

Interview With Mrs. Whitney Davidson

June 21, 1975

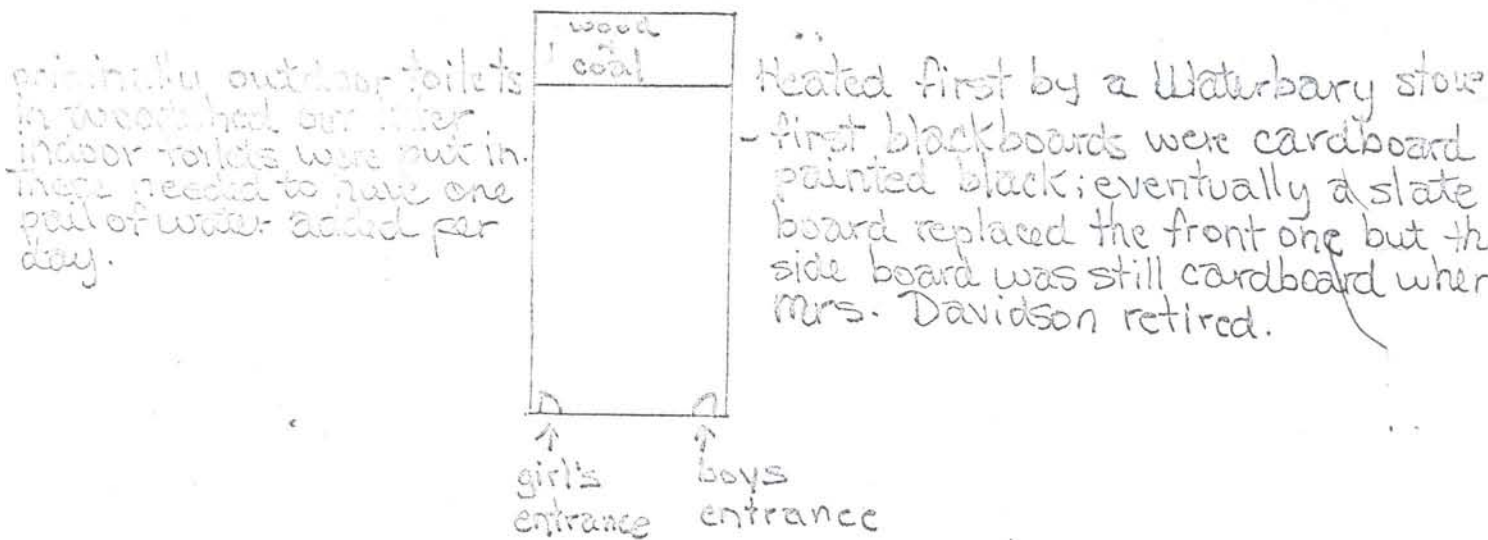
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The first music teacher came to Precious Corners School in the 1930's. Mrs. Davidson feels that the system in which she taught was a good one as there was a family type atmosphere. The schools often had sports meets with neighbouring schools, there was a township field day also.

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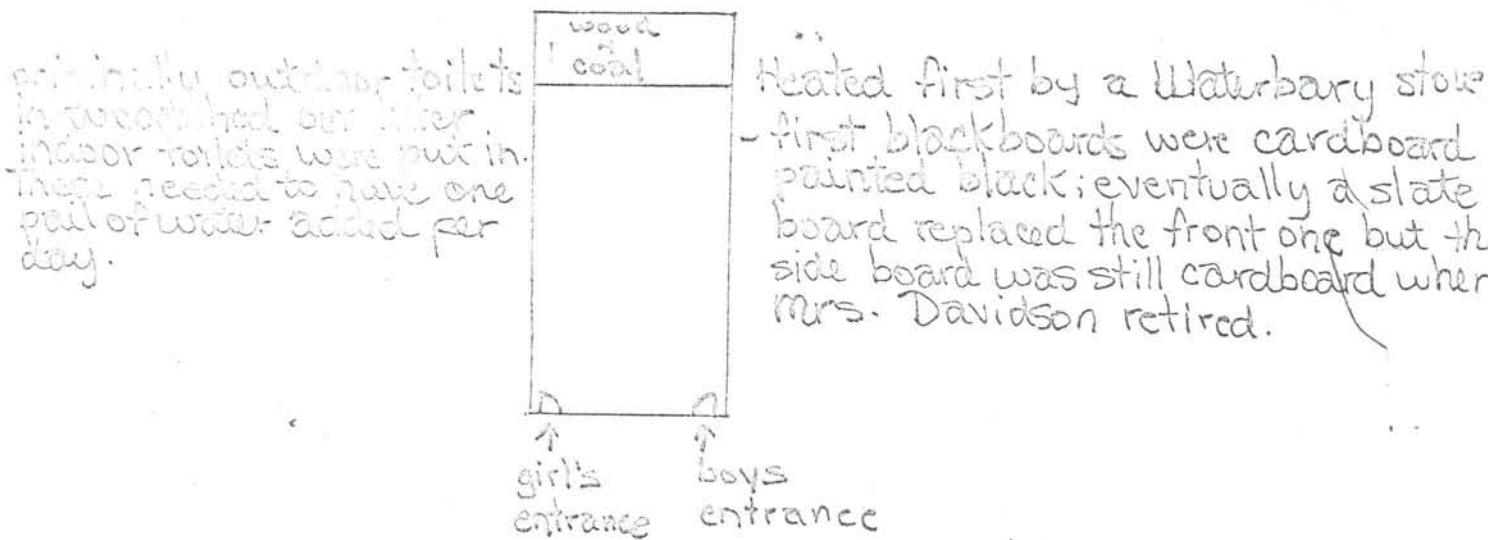
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Interview With Mrs. Olive Denton

Wed. June 23, 1975

Mrs. Denton was born in 1893. She said that the Collegiate did not have free attendance until about 1906-1908. She also remembered that there was a kindergarten in the Model School about 1900. Mrs. Denton thinks the Model School had about 12 rooms with at teacher for each room. It was heated by a furnace probably a coal one.

After completing her training as a teacher Mrs. Denton taught one year at Camborne School. She had 18 students that year in her one-room school.

Mrs. Denton began teaching in 1912 at a starting salary of about \$450. A supply teacher would get \$5.00 a day. She loved teaching but feels that to be a good teacher one must like children and want to help them.

Mrs. Dillon talked of her school days both as a teacher and a student. She was born in Cobourg in 1900. She spent her early school days at St. Michaels Separate School where she was taught by the sisters of St. Joseph. Mrs. Dillon then attended the West Collegiate in Cobourg where she was enrolled in the commercial course. After completing secondary school Mrs. Dillon went to Peterborough where she took teachers' training at Normal School.

According to Mrs. Dillon the separate school was very similar to the public schools. She recalls that their readers were different than those used by public school children but the other texts were the same. As a student she was expected to supply her own books. She went to school from 9 to 4. One difference in the separate school system was that each day one half hour was set aside for religious instructions. She fondly remembers picnics on the 24th of May for although it was a legal holiday one of her teachers would give her spare time to take the students out for a day. Arbour Day passed unmarked in town but Mrs. Dillon recalls the Christmas concerts. Each class, under the direction of their teacher put on a separate concert.

Mrs. Dillon also spoke of her teaching days. She had no trouble with discipline. She felt that it was important to know the mathematic tables so she would make games of them. Spelling was also important, she would list all mistakes and make those students who misspelled words to write them out several times. She would strap a child as punishment but would not make a student stand in the corner as it would humiliate him.

Interview With Lt. Col. Hinman

June 22, 1975

The Hinmans moved to Cobourg in 1903 when Mr. Hinman was about 10 years old. He told us an interesting fact that since there were no clocks the teacher at his school would judge when it was time for lunch by the angle that a shadow cast through a hole in the ceiling. The hole was really for the smoke from the fire to escape.

Mr. Hinman finished his public school education in Cobourg and also attended the Collegiate. After W.W. 1 he went to the Ontario College of Pharmacy in Toronto. Mr Hinman remembers students coming by train from Grafton to attend the Collegiate. He also recalls sports meets, baseball in the park, soccer and basketball games. He recalls some of his teachers, one who was a wonderful pianist.

Mr. Hinman said that there seemed to be a great turnover of teachers in Cobourg. All things taken into account though he feels the school system was a good one.

Interview With Mr. G.W. Nelson- Former School Inspector

Mr. Nelson served as a school inspector for Hamilton Twp. and the town of Cobourg from 1969-1969. He did not work under the local boards but was hired by the Ministry of Education in Toronto. This when local officials took over in 1969 Mr. Nelson was recalled to Toronto. However, as a result of his interest in the development of education in Ontario Mr. Nelson has done much research on the subject and was able to provide us with quite a bit of information.

He was able to tell us, for instance, that the first public schools in Hamilton township and in Cobourg were built soon after the passing of the Common Schools Act in 1816. It was certain that Cobourg had a Common School by 1837 since in that year there is a record of a large meeting being held in that school. The local Board of Police ran Cobourg schools for a few years following Cobourg's achievement of town status while the town clerk acted as superintendent. Further development though was slow in materializing partly due to the fact that these schools were not free schools therefore only the well-off could attend them.

It was not until 1847 that the first Normal School was established; that being in Toronto. Before this time the need for teachers was filled by a mottely crew, widows, old soldiers, wandering Americans and such like.

The earliest school buildings were log cabins. The inside of these schools was constantly dark as a result of the greased paper covering on the windows. The students would sit on high benches which had been hewn from logs while the table part of their desks would simply be a plank on which they could lay their slates. The private schools

were held on the homes of the teachers. At one time Cobourg housed 14-15 such teachers.

Interview With Mr. G.W. Nelson

Some progress was made so that by the early 1870's Cobourg had free elementary schools. These free schools were attended only by children coming from poor families. Families who were well-off and could afford to send their children to private schools still did so. People seemed satisfied with the educational facilities and felt that new railways and roads were a more important way to spend money. However, in 1874, Cobourg built a new school called a Model School. This school could teach children of all ages and provide teachers in training with a school in which to practice teaching.

Mr. Nelson told us about his job as an inspector. He was to assist the teachers in his area and he was to introduce improvements into the various schools.

Mr. Nelson summed up by giving us some comparisons between schools and school life in the early 1900's and that of today. He feels that the appearance of today's school room is much better. The cheerful brightness and many colors are a great improvement over the dark browns, heavy creams and battleship gray. Children today have more freedom and enjoy school more he feels. Now there is a multiplicity of texts and greater resources as compared with the single text and rigid programme. Today children are able to get more education. However he feels that most changes are superficial, that is if a teacher was a good teacher in 1932 then he would be a good teacher today.