

History of  
School Section Number 5  
Oxford Centre  
1844 - 1966.

From the book "Place and Stream Names of Oxford County, Ontario" by J. Wintenburg, we read: "Oxford Centre was known until 1853 as the 'Town Hall' for here the council met for many years, Being nearly in the centre of the township, this place quite naturally received the designation 'Oxford Centre'. Even before that time, our little community had its first school."

The first Oxford Centre School of which we have a record was built about 1844 or 1845. At that time Oxford County constituted the District of Brock which held council meetings in Woodstock. In an 1844 report of the District Council meeting it states that a grant of 50 pounds was given for the erection of a school house in School District No. 5 East Oxford. In due time a frame building 24 feet by 30 feet was erected on the southwest portion of the Pioneer Cemetery, land which had been donated for the cemetery by Abraham Canfield, one of the first settlers of East Oxford.

By the School Act in force at that time the schools were under the supervision of Local Superintendents. Those who served in this office from 1850 - 1870 were: George Alexander, B. Ellison, A. Hurlburt, John Bredin, Rev. Wm. Stephenson, Rev. Wm. Lund, Rev. S. Benson Kellog, F. D. Nesbitt, M.D. and A. J. Campbell, M.D.

Some of the teachers of this period were: Alexander Robb, James Winterborn and James Dumphy.

In the report of Mr. George Alexander, the school was given a first class rating. In 1851 it had a library of 120 volumes, which had increased to 215 in 1852. The annual salary ranged from 62 pounds in 1850 to \$350 in 1872. Pupil enrolment fluctuated from 62 to as high as 106.

Schools were supported by municipal and legislative grants. In a report of County Council (as the District Council was now called in 1850) the school tax rate for East Oxford was set at  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound.

This first school was used occasionally for church meetings and other social functions there being no church at Oxford Centre before 1860. Some of the older residents can recall stories told of them by their parents about the pupils playing in the cemetery and around the materials used in the building of the Anglican Church.

When the ratepayers decided to build a new school there was some controversy as to where it should be located. Those from the north wanted it to be at Oxford Centre, while those from the south wanted it where it now stands, as this would divide the distance more evenly. When it was put to a vote the result was a tie. Mr. N. Schooley, the local storekeeper, was called upon to cast the deciding ballot.

On April 9, 1872. an acre of land was bought from Earl and Charlotte Canfield for the sum of \$120. The trustees at that time were: Wm. Vroman, James Park and James Lund. Mr. Adams was given the contract to build the school. Many of the old records are missing, but we would presume that

the cost would be approximately \$1500 in comparison with other buildings at that time. Double seats to accommodate about 100 pupils were installed, and portions of the wall were painted black to be used for blackboards.

The school was ready for use at Christmas time and the opening took the form of a social evening. One could surmise that the large new classroom was appreciated by the teacher and pupils alike, after having been so crowded in the other one. The large playground was also an improvement.

The old school was moved north of Oxford Centre to the property now owned by Harold Armstrong. For many years it stood just east of the blacksmith shop and was used as a paint shop. In 1937 it was moved to its present location on the same property and has been used as a storage shed since that time.

Many changes have taken place since the present school was built. The following are a few of the changes through the years: Slate blackboards were installed in 1901. In 1907 the bookcase, which is still in use, was bought at a cost of \$10.50. About 1913, new single desks replaced the old double ones. In 1923, a phonograph costing \$99.50 was bought. This must have been considered quite a luxury. In 1925 the present well was drilled at a cost of \$749.88. A new heating system which cost \$162.50 replaced the old box-stove in 1935, but wood was used as the only fuel until 1942 when coal was bought for the winter months. In 1937 electric lighting was installed and in 1939 the first piano was bought. When the pressure system was installed about 1949, it was then possible to have a drinking fountain and better washing facilities in the classroom.

Since 1936 Oxford Centre has had a music supervisor come weekly. The following have worked in this capacity: Miss Priscilla Shields, Mr. Karl Wittig, Mrs. Phinn and Mr. J. Inch.

Religious instructors who have assisted the teachers since 1946 include Rev. A. Thrower, Mr. D. Gorrie, Mr. Watson and Miss Marguerite Hill.

For many years the East Oxford School Fair was held on these school grounds. Many of you will have pleasant memories of these fairs, which were carried on under the direction of the late Mr. G. R. Green, Agriculture Representative. The trophies displayed here today are reminders of the success of our pupils at that time.

In 1940 a Home and School Association was organized with Mr. Lorne Richardson elected as the first president. This group has continued to be of great service to the school and community since that time.

Late in 1944 the old school sections of East Oxford were dissolved, and a Township School Area was formed, coming into force on January 1, 1945.

After 1872 the enrolment continued to be quite high until about 1910. Then for many years it varied from 20 to 40. In the 1940's the enrolment started to rise again and at times due to crowded conditions it became necessary to take some of the pupils to other schools in the township.

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TEACHERS

Teachers who have taught in this school since it was built in 1872 include:

R. D. Cowan	1900-1903
Mr. Murphy	1903-1905
Mr. Laycock	1905-1910
A. J. McKay	1907
Wm. Kalbfleisch	1910
David Hume	1910
U. V. Christie	1911
Fred Minns	1911-1914
Margaret Best	1914
Morley Smith (absent some months in 1907)	1915
Norman Cook (August- December)	1915-1916
W. H. Martin (August- September)	1916-1918
Mr. McKinnon (October- December)	1918-1919
E. Milliken (January- June)	1919-1920
Ida Patterson	1920-1935
Marion Hughes (September and December)	1935-1938
John Geddes (January- June)	1938-1942
George Smith	1942-1944
Pearl Frizelle	1944-1945
Rosa Herron	1945-1946
Olive Coló	1946-1947
Gladys Ficht	1948
Mary Caley	1948-1951
Alice George	1951-1953
Mrs. Isabel Townsend	1953-1961
Doris Brinn	1955-1957
Mrs. Reba Logan ( September-April)	1957-1958
Mrs. Eniá Easton (April-December)	1958-1959
Mrs. Margaret Thornton (January-June)	1959-1960
Verna McComb	1960-1965
Morris McMillan	1961-1964
Mary (Caley) Armstrong	1964-1966
Shirley Appleton	1965-1966
Mrs. Margaret Palmer	
Mrs. Lila McMillan	
Mrs. Marion Plumb	
Mrs. Alice LeRiche	
Stuart Little	
Harvey Simmons	
Betty Stroud	

Mrs. Gladys Rutherford, the former Gladys Ficht, taught for the longest period, having served the section faithfully for fifteen ye

Oxford Centre Home And School Association1940-1966.

On Thursday evening, October 24, 1940, a meeting of the ratepayers of this school section was held at the school with an attendance of forty-five. Gordon Kelner, chairman, introduced the guest speaker, Mrs. J. R. Sullivan, Oxford County organizer of Home and School Associations and who was assisted by Mrs. Fred Fairs, Woodstock. It was moved by R. H. Buchanan and seconded by Mrs. Lorne Richardson that a Home and School Association be organized in this community, the first officers being

President: Mrs. L. Richardson  
 1st. Vice-Pres.: Mrs. S. Lawrence  
 2nd. Vice-Pres.: Mrs. R. Parking  
 Recording Sec'y: Miss A. George  
 Corr. Sec'y and Treas.: R. H. Smith  
 Programme: Mrs. E. Wilsdon  
 Social: Mrs. S. Hird and Mrs. R. H. Buchanan  
 Membership: Mr. W. Jeffery

Gordon Kelner and Frank Jackson were appointed Honorary Presidents and in 1945 the names of A. Thrower and Mrs. Lorne Richardson were added.

One of the first projects of the newly formed Association was making layettes for British babies. The first delegate to the Home and School Convention was Miss Alice George. In 1941 a School Beautification Committee was appointed, namely Mr. E. Schultz, E. Wilsdon, Mrs. E. Kennedy and Mrs. E. Wilsdon. Through this effort the school received a folding table as a prize. A quilt was made by the Jr. Red Cross girls and tickets were sold by members of Home and School with Mrs. W. Montgomery the winner, and all proceeds going to the Junior Red Cross War Fund.

On Jan. 17, 1946, Walter Wood unveiled an Honor Roll placed in the school with the following names inscribed by Mrs. W. G. Lazenby:

Harold Armstrong, James Burse, Janice Chalk, Jeffery Chalk, John Clifford, Norman Evans, Ray Givens, Peter Palubiski, Leslie Pellow, Murray Riach, Donald Riley, Stanley Smith, Arthur Stewart, Carl Stewart, Arthur Streng, John Stewart, Mark Travers.  
 Killed In Action: Jeffery Chalk, Norman Evans.

On May 28, 1946, a Well Baby Clinic was sponsored by Home and School and held in Oxford Centre Hall. The first helpers were Mrs. C. Dougherty, Mrs. G. Parkin, Mrs. E. Wilsdon, and later all Home and Schools in East Oxford were asked to help.

Cook Books were compiled by members and sold. Money was sent to Toronto in 1947 to help re-establish schools in war-torn countries in Europe under the UNESCO plan. In 1948, Home and School catered to a Grassland Day along with Blows and Curries and from the proceeds a record player was purchased for the school children's use.

In 1950 a Tenth Anniversary party was held when each president received a remembrance. A Seventeenth Anniversary was also celebrated,

at which time Mrs. S. Lawrence presented Mrs. W. Jeffery with a gift for regular attendance. On the Twentieth Anniversary it was noted that one present member, Aubrey Parkin, was also present at the first meeting in 1940. In 1962 the group sponsored a meeting of the Historical Society held in Oxford Centre Hall and was considered a huge success. In that year the first Graduation pins were presented to the Grade 8 class, and awards given for printing and writing. This practice has been carried on each year including additional awards donated by individual members.

Our final two years have been busy and interesting ones. Two of the highlights were: First-the presenting of a picture of the Oxford Centre School to the East Oxford Township School Area Board, which will be placed in the new Central School along with a similar one from each of the other schools in the township. Secondly, one of our former members, Mrs. George Parkin, was presented with a Life Membership from the Ontario Federation of Home and Schools Associations, the first for Oxford to receive this award from the Ontario level. Mrs. Charles Riach read the citation. This event took place April 6, 1966, at the Inn on the Park in Toronto during the Home and School Convention.

Through the years the guest speakers have been varied with ministers, music instructors, news editors, horticulturalists, public health nurses, public school inspectors, judges, dentist, Member of Parliament, librarian, Representatives from Dept. of Agriculture, Ymca, Children's Aid Society, Retarded Children's School, School for the Blind, Ontario Hospital, Dept. of Highways, Bell Telephone and others as well as capable speakers in and around our own community.

The music provided at our meetings has been mainly our local talent, which has been excellent down through the years.

The following is a list of Presidents of the Oxford Centre Home and School Association:

Mrs. L. Richardson	1940-1941
Walter Wood	1941 -1943
Mrs. C. Townsend	1943-1944
Mrs. E. Wilsdon	1944-1946
Mrs. G. Parkin	1946 -1948
Mrs. T. W. Lazenby	1948-1950
Mrs. H. McCready	1950-1952
Mrs. W. Hampson	1952-1954
Mrs. J. Huggins	1954-1955
Mrs. G. Parkin	1955-1956
Mrs. Colin Riach	1956-1958
Mr. Kenneth Sherman	1958-1960
Mrs. A. Martin	1960-1962
Mrs. E. Hird	1962-1964
Mrs. F. Maloney	1964-1966

Woodstock Public Library  
LOCAL HISTORY