



Serbian Orthodox Church GRATCHANITZA, Windsor, Ont., Canada
Consecrated October 19th, 1952

Српска православна црква ГРАЧАНИЦА, Виндзор, Онт., Канада
Освећена 19 октобра 1952 године

***50th Anniversary
of
the Serbian Church-School Congregation***

"Gracanica"

***in
Windsor***

Exhibit:

November 15, 1996 - February 28, 1997

INTRODUCTION

Church is people . Serbs, as other people, need to gather and shelter. They like to see themselves as unique as any other people linked to their long history, as other s have had need to shelter their spiritual life. They have built churches and monasteries, mansions and edifices of significant beauty wherever they settled. They have gathered there, prayed, looked for God's guidance.

The Serbian community grew in waves. The end of WW II brought many immigrants from all over the world to Canada and many were Serbs. Windsor opened its doors to them at that time as well as many other times later, till the present day and the end of war in Bosnia, 1995.

When Serbs settled in Windsor, one day in November, precisely on the 29th, 1946, about eighty (80) of them gathered and decided to form a congregation. One of the organizers was Pero Bulat; a treasurer, secretary and other functions were elected. All of those were eminent and active Serbs whose energy ensured others of success to the newly founded congregation. They led forward to a goal - to build a Serbian church.

When the first meeting took place on December 9, 1946, resulting in an official formation of the congregation, the head people perceived the necessity to have a physical space where Serbs could gather. According to that and a financial stretch, an amount of \$ 2,746 was collected and a special fund for the church building established. A continual fund raising followed and summed up with the sufficient means to build the church.

Meanwhile, the Serbian Hall on Drouillard Road was a temporary gathering place. There, Rev. Mijatovic from Detroit, served first liturgy on April 6, 1947. Soon after, father Djuro Vuckovic, a W W II prisoner arrived to Windsor from the camp. He became the first official priest of this newly formed congregation. May 2, 1949 marks the date of his appointment after which regular Sunday liturgy continued in the hall.

Rev. Vuckovic saved and carried a portable iconostasis from the prison camp and brought it along to Windsor. A Russian priest helped him acquiring this iconostasis in the camp where they both diligently served liturgy to the war prisoners, each in his own sector throughout period of four years in WWII prison.

During the time when church building did not exist, and the old Serbian Hall on Drouillard Road served as such, father Vuckovic carried and placed this portable iconostasis every Sunday, making

the service a proper orthodox liturgical performance.

When Serbs raised funds they approached, Petar Popovic, an architect from Toronto, who volunteered designing and producing plans for the church. On October 23rd, 1949, the blessing of the ground took place at 1960 Meldrum Road. Gradually the church was taking its shape and succeeded with the blessing of the corner stone on June 4, 1950. Consequently, on October 19, 1952, the new church was dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of God.

This event was significant to all Serbs. Rt. Reverent, bishop Dionisije and other clergy, Windsor parishioner, guests, were present in abundance marking the day a historical one for Serbs, Windsor, Orthodox church and Canada.

The name "Gracanica" given to this newly build church originates from the monastery in Serbia founded by king Milutin in 1310. The original one has five domes and was built not far from the Kosovo field where the major battle between east and west, between Serbs and Turks, took place in 1389. Many churches and monasteries in Serbia were built in the Byzantine fashion. Its major features are a depiction of building material: bricks, layered horizontally in contrasting colours, apses and domes, many arches, sometimes impressive entrance doors, and a base in the shape of an orthodox cross .

New "Gracanica" was built as a replication of this style. It has three domes and three apses and the base is designed in the shape of the Greek Orthodox cross. Its interior is decorated with the frescoes commissioned by the Circle of Serbian Sisters "Princess Jelena". Greek iconopainters from the Papastamation Studio in Athens completed the frescoes on canvas and with a new technique plastered them on the walls of the church. Seven stained glass windows were made by Tonelli Studio. The biblical scenes and saints embellish the church walls representing the Serbs' life in orthodox faith.

Stevo Budimir, Larisa Budimir-Toskovic and Milan Dobric donated the iconostasis. Mr. Maljenikov, an artist from Ohrid furnished it in an outstanding style and colour scale and along with the beautiful woodwork framing it. John Miloyevich handcarved bishop's throne, choir gallery crests and prayer stand-nalonj and donated them in the memory of his father and mother. Mrs. Raikov financed purchase of the chandelier. All these make the interior not less than the exterior of the church truly impressive. Church bells were donated by Mr. & Mrs. Peles, generous monetary donors, and Nikola Budimir as much generous Serb.

In the border town of Windsor the Serbian Orthodox Church gained yet another congregation - Gracanica, considered prosperous. Overcoming a problematic situation during the period of separation between two groups it has grown into a unique organization,