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Original School 1917.

Loch Sloy S.D. #3589

by Frank Knight

In the winter of 1916, several parents of the Loch Sloy district #3589 became concerned as to where their children were to get an education. On March 15, of the same year, several persons met at the home of W.W. Crannage, who also served as the first Secretary-Treasurer of the district. The meeting was held for the purpose of passing a bylaw to borrow a sum of eleven hundred dollars, upon security of the district, to erect and furnish a frame school house. Debentures to be repayable in ten equal payments of principal and interest combined, interest at not more than eight percent. The presiding chairman was J.H. Ferris.

A follow-up meeting was held on March 28, to accept the tenders of Neuert Bros. and E.E. Haning. Work proceeded quickly, and on July 18 a special meeting was held in the then finished schoolhouse to elect a trustee. This position was filled by Ambrose Bull, who was then appointed Secretary-Treasurer, payment being thirty-six dollars per annum, to be paid quarterly. A motion was made at the same meeting that E.E. Haning erect a 12 x 16 stable.

The cost of the school was in total \$1266.13, itemized as follows:

Neuert & Haning -\$1,065.00
J.H. Ferris (freight) -12.25
J.E. Squire (hauling supplies) -5.00
Christian Book Store -163.88
Fire Insurance -20.00
Total -1,266.13

The school was located on the north-west corner of SW 36-33-9 W2. Pearl Enright, the present Mrs. Pearl Burgess, was the first teacher, when school opened in July, 1916.



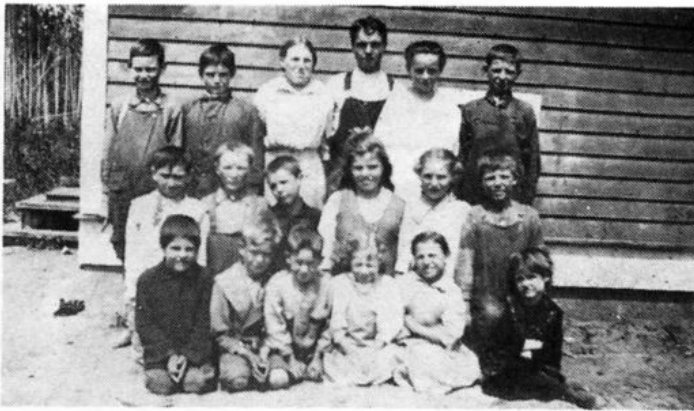
First teacher aJ; Loch Swy, Pearl Enright, the present Mrs. Pearl Burgess.

She had just completed her high schooling, and was asked to fill the position without any extra training, as teachers were very scarce. She taught July to December, 1916, then attended Normal School for three months, and resumed teaching duties in April of 1917, and remained until December, 1917. The school was closed during the cold winter months.

Following is a list of teachers who taught at Loch Sloy, not necessarily in order: Mrs. Pearl Burgess, Miss Scullen, Miss Forman, Miss O'Connor, Miss Crowe, Miss Jackson, Miss Ratz, Miss Keele, Miss McDougl, Miss Wilson, Miss Spicer, Miss Alford, Ellen Bates, M. Bartley, Miss Johnson, Miss Sparks, Miss Dundas, Miss Murray, Miss Drummond, Gordon Cairns, Miss McIntyre, Miss Allen, Gordon Bull, Gerald Peeling, Vic Loucks, F.E. Gattinger, Lydia Siegal, A. Genoway, Adolf Tkarchuck, Harry Petryshen, Steve Novakowski, Orest Wichar, Mrs. Bessie Rutko, Mrs. Vicki Essar, George Chabylo and Albert Kardash.

These are the students who attended Loch Sloy from July to December, 1916, as submitted to me by Mrs. Burgess; Bertha Palmer, Ada Palmer, Frank Palmer, Alex Palmer, Floyd Enright, Vera Ferris, Reata Ferris, Peter Haning, James Squire, Jack Squire, Minnie Squire, Hazel Squire, Harold Smith, Victor Knight, Charles Squire.

The original school was destroyed by fire in December of 1956. The students then attended classes for the remainder of the school term in a house owned by Puryks, originally built by Ted Sethre. The house was moved to the original site



L to R Standing: Vic Knight, Jack Squire, Ada Palmer, Jim Squire, Vera Ferris, Frank Palmer. Middle row: Joe Ceslak, Ted Stienke, Charlie Squire, Minnie Squire, Reta Ferris, Alex Palmer. Bottom row: Bob Squire, Harold Smith, Billie Smith, Marriette Bull, Lily Palmer, Hazel Squire.

for these few months. A new school was built and ready for classes to start the fall term in 1957. This school officially closed at the end of the 1962-63 school term, with 28 students still registered, a far cry from the 55-60 students, who had at one time attended.

Beginning the fall term in 1963 the students were bused to Invermay. The last teacher was Albert Kardash.

Students registered the last school term were:

Beverly Gryba, Gerald Squire, Michael Gryba, Raymond Puryk, Patrick Gryba, Evelyn Skoronski, Donnie Zazula, Larry Barteski, Lorne Barteski, Mervin Puryk, Marjorie Squire, Dolores Barteski, Kenneth Barteski, Michael Diakow, Sandra Orlovski, Linda Skoronski, Donnie Puryk, Ernest Barteski, Loette Orlovski, Randy Orlovski, Wayne Squire, Harvey Zazula, Leona Barteski, Eugene Diakow, Carol Orlovski, Cheryl Barteski, Janice Barteski, David Skoronski.

On July 26, 1980 a very successful reunion of the district was held at the local fairgrounds with the first teacher, along with several of the first students in attendance. The day proved most enjoyable with many pictures being taken, ballgames, displays and reminiscing, followed by a delicious banquet and dance in the hall, brought the long awaited day to a close. A lot of history was relived, along with many old school friends meeting for the first time in many years.

How I Conquered INVERMAY - and LOCH SLOY, too!

submitted by F. Eugene Gattinger

People said there was a war on somewhere; but I had decided it could wait, at least until I had taken a run at my first job in a one-room schoolhouse with 63 pupils from Grades I to X. At nineteen, I had just graduated from the Regina Normal School and there wasn't anything in the Education Business which I couldn't manage.



Class of 1917. Standing L to R: Ted Stienke, Frank Palmer, Ada Palmer, Joe Ceslak, Minnie Squire, Victor Knight, Charlie Squire, Miss Forman. Sitting L to R: Bob Squire, Marriette Bull, Lilly Palmer, Hazel Squire.

There were, however, a few minor obstacles. My mother had got it into her head that, Loch Sloy being close to the Arctic Circle (I had already compromised by rejecting a better offer from Snowden, Sask. at \$800.00 per annum), I would not be allowed to practise the art until I had an in-grown toenail removed. And before one could conquer Loch Sloy, one had to pass through a place called Invermay. That was to become the second obstacle. There were others.

Since the 36-passenger bus out of Yorkton had thirty-five empty seats, I got the distinct impression that the Loch Sloy School District had laid it on just for me. It certainly seemed a good deal more comfortable than bare-back! It was one of those soft June mornings (kids got their holidays in Jan.-Feb. in the far North!) when clearly life would simply go on forever.

As I stepped from the bus into the still settling gravel dust of Invermay, Sask., a meadowlark throbbled a welcome fit to burst from a tree behind the Three Star Imperial Oil standard. That bird was in direct competition with another who was just then gassing up a half-ton truck. Suitcase in one hand, violin in the other, broad-brimmed homburg flat upon my head and a rubber on my right foot, I limped toward this operator, gas still dripping from the hose. As near as I can recall, the conversation went somewhat as follows:

"Good morning, Sir!"

"Will you have it in the suitcase, or in the machine gun?"

"It's a violin, Sir ..."

"So you don't want gas, then?"

"I wanna know, Sir, Where is the Loch Sloy school?"

"You're standing on it, Teach!"

"I'm standing on WHAT?"

"On the road which, except for a few jogs, will take you there about five miles straight North ..."

As I gathered up my chattels, I noted that his Three Star truck door had the words 'Harry DEACON, Prop.' printed on it. That gent now called after me to suggest that I could hardly WALK the distance, having apparently, "shot myself in the foot!" My remonstrances about a toenail seemed not to move him.

"Put your worldly goods into the back of the truck, Teach," he said. "I'll take you out there right after we get back from church. We've only got some thirty minutes ... you do go to church, I presume?"

"Yes, Sir," I said, "but I'm United."

"Of course you are", he replied flatly. (I could only assume that in these foreign parts, R.C.s never shot themselves in the foot.)

In the family kitchen I was introduced to his son, Howard, as "a new recruit for the Choir - after Thursday night's rehearsal." In the church, I now saw my man, his son, and a goodly company of folk 'processing' into the choir loft. What a transformation! In a long black gown, my man stood tall and lithe as a jaguar. A spotlight on his wholly bald cranium now highlighted a tonsured ring of hair which suggested either a High Priest, or a Roman Consul. And when his basso profundo issued forth the AMEN, the congregation was left in no doubt that it was now all over. It was during the benediction that I decided that my professional career, if not my immediate salvation, might somehow be enhanced by following this prophet who was just now announcing "sandwiches and milk back at the kitchen."

But first, he told Howard, "the Teach had better meet Mother." I was introduced to her in the living room where, seated in solitary splendor, she balanced a large book upon her lap. As she closed this book to meet me, I realized at once that it was not the family Bible but a title which I had never heard of. With the wisdom which comes of hindsight, I now realize that you could probably count on the fingers of two hands the number of Canadians who were trying to make some sense out of Hitler's Mein Kampf on that fine June morning.

Many months later, I presumed to ask Howard why his father always spent Sunday afternoons at his Imperial Oil office downtown.

"He types reams of letters," said Howard, "to my brother Art, a flier, who is now in a P.O.W. camp in Germany." So that was it! I cannot recall ever having met 'Mother' again. To me, she is Lady Deacon, forever in her parlour and dealing with the likes of Adolf Hitler in perpetuity. Did Art come

home again, perhaps to 'fly' the little truck? I know not ...

But on this, my first Sunday in Invermay, and before communing with his son Art, Harry Deacon drove me out to the Loch Sloy School District, there to meet farmer Jack Knight, Chairman of the Board.

"I've got something here for you, John." said the Prophet, rolling down his window. I thought his name was 'Jack', but this roly-polly pudg of a man, smiling like a basket of chips, approached the passenger's door with an "Ah! This must be Mr. Gattinger, our new Teacher!" How wonderful that word 'teacher' sounded; but the 'Mister' was pure, unadorned music from heaven. Clearly, I was, at long last, to get a kind of respect appropriate to my office.

After the usual pleasantries, it was decided that the suitcase and the machine gun could come out of the truck; Mr. Knight would take me to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Birrell (lately landed from Loch Sloy, Scotland, I surmised). But first, I was to have a tour of the Knight farm. Since I had had some 19 years of farming experience as well, I took this tour quite in stride, there being many "Mr. Gattingers" to bolster my interest. Like all visitors to this farm, I was greatly impressed by a four-inch iron pipe which, near the top of a high and eastern protecting hillside, spouted water day and night, crystal cold from a spring below. The rest of the farmstead, noted Jack Knight, had been pockmarked by dry holes during the ten-year drought. With an elfin grin, he noted proudly that it had taken his eldest son Victor all that time to "convince us to sink a hole into the top of this hill!" It was here that I met their young son Frank who turned out to be one of my Grade X students and who was 1-½ heads taller than I - and he seemed pretty bright as well.

Arriving at the boarding house of the Birrells, we were almost immediately processed into the dining room for a high, Scottish tea. It began to dawn on me that a good deal more than the Yorkton bus had been laid on for my advent. Clearly, for the people in this district, education was a serious business. Would Monday morning never arrive, I wondered?

It did, in fact, finally arrive. I walked the mandatory mile North, my self-conscious rubber flopping in the dust. There, on the east side of the road, and on a slight knoll with not so much as a blade of grass or a tree to compromise its stark challenge, stood the Loch Sloy school. As I opened the bottom gate, all games stopped at once. Like spectres in a dream, the sixty-three children stood at respectful attention, their mouths wide open.

My first concern was for the fitting of all these bodies into the single room - until I noted that all

Juniors sat at home-made bench desks, three to a unit. I noted also that the entire east wall was given over to high sash windows, sweeping almost to the floor. What a wonderful distraction for the children, I thought. As mandated in the Regulations of the Ministry, I found the Register in the large flat drawer, lying parallel to the strap. Two inches wide and eighteen inches long, this was the instrument whose use Chairman Knight had advocated "at the earliest possible opportunity."

In large bold letters, I printed the two most important words in the English, or any other language, upon the blackboard. "Mister Gattinger" they announced with firm authority. (I had become more than a little testy about "The Teach" business which had hung in the air just now as I walked the gauntlet to the front door).

I rang the bell. I watched with fascination as the Grade I's, II's, and III's filed into these single benches, almost as though each had read just how Mr. Squeers managed such matters at Dotheboys Hall. Grades IV and V also shared benches somewhat larger; but by Grade VI, apparently, one was sufficiently educated to have a desk of one's very own. Things were beginning to look possible, especially as by 9:15 a.m., it was becoming quite clear that everyone could "say after me" MISTER GATTINGER with God-fearing conviction. We then had "O Canada", "God Save the King", and two shakey verses of "The Maple Leaf." During roll-call, I noted many Ukrainian and Polish names, that of 'Barteski' seeming to occur in every grade. Doubtless cousins, I thought. There seemed no need, as far as I could see, for the use of the strap.

On Wednesday evening I had a telephone call from Mr. Harry Deacon, Prop. to say that Howard would be up to get me for choir practice the following evening. Since I had already taken note that one of the altos, Jean Howe, had amongst other attributes, a porcelain complexion, I told the Deacon that I was "ready an' willin'" - though I had begun to wonder whether perhaps the local Imperial Oil agency was really only a 'front' for the United Church of Invermay.

I now found to my surprise, and satisfaction, that Frank Knight was prepared to walk both to and from school with me, rubber foot notwithstanding. At this distance in time, the mind tends to filter out all but the very best - and the very worst.

It must have been during the second or third week that I became aware of lice in the hair of many pupils; also, that many others had measles as well. At the Regina Normal School, we had been taught to be very circumspect about this first malady. It was to be dealt with as *pediculus capitis*; but I had decided upon a more direct approach, especially as

a letter from my mother advocated the use of coal oil. She also cautioned me against getting too close to the children as it had been amply demonstrated that measles were communicable. (How could one strap them, I wondered?) Accordingly, it was announced from the front of the classroom that children with measles were to stay home; also, that all heads with lice (sic) were to be washed over the weekend in coal oil.

There were other educational advances. I recall walking the entire school some nine miles North-westerly on a Saturday morning to the ??? School District, whom we thoroughly trounced in softball (was the final score really 13 to two?), and then walking all those tender, blistered feet back to Loch Sloy by sundown.

For some special event, we mounted a parade float which, under a huge bearskin, featured Premier Stalin. There was a mandatory Churchill, a Mussolini and, in a make-shift wheelchair, an F.D.R. as well. War, like education, was becoming an increasingly serious business in Saskatchewan.

Word got loose that the Inspector's car had been seen at a nearby school. I was advised to be well prepared for his arrival at any time. We rehearsed readers, spellers, sums - and some social studies as well - but mostly his name. (Was it really Inspector Sweetgrass, I now wonder, or was that the name some of the Grade VIII boys had given him?) In any event, I do recall bridling at some of his after-four "suggestions for improvements". In due course, as prescribed, I received a yellow carbon copy of the Report to the Minister of Education on this Mr. F. Eugene Gattinger. I recall being upset because, as so often in my life, I seemed not to have gotten straight A's in all categories. But my mind remains forever fixed upon the sentence with which this report concluded. It read: "Mr. Gattinger observed that anything he might accomplish in this school above and beyond sheer discipline, should be considered in the nature of a total bonus to the community." "What would Chairman Jack Knight think of that, I wondered? Perhaps as I now head into my nonage, it is a mere rationalization; but I do like to think that this same Inspector's Report was somewhat instrumental in pioneering the Consolidated School Districts in Saskatchewan after we got finished with Hitler. I cannot, at this late stage of my career, allow myself to believe that I was a total failure.

Certainly, from this nadir point, it seemed to be downhill all the way. Things seemed to be coming apart even in Invermay's United Church Choir - especially when I learned from Howard Deacon that Jean Howe had been the high school sweetheart of a chap called Something? Loucks who, in my opinion, had been rendering a wickedly frayed bass

in the choir.

In any event, I decided to move on "Par Ardua and Astra", to save Canada itself by volunteering for military service in the R.C.A.F. And it was in precisely this fashion that the children of Loch Sloy were themselves saved. My joining up at this time was not so much out of a sense of patriotism; it arose rather from a growing awareness that the teaching profession would be offering some nasty, unexpectedly rough bumps just around the corner. But more to the point, I became an airman out of sheer terror at the prospect of receiving the khaki coloured envelope from the Ministry of National Defense. Prime Minister MacKenzie King had taken to announcing "conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription" and this seemed far too ambivalent a promise upon which to launch a second career, especially as the Army was known to be a dangerous place.

Education is such a wonderful thing, especially to them as has it. Thank you Invermay, Saskatchewan; thank you Loch Sloy.

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