

21. Doukhobor Village Designs and Organization

Doukhobor history was something that was of great interest to me, and I believe my mother influenced that most when I was a preschooler and the only one at home. Mother was lonely and she would tell me stories about how her grandfather Somma and grand uncle Eloiysha Morozoff were sent away to Siberia because the Doukhobors burned their guns. This did not make any sense to me at that time but then she would walk around singing in Russian in a very mournful manner.

I would be uncomfortable at that age and always wanted to console her but when I did talk to her, she seemed oblivious to my presence. As I recall that, it was weird to say the least.

What it did though, was engrain in my soul this spiritual foundation to which somehow Doukhoborism became a base and even now I cannot explain.

So, it was in 1969 when Pete Oglow (deceased) met me in front of the Castlegar Liquor Store one Saturday afternoon and asked me questions to which only "yes" could be an answer, like:

1. Did I think the Doukhobor Villages should somehow be preserved? "Well of course, they should", I responded still thinking about what I came there to purchase.
2. "Do you know how to draught?" a stupid question, I thought since he knew I was an Engineer and "Yes, of course"!
3. "Do you think you could draw a complete Doukhobor Village?" he continued.
4. "That should not be a problem" as I thought he must be deranged to think that I could not.
5. "Brother Bill was going to go to the original Oglow Village in Glade to measure all the original buildings before they completely fall apart and he needs someone to help him, especially to draw it up," he became more resolute as this unplanned meeting continued on the sidewalk. "Can you help him?"
6. "Well, why not?" I was getting "sucked in" but I was thinking more about the main reason I was there.
7. "Bill is going tomorrow, Sunday, at 10:00 o'clock. Will you go?" and I was caught hook, line and sinker.

That was how I ended up crawling through the ruins of Villages in Glade, Shoreacres, Pass Creek and Ootischenia with Bill. Bill was an operating General Contractor at that time and had many stories about how he grew up in a Doukhobor Village setting including Cowley, Alberta.

What we found was amazing, every Village had the same designs, and the measurements were totally consistent with incredible accuracy. So, you might say, my drawings truly represented the non-existent original designs. Wow!

As I presented these drawings to Pete, he shrugged me off and said that I needed to attend a meeting of the Kootenay Doukhobor Historical Society (KDHS). Well so it did happen that Bill Merrilee's, a College Instructor, along with as many as ten (1) others from Selkirk College had initiated a British Columbia

Centennial (1971) project and the reconstruction of a Doukhobor Village was chosen as the project to celebrate the original Corporation of Kinnaird and Castlegar Villages.

"Do you think you can help us achieve this project?" was what Bill asked on behalf of the assembled group.

That is how a history of volunteerism started with the KDHS that included:

1. Original site location surveys.
2. Public Meetings to establish the current 17-acre site for historic sites. A tough fight for these original Christian Community of Christ (CCUB) foreclosed lands back in 1939. There was a strong promotion toward building a hotel on this site, but the ingenuity and the determination of those College professionals won out in the end analysis.
3. "Oh yes, Elmer," I can still hear Bill Merrilee's say, "the KDHS would not be properly represented without a Doukhobor at its helm."
4. That is how I became President and board member for many years which included Marilyn as well.
5. Many years as direct volunteer in the construction also.
6. I persuaded the Doukhobor Cultural Association (DCA) to construct the first Baunya as well as donate funds to the KDHS.

I learned a great deal from Pete Oglow, Mike Sawchenko, Bill Mazoroff, and many of the original Board Members as to how to scrounge for materials, services, and funding in their unique fashion with which I had been brought in originally.



Photo shows a complete Doukhobor Village (original designs about 1909). This replica was completed over several years starting in 1971

The DCA Baunya is shown on the lower right-hand corner.

The center buildings were destroyed by fire in 1984 and reconstructed after.

The building in the lower photo is the original Exhibition Centre that was Project managed by EWV under an original grant by Bill Merrilee's to the Federal Government. Harry Soloveoff drew the drawings. Award of the grant took over two years and costs had increased so that a subsequent grant from the Provincial Government was required to complete. Pete Oglow worked a deal with the city crews where they donated their time and the city the equipment to complete the extensive landscaping around the building.



The greatest achievement was a meeting with the British Columbia Government Cabinet in Cranbrook in and about 1976, when Pete and I obtained a \$120,000 cash grant without even preparing an application. This allowed the construction of the last building (Audio-Visual Center) which was competitively tendered and constructed by VIL This story is outlined on my blog where I talk about Pete Oglow in his memory.

See also my blog at [https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/A-Tribute-to-Pete-Oglow-\(deceased\)-and-permitted-by-his-son-Ivan-Oglow-September-05-2012](https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/A-Tribute-to-Pete-Oglow-(deceased)-and-permitted-by-his-son-Ivan-Oglow-September-05-2012)

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