

Central Parks

Duff Roblin Provincial Park



Introduction

Situated at the Red River Floodway Inlet Control Structure, approximately four kilometers south of the Winnipeg Perimeter off PTH 75, Duff Roblin Provincial Park commemorates two visionary achievements attained during Mr. Roblin's tenure as Manitoba's Premier. These are the construction of a flood control system for the city of Winnipeg and establishment of a province-wide system of provincial parks.

Development of park facilities is underway. Facilities are expected to be available for public use in April 2011. The park will accommodate year round recreational use and educate the public about the Red River, the legacy of Duff Roblin, and the historical engineering achievement that is the Floodway System.

The Honourable Duff Roblin,
P.C., C.C., LL.D.

Duff Roblin was born in Winnipeg in 1917, the grandson of Sir Rodmond Palen Roblin, Conservative Premier of Manitoba, 1900-1915. Educated at the universities of Manitoba and Chicago, Roblin served overseas with the Royal Canadian Airforce, retiring in 1946 as Wing Commander. He was elected to the Manitoba Legislature as an Independent Progressive Conservative in 1949, challenging the coalition government of Premier Douglas Campbell.

Roblin became Leader of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party in 1954 and Premier of Manitoba in 1958, after defeating Campbell in a provincial election. Like Sir John A. Macdonald, Roblin advocated an active government role in social reform. During his terms of office (1958-67), Manitoba was transformed as provincial parks were created and highways built and upgraded. Urban renewal was promoted and a metropolitan form of government for Winnipeg and adjacent suburbs introduced. Hospitals and welfare agencies were modernized, and education was dramatically improved through school consolidation and expanded post-secondary institutions. Northern hydroelectric power and mining projects were launched, and advisory agencies established to assist private economic development.

Re-elected in 1959, 1962, and 1966, Roblin resigned as premier in 1967 to contest, unsuccessfully, the national Progressive Conservative Party leadership. He returned to private life, and was appointed to the Senate in 1978. He served in the federal cabinet as government leader in the Senate 1984-86, retiring from that body in 1992.



Duff Roblin, centre, on bulldozer at the start of work on the Floodway, 1962
(Photo Library Collection) Manitoba Archives

The Red River Floodway

Intended to prevent a repetition of flooding in Winnipeg, such as the disastrous Red River Flood of 1950, the floodway was a federal-provincial project built at a cost of \$63 million. It supplements a system of permanent dikes along the Red and Assiniboine rivers constructed in the early 1950s. Begun by the Duff Roblin government in 1962 and completed in 1968, the floodway, Portage Diversion, and Shellmouth Dam and Reservoir were principal recommendations of the REPORT of the ROYAL COMMISSION on FLOOD COST BENEFIT in 1958.

Now popularly known as "Duff's Ditch," the floodway channel extends 47 kilometres from St. Norbert to Lockport and allows for the diversion of water around Winnipeg. The largest

excavation project in Canada, it required removal of 76.5 million cubic metres of earth and accommodation or relocation of the aqueduct, highways, power and railway lines. In 1997, the floodway was tested to near 75 per cent capacity.



Duff Roblin and son on bulldozer at the start of work on the Floodway, 1962
(Winnipeg Free Press Collection) Manitoba Archives

Manitoba's provincial park system



School tour of the Spirit Sands, Spruce Woods Provincial Park

The Manitoba Provincial Park System evolved over the last century due to the foresight of individuals who recognized the need to protect natural landscapes. Initially, the pioneers of the system set aside forest reserves, many of which are major parks today.

As the network of roads expanded and the population increased, recreational development became a prime focus. In 1960, the Manitoba Government led by Premier Duff Roblin passed

The Provincial Parks Act to guide the creation and management of provincial parks. Over the next four decades, the size, scope and diversity of the park system grew rapidly.



Interpretive hike in Whiteshell Provincial Park

Today, Manitoba's parks represent a variety of spectacular natural landscapes and unique features that offer a wide range of recreational opportunities. Manitobans can be proud of the significant legacy created by the vision of a few for the enjoyment of many.

Unique and hidden treasures



Prairie crocus, Manitoba's provincial floral emblem, is found in Birds Hill, Beaudry, Spruce Woods and Whiteshell provincial parks.

Manitoba's Provincial Park System features many attractions of natural, historical and cultural significance. For example, the Bannock Point Petroforms in the Whiteshell are ancient rock formations created by the ancestors of the Anishinabe in southeastern Manitoba. Their spiritual importance continues to this day.

In the Interlake, commercial fishing nets are set and popular fish fry events are held in the turn-of-the-century Icelandic fishing village at Hecla. The Red River links many historic sites from St. Norbert to Lockport. One of these sites is the Kennedy House tea room and museum with its classic English garden.



Commercial fishing demonstration at Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park

Pisew Falls in northern Manitoba is one of the most photographed sites in the province. In the west, the Spirit Sands of Spruce Woods features shifting dunes, pincushion cacti and northern prairie skink, Manitoba's only lizard.

With nearly four million hectares to explore in Manitoba's parks, there is always something new and fascinating to experience.



Beach, Birds Hill Provincial Park

