

Louise Bridge Walking Tour

History of the District

The first question that might be asked is why is this walking tour is called the Louise Bridge District? The answer is that prior to the opening of the Elmwood Cemetery in 1902, this area of Elmwood was known as the Louise Bridge District and then later named Elmwood, after the cemetery. I have checked with the newspapers of the day and I have not found any reference to the name Elmwood until 1904.

There was also an alternative name used prior to 1904, that being Kildonan Village. Elmwood was part of the Municipality of Kildonan which then consisted of Elmwood and what later became East Kildonan, North Kildonan, West Kildonan, Old Kildonan and the northern part of the North End.

The southern part of Elmwood where we are now was originally part of the Town of St. Boniface. This area separated from St Boniface in 1896 because the small number of residents living here were English speaking and wished to separate from the mainly French speaking citizens of St. Boniface. This was achieved and this northern part of St Boniface joined the Municipality of Kildonan in 1896.

The St. Boniface influence on the southern part of Elmwood is still evident today in the name of some of the streets such as Levis, Talbot, Herbert and Stadacona. Midwinter Street in front of us was originally called Vaudreuil. It was changed in 1913 to honour Charles Midwinter who was a long time school trustee and Municipal Councillor for the Municipality of Kildonan, City Alderman and City Controller for the City of Winnipeg after Elmwood joined the City of Winnipeg and a market gardener in the area.

The river parish lots in the Winnipeg area go back to the early Red River settlement when each settler required frontage on the river because it provided transportation to reach other settlers' homes, to church, to Fort Douglas and other locations. The river also provided another food source, namely fish.

The parish lots system still used today to describe property location uses St. Boniface Parish lots for the part of Elmwood that we are now in, as it was originally part of St. Boniface. The rest of Elmwood has St. John Parish lot numbers and properties north of Harbison Avenue have Kildonan Parish Lot numbers.

By 1905, residents of Elmwood wanting city services asked the City of Winnipeg to take over the Municipality of Kildonan's Ward One (Elmwood) after Kildonan turned down their request for such services. On November 13, 1905, Winnipeg City Council accepted the petition to join Winnipeg and after a referendum in Elmwood, the area joined the City of Winnipeg on February 9, 1906 becoming Ward 7.

Disraeli Pedestrian Bridge

This pedestrian bridge was built on the original piers of the Disraeli Bridge which opened in May 1959. The original portion of the Disraeli Freeway opened in the following year in May 1960. Some of you will remember that the original bridge over the Red River and the C.P.R. Mainline

had steel decking which allowed snow and rain to fall between the spaces of the steel sections, but it created a strange noise as vehicles passed over it. This steel surface was paved in 1971 and 1972 due to the high maintenance costs caused by the frequently needed repairs and welding. Total cost for this paving work was \$565,180.

A bridge at this site had been suggested as early as 1912 but it took nearly five decades before this idea was finally fulfilled due to the fact that Elmwood was the only part of the City of Winnipeg on the east side of the Red River prior to Unicity in 1972 and it only contained 5 to 7% of the city's total population during this time. Both East and North Kildonan would have benefitted from having the Disraeli Bridge built earlier, but they were not part of Winnipeg and therefore played no part in the decisions made by them. Residents of Winnipeg from outside Elmwood saw no point in having their tax dollars spent on a bridge that they would rarely use. Little thought was given to the construction of a new bridge at this location until the early 1950's when it became very apparent that the two-lane Redwood and Louise Bridges were clearly inadequate for the growing road traffic from Elmwood and beyond. In the later part of the 1950's two referendums in the City of Winnipeg failed to achieve the required 60% approval for the project despite a 95% vote in Elmwood. Three things finally set the bridge construction in motion; first the City of East Kildonan paid \$86,212 towards the \$5,213,373 construction costs, a first in Manitoba where one municipality offered to contribute to a local improvement project that was entirely in another municipality. Second was the willingness of the Winnipeg City Council to build the bridge ignoring the results of two defeated referendums. Third and probably the most important was the willingness of the new Roblin Provincial Government to pay for a major portion of the project a total of \$2,525,341. The City of Winnipeg paid \$2,601,219, a majority of this amount for property acquisition. The bridge over the Red River opened on October 20, 1959 and the freeway portion opened on October 19, 1960. The original route from the Disraeli Freeway to Main Street was from Lily and Logan as the route did not lead directly to Main Street until September 1966 when this last portion opened at a total cost of \$1,200,000, mainly for property acquisitions.

By the early 2000's it was apparent time and corrosion had taken its toll on the Disraeli Bridge and Freeway and it was determined new structures were needed. It was decided that a pedestrian/active transportation bridge would be built on the piers of the original river crossing and a new roadway with two new bridges would be constructed. The total cost for this twenty-first century project was \$195,000,000. The motor vehicle portion opened on October 19, 2012 with the active transportation section opening in the spring of 2013.

"Light Through" is an artwork that consists of sixteen 350 cm or 11.48 feet tall stainless steel structures that cover the four bridge piers. These structures contain photographs depicting the history of the bridge and its surroundings. The artist commissioned for this program was Bernie Miller. Born in Toronto, Bernie graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1974. His work has been exhibited in the USA, France, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Poland and Germany and he has been commissioned to create major public artworks in Toronto, Vancouver and Edmonton. Bernie lives in Winnipeg and serves on the board of the Plug-In Institute of Contemporary Art. Bernie first started with photo-based images of the previous bridge by searching various archives for photographic representations that included images of the original 1959 bridge. Incidentally the richest trove of archival photos turned out to be in a City of Winnipeg

Engineering Department binder of photographs taken during the construction of the 1959 bridge. During the archival search Bernie became increasingly aware that our present would unavoidably become the past and decided that a compelling exercise would be to mirror archival images with new present-day documentary photographs. This part of the project was a collaborative effort with Winnipeg artist William Eakin.

To perforate the stainless steel panels, Bernie had to develop a software program to translate the photographic images into patterns of holes. When light shines through these holes, the photographs are distinctly revealed and picture the lively public interaction with the bridge since 1959.

Structure 1

Lower front – Formwork Construction - March 13, 2013

Left Side – Diver on Inspection in Cofferdam on Pier 7 – January 19, 1959

Right Side – Pier 6 and up – November 4, 1959

Upper Front – Girders Up to Pier 17 – April 25, 1960

Structure 2

Lower front – Girder Loaded for Transport to Disraeli Pedestrian Bridge March 20, 2013

Left Side – Lifting the First Girder and Putting it in Place on Piers 5 & 6 – March 2, 1959

Right Side – Lifting a Girder for Disraeli Pedestrian Bridge March 20, 2013

Upper Front – Unloading a 58 Foot Beam for the Span Between Piers 10 & 11 – March 23, 1959

Structure 3

Left Side – Disraeli Bridge Piers – May 29, 2013

Lower Front – Disraeli Bridge – September 30, 1970

Right Side – Disraeli Bridge Piers and Girder – May 29, 2013

Upper Front – Cyclist in Traffic on Disraeli Vehicular Bridge – May 29, 2013

Structure 4

Upper Front – Cycle 100 Rally Celebrating the YMCA's 100 Years of Service to Winnipeg – June 4, 1979

Left Side – Disraeli Bridge Toward Downtown – May 15, 2013

Right Side – Disraeli Bridge Toward Downtown – October 19, 1982

Lower Front – Opening Day Disraeli Active Transportation Bridge – October 4, 2013

Now for some trivia. When the original Disraeli Bridge was constructed a number of houses were demolished on the Elmwood side as well as a greenhouse and gardening business owned by the Sulkers family (map on display board). In the 19th century what is now Henderson Highway was often called the East Road to distinguish it from the West Road, being Main Street in the Red River Settlement. It later became known as Birds Hill Road. On September 13, 1909, the City of Winnipeg changed its portion of Birds Hill Road to Kelvin Street and at the same time changed its portion of Panet Road to Birds Hill Road. Around the same time the Municipality of Kildonan changed its part of Birds Hill Road to East Kildonan Road. In 1929, East Kildonan and North Kildonan changed East Kildonan Road to Henderson Highway and in 1963 the name Kelvin Street in Elmwood was also renamed Henderson Highway.

Ernie O'Dowda Memorial Park – south side of Midwinter Avenue

This park is named after Ernie (Ernest) Peter O'Dowda. He was born on July 22, 1915 and passed away on June 25, 1985. He was educated at Lord Selkirk School and St John's High School. He was married to Grace Isabel Maddin (1907-1993) and they had no children. He is a relative by marriage to me as his sister was married to my great uncle, Stuart Lumsden. In his professional life, Ernie worked at the Canadian Wheat Board for many years, but it was for his community work that he was best known. He was very prominent in the game of lacrosse and later served as an official in the sport becoming the President of the Manitoba Lacrosse Association in 1948 and 1949. He later wrote a book "Lacrosse in the Winnipeg School Division 1901-1928".

Ernie served as a citizen member of the Winnipeg Parks Board, was a founding member of the Kelvin Community Club, was a member of the Little Canadian Minor Baseball League and was involved with the Elmwood Pats and the Elmwood Terriers, He was one of the four original members of the Every Second Tuesday Breakfast Club along with my grandfather Bill Lumsden. He was an active and long-time member of the Elmwood Curling Club and was also a boxing promoter.

One of Ernie's other achievements was compiling a sports history of Elmwood, East Kildonan, North Kildonan and Transcona called the Kildonan Place Sports Historical Society which was located at the Kildonan Place Shopping Centre but now is displayed in a room at the Terry Sawchuk Memorial Arena.

He received a Centennial Medal from the Manitoba Historical Society in 1970, was inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall in 1987 as a builder and of course this park, Ernie O'Dowda Memorial Park, was named in his honour on September 8, 1987.

J.Y. Griffin & Co. Ltd. Pork Packing Plant – east end of Ernie O'Dowda Memorial Park

This site was used for a snow dumping ground for many years even though it was officially designated as a park after being donated to the city by Swift's Meat in 1944 on the condition that it be used for that purpose. There were at least five attempts by the city to sell the property but each time Swift's vetoed the proposal by using the agreement signed in 1944 which allowed it to have the final say on any project. It was largely a barren area on the riverbank and an eyesore for the community. In the late 1950's it received some attention as Mayor Steve Juba suggested that it would be a good site for a new city hall.

Prior to use as a park and a snow dump, this was the site of a pork packing plant built by J. Y. Griffin and Company Limited in 1886 and was the first packing plant in Western Canada to use chilling rooms for the storage of slaughtered pigs. In the early years electricity was not used for the cold storage but ice which had been cut from the Red River during the winter was used. In 1886 the number of animals that could be slaughtered in a day was 250 but this was raised to 500 animals in 1898 by the doubling of the size of the plant.

By 1898 electrical mechanical refrigeration was installed in the plant and the use of ice for refrigeration was discontinued for good in 1902. This also led to a greater refrigeration area for the storage of butter, eggs and cheese which the company also sold at the time. The company also established plants in Vancouver and Nelson B.C. In 1902 the capacity of the plant was doubled again to 1,000 animals with the construction of larger facilities. In 1904 the company

established a plant in Calgary. In 1917 at the peak of its production it employed 480 male employees and 80 female employees making it the largest work site in all of northeast Winnipeg

The company was a buyer of eggs, butter cheese and of course hogs from local and provincial farmers, but its most well-known and bestselling product was cured pork.

In the early 1920's, J.Y. Griffin and Company Limited was bought up by Swifts Canada and the plant continued on Midwinter under that name until its closing in 1939 when a new Swift's Plant on Archibald in St. Boniface was opened.

Work at the plant was hard and dangerous with frequent accidents but the unionization of the meat packing plants led to improvements in the industry. In 1934 there were a total of 197 union positions at Swifts on Midwinter, with the following positions and wages per hour:

30 employees in killing at 60 cents per hour

30 employees in cutting at 50 cents per hour

30 employees in casing at 45 cents per hour

37 employees in shipping at 40 cents per hour

35 employees in the kitchen at 35 cents per hour

30 employees in pickling at 40 cents per hour

Midwinter Avenue Homes

The houses located on Midwinter were built at various times. 178, 184, 187, 207, 237, 243, 257 and 259 Midwinter were built in 1907; 235 Midwinter was built in 1910; 265 Midwinter was built in 1944; 217 Midwinter was built in 1946; 219, 223 and 269 Midwinter were built in 1947 and 263 Midwinter was built in 2008.

Louise Bridge

The original bridge at the location, the first Louise Bridge, was built in 1880 at a cost of \$300,000 and was one of the incentives used to have the Canadian Pacific Railway build its mainline through the City of Winnipeg and establish its shops here instead of in Selkirk, Manitoba. The railway company was given the right to use the bridge for a monthly rent of \$100 and along with other tax exemptions the railway did come to Winnipeg.

The bridge was the first bridge to be built over the Red River and it carried not only trains but pedestrians, horses and rigs of all kinds which certainly must have created a potential disaster if a train and other traffic were using the bridge at the same time. The tracks were surrounded by wooden planking as there were no sidewalks on this first bridge.

By the late 1890's the C.P.R. had built a new railway bridge over the Red River due to the fact that the trains were now heavier and the Louise Bridge was deemed not sturdy enough for the heavier weights. As a result the company discontinued using the Louise Bridge and in 1904 it stopped paying its monthly rent on the bridge. In 1903 the Winnipeg Street Railway Company laid its tracks on the bridge providing streetcar service along Midwinter to Henderson Highway and north, eventually reaching East St Paul. After the Redwood Bridge was completed in 1908 and had streetcar tracks laid on it in 1909, the portion of the streetcar route along Midwinter from the Louise Bridge to downtown was discontinued as the Redwood Bridge was used as the route from downtown to Henderson Highway. Streetcars now ran from the Redwood Bridge to Midwinter as part of the Griffin Spur serving the pork packing plant on Midwinter and other businesses and factories in the area.

After the opening of the Redwood Bridge, Winnipeg City Council made the decision to replace the original Louise Bridge with a new structure at the same location using part of the original piers. This new bridge was built with vehicular traffic in mind but also with a separation for sidewalks for pedestrian traffic. This new bridge opened in 1911 and was constructed at cost of \$120,000, much cheaper than the first bridge.

Today the Louise Bridge is the second oldest bridge in Winnipeg after the Redwood Bridge and there are plans to replace it with a new structure containing four lanes instead of the current two lanes. This would help provide a new rapid transit route but when this new bridge is to be constructed has not yet been determined.

Louise Bridge is named after Princess Louise-Duchess of Argyll (born: March 18th, 1848 in Buckingham Palace London, England and died December 3rd, 1939 in Kensington Place London; she is the daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

Moline Tractor Co. Showroom now Allmar Inc. - 287 Riverton Avenue

At 287 Riverton Avenue we have Allmar Inc. This building was constructed in 1944 replacing an earlier building erected in 1917 housing the showrooms of the Minneapolis Moline Power Implements Company of Canada Ltd. This company produced tractors and other farm implements and this building was used as a showroom for the company. There may have been some manufacturing done on this site in the earlier buildings at this location.

Allmar Inc. was founded in 1957 by Henry W. Redekopp who named the company after his two oldest children, Albert and Margaret. Henry came to Canada with his family in 1924 at the age of 11, emigrating from Ukraine and was the youngest of six children. He graduated from high school in Winkler and then moved to North Kildonan. In 1939 he purchased an existing small feed and grocery store on Henderson Highway called the Roadside Store and with two employees and much hard work, the store grew into the large general store and building material center called Redekopp Lumber and Supply selling complete home packages.

Even with his business interests he was able to serve the community for several terms as a school trustee on the North Kildonan School Board and two terms on the North Kildonan Municipal Council, as well as his church and other charitable institutions.

Henry found that some products were hard to obtain for his building centre such as doors, windows and roofing so as a result he decided to get into the wholesale business forming Allmar in 1957 selling to other lumberyards throughout Manitoba. In the early 1960's Allmar became involved in the Architectural hardware product line and began supplying public buildings such as schools and hospitals.

Allmar currently operates thirteen branches across Canada from British Columbia to Ontario offering products as well as specification writing, project writing and aftermarket service.

Henry has passed away but his sons Edwin and Arthur run the company today.

Allmar has worked on various large projects in Manitoba including the Health Sciences Centre, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the downtown Manitoba Hydro Building, the Manitoba Iceplex, the Pembina Residence at the University of Manitoba, Red River Community College, the Royal Canadian Mint, the Winnipeg Remand Centre, the Winnipeg Law Courts and the Toronto Dominion Centre at Portage and Main, now owned by Shaw.

Fire Hall No. 8 now Riverwood Church Community – 257 Riverton Avenue

This old former fire hall located at 325 Talbot Avenue was built in 1906 and was the first fire hall to be built in Elmwood as it was listed as one of the conditions for Elmwood joining the City of Winnipeg in 1906.

The fire hall was built using a standard plan utilizing architects A. and W. Melville's plans for the Maple Street Fire Hall # 3 with minor changes. The changes were four carriage doors and a triple window in the gable on the third floor. It is three stories high and is 75 feet by 55 feet and was designed to contain a maximum of eleven horses and sixteen men. It was constructed on a foundation of stone with the main floor being built with concrete. This allowed for the easy removal of animal waste, but it also proved to be good flooring for motor vehicles when the fire department became motorized. In the early days animals and fire equipment shared the main floor. The second floor contained the dormitories, washrooms, an office and the men's lockers, while the attic area was used for storage.

At the time this fire hall was constructed, firefighters were not required to live at the fire hall as they had been at other fire halls in the past. To become a firefighter, stringent entry qualifications and annual physicals were required and of course all firefighters had to be male. From 1906 to 1909 shifts were three 24 hour days on and one day off. In 1919 a two-platoon system was brought in which meant a ten hour day for a week and then a fourteen hour shift for a week. After World War Two, a three-platoon system was introduced which allowed for more time off and more of a regular life.

Fire Hall # 8 was constructed at a cost of \$17,000 in 1906 by John Saul of Saul and Brown Construction. Most fire halls outside the core area of cities dealt mostly with house fires but Elmwood was different as there were many industrial businesses in the area so the men in this fire hall had to deal with a wider range of fires.

In 1921 the roster for this fire hall consisted of two captains with sixteen firemen, one captain and eight firemen per shift, one horse drawn hose wagon, one horse drawn hook and ladder wagon, one horse drawn chemical fire engine with a 100 gallon capacity and one steam fire engine with a 750 gallon capacity. Each wagon was pulled by two horses and three spare horses were kept in reserve at the fire hall at all times. Hay for the horses was stored in a loft on the second floor at the rear of the building and a wooden shed at the back of the building stored the winter sleighs as well as the wood and coal used to heat the building. Full motorizing of the equipment came later to this fire hall than other fire halls in Winnipeg due to the fact there were still unimproved roads in existence in the Elmwood area at a later date than many other areas of Winnipeg, creating more problems for motorized vehicles.

With the coming of Unicity and the amalgamation of fire departments in Winnipeg in 1974, the fire hall became redundant and it became an ambulance depot for a few years until this function was removed. It then became the Pan-Am Boxing Club with a boxing ring and training facilities for boxers. In the 1980's the boxing club left and it became a facility for Youth for Christ until that group moved to a new building at Higgins and Main.

In the early 2010's Riverwood Church Community, which began at Chief Peguis Junior High in 1995, took over the fire hall and offers church services at this location and at 257 Riverton Avenue, serving 1,400 people

Interested in learning more history of these areas? Do you have stories/pictures to share?
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Email: info@newpghs.com
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