

Historical Happenings

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Oshawa Historical Society

Spring 2015



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Inside This Edition

- President's Report PAGE 4
The Murder of William Wells.....PAGE 8
Oshawa's Downton Era Teachers . PAGE 10
Donation & Fundraising Update ... PAGE 16

Historical Happenings

Spring 2015

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**Cover Photo:** *Robinson House, by co-op student Nadia*

# Upcoming Events

March 16-20

## March Break at the Oshawa Museum

Admission by Donation / Free for OHS

March 17

### OHS Speaker Series

Melissa Cole presents: *Reflecting on Reflections of Oshawa*

OPL, McLaughlin Auditorium, 7 pm

April 21

### OHS Speaker Series

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Alexander Gates presents: *The Seven Rolls-Royce Limousines of the Canadian Automotive Museum*

OPL, McLaughlin Auditorium, 7 pm

May 19

### OHS Speaker Series

Larry Cotton presents: *Whiskey and Wickedness: Yonge Street – 100 Taverns in 100 Miles*

OPL, McLaughlin Auditorium, 7 pm

May 31

### Accessioned! What Happens Behind the Scenes

Timed tickets available for purchase, start at Guy House; 12-4pm

June 7

### Downtown Walking Tour

Meet at McLaughlin Library, 2 pm

\$5/person; Free for OHS

*See next page for dates on Sunday FUNday and Monthly Tea & Talks*

#### Mandate of the Oshawa Historical Society

*The mandate of the Oshawa Historical Society is to bring together those individuals interested in the diverse historical aspects of Oshawa and to research, retain, preserve and present historical information pertaining to the Oshawa area. The Oshawa Historical Society maintains, as an agent for the City of Oshawa, the Oshawa Community Museum.*

# Museum News

Join the OCM on the first Sunday of every month and immerse yourself in history! Every Sunday FUNday brings a new hands-on activity! Drop in between 12 & 4pm.



## April 12

Toys & Games: Play with authentic Victorian toys and make one of your own!

## May 3

Click!: Bring a camera or use your phone to take a photo tour of the Museum!

On last Sunday of the month, join the OCM for afternoon tea. Enjoy your tea and scones while our Visitor Hosts lead engaging historical discussions.



## March 29

Stories from the Homefront

## April 26

An Introduction of Historical Reenactments

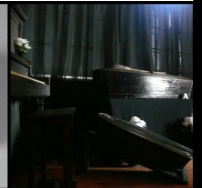
## May 24

If These Houses Could Talk: The Story of Henry House

*Opening May 2015*

# Mourning After

*The Victorian Celebration of Death*



# Message From the President

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Spring is just around the corner, or so I have heard, and excitement is in the air as our staff members prepare for even bigger and better things for our membership. Despite some very cold weather and less than ideal conditions, we have continued to have very encouraging turnouts at our monthly meetings and talks. This has helped to have the winter go faster and to keep us up to speed on historical happenings in Oshawa and area. Thank you to everyone who braved the cold and a change of location for two of our monthly meetings. We realize that space has been a bit cramped and that parking limitations have made it more difficult at the Northview Branch of the library but we will be back to our regular location in March. Hopefully we will be able to avoid having to change locations in the future.

This past month we have said goodbye to our longstanding display in Robinson House that featured a General Store theme. The space now looks very empty and forlorn, but not for long. Melissa and all of her elves are hard at work on a new display that will provide an even more dynamic look and even more scope to what can be shared with our members and visitors. From what I have been told this space will now form part of the larger free space that will be used to house new displays on a rotating basis. This will provide more capacity to feature some of our collections that are not currently on display and to feature different aspects of Oshawa's history during coming years.

I am always amazed at the enthusiasm of our staff in looking for new ways to carry out our mandate. The coming months should provide a number of opportunities for them to show off the results of that enthusiasm. You will also see that enthusiasm reflected in our new promotional video that will be used to encourage more people to take advantage of what we have to offer at beautiful Lakeview Park. I was pleased to be a part of that process and to take some time to reflect on what we represent as a Museum and Archives and how our staff and volunteers help to celebrate our collective history.

We have our AGM coming up soon and it looks like our OHS Board will be able to celebrate another successful year and to look forward to doing even more in the coming year. We look forward to reflecting on the past year's accomplishments with our members and providing you with some insight into the year to come. I look forward to seeing you back at the Museum for upcoming events and displays and chatting with you at upcoming meetings to hear what you have to say. Thank you again for your ongoing support of the OHS and your very active participation in all that we do.

*The Museum's Promotional video is available for viewing on our YouTube Channel: Bringing Objects to Life: The Oshawa Community Museum*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6m6OE7\\_oDrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6m6OE7_oDrA)



*Curator Melissa during the General Store de-installation*

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# The Desk of Dr. F.L. Henry

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*By Melissa Cole, Curator*

Dr. Franklin Luther Henry's desk arrived at the museum in the fall of 2014. This piece was donated to the museum by descendants of the Henry Family. The donor was married to the (late) great-granddaughter of Dr. F.L. Henry. This antique desk was once located in the former home and dental practice of Dr. Henry.

Dr. F.L. Henry was a grandson of Thomas and Lurenda Henry, of Henry House. He married Millie Clifford in 1889 and they had two children, Rhea and Russell Henry. This particular desk was located in his dentist office and home that was located at 231 King Street East in Oshawa. This building still stands and is now home to the Community Wellness Centre.

Dr. Henry's desk is a lovely example of a Classic Revival spinet desk that is made of mahogany and veneer. The name 'spinet' is used to describe this style of desk because it resembles a spinet, which is a musical instrument of the harpsichord family. From the exterior, the spinet desk has the appearance of a somewhat higher than usual writing desk. This particular desk does not have a hinged panel top, that folds over the top of the desk hiding the interior compartment, as most spinet style desks do. There are two types of spinet desks: factory made pieces dating from the 1920s through to the '40s, the second type are conversions made from Victorian square case pianos. This piece is of the first type, factory made. The original spinet desks were originally circa 1840 pianos that were converted into desks during the 1920s through to the 1940s, when their internal works were beyond repair, their rosewood and mahogany veneered cases and square design being seen as "old fashioned", but thought too valuable to throw out would then be converted into a desk. This particular desk features pigeonhole compartments in the interior of the desk along with small drawers. The desks features long tapered octagonal legs.



Who was Dr. F.L Henry? He was a dentist, but he did much more for the community of Oshawa. At the turn of the century, Oshawa was known as the Manchester of Canada. Dr. F.L. Henry was a high profile Liberal who persuaded the legislature to build a much needed Post Office in Oshawa. The site was the northeast corner of Ontario and King Streets. The Post Office was officially opened in 1904. Dr. F.L Henry was an active citizen in the community; he sat on the City of Oshawa's First Public Parks Commission along with other citizens of Oshawa including, R.S. McLaughlin. Dr. Henry managed the construction of the hospital in 1910, and he was also a member of the Thirty-Club.

Dr. F.L Henry passed away on October 19, 1947 at the age of 83; he is buried in Oshawa's Union Cemetery. This beautiful mahogany desk is currently on display in the study of Henry House.



*From top left: Dr. Henry's Desk, Dr. FL Henry, the Oshawa Post Office, and Dr. Henry's gravestone in Union Cemetery*

# The Murder of William Wells

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*From the upcoming book Until Day Dawns: Stories from Union Cemetery  
by Melissa Cole and Laura Suchan. Fall 2015*

Was it a case of murder for insurance money or a tragic accident? That depends on who you ask. A tombstone in Union Cemetery memorializes the life of William Wells, who in the 1890s, was at the centre of a sensational murder trial in Toronto.

The story begins in 1891, a few months before William's untimely death, when two brothers, Dallas and Henry Hyams, arrived in Toronto from New Orleans to start a commission business. The brothers purchased a warehouse on Colborne Street and soon after opened their office for business. They hired William's sister, Martha, as a typist and soon after William was hired to run messages and perform other odd jobs that needed to be done.



*William Wells Headstone,  
Union Cemetery*

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On the morning of January 16, 1892, the body of William was found at the bottom of the elevator shaft with his skull crushed and a 250 pound lead weight used to operate the elevator beside his head. It was reported that the doctor called to the scene was so nauseated by what he saw that he did not conduct a thorough examination of the skull and accepted the Hyams' account of William's death. A death certificate was issued and William was laid to rest in Union Cemetery.

The story doesn't end there. Shortly after William's death, Martha married Harry Hyams and found out an insurance policy had been taken out in the amount of \$3,500 on her brother. She thought that strange, however two years after her marriage, Mrs. Hyams became even more alarmed when she found out the brothers were trying to place a \$250,000 accident insurance policy on her. Mrs. Hyams confided her suspicions to a local magistrate who ordered, in February 1895, that William's body be disinterred. The local Whitby paper reported that William's body was accessed after three hours of digging, placed on the evening train and taken to Toronto for examination. The examination of the skull showed that it had been smashed, mostly likely by a hatchet that was seen on the premises. The Hyams brothers were arrested on a charge of murdering William.

The Hyams family hired a well known criminal lawyer from New York City to represent the brothers, and Britton Bath Osler represented the Crown. Two trials were held; the first ended in disagreement and the second in acquittal. At their request, the brothers remained in jail for a day or two until a New York City engine pulling a drawing room car pulled up to a siding at the jail and the brothers were whisked across the border. From there they were placed on a steamer destined for South America and were never heard from again.



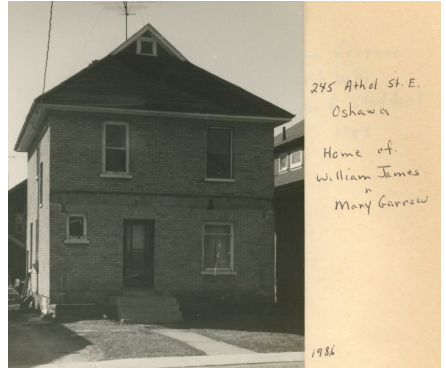
# Remembering William Garrow

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*Your loving brother  
Willie.*

*By Jennifer Weymark, Archivist*

This summer will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the enlistment of William Garrow Jr. with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces (CEF). Pvt. Garrow was born in Oshawa on May 15, 1894 and grew up in the family home on Albert Street.



*William Garrow's family home on Albert Street*

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On August 30, 1915, Garrow enlisted with the CEF in Montreal and by November of that year he was stationed in England and preparing to head to the front.

In 1995 a collection of letters written by Pvt. Garrow to his two sisters at home in Oshawa was donated to the museum. The collection includes letters from his time in England, while he was at the front and finally the official correspondence sent to his family upon his death. These letters have become the basis of a website created by the museum entitled *Letters from the Trenches: From the William James Garrow Collection*. They have now also become the focus of a travelling exhibit that will be on display in Guy House.



*William as a child with his two sisters, Leah & Lillian*

Please visit

[www.lettersfromthetrenches.wordpress.com](http://www.lettersfromthetrenches.wordpress.com)

or come down to the museum to learn more about this brave young man's role in the Great War.

# Downton Era Teachers in Oshawa

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*By Jill Passmore, Visitor Experience Co-ordinator, with excerpts from the Olive French manuscript*

I am a loyal Downton Abbey fan. The allure of the costumes, sets and actors has reeled me in, just like it has to many others. The depth of the characters both upstairs and downstairs is amazing. I was pleased this season when kitchen maid Daisy decided to take it upon herself to seek out further educational opportunities. Local school teacher Sarah Bunton has been one of the most interesting and fun characters to watch this season. Her actions and mannerisms made me start thinking about what Oshawa's education system was like in the post-Edwardian era.

The following are some highlights and facts about the various schools that existed at the time: in 1920, the Oshawa Home and School Association was founded – this was the forerunner of the modern Student Community Council; rural school fairs still occurred, but they had to be discontinued in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The rivalry between Thornton's Corners and Harmony became too bitter! A number of schools had additions built due to overcrowding, including Harmony P.S., Albert Street P.S., Mary Street P.S., and St. Gregory.

*Centre Street School teacher, Mr. John Dolan, was in the school at the time of the Titanic disaster and the terrible days of World War I. He was strict and kept things well under control. Gradually, he organized the school. The attendance was larger by this time, and also a literary society was started. There were debates and also a mock Parliament. Two of the laws debated were "A Navy for the back streets of Oshawa," (Oshawa was a mud hole then!) and also a law prohibiting Mr. (Louis) Stevenson from obtaining stray cats to dissect in the biology classes.*

Fanny Hislop was a teacher and principal at Albert Street School. She was appointed principal in 1911, a post she held for thirteen years. She taught Grade Three at that time and her salary was \$550.

She was very strict, and it was said:

*When the children were on the playground, she was there with her black sateen apron on and armed with a horsewhip. She was going to have order or else! A little girl, who probably regarded Miss Hislop with some apprehension said, "The teacher always wore the strap on her belt." "The Teacher," no doubt, kept it there to be handy in case of need. She often used to say, "You know I am as strong as a horse." One little boy said to her, "Could you pull a load of hay, Miss Hislop?"*

*After her passing, a provision was made in her will for the establishment of the Grade Eight scholarship out of her own funds. There were only eight public schools in Oshawa at the time of her death, and Miss Hislop could not have foreseen the tremendous expansion that was to take place in the future.*

*Mr. Louis Stevenson was a specialist in science and mathematics. He taught science at the Oshawa High School. He was an excellent teacher and tolerated no nonsense in his classes. Stevenson's botany students were required to make collections of seeds from weeds. These were dried, put in pill bottles and labelled. Leaves of deciduous trees, plants (weeds and wild flowers) were pressed and mounted. Collections of butterflies were also made. A nauseating job was to make a collection including tomato worms, spiders, crickets and grasshoppers, caterpillars etc., and pickle them in a bottle of wood alcohol for winter use in the classes. Also the dissecting of certain animals in the zoology classes was not conducive to a good appetite.*

Finally, we come to S.J. Courtice, who was brought up in the district east of Oshawa, called Courtice, named for his family.

*He was a specialist in mathematics and taught it in all of the forms... He knew his math well and had various ways of getting or trying to get difficult problems across to the students. However, he was a poor disciplinarian and many of the students took a delight in tormenting him, but he seemed to take it all in a stride.*

It seems fair to say that Oshawa had its own variety of interesting teachers. Did you attend school in Oshawa? Did you have any remarkable experiences with your teachers that you'd like to share? I'd love to hear your stories. Please email me at [programming@oshawamuseum.org](mailto:programming@oshawamuseum.org) to share!

*Oshawa's Public School Teachers at  
Parkwood, c. 1917*



# Yesterday They All Went Gathering Maple Leaves

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By Lisa Terech, Community Engagement

February 15 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Canadian Flag. After years of discussion and debate, our current flag was chosen to be Canada's official banner, and it was inaugurated on February 15, 1965.

While the new flag was being raised with the proper pomp and circumstance in Ottawa, similar ceremonies took place at provincial parliaments and local governments, Oshawa not excluded. However, the ceremony at Oshawa did not go smoothly; it was unclear if there would even be a new flag to raise! Due to high demand and low stock from suppliers, Oshawa did not receive its flag until 17 minutes before it was supposed to be raised! In fact, due to the rush and uncertainty, two councillors were unintentionally uninvited to this ceremony. Alderman Hayward Murdoch, Property Committee Chairman, took responsibility for this oversight, saying councillors were not notified on the Friday before because the flags had not arrived, and if there were no flags, there would not be a ceremony. Ultimately, the flags arrived and were unfurled at noon.

Many schools and businesses may have been flying the Red Ensign or Union Jack simply because the Maple Leaf flag was so difficult to attain because demand was so high. Many banks commented that they were simply waiting for their flag to arrive and were flying the Ensign/Union Jack or leaving their poles bare until it did. The *Oshawa Times* reported on who was flying what, and they remarked at the end of the article that the Oshawa Yacht Club at the lake had no flag flying, "nor did the Henry House Museum just up the street."

Perhaps the most endearing local story from February 15, 1965 came from Donovan Collegiate. The art department 'hastily put together' a maple leaf flag that was proudly hoisted on the school's flag pole; the following day, they were again hard at work, manufacturing a more sturdy flag that could replace the 'rather flimsy original.' Flimsy or not, instead of flying the Union Jack or flying nothing at all, Donovan students displayed the national spirit that Prime Minister Pearson hoped would be fostered with the new Canadian Flag.



WHY WAIT?

*Donovan students raising their flag, from the Oshawa Times*

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# Historical *Historical* Happenings

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OSHAWA AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

News Bulletin #43

February 1981

## O CANADA FIRST WRITTEN IN 1880

'O Canada,' the hymn some of us still hum because we aren't sure of the words, was originally written for a picnic on the Plains of Abraham on St. Jean Baptiste Day in 1880. The occasion was a visit by Louise, the Princess Royal.

The words – in French – were written as a 32-line poem by Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier, and the music by an adventurer named Calixa Lavallee.

More than 20 versions of the English lyrics have been popular at various times. The English lyrics we now use were written in 1908 by Robert Weir, to celebrate Quebec's tercentenary.

Weir's lyrics were not officially adopted until July 1<sup>st</sup> 1927, and were changed again slightly in 1972, when, after considering 615 different proposals, a Parliamentary Commission declared them the official anthem of Canada.

So let's all learn and sing our nation's anthem:



O Canada! Our home and native land!  
True patriot love, in all thy sons  
command.  
With glowing heart, we see thee rise.  
The True North, strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada, we stand  
on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee!

*\*In July 1980, the National Anthem Act making O Canada the official National Anthem of Canada. Before then, O Canada was the de facto anthem, although officially the anthem was God Save the Queen.*



# #21<sup>st</sup> Century Victorians

Engaging youth has been a focus of the Museum for many years, and hosting high school co-ops is one way that we do so. As well, we are always trying to stay on top of the ever changing world of Social Media.

The 21st Century Victorian project was born from this. Our co-op student was challenged to comically present Victorians doing our crazy 21st Century things, like taking 'selfies', going to 'spin class,' or using a 'tablet.'

We share these photos online at [2015Victorians.tumblr.com](http://2015Victorians.tumblr.com), and below is just a sample of the fantastic images that Helaina captured!

*Enjoy!*



Accessioned!

# **ACCESSIONED:**

## **THE LIFE OF AN ARTIFACT**

**SUNDAY MAY 31, 2015**  
**12-4 PM**

Go behind the scenes at Oshawa's only local history museum!

Learn about the life of an artifact from accessioning, to digitizing, and to storage and display by touring through the Oshawa Community Museum's three historic homes.

Visit storage areas that are never opened to the public!

Timed tickets are on sale in the OCM gift shop. Please phone or email to reserve now!

\$5 per person or FREE for OHS Members

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# Donation and Fundraising Update

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By Laura Suchan, Executive Director

*“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”*

— Winston Churchill

The Oshawa Historical Society is a registered charity that engages in fundraising activities and accepts donations from individuals, corporations, associations and other donors to support its mandate, vision, mission and values. As an external agency of the city, the Oshawa Historical Society receives an annual grant for the museum which covers general operating expenses including electricity, office supplies, insurance, accounting, salaries, promotion, etc. However expenses related to artifact purchases, conservation work or exhibit development are often not covered in the operating budget. With this mind, the Board of Directors established the Acquisition Account in 1995 to fund those purchases not included as part of the museum’s operating budget. Most of the funds in the account comes from donations and may be used to finance:

1. The purchase of artifacts historically relevant to Oshawa;
2. The restoration or conservation of artifacts in the collection;
3. Projects relating to improving the accessibility of the collection;
4. The purchase of items and services as deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors to support the above.

Thanks to contributions in 2014 from Frank and Pearl Cooper, Tedd Hann, Sandra Gaskell and an anonymous donor the following projects were financed:

- Digitization of Oshawa newspapers from WWI (\$1,500)
- Conservation work on the domed wax floral study currently on display in Henry House Parlour (\$ 1250)
- Protective cover for the Granny Cock painting in Guy House (\$1,000)
- Display case for Robinson House (\$2,000)

We would like to thank everyone who over the years has made a contribution to the Acquisition Account. Donations of any amount to the OHS’s Acquisition Fund are appreciated and can be made at any time. Tax receipts are issued for all eligible donations.

# The Society Pages



Two handy websites to remember:

[www.oshawahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.oshawahistoricalsociety.org) — News, info, pictures, all related to the Oshawa Historical Society

[oshawamuseum.wordpress.com](http://oshawamuseum.wordpress.com) — Our blog is a great place to visit for interesting articles between newsletters! There is a new post every week, so visit often!

Please join us for our

## Annual General Meeting

Tuesday April 21; 7PM

McLaughlin Library Auditorium

Speaker: Alexander Gates

presents: *The Seven Rolls-Royce*

*Limousines of the Canadian*

*Automotive Museum*

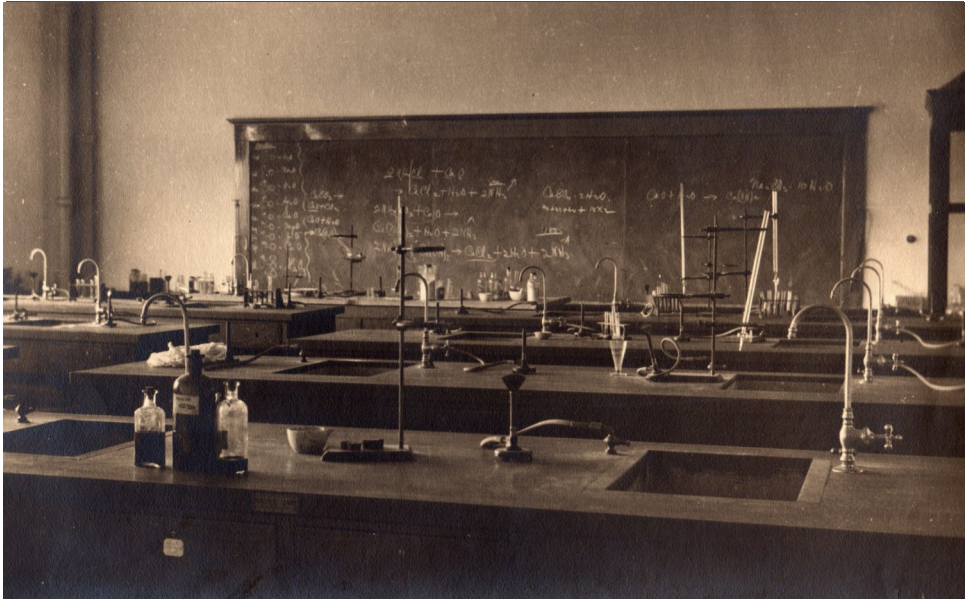


Parkwood Curator Samantha George, at  
January's Speaker Series





# Snapshots from the Past



## *Science Laboratory, Centre St School ca.1908*

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### *Memories of Centre Street School, from Olive French*

I shall now describe Centre Street School as I remember it, not long before it was to be demolished...

It was no gem of architecture, they couldn't afford many frills, and utility was the main consideration.

The walls inside the whole school were whitewashed and the woodwork was painted a colour that could be called "battle-ship grey." The floors had been originally of rather rough lumber and were very dark. Signs of hard-wear were very much in evidence throughout the whole building.

The front entrance was on the east side facing Centre Street and it had double doors. This was the teachers' entrance. The girl's entrance was on the north side and it was protected by an overhanging roof similar to a veranda. The boy's entrance was on the south side.

... Some of the class rooms opened into one another and of course this added to the confusion. The windows were not of modern design, but the lighting was not bad.

...Quite heavy pillars were in the classrooms on the main floor to support the weight of the building. Slate blackboards were installed in all the rooms.



# Thank you to our Sponsors!

**Robert T. Bell**  
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

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| <input type="radio"/> Corporate                                                                                               | \$30                                            | \$35                           | \$ _____ |
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| <input type="radio"/> Friends of the<br>Society (\$40 tax<br>receipt issued)                                                  | \$60                                            | \$65                           | \$ _____ |
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