

## **In The Beginning**

The history of public education in The Pas predates the incorporation of the town and the inclusion of this part of the north in Manitoba. Initially, all the children had to attend the Indian School where Mr. Bagshaw was the teacher. With the move of aboriginal people to a reserve across the Saskatchewan River, the remaining residents began to organize in 1909 for the purpose of starting a school for their children.

### **Early Steps - Coming Together**

On November 3, 1909, twenty-two citizens of the small community of Le Pas in the Northwest Territories gathered at the house of Mr. G. Halcrow, Manager of the Hudson's Bay Company store. They had come to discuss the possibility of establishing a public school for their fledgling community. Mr. G. Halcrow would act as the chair of the meeting and Mr. R. H. Bagshaw agreed to be the secretary. Other residents who attended were: Mr. Louis Bacon, Mr. Beatie, Mr. Bowering, Mr. Carier, Mr. John J. Cochrane, Mr. Louis Cochrane, Rev. B. Edwards, Mr. Fischer, Mr. Grant, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Arthur Halcrow, Mr. J. Halcrow, Mr. Haight, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Lindie, Mr. Rosser, Mr. Ed. Smith, Mr. Stephenson, and Mr. Walk.

The first decision made was to send a telegram to Ottawa to enquire if the Commissioner for the North West Territory, Mr. Fred White, had received the letters which had been sent to him the previous July requesting the establishment of a school district. Meanwhile, these residents decided to take action of their own to set up a school. The first problem was to obtain a building suitable for a school building as Le Pas had few structures that were spacious enough. Mr. J. Halcrow was asked if he could rent his house for such a purpose in the meantime and he agreed to do so for a rent of \$8.00 per month. The next decision was to appoint Mr. J. Halcrow, Mr. J. Gordon, and Rev. Edwards as managers of the school. Mr. Fischer agreed to lend some desks and some books for the school.

But how to finance the school's operation? One suggestion was to tax each child \$1.00 per month, but upon calculation of this revenue it was evident that this would not be sufficient. After discussion it was agreed to ask each parent what they would be willing to contribute each month. The amounts that were promised ranged from \$2 to \$6 (for a total of \$34) from the parents, and \$1.50 to \$5 (for a total of \$27) from the others. This was calculated to be \$61.00 per month, with payments made on the first Saturday of each month.

Mr. Gordon offered to provide a stove for the building, and the Hudson's Bay Company would provide some stove pipes. The Ruby Lake Company offered materials for a porch and agreed to build two "water closets." Others agreed to help out with the construction and it was decided to hire Mr. Kerr, a carpenter, to assist with this project.

As Reverend Edwards offered to provide instruction for the school until Christmas, he was replaced in his school manager's role by Mr. Haight. It was also decided that the school would run on "railroad time" from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

On December 29, 1909 the school committee met again to deal with correspondence received from Commissioner Fred White and an application from Mr. R.H. Anderson who had applied for the position of school teacher. It was agreed to hire Mr. Anderson for a six-month term for a salary of \$600 a year, with a school year set at 216 days. The school finances were reviewed. The sum of \$172.50 had been collected to date, with \$35.00 still owing. Mr. Halcrow agreed to lower the rent of his building to \$6.00 per month. The committee also agreed to order a new wood stove and stove pipes, and "let tenders for 20 cords of wood." A discussion concluded that the school building could only be used for day school purposes, a decision that later on turned out to be controversial.

The first meeting of 1910 was held on February 7. The school committee had formalized itself as Mr. Halcrow (Chair), Mr. Bagshaw (Secretary), Mr. Rosser (Treasurer), and two trustees - Mr. Gordon and Mr., Haight. Financing the school's operation was still a problem so it was agreed to approach Mr. Herman Finger (of the Finger Lumber Company) and Mr. Smith to ask "for a subscription (i.e., a contribution) toward the maintenance of the school." It was also agreed to develop a list of the community residents and to approach them to raise \$350.00 for the 1910-11 school expenses. Mr. Finger did provide an annual subscription.

Another issue had to be faced. Teacher Anderson had written asking to be released from his position. When the committee asked for a reason, Mr. Anderson declined to give one and asked to be released by the end of March, the end of his term, leaving the committee with the task of seeking a replacement.

When next they met in March, Mr. Anderson was asked if he would stay for another quarter year, and if he did not the job would be offered to a Mr. Van Fauske who had written to apply for a position. Anderson agreed to do so. In addition the committee decided to approach Indian Affairs to apply for getting three lots upon which to put a school for the 1910-11 school year. On May 27 they learned that the lots they had wished to acquire had already been applied for by some other individuals, so it was agreed to continue to seek three lots for school purposes.



At the September 8, 1910 meeting the building of a new school was needed as soon as possible, and a contract was let to have a local carpenter make windows for the school house at a cost of \$5.25 per pair. The school was to be located on Larose Avenue, and was called Larose School. (After 1915 when a new brick school was built, Larose School was moved north of The Pas to Big Eddy for use by the non-Treaty Indians.) Meanwhile Mr. Fletcher of the Board of Education in Winnipeg

would be contacted regarding hiring a new teacher to start November 1.

At the December 2, 1910 meeting, Mr. Haight needed to be replaced as a trustee as he was going to be away from the community. It was agreed to defer this decision until an annual ratepayer meeting was held on Wednesday, December 28. In addition an agreement was to be drawn up for the new teacher, Mr. Henderson, regarding his salary, and duties, including lighting the fire at the school and sweeping the floor. For the later two tasks it was agreed to pay him an additional \$15.00 per month.

## **Decisions, Decisions**

On December 28 an "Annual School Meeting" was held and Mr. Bunting was elected as the replacement trustee. A financial report noted revenues of \$981.83 with expenses of \$935.41 leaving a balance of \$46.42. On the topic of the use of the school house, Treasurer Rosser was adamant about restricting its use for school purposes only except for raising funds to pay off the debt of the school house, but even then it should be used with caution so no damage and no "ill feeling in the vicinity" resulted. Others present agreed for the alternate use of raising school funds (except for dances and religious purposes), and agreed that the school trustees could refuse a request in the interest of the community. Further such alternate use could only be done on a Friday evening, or holidays, so the building could be put back in order for school use.

The first trustee meeting of 2011 was held on January 4 in the Hudson's Bay Company office. A decision was made to buy some school desks, and to insure the school house for three years. The insurance rate was \$1.75 per \$100 value, with the value of the school placed at \$900.00 The Commissioner was still being written "regarding the organizing into a school section or District." It was also agreed that students should find out from their teacher what books they needed and that parents would have to supply these.

At the March 20, 1911 trustees meeting it was noted that the total value of materials for the school, insurance, and the teacher's salary came to \$1,137.45 (of which \$195.00 was the salary). As there was only \$22.51 in the treasury, it was agreed that "a subscription should be taken up towards the maintenance of the school, the Board not willing to raise funds by renting of the building..." A collector was appointed to contact community members. Another decision was to ask the teacher to make up the (16) days difference of school days not taught in November 2010 and for which he had been paid (and the NWT government had granted for this salary). He agreed to do so.

A special Board meeting was called to hear complaints made by parents against the teacher's teaching methods and the lack of progress among the pupils. In response the teacher asked to be made aware of complaints received by the trustees so he could address them as "he was not prepared to be dictated to with regard to his methods of teaching by parents, but by the Manitoba Board of Education." The teacher expressed a willingness to resign if his methods did not suit, but also noted that the school was in a backward state as no thorough teaching had been done prior to his arrival and he had to spend much time reviewing before proceeding with instruction. He found it to be discouraging work as he wanted to produce quality not quantity, He felt every child had a

claim on his interest and labour, but seven grades (in one classroom) presented a difficult problem that he was trying to solve. The teacher also noted that none of the trustees had ever visited the school to see firsthand the studies of the pupils, and he would heartily welcome such a visit. The trustees concluded that they had no complaints to make and in the future the teacher should forward any parental complaints to them. As a result of Treasurer Rosser's resignation, Mr. Bagshaw took on the combined position of Secretary-Treasurer.

### **A Controversy Faced**

On March 23, 1911, a ratepayer meeting was called and chaired by teacher Henderson due to the "absence of school trustees." Secretary-Treasurer Bagshaw agreed to take minutes of this meeting which had been called, former Treasurer Rosser stated, because funds were greatly needed for the operation of the school and to pay off the school debt. He argued for the need for additional voluntary subscriptions (i.e., donations) even from the bachelors of the community. Rosser further argued that these young people desired the use of the school house for dancing as there was no other suitable building to be had, especially for a Masquerade Ball wanted for Easter Week, He noted the youth were prepared to pay \$2 a couple for this event, funds going to aid the school. Rosser felt this request couldn't be refused as there was a need for the funds and the Pool Room (the only other facility large enough) was not a fit place to hold a dance, especially with wives and daughters to be in attendance.

This dance request was objected to by Mr. Horace Halcrow, who stated if necessary he would pay more toward the school, but Mr. John Bacon felt that the school should be open to any use by subscribers, and any dances should also be open to any wanting to attend. It was agreed to establish a delegate's "Committee for Entertainments in the School House" representing both married and single men to review this issue.

The subsequent delegates meeting heard Mr. Rusk complain that "people were tired of subscribing and not receiving any privilege or benefit". He further noted it would be a pity for the school to have to close for lack of funds when it could be rented out for dances. Young people wanted this use he stated as there was no other public building available.

Mr. Halcrow then offered to tender his resignation so as not to stand in the way of opening usage, but this was objected to as it was not a school board meeting so a resignation could not be accepted. Mr. Fleming, the designated person to collect subscriptions, noted he was getting much abuse when trying to collect subscriptions as many felt funds were being raised under false pretenses. Mr. Bunting had a change of heart upon hearing young people had contributed subscriptions, and noted he was now in favour of dances at the school. A procedure was clarified for replacing trustee Halcrow, who insisted on resigning, In frustration the Committee for Entertainments resigned as they felt they were unable to change the School Board's opposition to dances.

### **More Decisions and Some Progress**

At the May 8, 1911 school trustees meeting, the teacher asked the board to consider

procuring a second teacher as there were too many students for one teacher. The Board complained that it had no funds to do so, and suggested that the teacher use older students to teach the younger ones. They did agree to purchase a school register (to record enrolment and attendance) but asked the teacher to get student volunteers to sweep and wash the floor. He was also given permission to use a half day of school for cleaning the school yard.

At the October 18 meeting there was still a concern about raising funds for school desks, paying the teacher salary, and the interest on monies borrowed to build the school. At the November 16 meeting, teacher Henderson offered to continue his contract for another three months, at a salary of \$65 per month, and to continue to light the fire for the winter.

The first meeting of 1912 held on January 10 saw Mr. Halcrow reappointed as Board chair. It was decided to petition the Deputy Minister of Education in Winnipeg to organize a school district for The Pas, and the Board undertook to survey the number of school age children (ages 5-16). Mr. Halcrow was charged with producing a map showing the proposed boundaries of the intended school district, and a voluntary subscription for 1912 school maintenance was agreed upon.

The June 28, 1912 meeting was described as the final meeting of this Board. The Pas had become incorporated within Manitoba in May 1912 and The Pas School District #1635 was established, the first in northern Manitoba.

### **The Pas School District # 1635**

In May, 1912, when The Pas was incorporated, it had a population of approximately five hundred people. There were no paved roads, no sidewalks, and no modern conveniences. Believing The Pas would rapidly increase in population and require more and better school facilities than the one-room Larose School built by an earlier school committee in 1910, the efforts by that school committee undertaken since 1909 to establish a school district were finally successful. The Pas School District #1635 was organized under the regulations of the Manitoba Department of Education following the northern extension of the Manitoba boundary.

The election for School Board members was held in August 23, 1912. Elected were C.H. Anderson, banker; Dr. H. H. Elliott, physician; H.S. Johnson, manager of the Hudson's Bay Company Store. These three men constituted the first public school board at The Pas. At the first board meeting, Mr. Anderson was selected as chairman. Mr. David Clapp was given the position of Secretary-Treasurer. An Arts graduate and a former public school inspector in Ontario made him an asset to the Board which he served until his death some fifteen years later.

At a second meeting in August, an initial budget of \$5,000 was applied for from the Council of the Town of The Pas. At the third meeting on September 6, a resolution authorized the secretary to advertise for tenders for erection of another new school. It was also decided to advertise for an assistant teacher to begin November 1. At the fourth meeting on September 17, the tender of Coyle and Guymer for \$900 for work and material for the new

school was accepted as was the application of Miss Edith McLaughlin at a salary of \$750 per annum to assist Mr. Fiddler, who was the principal. As there were a number of Indian children who desired to attend the public school, the Board passed resolution stating that "Indian children be admitted to school at \$2.00 per month".

The estimate of expenditures for the school year 1913-14 was \$4,130. In January, 1914, six trustees were elected, two from each ward. Ward One: H.S. Johnson, G. Halcrow; Ward Two: D.C. Burton, F. Barker; Ward Three: Andrew Johnson and J.P. Jackson.

For the 1914-15 school term, the Board hired the following teachers: Miss Jeanette Babb – 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant at \$750; Miss Annie A. Campbell – 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant at \$750; and Miss Mary Duncan – Principal at \$1,000. Miss Velma Bickle later replaced one of the assistants. The 1914-15 estimate was placed at \$9,000, but due to the protests of the Council it was reduced to \$7,500.

Negotiations were started with the Dept. of Indian Affairs for the acquisition of a permanent school site which resulted in the acceptance in April, 1913 of the north portion of Block 50 (present site of provincial building) on which to erect a four classroom school. This building, build at a cost of \$900 for labour and materials, was called Armstrong School, and it had the latest features such as windows on both sides, a platform for the teacher and a blackboard.

On July 21, 1914, Coyle and Hughes were given the contract for building Fingerville School for \$1,065. Fingerville School was located on First St. East between Head Avenue and Crossley Avenue within the area known locally as Fingerville. Thus by 1915, three school buildings had been constructed in The Pas: Larose School built in 1910, Armstrong School, and Fingerville School in 1914.

### **The Pas Schools Evolve**

In August, 1915, contracts were given for the construction of a large new brick school for The Pas. Smith Brothers and Wilson of Regina constructed the building for \$33,800 and A. T. Engelbertson supplied the plumbing for \$9,225. The architect was G. N. Taylor who was paid 5% of the whole cost. In February, 1916, the students moved into this fine new eight-roomed red brick building, occupying only three rooms, however. For several years, this building's construction was seen as a financial blunder and "white elephant".

The minute book of the year 1916-17, indicates that the Hudson's Bay Company provided a large school bell. For the next 57 years that school bell would regulate the comings and goings of students in The Pas as it tolled the start of each session of the school day. And in 1974, when the red brick building was torn down, the bell was removed and placed in safe keeping. In the mid-1990s it was proposed by the high school principal that the bell be mounted inside the Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute as a memento of the origin of the first high school classes in Northern Manitoba. This was done.

With the building of the "red brick" building, The Pas owned four units – a large new eight-room brick building, (The Pas School) and three one-room school units. Eventually, the

three frame buildings were sold. The building on Larose Avenue, Larose School, was sold to the provincial government for use as a school house at Big Eddy. The Armstrong School was sold to the Anglican Parish of Christ Church and remained in this location (the present site of MacDonald's Restaurant at the corner of First Street West and Edwards Avenue) to be used as a parish hall. It was subsequently enlarged but eventually replaced with the present hall attached to the church. The Fingerville School was sold to the Salvation Army and was moved onto the 200 block of Edwards Avenue across from the then Opasquia Hotel. It also was enlarged and for years was used by the Salvation Army. It is now a commercial business building.

On January 8, 1917, the school board minutes indicate that the Board of Trade at The Pas requested the trustees to engage a male principal. The request was acceded to and in September that year a Mr. Jonasson took charge at a salary of \$1400 per year. This also marked the beginning of high school work in The Pas as the "red brick".as The Pas School was often called, took on the status of an "Intermediate School". In September 1917, the enrollment had increased to 162 students. After two years at the task, Mr. Jonasson was followed as principal by Miss Margaret E. Ross.

By 1920-21, the School District budget estimate was set at \$15,000. The principal was paid \$1,800, the assistant principal \$1,500, and the six classroom teachers each received \$1,200 per year. The caretaker also received \$1,200. By the fall of 1921 enrollment had risen to 208 with thirteen pupils enrolled in grades nine, ten and eleven.

### **Public High School Education**

Up to 1927, the "Intermediate" status of The Pas School entitled the School District to a secondary grant as a one-room high school. For the next three years it was classified as a "High School" with two teachers doing the secondary work. In the fall of 1930, grade twelve was begun for the first time in The Pas – and this was the first grade twelve class in Northern Manitoba. After two years, the school changed its status from a "Collegiate Department" to a "Collegiate Institute" having progressed from a three-classroom room to a four classroom secondary school.

In 1929-30, under the principalship of Mr. A. L. Mills, the school was reorganized on a Junior-Senior High School basis.

### **Information Sources:**

Kelsey School Division: School Committee Board minutes: 1909-1919

The Pas, Gateway to Northern Manitoba, The Pas Historical Society, 1983