

THE ARNPRIOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL 1865-1922 - Continued

JAMES MUIR

The first Headmaster of the newly established Grammar School was Mr. James Muir, B .A., a son of the late Rev. James Crichton Muir, D.D., a Presbyterian Minister at South Georgetown, in the County of Beauharnois, in the Province of "Lower Canada", as Quebec was then called. Here James Muir was born on the 13th day of February 1842, and his early school days were spent under an old Scotch Parish Schoolmaster who never failed to live up to his convictions regarding the use of a strap, or "tawse" whenever progress was hindered by insubordination , laziness, or inattention. "Punishment was not considered a disgrace, provided you did not cry, but rather as a sort of penance, followed by absolution. Boys and girls were treated alike, and in that respect, at least, our Domine was well in advance of his times. With smarting palms, and often with copious tears, we started again feeling that our debts had been honourable discharged, and knowing that the master would entirely forget the disagreeable interviews incident to school life".

Before he was sixteen years of age, James Muir was sent to Queen's University, Kingston, Ont., and three years later received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. His modesty makes him say. "How it was accomplished, I have not been able to solve", but it is not such a deep mystery to those of us who know that he had the extremely good fortune to be the son of a brilliant graduate of the University of Edinburgh, and a Presbyterian Divine whose first and only charge was the Congregation of North and South Georgetown for the remarkably long period of fifty years.

After graduating from Queen's, Mr. Muir spent a year at McGill University, Montreal, taking the course in Civil Engineering. In one of the daily papers he saw an advertisement for a Headmaster in the Arnprior Grammar School and applied for the position. "In August 1865 I was appointed at a salary of \$500 per annum, which, I may say was never increased. Possibly my work was not regarded as one of the permanent improvements of the town, the cost of which is usually spread over a number of years by the issue of debentures -- the ratepayers expecting to reap the fruits of my services at once, or not at all".

There is no record of the names of the students who enjoyed the distinction of being the first to attend the Arnprior Grammar School; hence considerable difficulty has been experienced in compiling and checking over the following list, but this has been done so often that it is now believed to be accurate and complete. For convenience of reference, the names are arranged alphabetically, and it is worthy of note that girls were admitted from the beginning: