



## WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PLAQUE INSCRIPTION

**T**HE PAST ACHIEVEMENTS OF MANITOBANS, the events that shaped and influenced their lives, and the sites and buildings they occupied, inform our lives today, whether we know it or not. It is this absence of knowledge, of the historic issues and subjects that happened all around us, that underlies a key aspect of heritage activity – commemoration. Commemoration of sites, individuals and events helps us gain an understanding and sense of respect for the past, and gives us an appreciation for who we are and how our communities have changed over time.

The most common form of commemoration—the plaque—has come to be a vital and meaningful venue for the expression of notable aspects of the past. And because plaques—and their inscriptions—are so popular, and have a fairly long history, it is often assumed that they are easy to produce. They are, after all, composed of short texts and featured on small tablets that are easy to manufacture. The latter case may be true, but the actual crafting of a good plaque text is not quite as easy as it appears.

This brief guide can help anyone interested in this important work, to think harder, dig deeper, and write longer in their quest to produce a plaque text that will have real meaning, and will engage readers long after the writer has moved on.

It is beyond this brief introduction to plaque writing to suggest the wealth of issues that can be brought to bear on the subject, but some key points are noted here, and a set of exemplary Manitoba plaque texts have been included for additional reference. Each of these 10 plaque texts is presented along with a “Commentary and Analysis” section that dissects each line of the text in order to help writers as they craft their own texts.

There are essentially two aspects to the creation of a good plaque text: Research and Analysis and Writing and Editing. But before those subjects are addressed, it is recommended that an additional aspect to plaque production be considered: Planning.

### Planning

Plaques are, by themselves, important solitary features that compellingly inform readers about some notable person, event, site or building. At this level they are purely educational – a very good thing. But a plaque also has the potential to be part of a local tourism strategy, and so it is always a good idea to think about the opportunity to develop a set of plaques.

Some key issues to think about include:

- Can you develop a text that succinctly describes the origins of the whole town or area – that is, why you are here?
- Do you have a historical theme that can be the subject of a set of plaques? Examples include groups of buildings, groups of people, notable themes and events.



- Have you identified the community's truly significant people – those who made a real difference in its history?
- Have you identified an architectural theme that distinguishes your community (a style, material or notable local builder)?
- Have you consulted with local economic development and tourism officials to determine the potential for this kind of initiative; and the funding that might go with it?

### Research and Analysis

Some key issues to think about before beginning an inscription are focused by the need to undertake research and analysis, or at least to locate this kind of support material:

- Do you have enough information to describe why commemoration should be considered? Is there good research available?
- Have you compared this information with other similar subjects (that may also have a good claim for significance) to ensure that the focus for your plaque is reasonable and accurate?
- Do you have appropriate facts, names and dates? Are they accurate?
- Have you consulted other historical references to provide context and claims? The Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism (contact information following) has publications that may help in this activity.
- A basic question that expresses the kind of work required for Research and Analysis is: What are you going to say? (For Writing and Editing, it is: How are you going to say it?)

- Research and Analysis will help you develop an outline, which defines each line of a good plaque inscription.
- A good way to approach this aspect of plaque development is to think about how you would quickly describe the significance of the subject to a visitor (one of your key audiences anyway), keeping in mind the need to first impress them with the significance of the subject, and then to be clear and concise.
- It is often the case that the necessary background information (dates, names, claims) is already available (via a local history book for example), with the plaque writer's job then being to recast this information into a compelling short text. This kind of interesting work usually requires some creative insights into what the information is telling you.

### Writing and Editing

Writing and editing are complex subjects, with many fine books produced over the years to help writers hone their craft. Anyone who is writing more than one plaque inscription should consider investing in at least one of these guides. *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. is a classic.

For the purposes of plaque production, the entries that follow will have to suffice as an overview of typical issues that can inform the development of an effective plaque text. The entries are necessarily focused on three key aspects of a plaque text: the need to be concise, clear and effective.

- As noted above: A basic question that expresses the kind of work required for Research and Analysis is: What are you going to say? For Writing and Editing, it is: How are you going to say it?
- The text should state clearly why the subject is significant, and why people should care about it.
- The first sentence should clearly express the reason for the plaque's existence.

# MAKE HISTORY.

- The significance should be emphatic and not left to the reader to piece together via a set of layers and facts presented throughout the plaque.
- Texts should be educational, and therefore above all they should be informative.
- An attempt should be made to put a human face on the subject, in order to make it understandable to a general audience.
- A dynamic rather than a documentary writing style should be used.
- The text should be written at a Grade 10 level. There are guides on the internet that can help define this quality.
- Do not use big words.
- At the same time, appealing words and phrases, and especially adjectives, should be used, as they add colour and make the text more memorable.
- Dates should be used judiciously; too many dates can overwhelm readers and often cause them to stop reading.
- Where numbers are available and relevant, consider using them for effect. Readers are often interested in issues of duration (how long did it last?) and extent (how wide was its influence?), as well as numbers of people affected and financial facts.
- Texts dealing with architecture should be generally helpful to those many readers who find the subject intimidating. References to architectural styles or traditions, and the attributes of the styles or traditions as they are expressed on the building in question, should be noted briefly. The Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism has materials that plaque writers can use.
- If the subject is a building, consider if it is typical or exceptional, and describe that quality.

- Try very hard to keep editing a text so that its total word count does not exceed 150; 125 words is even better.
- Have a few other people read your draft to ensure accuracy, and provide feedback on clarity and reading pleasure.



The actual rendering of text onto a plaque can take many forms (with one typical example noted above), with an obvious issue being durability. The subject of plaque design and manufacture is well covered, and a quick perusal of the internet will reveal as much information as is likely required. Monument manufacturers across Manitoba will have a wealth of information available for review.



## Heritage Grants Program

The Heritage Grants Program of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism supports the development of local plaque initiatives. The program's website contains application forms and a guide for eligibility:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/grants/hgp.html>

The Historic Resources Branch typically is involved in the review of applications to the Heritage Grants Program, and will often be noted as a contact for groups interested in developing a plaque text. It should be emphasized that the branch does not write texts for applicants; the branch's only role in this kind of exercise might be for final editing. It will be assumed that proponents will have access to this guide and that resulting texts will already be at a near-finished state.

## Historic Resources Branch

Anyone interested in the contextual information that can help inform a plaque text can contact the Historic Resources Branch:

Historic Resources Branch  
Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism  
213 Notre Dame Avenue  
Winnipeg MB R3B 1N3

Phone: 945-2118

Toll-free Phone: 1-800-282-8069,  
extension 2118

Email: [hrb@gov.mb.ca](mailto:hrb@gov.mb.ca)

## Plaque Sample 1: Ancient Traders in Southern Manitoba

Native peoples of Manitoba established and used wide-ranging trade networks thousands of years before the arrival of European fur traders. Bands and trading parties brought goods over immense distances for exchange at a trade fair or rendezvous. A wide variety of goods, including ornaments and ritual objects made of special seashells such as dentalium from the Pacific Ocean and conch from the Gulf of Mexico, were exchanged in this area. Obsidian (volcanic glass), which produces the sharpest cutting edge ever known, came from Wyoming. Copper from Lake Superior, Knife River Flint from North Dakota, and catlinite (red pipestone) from southern Minnesota were also traded. Artifacts made from these rare materials were valuable economically and their exchange promoted social and political ties among neighbouring populations. (124 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

Native peoples of Manitoba established and used wide-ranging trade networks thousands of years before the arrival of European fur traders.

- The text provides a sense of time (thousands of years), scale (wide-ranging), and even a comparison and clarification of claims (before the arrival of European fur traders), to set the record straight.

Bands and trading parties brought goods over immense distances for exchange at a trade fair or rendezvous.

- The text suggests through careful wording the likely challenges of this activity (immense distances) as well as the probable destinations (trade fair, rendezvous).

A wide variety of goods, including ornaments and ritual objects made of special seashells such as dentalium from the Pacific Ocean and conch from the Gulf of Mexico, were exchanged in this area. Obsidian (volcanic glass), which produces the sharpest cutting edge ever known, came from Wyoming. Copper from Lake Superior, Knife River Flint from North Dakota, and catlinite (red pipestone) from southern Minnesota were also traded.

- The text provides a wealth of fascinating information, especially terms (with definitions where necessary), making the whole inscription vivid and memorable.

Artifacts made from these rare materials were valuable economically and their exchange promoted social and political ties among neighbouring populations.

- The concluding sentence suggests the deeper significance of the activity.

## Plaque Sample 2: The Anson Northup Steamboat

The first steamboat on the Red River and the first to reach Fort Garry. Her maiden trip in 1859 proved that steamboat navigation on the Red River was practicable and initiated a new era of economic relations and transportation between the Red River Settlement and the United States. Built at Lafayette, North Dakota by Anson Northup of St. Paul. The machinery, cabin and furniture were transported overland from Crow Wing, Minnesota. Capacity, 50 to 75 tons; width 22 feet; length, 90 feet; engines, 100 horse-power. On her first trip the Anson Northup left Fort Abercrombie on June 6 and reached Fort Garry June 10, 1859, winning for her builder the prize money offered by the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce to the first person to institute steamboat travel on the Red River. Following her maiden trip she was purchased by J. C. Burbank, rebuilt and renamed the Pioneer in 1861. The boat sank at Cook's Creek near Selkirk in the winter of 1861-62, and was dismantled. (166 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

The Anson Northup was the first steamboat on the Red River and the first to reach Fort Garry.

- The text establishes immediately the historical claims for the subject.

Her maiden trip in 1859 proved that steamboat navigation on the Red River was practicable and initiated a new era of economic relations and transportation between the Red River Settlement and the United States.

- The text provides even deeper historical significance for the subject.

Built at Lafayette, North Dakota by Anson Northup of St. Paul, the machinery, cabin and furniture were transported overland from Crow Wing, Minnesota. Capacity, 50 to 75 tons; width 22 feet; length, 90 feet; engines, 100 horse-power.

- The text includes interesting historical facts and names, as well as technical issues that allow for an imaginary sense of the boat.

On her first trip the Anson Northup left Fort Abercrombie on June 6 and reached Fort Garry June 10, 1859, winning for her builder the prize money offered by the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce to the first person to institute steamboat travel on the Red River.

- The text features important dates, place names, as well as an interesting aspect of the inaugural journey – a prize.

Following her maiden trip she was purchased by J. C. Burbank, rebuilt and renamed the Pioneer in 1861.

- A key piece of information about the ship is included for additional historical “colour.”

The boat sank at Cook's Creek near Selkirk in the winter of 1861-62, and was dismantled.

- The demise of the boat concludes the inscription, a rather sad fate, but an important one for anyone wondering what became of the boat.

## Plaque Sample 3: Mandy Mine

In 1916 Mandy Mine became the first productive copper mine in Manitoba. Discovered in 1915 by F.C. Jackson, an engineer with the Hudson Bay Railway, and S.S. Reynolds, an experienced prospector, it was developed by Mandy Mining Co., a subsidiary of Tonopah Mining Co. of Nevada. Using the first diamond drill in Manitoba, the company found an extremely rich ore containing 20% copper, with silver, gold and sulphides. Between 1916 and 1920, over 17,000 tons of ore were transported by horse and wagon to Sturgeon Landing, on barges to The Pas, and by rail to a smelter at Trail, B.C. This brief but spectacular success prompted further exploration and investment in the development of Manitoba's mining potential. (117 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

In 1916 Mandy Mine became the first productive copper mine in Manitoba.

- The text establishes immediately the historical claims for the subject.

Discovered in 1915 by F.C. Jackson, an engineer with the Hudson Bay Railway, and S.S. Reynolds, an experienced prospector, it was developed by Mandy Mining Co., a subsidiary of Tonopah Mining Co. of Nevada.

- Essential facts about the discovery and operation are presented in a clear and concise fashion.

Using the first diamond drill in Manitoba, the company found an extremely rich ore containing 20% copper, with silver, gold and sulphides.

- The sentence provides an interesting claim (first diamond drill), as well as additional information about the mine, using emphatic wording (extremely rich).

Between 1916 and 1920, over 17,000 tons of ore were transported by horse and wagon to Sturgeon Landing, on barges to The Pas, and by rail to a smelter at Trail, B.C.

- The text gives a sense of the size of the operation (17,000 tons), its tenure (1916 to 1920) and most importantly a sense of the scope and nature of this kind of work in the early 20th century (horse and wagon; barges, rail), all the way to Trail. This kind of text appears merely factual but allows readers to develop an imaginative sense of the subject.

This brief but spectacular success prompted further exploration and investment in the development of Manitoba's mining potential.

- Emphatic language (brief, spectacular) engage a reader, which is especially helpful as the conclusion to a plaque inscription. The sentence also suggests a deeper historical significance to the subject (prompted further exploration).

## Plaque Sample 4: Tommy Prince

Manitoba's most-decorated Aboriginal war veteran, Sergeant Tommy Prince of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, was born at Petersfield on October 25, 1915. He enlisted in 1940, and served in the Royal Canadian Engineers, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, and the First Special Service force—part of the famed "Devil's Brigade." For exceptional bravery he received the Military Medal and the Silver Star (U.S.A.). He also received six service medals. Prince served with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry during the Korean War, for which he received the Korean, Canadian Volunteer Service, and United Nations Service medals. In civilian life he was an entrepreneur and a highly-respected advocate of increased educational and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples, and the honouring of treaty and Aboriginal rights. (123 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

Manitoba's most-decorated Aboriginal war veteran, Sergeant Tommy Prince of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, was born at Petersfield on October 25, 1915.

- The opening sentence includes the subject's major historical claim (most-decorated Aboriginal war veteran) as well as key personal information (which must all be double checked for accuracy).

He enlisted in 1940, and served in the Royal Canadian Engineers, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, and the First Special Service force—part of the famed "Devil's Brigade."

- The subject's service experience is noted, with each title providing a tight connection to history.

For exceptional bravery he received the Military Medal and the Silver Star (U.S.A.). He also received six service medals. Prince served with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry during the Korean War, for which he received the Korean, Canadian Volunteer Service, and United Nations Service medals.

- The sentence provides an important litany of titles and numbers that reinforce the level of honour and claims for which the subject is honoured.

In civilian life he was an entrepreneur and a highly-respected advocate of increased educational and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples, and the honouring of treaty and Aboriginal rights.

- The final sentence provides a sense of closure to the subject, in an honourable way.



## Plaque Sample 5: Amelia Yeomans

Amelia Yeomans was one of Winnipeg's first women medical practitioners. She led the early crusades both for temperance and women's suffrage. Born in Lower Canada, she obtained her medical degree at Michigan State University in 1883 and joined her daughter, Dr. Lillian Yeomans, in Winnipeg later that year. Her practice of social medicine among the city's deprived population led her to campaign for much needed reforms to extend social justice. She served as provincial president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1896-97. Yeomans' devotion to the temperance movement motivated her to participate with a group of Manitoba women in the formation of the Equal Franchise Association in 1894. Her activities during the 1880s and 90s paved the way for the success of others in the early decades of the twentieth century. She died in Calgary, Alberta. (137 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

Amelia Yeomans was one of Winnipeg's first women medical practitioners. She led the early crusades both for temperance and women's suffrage.

- The opening two sentences succinctly define the subject's key claims for significance (first women medical practitioners; led the early crusades).

Born in Lower Canada, she obtained her medical degree at Michigan State University in 1883 and joined her daughter, Dr. Lillian Yeomans, in Winnipeg later that year.

- Some basic personal data is provided, which helps readers quickly imagine the trajectory of the subject's life. This kind of data also gives a plaque text an aura of authority.

Her practice of social medicine among the city's deprived population led her to campaign for much needed reforms to extend social justice. She served as provincial president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1896-97. Yeomans' devotion to the temperance movement motivated her to participate with a group of Manitoba women in the formation of the Equal Franchise Association in 1894.

- These three sentences elaborate on the subject's claims for significance, which is often a helpful addition to the basic statement of significance.

Her activities during the 1880s and 90s paved the way for the success of others in the early decades of the twentieth century.

- This sentence suggests the deeper significance of the subject's activity.

She died in Calgary, Alberta.

- The final entry gives closure to the text.

## Plaque Sample 6: A.C. Emmett and the Development of Manitoba's Highways

When A.C. "Ace" Emmett arrived in 1902, Manitoba possessed few passable roads. Railways provided the chief means of transportation, and most automobile owners were concentrated in Winnipeg. Through his work with the Winnipeg Automobile Club and its successor, the Manitoba Motor League, and membership in various road-building associations, Emmett energetically led the movement for the development of a network of highways across the province. Emmett lobbied for the creation of a provincially-funded "Good Roads Program" to help municipalities construct standard market roads. In 1912, Wallace Municipality became the first to participate in this program. Emmett pressed for a system of provincial trunk highways, and in 1923 the first such route was designated. He also originated the idea of numbering highways, which was adopted by the Province in 1926. By the time Ace Emmett died in 1959, dependency on highway transportation had forever altered the land use patterns of Manitoba. (149 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

When A.C. "Ace" Emmett arrived in 1902, Manitoba possessed few passable roads. Railways provided the chief means of transportation, and most automobile owners were concentrated in Winnipeg.

- The text establishes names and dates, as well as a sense of the character of the province's transportation system at the turn of the 20th century.

Through his work with the Winnipeg Automobile Club and its successor, the Manitoba Motor League, and membership in various road-building associations, Emmett energetically led the movement for the development of a network of highways across the province.

- Names of important groups are identified, and the subject's work is defined, in this case even qualified by the adjective "energetically."

Emmett lobbied for the creation of a provincially-funded "Good Roads Program" to help municipalities construct standard market roads.

- Technical terms and titles are noted, providing helpful educational information to readers.

In 1912, Wallace Municipality became the first to participate in this program.

- An important historical claim is included.

Emmett pressed for a system of provincial trunk highways, and in 1923 the first such route was designated.

- The subject's ongoing work is described concisely, along with a date and claims.

He also originated the idea of numbering highways, which was adopted by the Province in 1926.

- An interesting facet is highlighted, again providing helpful educational information to readers.

By the time Ace Emmett died in 1959, dependency on highway transportation had forever altered the land use patterns of Manitoba.

- Emphatic language (forever) engages a reader, which is especially helpful as the conclusion to a plaque inscription. The sentence also suggests a deeper historical significance to the subject (altered land use patterns).

## Plaque Sample 7: Brandon Courthouse and Gaol

Brandon's importance as a major centre in southwestern Manitoba was confirmed when it was selected in 1883 as the headquarters for the newly created Western Judicial District of Manitoba. The Brandon Court House and Gaol was designed by C. Osborn Wickenden, architect of the Winnipeg (1883) and Neepawa (1884) court buildings. The skill of the architect and craftsmen is evident in the fine architectural detailing and intricate brickwork. Officially opened in March 1884, this Italianate-inspired structure is the oldest remaining court house on the Prairies. Completion of this structure ushered in an early stage of substantial government building construction in Manitoba. When the new Brandon Court House opened on Princess Avenue in 1910, this structure was remodelled for gaol facilities. It served as a detention centre in 1979. The gaol was demolished in 1985. The renovated court house is now the Rideau Park Personal Care Home. (146 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

Brandon's importance as a major centre in southwestern Manitoba was confirmed when it was selected in 1883 as the headquarters for the newly created Western Judicial District of Manitoba.

- The text immediately states the site's major connection to historical change, and includes the original name of the district (Western Judicial District) to provide historical "colour."

The Brandon Court House and Gaol was designed by C. Osborn Wickenden, architect of the Winnipeg (1883) and Neepawa (1884) court buildings.

- An important fact—the name of the architect—is featured, along with names of other commissions.

The skill of the architect and craftsmen is evident in the fine architectural detailing and intricate brickwork.

- For those not familiar with architecture (and there are many), this sentence informs and even directs people to places to appreciate the building: detailing and brickwork. Buildings are often subjects of plaque texts, and it is important to bear in mind that readers will usually be unfamiliar with the subject in general, and of course of the specifics of design – it is important that an inscription writer keep these limitations in mind, and help readers at least minimally to understand the issues.

Officially opened in March 1884, this Italianate-inspired structure is the oldest remaining court house on the Prairies.

- This dense sentence provides several rewards to a reader, including dates and claims (oldest remaining), as well as the name of the architectural style that the architect chose for the building.

Completion of this structure ushered in an early stage of substantial government building construction in Manitoba.

- Additional historical claims are elucidated.

When the new Brandon Court House opened on Princess Avenue in 1910, this structure was remodelled for gaol facilities. It served as a detention centre in 1979. The gaol was demolished in 1985. The renovated court house is now the Rideau Park Personal Care Home.

- Given that the complex has changed so much, it is essential that these last two sentences are provided, so that plaque readers are not confused by what they will see in front of them.

## Plaque Sample 8: Inglis Grain Elevator Row

Grain elevators are Prairie icons, powerful, stately reminders of our agricultural history. Almost every Manitoba community had at least one, and large centres often boasted a whole set, lined up along the rail track. The five elevators in Inglis are remarkable. They are not only the last example in Manitoba of an elevator row, they are also the best remaining example in Canada. In fact, in 1996 the line was declared a site of national historic significance. Built over the course of forty years, during the "Golden Age" of grain elevator construction (1900–1940), the Inglis elevators are a virtual textbook case of Manitoba's elevator history. They represent the full range of ownership types: from the large Canadian and American-backed companies, the smaller family-owned concerns, to farmer co-operatives. They also have survived largely unaltered, each boasting intact internal workings. (139 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

Grain elevators are Prairie icons, powerful, stately reminders of our agricultural history. Almost every Manitoba community had at least one, and large centres often boasted a whole set, lined up along the rail track.

- This energetic sentence (with words like icons, powerful, stately, boasted) sets the stage for the subject, providing a sense of how these kinds of buildings once defined communities.

The five elevators in Inglis are remarkable. They are not only the last example in Manitoba of an elevator row, they are also the best remaining example in Canada. In fact, in 1996 the line was declared a site of national historic significance.

- The shift to the site under question helps focus the reader, and then provides the impressive claims that are identified. These kinds of claims will have to be the result of careful research.

Built over the course of forty years, during the "Golden Age" of grain elevator construction (1900–1940), the Inglis elevators are a virtual textbook case of Manitoba's elevator history. They represent the full range of ownership types: from the large Canadian and American-backed companies, the smaller family-owned concerns, to farmer co-operatives.

- Helpful dates and terms are included here, with the latter providing a sense of authority to the plaque (Golden Age, full range), clearly suggesting to readers the deeper research that has allowed the plaque to be developed.

They also have survived largely unaltered, each boasting intact internal workings.

- A final notable point is included, suggesting an important claim as visitors continue to explore the site, which in this case includes the opportunity to look inside the buildings.

## Plaque Sample 9: Kildonan School (Nisbet Hall)

This building was erected by the Presbyterian parishioners of Kildonan under the active supervision of their minister, James Nisbet. Known as Kildonan School, this simple stone structure was opened on July 12, 1865. It featured a main room accommodating up to 80 pupils and a smaller back room for special classes in advanced subjects. In 1871 the first Manitoba College classes met here while awaiting the completion of the separate college building. In later years it became the home of the Kildonan Literary Society and the centre for many community and social functions. Closed and abandoned in 1905, the building was renovated in 1919 and Nisbet Hall, as it came to be known, served as a parish meeting place until vacated in 1969. The building was moved to its present site in 1987 and restored as a part of Kildonan Presbyterian Church. (142 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

It is important to note that the building has been given two names in its title – Kildonan School and Nisbet Hall. Where buildings have a few common historical names, it is a good idea to consider including at least two, to help readers understand the historical evolution of the site.

This building was erected by the Presbyterian parishioners of Kildonan under the active supervision of their minister, James Nisbet.

- The opening sentence establishes key names and subjects, and helpfully qualifies the leader of the operation, by the term “active supervision.”

Known as Kildonan School, this simple stone structure was opened on July 12, 1865.

- The site name is provided, along with a key date. The sentence also includes a key reference to the architecture of the building, helping plaque readers to appreciate its simple nature.

It featured a main room accommodating up to 80 pupils and a smaller back room for special classes in advanced subjects.

- In this instance, plaque readers will not be able to enter the building, and so a brief description of the interior is provided, to allow for a modest imaginative rendering.

In 1871 the first Manitoba College classes met here while awaiting the completion of the separate college building. In later years it became the home of the Kildonan Literary Society and the centre for many community and social functions.

- Additional claims are noted, helping to reinforce its sense of historical importance.

Closed and abandoned in 1905, the building was renovated in 1919 and Nisbet Hall, as it came to be known, served as a parish meeting place until vacated in 1969. The building was moved to its present site in 1987 and restored as a part of Kildonan Presbyterian Church.

- The ongoing life of this old building is explained in a clear and concise fashion.

## Plaque Sample 10: St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church

This, the oldest remaining Ukrainian Catholic church in Canada, was constructed in 1898. The Ukrainian pioneers who built it arrived in the Valley River area in 1896. They persuaded Father Nestor Dmytriw, editor of the American newspaper *Svoboda*, to visit them while on a Canadian tour, and it was here that he conducted the first Ukrainian Catholic mass in Canada. That mass, celebrated in the spring of 1897, was held in a home at what is now called the Cross of Freedom Site. Father Dmytriw encouraged the congregation to build a church, which they did the following year. St. Michael's is architecturally modest. Built of logs and covered with wooden siding, it's very small, measuring only 4 by 5 metres (12 by 15 feet). However, the interior is a remarkable example of Byzantine-style icon painting and decoration. The church, which has been threatened over the years by rural road development, has been moved twice, finally finding this safe haven through the dedication of local heritage enthusiasts. (166 words)

### Commentary and Analysis

This, the oldest remaining Ukrainian Catholic church in Canada, was constructed in 1898.

- The opening sentence immediately states the significance of the subject. This kind of emphatic claim (oldest) needs to be rigorously checked.

The Ukrainian pioneers who built it arrived in the Valley River area in 1896. They persuaded Father Nestor Dmytriw, editor of the American newspaper *Svoboda*, to visit them while on a Canadian tour, and it was here that he conducted the first Ukrainian Catholic mass in Canada. That mass, celebrated in the spring of 1897, was held in a home at what is now called the Cross of Freedom Site.

- Another notable historical claim that has relevance to the primary subject of the plaque is also included and succinctly described.

Father Dmytriw encouraged the congregation to build a church, which they did the following year.

- This necessary sentence brings the text back to the primary subject – the church building.

St. Michael's is architecturally modest. Built of logs and covered with wooden siding, it's very small, measuring only 4 by 5 metres (12 by 15 feet).

- A brief entry on the building's architectural qualities is provided. This particular building is modest, and the text does not avoid that fact, in fact emphasizing and celebrating it with measurements that help readers appreciate how tiny it is. Note that Imperial and Metric measurements are included, a recognition that plaque readers may have two different educational experiences with these kinds of numbers.

However, the interior is a remarkable example of Byzantine-style icon painting and decoration.

- The claims for the interior architectural qualities are provided, which are essential given that readers of the plaque will not likely have access to the church.

The church, which has been threatened over the years by rural road development, has been moved twice, finally finding this safe haven through the dedication of local heritage enthusiasts.

- The final sentence succinctly sums up the current situation of the building, and acknowledges the kind of volunteer effort required for good heritage conservation.