

Remembering Primary Education in the 50's by Don Dalziel

See page 106 Nobleton Heritage- note first school was a log school on the Burnfield farm (lot 2 conc 9 west side)which now is Diana Drive.

The next school was built on the present site of the Nobleton Junior School in 1870. It was a two room framed building This was the school that my father and his brothers had attended .In 1936 the building was torn down and a new brick building was constructed but it was only a one room school.

After WW2 there definitely was a post war baby in the Nobleton area and by the time I started to school there was no longer any room in the one room school thus they decided to add another room . Unfortunately it was not completed in time for us to start school (Grade 1 – there wasn't kindergarten at that time) and we were forced to spend our first 6 months in the upstairs of the former arena. As you can imagine our playground was limited but we did have lots of room to run around in upstairs. Some of the boys were more adventurous and one even tried to climb an apple tree which bordered the arena but to his dismay he fell and broke his arm. How happy we were to finally get into our new room at S.S. # 19 King.

We now had a playground with swings, teeter totters, parking slots for our bikes, an area to skip and a baseball field (in front of the school). How we would try to jump the teeter-totters or even try to throw the other person off; try to pump the swings in order to go right over top of the bars; skip, not so much individually, but with a long rope and sing songs such as "On the mountain stands a lady". We would even skip double Dutch but being totally uncoordinated I had a great deal of difficulty turning the ropes. One could also play hopscotch. A very popular game was red rover. It was a miracle that we didn't have more sprained wrists and broken arms. Today such a game would be banned. There were also countless games of tag or freeze tag. The hula hoop fad in the 50's added more fun to the play yard. In the winter, in front of the new one room addition, we could slide down the hill (which was consequently filled in when the next addition was added) and in fact one time I hit heads with another student (Bruce Bishop) and I gave him a big goose egg. I was teased for having a hard head. In the winter, at Mrs. Downing's discretion, we could have the opportunity to walk up to the arena and go skating on Friday afternoons. In the summer if it became too hot and humid one might find students sitting in the shade under the big maple trees.

The two room school had a girl's gym and washroom in the basement of new part which was bright and airy and the boys had theirs under the old room. The boys, in which the girls were not allowed even though there was a door connecting the two, was very dark and dreary, in fact it was like a dungeon and was also a fire trap. I felt lucky to be a girl at this time. Unfortunately this was to be short lived because in 1957 with 94 pupils and 21 beginners a temporary room was constructed in the girl's gym and occasionally we now had to use the boys' gym.

Between the two rooms upstairs was the dreaded office. Inside this office was the piece of leather known as “the strap” and anyone who misbehaved could possibly feel it on their outstretched hands. My understanding is that one of my classmates had the chance to experience it twice in one day. Luckily I never had this experience but I did have to write lines 100 plus times “I will behave when the teacher is out of the classroom” The office was also the place where the students would line up when the public health unit came in to give us our shots. The office does bring back some pleasant memories also because it was in here that I remember decorating the class Valentine’s box.

In the old room was also the piano and because we took piano lessons, Lynda Malloy and I took turns week about to play “God Save the Queen” while the classrooms sang. I really dreaded this as I was very scared of making mistakes which I did quite often.

In 1958 it was decided to add 2 more rooms with a large new gym. We also now had two new large washrooms on the main floor. Another addition was that of a water fountain. The main reason that I remember this is because one day while I was drinking someone thought they would play a practical joke and pushed me but unfortunately my head came down and my mouth hit the faucet which in turn chipped my front tooth. I still have a reminder of that incident until today.

In the new gym, which was the basement of the new addition, on rainy days we could play dodge ball, red light green light, etc. It was great time down there as it had very high ceilings.

1960 saw the addition of 4 more rooms and a gym.

To get to school we had to walk, ride our bikes, car pool with the neighbors or like Gary Broad come up with a unique way to get there- he hitched a ride with the milk truck. Our neighbours the Malloys’ and my parents took turns driving us to school until we were old enough to ride our bikes. Our bikes with their carriers became the best mode of transportation – to a friend’s house, to C.G.I.T. meetings etc.

In 1962 transportation by bus was arranged who lived more than a mile from the school. S.S.# 19 was no longer and had its last board meeting in December 1963.

I do recall two incidents. One while biking to school on Highway 27 I fell and badly skinned my knee - we wore dresses or skirts at this time as this was the dress code. My mother would never allow me to wear jeans or shorts to town. Millie Witherspoon, a former nurse came running out and fixed me up and I continued on my way to school with only a bruised ego. The second incident occurred when Lynda Malloy and I were biking home from a meeting. Her brother was following in his car as it was getting dark. I got home safely as I had to make a right turn off 27 but unfortunately Lynda had to make a left turn and the car following Don’s pulled out to pass as Don was going slow and in doing so struck Lynda. Fortunately she wasn’t seriously hurt.

I’ll never forget the time that Barbara Brown and I decided to visit our friend Diana Baker in the Humber Trails. Getting there was easy but our adventure began when we returned. As we came out the Mill Road we saw two big ferocious dogs, ready to attack and chase, across the road at MacDonald’s (4970 King Road). With no way to escape we waited and then got on our bikes and rode like “bats out of hell”.

In school we had other people coming in from time to time. The one I dreaded the most was the itinerant music teacher, Mr. Rigler. Most of the time if one didn't want to sing one could just mouth the words but when he took out his pitch pipe and played a high note and went up and down the classroom rows and made everyone sing that note- I would try to escape to the washroom. We did compete in music festivals in Woodbridge and at the Kiwanis Festival in Toronto. In 1960 a choir of 60 voices from Nobleton School (taking four parts) came first in the Kiwanis Music Festival in Toronto. And a triple trio of Brenda Hill, Barbara Brown, Marlene Small, John Umpleby, Lynda Malloy, Andrea Herring, Donna Warren, and Bonnie Huycke took second place. The above students also sang over a Richmond Hill radio station.

Another visitor was the inspector. We thought we were being inspected and not the teacher so we were always on our best behaviour. It wasn't until I became a teacher that I realized that the inspector was there for the teacher. One thing about school at this time - if you ever got into trouble at school your parents always found out. In fact you were disciplined twice – maybe in the woodshed.

We also had teachers in training – doing their practicum at the school. They would board at Mrs. Hambly's house (highway 27) and even the single teacher might board here. The hardest part of all this was that, I believe that they were there for 1 month, and in that time one became quite attached to the really good ones and was a sad day when they said their good byes.

One can't forget our daily visits from Bill Dalton, the milk man. Each week our parents decided if they wanted us to have chocolate or white milk and would place an order and send in the money. When one got into the higher grades one might be the monitor for a period of time, collect the money and be responsible for making sure that the right people got their milk. There was no refrigeration at the school and the milk just sat out until lunch time.

Some people remember Mr. Dewitt who monthly brought movies to the school.

There were monthly meetings and programmes for the Red Cross. We would use classroom talent for performances. We collected money for the Red Cross and received Red Cross pins.

Graduation from public school was very important . The Home and School organization put on a graduation banquet. In 1959, it was in the church. In 1960, my year of graduation it was in the school. See photocopy of my graduation.

The closest high school in the area in 1960 was- Aurora District High School which is now Dr. G.W. Williams High. To get there, as there was no busing south on 27, I had to ride my bike up to my grandmother's friend and leave it there and get on the bus at the four corners. King City Composite, as it was called then, didn't open until 1961. Some local students in the 50's went to Weston Collegiate, especially if they wanted technical courses.