



ABSTRACT

A tour of some of the points of special interest that relate to the lives lived and the resting places of this first-generation couple, descendants of Ukrainian pioneers on the Canadian Prairie with background on their family heritage and information about their descendants.

Rick Dondo

With a special focus on but not limited to the area of the Rural Municipality of Rockwood, Manitoba, CANADA

VIRTUAL GUIDED TOUR:
THE MICHAEL MARTIN RUSSIN (1900) AND
PAWLINA "PAULINE" SHMIGELSKI (1906) FAMILY
A First-generation Canadian saga

Virtual Guided Tour

Winnipeg, MB, Canada (and surrounding areas)

Including the Manitoba Interlake and beyond

Michael Martin Russin (1900) and Pawlina “Pauline” Shmigelski (1906) Family

Purpose, Sources, and Acknowledgements

This document has been prepared as a means of passing along information about these families to their living descendants, members of these families, and to their future descendants.

The stories told here leverage heavily:

- the family research done by the author, himself a grandson of this couple, in concert with other descendants on various branches of these connected family trees
- the 1982 and 2000 editions of the volume “Beyond the Gates of Lower Fort Garry” produced by “Volunteers in the Municipality of St. Andrews”
- the 1964 book “EARLY UKRAINIAN SETTLEMENTS IN CANADA 1895-1900” by “VLADIMIR J. KAYE”, sponsored by the Ukrainian Canadian Research Foundation
- the article “Ukrainian Settlements in Manitoba” taken from the book “Ukrainian Catholic Churches of Winnipeg Archeparchy, History of Ukrainian Catholic Churches in Canada, Volume 4” by Anna Maria Kowcz-Baran (Saskatoon, 1991)
- the 1977 book “Spruce Swamp and Stone - Gimli” by Michael Ewanchuk
- the book “The Interlake Beckoned - A History of Inwood and Surrounding Districts (A History of Inwood and Surrounding Districts)” (date unknown) produced by the specially instantiated book committee
- the 1973(?) book “The Land in the Middle – Manitoba’s Interlake” produced at the request of the Manitoba Interlake Development Corporation
- the 1982 book “Rockwood Municipality - 100 years of history” produced by Rockwood Municipality History
- the 1981 book “Selkirk - The First Hundred Years” by Barry Potyondi
- the brochure “Winnipeg Beach - Moonlight Days” (date and publishers unknown)
- available public resources from the Manitoba Historical Society [MHS]
- available public resources via the Digital Collections of the University of Manitoba
- information available on the “Find a Grave” service
- various other internet services (for maps and other enriching content)

Links to many of these are provided in the “[Additional resources](#)” section below.

Please note: The author intends to continue his research efforts. As a result, more or different information could come to hand. Also, the currently living people mentioned in these stories will have changes in their lives of interest to the reader. For that reason, you are asked to check often that you have [the latest version of this document](#), which the author will update from time to time.

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Organization and Scope

To provide some focus in this journey, which could have been laid out in many ways, the material is organized in categories:

- [Homesteads \(and notable familial residences\)](#)
- [Personal Histories](#)
- [Their Legacy](#)
- [Cemeteries and memorials](#)
- [Points of special interest](#)
- [Additional resources](#)

While the focus is without a doubt the area in and around Winnipeg, with some attention paid to other parts of Manitoba and then, to places around the world where their son, Gerald, lived with his family over the years.

Please note: For more details about the stories of their parents, their aunts, uncles, cousins, and some other relatives on their wider family tree, please see the very much related documents about their birth families:

- [Fred Russin \(1854\) and Dokija Vordyniak \(1859\) families](#) and
- [Cassian Shmigelski \(1868\) and Anastasia Dmytryk \(1878\) families](#)

All of the information in this document that has a geographical nature has been captured at some level of detail in a [single custom map](#), available on the internet as a “My Maps” resource. It is intended as a visual guide to the proximity of the various locations mentioned below. In addition, more information and content are available directly in that resource as part of each “pin” for the locations described below.

The author has attempted to capture enough information here to provide a foundation for understanding the places that were vital parts of the lives of our shared ancestors. It in no way pretends to be an exhaustive account of their lives.

Links in this document take the reader to both specialized and public resources that are not well captured in this format without it becoming overwhelming. Of special note: the “virtual cemeteries” referenced below are maintained by the author and have a much greater scope than this group of families. They may give one a sense of the way the lives of our ancestors were connected that are otherwise not readily understood today.

As a means of providing a jumping off point for further exploration of the area and the families’ connections to it, the [“Additional Resources”](#) section lists but a few of the great collections and services out there that provide more insight into the history these people lived and the ways they made us who we are today.

Left out of this document, are details about the spousal families of their children, or of other Interlake families (e.g., the Zachary (1877) and Wasylena (née Sawczuk; 1888) Watowich’s) that had a significant influence on the lives of these ancestors; people who may have been related in ways we do not understand and who spent many days socializing as well as assisting with the business of working a farm in the early 20th century. That work is left for another day...

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Homesteads (and notable familial residences)

See the very much related [“MyMaps” resource](#) for a visual presentation of these locations and further details.

Birth Family Homesteads and Residences:

- [Fred / Anastasia Russin Homestead](#)

The childhood home for Michael, right up to the time he set out on his teaching career, which is understood to have begun around 1920 and possibly a year or two before that.

- [Winnipeg Beach, MB](#)

Then but a village that grew into a town, this was the centre of much of the social life of the area. Michael lived here as a child for a period as reflected in some of the census records.

Members of the Russin family, especially the older children and their descendants, made this their home for many years, operating businesses such as grocery and general stores as well as serving, through the generations, as Postmasters. Michael eventually emulated that example when he left his teaching career behind to become a storekeeper himself.

- [Cassian / Anastazia Shmigelski Homestead](#)

Pauline’s childhood home, right up to their marriage in 1926.

- [Komarno, MB](#)

While neither family ever lived here, this town served as another centre of much of the social life of the Pleasant Home area. It figures often in the stories told by family members to their children.

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Michael’s (and Pauline’s) Teaching Career in the Interlake and Beyond:

- [McMillan School No 1109](#)

Located on the parcel that was the Shmigelski homestead

Believed to have been an early appointment for Michael (1900), his time here may have led to his knowing and later marrying, the young Pawlina Shmigelski (1906)

- [Vimy Ridge School No 1922](#)

Michael taught here from 1925 through 1935 and Paulina (1906) appears to have contributed to the school experience after their marriage in some way, as well

- [Kerr School No 2204](#)

Little is known about his time here and the available information seems to contradict other background known to be more reliable

- [Garland School No 1374](#)

The Manitoba Teachers Society has records indicating his time here included being highly active in the local “Teachers Association” which predated the current union; again, the information about the timing of his appointments is unclear

- [North Posen School No 1523](#)

Known to have taught here in 1922 and possibly again later; Stan Watowich (1928) recalls Michael being his teacher here in the years he walked from the Jachari Wojtowich homestead located on a neighbouring section, a bit more than a mile away (along the path!)

- [Melnice School No. 1295](#)

Both Michael (1900) and his older brother John (1893) and Russin taught at quite different times in the one-room school in this small town that has since disappeared. This was Michael’s final teaching post before bringing his family into Winnipeg at the time their son Gerald was beginning his studies at the University of Manitoba.

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Michael and Pauline’s Family Residences in Winnipeg, MB:

- Michael, Pauline, and their family moved to the city in 1942 where they successively kept two stores, the first, until about 1951, at York and Smith, the second, until their retirement in 1967, at 268 Albany Avenue. Pauline’s mother Nellie often stayed with them to look after Pauline after her major stroke just months after the marriage of her daughter, Edith, in 1952 and her subsequent related health problems.

Michael and Pauline’s Retirement Residences in Winnipeg, MB:

- The couple retired in 1967 to a seniors’ residence at 118 Sinawik Bay. This was Michael’s last residence. Following Michael’s passing, and after a short residency in a transitional facility, Pauline then spent the last few years of her life in care, in the Holy Family Nursing Home, where she, in turn, died.

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Russin Children:

- Gerald Martin Russin (1929) and his wife Dorothy “Jane” Williams (1932)

Their first-born, Gerald, completed his studies at the University of Manitoba in May of 1951. He immediately became part of the emerging oil boom in Western Manitoba, residing in the Virden and Brandon areas for a few years. He then followed the trends in the industry and transferred his skills to Venezuela. This is where he met his “English Rose” wife, Jane. They wed in Thornbury, Gloucestershire, England in August of 1959.

The couple lived in Venezuela for a time, where their first daughter was born. They then lived in England, where their second daughter was born. In 1963, they moved the young family to Calgary, AB, where they lived for many years and their twin daughters were born. There they stayed until their retirement. The girls all consider Calgary to be their childhood home.

Once retired, Gerry and Jane moved to White Rock, BC. This was Jane’s last residence before she died in 1999. Gerry remained at different addresses until his health demanded safer living arrangements and he went into care in the Gibson area to be near his eldest, Anna. There he passed away in late 2020.

- Edith Christine Russin (1932) and her husband Henri Marie Ferdinand “Hank” Dondo (1932)

Married in 1952 after meeting over the counter of her father’s grocery store (ice cream and bananas were always in demand!), the couple lived their entire lives in Winnipeg. They moved a few times as their family grew to include all five (5) children, settling for many years on Dunrobin Avenue, which was the address most of the children considered to be their family home.

The younger siblings spent some years with their parents on Donald Avenue, just a few blocks away, and the empty-nesters eventually set themselves up in an apartment complex also not far away on Whellams Lane. That was the final residence for Hank before going into care. Edith stayed a few more years, then moved to a more supportive facility next to the same care home in which Henri had spent his final weeks. That same residence would eventually welcome her, as well, for her final years. She passed away in this facility in May of 2020.

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Personal Stories

To allow everyone reading this document to gain further insight into the information gathered by the author about the main players in these stories, the senior generations, the pioneers, he used available features in Ancestry to generate two reports for each person. First, a “Life Story” for each of the following people and the files are available:

- [Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\)](#)
- His wife [Pawlina “Pauline” \(née Shmigelski, 1906 - 1985\) Russin](#)

Secondly, he has generated another document for each of them, a capture of their “profile” information. This view provides insight into both the “facts” about them and the sources that support them, currently:

- [Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\)](#)
- His wife [Pauline \(Shmigelski\) Russin \(1906\)](#)

The reader is welcome to take advantage of the information in these reports and to offer any suggestions for missing material or corrections. All help is welcome!

Also, of note: the author has extensive information about many people related to these key players by direct descendance and by marriage. Within reason... **questions and requests are welcome!**

Virtual Guided Tour

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Their Legacy

As readers are aware, the story of these families is on-going. These couples whose children met, married, and raised their own families, have since left us. However, their memory and their achievements live on in many ways through each of us.

One mark they have left, in most cases, is a memorial or grave marker in a cemetery. That has not always been the case and the locations of same have not all been found, but we can still create virtual memorials for them on services such as “Find a Grave”. That allows us to visit them, to think about them, to honour their memory, to recognize the way they shaped our own lives, while seated in a favorite spot, with a favorite beverage at hand...

As places to start such a nostalgic voyage of remembrance, the reader might want to consider the memorials for [Michael](#) and [Pauline](#).

Please note: The documents referenced here are the results of the family history research of the author. For errors and omissions, he accepts full blame. He is also open to all help in making the material better. He trusts you will find the journey they invoke to be a pleasant one.

While these documents offer a “point in time” view of our shared family history, they need not be static. With help and further research, they can be updated. This document will always refer to the most recent version available, so come back often and, please, make suggestions that will keep them up to date.

The reader has a chance to explore the realm of the lives of great-uncles and great-aunts (and further back!) and their descendance; second cousins and beyond who may not have been known before looking at these materials by reviewing the documents referenced earlier that describe the couple’s birth families.

Here is document that provides a simple list of descendants of this couple:

- [Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\) and his wife Pawlina “Pauline” \(née Shmigelski, 1906 - 1985\) Russin](#)

Here is related document that is another list. This one represents the known (or explicitly unknown!) resting places of those who have gone before us. As the reader will see, the lists go beyond the scope of the map offered in support of this document. There are graves and memorials in cemeteries beyond the locations that are the prime focus of this document, all marking the lives lived of our forebearers and worthy of our attention, at least, from time to time:

- [Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\) and his wife Pawlina “Pauline” \(née Shmigelski, 1906 - 1985\) Russin](#)

As an additional way of seeing the ways these people’s legacies have grown, here is a **Word Cloud** representation of the surnames of all the descendants in those lists:

- [Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\) and his wife Pawlina “Pauline” \(née Shmigelski, 1906 - 1985\) Russin](#)

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Cemeteries and Memorials

See the ["MyMaps" resource](#) for a visual presentation of these locations and further details.

Each link associated with the cemeteries in the list below is to the author's curated "virtual cemetery" for the yard in question. Each is meant to capture ALL the graves in the yard that are related to people in the author's extensive family tree.

While many names will be familiar, others may evoke a sense of wonder... wondering about just how the reader might be related to that person. While not everyone is closely related, they are on the author's tree for a reason and sometimes, that reason is both surprising and informative.

One thing the author has learned while compiling this information: We are ALL... cousins!

Author's note:

If any reader is aware of the details of the final disposition of the remains of anyone missing from these lists, please get in touch. I welcome all help in making these resources as complete and accurate as humanly possible.

Note: In direct reference to the above comments, the ["MyMaps" resource](#) includes pins for some cemeteries in the area that are not in these lists. This was done to suggest to the reader that there are more relatives buried in the area than appear on our direct lines of heritage... We owe... SO MUCH!

Greater Winnipeg and close suburbs area:

- [Glen Eden Cemetery, West St Paul](#)
Shmigelski, Russin, Kwasnicki, Payuk, Dondo, Watowich, Shalley, Harrison,
and many others by marriage

Further afield:

- [Ashes Scattered](#)
A collection of people whose choices for their remains involved cremation and the scattering of their ashes in locations that may or may not be known to the author

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Points of Special Interest

At this time, there are no identified points of special interest for this couple that are not mentioned above.

Virtual Guided Tour

Winnipeg, MB, Canada (and surrounding areas)

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Additional Resources

A free and public website:

[This online resource](#) provides a way for anyone desiring a peek into the connections that make us all cousins to explore the full extent of the author’s family tree.

The site gives access to the names and many facts about all the 17,900+ people for which he has information.

Feel free to explore! ESPECIALLY... the other lines of your own heritage that are not expressly discussed in the documents you will find there.

The author has worked to allow any living person on his tree to be able to show any living relative their (normally) 16 great-great-grandparents. In some cases, I have overachieved. In others, I have work left to do. I am hoping this will begin a collection of conversations that will help us ALL to understand the unexpected ways we are connected to people we may meet.

In addition, you will find there, links to “Virtual Guided Tours” for ancestors you may or may not share with the author.

Ancestry family trees:

(Ancestry account required)

(N.B., Viewing of some or all content may also require permission from the owner)

Of note: there are other family trees on Ancestry that provide in-depth information about other parts of the more distant relationships to other living relatives

[Rick Dondo \(1955\)’s main tree](#)

As of this writing, this tree contains information about more than 17,900 people, with more than 12,000 photos and images, more than 975 stories, and is supported by more than 34,000 records, with more than 51,400 unprocessed “discoveries” that could add depth to the stories these profiles tell about the people who went before us

N.B., The tree is “Public” on Ancestry and readily accessible; Ask if you want to see living people

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Publicly Available Records of significance:

Census records from Library and Archives Canada

Birth families:

[Canada Census 1901 - "Rusin" family in St Andrews](#)

[Canada Census 1901 - "Migelski" family in Komarno](#)

[Canada Census 1906 - "Rusyn" family in Winnipeg Beach](#)

[Canada Census 1906 - "Szmigielksi" family in Pleasant Home](#)

[Canada Census 1911 - "Rosian" family in Winnipeg Beach](#)

[Canada Census 1911 - "Sznigick" family in Komarno](#)

[Canada Census 1916 - "Russian" family in Winnipeg Beach](#)

[Canada Census 1916 - "Shmilzski" family in Komarno](#)

[Canada Census 1921 - "Russin" families in Winnipeg Beach](#) [of note: John (1893) is now head of family]

[Canada Census 1921 - "Shmygelski" family in Komarno](#)

[Canada Census 1926 - John "Russian" family in Winnipeg Beach](#) [Again, he is head of an extended family]

[Canada Census 1926 - "Srmigielski" family in Komarno](#)

Their family:

N.B., Michael Russin's entry in the 1921 census has not been found

[Canada Census 1926 - Michael and Pauline \(Shmigelski\) Russin family in Pine River](#)

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Snapshot images of ancestral family trees:

*(N.B. these are drawn from the author’s Ancestry tree and offered as a reference;
The trees may change at any time when new information comes to hand,
so these snapshots may become obsolete or otherwise inaccurate)*

While this document has a specific focus on the family Pauline and Michael raised, the reader is invited to examine the material available in the document that discusses the legacy of their parents to get an appreciation for the wider connections that are part of this heritage in subtler ways.

First as images (with their birth families, ancestors, and descendants):

(N.B., Making wall-size posters from these will require some meticulous effort or the use of a printing service with specialized equipment)

[Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\)](#)

Of note: references to sons “Michael (1888)” and “Martin (1895)” are ONLY drawn from a family history prepared by their grandson Fred Russin (1933). They appear in NO OTHER records.

His wife [Pawlina “Pauline” \(née Shmigelski, 1906 - 1985\) Russin](#)

Of note: The connection from Cassian to his parents is understood to be accurate, however the one to a possible sibling is purely speculative and is now understood to be highly improbable! We have NO documentation beyond some public family trees on Ancestry to support that sibling connection; however, the family lived in the Komarno area at the same time

Then, as documents, with a slightly different focus:

(N.B., Making wall-size posters from these will require some effort)

[Michael Martin Russin \(1900 - 1979\)](#)

(showing his birth family and some of his heritage)

His wife [Pawlina “Pauline” \(née Shmigelski, 1906 - 1985\) Russin](#)

(showing her birth family and some of her heritage)

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Winnipeg, MB, Canada (and surrounding areas)

Including the Manitoba Interlake and beyond

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Manitoba Local Histories:

[“Ukrainian Settlements in Manitoba” \(article\)](#)

[“Rockwood Municipality - 100 years of history”](#)

[“The Interlake Beckoned - A History of Inwood and Surrounding Districts”](#)

[“Spruce, Swamp and Stone - A History of the Pioneer Ukrainian Settlements in the Gimli Area”](#)

[“Winnipeg Beach - Moonlight Days”](#)

[“Beyond the Gates of Lower Fort Garry \(1982\)”](#)

[“The Land in the Middle – Manitoba’s Interlake”](#)

[“Selkirk - The First Hundred Years”](#)

[Manitoba’s Municipal History; RM’s and Districts](#) (Manitoba Historical Society)

Many others via [the Manitoba Historical Society](#)

Many others via [the Digital Collections at the University of Manitoba](#)

Family photo albums online:

[Celebration of life slide show for Henri Marie Ferdinand Dondo \(1932 – 2012\)](#) (as a document)

[A collage of just SOME of Hank’s press clippings](#)

At this time, these are the only ones known to the author, but all offers will be gladly received, and this document will be updated.

Check back often!