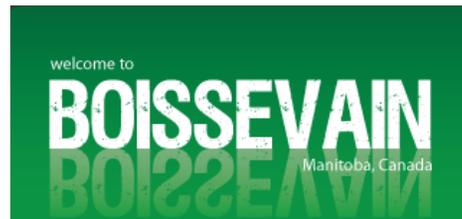


Special Places

Boissevain's Significant Heritage Buildings





A Project of the Boissevain Heritage Advisory Group

The Boissevain Heritage Advisory Group would like to acknowledge the support of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism in the development of this initiative, through a grant from the Heritage Grants Program and through ongoing guidance and support of the Historic Resources Branch.

Special Places

Boissevain's Significant Heritage Buildings

THE GREAT 19TH CENTURY English writer and historian, John Ruskin, observed about the subject of architectural heritage:

“Old buildings are not ours. They belong to those who built them, and partly to the generations who are to follow us. What we ourselves have built, we are at liberty to throw down. But what other men gave their strength, and wealth and life to accomplish, their right over it does not pass away with their death.

It is with this thought in mind that the Town of Boissevain, through an ad hoc committee called the Boissevain Heritage Advisory Group, has embarked on a project—in partnership with the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism (and also with the financial support of the Federal Government through its Historic Places Initiative)—to develop a major heritage initiative: *Special Places, Boissevain's Significant Heritage Buildings*.

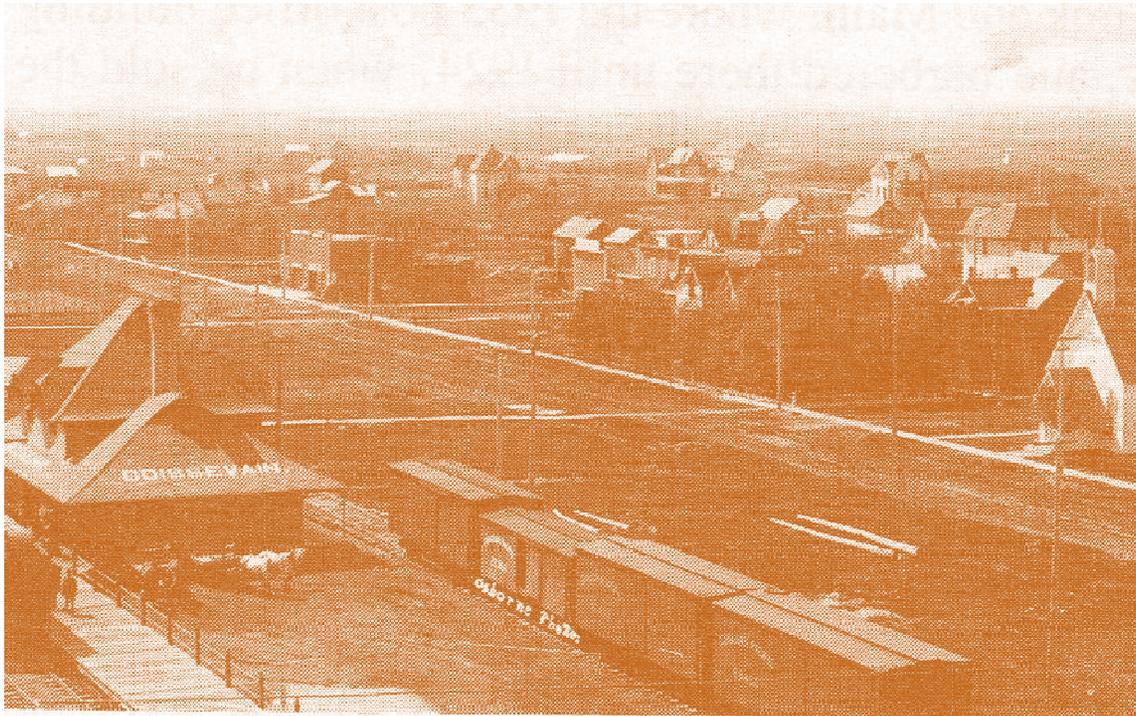
Boissevain's Special Places project (one of several underway across Manitoba with the support of the Historic Resources Branch and Heritage Grants Program) has been developed with two goals in mind: to ensure that communities undertake the kind of comprehensive inventory of sites and rigorous analysis and assessment that allows for a selection of those few buildings with real claims for heritage significance; and also in order to study and explore the community's architectural history and by so doing to identify those physical and built qualities that combine to make Boissevain an authentically distinct place.

Community Form and Layout

THE FORM AND LAYOUT of the Town of Boissevain is rendered attractive and appealing by two qualities – one natural and one man-made. The physical attribute that makes the community so attractive is based on the gently rolling topography of the whole region, and which in the town itself is visible especially in the southeast quadrant. It is here where buildings along Broadway stand high and regal atop gentle and sometimes even steep slopes.

An archival view suggests the width of the CPR's right-of-way that separates Boissevain into northern (seen here) and southern neighbourhoods.

The man-made feature that gives Boissevain a distinct physical aspect arises from the typical railway line/small-town grid system. In Boissevain, this system is altered by the great width of the railway right-of-way. This right-of-way, which bisects the town, is uniquely wide in a southern Manitoba context, and gives the community a distinct flavour, almost as if it were two places. And where many other communities would have developed on just one side of the track, Boissevain straddles the tracks to make it seem larger than it is.



Architectural History

THE TOWN OF BOISSEVAIN has several important community architecture claims. First and foremost is its legacy of stone buildings: St. Paul's United, St. Matthew's Anglican, Elliot House, Joyce House, Large Stone House and Welch Block. Each of these buildings is an exceptional expression of stone building construction and craftsmanship. And together they form a powerful grouping that the people of Boissevain should celebrate and honour. Unfortunately Boissevain has also lost many of her stone buildings over the years, and so special attention will need to be given to the survivors.

Boissevain's legacy of stone also needs to include an appreciation for local stone sources and especially of the work of local masons. So far anecdotal evidence suggests some interesting stories about gathering fieldstones for building projects. And there are references to a small sandstone quarry at Musgrove Ravine that was worked for a few years and produced material for several local buildings.

A modest list of builders and their buildings has been compiled through this project: William Lambert (Anglican Church), Mr. Johnson (United Church), Joseph Graves (Halladay House) and James McLachlan (Joyce House). But given the many other sophisticated buildings in town, this is an important subject that needs a great deal more research.

The town also claims a number of fine historic homes, especially the Dr. Schaffner House and the Halladay House. Other houses with slightly lesser claims to heritage significance—like the Hettle House, Nicholson House and Krockner House—should not be overlooked when heritage initiatives are considered. In fact, Boissevain seems to have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to the survival of houses connected to notable people.

Finally, Boissevain's collection of historic government buildings—Former Post Office, Land Titles Office, Town Hall and Former Manitoba Telephone Systems Building—provides an opportunity for townfolk and visitors alike to consider the architectural expression employed for the various levels of government activity: federal, provincial, municipal; and to examine the notable architectural styles employed in each. The concentration of these buildings in a small area around South Railway and Broadway makes that appreciation even easier.

While all the architectural claims noted above focus on the exceptional, Boissevain-ites should not lose sight of those many other buildings that make up the community's complete heritage stock. These are typically more modest places, or those with slightly lesser claims to significance. Together they might be seen as a supporting cast, providing an extra level of heritage detail to the whole community.

The Boissevain Municipal Heritage Advisory Group has undertaken the following analysis of our buildings and sites through the lens of building types. This analysis focuses on a few key considerations: providing a general situational overview of the type (based on a broad knowledge of the subject, provided by the heritage consultant, Mr. Ken Storie, and Mr. David Butterfield, Architectural Historian for the Historic Resources Branch); identifying whether there are any special claims for the whole collection (based on local, regional and provincial context); and noting whether there are any individual sites within the collection that merit special attention due to their extraordinary claims. The following outline focuses the discussions that follow:

- Civic/Government
- Churches
- Houses
- Commercial Buildings
- Schools
- Halls and Recreational Sites and Buildings
- Railway Buildings
- Industrial and Manufacturing Buildings
- Cemeteries/Memorials

Tow of Boissevain's architectural treasures: top: Elliot House, an exquisite residential example of stonework, and also of Second Empire styling; right: St. Paul's United Church, a symphony in local stone (from the fields and also a sandstone quarry) and a lesson in local masonry skills – from Mr. Johnson.



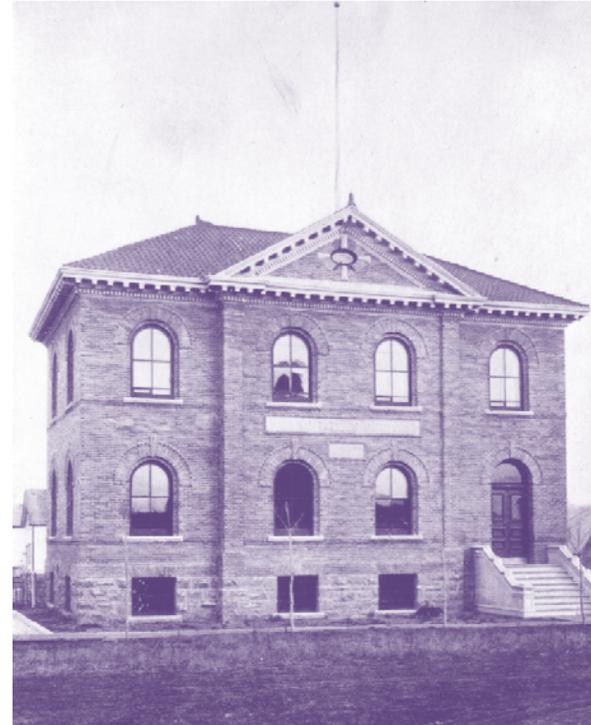
Civic/Government

Many Manitoba communities contain at least one building that can be seen to represent the theme of political/civic life: a post office or a library. But most places have lost many other sites once associated with civic history: fire halls, town halls, gas works, jails.

Boissevain is fortunate in this regard, for there are four extant historic buildings that connect to this theme: the Town Hall, Land Titles Building, Former Post Office and Former Manitoba Telephone System (MTS) Building. Together these four structures represent the various levels of government operations possible in smaller urban centres in Manitoba: the Federal Government (in the old Post Office), the Provincial Government (in the Land Titles Building and later in the Former MTS Building) and Municipal Government in the Town Hall. Few communities of Boissevain's size (ex. Souris or Carberry) have the same complete collection of government levels represented by historic places. Boissevain's is an impressive collection, concentrated in an area around the intersection of South Railway and Broadway, and also with notable qualities of architecture (design and materials).

Top: Boissevain's Town Hall, built in 1910, the building once included a fire hall, courtroom, jail and civic offices, as well as providing an upper-floor public hall.

Below: Boissevain's Land Titles Office, built in 1903. There are three other LTOs located in small urban settings: Neepawa, Dauphin and Morden.



Churches

Boissevain has the typical range of Protestant faiths that define so many southwestern Manitoba communities: Anglican, Presbyterian and United (former Methodist). It also once had a Baptist church and recently has seen the addition to the faith community of a Roman Catholic church and two Mennonite churches. Each of the three historic churches has its own special claims for the community: the Presbyterian church is the oldest remaining building in Boissevain (1886-87); the Anglican church is a very good example of stone construction and a nice example of the Gothic Revival style, but it is the United Church that is a marvel, and a source of great local pride. St. Paul's is one of Manitoba's foremost examples of fieldstone construction and a fine expression of the substantial church-building traditions established by Methodist congregations in southwestern Manitoba in the late 19th century. Designed by Winnipeg architect Edward Lowery, the church exemplifies the Gothic Revival style, one of the most enduring and influential architectural movements of the period. Its interior also is noted for its excellent auditorium plan. The well-built and largely unaltered structure is still used for regular services and is a landmark along Boissevain's historic South Railway streetscape.



The Baptist Church once stood on North Railway and was a landmark in that area.