



THE FOLLOWING TIMELINE for the history of the R.M. of Gimli has been developed from a review of our local history book, **The Gimli Saga**. The Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee hopes that the timeline will be helpful to anyone undertaking research on the history of our community.

- 1875** On October 21, a group of about 220 Icelandic settlers landed at Willow Point in the Icelandic reserve of New Iceland (Nyja Island), located immediately north of Manitoba.
- 1876** Approximately 1,200 Icelandic settlers landed in New Iceland and went as far north to live as the White Mud (renamed Icelandic) River and Big (renamed Hecla) Island.
- 1876** Federal government surveyors divided New Iceland into townships and three town sites: Gimli, Sandy Bar the mouth of the Icelandic River, and Lundi (later renamed Riverton).
- 1876-77** A smallpox epidemic, starting in September, 1876, ravaged New Iceland, which was quarantined, and the nearby First Nations community of Sandy River, where members has earlier replenished the Icelanders' supplies with dried moose meat and milk.
- 1877** Following a series of public meetings in January, the Icelandic settlers drew up the unique laws for a constitution outlining a democratic system of almost autonomous government for New Iceland, and held elections on February 14.
- 1877** On September 1, the first Icelandic newspaper in New Iceland and North America, Franfari (Progress), began publication in a log cabin at Lundi (later Riverton).
- 1877** On September 14, Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada, who had visited Iceland in 1856 and had intervened on behalf of the Icelandic settlers in 1875, toured New Iceland, delivered an inspirational speech praising the Icelandic immigrants, and was very favourably received.
- 1879** Religious and doctrinal differences and opposing views on the future of New Iceland, between the followers of Reverend Pall Thorlakson and his cousin the

Reverend Jon Bjarnason, led to a mass exodus of settlers to newly opened agricultural land in North Dakota, with more Icelandic settlers leaving for there in 1880 and 1881.

- 1881** Cold wet summers, severe winters, the flooding caused by Lake Winnipeg in 1880, and the rocky unproductive land resulted in more of New Iceland's settlers leaving for the Tiger Hills district of Manitoba, where they established the Argyle settlement.
- 1993** With only about 50 of the original 200 families remaining, New Iceland was re-populated with an influx of new settlers from Iceland, who re-occupied abandoned farmsteads.
- 1877** Although Manitoba's northern boundary was extended in 1881 (and incorporated New Iceland), the Icelandic settlers continued with their form of government, resisting the adoption of Manitoba municipal government until the Rural Municipality of Gimli was established.
- 1896** Sigtrygur Jonasson, often referred to as "The Father of New Iceland," was elected as the Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba for St. Andrew's, and became the first individual of Icelandic background elected to a Canadian Legislature.
- 1897** The New Iceland reserve was opened for non-Icelandic settlement for willing homesteaders and the first ethno-cultural group to come were Ukrainians, who located in the Pleasant Home district southwest of Gimli.
- 1897-1917** Ukrainians settlers were joined by Polish and Germans (in 1900 at Camp Morton, north of Gimli) and Hungarian colonists, changing the character of the former New Iceland colony to a multicultural one.
- 1899** The oldest still-extant business in Gimli, and the oldest operating general store in Manitoba, the H. P. Tergesen general store, opened.
- 1900** The federal government built a pier at Gimli.
- 1906** The Canadian Pacific Railway finished extending its line from Winnipeg Beach to Gimli, sparking an economic boom, and opening the area to summer residents from Winnipeg who built cottages in Gimli and the adjacent Loni Beach.
- 1908** The Village of Gimli was incorporated and the land for Gimli Park was granted to the Village.
- 1908** Mrs. Margaret Benedictson of Winnipeg, who lived on Hecla Island and in Selkirk, founded the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association, which presented two petitions for women's suffrage, signed by many residents of Gimli and district, to the Manitoba Legislature in 1910.

- 1915** After a few months in Winnipeg, the Betel Home, a personal care facility and a project for the Ladies' Aid of the First Lutheran Church, moved to a large house in Gimli and then to the former Lakeview Hotel.
- 1915** Illustrating the numerical and political strength of Ukrainians in Gimli and district, Taras Ferley was elected as the Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba for the constituency of Gimli, and became the first Ukrainian-Canadian to be elected to Manitoba's Legislature.
- 1930** The arrival of electricity in Gimli and district stimulated economic growth and facilitated social and economic life.
- 1932** The first Icelandic Celebration (Festival), Islandingadagurinn, was held in Gimli Park, after having been held in Winnipeg from 1880 to 1931.
- 1939** The Johnson Memorial Hospital, owned and operated by the Benedectine Sisters, and started with a bequest from Bjorn Johnson, was built.
- 1943** In September, No. 18 Service Flying Training School, Royal Canadian Air Force base, Gimli, opened to train pilots from the British Commonwealth Air Training Program.
- 1946** Large numbers of men and women from Gimli and district had served in both world wars, and Branch 182, Royal Canadian Legion, was founded in Gimli.
- 1947** The former Village of Gimli was incorporated as the Town of Gimli.
- 1950** In October, after serving for several years as a summer camp for auxiliary squadrons and air cadets, the Royal Canadian Air Force base, Gimli, was reactivated and No. 2 Flying School was formed to train Canadian and international students to become pilots (by 1967, renamed No. 1 Flying Training School).
- 1958** Following the passage of Manitoba legislation guaranteeing loans to rural towns wishing to install municipal waterworks, the Town of Gimli installed sewer and water service.
- 1964** After beginning telephone service with a party line and one or two operators, a new automatic service Manitoba Telephone System Building opened.
- 1966** The House of Seagram (Distillers Corporation – Seagram's Ltd.), impressed with the high quality of both Gimli's water and the surrounding area's grain production, purchased a site north of Gimli for a distillery plant, which began operations as the Calvert Plant of Gimli, in November, 1968, and was opened officially on August 21, 1969.

- 1967** The Gimli Chamber of Commerce commissioned the construction of a 15 foot high Viking Statue, which became symbolic of Gimli, near the Betel Home as a Canadian Centennial fundraising project.
- 1969** The establishment of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation provided a stable and predictable income for the commercial fisherman of Gimli and district.
- 1971** After the closure in September, of the Canadian Forces Base in Gimli, the governments of Manitoba and Canada financially helped to transform the former site into the Gimli Industrial Park, and the military's former recreation facilities were opened to the public and the military's housing complex was turned into condominiums.
- 1973** The Gimli Development Corporation purchased the British Columbia Packers Fish Packing Plant, and by 1974 renovated it into a three-part summer season museum, with an Icelandic Room, a Ukrainian Room and a Fishing Room.
- 1983** On July 23 an Air Canada Boeing 767, with 16 passengers and eight crew flying from Montreal-Ottawa to Edmonton, ran out of fuel over north-western Ontario and was forced to glide in for a safe landing at the former Canadian Forces air base runway at Gimli, with the event thereafter being referred to as the "Gimli Glider" incident.
- 1994** The Icelandic Cultural Corporation, a non-profit organization which had managed the museum, turned over the museum to the Town of Gimli, which led to the establishment of the New Iceland Heritage Museum.
- 2003** On January 1, the Town of Gimli amalgamated with, and became part of, the Rural Municipality of Gimli.