The London Normal School and Rural Education in Southwestern Ontario

Cover photograph: London Normal School circa 1900. The typeface on the cover is similar to the cursive writing style taught in rural and urban schools throughout southwestern Ontario in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

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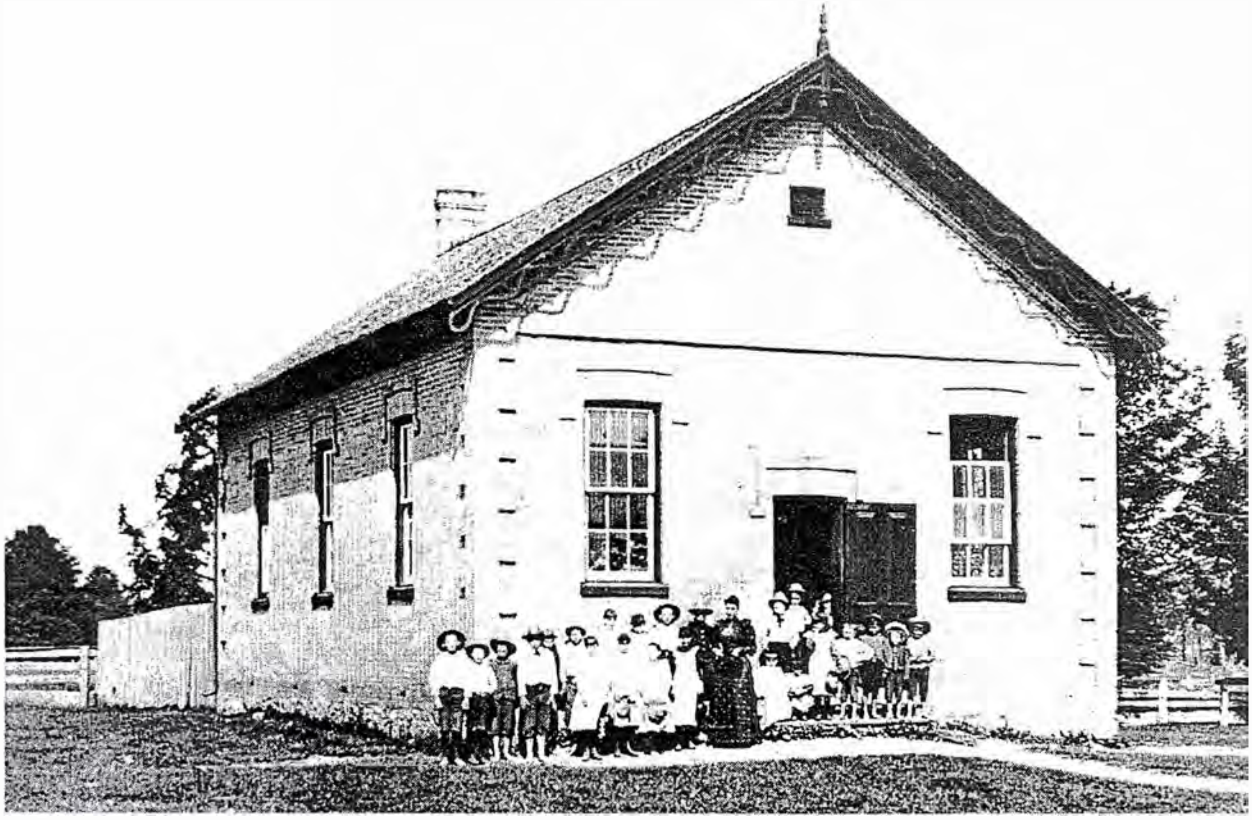

Marvin L. Simner

Above photograph: Nilestown School, circa 1894, a one-room rural school in the former Westminster Township. *Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archival Collection.*

THE LONDON NORMAL SCHOOL AND RURAL EDUCATION IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

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Introduction

For nearly 60 years the London Normal School, constructed in 1898-1899, was one of the major facilities for the training of teachers who taught in the rural communities of southwestern Ontario. The purpose of this booklet is to provide an overview of the changes in teaching style, teacher training and rural schooling that took place prior to and during the early years following the opening of this facility. We begin with a discussion of the status of elementary education preceding the emergence of the Ontario normal school system. Here the focus is on the pioneer period where rural school "instructors were essentially school keepers rather than school teachers...(and their success)...depended mainly upon their qualifications as disciplinarians" (McCutheson, 1941, p. 25). Next, we describe the events that led to the development of the Ontario normal school system and the nature of teacher training in Ontario during the mid-to-late 1800s. We then focus on the London Normal School to illustrate how the philosophy of early childhood education had changed around the turn of the last century, how these changes manifested themselves in a new child-centered curriculum, and how this new curriculum was implemented in the rural areas during the early years of the 20th century.

Chapter 1. Rural Education during the Pioneer Period

The first piece of legislation that led to the establishment of elementary schools throughout Ontario was the Elementary or Common School Act of 1816. According to the Act, "The inhabitants of (each) town, township, village, or place concerned (were authorized) to meet in public assembly and so soon as they had erected a suitable school house and were able to show that twenty children were likely to attend the same, they were to appoint three fit and discreet persons to act as trustees to appoint a teacher" (Ross, 1896, p. 5). The only criteria that a suitable candidate needed to posses was a proper moral character and the capacity to teach reading, spelling, grammar, writing (which meant penmanship) and arithmetic (Parvin, 1965).

The following material is from a book by Reverend W. A. Mackay (1899) who lived in the mid-to-late 1800s in Zorra Township, a farming community in Oxford County surrounding Embro. This highly readable and personal account of rural schooling no doubt reflects the daily experiences, not only of MacKay, but also of many others in southwestern Ontario during this period (for additional examples, see the recollections compiled by Hodgins, 1910, and Orr, 1977). Terms and references that are no longer current are explained in comments that appear in parentheses throughout the text.

The School System

> In the very early days (1820s - 1840s), there was really no school system, that is, no provision made by Government for the education of the young. A few settlers clubbed together, raised money enough to buy sufficient nails and a few panes of glass; then by means of "bees" the building was erected. The teacher boarded round, staying a week or two with each family.

No certificate of qualification was asked, and for his services he received six or eight dollars a month, which was raised by voluntary subscription among those who had children to send to school. The amount each man subscribed was, of course, supposed to be in proportion to the number of children he would send.

As some families were large and the parents poor, the children would be sent to school (for about a week), so that all would learn a little. Usually there would be in the school during the winter months quite a few young men and women about twenty years of age, trying to pick up the knowledge denied them in earlier years. In some localities, for lack of funds, the school was kept open only for six months of the year.

Bye and bye something more systematic was attempted. The township was divided into school sections and provision was made for the salary of the teachers by levying a certain rate-fee on each pupil. This did not work well as it discouraged attendance.

At length Egerton Ryerson introduced the "Free School" system (see page 6 for a summary of Ryerson's contributions to education starting in 1844). This system, where adopted, did away with the fee formerly charged, and provided for the expenses of the schools by levying tax on every acre of land, occupied or unoccupied, within the section. The adoption of this system was not compulsory, but was left to be decided by a majority of the electors regularly assembled at the annual meeting.

Long and loud was the controversy between what was called the "Rate Bill" and the "Free School" system. But truth is mighty, and it (the Free School system) prevailed in this case. Gradually, in spite of all opposition, the schools of Zorra all became "Free" and the blessing can scarcely be overestimated. It recognized the value of education, and put it within the reach of the poorest, and, as a result, all the children received a good public education.

The School House

The pioneer school-house was a very humble affair. A log shanty, thirty feet by twenty-two, cornered but not hewed, with chinks between the logs, then moss, all plastered over with clay. The roof consisted of rafters with poles laid across, and for shingles, pieces of elm bark three feet by four. The chimney was made of lath covered with plaster, and served for heating, ventilating, and lighting the little house. Of course it frequently caught fire, but the boys, by the free use of snow, were equal to the occasion. There was but one small window in each side.

The furniture was in keeping with the rest of the building. About four feet above the floor, holes were bored into the logs of the wall and pins driven in. Upon these were laid rough basswood planks, three inches thick, and the desk (for the children) was complete. The teacher's desk was somewhat more pretentious, being built on four upright wooden pillars, and furnished with a small drawer in which the dominie (school master) kept his taws (a

> leather whip divided into several strips used to punish children), switch (a thin stick often from a birch tree, also used for punishment), ruler (a further instrument for punishment), and other official equipment.

The School Master

When reading the following material from MacKay's book, it is useful to keep in mind the following quotation from McCutheson, an extract of which appeared above: "(school masters) were essentially school keepers rather than school teachers...Their disciplinary powers were often put to the test, and any noticeable weakness in this respect usually meant a brief tenure of office. In fact, the success of the early teachers depended mainly upon their qualifications as disciplinarians" (McCutheson, 1941, p. 25). Although this quotation refers only to school masters, it is also an accurate expression of the educational philosophy that prevailed at the time. Learning was said to have occurred only if pupils were forced to learn; the pupils' interest in the material was considered to be of little importance.

> The teachers of those early days were for the most part middle-aged men, earnest and faithful, but 'severe and stern,' and knew little of the theory of teaching as understood to-day. In the main they erred in applying themselves to the repression of the evil in the pupil, rather than to the development of the good. They certainly did not in their ideals rise above their environment, and, like all others of that generation, they had strong faith in the efficacy of corporal punishment.
>
> The taws was a great institution in those days. It was thought that the knowledge which could not be crammed into the memory, or reasoned into the head, could be whipped into the fingers or the backbone. Pupils, girls as well as boys, were flogged for being late, though some of them came two miles through the woods, climbing over logs, and wading through streams to get to the school. They were flogged for whispering in school or for making pictures on the slate.
>
> In preserving order the teacher watched all the scholars with the eye of a detective, and soon found out any scholar or scholars guilty of the crime of whispering or talking. Instead of coming down and remonstrating with the offender, as the teacher of the present day would do, he doubled up the taws into a ball, and sent it flying with unerring aim, carrying consternation to the delinquents. Those to whom this 'fiery cross' came had immediately to come up to the master's desk, each of them holding on to some portion of the detested taws, and then receive the castigation due to their fault.

The Curriculum

The school day typically started with a prayer by the teacher and a passage from the Bible. MacKay describes the teaching of penmanship in the following way. Aside from briefly showing the children how to form the letters, lessons in penmanship were especially useful in teaching moral values. Children were expected to reproduce on paper many times over, certain model sentences supplied by the teacher that contained either passages from the Bible or simply "words to live by".

> The grey goose furnished the pens, and ink was made from a solution of soft maple bark, diluted with copperas (a chemical compound often used in the manufacture of ink). Sometimes this ink would freeze, resulting in bursted bottles. To prevent this it was not unusual to mix a little whiskey with the ink; for the whiskey of Zorra in those days, though cheap, would not freeze like that alleged to have been used by some politicians in Muskoka a few winters ago.
>
> The paper used was coarse foolscap, unruled. Each pupil had to do his own ruling, and for this purpose took with him to school a ruler and a piece of lead hammered out in the shape of a pencil.
>
> Our first attempt at writing was making 'pot-hooks' and 'trammels,' which meant the up and down strokes of the pen. After practising this for several weeks, we began to write from 'copy' (sentences supplied by the teacher). The sentiment of the 'copy' was always some counsel, warning, or moral precept for the young, and as we had to write it carefully in every line of the page, it could not fail to impress itself upon the memory and to influence the life. I ascribe no little importance to this factor in early education. The duty of being on our guard against evil companionship, making the most of life by every day diligence, was constantly inculcated by this copy set by the teacher. Here are a few in illustration. I give them alphabetically as they used to be given to us,
>
> "Avoid bad company or you will learn their ways."
> "Be careful in the choice of companions."
> "Choose your friends from among the wise and good."
> "Emulate the good and the virtuous."
> "Fame may be too dearly bought."
> "Honour your father and mother."
> "Let all your amusements be innocent."
> "Omit no opportunity of acquiring knowledge."
> "Perseverance overcomes difficulties."
> "Truth is mighty and will prevail."
> "Wisdom is more to be desired than riches."
>
> Being thus early taught by our teachers, we naturally took to the scribbling of moral rhymes on our books.
>
> "Steal not this book for fear or shame,
> For here you see the owner's name;
> And God will say on that great day,
> This is the book you stole away."

Or another version was this:

"Steal not this book, my honest friend,
For fear the gallows will be your end."

In addition to penmanship, students were also taught grammar. The following passage illustrates the importance that was placed on memorizing

> The method of teaching was exceedingly mechanical. The pupil was taught to parse[1] a word, not by studying its relation to other words (which is the only appropriate way to engage in parsing), but simply by committing to memory a list of prepositions, adverbs, interjections, etc. He knew that a certain word was a preposition because he had committed to memory a list of prepositions in which that word occurred.
>
> The list of course was very long, and was a terror to young grammarians. It was arranged alphabetically; first, the prepositions beginning with "a," then those with "b," etc. Here, for instance, is the list under "a": - "about, above, according to, across, after, against, along, amidst, among, amongst, around, at, athwart." Then came the "b" words - "bating, before, behind, below, beneath, between, betwixt, beyond, by" and so on with the c's, etc.
>
> The list of adverbs was not even arranged alphabetically, but proceeded in this fashion: - "So, no, not, nay, yea, yes, too, well, up, very, forth, how, why, far, now, then, etc." After this the interjections (i.e., the question mark, comma, semicolon, etc.) claimed their right to be memorized. We used to think of the long, dagger-like mark (the exclamation point) was put there to indicate some murderous design.

From the forgoing account it is quite apparent that, for many during the pioneer period, schooling was not a pleasant experience, nor was it intended to be. Also, as stated above, during the early-to-mid 1800s the Government made no provisions for a centralized school system. Instead, decisions regarding teacher qualifications, the nature of the curriculum, how long children were to remain in school, etc. was left largely to the discretion of the locally elected trustees.

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[1] Parsing is a procedure for breaking a sentence into its component parts, explaining the grammatical form, function and interrelation of each part. This teaching method is rarely used in schools today.

Chapter 2. The Emergence of the Ontario Normal School System

In 1842 the Legislative Council in Upper Canada attempted to centralize and reform the common-school system. While it is reasonable to assume that this attempt at centralization was based on the educational needs of the children, this was not the case. Instead, the rationale behind the reform movement was based more on the political needs of the time. "The (MacKenzie) Rebellion of 1837 was still fresh in their minds, and the need for an efficient institution to socialize and promote the proper politicization of the populace was strong" (Smaller, 1988, p. 275). In other words, to avoid any further insurrections in Upper Canada it was considered important to generate a strong sense of Canadian nationalism and identity among the young and this could best be achieved only through an effective, centralized school system.

Adding to this fear of a further rebellion was a growing concern over the proliferation of American textbooks in the classroom, many of which were decidedly anti-British in nature. In an 1839 report on the conditions of schooling in Upper Canada, Lord Durham had the following to say about this matter.

> Great care should be taken in the selection of textbooks. Your committee regrets to find that additions published in the U.S. are much used throughout the Province, tinctured, as they are with principles which, however, fit for dissemination under the form of Government which exists there, cannot be inculcated here without evil results (Parvin, 1965, p. 16).

With these concerns in mind the Reverend Egerton Ryerson was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Education in 1844 and was asked to recommend a satisfactory elementary system for all of Upper Canada. To achieve this goal Ryerson spent the next year visiting the school systems in more than 20 European countries. The report he prepared, which gave rise to the School Law Act of 1846, contained the following provisions:

> that property generally should be taxed for the support of the elementary schools; that school attendance should be compulsory; that the schools should be systematically inspected; (and) that the teachers should receive professional training (McCutcheon, 1941, p. 21).

In keeping with these provisions, all of the common schools in the province eventually became tax supported, which meant free education for all children. In 1846 "the first concrete steps were taken toward the selection and authorization of specific texts for use in the schools" (Parvin, 1965, p. 24). This was done, of course, to ensure that any attempt to Americanize the curriculum would be curtailed. Then, to broaden the curriculum, in 1884 the Department of Education stated that the following 12 subjects were to be taught: reading, writing (which again meant penmanship), arithmetic, history, geography, composition, grammar, music, drawing, temperance, drill and callisthenics. Needless to say, this new curriculum was clearly an expanded version of the one that had existed during the pioneer period. In addition to enlarging the curriculum, the province encouraged growth in the number of school buildings. Whereas in 1842 there were approximately 1700 buildings in Upper Canada, by 1871 the number had increased to around 4700. Also in 1871, a compulsory education law was passed which made attendance mandatory for at least four months each year (Ross, 1896, p. 21). According to an 1886 report prepared by the public school inspector for Middlesex County, however, apparently many parents objected to this last provision.

> In West Middlesex, 19 (pupils) are reported as not attending school (at all) and 1,184 did not attend 110 days as the law demands... (The reason for this non-compliance was then explained in the following manner.)... The struggle for political power (by the elected trustees) demanded the courting and conciliating of those neglecting to educate these children. Trustees will not incur the displeasure or excite the rancour of their neighbours by enforcing the law; hence, instead of the numbers (of days of non-attendance) decreasing, they are increasing, and this in face of the fact that provisions must be made for the accommodation and instruction of all the children (University of Western Ontario Archives, box B746).

Of Ryerson's many accomplishments, one of his most important was legislation that led to the establishment a normal school system in Ontario with the authority to grant teaching certificates that would be recognized throughout the province. By virtue of this system, only those with proper training would be authorized to teach in the common schools. Whether the system was truly successful during its early days, however, is questionable.

The requirements for admission to the first provincial normal school, which was located in Toronto and opened in November, 1847, were minimal. A candidate merely "had to be at least sixteen years of age, produce a certificate of good moral character signed by a clergyman, and have ability in reading, writing, and arithmetic" (Phillips, 1957, p. 572). Despite these rather cursory admission requirements good candidates were difficult to find.

> Almost from the beginning it was a problem to attract enough qualified students to the program, and on at least one occasion it had been necessary to lower the academic qualification from an already very basic level of literary competence...In addition to low enrolment, high drop-out rates quickly developed among those who did enrol in the program...Though a number of reasons were listed, discontent with the program rated high, not only among early leavers but among the graduates as well (Smaller, 1988, p. 276).

The nature of this discontent was perhaps best summarized in a letter by a student who attended the Toronto Normal School in 1853.

> We cannot leave our Boarding Houses after 9:30 without permission from our head teacher - cannot speak, bow or winck at one of the female students - nor spit about the school rooms or even premices occupied by the buildings. Now if we violate the least of the rules given (and some are hard to keep) or fail of being at the rooms at the time the role is called we are expelled without further ceremony - and it can be done if we are not able to keep up with our several classes...I shall not intentionally violate any law - but I may do so inadvertently, and if such should be the case I should not expect no clemency...

> Lecture hours were from nine till noon, from two till five, and from six till eight. The headmaster spent five hours a day lecturing on the philosophy of grammar and parsing, on mathematical, physical, political geography, on the art of reading, on linear drawing, on lessons on reasoning, on history, and on trigonometry for land surveying. His assistant spent four hours a day in the afternoon and evening lecturing on geometry, algebra, arithmetic, various branches of physics, and agricultural chemistry. These were regular subjects scheduled for five days a week. There was also "repetition" on Saturdays from nine to twelve, and apparently in off hours time was found also for miscellaneous subjects - music, the mode of teaching writing, writing from dictation, exercises in composition, orthography, derivation of words, and the philosophy of education (Phillips, 1957, p. 572).

In view of the demands that were placed on the students, it is not surprising that one school superintendent wrote that

> some of the Normal School Students have confessed to me (their displeasure at being) allowed, or rather forced, to skim over as many subjects in one Session, as, for any practical purpose, would rationally take two or three years...(Being) over pushed, they become so far disgusted with the Books they have gone over...It trains them to be content with superficial views of the most important subjects" (Smaller, 1988, p. 276).

The reasoning behind this approach, though, was quite straight forward. In the mid-1800s a well educated person was said to be someone with a large command of information that could be cited at will. Classroom teachers, therefore, were merely expected to provide factual information to their students that the students in turn were expected to memorize. Hence, the role of the teacher continued to be similar to that of the pioneer teacher or teaching master. There was little attempt at modernizing instruction or making lessons interesting. In commenting on this matter Phillips (1957) reached the following conclusion: "The normal school must therefore be charged with part of the blame for slave-driving teachers who made life miserable for their pupils and themselves in the decades following Confederation" (p. 574).

Chapter 3. The Ontario Normal School System Around the Turn of the Century

The situation described above slowly began to change, in part, through the use of a Model School system. The Common School Act of 1850 authorized each township to erect a model school for the purpose of providing in-service training to individuals who wished to become teachers. Students who successfully completed a semester (typically lasting 15 weeks) of supervised training in one of the schools, and passed an examination consisting of written and practical tests administered by the county, were then granted a Third Class Teacher's Certificate which enabled the holder to teach for a period of three years (McCutcheon, 1941).

Of added importance, this Third Class Certificate eventually became one of the requirements for admission to a normal school. This meant that those who wished to attend a normal school now had to have at least some teaching experience before being accepted. Another new admissions requirement was the completion of one or two years of high school, which, by itself was not easily accomplished since to gain admission to high school in the late 1800s a candidate had to pass a fairly rigorous entrance exam. Also, for a candidate to be accepted he or she now had to be 18 years of age, instead of 16, and had to agree to teach in the province for at least one year following graduation (McCutcheon, 1941). Finally, owing to the previous difficulty in recruiting students, as an enticement to attend a normal school, those who graduated received a Second Class Professional Certificate which enabled them to obtain a more permanent position than could be had by those who only possessed a Third Class Certificate.

A further change that also took place around the turn of the century, and that led to additional improvements in the normal school system, stemmed from the growing influence of educational theorists who emphasized the need for teachers to become more aware of the nature of young children and their learning habits. This in turn gave rise to the need for instruction in appropriate teaching methods which was accomplished through the hiring of instructors whose responsibilities were to deliver lectures on teaching methodology (Johnson, 1968).

By 1907 there were seven normal schools in Ontario. To illustrate the profound affect that these changes had on all of these schools, in March 1909 the Ontario Department of Education issued a document entitled Syllabus of Regulations and Courses for the Normal Schools at Hamilton, London, North Bay, Ottawa, Peterborough, Stratford, and Toronto (Archives of the University of Western Ontario, Box 746). The preamble to this document contained the following statement:

> The purpose of the Normal Schools is to prepare teachers...in the theory and art of organizing, governing, and instructing pupils of the Public and the Separate Schools; and to improve the general culture of such teachers and, in particular, their academic preparation for teaching the subjects prescribed in the programme of studies (p. 3).

In keeping with this purpose one of the major courses was an introduction to the science of education which included applied psychology, child study, and a topic referred to as "General Methodology". The objective of the latter was "to gather up the main facts and principles bearing most directly on methods of instruction which have been developed in connection with the various topics (covered) in the Applied Psychology and Child Study (sections of the course)" (p. 16). In other words, the teachers-in-training were now to be made aware of the nature of children and, with this awareness in mind, they were then taught how to develop lesson plans, how to prepare the class for upcoming lessons, and how to present material in an interesting manner that would capture the children's attention. They even received lectures on the use of so called "teaching devices" such as how to employ "questioning in the development of a lesson, right and wrong methods of questioning, the treatment of faulty answers" etc.(p. 17) as well as how best to use the blackboard to engage the children's attention. Although this material was interwoven with lectures on how to teach such subjects as arithmetic, geography, and grammar, considerably more time would now be spent on teaching methodology than on course content.

The importance attributed to teaching methodology is perhaps best illustrated in the following questions from the March, 1910, Ontario Department of Education final examination for a Second Class Professional Certificate (Archives of the University of Western Ontario, Box 746). The answers were graded on how well the students prepared an appropriate lesson plan.

1) Solve as you would for your pupils the following example.
A baker's outlay for flour is 70% of his gross receipts, and other trade expenses are 20%. If the price of flour falls 40%, and other trade expenses are also reduced 40%, what reduction should be made in the price of a 5 cent loaf to allow the same percentage of profit as before?

2) Give, in order of treatment, the topics you would discuss ...in dealing with the geography of France. Give reasons for your selection.

3) You wish a class of beginners to find out that two triangles are equal in all respects in (that) the three sides of the one are respectively equal to the three sides of the other. Write a plan of the lesson you would teach.

4) Show the method you would adopt in teaching a lesson on the Magna Charta...to bring out its application to the liberties we enjoy.

As further evidence of this new commitment to ensuring that teachers would be thoroughly versed in teaching methodology, between 1910 and 1926 the Ontario Minister of Education authorized the publication of a series of teachers' manuals in the areas of arithmetic, composition and spelling, elementary agricultural and horticulture, geography, grammar, history, literature, nature study, primary reading, and writing. Each manual contained a section or chapter devoted solely to teaching methodology. The manual dealing with arithmetic, for example, contained the following advice:

> The method of teaching any subject must accord with certain principles determined by the nature of the learning process. These principles...may be briefly summed up in the following statements:
>
> 1. The acquisition of new knowledge is initiated by some problem in the solution of which the learner takes an interest.
>
> 2. The problem is analysed, and ideas are selected which are felt to possess value relative to the solving of the problem.
>
> 3. These relevant ideas are combined into a plan of solution.
>
> 4. This new knowledge is (then) expressed and applied (Ontario Teachers' Manuals: Arithmetic, 1915, p. 15).

In essence, the major change in educational philosophy that occurred around the turn of the last century was the need to fully involve the children in the learning process. This meant that teachers would no longer be mere technicians confined to the role of disciplinarian and provider of factual information. Instead, the new aim of education was to ensure that all subjects would be presented in an interesting, orderly, and relevant manner designed to capture and hold the children's attention. The next section, devoted to the London Normal School, illustrates how this child-centered approach to education was put into practice in terms of teacher training.

Chapter 4. The London Normal School

The London Normal School was the third to be built in Ontario, the first opened in Toronto in 1847, the second was constructed in Ottawa in 1875. The reason London was selected was due to prolonged lobbying at the local level. In "1872 an appeal was made to the Provincial Legislature to establish a Normal School in London - an appeal which was repeated on an average every other year for nearly thirty years before it was granted" (Hodgins, 1910, p. 116). The following account of the school's early history is based on material in the June, 1923, London Normal School Yearbook (Archives of the University of Western Ontario, Box 736).

Although the school opened in February, 1900, by 1923 it had changed considerably. The student body, for example, which initially consisted of 96 pupils, had grown to 333 pupils. Of these, only 34 were from London and the immediate surrounding area. The majority were from villages and hamlets up to 80km from London, while many others were from places as distant as Brucefield, Goderich, Ripley, Wallaceburg, Wilton Grove, Sarnia, and Windsor, to name a few. The staff had also increased from six members in 1900 to fifteen in 1923.

In 1923 the courses ranged from the science of education and literature to school management, primary reading, mathematics, spelling, nature study, composition, grammar, history, manual training, art, household economics, music, physical culture, writing, Latin, French, science, and agriculture.

Along with courses, to make attendance a more enriching experience than was the case in the mid-1800s, the students had access to a number of extra curricular activities. Male students could participate in hockey, soccer, and baseball, while both male and female students could take part in basketball. There was also a school orchestra, glee club, and debating team as well as a Literary Society open to all independent of gender. In 1923 the glee club even staged an operetta in the school auditorium that the students themselves wrote and directed.

How were the students treated? Given the moral standards of the time, it is not surprising that many of the rules that the teachers-in-training were expected to follow in the 1850s also applied in the early 1900s. For instance, "the houses at which the students lodge are inspected, and no student is permitted to lodge except at a licensed boarding house or with some relative or friend. Gentlemen attending the normal school must lodge in boarding houses not attended by the other sex" (Ross, 1896, p. 98). In 1918/1919 female students were expected to reside in the boarding houses shown on the next page that surrounded the school and were approved by the principal (Archives of the University of Western Ontario, Box 746).

List of London Normal School Boarding Houses

1918 FOR FEMALE STUDENTS 1919

Name	Residence	Can Accom-modate	Price of Board Per Week
Mrs. Cummings	Askin St., 16	4	$5 00
Rev. G. W. Howson	Askin St., 71	3	5 00
Mrs. F. Baird	Askin St., 114	2	5 50
Mrs. H. McKone	Beaconsfield Ave., 97	4	6 00
Mrs. A. M. McLeish	Beaconsfield Ave., 105	4	5 50
Mrs. W. Patrick	Briscoe St., 22	2	5 00
Mrs Ward	Briscoe St., 43	—	—
Mrs Geo. Roberts	Briscoe St., 45	4	5 00
Mrs. W. Roberts	Briscoe St., 27	2	5 00
Mrs. Oke	Bruce St., 23	4	5 00
Mrs McAlpine	Byron Ave., 86	6	5 00
Miss Knott	Carfrae Crescent, 19	2	5 50
Mrs. McDonell	Cathcart St., 22	4	5 00
Mrs. P. N. Wiggins	Cove Road, 20	4	4 50
Mrs. J. E. Hammond	Craig St., 36	2	6 00
Mrs. I. Marlatt	Craig St., 40	2	5 00
Mrs. E. Harris	Duchess Ave., 81	4	5 00
Mrs. T. H. Murray	Duchess Ave., 109	4	5 00
Mrs. Corbett	Duchess Ave., 230	4	5 00
Mrs. Bloomfield	Edward St., 13	6	5 50
Miss R Bryant	Edward St., 20	6	5 00
Mrs. McDonald	Edward St., 21	4	5 50
Mrs. Alex. Westman	Edward St., 60	4	5 75
Mrs. C. A. Vollick	Elmwood Ave., 22	2	5 00
Mrs. Wallace	Elmwood Ave., 26	2	5 50
Mrs. Allison	Elmwood Ave., 139	4	5 00
Miss M. Taylor	Euclid Ave., 56	—	—
Miss E. Keene	Euclid Ave., 62	4	5 00
Mrs. S. Spettigue	Garfield Ave., 22	2	5 00
Miss M. Scott	Langarth St., 134	2	5 00
Mrs. Atkinson	Langarth St., 174	2	5 00
Mrs. Peacock	Langarth St., 181	2	5 50
Mrs. I. G. Kilbourne	Langarth St., 192	4	5 00
Mrs. Ryan	Orchard St., 26	4	5 00
Mrs. E. Lewis	Orchard St., 31	6	5 00
Mrs. J. Wood	Orchard St., 32	3	5 00
Mrs. Marshall	Ridout St., 32	2	5 00
Mrs. Pethick	Stanley St., 80	2	5 00
Mrs. Cornfoot	Tecumseh Ave., 214	4	6 00
Mrs. W. J. Chalcraft	Tecumseh Ave., 215	2	6 00
Mrs. Geo. A. Farr	Tecumseh Ave., 119	4	6 00
Mrs. Sidney Clark	Teresa St., 14	2	—
Mrs. Land	Victor St., 21	2	5 00
Mrs. Kreitzer	Victor St., 29	2	5 00
Mrs. Burleigh	Victor St., 42	2	5 00
Mrs. Chas. Mennill	Wharncliffe Rd., 204	2	5 00
Mrs. E. M. Healy	Wharncliffe Rd., 225	4	5 00
Mrs. A. P. McLean	Windsor Ave., 103	2	5 00
Mrs. J. A. Campbell	Wortley Rd., 176	1	5 00

The school building also had two side entrances, one for females, the other for males. Moreover, a female staff member was appointed to "have oversight...of the social life" of the female students and social dancing was not permitted until sometime after the first world war. In fact, with respect to social dancing, the promenade, in which pairs of students walked around the building,

> was the only excuse for (intermingling between the sexes) within the school other than in the organized groups and societies. When a promenade was held...the students (along with others) would assemble in the library. As at a ball partners were selected...In most cases there was music to accompany this sedate perambulation up and down the stairway and through the halls of the school...Mr. Dearness (principal from 1918 to 1921) is said to have remarked that he was interested in (social) dancing as an Art form and that dances would (only) be permitted if the students would agree to dance alone (Laforet, 1959, p 9-10).

The school day, on the other hand, was much more enjoyable than before, at least according to the following account in the yearbook. The day began at 8:50 a.m. in the Chapel with a "repetition of the Lord's prayer and such announcements as are necessary." The students then marched to class, "to the tune of an inspiring march" played by one of the students.

> The morning session consists of five periods during which: Mr. Stevenson guides us along the paths of psychology, mingling knowledge with delightful witticisms. Passing on to Mr. Clark we are shown the very best ways to improve the English of the coming generation, and to create a wholesome interest in the great outdoors. Dr. White seeks to straighten the way for all young teachers who otherwise would find school management their greatest problem. Mr. Prendergast (principal in 1923) delights in teaching algebra and many an interesting geographical discussion takes place in the class room. Mr. McEachren leans toward an over fondness of the Loyal John Simcoe and catchy grammatical constructions...Last but most enjoyable of all are Mr. Hofferd's lectures, in the gallery room on "chickens," and "butterflies," and other interesting subjects. His clever ambiguous statements are a source of merriment usually at the expense of the ladies.
>
> With the final bell throngs of hungry students burst from the college doors to make their way in all haste to relieve the over-laden boarding house table. Spare moments gleaned at noon hour are usually devoted to neglected lesson plans or to such forms of exercise as may be in season (London Normal School Yearbook, 1923, p. 6).

The afternoon sessions were similar to the morning sessions although here the students had lectures on children's literature, music, art, and manual training. This routine, however, did vary somewhat depending on the day of the week.

> Each Monday the Ministers of the Gospel visit our institution to instruct us in the spiritual guidance of the child. Tuesday we are usually free at 4:30, and make the most of this opportunity to play team games. We usually know Thursday by a sinking feeling in the

> stomach and a trembling of the knees. In the afternoon we set out to show the critic teachers (teachers who were responsible for supervising the in-class performances of the teachers-in-training) what vague teaching qualities we possess. Following our performance the critic takes the stage and we are told in no uncertain terms just how poor we are.
>
> Friday the critic teachers perform for our benefit and woe is the student who dares to observe a mistake. At 3 o'clock is the meeting of the Literary Society at which we have enjoyed many excellent programs of a varied nature.
>
> Saturday is a day of rest? Students teachers should study at least eight hours says Mr. Stevenson. However, there are some students who study only four hours and the remainder of the time is spent on various outdoor diversions. We are told: Sunday is a day on which "to learn your duty."
>
> Monday evening has on several occasions been graced by delightful parties which will not soon be forgotten. If we have a night off it is Thursday. This evening was the one favoured for many interesting basketball games as well as school and theatre parties. Friday is the day on which the young men take the young women to one or other of the local picture houses as a frivolous celebration of the close of another week of lectures (London Normal School Yearbook, 1923, p. 6).

In summary, it would certainly appear that those who attended the London Normal School in the 1920s had a far more rewarding experience than those who attended the Toronto Normal School in the mid-1800s. It is perhaps not surprising that the editor of the Yearbook concluded her remarks with the following comment:

> So do we live through our training course and few of us realize just how much we are enjoying ourselves. In the years to come we will all look back and recall with pleasure that we spent many of the happiest hours of our lives while attending the school where we made many of our greatest friends.

Chapter 5. Rural Education in the early 20th century

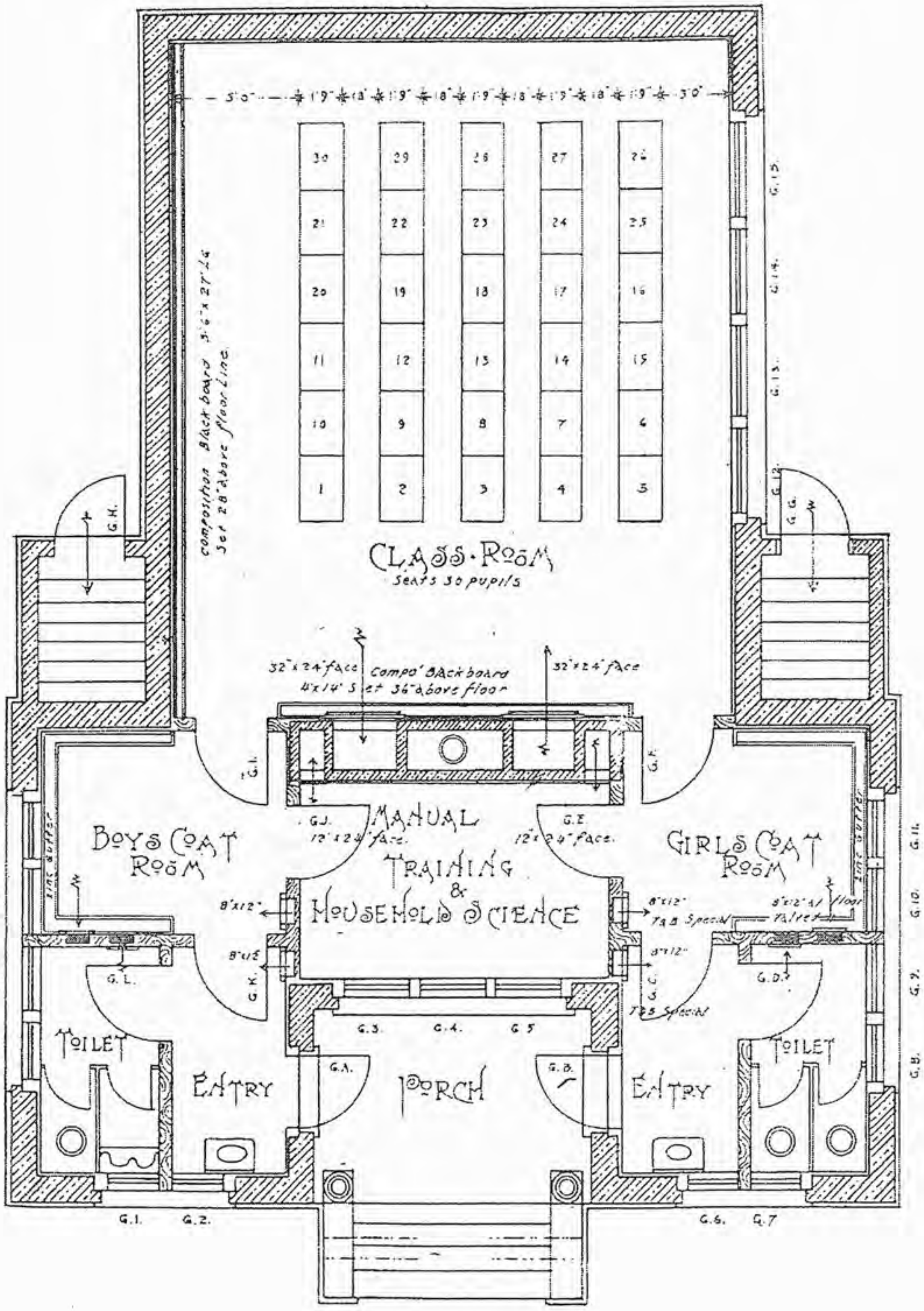
In 1922 there were nearly 5,000 one room schools in Ontario (Canadian School Board Journal, 1925, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 2). How did all of the changes outlined above manifest themselves in these schools? We began the booklet with MacKay's description of rural education during the pioneer period. For comparison purposes, the following sections are organized under the same headings that we employed in summarizing his description of rural education nearly 100 years earlier.

The School House

In addition to publishing a series of manuals with detailed information on how to teach such subjects as arithmetic, geography, and history, the Ontario Department of Education also issued a manual with detailed information on the construction of rural school buildings. After all, if the students who attended rural schools were expected to learn, they needed to be housed in an environment that was conducive to learning. Existing school buildings that did not meet the following government standards, were expected to upgrade or risk the loss of "a portion of the Legislative grant" (Regulations, Courses of Study...1915. p. 11; University of Western Ontario Archives, Box 746):

> The class rooms shall be oblong, the length being about one-third greater than the breadth. A superficial area of a least 16 square feet and a cubic air space, exclusive of cloak rooms, of not less than 250 cubic feet shall be allowed for each pupil, these provisions being based on the highest attendance. A room 32 feet long and 25 feet wide, with the standard requirement of 12 1/2 feet from floor to ceiling, will accommodate a class of 40 pupils, allowing at the same time the necessary spaces in front and rear and in the aisles. The aisles, next to the walls, at the sides and in the rear of the school room should be about 3 feet wide, and those between the rows of desks about 2 feet wide. The front row of desks should be about 10 feet from the teacher's blackboard. Much ample floor space is always desirable if proper diffusion of light can be secured, but no pupil should be seated more than about 28 feet from the teacher's blackboard (p. 13-14).

To illustrate many of these requirements, W.W. LaChance, a member of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, published a book in 1919 entitled Modern Schoolhouses: With Plans and Illustrations of the Newest in Schoolhouse Architecture. The example on the next page is the first floor plan of a "one-teacher schoolhouse" (p. 104).


3'0" 1'9" 18" 1'9" 18" 1'9" 18" 1'9" 18" 1'9" 3'0"
Composition Black board 3'6" x 27' Lg
Set 28" above floor Line
CLASS·ROOM
Seats 30 pupils
32" x 24" face
Compo' Black board
4' x 14' Set 36" above floor
32" x 24" face
MANUAL TRAINING & HOUSEHOLD SCIENCE
G.J.
12" x 24" face.
G.E.
12" x 24" face.
BOYS COAT ROOM
GIRLS COAT ROOM
Zinc Gutter
Zinc Gutter
8" x 12"
8" x 12"
8" x 12"
T & B Special
8" x 12" at floor
Valves
8" x 12"
T & B Special
TOILET
TOILET
ENTRY
ENTRY
PORCH
G.1. G.2. G.3. G.4. G.5 G.6. G.7
G.8. G.9. G.10. G.11. G.12. G.13. G.14. G.15.
G.16. G.17. G.18. G.19.
G.A. G.B. G.C. G.D. G.E. G.F. G.G. G.H. G.I. G.J. G.K. G.L.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

The School Master

Since MacKay's description of the teacher's role in the mid-1800s focused solely on the teacher as a harsh disciplinarian, it is instructive to consider the changes in disciplinary practices that took place in the early 1900s. Considerable information along these lines appeared in the Canadian Teacher, a heavily subscribed, widely read magazine which began publication in the 1890s and appeared 16 times each year throughout the 1920s. The following editorial expresses in everyday language the new child-centred approach to discipline that the Department of Education now advocated.

> Instead of going after the child with a birch-rod to make him concentrate on his lesson, the modern teacher goes after the lesson, determined to make it so interesting in and of itself that the child can't keep his mind off it whether he wants to or not (Canadian Teacher, 1923, Vol. 27, No. 14, p. 1008)

The next issue of the magazine contained a similar editorial, but dealt with this matter from a somewhat different perspective.

> Every successful teacher must not forget that he or she was once a child. One must forever view the affairs of a child from a child's standpoint, and then administer punishment as the years of experience tell how it should be administered. A teacher who blindly rushes into a case of discipline viewing the affair only from his (adult perspective) will fail nine times out of ten (Canadian Teacher, 1923, Vol. 27, No. 15, p. 1009).

The letters reprinted below were written by teachers in response to these and many other editorials that appeared in the Canadian Teacher over the years. Although anecdotal in nature, collectively they reflect the different ways that teachers struggled to comply with this new approach to discipline.

Letter 1

> I found that I simply couldn't teach my school while one boy (Jim) remained in it...when I told the class to do things, he simply didn't do them unless he wanted to. He was puting a crimp in my discipline, but I knew I couldn't punish him with the strap...So I went to the School Board and told them about it. I said that I couldn't manage him and that he must either leave the school or I should have to resign.
>
> They were very good and backed me up...So the next time he refused to do what I told him, I kept him after four then explained that I couldn't have a pupil who spoiled my discipline with the class, that if everybody didn't obey the school would soon be in such a state of insubordination that I would not be able to teach...I told him that I had talked the matter over with the School Board, and that he need not come back to school again.

He took his books and went away without saying a word. And (in) someway I was sorry. I thought perhaps if he had a man for a teacher he would have thought he had to behave and would have learned something. I kept thinking about it for a month or two...and I kept thinking he might have done something worthwhile if he had stayed in school. Finally I decided to resign if only I could make the School Board hire a man who wouldn't have any trouble keeping Jim in order.

So I told them exactly why I was leaving and what I wanted them to do. Then I went to Jim's father and told him about it. I only wanted to be sure Jim would come back to school when I had gone. His father promised that he would use his influence to persuade Jim to go on to school.

But the very next morning Jim was back. He took his seat with a rather sheepish air (and) was good as gold. I said nothing at all about our last talk, only made him welcome and tried to make the lessons interesting. At recess he came to me with a list of miss-spelled words to be checked. As he was learning he said, "You don't need to go away. I'll come back to school anyhow. An' I won't plague you."

It was a promise on which I could rely. When the School Board asked me to reconsider my decision, I decided to stay. I am still in the same school (Canadian Teacher, 1926, Vol. 31, No. 11, p. 732).

Letter 2

I have a boy (Donald) in my school who has given me...a great deal of trouble. He is a natural leader, and it seemed to me he could put the other boys up to all sorts of tricks which they never would have dreamed of carrying through alone. He wasn't what one would call a bad boy, but I was simply driven to distraction with him, and felt that he was a menace to good discipline in the school.

I decided to give his talents for leadership a real chance, and suggested organizing a School Club for the purpose of giving proficiency in public speaking and the enjoying and fostering of clean sport. We decided that, though the executive and officers must be chosen from the school, any boy or girl in the section under twenty-one years of age might be a member. As I expected, Donald was chosen President. I tried to keep my hands off as far as possible, serving only in an advisory capacity, and letting the boys and girls work out their own plans.

But the thing I want to emphasize is the change in Donald. I have not a more helpful or orderly boy in my school...Often the "bad boy" is bad because he finds no outlet for his special abilities. To supply such an outlet is to change the direction of his energies. He may surprise you by being not only good, but the best (Canadian Teacher, 1925, Vol. 30, No.6, p. 387).

Letter 3

> I too am a country school teacher. When I began teaching I resolved never to use the strap (but) before long I found myself termed "easy going," "not severe enough," etc. The parents and pupils of most rural districts expect it (the use of the strap).
>
> I like that beautiful theory of appealing to the better side of children, but there are some whose home surroundings made them so hardened that it is impossible to get them to do right for right's sake. They don't know what it means. Now I don't mean to say such children have no better side, they have, but it won't make them do what is right always. The only regret I have is that my arm is not strong enough to give a severe punishment in some cases. No doubt some will think I am something of a crank but I don't think my pupils would say so if asked, and I have forty (Canadian Teacher, 1928, Vol. 32, No. 15, p. 1113).

The Curriculum

While disciplinary practices, for the most part, had changed over the ensuing years, did change in the curriculum also occur in a manner that would generate the level of interest and enthusiasm for learning required by the Department of Education? In McKay's account of the pioneer curriculum, he focused on penmanship and grammar. According to McKay, during the pioneer period penmanship was merely a motor exercise. Hence the need to practice for several weeks a series of up and down strokes of the pen before copying, many times over in rote fashion, a series of moral sentences supplied by the teacher. Grammar consisted largely of having children memorize long lists of words associated with various parts of speech.

In the early 1900s both were indeed treated quite differently, at least according to the rationale in the introductory pages of the various teachers' manuals provided by the Department of Education. Whether the actual exercises, as described in detail on the remaining pages in the manuals, however, were truly less monotonous and more engaging than before is an entirely different matter.

In penmanship the children were now required to adhere to a series of rigidly enforced rules. Consider, for example, how teachers were told to ensure good posture, pen holding and hand position.

> The first requirement of a good posture is that the body and the head be held erect...The second requirement is that the pupil should sit squarely on the seat...A third requirement is that the feet should be flat on the floor. The next requirement is that the pupil must face the desk squarely. Both forearms should rest on the desk, with the elbows projecting over the edge equally, and at an equal distance from the sides.
>
> The recognized manner of holding the pen is to place the holder in such a position that it crosses the second finger somewhat between the root of the nail and first joint. The first

> finger is placed on top of the pen-holder about one inch from the end of the pen point...The thumb is placed at the side of (not underneath) the holder about one third to two thirds of an inch from the end of the first finger...The position of the hand now generally accepted as correct is one in which the wrist does not touch the paper...If the hand is made to slide on the nails of the last two fingers, and the wrist slants slightly toward the right, the holder will naturally point somewhere between the elbow and the shoulder (Ontario Teachers' Manuals: Writing, 1926, p. 12-14).

The teaching of grammar also followed a similar dogmatic approach. Children were expected to memorize not only a series of rules for parsing, but also the defining properties of nouns, verbs, adjectives, the nominative case, the progressive case, the objective case, perfect and progressive phrases, emphatic phrases, passive phrases, appositives, etc. (Ontario Public School Grammar, 1910). Other subjects such as geography also required considerable memory work. Here children were to memorize the names and locations of nearly 800 cities and countries throughout the world. Teachers were even told "to drill the pupils so that they become familiar with the chief railways of Canada, their routes, chief cities along the routes, and the character of traffic" (Ontario Teachers' Manuals: Geography, 1926, p. 91). Strange as it may seem, the rationale behind this memory work in geography was to promote a well educated public that would be able to understand and appreciate articles that appeared in newspapers and magazines.

> A careful examination of the contents of newspapers and magazines shows that over fifty percent of their geographical information deals with location, size, direction, etc., of specific places while only twenty-five percent deals with political geography, and less than six percent with commercial geography. The usefulness from a practical standpoint, therefore, of learning the names and positions of the important places in the world cannot be gainsaid (Ontario Teachers' Manuals: Geography, 1926, p. 61).

This emphasis on memorizing material was even applied to the study of such classics in literature as the works by Wordsworth, Longfellow, Browning, Tennyson, and Kipling. Teachers were told "One of the most valuable means of securing an appreciation (for good literature) is the memorization of fine passages of prose and poetry. (Therefore) Pupils from the primary grades upward should be required to memorize systematically several lines (of prose or poetry) every week of the school year" (Ontario Teachers' Manuals; Literature, 1916, p. 20).

Thus, although the aim of the new curriculum was to free teachers from the need to act as mere technicians and providers of factual information, it would seem that memory work and strict adherence to rules had become a dominant part of this curriculum. It would also seem that the role of the teacher had now become even more autocratic than before. Clearly, the Department of Education by emphasizing, on the one hand, the need to generate interest and enthusiasm for learning among children, yet on the other hand, by expecting teachers to carryout the curriculum as described, the Department was working at cross purposes with itself. Given this state of affairs, it is perhaps not surprising that many children in the rural areas, along with their parents, found schooling both irrelevant and unnecessary. Indeed, a report on rural schooling in Ontario, commissioned by the

Department of Education in 1914, contained the following comment: "...the fact remains that the average rural school in the Province is unable to offer enough of what is vitally interesting to the larger boys and girls to keep them in school" (Stamp, 1982, p. 79). That the same issue also applied to younger children is evident in the following letter written by a rural teacher some thirteen years later.

> I have only ten pupils this year. Their ages range from six to thirteen years...could you give some suggestions for making school work interesting? I know that is very vague, and includes a great deal. And much of what I should like to know is not found in manuals (provided by the Department of Education). The point is this - I have overheard some of my pupils saying that they hated to come to school. I should like to have them enjoy it, for of course I know they will never get very far if they are just driven to work (Canadian Teacher, 1927, Vol. 32, No. 4, p. 278).

Despite these criticisms, because of the provincial high school entrance examinations that had been given yearly since in 1873, teachers were not encouraged to deviate from this curriculum. Not only was it the case that students needed to pass these exams (which covered all of the major areas of the common school curriculum) if they wished to attend high school, if the teachers did not "teach to the test," ultimately it would be the students who would suffer. Agriculture, for example, which would have appealed to the students in the rural communities, was removed from the curriculum as a required subject and made optional because it did not appear on the classically oriented high school entrance exam. It was also removed because of the difficulty finding qualified teachers (Stamp, 1982, p. 37).

Postscript

While the teachers who graduated from the normal schools in the early 1900s were clearly better trained than their counterparts who graduated in the mid-1800s, owing to the lack of interest in the new curriculum by parents and pupils alike, a major problem that still remained in the rural areas had to do with school attendance. As stated above, the Act of 1871 required children to attend school. Owing largely to parental resistance, in the rural areas of Ontario as late as 1890 attendance only averaged 47% (Stamp, 1982, p. 38).

To address this matter teachers in the early 1900s were strongly encouraged to stress the overall importance of education, not only to their pupils, but also to the parents and other tax payers in the surrounding community. The 1912 edition of the Canadian Teacher (Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 487) offered the following suggestions for launching an effective outreach program to promote greater acceptance of the need to educate young children.

> The teacher should make the school of interest to all the people in the section. This can be done:
>
> 1) By calling at the home of the children.
>
> 2) By having public exercises, social and literary, at the school house or at the homes in the district.
>
> 3) By organizing parents' associations for school improvement.
>
> 4) By interesting parents in the school library and forming reading clubs.
>
> 5) By having children take home their examination papers and written lessons.
>
> 6) By having a patrons' week when the teacher and the children unite in extending written invitations to parents to visit the school.
>
> 7) By taking part in the general activities of the community; in short, by becoming a leader in the community.

Teachers were also encouraged through further advice in the Canadian Teacher to make parents aware of the financial gains associated with having their children remain in school. In particular, it was felt that if parents were alerted to the following statistics compiled by the Massachusetts Board of Education this would convince them to want their children to complete their education.

> The pupils who left school at 14 began work at $4 a week and by the time they had reached the age of 25 they were receiving $12.75 a week. On the other hand, those who went on and completed the high school course began with a wage of $10 a week, and at 25 were receiving $35 (Canadian Teacher, 1913, Vol. 17, No. 11, p. 834).

Despite these statistics, however, parental opposition remained. To strengthen the above argument teachers were also advised to inform the community of the tax advantages associated with supporting public schooling and keeping children in school.

> It is not easy for taxpayers to realize that the money put into education of the common people comes back in increased tax-paying within fifteen years and continues as a permanent income...The more a child gets out of the public schools the more tax he will pay and less liability is there that he will be a burden upon the taxpayer...A child who gets little out of the public schools will pay little or no tax though life, and will be liable to make a personal draft on the taxpayer as a pauper, criminal, or weakling (Canadian Teacher, 1924, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 113).

In short, even though teacher training had improved, the curriculum had been reformed, and school attendance had become compulsory, the challenge that remained in the early 1900s was to convince the government that further curriculum reform was truly needed. The following passage by Suzzallo (1913, p. ix) summarizes the conclusions that had been reached by many concerning the need for additional reform if formal education were to be considered truly essential.

> Our whole policy of compulsory education rises or falls with our ability to make school life an interesting and absorbing experience to the child. In a sense there is no such thing as compulsory education. We can have compulsory physical attendance at school; but education comes only through willing attention to and participation in school activities. It follows that the teacher must select these activities with reference to the child's interests, powers, and capacities. In no other way can she guarantee that the child will be present.

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