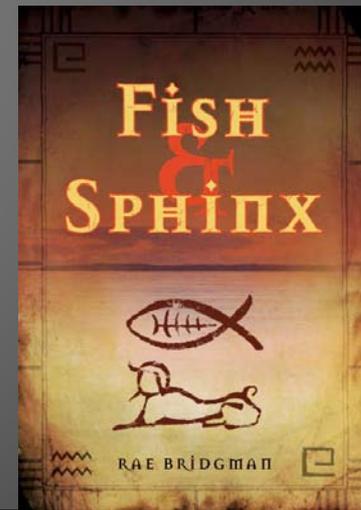
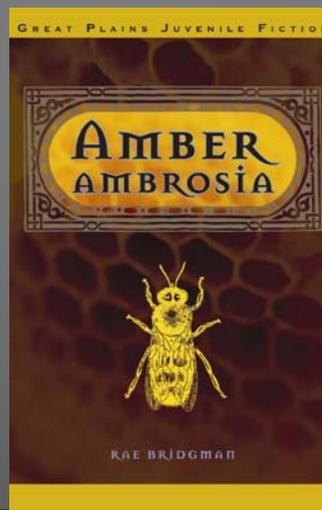
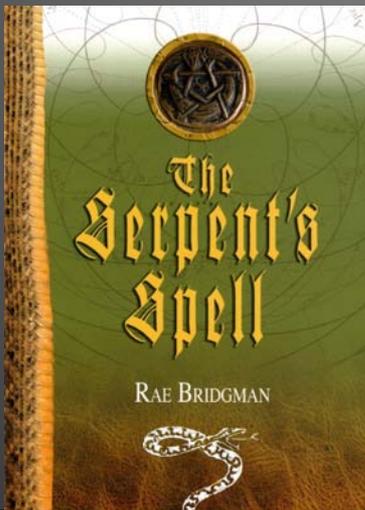
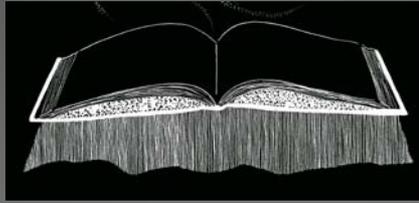


The MiddleGate Books

by Rae Bridgman

A Magical Literary Tour





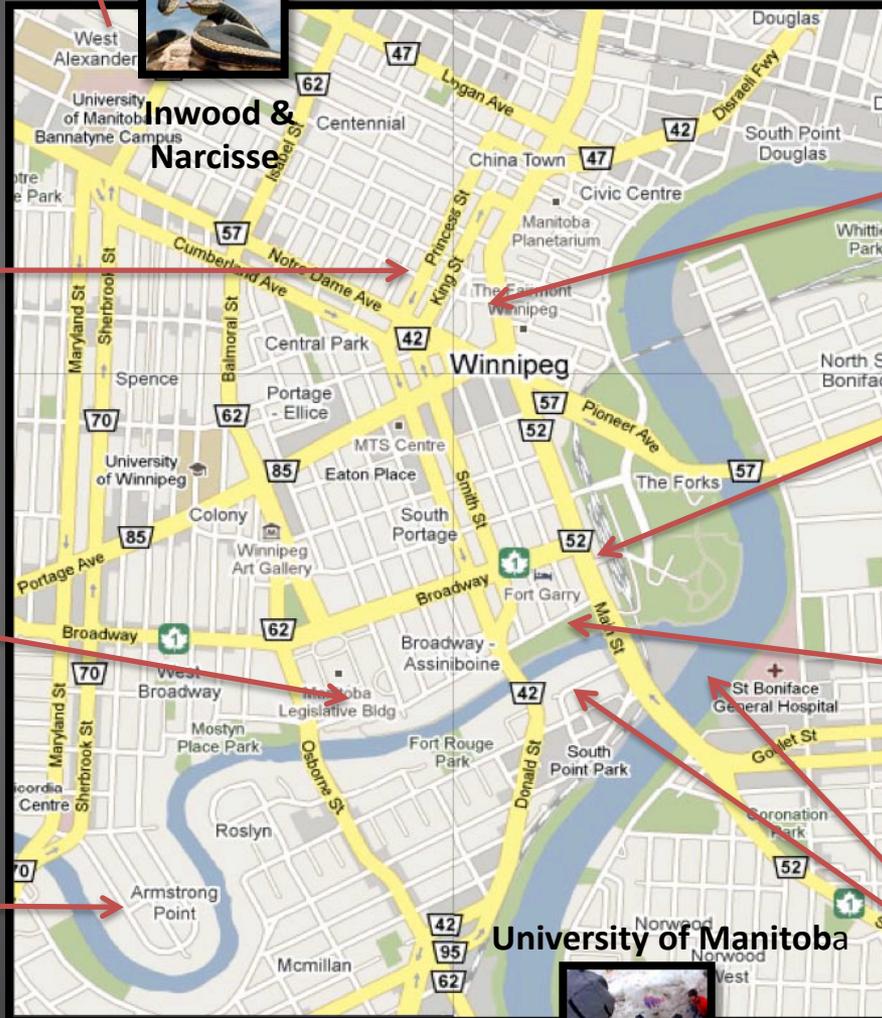
MiddleGate's Hidden Secrets

Home to cousins Wil and Sophie, MiddleGate is a magical community found within the pages of The MiddleGate Books. Find the REAL places in Manitoba inspiring the MAGICAL places of MiddleGate!

Discover architectural wonders and city sights. Scandal and mystery. See Winnipeg as never before, through the eyes of Canada's well-known children's fantasy author and illustrator Rae Bridgman.

Take the tour!

Winnipeg Map



Inwood & Narcisse



Kelly House
'The Magical Portal'
88 Adelaide St.



Manitoba Legislative Building
('Palace of the Blazing Star')



Middle Gate



460 Main St.



Union Station
123 Main St.



Fort Garry Place
55 Garry St.



Assiniboine & Red Rivers

Map source: Google Maps



Middle Gate



Photo by Rae Bridgman

The secret, magical community of MiddleGate is inspired by the street name of Middle Gate, located in the Winnipeg neighbourhood of Armstrong Point, and flanked by East Gate and West Gate. Tucked into a bend of the Assiniboine River, this beautiful neighbourhood is surrounded on three sides by water, and is well-known for its elm-lined streets and stately mansions. The land was once owned by the Hudson Bay Company; most of the homes were built between 1882 and 1920. Much of the historic sensibility of this time period has been preserved. Lovely stone and iron gates grace each of the three streets that lead into the community. Though they are always left open now, they used to be closed nightly, insulating the neighbourhood from the rest of the city.

Middle Gate



Map of Middle Gate, with Grunion Square and Gruffud's Academy (by Rae Bridgman)



MiddleGate Portal: 88 Adelaide St.



Photo by Rae Bridgman

At this address sits a small historic home known as the Kelly House. The building sits on the edge of Winnipeg's Exchange District, a 30-block district that showcases North America's most extensive turn-of-the-twentieth-century architecture. The district is also home to the city's lively arts community.

The Kelly House has a brick exterior and was built in the ornate Queen Anne style. Construction by Michael Kelly began in 1882. The Kelly family owned a prosperous construction business that was involved with the building of the Shoal Lake Aqueduct and Winnipeg's Law Courts, Boyd Building as well as the Manitoba Legislative Building. The family's reputation was tarnished by scandal in 1915, when it was learned that the Kelly family were being overpaid on the construction costs of the Legislative Building. Thomas Kelly, the

MiddleGate Portal: 88 Adelaide St.

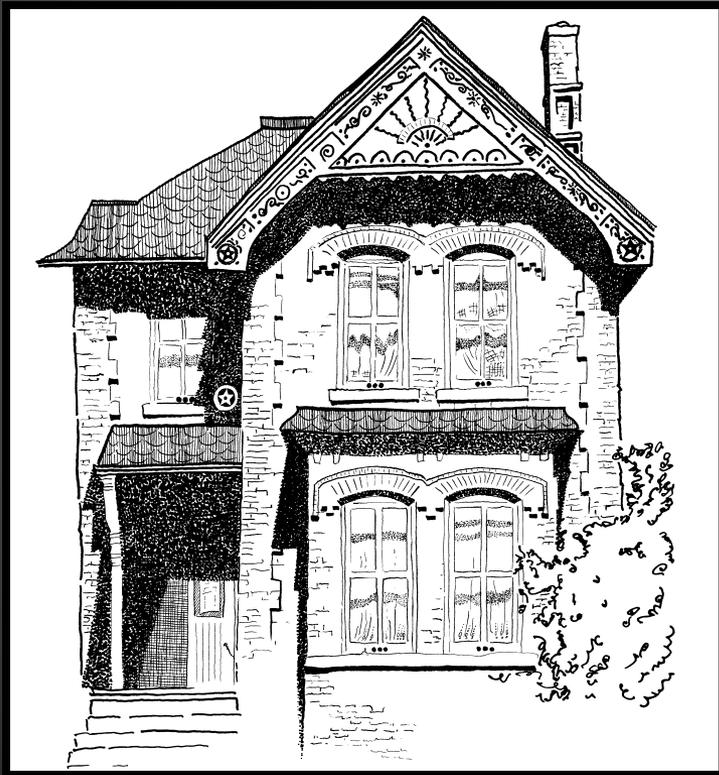


Illustration by Rae Bridgman

president of the company at the time, fled to the United States where he was caught. He was convicted to serve a two-and-a-half year sentence in Stony Mountain Penitentiary for perjury and embezzlement, to the tune of \$1,400,000 – an astronomical sum in those days.

The Kelly House was also home to James H. Cadham, a prominent architect. He looked after the building operations of many well-known buildings in the Exchange District, including the J.H. Ashdown Warehouse. While Adelaide was once a prestigious street, the area has experienced decline that is still visible today.

MiddleGate Portal: 88 Adelaide St.



Photo by Rae Bridgman

"...the bus jolted along a side street pitted with potholes until it turned into a large, deserted parking lot by a brick house. It seemed to be the only house in the area, surrounded by a sea of parking lots dotted with warehouses. A rising sunburst decorated the peak of the house and a five-pointed star graced each corner.

The bus turned to face a brick wall at the back of the house. A faded mural on the wall featured an enormous box of Black Mirror chocolates, and underneath in peeling letters the words, Satisfy Every Sweet Desire. The wall had gaping cracks and was missing chunks of mortar. Faded pink insulation poked out from a stovepipe hole, beneath which there was a green door with a small brass doorknob.

The bus driver got up from the seat, stepped out of the bus and inserted an ornate key into one of the chocolates. Then he clambered back onto the bus. The bus jerked forward, its engine chortling. The box of chocolates began to melt away. Wil blinked his eyes. The bus was driving...right... through...the...wall." (The Serpent's Spell, pp. 22 – 23)

Manitoba Legislature (‘The Palace of the Blazing Star’)



“The building was designed by architects Frank Worthington Simon and Henry Boddingtons III,’ said the guide and she cleared her throat. ‘Can everyone hear me? You may want to move a little closer. The acoustics in the hall tend to swallow voices up. Now, this building is practically at the very centre of North America – only 18 miles or 29 kilometres from the longitudinal centre of North America actually. Construction on the Legislative Building began in 1913 and continued until 1920. The original cost of the building was to have been \$2.3 million and it actually ended up costing \$19 million.’

‘Did you hear that?’ whispered Wil to Sophie. ‘Nineteen million. I wonder how much it would cost to build now.’

‘You may be interested to know that the replacement value of the Building is now estimated to be over one billion dollars,’ said the guide.” (Fish & Sphinx, p. 109)

Manitoba Legislature



Photo by Rae Bridgman

Image source: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/images/legfrost.jpg> (6 March 2010)

Manitoba Legislature



Photo by Scott McCullough

Manitoba Legislative Building seen against the night sky, with a new crescent moon and Venus clearly visible.

Manitoba Legislature



Image source: <http://vigilantcitizen.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/clear-golden-boy.jpg>

The Golden Boy

Designed by Charles Gardet, and built in France, the Golden Boy has graced the top of the Manitoba Legislature since 1918. Its journey to Manitoba was not an easy one. While in France, it was almost destroyed during a bombing in the First World War. When the statue made out to sea on its way to Canada, soldiers commandeered the ship on which it was being transported. The ship was forced to travel many miles in hostile waters. Standing at 5.25 metres (17 feet), the statue eventually reached its final destination unharmed. The Golden Boy has become one of the most beloved icons of the Province. Rich in symbolism, he holds a torch in his right hand, as a call to young people to join in the pursuit of a prosperous future.

Manitoba Legislature



Illustration by Rae Bridgman

The Golden Boy

“The statue of the Golden Boy atop the Palace of the Blazing Star’s great dome basked in the fire glow of the setting sun – torch soaring high in his right hand and golden grain splayed in the curve of his left arm. The Golden Boy could have been Hermes himself, that ancient messenger of the gods, if his feet had been graced with winged sandals. Resolutely facing the North Star, the Golden Boy’s gaze followed the winding path of the river’s muddy water northward.

Far below the statue, on a large, flat rock by the riverbank, huddled a woman. Her bare and muddied feet kicked idly at the darkening waters...”
(*Fish & Sphinx*, pp. 1 – 2)

Manitoba Legislature



Photo by Rae Bridgman

Sphinxes

The sphinxes, one facing east and the other west, are only two of many stone statues atop the Legislature Building. The building's statues reflect a variety of Roman, Greek, and Egyptian influences.

Manitoba Legislature

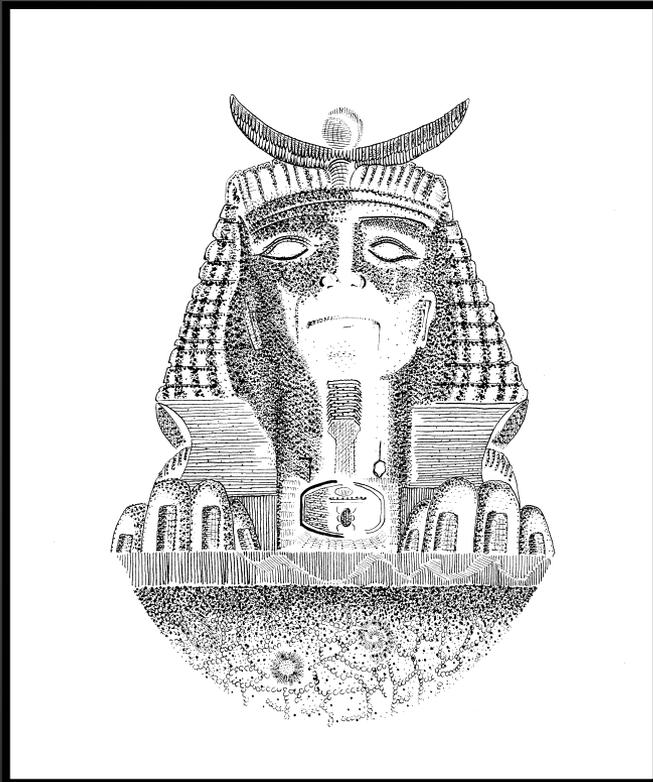


Illustration by Rae Bridgman

Sphinxes

“And not a stone’s throw from them, the two massive stone Sphinxes crouched – one looked to the East, and the other to the West. A large serpent ornamented the front of each of the Sphinxes’ head–cloths. Wil’s heart surged at the sight of their enormous paws, their sharp claws and long, thick tails curling over their great haunches.

‘The Sphinxes,’ whispered Sophie.

‘Can you believe it?’ said Wil. ‘We’re actually on the roof, and the Sphinxes are right...they’re right there! We can touch them if we – ’” (Fish & Sphinx, p. 169)

Manitoba Legislature



Image source: <http://img231.imageshack.us/img231/7904/800pxpoolblackstar.jpg>

Pool of the Black Star

Centrally located in on the main floor of the Legislative Building, this circular room is very grand. Bordered by stone columns, the room's focal point is the black eight-pointed star carved in marble at the very centre of the chamber. This star is believed to represent the underworld. When standing on the star one can look up through a circular hole and see the building's high domed ceiling, 74 metres (243 feet) above.



Photo by Rae Bridgman

Manitoba Legislature



Image Source: <http://img231.imageshack.us/img231/7904/800pxpoolblackstar.jpg>

Pool of the Black Star

“The guide led them down a set of stairs to a large, circular, low-ceilinged chamber – the Pool of the Black Star. In the very middle of the floor was a black eight-pointed star.

‘The acoustics here in the middle of the star are quite special,’ said the tour guide. ‘If you stand in the middle of the star and sing, you can hear the sound throughout the whole building. It echoes and reverberates in quite a special way. Would you like to try?’ she asked, looking at Beatriz.

Beatriz threw back her head and shouted ‘ECH-O-O-O!’

The word funneled up through the circular opening in the ceiling to the great dome above, rebounded back down and echoed in the chamber of the Pool of the Black Star” (Fish & Sphinx, 112).

Red & Assiniboine Rivers



Image source: <http://www.areavoices.com/renewnd/?blog=64425>

Two major rivers run through Winnipeg. They are the Red, which runs from the South to the North, and the Assiniboine River, which runs East to West. The rivers meet in the city's downtown. This is the site where Winnipeg's settlement first began; it was historically used as a busy trading post. Today, the Forks Market, a bustling tourist attraction and meeting place, has developed around this important site. During the winter months in recent years, the rivers have been transformed into a popular (and the world's longest!) skating path and outdoor hockey rink.



Image source: <http://www.destinationwinnipeg.ca>

Red & Assiniboine Rivers



Photo by Rae Bridgman

“The four children walked slowly along the crazed, dried muddy flats of the river’s shoreline, hunting for unusual stones or bits of coloured glass. Wil was glad of the fresh air, for it seemed to vanquish his grim thoughts from the night before. He squatted by the side of the river, took off his gloves and dipped his hands in the muddy water. It was colder than he had imagined. He shivered and quickly shook his hands dry. As he did so, he thought he saw a ripple nearby. Something had broken the surface of the water.

‘Did you see that?’ he asked.” (Fish & Sphinx, pp. 51 – 52)

Main Street



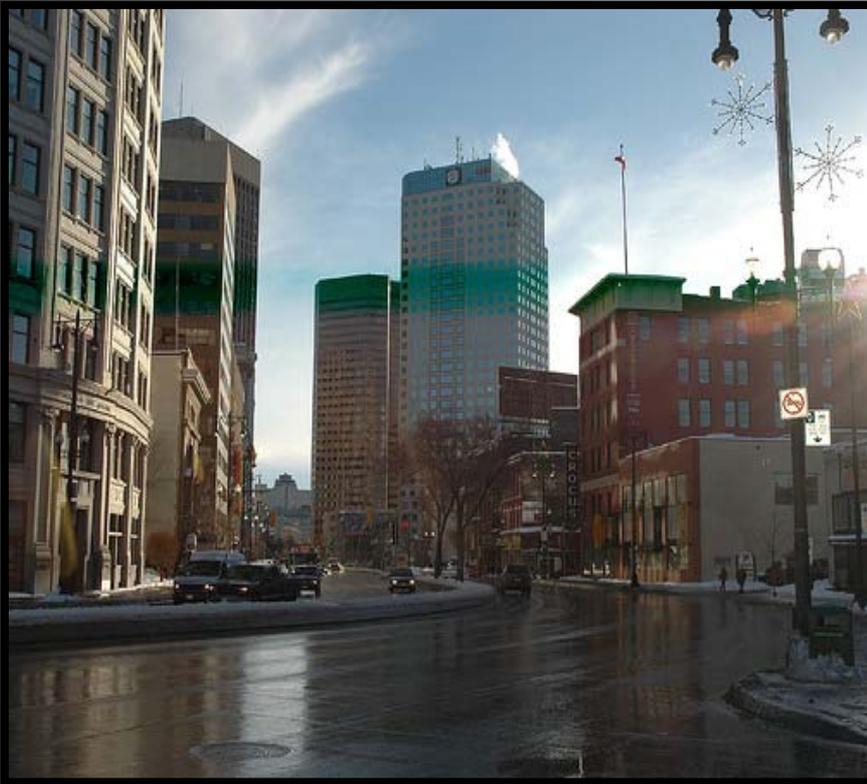
Image source: <http://www.danharperphotography.com/desktops.html>

Main Street is one of Winnipeg's most well-known and busiest streets. It runs through downtown, all the way to the city's northern edge. Many important and historic buildings line Main Street. It also makes up half of the Main and Portage intersection, notorious for being the windiest corner in Canada.



Image source: http://blogs.usatoday.com/weather/images/img_0116_1.jpg

Main Street



They crossed Main Street and walked past several tall buildings, past a large parking lot, past a tiny restaurant filled to the brim with people. The smell of something delicious and mouth-watering flooded over the sidewalk – pizza, thought Wil. He imagined a large, crusty pizza slathered with three different kinds of cheese. His mouth watered.

‘I think it’s just in the next block or two,’ said Aunt Violet. ‘Not far...I hope. That does smell good, doesn’t it? I think we should have eaten more supper.’

Main Street was filled with people, who all seemed to be hurrying somewhere... (Fish & Sphinx, p. 59)

Image source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/26266017@N00/352321223/>

Union Station



Photo by Rae Bridgman

Located on Main Street in downtown Winnipeg, this grand Beaux-Arts style building opened in 1911. It was designed by the architects Warren and Wetmore who also created the Grand Central Station in New York City. Like the Legislative Building, it is made from local Tyndall stone, and has a central rotunda covered by a dome. Though not as busy as it once was, Union Station still acts as a passenger train stop. It is also home to Winnipeg's Railway Museum. Look for the paired entwined snakes in the decorative windows either side of the Station's main entrance.



Union Station

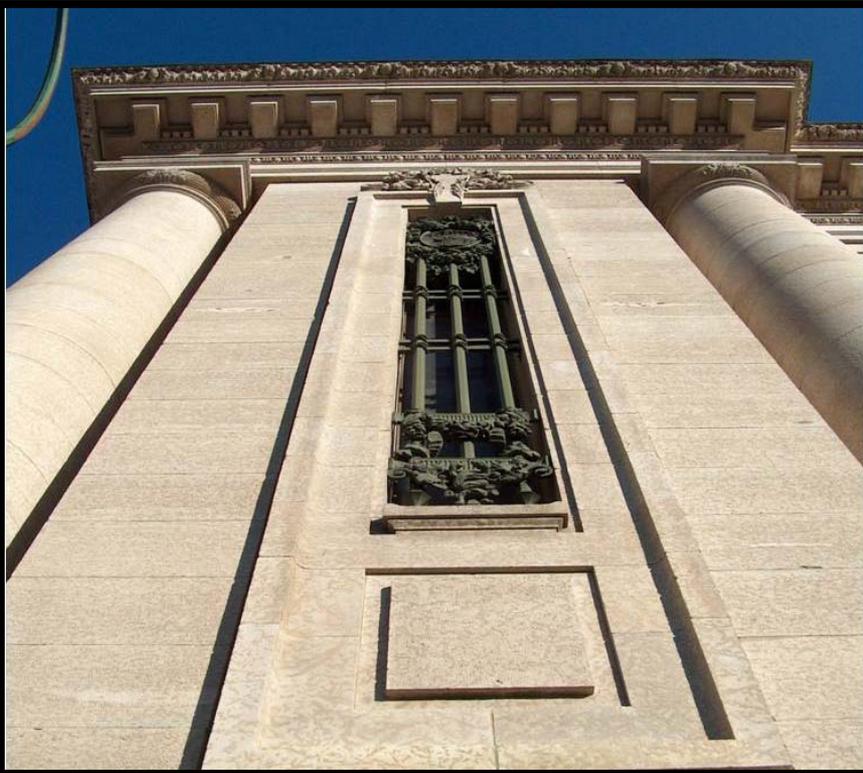


Photo by Rae Bridgman

“Porters pushed through the crowds beneath a grand glass dome in the train station, while Sophie and Aunt Rue stood at the base of a huge marble column. Everyone seemed to be hurrying to greet friends and relatives.” (The Serpent’s Spell, p. 18)



Image source: http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2373/2152666571_f487c87880.jpg

460 Main Street



Photo by Rae Bridgman

The building residing at this location is the current home of the Ted Motyka Dance Studio. In its earlier history, it housed the Imperial Dry Goods building, built by James H. Cadham. It was then sold to the Royal Bank of Canada in 1911 and renovated into the neoclassical building we see today. It became part of Winnipeg's historic 'bankers' row,' which stretched along Main Street from Portage to William Avenues. The impressive green iron doors are a dominant feature that has remained throughout the years. If you look closely, you'll see two curling snakes on each panel.

460 Main Street



"...his words are mysterious. And look where he has stationed himself. Right in front of my favorite doorway in the whole city."

It was the ornate wrought iron door decorated with two green serpents staring at each other; they looked as if they were guarding the door. Wil recognized the snakes immediately, for he had seen them the very first day he arrived at the train station in Winnipeg." (Fish & Sphinx, p. 60)



Image Source: Rae Bridgman

Image source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bryanscott/2298782635/>

Fort Garry Place, 55 Garry Street



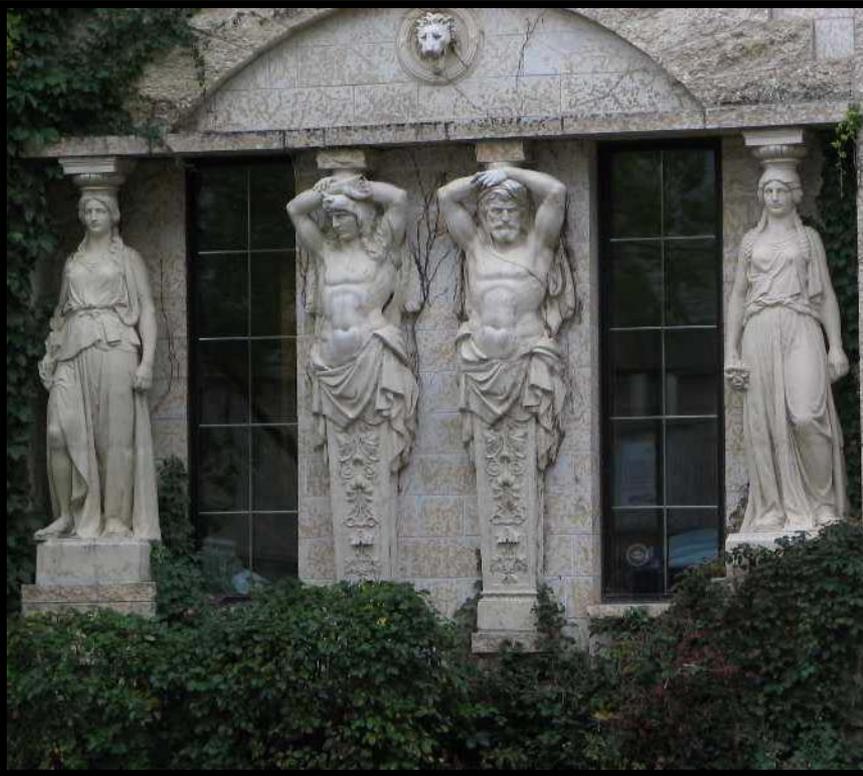
Image source: <http://www.nova3.ca/photos.html>

MiddleGate's Secretariat on the Status of Magical Creatures (S.S.MC.) building was inspired by Winnipeg's own Fort Garry Place. Designed by MMP Architects in 1990, it features commercial space on the main floors and residential units above. The building is lavishly (some would say grotesquely!) decorated inside and out. The exterior base is covered with stone Roman-Greco statues.



Image Source: <http://www.manitoba-eh.ca/Fort-Garry-Place-Statues-1.jpg>

Fort Garry Place, 55 Garry Street



“From a distance, the Secretariat looked like any other large government building. Up close, though, stone snakes slithered across its walls under the watchful gaze of stone bald eagles sitting on top of the columns. Stone fishes, so life-like Wil thought they would jump if he touched them, taunted a stone beaver with a large, flat paddle tail. The massive stone bison directly above the door glared down on all who entered, while stone peacocks strutted beside tall, muscular stone women and men dressed in togas and carrying sheaves of wheat

Wil was so busy gawking at all the sculptures that he stumbled on his way up the Secretariat stairs” (Amber Ambrosia, p. 1).

Image source: http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3060/2298782635_94ec30589d.jpg

Inwood Snake Statues



Photo by Rae Bridgman

MiddleGate's Brimstone Snakes in Grunion Square are inspired by a large statue of two snakes in the village of Inwood, Manitoba. It is located on the way to the Narcisse snake dens. Designed by Marlene Hourd, it was erected in 1995 at a cost of \$2500. The statues draw attention to the large snake population of the area and help promote tourism. Locals refer to the two snakes as S-S-Sam and S-S-Sara.

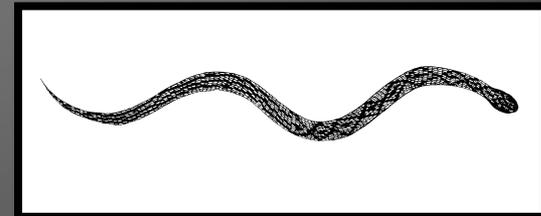


Illustration by: Rae Bridgman

Inwood Snake Statues



Photo by Rae Bridgman

“They passed a large storefront window filled with gleaming jars of honey. Then the smell of roses, lemon and peppermint drifting out from a soap shop caused Wil to sneeze no less than nine times. By the time he’d stopped sneezing, they were already turning onto another street. Far in the distance loomed a monument in the middle of an enormous stone plaza. That must be Grunion Square, thought Wil. As they drew closer, he saw two bronze snakes rising up out of large boulders and coiling around each other. Small children were climbing the snakes and waving at their parents below.

Wil was so impressed by the size of the snakes-the children riding their backs seemed to be flying-he suddenly realized he hadn’t heard a word Sophie said.” (The Serpent’s Spell, p. 34).

Road to Narcisse, Manitoba

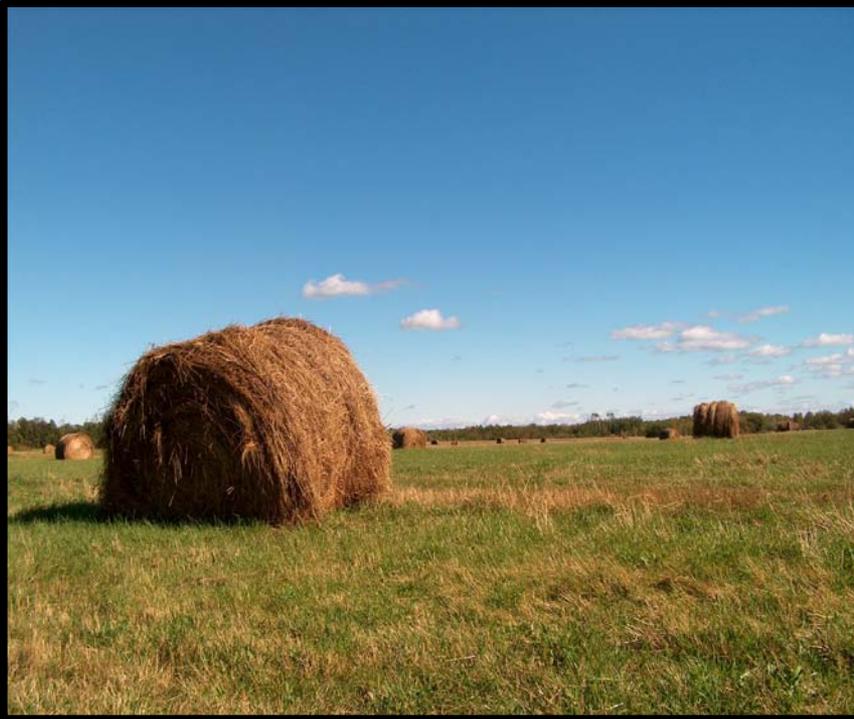


Photo by Rae Bridgman

Naricisse is accessible from Highway 17. It is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes north of Winnipeg. The highway travels through Manitoba's extensive prairie landscape.

"The bus barreled along the open road. Pastures gave way to flat fields of rippling wheat, and bales of hay – huge, round biscuits – dotted the horizon. As they drove farther north, abandoned houses and swayback barns were sinking into wild grasses, gravestones leaned perilously in derelict cemeteries, and exploded tire shreds pitched like so many dead blackbirds along the highway" (The Serpent's Spell, p. 64).

Narcisse Snake Dens



Photo by Rae Bridgman

The snake dens are home to 70,000 red-sided garter snakes during their winter hibernation period. This is the largest known concentration of non-venomous snakes, and the site attracts scientists and visitors from all over the world.

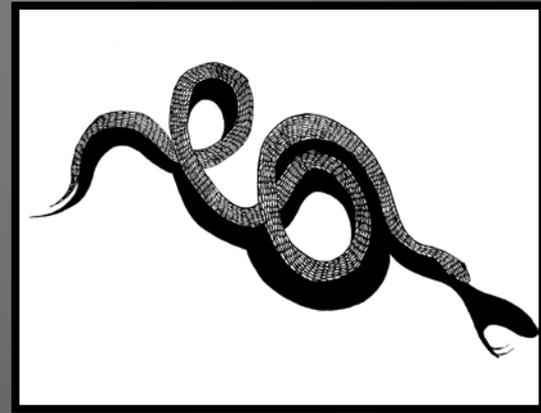


Illustration by Rae Bridgman

Narcisse Snake Dens



Photo by Rae Bridgman

"Sophie shivered at a low, hooting sound. 'Did you hear that?'"

'Just an owl," said Wil, but Sophie noticed his voice trembled a little.

'Do you think they know we're missing?'" asked Sophie.

If Wil answered, his reply was swallowed up by the crackling and rustling all around them. The rocks themselves seemed to be alive and moving. Snakes were sliding over their feet and Sophie hoped she wasn't stepping on any of them. 'We're going to get soaked,' she said.

'If the snakes are heading to the caves,' said Wil, 'there must be one nearby.'

'How do you follow snakes in the dark?' asked Sophie. 'Anyway, I don't want to go inside a cave where there are hundreds of snakes. Esme is a nice snake, but this is different.'" (The Serpent's Spell, p. 74)

Ditchball: University of Manitoba



The winter game known as ditchball was actually invented by students in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba over 30 years ago. It is hosted annually in the spring. The game can be quite physical, and all players are required to wear full protective gear. It is played in a 10-foot ditch carved out of snow. The ditch is iced down to make the game even more challenging and fun to watch.

Image source: <http://www.archinect.com/images/uploads/ditchball2.jpg>

Ditchball: University of Manitoba



Image source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/davidkury/3389521801/>

“Wil shivered at the thought of the ditchball – a large rainbow-coloured ball as tall as he was. They had been practicing in Thistleburn Field with Mage Quartz for the past month. As far as Wil could tell, ditchball was like a tug-of-war, only with a ball instead of a rope.

‘Right,’ Mage Quartz had said at their first practice. ‘Make sure you keep your eye on the ditchball at all times – it’s got a mind of its own sometimes.’ He had grinned at the class as he said this.

‘The night of the game, the ditchball is dropped by the Snow King down into the middle of the great ditch. Object of the game – score a goal by lifting the ditchball to your goalie platform at ditch’s end. A goal is worth three points. All’s fair except you may not hit, kick, tackle, gang up on, or otherwise injure another player.’ (The Serpent’s Spell, pp. 107 – 108)

The top corners of the page are decorated with a cluster of stars in various sizes and colors, including gold, silver, and blue. The word "Acknowledgements" is written in a white, elegant cursive font, centered in the upper half of the page.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Pam Elias for her design of our *MiddleGate Tour*. Thank you also to the University of Manitoba Faculty of Architecture for their support of the project. And thanks to Ellen MacDonald of The Perfect Publicist for sparking the idea of this virtual tour in the first place!

To find out more about The MiddleGate Books and follow Wil's and Sophie's adventures, please visit Rae Bridgman's website:

www.raebridgman.ca