

The History of St. Thomas Schools

THE SUBSTANTIAL, well equipped and architecturally pleasing school structures of St. Thomas of today are a long step removed from the city's earliest school structure of record, known as the St. Thomas Grammar School, referred to at some length on another page by Dr. J. H. Coyne in his "St. Thomas School Reminiscences." The school structures today are in themselves monuments to the deep interest manifested by the people of the present and preceding generations in the education of the young—the basis of all true civic and national development. And in the present day of materialism or commercialism, that interest is perhaps greater than at any previous time in the city's history and is finding expression in the greater consideration being given to practical or mechanical instruction and kindergarten classes.

As is set forth in Dr. Coyne's Reminiscences, free schools were unknown in St. Thomas in the early days; indeed it was not until November, 1890, that a resolution of the board of education, fathered by Mr. Wm. Coyne and Mr. D. K. McKenzie, prevailed, and attendance at the public schools was made free. Shortly afterwards free schools were made general throughout the province by act of the legislature.

The immediate result was a largely increased attendance. Since then, in 1911, free school books were introduced in St. Thomas on the initiative of Mr. Albert Roberts, chairman of the Board of Education for the year 1910.

The history of the city's school buildings and those who have directed education in the city, is briefly, as follows:

Wellington Street School—The Central School, a four-roomed red-brick building, was erected in 1855. The first principal was Mr. John McLean. Subsequent principals were Mr. Bigg, Mr. Ewin Cameron, Mr. Alex. Young, Mr. John Mil-

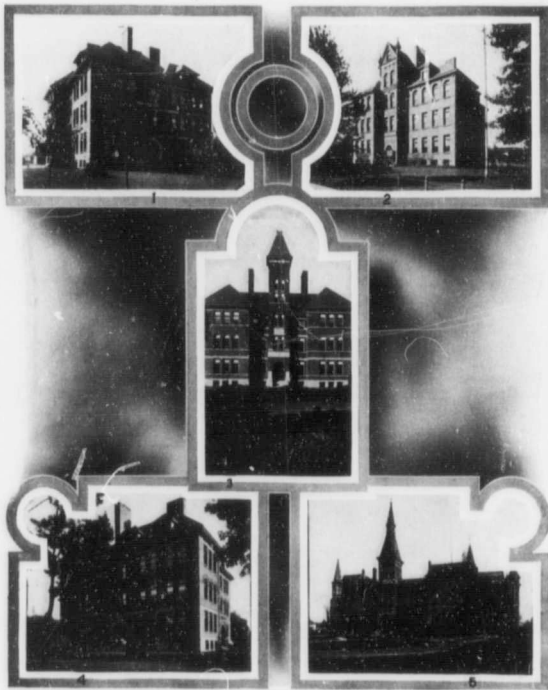
lar, (late Deputy Minister of Education), Mr. Angus McCrimmon, (present County Crown Attorney), Mr. N. M. Campbell (1876—99), Mr. H. A. Stewart (1899—1902); Mr. J. McK. Urie (1902—1908); Mr. Frederick Voaden (1908—1911), and Mr. Franklin C. Poole (1911 to the present).

In 1872, the Central School was enlarged to eight rooms so as to accommodate both the Grammar and the Public Schools. Mr. John Millar was principal of the combined schools until 1878, when a separate High School building was erected at the north end of Pearl street. This building was remodelled

in 1903. The present Wellington Street School building was erected in 1898 and opened in January, 1899.

Balaclava Street School—A small school, presided over in succession by Miss E. Comfort, Miss J. Mark and Mr. J. Dickie (1877), existed in St. David's Ward and in 1878 an eight-roomed building was erected. Mr. Dickie continued headmaster until 1880, and Mr. A. F. McLean became principal in September of that year. After his death, Mr. J. A. Harvey was principal. He was followed by Mr. H. A. Stewart, Mr. Martin Kerr, and Mr. James A. Edmiston, the present principal. The eight-roomed building was replaced by the present 12-roomed building in 1898 and opened in January, 1899.

Myrtle Street School—A four-roomed white brick building was built on Myrtle street in 1881 and opened January, 1882, with Miss M. E. Smyth as principal. The building was enlarged to eight rooms in 1888. Six of these rooms were occupied in September, 1888, with Mr. S. Silcox as principal. He was succeeded in January, 1890, by A. R. Simpson. Then followed Mr. H. A. Stewart, Mr. M. Kerr, Mr. J. McK. Urie, Mr. J. M. McCutcheon, B. A. Martin Kerr and J. A. Dale, the present principal.



1—Wellington Street School. 2—Balaclava Street School. 3—Collegiate Institute.
4—Myrtle Street School. 5—Alma Ladies' College.