

# Winnipeg's Hermetic Code Tour proves mesmerizing

## TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

**F**ancy an adventure the likes of the Da Vinci Code, complete with ancient symbols, hidden clues, and secret society rituals? Then take a trip to Winnipeg. As a bonus, this code-busting experience is for real.

The Hermetic Code Tour is the most surprising tour we have taken anywhere. The unlikely setting was the Manitoba legislature, its dome topped by the brilliant statue of the Greek god Hermes, commonly called the Golden Boy. It was on the front steps of the stately building that we met Don Finkbeiner of Heartland International Travel and Tours, who informed us that we were about to enter a temple in disguise, modelled after King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

Our heads never stopped spinning as he ushered us through a beguiling world of mythical gods, numerology, and the occult, liberally sprinkled with pagan, Christian, and Masonic imagery.

On the surface, this is a fine government building with elaborate decorations. It was architectural historian Dr. Frank Albo who

unlocked its secrets after years of painstaking research. It began when Albo wondered why the legislature had statues of Egyptian sphinx. Looking further, he found the building packed with mysterious symbols that aren't at first obvious.

When Finkbeiner learned of Albo's findings, he was hooked, and they teamed up to bring this fascinating story to the public through specialized tours.

Inside the main hall, we're faced by two bronze bison statues, symbolic of Manitoba. Or are they? Finkbeiner explained that ancient temples had a room of protection guarded by two large bulls to ward off evil. The square room measures 66 feet, six inches on each side, the number 666 considered powerful in the occult world. Adorning the room are other symbols to battle evil, including the face of Medusa with her hair made of snakes.

Number 13 is everywhere, from 13-foot-long bison, to the grand staircase with three sets of 13 steps. In the centre of the building stands the rotunda (13 feet across) where we look down to the lower level and see a black star representing the second essential part of a temple — the sanctuary and altar. Much of it is illuminated by lamps with 13 lights.

The ancient melds with the modern. The rotunda is backed by a huge mural, which at first glance portrays the First World War, which was raging during construction. Muralist Frank Brangwyn frequently embedded Christian imagery in his paintings, and once



Manitoba's legislative building reveals more than meets the eye when you know where to look. The brilliant statue of the Greek god Hermes on the top of the legislative building is more commonly known as Golden Boy.

Finkbeiner pointed it out, we could see that it also represented the Passion of Christ.

The most important room in Solomon's Temple was the Holy of Holies, built on the western side to house the Arc of the Covenant containing tablets with the 10 Commandments,

where only the high priest could enter. Finkbeiner led us to the door of a little-used room off to the legislature's west side, its entrance framed by two pillars using a design from Solomon's Temple. A security guard unlocked the door and we peered into the reception room of Manito-

ba's most important figure — the lieutenant-governor.

The room's dimensions match exactly those of the Holy of Holies as described in the Bible. However, there was no hint that the Arc of the Covenant may be represented here. The arc was said to be hidden



Frank Brangwyn embedded Christian imagery into this mural of a scene from the First World War.

behind a blue veil. This room has blue curtains, but behind we see only a window.

“That’s still where we have to look,” explained Finkbeiner, “but outside where it’s hidden in plain view.”

Of the numerous sculptures decorating the exterior, Finkbeiner pointed to the one just above the lieutenant-governor’s window. It portrays a box, usually described as a war chest, flanked by two warriors. Its proportions are identical to that of the arc.

So why Winnipeg for such an

extraordinary building? In the early 20th century, this was the fastest growing city in North America, a boom town on steroids where everything was possible. They invited proposals from throughout the British Empire to design a magnificent new legislative building.

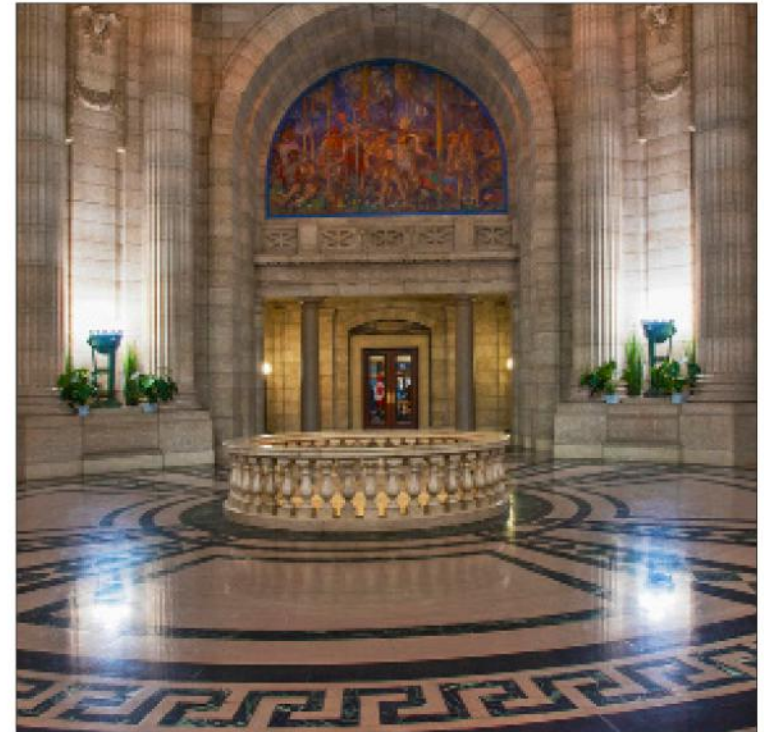
The chosen architect was Frank Worthington Simon who, along with senior members of the Manitoba government, were Freemasons, a benevolent society big on symbolism and secret rituals. Simon not only incorporated Masonic designs but added layers of ancient, pagan,

and religious symbols, all intended to make for a better society. Even the ceremony to lay the cornerstone wasn’t left to chance, taking place on June 3, 1914, precisely when the planets of Venus and Mercury aligned over Winnipeg.

We’ll never look at a building the same way again.

For more details, see [www.heartlandtravel.ca](http://www.heartlandtravel.ca) or [www.tourismwinnipeg.com](http://www.tourismwinnipeg.com).

Arlene and Robin Karpan are well-travelled writers based in Saskatoon. Contact: [travel@producer.com](mailto:travel@producer.com).



The rotunda stands in the middle of the building.



The building’s architecture blends classical with more traditional prairie.