

STORY OF THE VEGREVI LLE PYSANKA

Why an Egg?

Of all things, why an egg? The story began in 1973 when the Alberta government established the Alberta Century Celebrations Committee to coordinate the Centennial celebrations of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to be held in 1974. The committee was to distribute funds to communities that wished to build a monument to the R.C.M.P.

The Chamber's Challenge

The Vegreville and District Chamber of Commerce took up the challenge. Numerous suggestions were made but the best by far was a giant Easter Egg symbolizing the peace and security the Mounties had offered the area's pioneers and their descendants. The exquisite and intricate decoration of Easter eggs is a Ukrainian folk art known the world over. (The Ukrainian word for Easter egg, Pysanka, comes from the verb pysaty - to write.)

To Build a Pysanka

The unique nature and complicated geometry of the egg shape made the design of the Pysanka a highly complex project. Professor Ronald Resch, a computer scientist at the University of Utah, agreed to take on the design project. Realizing the significant nature of the project, the Century Celebrations Committee increased the Chamber's grant to \$25,000. Professor Resch was responsible for the entire Pysanka concept which required the development of new computer program. The Pysanka is really an immense jigsaw puzzle containing 524 star patterns, 2,208 equilateral triangles, 3,512 visible facets, 6,978 nuts and bolts, and 177 internal struts.

World Recognition

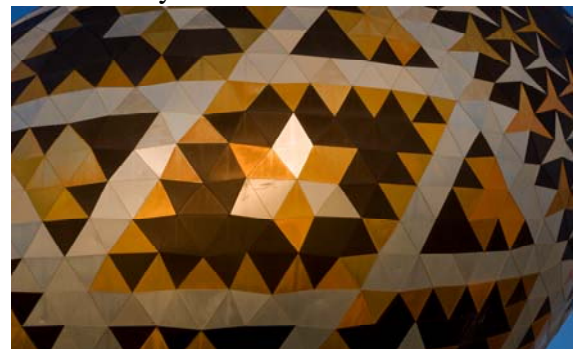
As a result of Professor Resch's work and leadership, the Pysanka is recognized around the world as not only a unique artistic masterpiece but also an achievement of nine mathematical, architectural and engineering firsts. The design represents the first computer modeling of an egg. Thousands of tourists from around the world visit Vegreville annually and marvel at the Pysanka. It measures 25.7 feet long, 18 feet wide, and stands 31 feet high. It is one of the premier tourist attractions on the Yellowhead Highway. The 2,000-pound aluminum skin is attached to the central mast at a 30-degree angle with 177 turnbuckle struts. Cessco International Ltd., Edmonton, fabricated the massive internal structure which weighs 3,000 pounds. The Pysanka rests on a 27, 000-pound base of concrete and steel and turns in the wind like a weathervane.

Symbolic Meanings

Paul Sembaliuk, an authority on traditional Easter egg design, used three colors - bronze, silver and gold - to symbolize prosperity. Bronze is the predominant color of the design and suggests the "good earth", the land on which our forefathers struggled for survival and existence.

Five distinct symbols make up the design. The radiating gold stars on the end sections symbolize Life and Good Fortune. The three pointed stars, in alternating gold and silver, symbolize the Trinity, representing the strong devotion to the faith of our ancestors. The band of silver circumscribing the Pysanka, with no beginning or end, symbolizes Eternity.

On the central barrel section, gold and silver windmills with six vanes and points symbolize a Rich Harvest. The most prominent motif of the design - the silver wolfs' teeth which point to the centre from the silver band symbolize the main message of Protection and Security afforded our pioneers by the R.C.M.P.



The dedication message is written in four Languages: English, Ukrainian, French and German. It Reads:

"This Pysanka (Easter Egg) symbolizes the harmony, vitality and culture of the community and is dedicated as a tribute to the One-Hundredth Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who brought peace and security to the largest multi-cultural settlement in all of Canada."

R.C.M.P. Centennial Celebrations

The Pysanka was the showpiece of the R.C.M.P.'s centennial celebrations. The Century

Celebrations Committee concluded its report to the provincial government with this statement:

"Of the great variety projects undertaken to mark the Century Celebrations, none can be regarded as more unique than the Ukrainian Easter Egg, 'Pysanka', undertaken by Vegreville. It is spectacular in its contrivance to combine the ancient traditions of one of Alberta's largest ethnic groups with architectural and geometric developments that represent a 'breakthrough' in modern science thus linking heritage and progress. "

The Royal Visit

During the Royal Visit in 1978, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, participated in the unveiling of a plaque which commemorates their visit to Vegreville. The plaque is located adjacent to the Pysanka and bears the inscription:

"To Commemorate the Visit of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, on August 2, 1978."

The sincere cooperation of the Town of Vegreville, local firms, and individuals in the construction on this project is hereby acknowledged by the Chamber of Commerce.

The Pysanka has a beautiful setting in the Elks' Park beside the fish pond at the east end of the town and highlights the entrance to the park.

