

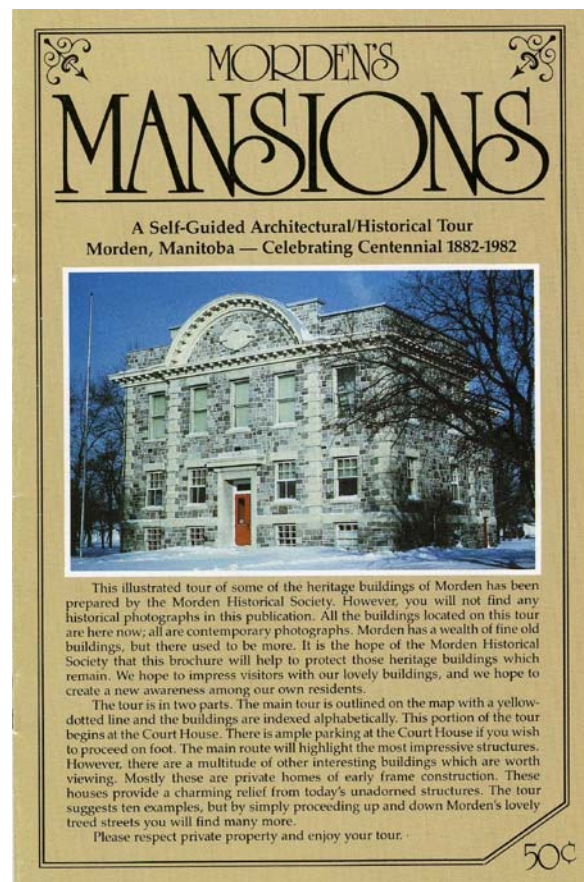
Developing an Effective Walking Tour

Walking (and driving) tours are popular vehicles to showcase a community's history by focusing on its notable buildings. Stories about the community's growth, seminal events and important people are all effectively expressed through their associations with certain buildings.

A basic, and conventional, walking tour includes a cover image, a brief introduction, small images of selected sites, cursory text for each site and a map. Such a tour can be useful, but there is often a level of detail that is missing, which if explored could make the tour even more compelling. The purpose of this leaflet is to take these basic components and suggest how each might be addressed more effectively. The following subjects will be of interest to groups undertaking this kind of project:

- Nature of the Tour
- Research and Analysis
- Site Selection
- Tour Design
- Text
- Images
- Map(s)
- Design, Production and Distribution

A handsome and very popular booklet provides visitors to Morden with a concise tour that highlights the community's special buildings.
(Courtesy *Morden's Mansions*)



MAKE HISTORY.

Nature of the Tour

A conventional walking/driving tour highlights the best heritage buildings in a particular area, and uses them to discuss notable people from the past, historic community events and local architecture. This tried-and-true approach often ensures a vivid and inclusive exploration of the community. But it is also possible to approach the subject differently:

- Some tours focus exclusively on a building type (churches, for example), where a great deal of architectural and religious information is presented.
- Other tours rely on a historic theme or event (the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, for example, in which buildings form the backdrop for an analysis of social conditions, personalities and events).

- Other suggestions for this kind of thematic approach include ethnic groups, economic engines, building styles, building materials, founding community members.

A walking (and driving) tour exploring the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike includes several sections that help put the various sites noted in the tour into a historical context.

Working-Class Winnipeg

As a result of campaigns by civic and commercial leaders to attract immigrants for agriculture and industry, Winnipeg's population grew dramatically from 26,000 to 179,000 between 1891 and 1921. Almost 30 percent of these immigrants were British, Ukrainians, and Poles. Residents of other eastern European countries accounted for another eleven percent of this population increase, while much smaller groups arrived from western Europe and the United States.

Thousands of these immigrants settled in the neighbourhoods near the factories and warehouses that crowded the imposing C.P.R. marshalling yards that stretched across the city. Located within walking distance of Winnipeg's many factories, a necessity in the era before the automobile and mass public transit, such areas were usually perceived by outsiders as simply dusty, noisy, and overcrowded. More importantly, though, they supported vibrant ethnic working-class communities. These German, Jewish, Ukrainian, and British communities that grew alongside one another became the centres of labour militancy and radical politics. Many of these values and ideas were part of the



Immigrants arriving at C.P.R. Station.
Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection.



Research and Analysis

Research and analysis are critical aspects of the production of a walking tour. All tours will require a minimum level of research – to learn correct dates of construction, and correct names (and spellings), and to collect interesting anecdotes and stories. Readers will expect at least this level of detail. But a more ambitious, and ultimately more rewarding approach, beginning with the production of an inventory followed by analysis of information collected, can lead to the development of a unique and truly compelling tour for residents and visitors alike.

Inventory

It is helpful as a first step to produce a Community Heritage Site Inventory. Such an inventory will include those buildings and sites that seem to have at least some potential to be on the walking tour, and will include photographs and brief historical information (construction dates, owners, building type, style, etc.). The Historic Resources Branch has produced a guide, *Special Places: Community Heritage Site Inventories*, to assist groups undertaking this kind of work. It is important at this stage of the project that judgements be suspended about what ultimately will be on the tour – it is possible that long-overlooked (but important) buildings might be rediscovered, or that a special non-building site will be revealed.

Analysis

The Analysis stage involves a review of the Inventory (in concert with the local history book), with the expectation that the working group will start developing contextual claims that will inform various parts of the tour. The Historic Resources Branch has produced a guide, *Special Places: Analysis and Evaluation*

of Heritage Sites, to assist people undertaking this kind of work.. The kinds of questions (and sample answers) that a group should ask to help develop this information include:

- Are there historical claims that can inform the tour? For example, is there a prevailing culture that explains why a certain architectural style was used? Is an early period of the community's history still expressed in certain remaining buildings? was there an economic or physical determinant that explains the existing community layout or character? are there buildings that were moved in from an earlier townsite?
- Are there overall architectural claims? For example: is there a prevailing material (stone or brick) or style that can be explored through the tour? Does the community boast an impressive number of a certain building type (intact commercial core, concentration of fine houses)?
- Are there special or unusual buildings that often are not thought of as heritage sites? For example: a house built of concrete blocks, an old automobile service station, an old stable recalling the age of horse power.
- Are there strange or compelling stories that can be highlighted? Crimes, local legends, etc.
- Are there places that are either non-building sites, or where important buildings once stood, that might be included?
- Are there certain buildings that are so important that they require additional research?

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Site Selection

With the Inventory and Analysis in hand, the community can begin the process of site selections. Some issues to think about:

- Which buildings are nice to look at?
- Which buildings have the most compelling stories?
- Which buildings are more like a supporting cast?
- Are there concentrations of buildings that would make the tour more efficient?
- What amenities (washrooms, parks, seating areas, restaurants) need to be added to the list?
- What is the best starting point?
- What themes and issues should be highlighted and explored?

Tour Design

The list of potential buildings and sites that might be featured on the tour should be plotted on a map to suggest where there are concentrations of places. This mapping step will help determine whether there are buildings that might be dropped from consideration (unless they are so special that they must be retained).

A walking tour is usually a loop (so that readers start and finish in the same location), and the most successful tours also ensure that there is sufficient density of buildings to provide the most meaningful experience. Tours usually take between half an hour and an hour, so if the tour is longer, consider dividing it with break points, like a park, where tour participants can rest. Also consider the physical limitations that some participants might have, and address those in the tour design.

LOCATION D 77 FIRST STREET NE



In the hands of a skilled designer it is possible to transform what might be a clunky Southern Ontario Gothic house into an elegant, dignified building. Here, the appearance of the familiar pointed Gothic gable gains grandeur through the combination at the roof line of bargeboards, pinnacles and pendant. The porch, also featuring elegant forms and details, and painted white to contrast with the greys and reds of the walls, is a beauty.

The partnership of Tanner, Armitage and Brownlee is listed as an early owner of this piece of property.

The beautiful stone house was built for Joseph and Edith Burgess. They raised 11 children in this home. Joseph, a butcher by trade, was employed first by his father-in-law, John Wake. Joseph Burgess established the Burgess store in 1896. It still operates in the same location today, under the direction of great-grandson Rick Burgess.

Following the deaths of Joseph and Edith Burgess in 1952, the house was purchased by Dr. William James Sharman who occupied the house until 1964.

The house returned to the Sharman family in 1985, when Lois Christine Sharman Douglas, daughter of Dr. Sharman, purchased the house. She restored it to its present condition.

Owners in 2006 are David and Sheila Mickle.

GPS Coordinates: N 50°15.091' W 99°50.257'

One of Minnedosa's walking tours focuses on that community's notable stone-building legacy, and in each entry historical information found in a typical walking tour (names, dates) is combined with references to the local stone heritage. (Courtesy: *Stone Buildings of Minnedosa*)



Text

Because walking tours are often dense collections of information—photographs, a map, an introduction and accompanying texts for each site—it is necessary that the texts themselves be carefully considered. They will need to address a few key issues, and they need to be concise. They should include basic tombstone data (names and dates) and the information must be accurate; double check dates and spellings.

Texts also need to be informative. Ask yourselves why an observer should be interested in each place; they will want to know why the place has been selected and why they are looking at it. Does it have an important historical claim? What was that claim? Does it have a connection to a notable person or family? Are there architectural features that need to be highlighted?

If at all possible, each text should also be interesting. Try to find some compelling way to present the information. For this part of the project it might be advisable to hire or engage a professional writer.

Tour Title

Groups should think about giving their tour a catchy title (*Morden's Mansions*, for example), and try not to default to the typical “Community Walking Tour” solution.

The Introduction

The tour should have an introduction that very briefly sketches the main points of the history of the community. If the tour is not conventional (i.e., if it focuses on a single building type or on a theme), that angle needs to be explained and explored, with additional information.

Writing about Buildings

Writing about buildings is often thought to be the purview of an architectural historian. But there are some basic subjects, and word choices, that can help novice writers address this important subject:

- Is the building of a certain style? The Historic Resources Branch has produced a guide, *Special Places: References and Resources: Architectural Styles and Building Traditions*, to assist people undertaking this kind of work. If the building does have such a claim (and many will not), what features and elements, typical of the style, are visible on the building? Given the information in the booklet, does the building have exceptional features and details, especially compared with other local examples?
- Does the building exhibit construction materials or techniques that can be discussed or described? The Historic Resources Branch has produced two guides, *Special Places: References and Resources: Historic Construction Materials and Techniques* and *Glossary of Architectural Terms* to assist people undertaking this kind of work. A building made with stone will catch people's interest – is there something worth saying to help an observer better appreciate the skill employed? Brick and wood-frame buildings can also be explained with reference to certain parts whose technical terms will be of interest.
- Perhaps there are certain words that can be used to characterize the building: grand, pictur-*esque*, majestic, playful, handsome, sombre, elegant, quaint, refined, imposing. Think about using these words to spice up the texts.

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Images

Images are a vital aspect of a walking tour's appeal. They will need to be attractive, and they will also need to be informative – that is, they need to connect to the text. Some things to think about:

- Most communities employ contemporary photographs to illustrate their tour. Photographs are cheap and effective, and digital cameras allow for great ease of collection, and with suitable software also for opportunities to manipulate and enhance images.
- Consider using archival images to provide some visual contrast to the pamphlet.
- Archival images of people can make the content more accessible.
- Using one or two archival contextual views will provide readers with a better sense of how buildings once fit together.
- Read the texts carefully to see if there are certain views that are preferred, or whether there are certain details that will make viewing the building more compelling.
- Consider whether it is possible to render the images as high quality drawings (commissioned from a local illustrator) – this adds a whole other level of interest to the product, but also to the experience of looking at the sites.
- Because images will be the immediate source of the tour's delight, it might be necessary to hire or engage a skilled photographer adept at interpreting a building from its most advantageous perspectives and in its details.



A fine image of a house in Minnedosa captures the exuberant qualities of the building, qualities that should be expressed in any accompanying text.



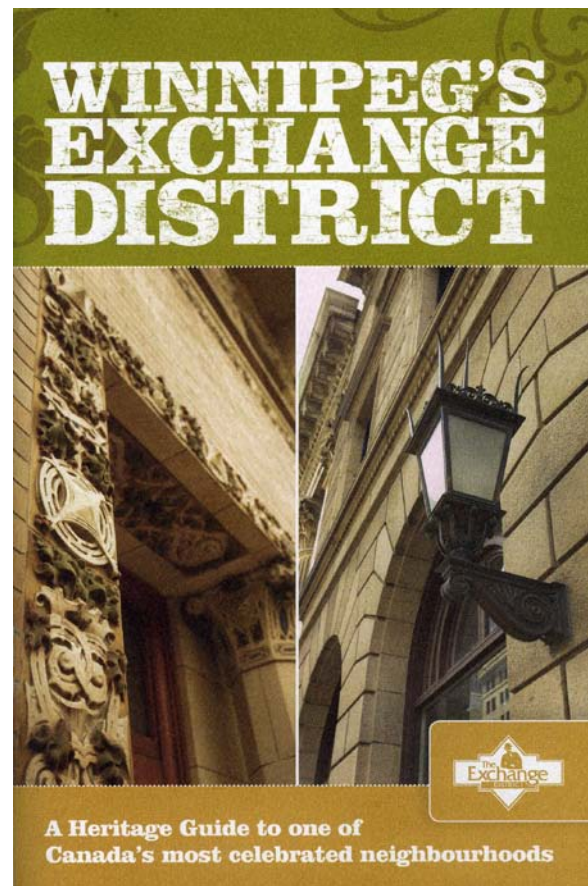
An archival image (in this case of Ste. Adolphe Church and Convent) can help walking tour readers imagine what a building once looked like, or, if it has been lost, what the site once looked like.

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Design, Production and Distribution

Given the rather restrictive qualities of a typical walking tour pamphlet—with images and text tightly packed into a small space—only a few graphic approaches have been developed in Manitoba. It is recommended that communities seek out other walking tour examples to explore the possibilities. The Historic Resources Branch has collected many Manitoba tours, and can share those with interested groups.

After all the hard work expended to create the tour, it is vital that it be effectively promoted. Make sure to place quantities of pamphlets in local museums, schools, stores, hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, municipal offices and service stations. Also consider whether the tour brochure will be sold to recoup some of the production costs – if there is a charge, very widespread distribution will be more challenging. You might also consider seeing whether you can place your leaflet in “pdf” form on your community’s website.



Strong graphic design ensures that a tour is clear, concise and exciting. (Courtesy: Winnipeg Exchange BIZ)