Whitewood Heritage Walking Tour

WHITEWOOD, SASKATCHEWAN

Whitewood's First Town Hall

The co-operation of the present owners of walking tour properties is greatly appreciated. We request that persons enjoying the tour respect the privacy and integrity of the sites they visit.

How to use this guide to the tour.

As the map shows, the sites are numbered to correspond to descriptions in the guide. The numbers are also displayed on small plaques located on each building. Where possible, we have also listed street addresses but part of the beauty of small towns is that buildings are often known by name of occupant rather than by address. We apologize if this causes some confusion. If you are unable to find the building, please stop someone and ask.

Walking Tour Map
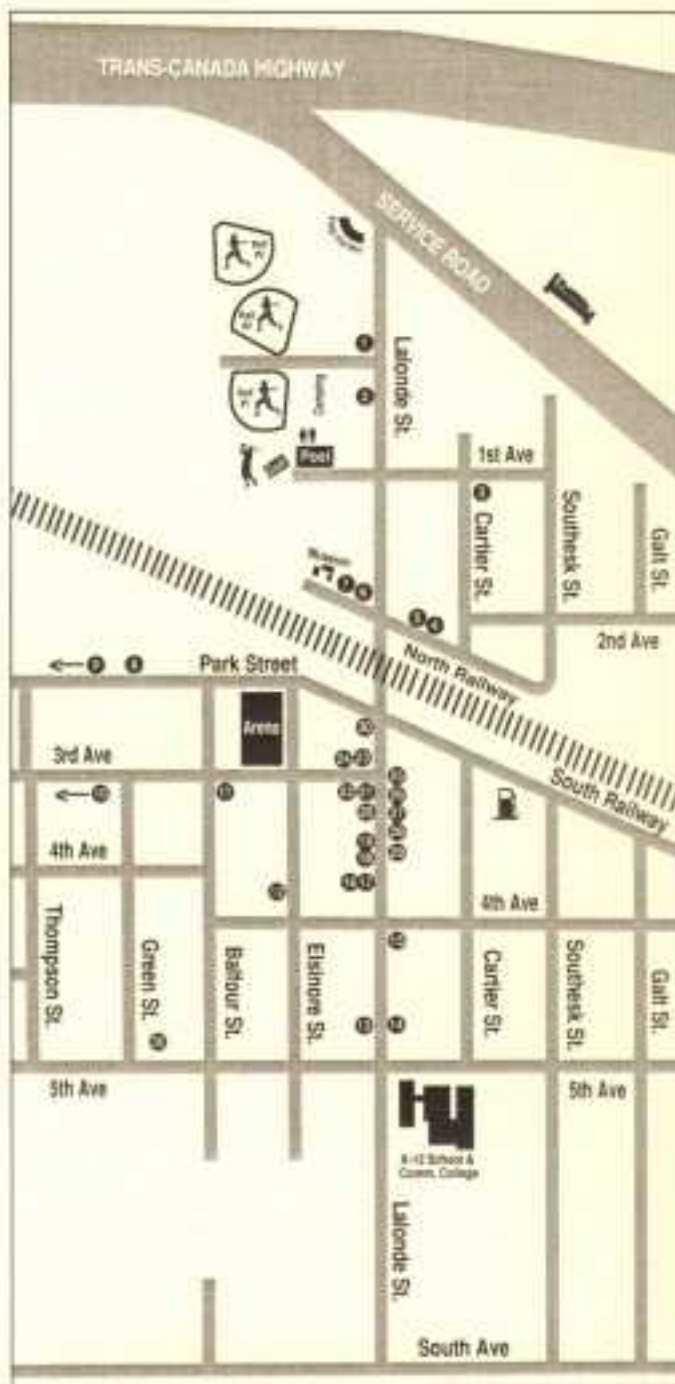
Let's begin the Heritage Walking Tour...

(Pre-Existing Building)

1. Log House

Built in 1886 by Donald Crawford on the trail between Moosomin and the Moose Mountains, this house served as a home for him, his wife Mary and their four sons as well as a stopping place for weary travellers to have a cup of tea, a meal, or a place to spend the night. The only requirement, if one wanted to spend the night, was to have a blanket and to be able to find a spot on the floor not already taken. The house was moved to the Jamieson Museum in 1980 and to Whitewood in 1998. The joints between the hand-cut logs on the exterior walls were made of authentic clay and grass chinking which had to be replaced periodically as the weather eroded it.

2. 306 Lalonde Street (Old Gillis House)

This house was built in 1917 by Malcolm and Doris Gillis. Doris was the daughter of John Hawkes, who served as Saskatchewan's first Legislative librarian and who was a noted historian. One of his books, the three volume Saskatchewan and its People, is in the local library for reference. Elizabeth Hawkes, his wife, was the first woman to publish and edit a newspaper in Saskatchewan (The Broadview Express). Malcolm and his brother Archie started ed the Whitewood Implement Company in 1914. This well preserved house appears to be in close-to-original condition with siding and windows intact.

3. Cartier & 1st Avenue
(Old Presbyterian Manse)

This small two story house was originally built in 1885, the year of the Riel Rebellion, by John Callin as a Presbyterian Church and manse. The meeting hall was converted to living quarters in 1897 after the new church (see #6) was built. This building served as a church and meeting hall for the Methodists as well as the meeting place for the Temperance Society. When Jennie Lyons, daughter of the first postmaster, first attended services in 1886, the singing of hymns was led by an old Scottish gent with a tuning fork. The sounds were so terrible that Jennie and her father donated $25.00 and collected enough money to buy an organ. It was said that even the old Scottish gent donated $10.00. Architecturally, only the original bargeboard trim and pendants in the gable ends have survived the various renovations and changes in siding and doors.

4. 707 North Railway
(Lyons House)

This lovely brick house was built in 1883 by Thomas Gamble Lyons as his living quarters and Whitewood's first post office. This house served as a post office until 1888 and was the workplace of the first female postmaster in the Northwest Territories, when Jennie Lyons, Thomas's daughter was appointed in 1886. In 1889, ownership of the house was transferred to Jennie and she gave piano and organ lessons to many of the townspeople. Today this stands as the oldest existing building that ever housed a post office in the province of Saskatchewan. Architecturally, it is noteworthy for its asymmetrical façade and lovely "gingerbread" trim in the eaves.

(Pre-Existing Building)

5. 705 North Railway Street

Built in 1889 by Murdoch Gillis, this house is of log construction. It was bought through verbal agreement by A.B. Gillis in 1893, when it became Whitewood's second post office (1893-1908). It was also the home of Archibald Gillis, who was an MLA for the Northwest Territories (1894-1905). Mr Gillis continued to serve the new province of Saskatchewan as an MLA until 1912, including a term as Speaker of the House. He served in World War I and was a Colonel of the 217th Overseas Battalion. He was elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa in 1915 and the Member of Qu'appelle and served in the Canadian Senate from 1921 until his death in 1941. The house was then sold to George Lamont and then in 1944 to William and Mary Armstrong, the first owners of the Whitewood Hotel. In 1957, the house was purchased by Reynold Dayman and in 1971 by Rowland Hoggarth. This has been home to many over the years as well as being the choir practise hall for the Presbyterians for many years. We are told that the house was originally a business with a false front so the bay window and gable front with gingerbread must have been added later but is still typical of the period.

6. 609 North Railway Street
(Knox Presbyterian Church)

This designated heritage site was built in 1896 of brick made locally by Angus Campbell at the Sterling Brickyard north of Whitewood, for a total cost of $1265.00. The first minister was a Reverend Muirhead. The cornerstone was laid with two bottles containing copies of the Whitewood Herald, the Free Press, the Presbyterian Record and Review and documents containing the names of the pastor, church officers, building committee, the contractor and officers of the Sunday school as well as a sample of 1896 wheat.

7. 605 North Railway Street
(Murdoch Gillis House)

This large house was built by Murdoch Gillis around 1914. Murdoch arrived in the area before the railway and settled in the Forest Farm district north of Whitewood. Mrs. Ruth Gillis, his wife, was probably the first white woman to settle in the area. A staunch Presbyterian, Murdoch was instrumental in the affairs of the church, including the building of the "new" brick church. This house became the gathering place for the large Gillis family in the area. The modernization of this house has not changed its handsome proportions and the original bargeboard trim and fretwork survive intact.

Note: Whitewood Historical Museum

Immediately to the west is the Whitewood Historical Museum. This treasure house of local history and memorabilia includes ethnic displays and records in the main building, a schoolhouse, home, dress shop and barracks exhibit in the middle building. The West building houses agricultural and industrial displays. The museum has regular summer hours and access may be arranged at other times by contacting the town office.

8. 315 Parks Street
(Hamill House)

This graceful brick house was built in 1893 by James McDonald, Whitewood's first druggist. In 1902 it was purchased by Thomas Hamill, a grain buyer for D.H. McMillan Co. Later, Thomas was the grain buyer for Whitewood's first elevator, the Dominion Elevator Company (1889), until 1926 and served as Whitewood's fourth postmaster from 1909-1940. Mr Hamill also served as mayor and was on council for 12 years. The house was purchased in 1942 by Joseph Tuba as a residence for his daughter and her husband, Mr. & Mrs Alvin Miller. In 1946, William Hoggarth purchased the house and it remained in the Hoggarth family until it was purchased for restoration by the McKay Historical Society in 1996. It is now a private residence. The original veranda on the Queen Ann Revival house is part of its appeal. The brick detailing around the windows, the use of "gingerbread" ornamentation and the brick addition at the back indicated that this was one of the "fine houses" of the town. This house also has quite lovely coloured glass windows on the east side.

9. 205 Parks Street

John and Elinor King came west in 1882 and homesteaded south of Whitewood, purchasing a farm directly south of town. As well as farming, John acted as Indian agent and Justice of the Peace. In 1900, at the age of 64, King retired and he and his wife built this fine house on one of the highest points in the town. Although the brick on this house has been covered by stucco, the ornamental details are quite visible with projecting corner brickwork, ornamental wooden barge boarding, "carpenter" style eaves trim and pendants. The bricks for this house were made locally by John Street.

10. 100 Block 3rd Avenue
Whitewood Cemetery

Whitewood's oldest burial place was east of town near the railway crossing. Records show that it was abandoned as early as 1893 as is evident by the dates on some of the older gravestones. The beautiful old trees on the hilltop shelter many fascinating stone markers and the families they commemorate. Cemetery records are located at the town office.

11. 503 3rd Avenue
(Southeast Archives)

Built in 1891 as a Methodist Church, this building also hosted many of Whitewood's large social functions as well as being used by the Presbyterians before they built their own church in 1896. In 1892 the Presbyterian ladies hosted a tea and bake sale and provided entertainment. They raised the unprecedented sum of $31.00, the most ever raised at a function in Whitewood's short history. The Methodists discontinued services in 1910 and the building was sold to the Masons in 1916. The building served as the Masonic Hall until 1986. It was restored by the McKay Historical Society to serve as the South East Saskatchewan archives. The building won the Lt. Governor's award for Architectural Excellence for the Exterior Restoration in 2003. Noteworthy are the leaded glass windows which, although not original to the building, are very attractive.

12. 718 Elsinore Street

This small Second Empire Style house may be a tribute to the many French settlers of the 1880-90's. This style originated in France, was fashionable at the turn of the century and is noted for the distinctive mansard style roof and projecting dormer windows in the upper story. Old photos show it being built for George Reade.

13. 820 Lalonde Street
(The Duquette House)

This large, wood-frame house was built in 1898 by W. A. Lamont and sold to Cecil Barker, grocery retailer, in 1904. In 1914, J. J. Knowler purchased it and later sold it to A.M. Duquette in 1922. Mr Duquette had come to Whitewood in 1884 and had worked for Benjamin Limoges as a clerk. In 1886 he joined the Northwest Mounted Police and served in Regina for four years. On his return to Whitewood, he resumed his job at Limoges' store, worked for Knowler and went into partnership with Comte de Langle in a grocery store. Mr Duquette later went into partnership with Percy Knowler in a grocery business and when the Whitewood Trading Company bought the Hudson's Bay Store, he became manager. Mr Duquette served as mayor of Whitewood for four years. After his death the house was sold to Alex Szabo Sr. in 1945 and from 1957-1959 it served as the Evangelical Church. In 1959 it was purchased by Andrew Farkas as a family home. In 1998, the house was purchased by the McKay Historical Society to prevent its demolition. It was restored and is now a private residence. Of interest is the Queen Ann style two-story bay window with tower.

14. 819 Lalonde Street

This lovely brick house also shows Queen Anne Revival influences with the off-center window treatment, wrap-around veranda, ornamental wooden fan work in the eaves and the porch windows with large central panes surrounded by smaller panes. Queen Anne style typically would have been red brick in Eastern Canada but in a small prairie town, the locally made buff color brick would have been more affordable and equally attractive. Windows replaced for energy conservation in this building, now an art gallery, have not detracted from its overall appeal.

(Pre-Existing Building)
15. 801 Lalonde Street
(Fosters Garage)

This garage was built in 1949 to replace an older structure across the street to the west. It featured the streamlined Art Deco or Art Moderne style of the 30's and 40's with its distinctive rounded corners. The stucco wall finish would have been typical and lines of color and decorative brick would have been used to show movement and speed. The large area of window would have been angled inward at the base to reduce glare for passers-by looking in at the wonderful new vehicles in the showroom. There was a large

metal "Foster's" sign located above the corner door. This style of architecture was often used for automobile service stations and the designs were sleek and streamlined to match the 1930's and 40's cars. This style was much more prevalent in the cities but before its demolition in 2011, there were fewer than 10 of this style of garage or service station still standing in the whole province.

16. 730 Lalonde Street
(St Mary's Anglican Church)

Constructed of local fieldstone, the community's first Anglican church was begun on this site in 1900 and completed in 1902. An earlier wooden structure was built in 1885 for a cost of $80.00. The west center stained glass window was donated by Mrs. Charles Marshallsay in memory of her husband, a lay minister and the first MLA for the area. The window came from England and freight and customs charges were $700, the raising of which posed quite a problem for the congregation. This is one of Whitewood's most beautiful buildings and one of only a few remaining stone structures.

17. 730 Lalonde Street
(St Mary's Lych Gate)

A lychgate is a roofed gate under which a coffin is set down to await the clergy before a funeral. In happier times it is also called a "kissing gate". This one was built in 1924 by Jack Francis and Charles Bachelor as a replica of a gate constructed in 1450 in the churchyard at Heston England. For many years this was the only such structure in Saskatchewan and when the original in England required restoration, they contacted Whitewood for assistance. The church and gate are featured in a book, *Building Our Future*, which will commemorate 100 significant buildings in Saskatchewan.

18. 714 Lalonde Street
(Merchant's Bank Heritage Center)

This Building was constructed in 1906 by James Grierson to house the Merchant's Bank (1906-1914). It later served for many years as the Rex Theatre and also as Whitewood's telephone office. In 1949, Ernest and Bernice Baker opened the town's first self-serve grocery store here. It barely survived demolition before the town purchased it in order to create a building to house an exhibit commemorating the French Counts of St. Hubert. Restoration of the building included

reconstruction of the front façade and interior renovations including the restoration of a very attractive tin ceiling complete with bullet holes. The building currently houses the French Counts exhibit, the Fleur de Lis gift shop and is used for various small community functions. The building, open seasonally, won the 2004 Lt. Governor's award for Architectural Excellence for Adaptive reuse.

19. 712 Lalonde Street

Once known as the Grierson Block, this building was built in 1893 by James Grierson, a local contractor, as a lumber and hardware store. This business was operated by his son John until his death in 1961. It was then sold to Doug McEwen in 1969 and became a clothing store and Sears outlet, was resold in 1977 to Jim and Dianna Tannas who operated a paint and painting business, then to Ken Burge who operated a Sears outlet and then to D&A Leathercraft in 1983. The building was sold in 2012. This storefront was originally elaborate brickwork.

20. 706 Lalonde Street
(Lamont Hardware)

Built in 1889 by Dan Campbell, Postmaster, this building has an eventful past. It is believed that Dan and his family lived on the main floor, used the second floor for his office and rented out space for town council and agricultural society meetings. When Mr. Campbell absconded with govern-

ment and postal funds, the town council knocked holes in the walls of the building looking for secret stashes of money. In 1894, Joseph and Sarah Lamont purchased the building and opened a hardware store. In 1923 the store was leased to Percy Tinline who operated it until his death when his wife Adeline took over until 1946. Malcolm and Ann Gillespie took over the operation of the business in 1947 and Gillespie Hardware remained in operation until 1974. It was purchased by Ted and Frances Pearson, by Winnifred and Steve Berkes in 1977; it presently houses an Outdoor & Pet store. Much of the original storefront design can be seen in spite of the

siding which covers the original red brick finish. Noteworthy from an architectural point of view is the elaborate boomtown façade or false front with pressed metal cornice moulding, brackets, dentils and large finials on each end of the façade. The cast iron pillars on either side of the door are also original.

21. 702 Lalonde Street
(Knowler's Store)

This was the site of the town's second post office from 1888-1893. That original building was removed and, in 1901, J.J. Knowler built an impressive stone building to house his already thriving grocery business. One of Whitewood's first citizens, James Jackson Knowler, came to Whitewood to homestead. In 1885 he contracted with the territorial government to haul supplies from Whitewood to Yorkton during the northwest Rebellion. When the rebellion was over, Mr. Knowler found he had a large supply of goods left over so he started selling groceries out of a tent. From there he moved into a small frame structure and in December 1901 into his new stone building. The business continued in the Knowler name until 1956 when it wan sold to Tom and Harry Noble who operated it as Noble's Department Store. In 1970, Ray and Edith Percy purchased it and, in turn, sold it to Dennis and Linda Gebkenjans in 1983. In 1997 the store was purchased by Fern and Scott Hamilton. This is one of two remaining stone buildings and has been in operation as a grocery store for over 100 years.

22. Lalonde and 3rd Avenue
(The Market Day Mural)

This community Millennium project was completed by the people of Whitewood in 2000. The source of the image was a photograph of Whitewood taken in the 1880's of the view down Lalonde Street from the railway tracks. Market Day would have been a day when local farmers would have brought their stock (cattle, horses, sheep) and other produce to town to ship to market on the railway. This painting reproduces the actual people and buildings as accurately as possible with the result that several people in the mural have been identified by name. Artist Rita Swanson of Churchbridge assisted with the initial work and artist Janet Blackstock of Whitewood completed the finishing touches. Financial assistance was provided by the Federal Government Millennium Fund. Over 50 people painted the mural, many of them first time painters and the end result is a source of pride for the town and a point of interest for visitors from near and far.

23. Lalonde & 3rd Avenue
(The Cenotaph)

Originally this was the site of the old Woodbine Hotel (1886-1919). After it was closed, the hotel was cut into sections and moved away to be used for homes. In 1919 the lot was selected as the site for a memorial to those who gave their lives in the Great War. It was unveiled on July 2, 1922. The marble statue came from Italy, the base from British Columbia and the granite dais from Nova Scotia. The cenotaph grounds are maintained with loving care by the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and the flower beds are planted every year with a variety of plants and flowers.

24. 605 3rd Avenue
(Whitewood Locker Plant)

Built in 1948 by Cyril Truman, this distinctive building has a rounded Art Deco style false front. As well as being a butcher shop, for many years it was the pick-up and delivery point for cream cans for anyone shipping cream to the milk processing plants. The cream can shelf is still evident on the west side.

25. 617 Lalonde Street
(The Chinese Café)

Built in two sections, the south part in 1893 and the north in 1894, this building has been home to many businesses. The south part began as a barbershop and residence, then became a fruit store. The north section started as a grocery store and fruit store. Next it became a confectionary and a small part was partitioned off to become a barbershop. After many more transformations in recent years it has been principally a café and has been owned by a succession of Chinese business people and others. Of special interest in the building is the large plate glass mirror, believed to have come from the Woodbine Hotel.

26. 703 Lalonde

The site was originally occupied by a feed store (1902-1914) and was operated by Catherine Sanders, wife of James Sanders, who owned the Whitewood Flour Mill. In 1914, Archie and Malcolm Gillis purchased the building and started The Whitewood Implement Dealership. In 1919 the Gillis Brothers removed the original wood building and built an impressive 2-story brick building. In 1928 the business was purchased by W.G. Foster who operated it until 1943 when he sold the building to Hamilton Gillis. Mr. Gillis converted the building to a drugstore and remodelled the upstairs into offices. These offices housed several businesses including the Veterans Land Act Office, the R.M. of Willowdale offices as well as a dentist and hairdresser. In 1954 the drug store was purchased by Ken and Peggy Wright and still remains in their family but houses a doctor's office. Whatever remains of the original building is hidden under a low maintenance exterior.

27. 707 Lalonde Street
(Old Bank of Montreal)

Built in 1914, this Georgian Revival style building was originally constructed to house the expanding Merchant's Bank which had outgrown its original site across the street. The Merchant's bank was bought by the Bank of Montreal in 1922. In 1979 the Bank of Montreal built a new building and in 1981 their former building became a Bumper-to-Bumper. In 2003 the building was bought by Liz and Ray Giroux who opened a flower and gift shop and enhanced its historic character. The use of red brick with white trim, a simple symmetrical façade, hipped roof with deep eaves, projecting dentils and brackets under the eaves are all typical of the Georgian revival style and create a gracious and dignified atmosphere on the street.

28. 711 Lalonde Street
(R.M. of Willowdale)

This was the original site of Ashdown's Hardware, circa 1888. When that business was purchased by J.J. Knowler in 1889, it continued as a hardware store and residence and later became an insurance outlet. For a brief period it housed the Lew Lee Laundry. In 1935 the lot was sold to the federal government and Whitewood's fifth post office was built in 1936 for a cost of $12,000. The post office remained here until 1958 when the building was sold to the R.M. of Willowdale. In the year 2000 the building received an award from the Sask Architectural Heritage Society for Exterior Restoration. This building shows the influence of the Prairie School of Architecture with its emphasis on the horizontal: low pitched roof, deep eaves, casement-style windows in a band across the front and even the distinctive horizontal metal grills on the entrance doors. This building has been well preserved and the interior is worth seeing since it is in almost-original condition and is a nice example of a government building of its time.

29. 713 Lalonde Street

Whitewood's Power Plant Building was built in 1934 by George Lamont to house the new electrical service. Over the years it has housed a jewellery store, dress shop, gift store, electrical business, fitness center, hairdresser, and is now a meat and sub shop. Details of the original brick façade can still be seen through the stucco finish.

Note. Dinner in the Field Mural

On your way back down the street, opposite the Whitewood hotel, you can see another of Whitewood's large murals. This one, titled Dinner in the Field, depicts a typical harvest scene of yesteryear, with workers, cooks, kids and dogs all enjoying a break together in the outdoors. The horse and binder would have been used to cut and tie the crop into sheaves which had to be stood on end or "stooked" to allow the grain and straw to dry before threshing. The mural was painted in 2002 by three local painters, Sharon Armstrong, Janet Blackstock and Barb Vennard, and donated to the town.

30. 604 Lalonde Street (Whitewood Hotel)

The Whitewood Hotel was built in 1905 as the Armstrong hotel by John and Charlie Armstrong. The architect for the building was John McGuirl of Moosomin, who also made much of the furniture for the Saskatchewan Legislative Building. Over the years the hotel has been owned, leased or managed by a number of people including J.G. Emigh, the Shores, William Thompson and Alice Crow, Mr. McCallum, Mr Jones., Charles Walwyn and Len Owen. In 1958 Harry and Rita Minovitch purchased the hotel and operated it until 1983 when it was sold to Tim and Penny Dlouhy. The Dlouhy's were followed by Rollie Mohl until 1999 when it was sold to Sean Choo-Foo and Brian Hill. At one time during the Prohibition Era, the hotel was notorious for its famous basement Snake Room and the owners would have to repeatedly pay fines when caught selling liquor, but according to the old stories, they would be operating again before the ink was dry on the fine receipt. The building originally had a veranda and balcony across the front to shade the large dining room windows. In the 1930's a band would play on the balcony on Saturday nights. The building has attractive round arched windows on the upper floor. This simple version of a popular urban style is typical of many small town commercial buildings. Of interest inside is the large wood-framed plate glass mirror in the steak pit. The mirror frame has interesting original detailing (inlay or paintwork) still intact after all these years.

Note: The Benjamin Limoges House

No visit to Whitewood's Historic Buildings is complete without stopping at the famed Chopping museum. Located in a 17 room mansion built by Benjamin Limoges on the north edge of Whitewood, this museum is filled with unique treasures from all over North America. Behind the house is a rustic Hidden Village with many authentic and replica buildings and an outdoor stage complete with sound and dance floor. The owner of the museum, "Old" George Chopping, is well known as a collector and author of the book, Bottles of the Prairies and for his extensive knowledge of the Beausejour bottle factory archeaological site in Manitoba.

And that ends your historic walk through Whitewood's rich history...

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to these historic points of interest in our town. Please forward any comments and feedback to the tourist booth attendant or to the Town of Whitewood at the following address:

TOWN OF WHITEWOOD

Box 129, Whitewood, SK.,
Canada, S0G 5C0
Ph: 306-735-2210
E-mail: general@townofwhitewood.ca
Web: www.townofwhitewood.ca

For those interested in more in depth information about the town and its history, the following people and organizations can be contacted.

Whitewood Merchant's Bank Heritage Center
714 Lalonde Street
Open summer Hours
306-735-2210

Whitewood Town Office
721 Lalonde Street
306-735-2210

George Chopping
Old George's Museum and Hidden Village
No. 1 Highway, just west of Lalonde Street
306-735-2255

Whitewood Museum
603 North Railway Avenue
Open Summer Hours
306-735-2210

Whitewood Library
721 Lalonde Street
306-735-4233