

Land Titles Office

North Railway



The BOISSEVAIN LAND TITLES OFFICE, built in 1903-04, is the primary local symbol of Provincial activity in the community. Carried out in a refined classical vocabulary, typical for most government buildings of the day, to designs by architect W.R. Lait, the building is a good illustration of the kind of small public facilities that the provincial government constructed in selected smaller communities in the early 1900s. The building also has important value because of its original function, as a land titles office, an activity that is still apparent in many of the interior configurations (even though land titles functions vacated the community in 1984). The Boissevain Land Titles Office also has minor heritage value because of its location, a noticeable presence in the north side of the commercial core of the town.

Former Post Office

400 South Railway



The FORMER POST OFFICE is a major reminder of the importance conferred on Boissevain by the Federal Government in its decision to locate a large post office here in 1935. Along with other government buildings (the Province's Land Titles Office and Manitoba Telephone Building and the Municipality's Town Hall), the Post Office gives Boissevain a notable air of being a major hub of civic activity. Likely devised as a Depression-era public works project, the building has major claims for its architecture, a stunning small-town example of the Neo-Gothic. With its sophisticated wall treatments—elegant and complex brickwork, detailed stonework and animated roofline—the building is apparently unique in Manitoba, where Classical Revival was the style of choice for most small-town post offices.

Joyce House

542 Broadway



Commissioned in 1903 by Thomas Joyce and built by James McLachlan, the JOYCE HOUSE is treasured as one of Boissevain's finest stone houses. Like its neighbour—the Elliot House—the Joyce House is a now-rare and intact example of the once-popular Second Empire style, defined by its mansard roof and dormer windows. The claims for high levels of craftsmanship exhibited in the stonework are immediately apparent on close inspection, but receive another level of interest when it is noted that the stone apparently came from a single giant boulder. Reports recall that Mr. McLachlan found the stone on NE13-2-20W, about two kilometres from town, and spent many weeks blasting, drilling, cutting and finishing the stone, and then hauling 29 wagon-loads of material to the building site.

Large Stone House

529 Broadway



Boissevain has always been noted for its wealth of stone buildings, and given the loss of some of the larger examples, the grand stone house at 529 BROADWAY assumes even more significance. Stylistically the house is notable as a typical and subdued version of the popular Queen Anne style used on so many Manitoba houses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its real importance lies in its materials – after St. Paul’s United and St. Matthew’s Anglican churches the largest stone building in town. While not exhibiting the same level of craftsmanship seen in other local stone buildings, in fact this house is more typical in the way that the rough fieldstone has been laid, with the many sizes of stones heavily mortared for stability. Situated on a steep slope on Broadway, the house is a noted community landmark.

Dr. Schaffner House

544 Cook



The DR. SCHAFFNER HOUSE is a major Boissevain house, with primary heritage significance gained through its association with Dr. Frederick Laurence Schaffner (1855-35). Dr. Schaffner was a member of the Manitoba Board of Health, a coroner, and Health Officer of the municipalities of Morton and Boissevain. He was also a city councillor, Mayor of Boissevain, was elected to the Canadian House of Commons for the constituency of Souris (1904, 1908 and 1911). and served as a Senator of Canada until his death in 1935. Dr. Schaffner's house, built around 1890, is an old one in Boissevain, and is also a very good example of the kind of large (and heavily ornamented) Victorian manor that the wealthy of the day preferred.

Welch Block

410 South Railway



The WELCH BLOCK, with its traditional storefront facade, grey stone walls and recessed centre entrance, stands as a determined link to Boissevain's past. The building carries a strong association with pioneer entrepreneur and stalwart public servant Alexander R. Welch, who opened his first Boissevain business in 1894 and later moved into these premises. The Welch name was a presence in Boissevain's business district until 1961 and the Welch Block has been home to a succession of retail operations for over a century. Although the use of fieldstone for the construction of commercial buildings was not widespread in southwestern Manitoba, Boissevain's main street boasted several such structures, of which the Welch Block is the sole visible example.

Sites of Heritage Interest

The following six buildings of slightly lesser heritage significance are noted here as Sites of Heritage Interest.

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

558 Cook



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is the oldest building remaining in Boissevain. Built in 1887, the church is a strong reminder of the Anglo-Ontario cultural roots of its original congregation. It is also a good example of the kind of building that was possible in many pioneering situations. Small and modest, of wood frame construction, the building still exhibits basic Gothic Revival qualities that defined its function – especially the pointed windows along the side walls.

Hettle House

653 Stephen



The Hettle House is valued because of its associations with John Hettle, a noted implement dealer and farmer, and also for its architecture. The house is a good example of the kind of Manitoba interpretation of the Queen Anne style that was so popular in the first decade of the 20th century. Here, in about 1910, the Hettles received a house with a playful and varied floor plan (possible because of its construction of wood frame), large and varied window openings, a wraparound porch delicately detailed in wood, all rendered in a pleasing colour palette of golds and whites.

Dow House

721 Mill



The stately Dow House (ca. 1910), a large and finely detailed red brick dwelling of four-square design, is an exceptional example of substantial prairie architecture. Its broad facade, with a well-conceived verandah and strong roofline, recalls the aspirations of community and business leaders in a period of economic growth. The well-known Boissevain landmark housed the prominent George Dow family for over 80 years, including businessman Edward Dow, also the town's mayor (1946-68) and a provincial politician.

Krocker House

Johnson



The Krocker House is an old Boissevain building, constructed in ca. 1890. With its irregular form, animated roofline, wealth of window shapes and numerous wooden details, the house is a Boissevain landmark. It is also a good example of the kind of architecture that defined so many houses in southern Manitoba in the late 1800s – combining Gothic Revival and Italianate elements to create the kind of picturesque and inviting home that Victorians loved.

Nicholson House



Heritage Value Statement

Built in 1891, the Nicholson House is one of Boissevain's oldest buildings. A community landmark situated on expansive grounds on the west side of Mill Road, the building—commissioned by the John Nicholson family—is an impressive example of late 19th century residential design. Exhibiting some distinctive Gothic Revival qualities—seen in the steep roof and numerous dormers, as well as fine wooden details—the house also boasts an interior that is nearly intact, with original woodwork on stairs and doors, wide baseboards, high ceilings and original registers. While the house has been compromised in its integrity by the addition of stucco over the original exterior wall sheathing, it is still a handsome and notable site.



Parting thoughts

The strength of a nation is derived from the integrity of its homes.

— Confucius

A country without a past has the emptiness of a barren continent; and a city without old buildings is like a man without a memory.

— Graeme Shankland