

Former site of Grand Marais Pier

Historic Grand Marais





Lagoon

Grand Marais

Lake Winnipeg

Please respect the privacy of owners' property limits.

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“The Great Marsh”

It is said that one of the members of the famous La Vérendrye family, early explorers of Western Canada, gave this area its name “Grand Marais” – the Great Marsh.

There does not appear to be any basis in the historical record for this claim. However, it is fact that Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye (1717-1761; also called The Chevalier), traveled down the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg in 1739.

La Vérendrye was directed to examine all topography, tributary rivers, and local Aboriginal peoples, along the way, presumably to determine potential fur-trade opportunities.

Local Métis History

Before Grand Marais and Grand Beach were developed as major recreational destinations in the early 1900s, this area was home to many Métis people.

The community has its roots in long-ago Métis history when those earliest settlers arrived the 1870s to undertake fishing, farming, and lumbering.

As the fur trade moved west, many French-Canadian fur traders married indigenous women (Cree, Ojibway, Saulteaux). The children of these unions grew up with a combination of French Catholic and Indigenous cultural and spiritual beliefs.

Community Plan

Initially, there was no community plan, however, that changed with the advent of the Grand Beach Park development in 1914 and the arrival of the first train in 1916. Very quickly, Grand Marais took on the now familiar community layout, as cabins were constructed and main streets and side streets developed.

An aerial view of the community highlights the main thoroughfares that form a large figure eight, with the centre at the intersection of Grand Beach Road and Grand Marais Boulevard.

The original layout is still current, with tidy streets, beautiful trees and broad boulevards. One major change that altered the community dynamic was the loss of the Canadian National Railway (CNR) line, followed by the alteration of the highway route into Grand Beach.

The old rail line ran along the present site of the main access highway and a vehicular road ran beside it along its southern edge. The old highway used to jog into Grand Marais and then straight along Grand Beach Road up to the old hotel and rail station.

When Grand Beach was transferred to the Province as a park in 1961, that access was eventually cut off (at Parkview) and now the two communities are separated.



I. St Jude's Anglican Church and Cemetery

Grey Avenue at Sunset Avenue

St Jude's Anglican Church was built in 1896 on land donated by George Rupert and Alex Knott. The church is the oldest remaining building in the village with the strongest connection to the original Métis community that settled here.

The structure is architecturally significant due to the materials used in its construction: black poplar logs with dovetailed ends and local fieldstone with mortar. The log construction is covered with shiplap horizontal boards. This was a common construction approach for many pioneer log buildings. Building with logs was seen as primitive and unsightly, so builders covered the logs with cut boards.

St Jude's is a modest example of the Gothic Revival style. The crenellated tower rises from the front porch – a feature common on Medieval castles.

The church is surrounded by a garden cemetery that contains the gravesites of many of Grand Marais' earliest inhabitants: Linklater, Knott, Cook, Thomas and others.



A garden cemetery, popularized in Victorian England and Europe, saw fine headstones for loved ones placed in lushly landscaped spaces with lawns and trees. Garden cemeteries became popular places for walks and even Sunday picnics.

Grave markers, sometimes in marble and granite, displayed a wealth of sculptural and engraved symbols, evoking a sense of the personality of the deceased.

Some common forms and symbols:

- Christian Cross - the key expression of faith
- Angels - emissaries between this world and the next
- Dove - the Holy Spirit, signifying the soul, purity and love
- hands clasped in prayer - showing devotion
- hands together/clasped - symbol of matrimony

The most common symbols were flowers and plants. The perfect symbol suggesting the poignancy in the cycle of life and death.

Common flowers:

- Calla Lily - beauty, marriage
- Rose - beauty, purity
- Olive branch - forgiveness and peace
- Wreath - victory over death through redemption
- Ivy - immortality and fidelity



For a more detailed exploration of grave markers and symbolism can be found in *A Guide to Funerary Art in Manitoba* on the Heritage Manitoba website: www.heritagemanitoba.ca

2. The Point, Lagoon, Marsh, & Lake Winnipeg **N 50.54200 W 096.62747**

The Point, Lagoon, and Marsh

Turn south (left) from Pinehurst onto Grand Marais Blvd South to the bench on the beachside looking toward the lake.

This part of the Boulevard and stretching north to Thorncliffe, is actually a large man-made dyke that protects current cottages from Lake Winnipeg waters. In older times these areas were often flooded in the spring.

Grand Marais is bordered by the Grand Beach campsite to the north, Lake Winnipeg to the west and a mixture of lagoon waters and marshes to the east and south. Beyond the lagoon and marsh is the Belair Provincial ForeSt

The marshes that surround Grand Marais are located to the south via a thin peninsula called “The Point”. These non-tidal, freshwater marshes occurring at the edges of sheltered, shallow waters along the boundaries of Lake Winnipeg. Most of the marshes are located alongside the lagoon.

Marshes sustain a diversity of life disproportionate to their size. Canada has over 127 million hectares of wetlands, a whopping one quarter of the world’s total. If the boreal forests are the lungs of our region, then wetlands are the kidneys – removing toxins from the ecosystem.

Unfortunately, people have often seen wetlands as wastelands and barriers to agricultural or residential development. Only recently, as our society recognizes the valuable role wetlands play both for our environment and economy, new strategies to conserve and restore wetlands are being developed.

Lake Winnipeg

Lake Winnipeg is one of the world's largest freshwater lakes: the fifth largest in Canada and the tenth largest in the world by surface area. It covers just under 4% of Manitoba.

The Lake Winnipeg watershed is the second largest in Canada and includes parts of four provinces and four U.S. States. Lake Winnipeg, along with lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis are remnants of ancient Lake Agassiz, an enormous glacial lake.

More than 23,000 permanent residents live in thirty communities along the shores of Lake Winnipeg, including eleven First Nations communities. There are seven Manitoba Provincial Parks located along the south basin: Beaver Creek, Camp Morton, Elk Island, Grand Beach, Hecla/Grindstone, Patricia Beach and Winnipeg Beach.

Read more about Lake Winnipeg on pg. 32



3. 1950s Bungalow 33 Pinehurst Avenue

At the end of lot #33 is a 1950s bungalow that was the home of Frank Rogoski, Grand Marais' Police Constable for many years.

Policing at Grand Marais/Grand Beach began in 1923 and continued through the war years. In 1945 there was one female Constable on staff, Miss Margaret Delaney. By 1950, the area came under the watchful eye of the RCMP along with four local volunteers. The Police Station was located on Grand Beach Road.



Constable Frank Rogoski, a towering man, well-known in the area, was always accompanied with his dog, a German Shepherd called Carmel. Frank had a spirited career. One local referred to those days as when "...the Beach was really swinging and the Boardwalk was in boom!" It was rumoured that the Rogoski cottage had a "drunk tank" in its basement for local rowdies.



4. Hendrickson Cabin

35 Pinehurst Avenue

There are only a few sites left to recall the pre-cottage history of Grand Marais, when it was more of a fishing and farming locale.

The building at 35 Pinehurst Street was once the home of Karl Hendrickson. It is set further back from the lake as in earlier times when the lake was high, the water would have come close to this location. Fishing shacks and fish sales activities were, until recently, quite close to the western end of Pinehurst and along the Point.



5. Bremont Cottage

13 Thorncliffe Avenue

The early cottages of Grand Marais were quite distinct from cottages in other locations. CNR workers were the first to build summertime cottages with a design aesthetic defined by modest building sizes, rough-and-ready building materials, handyman construction and ingenious design features/details.



Called “Bremont,” the Whyte-Gibson Cottage, built around 1928, is an excellent example of the type of modest, informal cottages that defined Grand Marais in its early years.

The hand-made quality of the original cottage is seen in various surviving features and details, such as the overall rustic form, the rubble stone chimney, wooden window frames with shutters and the original door.

Inside, the cottage retains much of its original physical integrity. In addition, an older shed with large vertically-operated shutters and the original wire fence are still present on the site. The cottage has been expanded over the years with additions sympathetic to the original building.



6. Stewart Cottage / Isaac Fence 275 Grand Marais Boulevard South

Grand Marais' stone fences are one of its key heritage attributes. At one time there were at least 25 stone fences in the community; today, six remain. This example is perhaps the best known of its type in the community, which prides itself on the legacy of its stone fences and front steps.

Each of the remaining six fences has its own distinct architectural quality, as if designed with a historic architectural style in mind; all built by hand with locally sourced materials.

Stewart Cottage is a landmark, built in 1928, with an impressive stone fence and fanciful cottage style. It shows superior materials, features, and fixtures with a Victorian lace design, dainty posts, and sweeping curves.



7. Barnfather / Garrioch Fence

241 Grand Marais Boulevard South

There are many stories and myths about the Grand Marais fences: that they were built by convicts from Stony Mountain Penitentiary; or by World War I draft dodgers; or even that they were erected during the 1919 General Strike by men stranded at Grand Marais by the cancelling of rail traffic. Given the passage of time and the transfer of so many properties to new owners it is hard to know the true origins.



However, it is known that some of the fences were built by Fred Orvis and one Mr. Gillis. Orvis (1883-1975) was well known as a farmer, fisherman, railway worker, boat builder, carpenter, and stonemason.

The Barnfather / Garrioch fence is an example built in circa 1919 by the homeowners' great-grandfather, showing a somewhat "Gothic" appearance with pointy/craggy top edges.



8. Doyle Cottage / Oak Manor 27 Oak Avenue



Built in the 1920s, Oak Manor (also called the Doyle Cottage) is one of the best local examples of traditional cottage form that can be found in many other Manitoba summer communities. With a shallow pyramidal roof and wide verandah, the shape is of an “A” type.

Inside, the original log construction is apparent in the exposed beams and rafters. The whole cottage, at about 100 years of age, still has period siding, flooring, wall materials and stone fireplace.



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9. McQuade/Mulligan Fence

190 Grand Marais Boulevard South

Built ca. 1921 by original site owner James McQuade, with assistance from later owners David and Pearl Mulligan, this fence has the feeling of an ancient Norman wall – monolithic, strong, impregnable, but with a dainty wooden gate in the centre. At 80 feet in length, this is a major feature along Grand Marais Boulevard.

Dave and Pearl Mulligan were two well-known figures in early Grand Marais history. Dave Mulligan (1893 -1981) was a long-time city



councilor in Winnipeg (1950 - 60s) and was also Deputy Mayor. A CNR employee in charge of the old Grand Beach Hotel in the late 1950s, Mulligan and his wife Pearl (1900 -1969) were very active in Grand Marais and Grand Beach in both social and commercial situations.



Photo: Dave Mulligan and daughter Tannis, circa 1940

Mulligan was awarded the Centennial Medal in 1970 and he and Pearl were named Scouts of the Buffalo Hunt, an honour of the Manitoba Historical Society. Dave and Pearl developed this site as Greenwood Place, one of the places throughout Grand Marais that offered cabins for rent during the 1950s and 60s.

10. Agricultural Past

Grand Beach Rd and Grand Marais Blvd/Glenvale Ave

There are only a few sites left to recall the pre-cottage history of Grand Marais—when it was more of a fishing and farming locale.

The most obvious sites that recall an agricultural past are on Grand Beach Road at the farm site where Grand Beach Road intersects with Grand Marais Boulevard.

Here you can see a distinctive building—with its tell-tale barn shape. This is called a gambrel roof and was common for barn designs throughout western Canada as it allowed for more hay storage in the loft area.



The other site connected to local agriculture is further north on Grand Beach Road, at the intersection of Glenvale—this was the old dairy/creamery.



11. Back Lanes and Honey Wagons

GPS Coordinates: N 50.54954 W 096.62986

One interesting physical feature that distinguishes the residential cottage areas of Grand Marais from Grand Beach are the back lanes.

From about the 1920s onward, cottages began to be separated by back lanes: a narrow alley just wide enough for a truck to pass through. The lanes created access for garbage collection and other messy work.

Most cabins had an outhouse or “biffy” strategically placed on the property line by the back lane. Outhouses were equipped with back hatches which swung open and upwards. In Grand Marais, the local municipality employed sanitation workers to travel the back lanes, usually during the night, open the hatch, grab the pail, empty it and replace it back in the outhouse. Known in England as night men, these workers were referred to as “honey men” in Grand Marais, although the task was carried out by females and males alike.

The convenience of back lane access and outhouse placement made the job of the honey men faster and more efficient. It also ensured no one saw them at night and that they did not have to carry pails long distances and through very visible front yards.

Indoor plumbing and septic tanks have rendered the outhouse a relic of the past, but there are still some here and there.



The system of municipal bucket toilet collection was widespread in Australia where "dunny cans" persisted well into the second half of the twentieth century. The workers who emptied these buckets were called "dunny men", an obvious rhyming word with honey. However, a bucket toilet has also traditionally been called a honey bucket, an English moniker. The honey wagon is colloquial for the collection truck still used for the modern vacuum truck, which sucks waste from septic tanks and delivers it to waste management sites.

Keeping outhouse odours to a minimum was a challenge. Cottage owners often hoped Mother Nature would provide a strong summer breeze off the Lake. In early times, sawdust, ashes from bonfires or creosote were placed on the bottom of the outhouse. Creosote clinkers can still be found in some yards in Grand Marais, generally a good clue as to where an outhouse once stood.

Eventually, however, ashes, tar, and creosote gave way to strong disinfectants. Later, the honey men wore black protective rubber wear and respirators while emptying sewage pails, which provided perfect camouflage for working at night.

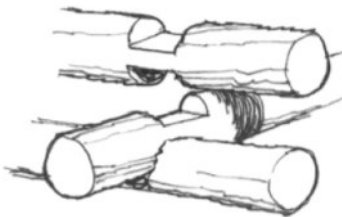
Many humorous memories and stories are associated with the outhouse and it doesn't require much probing to find them among cottage goers. As well, many people came to look fondly on their bathroom retreat, often giving them colourful names such as Moldy Manor, The Moon Room, Lou's Loo, and The Thunder Room.

12. Broken Tree Cottage / Kurtz Cottage 77 Grand Marais Boulevard

Broken Tree Cottage or the Kurtz Cottage, is a significant Grand Marais landmark. Built in the 1920s, this is the largest and most ambitious of the several distinctive log cottages that still stand in the community. Features to note are the saddle notch log construction, stone chimney and original interior details.



Saddle Notch construction detail



13. Government Pier At the Lake and the Head of Central

Located on the lake and at the head of Central Ave, this large pier was once a major piece of construction, with huge boulders stretching out into the lake.

The Pier was used by commercial fishermen and bargemen, as well as for pleasure-craft. It has been abandoned and, over time, is disappearing.



14. 1960s Cabin

83 Hillbrow Avenue

Towards the southern end of Hillbrow Avenue and sits a circa 1960s cabin. The circular floor plan gives the cabin a slightly space-ship-like appearance.

This was the home of a major Grand Marais character, Harry Blake-Knox. Mr. Blake-Knox was active on local council, publisher of the local newspaper, *The Spotlight*, and founder of the Grand Beach Electric Company.



He was also responsible for Harry's Hideout, an important movie and dance emporium active in the 1950s and 1960s. The Hideout offered evening movies twice a day in the summer and dances on Saturday night.

In 1992, the 125th anniversary of Canada, Blake-Knox was awarded the Commemorative Medal for his contributions to the community and his fellow citizens.

15. Oakleigh Lodge/Watt Cottage 36 Hillbrow Avenue

At what appears to be the northern end of Hillside there is a public stone path that leads up to another section of Hillside – marked by a street sign.

The Oakleigh Lodge or Watt Cottage has been a landmark in the community since its construction in the 1920s. The site of the local magistrate's office for many years, the cottage has also a strong physical presence.

Facing onto Parkview and set into a hillock, the cottage is placed on a tall stone foundation. The large building has many exterior qualities from its earliest days, as well as many features and fixtures inside, including a large stone fireplace, wooden floors and ceiling and many intact windows.



16. Summerhill / Taylor Stone Fence 32 Central Avenue

Summerhill fence is located at the mid-point of Central on the east side. This very long fence dates to the late 1920s.

Built by hand, likely with stones taken from the nearby beach. One can imagine a human chain throwing stones along a line to the fence construction site .



17. Ashgrove Cottage 31 Central Avenue

Ashgrove Cottage is one of the best remaining sites recalling how Grand Marais cottage owners often developed small complexes of buildings for rental purposes.

A fine main cottage, dating from 1922, dominates the yard. Behind it, several outbuildings were once used by guests. One of these still reveals the modest and distinctive wooden pole construction used.

Throughout all of the buildings are excellent intact examples of hand-made, ingenious features and details that define the cottage character: summery, whimsical, but durable.



18. Local Trails

As people walk through Grand Marais, they often find strange little side paths and crooked trails that do not seem to be part of the existing grid street system.

It is thought that these footpaths could have been small parts of larger pathways for large-scale tribal migrations to and from Ojibway hunting, fishing, and berry-gathering places.

The footpaths begin at the end of St Clements Row and extend through an area of scrub bush, alongside cottages where they end at Hillbrow Avenue. A small footpath leads to several cottage frontages which do not have street access on Hillbrow Avenue. These are not private paths and are open to the public.

There are also several footpaths that connect Grand Marais to the Grand Beach Campsite and a well-known footpath that leads from Grand Beach to Spirit Rock.

For many years cottagers used these footpaths as thoroughfares for use only by pedestrians. The trails are narrow and no other forms of traffic such as motorized vehicles or horses would be able to access them.

The footpaths at Grand Marais are still used today as shortcuts and shaded routes that provide a natural respite, away from traffic on hot summer days.



19. Old Commercial Strip

GPS Coordinates: N 50.552997, W 096.631671

From the 1920s and well into the 1960s, Grand Marais was a major commercial nucleus, with scores of businesses along Grand Beach Road and Parkview Avenue. Many of these businesses were seasonal—open from late May to early September. Others were only open in July and August, when schools were closed for the summer.

Many of the businesses were either convenience stores or small restaurants: Mama and Papa Joe's, The Blueberry Patch, Hilltop Restaurant, Mike's BBQ, Fingold's, Lou's, Campers, and Playland which had a Ferris wheel behind the building. There was a lumber yard at one time, located on the highway, as well as the presence of little cottage motels.

Lanky's Hot Dog Stand is the last remaining site along Grand Beach Road that recalls the line of commercial establishments that once dominated this strip. Lanky's, built in 1950, still expresses that fun summer-time resort atmosphere.



Get to Know Lake Winnipeg

Some 12000 years ago, as Ice Age glaciers receded, rock layers were stripped away sometimes scouring down to Precambrian bedrock. The melt waters pooled, forming Glacial Lake Agassiz. This giant lake ultimately spread across most of Manitoba and northwest Ontario, stretching into Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Minnesota and points beyond. Wave action and torrential river flows carved and shifted silt and gravel deposits into what is now the Red River Valley. Lake Winnipeg rests at the north end of this vast 510km (315 miles) valley. Today, the Red River drains this basin: formed at the continental divide in North Dakota and emptying into Lake Winnipeg 800km downstream.

In 1690, the English explorer Henry Kelsey became the first known European to see and travel on Lake Winnipeg. The name Winnipeg is adopted from the Cree words *win* “murky” and *nipy* “water”. The city of Winnipeg is named after the Lake.

The rich sediment and silt deposited on the plains as Agassiz drained became some of the most fertile soil on the planet. This clay based soil did more than grow good crops. On a July 1895 visit to “Mud City”, as Winnipeg was less affectionately known at the time, Mark Twain (born Samuel Clemens) was impressed not only by the vast fields of wheat but by the Red River gumbo, stating “I have never seen real mud since leaving the Missouri till today”.

Lake Winnipeg experiences “wind tides”. This occurs when the prevailing northerly winds blow along the length of the lake, exerting horizontal stress and forcing surface waters to pile up along the windward south shores. These wind tides can be greater than a meter above normal lake level. Wind and wave action can also form massive ice “bergs” in winter and during spring thaw.

Lake Winnipeg is one of the most important bodies of water in Canada's history. The lake was a key transportation link between the Hudson Bay Company's port in York Factory and the fur trade hinterlands of the Red-Assiniboine watershed. Travelling on Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson River, traders were able to transport goods between Hudson Bay and the Red River Settlement in addition to the HBC's forts and outposts in between. York boats transported provisions to the HBC forts and returned with furs and trade goods.



HBC officials taking an express canoe, 1825. Photo from Library and Archives Canada.

Lake Winnipeg is the world's third largest hydroelectric reservoir. Water flows through the lake into the Nelson River relatively quickly, over three to five years. (As a comparison, the waters of Lake Superior take 119 years to flow into Lake Huron via the St Mary's River). As the only outflow of Lake Winnipeg, the Nelson River has significant potential for hydroelectric power generation. Development began in 1966 and five power stations now meet 75% of the provincial demand.



Jenpeg, a control structure on the main branch of the Nelson River, regulates the volume of water flowing out of the lake. Photo from www.manitobahydropower.com

Why is it Green?

In the last 30 years Lake Winnipeg has experienced a steady surge of blue-green algae growth. Algal blooms are the result of eutrophication—a condition caused by an over-abundance of the nutrient phosphorus. These blooms contaminate beaches, reduce water quality, and damage Manitoba's important fishing and tourism industries.



Foaming sludge resulting from phosphorous load on Lake Winnipeg..

Photo from rmofstclement.com

Save the Lake!

You can protect Lake Winnipeg by following some simple guidelines at the cottage, beach, and when camping:

- Protect the shoreline—don't remove trees, rocks or shrubs.
- Don't carry aquatic plants or animals from one water body to another.
- Prevent the spread of zebra mussels and other invasive species by inspecting and cleaning boats before leaving the area, allowing them to dry thoroughly.
- Safely dispose of bait bucket contents in a suitable garbage receptacle.
- Don't use fertilizers or pesticides within 30 meters of the shoreline.
- Use phosphate-free soaps and detergents at the cottage.
- Never bury garbage. Always place refuse in a receptacle suitable for garbage collection.
- Have regular maintenance performed on your septic field or holding tank.
- Don't overfill boat fuel tanks.

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www.RedRiverNorthHeritage.com



Historic Gems of Grand Marais

Enjoy a tour through Grand Marais by foot, bicycle, or vehicle! Experience the range and depth of a heritage that makes the region one of the most historically significant in Manitoba.

Highlights include the natural wonders of Lake Winnipeg and connected marshlands, and the stories told through whimsical architectural elements. Visit a neo-Gothic revival church, explore mysterious stone features, and learn about some of the famous cottagers of the area.

This guide begins at St Jude's Anglican Church but you may begin at any point along the route. GPS coordinates are provided for each location. Nearby geocache sites and their GPS coordinates are noted.



Download this guide at www.RedRiverNorthTourism.com



Picnic at Grand Beach, 1914. Photograph by L.B. Foote

Whatever the season, there's always a reason to spend time in Red River North.



Red River North Tourism is an incorporated not-for-profit, volunteer organization that develops, coordinates, and promotes activities that maximize tourism to the Red River North region on behalf of the municipalities of St Andrews, St Clements, and Selkirk; local businesses; cultural, heritage, and other groups; and the community at large.



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