

From

the first Norwich District High School yearly magazine.

OUR SCHOOL

In 1917 Mr. Young came to Norwich as a teacher in the Norwich Continuation School. At that time there were fifty-two students in the first, second and third forms.

In 1920 a campaign was started through The Norwich Gazette to give better education in this part of the country. Prior to this time many students had gone to Woodstock to finish their High School education.

Owing to a division among the members of the Public School Board, the Norwich Council took up the matter. They found an Old County by-law which established Norwich as a High School district. The matter was approved by the Department of Education and in the spring of 1920 a High School Board was appointed.

This board purchased the palatial residence built by the late Geo. A. Cook, Ex-M.P., and during the summer and fall transformed it into a beautiful school, admirably suited to the needs of this community.

On January 1, 1921, the building was formally opened, with Mr. Young as principal and Miss Norah G. Templar and Miss Jean K. Barclay, as assistants. On Monday, January 3, the classes assembled for study in the new class-rooms. There were eighty-two pupils present.

Mr. Lowe has vivid memories of the old school during his 26 years as caretaker. Here in his own words is a brief description of the highlights which occurred at the old school.

"As I shook hands with and received the keys of the old school from Byron Zufeldt, on Saturday afternoon, April 30, 1927, I said to him: 'Mr. Zufeldt, as you doubled the time of Andrew Searls, the first caretaker, do you suppose I shall double the time you were here?' It was a pertinent question then, but, as I look back on almost 26 years, it does not seem so now.

Monday morning we started at work. Everything was new to us, but everything was sparkling and clean. The school was just six years old then and it was just as much the 'pride and joy' of the citizens as our new school is now. Mr. Searls had fashioned a park out of the grounds, for they had grown up in years of neglect, and Mr. Zufeldt had carried on in the manner of his predecessor. He wished me every success and happiness too. I needed it, I found later, trying to live on the salary which was then the magnificent sum of \$720 a year.

The furnace burned well that first morning and we, Mrs. Lowe and I, busied ourselves getting settled. Evidently some of the boys at the school decided the new caretaker should be given a fitting welcome, for one of them turned off the suction valve in the furnace pit so that it filled up with water. Quite innocently we stepped into the furnace pit. Plop, plop we went, for the pit was filled with water and it came well over the shoe tops. The boys who attended the old school will remember that water ran in a continuous flow through the furnace pit during winter and spring months. Unfortunately, perhaps, no one was present to witness the result of their joke and I am quite certain none has known it until now.

When I came to the school the staff consisted of Mr. Gordon Young, principal; Mr. R. F. Trewin, who taught Latin; Miss Vera Skene who taught mathematics during the day and in her off times persuaded Mr. Trewin to make her Mrs. Trewin. In September that year she went to Merlin as principal, but she continued her interest in Norwich and she and Mr. Trewin were married the next year. Then there were Miss Mildred Gliddon, who taught French; and Miss Marion Hulet, now of Galt, who was supplying for Miss C. V. Yates, on leave of absence. Miss C. I. E. Currey, who was to remain in Norwich for 15 years, replaced Miss Skene in September.

The Board then consisted of James Milne, chairman; Herbert Clare, S. G. Kinsey, Dr. E. W. Moles, John McKee and J. H. Templar.

Mr. Young was enthusiastic about flowers and went to the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph to get the first perennials that were planted in the south border. Then it was about one foot wide, but has grown gradually since. Peonies that were sent in commemoration of the anniversary of Confederation by the Prince of Wales were planted right up against the conservatory.

When agriculture was introduced at the school the garden was in the plot which I own, just in front of our house. Mr. C. Carroll owned it then and a plot more infested with couch grass it would have been hard to find. After the potatoes made their way through the grass roots, we lifted them, shook the grass roots out of the area and re-planted the potatoes. We had a good crop too. The second garden was what is now the extension of Cooke Street, but finally the four acre lot was procured. When Mr. Stensson came he soon saw where foundation planting would improve the appearance of the building and all the trees that grow around it now were donated and planted by him and his classes.

Mr. Young, who is still loved and respected by his former students, left us in 1932. Mr. St. John has been principal since then except for his years in the army. During these years Mr. Gordon Hill and Mr. J. D. Thomson served as principal.

Mr. St. John had a little fun with a class of boys once. It was during the depression and the future looked dark and the need for gaining an education seemed futile. A particularly restless class of boys formed third form then, so when division court was held in the old Edison Hall that seemed like an inviting respite and a number went. Afterwards Mr. St. John had them up on the carpet and imposed a half hour's detention, to be taken between 8.30 and nine o'clock a.m., instead of the usual half hour after four.

We chuckled a little on Monday morning when Jack Lester arrived well on time carrying a small bag of sugar. In a few minutes Gren Walker came along with corn flakes; Ronald Hartley and David Atkins from the farm with a honey pail of milk; George Pearson landed with some splendid snow apples; Win Cooper with forks and spoons and last, but by no means least, Alf Bishop with eight pieces of toast, one for each boy and one for teacher. Seven places were set on seven desks in the detention room and an additional one was placed for Mr. St. John, who arrived at twenty past eight. Win Cooper offered thanks and when Mr. St. John came the seven were quietly and smilingly devouring what they had brought. The principal smiled, ate two apples, watched the boys finish, set two of them to wash the dishes and at 8.30 assigned each one half hour's work. We remember that the lads talked of organizing a breakfast club to last the week, but the one day finished it.

Delmer Miller seems to us to hold the prize for the school's best sleeper. We remember his going to sleep one day and some one in the class advancing the clock to past four. Delmer was very sleepy when he awoke, but he proceeded to pack up his books and go home. He was half way out to the road before someone informed him he had about three classes yet to go before he could call it a day.

When we came to the school several pupils came to school from New Durham by bicycle. Others came in several miles on foot, or by horse. Then there were a number of barns in town and the farmers would rent these for the children to stable their horses during the day. Many farm youngsters had just as far and farther to walk than the local children had even after they had driven several miles. It meant that they had to walk at noon to feed the horse as well. It seems to us those youngsters worked harder than most do now, but it may just be our opinion.

We remember well Mr. Young's enthusiasm when Dr. Meldrum decided to donate a scholarship annually. He could hardly contain himself as he gave me the news that the value of the scholarship was to be \$50. Lewis Burrill, a cousin of Jim and Agnes, was the first winner.

LOCAL HISTORY

We remember too the coming of the war and seeing so many former students leave to take their place in the armed services. Our hearts were torn as we learned, one by one, of those who had laid down their lives in their Country's cause. We shall never forget them.

Among the hundreds of students who have attended Norwich High School there has never been a lad that we did not love. Three stand out in our memory because they completed their education after they had reached manhood. Jack Palmer, after returning to high school at the age of 26, received B.S.A. and is a lecturer at O.A.C. Jack Hulet, who returned to high school at the age of 36, has graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College and is now in the employ of the Saskatchewan government.

I think of all the teachers who taught in the old school and I am proud to say they have been my greatest friends. With some I have not always agreed, but that does not hinder me esteeming them greatly.

We remember the school fairs that used to be held on the old school grounds and we still hold our breath when we recall having gone up on the roof, one of those days, to show people the surroundings. We lifted the trap door, the wind jerked it out of our hands and away it went sliding rapidly off the roof. We held our breath and listened. There was a heavy thud, but no outburst, so we assumed everything was alright below. We hurried down and, strange to say, there was not a soul even in sight. A few minutes earlier there had been dozens on the spot where the heavy door fell, but we got it back up without even anyone knowing anything about it.

We recall the formation of the school band in 1930 under Mr. Sylvester. What a conglomeration of sounds they made at first! It was pretty hard to take, but there was enthusiasm there and out of that noisy beginning the present Norwich Musical Society Band has come. Many members of the present band "tooted their horn" for the first time back in 1930 at the Norwich High.

While we were talking about the means of transportation in earlier days, we possibly should have mentioned that sometimes, then, there was no transportation. Many times through the years our beds and the beds of other local folk have been filled with stranded pupils, but those were happy events and always much appreciated.

We have loved our work at Norwich High. We regret that the coming of buses at nine and their leaving promptly at four prevents us becoming acquainted as we used to be able to do. How well we got acquainted with those "kids" who used to travel to and from Otterville, LaSalette and other places on the train. The train arrived before 8 o'clock a.m. and did not leave Norwich until about 6 p.m., but what a lot of homework could be accomplished then. It thrills us now, when we are getting old, to have our young friends invite us to sing at their weddings, or to join them on other happy occasions and we even have those who refer to Mrs. Lowe and I as Ma and Pa and that we consider a compliment too.

We think Paul Wenn was the first "second generation" student to appear at Norwich High, but there are so many going now whose parents attended since we have been caretaker that we take it for granted now. There are those who think the young people of today "ain't what they used to be," and with that we will agree. Comparing them with their parents we may be excused if we make the claim that in every way they are getting better. We find them just as ready to co-operate and do the right thing as ever young people were. We also find them just as full of "deviltry" and we thank God for that."

An increase in the number of pupils attending high school due to the introduction of buses and greater bus routes resulted in the need for a larger school. For several years the students and teachers campaigned for a new school and, finally, aided by the unsafe conditions of the old building, they were able to convince the town and school board of the dire need for a new school.

In the spring of 1951, construction was started on the new building and on September 8, 1952, classes were held in the modern building which is the Norwich District High School. With pride, the students, teachers, our principal, Mr. St. John, and parents attended the official, belated opening held on Friday evening, October 17, 1952.

HELEN KATARYNCZUK