

HOURS OF OPERATION

July & August: Tuesday – Saturday 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

September – June: Friday & Saturday 11:00 – 3:00 p.m.

TOURS WELCOME BY APPOINTMENT OUTSIDE OPERATING HOURS

CONTACT US AT 306-946-1177

This periodic newsletter is designed to keep the public informed about news, events, and activities at the Watrous-Manitou Beach Heritage Centre (WMBHC).

Decoration Day



After several decades, Decoration Day has been revived in Watrous thanks to the dedicated efforts of organizers Susan Struthers and Mairlyn Cannon.

Susan approached the Watrous-Manitou Heritage Centre with the idea of reintroducing Decoration Day as a meaningful tribute to local veterans, complementing the existing Remembrance Day observances. Her passion for honouring those who served runs deep—both of her parents served in World War II, and her family has long been involved in cadets and the military. Mairlyn Cannon shares a similar connection, with both of her parents also having served in the Second World War. She believes strongly that local history provides an important avenue for educating the

community about veterans and reflecting on their contributions.

The duo spent many hours researching and organizing the event, which took place in June and was well attended by residents of Watrous and students from local schools.

The most impactful part of the event was the visible tribute to veterans through the placement of flags on their graves. This act, combined with the participation of schoolchildren, created a powerful and meaningful experience. Many students expressed sincere curiosity and interest, gaining a deeper understanding of the



sacrifices made by veterans. For many, it was a true eye-opener.

Thanks to its overwhelming success, Decoration Day in Watrous will now be held annually, ensuring the legacy and stories of local veterans continue to be remembered and honoured by future

WE INVITE YOU to visit the Veterans Room at the Heritage Centre to view photos, artifacts, and stories that honour the service and sacrifice of our local veterans. All are welcome - free admission on Remembrance Day.

New Exhibit

HOMESTEADER, MERCHANT, BUSINESSMAN, INVENTOR



Tobias Neslson Bjorndahl was born in Mandal, Norway on April 24, 1875, and moved with his family to North Dakota, USA, in 1882. In 1903, Bjorndahl and several other Norwegian immigrants travelled to Canada looking for new homesteads. Happy with what he found, the next year Bjorndahl moved with his wife and son to an area south of Little Manitou Lake.



As the nearest town was Davidson, which was over 80 km away, area residents applied for a post office that would be on the Bjorndahl homestead called Mandal. Bjorndahl became the first postmaster and he also opened up a general store and blacksmith shop.

In 1908, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was surveying for a new rail line in the area and chose a site one mile from Mandal. Needing a rail link, the entire village moved — buildings and all — to the new community called Watrous.

Bjorndahl sold his farm in 1910 and opened T.N.B Manufacturing (later renamed T.N.B. Machine Shop) where he could indulge his interest in machines and inventing. To help support the shop, he also became a dealer for farm implements, cars, cream separators and sewing machines.

Along with his creative inventions, Bjorndahl was an avid curler. He also owned a general store, served as postmaster, was a member of Town Council, served on the school board, was in the First Citizen's Band and Masonic Lodge. He was instrumental in having Lutheran Church services start in Watrous, and owned the first car in town!



The Watrous-Manitou Beach Heritage Centre has acquired the patent prototypes for three of Bjorndahl's inventions, along with a magneto

testing bench which came from the machine shop. These had been donated to the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon by the Bjorndahl family many years ago, and now have been repatriated to Watrous. They are currently on display at the Heritage Centre.

Education

YOUTH VISIT THE HERITAGE CENTRE



Thanks to a Sask Lotteries grant, the Nokomis Museum received funding to support educational programming — and we were thrilled to welcome a group of eleven enthusiastic 10–12 year olds to the Heritage Centre as part of this initiative.

The group chose to visit the Heritage Centre to learn more about local culture and history, followed by a fun afternoon of bowling after their tour.

A highlight of their visit was the school room, where students enjoyed writing on the blackboard and trying out a 1950s typewriter — a new experience for many! And of course, the snacks were a big hit too. We hope to see these young visitors back again soon!

A big thank you to Nokomis board members Shelley Hendry and Christine Gingrich for organizing and bringing the students to explore our Heritage Centre.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, NATURE, AND RECONCILIATION

The Watrous-Manitou Beach Heritage Centre was pleased to host a special workshop for a grade 3/4 split class from Watrous Elementary School, led by teacher Nita Chester and attended by **21** enthusiastic students.

The workshop focused on Indigenous knowledge and reconciliation, featuring hands-on, meaningful activities such as sage teachings and braiding. Students also had the opportunity to spend time outdoors, connecting with nature in a thoughtful and engaging way.



Each child received a special kit that included sage, a magnifying glass, and two nature “passports” to check off what they observed during their time outside. This nature exploration was a highlight of the day, with many students expressing how much they enjoyed discovering the environment around them.



The teacher shared how pleased she was with the workshop’s content and delivery, noting how well it resonated with the students.

This workshop was supported by a grant through the Prairie Central District, and as a host site, the Heritage Centre received a \$100 honorarium. We are proud to be part of educational initiatives that foster reconciliation, cultural learning, and environmental awareness in our community.

Projects

CLASS ACTS: YEARBOOKS GET ORGANIZED



We're pleased to share that Marilyn Cannon has generously volunteered to organize our yearbook collection. The WMBHC holds yearbooks dating from 1960, and thanks to Marilyn's efforts, a full inventory has now been completed and documented.

If you have any yearbooks from this time-period that you no longer wish to keep, please check with us — we may be missing it from our collection.

A heartfelt thank you to Marilyn for helping preserve this important part of our history!

TRACING THE FOOTSTEPS OF BUSINESS PAST

We would like to recognize and thank Ruth Kornelsen, a long-time volunteer whose dedication has greatly enriched our understanding of the local business history.

Ruth has focused her efforts on researching businesses along Main Street and the surrounding avenues, compiling a detailed outline of building numbers and their associated businesses, organized by location. Her work provides a valuable snapshot of how our town's commercial landscape has evolved over the years.

Using a variety of sources — including archived newspapers, interviews with residents and business owners, and other historical documents — Ruth pieced together stories and information that bring each business location to life. The newspapers of the past served as her primary resource, offering a window into the community's development.

Thank you, Ruth, for your meticulous research and commitment to preserving our town's rich history!



Projects

A SOUVENIR SHOP FOR THE HERITAGE CENTRE



We are pleased to highlight the efforts of dedicated volunteer Donna Jackson, whose vision and generosity led to the creation of our souvenir shop at the Heritage Centre. Recognizing the absence of keepsakes for visitors, Donna proposed the idea, noting that many travellers enjoy purchasing a memento to remember their experience.

Thanks to her initiative, we now offer a selection of branded merchandise featuring the WMBHC logo, including mugs, tea towels, key chains, tumblers, pens, stickers, coasters, and glasses. All of these items were personally sourced, labelled, and donated by Donna herself.

In addition to our logo-branded products, the shop also features a range of other items such as *Prairie Reflections*, our community cookbook, postcards, and more.

We are sincerely grateful to Donna for her creativity, generosity, and commitment to enhancing the visitor experience at the Heritage Centre. Her contributions have added a meaningful and memorable touch for all who pass through our doors.

ONGOING ENHANCEMENTS TO EXHIBITS



Kathy Bergen, the exhibit designer responsible for the thoughtful curation of displays at the Heritage Centre, continues to elevate the quality and depth of our exhibitions. Most recently, she has introduced two QR code stations to further engage visitors with additional historical context. One station provides detailed information on the architectural features of Danceland's renowned dance floor, while the other offers insights into the history and significance of the region's bathhouses.

We are grateful for her creative vision and design expertise, which ensure our exhibits remain dynamic, engaging, and educational for all visitors. Her ongoing contributions play a vital role in preserving and presenting our community's heritage.

Board Transitions

A Time of Gratitude & Change

KATHY BERGEN - A FOUNDING VISIONARY STEPS DOWN AS CHAIR

We extend our deepest thanks to Kathy, one of the original founders of the Watrous-Manitou Heritage Centre, as she steps down from her role as chair after 14 years of dedicated leadership. We are incredibly grateful that she will remain on the board and continue to share her expertise.

From the beginning, Kathy—alongside Lionel Sproule—envisioned a space that would preserve and share the rich history of Manitou Beach, Watrous, and the surrounding area. Her leadership, creativity, and strong eye for design have helped bring that vision to life. The professional, visually engaging exhibits at the Heritage Centre are a direct reflection of her talent and commitment.

Kathy's contributions to the startup, development, and growth of the Centre have been instrumental in shaping it into the museum we're proud of today. Thanks to her efforts, countless visitors will enjoy and learn from the exhibits for years to come.

We are truly grateful for all she has done—and continues to do—for the Heritage Centre.

SUE ALCOCK - AN EARLY AND DEDICATED BOARD MEMBER STEPS DOWN

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Sue Alcock as she steps down from the board of the Watrous-Manitou Heritage Centre. Sue has been with the Centre early on in its inception, and her contributions have been truly invaluable.

With a strong focus on research and exhibit development, Sue has played a key role in shaping the Centre into what it is today. She has long been our go-to source for historical information, and we are incredibly grateful for the depth of knowledge and passion she has brought to our work.

Although she is no longer serving on the board, we're delighted that Sue will continue to volunteer and share her expertise. Her ongoing involvement ensures that her legacy and impact will continue to be felt for years to come.

Thank you, Sue, for everything you've done to help preserve and celebrate our local heritage!

WELCOME KRISTIE PILLING AS BOARD MEMBER

We're excited to welcome Kristie to the board of the Watrous-Manitou Heritage Centre!

Kristie holds the position of manager at Affinity Credit Union and has also been a dedicated volunteer at the Heritage Centre. Her professional expertise and community spirit make her a valuable addition to our team. We look forward to the insight and energy she will bring to our ongoing efforts to preserve and share our local history.

Welcome aboard, Kristie!

Thank You

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS OLIVIA



Olivia returned as our summer student for the third year in a row.

Each year we have watched her grow and expand her knowledge and develop new skills. This year she was kept very busy providing tours to 441 people (174 more than 2024) that visited the Heritage Centre in July and August. Olivia also managed to complete a few projects in-between touring.

We wish Olivia all the best as she begins her new adventures as a student at the University of Saskatchewan.

***Thank you to all our volunteers
for generously sharing your time, talents, and ideas!***

WMBHC Board Members

Kathy Bergen, Joanne Kowalski, Dan McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Kristie Pilling, Karen Schroeder-Mark, Karen Siegfried, Lionel Sproule (Chair), Patti Regier, Lorraine Worobec (Treasurer), Taylor Engele (Town Representative)