

Landmarks

Gimli's Significant Heritage Buildings

The **Gimli Special Places project** was inaugurated in 2008-09, with the first major component being a comprehensive and detailed inventory of 68 buildings and sites. Through rigorous analysis and assessment processes suggested to us by the province's Historic Resources Branch, we have identified a handful of buildings that most effectively define and illustrate key aspects of our history and heritage. The following list of 20 buildings and sites constitutes the Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee's recommendations and reminders to the community about those places that have major claims for heritage significance.

- Gimli Public School
- Gimli Dance Pavilion
- Gimli Unitarian Church
- Sts. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church
- St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church
- St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church
- H.P. Tergesen and Sons General Store
- Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery

- Arnes Lutheran Church
- Jonasson House
- H.P. Tergesen House
- Olson House
- Spruce Lodge Cottage
- Erindale Cottage
- Goodman Cottage
- Maryville Cottage
- Wartars Cottage
- Devon Lodge Cottage
- Wigg Cottage
- Thorson Cottage

This kind of short, sharp list will enable the community to focus attention and resources when it undertakes future heritage endeavours, be they updates to the walking tour, community websites, school projects, plaquing programs and designations.

The List of Significant Sites effectively sums up key themes in Gimli's history. Public life is expressed in the Jonasson House, where the original owner, Einar Jonasson Jr., a long-time municipal official, Gimli mayor and member of the provincial legislature, maintained an office in the front of the house.

The community's spiritual life is well represented in the stock of selected sites. All major faith groups are represented: Gimli Unitarian Church, Arnes Lutheran Church, Sts. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church, St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church and St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The theme of education is reflected in the Gimli Public School, a now-rare example of the kind of large consolidated schools that graced nearly all Manitoba communities at one time, and which have mostly been lost over the years.

The H.P. Tergesen Store is an excellent (and now rare) example of the kind of pioneer commercial buildings that dotted Gimli's downtown core. The theme of recreation is represented by the Gimli Dance Pavilion. The Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC) will continue to explore this theme with more work on church camps, and Camp Morton in particular.

The work carried out by the MHAC for this current Special Places project has mostly focused on our residential heritage:

houses and cottages. The two houses noted for the list—H.P. Tergesen House and Olson House—are excellent representatives of the kind of large buildings constructed by our business elite around the turn of the 20th century. And the eight cottages—Spruce Lodge, Erindale, Goodman, Maryville, Wartars, Devon Lodge, Seaforth and Thorson—together sum up the various interesting and important aspects of that vital part of Gimli's heritage.

As noted, the development of this short list of significant sites was the result of careful and studied deliberations using standard heritage evaluation criteria, processes and scoring regimes. This work was carried out by the Gimli MHAC with assistance from staff of the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection. We are grateful to the branch for their generous support and patient attention in this particular endeavour.

These buildings are presented on following pages with an accompanying Heritage Value Statement that elucidates each building's key heritage attributes. Please note that several of the buildings presented on the following pages have been designated (indeed, the H.P Tergesen and Sons General Store is a Provincial Heritage Site), and that this distinction as a Municipal Heritage Site is conveyed in the title block where appropriate.

Gimli Public School

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



Gimli Public School (1915) is a commendable example of the kind of educational institution constructed by an Icelandic community determined to provide the best opportunities for its children despite limited resources. The design did not come from a set of standardized plans from the Manitoba Department of Education, as was popular at the time, but rather from a local resident and designer, Halldor Sigurdson. Ascribing to its era's conventions and regulations for health and safety, the school demonstrates special attention to emergency exits, lighting and ventilation. The original facility, with six spacious classrooms, featured the most modern conveniences and equipment available at the time, housing Grades 1 through 12.

Gimli Dance Pavilion

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



The Gimli Dance Pavilion (1911) is the older of only two extant facilities of its type still operating in Manitoba and the only remaining dance hall of three built in the Interlake district. Designed by Olafur Thornsteinson, a talented craftsman, musician and early pioneer in New Iceland, the pavilion remains largely intact with its original materials and design features. Although diminutive in size and appearance compared to later facilities, it represents the popularity of dancing as a recreational activity after the turn of the twentieth century. The pavilion also holds significance as a social and cultural venue for the Icelandic community, hosting many events, including the yearly Icelandic Festival of Manitoba.

Gimli Unitarian Church

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



Gimli Unitarian Church (1904-05) represents the beginning of organized Unitarianism on the Canadian Prairies. As the first church built after four of Manitoba's Icelandic congregations seceded from the Lutheran Synod, this structure became the Mother Church of the Unitarian movement in Western Canada, as well as an institution of central importance to the Icelandic community. The building expresses this religious development in a direct and functional manner through its basic plan, wooden construction, modest Gothic Revival detailing and simple, yet elegant tower.

Sts. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



Sts. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church is a select representative of rural Manitoba places of worship built in the early decades of the twentieth century (1921) by Eastern European immigrant communities. Its site, donated by parishioners, was occupied by the first Polish Catholic church (1904) in the Gimli district and for many years was the centre of spiritual life for Poles in the area. The current building, the third at the location after fires destroyed its predecessors in 1909 and 1911, was served by priests from Arborg and Winnipeg until it became a chaplaincy of a newly formed parish at Camp Morton in 1924. Its humble architecture, effectual yet also with attention to detail, is based on the symbolism of the Holy Trinity, as seen in the tripartite massing, plan and arrangement of various elements. Vacant for nearly four decades, the church was restored in 2000 and now hosts various celebrations again.

St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Dnister

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church (1906) is a modest example of how long-established architectural practices from Ukraine were adapted to the pioneer conditions of rural Manitoba to enable early settlers to maintain and foster their religious traditions. The building's simple form, interior layout, materials and detailing, including a single banya (dome), recall in a humble manner important symbols associated with more elaborate Eastern rite facilities in the Ukraine. From its donated site to lumber sawn from local logs, this church demonstrates the desire among Ukrainians in the Gimli area to give tangible expression to their religious values and practices, despite limited resources and other challenges of settling in a new country.

St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, North Foley Designated Municipal Heritage Site



St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church (1904) is a modest example of Byzantine architectural influences recreated in Manitoba's rural Interlake region by early Ukrainian settlers. Through its single banya (dome), one-room plan, decorative intact interior and extensive iconography, including floral motifs painted by visiting Belgian priests, the church represents a simplified version of more substantial Eastern rite structures found in Ukraine and elsewhere in Manitoba.

H.P. Tergesen and Sons Store

Designated Provincial Heritage Site



H.P. Tergesen and Sons General Merchant is a rare surviving example in Manitoba of the kind of commercial establishments that served most small communities around the turn of the twentieth century. The store recalls the simple vernacular traditions, construction materials and interior layout, finishes and details that characterized this building type, with the exceptional feature of pressed tin cladding on its facades. The store has been open since 1899, making it one of the oldest small retail establishments in Manitoba. It also has important connections to the Tergesen family, which has operated the store continuously for more than 100 years.

Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



The Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery, a tidy landscaped site with few physical symbols of its purpose, is the first Icelandic cemetery established in Manitoba and the oldest Icelandic public cemetery in Canada. Opened in 1875 on a tract of land that was granted by the Government of Canada and initially called the Republic of New Iceland, the cemetery is an important link to the Icelandic pioneers who settled along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg. It also is significant as a burial and memorial site for victims of the 1876-77 smallpox epidemic, a great tragedy that decimated settlers and Aboriginal peoples in the Interlake region. The well-kept cemetery is a poignant historical landmark that recognizes the struggles of early Icelandic immigrants in the Gimli area.

Arnes Lutheran Church

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



Arnes Lutheran Church (1910; interior completed 1919) is a well-preserved example of the type of simple rectangular wood-frame church that was once found in nearly every Manitoba community, but was often replaced by larger buildings as communities grew. The church, which is in the Pioneer Baroque Style, is entered through an elegant two-tiered square tower projecting from the front. It is an important physical reminder of the Icelandic heritage of the district, which had expanded north into the region in the late 1870s after a disastrous smallpox epidemic in the Gimli area. It initially stood on a site south of Arnes, and was moved to the current site by horse and sleigh in 1920. The church played an active role in the community until attendance began to drop in the 1960s and 70s; it still has a high degree of physical integrity, with nearly every historic feature intact.

Tergesen House

Site of Heritage Significance



The early residence of Hans Pjetur Tergesen, a pioneer merchant (whose store is still operating under the family name and auspices, and is also a Provincial Heritage Site) is one of the community's grandest examples of residential architecture. Completed in 1911, it is distinguished by a columned porch, magnificent front door and stained glass windows. The house, which continues to be owned and occupied by the Tergesen family, also boasts several murals, in the study and the ceiling of the living room – typical internal decorative features of Icelandic homes of a certain quality.

Olson House

Site of Heritage Significance



A very significant Gimli house, this imposing and attractive building was constructed in 1910 for A.B. and Joreen Olson, and was later owned by Hector and Nellie McGinnis – Hector was the manager of the Armstrong-Gimli Fishery and was mayor of the town from 1927-32 and again in 1938-47. The house is typical of the kind of large and commanding homes that the community's elite built in the early 20th century. A few changes have been made to the house over the years, but it still maintains a high level of historical integrity.

Jonasson House

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



Jonasson House (1906) is an excellent example of a standardized period 'catalogue' dwelling enhanced through the use of eye-catching exterior modifications that resulted in an engaging design. The house, one of the few surviving large residences dating from the early 1900s in Gimli, also is significant because of its association with three well-known local citizens, all of whom used the front rooms in public fashion for their offices. They were the original owner, Einar Jonasson Jr., a long-time municipal official, Gimli mayor and member of the provincial legislature who maintained an office in the front of the house; his father, Einar Sr., who was a founding member of New Iceland (Gimli), homeopath and municipal health officer; and physician Frank Scribner.

Spruce Lodge Cottage

Site of Heritage Significance



“Spruce Lodge” (Andrews Cottage) is an excellent example recalling the development in the early decades of the 20th century of a summer cottage area around Gimli Park. It was probably built in 1913 for Thornton and Emma Andrews. The Nicholson/Sutherland family has had ownership since 1921. The cottage is representative of its type in some ways, with its typical hipped-roof form, entirely wood construction, informal plan and ingenious details. But the building is distinguished by notable variations on the theme: graceful sloping roof and unusual exterior detailing (vertical strapping that gives the cottage a more refined quality). The cottage’s interior is one of the few in town that still reveals its construction, and the rest of the interior is of the highest integrity.

Erindale Cottage

Site of Heritage Significance



“Erindale” (Truesdale Cottage) was put up in 1918 by a professional carpenter who brought kiln-dried lumber from British Columbia and built two identical cottages in town. Rhodes Scholar Skuli Johnson, father to the current owner, served as Classics Professor at Wesley College, then the University of Manitoba. A well-preserved hipped roof affair, this attractive structure boasts a very high level of integrity: much of the exterior fabric, and the original chimney.

Goodman Cottage

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



The Goodman Cottage was built in 1914 by Carl Goodman, its first owner, who built three other cottages in town for members of his family. The building boasts excellent interior integrity, with an open ceiling and wall studs. It also has original doors, hardware, windows, shutters and linoleum flooring. Even some original furnishings are apparent – oil lamps (with hand-made shades), old Eaton’s cabinets, an old GE refrigerator and RCA Victor windup record player. The cottage was built around the large dining room table which was too big to bring in through the doors or windows. It is in good condition and has a high level of integrity.

Maryville Cottage

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



“Maryville” (Deaks Cottage) is a well-preserved and excellent example of the basic hip-roofed cottage typical of the Gimli Park Cottage Area from the 1920s. With typical window and door treatments (and with original hardware in many cases), floor plan, building materials (simple wood frame on stout wooden blocks), the cottage is a textbook example of its type. “Maryville” seems to have been built for John and Mary Deaks, and subsequently was owned by daughters Elsie and Beatrice, who owned the place until 1999. A typical hipped roof design, the cottage was put up around 1925, and was built from a kit, likely from Eaton’s. The cottage is in good condition and has an impressive level of integrity, even including the old chimney.

Warters Cottage

Site of Heritage Significance



The Warters Cottage is one of many extant examples that recall the development in the early decades of the 20th century of a summer cottage area at Loni Beach. The cottage (long owned by the Snidal family), built in 1912, was constructed from a catalogue kit (interestingly, it is noted that the kit may have been put together incorrectly, with base plates missing on the north and south sides). The cottage is a very good representative example of the side-gable cottage type, is in good condition and boasts excellent integrity. The cottage also contains much early hand-made furniture.

Devon Lodge Cottage

Site of Heritage Significance



“Devon Lodge” (Whiteway Cottage) is an important Gimli site, built by A.P. Whiteway in 1922 and maintained in the family for almost 90 years. This basic side-gable building is an exemplary example of that type, with high levels of integrity—exterior qualities like sheathing, original windows and door, window canopies, as well as many interior characteristics—that make it a notable place. It is filled with original furnishings and artifacts such as a 1938 GE refrigerator (with warranty!), RCA windup record player with old needles and Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy records.

Wigg Cottage

Site of Heritage Significance



Built around 1915, the Wigg Cottage is an excellent and well maintained example of the “long gable” type of structure that still defines so much of Gimli’s cottage stock. Accessed though the long porch along the front of the building, which faces onto the lake, residents and visitors enter into a modest and well-lit interior that hasn’t changed much over nearly 100 years.

Thorson Cottage

Designated Municipal Heritage Site



The Thorson Cottage, dating from 1918, is a very good example recalling the development in the early decades of the 20th century of summer cottages in town. Originally owned by Stefan Thorson, it was purchased in 1925 by Jacob Greenberg, a merchant and businessman. The Ludlow family owned it for many years, before the Blicqs moved in, in 1997, and began a restoration and upgrade. This cottage is said to have been built by Hjalmar Thorsteinson, (a well-remembered early carpenter whose hands touched many Gimli buildings). It is a fine example of the hipped type cottage. The building is in very good condition and has a high level of integrity.