

Review of *Icelandic Winnipeg*

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Katrín Níelsdóttir and Signý Thorsteinson. *Icelandic Winnipeg*. Winnipeg: Icelandic Canadian Frón, 2026.

A new book, *Icelandic Winnipeg* (published by the Icelandic Canadian Frón), is a wonderful photographic (in colour and black & white, mostly exterior but some interior shots) and historical survey which consists of forty-two historical locations, including buildings, and institutions which are tied to the Icelandic-Canadian community in Winnipeg. Each location was photographed by Signý Thorsteinson and includes a lively and informative text written by Librarian Katrín Níelsdóttir, and a foreword by Stefán Jónasson. The book was developed from the “New Iceland 150 Tour and Exhibition” shown last year at the Winnipeg Scandinavian Centre (on Erin Street in Winnipeg) and the New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli. The book functions as an important archive of Canadian-Icelandic history focusing not on the more well-known areas around Gimli and Lake Winnipeg but in the heart of late 19th and 20th century Winnipeg.

The buildings photographed are a large variety of structures, which relate to Icelandic activity in Winnipeg: churches (Lutheran and Unitarian), schools, businesses, especially involved in the printing and publishing industry, houses and apartment buildings are well represented. The publication also notes, and many of the photographs bear witness to this, that this heritage is rapidly disappearing over time as structures decay or are repurposed. Viewing the excellent photographs side-by-side with the well-written text brings together an important part of Winnipeg’s built heritage. I was struck by how many of the subjects of the book are part of my own life. There is the distinctive The Winnipeg Clinic (St. Mary Ave.) established by Paul H. T. Thorlakson; buildings related to Charlie Thorson, the designer of ironic cartoon

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characters such as Bugs Bunny and possibly Snow White, and whose archives are held by the institution which I currently work for, the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections. Thorson-related locations include the Wevel Café on Sargent Ave., and the Verona Apts. on Victor St. There is also the Baldur Stefansson bust at the University of Manitoba grounds which I walk by almost every day. The book includes a photograph of the house of master spy William Stephenson (aka “Intrepid”) in the Point Douglas area. Stephenson, who also merits a statue (not shown) in Memorial Park, is one of several notable figures and locations featured in the publication. It also includes the Scandinavian Centre, which has hosted Folklorama events since the annual festival began in 1970, a few of which I have personally attended. These are just a few of the interesting locations documented in this publication.

I highly recommend this delightful book to anyone who is interested in the Icelandic heritage in Winnipeg and Manitoba, and architectural history in general.

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