

Riverlands Heritage Preservation Region Inc.

1. TOWN OF BLAINE LAKE

The town was settled in the late 1800s and grew rapidly with the Doukhobors' arrival in 1899. It was, and is, a farming and business hub with many amenities and services. Its historic features include a museum/library in the former train station, a cairn with the original grinding stone from the old Petrofka Flour Mill, painted murals, several churches, and a wheat sheaf monument commemorating the town's centennial. The Doukhobor Prayer Home on Main Street is a Municipal Heritage Property, designated for its unique classic design and historic community role.

2. PAZERAJEVKA

Here, near the site of Pazeraevka village, Doukhobors who had come from Russia, and their descendants, gathered over the decades to celebrate 'Petrov Dien' or Peter's Day on June 29th each year. Doukhobor values, underscored by the motto 'TOIL AND PEACEFUL LIFE', were emphasized and reinforced. The communal gathering drew people from miles around and was marked by singing, speeches, and good fellowship.

3. BALMORAL CEMETERY

This cemetery, established at the turn of the last century by the Congregational Church of Canada, is the resting place of William Diehl (1850 – 1936). Diehl was one of three scouts during the Northwest Resistance of 1884-85 to whom Louis Riel surrendered. William Diehl and the scouts are credited with transporting Louis Riel to General Middleton of the Canadian Militia.

4. AGRICULTURAL ZONE

Soil types in the area east of the towns of Blaine Lake, Marcelin, and Leask are varied – predominantly black soil (chernozems) as well as sandy loams and other types. In this mixed farming area, the variety of crops grown included cereals, legumes and oilseeds.

5. OSPENNIA SCHOOL

The school district (#2386) was formed in 1909, after much petitioning to government, and the school itself opened in 1911, near the Doukhobor village of Ospennia. After closure due to damage by lightning, the school was rebuilt in a new location, at SE-2-44-6 W3. The school served as a focal point for the community for many years, before closing in 1957.

6. BIG TREE

A plains cottonwood crossed with balsam poplar, the Big Tree stands nearly 21 meters high at the present time, as its top was sheared off by lightning. The tree has a girth of 5 meters and a span reaching 32 meters. Estimates place its age at over 160 years. This tree is one of the last remaining giant cottonwoods, as most have fallen to saw and axe. It stands near the site of the former Laird Ferry.

DOUKHOBOR DUGOUT HOUSE

Dugout houses were built by Russian Doukhobor immigrants as temporary shelters when they arrived on the prairies in mid-winter in 1899. Now a national historic site, this dugout house is the only known surviving example of this form of shelter in Canada. It is part of a landscape of farm buildings and archaeological remains that reflects the evolution of prairie Doukhobor communities. The site is on private property; it is open for tours ONLY in July, on Saturdays (admission fees apply). See www.doukhobordugouthouse.com for more information.

7. OSPENNIA CEMETERY

As the tour continues, one passes the location of cemeteries, old village sites, and other historical entities. This cemetery served the nearby village of Ospennia, one of 12 villages within the Prince Albert land reserve set aside for Doukhobor people.

8. SLAVANKA CEMETERY

Located on NE 17 – 44 – 5 W3, this cemetery serves the Slavanka district. The cemetery house has been decorated in a style that has been influenced by Doukhobor settlers who arrived from southern Russia. Visitors are encouraged to spend time contemplating the passing of history, pay respect to those buried at Slavanka cemetery, and sign the guest book.

9. RIVERLOT FARMS

Saskatchewan is surveyed on a grid system with individual quarter sections measuring ½ by ½ mile. The measurement of river lots at Riverhill is different, affording proximity to the river. Each lot is the equivalent of a quarter section but is 1/8 X 2 miles in size. Two locations of note are found within the 16 river lots: Riverhill Cemetery with an armillary monument, and the original site of Fort La Montée (private property - no access), a North West Company trading post which amalgamated with Fort Carlton of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821.

10. RIVERHILL SCHOOL (No. 2586)

Established in 1910, classes began in February 1912 with 14 students in attendance. The original school was destroyed by fire in 1931. A new school built on Riverlot North 7 - 45 - 5 W3 functioned as an education facility and community centre.

11. RIVERHILL (SPASOVKA) ARMILLARY

This memorial honors the people of the region who developed the land. Based on a sun dial design from the Renaissance Period, the armillary takes into account the latitude of the area, 53° N of the equator. A gnomon (arrow) points to Polaris (North Star) which remains nearly constant over the North Pole. The gnomon's shadow is cast upon the numbers of the horizon ring, indicating real time. Riverhill Cemetery continues to function as a focal point of the district. Visitors are welcome to stop by and sign the guest book.

12. SLOUGH and MARSH LAND

A typical aspen-parkland slough has a wet meadow perimeter transitioning to deeper open water in the middle. Each zone provides distinct habitat for flora and fauna. At this location, 15 or more species of waterfowl may be sighted at various times of the year. Associated with sloughs and marshes are many species of ducks, geese, shorebirds and songbirds.

13. FORT CARLTON – GREEN LAKE TRAIL

Dating to prehistory, the trail began as an aboriginal trail following the great buffalo herds. In the late 1700s, it developed as an overland route for explorers, fur traders and settlers and was the main trail between Fort Gary of the Red River District in Manitoba and Fort Edmonton. The trail came into prominence in the mid-1800s but declined with the advent of steamboats and the railway. Known locally as Snake Plain Trail, it winds its way northwest towards Green Lake. Today, a pleasant drive through the historic parklands countryside may be taken from Carlton Crossing to the Town of Leask.

14. CRAIGMORE CHURCH AND CEMETERY

Founded by Dr. Benjamin Ralph in 1904, Craigmore was named after a college in Ireland. Dr. Ralph arrived in the district to homestead and to provide leadership, serving with distinction until his death in 1930. His grave is in the Craigmore Cemetery. Considered by many to be among the most peaceful and serene locations in Saskatchewan, this idyllic little country church is a favorite spot to visit.

15. CARLTON CROSSING

High on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, one stands on soil crossed by prehistoric buffalo hunters, fur traders on Red River carts, and later homesteaders who developed the land. From this vantage point, one can imagine a scene of canoe brigades, York boats and later, steam boats. Across the river is Fort Carlton, formerly a bustling trade centre and transportation hub in the 1800s and now a provincial park.

16. CHELLWOOD SCHOOL (No. 2480)

Named after an area in southwest England, Chellwood School was established in 1909 at a meeting of four people. Located on NE 28-45-4-W3, the school and teacherage were built the following year, with 20 students in attendance. It operated until 1961.

22. GREENLEAF HUTTERITE COLONY

Originating as Anabaptists during the reformation of the 1500s, Hutterite people were persecuted and forced to relocate frequently throughout many areas of Europe. Eventually settling in Russia, an opportunity arose to go to North America. Hutterites live within a structure society with communal sharing of property, goods, and services. Hutterites are known for their hard work in agriculture and a focus on self-sufficiency.

23. POTHOLE SLOUGH

Saskatchewan's aspen parklands are dotted with potholes, sloughs and marshes, providing habitat for many species of ducks, geese, shorebirds, and songbirds. This marsh area extends many kilometers to the North and to the South. At least 200 species of birds may be sighted in the general area – breeding, migrating or wintering.

24. ST. JOSEPH HOME CEMETERY

In 1944, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Cross came to Marcelin area to help build and run a home for the aged, supported by a generous local donation. St. Joseph Home received its first resident in August 1944. It included an agricultural operation to sustain the facility and its residents. A large barn, now privately owned and visible from the cemetery, marks the location of the home. This cemetery, part of the home's operation, is no longer active. In 1956, the Sisters moved to Prince Albert to establish Mont St. Joseph Home there.

25. ORIGINAL MARCELIN SITE

This site was the original location of a settlement founded by Antoine Marcelin in 1902. With the coming of the railroad, which bypassed this site, the village moved to its current location, a half-mile west across Highway 40.

26. TOWN OF MARCELIN

The town sits at the corner of Highway 40 and Grid Road 783. In about 1913, the town was moved from its original location, a half-mile east, to be closer to the new CN rail line. It is home to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, the largest church in the region, and is a business/service centre for the local area. It also houses administrative offices for nearby Muskeg Lake First Nation. The town's cemetery makes an interesting stop, as it reflects the cultural diversity of the area.

27. ST. JOSEPH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The first St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church was a wooden structure built in 1904 at the original Marcelin town site. When the village was moved to its present location, a new church was built to house the growing congregation. Its architect, Theodore de Byl, was noted for building churches for French Canadian Roman Catholic communities in Western Canada using local brick and fieldstone. Completed in 1923, it was renamed St. Joseph's Parish, Marcelin. It is now a Municipal Heritage Property. The parish included a convent for some time; its nuns were known for teaching school and music to local children.

17. LOCAL FAUNA (Animals and Birds)

Within this habitat area of the riverlands region, over 50 species of mammals may be sited. Larger mammals include wolf, fox, coyote, lynx, cougar, bear, deer, moose and elk. Many smaller animals abound, with over 25 species of mice, gophers, voles and squirrels. Over 200 species of birds may be sited at various times of the year.

WINGARD FERRY

While the tour heads west along Range Road 783, travellers may also head north and east to Wingard Ferry (seasonal operation). It is a six-car ferry operated by Sask. Highways. The ferry is toll-free and operates between 7:00 am and midnight during the ice-free season.

TRANSITION ZONE

For the next 20 kilometers, the route passes through a transition eco-region with the northern aspen-parklands blending into the fringes of the southern boreal forest. The rolling topography consists of various soil types giving rise to varied vegetation. Trees found in the area are predominantly trembling aspen (white poplar), balsam poplar (black poplar), white spruce and jack pine. Cultivated land blends with grazing land in this mixed zone. The area abounds with wildlife.

18. ASPEN PARKLANDS

From this vantage point, one sees an example of transition from the aspen-parklands to the southern boreal forest. The resulting habitat is rich in flora and fauna with over 50 species of mammals, about 230 species of birds, and other creatures. A wide variety of trees, shrubs and other plants may be found in the area.

19. LOCAL FLORA (plants)

This section of the Fort Carlton Trail passes through the light sandy loam soils of the transition zone between the aspen parklands and the southern boreal forest. In addition to the predominant white spruce and trembling aspen, there are many shrubs, including: saskatoon berry, chokecherry, pincherry, red-ozier dogwood, wolf willow, hazelnut, and hawthorn.

20. FORT CARLTON – GREEN LAKE TRAIL

Fort Carlton was the main provisioning centre along the Fort Carlton Trail linking Fort Gary in Manitoba with Fort Edmonton and points north. Carlton Trail had many branches. This section of the trail, which wound its way northwest to Green Lake, was a major route for hauling trade goods to northern posts and returning with furs. Its more recent history relates to settlement.

21. OTTAWA SCHOOL (No. 2519)

Established in 1910, the original Ottawa School was destroyed by fire. The new school, rebuilt in 1930, functioned until closing in 1958. As with many country schools, it was a focus of the community providing not only education facilities but a centre for meetings, socials, dances, Christmas concerts, and sports days. The school, with a nearby orchard, is privately owned and has undergone some restoration.

CROWN HILL

A little way off the tour route, southwest of Marcelin, Crown Hill is visible for miles around and has long served as a prominent landmark for area residents and travellers. It is a glacier-formed hill known as a drumlin; the gentle slope on its side indicates the direction of the glacier's flow.

28. BLAINE LAKE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CEMETERY

This cemetery serves much of the local Ukrainian Catholic community and is associated with the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Ukrainian Catholic Church in Blaine Lake. It has about 80 graves and is beautifully maintained.

NOTE

The tour route continues along Highway 12 south of BLAINE LAKE to include the PETROFKA area.

29. PETROFKA AREA

Petrofka was a major first settlement of Russian Doukhobors who came to Canada in 1899 and settled throughout Western Canada. Near here, they wintered in homes dug into the river bank. Petrofka Village site was well-chosen, near a spring (now Petrofka Spring) and a good river crossing (now Petrofka Bridge). Near the village, there was a flour mill on Radouga Creek, a cemetery and a school (Petrofka School District No. 23).

30. PETROFKA CEMETERY

This cemetery sits on NE 25-42-7 W3, slightly southwest of the bridge, and was established in 1899 near Petrofka Village. Although the village disbanded in 1929, the cemetery continues to serve the surrounding community. It has approximately 100 graves, many being very old and unmarked. It features tall pines in the centre, a common feature of rural cemeteries to make their location visible from a distance in many types of weather.

SEE MAP ON BACK



OVERVIEW

This self-guided tour route offers a glimpse into the rich cultural and natural history along the west side of the North Saskatchewan River between Petrofka Bridge and Wingard Ferry in Saskatchewan, Canada.

The river valley is rich in biodiversity. Fauna includes fifty species of mammals, over two hundred species of birds, and many examples of fish, amphibians, reptiles and insects. Plant life includes twenty types of trees and shrubs, countless varieties of flowering plants, grasses, and more primitive species. First inhabited by Indigenous Peoples, the region was settled by Europeans in the late 1800s, including the Doukhobors and other religious and cultural groups. The tour has over two dozen sites, including: old school, church and village sites; many cemeteries, including five Doukhobor sites; several river look-outs; parts of the Carlton Trail; and bird-watching spots.

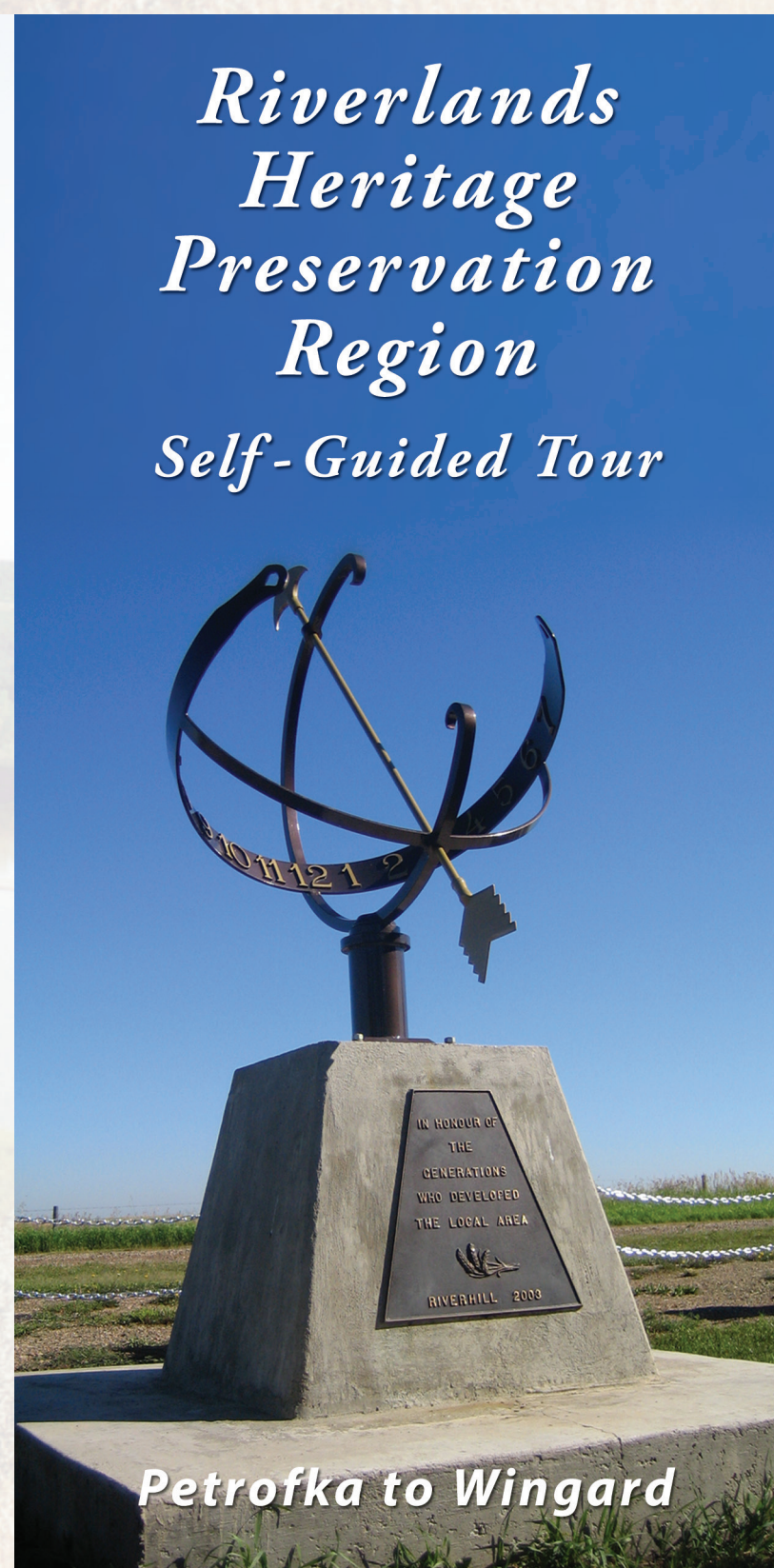
The starting point of the tour route on the map is the Town of Blaine Lake, at the junction of Highways 12 and 40, but the tour can be started at any point. It is possible to complete the route by car in a day but visitors may wish to take more time to enjoy the scenic and historic area. There are signs along the way to mark the route and explain key points in more depth.

PLEASE NOTE

Some of the roadways may not be accessible in winter or during wet weather. Use caution, watch for other travellers at crossroads, and pay attention to all traffic signs.

Riverlands Heritage
Preservation Region Inc.
~ Petrofka to Wingard ~
www.riverlandsheritageregion.org

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Petrofka to Wingard



Riverlands Heritage Preservation Region Tour

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