

John Scott Deacon: An Early  
Canadian Educator

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### Chapter III - Background of John Scott Deacon - to 1863

John Deacon was born in Northern Ireland on November 12, 1841. His father, William Deacon, was an Anglican Minister and his mother, Ann Scott, was the second wife of William. When John was less than a year old his parents emigrated to the New England States. Between 1842 and 1850 the family lived in New England and Quebec, near Wolfe's Cove. William taught school during this time but did not hold any one position for a long period of time. His addiction to alcohol probably had much to do with this. During their stay in Quebec, John's sister, Georgina, was born.

The Deacon family moved to Toronto in the summer of 1850 where a third child, a girl, was born. After the birth, Ann went into what would probably now be referred to as post-natal depression. In modern times she would likely have been treated successfully. In those times, however, so little was known about mental illness. Ann was sent to the newly opened Queen Street Asylum in that year and remained in an asylum for the rest of her life. John visited her many years later when he was at Normal School, but she did not recognize him.

William Deacon apprenticed his children to farmers that same year. His reasons for doing this are unknown but probably were related to the hold that alcohol had over him. John's two sisters were apprenticed in the County of York. Although efforts have been made, no one in the family has been able to trace them. John was apprenticed to William Utter, a farmer who lived in the Township of Trafalgar in the County of Halton. Apprenticeship in those days was a form of adoption, but with a difference. The apprentice was expected to stay and work the farm. It would seem, then, that at the age of nine, John's career was set, that he would learn to farm and that would be his lifetime work.

For many reasons, perhaps, John's career would take a different direction. In his autobiography, John described his father as "of prepossessing appearance,

and very intelligent."<sup>1</sup> He remembered his father as well-educated, knowledgeable, and neatly dressed, and felt he would have advanced well in his career if it had not been for alcohol. This helps to explain why John was devoted to the cause of temperance throughout his life. It is also quite possible that, even at the age of nine, John was very ambitious. His father had given him a good education and perhaps certain values and ideals that couldn't be fulfilled on a farm in those days. It may even be possible that John wanted to make up for his father's career failures, through his own successes.

For the first three years of John's apprenticeship, his father was not far away. He was Principal of Bronte Public School, and visited John quite often. Then William left and went to Cobourg. What happened is vague, but later John heard that he had been accidentally killed. John Deacon had lost all contact with his family.

During the next few years John worked hard on the farm. It would appear that he went to school only in the winters, no doubt because he was needed on the farm. This was not unusual in rural Ontario. Boys were needed on the farms and school was not made compulsory until 1871, and then for only four months of the year.

The Utters treated John well, although William Utter had no interest in his desire to learn more. It was Mrs. Utter who defended his interest in books and often John would read at night by candlelight in spite of William's disapproval. The books had been loaned to him by his teacher at the time, George Husband. Mr. Husband had been trained at Normal School. Very few teachers at that time had his kind of education and qualifications. In fact it was George Husband who inspired John to become a teacher and John set his goals on Normal School. He knew that his foster father would not lend him the money, partly because he did not believe in John's ambition, and partly because there was probably little extra to spare. Therefore, while

the family was away in the summer of 1856, John cleared ten acres of virtually unused land on the farm. William Utter was pleased upon his return and the following year, 1857, the ten acres yielded six-hundred dollars in wheat that was sold. William gave him twenty-five cents. This was probably a turning point in John's life. He had worked very hard and loyally for William Utter, yet he did not seem to be getting anywhere. William although basically good, was not progressive. John wanted a chance to succeed and decided he would have to leave in order to follow his ambitions.<sup>2</sup>

It was also in 1857 that John became a member of the Sons of Temperance, thus beginning an association that lasted throughout his lifetime. Another lasting and very strong influence was his association with the Methodist Episcopal Church, the religion of William Utter. As a boy on the farm, John attended Church regularly. Later on he would give a large amount of time and energy supporting the Church. The Church was very important to him. From 1856-1860, John gained much experience in public speaking through McCraney's Debating Society at Merton. He won a public speaking contest there. Both his foster parents were pleased and Ma Utter gave him twenty cents.

When John left his home on March 19, 1860 to follow his career, he had a sum total of sixty-five cents: twenty-five cents from the sale of wheat, the twenty cents from Ma Utter, and twenty cents borrowed from a friend, John Secord. It was an emotional and courageous moment for him. Although he felt he could not stay, the farm had been his home for ten years. John could not bring himself to tell his foster parents of his plans for leaving. That first day must have been a lonely one for him as he walked to Burlington. Two days later he had a job working for John Henry, a farmer in the Beamsville area. He worked hard for two months. He was well fed, his work was greatly appreciated and he was paid six dollars a month. When the spring work was done, John had to move on and found work with a vegetable farmer.

John endured much hardship there, since this farmer was a mean, cruel master who could not be pleased with any amount of work. He worked sixteen hours a day and one day managed to haul twenty loads of manure. At the end of the month, John left, another seven dollars earned.

Soon he had found his way back to his own home territory. He found work with another farmer, George Dale, at ten dollars per month. At the end of three months, George was so pleased with his work, he gave him thirty-three dollars instead of the thirty dollars and offered more if he would continue. John, however, had his heart set on going to Normal School in Toronto and decided to leave. He had also learned from his friend, John Secord, to whom he had repaid the twenty cents, that the Utters wanted to see him again. And so, in the fall, John returned home. His welcome was a warm one. Ma Utter and Maggy Hislop were thrilled to see him again. Maggy was a daughter by Ma Utter's first marriage and the two were very fond of each other.

John had fifty-two dollars saved and hoped to borrow the remaining amount needed from William Utter. The loan was refused and so John had to rule out Normal School for the time being. However, he did find work on a nearby farm for a month and a half which gave him another eleven dollars, enough to attend Baldwin University in Berea, Ohio. This was a self-boarding college and through very careful management of his money, he would have enough.

John arrived there in December of 1860. His room cost seven dollars and sixty cents for the two terms and tuition was four dollars. He also had to buy text books, another ten dollars. Somehow he managed to attend to the end of the second term in June. He worked on Saturdays and limited himself to one dollar per week living expenses. He would buy a bushel of corn for thirty-seven cents and use it for many of his meals. When the second term was over, John once again went to work for a farmer, Leroy Guthrie in Norwalk.

However, he returned to his home the end of July to visit the Utters. He was very concerned about Maggy's health since she had been ill with tuberculosis for most of the time he had been away.

Once again, in September, John made the long, tedious trip to Berea. In October Maggy died and by the end of the term in December John once again returned home, this time to stay. He was very sad at the loss of his good friend, he had little money left, and he couldn't find a teaching position in Ohio. For a large part of the next year, John sold books and maps in Halton County. It was a job he did not enjoy. He had to walk great distances and didn't feel he was suited to selling.

Then, in December of 1862, John got the break he had been waiting and working for. While staying with relatives of the Utters in Dereham Township, Oxford County, he learned from them of a teaching position at the Dereham Centre school. He went to see the three trustees. One thought he was too young to handle the older age group. The ability to discipline seemed to be the main prerequisite of a teacher in those days. The other two, however, were impressed. John then had to walk most of the fifteen miles to Tilsonburg to get the approval of the Local Superintendent, Reverend Garnett, a Methodist Minister. He was examined in the subjects to be taught and received a certificate to teach in School Section Seven of Dereham. The certificate was temporary until the Board of Examiners for Oxford County met in March. At that time many teachers were hired and certified in this way. His salary would be two-hundred and forty dollars per year. His holidays consisted of Christmas, New Year's, the Queen's Birthday, and two weeks in the summer. To a man who had planned, worked and sacrificed so much to become a teacher, it was a happy beginning.

John's first day of teaching was on January 3, 1863, at S. S. No. 7, Dereham. He did well, managing a class of forty pupils whom he described as "rather rough ones". He established the necessary rapport and pleasant relationships which he described as lasting almost five years. In March he received from the Board of Examiners in Ingersoll a Second Class Certificate which would last for one year. In those days it was customary for a teacher to hold a Public Examination. Official visitors, listed in the School Law of 1846, were comprised of judges, justices of the peace, and municipal councillors. However, others such as parents, clergymen, trustees, local and county superintendents, and wardens were allowed to attend. John's first Public Examinations were held on April 2, 1863. It was quite successful, with about fifteen visitors attending. After the two-week summer vacation, he continued on at the same school, and the three Trustees raised his salary to two hundred and sixty-four dollars. His second set of Public Examinations were held on December 22, 1863 with twelve to fifteen visitors.

Then in the winter of 1864, a new student entered his classroom. Her name was Frances Allin. She had come to make up for a lack of education in her youth. Being twenty-two years old, she was much older than the other students but learned well and studied hard. In June a courtship began, in August they were engaged, and on December 22, 1864, they were married. By this time John was making three hundred dollars per year, supplemented by a small amount earned by hard work in the fields during the two week summer vacation. He also had his First Class Certificate for Oxford County which he had received in March of 1864. Although it was only valid in Oxford, legislation passed at a later date made it acceptable throughout the province.

John continued teaching at S. S. No. 7 at three hundred dollars until October of 1867 at which time he left teaching. They moved to Ingersoll and he went into partnership with his brother-in-law, Richard Butler, in a grocery business.



John Deacon's class at Dereham Centre 1864: back right is John Deacon,  
back third from right is Frances Allin.



Even while teaching in 1866 and 1867, he and Richard had managed a store, with Frances running the business during the day. John did return to teaching for three months in 1868, starting in January, but once again left the profession in April. They sold the store in Ingersoll and bought another one in Branchton, Waterloo County.<sup>1</sup> Then in 1869 they sold this store also, losing some money on the sale. John decided to attend Normal School, thereby realizing a dream he had held for many years.

The session at Normal School in Toronto began on August 9. He passed the Senior Entrance Examinations, finding them more difficult than the County Board Examinations, but "a little more reasonable".<sup>2</sup> Normal School proved to be a tough grind in those days. The students had to study long hours to keep up with the work. Fifteen to twenty were let go after the entrance exams and those who stayed had to face regular examination sessions every four weeks. In a letter to his wife dated November 1, 1869, John commented on how the masters would suspend two or three students each day because they hadn't prepared their lessons well enough.<sup>3</sup> He found the situation depressing and was often tense and worried that he would not pass. He also described a case where the masters made one man re-do his work for asking him whether they should use both sides of the paper for writing on.<sup>4</sup>

John's living expenses at Normal School amounted to about two dollars and fifty cents per week, and the boat trip from Bronte to Toronto cost fifty cents. This was quite a lot of money, considering teachers' wages in those times, and of course there was no income at all while he was at school. Nevertheless the term at Normal School was very worthwhile in spite of the overly strict conditions and the financial strain. John received a Second Class, Grade A Certificate, valid in any part of Ontario. He also met George Ross, a fellow student, who later became Minister of Education and Premier of Ontario. Their friendship lasted throughout their careers and later, when John became an inspector for Halton County, the two would share ideas on educational matters.

Some of John's compositions written during this time demonstrate his belief in the importance of hard work. He felt that a willingness to apply oneself and labour diligently was more important than a great intellect, that success is earned and that one who has not tried hard to succeed cannot expect to happen upon success merely by chance. A paper written in 1869 showing his philosophy on book teaching was very thoughtful and knowledgeable, and demonstrated a commonsense approach to teaching and learning. In this paper he stressed the importance of teaching students to understand underlying principles and to develop an ability to think for themselves. To get them to understand the reasons for what they were reading would be to motivate them.<sup>5</sup> In 1869, John had written down a philosophy which lies behind curriculums laid down one hundred years later.

On January 3, 1870, John returned to teaching at S. S. No. 3 North Oxford where he had taught for the three months in 1868. His salary was four hundred dollars a year. Although teachers' salaries were low and teachers underpaid, John managed his money well and was able to save substantial amounts. In his first two years of teaching he saved three hundred dollars from his small salary and loaned it out at eight percent per annum. He supplemented his salary with other income. For example in 1871, his income was five hundred and seventy dollars and fifty-five cents, although his salary was only four hundred and sixty dollars that year. The balance came from extra work in Woodstock, writing deeds, and sixty-nine dollars and sixty cents in interest earned.<sup>6</sup> His expenses that year were three hundred and fifty-five dollars giving him a balance of two hundred and fifteen dollars and fifty-five cents.<sup>7</sup> In his autobiography John described living as "cheap". Their rent did not amount to much. A dressed hog of two hundred pounds cost five or six cents a pound and he sold the cured sides in the spring for ten to twelve cents a pound. Good beef by the quarter was bought for four cents a pound. They bought their food in large quantities and even had reasonably-priced fruit. In the spring of 1865 the house he bought in front of his

school cost three-hundred dollars.

During 1870, John studied at home and in November and December returned to Normal School. He spent a good deal of time teaching at the Model School and received a First Class Grade B Certificate. John continued at the same school, his salary four hundred and sixty dollars for 1871. In June of that year he was appointed to the Board of Examiners for examining and licensing teachers in the County of Oxford, a post he held until 1885.<sup>8</sup>

In July he applied for Principal of Ingersoll Public School. He was chosen as one of the three best, but in spite of a letter of high recommendation from the Inspector of Schools for Ingersoll, the position was given to another man. In his letter, Inspector Peter Wright, had stated:

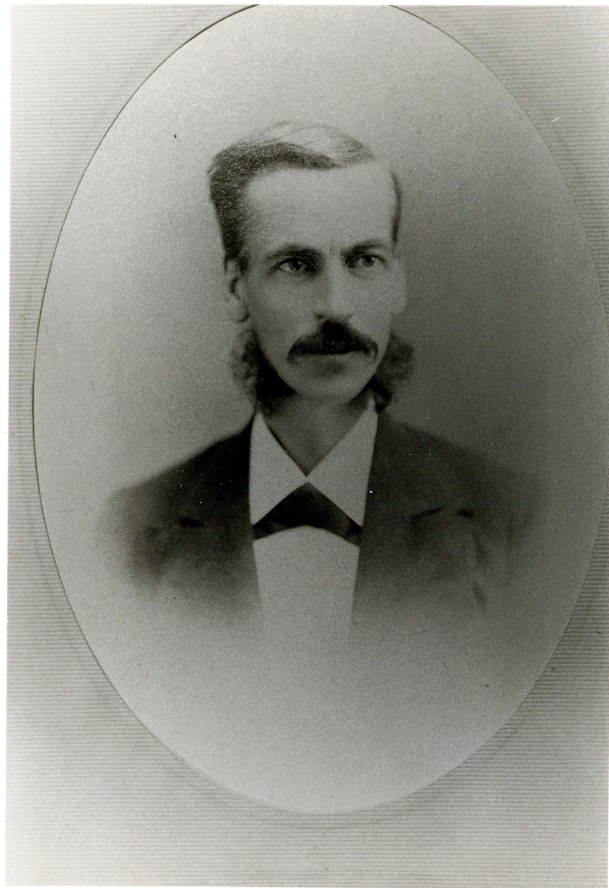
Teaching is his adopted profession and he is destined to rise as nearly to the top of it as zealous perseverance, earnest industry, high ability, and conscientious discharge of duty may enable him. He is giving the greatest satisfaction in the neighbourhood where he now teaches, respected and loved by both pupils and parents.<sup>9</sup>

The trustees of S. S. No. 3, North Oxford felt the same way. In a letter written in June, 1871, they expressed great regret at his resignation and referred to his popularity and efficiency. He continued on, however, in the fall, having been turned down for the Principalship of Ingersoll Public School. His salary for 1872 was to be five hundred dollars. One of the trustees thought it was too much so he resigned again. Within a week he accepted a new position, principal of S. S. No. 6 South Norwich, also called Otterville Public School. Again the trustees of S. S. No. 3, North Oxford showed their admiration by offering him a new house on the school grounds and highest possible salary for life. John refused, for he wanted to be a principal.<sup>10</sup> He held his closing examinations at S. S. No. 3 on December 18, 1871, attended by twenty-six visitors. It was a sad occasion with tears from both the children and the teacher.

Teaching is not an easy task, nor has it ever been. It was no different for John Deacon. He found Otterville Public School a trial. He had one assistant, Lottie Jones, and they each had eighty students. John discovered the school to be in a poor state of affairs with regard to both discipline and academic achievement. Right from the beginning, January 8, 1872, he had to supervise his class very closely. In his teaching diary he commented on the poor standards of reading, grammar, spelling, arithmetic and writing.<sup>1</sup> It was not long before he regretted going to that school. One student in particular, John McFarlane gave him a great deal of trouble as he had the previous teacher. One day, about two weeks after John's arrival, the boy went too far and threatened him with a stalk of cordwood. John disarmed him and later whipped him for his disobedience. Although another whipping was required in March, by spring John McFarlane had become a good student, one of his best.

The difficult and trying situation turned into a successful one. By June the academic standings had improved noticeably and order had been established. At the Junior Public Examinations on July 12, there were eighteen visitors and at the Senior, between fifty and sixty visitors. So successful was he that the Ingersoll Board asked him to re-apply as Principal of their public school, since the principal they had hired the previous year hadn't worked out. John was unanimously elected and so, on August 19, 1872, became Principal of Ingersoll Public School at a salary of six hundred dollars per year.

His new school was far different from the one in Otterville. It was in better order and John found the level of achievement to be generally "moderate", in other words, much better than what he had faced in Otterville in January. He still taught full-time in a classroom and during 1872 and 1873 seemed to feel somewhat badly about the students' achievement in some subjects when



John Deacon - 1870's

examined. In April, a visit by the Public School Inspector, W. Carlyle, left him depressed. Perhaps it was this and subsequent thinking that led him to write down his thoughts on methods of control and teaching on June 4th of 1873.<sup>2</sup> In these he stressed the importance of kindness and firmness, of establishing strong control when first starting in a school, of replacing threats with the actual punishment. Written over one hundred years ago, these ideas are basically the same as the advice given to those starting new schools today.

During the next few years he continued to hold public examinations twice yearly: one in December and one in June or July. His salary increased steadily: six hundred and fifty dollars on January 1, 1873; seven hundred dollars July 1, 1873; seven hundred and fifty dollars January 1, 1874, where it remained for the next few years. Whatever uncertainties he may have had in the early years at Ingersoll Public School, he was impressing others with his success. In 1877 a report from Inspector Carlyle was published in the Ingersoll Chronicle. The report praised the students' academic achievements, the thoroughness of instruction in all subjects, the quality of the examinations, and the attention given to the individual pupil. Discipline was described as particularly good. The report went on to say

That your school is exerting a potent and wholesome influence on the youth of your town is unquestionable,...

During these years there were times of great sorrow for John and his wife. Two of their children died of scarlet fever, Annie Elizabeth, four years old, and Edgar William, three. Four other children were born during this time, Bertha Frances, Frederick Herbert, Florence Elizabeth and John Kenneth. Bertha, Frederick and Florence survived and went on to have children of their own, but at nine years old Kenneth scraped his knee in a fall and died of a form of poisoning that resulted. The doctors did not have the knowledge or medicine then that probably would have saved them in modern times.

Besides his job as a principal and teacher and other duties and jobs related to education, John had also been the Superintendent of the Methodist Sabbath School since 1872. Furthermore he was working on a degree through Victoria College in Cobourg, studying Latin and Greek every night, often until midnight.<sup>4</sup> As a result his health failed in 1877 and the doctor urged him to get a rest. In the summer of 1877 he went on his first major trip (although he had been to the World's Fair in Philadelphia the previous year). He stayed with relatives in Prince Edward Island, relaxing and receiving his first swimming lessons. He also travelled to Boston before returning to Ingersoll. Although travelling took a long time in those days, he got the rest he needed. It was perhaps good timing, for in October of 1877 the Ingersoll Public School became a Model School.

The history of the Model School system as a method for training teachers is an interesting one. In the early years of education, teachers were generally poorly qualified and standards were inconsistent. The first Normal School was established in Toronto in 1847, the second in Ottawa in 1875. It wasn't until 1907 until the Normal Schools reached a total of six. During the 1800's therefore, there was not enough room to accommodate all the teachers at Normal School. The Model School system was used to fill the gap, and in some ways it did. As early as 1843 a County Model School system was inaugurated. One or more schools in each county could be used for observation by teachers of common schools. It was not adequate; there was no Government money. The system was upgraded through the Common School Act of 1850. Model Schools were now organized on a township basis, the township councils being allowed to raise money for the Model Schools. Members of the township council would be trustees of the Model School. Tuition was free, and training was given to student-teachers as well as to teachers. This system also did not succeed. Some of the local superintendents did not do their job. For too many of them, being a superintendent was not their main occupation.

The actual beginning of the Model Schools came through the Public School Act of 1877 which established a County Model School system once again. Money was made available from both the county and the provincial governments. The system of school inspection had been revamped by the Common School Act of 1871. Inspectors were organized on a county basis and their qualifications upgraded. At least one public school in each county or group of counties had to be a Model School with the authority to train candidates for a Third Class Teacher's Certificate, good for only three years, but renewable. By 1879 there were fifty such schools operating. With the two Normal Schools they provided the number of qualified teachers needed. In fact, during their thirty years in existence, they prepared more than thirty-six thousand teachers. Before the Model School System, only about half the teachers had even the lowest class of certificate.

The Model Schools were to give the student-teachers a professional training, not an academic one. The course was to include school organization and management, teaching methods, school laws and regulations regarding teachers' and pupils' duties. The main purpose was to give the student-teacher a knowledge of proper class instruction and to give him opportunities to practise under the supervision of experienced teachers.

As Principal of the Ingersoll Model School, John was responsible for directing the work of the student-teachers as well as teaching his regular classes. In the first year, 1877, he had ten Student-teachers or Model Students, the next year, eighteen, the third year twenty-five, the fourth year twenty-four, then ten, fifteen, and fifteen successively in the following years. Sessions for the students normally ran for fifteen weeks beginning in September. John had to give a detailed account of each lesson taught by his Model Students, although it would appear that he did not have to give a detailed account for each student throughout the entire session. For example, in 1879 the Model Students were divided into three classes and John observed



Class 1, Session 1 in September and October; Class 2, Session 1 in September and October; Class 3, Session 1 in September and October; Class, Session 2 in November and December. Students were marked on such standards as discipline, interest of the class, their preparation, fluency, energy, accuracy and thoroughness. Altogether there were twenty areas which were to receive marks for each lesson given.<sup>5</sup> Marks ranged from "1", the highest, to "6", the lowest. The amount of work required of John was astounding. In his autobiography he described a typical day. From 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. he taught the Model Students. He taught his regular class from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Of course, as principal he still had to supervise the whole school. After school hours he had to write down the marks for his Model Students and prepare their lessons. During his lunch break he marked slates and papers. On top of all these daily duties he had to examine each pupil two times a year and prepare questions for examinations.<sup>6</sup> For his extra duties as a Model School Principal, John received one hundred dollars per year. Obviously the work-load for a principal of a model school was far too great, in fact this was one of the short-comings of the system. John was relieved of some of his teaching duties that first session in 1877. Gradually the load was made lighter for principals of model schools by allowing assistants to take over their regular classrooms during the model sessions. These principals also faced additional pressures since there was to be three inspections during each model session, one by a department official and two by the county inspector. To succeed, the principal of the model school had to be a special type of person for as J. M. McCutcheon wrote:

The principals of the County Model Schools were usually men of culture, high ideals, and successful teaching experience, men whom to contact was in itself an education.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of all the extra work involved, John was very successful as a Model School Principal and teacher. He was popular with and respected by

the Model Students, receiving presentations and gifts each year from his Model classes.<sup>8</sup> He had an understanding and helpful manner which was greatly appreciated by his Model Students.<sup>9</sup> It was a credit to his ability and drive that he continued his success in the regular classroom. A letter from his pupils, dated June 28, 1880 expressed their appreciation for his "kindness and persevering efforts".<sup>10</sup> The teachers of his school felt the same kind of affection and respect for him. On his resignation in December of 1881 a letter from them expressed their sadness at his leaving.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, John's hard work and ability to relate well to others were making him a very successful educator and a popular member of the community. The testimonial letters in this regard were many. One in particular, written in January 1880 by C. Fergusson, Chairman of the Ingersoll Board of Education, summed up the qualities that made John so respected: an excellent disciplinarian who held the "confidence and esteem" of the teachers and pupils, great teaching ability, "unimpeachable" moral character, courteous manner, "energetic and painstaking".<sup>12</sup> The Inspector of Public Schools for Oxford County, W. Carlyle, praised John for his successful work with the Model Students and the model he himself had set for them. He also commended him for his work and influence with the Teachers' Institutes.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the great individual efforts by many teachers and principals, the Model School System had many weaknesses. Although it did upgrade teachers' qualifications and standards from what they had been, by the early 1990's this was not enough. There were too many teachers with the lowest grade of certificate. The sessions at Model Schools were too short; the professional training being received was really only an introduction, since the opportunities for observation and practice-teaching were limited. The teachers being turned out were therefore too inexperienced. Also, there were no facilities for new subjects such as manual training, household science and nature study. The setting and appraisal of examinations was not uniform throughout the

province. At first local boards set the exams. Later, when the Council of Public Instruction set them, the local boards continued to mark them. With the addition of four new Normal Schools in 1907, the County Model Schools were abolished. Some Provincial Model Schools did continue until 1924. The County Model Schools had served their initial purpose. They had taken the teacher population in general from a very low level of training to a higher one. In so doing they had thus acted as a stepping stone to even higher levels of certification.

During his time as principal of Ingersoll Public School, John continued to take an active part in the Methodist Church. In November of 1880 he became the Superintendent of the Sabbath School on King Street in Ingersoll. He also continued his involvement with Teachers' Associations, being elected President of the Oxford Teachers' Institute in December of 1879.

In 1880 John became involved in land speculation in the United States. At first it went well. In the summer vacation of 1880 he travelled to South Dakota with businessmen and others from Ingersoll and bought six hundred and forty acres of land. One year later he sold it for an eight hundred dollar profit, no small sum in those days. He then bought more land further north. He and another investor travelled again, this time to North Dakota and then to Portage la Prairie. Then, through an auction in Toronto in October of 1881, he bought about five blocks of land in partnership with Richard Butler. In December John sold his share at a profit of three thousand dollars. In one year he had made about four thousand dollars in land speculation.<sup>14</sup> He resigned his position in Ingersoll and left for Winnipeg in January. This time the local businessmen had formed a syndicate with John as their representative. Thus he went not only with his own money but the funds of the others as well. The "land fever" was on. Many people from Ingersoll forced their savings on him before he left, urging him to invest it for them in land. The timing was terrible. The boom lasted only long enough for him to buy

land and then the market fell apart. Thousands of dollars were lost by the syndicate and John's personal profits of the year before were wiped out. In his autobiography John described himself as feeling "badly discouraged" when he returned in April. This was probably an understatement. Although no fault of his own, he had lost thousands of dollars, both his own and others. The four thousand dollars he had made the previous year would have allowed him and his family to live quite comfortably. He did retain possession of the lands he had bought in 1881 and 1882 and sold them twenty-two years later, making back much of the money he had lost, but during that time had to pay taxes on the properties which he described as "an annual burden". And of course he lost the interest he could have earned on that money.

The people of Ingersoll who had sent money bore him no grudge for what had happened. Yet he did not go back to work in the spring. He spent the time gardening and perhaps trying to get enough courage up to begin again. He had worked so hard at saving money. In summer he applied for the position of Principal of Belleville Public School and was accepted. He declined, however, since the Ingersoll Board offered him a position teaching the Model Students and penmanship, with a good chance of becoming Principal again at Christmas. The Belleville Board raised their salary offer by one hundred dollars but John decided to remain in Ingersoll. In January of 1883 he again became Principal of Ingersoll Public and Model School. His salary was as before: seven hundred and fifty dollars plus one hundred dollars extra for teaching the Model Students. In February of 1884, his salary was raised to nine hundred dollars. Then in February of 1885 he was chosen from thirty-five applicants as Principal of Woodstock Model and Public School at nine hundred dollars. Hearing this, four Board Members from Ingersoll went to his house and offered him one thousand dollars per year for five years to stay. He couldn't stay, however, since he had already accepted the Woodstock offer. Also his position in Woodstock would involve three schools and twenty-two teachers.

By this time John had received his Second Year standing with First Class Honours in Classics from Victoria College (1884). This gave him a First Class, Grade A Teachers' Certificate and a Public School Inspector's Certificate in July of 1884. He had well deserved this success, for he had worked and studied hard, so hard in fact that when his examinations were to begin he was studying with a bandage over one eye. Fortunately a friend had learned of this and suggested a remedy with hot water that improved his eyesight and stopped the pain.

John did not stay in Woodstock for long. The inspector's position for Halton County became available in June of 1885. He applied but was not appointed. However, the one who was appointed held "only a County Certificate" and did not qualify. John went to each of the fifteen councillors to speak for his qualifications. He knew one or two from his years at the Utters but the rest were unknown to him. He was a popular candidate as evidenced by the write-up in the Acton Free Press.<sup>15</sup> There were six other candidates, two with B. A.'s and two with M. A.'s. John received the appointment on the fifth ballot and became the Public School Inspector for Halton County. Another article in the Acton Free Press predicted that the new inspector would devote his energy and capabilities to improve and maintain the quality of education.<sup>16</sup>



John Deacon - 1890's



John Deacon - 1922 or 1923