

1889 -- a dream year for town educators

By J.M. ROWE
Herald Special

October, 1889 saw the culmination of a dream, one shared by many in Georgetown. The Georgetown High School began educating the children of North Halton in its own premises. The Board of Trustees, on behalf of the village and the county had spent \$11,000 to erect a stately edifice behind which education would flourish. As with all great rewards, this school was the result of hard work. Years of labour, politicking, and pressure were behind those stones which were Georgetown High School.

The story begins when high schools were called Grammar Schools and had a different "raison d'etre". Boys were usually the rule, classics, maths, latin, Greek and gentlemanly conduct were the core curriculum and the long term goal was usually teaching, university, or gentlemanly enterprise.

For Georgetown residents, in 1865 a student had to travel to receive higher education. Besides the fees, room and board was necessary. Private schools were available like Rockwood Academy and Upper Canada College, but the fees alone were prohibitive. Public Grammar Schools were often reasonable and Halton had one at Oakville and Milton. Luckily Brampton and Streetsville Schools were open to Georgetown.

In June, 1871, the Halton County Council passed a request by Mr. Barber, to introduce a Bvlaw at the

next meeting to establish a grammar school in the village of Georgetown. The first bid was made, but never followed up. It did however, get people thinking about the idea. On July 1, 1871, the high school system was created in Ontario.

About 1874, Milton closed its high school and Georgetown students had one less choice. In 1876, the Milton Champion urged its citizens to reorganize its high school. One resident even advanced \$50 to get it started, but education, even then, was getting very expensive.

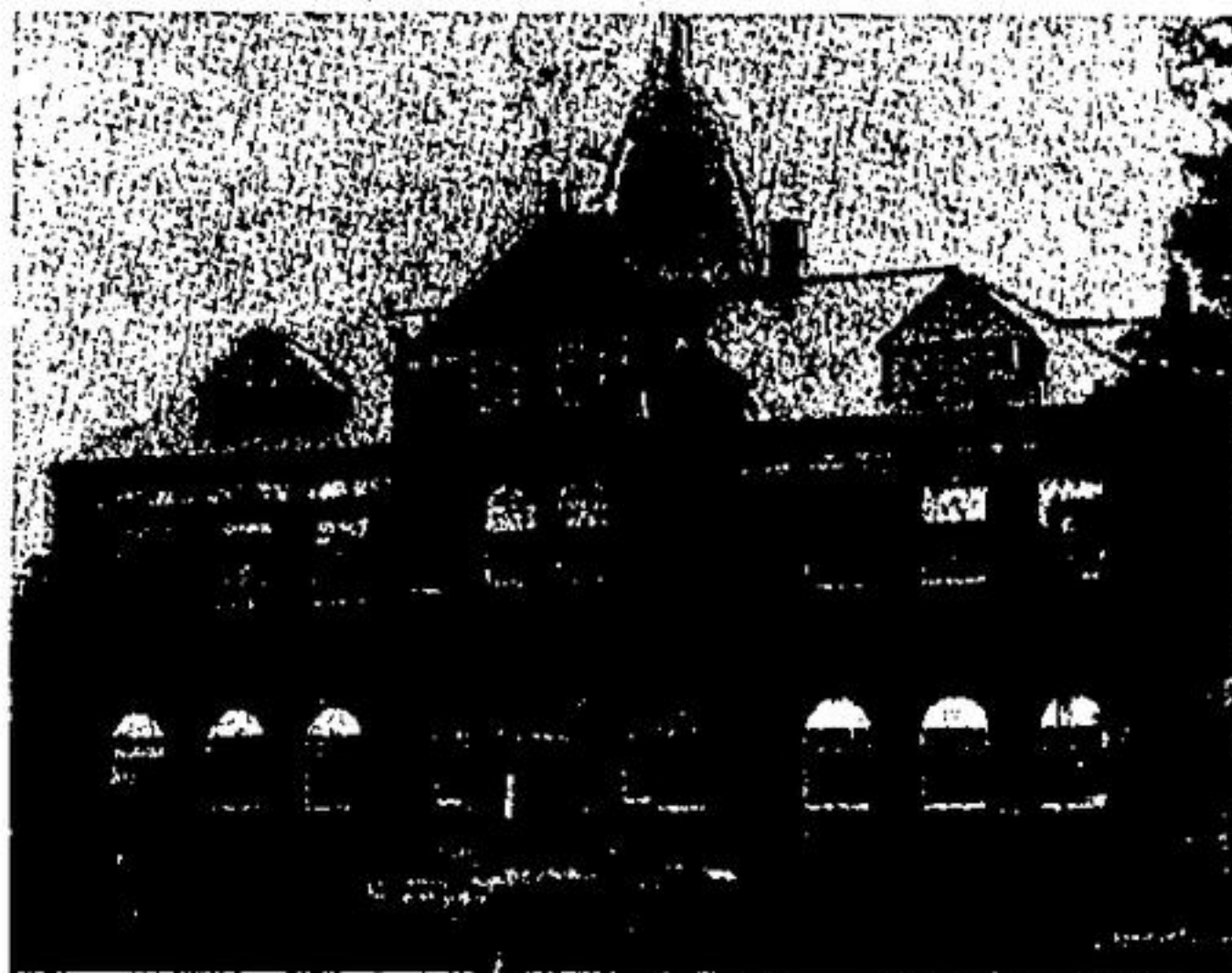
In the 1877 Halton County Atlas, Georgetown ensured that it was noted that efforts were being made to establish a high school. The Acton Free Press in 1881 noted Georgetown's continuing drive for a high school of its own.

Finally in 1885, County Council had accepted the idea that North Halton needed a high school of its own. People had given up the notion that long distances to travel for everything, was necessary. More and more students were going on to high school. Oakville, Guelph, Brampton, or Streetsville High Schools were too far and getting filled up with their own residents.

The debate began in earnest now. Georgetown and Milton hotly put forth arguments in favour of their towns. In April, the Acton Free Press entered the fray, pointing out calmly the convenience and suitability of Acton as the home of the future high school. To their chagrin, Georgetown was finally chosen.

At the Sept. 7, 1886 meeting of the County Council, the trustees of the high school board were appointed. J.R. Barber, Dr. Roland, Rev. W.G. Wallace, were the County nominees.

How it all started at Georgetown High School



On Oct. 11, The Village Council of Georgetown completed the Board by appointing Messrs. Charles Ryan, L. Grant, and A.C. McKinlay as trustees.

The Georgetown High School Board immediately began the arduous task of opening the school. A Jan. 10, 1887 date was chosen as the appointed day. Applications for staff were received and pored over. At mid-November the two candidates were announced. To be Head Master and Master of the Classics and Modern Languages (English, French, and German) was M.S. Clark of the Strathroy Collegiate Institute. Mr. Clark received his B.A. from the University of Toronto and then spent a year and a half at the University of Berlin, Germany. Taught in Halton previously and held

Georgetown would be his second teaching appointment.

As the Assistant Master, Edward Longman was selected. He had



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Street. The final preparation was the entrance examinations which were set at the school on December 21, 22 and 23. The Acton Free Press announced the successful candidates from its area as Arthur Smith, Frank Pigott, and Katie Allan of Acton Public School; Thurtell Brown, John Warren, Minnie Lamb, and Jennie Somerville of Bannockburn School (S.S. No. 13).

Finally, the long-awaited day arrived and on Monday, Jan. 10, 1887, the Georgetown High School began teaching 60 pupils in the elementary school. The circular of November, 1886 announced that the official opening would take place on the evening of the tenth at the Georgetown Town Hall where several dignitaries would speak.

When that night finished, the Trustees began to plan their strategy to erect their own building. That second dream was realized two years and nine months later.

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Prizes will be awarded to the category winners on Sept. 5, and these photos will be displayed inside the Visitors Service Centre throughout the fall season. Entry forms are available at Terra Cotta Conservation Area's main gate house or at the Visitors Service Centre.

This program is sponsored by the Credit Valley Conservation Area. Terra Cotta Conservation Area is located on Winston Churchill Boulevard just 2 km north of the Village of Terra Cotta.

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