

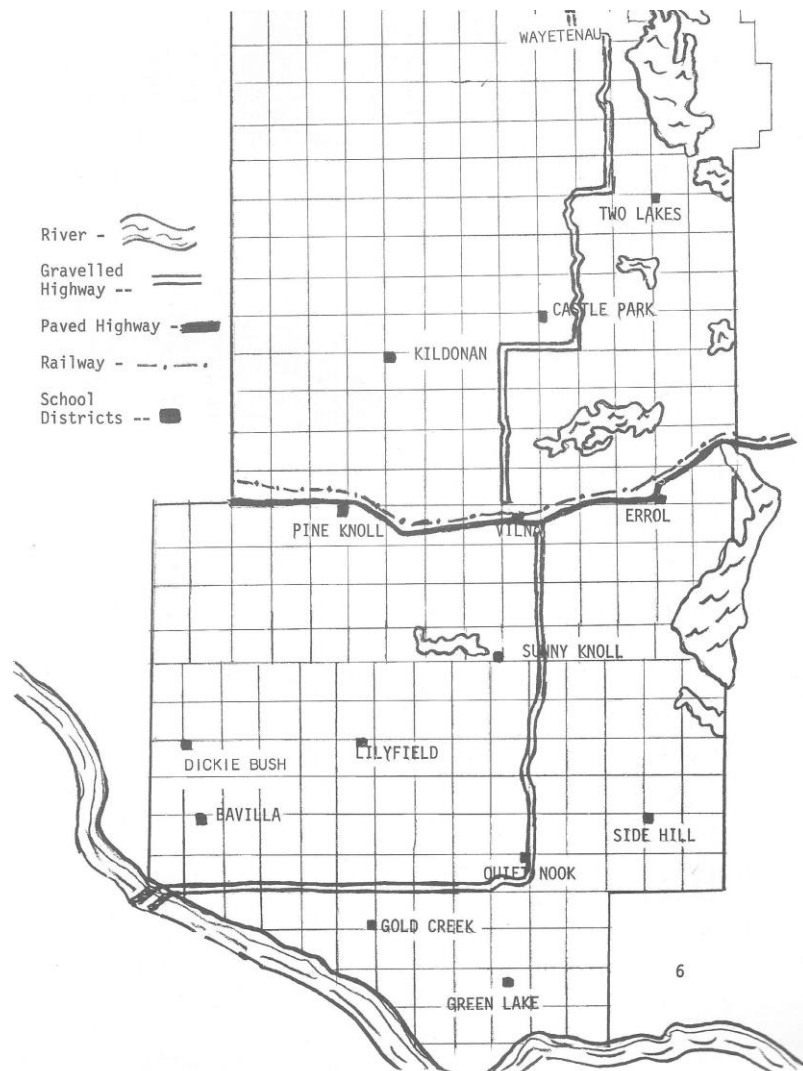
EARLY DAYS OF VILNA

The Vilna District opened in 1907 by an influx of mostly Central European homesteaders and squatters. In that same year, Treffle and Esther Veillette settled on a farm, two miles east of where Vilna is now and opened the first public and commercial buildings, a store and post office. In honor of this early pioneering family, the district was named after them in 1910.

When the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific Railways began to expand their lines west and north of Edmonton, the local homesteaders and early settlers had been promised a railroad serving the area north of the North Saskatchewan River. The rails had to run as far north as the present site of Vilna to avoid the difficulties of Indian lands and large bodies of water.

The Town site had been set aside at mile 90. In an enterprising effort to meet the railway's completion and subsequent boom, Harrold Asouthwell purchased the Vieillete's place in 1919 and moved the post office to the town site. The CNR finished laying the rail in 1919. A general store was built on the site of the Vilna Hotel and a hamlet grew up around it. A popular vote changed the name from Veillette to Vilna which means peace in Polish.

A hardware store, bank, butcher shop, hotel, post office, apartment and rooming house, pool hall and four stores were open for business in 1920. Vilna became a village on June 13, 1923.



Communities around Vilna 1967

The Hospital

"Alberta was bound to attract the Sisters of Service, a new Canadian order founded in Toronto in 1922, to do nursing and teaching and give religious instruction to children in rural areas. The order drew many nurses who had served in the army in the first great war. Within three years of founding the new order had started Our Lady's Hospital in Vilna.

Three Sisters of Service opened a hospital in Vilna in an

abandoned bank. It was November 29, 1925. There were six beds. The running water was the kind the nurses ran for, and so was the plumbing in cold or rainy weather. Fuel for the sterilizer came from the woodpile. It was a prospect to make the faint-hearted want to abandon the bank again, but Sister Catherine Wymbs, Sister Mary Rodgers, and Sister Ann Geraghty did not mind.

Sister Wymbs had been an army nurse overseas; had stayed in France after the war to help in the flu epidemic, and had been decorated by the French government. Sister Geraghty a jovial soul, had a fund of Irish songs and Irish Tales wh4ch were rated as good as medicine in the district homes where she went to nurse. Sister Geraghty was a sort of public relations officer for the hospital as she travelled around the district on her home visits. She was also a public health nurse.

After three years of hard work and firm organization the sisters were able to abandon the bank and move into a fifteen bed cottage hospital. In conjunction with the hospital they ran a small farm."

Quote from "Heritage of Service" Alberta by Tony Cashman.

Main Street Program



Currently the village of Vilna has been accepted in the Alberta Main Street Program and is preserving the heritage of the community by preserving many of the older buildings in Vilna.

In Vilna, you will see the largest mushrooms in the world. Although these particular mushrooms are not edible mushroom picking around this area is very popular. The Giant Mushrooms stand 20 feet high and have a 18 foot diameter. They are a replica of a tricholoma uspsale mushroom, a traditional ingredient in the ethnic dishes of the region.



Vilna's Giant Mushrooms

You may want to take in the Annual fair, a weekend of traditional rural activities. Enjoy a parade, a traditional bench show of farm and garden products, a display of local handicrafts drop by the Vilna Farmer's Market held every Saturday.



Another attraction in town is the Pool Hall. Turn back the clock with this authentic, early 1920's Alberta's oldest operating pool hall and barbershop