

The Historian

S T . V I T A L H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y A N D M U S E U M

PRESIDENT LETTER: MY CONNECTION TO ST. VITAL

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Glenlawn is having their 100th reunion in May!
- Doors open Winnipeg, May 27 and May 28th!
- Renew your membership!

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It was 1955 when my family moved to St. Vital. I was three years old. I attended elementary school at St. George, junior high at Norberry and then Dakota Collegiate. Back in those days most of the kids walked to school, as did I.

It was a good childhood playing on the streets, walking down to Norberry Community Club with my skates and hockey stick, tobogganing in the winter and picnicking in the summer at St. Vital Park...it was a good life. St. Vital is still a good place to live!

I remember attending the party when St. Vital became a city in 1962. It was held where the Superstore is located on St. Anne's Road. I heard the Guess Who at a Grade 12 dance at Dakota and by the way, the museum has some gold records on display of the Guess Who thanks to Jim Kale.

I knew there was a St. Vital Museum for a while before I stopped in one day. Of course, I met my predecessor, Bob Holliday. As I walked through the museum, I felt a sense of the history of the place I called home. It was very illuminating and I felt a part of it. .

I decided to become a member and

help the museum as best I could.

When Bob passed, board members reached out to me to see if I was interested in taking Bob's place as president. While I realize those are big shoes to fill, I also believe in the museum and hope I can help it grow and prosper.

I welcome everyone who has a connection to St. Vital, to come down for a visit, become or renew your membership, volunteer, and spread the word to your friends.

This museum is a treasure and we should all protect it and help it flourish.

John Hindle, President



BOB HOLLIDAY TRIBUTE

I hadn't seen Bob (Doc) Holliday in six or seven years when he came to visit me in the Canstar Community News offices at the *Winnipeg Free Press* in early 2013. Doc and I had been colleagues at the *Winnipeg Sun* in the 1990s and early 2000s, and we worked together closely when I was the city editor, assigning news stories to reporters and he was a reporter who didn't like taking assignments.

Bob retired from the *Sun* in 2007 and dedicated himself to his role as volunteer president of the St. Vital Historical Society. It was his determination and dedication that led to the opening of the St. Vital Museum in May 2008 in the old fire station at 600 St. Mary's Rd., just south of the junction of St. Mary's and St. Anne's Road.

On this particular afternoon in 2013, Bob had come to pitch me on becoming a community correspondent for *The Lance*, which would allow him to write about the history of St. Vital while also promoting the museum. He mentioned that he'd started his long media career (which included stints at the *Winnipeg Tribune* and *CJOB*) as a cub reporter for *The Lance*, where he wrote sports stories, sold ads, and covered St. Vital council meetings in the late 1960s.

I said yes, and Bob's first St. Vital column ran on May 1, 2013.

A couple of months later, Doc came to see me again, and the twinkle in his eye told me I was in trouble.

"Hey J.K., have you got 20 bucks?" he asked.

Humouring him, I handed over a bill.

"Congratulations! You're

now a member of the St. Vital Historical Society," he said. "How'd you like to be on the board?"

I was vice-president within a year.

That transaction was pure Doc Holliday. He was the kind of guy who could kid and cajole anyone into doing just about anything, and he seemed to know almost everybody in town.

Over the next few years, Bob and I once again worked closely, mostly on raising funds for the museum. We ran several SVHS barbecues with the historical society's members and volunteers, and we also organized and promoted two fundraising concerts featuring Ray St. Germain (another St. Vital kid). It was fun work for a good cause and, most important, we renewed our friendship.

Although time constraints led me to step away from the historical society a few years ago, Bob and I spoke often, and I always looked forward to reading and editing his columns.

Bob died last December, finally succumbing to the cancer he battled off and on for two decades. I knew he was gravely ill, so I was saddened by the

news but also relieved to hear his suffering had ended. I was also given pause to smile more than once as I remembered his devilish grin and easy humour.

Godspeed, Doc. You will be missed.

— **John Kendle** is managing editor of *Canstar Community News* and former vice-president of the *St. Vital Historical Society*



THANK YOU, HOME DEPOT!



The St. Vital Historical Society and Museum would love to give a huge thank you to the volunteer team from Home Depot!

The Home Depot crew went beyond just donating the materials needed to renovate and refresh our space for meetings and research and the basement. They came and installed all new flooring in the meeting and research space along with the installation of new shelving units in the basement!

Your generous contribution of time and goods is not only allowing our volunteers and staff more comfort while working but in doing so you have made a major contribution towards the future of the making sure the history of St. Vital is collected for years to come.

What many might not realize is that the flooring that the team from Home Depot is laying in some of the pictures is going over the original stalls that the horses would have lived in!

Stalls are great for horses but not humans!



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FROM THE FRONT DESK...

As you step into the St. Vital Historical Society and Museum, you will notice that there is a new face at the front desk!

Hi! My name is Breanna and I'm the new Curator/Museum Manager.

I am incredibly excited to be working at the St. Vital Historical Society and to continue the tradition of maintaining and growing the historic and future presence of St. Vital.

My absolute favourite part of working in the museum is working with the artifacts. I love doing research on new pieces and discovering their historical background!

Outside of my time at the museum, I'm a huge reader of both fiction and nonfiction. I love going to the library to pick up more books (even though I have bookshelves that are completely overflowing already!)

Besides my love of reading and history I am a proud cat mom, fossil enthusiast, and coffee addict.

Breanna, Curator

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Doesn't the class of 1936 look amazing?

This black and white photo-graph has captured beautifully the spark of intelligence and drive! These were the doers of their tomorrow!

Do you know a graduate from a St. Vital school? Do you think they would like to have their picture in the history of St. Vital?

They are the future of our to-morrow so why not bring us a copy of their picture!

The St. Vital Historical Society strives to celebrate everyone!

**Class of 1936 graduates from Glenlawn Collegiate!
 Location and photographer unknown.**

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THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JIMMY OLSEN

On July 9, 1967 eight-year-old Jimmy Olson (James Peter Einar Olson), rode his bicycle from his family's backyard at 153 Riel Avenue...then part of rural St. Vital. It was to be a sunny, warm day with a high of 78 F expected - perfect for one of the many adventures he hoped for during his summer vacation. Sadly, it would be his last adventure. Jimmy's parents and his three siblings never saw him alive again after that Sunday morning.

Jimmy was my former classmate at Woodlawn School which has long since been demolished and is now part of the Abinojii Mikanah (Bishop Grandin) right-of-way. He did not rejoin us in Grade 4 that fall. He had already been buried on July the 13th.

Einar Olson, Jimmy's father, was 50 years old in 1967. Though relatively young he was already listed as a "pensioner" in the 1963 voter's list. The son of Norwegian immigrant parents, Einar was born in Ashern, MB. He had served with the Canadian Corps of Signals in WWII. After the war, he worked as a baker in Ashern. Einar had moved his growing family to St. Vital around 1957 and Jimmy was born a year later.

By 4 PM on that fateful Sunday, Jimmy's family was already worrying that he could be missing. As supper approached, there was still no sign of him. Einar, and his wife Margaret, decided that the St. Vital Police would have to be called.

The Winnipeg Free Press later reported: "Monday morning, a bicycle and the boy's clothes were found beside an excavation along River Road in St. Vital which was dug for diking operations dur-

ing the 1966 flood and was never filled in. Up to 12 feet of water had gathered in the pond."

Fearing the worst, the police dragged the dark waters all morning but their efforts were unsuccessful.

St. Vital Police Chief Constable, Edmund Stanley (58 Ellesmere), 62, had emigrated from Queen's County, Ireland at age 18. He was a former RCMP constable and Dryden Police Chief. He served a contentious eight years in St. Vital from 1960 to 1968. Stanley and his staff decided that the next thing to do was to call in a professional skin diver and fellow St. Vitaller, Sandy Lockhart.

Sandy donned his gear that Monday and began his grid search in the large clay pit dug out of the bush-land on River Road south of the uncompleted St. Michael's Road. Sandy soon found what, sadly, many had feared.

"The boy's body was found at a 6-foot depth. He was wearing swimming trunks which he had apparently been wearing under his clothes when he left home," police said.

Jimmy was buried later that week on a Thursday in the family plot at Chapel Lawn Memorial Gardens. His father would die and be buried near him only 4 years later.

In truth, I did not think of Jimmy for many years until I began researching this article. I hope that he is often and fondly remembered by his family, and that they do not mind that I shared a few memories of him with you today.

David Watson, Community Correspondent



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Black and white photograph of REO Speedwagon from either 1915 or 1922 with St. Vital Fire Brigade in uniform, sitting at the helm. Photo taken in front of the St. Vital Fire Hall. Photographer unknown.



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DON'T FORGET!

Have you recently updated your membership with the St. Vital Historical Society?

If you can't remember and would like to renew just come down to SVHS Museum and we would be glad to help you!

The St. Vital Museum is dedicated to increasing the knowledge and understanding of the history related to St. Vital.

Through collections, exhibits, and educational opportunities the Museum collects, preserves, and interprets objects and informational materials related to the founding, development, and evolution of St. Vital.

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