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Chain-of-Lakes School No. 468 1898-1930

by Dalton Jones

In the North West Territories before the Province of Saskatchewan was formed, the only schooling there was done by Missions and the churches until the year 1884.

That year the Federal Government started a system of public education. South of the Lakes was good ranching country. In the year 1895, Tulloch came in from Broadview. The next year, 1896, Rattray came in from Saltcoats, others who came in were Peters, Christopherson, Thorsons and Abbotts. These families were what is known as squatters, most of them. They did not own the land, but would move from place to place as an area started to get settled.

Tullochs tried to educate their children themselves by using relatives. This did not work very well. On May 21, 1898, the formation of the Chain-of-Lakes School District took place in Regina. The tract of land taken into the district were sections 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27 in Township 32, Range. 9. The School District was to be known under the Corporate name of The Chain-of-Lakes Public School District No. 468 of the North West Territories. It was not long until the first school was built, a log one with a sod roof, on SW 24-32-9 W2.

The first teacher was Miss Stevenson in 1899. The next teacher was Mr. Albertson in 1900, then Miss Williams, 1901 and 1902, followed by Miss Rattray. Miss Williams stayed at Tullochs. She got lost one day; was out all night; they found her the next day, 4 miles from home. The School Inspector in those days was Mr. Perrett. The log school was also used for Sunday School. The teacher was Hammy Brown.

There were only two resident ratepayers in 1901 in the district, and they ran the school. The

Commissioner of Education in 1902, appointed Walter Tulloch as Official Trustee. On Sept. 1, 1905 Saskatchewan became a Province. The first premier was Walter Scott. When Saskatchewan became a Province, provisions were made for the establishment of schools in the Province, subject to the control of the Provincial Administration. Also a sound Educational system with its centre in a Provincial University at Saskatoon was established. The settlers first had to petition the Dept. of Education for a district. The district had to have 12 children of school age to be eligible. When permission for a district was granted, a School Board was formed, debentures were raised for the building of the school.

In the year 1906, Walter Tulloch resigned as Trustee. He said there had been no school in Chain-of-Lakes for over two years and there now were enough children in the district to have school again. The Commissioner then appointed Henry Christopherson of Yorkton as Official Trustee. In Aug. of 1907 Christopherson had a bylaw submitted to the ratepayers for \$800 debentures, for the building of the frame school 20' x 24' with 12 foot studding and a cloakroom 8 x 8 feet.

In October of 1907, the Commissioner appointed Charles Rattray to hold a ratepayers' meeting to elect a Board of Trustees. The meeting was held in December 1907. The Board selected were Neil Morrisson, Wilfred Jones and Heming Suva. Suva was to be the secretary. The School Board was authorized on April 14, 1908, to borrow the money to build the school. Robert and Willie White built the school in 1908 on two acres of land on NW 13-32-9 W2. The new Chain-of-Lakes School opened May 1, 1909. The teacher was Miss Ward. Some of the first pupils were Andrew, William and Theodore Mikkonen, Grace, May and Edith Bradley, Harry Harju, Tena and Lenard Kallio, Annie and Emma White, Jessie, John and Albert Rattray, Ben, Joe, Fanny, Mary and Jessie Claughton.

The first Chain-of-Lakes School was the first in the Municipality, also had the first Christmas entertainment ever held in the Invermay district.

The new school was not too warm in winter, there was no insulation and a high ceiling. It was heated by a box cast iron stove and a round tin heater, as they were called. The school had a porch where the pupils left their lunch and coats. The first barn was destroyed and a new one was built in 1917 for anyone who wanted to drive to school.

In the early days the children were taught from 48 picture cards, these cards were about 30 x 20 inches in size. A lesson on each card, was printed or written, on each side. When the children finished the cards, they got their first Alexandra Reader.

Each grade got an Alexandra Reader up to grade 6. There was much good reading in these Readers. Grades 7 and 8 got the Narrative and Lyric Poem Book. There was much good reading in this book.

In the early days many of the children, when they first came to school, couldn't speak English, this was very hard for them. One young Finn boy started to school and the teacher just couldn't seem to manage him or get through to him in any way. She did not know what to do. After a couple of months, she was beat. So one morning he came to school, marched into the school to the teacher himself, looked at her and said, "Daddy banged a skunk last night." Everything went well after that, he was only shy.

Our 1922 teacher called the boys into school at noon, soon as they had their dinner. She told us she was going to make us paper money out of brown paper and give each of us so much money. She was going to be the banker for two months. We could deposit money, we could withdraw money, she would keep the books. She did this for two months. Perhaps she learned a lot about the boys that way. This teacher started us playing baseball. Two girls did the catching. They were good at it. Their dresses were good backstops too, only thing they wouldn't wear a mask. One got hit in the face with a baseball one day. She sat behind the school for a couple of weeks, then went back to catching again. Says she sure remembers getting hit and can feel the hurt yet.

One day the boys knocked a big wasp nest out of a tree. It was on the ground. Nobody would go near it. Ken Currah said, "I am not scared, I'll go in the bush and jump on it. Just have to hold my breath, they can't sting me." He went in and jumped on the nest. He came back through the bush like a tornado.

The teacher had a tub of water. She had washed the blackboards and went to the steps and threw it out. At the same time, John Panchyk came around the corner. He got a shower from head to foot. The teacher sure felt bad.

List of Chain-of-Lakes Teachers 1909-1930.

1909 - Miss Ward	1921 - Miss Loucks
1910 - Miss Snell	1922 - Miss McMahon
1911 - Miss Robinson	1923 - Miss McMahon
1912 - Miss Ross	1924 - Miss Johnston
1913 - Miss Lewis	1925 - Miss McLellan
1914 - Miss Grant	1926 - Miss Meldrum
1915 - Miss Arnold	1927 - Miss Lindgren
1916 - Mr. Campbell	1928 - Miss Middlemiss
1917 - Mr. Riddell	1928 - Mr. Trueman
1918 - Miss Adiar	1929 - Mr. Trueman
1919 - Miss Thomson	1930 - Mr. Olson
1920 - Miss Schell	



Chain of Lakes School 1938. Back row L to R: Jean Dave, Etta Minhinnick, Otto Paso, Victor Mikkonen, Nessa Jones, Mable Widenmair, Eileen Minhinnick. Row 3: Chester Minhinnick, Edith Becker, Ernie White, Ellen Widenmair, Robert White. Row 2: Roy Mattson, George Fogg, Geraldine Becker, Bill Panchyk, Sidney White, Harold Fogg. Front row: Earl Parsons, Norman Atkinson, Steve Panchyk, Alice Mattson, Fred Mikkonen.

Chain-of-Lakes - 1940's and on

by K. Minhinnick and Isabelle Fogg

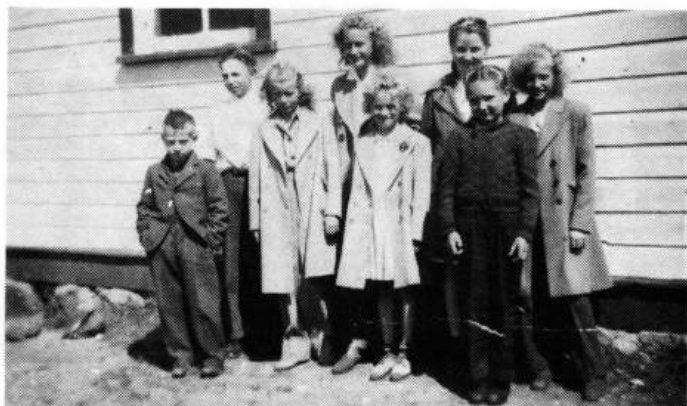


Chain of Lakes School 1947.

In 1940, there were 20 pupils in the Chain-of-Lakes school. Miss Felicia Kergen was the teacher. The trustees were, Herb Murray, Lanty White, Henry Paso and Alma Paso was the secretary-treasurer.

There were two stoves in the school and a wood shed at the back of the school. Lanty White supplied the wood for many years. It took a lot of wood to keep the fires going all day in the cold winter. Lanty also started the fires in the mornings. He would walk the half mile and have a good fire going in each stove by the time the teacher or any pupil arrived.

The floor was swept every day after school, but Mrs. Pearl White washed floors every Friday unless there was some event in the school Friday night, then it was washed Saturday. This involved hauling the hot water and washing the floor on your knees.

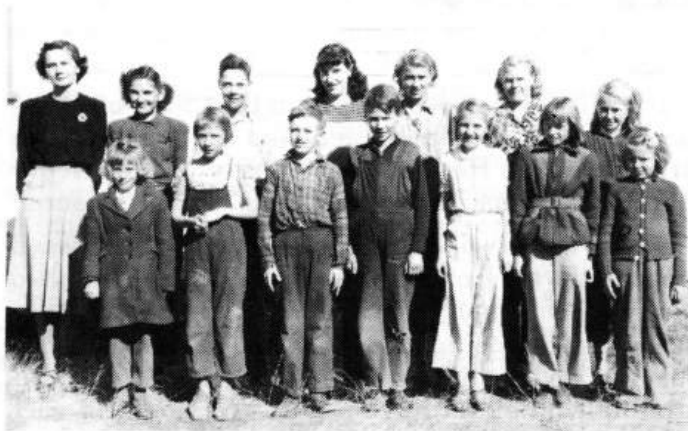


Back L to R: Jim Parsons, Lil Mikkonen, Isabelle White, Lila Mikkonen. Front L to R: Jimmy Becker, Betty Mikkonen, Ellen Mikkonen, Gwen Murray. Class of 1945.

The teacher boarded at the Paso home or at Sid Parsons.

The playground equipment was: 2 good swings, 2 softballs - 1 good, 1 bad; 1 good football; 5 softball mitts; 1 good mask and 2 good bats. With equipment like that you can see why the pupils had to find something else to do. In the late forties, it was decided to build a new school. The new Chain-of-Lakes school was built in 1950, complete with a basement and a furnace. Trustees on the board at that time were Clarence Dawe, Bud Murray and Bob Graham. The old school was sold to the Legion and moved into Invermay, where it stayed for several years. It was then purchased by Peter Krawetz and moved out to his farm east of Invermay.

In 1948, the teacherage was built. It was sold when the school closed to Bill Velichka and moved into town where it still stands on North Road.



Class of 1950. Back L to R: Teacher Julie McKetsy, Gwen Murray, Eddie Mattson, Isabelle White, Betty Mikkonen, Margaret Minhinnick, Bonnie Murray. Front L to R: Myrtle Dawe, Margaret Widenmaier, Allan Dawe, Fred Widenmaier, Audrey Murray, Mabel Mikkonen, Joyce Murray.

During the '50's, Allen and Myrtle Dawe had the janitorial duties - lighting the fire, sweeping and dusting. Mrs. Ruby Dawe washed the floors.

The average school enrollment during the fifties was about 15 pupils, but by 1961 it dwindled to 5 pupils. The school was closed in 1961 and the students were bussed to Invermay. The last students to attend classes at Chain-of-Lakes were, Donny Fogg, David and Julie Mikkonen, Sid Dawe and Bobby Burseth. The trustees on the board at this time were Fred Mikkonen, Jim Parsons and George Fogg, Jr. After the school closed the people of the district bought shares and purchased the school and yard site for a community centre.

On July 15, 1963 the tender submitted by Jim Parsons and G.W. Fogg on behalf of the shareholders was accepted by the school unit. On August 9, 1965, the Chain-of-Lakes Community Centre was incorporated under the provisions of the Societies' Act. At the meeting June 15, 1961 Isabelle Fogg was elected chairperson and K.M. Minhinnick was elected secretary-treasurer. This was the last elected executive. The Community Centre required a new foundation. At this point, it was decided that the cons outweighed the pros and on June 10, 1972 the Community Centre, contents, land site and yard contents were tendered as there had not been enough interest or use made of the facility to warrant moving it to another foundation.

George Fogg Jr.'s tender for \$300.00 for the school was accepted. Clarence Dawe tendered the school site for \$5.00 and G.W. Fogg, the fence posts \$5.00. The school contents, (an oil heater, 5 benches, a bookcase, 2 cupboards, a chair, desk and a quantity of desks) were tendered for \$36.00 by R.C. Minhinnick. Following the sale of the Community Centre, \$20.00 was paid to each person holding a full share and \$10.00 was paid to shareholders with ½ shares.

School Activities:

The annual Christmas Concert was a great event at all the country schools. For weeks we practiced plays, recitations, and songs and each day the excitement mounted. Finally the big day came. Planks would be brought up from the basement for a makeshift stage. The front curtains would be hung. The side curtains to enclose the dressing rooms were made of sheets which some of the pupils brought from home. All the pupils would join in decorating the tree and classroom. We would practice one last time and then everything would be in readiness.

In the evening all the parents and people of the district came. We would go through our program with the school board chairman acting as master of ceremonies. Then came the highlight of the

evening - Santa's arrival. Bags of treats were distributed to all the students and preschoolers on behalf of the local school board. The delight of the older students was trying to guess who Santa was.

Another big event in the school year was the annual school picnic at the end of June. Games, races, ballgames and other activities made up the day. Quite often a booth was made of poles and covered with poplar tree branches to provide shade. All the food was supplied by the parents and the people of the district who attended.

Everyone looked forward to the annual field meet. All the country schools gathered on alternate years at either Invermay or Rama schools. The day started out with a parade (previously we had spent days learning how to march around the school grounds). Each school was expected to have a banner and to come dressed in some type of uniform. In the fifties the Chain-of-Lakes colors were black shorts or pants and gold color blouses or shirts. Each school also had a school cheer. Remember ...

"Black and Gold, Black and Gold.
We're the gang that's got the hold.
We've got the "go", we've got the "get"
We'll take the honors. Yes, you bet!
Rah! Rah! Rah!

Yes we did take the honors a few times and won the coveted cup for the most points. We also took a picnic lunch to the field meet which everyone contributed to.

Arbour day in May was another day we all looked forward to. That was the day we cleaned up the school yard and then had a big bonfire and weiner roast to top it off.

Valentine and Halloween parties were also very special days. On the morning of the party the preschoolers in the district would come with their brothers or sisters or some other relative who was in school and spend the entire day at school. In the afternoon the families (mostly mothers) would come and enjoy the program which the pupils had organized. Lunch was brought by the mothers and enjoyed by everyone. Guessing games were a part of school activities. At Halloween everyone tried to guess who all the costumed people were. At Valentine's everyone tried to guess who had got any "special" valentines or who they had received them from.

During the fifties, the school Red Cross organization held several Mother's Day programs and teas. They also held a bake sale and bazaar that day. Carnations were made of kleenex and given to all the mothers who attended. Many of the bazaar items were made by the students during the long winter months.

The inspector's annual visit was a bit scary. We'd been warned several times that he might visit at any time and that we were to be on our best behavior. We were expected to rise when he came in and greet him with "Welcome Mr. Whoever he was". (Seems as though they didn't have any lady inspectors in those days). We had also been told to remove ourselves bodily, ears and all, from the classroom at recess or noon hour, whatever the case might be. The inspector I remember the most was Mr. McMonagle. He was a rather distinguished, grandfatherly looking old gentleman. He did not really look like what we had been warned to expect. He also had the most beautiful handwriting (complete with all the fancy loops and perfectly formed letters) of any man I have yet seen to this day.

Christmas vacations we all loved. They would usually last a month or six weeks. The only drawback was that in order to have a long Christmas vacation we had to start school in the middle of August.

Several times we planted flowers along the fence and the school but most of them refused to grow. The reason I think was the hard packed clay or perhaps because we had no green thumbs although there had been plenty of dirty ones when we were done.

One of the boys' greatest challenges was trying to shinny up the flagpole without getting caught. Obviously they had an advantage because the pole was right beside the steps so they were about one third of the way up when they started. The games we played at school did not require a great deal of equipment because there was next to none provided. So we played games like Prisoner's Base, Tag, Fox and Goose, Pom Pom Pull-away, and Run Sheep Run - anything which didn't require equipment.

The greatest game in the spring was trying to drown out gophers on the knoll in the schoolyard. The little kids lugged the water from the ditches and the slough from behind the teacherage and the big brave boys stood by, ready with bat or stick to kill the innocent half drowned gopher when he emerged from his hole. On occasion the gopher was smarter than the kids and at those times he would plug up his front door with dirt and escape through the back door flicking his tail at his tormentors.

There were also the usual fights and spats that occurred in every school. Sometimes between the boys; sometimes between the girls and sometimes between the boys and girls.

Some winters, we made hot cocoa or soup on the stove at the teacherage, which certainly helped to warm us up, when our only lunch consisted of cold and sometimes yet frozen sandwiches. Some pupils

had a thermos, but they never seemed to last too long.

There were also the long walks to the outdoor bathrooms. Occasionally, some of the students became distracted on the way going or coming back and lost all track of time. No cause for alarm because another student would benefit from this - he would get to skip a few minutes or even hours to go and retrieve the lost.

Transportation:

Since there were no school buses, transportation to and from school was very different from what we know today. In the summer some pupils walked; some rode horseback; and some came in horsedrawn buggies, carts or democats. In winter it was much the same except that they used toboggans, cabooses, or cutters pulled by a horse or horses. The caboose would have a little wood heater to keep the occupants warm, but if you came by toboggan or cutter it would not be an unusual sight to see someone out walking or running behind to keep warm. On very cold winter days the pupils spent the first half of the day getting warmed up after their cold early morning journey. Many times the children's hands would be warmed under their mother's arms after they got home. We dressed for warmth in those days - not for style but we still got cold. One of the nicest things to come home to on cold winter days was a pot of warm soup or stew simmering on the back of the stove.

School Uses:

The country schools were used for many social events. Church services were held on Sunday. Whist drives and pie socials or box socials were also held at the school. For the pie social or box social, the girls and women would take a fancy decorated boxed lunch or pie with their name on a piece of paper inside. The boys and men would bid on them but they weren't supposed to know whose box it was until they opened it. However this wasn't always the case, and some ended up paying dearly for their lunch especially if word had got around which box belonged to a bidder's special someone.

The school was also used for club meetings and other meetings, farewells, showers, dances and many other social activities.

Chain-of-Lakes Highlights and Happenings:

The first post office in the area was called the "Tulloch Post Office" and was located on the Tulloch farm which is now owned by Reg Graham. This post office was in use even before the town was officially named.

The Chain-of-Lakes school was the first one built in the area.

The Chain-of-Lakes also had the first Christmas Program (Christmas Tree).

Miss May Bradley was the first assistant postmistress in Invermay. (Later Mrs. C.L. Minhinnick).

In the 1940's, they had an open skating rink across from the school. A granary was pulled in and a stove was set up in it. Many happy hours were spent there. In 1942, a cyclone passed through the area doing considerable damage.

During the early forties the ladies of the district had a very active Red Cross group for which they did a lot of knitting and sewing. They also held a fowl supper at the home of Sid and Laura Parsons each fall. The house is still standing there. The only one in the district left as it was in the forties.

In the spring of 1959, a farewell party was organized by the Chain-of-Lakes ladies in honor of Bob and Benie Jones who were retiring from the farm and moving to Vancouver. They were presented with a lunch cloth on which Mrs. May Minhinnick had embroidered a map with the names of all the neighbours and their homes in the Chain-of-Lakes area.

In 1950's there was a Chain-of-Lakes Sports Club (ball team).

The Chain-of-Lakes held a homecoming picnic and program at the Community Centre in August 1971. There were over 80 persons attending. Organizing was done by Isabelle Fogg and Kathy Minhinnick with the help and co-operation of the people in the district. Three of the original pupils, May (Bradley) Minhinnick, Annie (White) Jones and Theodore Mikkonen were in attendance. There were also four teachers present. They were Mrs. Bessie (Loucks) Raymond, Mrs. Vi Nelson, Mrs. Pearl Burgess and Mrs. Hazel Quallie.

The class of Mrs. Vi Nelson had the most people in attendance. They were, Margaret (Graham) Panchyk, Betty (Mikkonen) Parsons, Mabel (Mikkonen) Mennie, Margaret (Minhinnick) Knight, Kathleen (Graham) Minhinnick, Isabelle (White) Fogg, Lila (Mikkonen) Landstad, Ellen (Mikkonen) Hanson, and Myrtle (Dawe) Romanovitch.
Chain-of-Lakes teachers 1928-1961

Jan. - Sept. 1928 - Margaret Middlemiss
Sept. - Oct. 1928 - Maurice Sanger
Oct./28 - Dec./29 - Mr. C.E. Trueman
Feb./20 - Dec./31 - Salmer Olson
Feb./32 - June/35 - Jessie Gillanders
Aug./35 - June/37 - Miss Phyliss Strawson
Aug./37 - June/38 - Miss W. McKay
Aug./38 - Nov./39 - Miss M. Toderan
Nov./39 - Dec./39 - Gordon McDonald
Jan./40 - June/42 - Miss F. Kergen
Aug./42 - June/43 - Miss Norman
Aug./43 - June/44 - Miss H. Kotasek
Aug./44 - Sept./44 - Miss G. Jolly
Oct./44 - Dec./44 - Miss Bender

Jan./45 - June/45 - Miss Alice Heal
 Aug./45 - June/47 - Mr. Bob Doroshenko
 Aug./47 - June/48 - Miss J. McKetsy
 Aug./48 - Dec./48 - N.N. Cherneski
 Jan./49 - (1 month) - Mrs. B. Willis
 Feb./49 - Dec./49 - Miss J. McKetsy
 Jan./50 - June/51 - Mrs. V. Nelson
 Aug./51 - June/52 - G.O. Johnson
 Sept./52 - Oct./52 - G.O. Johnson
 Oct./52 - June/53 - Miss Mildred Dreveny (Supervisor)
 Sept./53 - June/54 - Mrs. P. Burgess
 Sept./54 - June/56 - Mrs. P. Burgess
 Sept./56 - June/57 - Mrs. Annie Knight
 Sept./57 - June/58 - Mrs. Hazel Quallie
 Sept./58 - June/59 - Miss K. Sookochoff
 Sept./59 - June/60 - Miss K. Sookochoff
 Sept./60 - June/61 - Miss Dutka



Chain of Lakes Homecoming, 1971. Three of the first pupils: May Minhinnick (Bradley), Annie Jones (White), Theodore (Tudor) Mikkonen.

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