

Inkster House, known as Bleak House 1637 Main St., Winnipeg

Inkster House (Bleak House), built in 1873-75, is a 2 1/2-storey log dwelling in a residential area of north Winnipeg. It is Georgian in style and constructed of logs with an overlay of siding. A rear extension and front verandah were added in the early 1900s. At the time his father's (John Inkster, b.1799) death, Colin Inkster (b. 1843) decided to build Bleak House as a small farm within the confines of the Seven Oaks property, which was three miles north of a new city. Colin was best known as the High Sheriff of Manitoba for some 51 years, Colin Inkster also gained distinction as a progressive crop and livestock producer, provincial politician and warden of St. John's Cathedral.

On March 16, 1871, Colin married Anne Tait and during their marriage, they had 12 children, 5 surviving to adulthood. In the same year, Colin became one of the first legislative councillors of Manitoba. During his parliamentary service, he served 2 years as Speaker of the House, in which he cast the deciding vote to abolish the Upper House. Colin Inkster died in 1934 from pneumonia at the age of 91 years.

There are 2 stories for how Bleak house received its name. One being that Sybil (one daughter of Colin and Anne) named it because of the lack of trees. The second story is that the house was named for the county in the Orkneys Islands where the Inkster's originated. Sybil Inkster willed Bleak House to the City of West Kildonan in 1973 after her death specifically for the "quiet enjoyment of people." Bleak House is now a drop-in senior's centre where activities such as crafts, barbeques and bridge take place during the week.



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