

CAMERON SCHOOL

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During the first half of the nineteenth century, the formation of a system of public instruction was little more than a dream. The first legal step towards this goal was the setting aside of land for grammar schools in 1791. The establishment of grammar schools in Ontario, however, was not provided for until 1807 under the District Public School Act. Although this Act provided for the appointment of trustees to select teachers and look after the general administration of the schools made possible by an appropriation of 800 pounds, it did little for the development of education for the ordinary people. Provision for the establishment of a system of public instruction would depend upon community rather than government initiative.

The opportunity came in 1816 when the Common Schools Act was passed and provided for the establishment of a school, electing three trustees who would select a teacher and run the overall affairs of the school. Also at this time the Act made provision for a General Board of Education made up of five members appointed in each district for the purpose of superintending the Common Schools, distributing the annual legislative grant among the teachers, and making an annual report to the Governor.

Education in Upper Canada over the next twenty-five years fluctuated with the fortunes of the nation. Political concerns had culminated in 1841 with the union of the provinces and the passage of a Common School Bill, which established uniformity in the conduct of schools under the direction of a Superintendent of Education. The idea of common schools, that is, education for everyone, had become deeply entrenched in Upper Canada.

Government, the local community and church worked in harmony as partners in the funding of education and superintending of schools.

In 1844 the Reverend Egerton Ryerson was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Education, and later Superintendent of Education. He was a Methodist minister who was president of Victoria University, Cobourg, and who had studied some of the school systems in the United States and Europe. He became convinced of the necessity for greater flexibility and variety in his own schools yet felt a need for an educational system. The Common School Act of 1846 exemplified his viewpoint. The uniformity of an educational system Ryerson believed was:

.... to guard the Provincial liberality from any local misapplication, and to supply the deficiency of local means of information, as well as to assist and encourage local exertion. In contradistinction to the isolation of a Private School, each Common school is a component part of a provincial whole; and, as such, participates in the common benefit and is subject to the common regulations. The practical efficiency of the System of Common Schools depends, then, upon the completeness with which the General Regulations, and the provisions of the Law are carried out, in respect to each locality, and the unanimity and zeal, with which each locality co-operates in the directly practical, and most essential, part of the general work.<sup>1</sup>

The variety and flexibility Ryerson believed in was to be found in the curriculum of biblical history and morality, reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, drawing, singing, history, natural history, natural philosophy, agriculture, physiology, civil government and political economy.

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<sup>1</sup>J. George Hodgins, ed., Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada, Vol. 6, p. 261.

Further uniformity and yet flexibility were provided for in the more comprehensive Common School Act of 1850. This Act provided for the establishment of up to a nine-member Council of Public Instruction which replaced the General Board of Education. At the local level, county boards of public instruction were given full power to levy taxes on all property and not simply on the parents of school children, to manage schools and to promote education in the individual county boards.

The Acts of 1841, 1846 and 1850 provided the legal framework by which the people in the community of Cameron would promote the cause of education and build their first school house. A small log cabin without slate blackboards was erected in 1856. The cabin was located on the north side of the Concession Road behind the present site of the Anglican Church and was to be known as School Section Six. The school was not to be opened to pupils until 1859 but was registered as a school at the Education Office in Toronto by Gilbert Tweedin, the first Local Superintendent of Common Schools for the Township of Fenelon. In his annual report for 1856, Tweedin stated:

School Sections Nos. 5 & 6 Fenelon are new sections. No school was open in either of them till the commencement of 1857. I have given their post office address as I thought it would be well that they should get the Journal of Education regularly.<sup>2</sup>

Although school sections five and six were considered new sections in 1856, the previously built sections were certainly not old. School sections or areas were originally spaced so that a one-room school was within walking

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<sup>2</sup>Annual Report of the Local Superintendent for Common Schools, Township of Fenelon, County of Victoria, March 16, 1857.

distance for young children. School Section one was a frame structure built in Cambray, a saw mill community south and <sup>west</sup> east of Cameron, in 1849 and was opened in 1850. School Section two was first built as a log cabin in 1848 in Islay. Number two was first opened in 1849 and was reconstructed in 1855 as a frame structure. School Section number three was a union school built in 1853 between Fenelon Township and Verulam Township, and was opened in 1854 (Appendix 1). Number four was constructed from logs and was opened in 1856. Distance prevented the Council of Public Instruction in Toronto from being an effective body promoting uniformity of education in Fenelon Township. Tweedin, as local superintendent, did his best to keep each school section informed of educational developments in Upper Canada. Through subscriptions to The Journal of Education each school section became informed of recent developments in education, but each school was preoccupied with its own day-to-day problems.

School Section number six opened its door in 1857 to a class of fourteen boys and thirteen girls. The class could have been larger since thirty-six pupils in the area were between the ages of five and sixteen, but the cause of their lack of attendance was indigence on the part of the parents. The twenty-seven pupils who attended did so in varying degrees over the ten-month period in which the school was open. Six children attended school for less than twenty days. Four children attended school between twenty and fifty days while eight children attended between fifty and one hundred days. One-third of the children attended school between one hundred and one hundred fifty days. The average attendance in 1857 was seven pupils. Weather, lack of proper clothing, sickness, helping at home and on the farm were some of the

reasons for poor attendance. Probably the biggest reason for poor attendance can be traced to negligent parents or indigent parents.

When the children of the area did manage to attend school, they were met each morning by Miss Susannah Milligan. She was hired at a salary of ~~1~~30, however, she was paid only ~~2~~25 for teaching during the year of 1857. Of her twenty-seven pupils in her reading class, seventeen were in the lowest class First Book of National Readers, six were in the Second National Reader, three were in the Third Book of National Readers, and one pupil was in the next to highest class or Fourth National Reader. As near as can be estimated at the time, six per cent of the general population were unable to read or write. Of the other branches of instruction which Ryerson had recommended, only Arithmetic was being taught and there were five pupils receiving this instruction in Miss Milligan's class.

In 1857, one of the five Local Superintendents in Victoria County was the Reverend Daniel Wright of Fenelon Falls, "supervising Fenelon, Verulam, Somerville, and Bexley, with 10 schools."<sup>3</sup> Miss Milligan was not visited by her local superintendent, but she was visited on four occasions by the local trustees. The trustees were responsible for collecting six pence per pupil per month in the form of a rate-bill in 1857 to supplement the small amount the teacher received from the government. Whether the collections were made on a regular basis and what lay ahead in the future for the schools in which Wright was the local superintendent were two questions for which

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<sup>3</sup>Watson Kirkconnell, County of Victoria Centennial History, p. 222.

only the future would provide answers. In describing the condition of education of the schools where he was superintendent, Wright remarked in his annual report for 1857:

Some of the Trustees Annual Reports were so imperfect, that, I would not have received them, but for the consideration, that their schools need all that can be done, to keep them in existence. I was not aware that the schools in these Townships were so far behind, until I began to ask for their reports, some of which were long delayed. I think school officers here have not been faithful in their duties.<sup>4</sup>

Miss Milligan, who held a third class teaching certificate, was kept on for a second year and was to be paid an annual salary without board of \$144.00. Unfortunately, the school was only kept open for six months in 1858 with a slight increase in average attendance of nine pupils. Miss Milligan was paid \$72.00 for her services rendered that year and was given some support in the form of two visits from her superintendent. On one of these visits, Mr. Wright delivered a lecture to the parents and children of the school. In addition to The Journal of Education, the Library Catalogue, the Chief Superintendent's Report, and a pamphlet on School House Architecture were distributed. These pamphlets and publications may have had some influence, but the influence could not be measured as on the other hand, Miss Milligan's teaching could. In 1858, one pupil was in the First National Reader, ten in the second book, eleven in the third, four in the fourth, and two pupils in the highest class or Fifth Book of National Readers. In the other branches of instruction, twenty-two pupils were in Arithmetic, two in

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<sup>4</sup>Daniel Wright, Annual Report of the Local Superintendent of Common Schools, Township of Fenelon, County of Victoria, February 20, 1858.

general Geography, and ten in Writing. Progress was being made, however, slowly.

By 1860, teaching duties had been taken over by a young Quaker girl, Wilhehmina Johnson. She held a second class teaching certificate and was engaged to teach at a rate of \$156.00 per annum, but since the school was only open for ten months, she was actually paid \$140.10 for services rendered in 1861.

The population of the area had increased to two hundred thirteen, 93 of which were children between the ages of five and sixteen. In other parts of Upper Canada during the 1850's and 1860's, the pupil-teacher ratio was ninety-to-one, resulting in overcrowded classrooms. Depending on one's point of view, Miss Johnson was fortunate that thirty-nine pupils were not attending school due to the negligence of parents. Of the fifty-six pupils in attendance, thirty-four were boys and twenty-two were girls with an average attendance of fifteen over the year.

William Powles, who had taken over from the Revd. Daniel Wright as Local Superintendent, reported that the new course of study as listed in The Journal of Education was observed. Powles also reported that the general regulations in regard to Religious Instruction were being followed with good results.<sup>5</sup>

During these early years of schooling at S.S.No.6, a New Testament Bible was being used but school was not being opened or closed with prayer. In Miss Johnson's class thirteen pupils were in the lowest reading book, eight

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<sup>5</sup>Wm. Powles, Annual Report of the Local Superintendent of Common Schools, Township of Fenelon, February 25, 1862.



in the second, twelve in the third, seventeen in the fourth and six in the highest National Reader. In the other branches of instruction, thirty-two pupils were in Arithmetic, ten in Grammar, ten in Geography, six in History, and thirty-four in Writing

By 1862 a greater interest in education was being shown in S.S.No.6 and Wilhehmina Johnson had kept the school open for twelve months or two hundred forty-four days, and was able to collect her salary of \$156.00. The Reverend John Patterson, a Presbyterian minister, had visited the school on two occasions and had delivered one lecture as Local Superintendent, and even the trustees had visited on four occasions. The building itself was valued at \$200.00 including its contents of one world map, four maps of the continents and five other maps. Blackboards were used in the school in 1861 according to the superintendent's report. Although the boards were little more than black painted wood, they were of great assistance to the pupils and teacher alike. The influence of the curriculum was finally measured in 1862 with a public examination and prize giving. During this special time, pupils gave recitations of poetry and prose.

Of the seven schools open in 1865, six of the eight teachers were men. For the pupils of School Section six, Mr. Samuel Sheridan, a Methodist, was to be their first man teacher. He earned a salary of \$240.00 because he held a second class certificate and kept the school open for twelve months of the year. The population of the municipality had increased to 250 by 1865, 100 of these were school age children of which ninety were on the register. By 1867 the population had increased to 430; of this number 225 were children and 120 of this number were between the ages of 5 and 16 years. With seventy-

four boys and fifty-one girls on the register, overcrowding was at an all time high although the average attendance was thirty-eight. According to the Revd. John Patterson's report of 1865, "there was teaching in No. 4 only for a short time during last half-year in consequence of the erection of a new and very superior School House."<sup>6</sup> The trustees, Mr. Sheridan and concerned parents must have been thinking about the future and the need for a bigger and superior facility in S.S.No.6.

The last full year of operation for the old log school house, valued at \$200.00, came in 1869. In the same year a very talented and dedicated teacher in the person of Mr. John Irwin was hired at \$260.00 per year. Mr. Irwin taught Canadian Geography as had Mr. Sheridan during his last two years as teacher at S.S.No. 6. Teaching Canadian studies was quite a step forward as the Geography of Europe and the History of Great Britain had held the emphasis in the past. Mr. Irwin was writing his own lessons for General and Elementary Geography which met with the approval of local superintendent Revd. John Patterson. Mr. Irwin must have been a reasonably talented singer and musician since forty pupils were registered for the first time in Vocal Music.

By 1869, the population had grown to 560. Of this number, 280 were children of school age but only 145 of these children plus eight children not of school age were entered on the register. Mr. Irwin opened and closed school with the reading of scripture and a prayer for a period of twelve months. No doubt one of his prayers was for the construction of a new

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<sup>6</sup>John Patterson, Annual Report of the Local Superintendent of Common Schools, Township of Fenelon, 1865.

school since the average attendance of the eighty-seven boys and sixty-six girls attending school was sixty pupils. Nevertheless, three public exams were held during the year.

Since 1867, there were in existence two Sunday School libraries. These held one hundred fifty volumes by 1869. The close relationship between religion and education in the form of Sunday schools was part of the educational tradition inherited from the old world. Two of the "Rules for the Sunday Schools" were:

1. The hours of School are, from 9 o'clock in the morning till public worship begins; and from 3 o'clock till 4 in the afternoon. At the opening and closing of the School, it is expected that all the children should then be present.
2. Any scholar who shall be absent from School three successive Sundays, without a sufficient reason being given, shall be dismissed; but with liberty of appealing to the Committee.<sup>7</sup>

In 1869, there were one hundred scholars and ten Sunday school teachers under a committee comprised of the Anglican and Methodist ministers.

Reverend John Patterson, in his superintendent's report dated March 8, 1870 records nineteen school visits to the old log school house in its last full year of operation by the superintendent, clergy, municipal councillors, trustees and others. These numerous visits were to determine the needs of the community and pupils of S.S.No.6 who had overcrowded the old log school house for at least seven years of its fourteen years of existence. On March 11, 1870, three days after Patterson made his report, the trustees of Common School Section number six purchased a half acre of

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<sup>7</sup>C. E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, p. 302.

directly across the road from the old school.

Thomas Moynes had sold the north half of lot eight in the fifth concession to James Bryson in 1864 for a sum of \$761.00 (Appendix II). Bryson built a two-storey brick structure east of the half acre he had sold to the school with the intent of dividing the interior into rooms to be let out. Apparently, Mr. Bryson neglected to obtain a hotel licence before building and upon completion, the licence was refused. Bryson used the building instead as a General Store and for some years as a Post Office when he was Postmaster. Over the years, many children from S.S.No.6 passed through his store to post letters, buy sweets and liquorice.

After the land transfer and payment of \$70.00 was made between Mr. Bryson and Joseph Mego, John McLaughlin, and John Crozier, trustees for Common School Section Number Six, building of the new structure began. According to Reverend William Lohead's 1870 annual report as Local Superintendent, there was no interruption of studies since the school was open for twelve months of the year. At some point after June or July of 1870, Mr. Irwin was given the key to the new school (Appendix III). The senior students made a few trips back and forth across the Concession Road carrying some school furniture, the four maps of the continents, a map of Canada, an old map of the world and one other newer map. All of the pupils except the smallest child carried the slates, slate pencils, Mr. Irwin's few books and the several volumes that belonged to the Sunday school to their new location. The old school house which was vacated for the last time stood empty for several years. By 1887, only a pile of neatly stacked logs against a slight slope in the ground was the only evidence of the old

overcrowded log school house. In describing the school moneys in his report of 1870, Lohead wrote that \$400.00 was the amount due for building on December 31st, 1870. The new brick structure was valued at \$1,500.00.<sup>8</sup>

To keep up with growing enrollment, the new school building seemed to be the answer. However, the school in Cameron and schools across Ontario still seemed ineffective when attempting to deal with the general welfare of the student population, broadening the number of subjects taught and enlarging the pedagogical outlook at the different stages of the educational process. As the local schools expanded their offering to meet the needs and interests of their school children, the centralized system of education was strengthened with the passage of the School Act of 1871. Through the Act of 1871, compulsory taxation for school purposes and compulsory attendance for children between the ages of eight and fourteen became law. Highly qualified teachers with many years of experience were appointed, Public School Inspectors replacing County Superintendents. Common Schools were renamed Public Schools, and, under the new Act, Normal Schools could only grant first and second class certificates. "By 1875, every teacher in the province was certified under Government examinations and a great many of them had been trained at Normal School."<sup>9</sup> However, County Boards could still bestow a three year third class certificate to those who had passed the strict requirements prescribed by the central education authority.

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<sup>8</sup>Revd. Wm. Lohead, Annual Report of the Local Superintendent, February 10, 1871.

<sup>9</sup>Watson Kirkconnell, County of Victoria Centennial History, p. 211.

On July 25, 1871, the first examination of teachers under the new law was held in the Union School, Lindsay. Eighty-two candidates presented themselves for second class certificates, nine for the third and nil for first, for a total of ninety-one. The following day, Henry Reasin, Inspector for West Victoria and secretary for the Board of Examiners, writes:

A memorial (sic) was drawn up, signed by all the members of the board and forwarded to Dr. Ryerson representing that the questions were likely to prove too hard for the class of Teachers employed in New Townships of this County and asking for power to grant relief in certain cases to which the following favourable reply was received.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, the letter has been lost but one can surmise that the teachers presenting themselves for examination did not do too well. The County Board was in danger of losing a good many teachers who were willing to teach but who were not suited to the setting of rigorous examinations. Ryerson had to be careful of incompetent teachers because some trustees in other boards wanted cheap teachers regardless of qualifications. Ryerson realized that a willing teacher was better than no teacher in the new townships of rural Ontario so special provisions were made.

The teacher who was to succeed Mr. Irwin in 1873 was to be paid \$8.00 per month; showing that teaching was not a rewarding profession, financially. Mr. John Baxter, who was hired by the trustees of S.S.No.6 in 1873, in addition to the \$8.00 a month salary, agreed that he would not receive his first pay until 1875. Mr. Baxter, like a great many other teachers in Ontario, was forced to use teaching as a stepping-stone to another occupation in order

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<sup>10</sup>Minutes of the Board of Examiners of Public School Teachers County Victoria, July 26, 1871.

to make ends meet. The local correspondent to the Canadian Post in 1874 wrote: "Our school, which had been closed for some time past, owing to Mr. Baxter's leaving to take the position of bookkeeper in Messers. Ray & Co.'s store in your town, has been reopened under the charge of Mr. J. Cundall."<sup>11</sup>

Born in Lincolnshire, England, November 20, 1847, Mr. John M. Cundal began teaching in 1872 in S.S.No.12 in the Township of Brock, Ontario. After teaching at Manilla in 1873 and the first half of 1874, Mr. Cundal came to S.S.No.6 where he quickly proved himself as an efficient teacher. The people of the community were sorry to lose Mr. Cundal to Coboconk in January of 1876, and felt it would be well if they found a teacher equally qualified to fill his place.<sup>12</sup> In 1877, Mr. Cundal returned to Cameron school where he finished out his teaching career in 1901.

Initially, the trustees were doubtful of Mr. Cundal's ability to handle the pupils since the pupils had thrown the previous teacher out of one of the windows on the north side of the school. Mr. Cundal, although short in stature, had had a hard life himself as an illegitimate child and had learned to look after himself. Mr. Cundal ruled with an iron hand. He did not take kindly to Bill Hepburn who had used the drinking water as a privy nor to senior lads who went about with garter snakes in their teeth, scaring the younger pupils. He would roll the leather strap up in a small ball, throwing it in the direction of the pupil who had misbehaved. The pupil in turn had to fetch the strap and bring it up to the elevated platform where Mr. Cundal stood. The pupil would then be lambasted with the strap before Mr. Cundal continued with the

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<sup>11</sup>Canadian Post, Lindsay, Ontario, Friday, July 3, 1874, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Canadian Post, Lindsay, Ontario, Friday, October 27, 1876, p. 3.

lesson.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Cundal taught the 3 R's, Euclid, Geography, and even a little Music as he played a jew's harp. He was noted for taking a personal interest in each of his pupils even his son Willis, who also got the strap! The Honour List for Cameron School in 1878 includes Melvina Townsend, Archie Wilson and Hettie Perrin all from the fourth form, based on written examinations during the term. Third form: Isabel Flack, H. Naylor and Lizzie Bice. Second form: Lizzie McNabb, Manda Townsend and John Naylor.<sup>14</sup>

Teacher Conventions or Professional Activity Days as they are known today were held for two or three days in the late nineteenth century. In 1897, the annual meeting of the teachers of West Victoria was held at Fenelon Falls on Thursday and Friday, 20th and 21st May. The heavy rain on Thursday prevented a full attendance of teachers although Mr. Cundal was present since he was to address his colleagues.

Mr. Maybee of Fenelon Falls taught a lesson on mathematical geography. Mr. Rennie of Oakwood gave a review of entrance analysis taken from recent entrance papers. Mr. D. Smith of Palestine exemplified his method of teaching "map-geography". Miss Robinson of Fenelon taught a lesson on "Constitutional Act". Mr. Little of Coboconk gave a talk on his method of teaching the physiology of the eye. Mr. Cundal of Cameron gave an address on P.S. Leaving Geometry. Mr. Mosgrove of Kirkfield illustrated a lesson on Mensuration.<sup>15</sup>

To round out the two day event, the Inspector of the Public Schools, Mr. Reazin, gave a lecture on the Curriculum and the pupils of the fifth class

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<sup>13</sup>Neil Mark, personal interview, Cameron, Ontario, September 17, 1980.

<sup>14</sup>Canadian Post, Lindsay, Ontario, Friday, March 22, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>The Victoria Warder, Vol. XL, Whole No. 2098, Friday, June 4, 1897, p. 1.



debated and resolved: "That the early inhabitants of Canada were more enterprising, energetic and patriotic than those of the present day.<sup>16</sup> The committee decided in favour of the negative, although J. H. Knight, Inspector for East Victoria, in a letter to The Post on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee wrote in April:

The minister of education has issued a circular to the inspectors recommending the afternoon of Friday, June 18th, be devoted to a consideration of the most notable events in her majesty's reign, particularly those bearing upon the progress made in science, invention and education; and that the history of Canada in relation to the empire be considered in brief addresses by trustees and others whose services would no doubt be available. He suggests that a portrait of her majesty, appropriately framed, be placed in every school room. Such a portrait, I understand, can be obtained from Messers. Copp, Clarke & Co., price 35 cents.<sup>17</sup>

The patriotic practice of hanging the sovereign's picture would extend into the early 1970's. New legislation was brought out in the late 1970's which recommended that Canada's flag be visible in classrooms.

Mr. Cundal ceased teaching the Public School in Section No. 6 on the 20th day of December, 1901. According to Archibald Wilson of Fenelon Falls, Mr. Cundal's registered Medical Practitioner, the constant pursuit of the teaching profession over twenty-nine and a half years prevented Mr. Cundal from continuing to earn his livelihood by teaching or in any other occupation. Dr. Wilson found in his examination of Mr. Cundal on December 19, 1901 that:

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid

<sup>17</sup>J. H. Knight, P. S. Inspector, The Canadian Post, Lindsay, Ontario, Friday, April 30, 1897, p. 6.

Physical weakness, manifested by partial loss of hearing, nervousness, insomnia, inability to study, aching in the back & of the head accompanied by severe drowsiness which is very distressing, change in his disposition to an irritableness which is hard to control. He has a coldness and numbness in the left hand and leg which I fear may yet progress to a paralysis. He has indigestion. In short, his condition is that of neusthenia. The cause is probably a severe blow received in the forehead a few years ago while playing baseball with the pupils at noon hour, in which he was rendered unconscious for sometime and never remembered how the accident happened, together with too constant pursuit of the teaching profession. A degree of recovery would be expected with mental and physical rest, but liable to relapse at his age with over strain.<sup>18</sup>

With the high standards set by Egerton Ryerson's Ontario public school system, education by the beginning of the twentieth century was generally both free and compulsory. After thirty years in the new school house, twenty-six of which Mr. Cundal was at the helm, education in Cameron, Ontario was reaching a respectable maturity. The average attendance had been about sixty-three per diem and the trustees found that they would have to engage the services of an assistant teacher for the whole year, instead of a few months as had been the case in the past.

Entering the senior room (girls on the right and boys on the left) where Miss Martha J. Langsford (Appendix IV) taught from 1911 to 1916, the pupils walked through the small porch at the front of the school where a tin cup dangled on a nail above the water pail. The senior pupils would fetch water from the well at the north end of the school lot or if that pump was out of

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<sup>18</sup>Superannuated Teacher's Report, December 20, 1901.

order, water was available from the old well across the road where Neil Mark recalls pumping water when Mr. Cundal was his teacher (Appendix V).<sup>19</sup> In order to have the school house warm when school was called, a senior boy was often hired at fifteen or twenty cents a week to get the fire started in the two stoves at the back of each room. The wood was originally stored in a shed at the north-west end of the school yard until a new shed and a two-seater outdoor privy were built behind the junior room. In each room, the slate blackboards were arranged back to back enabling teachers of the senior and junior rooms to eavesdrop on each other's lessons. The pupils in the junior room entered through the small door at the east side of the school and would enter the senior room only for school assemblies and, hopefully, graduation.

"Martha Jane" as Miss Langsford affectionately came to be known was a big lady who always dressed warmly, often wearing three petticoats. She was not the disciplinarian that Mr. Cundal was although she was strict enough and well respected. One day Stan Beggs was put in under her desk for misbehaving. Like most boys, Stan didn't know when to quit and proceeded to tie Miss Langsford's shoes together. One can just imagine what happened when she attempted to get up from her chair--anyway, Stan Beggs got a licking.<sup>20</sup> Miss Langsford retired to operate a small store with her sister who was a switch board operator with the Cameron Rural Telephone Company and for a time the post office. The school continued to buy a variety of school supplies from Miss Langsford until her death in 1940 (Appendix VI).

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<sup>19</sup>Neil Mark, personal interview, October 3, 1980.

<sup>20</sup>Clayton and Margaret Hewie, personal interview, September 9, 1980.

In the early years of Cameron school and schools across Ontario, the practice of indicating a pupil's grade was based on the level of the National Reader in which he or she was working. When the eight grade system had evolved by the 1880's, pupils were said to be in the junior first, the senior first, the junior second, and so on to the senior fourth. After graduation from the senior fourth at Cameron school, pupils attempted to go by train to the Collegiate Institute in Lindsay. The train was either late or in the bad weather, pupils were sent home early. As a result, a fifth class was established to enable pupils to stay at the public school while studying more advanced work. Fifth Class work or Continuation Class work, was carried on at Cameron School in 1914 and from 1921 to 1946. Four years later, Continuation Classes were abolished altogether. The following chart shows grading equivalents of the past and present:

Grading Equivalents

	<u>Past</u>	<u>Present</u>
	Junior First	Grade One
	Senior First	Grade Two
	Junior Second	Grade Three
	Senior Second	Grade Four
	Junior Third	Grade Five
	Senior Third	Grade Six
	Junior Fourth	Grade Seven
	Senior Fourth	Grade Eight
Continuation Classes	First Form	Grade Nine
	Second Form	Grade Ten

Before the 1880's, the teacher was required to clean and sweep the classroom on a daily basis, but, by the late nineteenth century a janitor was hired on a part-time basis to clean the school. The duties of the

janitor as spelled out in the board of trustees' minute book in 1908 were:  
"sweep every evening and dust every morning. Light fires when required, and bring in wood as shall be required for each day. Clean stove pipes, shovel snow. Hoist the flag in the morning and take it down at night and every public holiday."<sup>21</sup>

The janitor, however, could not be expected to get everything done. Miss Grace Lounsbury (Appendix VII), who taught at Cameron from 1919 to 1923 left a stiff reminder for the trustees to get on with their obligations and responsibilities before she went home for Christmas in 1922. Apparently, the old wooden floor was in such a state that pupils who were not paying attention to the lesson, shoved their pens down between the boards. Miss Loundsbury took a piece of chalk and listed items that were to be looked after over the holidays. At the head of the list was "FILL CRACKS IN FLOOR", printed in big block letters. The floor was repaired by January!

The school house went through a great many changes in 1934. The junior room was widened, a basement was put in under the senior room, a partial basement was put in under the new section of the junior room, and a furnace was installed (Appendices VIII and IX). Byron L. Maunder was in charge of the operation although many of the villages contributed their time, labour and skills as shown in the school cash book for the month of August, 1934.

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<sup>21</sup>George McNabb, Secretary-Treasurer S.S.#6, Board of Trustees Minute Book, 1904 - 1942.

Aug. 4	Fred Maunder 18 hrs. work at school @ 25¢	4.53
10	L. A. Waddell 2 sash & 6 lights 10 x 12	4.24
11	Alfred Bryant part payment on contract	200.00
15	Byron Maunder work done at school	25.00
15	Keith Parkin 34 hrs. work at school	8.50
24	Alfred Bryant part payment on contract	200.00
25	L. A. Waddell Material for school	93.40

The finishing touches including three natural slate blackboards and a twenty-one foot chalk trough purchased from E. C. Moyer & Co. were added by October. The total expenditures for 1934 were \$3,876.57 which included the \$95.03 per month paid to Mary Bourn as senior teacher and \$80.03 per month paid to Gertrude Donaldson, the junior teacher.<sup>22</sup>

The two box stoves were left in place initially but the modern furnace proved to be well worth its \$400.00 purchase price. The two stoves had provided Cameron school with years of heat and humour. Wood for the stoves was often hauled from Kinmount by rail, dumped at the station in Cameron where it was hauled by horse and wagon to the school, and then cut and stacked. In February, 1929, the school purchased five cords of wood from Martha Langsford and three cords of hardwood from William Hewie at \$9.40 a cord (Appendix VI). The depression of the 1930's, however, forced B. L. Maunder to sell five and a quarter cords of hardwood at \$7.00 a cord.

Heated arguments between pupils about who was to blame for putting pepper on the stoves, forcing those pupils who sat near the stove into fits of sneezing, were quickly squelched by the teacher who warmed the back ends of the trouble makers with the strap. Another favourite prank occurred on very cold days when the ink bottles would freeze. To hurry the defrosting process,

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<sup>22</sup>Fenelon Township School Section No. 6 cash book, August - December, 1934.

the corks were removed and the ink bottles were put on the stove to thaw out. Mischievous pupils would "overlook" a cork or two on occasion, and the heat from the stove would send the cork into orbit and the ink all over the ceiling. For health reasons, pans of water were left on the stoves to put moisture into the air. When the pans burned dry, the noise and smell would distract the class from their lessons which were probably not dealing with water evaporation anyway.

During the years, teacher vacancies occurred which necessitated advertising in the Globe and Mail or the Evening Telegram at a cost of two or three dollars a week. To save money, since the teacher came from Toronto by train, the teacher was hired regardless. The problem, however, was what you got was not necessarily what you expected. In 1927, for example, George McNabb went to meet Jane McClellan at the station in Lindsay. Instead of the young teacher he expected, a tall, skinny woman, wearing a tall hat, long laced boots, and a long skirt, stepped from the train. She was near fifty years of age, with twenty years of experience and only lasted half a year.<sup>23</sup>

Most teachers, however, were very dedicated and highly respected by their pupils. Miss Sadie M. Cran<sup>N</sup> prepared a graduation programme and sent each of her pupils a post card congratulating them on their achievements (Appendix X). In early years of education in Ontario teachers boarded with families in the village. Teachers were an integral part in the community and participated in all community events. Lucy S. M. Overend for example, used to play her violin with her left hand in the Methodist church, and

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<sup>23</sup>Clayton Hewie, <sup>PERSONAL</sup> personal interview, September 9, 1980.

<sup>Bourn</sup>  
Miss Bourn visited those who were sick.

Like many others, the teachers felt the pinch of the depression in the 1930's. Miss Bourn, for example, was earning \$1,100.00 a year in 1932 and by 1936, her salary had been reduced to \$900.00 per year. The depression and the two world wars were talked about in Cameron school only as historical events. They were realities which had to be put up with but for the most part these events occurred too far away to disturb the problems and joys of day-to-day living. The community was disturbed, however, by the death of Clarence Mark, a former pupil of S.S.No.6, who was killed in an air battle over Jutland in 1942. Life for the people of Cameron went on, however, with hopes that the war would soon be over.

The hill behind the school was a source of great fun and frolic during the long winter days. Boys and girls would slide down the icy slope on old pieces of cardboard with reckless abandon. When spring arrived, the muddy field and slope of the land confined baseball to a rather small patch of land. As early as 1878, the need for further open space for playing ball was recognized:

The attention of the trustees is called to the school ground which is altogether too small for the large number of scholars attending the school. It is also in a very bad condition with mud, especially in front of the schoolroom door. A few loads of gravel would be of great benefit in keeping the schoolroom clean.<sup>24</sup>

Appended to this report was an editor's note suggesting that the problem be attended to immediately. "In 1938 it was moved by Thomas Eyres and

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<sup>24</sup>Daily Post, Lindsay, Ontario, Friday, March 22, 1878, p. 3.



seconded by Roy Worsley that the board purchase three acres of land from Arthur Parkin for \$350."<sup>25</sup> The wheels of administration which moved slowly from 1878 to 1938 did sell the property back to the town for one dollar in 1968 (Appendix XI). This area is now Cameron ball park where students and former students can be found in the warm summer months playing ball. In the ball park an old shed, which housed the pump for the new flush toilets installed in 1941, still stands.

Rural education in postwar Ontario was in a transitional stage in which the Department of Education in Toronto was striving to bring about important changes without being unduly arbitrary in their policies. School enrollments, especially in urban areas, increased on account of the postwar baby boom and heavy immigration, but this did not happen to any great extent in Cameron. In the management of public schools, township boards were steadily being organized and the old three-trustee boards were disappearing, but this did not happen in Cameron until much later. The provincial Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario, 1950 hoped to equalize educational opportunities in the province and simplify the complexities of the educational structure. Consolidated public schools were on the way, although agitation for them in Fenelon Township was not particularly marked. "The people of Fenelon Township were very slow to change,"<sup>26</sup> according to Mr. D. R. MacDonald, Superintendent at the Fenelon Township schools in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

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<sup>25</sup>The Post Mercury, Vol. 4 No. 5, Lindsay, Ontario, Thursday, April 13, 1972, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>D. Russel MacDonald, personal interview, Thornhill, Ontario, September 21, 1980.

The change began in 1945 when a Township School Area was established consisting of No.'s 5, 7 and 13. Mr. Cleve Endicott, Mr. John Greer, Mr. Arthur Smitheram, Mr. J. J. Thurston and Mr. Clifford Worsley were the first trustees. All the other school sections including No.6 later joined, with the exception of No.'s 4 and 8. During these years, Mr. John A. Mark was engaged as secretary, a position he held until 1964. In 1965, William Davis became Minister of Education. Through an amendment to the Public School Act in 1965, it was mandatory for school sections No.'s 4 and 8 to amalgamate into township school areas.

Prior to the implementation of the compulsory reorganization programme of 1968-69, which formed the Victoria County Board of Education, the schools of the Fenelon Township school area had begun to amalgamate. No longer was the one room school house a school, but a one room facility. Children swapping between the different schools had been going on since 1965. For example, the grade one pupils from Cameron attended Powles' Corners school (Appendix XII). The pupils in grades two and three held class in the old junior room while the pupils of grades four, five and six held school in the town hall (Appendix XIII). The old senior room at Cameron was filled with grade seven and eight pupils who were bused from the Pleasant Point school and grade eight pupils from Cambray (Appendix XIV).

September of 1967 arrived and the new consolidated school was not quite ready for occupation. The busing arrangements of the past few years were continued until the doors did finally open in late October of the same year (Appendix XV). Mr. Rodger L. W. Smith, who had been principal of the Coboconk school thirty-two kilometers to the north of Cameron, became the

first principal of Fenelon Township Public School. The first few years were not easy since all the teachers except Mrs. Vivian Burnett had taught in a one room school house (Appendix XV) prior to the opening of the new school. Many of these teachers had acted as principals and were used to being involved in decision making and making decisions which, under the new system, was up to Mr. Smith.

The official opening of the new school was Wednesday, January 3, 1968. The school had been built one-third of a mile to the north of old S.S.No.6. Almost before the new building was finished, more space was required. The old school was used in 1967, 1968 and 1969 for special education classes. In 1969 and 1970, grades four, five and six held classes in the old facility. This arrangement was not satisfactory because the pupils in the old school did not want to leave the huge play area and the new baseball diamonds which had just been put in. Some parents were upset about children suffering from non-benefits of the new school; feeling that their children weren't part of the school. The .4 kilometers was indeed a long hike to use the new cramped facilities on a cold winter's day.

In addition to the problems caused by shuttling pupils back and forth between the old and new facilities, the school building itself was in poor shape. In a report to the board, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Mr. David C. Parrott, reported that "the basement leaks in wet weather and two to three inches of water has been in the area where the boys' toilets are located."<sup>27</sup> The department of health also recommended the provision of hot water in the washrooms plus plastering and painting throughout.

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<sup>27</sup>Lindsay Post, Lindsay, Ontario, February 16, 1973, p. 4.

Repair of the old facilities was to be an expensive proposition, especially when there was already a need for expansion of the new township school. For these reasons, the board decided to retire Cameron school. Classes ceased for the last time at School Section No.6 in June, 1973.

The old school building, which has been the centre of education for over one hundred years, was sold to Mrs. B. H. Longland for \$13,000.00 in August, 1973. One year later, the old school building changed hands again and was sold to Mrs. B. P. Lawrence for \$16,500.00, more than ten times the cost of the original structure (Appendix XVI). Mrs. Lawrence made some renovations before turning the building into an antique store which she named "Cameron Schoolhouse Antiques". Many former pupils of S.S.No.6 from Cameron and out of town still wander into the old school house and while looking at the antiques, still reminisce about their years spent at school and where they sat in so and so's class.

To accommodate the pupils from S.S.No.6, two portable classrooms from Woodville Public School were relocated on the new school grounds by September, 1973. With the establishment of a library in one of the new classrooms, another portable from Lady Eaton Public School was added and by 1974 a fourth portable was added to look after the swelling enrollment.

Mr. John Wenzel took over the principalship from Mr. Smith in 1974. It is interesting to note that Mr. Wenzel's wife, Helen, taught at the old S.S.No.6 in 1966 for a short time. The enrollment had swelled to 383 pupils by 1974 so, shortly after Mr. Wenzel's arrival, construction of the Fenelon Township Public School addition was begun. The addition was officially opened on October 20, 1976, and consisted of two classrooms, a kindergarten

room, two storage rooms, a health room and the library-resource centre.

The kindergarten room had been long overdue since the inception of kindergarten into the school system in Fenelon Township. The first kindergarten classes were held in a corner of the gym in September, 1968, and the first kindergarten teacher at Fenelon Township School was Mrs. Brenda Boyd. She was a very capable person, who was musical and was loved by the children, but was an unqualified teacher; having had no teacher training. The three years in which the kindergarten was held in the gym not only limited the kindergarten programme itself, but limited the physical education programme of the other grades in the school. For this reason, the kindergarten classroom designed to meet the young child's needs was beneficial to all pupils and teachers in the school.

The building of the library-resource centre was an indication of changing expectations of educational development. The library was not only a place where children could read and exchange books, but became a resource centre where information is organized in a systematic way. The sources of information were no longer just books but records, filmstrips, films, or audio and visual cassette tapes. With the implementation of new curriculum from the Ministry of Education and from the local board of education, the library has become a resource centre for the pupil and teacher alike.

Visitors to Fenelon Township Public School still include the clergy and the superintendent, but also include many more trained personnel such as: dental health nurses, the school nurse, speech pathologists, O.P.P. constables, the music consultant, primary, junior and intermediate consultants plus other visitors who come and share their talents and experiences. From January

to December, 1980, Mr. Robert Anderson exchanged schools and houses with Mr. Pat Dorian from Adelaide, Australia. This was the first teacher exchange for Fenelon Township school, which not only enriched the lives of the two teachers themselves, but enriched the lives of the whole school. Educational ideas and processes were shared among the teachers, slide presentations and talks were given several times not only in the school but in the community by Mr. Dorian and the children were encouraged to think about Australian children who had similar problems to their own along the road of life.

In September, 1980, the enrollment was 350 pupils, but what will the future bring? In 1973, Mr. Parrott as Assistant Superintendent of schools was forecasting the use of portables until 1982. Now, in 1980, as Superintendent of Schools, he notes that enrollment has not declined as quickly as it might but that the two portables presently in use may be vacated by 1984 or 1985. Mr. Parrott's view of gradual decline in Fenelon Township School conflicts slightly with the position held by the Victoria County Board of Education and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The board believes that enrollment will hold its own in the county whereas O.I.S.E. believes that the future will bring a slow increase in the number of pupils attending the public schools in Ontario.

Filled with nostalgic memories of the past, our minds were brought back to the present by the jarring ring of the bell and the principal's voice over the intercom: "May I please have your attention for the announcements. May I please have....." After the long list of activities which included

gymnastics, choir, volleyball, chess club, and the rising costs of milk and juice, we ate our lunch in the classroom and discussed what we had learned. Some of the pupils bugged the teacher in order to get out early and race up to the store where pupils purchased more candy for a nickle in 1870 than a dollar buys today. Other pupils were still interested in the strap and wondered if it was used today.

Mr. Allen, our vice-principal, tells a rather humorous story about a boy who was in to see Mr. Wenzel for very bad behaviour. After a short discussion, Mr. Wenzel gripped the strap securely in his right hand and wound up to strike the boy's outstretched hand. As the strap was about to come crashing down, the boy quickly pulled his hand away. The strap came down instead on Mr. Wenzel's leg with a loud whack! The strap is still given today as a reminder to pupils of their responsibilities.

The teachers at Cameron school were not always successful in their attempts to educate the young children of the community; yet for almost 125 years the public school education has reached countless individuals and provided them with the base on which all subsequent education is built. French class, bus trips, swimming in Lindsay, field trips to Ottawa and Toronto, homework, Christmas concerts, concerned teachers and our fellow classmates are what school is all about and not just the building itself.