

Marmora's first High School

by Gerald Belanger

On January 22, 1920, a public meeting was held in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall to consider the question of having a Continuation or a High School in Marmora.

Parents realized that without the Continuation School, the majority of their children would not go any further than the entrance level (grade 8). There was a desire for the students to obtain their Junior Matriculation, which was required in order to gain entrance to any University or Normal School (Teachers' College). Since the Continuation Schools offered the same work and same results as High Schools, it was decided by Council to use the misnomer "The Marmora Continuation School". The Council decided there was no advantage of the school section of Marmora and Lake and Deloro uniting with Marmora Village in forming one Continuation School.

Lack of Communication

Another public meeting was held on May 20, 1920, this time to endorse the purchase of the Nayler residence for \$2,500. This beautiful red brick two-storey house was located on the corner of Madoc Street and Victoria Avenue. Shortly after the death of George Louck on October 19, 1898, John Nayler and his wife Annie Butwell purchased the Louck's residence and large property holders from the estate.

Mr. Blackwell, a Peterborough architect, had advised Council members that the Louck residence could easily be remodelled for school purposes for a fraction of the cost of erecting a new building.

Marmora's first Continuation School or High School officially opened on September 7, 1920. On that day, approximately fifty pupils were registered. Due to overcrowding that year, two rooms were rented from the new addition at the Public School for students of the Con-

tinuation School. As a result, the Public School primary class children were transferred to the lower part of the Masonic Hall.

The official opening of the New Continuation School was not without a few humorous incidents as reported by the Marmora Herald dated October 7, 1920;

'A large number were on hand for the proceedings quite a few coming a considerable distance to hear the Minister of Education and other invited speakers.

Members of the local School Boards and Village Council went to the CPR station to meet Dr. Grant, Minister of Education, but for some reason he failed to arrive. Mr. McDonald, MPP for East Peterborough for some unexplained reason also failed to appear.

The Deloro Orchestra were notified to come - but then told not to bother.

It was decided to hold the meeting in the Town Hall instead of the Continuation School. But they failed to notify those already waiting at the school.'

Fire Scare

The banging and buzzing from hammers and saws had just finished when a very serious fire broke out in the new school on February 14, 1921. The fire started in the basement and quickly spread to a wood pile near the furnace. The school would have burnt to the ground had it not been for a good steady supply of water from the chemical fire engines. A very deep drilled well, a large cistern full of water and a steady bucket brigade saved the day. The damage was estimated at approximately \$1,500.

Angry Ratepayers

When school started on September 6, 1921, the total enrolment in forms One, Two and Three was approximately 80 pupils.

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Again the Public School primary class pupils used the lower part of the Masonic Hall.

On June 5, 1922 the Marmora Herald wrote;

'The Continuation School Board is faced with the problem of engaging a whole new staff for next year.

Teachers have been bringing pressure to bear on School Boards to pay large salaries and grant other concessions.'

As time passed, teacher's salaries and school related costs escalated. At the June session of the Hastings County Council held in Belleville, angry and frustrated ratepayers were demanding a reduction in their mill rate.

The Marmora Herald dated June 22, 1933 wrote:



Marmora's first High School was located at the east end of the Village in the former home of George Loucks.

'A resolution was passed requesting that all high schools reduce the teacher's salaries by 15 % from the 1932 basis starting September 1 next.'

In a 1934, a petition was circulated asking for the closing of the Marmora Continuation School due to the rising school cost. The Marmora Herald on March 8, 1934 wrote;

'In other words, the municipality has been better off financially instead of poorer because of the schools, even though the majority of the ratepayers have received no direct benefit.'

Unfair Subsidies

On May 25, 1937, Reeve William R. Linn travelled to Toronto to meet the Minister of Education, Dr. Simpson. Mr. Linn was pressing for more assistance to Marmora's Continuation School. For years, ratepayers of Marmora Village had carried a heavy tax burden. Although Marmora and Stirling had almost the same school attendance, the County grants to Stirling were from \$10,000 to \$12,000 per year while Marmora received from \$4,000 to \$5,000.

That year the high school course of study was revised. The core studies for Form One was English, Social Studies, Mathematics, French, Science, or Agricultural Science, Music or Art, Commercial Work, home Economics for girls and General Shop for the boys.

To start the school year in September of that year, William N. Fraser of Hamilton, a graduate of McMaster University was hired with a starting salary of \$1,500.

On June 23, 1938, the Marmora Herald wrote;

'Mrs. Grace Deacon has very graciously offered her fine residence and property on Forsythe Street to Marmora Village for a new High School.

An architect has been engaged to prepare plans.'

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The War Years

September, 1942 saw the introduction of new Defence Courses offered by the Department of Education.

Because of the War, it was affecting the normal pattern and life of the school. Many homes had one or more engaged in military service of some kind. The War distracted the pupils from concentrating on their studies.

On August 16, 1945, the Marmora Herald wrote:

'A shortage of labour and building material caused by the War may delay the erection of the new High School until next year or the year following.'

For over 20 years the local School Board Trustees had been waging a battle with the Department of Education over the need for a new high School in Marmora. Although approval had been given by the Department in December, 1945 to build a new school, it was again delayed.

On May 16, 1946 the Marmora Herald wrote:

'The Department of Education has decided not to permit the erection of any new local schools until the idea of a larger area has been decided one way or the other.'

On March 22, 1948 a public meeting chaired by Reeve Vincent Lynch was held at the local Town Hall to discuss whether Marmora Village should become part of the new large High School area proposed for Centre Hastings. High School Inspector, Mr. S. Rendell explained to those present that after the Second World War there was a need for rural areas and small urban centres to have the same educational advantages as those in the cities. Because of the cost involved, the only feasible way to achieve this was to create larger school areas, which would have 300 pupils or over. This plan would allow a large assessment so that a low tax rate would be spread uniformly over the whole

area.

Larger School Area Proposed

As a result of a series of meetings in Tweed, Stirling, Madoc, Marmora and other places in Centre Hastings all agreed in principle to the formation of a large Centre Hastings High School area. It was decided that a Board of Trustees would take over its management on January 1, 1949. There would be at least one trustee from each municipality in the area.

Strong opposition soon developed over this proposal from Tweed, Madoc and Hungerford. Stirling voted unanimously against joining the new school area.

On July 7, 1948, at a special sitting of Hastings County Council, it was decided to discontinue the high school district of Marmora, Madoc, and Tweed and establish two new districts to be known as Centre Hastings High School District (C.H.H.S) and South Hastings High School District (S.H.H.S). C.H.H.S district would include the Township of Rawdon, Huntington, Marmora and Lake, Elzevir and Grimsthorpe, parts of Tudor and Hungerford, and the Villages of Deloro, Marmora, Madoc and Tweed, S.H.S.S district would include Thurlow and Tyendinaga. Sidney Township made no request to enter the new district. The newly proposed High School area was scheduled to start the first of the new year.

The Department of Education also granted to Marmora High School the privilege of using buses to bring pupils to the nearest school in the area. As a result the School Board was now operating buses from Harold, in Rawdon township, from Deloro and through Marmora Township to serve pupils in the area. It was expected that a considerable increase in enrolment would occur that year.

New Junior High School

With the formation of three larger High School areas in Hastings County; Centre Hastings, South Hastings, and North Hastings, it was decided to undertake a building program as soon as possible. It was estimated that approximately \$170,000 would be required to build a new Junior High School in Marmora. New additions were also approved for Madoc and Tweed Schools at a total cost of \$150,000. The question of a large Senior High School for the whole area was left in abeyance for some time.

On September 1, 1949, T.E. Moffatt was appointed Supervising Principal of the new Centre Hastings High School and Wesley Hamilton was appointed principal of Tweed High School. The Continuation School staff consisted of: Leonard Begley, principal; Annie Deans, Leighton McGinnis, Mrs. Charles Brady/nee Helen McHenry, Stanley Hawthorne, Mrs. W. Turpin and Albert Wells.

Dreaming Big

The property belonging to Mrs. Pearl Inkster on Madoc Street, east of the village, along with the additional land east of her property, which belonged to Albert Burrige, was purchased for the new proposed Junior High School.

The Architectural firm of Craig and Madill of Peterborough designed the new school. The contract for building the facility was awarded to St. Lawrence Construction Company of Belleville for \$155,340. The sod turning on the five acre parcel of land for the new school occurred on July 7, 1950.

While construction was under way, Rawdon Township forwarded a by-law requesting permission to withdraw from the proposed school area. In spite of the assurance given by representatives of the Department of Education that the new school would be modern in every way, approval for a gymnasium had not been approved. As a result of representations made by Reeve Vincent Lynch of Marmora, Reeve Charles Buskard of Deloro and Elmer Sandercock, M.P.P, the Department revised its final decision and a gym was again approved.

On November 16, 1951 the new Junior High School in Marmora was officially opened. The gym measured 70 feet by 55 feet. A room for woodworking was located at the north west part of the building. A large room for teaching chemistry and agricultural science was on the south west end of the building. Another large room for teaching household science (Home Economics) was added as well as two or three ordinary class rooms. The building was heated by steam provided by a large oil furnace.

The final cost of the new Junior High School was \$180,000. Debentures of \$13,200 for a period of twenty years was arranged. Due to generous Government grants of nearly 80 %, the net amount required by local taxation was \$2,640 or, less that a half mill per household.

Total registration for September, 1951 was 131 pupils. On August 30, 1951 the Marmora Herald wrote:

'While the building was only planned for a Junior High School and will only be used by Grades 9, 10 and 11 for a few years, it now seems certain that within 3 or 4 years, perhaps sooner, it will be the largest school in Centre Hastings High School District.'

Grade 12 in Marmora

The enrolment for September 4, 1956 was 150 pupils. This was the first year that Marmora students in Grade 12 did not have to attend Madoc or Stirling High Schools in order to receive their Junior Ma-

trication Diploma. This was due to the addition of four new rooms built on to the Junior High School. Although the rooms were still under construction when school opened, pupils used the auditorium for classes until late in October of that year. By September 1957, total enrolment was at 175 pupils.

Madoc Goes Technical

On February 8, 1962, the Marmora Herald wrote:

'With the announcement last fall that the government would build a million dollar technical school at Madoc, a heated controversy arose in the area.

At first Marmora Councils of Village and Lake Townships had gone along with the idea of the new technical school. However, the public demanded that it was time for Marmora to demand some consideration for the school here instead of sitting back and paying considerable cost of educating pupils in Madoc, while Marmora gets shoved off with a Junior High School.

Tweed and Hungerford have applied to withdraw from the area and their application will be dealt with by County Council.'

At the regular Council meeting held on February 5, 1962, Reeve William Shannon of the Village spoke of the disturbing condition facing the school area. Tweed and Hungerford, by withdrawing from the school area, had reduced the area tax assessment by \$2.5 million. When Marmora entered the school area it had been understood that there would be one large central school for the whole area, but instead there were three schools to maintain. Rawdon Township had left the area and gone to Stirling. Deloro Smelting and Refining Company Ltd. had closed their plant making conditions very different to what they had been in the beginning..

It was now felt that the new set-up would make Madoc school "The School" and leave Marmora with a second rate Junior High School.

Big Fellows

Vincent Lynch spoke in defence of the Councils who had listened to the "Big Fellows" from the Department of Education. He pointed out that when the area was formed, the tax assessment was three million and the rate was eight mills. But now, with an assessment of eight million, the mill rate was twenty-two mills.

At the Council meeting it was decided to pass a resolution which read;

'Approve without qualification the establishment of Grade 13 in Marmora High School and that such approval include equipment, teachers and accommodations within the present by-laws and that Grade 13 to commence with the opening of the 1962-63 school year.'

The resolution was taken to the next area board meeting and unanimously passed by the Board.

High School Closes

At the end of the 1968 school term, the nine room Junior High School with a capacity of 250 students had only 122 enrolled. It closed its doors for the last time. At the same time, Stirling also closed due to a decrease in enrolment.

In Madoc, "The School" now had to make room for an enrolment of over 1200 students.

The Marmora Herald on July 11, 1968 wrote:

'Mr. Robert Prentice, B.Sc, a former student of Marmora High School, Plant Manager of Quaker Oats Co. in Trenton, was guest speaker at the last commencement exercises of Marmora High school told the students present, "No longer in this advanced society of ours, is an academic high school satisfactory to suit the needs of our present day economy. We must now include vocational training along with academic training."'