

First Schools in Ameliasburgh 80 Years Since.

The first school opened on the front of Ameliasburgh was kept in the basement of Capt. James Peck's dwelling situate on lot 93 1st concession of Ameliasburgh which is still in the possession of some of his grand children. The names of the respective teachers were Reuben Potter a surveyor and David Delong; the latter settled afterwards on part of lot 91 in the second concession of Ameliasburgh where he resided till his death, 18 or 20 years since. This school was only kept open during the winter season. The school furniture was not so extensive and costly as at the present; the seats were made of pine slabs, or two inch planks with holes bored about a foot from each end in which the legs were inserted and these seats were placed lengthwise or otherwise in the room to afford the greatest accommodation. These seats were not plained nor painted but were just as they came from the Saw-Mills; the boys were placed on one side, and the girls on the other. The pupils outfit in those days consisted of English Reader, Savors Spelling book a slate, some fools cap paper, a bottle of home made ink a pencil, arithmetic and a quill. The arithmetic was a luxury only enjoyed by very few of the senior pupils. Reading writing arithmetic and spelling was the entire Curriculum of these primary colleges and these schools were composed of from 12 to 15 pupils and were maintained by subscription viz, the Parents and Guardians would subscribe to an agreement with the teachers to pay him 7s 6d per quarter or 3 months, teaching each pupil and he had to collect his own salary, and board around in the neighborhood. There were no school section boundries no holidays at that time, neither was there any general Public School Law in force in Upper Canada. To the early settlement of the Weeses in 1785, Capt. John Bleecker in 1788 and Thos. Dempsey the same year and Sagars, Pecks, Corbmans, Schermerhorns, Bonters, Piersons Alyeas Bryants and Masters, shortly after. The first white child born in that section was John R. Bleecker who was born July 17th, 1789, the next was Elizabeth Sagar and the third was Margaret Dempsey; both were born in 1790. Mr. Bleecker was born on Lot 93, 1st Con. of Ameliasburgh, then owned by his father Capt. John Bleecker who sold this Lot 93 to Capt. James Peck, Jan. 1st 1800. The first school in Ameliasburgh was opened in the basement story of Capt. Peck's dwelling about 1810. The early teachers were Reuben Potter and David Delong respectively. By this time this part of the first Concession was pretty well settled. We find the Weeses, Dempseys, Pecks, Piersons, Bonters, Mikles, Schermerhorns, Babcocks, Sagars, Bryants, Corbmans, Lyons, Alyeas, Masters, Corbmans and Stoneburghs.

This school was not open regularly as it could only be kept open when

a sufficient subscription was obtained to induce the teacher to open the school for the Winter term. Two years some times passed without any school having been kept.

In 1833 nine years before the first school act was passed in Upper Canada, the citizens of what now comprises a part Sec. 3 and School Section No. 4 Ameliasburgh, met pursuant to notice and determined to build a frame school house to meet the growing wants at that time and the following is an exact copy: Know all men by these presents. That we whose names are affixed do, each severally promise to pay Peter Dempsey, James Peck jr. John Sager and William Dempsey, who were appointed a building committee, the sums set opposite our respective names on this paper for the purpose of building a school house in the township of Ameliasburgh and County of Prince Edward said house to stand on the premises of James Peck Sr. lot 93 1st Con. at a place selected by said committee. The size of said house to be 24 by 28 feet on the ground, all money to be paid by the first of January next. Different kinds of produce will be taken in payment at the market price, given under our hands at Ameliasburgh June 13th 1833.

	£.	S.	D.
James Peck jr.....	5	0	0
Peter Dempsey.....	5	0	0
Isaac Dempsey.....	5	0	0
David Pierson.....	5	0	0
John Sager.....	4	0	0
John Shear.....	2	0	0
William Dempsey.....	5	0	0
John Peck.....	2	0	0
Peter Redner.....	2	0	0
John Briant.....	2	10	0
John Bonter.....	2	10	0
Peter Mikol.....	1	5	0
William Schermerhorn.....	2	10	0
Daniel Mikel.....	2	0	0
Daniel Masters.....	0	5	0
Benjamin Masters.....	0	10	0
Jacob Stoneburgh.....	0	10	0
Andrew Weldon.....	0	12	6
James Herencont.....	0	7	6
Henry Weese.....	1	0	0
William F. Weese.....	0	5	0
John A. Weese.....	0	5	0
John Osborn.....	0	5	0
John Onderdonk.....	0	5	0
Jacob Alyea.....	0	10	0
Jacob Bonter.....	0	10	0
Thos. D. Benson.....	0	5	0
Henry Shear.....	1	10	0
Johnathan H. Newman.....	2	6	
William Alley.....	1	10	0

John C. Lawson 5 days work, James Shear 4 days work, of the above named subscribers only two survive viz, David Pierson who was 95 years old Dec. 23rd 1893 and John Onderdonk who is about 82 years old.

The late William Dempsey took the contract to build the school house and accepted the subscription list in payment of said contract; John Sager took the job of building the foundation. The building was not completed till October and was not finished as agreed and at each school meeting for years the question of completing the school house was

brought up by David Pierson who never lost the opportunity of reminding the contractors that they had got their pay and had never finished the contract.

John Sager, insisted that he had done his job. Mr. Pierson said that he had not as there were three large openings in the foundation. John said they were only cat holes, and that if you did not leave cat holes in the under pinning the building would soon rot. Mr. Pierson said they were very large cat holes, and that a yoke of 2 year old steers could be driven through these holes. The school house was built upon a piece of land given by Capt. James Peck in 1825, for burial purposes and under the School Act of 1842, each Township in each County in Upper Canada was divided into School Districts by the then District Councils. This name continued for 8 years till the present Municipal and School Acts were passed in 1849, and both came into force Jan. 1st 1850 under the Premiership of the Hon. Robert Baldwin under the Act of 1849. The name was changed to School Sections. In this school house, many of the citizens in the Township of Ameliasburgh received their primary education. Here William Kerr, M. A. Q. C. of Cobourg received a part of his primary education and in looking back over a period of over 60 years of the different pupils who have attended this school not one has ever been convicted of any Criminal offence.

This school house remained till 1871 when it was burned. There was some trouble in the section those living in the Western part of the section were determined to have a new school house and have it in the Western part of the section and the tax payers of the Eastern and Central part of the section, who always had to pay two thirds of all expenses, connected with the school, objected. Some litigation ensued and those residing in the Westend of the section came out second best, and the result was this school house was burned, and a new one built on Lot 94, shortly after.

There was a school opened on Lot 66 first concession of Ameliasburgh owned at that time by John Post. This school was opened about 1812, and the teacher was one Philo Nobles, and in about 1818 a log school house was built on Lot 86, 1st con. now known as school section No. 3, Ameliasburgh. Dr. Dunn, was one of the first teachers in this school; later Philo Nobles and Patrick Jones, at different times taught this school. Philo Nobles taught for many years in the different schools of Ameliasburgh. At that time the qualification of teachers was not what it is at the present time reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic, was the standard, geography and grammar were only taught in the colleges. People were not quite so polished as at present but they seemed to prosper better than at the present time, there was more labour and less extravagance, and people as a rule did not spend their money before they got it, and it was not considered a disgrace to be seen at any legitimate work. J. H. P.