, composed of chairman Vincas Treigys, vice-chairman Benediktas Stonkus, secretary Jonas Mikelėnas, treasurer Stasys Kairys, member responsible for cultural and organizational affairs Vincas Ignaitis and member-at-large Vincas Andriulionis.

The POC, which later became the Delhi chapter of the LCC, did much for Lithuanian activities. In the XXVIII Lithuanian Days yearbook of 1983 it was noted, "Although we were all busy with our daily tasks on our farms, especially during the summers, we had lots of energy and good intentions and got involved in Lithuanian organizations." Events to commemorate national holidays were organized and lecturers invited from larger Lithuanian communities. The LCC organized Independence Day, Armed Forces Day, Deportation commemoration and Mother's Day events, as well as Christmas pageants, harvest festivals and programs for the Tillsonburg radio station. Soloists, choirs, theatre troupes and folk-dancing groups from Toronto and Hamilton were invited to cultural evenings. Whatever profits were made were invested in local organizations and education or contributed to the National Foundation.

The largest Lithuanian event was the Catholic Children's Congress in 1961, organized by Dr. J. Gutauskas, the pastor of Delhi's St. Casimir's Lithuanian parish. Delhi's Lithuanian School was sponsored by the LCC, and, despite occasional interruptions, lasted for about 20 years.

Due to the efforts of Dr. Laszlo Pandý, the Multicultural Heritage Association of Norfolk County was established in the Delhi area in 1978. Jonas and Birutė Lukšys were the LCC representatives until 1998. A Heritage Day is celebrated each year with a program performed by some of the 31 national groups in the area. The audience numbers from 3,500 to 4,000. The folk-dancing groups *Gyvataras* from Hamilton and *Atžalynas* from Toronto performed in 1988 and 1991, at the invitation of Delhi's Lithuanian community. The community also used to organize a display and sell Lithuanian food. The rather considerable profits made from these sales over two years were used to support Lithuania's bid for independence.

Teresė Pargauskienė, chairwoman of the Delhi chapter of the LCC, described community events in 1997: “We try to organize a Deportation commemoration every year...we participate in local multicultural events and organize a Lithuanian display. Dressed in national costumes and carrying the Lithuanian flag, we march in Delhi’s multicultural and harvest parades. Lithuanian national holidays are celebrated, as are Mother’s Day and New Year’s. The chapter’s news and activities are reported in the Lithuanian newspaper *Tėviškės Žiburiai*. As always, all meetings and events take place at St. Casimir’s parish after High Mass.”

In the XXXIV Lithuanian Days yearbook, Delhi’s Lithuanians wrote “With our modest efforts, we try to maintain Lithuanian traditions and help Lithuania.” In 1999, the chapter’s Lithuanians participated in the multicultural festival, as they always do. The display was prepared with the assistance of S. Comeau, a young Lithuanian lady. Hamilton’s *Gyvataras* performed, and the area’s Lithuanians marched in the parade. Lithuania’s independence, the deportations to Siberia and the coronation of King Mindaugas were commemorated. The chapter’s Lithuanians sent over 1,000 letters to Canada’s members of Parliament, urging them to support Lithuania’s bid to enter NATO.

LCC chapter chairs: Vincas Treigys (1950), Vincas Ignaitis (1951-54), Mečys Norkus (1955), Fr. K. Rickus (1956), A. Rudokas (1957, 1968), A. Aleliūnas (1958), Petras Augaitis (1959, 1965), B. Bačiūnas (1960), V. Miceika, Stepas Jakubickas (1961, 1967, 1970-71, 1974-75), S. Kairys (1962-63, 1972, 1973), Benas Stonkus (1964), Dr. B. Povilaitis (1966), P. Žilvitis (1969), Agota Ratavičienė (1976-77, 1992-95), Birutė Vytienė (1986-87), Jonas Lukšys (1982-85), Stasys Beržinis (1978-79, 1980-81, 1988-1991). Former resident of Lithuania Teresė Pargauskienė has been chairwoman since 1996.

Organizations. Lithuanian Farmers’ Club of Tillsonburg, Delhi-Tillsonburg chapter of the Lithuanian Catholic Women’s Association of Canada, Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas Company of the National Guard, local chapter of the Lithuanian Rebirth Movement, *Vilkas* Hunt Club, Palanga Youth Association, Scouts and Girl Guides. A folk-dancing group established in 1958 lasted a short while. The instructors were L. Racevičius, D. Norkienė, Z. Augaitienė and the musician M. Norkus.

Parish. St. Casimir’s Parish.

School. Delhi Lithuanian School.

Library. The LCC established a library in 1961. The librarian was V. Miceika, assisted by Domas Žiogas. Anelė Klemkienė has been the librarian since 1994. The library has about 500 volumes, most donated by local residents. New titles were added each year. The library received financial support from other organizations and individual donations.

Statistics. The 1960 Lithuanian Days publication mentioned about 200 members in the Delhi chapter, while 1961’s counted approximately 100 Lithuanian families. There were about 200 people of Lithuanian descent in the area in 1981. “About 100 support Lithuanian activities, but the number is decreasing.” Because there are no institutions of higher learning near Delhi, younger people move to the larger urban centres to continue their studies after high school and stay there to work. In 1984, 200 Lithuanians lived in the area, with about 35% involved in Lithuanian affairs. By 1996, the Delhi-Tillsonburg chapter of the LCC had 95 members.