



A West Broadway spooky/history self-guided Walk

Thank you to the West Broadway BIZ, Manitoba Historical Society, West End Dumplings, and the Winnipeg Public Library!

#1 School for the Deaf

At a cost of nearly \$15,000 and based on a design by Charles H. Wheeler, a three-storey brick building at the intersection of Sherbrook and Portage opened in late May 1890. It was used for 24 years as a facility for education of the profoundly deaf.

The Manitoba School for the Deaf vacated the building in 1914, and the provincial government reclaimed the structure. The interior was then remodelled and the building was partially used by the University of Manitoba.

It was then converted for use as the Winnipeg Juvenile Court, Detention Home for Juveniles, and Detention Home School which was operated by the Winnipeg School Division and served the educational needs of children who were detained, incarcerated, or taken into protective custody.

The building was later demolished and replaced by Lion's Manor in 1970, which at the time was the largest senior's residence in Canada. Few seniors at that time had lived in a high-rise, and to address a stated concern about the possibility of fire, the building was purposely built in a style known as Brutalist, using exposed concrete and brick to give the impression of safety and stability.

#1 The gas station

Kim Taylor and her husband were motorcycle enthusiasts, and they had a strange encounter back in 1973 when they first moved here from British Columbia.

They had decided to go to a summertime music festival and, shortly into their journey, several other motorcyclists flagged them down.

Not being from the area they weren't able to answer their questions, and instead pointed them to a nearby gas station and watched idly as they drove across the road and spoke to an older man who came out of the station.

Kim and her husband got back on their bikes and continued on, heading homeward a number of hours later.

As they arrived at this corner, there was no more gas station, only a pile of smoking rubble, with a man poking a stick through it and an ambulance standing by. They were shocked and all the way back home they kept looking back, expecting at any moment to be passed by the ambulance but none came.

They contacted the police the next day seeking more information, and the staff sergeant listened as they described their shock at the extent of the devastation.

There was a pause at the other end of the phone, and Kim assumed he was making notes. "Folks," he said, "I'm not sure what you saw, but that gas station exploded two weeks ago."

Kim and her husband both got a sick feeling in their stomachs and have not returned to the area since.

#2 Mulvey School

Mulvey School was originally here at the corner of Broadway and Maryland, a two-storey, two-room school that opened in October 1884 with 47 students. Classrooms were heated by box stoves, around which students would cluster during cold, winter days.

In 1893, a new three-storey, ten-classroom school was built and the provincial government used the third floor as a museum to display its exhibit from the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Two years later, a fire started in the museum and spread to the entire building, destroying it. There were a succession of replacement buildings, including Mulvey School No. 3, which had 12 classrooms and an assembly hall. In 1922, the school was reconfigured, allowing the building to accommodate up to 900 students.

Another school was built in 1925 at the corner of Maryland and Wolseley, and it was originally known as Gordon Bell Junior High School. When a new building for senior students was erected here in 1956, the two schools decided to switch their names, with the school to the south renamed Mulvey and this school became Gordon Bell High School.

#2 Gordon Bell

Gordon Bell had a shy and reserved disposition, possessed a keen sense of humour, and was sympathetic and generous towards others.

He enrolled in 1887 at the Manitoba Medical College; he would graduate three years later. During his second year at the college, he contracted typhoid fever, which caused a severe infection and necessitated the amputation of his right leg and he was fitted with a wooden one. After graduation, Bell became the superintendent and medical officer of the Brandon asylum. Three years later he took up graduate studies in

Vienna in ophthalmology, and after returning to Winnipeg, he practised as a partner with James Wilford Good, the first eye specialist in western Canada.

Bell was later appointed provincial bacteriologist and his energy went into recommendations for solving major public health problems such as tuberculosis, typhoid fever, diphtheria, and venereal disease, setting standards for milk suppliers and food distributors, controlling sewage disposal, and providing clean drinking water. He was instrumental in having amendments to the Public Health Act passed that introduced public nursing to Manitoba.

In early August 1923 Bell was investigating streptococcal throat infections in Brandon, Man. He gathered specimens, consulted with a colleague in Winnipeg, and then took a trip to Fox Lake, where he was seized with chills, fever, and sore throat; he died within 48 hours from streptococcal septicaemia.

Bell's memory has been honoured in a variety of ways, including the naming of Gordon Bell High School.

#3 Broadway-First Baptist Church, 790 Honeyman Avenue

We're standing on what used to be the west end of Broadway before the city decided in the 1970s to make Broadway curve out to meet Portage Avenue. This part of Broadway was then renamed Honeyman Avenue after a Winnipeg alderman.

Across the street from us is the Broadway-Baptist Church. Rev. Alexander Grant was its first pastor, and he regularly went to the CPR station to meet newcomers, to encourage them, and to provide assistance. Although he died in a boating accident in 1897, his impact was so profound that the Grant Memorial Church at Wilkes and Waverley is named after him.

What's interesting architecturally about the church across the street is that the initial building had permanent side-walls only. The end walls were designed to be moved out to meet the needs of an expanding congregation and that enlargement was begun in 1914 and the building completed in 1915.

#4 Maryland Street House

Many people believe that this house with its corner turret is haunted, and its early tenants bore absolute testimony to the presence of spirits.

Tea tables, which had been cleared away, were found the next day set for breakfast. Pictures hanging in their accustomed place in the evening were found on the floor in the morning; trunks securely locked at night were later opened and their contents strewn about. These were frequent and distressing events.

Even now, close to All Hallows Eve, children suddenly awake during the night, and cry out that someone is near them. Footsteps are distinctly heard passing from room to room in the dead of night.

A persistent ghost was frequently removing a certain picture from one wall. The room was finally locked and the key placed out of reach. Next morning, the picture was again on the floor, face downward. This was repeated several times until the picture was placed in another location, where it has been allowed to remain.

People who believe in ghosts credit the strange goings-on in this house to them, while there are others who do not.

#5 The haunted bathtub

The Anderson family moved here from Scotland in the late 1800s, raising seven children and by all accounts leading a happy and congenial life.

However, a tragic event took place in the winter of 1907 when their youngest child wandered out of the home unnoticed, and perished during the night. The family was devastated and no longer wished to remain in this house, selling it a year later and moving west to Brandon.

Subsequent owners told of hearing a tiny child's footsteps in the nighttime, making their way up the stairs to the second floor washroom. That washroom contained a freestanding, clawed bathtub, and the homeowners claimed they would hear the sound of running water as the child presumably poured a bath.

However, when they turned on the lights no one would be there, and the bathtub would be completely dry. This phenomenon would only take place during the coldest winter nights.

The current owners have themselves heard the ghostly footsteps and the sound of running water, although they are sympathetic to the event and feel it is a friendly ghost.

When they renovated their second floor washroom two years ago and the decision was made to remove the bathtub, they have purposely installed it in their front yard as a place of reminder and refuge for their ghostly nighttime visitor.

#6 James Mulligan

James Mulligan arrived at the Red River Settlement in 1848 as part of a contingent of British troops and, after service, he received a plot of land that extended from the Assiniboine River to what is now Notre Dame Avenue.

He continued to buy more land and by 1878 Mulligan was one of the largest property owners in the city. In 1881 he subdivided some of his property into residential lots and created "Furby" Street.

Nearby Boundary Street was originally the boundary for the City of Winnipeg but as the city expanded and moved further west, a new street name was proposed and it came from Mulligan, whose riverside mansion was named Maryland.

There was also a Mulligan Street and it was later renamed Sherbrook Street, the name of the unit of army pensioners of which James Mulligan was a member.

#7 The cabin

James Spence came here in 1842 to work as a tinsmith to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. Nearby Spence Street was named after him, and his home was near the current site of the Osborne Bridge where he and his wife Mary raised their 11 children.

It was a cold and bitter night in the winter of 1872 when a visitor came to James Spence's tiny home on the Assiniboine River.

It was full of people and James directed him to an empty log cabin across the frozen river, telling him that it was supposed to be haunted.

The visitor later recounted this story:

I pulled up my sled to the dwelling and entered, finding two rooms, one of which contained a fireplace that had not been used for some time.

I started a fire and fried a little bacon and made some tea. As I was eating I looked up and found a stranger by my side. I did not hear him come through the doorway and

was naturally surprised. He was an Englishman, smartly dressed and wore no coat. He had his arms folded across his chest. His eyes seemed to look through me and I felt very uncomfortable.

I addressed him and asked if he owned the cabin. He shook his head - no. I asked him where he came from and he pointed to a number of graves standing white on the hillside. I had now become thoroughly alarmed and asked him if he was going to stay the night.

He pointed to the graves and beckoned me to follow him. I began to believe that he was a supernatural being, a genuine ghost. I offered him some of my bacon, bread and tea, but he silently left the room without a sound of footsteps.

When he had disappeared, the fire blazed up into a flame and roared up the chimney, my frying pan rattled and banged onto the floor, then balanced in the flames while the bacon turned a strange blood-red hue. I swooned with fright and to this day I cannot solve this mystery.

#8 The musical doll

Langside Street was named after James Lang who came here in 1862 at the age of 21 to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. His father-in-law was James Spence.

Alice Cowling, whose family lived in this house at 193 Langside for many years, told this story:

My aunt died suddenly at age forty-five, which was a shock to us all.

About ten years after she died, I was listening to the radio when a certain song came on and I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked around to see if someone was there, but there was no one. I had a feeling it was my aunt because the song playing was one she loved, one we all knew as her favourite.

The other incident happened on my 17th birthday.

Before my aunt died we had gone to a yard sale, where she bought me a musical doll. I didn't know it at the time because she died on July 5th and my birthday is July 10th.

When I opened up my gift, there was the doll she had bought me and you may think this is unusual, but the doll sometimes plays music on its own and the song is the one I heard on the radio.

One time in particular, it was almost 6 in the morning, and I was just coming back into bed when I was startled as my musical doll started playing on its own.

It was loud enough that it woke my brother and my parents. We were all amazed and a little scared as this was the exact time that my aunt had died. I firmly think this is just my aunt saying hello. What do you think?

#9 James Wilford Good

James Wilford Good was a physician at the Winnipeg General and St Boniface Hospitals who later studied in Vienna, and became the first ophthalmologist to practise in western Canada.

In 1898, during the gold rush in the Yukon, Good left for Dawson, where he tackled the problems of typhoid fever and scurvy that were rampant in the area.

He returned to Winnipeg two years later and resumed teaching at the Manitoba Medical College, where his lectures were presented with some sparkling wit. Known for his sense of humour, he was in great demand for public lectures.

Throughout his life, Good travelled widely, visiting Europe, South America, and India. After visiting the Calgary Stampede, he took up horseback riding, and developed affection for dressing as a cowboy. To maintain his physique he began boxing and hired a former prizefighter as a sparring partner; however, a heavy punch knocked him out and prevented him from working for a week, and he gave up this athletic pursuit. He also played billiards.

In 1921 Good moved to Vancouver. Upon his death, his considerable wealth was distributed to the sanatorium in Ninette, Man., the Children's Home of Winnipeg, and a senior citizens' home. Nearby Good Street was named in his honour.

#9 Manitoba Legislature

The Manitoba Legislature is known as one of the most impressive legislature buildings in all of Canada.

Constructed and designed by Masons, some people believe it was built as a replica of King Solomon's Temple. The building contains a number of hidden hieroglyphic inscriptions, numerological codes, and a hidden Arc of the Covenant.

In ancient times when an ox was sacrificed, its skull was hung from a tree to ward off demons and to signal that the place was sacred in nature.

The legislature has eight oxen skulls placed over the Grand Staircase, meaning it is an especially sacred site.

The building's design appears to have a number of connections to the occult and the supernatural world, and many people understand The Pool of the Black Star as a symbolic gateway between heaven and hell.

The number 666 is often viewed as the sign of the beast, and is frequently associated with the devil. The Grand Staircase room measures exactly 66.6 feet by 66.6 feet.

The number 13 is also viewed as unlucky in western culture, based in part on the common belief that Judas was the 13th guest at the last supper.

In October, 1307, on Friday the 13th the King of France murdered most of the Knights Templar. In response, the Freemasons have adopted numerous symbols of importance to the Knights Templar and many are found throughout the legislature.

For example, the Grand Staircase has 3 sets of 13 steps; each hallway has 13 light fixtures; there are 13 light bulbs in the light fixture in the rotunda; and the balustrade around the Black Star is exactly 13 feet in length.

Because there are so many hidden Masonic symbols throughout the building, many people feel that the Legislature is a haunted place.

#10 Spirited Away

People may be unaware that many early funeral homes, like Thompson's at the corner, contained living quarters as a staff member always needed to be on site in the event of a death and the potential for a body needing to be delivered to a funeral home at all hours.

This story was told by a staff member here of an event during a hot summer night in 1934.

“Who’s there?” shouted the occupant of a room in the Thompson Funeral Home, as he heard a noise in the corner of the room. There was no answer and the noise stopped.

“Anybody there?” No answer.

“It must have been a spirit,” he said to himself. “I must be a medium.”

Then aloud he said, “If there is a spirit in the room it will tap three times.”

Three distinct raps were heard.

“Is it the spirit of my sister?” No answer.

“Is it the spirit of my mother-in-law?” Three very distinct raps.

“Are you happy? Nine raps.

“Do you want anything?” A succession of loud raps.

“Will you give me a communication if I get up?” No answer.

“Shall I hear from you tomorrow?” Raps very loud in the direction of the door.

“Shall I ever see you?” He waiting long for an answer, but none came, and he fell asleep.

Next morning he found that the “spirit of his mother-in-law” had carried off his watch and purse, his trousers and his overcoat.

#11 Lawsuit

A week before Hallowe’en on October 23rd, 1905 the Manitoba Free Press ran what they probably thought was just a short amusing article. Titled, ‘A Wolseley Ghost’ the article stated that a vacant house at 294/296 Furby Street, was haunted by a ghost.

Though many people were afraid of the house, large groups started to gather in the basement hoping to experience the ghost for themselves.

This activity and attention did not please Rachel Nagy, the owner of the house. She was planning to sell, and believed that the article had dramatically reduced the value

of her property. She also blamed the Free Press for attracting large crowds who had vandalized the house. She decided to sue the paper for \$10,000 in damages.

One interesting argument brought forward by a lawyer for the newspaper was citing a 200-year-old law that stated that no action could be taken against a person saying that another person was a witch.

His argument was that a ghost and a witch were similar in nature, and therefore the lawsuit had no merit.

The case went all the way to the Supreme Court who upheld an appeal court's decision, awarding \$1,000 in damages to the owner of the home and bringing an end to the haunted house lawsuit.

The End

We hope you enjoyed your walk and learned some fun things about the neighbourhood!

Thank you for practicing social distancing and for taking care of yourself and everyone else.

By the way, only one of the spooky stories was completely made-up – can you guess which one?

(It was #5).