

History of Maple Leaf School Part One

By Jim Smith

Maple Leaf School will be 50 years old in 2006. In 1956 the year of the Hungarian Revolution, the Suez Crisis in Egypt and closer to home the famous 'Pipeline Debate' in Ottawa the decision was made to build a new 4 room school on McIvor Avenue.

McIvor Avenue in 1956 looked very different from today. There were only a total of 30 homes on McIvor from Henderson Highway to Raleigh with 7 of these homeowners also having active milk farms. McIvor itself was a gravel road with deep ditches and no sidewalks along its entire length.

All students in the northern part of North Kildonan went to Lord Kitchener School, the present John Pritchard on Henderson High prior to the construction of Maple Leaf School. This was quite a walk for students especially younger students. In these days there were no provisions for staying at school for lunch as all students were expected to make the trip to and from school 4 times a day.

Due to a dispute among the elected members of the North Kildonan School Board in 1954 and the resignation of the entire school board in that year; the actual decision to build a new school on McIvor was made by a trustee appointed by the province to manage the affairs of the school district. The final decision to build a new school or build an addition to an existing school had to be approved by the voters in a vote of all of the taxpayers of the district in those days. In May 1956 the voters approved the decision to build the new school.

Maple Leaf opened in November of 1956 but the school of 1956 was a far cry from the school of 2005. The school consisted of just 4 classrooms, 1 classroom for grades 1 to 4. Older students still had to make the long walk to Lord Kitchener School. The original building cost \$35,000.00 and contained few of the features of today's schools. There was no library, no gym and not even a storage room or even a principal's office. Maple Leaf from 1956 to September of 1961 had no principal of its own. The principal of Lord Kitchener acted as the principal of Maple Leaf from his office at Lord Kitchener. In 1956 he also acted as the principal of Princess Margaret School which had opened earlier in 1956 and for Princess Elizabeth School which was located beside Princess Margaret. The Lord Kitchener principals also acting as principal of Maple Leaf in those early years were Mr. Helgason from 1956-1959, Mr. McGill 1959-1960 and Mr. Neufeld in the 1960-1961 school year.

One of the 4 teachers at Maple Leaf acted as the vice principal of Maple Leaf to June 1961 when the first addition was made to the school. Mrs. Helen Hopko acted as Maple Leaf's vice principal in 1960-1961 and possibly prior to this. Maple Leaf opened in 1956-1957 with 85 students. In the following years Maple Leaf had 107 students in 1957-1958, 113 students in 1958-1959, 122 students in 1959-1960 and 106 students in 1960-1961.

Elementary teacher's salaries in 1956 seem very low by today's levels, starting salaries were \$2,100.00 in 1956, with the average salary being around \$2,600.00 and the maximum salary for elementary teachers in 1956 \$3,725.00. Elementary teachers until well into the 1960's did not have a university degree as this would have required them to be paid a higher salary range which school boards in those days were unwilling to pay. Holders of university degrees were restricted to the junior high and high school grades as a result of this policy with the only exceptions being made for elementary school principals and vice principals. The typical elementary teacher had one year of training in a teacher's college after grade 12 but sometimes even this level of education was not met. It was still possible for elementary teachers to have as little as grade 11 education with a summer school of training under the 'letter of permit' system from the Department of Education.

The first year I have been able to find the actual teachers of Maple Leaf School were the teachers of the 1960-1961 school year. Lillian Morgan taught 28 grade 1 students at a salary of \$4,300.00 for the year. Annie Henderson had a class of 28 grade 2 students for which she received \$4,500.00. Hope Paulson taught 24 grade 3 students for \$3,200.00 and Helen Hopko who also acted as vice principal taught 26 grade 4 students at a salary of \$4,300.00. Mr. Neufeld acting as principal of Lord Kitchener and Maple Leaf made \$7,100.00 for the year.

In a following article I will continue the history of Maple Leaf School.

History of Maple Leaf School Part 2

By Jim Smith

Maple Leaf School has had 3 additions made to it since its opening in 1956. The first was made in 1961, the second in 1973 and the third in 2000.

The 1961 addition costing \$160,000.00 added 6 classrooms and an auditorium equal in size to 3 classrooms. As well as the additional classrooms and auditorium, Maple Leaf School was connected to the sewer system and water mains with special pipes being built from Henderson Highway. Prior to 1961 water for the school came from a well on the school grounds and the sewage was disposed of through a septic tank and septic field on the property. The property owner immediately to the west of the school had complained that the septic tank and septic field frequently overflowed and drained onto his property.

The year 1961 saw the first sidewalk a gravel one, being built from Henderson Highway to the school on the north side of McIvor Avenue. The School District had asked for a concrete sidewalk to be built but the property owners on McIvor Avenue refused to support this as it would have meant an increase in their property taxes as a concrete sidewalk was a local improvement.

Even though Maple Leaf School now had 10 classrooms only 6 classrooms were actually used in the 1961-1962 school year, one each for grade 1 through 6. This was to continue through the 1962-1963 school year. In the 1963-1964 school year a 7th classroom was used for grade 7. In the 1964-1965 school year a 8th classroom was in use for grade 8 students. It was not until the 1965-1966 school year that all 10 classrooms were in use, one class each of grade 1 to 8 students, a combined class of grade 1 and 2 students and a class of 12 special education students.

In the 1966-1967 school year Maple Leaf School finally received its own principal, up to this time Mr. H. V. Neufeld of Lord Kitchener now John Pritchard had acted in this capacity. It was finally decided that Maple Leaf deserved to be seen as a school in its own right rather than a satellite school of Lord Kitchener. Maple Leaf's first principal was Mr. Guenter Strempler, formerly of Princess Margaret School and paid at an annual salary of \$7,200.00. Mr. Strempler was replaced as principal for the 1968-1969 school year by Mr. Nicholas Mosie (Moe) Tobin.

April 1967 saw the dissolution of the North Kildonan School District and its incorporation into the River East School which since its beginning in 1959 had responsibility for the teaching of high school students only.

The fall of 1969 saw the first kindergarten class at Maple Leaf and the last year of grade 7 and 8 students with the opening of Chief Peguis Junior High in early 1970. The late 1960's also saw the increasing vandalism problem hitting most schools. Maple Leaf School was broken into in late 1968 with a small amount of damage done.

By the early 1970's with the area around Maple Leaf rapidly developing it was evident that the school needed to be enlarged again. The opening of Donwood School in 1971 had relieved some of the pressure on Maple Leaf but this proved to be far from sufficient, so the decision was made in 1972 to add a 10 class open area, a library, a gym, a multipurpose room, a staff room, a science room, offices and storage rooms and a double kindergarten room. The original 4 room portion of the school from 1956 was gutted and the previous 3 room size auditorium/gym from 1961 was renovated and turned into the new library. The total cost of the new addition and renovations was \$600,000.00.

Mr. Bob Harris who had taken over as principal in 1971 had the privilege of overseeing the official opening of the new addition on February 14, 1973 with the tea service at the opening officially opened by Mrs. Lily Schreyer wife of the Premier of Manitoba.

In my next article I will continue the history of Maple Leaf School from 1973 using articles published about the school from the Herald Newspaper.

History of Maple Leaf School Part 3

By Jim Smith

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Teacher's salaries by 1972 had risen considerably from the opening of the school in 1956. Principal Bob Harris's salary was \$14,420.00 with the starting salary of new teachers was now \$5,230.00 per year to a high of \$9,600.00 for Maple Leaf's highest paid teacher.

Maple Leaf School by the early 1970's was now mentioned in articles on an average of 2 or 3 times per year in the Herald Newspaper. The remainder of my history of the school will be a summary of these articles.

For Manitoba's Centennial in 1970 the River East School Division and its schools including Maple Leaf participated in a Festival of the Arts program from May 19 through May 22, 1970. There were 121 various programs items put on by the various River East School Division schools at the 2 sites Salisbury/Morse Place and Chief Peguis Schools. Maple Leaf's contribution was a square dance display at Chief Peguis. The event was filmed but I do not know whether Maple Leaf Students were recorded for posterity.

The Herald in 1971, 1972 and 1973 told readers of the original planning, the building and opening of the new addition to Maple Leaf School. Another notable event in 1973 was a strike by clerical staff in the River East School Division including those at Maple Leaf lasting one day. Clerical staffs at the time of the strike were making \$275.00 to

\$460.00 per month for those staff members working full time hours. After the one day strike salaries were raised by 13% and a total of 48% over the 3 years of the new contract.

The new addition in 1973 meant that the number of students at Maple Leaf rose to 440 in September of 1973 from 280 in June of 1973. The number was to rise every year so that by the 1977-1978 school year Maple Leaf had about 660 students which is the highest number in the school's history. Despite this high number the school was still considered to be below its peak capacity as the 1973 addition enabled the school to hold 700 students according to the school division.

In June 1974 Maple Leaf School Patrols were judged second best in the school division. Captain Jeff Charriere and Lieutenant Greg Chubaty were presented the Canadian Legion Trophy on behalf of the school and each individual member of the school patrol was given a letter of appreciation.

A story by Herald columnist Allen Rouse reported in January 1976 that the Provincial average teacher's salary had risen to \$14,193.00 at the end of December 1975. Teacher salaries had been rising by an average of over 12% per year over the previous 4 years.

This same column mentioned that approximately one half of the students of Maple Leaf were being bused to the school, this was the highest percentage of all schools in the division except for the schools in East St. Paul.

September 1976 saw the changing of the school day at Maple Leaf; school hours were now 9:30 am to 4:00 pm instead of 9:00 am to 3:30 pm. Students living more than a half mile from school were to be bused home for lunch instead of eating lunch at school. This "experimental plan" meant that no students stayed at school for lunch as all students living less than a mile from school had always been expected to walk home for the one hour lunch break.

By October 1976 the Herald quoted Maple Leaf Principal Norm Grywinski as saying that the policy of busing students living more than one half mile from the school home for lunch was not working due to 'some parents playing games with us'. Some parents continued to send lunch with their children while others with homes less than a half a mile from school were sending their children to the nearest bus pick up point to their home. As well some parents were calling the school asking that their children be allowed to stay for lunch. One unforeseen problem was the inability of the school buses to keep to the planned schedule meaning that some children had as little as 15 minutes to eat lunch between the lunch drop off and pickup.

The busing of students home for lunch ended at the end of October 1976 when the school board decided to purchase 10 folding cafeteria tables at a cost of \$4,500.00. The change in the policy resulted in all but 50 students of the school's 622 students staying for lunch as even most students living within a half mile of the school stayed for lunch.

The summer of 1976 saw a gravel sidewalk installed on the south side of McIvor between Pentland and Rothesay for the benefit of Maple Leaf students walking to school as McIvor Avenue was still not paved. This sidewalk was to stay till the paving of McIvor in the summer of 1979.

A decision in January 1977 to set up a committee to plan for a new school north of Maple Leaf along Emerson Avenue had ramifications for Maple Leaf as this new school would take over a portion of Maple Leaf's catchment area and reduce the numbers coming to Maple Leaf for the future.

In January 1977 the growing new developments in the area had resulted in a swelling student population with necessitated the transfer of one grade 6 class to Springfield Heights School in January. As the school population was expected to make a big jump in September 1977 alternatives were explored to deal with the situation. One proposal looked at was to transfer all of the grade 6 students to Springfield Heights in September 1977. Another proposal was to erect a hut at Maple Leaf to house the music and science program. The third proposal was to transfer all Maple Leaf students living east of Raleigh to other schools.

April 1977 saw two choirs of Maple Leaf students win a total of 4 trophies at the Manitoba Music Festival. One choir under the direction of Mrs. A. L. Malloy won the McArthur Memorial Trophy. The other choir under the direction of Mrs. A. L. Molloy won the Archbishop Tache Shield, the Hugh Robertson Trophy and the Will and Frieda Rook Trophy.

The month of April 1977 saw the River East School Division make the decision to transfer all grade 6 students in the fall of 1977 to Springfield Heights School and the new John De Graff School. This decision affected 82 students as well as any new grade 6 students moving into the area. The decision was also made to transfer any new students of any grade moving into the area to other schools.

May 1977 saw Maple Leaf in the news when a dog on the school playground bit 5 different children during one recess requiring one child to have 9 stitches to his face. Principal Grywinski and his vice principal were required to catch and hold the dog until an emergency phone call to the dogcatcher brought his arrival.

June 1977 saw a proposal by Maple Leaf teachers to bank time for use for professional development time rejected by the school board. The proposal would have lengthened the school day by 15 minutes each day and then using 2 ½ hours every second Thursday afternoon for preparations of programs.

June 1977 also saw Maple Leaf School win the Lions Club Trophy for having the best school bus patrols in the River East Division.

A change to the physical structure of Maple Leaf was made in the fall of 1977 when a hut was added to the back of the school to serve as a multipurpose room.

The decision was made in January 1979 to transfer the hut at Maple Leaf at the end of the school year to Kildonan East. Emerson School was to open in the fall of 1979 and at its opening it would have 425 students and thus reduce the size of the Maple Leaf catchment area reducing the pressure on Maple Leaf. This allowed the return of grade 6 students back to Maple Leaf in September 1979.

The summer of 1979 finally saw the paving of McIvor Avenue from Henderson Highway to Raleigh at a total cost of \$649,540.00 and the filling in of the ditches that had lined both sides of McIvor from the first opening of the street many years before.

The 1980's resulted in fewer stories on area events and as a result there were far fewer mentions of Maple Leaf School. Over the 1980's, the enrollment at Maple Leaf School declined slowly from just over 600 to just under 500 students by the 1989-1990 school year. The opening of Sun Valley School in 1986 further reduced Maple Leaf's catchment area.

In March 1988 the Herald did a story on the kindergarten student of Maple Leaf looking forward to the year 2000 when these students would be part of the high school class of 2000. The kindergarten students under teachers Ricki Daly and Leslie Dowbenko had their students complete booklets containing details about themselves and their lives. They were to take them home and store them until the year 2000 and then look at them when they would be graduating from high school.

A story in May 1989 told of a new 'space-age' technology that some students at Maple Leaf were using. The story mentioned that Maple Leaf was part of the Apple Global Network; this was a project that allowed 59 sites around the world to communicate to the other sites around the world by computer in a fraction of a second. Maple Leaf was the only school in Winnipeg involved in the network and one of only 15 in Canada.

As the 1990's begun changing times brought new smoking policies to all schools in River East. The decision was made to ban smoking on all school property as of August 1, 1991. One other decision that affected Maple Leaf School was the decision to eliminate bus service to students living closer than 1.6 km from school; the previous policy had allowed students living as close as .8 km to be bused. Some exemptions were made but this did reduce the number of students eligible to be bused to Maple Leaf. The original change in policy would have eliminated a further 100 students from the busing service.

In January 1991, it was reported that the starting salary of a teacher with the minimum requirements was now \$27,130.00 and the average salary was now \$42,500.00 but River East Teachers were unhappy with this situation.

In October 1991 some parents at Maple Leaf protested that kindergarten classes of 29 and 30 students at Maple Leaf were too large. Some education experts thought Kindergarten classes of larger than 20 students were inappropriate but this did not change the situation at Maple Leaf.

A story from March 1993 reported that the average teacher in the school division now made \$48,000.00 per year.

In January 1994 the 6 boys of the TLC class (The Treatment and Learning Class) at Maple Leaf were highlighted in their efforts to collect Campbell's Soup Can labels to help a student earn a prize of a computer. The 6 students at Maple Leaf come from across the Division to learn in a special class because of their behavioral and emotional disorders.

The River East School Division in June 1996 announces that Donna Cochrane Principal of Maple Leaf School will move to Sun Valley School in the fall and will be replaced as principal by Larry Hoffmann currently principal of Lord Wolseley School.

In July 1996 the school division submits a wish list to the Public Schools Finance Board. One of the projects submitted is the replacement of the southwest section of Maple Leaf School.

May 1997 brings news that Maple Leaf is awarded a CAHPERD Award for the school's outstanding physical education program. Maple Leaf School is mentioned as the catchment school for students moving into the Pritchard Farm Properties in East St. Paul due to the overcrowding at Birds Hill School.

News from April 1999 tells that finally that the southwest section of Maple Leaf is to be torn down and replaced in 2000 creating a new section with a new main entrance that is to be smaller in area than the area it is replacing. The old southwest section of the building has shifted causing some structural problems.

A fire in the fall of 2001 to the portable hut section of the school causes major damage to this section but the main part of the school only suffers some smoke and water damage. The fire is determined to have started as a result of arson.

In July 2002, Maple Leaf School becomes part of the new River East Transcona School Division as schools in Transcona are united with the River East School Division.

In June 2005 to celebrate National Aboriginal Day a \$2,000.00 original hand painted teepee is welcomed to the school library.

In a story from July 2005 it is announced that Maple Leaf School is at the halfway point of a \$100,000.00 campaign to build a new accessible playground structure

September 2005 features Maple Leaf School staff being relieved that a popular recycling blue box program is being reinstated.

In October 2005 Maple Leaf is featured in a story as the only school in Manitoba chosen to host the 50th anniversary celebrations for UNICEF.

Maple Leaf School Enrolment Over The Years

1956-1957 – 85
1957-1958 – 107
1958-1959 – 113
1959-1960 – 122
1960-1961 – 106
1961-1962 – 135
1962-1963 – 169
1963-1964 – 209
1964-1965 – 227
1965-1966 – 263
1966-1967 – 245
1970-1971 – 314
1971-1972 – 282
1972-1973 - 280
1973-1974 – 440
1976-1977 – 622
1977-1978 – 660
1979-1980 – 625
1980-1981 - 606
1988-1989 – 540
1989-1990 – 496
1990-1991 – 454
1991-1992 – 467
1992-1993 – 461
1993-1994 – 503
1994-1995 – 489
1995-1996 – 455
1996-1997 – 459
1997-1998 – 466
1998-1999 – 464
1999-2000 – 450
2000-2001 – 427
2001-2002 – 403
2002-2003 – 380
2003-2004 – 378
2004-2005 – 351
2005-2006 - 345