

Stephen Family in South Beach

Written by Jeff and Doug Stephen, August 2020



John and Jean Stephen



Jean and John Stephen purchased an unoccupied farmhouse at the south east corner of Benedict Avenue and Anna (formerly Akra St) from Benedict Jonasson (Ref. p. 116, *Gimli Saga*) for \$500 in 1932.



The area would soon become known as South Beach. At the time John did not think they could afford the place when they first saw it, but Jean had been secretly saving her oldest son's (George) room and board and paid for the place in cash.

As was the historical practice at the time the name they gave their new cottage was *Dorrery Lodge*, after a residence in the Scottish Highlands that Jean worked at as a young girl.



Spring opening at Dorrery Lodge, North East view

From then on they would come up from Winnipeg and spend their weekends and summers, enjoying the area and watching it grow along with their eight kids, who also brought out friends and eventually their spouses and subsequent families. And so it began, the growth and interest of the Stephen family in South Beach, Gimli now spanning five generations.



Stephen clan in the yard of Dorrery Lodge, East view

Children of John Stephen & his wife Jean Cormack:

George m. Grace Murphy
Elizabeth (Bette) m. Syd Donovan
Arthur (Art) m. Jeanne Hayes
Jessie m. Stanley (Stan) Murphy (Grace's brother)
James (Jim) m. Beth Tibbs
William (Bill) m. Joyce Roberts
Bruce m. Jean Durnon
Wallace (Wally) m. Shirley Dickie



Playing horseshoes on the lane, North view

The original *Dorrery Lodge* was taken down in 1986 due to age and condition. In 1987 a new *Dorrery Lodge* was built and remains in the same place today at 22 Benedict.



The 'new' Dorrery Lodge



The J Stephen Park (corner of Anna & Howard) is named in John and Jean's honour. The annual picnic of the South Beach Property Owners Association is held there every summer. A lovely picnic pavilion was added recently.



New Pavilion



Annual Picnic races



Allan Stephen (left), grandson of Jean and John



Some of the Stephen family descendants, 2019



How the Stephen / Murphy family connections came to be

The connection started before Gimli – both the Stephen and Murphy families (and the Pennycooks) attended Old St. Andrews Church in downtown Winnipeg on Elgin Ave. In the 1930s the church had a very active youth group called ‘Young Peoples’ and the Stephen and Murphy kids all knew each other there – in the summer many of them would all go down to Gimli to get out of the city. This is how Jessie Stephen first met Stan, how George Stephen first met Grace, and how Eileen Murphy first met Rod Pennycook!

John and Jean bought a lot on the north side of 3rd Avenue (maybe early 1950s?) and moved a building to it and called the cottage *Thurso* (the main town in Caithness, Scotland where Jean grew up). Also, they bought 2 buildings and moved them to the south half of their 1-acre *Dorrery*

Lodge lot. One was a tiny 1-room cottage affectionately named *The Nook*. The other somewhat large cottage was named *Rothiemay* (a town in Aberdeenshire Scotland near where John grew up). For years they rented out all 3 of these cottages in the summer, often to some of the younger Murphy kids.



Over time, Jean & John sold *Thurso* and gave *Rothiemay* to their son Jim and *The Nook* to son Wallace. Art & Jean had a lakefront cottage in Boundary Park (Winnipeg Beach).

Jessie & Stan moved 2 surplus wartime houses from the University of Manitoba campus to 2 lots immediately north of *Dorrery Lodge* on Benedict Avenue. The corner cottage was called *Monymusk* (another Aberdeenshire town from John's youth) and the other was called *Jesta* (even back in the 1950s, couples made a new moniker from combining their names, Jessie & Stan!). Jessie and Stan lived in Jamaica

and came back to Gimli every 2nd summer, staying at *Monymusk*. In between, *Monymusk* was rented out.

Stan & Grace Murphy's mother Doris was widowed in 1957 and from then on she spent the summer months at *Jesta* until her death in the 1980s. So, the Stephen and Murphy parents/grandparents lived across the street from each other for years, thus cementing the Stephen/Murphy family's closeness.



Doris at Jesta

Elizabeth 'Bette' and husband Syd moved away to Vancouver after World War 2. Bill moved away to Calgary in his early 20s. Bruce was not in the area as he moved around frequently. Wallace moved away to Alberta and sold *The Nook* to Jim & Beth. When Jim died in the 1990s, *Rothiemay* and *The Nook* were sold, as his children lived out of the province.

Because of the double marriage of the eldest children (Jessie/Stan and George/Grace) the families were very close to John & Jean. While many of the Stephen children moved away, all 5 Murphy sisters had cottages or lots around *Dorrery Lodge*:

- Isabel & husband Bud Harman owned the lot at the SW corner of Benedict & Anna.
- Fran & husband Ernie Thompson had a cottage immediately east of *Jesta*.
- Jean & husband Cecil French owned the cottage *Galway Bay* (28 Benedict) immediately east of *Dorrery Lodge*.
- Eileen & husband Rod Pennycook built a cottage at the SE corner of Anna & Ethel (Kathleen Pennycook & Ken Coe's home today)
- Grace & husband George Stephen had their cottage – *The Baltimore* – at 5 Hansson Ave. When they had a new cottage built in the 1970s, the original cottage was moved to Isabel & Bud's lot.

Moneymusk, *Jesta*, and Fran & Ernie's cottage have all been demolished and that land is now Rick & Patty Harman's home at 27 Benedict Ave.



The next generations:

Kate Stephen (George & Grace were her great grandparents)
Evelyn Seow (George & Grace were her great grandparents) with her
grandfather Doug Stephen (son of George & Grace) at J. Stephen Park

Jean and John would both be proud of the legacy they created, that of many happy families now enjoying the beautiful area of South Beach, Gimli, Manitoba.

Addendum 2026:

I had a magical life there, my 3 grandparents playing cribbage with me almost every day in the summer, my two grammas baking cinnamon buns and bread (Gramma Murphy) and raisin scones and rhubarb pie (Gramma Stephen) that I always seemed to get the the majority of. Coupled with having 6 aunts and uncles with cottages right there and up to 40 cousins when we had family reunions, I was never without something to do.

Doug Stephen