

A Piece of the Broomhill Store



Kilkenney's General Store – photographed in Broomhill, 2011.



Examples of the framed tin pieces Tyler Kilkenney salvaged from the walls and ceiling of his grandfather's store and turned into pieces of art.

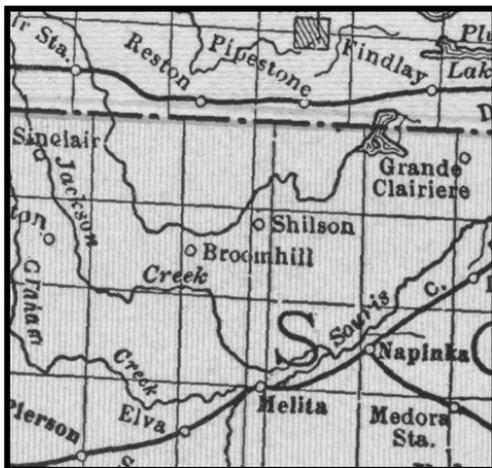
The old joke is that the little villages on the Manitoba prairie can be so small that if you blink you just might pass by without noticing them.

Looking at the abandoned site of Broomhill today, you can see how it might have been such a village, except for the large two-storey structure that still stands on this quiet stretch of Provincial Road 345. It makes you wonder. Why such a large building in a tiny hamlet?

Perhaps when local Postmaster William Kilkenney and his brother John built it in 1908, they were not only optimistic, but also ahead of their time.

Every little village needed a store

Broomhill existed before roads or rails came by.



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and a post office, and later, a garage and gas station. An implement dealership would also be a valuable service. Whoever ran the place would need a place to live. Why not put them all in one building?

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In its heyday, the Kilkenney store was the centre of the community. It practically was the community. More than a service centre, it was a meeting place – even a dance hall.

In addition to all its practical usefulness, it also had style. The building's east and south walls are made from patterned concrete blocks, cast on site using sand and gravel obtained nearby. Pressed metal walls and ceiling panels lined the interior.

The business was operated by a succession of Kilkenneys until it closed in September 1964. And you would think that would be the end of the story.

Not so. The store lives on!

Thanks to Tyler Kilkenney, a grandson of the last operator of the store, you can buy a piece of Broomhill history. Tyler salvaged the fine pressed metal that had lined the interior and has turned it into pieces of art. Each framed piece of metal comes with the his-

tory of the building providing a rather unique blend of art, craft and history. He operates "Tinhouse Designs" and has done the same for several western Canadian buildings.

"It's a great way to have some art with a story that is relevant to the owner," says Tyler. *"We all have a stake in the stories of the men and women that settled this country. This is a small way to salute those that have made Canada what it is today."*

Of course the hamlet of Broomhill was more than just a store. That it appears on the 1905 map of Manitoba is likely due to Broomhill Post Office – established in the region in 1892.

The school, which also opened in 1892, was called Hathaway School. Later, in 1899, a school named Broomhill was opened a few kilometres southwest of the village. They joined in 1958 to become Broomhill Consolidated School No. 2363. The community also had a cemetery, located west of the village site.

But that's about it.

Sources:

Goldsborough, Gordon. "Historic Sites of Manitoba: Kilkenney General Store." Manitoba Historical Society. 2015 <<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/broomhillstore.shtml>>

TinHouse Designs. "The Stories Behind the Art." 2015 <<http://www.tinhousedesigns.ca/stories/>>

Photos:

Gordon Goldsborough, 2011.

TinHouse Designs

Map: Adapted from: Geo. F. Cram. Map of North-West Ontario Manitoba and North-West Districts [map]. Chicago, 1890.