

Early School Days of Nanaimo

Transcribed by Dalys Barney, Vancouver Island University Library
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William Barraclough

This tape recording was made Tuesday, October 21st, 1969 during an address by Mr. John G. Parker before Nanaimo Historical Society in the lecture room of the Centennial Museum. His subject: early school days of Nanaimo. The address was of one hour's duration. Here Mr. Parker commences to speak:

John Parker

Well, this should bring back some memories to those of you who remember these bells [bells ringing]. Well, I'm sure many of you have heard that rung outside and started to run to get to school on time.

Now before I start, I would like to say that some of this information has been probably given before. Some of it has appeared in the newspapers, under my own byline. And, but for the benefit of continuity, I am going to start at the beginning and if you've heard some of these events and facts before, you'll just have to bear with it. Also, I'm going to read a good deal of it, because it's rather hard to speak from notes and get all the information in, and also to get it accurate. I would like to say that the recording of history is a very doubtful sort of a function. I think history is written from a point of view of who you are or where you happen to be at the time. Some of it is written years after, and there is always room for doubt and argument as to events. The events that I'm going to talk to you about tonight, have been taken from school board minutes, and from diaries, and records in the Provincial Museum, with one or two personal anecdotes, and I'm not prepared to argue with anyone as to their authenticity. They are as authentic as is possible at this time. Some of these were written some time ago, and others have been written recently.

The immediate events leading to the establishment of schools at Nanaimo began in the year 1849. In that year, the headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company [Hudson's Bay Company] was moved from Fort Vancouver to Fort Victoria. And on January the 13th, 1849, the Colony of Vancouver's Island was established. You'll notice that the old records call it Vancouver's Island. During the year the Reverend Robert Staines was brought from England as chaplain of the Company at Fort Victoria. He was accompanied by his wife and together they taught the first Protestant school in Victoria.

This school was established primarily for the officers and servants of the Company. In March 1849, Father Lempfrit arrived in Victoria and opened a school for the Catholic families of the settlement. It is uncertain whether the school conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Staines, or Father Lempfrit, has the honour of being the first on Vancouver's Island. Shortly after the opening of these schools, Father Lempfrit left Fort Victoria to open a mission with the Cowichan Indians, and in 1853, having previously resigned from his position with the Company, the Reverend

Staines set sail to return to England. It was his intention to protest what he called a tyrannical rule of the Company, on his return. However, this was not to be, as the ship was lost during the voyage, it was actually wrecked off the Columbia River, the mouth of the Columbia River.

I think it is rather interesting to note that the Hudson Bay Company took a great interest in its employees, although it was a company that was probably, as history has recorded, had many doubtful sides to its character. It did take a personal interest in its employees, and attempted to do what it could for the education of the young people, and also to look after their health.

In a letter written to Archibald Barclay, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, and dated the 18th of March 1852, James Douglas informs to the Governor of the establishment of the first common school at Fort Victoria. He writes:

"Mr. Charles Bayley, the young man who acted as schoolmaster for the immigrants during the outward voyage of the *Tory*, having conducted himself with great propriety since his arrival here and not being particularly useful as a mere labourer, has opened a day school for boys. The children of the Company's labouring servants in this place, who are growing up in ignorance of their duties as men and Christians. It is now attended by 18 boys who are making fair progress in learning. The parents furnished books and stationery and pay one pound annually for each child, which goes into a fund for the support of the schoolmaster and he also receives his wages and provisions from the Company, who are put to no other expense for the institution."

In August 1852 the Hudson Bay Company established claim to the coal seams in Nanaimo, and during September the first miners arrived to work the mine. On the 16th of January, 1853, the ship *Norman Morison* arrived in Victoria, bringing Mr. Robert Barr and his wife, who had been engaged as Master of the Colonial School at Fort Victoria. The first colonial schoolhouse was then built at the Fort, and occupied prior to the 21st of October 1853. Mr. Bayley, no longer being required at Fort Victoria, was moved to Nanaimo. And in a letter written on September the 3rd, 1853, and also to Governor Barclay, Douglas reports the establishment of the first school at Nanaimo in these words:

"While at Nanaimo I had much conversation with the miners and other married servants of the Company on the subject of opening an elementary school for their children, who have been much neglected and are growing up in ignorance of their duties as Christians and as men. Seeing that they all expressed an ardent wish to have the means of educating their children, I transferred Mr. Bayley, who has for some time been employed as teacher of the Victoria day school, but is not required here, to the establishment at Nanaimo, where he has since opened a school. His emoluments are the same as formerly, say 40 pound a year, with board from the Company, and one pound sterling per annum for each child under his tuition to be paid by the parents, who are also to provide books and stationery at their expense."

However, no proper schoolhouse was built in Nanaimo, and it is evident that school was carried on in one of the buildings erected for other purposes by the Company. It was not until 1873 that the first schoolhouse was erected. It is rather interesting that recently we received a picture from Mrs. Horne, from her aunt's estate, Mrs. Rowe I should say, from her aunt's estate, Mrs. Horne, and on the back of this picture, in what is believed to be Mark Bate's writing, it reads: "The first colonial school: the mine superintendent's home." I think we are very pleased that we've got this picture, because it sort of establishes the building in which the first school was used. Now it is generally believed that this school was in close proximity to the present Dakin's Store. And I think in time we might be able to pin it down a little closer by looking at other old pictures which have buildings in it, and perhaps identifying the building that we have, which is supposed to be the first colonial school and the first mine manager's home.

9:14

The Free Press of November the 16th, 1889, has this to say on the occasion of the death of Mr. Bayley, and with reference to the location of the first school building:

"Death - Bayley in San Francisco, California on November the 3rd, 1889. Charles Alfred Bayley, a native of England, aged 59 years and 25 days. The deceased was one of the pioneers of this city and was the first village pedagogue that taught the then Nanaimo's young idea. The schoolhouse was the original part of the building now occupied by Mr. Thomas Hirst, Commercial Street, adjoining the long bridge. From Nanaimo Mr. Bayley went to Victoria where he started in the grocery business on Yates Street, and his Red House soon became a noted place for the gold hunters of the early '60s to secure their supplies of bacon, beans, rockers, gold pans, etc. The writer has many times seen large bull teams standing in front of his store. After the mining excitement died out, the deceased went to California, where he died, as above stated. The deceased was son-in-law of Mrs. Andrew Hunter, having married her eldest daughter, who is now a widow with ten children, all of whom however are advanced in years. The deceased will be kindly remembered by the pioneers, while perhaps the youth will remember him best by the discipline he enforced, kindly but firmly, in the school. Thus another is taken away from the pioneer past and soon all that will be known of the brave band who first settled in Nanaimo will be the good they have done and the kindly memories that will be bestowed on their last resting place."

In the fall of 1854 Mr. Charles Clark arrived on the *Princess Royal* to open the school at Craigflower; however, this school was not built and opened until March 1855. In 1855, Cornelius Bryant, then a young man of 18 years, residing in Brierley Hill, Staffordshire, wrote the first application for a position of teacher in Nanaimo. The following is taken from his journal:

"Sir, having heard that you are in want of school teachers for Vancouver's Island, in the honourable Company's territory, North America, I take this opportunity of making an application for a schoolmaster situation, believing that I should be able to fill such a position to your satisfaction. I could engage for a certain number of years, just as you wish. My present

occupation is a clerk for the railway company goods station, Round Oak, Brierley Hill. If you have not such a situation as that vacant, I should be very glad indeed to make myself generally useful as clerk, book, or timekeeper. If you should be able to find me employment in the Vancouver's Island."

On Monday, August the 14th, 1856, Mr. Bryant left home and landed in Colevilletown, that's the old name of Nanaimo, on February the 1st 1857, to take over his duties as teacher. From Mr. Bryant's day book we are able to record the following families as having children at school: Mr. Ovid Allard, 1 boy; Mr. Matt Miller, 2 children; Mr. J. Sage, 2 children; Mr. E. Ganner, 3 children; Mr. T. Hawkes, 2 children; Mr. Malpass, 2 children; Mr. George Bull, 1 child; Mr. E. Gough, 2 children; Mr. Dunsmuir, 3 children; Dr. Benson, 2 girls, Enoch and Margaret; John Richardson, 1 girl; Richard Turner, 1 girl; Josh L. Bevilockway, 1 girl and 2 boys; Mr. Meakin, 1 boy; and Harry Sampson. Later names which are added to the above list include: A. Hunter, 2 boys; J. Elliot, 1 boy; G. Baker, 1 girl; Mr. Randle, 1 boy and girl; J. Biggs, 1 girl; Mr. Sabiston, 1 girl, 1 boy; J. Rutland, 1 boy; and J. Lockway, 2 girls.

A fee of five shillings a quarter was charged for the instruction of these pupils. On May 28th, 1857, the entries show a change in currency to dollars and cents and the following note: "A total of 34 pupils enrolled up to this date." Many descendants of these original students still live in and around Nanaimo.

In April of 1855 Reverend Edward Cridge arrived in Victoria, and in the following February, 1856, he was appointed by the Council of Vancouver Island to the position of what was in effect Inspector of Colonial Schools. However, it was not until his third report in 1861 that he makes reference to the school at Nanaimo as follows:

"Nanaimo school, Mr. C. Bryant, master. In this school are 18 children, not exceeding seven years of age. I have not had an opportunity of visiting recently, but from frequent communications with the teacher and information derived from other sources, I have reason to believe that Mr. Bryant continues to display the same assiduity in the discharge of his duties as heretofore. From the teacher's report, it appears that the schoolhouse, which consists of four rooms, needs some repairs."

In a table at the bottom of this report, he shows 22 males and 10 females on the books at Nanaimo.

15:13

Mr. Bryant remained in charge of the school until June the 30th, 1870 when he resigned and went to the ministry. During these 13 and a half years, the attendance was small and irregular and the writer can detect what appears to be a note of discouragement in his entry in Mr. Bryant's journal dated the 3rd of January, 1870: "I reopened the school this morning with less than 30 pupils." I'm sure that there are many people that remember Cornelius Bryant. I

remember being told by a teacher at the school who remembered him as a young child when he was, I think, superintendent of the Sunday school. And how she was in fear and trembling and actually refused to go to the Sunday school because she was so afraid of him.

On the May the 5th 1865, the Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island passed the First School Act, which was to establish free schools. The terms of this Act was to provide education at the expense of the colony and free of student fees and district rates. The following year, on August the 6th, 1866, the imperial government combined the Colony of Vancouver's Island and the Colony of British Columbia under the name of British Columbia. This change marked the beginning of the struggle on the Island to maintain free schools under the provisions of the Free Schools Act of 1865.

The situation was aggravated by the hostility and opposition of the governor of the colony and resulted in periods when the teachers were teaching without salary or only partial payments. In December 1866, the salaries were seven and a half months in arrears. It is to the credit of these pioneer teachers that they continued to teach in the face of official indifference and neglect.

In 1869, a new Education Act was passed which resulted in the abolishment of the free common school. Under this Act, districts were to be set up and school boards elected. *The History of Education in British Columbia*, MacLaurin, has this to say:

"Nanaimo, September the 3rd, 1869. I asked for a grant of \$500 and gave the number of children in the district as about a hundred. Voluntary subscriptions and tuition fees were to provide the district's contribution to the support of the schools. The persons elected to the school board were: Robert Dunsmuir, Mark Bate, and Thomas James."

"On January 11th, 1870, Mr. James reported that only 26 pupils were in attendance. He said, 'I regret to state that there are parents amongst us who rather than pay the small sum are apparently allowing their children to grow up regardless of the advantages which accompany and follow education.' As yet, no school had been built in Nanaimo."

On February the 2nd, 1870, Mr. Bryant complains that "the government only proposes to give me \$480 instead of \$500 for the present year." Again on February the 8th: "Today I was paid \$125 for the three months ending June the 30th." And in March, he was still in arrears \$450, of which the government eventually paid \$386.

On June the 30th, he resigned. In the face of non-payment of salaries, the Victoria teachers failed to reopen the schools in September 1870, and they remained closed until August the 19th, 1872. Lest the Nanaimo schools, although not the first to be established, have the longest record of continued operation of any in B.C.

On July the 30, 1870, the Nanaimo School District was formed, including all that land within a circle having a radius of 3 miles from the courthouse. The Inspector General E. Graham Alston, reports thus on the Nanaimo school for the year 1870: "The teacher was Mr. C.N. Young, formerly vice-principal of the Collegiate School in Victoria." He visited Nanaimo on the 7th of September.

"The number of children on the register was 52, since increased to 71. In attendance: 38: 21 boys and 17 girls. The building formerly used as a school was of the worst possible description, small and ruinous, without playground, or any decent back premises. But a more suitable building belonged to the Church of England is now rented by the board. The children have made greater progress than could have been expected in the face of so many difficulties. There is no other day school in the town. There is no residence for the master. Proper school premises are greatly required in this town, where the number of children is greater than in any other place in the colony except Victoria."

"Mr. C.N. Young is certified by the board, and appointed June the 7th at a salary of \$75 per month." The last paragraph is taken from the First Public Schools Report. Mr. John Jessop, the superintendent of schools reported he visited school on the 2nd of July:

"School commenced with 10 pupils, they kept dropping in until 26 arrived, 11 boys and 15 girls. The children were disorderly and but little attention paid to the teacher. School run with the worst possible condition. Number of children of school age was 175. A Miss Mahood was appointed in 1872, at the salary of \$60 per month to take charge of the girls department as soon as the school erected." However, the lady got tired of waiting, and moved on to greener fields in Victoria.

The first recorded school trustees were Messrs. Bate, Pawson, Dunsmuir, Cooper, Myers, and Renwick. And in 1875, the first building built as a schoolhouse was erected on two town lots given by the Vancouver Coal Company and located on Grace Street. This building was built at a cost of \$2,500 and it later became the Good Temperance Hall. Mrs. Young was appointed to take charge of the girls department and thus became the first lady teacher in Nanaimo. The attendance rose to 125, so one can only conclude that there was considerable beating of the bounds.

In case anyone is not familiar with that term, you know it was an old custom, where they used to take the children of the school around in towns in the old country, so that they would know exactly the boundaries of the city. And at each boundary, they would beat them, so that it would impressed on their mind exactly where the boundaries of the city was. And that was the only way they had of marking, so when you're talking of "beating the bounds" that's actually what happened.

During this year, a school was also erected at south Gabriola on an acre of land donated by a Mr. Kemp. During the year 1873, the first teachers' convention was held in Victoria. This year also saw the building of the first school at Wellington on two lots donated by Dunsmuir, Diggle and Company.

Conditions were still far from satisfactory at Nanaimo, as indicated in the following excerpt from the inspector's report: "Inefficiency in its management, especially in the boys department is causing injury on the rising generation." Happily, an improvement is noted during 1874-75, and during this year, Mr. Joseph P. Planta, was added to the staff. The young town of Wellington now boasted two teachers: Mr. W.F. Jones. (M.A., American) and Miss M.E. Polley (Canadian).

During 1874, the first school was built at North Cedar, on four acres of government land. This school and the teacher's residence was built at a cost of \$2,677.16 by the early settlers of Cedar district, with the aid of the government. The first teacher was Miss Stark. This year also saw the first high school at Victoria. It's interesting to note the discrepancies in dates recorded in succeeding official reports. These given in this report are the earliest recorded, variations occur in many of the later reports. It should also be pointed out that yearly public school reports, from which many of these facts are gleaned, terminated on July the 31st, which accounts for some of the double dates.

During 1875-76, the Nanaimo school had an average of attendance of 105 out a possible 275 school aged children. The first examinations for high school were held with little success. The boys were noisy and disorderly, the inspector complains that too many children are being withdrawn from school at too young an age to work in the mines. It requires little imagination to appreciate the teacher's difficulties in this area of development.

Immigrants from many parts of the world were coming to work the mines, many were unaccustomed to more than the rudiments of formal education. Boys in a working man's family were expected to begin earning a living at a young age. And education was not too important for girls at that time.

25:32

Compulsory education was yet to be established or enforced. At the start of the fall term of 1875, Mr. Planta was appointed head of the boys' school to succeed Mr. Young. The remaining members of the staff were Mrs. Young and Miss Katie McGregor.

The 1876-77 term started with further changes in the staff, with John Mundell succeeding Mr. Planta. The staff is shown as follows: John Mundell (Scotch), Elizabeth Young (English), Katie McGregor (English), Mary Polley (Canadian). It's uncertain whether the country shown in the brackets is the place of birth or the source of educational training. Further reference to the

crowded conditions of the schools is made in reports. The school board was William Raybould, J. Renwick, and George Norris.

During the year 1877-78, Miss M.E. Mason was appointed and the schools continued to grow, making it necessary to erect a new girls' school of three rooms. This school was opened during 1878-79. It was built at a cost of \$2,500, on five lots purchased from the coal company. The site is now occupied by the Quenelle School. Mrs. Young continued as principal, with Miss McGregor as assistant. There were 106 girls enrolled.

The boys' school continued at the old site, with Mr. Mundell as principal, and Mr. A. Flett as assistant. There were 137 boys enrolled.

In 1879-80, Miss Berkeley became principal of the girls school, with Miss Polley as assistant. And in 1880-81, Mr. David Jones became principal of the boys school. During this year, a new school was built at south Cedar, on the railway reserve and an addition was also built on the Wellington school at the cost of \$750. At the 1881 Christmas examinations, the first students from Nanaimo to be successful for entrance to high school were William Pool, John Parkin, and Thomas Jones. Mr. A. Lindsay was appointed to the staff.

27:55

During 1882-83, Maria Jane Bryant won a bronze medal in competition with the New Westminster school. A growing enrollment was causing crowding conditions in the boys' school and in 1883-84 this had grown to a total of 224. The principal, David Jones, received a salary of \$90 per month, and the new assistant, Miss MacDougall, who succeeded Mr. Flett, received \$60.

There appears to be no standard for teachers' salaries. In a letter written by Mr. Jones to the department, he complains the Nanaimo schools were larger than those at Westminster, but his salary was smaller. During 1884-85, Miss Berkeley was forced to resign due to an illness and Miss A.E. Bailey replaced her.

The staff of the boys' school changed, with John Shaw and Miss L. Mebius, I don't know if that's the right pronunciation, as assistant to David Jones. It's rather interesting, Mrs. McGirr has a picture of Miss Mebius, and I can assure you, she was a very good looking girl.

[unidentified male]

She stayed at the same boarding house.

John Parker

Is that right? There must have been something wrong with the young fellows around at that time. [laughter].

29:25

The year 1885-86 was an important one for Nanaimo, during the year a new school was opened for boys, when the old Middle Ward was built. This building was to remain in use for over 60 years. On May the 10th, 1886, the first high school was opened in one room of the new boys' school. Mr. E.B. Paul appointed as teacher with a salary of \$100. There were six girls and six boys in attendance. Honour rolls were issued at the end of the term to Georgina Brethour, deportment; James Bell, proficiency; and Herbert Stewart, regularity. These were the old traditional...

[man whispering - possibly William Barraclough]
I have a picture of that group.

John Parker
...honour rolls. Do you? I remember winning one myself, it was for punctuality and regularity; I never got any further up the scale.

[unidentified female]
I've got about ten of them.

John Parker
The old boundaries were redefined and the school district divided into wards. The date would appear suitable to pause briefly in this record to compare Nanaimo with other parts of British Columbia. There was one school in Vancouver with a staff of three teachers and an enrolment of 248. In addition to Nanaimo, there were high schools in Victoria and New Westminster, with an enrolment of 107 in Victoria and 38 in New Westminster. The average cost per pupil for British Columbia on an enrolment basis was \$17.78 per annum, a far cry from the present times. All told, over 92 schools in operation, with a total of 116 teachers, and two monitors. And the total cost of education for that particular year was \$88,521. There again, there's been a considerable change.

The school year of 1886-87 was a tragic one for Nanaimo. The disastrous explosion of May the 2nd brought grief into nearly every home and as a result the schools were closed for two weeks. John Shaw replaced David Jones as principal of the boys' school in June 1887, with W. Hunter and Miss Mebius as assistants. There were several changes in the girls' school. Miss Emelene Bell replaced Miss Bailey as principal, until December of 1886, when Miss A.F. Gardiner was appointed. The assistants were Miss Reynard and Miss Maria Bryant. Miss Bryant thus became the first locally educated student to teach in Nanaimo. It is interesting to note that she had 75 students enrolled in her division.

In her yearly report, Miss Gardiner points out the need for additional accommodation in the girls' school, with the result that two rooms were added during the summer. The inspector also has this to say in his report with reference to the high school:

"Application was made by the principal on behalf of the students to be permitted to continue the same hours during the winter session, as prescribed for the summer session, an additional hour a day. This zeal on the part of the students is rather remarkable."

The writer is interested in the report of a Mr. Stranberg of the New Westminster high school, he complains, "Many of our citizens think that high schools should impart more of the character of commercial colleges. Children are not slow to accept the opinions of their parents. Once a pupil becomes possessed of these crude and mischievous notions, very little can be done with him until he can be convinced that many subjects must be studied for the mental discipline they afford." This appears to be the beginning of the struggle between progressive schools and the traditional type of school. In other words, Mr. Stranberg was not in favour of introducing any other subjects but the standard.

33:52

In 1889, the first Governor General's Bronze Medal to be won by a Nanaimo high school student was awarded to James Galloway and in 1890, Herbert Stewart repeated the feat. On November the 30th, 1889, Walter Hunter became principal and sole teacher of the high school. James Galloway became a teacher at the boys' school along with Flora Hartt. Miss Mebius was transferred to the girls' school to succeed Miss Bryant, the second assistant being Isabel Brown.

The year 1890-91 finds the capacity of the Nanaimo schools taxed to the bursting point. A name is added to the teaching staff which is to remain for many years and be perpetuated in one of our modern schools, Miss Mary P. Haarer was appointed third assistant to the girls' school to take care of 190 pupils of the fourth division. When I read this, I could hardly believe it was 190 pupils, but that's a fact, that's what she had to teach.

During 1892, the old North and South Ward schools were built. The history of the Nanaimo schools would seem to fall into four eras: the first covers the period of the colonial school up to Confederation; the second from Confederation up to approximately 1890 and during this period, growth was slow, the total number of teachers small, and their tenure, in many cases, short.

We now enter the third era, which is to last over 50 years. Buildings which now stand or are shortly to be built, will be in use 50 years later. Some of the teachers that appear will serve the community for the same period of time. It will be a period of changing fortunes, from the golden age of coal through years of depression and hardship, to the final emergence of a new growth. It's not the intention of the writer to record in detail all the teachers or events of this era, but rather to select those names and events worthy of record.

The name of Mr. S. Gough now appears at the bottom of school reports as secretary of the school board. In his report dated September the 15th, 1896, he reports the construction of a

new school on the site of the girls' school. The eight classroom on the first and second floor occupied at Easter 1896. 58 years later, they were still in use. The value of the building was given as \$15,000 and the total enrolment in the year was 594. It was apparently with some misgivings that the boys and girls were combined in the new school for the first time. However, the principal, Mr. Shaw, was able to offer congratulations on the success of the experiment. And boys and girls have worked diligently and happily together these days.

36:58

At Wellington there are six teachers with John D. Gillis as principal. In Mr. Hunter's report December the 28th, 1901, after reporting a successful year at the high school, he finishes with these lines, "True, there has been at times a cloud or two, one parents waxes wroth because a prize is awarded to someone other than his child; another because the teacher is unable to supply talent as well as tuition." In 1900-1901, the high school was moved from the Middle Ward School to the North Ward School. There were now 18 teachers in the city's schools, with the following in charge of each school: the high school - William Hunter; Middle Ward - Miss N. Donaldson; and the North Ward - Miss T.B. Bennie; the South Ward - Miss Le Feuvre.

[unidentified female]

My mother was one of those 18.

John Parker

Was she. The existing records of the school board date from July the 6th, 1891, which was a Monday, when the first meeting of the new board of trustees was held in the council chambers with Mayor John Hilbert in the chair and Donald Smith as secretary. In this initial meeting it was decided to request the council to provide ways and means to build two schools, one in the North Ward and one in the South Ward. At the next meeting, plans of the suggested schools were laid before the board with an estimate of the cost of the land amounting to \$750. By July the 11th, the date of the third meeting, final plans, as prepared by I. May, were approved and it was reported that Lot 192, Block 44, and lots on Needham Street, the Goldsworthy block, had been purchased from Mr. Sam Robbins of the new Vancouver Coal Company for \$850 for Lots 1 and 2 and \$750 for the Needham Street property. All of this was done in five days without further reference to the city council. Tenders were received for clearing the lots and erecting the buildings, but at this stage, the board appears to have struck a snag. In spite of a letter from the Provincial Secretary, stating that as of the 30th of September, 1891, it was now the responsibility of the city council to provide the funds for the erection and maintenance of schools, the council appeared unwilling to take on this responsibility.

39:32

This impasse made it necessary for the board to rent the old Presbyterian Church, which stood across from the present St. Andrew's Church. And the old Methodist Church, which stood on

Front Street, for the young students. Both of these churches were referred to as "old" in 1891. The Methodist Church was rented from the Ashlar Lodge, A.F. and A.M.

Thank you, is that the best you can do? [laughter]

C.A. Duncan, Kate Hilbert, and Christina Pool, who later became Mrs. Dr. G.B. Hall, the mother of the present Dr. Hall, were appointed as teachers from 12 applicants. And in December 1891, Miss Gardiner resigned as principal of the girls' school to be replaced by Maria Lawson. The crowded conditions of the schools became worse, and in 1892, until in April, Mr. Shaw was moved to write to the board, "If any more pupils are allowed into the South Ward Division, they would require a number of shelves for them, as the seats and standing room on the floor are occupied." [laughter]

In May the board decided to act and called for tenders for erection of the Needham Street school. The city council was informed of this decision, they in turn declared that they would not be responsible for any such expenditure. Which prompted the board to reply that they considered the action of the council very ill-advised and irregular. And to say the least, disrespectful to them. And referred them to the new Public School Act of 1891. In 1892, the council stated that funds for school buildings would be forthcoming shortly, with this assurance, the tender of J.A. Betancourt, for the sum of \$2,311 was accepted for the South Ward and work was started immediately. Mr. Kelly was the architect, and he was instructed to prepare plans for the North Ward School to be erected on Campbell Street, and in September the contract was awarded to M.G. Clark for \$2,650. Both of these buildings were erected complete with bell tower.

On January the 8th, 1893, the South and North Ward Schools were opened, with Miss Marion Gordon, senior teacher in the North Ward, and Miss C. Cameron in the South Ward. Students at the high school were moved into a room occupied by the city clerk at the city hall. In January the 8th, 1893, Dr. Prager was elected chairman of the school board and Sam Gough secretary.

One of the duties of the school board was to investigate unusual cases of misconduct in the schools. On occasion a special meeting would be held in the school at which the teacher, parents, and pupil would appear. After hearing the evidence of all concerned, the board would render judgement and suitable punishment. One such case involved a number of boys who broke into the girls' school and damaged some of the equipment as well as writing uncomplimentary remarks on the blackboard. After due consideration, it was decided by the trustees that the boys should be publicly punished by their parents in the presence of the scholars in whose room the offence had been committed. The punishment was then proceeded with in the presence of the trustees and scholars. This is a much more direct approach than modern members and I'm quite sure a lot more effective.

In February 1895, Mr. W. McGregor was appointed chairman of the school board and by May plans were well under way for the erection of a new school on the site of the girls' school at

Franklyn and Selby Streets. Mr. J.J. Hineman was retained as architect, and in July 1895, tenders were accepted from the following: W.N. Shaw for the carpentry work at \$5,780; masonry and ironwork, R. Nightingale for \$5,000; the plastering, W. McCape for \$850; and the painting, A. Fleury \$625; plumbing, Creswell and Foster for \$3,101; the electric bell system, from the Nanaimo Electric Light Works was \$59; and the total cost was \$15,415.45.

Because of the excessive cost, it was decided to leave out the heating system [laughter]. This always puzzles me. The girls' school was torn down to make room for the new building and temporary arrangements were made to accommodate two divisions at the Co-operative brick building opposite the fire hall. And one each at the fire hall and council chamber. During excavation, excessive rock was encountered, otherwise the work proceeded without delay, so by Easter the school was ready for occupation. This was carried out without any fuss or ceremony of the type that usually attends the opening of new schools these days.

Mr. J.B. Mercer was the first janitor and combined his duties with that of attendance officer. It seems to me that Mr. Mercer was the father of the gentleman that donated some money for part of the library.

45:08

In reading the early minutes of the board, it is interesting to note the position of the teacher within the school system. Appointments and promotions were made by ballot at any time during the year. There are numerous instances where teachers were required to appear before the board to explain the reason for their late arrival in the morning, or their undo harshness in maintaining classroom discipline. The last on the complaint of the parents. In some cases, petitions were received asking for the dismissal of the teacher. On one occasion, because sufficient homework had not been given.

The old method of having pupils line up outside in good weather, or in the basement in wet weather, and march to their classroom was carried out with the use of a drum. An entry in the minutes refers to the purchase on an additional drum to secure better order in marching at the Central School. Efforts were made from time to time to have such subjects as stenography, agriculture, etc. introduced into the school system without success. The struggle between the "wets" and the "drys" filtered into the school, I never noticed that before, the word "filtered" in there, seems to be quite appropriate [laughter].

An organization called the Loyal Temperance Union received permission to hold meetings after school. Later a complaint was received from the local branch of the Anti-Prohibition Association, asking by whose authority the school children were being given Prohibition badges. The board replied that they did not consider it within their authority to decide what the children shall wear or shall not wear.

On December the 6th, 1898, the minutes record the passing of the chairman, Mr. William McGregor as a result of an accident in the mines. The esteem in which Mr. McGregor was held is recorded in these words: "We feel sure his memory will live long in our hearts, and we trust his honourable and noble character will deeply impress itself for good upon the minds of the young of our city."

The per capita grant from the provincial government of 1899 was set up at \$10 per student. When school reopened in September of 1899, the number of pupils in the junior grades made it necessary to operate on what we now call a swing shift. Some of you here I think are now on a swing shift. Half the classes attended in the morning, and half in the afternoon, so you see there is nothing new in a swing shift.

In October 1900, the board received a letter from the Superintendent of Education informing them of the formation of a normal school. In future, no certificates were to be issued to teachers unless they had attended this school for six months. Up to this time, any person who considered himself, or herself, sufficiently educated could write an examination, and if successful, receive a certificate to teach. A system of monitor teachers, selected from students in the high school was also in effect.

The following story was related to me by Miss May Woodman, a pioneer teacher of this area. She had passed the examination and had applied for a position at the north end of the Island, being then a young girl of 17. One day during the summer while she was skipping outside her house, a gentleman drove up in a buggy. Seeing a girl skipping, he inquired where he might find Miss Woodman, he was somewhat surprised on being informed that she was Miss Woodman, but this was not enough to deter him from having her start a teaching career that lasted for many years.

48:54

During 1902, 40 shade trees were planted around the Central School, which is the present Quenelle School. And at this late date, several of them are still thriving.

An entry of interest occurs in the minutes of March 1903, referring to a system of manual training in operation at Victoria. This is the first record that has come to hand of this kind of training in British Columbia. Mr. Dunnell was the chief instructor. This matter was further investigated by the local board with a view to setting up such a course in Nanaimo. It is interesting to note that these first stirrings in the minds of the board as to the needs of the non-academic education. A letter was eventually received from Mr. Dunnell, stating that the Victoria manual training had been financed by the MacDonald Manual Training School Fund, which had been set up to establish one such course in the capital of each province. This MacDonald was the tobacco king, MacDonald's tobacco. And he gave money to each province in Canada to set up a school of this kind.

The letter was received from the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council protesting against the endowment of a university in British Columbia, that's rather interesting. On the 13th of February 1905, Mr. Walter Hunter died suddenly at his home. He had been principal of the high school for 14 years. And to quote from the school board minutes, "no better tribute can be paid to his memory than the expressions of approval and appreciation made by the many students attending the classes of so faithful, and painstaking a tutor."

Mr. Sedgewick, later Dr. Sedgewick, was appointed in July 1905 to succeed Mr. Hunter as principal of the high school. In February of 1908, Mr. Shaw resigned after 24 years of teaching and was succeeded by Mr. E. Farley as principal of the Central School. In January 1909, Mr. Shaw was elected to the school board.

During the early part of 1912, the board decided to build a new school on the Central School site, and the bylaw for \$50,000 was approved by the rate payers. In due time, a contract was given to Messrs. Carver, Jones, and Carver for the construction. Mr. A. Waters was retained as architect, and this building was named for the chairman of the board, Mr. Quennell, and the name of course, still stands.

In July 1913, it was decided to erect a domestic science and manual training building, the Nanaimo Construction Company was awarded the contract with a tender of \$5,310. The Department of Education agreeing to bear half the cost. The completion of this building was to mark the end of any major construction for 35 years.

52:04

The boom years of the early part of the century were giving place to business failures and unemployment. An entry in the minutes records the loss of the students' saving through the failure of the Dominion Trust Company. Mr. Archer, the principal of the high school, was held responsible, and it was presumed he had to make good the loss. The Dominion Trust Company got some of my savings too, as I remember it. I never did get it back, so I guess they didn't hold the principal responsible at that school.

In March of 1914, Mr. F. Skinner was appointed the first manual training instructor, and in June, Miss C. Fenton became the first domestic science teacher. During the spring of the same year all the students in common with the schools throughout Canada were shown pictures of the ill-fated Scott Expedition to the Antarctic. I remember seeing these pictures, many of which were slides of pictures recovered from the effects of the party, which perished on the return trip from the South Pole. Most of you will remember the heroic action of Captain Oates, who because he was hampering the party in its return, walked out of the tent into a blizzard and died. But of course, his sacrifice was in vain. There is a very famous painting which is entitled, *A Very Gallant Gentlemen*. These pictures made quite an effect on me, and I think they must have done on a good many students who saw them.

When classes returned in the fall of 1914, the country was at war with Germany. A cadet core was immediately organized in the high school, and 50 Ross rifles were acquired for drill purposes. The girls did knitting for the troops, while the boys made splints. During 1915, students from outside the city were permitted to attend the high school for the first time. However, this was not a permanent arrangement, and for some years, the policy in this regard was uncertain.

Another matter of dispute was the entry of Chinese students in to the schools. At one time this resulted in a threatened legal action. But some years were to pass before they were finally accepted. Teachers' salaries from earliest records on, have been a basis for dispute. During the war years, salaries dropped lower and lower. As stated, no equitable policy had ever been established for salaries. In February of 1919, the Nanaimo teachers for the first time attempted to negotiate with the board, as a group, on salaries and other matters pertaining to the welfare of the schools. This move was rejected by the board as an encroachment on their authority and the matter of salaries remained a personal agreement between the individual teacher and the board.

55:09

In December 1919, the board approved the purchase of the building owned by the Nanaimo Agriculture and Horticulture Society. Later, the price of the purchase was set at \$5,100, and after the necessary alterations that remained, the building was officially opened as a high school on the 3rd of December, 1921, by Mr. William Sloane, who was likely at that time Minister of Mines, in the British Columbia House.

During 1922, a motion was passed authorizing the building committee to dispose of the two buildings at the entrance to the high school, and the old buildings at the rear. Well, I've forgotten the exact date there were pulled down, but in 1956 they were still standing, so they didn't make any rush to get them down.

In November 1920, the first reference is made to the building of a gymnasium by a Mr. Thomas Hodgson, was appointed to represent the school board, on the Gym Board of Control. No reference is made in the minutes as to the means of raising the funds necessary for the building of the gym. However, there are many residents of Nanaimo who were school children at that time, who remember bringing their weekly contributions to the building fund.

On the 10th of November, 1922, the trustees of gym fund turned over the necessary monies to the school board, who in turn handed them to the municipal council. Tenders were then called for a contract, for the sum of \$10,695, which was let to Mr. C. Wilson. The building eventually cost \$14,177 when heating, wiring, and other extras were included. When the gym was opened, it would appear from frequent references in the minutes, that the school board exercised full control over the building. However, in November 1923, the secretary of the board

was instructed to inform the School Gymnasium Committee that the board wished to appoint a special committee to have control over the gymnasium for public purposes.

W.W. Gray, Peter Maffeo, A.H. Hall, Ann Bevis, E.S. Martin were eventually appointed. In 1925, the gym board was reorganized, with Mr. George Pearson as chairman. The new board received permission to charge fees for after school activities and proceeded to administer the gym in September.

57:52

The effort made by the teachers in 1919 to negotiate salaries was finally brought to a head in 1921. In April of that year, reference was made to the Nanaimo and District Teachers' Association and in June, the board entered into arbitration on the matter of salaries. Trustees George Pearson and J.M. McGuckie were appointed members of the arbitration board. The remaining members were Oliver Eby and E.S. Martin and George Beedie. Although the record would indicate that the findings were not unanimous, they resulted in the establishment of the first salary scale for teachers. The findings and recommendations can be read in the minutes under the date of 8th of July 1921, and in brief they were: Junior salaries: \$1,100; Receiving \$1,100; Intermediate: \$1,100; Senior: \$1,200; and Entrance: \$1,300.

In January 1926, Mr. Samuel Gough passed away, having served as secretary from January 1893, a total of 33 years. Mr. E.H. Gough was appointed to succeed him. B.C., along with the rest of Canada, was now approaching the Depression years, during which most school building came to an end. During the '30s an event of importance which occurred was the consolidation of the schools in the area into a school district. Dr. Plenderleaf was sent to the area to assist in making this change, which was accomplished after opposition from some areas. He remained a school superintendent for several years.

The present school era starts with the building of the Pauline Haarer School, named to honour the pioneer teacher. From that time on the system has grown to be one of the most progressive in British Columbia and has been responsible for many innovations that have become common practice throughout the province.

At this point, we must close the record of the early Nanaimo schools and leave the recording of the present era to some later historian. In closing, I would like to pay tribute to the many teachers who laboured to bring knowledge to thousands of willing and unwilling students who warmed the seats of the Nanaimo schools.

[applause]

Just before I leave the subject, some day I'm going to write my own experiences in the school system, but they don't really go back that far, only about 25 years, but they are interesting

because during that time we experienced fires, floods, insurrection, and almost all of the ills that man is capable of withstanding. Thank you.

60:52

[recording ends]