

The Growth of Prince Rupert's Schools

By Marion E. Johnstone.

To watch the development of any craft, industry or movement in a new community is always of absorbing interest, but in no other line is it so noticeable, particularly in British Columbia, as in the cause of education. Wherever two or three families settle in a district they commence planning for the time when others will join them and there will be enough children to demand from the government, under the educational laws of the province, a school.

Thus it was in the initial stages of Prince Rupert and the most sanguine builder of our city would have hardly predicted that by this time there would be a school population of 350 children.

On March 7th, 1908, a few enthusiasts gathered in the provincial constable's office to discuss steps for providing the public with school accommodation. Mr. J. H. Pillsbury was elected chairman and Mr. G. W. Morrow secretary of the meeting. Messrs. A. R. Barrow, George W. Morrow and William Craig were elected school trustees, to serve until the following July. It was decided to ask the Department of Education for a grant of \$600 to start a school. The initial meeting was followed by another soon afterward, at which the newly elected school board chose William Craig chairman and A. R. Barrow secretary.

On March 27th another meeting was held in the provincial constable's office, at which a letter was received from Bishop Du Vernet offering the use of the Anglican Church Hall as a temporary school house. The Bishop's kind offer was unanimously accepted and at a meeting of the board next day Miss M. A. Johnson was appointed teacher.

Miss Johnson began her duties early in April with ten pupils. She was obliged to relinquish her position at the end of June, as she only held a temporary B. C. certificate. Miss Lena Pringle succeeded her at the beginning of the autumn term.

On July 11th, 1908, the following gentlemen were elected as school trustees under the Rural

School Act: Messrs. A. R. Barrow, P. W. Anderson, and George R. Naden. When the newly elected trustees convened, on July 14th, Mr. George R. Naden was appointed chairman and Mr. P. W. Anderson secretary.

They immediately asked the government for permission to build a school on certain government lots. Before a reply was received the agent of the Grand Trunk Railway offered the use of the site at the corner of Second avenue and Seventh street. This offer was accepted and orders were given for a two-room frame structure to be built.

On October 14th Miss Charlotte M. Martin was chosen as principal of the new building, which was opened about the end of November.



The Central School Building

By the end of June, 1909, the two-room building was found to be inadequate accommodation for the increased attendance, and a two-room addition was begun. This was ready for occupation at the end of August.

On August 6th Mr. Douglas McD. Hunter was appointed principal, in which office he still continues. Miss Pringle tendered her resignation in December and was succeeded by Miss Jeannette Mebus, Miss Anna Harrison being put on as an additional member of the staff at the same time.

On April 12th, 1910, the School Board resigned and notice was given of the first election of

school trustees under the City School Act. This was an important era in the educational history of the city, in this proving that the government recognized Prince Rupert as a city. At the election, on June 13th, C. V. Bennett, D. G. Stewart and John Currie were returned; Messrs. Stewart and Bennett for two years and Mr. Currie for one year. Mr. Bennett was chosen chairman and on June 24th C. H. Sawle was appointed secretary at a small salary.

Mrs. Harrison retired at the end of June and on July 18th Miss Jessie Mercer was selected as her successor. On August 30th the principal reported 120 pupils in attendance, which averaged 30 pupils to each of the four teachers.

The government has also expressed its willingness to give sites in Sections 2 and 9, or anywhere else needed when the city is sufficiently populated to require additional ground for schools.

The school population kept steadily increasing and it was necessary to appoint Miss Milligan at Christmas, 1910; Miss Johnstone in April, and Miss Manning in September, making three additional teachers in that year.

In August, 1910, the old school building on Second avenue was again placed in commission, being used as a primary school, as it was found that the distance to the handsome modern school erected on Seventh avenue was much too great for the little

scholars of the lower grades to walk. The wisdom of this step has been proved time and time again, for at the time of writing there are in the neighborhood of 75 pupils in this district.

Upon the retirement of Miss Mebus, at Christmas, 1911, it was considered advisable to engage a male assistant to aid Principal Hunter in the management of the school. At the beginning of the autumn term the school was rated as a superior school, and we find a small high school class in Principal Hunter's room.

When the results of the high school entrance examination were published, it was found that

there were enough high school pupils available to start a high school. A room in the old school on Second avenue was prepared and Mr. J. F. Brady, a graduate of Dublin University, was appointed principal, beginning work on September 8th with 17 pupils. This was really a red letter day in the school history of the city, for very few places of Prince Rupert's age and population have sufficient pupils to start a high school. Vancouver had a population of 12,000 persons before the establishment of a high school.

At the present time there are 350 pupils and 10 teachers in the city. There are 20 pupils of school age in the Seal Cove district, for whom a teacher must be provided and an additional assistant must be appointed to the Second avenue school, bringing the staff number up to 12.

A step in the right direction was taken in the fall of 1911, when Dr. Neil McNeill was engaged as medical health inspector. Under his judicious supervision the children are kept in excellent health and their future hygienic welfare established. The attendance of pupils since the inception of the school system in Prince Rupert has been fairly good, only one epidemic of measles interfering.

In no place on the face of the globe is there such a cosmopolitan school population as in Prince Rupert. We have English, Scotch, Irish, Americans, Swedes, Germans, Italians, Montenegrins, French, Huns, Poles, Indians, Japanese, and probably other nationalities. The progress of the children is excellent when one considers that at least 35 per cent. of them are non-English speaking when they begin their school life.

The present School Board, composed of Messrs. O. H. Nelson, P. W. Anderson and Dr. Kergin, is an excellent one, and under its judicious management the educational facilities of our city will be strengthened and developed even more than in the past.

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How the Citizens of Prince Rupert Entertain Themselves

By Norman Mackintosh, in the Saturday Sunset.

There are three theatres today in busy operation in Prince Rupert. Two of them are quite considerably large houses of entertainment, and the third is a picture theatre situated in the very best location in the city's present centre, and, therefore, doing a very good business indeed. All three theatres have perforce to concentrate on their picture business, for it costs heavily to bring stock companies to Prince Rupert, but there are very frequent concerts and special entertainments arranged which keep the stages in something like really theatrical appearance.

Pioneer amongst Prince Rupert's theatres is the Empress. Its manager, F. Stevens, is an old timer of old timers in Rupert. His experience dates back to the lively old days of the "Rupert Road," now gone forever. Here in the earliest day of all, when the whole life of the pioneer town was concentrated on the single board walk which led from Centre

street to a blind and unrepresentable end and back again, Manager Stevens established his theatre just about the hub of the traffic.

Pioneer Theatre Days.

This was the pioneer picture show and entertainment put on professionally in Prince Rupert. There was a piano, and a violin was added later to the orchestra. Some old timers insist that there was also a piccolo, and perhaps a concertina, but I have not been able to substantiate these claims to the pioneer orchestra. One thing is certain, and that is that Mr. Stevens himself was the mainspring and motive power of the whole show. He played the piano; he took the tickets at the door. He attended to the correspondence; he hired the performers, when they had any he selected the picture films; he maintained order in the house when trouble arose; and in those wild days of the "Rupert Road" there was trouble every once in

a while. Mr. Stevens is a big, burly fellow with a tremendous amount of quiet tact. He was equal to the gentle task every time of hauling an obstreperous patron from a rowdy position in the front rows and placing him where the night air could cool his fevered brow, and then coolly return to his place at the piano to whirl on the music gaily and vigorously just as if he had never been disturbed.

Modern Advances.

Today the Empress Theatre, under the management of the same Mr. Stevens of "Rupert Road" days is centrally situated in the heart of the town. It is decorated within and illuminated without. The flapping sides of the tent that held its pioneer origin have given place to substantial walls. Its stage has supported many and many a good show. But to some of those who sit in it, it lacks the subtle romance of its birthdays—the days which were a drama in themselves. To more recent comers to Prince Rupert its present days are as romantic as its past, and it is on the eve of enlargement and alteration again it must maintain its traditional charm.

In the Westholme Theatre, which occupies a position not far distant from the pioneer entertainment house, Prince Rupert has her most modern theatre. Usually it is known as the opera house. In every way the Westholme Opera House is a bijou theatre. Its stage and dressing rooms are thoroughly up-to-date, and its auditorium, which consists of pit, balcony and boxes, accommodates upward of a thousand people. The Westholme was built and established only about a year ago, and has



THE WESTHOLME OPERA HOUSE, SECOND AVENUE

no traditions of the past to boast of. But it has made for itself a reputation for comfort and for thoroughly up-to-date entertainments which will remain with it. It was also honored by the presence during the vice regal tour of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and the Princess Patricia.

Amateurs of Rupert.

In the Westholme Theatre are given many of Prince Rupert's amateur entertainments, and indeed "amateur night," which is an institution devised by Prince Rupert's lively people to supply themselves with real flesh and blood shows as a variation of the film show, has proved an immense success and is inseparable now from the boards of the Westholme. Every Friday night a company of clever amateur comedians and actors, assisted sometimes by actresses as talented, arranged to stage a series of turns. The public of Prince Rupert has taken to "amateur night" with evident appreciation,

and the quality of the shows produced has often attracted visitors fresh from far less original stage shows in the south.

Church and Stage.

Besides the regular "amateur night," which has, of course, its steady stock company, augmented whenever necessary, Prince Rupert provides itself with entertainment of a still more ambitious nature through its churches and social organizations. Concerts are gotten up regularly by all the churches, and exceedingly good entertainments they have always proved.

Boy and Girl Shows.

In Prince Rupert's children there is found, of course, a mine of entertainment talent, which has been developed more recently with remarkably good effect. There are hundreds of merry boys and girls in Prince Rupert. The public school is one of the most crowded and increasingly busy in all the province. Out of the ranks of Prince Rupert's

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EMPERSS THEATRE, THE PIONEER PLAY HOUSE

boys and girls have been picked up scores of clever little entertainers, and dancing exhibitions, singing, musical drill and all the graceful displays in which children throughout Canada achieve their juvenile successes, have been effectively produced regularly.

In line with Prince Rupert's other entertainments come, of course, the dances of Prince Rupert. From the very earliest days of the pioneer of the city Prince Rupert has had dances. In early days were held dances in all kinds of odd halls and assembly rooms, the best that could be discovered or provided. Nowadays it is easy to find in Rupert spacious assembly rooms. Dances are held throughout the winter, and well on into the spring, as well as early in the fall, which are remembered with treasured charm—for the social word of Prince Rupert is no cold, staid thing as yet. It is full of fun and frolic.