

# The Whitemouth River Valley Heritage Driving Tour

*This document provides you with a written outline of the Whitemouth River Valley Heritage Driving Tour. You may print this off and bring with you to read along the tour, if you do not have a device or do not want to listen to the audio recordings available for the driving tour. You can also click on the titles of each location below to find the Google Map link to each site location.*

*A reminder that travel on gravel roads will be required to visit some locations. Please use caution when parking or leaving your vehicle to visit historic sites. To access some sites, you will need to cross roads, highways or train tracks by foot. Please use caution and cross at your own risk. The RM of Whitemouth will not be held liable for any incidents or mis-use. We also ask that you please respect private property and do not trespass on any private property.*

*Don't forget post on your social media about the Whitemouth River Heritage Driving Tour! We would love to see your photos. Tag us and use the hashtag #whitemouthriverdrivingtour*

*If you have any comments, questions, concerns or feedback about this driving tour, please contact the Whitemouth River Recreation Commission.*

Call (204) 348-2221 or email [recreationdirector@whitemouthriverrec.com](mailto:recreationdirector@whitemouthriverrec.com)

*This project is offered in partnership with the Whitemouth River Recreation Commission Inc., the Whitemouth Municipal Museum and the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth. Financial support from the Province of Manitoba and the Whitemouth River Valley Community Development Corporation Inc.*

## **Introduction: Welcome to the Whitemouth River Valley Heritage Driving Tour**

The Whitemouth River Valley is situated midway between the city of Winnipeg and the town of Kenora. The area stretches over a district of fertile field, winding streams and hill and dale. The Valley is named after the river which runs through it from south to north, called Whitemouth. The area is a diversified geological beauty mixed with a friendly and courteous community spirit. From the Seven Sisters Hydro Dam, through the rolling valleys of the various falls along the Whitemouth River, prairie grasslands blend with Canadian Shield and forest. It is this location that drew settlers from Europe in the 1800s to the Town of Whitemouth, as the railway building era began making the town into a staging and supply centre. One of the first families was that of Dr. Charlotte Ross – Manitoba's first women physician, who lived and practised in Whitemouth from 1881 to 1910.

After the railway era had slowed, farming such as dairy, grain, hog and poultry became the mainstay of the region. There are over 17 centennial farms in the area, with several currently still in operation. These farms are a proud lineage and indeed a testament to the hard-working people in the region.

Manitoba's celebrated history has primarily been told in mainstream media from a settler perspective. We would like to acknowledge that the Whitemouth River Valley Heritage Driving Tour is located on traditional territory of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene and Metis people. The Rural Municipality of Whitemouth is located on Treaty 1 and Treaty 3 Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We respect the treaties made on these territories.

This scenic winding tour will take you through the vibrant communities of Elma, River Hills, Seven Sisters Falls and Whitemouth. It's easy to explore, easy on your budget and you're sure to discover fun at every turn.

Be sure to check out the maps and materials we have created for you to ensure you have a smooth and enjoyable tour. You can find all details on our website at [www.rmwhitemouth.com](http://www.rmwhitemouth.com)

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### [Site 1: Whitemouth Municipal Museum](#)

*Civic Number: 62 Henderson Ave., Whitemouth (access to parking lot). Amenities on Site: Wheelchair Accessible; Indoor & Outdoor Museum Artifacts; Washroom Facilities (At Lion's Park) | Buildings on Site: Yes*

The Dominion Land Survey refers to Whitemouth as early as 1877, at which time the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP Rail) right of way was being surveyed through the area from Winnipeg to Rat Portage (which in 1905 was renamed Kenora). The line was in operation by 1880, with passenger service. The first station was built in 1886, and a second, larger one built in 1923. The CP Railway plays a large role in Whitemouth's beginnings.

After the development of the railway other establishments started to rise in the area. The first post office opened in 1880. The first hotel was built by G.D. Stinson in 1880. The first store/trading post was built by Howard Corregan on the south-east corner of Front Avenue and Main Street in the early 1880s. It became known as "Fort Howard". (We will learn more about Fort Howard later in the tour). The first school was built in 1881 on Main Street. The first church, which was Presbyterian was built the same year on Front Street. Both were built by David Ross, on land and materials donated by him. The Rural Municipality of Whitemouth was incorporated in 1905.

The idea of a museum was conceived in 1973 by a group of civic minded people. The museum was opened in August 1974 with one log building donated by Manitoba Natural Resources. The museum's motto was, and still is "*Preserve the past for future generations*". Numerous buildings have been added over the years. Currently on site, resides a 110-year-old house and a Canadian Pacific Railway caboose, built in 1929. A large steel machinery storage shed was erected in 1979 and a wood artifacts/office building added in 1989. A clay bake oven was built in 1984, where bread and buns are baked each year during the Museum's annual Heritage Day. The first Heritage Day was held in 1977, and still takes place each second Sunday in September. The event pays tribute to framings early beginnings from threshing to breadmaking. This event makes a fun outing for all.

The Whitemouth Municipal Museum published a very successful history book called "Trails to Rails to Highways" in 1979. The Trails to Rails to Highways book is still available for purchase. The book is \$40.00 plus shipping, and you can contact the Museum via email for your very own copy. [museum.whitemouth@gmail.com](mailto:museum.whitemouth@gmail.com)

In 1981, the museum was instrumental in the clean-up of the old municipal cemetery, and in 1982 dedicated a cenotaph commemorating those that fought in the war.

The Whitemouth Museum also has a dedicated memorial cairn honoring Dr. Charlotte Whitehead Ross (1843-1916). Dr. Charlotte Whitehead Ross belonged to the first generation of women to practice medicine in Canada and was Manitoba's first qualified woman doctor. Dr. Charlotte Whitehead Ross practiced medicine in Whitemouth from 1881 to 1912. Her father, Mr. Whitehead and her husband, David Ross, helped build railways in the west and through lumbering and other industries, aided the opening up of the country. After marrying Ross, Charlotte took responsibility for caring for her chronically ill sister Mary Anne, an experience that apparently stimulated her interest in medicine. She was encouraged to study medicine by her family physician, whom she borrowed several medical books from, despite the disapproval of her father. With the understanding that her husband's work on the railway out west would mean that her family would have little access to medical care, she decided to enrol at the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia in 1870, as no Canadian medical college was open to women at that time.

Charlotte came to Whitemouth in the summer of 1881 with her children, and treated her first patient the night after she arrived. Although qualified, she was not legally allowed to practice medicine. She defied the so-called establishment and got on with her work. Charlotte's early patients were mostly men, unusual for a female doctor at the time, which was mainly due to the logging industry around Whitemouth and the results of logging accidents that would occur. Many of these initial procedures involved Charlotte using her surgeon's skills, amputating legs, stitching wounds and setting broken bones due to the many lumber or axe related injuries to the legs or feet. Her strength, will and dedication helped forge a heritage which is alive and well in the region. Fred Edge wrote a book titled "The Iron Rose: The Extraordinary Life of Charlotte Ross, MD ". The book highlights the life of the doctor and was published in 1992, with the University of Manitoba Press.

In 2001 Whitemouth's historic Christ Anglican Church, was moved to the Museum grounds. This church, originally located on Elevator Road was built in 1904-1905. The first service was held on August 22, 1905. It was hand built by local parishioners on donated land, from local lumber on a Tyndall limestone foundation. The original bell tower was destroyed in a windstorm in 1922 and was not replaced. The church was active from 1905 to 1923. No services were held until 1930, when the congregation was revived. The church saw continuous service until Christmas 1995, when the congregation became too small to sustain itself. The owners, the Diocese of Keewatin donated the building to the Whitemouth Museum Society, and it was moved on site and refurbished.

Today, the museum boasts a 1929 train caboose that families can explore, a large antique farm machinery collection, a pioneer house dating to 1909, a large artifact building, a blacksmith shop and a log trapper's cabin. All except the caboose are wheelchair accessible. We encourage you to plan a trip and visit this special museum. To learn more and confirm hours, please check out their website at: <https://www.whitemouthmuseum.com>

North of the Museum you will also see the Whitemouth & District Lions Club Campground & Park. This is a popular location by tourist and locals alike and includes a playground, washrooms, picnic shelter, fire pits, and more. Camping is free, although donations are greatly appreciated. We encourage you to visit the Park and check out the beautiful mural on the Picnic Hut, hand painted by local artists and community members. The Lion's Campground also connects to the Co-op Community Trail. Along the trail you can find many mosaic art pieces and resting spots to sit and enjoy the view of the community grounds. The creation of this trail was done in partnership with many local business and organizations, with local artists and community members assisting with the artwork along the trail.

## **Site 2: Cooks Falls Tourist Park**

*Civic Number: N/A; Driving Tour Signage located on Cooks Falls Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No*

The Cooks Falls Tourist Park was originally called Webb's Falls and was built around 1930, when the Trans-Canada highway went through the area. The original site was located east of the current highway, closer to the water bank. There were several cottages, boats, an open area dance floor and a concession stand. Next to it was a golf course built by William Webb in 1929. It remained in use until the mid 1940s.

The water that flows through this area is referred to as Cooks Falls. These falls are a drop-pool style of rapid, created by narrowing effect of shoreline rocks, outcroppings and several river wide ledges.

## **Site 3: Winnipeg Falls North School S.D. #1346**

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes*

Located at the junction of Hwy 44 and PR 408, this was a one-room school built in 1905. The building was originally located one mile north of Seven Sisters Falls, on the west side of Highway 408. Students in grade 1 to 8 attended. One teacher had as many as 75 pupils at a time. Construction of the Seven Sisters hydroelectric power dam commenced in 1929 and the school district was split between Seven Sisters and River Hills. The building was moved to Seven Sisters (see site 12) and used as a school until 1948. Once the school closed, the building was moved during the winter to its present site and used as a granary for many years.

Among the teachers who worked at Winnipeg Falls North School through the years were William Gevers (1912), Ernest Lexow (1916), John Gfeller (1920), James Oswald (1925-1928), Mary Mroze (1938), Esther Anne Brandt (1944), Nonnie Panchuk (1948, wife of M. W. Peleshok), Hilma Clara May Solar (1950-1957), Frances Gochowich (1961-1962), and Darlene Elizabeth Lackman (1965-1966).

## **Site 4: Oldenburg School S.D. #968**

*Civic Number: 68157 PR 408 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes - Private Residence (Please do not trespass)*

The Oldenburg School District was established in June 1898 and a one-room schoolhouse was built in 1899 by local people from local materials on land donated by a farmer. First classes were held in September 1899, with one teacher and 36 pupils from grades 1 to 8. By 1914 there were 75 pupils, and the old log school was replaced by the present building in 1920. A second room was added in the basement in 1943. Grades 1 to 11 were taught here and Grade 12 student needed to go to Whitemouth. As many as 80 students attended classes some years. The school was closed in 1962 due to amalgamation with Whitemouth school. The former school building was renovated into a private residence which is still present at the site.

Among the teachers of Oldenburg School through the years were Harland Chester Whitewarsh (1906-1907), M. B. Forster (1908), Gustave Pfaff (1909-1910, 1915-1916), Charles Van der Panl? (1911), John S. F. Hart (1911), Florence E. Long (1911), Mary M. Johnston (1912-1914),

Helena Zado (1915-1915, 1918-1919), Eva. J. Bell (1917), M. Hausfield (1918), F. Sutherland (1919), Winifred Dobie (1920), Charles D. Smith (1920-1922), Mary M. A. Ruccius (1922-1924), Rosina Perick [Perich] (1924-1925), Edith Aylwin (1925), Eleanor Zaslow (1926), Martha L. Ruccius (1926), Elsie H. Handel (1926-1927), Lydia P. Milbrandt (1927-1928), Lyall MacDonald Robertson (1928-1929), Eleanor Massey (1930), Elizabeth Anne Drewry (1930-1931), Mary Agnes Bremner (1931-1932), Laura Feltham (1932-1935), Mary Harper (1935-1938), Charlotte Isabelle Lynch (1938), Gwennie Olwen "Gwen" McWhirter (1938-1939), Lois Mabel West (1939-1940), Mildred Enns (1940), Mrs. J. L. Cousins (1941, substitute), Mrs. H. W. Stacey (1941), William Schultz (1941-1942), Alice Gietz (grades 1-3, 1942-1943), William Schultz (grades 4-9, 1942-1943; grades 4-10, 1943-1944; grades 4-9, 1944-1945; grades 5-10, 1945-1946; grades 5-9, 1946-1947; grades 5-10, 1947-1948; grades 7-11, 1948-1949), Helena Braun (grades 1-3, 1943-1944), Evelyn Arnold (grades 1-3, 1944-1945; grades 1-4, 1945-1946; grades 1-4, 1946-1947), A. John Howk (grades 1-4, 1947-1948), Hilma C. M. Solar (grades 1-6, 1948-1949), Ruth Thelma Wier (1949-1950), Oscar Andrew Wurster (1950-1954), and Peter Jacob Williams (1954-1961), and Veronica Theresa Toker (1961-1966).

### **Site 5: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church & Cemetery (South)**

*Civic Number: 68158 PR 408 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No church, cemetery on site.*

St. Paul's South Evangelical Lutheran Church congregation was formed in 1902, when the first church was built on donated land, and dedicated, along with the adjacent cemetery. The parsonage was built to house their pastors and families around 1923, and still exists as a private dwelling just north of Oldenburg Road. Due to the large number of parishioners, a larger building was erected beside the old one, and dedicated on November 16, 1953. The church was closed in 1970, and moved to Oakbank, MB. All that remains of the Church is the concrete front steps and granite monument. The cemetery is found at this site.

### **Site 6: Whitemouth Baptist Church (Whiteshell)**

*Civic Number: N/A Cemetery: 69069 PR 408 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No; cemetery located to the South of site.*

In 1897 a group of German Baptist families came from Vohylnia, Russia to Winnipeg. From there they moved to Whitemouth, where they took up farming, bringing with them their customs and religion. The government at the time, gave homesteads a very reasonable price, if one wanted to work. All that sounds easy now, but all they had then was a horse or ox, an axe and a whole lot of muscle. The need for fellowship and worship arose as more moved to the area. The first services were held in private homes as early as 1897. Soon their homes were not large enough, so they decided to build a church. The church was built between Whitemouth and River Hills. The first Baptist church was built here in 1906 on donated land from Gottlieb Knopf. The project was spearheaded by the church's first pastor, with 57 church members. Stables were built to shelter the horses, and a well was dug. In 1904, the church was finished and dedicated. The original bible cost \$6.00. The church cemetery was located one mile to the south, near Oldenburg. The church parsonage was built in River Hills in 1952 at this site.

A new, much larger church was erected in 1961 in Seven Sisters, at the junction of highways 307 and 408. Since it was now in the Whiteshell area, they changed the name to Whiteshell Baptist Church (formally called Whitemouth Baptist Church). The church was badly damaged in

a fire on July 4, 2010. Shortly after a new church was built. The old church building was sold to the neighboring Hutterite colony for use as their church. The year 2006 marked their 100-year celebration!

The Whiteshell Baptist Church's Cemetery is located just down the road from this driving tour site. You can head south approximately 1 mile from this site to view the cemetery.

### Site 7: Whiteshell Colony

*Civic Number: 70001 PR 408 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Private residence.*

Whiteshell Colony's Roots, Written by Mark E. Gross

Whiteshell Colony was a branch from the Iberville Colony near Elie, MB. When the farm was bought in 1960, it was bare except for one house, which was used by the colony boss at the time. The farm came with about 1000 acres, which was made up of several small farms located locally and families were spread out on those farms until enough money was raised to move all houses and buildings on to the one site. There were no new houses built, rather pulled in. Most barns were constructed in the first couple of years such as cow, chicken, and pig barns.

In 1968 once everything was in place the two colonies physically split apart sharing everything to give each colony an equal amount, including the people. Each colony was then made up of about 40 people.

In 1981 Whiteshell Colony had grown to be considered big enough to create their own sister colony. So land was bought near Elm Creek Manitoba, which would now be called Clearview Colony. The two colonies branched apart in 1983 by the same process however everything was practically built new if not at the time shortly after. Much support was still needed from the mother colony till all things were in place. All things owned by Whiteshell Colony were equally split with Clearview Colony. After about 5 years a sister colony would become independent (from financial support) from the mother colony.

Whiteshell Colony's current revenues are generated mostly from farming large hog operations, 10, 000 layers and over 5500 acres of land. It has become very modernized with technology, farm equipment, buildings, and vehicles. It has very skilled people in the areas of field management, carpentry, mechanics, welding, electrical and livestock management. We offer custom support and manufacturing in most of these areas. Once the supervisor running the business is ready to retire, a well-trained on-site employee would take over his position. The colony leaders would appoint that person. The male congregation elect's colony Leaders such as farm boss, secretary, and minister. It is considered to be a very progressive colony. Education today is more valued with offering grade 12 diplomas and also education our own teachers by sending them to university.

As Hutterites, our main reason for our customs and our social activities is our religion. Our religion is greatly tied into our history. Hutterites originated in Tyrol (te roll) in the 1500s. Their leader was Jacob Hutter, hence the name Hutterites. But the religion goes back to the time of Jesus' disciples and is based on the whole New Testament that tells of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Hutterite was not easy, for in 1535 they were

heavily persecuted, but remained strong in their faith and beliefs. While some were imprisoned, they wrote great books, beautiful hymns and sermons, which we still read and sing today. Our sermons are still the same ones that our forefathers wrote in prison.

Today, the Whiteshell Colony is well known as a custom furniture manufacturer (Whiteshell Chairs).

### **Site 8: River Hills**

*Civic Number: 62 115 Homestead Road      Amenities on Site: Dock & Porta Potty During Summer | Building on Site: No | No fishing.*

The River Hills settlement started as a crossroads for the earliest settlers, dating back to the 1900. One of the early settlers, Mr. Fred Zink Sr., built a sawmill one mile north of the crossroads, on the Bog River where it joins the Whitemouth River. The timber was very large; two oxen were needed to pull a single log. Lumber from this, and other later sawmills enabled the local farmers to build their houses and large barns. In 1914, Mr. Zink built a flour mill on his farm, south of the River Hills bridge, on the east bank of the river. It was operated by a large steam engine powered by two boilers. The mill stone still sits in the field at the site. The mill drew customers from as far away as Elma and Hadashville; some people had to wait two weeks to have their wheat ground into flour, camping on Zink's yard. A larger mill was built near the Provincial Road 408 bridge, south of Oldenburg, which also proved to be much too small. In 1918, a larger flour mill was built in Whitemouth, powered by steam. It was sold to the Kardesh family in 1932, subsequently burning down in 1935. The Whitemouth Museum has that mill stone on display. The first store north of Whitemouth was built on the south west corner of the crossroads by Albert Ataeh in 1920. It passed through several owners until George Grubert bought it. Grubert had a larger store moved with a team of horses to the site beside this marker post in 1931. During this time (the great depression years), the evolving settlement became known as Grubert's Corner. Grubert had a Chrysler agency through Breen Motors in Winnipeg, and a CCM bicycle dealership. The town prospered during and after the construction of the Seven Sisters Falls powerhouse and dam. All traffic coming into the Seven Sisters and Whiteshell had to enter via the Brookfield Road and Grubert's Corner. In the late 1940s and 1950s there was Della's Cafe, owned by Della Bonikowski, and a B-A garage (Benny's Garage). Later the restaurant became the Riverside Cafe, operated by Leonard Lipps. There was an International Harvester dealership, garage and body shop owned by Jack Rempel where the original store was located. At the crest of the hill, coming off the Whitemouth River bridge, on the south side was a store owned by Lou Wittenberg, with a large lumber yard. He kept bees in his basement. On the same yard was a garage owned by Norman Zink, a beauty parlor owned by his wife, Ruth. There was also a TV radio electronics shop owned by Irvin Grabke. Until 1948, Ed Moroz, the store owner, brought mail from Seven Sisters. In 1948, a post office was opened in town; the postmaster was Lilly Rempel. A referendum was held to choose a name for the post office, as Grubert's Corner didn't seem appropriate. After much discussion, the name River Hills was chosen. Hydro service came to town in 1943 and telephone in 1952.

### **Dairy Farming in the Whitemouth River Valley**

Back in 1920's the Whitemouth River Valley had the highest number of dairy cows per acre of all of Canada. Other regions of the province where dairy production was sizable included the Brandon and Dauphin areas, where the milk could be sold to the nearby urban population. Two

areas in the province, not close to urban centres, but where dairy farms were created, were the Pembina Hills and the Whitemouth Valley. Both these regions had the soils and water conditions for good pastures, but not for grain production. They lacked proximity to a nearby market, but the development of railways made this less of a problem. Dairy farming in these regions was more determined by another factor: knowledge of dairy farming. New immigrants brought this from their former homes.

The Whitemouth Rive Valley area today has twelve bulk milk producers. This is not unusual since the land is well suited for forage crops. But the fact that a dairy industry developed in the region early in the 20th century is surprising. Its existence can be explained by three factors. First, many of the early settlers in the area were Danes, Finns, or Germans who emigrated from Russia or Poland, many bringing with them some knowledge of dairying. The second factor was that Whitemouth was located along the mainline CPR, and represented the last agricultural area before the Canadian Shield enveloped Western Ontario. Much of the milk, butter and cream produced in the Whitemouth area was shipped eastward, to places like Kenora and Dryden. It was used to supply the lumber camps in the forests of southeastern Manitoba and Ontario. Thirdly, in the first quarter of the century, large construction projects for hydroelectric power and railroads added to the demand for the dairy products of Whitemouth. Municipality.

Life at the edge of the Canadian Shield was hard and none of the early pioneers were able to concentrate on farming alone. All male family members had to seek employment in the construction, railway, or lumber camps at some point. Once the trees had been cleared and the muskeg burned, dairy products prepared by their wives became a constant source of income. Several families concentrated on dairying after the pioneer period. With cheap lumber readily available, farmers could construct large barns, many of which still dot the landscape. Bill Altstadt ran a dairy farm for over thirty years, delivering milk to local restaurants and residents for five cents a quart (5.5 cents per litre) in the 1930s.<sup>159</sup> Sid Meltzer started a service hauling farmers' cream to Beausejour.<sup>160</sup> Emil Merke started a dairy farm in 1947 with 15 cows, shipping his milk to the Safeway Lucerne plant in Winnipeg.<sup>161</sup> The Schultz family had a dairy farm near Seven Sisters, delivering milk and cream to the people living in the townsite.<sup>162</sup> Jake Stark started a dairy farm in 1965, shipping his milk to Grunthal, and arranging for 15 neighbours to ship their milk there jointly by transfer. Henry Steiner took over his father's farm in 1925 and changed it to a dairy operation. He shipped his cream to Kenora by CPR.<sup>163</sup> Most local families however, milked about eight cows, and shipped the cream. (Source: Microsoft Word - MHC Dairy Industry in Mb (gov.mb.ca)

Since then, technologies have continued to grow in the dairy industry. In 2006 the first milk robots in Manitoba were installed in Whitemouth.

### **[Site 9: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church & Cemetery \(North\)](#)**

*Civic Number: 63 003 Homestead Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Church & Cemetery.*

The original St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church (North) building was completed in 1908, and dedicated along with the adjacent cemetery. Before 1907 services were held in private member's homes. The first church was replaced by a larger structure with a basement in 1951. The present-day structure was built on the old foundation, and dedicated on June 11, 1967 and still remains active for services.

### **Site 10: Winnipeg Falls South School S.D. #1348**

*Civic Number: 63 019 Homestead Road; School & Community Club no longer erect. Baseball cages still erect.*

When Winnipeg Falls school was divided in 1929, a school building was built here to school the southern portion of the division. In 1929, when construction of the Seven Sisters hydroelectric power dam commenced, the original schoolhouse was replaced by two structures: the Winnipeg Falls North School nearer to Seven Sisters and the other a two-room structure at this site in the community of River Hills. A third classroom was added to it in the 1950s. In 1967, the district became part of the Agassiz School Division.

Among the teachers who worked at Winnipeg Falls South School through the years were Murray Holmes (1928), Thelma Jean Dryborough (1929), John Gordon Tully (1932), Edward Alexander Mroz (1936, 1940), Miss McCullough (1939), Gladys Mooney (1945), Mrs. M. Peleshok (1950), Maria Warkentin (1954), Nonnie Peleshok (1957, wife of M. W. Peleshok), Marian Balness (1961), and Carolyn Klepatz (1964-1966).

When the South School closed in 1968, the building was turned into the River Hills Community Club. The Community Club was torn down in 2015, all that remains is the school yard.

This site was also the home field for the River Hills baseball team "The Hungry Nine" between the 1930s-1980s. The Hungry Nines were a very successful fastball team, often reviled by other teams who had to play them.

### **Site 11: Seventh Day Adventist Church & Cemetery**

*Civic Number: 63 027 Homestead Road; Church no longer erect. Cemetery still on site.*

Located just east of the Winnipeg Falls South school was the Seventh Day Adventist Church. As early as 1905, services were held in church members' houses. A church was erected, and dedicated on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1931, with 53 in the congregation by 1935. As people moved away and the congregation dwindled, the church became inactive. Last regular services were held in the early 1970s. The building was torn down in 2017. All that remains is the cemetery at the back of the church yard. Several names mentioned in the stories about River Hills can be found in this graveyard.

### **Site 12: Winnipeg Falls North School S.D. #1348 (second location)**

*Civic Number: 63 033 Homestead Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Church & Cemetery.*

Located on Provincial Truck Highway 307, in Seven Sisters Falls. This was the second location of the Winnipeg Falls North School. In 1929, when the school divided, the north school was moved to this site (the building that was at site 3). However, as the class sizes grew a new building was needed. The present building was built and erected in 1948. This was a one room school for grades 1 to 8. Students were children of local settler's and constructions workers. This school closed in 1964 and the pupils went to Seven Sisters Falls. The building is now a private residence.

Among the teachers who worked at Winnipeg Falls North School through the years were William Gevers (1912), Ernest Lexow (1916), John Gfeller (1920), James Oswald (1925-1928), Mary Mroze (1938), Esther Anne Brandt (1944), Nonnie Panchuk (1948, wife of M. W. Peleshok), Hilma Clara May Solar (1950-1957), Frances Gochowich (1961-1962), and Darlene Elizabeth Lackman (1965-1966).

### Site 13: Seven Sisters Falls Townsite

*Civic Number: 69 Townsite Road (Seven Sisters Falls Community Club) | Amenities on Site: Curling Club, Outdoor Skating Rink | Building on Site: Yes.*

Originally the Seven Sisters Falls area was settled by immigrants, mostly from eastern Europe as early as 1905. The area languished until 1927, but when word that a large electric power development was coming things changed. The Northwestern Power Company, a division of the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway Company built a rail line to the power site from the CPR tracks at Whitemouth. This was a distance of about twelve miles, completed in late 1928. Seven Sisters, alternatively called "Tin Town" or "Upper Seven Sisters" in the 1940s and 50s grew as a collection of mostly tar paper shacks with tin roofs housing construction workers and their families. It could have been called a "boom town" during first construction from 1928 to 1931. There were at least three stores, a pool hall, a shoe maker and a barber shop. "Rerick's Hall" was built by Joe Rerick in 1928 as a dance hall, pool hall with a restaurant and general store. There was a player piano in the dance hall, and a stage. In the 1930s movies were shown, attracting large audiences. This hall is the present-day Dunlop's Tourist Hotel. After the first construction, during the "dirty thirties", the town stabilized; most homes were rebuilt; shacks became houses and the present layout emerged. After the Second World War, construction of the tail race and second half of the powerhouse proceeded, and "Tin Town" again prospered. There was a store, barber shop and pool room at the east end of town owned by Walter Ledowsky, a photography shop owned by Rudy Welz, two shoe maker shops, owned by Dan Harris and Nick Reyko, a butcher shop owned by August Kluge and a confectionery shop owned by Bill Drein (Drain). There was a Chinese restaurant located beside the Tourist Hotel. In 1948, Olga Campbell had a restaurant built by a local contractor, Charlie Hill. This restaurant became known as The Village Inn, and was an extremely popular stop for tourists, as well as the local people, especially the teenagers. This was our "Mel's Diner" of the television show Happy Days. It was sold in 1970, fell on hard times and was demolished.

In 1945, a building was moved to a site on the east end of town, on South Street, called and "The Friendly Fellows". The hall was founded by a group of community minded people headed by Jack Craig. Numerous socials, bingos and dances were held in the building until membership dwindled. Around 1975 the building fell into disuse. It was torn down in 1993.

On May 17, 1968, the Seven Sisters Falls Wildlife Association grew out of the Friendly Fellows club. By November, the clubs split, with the wildlife association later building a clubhouse three miles east of town.

There was a Texaco station called Emil's Garage in town. Before 1939, Emil Welz had timber sales in the area, and a trucking business. He lived just west of the Tourist Hotel. About 1943, he moved a small garage beside the house, replacing it with a larger one in 1946. He was in business until the early 1980's. The house and garage are still here. The site of the Esso gas station was originally a house, later made into a store by John Wiebe. The gas station and

general store evolved through four owners to its present state. Hydro came to town in 1944, telephone service in 1952.

In the centre of the Townsite, was the Seven Sisters Falls School S.D. #2218. (North of this Sign). The Seven Sisters Falls School was opened in September of 1929, in the existing main building you see today. The school was private, operated by the Winnipeg Electric Company, mostly for employee's children. By 1940, there were two rooms teaching from grades 1 to 6, and 7 to 11. As many as 50 pupils attended some years. It ceased operation in 1966 and became part of the Agassiz School Division. Pupils were then bussed to Whitemouth for school. At one point following the school closure, the building was used as a community club. The building is still owned by Manitoba Hydro and is used as a training and conference centre.

Among the teachers who worked at Seven Sisters Falls School through the years were James Dark (1930), William R. Lee (1933), Gordon Jorgenson (1940), and Gertude G. Cousins (1945-1967).

The building located directly beside this sign is the current Seven Sisters Falls Community Club. The facility includes a club house and curling rink with many renovations happening over the last few years. To the North is an outdoor skating rink maintained by volunteers in the area. You will also find a beautiful mural painted by local artist Annie Bergen and local community members.

#### **Site 14: Seven Sisters Falls Generating Station**

*Civic Number: Inside the Townsite | Amenities on Site: Generating Station | Building on Site: Yes.*

The area was settled by homesteaders well before the construction of the hydro dam and powerhouse. The Winnipeg River in this area consisted of seven nearly identical falls along a 2 1/2 mile stretch of river. The falls looked so much alike that they were called sisters. They were given girl's names: Helen, Maude, Mary, Ruth, Katherine, Nora and Jean. The dam is built on the fifth fall, with the sixth and seventh visible downstream. The upper five falls or sisters are flooded. A private consortium, the Northwestern Power Company, a division of the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway Company was granted the rights to develop hydro electricity here in 1923. The dam was built in two stages. The first stage, began in July of 1929 and featured the construction of a powerhouse. A rock filled cofferdam was constructed, and concrete poured just downstream to form a control dam and a powerhouse. Work progressed on the dam, powerhouse, town site and transmission lines to Winnipeg over the next two years. Gravel for concrete was excavated from pits at Shelley, northwest of Whitemouth, and brought here by rail. The dam, dikes and the first half of the powerhouse were completed in 1931. Generators 1, 2 and 3 went on line between June and August of that year. The town site consisted of about 25 houses. As one came into the town site, they would see the Northwestern Railway tracks beside the road. At the first bend was a street called "Frog Alley" going behind the present-day dike. There were houses here, and a sawmill owned by Paul Sigurdson at the end, where Natalie Lake now is. Across the town site road was a large car garage for the residents. This garage later was converted into the present-day curling rink, with two sheets of ice, now operated by the Seven Sisters Community Club. Just north of the garage was the community hall, and then an outdoor skating rink. A Chinese laundry was located just off Frog Alley. The large building north of this marker post was a Hudson's Bay store with living quarters, a two-room school, post office, company office and library. The store closed around 1965, and the post office was moved to the main town of Seven Sisters. A large building behind the main building was the locomotive

shed, later the bus garage. The outline of the big doors could be seen in the stucco of the south facing wall. The upper floor in this garage was used initially as a high school, and then as a church room. It was the home of the Seven Sisters Community Club. The building fell into disrepair, and was demolished in 2015. The first house (now gone) in the present-day town site was a duplex, with one unit being an infirmary, looked after by local doctors and nurses. The first doctor was Dr. Reid.

The great depression and World War II brought the construction progress to a halt for over 15 years. Stage two began later, in 1948, three years after World War II had ended. Inevitably, the war had delayed progress in the province's development, but during that time the demands for electricity had increased and more energy was needed. The tail race, carrying the water away from the turbines, was widened and deepened to increase efficiency. Also, the second half of the power house was built between 1947 and 1949. This was called the "second construction", providing a much-needed boost to the local economy. Units 4, 5 and 6 came online between 1949 and 1952. The dikes were built up to their present levels, and water levels increased to form the fore bay; an artificial lake called Natalie Lake. The lake was named after the daughter of the chief engineer of the Northwest Power Company. Old Pinawa generating station, built in 1906 on the Pinawa Channel was shut down September 26, 1951, forcing all the Winnipeg River's water to flow through the turbines at Seven Sisters. This is the largest generating station on the Winnipeg River, at 150 megawatts. Seven Sisters was operated by the Winnipeg Electric Company until 1952, when all of its assets were sold to the Manitoba Hydro Electric Board (Manitoba Hydro). The rail line had outlived its usefulness, and was dismantled in 1956.

When Seven Sisters had reached 50 years of age in 1979, a major six-year rehabilitation project was conducted to extend its productive life another 50 years. Manitoba's winter with its freeze-thaw phenomenon had caused serious concrete deterioration and it became necessary to repair the generating station's north dam, to build a concrete structure to link the powerhouse to the north dyke, and to repair the powerhouse, spillway and sluiceway structures. In the late 1980s, the station's electrical and mechanical equipment was also upgraded.

A monument at the generating station was added in 2006 in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of hydroelectric dam.

### **Site 15: Whitemouth Falls Provincial Park**

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: Park, Washrooms, Camping, Picnic Shelters | Building on Site: Yes.*

The Whitemouth Falls, located 1 and a 1/2 miles north of Seven Sisters, are the largest falls on the Whitemouth River. According to the archaeological record, Whitemouth Falls has been continually occupied for thousands of years and likely since glacial Lake Agassiz receded from the area about 8,000 years ago. Significant archaeological assets have been found within the park include an Indigenous burial dating back over 6,000 years. The first European influence on the area came from explorers and fur traders in the early 1700s. The region was settled by 1910, and by 1920 had become an important tourist area, especially the west shore. Fishing was excellent especially for sturgeon, a culturally important fish to local Indigenous peoples. Folks came from miles to pick berries and enjoy the scenery.

By 1918, a local farmer, Louis Berntt had built several log cottages at the falls, which were owned by the T. Eaton Company, the CN railway fishing clubs, and a few private owners. Most of these cottages still exist on the Brookfield Road on the west shore.

The area was designated as a Provincial Park in 1974.

The Whitemouth River empties into the Winnipeg River system at Whitemouth Falls, which is a boundary between the grasslands of the west and the boreal forest shield country to the east. The river and the town of Whitemouth are presumably named after the falls, where the gushing waters surging over the rocks form white billows of foam at the river's mouth.

A reminder that this is now a Provincial Park and you will need a park pass to visit within the park. You can purchase a pass on the [province's website](#).

### **Site 16: Sieg's Corner**

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No*

Sieg's Corner, residing at the corner of Hwy. 44 and Brookfield Road, is a name that many might not be accustomed to. More often referred to as "Benny's Corner" (because of the garage that was built in 1958, and still currently stands at the corner of Hwy. 44 and Hwy. 11), Sieg's Corner was a bustling location from 1930 to 1974, with bus service still active until the late 1990s.

In 1919, a road was opened from Seddon's Corner to Sieg's Corner, providing a route to Beausejour and Winnipeg. This trail was called "The Automobile Road" until it officially became the Trans-Canada Highway in 1930. This corner became a major junction, with the Brookfield Road leading to the hydro project construction, the tourist areas of Whitemouth Falls and the Whiteshell, as well as the numerous farms and towns in the area.

With the opening of the road, many service stations began to spring up, one of those stations being Sieg's Corner. Herman Sieg opened Sieg's Corner Gas Station in 1930. This station had the first electric lighting plant in the area, a 32 volt system powered by a gasoline generator. The store was later enlarged, adding in a restaurant, ice cream parlour and groceries.

By 1932, there was scheduled bus service from Winnipeg to Kenora and Sieg's Corner was a major stop. Bus tickets were sold at Sieg's Corner. Parcels and letters could also be given to the bus driver to be mailed in Winnipeg.

Herman ran the station until 1934, when he went into the lumber business. The station was then leased to Radio Oil Company, and sublet to various tenants. One of the most notable tenants was MLA George Henderson who sublet it for many years. The gas station would run until 1974, once the old Trans-Canada was torn out in favour of the new (and faster) Trans-Canada Highway #1.

The original building was removed sometime in the 1980s. After the building was removed, the location was used for stockpiling gravel, which is no longer on site. This area is still known as Sieg's Corner. The Rural Municipality of Whitemouth recently installed a fire hydrant on the location, clearly marking the location on Sieg's Corner. If you stop by Sieg's Corner, you can still see part of the old Trans-Canada Highway that was the building block of eastern Manitoba and Winnipeg alike.

*-Thank you to Cohen Sieg (great-grandson of Herman Sieg) for the updated information.*

### **Site 17: Lonely Dale School S.D. # 2251**

*Civic Number: N/A On Lonely Dale Rd | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No*

The Lonely Dale School was built in 1934 and the first class was held on January 3, 1935. The one-room school was built so that students living on the west side of the Whitemouth River didn't have to travel all the way to Oldenburg. Grades 1 to 8 were taught, with as many as 50 pupils attending some years. A second room was added in 1946. It was closed in 1966 due to amalgamation with Whitemouth school. The former school building was sold and all that remains is the old concrete foundation, lying along the road.

Among the teachers who worked at Lonely Dale School through the years were Irene McCulloch (1935), Katherine McDonald (1940), Elizabeth Bergman (1945), Gloria Martens (1950), Jane Halverson (1955), and George T. Reimer (1960).

### **Site 18: Oldenburg Cable Suspension Bridge**

*Civic Number: N/A - Off Whitetail Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No*

The Oldenburg Cable Suspension Bridge was originally located to the East of this signage, across the current highway. Many settlers lived in the area west of the Whitemouth River but their school and church lay across the river in Oldenburg. Children attending school had to cross the winter ice, or walk two miles north to the railway bridge leading to Seven Sisters near the present-day Hutterite colony. In 1934, the local people got together and built a wooden foot bridge across the river. This cut over four miles and about an hour off the children's morning and afternoon walks to and from school. However, high water flows each spring washed out the bridge, which then required rebuilding each year. In 1949, some locals went to the engineers at Seven Sisters, who made the plans for a cable suspension bridge, and asked for assistance with the bridge. The request was a success. These engineers not only made the plans for the bridge but also provided the supplies and materials, and oversaw its construction. This enabled the settlers year-round access to Oldenburg, as the bridge was above high-water levels. The bridge was used for about 15 years, when vandalism and the elements made it unsafe. By this time, roads became much better and everyone had a vehicle, making the bridge unnecessary. In 1969, the Trans-Canada Highway was rerouted southward and this route is now Provincial Trunk Highway 44. The upright steel beams, the cables and guy ropes are all that remain. Some of the old structure can still be seen when canoeing down the river.

### **Site 19: Wardrop House** (Brickyard Road, Whitemouth)

*Civic Number: 64 162 Brickyard Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes. Private Residence.*

The Wardrop house was built by Walter Wardrop in 1885, but the family did not move into the property until the late fall of 1887. From 1887 to 1899 the front of the Wardrop home was operated as a store for the community. They had dealings with the W.J. Gage Company from Winnipeg and also the Ames Holden Company, wholesalers in Winnipeg. When the house was built, there was no concrete for the basement walls, it was simply a hole in the ground and those stood for many years in the hardened clay.

In 1911 Dave Wardrop married Mabel Cousins, and moved into the house, remaining there until their passing. A barn was built in 1918 and in 1922 a 32-volt electric plant was installed in the basement of the house along with 16 glass storage batteries, for the lights in the house, barn

and blacksmith shop. This upgrade offered the family the luxury of electricity. An electric motor mounted on a tripod ran the cream separator, the churn, a grindstone and the fanning mill. Heat from the house was by a furnace in the basement with a large register in the dining room. A square 6-foot concrete walled opening with a wooden cover had been installed on the west side of the house, leading to a door in the basement that gave access to store wood in the basement for the furnace.

Throughout the year, there were several fires in the furnace chimney and salt would be thrown in the fire to control it. A large camp stove was located in the kitchen with a reservoir for hot water at one end. A pump was located inside the kitchen that pumped water from a well located partly below the kitchen and back porch. There was a high verandah running along the front and side of the house, with an outside stair case on the west side of the house. As wood deteriorated it was finally removed and ultimately a porch with windows was added on the east side for a front entrance. The home was quite modern for its time.

The house was uninhabited for many years, and was torn down around 2019. The land is still in the Wardrop family, one of the early Whitemouth pioneering families.

### **Site 20: Old Municipal Cemetery**

*SPECIAL NOTE: To access this site, you will need to cross the train tracks by foot. Do not drive across the tracks. These lines are still used frequently by CP Railway, trains do cross here. Please use caution and cross at your own risk. The RM of Whitemouth will not be held liable for any incidents or mis-use. Never play or walk along train tracks.*

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No.*

This is the site of the first known burial in this cemetery in Whitemouth. Many of the names buried here are found throughout the stories and information in this tour. There are also several unmarked graves at this site. In 2016 a service was held by Pastor Richard Engel, to provide blessings for the unmarked graves at this site. The RM of Whitemouth also dedicated a monument to these graves and those resting in this place.

On the South side of Brickyard Road, you will find the current Whitemouth Municipal Cemetery. A gate at its entrance was donated in August 1990 by the Wardrop family.

### **Site 21: Whitemouth Brickyard**

*Civic Number: 64 077 Brickyard Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes. Private Residence.*

The Whitemouth brick yard was started by John (Jack) Wardrop in 1914. Although unconfirmed, it most likely did not operate during World War I. Albert N. McCutcheon started the brickyard again in 1917, with limited success. In 1920, John restarted it under the name "John Wardrop Brick and Tile Company". That year 75,000 bricks were produced. In June, 1922 John's brother Walter bought the business, running it as a family operation. By 1923 it was producing 26,000 bricks per day, which was increased to 40,000 soon after. In 1925 Dave bought it outright, operating it during the depression years providing employment for many men, producing "DMW" (David M. Wardrop) bricks. He owned it until 1945, at which time it was sold to Alsip Brick & Tile. It ceased operation in 1959. In one summer the usual output was 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 million bricks, all accomplished with hand labour! The finished bricks were loaded onto flat cars on a

railroad siding, and hauled to market by the CP Railway. Many of these bricks were used in buildings along Portage Avenue and Main Street in Winnipeg.

### **Site 22: Ross's Sawmill**

*Civic Number: 273 Railway Ave., Whitemouth | Amenities on Site: Benches, Beach, Porta Potty in summer | Building on Site: No.*

David Ross came to the area in 1877. His father-in-law Joseph Whitehead had surveyed the new rail line right of way through Whitemouth, and took the contract to build the line east to Cross Lake on the way to Kenora (Rat Portage).

At first Joseph Whitehead operated a sawmill in St. Boniface and shipped the materials he needed for building the railway from Winnipeg. He had brought Manitoba's first railway steam engine, towing it by barge from Minnesota. Mired in financial over-expenditures, Whitehead was forced to give up the contract in 1880. But Joseph Whitehead and David Ross had decided to stay in Manitoba, even if they lost the railway construction contract. Ross began buying timber rights, his first being 120 sq. miles of tamarack, jack pine and black spruce in the Whitemouth valley. He built a sawmill, powered by a large steam engine, along the river, employing dozens of men in the forest and mill. He supplied railway ties, bridge and trestle material for the construction of the C.P.R. from Kenora to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The "Countess of Dufferin" made a trip each day to carry flat cars of railway ties to Winnipeg. The operations at the sawmill were quite extensive and there is a small island that still has metal chains on it where the ropes were tied to, to stop the logs from flowing down the river.

His wife, Dr. Charlotte Whitehead Ross arrived in 1881, and began her medical practice. She was the first female doctor west of Montreal at that time! David had built a log house on the property. In 1886 he built a large frame house for his growing family. It was in use until 1950, when it was demolished. Dave and Charlotte built the first school, and church (Presbyterian) in 1881. They also hired the first teacher, Miss Sarah Ayr. David died in 1912, and Charlotte moved to Winnipeg. Both are buried at Brookside cemetery.

### **Site 23: Fort Howard**

*Civic Number: 241 Main Street, Whitemouth | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes. Private Residence.*

In 1880, Howard Corrigan built a stone building trading post, naming it after himself "Fort Howard". Fort Howard was the original name of the settlement, located on the south side of the railway tracks. Zinc tokens were the currency used for trade goods brought up the Whitemouth River by the Winnipeg River Trading Company. Corrigan supplied the railway workers and settlers, as well as the Saulteaux peoples living in the area. Due to a faulty foundation the building began to sink. It was dismantled, and rebuilt as a house. It has been a private residence since then.

### **Site 24: Scott's Hill School S.D. # 2261**

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Roof and cement base still on site.*

Scott's Hill School is located on Scott's Hill road 5 1/2 miles north of the junction of Highways 44 and 11 south. Opened in 1940 with Stefina Eyford as the teacher and 13 pupils. Attendance never exceeded 15 students. The school was closed around 1950 with John Howk as the teacher and 14 pupils. The children then went to Whitemouth school. After the school closed, the former building was sold and stood vacant for many years. All that remains is part of the concrete base and a part of the school porch roof. The building and site are privately owned.

Among the teachers of Scott's Hill School through the years were Neilona Mary Chatfield (1936-1938), Lois Cautley Lund (1938-1940), Stefania G. Eyford (1940), Emma Louise Hadley (1941), Isobel Margaretta Grierson (1941-1942), Phylis Rowena Birkett (1942-1943), Edith Grace Irvine (1943-1944), Jean Margaret McLeod (1944-1945), Mary Evelyn Pearson (1945-1946), Ada M. Kern (1946-1947), Juanita T. Bakke (1947-1948), Hazel Evelyn Kolton (1948-1949), and John Howk (1950).

### **Site 25: Darwin Station School S.D. # 1950**

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No.*

The Darwin Station School was located along Highway 44, three miles east of the junction of highway 44 and highway 11 south. This one-room school was built in 1920 and located near the CP Railway. Curtis Wenderborn was the first teacher, teaching twelve pupils. The highest attendance was 22 children. When the school population dropped to eight, the school was closed, in 1945. The building was sold and moved in 1950 onto a private property on Scott's Hill Road; the old school yard sits vacant, being slowly reclaimed by the forest. No vestige of the former school building remains at the site.

Among the teachers who worked at Darwin Station School through the years were Curtis Wendeborn (1920-1925), Eva Schwartz (1930), Robert Monro (1935), Mary Williams (1940), and Agatha Wiebe (1945).

### **Site 26: Whitemouth Reynolds North Whiteshell Waste Management Facility**

*Civic Number: 62 125 PTH 111 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes.*

In 1993, through a joint effort with the RM of Whitemouth and RM of Reynolds, this Waste Management facility was conceived. Originally what was going to be done at the facility was to have a recycling depot and sanitary landfill. Later on, the committee members changed, so did the ideas and it was decided then to get to the point of landfilling as little as possible.

In 1996, 160 acres of land was purchased from a local farmer for the sum of \$50,000.00. That same year the construction started on the site. The yard area was cleared and a road was built to the site. Construction of a 42 x 102 foot metal building was started in 1995 to house recycling equipment, warehouse, office, lunchroom and washroom.

In 1996, the northern region of Whiteshell Provincial Park approached the committee about joining the facility, as their landfills were no longer effective. In November of 1997, an agreement was reached and signed by all three parties. At the time it was decided to compost wet waste instead of strictly landfilling. This required the construction of a 42 x 132 foot building

to act as a receiving area for wet waste, as well as to house sorting and grinding equipment. Compost beds were also required and construction on them was completed by late 1998.

On October 1, 1998 the three landfills that serviced the RM of Whitemouth were closed and all wet and dry waste from the RM of Whitemouth, was brought to the facility. On June 1, 1990 the RM of Reynolds closed its seven landfills as well as the North Whiteshell shut down half of their sites. By September 30, 1999 all twelve landfill site that used to service the three districts were no longer in use.

### Site 27: Elma Rapids (Wayside Park)

*Civic Number: 19 Riverview Drive., Elma Amenities on Site: Picnic Table, Porta Potty in summer | Building on Site: No.*

The area surrounding present day Elma was sparsely settled by 1880, mostly by immigrants of Polish and Ukrainian descent. Around 1895, an influx of Finnish settlers homesteaded in the area, six miles south of Whitemouth. Whitemouth, established on the CP Railway tracks was the area's supply center, with settlers following trails along the west shore of the Whitemouth River. The people took up homesteads of 160 acres, paying \$10.00 to the Dominion Government. The land that wasn't bog (swamp) was covered with stands of huge spruce, tamarack, elm and poplar trees that had to be removed with grub hoes and axes. Human and animal labour was used in order to clear areas for their houses, barns, gardens and crops. The peat bogs provided vast swarms of mosquitoes to accompany the hordes of flies. One of the first employers of the people was David Ross' sawmill in Whitemouth. By 1900, word of a second national railroad began to spread, bringing in more men as construction labourers. The National Transcontinental Railroad (later known as the Grand Trunk Pacific, and, after 1919 called the Canadian National Railway) began construction of the rail grade or "dump", using human labour with horses pulling hand operated scrapers, shovels and wheelbarrows. The grade was complete through Elma by 1906, and railroad service to Winnipeg soon followed, ending the area's isolation. By 1907 the tracks extended to Fort William, Ontario which we now call Thunder Bay.

The settlement was called Janow for many years, especially the post office. When Janow (John) Galewicz had the original post office and store before 1906, the post office needed a name. It was called Janow after the postmaster. When the railroad was built and a station erected, the town was named after the station, which was named Elma in honour of a daughter of one of the railroad building contractors.

The settlement's first store was located a mile to the south, owned by Janow Galewicz. He moved the building beside the tracks in 1906, forming the nucleus of the new settlement. The Polish Roman Catholic church was dedicated in 1912. The Holy Cross Ukrainian church was built and dedicated in 1910. More and more businesses came to the town; enough to fill a two-block long area. Disaster struck in 1922, when a chimney fire in one of the town's businesses set the whole two block area on fire. One of the factors contributing to the spread of the fire was the wooden sidewalks. Only a couple of brick chimneys were left standing. There were five stores in town at that time! The town quickly rebuilt. In 1927 a second disaster struck when two trains collided on the Whitemouth River bridge. Two locomotives and several cars ended up in the river. Eight people and numerous cattle were killed. It was the worst C.N.R. wreck to that date.

Because of the large concentration of Finnish people, a cultural center was built two miles south-east of Elma. It was called the Riento Hall and operated from the mid 1930s to the mid 1950s. It fell into disuse as the original settlers died and their children left the area.

An all-weather road (now Provincial Road 406) was created to link Elma to Whitemouth. Another road was built southward to Medika and Hadashville. Electricity came to the town in 1938, and telephone in 1930. Hydro came to the rural areas in 1952, and telephone in 1953. The Canadian Consolidated Grain Company elevator was built along the tracks in 1950. It was moved to Whitemouth in 1962 by United Grain Growers. The area was served by a midwife/unofficial doctor from 1910 until 1950. Her name was Lydia Pajunen (married name – means of or from the willows) (Pohjonen was her maiden name, means “North” in Finnish). Lydia was born in Tempere, Finland in 1884. She assisted in the births of a great number of babies, and rendered medical assistance to the sick and injured. The area's ethnic makeup changed in the late 1940s when the first Mennonite families settled in the region. They built their church on P.R. 406 in the early 1950s, replacing and enlarging it over the years. They have a school, called Riverbend School near the church. Farms in the Elma area are now owned predominantly by Mennonite families.

### **Juno School**

The Juno school was very important to the developing of the community. It served the Juno area and the developing Birch River settlement, which went as far south as Medika and eventually to Prawda. Families were large in those days; one family in the area had 19 children! The Juno carriage was built over the Whitemouth River to afford access to the school to children on the west side of the river. The Juno School District was established formally in April of 1913, and a one-room schoolhouse operated at SW14-10-12E in the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth. It had the largest catchment area of all schools in the municipality, with some students coming from as many as 10 miles away. The district was dissolved in 1968 and its area becoming part of the Agassiz School Division.

### **[Site 28: Holy Cross Ukrainian Catholic Church](#)**

*Civic Number: 104 Regan Ave., Elma | Amenities on Site: Church & Cemetery | Building on Site: Yes.*

This church was built in 1908. It replaced an earlier Ukrainian church and cemetery built before the arrival of the railway in 1908. Before then, a priest would travel out from Winnipeg on the CN Railway to visit various homes in the area, to visit sick people, have baptisms and hold Masses. When the church was built, the priest would come out every month. This eventually became once every three months. The church was built basically as it stands today. The first burial took place in 1909. In 1921, the interior of the building's dome and walls were painted with religious iconography and murals by Winnipeg artist Hnat Sych, whose work can be seen in churches throughout Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Artwork was renewed by V. Pushka in 1955. A new roof, new siding and carpeting were installed in 1978. When the church was built, the priests would visit every month. This became every three months as the congregation became smaller. This church and cemetery are still operative today.

### **[Site 29: Elma Lath Mill](#)**

*Civic Number: N/A | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No.*

Looking straight southeast from the St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church, was the Elma lath mill. The Lath Mill in Elma was located at the river end of what we now know as Old Highway 15. In 1922 a man named George Gibson from Lac du Bonnet started up a lath mill, located by the CN bridge on the west side of the Whitemouth river. The mill employed between 30-35 local men at times. Farmers cut logs for the mill in the winter, usually upstream, so that the logs could be "boomed" down river.

The mill was powered by steam engines that used slabs and saw dust for fuel. Each lath was four feet long, 1 3/4 inches wide and a 1/2 inch thick. They were packaged into bundles of fifty, taken to Elma on wagons and loaded into boxcars. About 30,000 laths could be produced in a day. The lathers were used when plastering gypsum board inside buildings.

It was finally shut down as the demand for wood lath decreased and metal mouldings were being used by plasterers. Later drywall gypsum board replaced the need for laths entirely. A novel use was found for the wasted saw dust; it was loaded into box cars in the 1930s for \$15.00 per load and shipped to Saskatchewan, where it was mixed with poison and used as grasshopper bait.

### **Site 30: St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Cemetery**

*Civic Number: 59 024 PTH 11 | Amenities on Site: Cemetery, Memorial Gardens, Outhouse | Building on Site: No.*

This site is located in Elma, on Hwy. 11, South of CNR tracks. St. Anthony's was the spiritual center of three churches: Elma, St. Augustine's in Whitemouth, and St. John the Baptist in Hadashville. St. Anthony's history traces back to Father Anthony Polaska who first looked after the Polish immigrants in Elma. The wood frame church was dedicated on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1912. The first burial in its cemetery occurred in 1917. In 1938, Father Francis Slusarz, who was the first resident priest, built the rectory situated beside the church. The Priests who serviced Hadshville, Elma and Whitemouth lived in the rectory until the church closed in 1975. The rectory is now a private residence. The church was taken down in August of 1994. The cemetery is being maintained by some family members of the deceased. New signage and a serenity garden with statues and benches have been added for those choosing to sit and reflect. A pictorial history has been erected in memory of the church's pioneers.

### **Site 31: St. Ludwiga (Stony Hill) Church & Cemetery**

*Civic Number: 58 138 Stony Hill Rd | Amenities on Site: Cemetery & Bell Tower | Building on Site: No.*

The St. Ludwiga Church was built in 1907, made of squared poplar logs. It serviced both Polish (Roman Catholic) and Ukrainian (Orthodox) families, as neither faith had enough parishioners to each have a church. The cemetery was started at the same time. The church operated for many years, gradually dying as the pioneers died. Most of their children decided to leave the area to seek employment. The last funeral service held in the old building was in August of 1954. By that time the building was becoming run down and became unused; no one was left to maintain it. Around 1970 the roof started to cave in, so the church was demolished. Two of the last parishioners salvaged the church bell, and built a small shed to protect it. All that remains is this building and the cemetery, still in use.

### **Site 32: Stony Hill School S.D. #1410**

*Civic Number: 58 129 Stony Hill Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes. Private Residence.*

The year 1900 was the beginning of the settlement of the Stony Hill School District. The pioneers were mostly Polish and Ukrainian people. They started settling by Stony Hill creek from its mouth at the Whitemouth River, following it south as far as the land was suitable for farming. Times were hard then; there were no roads, just trails from one homestead to another. The closest store where one could buy flour, groceries, etc was in Whitemouth about 8 miles away. There was just a trail and supplies had to be carried on one's back. Roads were built later by hand. Electricity and telephone both came to the area in 1953. In 1907 the CNR mainline went through Elma which was a huge help to the people living in the district, as they were now able to get their supplies and groceries from Elma.

As the homesteaders' children started growing up, the need for a school was obvious. The Stony Hill School started in 1907. It was a one-room school, built on land donated by farmer, teaching grades one to eight. Higher grades had to attend Elma school. The Average yearly attendance was about 40 pupils, but some years as many as 75 attended. The school closed in 1967 and the district was dissolved, its area becoming part of the Agassiz School Division. The building and teacherage were renovated into private residences which remain at the site.

Among the teachers of Stony Hill School through the years were Theodore Kochan (1909), J. Bielinski (1911), S. P. Basarobwicz (1915), J. A. McDaniels (1920), Laura A. Strong (1925), J. W. Chinchak (1930), Ernest Nakka (1932-1937), J. Zurbyk (1945), Pat Thompson (1949), Olive M. Parks (1955), Mrs. J. Parisian (1959), Peter D. Matthies (1959), Lloyd Klaprat (1965), and Fred A. Peters (1967).

### **Site 33: Lewis Roman Catholic Church**

*Civic Number: N/A Off Lewis Road | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No.*

The Lewis area was settled by predominantly French Catholic families. In 1924, a frame house was purchased in Lewis and moved 1/2 mile south beside the trail to Elma to be used for as a Roman Catholic Church. Father Pailler visited the new church for services, as he had done in private homes in the past. He would visit, arriving on the CNR train about every two months. Improvements were made to the church over the years, including a basement. The church gradually died, becoming inactive around 1960. The building sat idle for more than 15 years, and was moved away around 1977. A blue cross mark where the church once stood. There are two unmarked graves in the churchyard, now overgrown with trees. Lewis is located near the western boundary of the RM of Whitemouth along the CNR tracks. Until the late 1940s the only access to Lewis was by rail or winter road. By 1952 a mud grade road was built from Elma, only useful in dry weather. Later an all-weather road that is known as old highway 15 was constructed. Lewis was a thriving community around 1919, with around 100, mostly French families in the area. A store was opened in a log building about 1921, and a post office in 1935. The store, owned and operated by the Zadorozny family for many years closed in 1974, and the post office closed in 1978.

### **Site 34: Dollard (Lewis) School S.D. # 1686**

*Civic Number: N/A Off Old 15 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: No.*

The Dollard School District was established in July 1913. The small one-room school was built in 1917 to educate children of the area. It was a small school, teaching grades one to ten. Enrollment was usually between ten and twenty students. After the school closed in 1962, the building was moved to Medika as a private residence.

Among the teachers who worked at Dollard School through the years were Mrs. Margaret Elder (Spring 1923 - Spring 1925), Mrs. L. A. Strong (Fall 1925 - Spring 1927), Lillian Nicklin (Fall 1927 - Spring 1928), Mrs. L. A. "Lillie" Brynelson (Fall 1928 - Fall 1931), Victor Woyna (Spring 1932), Joseph A. Loucks (Fall 1932 - Spring 1936), Rod L. MacDonald (Fall 1926 - Spring 1938), Joseph A. McCracken (Fall 1928 - Spring 1939), Agnes Adamek (Fall 1939 - Spring 1941), Agnes Angela Zadorozny (1945, 1960, Fall 1965 - Spring 1967), Anthony Kozachenko (1950), and Edward Krysko (1955).

### **Site 35: Kelner (Elma) School. S.D.# 1286**

*Civic Number: 59 040 PR-406 | Amenities on Site: Community Club, Ball Diamonds | Building on Site: Yes.*

In 1904 a petition for a school district was brought about by the local taxpayers, headed by a man named Joseph Kelner. The new district was formed in May of 1904 and a building erected just north of the present-day community center. The name was changed to Elma in 1918. In 1916 a second room was added, grades 1-6 and 7-8 being taught. The present building was built in 1953, with three rooms teaching to grade 11. The old building was sold off and removed off site. Most years saw about 80 pupils attending, with some years over 100. In April 1971, it was announced that Elma School would close at the end of the school year. Six months later, it was sold to the community to become Elma Community Club. The existing building was renovated to include a large cloakroom and commercial kitchen and an extension was added for use as a hall.

Among the Principals who worked at the school included Isaak J. Warkentin (1885-1971), John Duchominsky (1906-1977), Alfred John Patrick Moran (1903-1967), Thomas Adam "Tom" Kalichak (1927-1973), Alexander John Shewchuk (1933-2015).

Among the other teachers who worked at Elma School through the years were J. H. Barsarabowicz (1911), J. H. Golembioski (1915), A. P. Trowsdale (1920), R. Green (1920), Mabel McQuade (1920), Mrs. J. W. Sibinski (1925), John Sibinski (1925), A. Neyedli (1930), W. O. Yacula (1930, 1940), Genevieve Rudneski (1935), M. Sadoway (1935), Sam Yacula (1935), Jennie Sernyk (1940), M. R. Labay (1945), M. A. Lebit (1945), J. E. Senicie (1950), William Kachur (1950), S. Smelski (1956), Caroline Korlak (1956), E. Curtis (1960), Elsie Shewchuk (1960), Miss B. C. Griffin (1965), Dennis Herntier (1965), Miss J. Cook (1971), Mrs. Jean Borsa (1971), and Miss F. Niecarz (1971).

### **Site 36: Elma Pool Hall**

*Civic Number: 67 159 PTH 15 | Amenities on Site: N/A | Building on Site: Yes. Private Residence.*

The Elma Pool Hall was built in the 1920s by owner Peter Kolega (c1885-1960) as a men's only pool hall. It had a games room on the main floor and a lunch counter in the basement. A residence building behind it had boarding rooms upstairs and a crawlspace connected to a network of concrete-lined tunnels. The Pool Hall was built after a fire in 1922 that destroyed almost every building in the area. After Peter's death, and later, his son's passing, the property was willed to the Salvation Army who chose to put the unique heritage site on the auction block. Frank Laba acquired the property at a Salvation Army auction in the early 1990's. In 1998, Frank Smerch purchased the large lot on Elma's main street containing both the pool hall and a uniquely designed and constructed one and a half storey home from Whitemouth resident Frank Laba. The residence is now privately owned.

### **The Elma Tunnels**

For decades, speculation and rumor have fueled stories of some not so legal going-ons in the humble little eastern settlement known as Elma. It is no secret that during prohibition and the pre-war years, gambling and drinking was fairly common place in most rural settlement and Elma was no different. The exception was the organization that one dwelling, located behind the old pool hall on Elma's main street, provided.

Recently, a series of tunnels was discovered under the old Pool Hall/ Confectionery building on Main Street. The building was purchased by Frank Smerch (1998), who decided to clean up the basement, discovering an elaborately constructed gambling den, and of even more interest, hundreds of feet of concrete lined tunnels, just large enough for a person to crawl through on hands and knees.

Tunnels lead from the basement north to the old dance hall, and south under the street, probably to the CNR tracks. When prohibition was in force from 1916 to 1921 these tunnels would have afforded private access to the illegal drinking/gambling rooms, as well as a hasty exit should the building be raided by police. It is also believed that draft dodgers and illegal aliens would have hidden here. Rum Running or "boot-legging" would have been made possible by the tunnel connecting to the railroad tracks. A piece of history made famous by the tunnels in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan is hidden in the sleepy hamlet of Elma! Long time residents report hearing stories of the tunnels traveling as far as the railway tracks on the south side of the street and to the old dance hall in the north. Stories tell of the days when draft-dodgers were hidden in the house and rum running was a common occurrence made easier by the underground passages leading from the basement coal room to waiting railways cars.