

A COMMON LANGUAGE

By Delsie Olson Cousineau



Many Swedes settled in Sprague during the late 1800's, and early 1900's but it wasn't just a Swedish community. The offer of free land also brought Norwegians, Polish, Ukrainians, Germans, English, French and Hungarians and they all worked together to form a community. English, spoken with many different accents and some amusing mispronunciations became the common language.

Most settlers had homesteads where they worked at mixed farming and took on other work such as trapping. Many worked in the forest industry, cutting logs, and milling lumber. Before rail shipping became available, the Sprague Lumber Company floated the logs on the Roseau River from The Landing at Sprague to their mill in Winnipeg. Some were railway workers who helped build and maintain the railway that came through Sprague in 1901. Swedes and other immigrants fought for Canada in both world wars. The Hardy, Golden Branch and Sprague

Schools were built. United, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic churches were established and disbanded. Only the Baptist Church remains.

Sprague has grown a little over the years and has remained a viable community with a consolidated school that also serves the surrounding villages. It is worth a trip to visit the museum to explore several buildings containing artifacts from Sprague and the nearby area.

Descendants of the original immigrants, live and work or are retired in Sprague and continue to contribute to its life. Swedes who once lived in Sprague still consider it their home town as evidenced by the attendance at the Swedish Cultural and Heritage Day put on by our Winnipeg Swedish Club and the Sprague Swedes in 2017. One hundred and twenty people with Swedish heritage or connections travelled from all over Canada and USA to hear or tell memorable stories about the early Swedish settlers and celebrate together at that event. English is still the common language. It is not as colourful as it once was but if you listen carefully, occasionally a little trace of a Swedish accent will reveal a Swedish heritage.



