



Heritage Tour of "Old Town Gimli"

The growth of Gimli is reflected in the many types of buildings and sites that still define the community, several of which have been designated by the RM. Each of these protected places effectively defines an important aspect of our past and of our growth, the importance of faith, the evolution of education, the development of commerce, and the traditions of architecture and building construction. It is an impressive and well-rounded collection, a heritage set of which all citizens of Gimli should be proud.

Please respect the privacy of property owners.



B1. H.P. Tergesen & Sons (Manitoba Heritage Site) - 82 1st Ave. GPS loc N50 degrees 37.904 minutes W96 degrees 59.136 minutes.

Constructed in 1898 by Hans Pjeter Tergesen and opened for business as a general store on January 1, 1899, this store has been owned and operated by four generations of the Tergesen family. It is the oldest operating general store in Manitoba and an excellent example of a rural community store. The interior possesses most of its original displays and furnishings.



B4. Jonasson House (Municipal Heritage Site) - 48 3rd Ave. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.116 minutes W96 degrees 59.350 minutes.

This fine 1911 heritage home is an important Gimli landmark. It is associated with three well-known early citizens. Einar Jonasson Sr. was a practitioner of homeopathic medicine. Einar Jonasson Jr. served as Secretary-Treasurer of Gimli for 28 years, and his house served as his office (complete with a safe). Einar Jr. was also Mayor of the Village of Gimli from 1924-26. Dr. Frank Scribner also lived here and used part of the house as his office. The building is an excellent example of those houses in Manitoba built according to catalogue plans.



B6. H.P. Tergesen House - 38 4th Ave. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.181 minutes W96 degrees 59.420 minutes.

With its grand columns on the outside and its stained glass windows and murals on the inside, the Tergesen house stands as a testament to the ambitions and optimism of the New Iceland community at the turn of the century. Built by one of Gimli's founding families in 1911, the home enjoyed steam heat, a plumbing system powered by a windmill and electrical wiring, all of it installed long before modern conveniences came to the community.



B8. Gimli Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery (Municipal Heritage Site) - Just south of the junction of PR 231 and PR 222 GPS loc N50 degrees 38.354 minutes W96 degrees 59.691 minutes.

The Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery is the first Icelandic cemetery established in Manitoba and the oldest Icelandic public cemetery in Canada. Opened in 1875, it is important as a burial and memorial site for victims of the 1876-77 smallpox epidemic, a great tragedy that decimated settlers and aboriginal people in the Lake Winnipeg region.



B2. Gimli Unitarian Church (Municipal Heritage Site) - 72 2nd Ave. north of Centre St. GPS loc N50 degrees 37.948 minutes W96 degrees 59.238 minutes.

The Gimli Unitarian Church, completed in 1905, remains the mother church of the Unitarian movement in Western Canada. With its tall slender tower trimmed with wooden detailing, a facade enlivened by a pointed arch entrance, and windows highlighted with wooden tracery, it is a fine example of wood construction. Today, it is used as both church and theatre.



B5. C.P. Paulson House - 44 4th Ave. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.146 minutes W96 degrees 59.419 minutes.

Built in 1931 for C.P. Paulson, the village mayor, this attractive home features front and back dormers and a gabled roofed portico at the main entrance. The gracious interior has maple floors, a brick fireplace and French doors. Governor-General Lord Tweedsmuir dined here in 1936, during his tour of the Interlake. The story is told that Paulson fed him ducks, which he shot in the marsh out back and hung in his garage to age.



B7. Gimli Dance Pavilion (Municipal Heritage Site) - 4th Ave. & Amisk Dr. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.310 minutes W96 degrees 59.414 minutes.

From about 1900 until after World War II, dance halls were popular venues for socializing on the prairies. The Gimli Dance Pavilion (1911) is one of two still in use in Manitoba. Designed by Oli Thorsteinson, a local carpenter and musician, the Pavilion remains largely intact with its original materials and design features. It also holds significance as a social and cultural venue for the Icelandic community, hosting many events including the yearly Icelandic Festival.



B9. Josephson House - 23 3rd Ave. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.262 minutes W96 degrees 59.309 minutes.

This modest but lovely 1913 bungalow is believed to be an "Aladdin Home", a kit that could be ordered from a catalogue. Aladdin homes came with plans and the materials were delivered by rail from British Columbia. Each board was numbered to aid in construction. An early picture shows this house standing by itself in the north end of town. The original owners, Jon and Anna Josephson, boarded teachers working at the Gimli Public School.



B3. Gimli Public School (Municipal Heritage Site) - 62 2nd Ave. north of Centre St. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.047 minutes W96 degrees 59.239 minutes.

The Gimli Public School was built in 1915 by an Icelandic community determined to provide the best opportunities for its children, despite limited resources. The building is still a vibrant part of the community, now housing government offices including those of the RM of Gimli. The attic is home to Icelandic Huldufolk (hidden people). Climb the spiral staircase, be very quiet, and you might hear them.



B10. Thorson/Kristjanson House - 32 Lake St. GPS loc N50 degrees 38.213 minutes W96 degrees 59.077 minutes.

Built in 1914, the Thorson/Kristjanson house is a very important Gimli site, associated with Stephan Thorson (the original owner and mayor of Gimli), "Cartoon Charlie" (a well known cartoon artist who was responsible for early versions of Walt Disney characters, including Snow White), and the Hannes Kristjanson family, including Leo Kristjanson, former President of the University of Saskatchewan and a leader in conserving the Gimli Public School and Lake Winnipeg Visitor Centre.



B11. A.B. Olson House - 129 3rd Ave. GPS loc N50 degrees 37.627 minutes W96 degrees 59.308 minutes.

This historic 1910 house, moved from 32 3rd Ave. in 1993 to the waterfront at 129 3rd Ave., is remembered by many families for its cozy second floor veranda.

Many of the community's girls recall being sent here to stay in the upstairs "doll house" veranda while mother was elsewhere giving birth. In the 1920s and 1930s, the house was owned by Gimli Mayor Hector McGinnis, manager of Armstrong-Gimli fisheries, and his wife Nellie. The home's unique features include; square columns supporting the veranda and a bull's eye porch window.

The current owner, Lila Goodspeed, has maintained its integrity through sympathetic changes.

Notes:



Gimli Dance Pavilion circa 1920s



H.P. Tergesen House circa 1911



Looking at Third Avenue from the Gimli Public School circa 1930s



OLD TOWN GIMLI

Enjoy Gimli's rich collection of heritage buildings and sites



"Gimli gratefully acknowledges the support of the Province of Manitoba"

