THE WOODEN ARCHITECTURE OF LITTLE POLAND

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition owes its existence to five Polish architects — Marek Dunikowski, Wojciech Miecznikowski, Stanisław Deńko, Anna Palej, and Krzysztof Bojanowski — who came as visiting faculty to the School of Architecture at the University of Tennessee. I was pleased to show them the unusual log barns of east Tennessee, which I was then studying, and they introduced me to the wooden architecture of Poland. With their encouragement and practical support, I became interested in learning more about these handsome vernacular buildings. Grants from the International Research and Exchanges Board (using funding provided by the U. S. Information Agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Ford Foundation), the UTK Faculty Development Fund, and a leave from the School of Architecture allowed me to spend January through June 1993 at the Politechnika Krakowska to study material in libraries and archives and also to visit buildings in the field. Dean Marleen Davis of the UTK School of Architecture has provided support for framing and mounting the exhibition, which has been planned and executed by Sam Yates, Director of the Art and Architecture Gallery, with assistance from Tim Massey.

Faculty and staff of the Politechnika Krakowska were of great assistance in this work. I am indebted to Dr. Wiktor Zin, Head of the Institute for Architectural History and Monuments Conservation, and Dr. Andrzej Kadłuczka, now Dean of the School of Architecture, for their hospitality during my stay in Kraków and their willingness to lend drawings from the Institute's archives for use in this exhibition. Joanna Arct of the Institute's Library was always helpful in locating material, and Dr. Ewa Sadowska kindly shared her books. Dr. Jacek Czubiński, who has collaborated on the preparation of the exhibition and wrote the catalog entries, was invaluable in introducing me to the PK archives and the unique features of the Jagiellonian University Library. Special thanks are due to Anna Palej, who made me welcome in her home, and Joanna Dunikowska, who was my enthusiastic companion and capable driver for travels in the countryside.

Information regarding the exhibition may be obtained by contacting the Director, Art + Architecture Gallery, 1715 Volunteer Boulevard, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-2410.

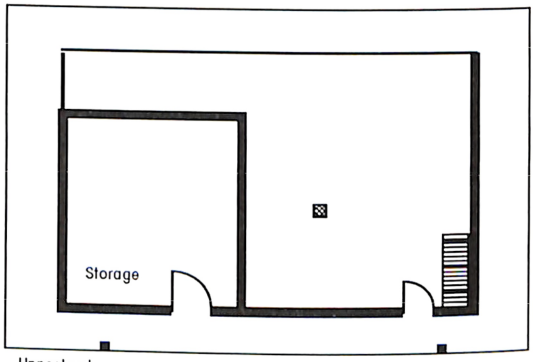
THE WOODEN ARCHITECTURE OF LITTLE POLAND



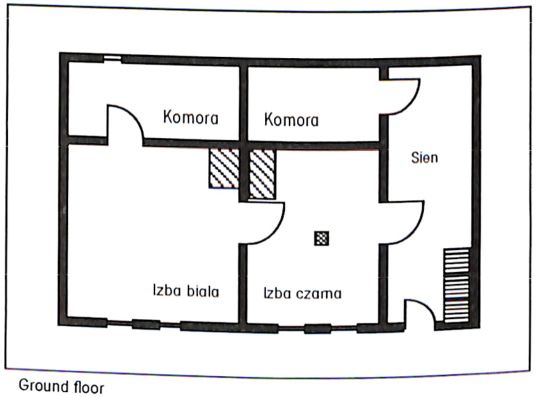
Marian Moffett

Art & Architecture Gallery • The University of Tennessee, Knoxville • 1995



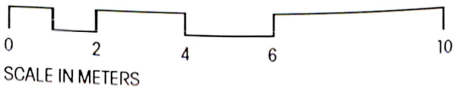


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Zubrzyca Górna - House #232



SCALE IN METERS

INTRODUCTION

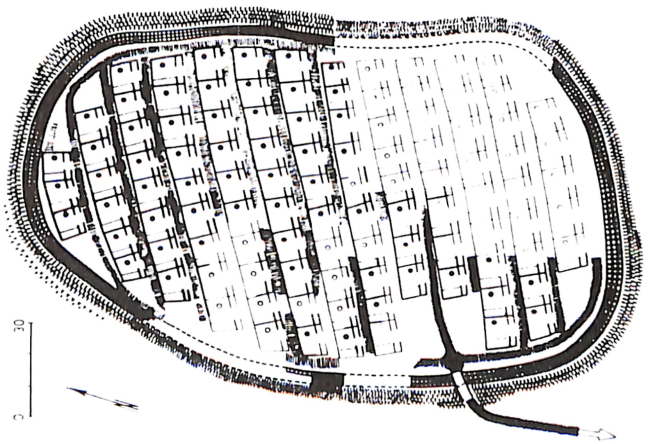
Here is presented a very brief overview of wooden building in the southern districts of Poland, known historically as Little Poland (Małopolska), containing the foothills and high ridges of the Carpathian mountains. Until rather recently, political isolation has hindered western knowledge of this region, and language barriers have kept many publications inaccessible to English-speaking readers. The territory itself has been governed by various states, and what was once under Polish rule is today the province of Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Architectural historians, archaeologists, and ethnographers of all three countries have made extensive studies of the vernacular buildings of the mountains, and it is their good work on which this exhibition relies. All the drawings are the work of students from architecture classes at the Politechnika Krakowska, which since 1947 has sent third-year classes into the field for summer experiences in measuring and drawing historic buildings. While most of the monuments thus surveyed are masonry, the students have also studied wooden architecture. Drawings of various types, from working field sheets to finished renderings, have been included to illustrate the documentation process. It is hoped that through this exhibition, these buildings may become more widely known outside of Poland.

CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

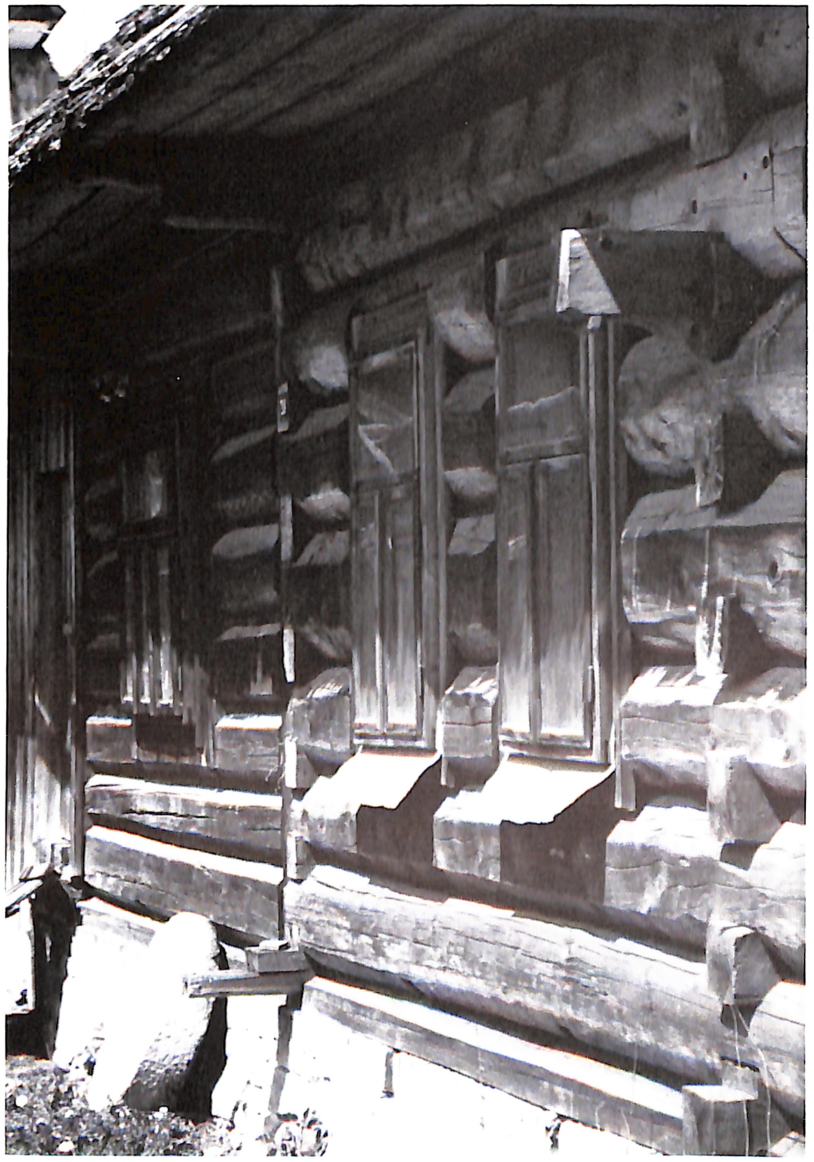
Eastern Europe may well be considered a cradle of wooden architecture. Prehistoric settlements dated to 500 B.C. have been excavated at Biskupin in north-central Poland, revealing a community with wooden houses, earth-filled horizontal-log fortifications, and log-paved streets. These ancient traditions have continued until the present, growing in sophistication as folk building while also remaining of interest to contemporary architects. In rural districts of eastern Europe, wood is not only the dominant building material, but virtually all wooden building is constructed with horizontal logs. Even buildings dating from the nineteenth century represent developments that extend back much further.

Most wooden houses, farm structures, and churches of Little Poland share certain construction features. Stone foundations are typically used to provide protection from ground moisture, set either as large flat cornerstones or laid carefully in fieldstone. Walls are built of either squared or rounded timber from which the bark has been removed. In some districts,





View of the partially reconstructed village of Biskupin and a plan of the settlement, based on excavations begun in 1934. On the left, a portion of the fortified wall with gate tower. Houses are visible on the right.



Detail of a house from Koniówka, showing careful shaping of the logs and construction of the eaves. Windows are doubled for insulation, with paired casements and an awning/hopper combination overhead.

it is traditional to daub house walls with plaster or clay and then paint the whole, a technique which would help to seal out the weather. Parts of Poland traditionally use blue, and the exterior coloring is renewed annually, typically at Easter. For churches especially, log walls are often covered with wood siding, perhaps to give a less rustic appearance or to increase insulation against the harsh winter. Spaces between logs are handled in several ways. The most carefully crafted buildings have logs which rest directly on the previous course, with a groove scored to ensure a tight fit. Joints may be packed with moss, straw, rope, or the specially cut wood shavings that are used primarily in more recent construction, where they contrast to smooth logs of the wall. Only on poorer cottages does one find clay or plaster chinking faced internally with wood.

Many varieties of corner timbering seen in eastern Europe have no parallel in the United States. While the V, saddle, and half-dovetail joints used so frequently in American cabins are found, east Europeans tend to employ corner notch types which are pegged internally for rigidity. On the oldest churches, complex corner joints have been recorded by preservationists, who have probed the joints with long thin needles to ascertain the internal geometry.

Roofs on houses tend to be constructed with heavy log purlins tied into gable end walls, while truss construction is most commonly reserved for the larger spans found in churches. The roofing material, be it shingle, thatch, or a combination of the two, contributes both to waterproofing and decoration of the building. Shingles are rived or split, not sawn, and most commonly, they have a tongue-and-groove joint so that they interlock along the side. The lateral joint allows the boards to swaddle irregular planes and curves while contributing texture to the exterior, and this quality is exploited in the many fluid roof forms observable particularly on churches. Shingles at the roof's edge may be cut with pointed ends to encourage run-off and minimize the drawing-up of water along the bottom. Simpler buildings may be roofed with boards set in two overlapping layers, also with shaped ends to improve run-off. Birch bark is used as flashing along roof-wall junctions as well as in damp-proofing courses between foundation stones and wall logs.

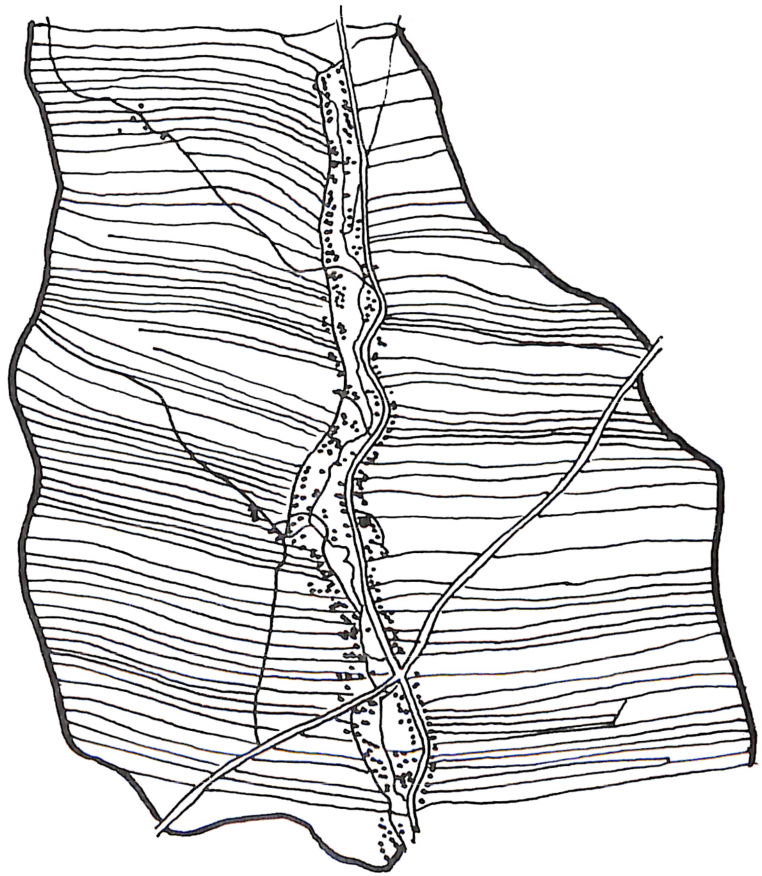
Churches and the finer folk houses are subject to embellishment of all sorts, including carved or scroll-saw gable boards, doorway ornaments, shaped window surrounds, balcony railings, roof finials, and chiseled summer beams. To the historian's delight, the date of construction is frequently incorporated into these designs.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The area featured in this exhibition embraces the northern arm of the Carpathian mountains. The Tatras contain the highest peaks, while much of the remainder consists of rolling mountain land broken by streams and rivers. The climate is harsh, the soil is poor, and not surprisingly, the region was not inhabited until relatively late in the middle ages. Despite legislation which freed the serfs in 1864, an essentially feudal society, with aristocratic landlords and dependent peasants, was preserved here until the upheavals of 1919 and 1939 finally swept away the old social order. The mountain villages, with their wooden buildings, are thus a living link to the medieval past.

Carpathian settlements were generally deliberate ventures to exploit forest resources. Noble land owners established villages to attract settlers, and in some cases they also provided the houses, which accounts for a certain uniformity in design and placement. A typical mountain village consists of a single road, often set parallel to a stream, with a row of houses on either side. Plots for each dwelling run at right angles to the road, extending up to the ridge crest, so that each household has a share of fertile bottom land, hillside pasture, and higher wood lot. Subsistence farming was necessary to feed the family and livestock, but for the landlord the exploitable commodities were timber and sheep, with their associated products: wooden crafts, sheepskins, wool, and cheese. Farming and sheep herding were the focus of summer activity, while winter months were spent on craft production and logging.





Plan of Markowa, a typical forest village in southern Małopolska, showing the narrow strip field divisions.

CATHOLIC CHURCHES

In most villages of the central Carpathians, wooden houses were complemented by a wooden Catholic parish church. Typically, the church is set slightly apart from the community and located on a rise or beside a stream. The building is surrounded by a wall to keep out animals, and very frequently there is also a second enclosure of trees, which may be older than the present structure. These trees are thought to represent continuation of pre-Christian nature worship, or perhaps they were intended as living lightening rods to protect the building from electrical storm damage — both explanations are offered. Churches are usually distinguished by their towers and a high gable roof. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many churches also received encircling galleries called *sobota* that protect the foundations from damp and once provided overnight shelter for pilgrims who had traveled to attend Sunday services. (*Sobota* in Polish means Saturday, and the galleries were used on Saturday nights.) In some churches, multiple roof layers dominate the exterior form, cascading down in an all-encompassing composition that expresses symbolically the concept of sanctuary or safe haven.

Catholic churches in the region of Podhale were among the earliest to be established, with the oldest surviving wooden examples dating from the fifteenth century. Most are oriented — that is, their chancel ends face east — and they are clearly patterned on masonry churches having a simple nave and chancel layout. In wooden versions, this basic scheme is generally enriched over time by a sacristy built on the north side of the chancel and a south porch providing direct entry to the nave. The plan was readily adaptable to horizontal log construction for the walls using wooden trusses for the roof. Pointed arches typical of Gothic architecture are sometimes reproduced in wood, as in the chancel doorway at Dębno. At first, the bell tower was built separately, following the model of defensive towers constructed on a framework of inwardly inclined, crossbraced wooden members. Sloping walls thus are characteristic of most belfries, and from the seventeenth century onward they were often added to existing log churches or included as original parts of new constructions. Two separate framing systems, inclined posts for the tower and horizontal log for the church proper, were maintained in either case.

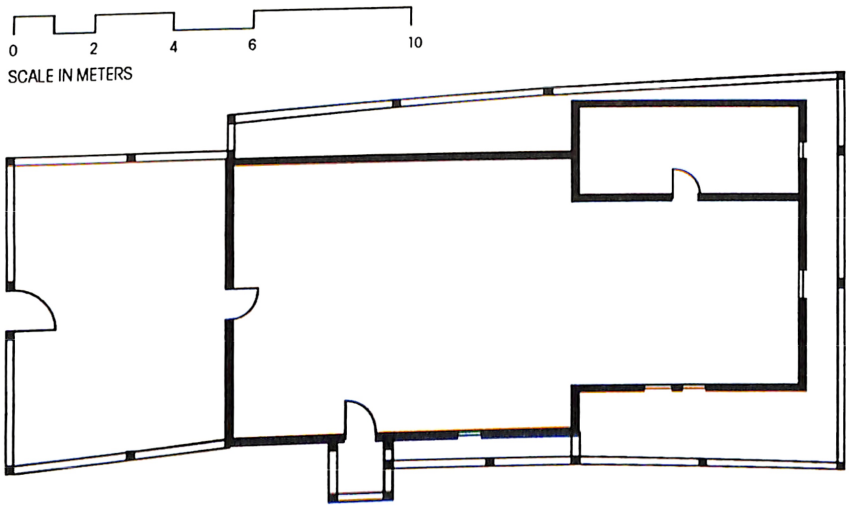
There is considerable evidence that parish churches were constructed by guilds whose members would have been exposed to styles prevalent in urban areas. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wooden churches follow patterns established in masonry architecture, gracefully translating the curvature of Baroque domes to wooden construction and shingle work. Smaller ave bell turrets were added to some nave roofs in the nineteenth century, creating a more complex profile against the sky.

Interiors of Catholic churches are rich and surprisingly well lit, considering that windows are largely restricted to the south wall. Some of the loveliest early churches, such as Dębno and Łopuszna, are embellished with stenciled decorations probably executed by traveling craftsmen. Artists from later periods contributed illusionist coffering to ceilings, saints' pictures to the walls, gilded Baroque altarpieces, patterned rugs or carpets, and crystal chandeliers. These combine with seasonal festival decorations hung by current parishioners to create lively interiors that make up in local enthusiasm what they may lack in artistic unity. These buildings are still very much in use.



Southeastern view of the Church of Holy Trinity at Łopuszna. Notice the wall and grove of trees surrounding the building. Although there is a door under the western tower, the south porch entrance is generally used.





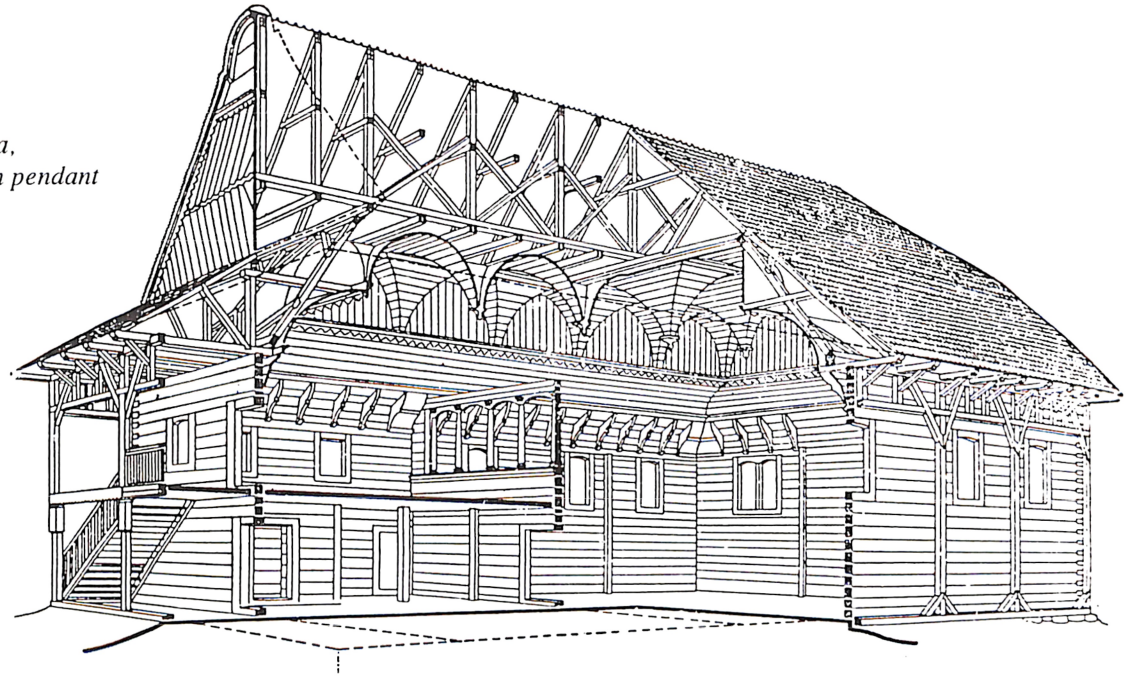
View and plan of the Church of St. Michael Archangel at Dębno, one of the most celebrated in all Poland. This building illustrates features of wooden churches in Podhale and preserves much of its original interior.

(left) Interior of the Church of St. John the Baptist from Orawka. looking from the nave into the chancel.

(below) The Church of Immaculate Conception at Spytkowice was built in 1758 with a church and separate belfry.







Perspective drawing of the eighteenth-century synagogue at Pilica, showing external stair access to the women's gallery and wooden pendant vaults over the main hall.

SYNAGOGUES

Jewish traders and merchants were in the Carpathian region almost as early as were Christian missionaries. In the context of medieval and Renaissance history, Polish kings were more tolerant than any other European powers, and as other countries expelled their Jewish populations, many of these displaced people moved to Poland. The Jews' involvement in trade, manufacture, and banking made them a vital part of the small towns established in western Ukraine under Polish expansionist policies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the end of the nineteenth century, it is claimed that 75 to 80% of European Jewry resided in what was once Polish territory.

The earliest known wooden synagogues, dating from the seventeenth century, appear to have been modeled on masonry designs, such as the old synagogues in Kazimierz near Kraków. Wooden versions used log construction for walls and complex timber frames for roofs. Synagogue construction was closely regulated by Catholic authorities, who required among other things that the building maintain a profile lower than that of the church and be located at some distance from it on a street that did not bear a saint's name. In plan, synagogues had square or rectangular prayer halls flanked on one or more sides by galleries for women. A vestibule, chamber for the religious court, and a study room completed the building's spaces. Exteriors were modest, based perhaps on features of wooden manor houses of the gentry. Religious tradition required separate entrances for men and women, and covered exterior stairs were commonly used to access the women's galleries.

Synagogue roofs were typically characterized by breaks which interrupted the continuous slope of the roof. Sophisticated truss construction allowed the ceiling over the prayer hall to assume a sculpted shape, rising to its greatest height over the bima or rostrum placed in the center of the hall. Even though the actual interior dimensions were not great, the shaped ceiling created the illusion of monumentality while simultaneously observing the church-mandated low profile for Jewish houses of worship.

Every wooden synagogue in Poland and Ukraine was destroyed during the German occupation of 1939-44, and only partial documentation had been made of synagogue architecture before these important monuments of Jewish culture vanished. Although they share material and construction techniques with Catholic churches, synagogues embodied a completely different character, as expressive of the Jewish community in Poland as a wooden church was distinctive of the village. In the words of Maria and Kazimierz Piechotkowie, foremost architectural historians of Jewish synagogues, the wooden synagogues represented "an architecture that was highly original in form and construction and offered inimitable bold solutions to spatial problems, particularly in the field of carpentry."

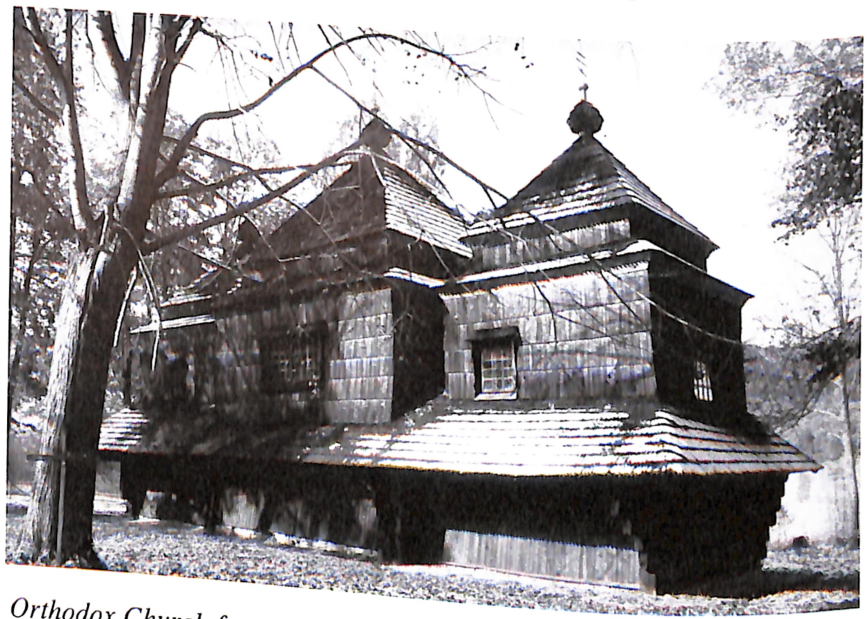
ORTHODOX CHURCHES

During the fifteenth century, Ukrainian farmers migrated from the plains of Ukraine into the more arable Carpathian valleys of southeastern Poland. These settlers, known as Boykos, were Russian Orthodox until 1596, when as a result of Jesuit proselytizing among Orthodox populations living adjacent to Catholic lands, the treaty of Brest brought them under the jurisdiction of the Pope. Boykos retained their clergy (who could marry), their church language (Slavonic), and their distinctive liturgical practices (including the veneration of icons), but they now recognized the Pope in Rome rather than the Patriarch in Moscow as the ultimate religious authority. The church thus created is known variously as Greek Catholic, Uniate, or Ukrainian National, depending on whether Poles, Russians, or Ukrainians are doing the labeling. Not surprisingly, Boyko architecture derives from Russian traditions, specifically the tripartite plan of chancel, nave, and women's porch. Pyramidal roofs, which were developed in Volhynia and Galicia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, became the basis for more elaborate forms to come in the Carpathians.

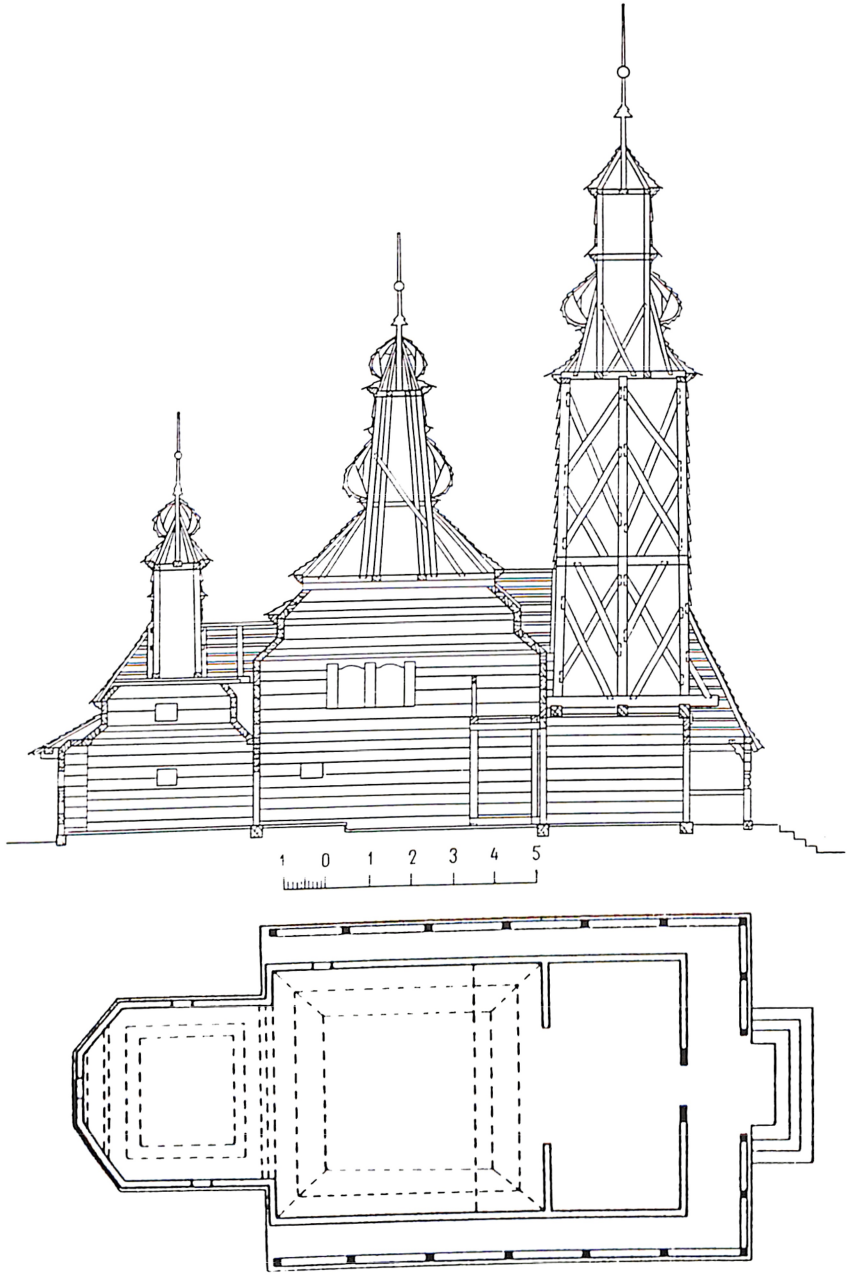
Each section of a Boyko church is square in plan and articulated by a separate roof, presenting a nearly symmetrical composition in side elevation. The earliest extant models date from the eighteenth century. They feature a high roof over the nave, typically twice the height of the walls, incorporating breaks or *zaloms* in its profile. While superficially these *zaloms* resemble the breaks in synagogue roofs, their construction is completely different, for ceilings of Boyko churches are constructed of horizontal logs rather than timber trusswork. The *zaloms* are formed by alternating vertical and inclined sections of log work in a manner that might be considered log vaulting. External galleries or low roofs cantilevered from the log walls protect the foundations as sobota galleries do for Catholic churches. On the interior, the plan's divisions are quite clear: the chancel is separated from the nave by the iconostas, clearly delimiting the domain of the priest, and the westernmost section reserved for women is distinguished from the men-only nave by a framed opening and change of ceiling height. Customarily, there is a separate belfry not aligned with the axis of the church. Breadth, not height, is characteristic of Boyko belfries, which are sometimes elaborated with tiers of open galleries so that people could view celebrations in the churchyard.

A second group of Orthodox people, known as Łemks or Łemkos, also moved into the Carpathians. Their origins are still debated. Polish ethnographers link them to the Balkans, perhaps to Albania or Bulgaria, while Ukrainian researchers feel they are related to the Cossacks further to the southeast. Both scholarly groups agree that the Łemkos were nomadic herdsmen accustomed to pasture their flocks of sheep and goats on the high ridges in the summer and shelter in lower forest lands during the winter. By the late fifteenth century, most Łemkos had been forced by feudal landlords to give up their aestival migration and reside permanently in newly established mountain settlements located in the areas poorest for agriculture. Many of the highland villages in Poland between the Poprad and Oslawa rivers were entirely Łemko, for landlords tended to evict other tenants in favor of Łemkos, who knew better than most how to scratch a living from difficult terrain.

From a liturgical point of view, there is no difference between the Boykos and Łemkos, for both are identified with the Uniate church, but their differing ethnic origins are reflected in slightly different church designs. While Łemko churches use the same tripartite plan as the Boykos, retaining the iconostas and the women's section, they soon incorporated a bell tower onto the women's porch and included Baroque domes at the apex



Orthodox Church from Smolnik, showing the towerless tripartite design typical of Boyko churches. The women's porch, nave, and chancel are basically square in plan, and each is articulated by a pyramidal roof.



Section and plan of the Łemko Church of the Intercession (1792), originally at Ploskoje, moved to Kanora, and now at the open-air museum in Kiev.



The Church of St. James the Apostle from Powróznik (1612), one of the oldest Łemko churches in Poland.

of the roofs. Most Łemko churches are interpreted as a fusion of eastern church traditions — the three-part plan with its separate functions and clear volumetric expression through log vaulting — with western elements, such as the timber frame tower and Baroque domes from Catholic lands. Their churches also feature pews, a non-orthodox idea. As the most western of Orthodox people, it is no particular surprise that Łemkos borrowed from Catholic church designs which could easily be seen in the surrounding territory. Some Łemko churches, however, remained closer to the Boyko scheme, raising a series of cupolas and lanterns over the church and retaining a freestanding belfry.

Łemko churches are delightful compositions. The buildings themselves are small, and yet they assume a distinctive profile in the community, set (as with Catholic churches) in a fenced enclosure surrounded by trees. The ascending line of domes rising over the chancel, nave, and belfry presents a dramatic skyline, crowned by wrought iron crosses, each made to a different design. Originally, these domes were covered with wooden shingle, but in more recent days, sheet metal has been bent over many roofs in an effort to keep out the elements. Substantial numbers of Boyko and Łemko churches vanished after World War II, when Polish authorities forcibly moved Greek Catholic people to northwestern Poland in an effort to quell Ukrainian nationalism. Although money to repair churches in the field was scarce during socialist days, the governments of Slovakia, Poland, and Russia have preserved some lovely Orthodox churches in open-air museums.

What were the interactions among the ethnic groups which built these houses of worship? How much was shared besides a common building material? The answer seems to be, not very much. Aside from the borrowings already mentioned — notably the timber-framed belfries and Baroque domes on Łemko churches, and roof lines with breaks which synagogues may have adopted from Polish manor houses — one remarkable quality of Jewish, Catholic, and Orthodox groups was their ability to retain individual identity despite centuries of living in close proximity one to another. The relationship between Jews and Catholics in Poland has been well documented: each group was firmly convinced of its moral superiority over the other, and each preferred to live in separate communities. Only Catholics were citizens of the country. Consequently, Jews in Polish towns were isolated in ghettos or shetls, speaking either Hebrew or Yiddish rather than Polish, maintaining Jewish schools, and abiding by Jewish laws. The situation is similar with relations between Catholics and Orthodox people, who seldom inhabited the same village. Łemkos and Boykos, largely peasants on estates owned by Polish aristocrats, were collectively known as Russians, their dress and speech differentiating them from the Poles. Since religious affiliation was a major component of culture for all groups, designs used for houses of worship reflected distinctive identities. Evidence for this is striking: the Catholic church at Sękowa and the Orthodox church at Rychwałd, located less than six kilometers from each other, are fundamentally different in terms of construction and spatial conception.

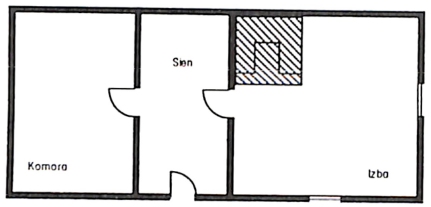


Interior of the Orthodox Church of St. James the Theologian at Muszynka, showing the shaped ceiling formed by inclined log courses over the nave. The iconostas screens the chancel from view of the congregation.

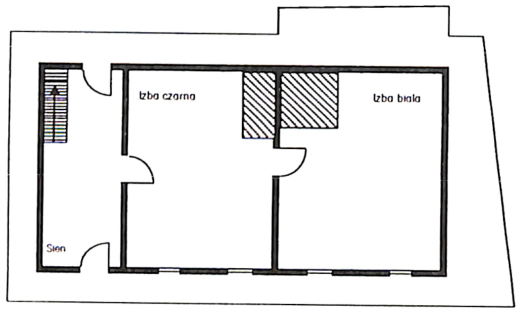




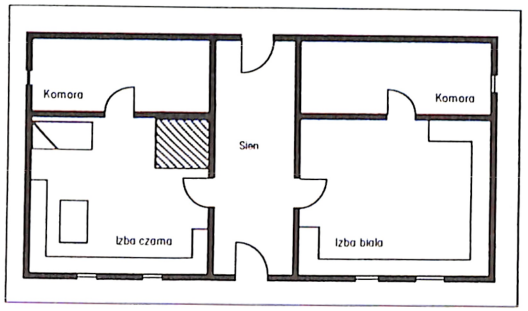
The Catholic Church of SS. Philip and James at Sękowa (left) and the Orthodox Church of the Intercession from Rychwałd (above). In these neighboring buildings, one sees the individual approach to church design taken by two distinct ethnic communities.



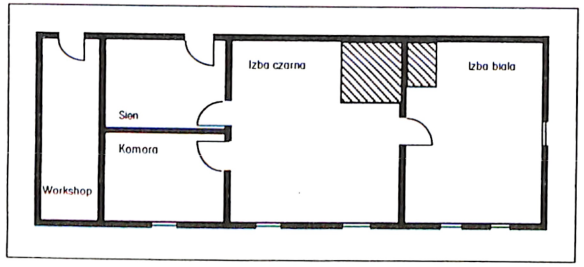
18th century house from Przysietnica in the region of Podhale



House from Bukowina OS in the region of Spisz



House from Skibowice in the region of Podhale



House from the region of Spisz



DWELLING HOUSE DESIGNS

House plans used throughout the region share certain features — room size determined by the limitations of horizontal log construction, a minimal number of rooms and windows, and a large chimneyless clay stove for heating and cooking. These elements have inspired academicians to characterize the theoretical evolution of plan types. One should approach these diagrams with a certain measure of caution. While it is undoubtedly true that the single heated living room is the nucleus of every house, it does not necessarily follow that peasant communities followed an orderly development process in the construction of more expansive plans. Wealth and higher social standing are connected with increased numbers and sizes of rooms, and they are associated with other house design features as well. Peasant communities had both poor and more prosperous households, and housing reflected economic status. For example, steeper pitches on roofs were a sign of wealth, indicating that the owner could afford the longer timbers required for rafters, rather than being a reflection of rainfall or elevation, as was postulated in some academic studies.

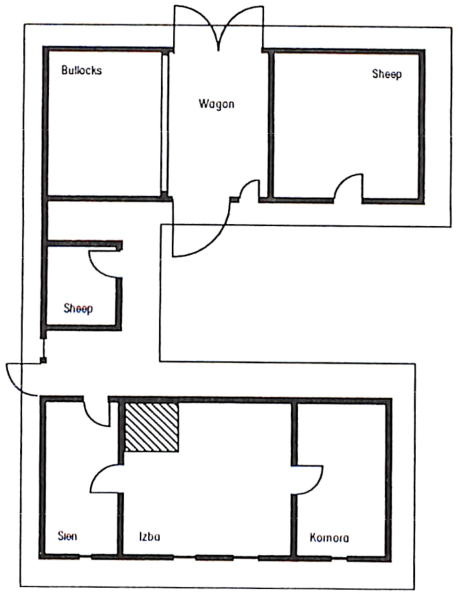
One does not need a compass to determine the orientation of houses. Windows are always more numerous on the south-facing facade, although there might be openings in other walls. The fundamental house plan has three rooms: an entrance hall (*sień*), a heated living room with the stove (*izba*), and an unheated storage chamber (*komora*). The entrance hall, which served as an airlock for the living room, was also used for storage and as a stable for young animals, typically a goat. The main chamber served as kitchen, living space, dining area, and bedroom combined into one, with perhaps a cow or two included as well. For a large family it would be a crowded space, but it was warm. Most houses had only one bed, but bench seats set against the wall or built-in as part of the construction were converted into additional sleeping space by addition of a backed bench. Stoves might be constructed to include a sleeping platform above the warm oven. A table set in the cleanest corner diagonally opposite the stove would be used primarily for ceremonial occasions, as most meals were eaten with simple utensils from a common pot. Spoon racks, a plate rail, clothes rod, cradle, and perhaps a kitchen cupboard completed the usual interior furnishings. Smoke from the stove would find its way out through ceiling holes or a wooden hood duct set above the fire. This indirect ventilation was responsible for the descriptive name applied to the room in Polish, *izba czarna*, which means black room. The original indoor air quality cannot be approximated by the cleaned-up houses displayed in museums.

Chambers designated *izba biała* or white room were heated indirectly through a wall shared with the *izba czarna,* without participating also in the smoke and soot. The white room was typically given nicer furnishings as a parlor or room for elderly parents.

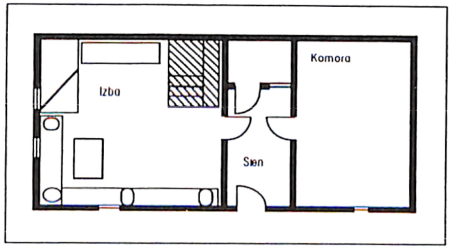
An unheated storage room was used for staple foodstuffs (generally potatoes and sauerkraut), seed corn, household and farm implements, and out-of-season garments. In some houses, additional storage chambers wrap the living space on the sides or rear to provide insulation from the cold and shelter for firewood and livestock. Additional rooms, if any, might be used for workshops, the keeping of special treasures such as a dowry chest, or bedrooms.

The districts of Orawa and Podhale have some of the most distinctively detailed houses. Orawan houses, such as those preserved at the museum in Zubrzyca Górna, feature a second-level cantilevered gallery called a *wyżka* accessing an upper storage room. The gallery is reached by a narrow ladder-stair placed either on the exterior or in the entrance hall, and the *wyżka* provided space for drying clothing and produce. Orawan houses often have smoke holes set like very tiny dormers in the roof to vent the stove in the living room. The smoke holes dot the roof and are complemented by turned hoods at the peak of gable ends. Doorways generally have ingenious braces, known locally as *dogs*, inset at the upper corners as both a decorative and reinforcing element. In more isolated mountain communities, there were at one time Orawan farmsteads which clustered around rectangular courtyards, but few of these survive. (The open-air museum at Martin in Slovakia has several fine examples.)

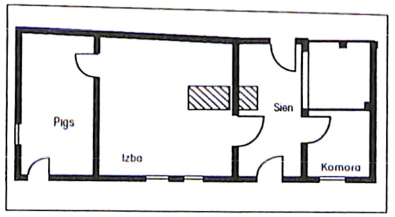
The highest Carpathian elevations in the Tatra mountains are associated with the cultural district known as Podhale. As the independent highlanders who inhabit this region of snow-capped peaks are celebrated for their woodcarving skills, Podhale houses are often lovingly decorated with geometric sun ornaments that have links back to pre-Christian symbolism. Doorways with dogs and conical gable hoods on houses are features common to both Orawan and Podhale houses. There are least two living Podhale communities that survive thanks to national cultural protection, Chochołów in Poland and Vlkolinec in Slovakia. Essentially similar house forms are washed once a year at Easter in Chochołów and regularly repainted with pastel hues in Vlkolinec. The rationale for the distinctive Podhale roof with a skirt across the gable end becomes obvious in the winter: the additional overhang protects the log walls from snow and thus contributes to the preservation of the wood. House plans tend to be long



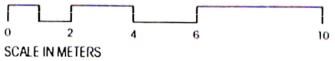
Zdiar - House #117 (1912) from Spisz (Slovakia)

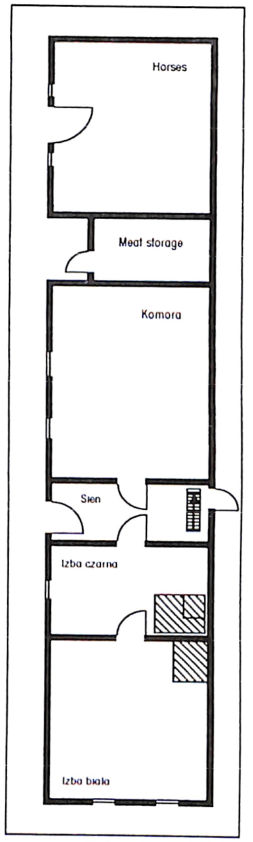


Fackov - House #36 from Orawa (Slovakia)



Racieborowice - House #48 from the region of Kraków





Sucha Hora - House #175 (1859) from Orawa (Slovakia). This plan is similar to houses in Chocholów.



House from 1865 at Chyżne, with the owner standing beside the entrance to the storage room, showing the "dogs" used as bracing for the arched opening. Notice also the six-sided sun symbol carved on the lintel.

and only one room wide, oriented with the gable end to the street. Entrance to the house comes from a narrow alley-like passage which extends back to the barn and fields beyond. Having windows in two or more exterior walls creates a bright interior which would make the long winter months more cheerful.

As can be seen in houses near Chochołów, some of these simple buildings were enlarged in the nineteenth century by the addition of porches and then a second story for the accommodation of visitors. The region of Podhale was discovered late in the century by Polish intellectuals who were seeking an authentic national identity. At that point, Poland as an independent country had not existed for nearly a century, and the hardy Tatra mountaineers came to symbolize the unconquerable spirit of Poland. Zakopane, a small town surrounded by the mountains, became a health resort for consumptives, among whom there were an exceptional number of artists, musicians, and writers. Led by the author and artist Stanisław Witkiewicz, these members of the intelligentsia embraced elements of Podhale architecture to create the so-called Zakopane Style, a movement which had elements in common with Arts and Crafts ideals elsewhere. Podhale architecture was interpreted as being uniquely Polish, and the use of horizontal log construction, carved decoration, and articulated roof forms became a way of expressing Polish nationality in a time when this was not possible politically. Echoes of this period continue to be felt to this day in Zakopane and surrounding mountain districts, as much of the region has codified these features into building regulations. Architectural firms specialize in designing in log houses with traditional massing and details, a practice which keeps the building tradition intact if not always dynamic.

Poland's peasant houses provide tangible connections to a time now gone. These, rather than the grand castles and palaces, are the homes in which most medieval people spent their lives. One room, typically less than 200 square feet in area and about 20% occupied by a stove, served as the primary living space for what was most likely an extended family. And although the house alone cannot recreate what it meant to be a serf, the rigors of daily life in the vast forest lands and the isolation of a small community of similarly impoverished families are still evident in those rural villages where these buildings remain in use. Fifty or more years of socialist progress have not brought much beyond cement-asbestos roofing and electric light to many settlements. Firewood is still stacked against the winter's cold, water flows from a hand pump in the yard, and the sanitary convenience is at the side of the barn.

It is to be regretted that these buildings are not more widely admired for what they represent: the careful application of limited resources to create shelter that goes beyond the minimum. Even the construction details reward close observation. Each wood has different properties, and centuries of experience taught builders that larch logs were useful for lower courses and building elements exposed to moisture, that easily worked pine was well suited for the central log sections and window frames, and that silvery fir boards or aspen shingles made the best roofs. The decorative details, too, are wonderful, for here the builder could indulge individual taste, thereby keeping common models from becoming commonplace. In sum, studying the craft embodied in these wooden buildings recalls the God-is-in-the-details dictum of Mies. Discipline fostered by limited building materials does not seem to have hindered creativity, but rather to have served as a spur to ingenuity. Living as we do in a period when architects strive for fractured constructions, juxtaposing unlikely materials in a form that is said to carry recondite meanings, it is refreshing to realize that at other times and in other circumstances, people have done more with less.



The road at Chochołów, where all house gables face the street.





Two Podhale houses at Koniówka, showing a simple version (above) and one with a second-floor addition after the fashion of the late 19th century.


Vistula
Warsaw
POLAND
Kraków
CZECH REPUBLIC
Spisz
Boyko
Orawa
Podhale
Lemko
SLOVAKIA
UKRAINE
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY

CATALOG OF ITEMS IN THE EXHIBITION

* **Harklowa. Church of the Nativity of the Virgin** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Similar in form to its neighbor, Łopuszna, this church also has interior stenciling. It was restored in 1737 and given Baroque polychrome at that time. *Sobota* galleries were added in the second half of the eighteenth century as an overnight shelter for pilgrims, especially in the winter, and the ave bell turret on the nave was added in 1877.

* **Szczawnik. Orthodox Church of St. Demetrius the Great Martyr** from 1841. View from the southwest, showing the impressive late Baroque domes.

LATE GOTHIC CATHOLIC CHURCHES FROM THE PODHALE REGION.

1. **Dębno. Church of St. Michael Archangel** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Widely regarded as the best preserved example of a Gothic wooden church, this building displays typical features for the Podhale Region: one steep shingled roof over the nave and chancel, a western tower (added 1601 or 1607) with walls covered by shingles and an overhanging bell turret called *izbica* (under the helmet), *sobota* galleries (added in the nineteenth century) around the church, two entrances (one through the western tower and one to the nave through the south porch), windows placed only along the south wall of the nave and choir, and an encircling fence and planting of trees.

2. **Dębno. Church of St. Michael Archangel** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Interior of the chancel showing Gothic-arched doorway to the sacristy. The walls and ceiling are covered by stenciling in geometric and floral patterns typical for the Podhale Region. The designs are identical with some used at other churches in the region, suggesting that these represent the work of a traveling guild of painters.

3. **Łopuszna. Church of the Holy Trinity** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Stencil polychrome on the interior ceiling dates from ca. 1500. In the center is the White Eagle, the emblem of the Polish kingdom.

4. **Łopuszna. Church of the Holy Trinity** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Wall logs are covered by exterior wooden boarding, and the steep roof is covered with shingles. The western tower, added in the seventeenth century, is also shingled on its sloping sides and capped by an overhanging bell turret called *izbica* [under the helmet].

5. **Dębno. Church of St. Michael Archangel** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Stencil work reproductions. Tempera and watercolor on paper, 39 1/4″ x 27 5/8″. Drawings done in 1953. The interior of the church at Dębno was decorated about 1500 using 77 different leather-cut stencils of geometrical ornaments, plants, and animals. No earlier use of such polychrome is known. These drawings reproduce the stencils and original colors at full-scale.
   5a. Motifs from the ceiling of the nave. Geometric patterns with the scene of St. George killing the Dragon [upper right corner].
   5b. Upper border [framing] of the northern wall. Geometric and floral patterns with court-hunting scenes.

6. **Dębno. Church of St. Michael Archangel** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Stencil work reproductions. Tempera and watercolor on paper, 26 3/4″ x 13 7/8″ on paper stock 39 3/8″ x 19 3/8″. Delineators: B. Kowalska and W. Jozefowski. Drawings done in 1953.
   6a. Fragment of the nave ceiling with the scene of St. George killing the Dragon.
   6b. Geometric and floral patterns with court-hunting scenes from the northern wall of the nave.

7. **Grywałd. Church of St. Martin** from the second half of the fifteenth century. Exterior shingles were added later, but the original church volume survives. The tower was added in a remodeling before 1618, by which date the interior polychrome was complete.

CATHOLIC CHURCHES FROM OTHER CARPATHIAN REGIONS.

8. **Orawka. Church of St. John the Baptist** from ca. 1650. View from the southwest, showing the western tower which was moved and incorporated into the church proper in 1901. (Its sloping timber supports are visible inside the church.) The design of the tower's terminating turrets was inspired by the north tower of St. Mary's Church in the market square of Kraków.

9. **Orawka. Church of St. John the Baptist** from ca. 1650. Interior view from the chancel to the nave. There are Baroque wall paintings and polychrome coffering on the ceiling. The balustrade of the musicians' gallery at the west end of the nave features nineteenth-century folk paintings illustrating the Ten Commandments.

10A. **Łodygowice. Church of SS Simon and Judah Thaddeus** from 1634-35. Interior of a *sobota* gallery. On the right is a portion of the log wall of the church with small window, and on the left is part of the frame construction of the *sobota* gallery with boards covering the exterior.

10B. **Orawka. Church of St. John the Baptist** from ca. 1650. Interior view from the nave to the choir through the wooden chancel arch. Late Renaissance polychrome on the coffered ceiling and Baroque wall paintings. Baroque fittings.

11. **Rogów. Church** from the eighteenth century. Log walls are covered by vertical boards, with Baroque pilaster articulation on the corners. Perspective sketch, pencil on paper; 20 11/16″ x 19 5/16″. Delineator: A. Cieszyński. Field sketch done in September 1947.

12. **Chabówka. Church of the Holy Cross** from 1757. An example of a simple church without a tower. The *sobota* galleries are open on the sides.

13. **Lachowice. Church of SS Peter and Paul** from 1789. Church from the southwest. The nave and chancel are covered by separate shingled roofs, and the whole church is surrounded by a *sobota* gallery with a picturesque undulating roof line. A Baroque helmet dome crowns the overhanging bell turret of the western tower.

14. **Lachowice. Church of SS Peter and Paul** from 1789. Entrance to the *sobota* gallery. The wall of the church is visible on the left.

15. **Lachowice. Church of SS Peter and Paul** from 1789. Church from the southeast, showing the curved, soft line of the roof over an entrance to the *sobota* gallery.

16. **Niedźwiedź. Church of St. Sebastian** from 1695. Wooden church with northern masonry chapel added in the nineteenth century. Ink on paper, 21 5/8″ x 15 3/4″. Delineators: A. Gruszecki, T. Mańkowski, B. Mikołajski, and H. Zawadowski. Drawings done July 1947.
16a. South elevation.
16b. Perspective view.
16c. Longitudinal section.

17. **Białka. Church** from the eighteenth century. View of the eastern end of the chancel, showing the sculpted wooden outdoor altar with crucifix on the wall. Pencil on paper; 19 3/4″ x 26 7/8″. Delineator Piotr Leszek; dated August 3, 1949.

18. **Sękowa. Church of SS Philip and James** from the sixteenth century. This is a rare example of a church with a single shingled roof encompassing the nave, chancel, and *sobota* gallery. The west tower with a Baroque dome was added in the seventeenth century.

19. **Sękowa. Church of SS Philip and James** from the sixteenth century. Interior view from the nave to the chancel. The spare quality of the interior may be the result of reconstruction carried out to repair damage during World War I, when Austro-Hungarian troops ravaged the building for fuel and building material. There are noticeable fragments of the original polychrome. Note the unusual arch shape of the doorway to sacristy on the left.

20. **Bukowina Tatrzańska. Church** from the nineteenth century, displaying mixed construction: a masonry nave and chancel with a wooden tower and porch. This is an example of a small village

church. Field drawings done in July 1986. In this case, a group of five students had two weeks to measure the whole church and develop final drawings (ground plan, elevations, horizontal and vertical sections, details, perspectives, etc.).

20a. Longitudinal section. Pencil with red purple ink on paper, 31 3/4″ x 22 13/16″. Delineator: Ryszard Paprocki.

20b. Rendering, watercolor on paper, 26 5/6″ x 18 7/16″. Delineators: Ewa Paluch, Marta Urbańska, Marek Nowacki, Ryszard Paprocki and Mariusz Plewa. Field drawing done July 1986.

20c. South elevation. Pencil with red purple ink on paper, 31 3/4″ x 22 13/16″. Delineators: Ewa Paluch, Marta Urbańska, Marek Nowacki, Ryszard Paprocki, and Mariusz Plewa.

21. **Rabka. Church of St. Mary Magdalene** from 1606. View from the southwest, showing the tower with a Baroque helmet dome, which was added in 1744. The gnarled trees growing in the churchyard are typical of the ancient groves associated with many wooden churches.

22. **Spytkowice. Church of the Immaculate Conception** from 1758. This is an example of a church with its belfry constructed separately. It was heavily restored in 1978-79.

23. **Łętownia. Church of SS Simon and Judah Thaddeus** from 1760-65. This is an outstanding example of a Baroque wooden church preserved without significant alteration.

ORTHODOX CHURCHES.

24. **Szczawnik. Orthodox Church of St. Demetrius the Great Martyr** from 1841. View from the northwest. The light color shingles are recent replacements of old ones, and under the metalwork of the roofs are wooden shingles on the domes.

25. **Andrzejówka. Orthodox Church of the Dormition of the Virgin** from 1816. View from the west, showing the tower dome still covered in wood shingle. Traces of red, blue, and green paint are visible along the fascia and soffits of the roof overhangs, while remains of the original shingles exist under the rather poorly applied metal covering the nave and chancel domes.

26. **Muszynka. Orthodox Church of St. John the Theologian** dating from the seventeenth century according to tradition. (Historians think it is more likely from the second half of the eighteenth century.) Interior view showing the iconostas and a portion of the shaped ceiling formed by logwork rising over the square nave.

27. **Ropice Górna. Orthodox Church of St. Michael Archangel** from 1819. This partial view shows the wooden shingles which originally covered walls and roofs of most Orthodox churches. (A dense planting of trees prevents an overall view.) The wood color ranges from light brown to a medium honey color.

28. **Powroźnik. Orthodox Church of St. James the Apostle** from 1612. This is one of the earliest and finest of all Łemko churches in Poland. The exterior is still covered in wood shingle, made rather dark by wood preservative. Its interior includes the original seventeenth-century iconostas and fresco work dating from 1643.

29A. **Dubne. Orthodox Church of St. Michael Archangel** from 1863. View from east, showing shingled walls and Baroque helmet domes covered by tin sheets over chancel, nave, and western tower. (The original roofing material was wood shingle.) These three domes articulate the three separate sections of the church plan: women's porch, nave, and chancel.

29B. **Dubne. Orthodox Church of St. Michael Archangel** from 1863. View from the east, showing the ascending line of domed turrets.

30. **Tylicz. Orthodox Church of SS Kosmas and Damian** from 1742. The huge tower of this church dominates the relatively small volumes of the nave and chancel.

31. **Polany. Orthodox Church of St. Michael Archangel** from 1820. View from the west. Entry into the church is made through the western tower, built over the so-called women's porch. Men only

occupied the nave, while the priestly domain in the chancel was screened by the iconostas.

32. **Polany. Orthodox Church of St. Michael Archangel** from 1820. View from the east, showing the three domes. Notice that each of the terminating Orthodox crosses is different. The metal roofing is modern; the original covering was wood shingle.

33. **Rychwałd. Orthodox Church of the Intercession** from 1653. View from the northwest, showing the enclosing fence and separate masonry gate containing the bell tower.

34. **Rychwałd. Orthodox Church of the Intercession** from 1653. This church, seen from the east, illustrates the typical Łemk form of ascending domes.

DWELLING HOUSES.

35. **Chochołów. Village** in the Podhale Region which preserves its old layout. Houses are located on both sides of a long road, with their gable ends facing the road. Access to individual houses comes from alley-like driveways that extend back to farm structures beyond.

36. **Chochołów. House with porch**. Porches were mid-nineteenth century additions to the original simple house shape. Windows were formerly put only on the longer southern facade. The porch gable is decorated with motifs of rising sun and other cosmic symbols.

37. **Chochołów. House with second floor addition**. At the end of nineteenth century, second floors were added to some folk houses as a reflection of the Zakopane Style developed by Witkiewicz. The upstairs rooms were intended for tourist accommodations.

38. **Chochołów. Side yard** of a Podhale farm. Farmsteads typically have a long thin rectangular shape, set with the shorter side perpendicular to the road. Each family's holding is defined by the house, stables, barns and other service buildings set along the north edge of the property.

39. **Chochołów. House being washed**. Every spring before Easter, women of the community wash the outside of their houses with soap and water. This annual cleaning keeps the logs looking new and creates a contrast between the gray-yellow color of the walls and the darker shingles on the roof.

40. **Chochołów. Simple door frame** with a cat hole [and a cat nearby].

41A. **Chyżne. House door**. Above the arch is a small rosette carved in relief, a typical ornament in the Podhale Region, perhaps derived from ancient sun symbols.

41A. **Chochołów. House door**, set within the wooden log wall. Its characteristic semicircular shape is formed by five pieces of solid wood. Above the door is a small window to the hallway.

42. **Łopuszna. Manor house** from the eighteenth century located in the Podhale region. Elevation rendering. Ink and watercolor wash on paper, 22″ x 15 1/8″. Delineator: Jan Chrzabowski, dated 1963. Drawing developed as an in-class exercise working from an old photograph. The building as photographed has been restored.

43. **Łopuszna. Manor house** from the eighteenth century located in the Podhale region. Wooden log walls are covered by white plaster with half-columns set at the corners. The axial porch has a Baroque-shaped gable attached to the massive shingled roof with a broken silhouette. This is the so-called Polish mansard roof commonly seen on manor houses.

44. **Rudawa. Farmstead of Władysław Maudecki** (nr. 52) from the region of Kraków. Mixed construction of wooden logs with boarded wood frame and a thatched roof. Pencil on paper, 12″ x 8 3/4″. Delineators: A. Musioł, L. Krajewski, and R. Sakuła, undated.
44a. General view.
44b. House elevation.
44c. Barn elevation.

45. **Żerosławice. House of Stanisław Kopera** (nr. 33) Pencil on paper, 18 3/8″ x 13 3/8″. Delineators: Ignacy Zając and an unidentified second student. Drawings done in September 1946.
45a. Perspective view of the farmstead. This view seems to capture the mood of the period, when a bright future was envisioned for Poland's peasants after the deprivations of war and centuries of exploitation by aristocratic landlords.
45b. South elevation. On the right side is the entrance to a stable which was an integral part of the structure.

46A. **Krzyszkowice. House** from 1911 in the region of Kraków. Thatched roofs used to be characteristic for all of Poland except the southernmost regions, where wood shingle was more common. The blue paint seen here is a typical color for the decoration of vernacular architecture in this area.

46B. **Krzyszkowice. Barn** belonging to the 1911 house from the region of Kraków. Note patching of the thatch with plastic and other materials. Owners of such farm buildings as this are typically elderly and without funds to hire expert craftsmen to renew aging thatch roofs.

47. **Kraków [Bronowice Wielkie]. House**, 12 Ojcowska St. Southern elevation. Ink on tracing paper, 22 3/8″ x 15 3/16″. Delineators: Jerzy Urbański and Michał Hnatowski. Double house with mixed construction of wooden logs, boarded wood frame, and a masonry addition on the right. Original thatched roof partly replaced by shingles. Drawings done in 1956.

48. **Kraków [Bronowice Wielkie]. House**, 21 Tetmajera St. Dimensioned field drawings, pencil and red pencil on newsprint, 22″ x 17″. Delineators: Stanisław Deńko, Janusz Lągawa, and Jerzy Biela. Mixed construction of wooden logs, boarded wood frame, and masonry, all covered by a thatched roof. Drawings done in April 1962.
48a. Elevation.
48b. Plan. This is a simple example of a wooden house from the region of Kraków, comprising a passage-hallway (*sień)* with rooms on both sides. On the left is the *izba czarna* [black room], containing the kitchen with its oven and big chimney. In winter it was also used as bedroom for the whole family. On the right is the *izba biała* [white room], which was used as a parlor or sitting room.

49. **Nowy Sącz. Cottage** from Rogi, now part of the open-air museum at Nowy Sącz. The house dates from the first half of the nineteenth century, when it was built by the owner of the manor for the village baker. Small windows in the white-washed walls look into the fenced garden area.

50. **Nowy Sącz. Cottage** from Lipnica Wielka, now at the open-air museum in Nowy Sącz. This cottage was originally constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century by the owner of the manor for a landless caretaker. It is typical of housing for the poorest peasants. Small windows are located only on southern and eastern walls to catch early morning and full sun. Thatch "beards" on the roof folds provide protection from rain and snow.

51. **Ojców. Barn** with a thatched roof from region of Kraków.

52. **Chyżne. Orawan house** with *wyżka,* built in 1865 and still inhabited. The balcony balustrade is decorated with motif of blind arcades. The original shingle roof has been partly replaced by thatch, and a brick chimney has been added to vent the stove.

53. **Zubrzyca Górna. House of Jan Klesia**. Ink on paper, 15 1/2″ x 11″. Delineators: Danuta Małkowska and Adam Kotarba. Drawings done during the 1950s. These drawings illustrate the elements of a typical Orawan house with *wyżka* galleries.
53a. South elevation.
53b. Longitudinal section.
53c. Plan.

54. **Podhale region. Doors** showing characteristic Podhale decoration of Gothic origin, constructed with wooden pegs (tree-nails). Ink and watercolor wash on paper, 22 3/16″ x 14 1/8″. Delineators: B. Kuczyńska, E. Małyszczyk, and R. Sikora.

55A. **Zubrzyca Górna. House of Paś Filipek**, moved from Jabłonka in 1957 to the Open Air Museum in Zubrzyca Górna. The present house dates from about 1843, but it incorporates parts of an older house, for the summer beam carving has the date 1765. The second floor has a characteristic overhanging balcony *(wyżka)* used to access attic storage rooms.

55B. **Zubrzyca Górna. House of Franciszek Kot**, built in 1869 and moved from Zubrzyca Górna to the Museum in 1969. This house is typical of an average peasant home in Orawa. A damper in the ceiling regulates the venting of smoke to the space above the *izba czarna*.

OPEN AIR MUSEUMS

While many wooden churches remain standing (and in use) in their original communities, finding wooden houses in good repair is becoming more difficult as the owners rebuild their homes in concrete block. Open-air museums or skansens are becoming the best places to inspect traditional wooden houses in something like their original condition. Museums with collections relevant to the Carpathians are located in the following cities:

Bardejovské Kúpele (Slovakia). Small skansen with houses and two churches from the Slovak Carpathians.

Kiev (Ukraine). National museum with representation from ten major districts of Ukraine, including the Łemks and Boykos of the Carpathians.

Lwów (Ukraine). Museum representing all areas of Ukraine, with particular richness in houses and churches from the Carpathian districts. The centerpiece is the handsome church of St. Nicholas originally at Kryvka.

Martin (Slovakia). Relatively new museum which will feature various cultural traditions from Slovakia. At the moment, the section on highland architecture is most complete.

Nowy Sącz (Poland). Regional museum showing buildings from the highlands and foothills of the area around Nowy Sącz.

Rožnov pod Radhoštěm (Czech Republic). Museum of Wallachian culture, another name for the Łemk people.

Sanok (Poland). Ethnographic Park with architecture from Boyko, Łemk, and Carpathian foothill regions of the district around Sanok. Its masterpiece is the small church from Rosolin.

Svidnik (Slovakia). Skansen devoted to Ukrainian culture of the Łemkos.

Užgorod (Ukraine). Museum featuring trans-Carpathian houses and a spectacular church of St. Michael from Šelestovo.

Zuberec (Slovakia). Museum dedicated to highland architecture on the Slovak side of the Carpathians.

Zubrzyca Górna (Poland). Museum of Orawan architecture, featuring houses and a large manor house.

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