

# Renewed Loni Beach Residents' Association highlighting the community

By Patricia Barrett

The Loni Beach Residents' Association is up and running again after a quiet spell, and its new executive is planning to highlight some of the unique features of the neighbourhood, which lies on Gimli's northern edge.

Salim Guttormsson, who led a project to restore the gravesite of Fridrika Bjornsdottir (who may possibly be an Icelandic princess), was president of the Association about a decade ago and has returned to the helm this year.

"It is a very distinct, quaint neighbourhood with an eclectic mix of people," said Guttormsson, who owns a cottage in the community. "There's nothing commercial in Loni beach. It's all residential."

She has set up a Facebook page to help residents get acquainted with one another and to share interesting stories and concerns.

"There's been a lot of movement in Loni Beach over the last couple years with new owners who may not be aware of the Association and what we do," said Guttormsson. "We're a contact point with the municipality, bringing items of concern to their attention."

The Association held a membership drive during the September long weekend and is thinking about setting up a free community library next year, which may be located at the tennis courts. It is also planning to hold a Loni Beach bicycle parade next year followed by a potluck to bring the neighbours together.

The Facebook page will also help residents discover some unique features of the neighbourhood, which includes a few heritage cottages with storied histories.

One of those is the Hamilton cottage at 40 North Lake. It is said to be the site of séances in which Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1921-1930, 1935-1948), who believed in spiritualism, may have taken part.

"This is one of these things that a lot of people just don't know about, or they did and they forgot," said Guttormsson. "It actually came back on



Salim Guttormsson is president of the Loni Beach Residents' Association.

my radar when the cottage was up for sale."

Thomas Glendenning Hamilton (1873-1935) was a medical doctor and member of the Manitoba legislature who believed in spiritualism and conducted paranormal investigations at his Winnipeg home and Loni beach cottage.

The Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee's history of Loni Beach dwellings notes that the cottage, built sometime after 1910, may have been the site of séances.

"It is said that strange noises emanate from the cottage on weekends," states the pamphlet.

"I was kind of laughing when I read that," said Guttormsson. "In that respect it's probably no different from the majority of cottages in Loni Beach on the weekends!"

Steve Schwartz's family bought the



EXPRESS PHOTOS BY PATRICIA BARRETT

The Hamilton cottage at 40 North Lake in Loni Beach, north of Gimli is one of the heritage homes with a storied history that Loni Beach Residents' Association are hoping to highlight.

cottage in 1961 and spent every summer there when he was a boy.

"It was the claim to fame for that cottage," said Schwartz, who lives in Winnipeg. "The Hamiltons owned it and they were friendly with Mackenzie King, and he used to come and have séances with him there."

Schwartz's bedroom in the attic was reputedly the site of Hamilton's paranormal research, but he said he never experienced anything unusual.

"I never felt spirits there or anything like that," he laughed. "I would not say that place is possessed or haunted or visited in any way, but I'd like to be able to tell a tale like that."

Although Schwartz's family sold the cottage in 2008, his uncle still owns the cottage next door and he and his family visit Loni whenever they can.

"The area is really quite unique," he said. "I have a great love for Lake

of the Woods, but there's something about Lake Winnipeg that's completely unlike anything else. It draws us, that's for sure."


Visit the Loni Beach Residents' Association Facebook page: Loni Beachers: the Loni Beach Residents' Association (LBRA) or its website at [www.lonibeach.org](http://www.lonibeach.org). Email [lonibeachers@gmail.com](mailto:lonibeachers@gmail.com) for more information about the association.

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