

History of Gracefield Public School by Bill Stevens

Gracefield Public School is located on 117 Bayview Drive (formerly Albert Street) at the corner of Robert Street.

On Saturday, May 29, 1954 an official sod turning ceremony took place for the new Gracefield Public School. The five room school was estimated to cost \$105,000.00 and be ready for kindergarten to grade 4 classes in January 1955. Mr. Robert Douglas, with 35 years of continuous service as a trustee, held the record as the longest serving school trustee in Canada at the time of the sod turning.

The approximate 5.5 acres of land upon which the school is constructed were purchased from Mrs. T. B. Read and Mrs. (R. F.) Ella Mildred Grace in 1951. The residence of Mrs. Grace still stands at 199 Dalhousie Avenue.

On Sunday, April 24, 1955 an official ribbon cutting ceremony took place to open Gracefield. The first principal was Miss. Alice Gilleland, who continued as principal until 1972. Mayor Robert M. Johnston raised the flag on the new flag pole donated by Mrs. Grace. Rev. T. A. Carmichael offered the prayer of dedication after which J. C. Walker, inspector for Lincoln, addressed the audience on behalf of the Ontario Department of Education. He paid tribute to the architect, T. A. Wiley and the contractor, J. R. Stork and to the teaching staff for their fine work under difficult conditions while the construction work was completed. Warren Laskey, chairman of the board, cut the ribbon. A tour of the new school followed.

On the same day (April 24, 1955), a plaque donated by Mrs. G. McArthur was unveiled to officially name Port Dalhousie Public School on Main Street McArthur Public School in honour of Mr. George A. McArthur who was the principal there between 1938 and 1947. Rev. J. S. Bole of Smithville in his address of dedication recalled the qualities of character in the late Mr. McArthur which we remember and honour in the naming of the school.

A choir of 60 boys under the direction of Mrs. H. Cooke participated at both ceremonies. After the unveiling, a reception was held in McArthur school for over 100 guests, including Inspector J. L. Runnalls, Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Wiley, J. R. Stork, former principals W. G. Crandon and W. Speake, former school Trustees and several members of the class of 1888.

The Port Dalhousie School Board Trustees named in the official opening and plaque unveiling were: Warren Laskey (Chairman), Robert Douglas (Senior Trustee), Robert Barron, Mrs. C. Wallis, Dr. George Sparrow, Mrs. J. H. Furness, Jack Critchley (principal of McArthur) and Dr. Charles Down.

In 1965 an addition with two classrooms and a staff room were added.

The second principal of Gracefield was Wayne MacMillan (September 1978 to June 1985).

In 1979 McArthur School, which opened in 1877, was closed. Gracefield had two portables installed and now offered grades Junior kindergarten to grade 6, while grade 7 and 8 students were bused to Woodland School on Seventh Street Louth. McArthur school was shortly thereafter sold and became an antique market. In early September 1988, the building was demolished and Bayside Village a 24-unit condominium was built on the site.

In July 1981 the Ontario Ministry of Education announced an addition to Gracefield and construction of the addition started in April 1982 for a gymnasium, four classrooms and a library. The new classrooms opened for classes in September 1982, while the gymnasium work continued until the end of September. The official opening ceremony took place May 9, 1983.

On September 1985 George Sinnicks became principal and held that post until June 1989 when Ted Fretz took over until June 1991.

Growth of student population saw the placement of 4 portables by 1990.

The next principals were:

Doug Ransom - September 1991 through June 1998

Sue McEwen - September 1998 through June 2001

Sue Lawrence - September 2001 through June 2004

Jane Brown - September 2004 through June 2008

Lonny Schmidt - September 2008

On Tuesday, May 3, 2005 the students and community celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Gracefield with an assembly and open house and many former students fondly remembered their days at Gracefield.

Did you know that Neil Peart of the band Rush fame received his grades 1 through 5 education here?