

Flood of memories

Exhibit submerges St. Vital in 1950 history

JASON HALSTEAD
Winnipeg Sun

A new display is sure to bring memories flooding back for longtime St. Vital residents.

The St. Vital Historical Society is hosting the grand opening May 29 for its new exhibit looking back on the flood of 1950 that hit the Winnipeg neighbourhood particularly hard.

The exhibit features more than 70 photos, including a picture published at the time in *Life* magazine, and other artifacts from the flood.

"People are amazed when they see the photos," said Bob Holliday, president of the society and its St. Mary's Road museum. "The younger people have never seen the water like this and some have never heard of the 1950 flood. For the older people who lived through it, the photos bring back a lot of memories, good and bad."

Holliday, a former *Winnipeg Sun* reporter, was eight when the floodwaters abruptly rose on May 2, 1950 around his family's Sadler Avenue home along the Seine River.

"We were surrounded," he said.

Holliday and family members were taken from their home in the middle of the night by police boat as more than 20,000 people evacuated

St. Vital in four days. They were part of 70,000 people who fled their homes across the city.

The photos in the display were collected from area residents and show flooded-out streets and homes (including Holliday's), the flood-fighting effort, and more lighthearted scenes.

"When you're eight years old, it's just fun ... We'd get our homemade rafts out and away we'd go."

Historian Bob Holliday

"When you're eight years old, it's just fun," Holliday said. "We'd get our homemade rafts out and away we'd go. If you did that during a flood now people would call the police."

The Hollidays' water-damaged house was raised four feet after the flood with the addition of a new basement. Holliday's father, Herb, was a constable with the St. Vital police force and worked guarding temporary dikes.

As part of Doors Open Winnipeg, the society will officially open the exhibit and host a pancake breakfast from 10 a.m. to noon on May 29.

The museum is located in the St. Vital Fire Hall at 600 St. Mary's Rd. The fire hall itself played a key role during the 1950 flood as it was one of the few developed spots in St. Vital not flooded, and was used as a command centre.

For more information, visit the historical society's website at www.svhs.ca.

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JASON HALSTEAD/WINNIPEG SUN (ABOVE), HANDOUT (BELOW)



ABOVE: St. Vital Historical Society president Bob Holliday holds a photo of his childhood home as it looked during the 1950 flood. LEFT: An image from the exhibit shows the corner of St. Anne's Road and Fermoer Avenue under water.

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