



Is there a **GOLDMINE** in your backyard?

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Could heritage be your
community's untapped resource?

Contributed by the Manitoba Historic Resources Branch

Would you believe someone who told you there was a goldmine in your backyard? What would you do if there was? And, most importantly, would you be ready to make the most of it? Truth is, many Manitoba communities are sitting on untapped resources; historic places which have the potential to be valuable community assets. Consider the benefits of these ‘goldmines’:


- **Economic** research shows that designated heritage buildings appreciate in value and perform better on the real estate market. In urban areas, the conservation of historic places can aid in the revitalization of commercial and residential neighbourhoods and help restore their economic activity, livability and attractiveness. The labour intensive nature of conservation creates local jobs.
- **Cultural** benefits of heritage are harder to quantify, but should not be overlooked. Historic sites are tangible connections to our past, linking generations and

providing venues for education and citizenship, as well as serving as community landmarks and sources of pride. Volunteer activity that goes into maintaining and promoting these sites is a way to keep people, especially seniors and youth, active and involved in their community.

- **Environmental** benefits from heritage conservation are experienced now (every old building reused is less waste going into the landfill) and revitalizing existing buildings (rather than developing unserved areas) uses less municipal infrastructure, delivering longer-term returns. As well, rehabilitation brings proven energy savings; the energy required to build a new building is roughly equivalent to the energy required to operate it for 40 years.

These areas are all pillars of a healthy community, and heritage resources *already exist* in most Manitoba municipalities. Still, for many communities, heritage is a low priority item; something to be dealt with when and

if there is time. At a time when communities are looking for every competitive advantage and every opportunity, could heritage be your community's untapped resource? Could heritage conservation fit with another project (neighbourhood revitalization, waste reduction, centennial celebration, etc.) to leverage additional support and contribute to even more impressive results? If so, what is your municipality's plan for taking advantage of this untapped resource?

If it's time to get started looking for your ‘goldmine’, or if you have a historic resource and you would like to discuss how to make the most of it, **now** is the time to act – your heritage is a non-renewable resource. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. The Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism offers technical, financial and advisory assistance for heritage projects and municipal heritage sites. Contact the Historic Resources Branch at 1-800-282-8069, ext. 2981 or ihall@gov.mb.ca. 

One municipality's approach:

St. Claude goes straight to jail, still collects \$200

Recently, the Village of St. Claude learned that the small building that was about to be torn down to expand the parking lot for the community fire hall was, in fact, the area's first jail (or 'gaol', to use the Old English spelling). The community realized they had a potential goldmine.

The Village's Tourism and Marketing Committee suggested a new use for the old building – the development of a small tourist information office. Council agreed, and a plan to turn the building into a museum and information centre was developed, with most construction to be completed during the summer of 2005.

John Quayle, project coordinator and president of the municipal tourism and marketing committee, knew people were intrigued by the lurid allure of historical jails, and had no trouble finding volunteers to help rehabilitate the building. Other support came from local community members and businesses that provided in-kind donations of materials, labour, and equipment loans; as well as a Designated Heritage Buildings Grant and technical advice from the Historic Resources Branch.

"Heritage is one more thing helping put St. Claude on the map," John says. He feels the jail museum and tourist centre will be a great community attraction, and why shouldn't he? Even before the building's official opening (scheduled for spring 2006), the St. Claude Gaol has drawn hundreds of curious visitors from both within and outside the community who want to experience St. Claude's heritage. ⚡



Visitors flock to the new/old gaol even before its Official Opening.



The 'work gang' installs a membrane on the roof. From top: Georges Jobin (consultant builder), Pierre Huberdeau, 'Foreman' Raymond Theroux and John Quayle.






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