

Winnipeg Beach School, 1906

The School District of Winnipeg Beach was created March 4, 1905. However according to W.J. Wood, the first school classes were held in 1903 in the second story of William Robinson's store, with James Hume as the first teacher. Mr. Wood served as chair and John Kernsted as secretary treasurer of the school board, both for many years. The first school was built in 1906 at the corner of Robinson and Gimli Road, the site of the current school yard. It was first occupied June 1, 1906. The building was attractive, the interior well lighted by numerous windows, with a bell tower centred on the front entranceway. The school board hired Miss E.M. Griffs as first teacher in the new school, with an enrollment of 70 students. Most students were of Ukrainian or Icelandic origin. At that time, Mr. E.E. Best was the school inspector. An addition was built around 1916 due to the increased enrollment of 84, and there were now two teachers, the principal being P.R. Loutit.



Town Hall 1911

Until 1910, Winnipeg Beach had been part of the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews. As Ward 6, it was entitled to one councillor to represent its interests. Being primarily a rural municipality, St. Andrews gave little attention to the needs of the rapidly growing little resort, so in 1909, Winnipeg Beach residents had the Village of Winnipeg Beach incorporated. W.J. Howes was elected as the first mayor; A.C. Duke, Helgi Sturlaugson and J.O. Stacey were elected as councillors. The first meetings of the new council occurred on January 4, 1910, in the store of A.C. Duke. For years, there was political conflict and rivalry between the local residents and the summer resident cottagers. For the first election, the Winnipeg Beach Club, prominent Winnipeg businessmen, put forward a slate of cottager candidates, and mistakenly assumed it would control the council. Due to continued growth of the community, it achieved town status in 1914.



Ritchie Park 1914

According to the Real Property Act of 1914, Sinclair B. Ritchie and Robert Lorne Richardson transferred lots 3 to 8, and lots A to E, block 5, Subdivision Plan No. 729 to the Village of Winnipeg Beach for use as a public park. This area was located on the waterfront east of Hazel Avenue. The village developed tennis courts and lawn bowling greens within the park, and named it after Ritchie, who had donated most of the land. Women were not permitted to lawn bowl. Tennis tournaments were held here in the early days. By 1934 there were nine shale courts in the town. After play finished, the young men dressed in flannels would be served tea in the verandas of cottages of socially prominent ladies. Veranda teas had become fashionable. The local boys and city boys used to congregate at the park in the 40s and 50s.



The Beach

William Whyte chose the location as the site of “Winnipeg’s Beach” because of its magnificent crescent of sandy beach. Records of Lake Winnipeg water levels show that from 1913 to 1945, the glory days of the resort, lake levels were from one to three feet lower than the long-term average. The beach was huge, and the water shallow out to the end of the CPR Pier, so it was an ideal area for children to frolic safely. Day trippers, cottagers and picnickers all came here for the sun, sand and water. Bathing suits, canoes, row boats, sail boats were for rent and motor launch and steamer provided rides out onto the lake for a price. In the early period, adults dressed quite formally on the beach, and the CPR police enforced order and proper attire. Unlike the bikinis of today, both men’s and women’s suits exposed very little of the body. And many of the adults simply took the sun, what little they could get in formal dress. Or they promenaded on the beach and CPR pier.





WINNIPEG BEACH.

The Beach, Continued



