

Watt Street North Walking Tour

925 Watt Street – In the 1930's the Prince Edward Legion first suggested that the current site of the Rossmere Golf Course be set aside as a golf course for Veterans, but nothing came of that idea until the late 1940's when a private group came forward to develop a plan. Originally the Golf Course was to consist of 170 acres of land extending to Brazier Street, but the portion of land between Roch and Brazier Streets and a piece of land along the east side of Roch Street was sold off to raise funds for the development of the golf course. In the early 1960's another portion of land situated at the current 500 and 600 blocks of Roberta Avenue, was sold off. The property now consists of 120 acres with 64 acres of land being owned by the club and 56 acres of land at the eastern portion of the property being owned by the City and rented to the club on a long term lease.

The club opened for the first time in the spring of 1951 with nine holes operating along Roch Street. Membership was restricted to 350 with provisions made for lady golfers and junior members. As the course consisted of some municipally owned land, a provision was made in the lease of this land that a portion of the operating time must be set aside for members of the general public making it unique to be both a private and public course.

In 1957 a new \$50,000 clubhouse was built connected to the original clubhouse that had been an old house moved from Henderson Highway beside Lord Wolseley School. The old house is still part of the current structure comprising the northwest section of the building. In June, 1960 the course was expanded to 18 holes. The 6,685 yard course was designed by Norman Woods of Vancouver and built at a total cost of \$225,000.

January, 1960 saw the opening of a 6 sheet curling club building with the first rock thrown by Lieutenant Governor Errick F. Willis to the broom of East Kildonan Mayor George Suttie. The curling rink, along with a two storey addition to the building, cost \$125,000. A new 300 seat banquet area was set aside for the second floor. Rossmere Country Club is one of the few clubs in Canada that contains both a golf course and a curling rink.

440 Hazel Dell Avenue – William E. (Bill) Lumsden (1907 to 1982) was my maternal grandfather and lived here for 24 years, just a very short walk down the back lane from me. He was an insurance broker for many years and a partner in Barber-Lumsden until his retirement.

In his younger years he was an avid baseball player with the Columbus Club and the Nighthawks. He organized the Elmwood Giants Pee Wee Baseball League and coached for many years in the Elmwood area.

He was one of the original organizers of the Kelvin Community Centre, serving as president for two years and a citizen member of the City of Winnipeg Parks Board for 7 years.

He was a member of the Elmwood Curling Club for 53 years, serving as president in 1938-1939 and secretary for 15 years and was made a life member in 1953. He was a director of the holding company from 1943 to his death in 1982.

He helped found and solicit funds for "Aunt Sally's Farm" for children at Assiniboine Park. Some of his other achievements and awards include: he received the Order of the Buffalo Hunt by the Government of Manitoba for his many years of contribution to sports and the Manitoba Sports Federation Certificate of Merit as a builder of sports. He was the Secretary of the Manitoba Curling Association in 1946-1947 and served as its President in 1947-1948 and as Vice Chairman. He organized the Red Cross's prisoner of war parcel fund which raised \$130,000 from 1940 to 1944. He chaired the 1970 Canadian Curling Championship held in Winnipeg. He won the Hudson Bay Trophy in 1964 and the Ganong Trophy in the Manitoba Curling Association bonspiel. He was honoured with life memberships in the Civic-Caledonian, Charleswood, Deer Lodge, Maple Leaf and West Kildonan Curling Clubs. He was honoured with a life membership in the Winnipeg Curling Club Secretary's Association and the Past Presidents of the Manitoba Curling Clubs Association and was elected a life member of the Canadian Curling Association. He was also appointed a life member of the Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia Curling Associations.

He was awarded honorary citizenship by the City of St Boniface and was honoured by the City of East Kildonan for his many achievements. He has been elected to the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame, Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame, and Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame.

He was the Chairman of the Canadian Hall of Fame selection committee for four years and served as the first Chairman of the Canadian Curling Schoolboys Championship Committee. He negotiated with Seagram's Distillers to sponsor the Canadian Senior Men's Curling Championships and was the Vice President of the Royal Caledonian Curling Association in 1967. He was selected by Air Canada as Curling Executive of the Year in 1968, and served as a member of the Air Canada executive selection board for three years. He was a director of the 1978 Silver Broom Curling Championship held in Winnipeg and chaired its ethnic night gala.

In 1967 he was honoured with a Centennial Medal and after his death in 1982, the Elmwood Curling Club created an award in his name to honour builders of curling in Manitoba.

488 Hazel Dell Avenue – Patrice Impey and her family lived right across the lane from me. She was born in 1958 and was an active student at Miles Macdonell Collegiate where she graduated from in 1976. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Manitoba, majoring in chemistry and an M.B.A. degree from the University of Western Ontario.

She has served in a number of high financial positions at Hewlett-Packard Canada Ltd. serving as the Vice President of Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer of the Canadian Division. She then moved to the corporate headquarters in California before leaving in 2003 to serve as Corporate Controller for Crystal Decisions. She is currently the Chief Finance Officer and General Manager of Finance Services and Human Resources for the City of Vancouver and oversees all information technology in her position. In 2012 she was added to the Legacy Wall at Miles Macdonell Collegiate.

491 Oakview Avenue – This is the home that I grew up in, but that is not the reason this house is on this walking tour. It was the home of my father James Gordon (Jim) Smith who was born on January 22, 1932 and died on April 10, 2001 and lived in this house from 1958 to 1984. He grew up at 39 Hart Avenue in Elmwood and attended Lord Selkirk and Gordon Bell schools, attending the University of Manitoba and obtaining a B.A. and L.L.B.

He was a very active member of the community. He was a lawyer by profession and served in that role from 1957 to 1982. In April, 1982 he was appointed as a judge on the County Court and in 1984 he was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench where he served until retiring in 1998.

He was involved in many volunteer and community groups, which meant he was out most nights of the week. He served the community as a member of the East Kildonan School Board for two terms from 1962 to 1965, including two years as Vice Chairman. He was elected to two terms on the River East School Division from 1967 to 1971, including time as the Chairman of the Board. In 1971 he was elected to the first Unicity Council of the City of Winnipeg, serving until 1974. He was also the Liberal Party candidate for the Manitoba Legislature in 1966.

He was a member of the East Kildonan Kiwanis Club for 43 years, serving as President in 1963. He was on the Kiwanis Centre for the Deaf, the Metropolitan Kiwanis Courts and the East Kildonan Kiwanis Homes Board. He served as a Regent for the University of Winnipeg and was a member of the City of Winnipeg Conflict of Interest Committee. He was on the Concordia Hospital Board of Directors and the Concordia Hospital Foundation. He also served on the Winnipeg Enterprises Board, the Winnipeg Industrial Development Board, the Age and Opportunity Board, Manitoba Health Organization, Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, East Kildonan Parks Board, Henderson Regional Library, East Kildonan Centennial Committee, City of Winnipeg Board of Revision and lectured for the Winnipeg Real-Estate Board and the Manitoba Bar Admissions Course. He served and held many of the executive positions of the National Liberal and Manitoba Liberal parties. He was on the Board of the Knowles Centre, was a trustee and choir member for many years at Immanuel United Church and sang for the Gilbert and Sullivan Society. I hope I haven't missed anything.

Jim Smith Drive near the intersection of Gateway Road and the Chief Peguis Trail is named in his honour.

724 Watt Street – this grocery store opened in November, 1956 as a Shop Easy. Over the years it continued business under the names Tom Boy, Boyle's Budget Basket and Food Fair. This was the grocery store that my family went to most often while we lived on Oakview Avenue.

722 Watt Street – Ebbeling Pharmacy opened in November, 1956 under the ownership of Reginald Ebbeling. He later sold the business in 1967 to the Zink family who kept the name, and I believe a second generation member still owns it. This was the drug store that I walked to numerous times when I was young.

Kimberly Avenue has had three other names since the early 1900's. It was originally known as Municipal Road, which was a common name in the Greater Winnipeg area. Around the year 1910 it was renamed Sutherland Avenue due to the fact it was on part of the land owned by the Sutherland family. In 1930 it was changed to Melrose Avenue and in 1963, due to the amalgamation of all the small cities into Unicity, it was renamed Kimberly Avenue to avoid confusion with the Melrose Avenue that already existed in Transcona. Just west of Watt Street is the Melrose Park Community Centre (built in 1956) which began in 1953 as a satellite location for the Bronx Park Community Club.

To the immediate west of the Community Centre is the YM-YWCA which opened in 1963 and contained the first indoor swimming pool built in North East Winnipeg. The building is a thriving enterprise today and has experienced three building expansions over the years.

Continuing west again, at the corner of Kimberly and Roch Street is Miles Macdonell Collegiate which opened in September, 1952 at Roch and Bronx Avenue as an eight room school. The part of the school located along Kimberly Avenue began its life in 1954 as Melrose Junior High, becoming the first junior high school in North East Winnipeg and contained the first gymnasium/auditorium in the area. In April, 1961 the Junior High staff and student population moved to the new John Henderson Junior High on Brazier Street, and as a result the Melrose building became part of Miles Macdonell Collegiate at that time.

720 Watt Street – The Bank of Montreal was located at this location from 1956 to 1997 and this is where I had my first bank account. I deposited \$12 on March 6, 1970 and at the time they paid 6.5% interest on a saving account with no service or transactions fees.

718 Watt Street – Businesses at this location over the years include the East Kildonan Department Store, Fitzgerald's Printing Shop, French Cold Waves Hair Salon and the Bank of Montreal.

716 Watt Street – Businesses at this location included Melrose Hardware Store and the Sud Dry Laundromat.

714 Watt Street – Watt Variety Store, Perth's Dye Works, Economy Textiles and Twice as Nice Used Clothing were all located at this site at various times.

712 Watt Street – this was a Medical Clinic and some of the doctors and dentists who practised at this location over the years include Dr. Kobrinski, Dr. Barry Rayter and Dr. Morris Burke.

704 Watt Street - Jeanne's Bakery began at this location in the late 1950's selling its famous cakes, but I have been told the reason the store failed was because it brought too many stale cakes to this location. By the early 1960's this was the site of a "Mini Mart" which was a convenience store company in existence before the 7-11 and Mac's stores. I remember going to the Mini Mart in the late 1960's for a Popsicle costing 6 cents, which was one cent less than at Ebbeling Drug Store. By the mid 1970's the Mini Mart stores had disappeared and Reidke's Photography moved into the building.

700 Watt Street - East Kildonan Baptist Church opened in October, 1958. As a result of a split in the Beulah Baptist Church, located on the west side of Henderson Highway just south of Johnson Avenue, this church was formed by the more conservative element of Beulah Baptist. A major addition to the church was built in 1986 costing \$5,000,000.

680 Watt Street – The Nu-Watt Barbershop and Beauty Shop was located in this building from the late 1950's to about the mid 1970's. The beauty shop was located on the south end of the building and the barbershop on the north end. The barbershop is where I got my early haircuts and I remember in 1965 men's haircuts cost \$1.25.

636 Watt Street - This site began as a full service gasoline and local car repair business under the B.A. (British American Oil Company) name, a Canadian Oil Company bought out by the Gulf Oil Company in the late 1960's. In late 1970 the gas station was closed and in 1971 a 7-11 store opened, becoming one of the first 7-11 outlets in Winnipeg.

498 Trent Avenue – Trent Grocery existed at this location from the 1940's to the 1970's. It was typical of the small corner store that existed at street corners in the older parts of Winnipeg.

North-west corner, Munroe and Watt – This is the location of Polson School which was previously known as Munroe School from 1953 to 1960. In 1960 with the closing of the original Munroe School, the name was changed to Polson School to avoid confusion with Munroe Junior High which had opened in 1958 further west on the block. There have been four additions to the school over the years.

460 Watt Street – This was the site of the original Polson School which open in 1910. It was a three storey building with an annex located behind it containing the Home Economic rooms for the entire East Kildonan School District. The wood shop space for the boys was located in the basement. For some years the fire hoses of the East Kildonan Fire Department were dried in the basement of the main building. During the 1920's and 1930's the school's classrooms often contained more than 50 students each. In June, 1960 Munroe School closed as the renamed Polson School had been enlarged to contain all the students from the old Munroe School. From 1960 to 1962 the building was used to house the maintenance department of the East Kildonan School District. In 1962 the building was torn down and the site was sold to Janzen Builders for \$62,295. Three apartment blocks were originally planned, but never built. The money from the sale of the property was used to build the original part of the local School Board offices on Roch Street and the land at this location was later sold to Holy Eucharist Church for its Parish Hall and priest's residence.

505 Watt Street – The original location of the East Kildonan Fire Hall which was built on this site in 1914. A new fire hall was built further north and in 1954 the land was sold to Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic Church. The original church opened in 1919 at Watt Street and Montrose Avenue (now known as Larsen Avenue) which had been built in 1919 at a cost of \$6,000. In 1954 the parish consisted of 235 members with 125 children. This church opened in November, 1955 at a cost of \$125,000. It measures 116 feet by 36 feet, with the cross section being 56 feet wide while the dome is copper covered. The inside of the church contains mosaics created by the well-known Winnipeg artist Leo Mol.

545 Watt Street – This location became the site of the City of East Kildonan Police and Fire Station in 1954. The Fire Department moved out in 1969 to its present location on Kimberly Avenue with the Police Department taking over the Fire Department space after renovations. In 1975 the Police Department closed and the East Kildonan/Transcona Parks Department took over the location. In the late 1990's the Parks Department amalgamated with the Public Works Department.

549 Watt Street – In 1955 this location became the works yard for the City of East Kildonan Public Works Department and after the creation of Unicity in 1972, the Public Works staff moved out and the space was taken over by the local Parks and Recreation Department

643 Watt Street – Neil and Watt Esso Service Station began in 1956 by the Telencoe Brothers and offered a full service gasoline and repair business. They continued to run well into the 1970's and this was the service station used by my father and grandfather.

Watt Street and Sydney Avenue – To the east of the hydro power lines on Sydney Avenue there was a dairy enterprise called Oak Dairy which existed from about World War One to the late 1940's. Its last owners were the Devisscher family who later owned the Oakview Soda Bar on Henderson Highway. The dairy sat on a relatively a small piece of land, so during the warmer months the cows were led from one piece of land to another in East Kildonan to graze. At its peak around 1945 the dairy had about 170 cows. There are stories in the East Kildonan Council Minutes about complaints about the dairy due to some of cows also grazing in residents' gardens and on their lawns. The likely reason for the dairy closing was due to the lack of land for the grazing of the animals as a result of the development of East Kildonan after World War Two. This was not the only dairy in East Kildonan as there was also one in the Morse Place area.

574 Chelsea Avenue – Though he only lived at this address for a few years, actor Len Cariou (born September 30, 1939) is probably the most well-known person internationally that ever lived in East Kildonan. He went to Miles Macdonell Collegiate for grades ten and eleven and this is where he first acted and directed, performing in several school plays.

He later performed in "Damn Yankees" at Rainbow Stage in 1959 and was a founding member of the Manitoba Theatre Centre. He then moved onto the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario and performed in many regional theatres across North America. He appeared on Broadway in New York City, starring in many roles and earning a Tony Award nomination for playing opposite Lauren Bacall in the musical adaption of "All About Eve". He went on to win a Tony Award for his role in "Sweeney Todd" in 1983. From 1985 to 1992 he played a semi regular part in the television show "Murder She Wrote" and has had many other roles in television and movies. In 2004 he was inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame and currently appears on the television show "Blue Bloods". He has received honorary degrees from the University of Windsor and the University of Winnipeg. In 2012 he was honoured by Miles Macdonell Collegiate as one of the first persons included on its Legacy Wall.

721 Watt Street – This Domo Gas Station began in 1956 as a Canadian Oil Company station with Glen Ball as the first proprietor. In 1959 it became Howard Kendel's White Rose Service Station under a lease contract with White Rose, a Canadian Oil Company which was bought out by Shell Oil in the early 1960's. In its first year of operation, the station received an award for selling the most gasoline by a White Rose station in Western Canada. Howard Kendel leased this location for five years and then moved to a Shell Station on Nairn Avenue. In 1972 he returned to this location under a new lease agreement with Shell Oil and operated the station with his brother Curtis for three years. In 1975 he purchased the Shell service station at McLeod and Molson which is still run by his son Jeff Kendal.

505 Oakview Avenue – Oakview First Baptist (later renamed Cornerstone Baptist Church in the 1990's) opened in January, 1959 as a result of the split of Beulah Baptist Church, located on the west side of Henderson Highway just south of Johnson Avenue. This church was created with the more liberal elements of Beulah Baptist Church, with the more conservative members operating out of the East Kildonan Baptist Church at 700 Watt Street. The church had seating for 240 in 1959 and has had one addition added to it since it opened.

829 Watt Street- St. Clement's School opened here in September, 1957 as a satellite site of St. Alphonsus School on Munroe Avenue for grades one to four. It closed as a private school in June, 1970 and remained vacant for several years before re-opening as the Care-a-Lot daycare centre.

520 Hazel Dell Avenue – This was the home for many years of the Starkell family. Don Starkell bought this home in the early 1960's and lived here until his death in 2012. I went to school with his son Dana from kindergarten all the way through to high school at Miles Macdonell Collegiate as he lived just down the back lane from me. Don and his sons Dana and Jeff are listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for conducting the longest canoe trip ever, canoeing from behind Bronx Park Community Centre on the Red River all the way to the Amazon River in Brazil. The trip started on June 1, 1980 and ended on May 2, 1982. Their epic story is recounted in the book "Paddle to the Amazon" published in 1987. Don attempted to paddle a kayak through the Northwest Passage from 1990 to 1993, falling short by only 30 miles. This adventure was chronicled in his book "Paddle to the Arctic" published in 1995. During Canada's Centennial Year in 1967, he was part of the winning Manitoba team that paddled the fastest from Rocky Mountain House in Alberta to Montreal as part of Canada's Centennial events.

Don was an avid canoeist from an early age, receiving the Most Outstanding Novice award at the Kildonan Canoe Club at the age of 17 and winning many canoe races as a professional in his thirties. For a number of years he worked at the YMCA on Kimberly Avenue. A fire in this house in 2010 caused over \$150,000 in damages and nearly ended his life, but he rebuilt the home from his personal savings as he had no insurance on the house.

- *Composed by Jim Smith – President and Historian/Archivist*

NORTH EAST WINNIPEG HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. (2011)

- ***Third Wednesday*** of the month
- **Bronx Park Community Centre, 720 Henderson Highway**
- **7:00PM**
- **For more information:**

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