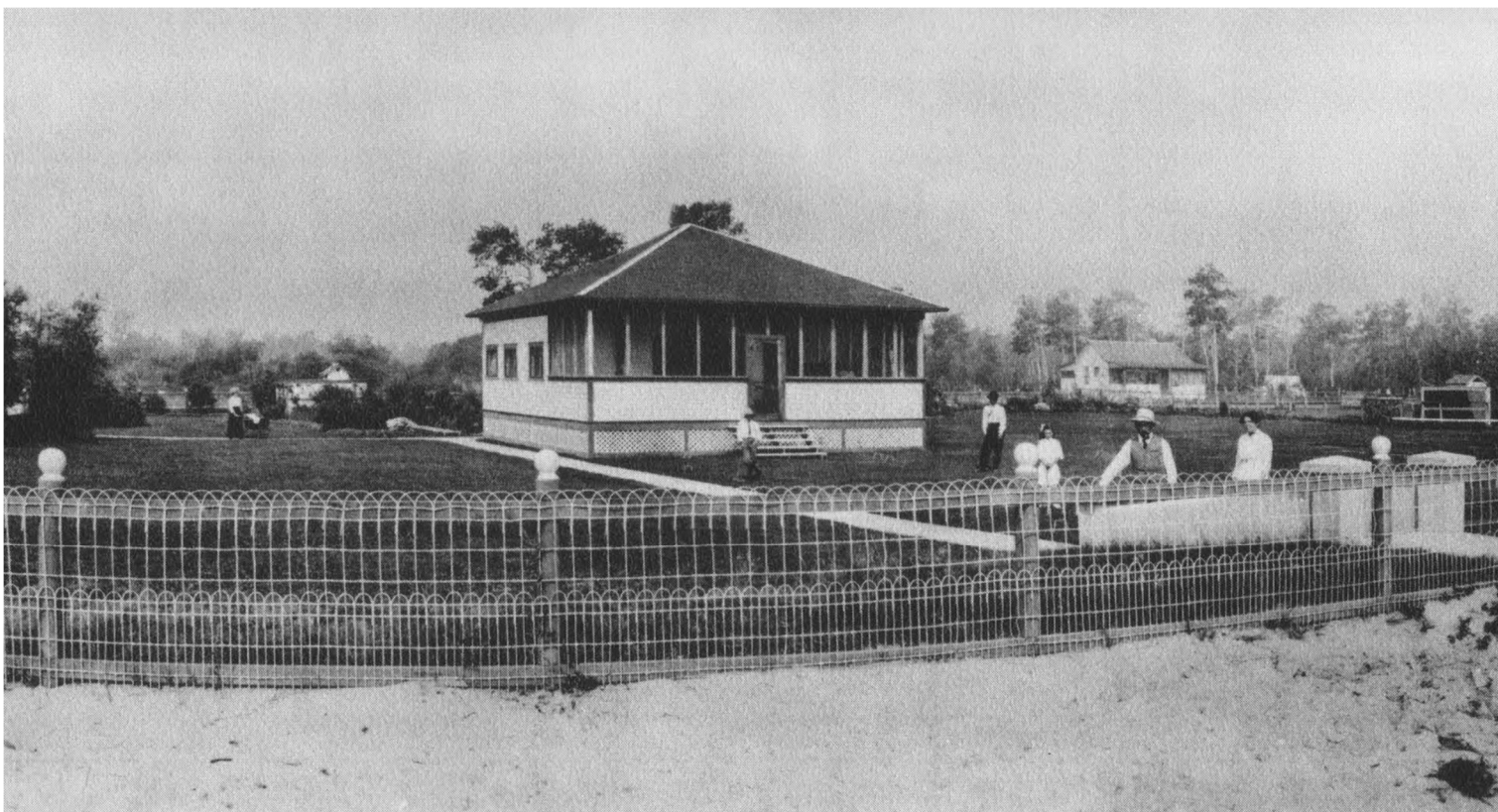


LONI BEACH

A GIMLI HERITAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD





A project of the Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee

The Committee acknowledges the support of the Province's department of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection, provided through a grant from the Heritage Grants Program and through the ongoing support of the Historic Resources Branch.

On the cover:

View of a Loni Beach cottage viewed from the lakeshore, ca 1922.

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The Loni Beach neighbourhood has an important history, and very distinct physical qualities that make it notable within the Municipality of Gimli. It has special heritage values, which are increasingly coming under pressure from development and the addition of modern amenities and resources.

This booklet is intended to provide property owners and local government with a useful tool. The detailed description and definition of the heritage character of Loni Beach can be used to inform evaluations of how any proposed changes might affect or threaten the integrity of the unique and fragile heritage qualities of this historic Gimli neighbourhood. Careful evaluation and planning can accommodate required changes to historic resources without compromising their integrity. It is also hoped that the information provided will encourage a genuine appreciation of this built heritage environment and create a willing heritage conservation ethic within the community.

The Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC) has undertaken this work using an important heritage management tool developed through the Historic Places Initiative, a pan-Canadian project of the federal Parks Canada and all provinces and territories (including Manitoba's Historic Resources Branch) that involved the development of the values-based management approach, via a product called the Statement of Significance. The Gimli MHAC has used the values-based management approach and the Statement of Significance for all of our 15 municipal designations. We have found that this approach, which is designed to engage building owners in a deeper, more focused understanding of their building's heritage significance, ensures good communication about heritage, and especially leads to good ongoing maintenance and conservation.

The Gimli MHAC is hopeful that this same values-based management approach can be explored with a whole neighbourhood that has some clear heritage attributes. The MHAC is also hopeful that this pilot project will be used by other municipalities seeking to describe their own distinct heritage neighbourhoods and areas.

The Gimli MHAC has worked with the province's Historic Resources Branch to develop the Loni Beach Neighbourhood Statement of Significance, and also with heritage consultant Lorne Thompson, who has done much of the research.

This report begins with the following contextual information:

- History – A brief history of the Loni Beach neighbourhood
- Maps – Two historic maps that help define the origins of the Loni Beach neighbourhood
- Camp Robertson – A brief overview of one of the old fresh-air camps that historically was associated with Loni Beach
- Landscape Qualities – A collection of contemporary images that suggest some of the historic aspects of Loni Beach
- Historic Cottage Photographs – A collection of archival images from various people to suggest the early cottage qualities of Loni Beach
- Cottages – A collection of contemporary images that show the important qualities of historic cottages in Loni Beach
- Notable Loni Beach Cottages – A collection of images and historical data
- Cottage Owners' Impressions – A collection of information developed from interviews with some of the area's long-standing families suggesting certain intangible and ephemeral qualities that define the area's heritage

The report concludes with three key resources developed for this project:

- Heritage Districts – An Introduction
- Values-based Management and the Statement of Significance
- Loni Beach Cottage Neighbourhood Statement of Significance

It is the Loni Beach Cottage Neighbourhood Statement of Significance that is the ultimate product, and the ultimate purpose of this project. The Gimli MHAC is hopeful that this resource can be used by residents, visitors, Gimli Council and its administration, as well as the community at large, to better appreciate this important aspect of our community's heritage.

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History

Historian Nelson Gerrard generously provided the following information about the origins of the Loni Beach neighbourhood in an interview from November of 2014.

“The original homestead along the shoreline immediately north of Gimli was called Lón (Icelandic for *pond* or *lagoon*). In Icelandic, names take on different forms depending on grammatical usage, and the most frequently used form of Lón is Lóni (dative case, indicating location or following prepositions such as "at" or "from"), so this form of the name was the most familiar one to English speakers, who began to refer to the shoreline along this property as Lóni Beach.

“The first known homesteader (1875) was an Icelander named Jónatan Halldórsson, who had come to Canada in 1874. Following Jónatan's departure from New Iceland about 1879, this property was acquired by Friðjón (Fridjon) Friðriksson (Fridriksson), a merchant and postmaster in the village of Gimli, who acquired the homestead patent (title) for Lón. The property was then farmed for many years by a couple name Gísli Sveinsson and Margrét Brynjólfsdóttir, and it was in their day that the lakeshore portion of Lón (Lóni Beach) was first developed by cottagers seeking sun, sand, and tranquility along Lake Winnipeg's shoreline.

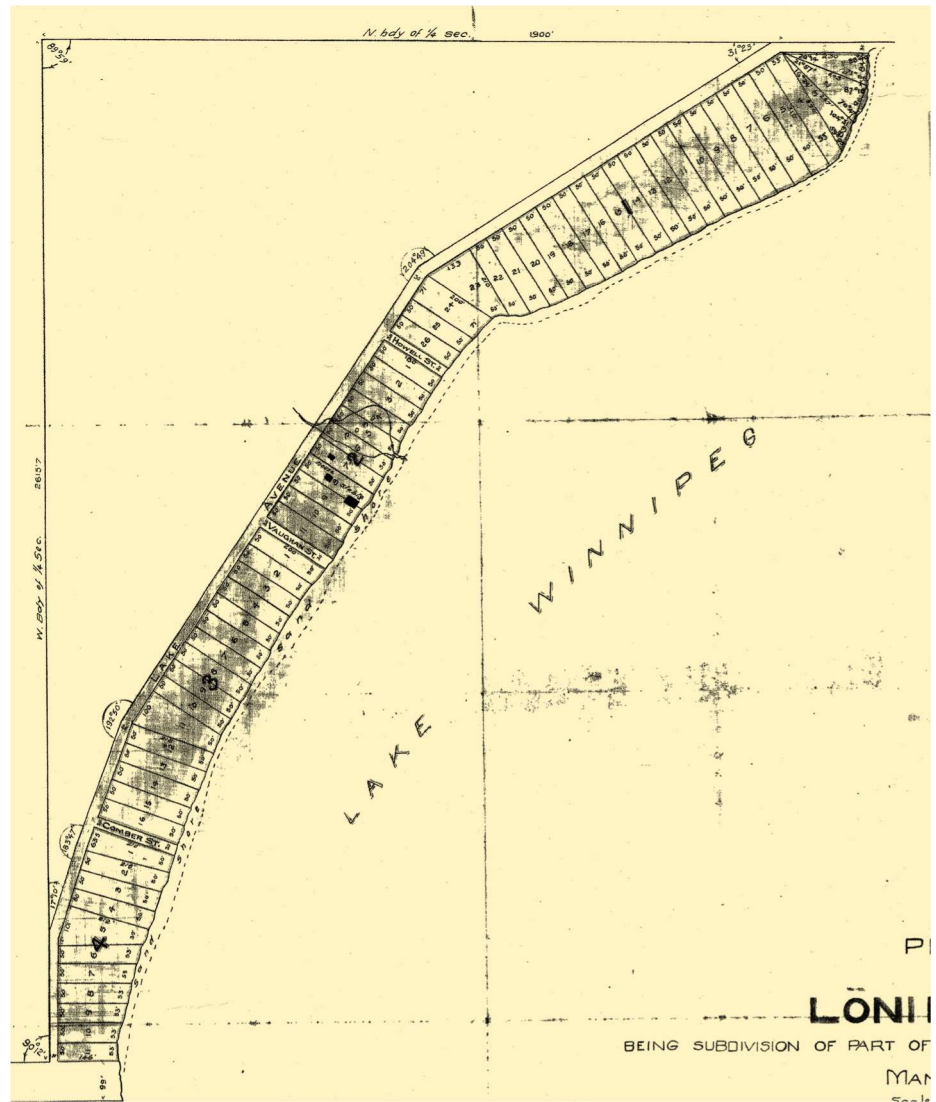
LONI BEACH

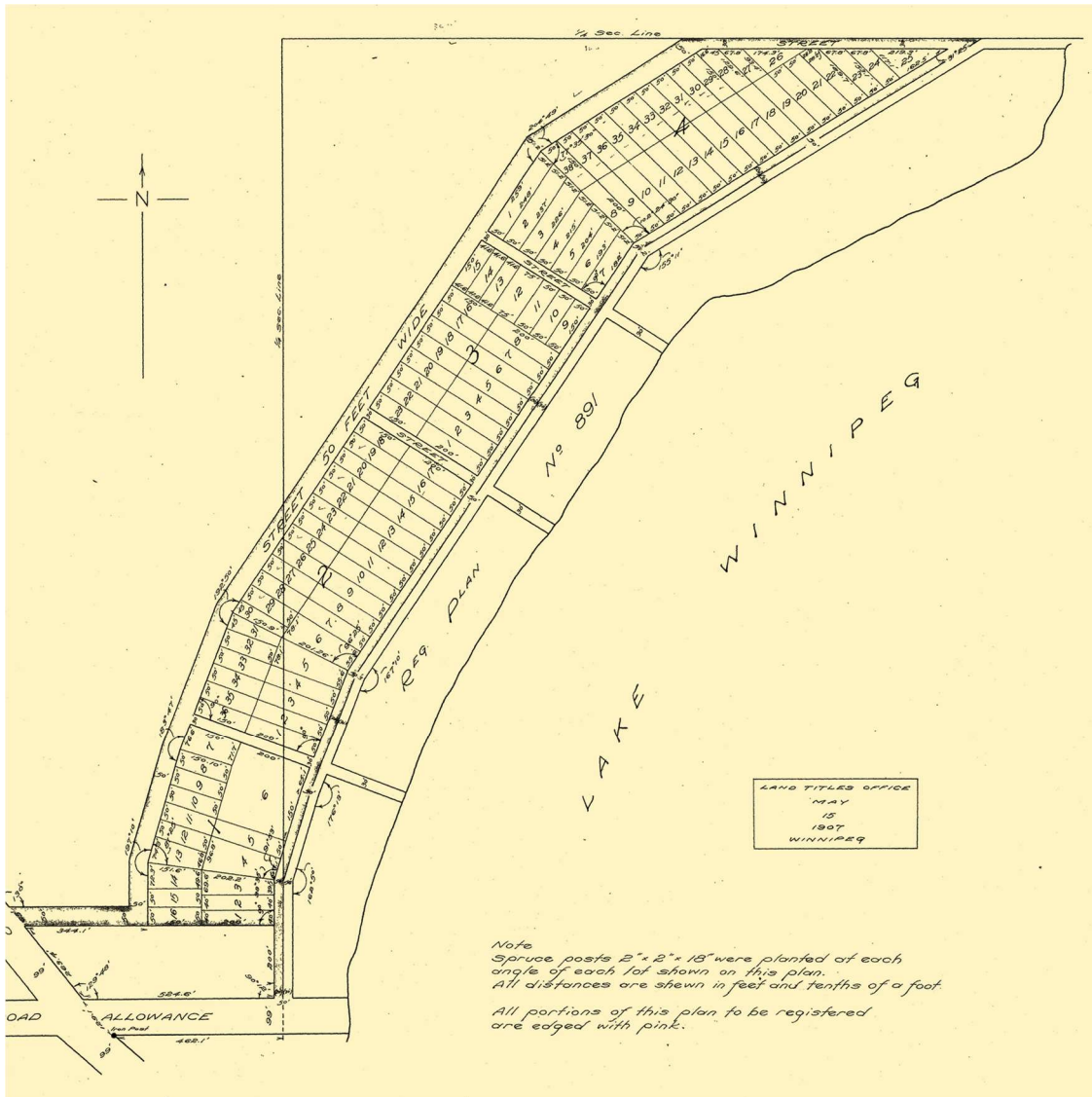
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Maps

The following two maps, from 1904 and 1956, show subdivisions of Loni Beach.

Subdivision Plan for Loni Beach area from 1904.
This plan shows original lots along the Lake Winnipeg shoreline.





Subdivision Plan for Loni Beach area from 1956. This plan shows the addition of lots on the west side of the original subdivision along the Lake Winnipeg shoreline

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Camp Robertson

The Loni Beach area was for many years the home for Camp Robertson, one of several open-air camps that were located on the west side of Lake Winnipeg.

Open-air camps were a phenomenon that began in Great Britain in the mid 1800s as a way to provide poor urban children with brief (a week or two) opportunities to spend time in physical situations away from unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions. It was noted especially that these camps focused on alleviating “bad air” (miasma) that was a contributing factor in illnesses. And that was not unlikely – before electricity was widely used, domestic coal- and wood-fired stoves and furnaces made for poor indoor air quality.

An article by James Burns and Gordon Goldsborough in the *Manitoba History Journal* of Spring 2011 (“Fresh Air for Kiddies: The Fresh Air Camps of Lake Winnipeg,” pages 31-38) provides good background on these camps, and specifically on the camps along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg.

Camp Robertson was formed in 1911 and situated near Loni Beach (we note that the authors of the *Manitoba History Journal* article appear to have mixed up Camp Robertson and Camp Sparling – it is Camp Robertson that was near Loni Beach, not Camp Sparling as they suggest). According to Burns and Goldsborough, “the camp was just north of the town of Gimli . . . on a beautifully wooded, five-acre plot already [with] a few buildings on it and a bathing beach. More than 700 children and mothers attended the camp in 1911.”

“During 1913 the Gimli camp took in about a thousand children and number of mothers. According to the *Manitoba Free Press*, “It costs three thousand dollars [per year], and those who give the money know they have given happiness and health and beautiful memories to many to whom life was very grey.” The first party of campers, “ranging in age from a pale faced baby of a year old to a stoop-shouldered girl of fifteen,” descended on the place in July 1911. They included recently orphaned and disabled children, mothers whose husbands had died, or deserted them; families devastated by alcohol abuse. Among benefits available to campers was nutritious food, and lots of it, but as one reporter cracked “. . . no one has yet been known to eat more than four plates of porridge at one meal.”

The Lake Winnipeg fresh-air camps came to include Camp Sparling, Camp Morton (for Roman Catholics), B’Nai Brith Camp (for Jewish children), a Salvation Army camp around 1921 and finally the Lakeside Fresh Air Camp (established by the Anglican Church) also in 1921.

Fund-raising was always an issue for these camps, but a great boost in their fortunes came in 1931 when the first Winnipeg Foundation grants were given to the camps. The Winnipeg Foundation had been established in 1921 by banker William Alloway, and as Burns and Goldsborough observed “the camps were exactly what Alloway had in mind for support – they squarely addressed its mandate of support for charities and the

professional field of social work that was emerging in the 1920s. Over the next 25-year period to 1950 the Winnipeg Foundation contributed \$14,250 to operation of the Lakeside Camp and \$45,000 to the Associated Fresh Air Camps at typical annual rates of \$500 and \$2,000 to \$2,500 respectively.”

The camps stayed open through World War II but began to decline in popularity after the war. B’nai Brith closed in 1954. Lakeside in 1977. Camps Robertson and Sparling ceased operations in 1974.

There are no physical remains of these camps, notably of the one associated with Loni Beach, Camp Robertson. But it is good to know that this once important social attribute was once part of the community – just to the northwest of the north intersection of North Lake Street and Loni Street.



View of a typical fresh-air camp on Lake Winnipeg, undated (Courtesy: James Burns and Gordon Goldsborough. Manitoba History Journal. Spring 2011 “Fresh Air for Kiddies: The Fresh Air Camps of Lake Winnipeg.”)

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Landscapes

The following collection of images suggests some of the physical qualities that define the neighbourhood's distinct character.



View showing the area's typical cottage-lot character, with expanse of lawn and variety of trees.



View of a typical groin feature on a Loni Beach beach (left), and view of a Loni Beach beachfront.



A Loni Beach lane viewscape (left) and a view of a public access path to the beach.



View to the lake, with typical stairs (left) and view of the beach, showing typical retaining wall.



View from the beach, back along a public access route (left) and view from the beach, back along a public access route.



View of a groin and moveable stairs on a Loni Beach Cottage Neighbourhood beachfront.