



**442 WILLIAM AVENUE  
PROVINCIAL NORMAL SCHOOL**

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1980

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The first Normal School in Manitoba was established in 1882 by the Protestant Board of Education, an administrative body responsible for what were later the public schools of the province. The Catholic Board followed suit in 1883. These represented an effort to improve the standards of teaching, which was at a rather low level, being left to each school to set its own standards. The two normal schools also provided four-week sessions in various towns to help the country teachers and by 1884, the good work of the Normal School and rural Normal Institutes were beginning to show.<sup>1</sup> There was a movement among educators to organize and standardize the quality of education and this envisaged making the teachers more “professional”. It was not mandatory for teachers to take this training for many years however, nor was there compulsory school attendance for the children.<sup>2</sup>

Lack of professionalism was only one of the problems attending the school system. The Manitoba School Question of 1897 wrenched the population into opposing factions and the Laurier-Greenway compromise and the Coldwell Amendments of 1912 did little to close the schism or raise the standards. The problem was intricately connected with the mass immigration to the west of thousands of people who spoke dozens of languages, and the need of the established majority to enforce its concept of ‘nationalism’. One of the results of the School Question left the Department of Education in a state of chaos.

Nevertheless, against this backdrop of controversy and ineffectiveness, teachers’ education did manage to progress. The Normal Schools offered both a long and a short teacher-training program, and the number of teachers taking one or the other climbed rapidly.<sup>3</sup> By 1905, there were 2,272 teachers in Manitoba, of whom half had at least a few weeks of Normal School and

another 300 had more.<sup>4</sup> The number of students attending school was also increasing rapidly. To accommodate this growth, a permanent Normal School was built in St. Boniface in 1903, in Winnipeg in 1905, in Brandon in 1913 and in Manitou in 1914. Before 1905, the Winnipeg normal sessions were held in the old Mulvey School on Maryland at Broadway and later in Carlton School. In 1904, plans were drawn up for the site at 442 William Avenue, and in 1905, construction commenced on the Normal School. It opened its doors in 1906.

The building was designed by Samuel Hooper who became the first Provincial Architect in 1907.<sup>5</sup> Hooper was British born and came to Winnipeg in 1889, where he established the Hooper Marble Works. He designed and carved the monument formerly in front of City Hall which commemorates soldiers lost in the second Riel Rebellion. In 1894, Hooper “took up the practice of architecture”,<sup>6</sup> after some formal training in England. He established a solid reputation and his works, while in private practice include the Carnegie Library down the street from the Normal School, Isbister School and the Land Titles Building. As Provincial Architect, Hooper designed some of the agricultural college structures, the Brandon asylum and the Brandon courthouse.<sup>7</sup> He died in 1911, to be succeeded by the only other architect to hold that office, Victor Horwood.

Hooper’s design for the Normal School gathered elements from several architectural orders to give a classical effect. The building is 99 by 121 feet and three storeys high, with the first floor partly underground. It has a facing of smooth-cut limestone with a brick backing and rests on a rougher limestone foundation. Galvanized iron clad the roof<sup>8</sup> and the top of a large dome which is situated over the corner entrance. The iron has rusted to a muddy colour and has washed down in ribbons of brown onto the limestone. The three features of the building are its corner entrance, its dome and the varying roof line. The entrance opening is set in, which permitted a portico with limestone pillars and a carved parapet containing the words “Normal School” and the crest of Manitoba. The corner location is further emphasized by a gable and the dome which

was originally surrounded by a stone balustrade. Three pediments, each with a round window, and three stone gables create a varying and 'busy' roofline. The walls of the structure are plain by contrast, using only an entablature between floors and a bracketed cornice. The interior is finished in woodwork of oak and fir.<sup>9</sup> The cost of the structure was \$10,000.

The firm of W.H. Rourke was the general contractor and did all the stonework. The interior woodwork and some of the ironwork was given to C.H. Simpson and local firms were contracted for the rest of the job.<sup>10</sup>

The basement, which is set high enough to receive a good deal of light, held a recreation room, gymnasium, class rooms, kitchen and boiler rooms. On the main floor were the offices, more class rooms, a model room, and a 40 by 30 foot library. The second storey contained a laboratory, museum and art room, and rooms for manual and domestic training.<sup>11</sup> The caretaker's suite was finished in the attic in 1912.

In 1912 an "international station...for the study of the deformation of the earth by the moon"<sup>12</sup> was sunk 22 feet below the basement. This was described by the Department of Public Works as one of only three such stations in the world, and the first one in North America, but no further information could be located on this underground lab.

This building is significant in that it also contained a model school, a concept in teacher-training that was new to Manitoba. This consisted of seven classrooms with an attendance of thirty students per class, so that there was in effect, a school within a school. The teachers were shown the latest in teaching methods and new course material;<sup>13</sup> it was practice teaching with a set group of students. Manual training for the boys and domestic arts for the girls were likewise taught, having been introduced into school systems in 1903.<sup>14</sup> The model school was so successful that parents were on waiting lists to enroll their children, and the student graduates

seemed to flourish from the particular attention. So more teachers took the normal training, there was less room for the students and the model school closed in 1913. Teachers were subsequently given practice teacher training in schools throughout the province and that situation continues today.

By 1916, attendance at Normal Schools was required. Aspirants to the teaching profession had to complete Grade 10 and take an eleven week course for a third class certificate, tenable for three years. Later, a twenty week course (which was soon extended into a full year) would give teachers second class standing.<sup>15</sup> University courses were required for first class standing. In fact, most teachers quit before their first three years because the salaries, especially in the rural areas, were so low. This in turn kept the quality of teaching low also. W.A. McIntyre, the principal of the Normal School complained repeatedly:

There is no monetary inducement for a teacher to perfect herself in her calling. Everything points the other way. Suppose a teacher to hold a third-class license. What outlay is involved in proceeding toward a certificate of the next grade? It is represented by a year's attendance at a secondary school and a half year's attendance at Normal School, together with the loss of money that might have been earned during this period. What is the monetary gain? It may be \$25 or even \$50, a year, or the doubtful privilege of serving in a crowded village school...<sup>16</sup>

The depression in the 1930s worsened the situation. In 1932-33, the average monthly salary of teachers in Manitoba was \$112, board not included. Wage scales were set in the 1940s, and it was then that a small Department of Education was established at the University of Manitoba, housed for many years in one of the 'huts' built on campus during World War II.

In 1949, the provincial Normal School moved into the former Manitoba School for the Deaf in Tuxedo, and in 1957, its name was changed to the Manitoba's Teachers' College.<sup>17</sup> The William Avenue building was taken over by the Manitoba Department of Health and Welfare. During the 1960s, there was a Vocational Centre in the building. The government offices vacated the

building in 1979.

In 1962, the Education Building was constructed on campus<sup>18</sup> and co-existed with the Teachers' College but now all teachers are trained through the University.

There have been few external changes to the Normal School over the years. Routine maintenance and a quota of remodelling has occurred on the inside but the structure is essentially as it was in 1906.

## Footnotes

1. Keith Wilson, The Development of Education in Manitoba, PhD. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967, p. 122.
2. Under much controversy, compulsory attendance for children under the age of 14 was made law in 1916.
3. “Report of the Department of Education”, Sessional Papers of the Province of Manitoba, 1908, p. 430. There is a chart which gives the number of teachers attending all the Normal School sessions from 1883-1907.
4. Loc. cit., table 3.
5. Frank Schofield, The Story of Manitoba, Vol. III, The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, Winnipeg, 1913, p. 601.
6. Obituary, Construction magazine, January 1912, p. 49.
7. Schofield, op. cit.
8. City of Winnipeg Building Permits, #1450, June 21, 1905.
9. Public Buildings Erected and Improved by the Government of Manitoba During the Years 1900-1906, Manitoba Government, Ministry of Public Works, December, 1906.
10. Hammond and Rodway – plumbing and heating; J. Anderson – painting and glazing; J.H. Torrey – electrical work. Sessional Papers, op. cit., “Report of Provincial Architect”, 1906.
11. Public Buildings Erected, etc., op. cit.
12. Sessional Papers, op. cit., “Report of Provincial Architect, 1913, p. 345.
13. Sessional Papers, op. cit., “Report of W.A. McIntyre, B.A., Principal of Provincial Model School”, 1908, p. 450.
14. Wilson, op. cit., p. 303.
15. “Early Teacher Training in Manitoba”, Free Press, 30 October 1971.
16. Sessional Papers, op. cit., “Report of W.A. McIntyre, B.A., Principal Provincial Normal School, 1908, p. 447.
17. Free Press, 27 September, 1957.
18. From Rural Parkland to Urban Centre, the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1978, p. 66.

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Plate 1 – Provincial Normal School, 442 William Avenue, shortly after construction. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, M.J. Guthrie Collection, No. 13.)

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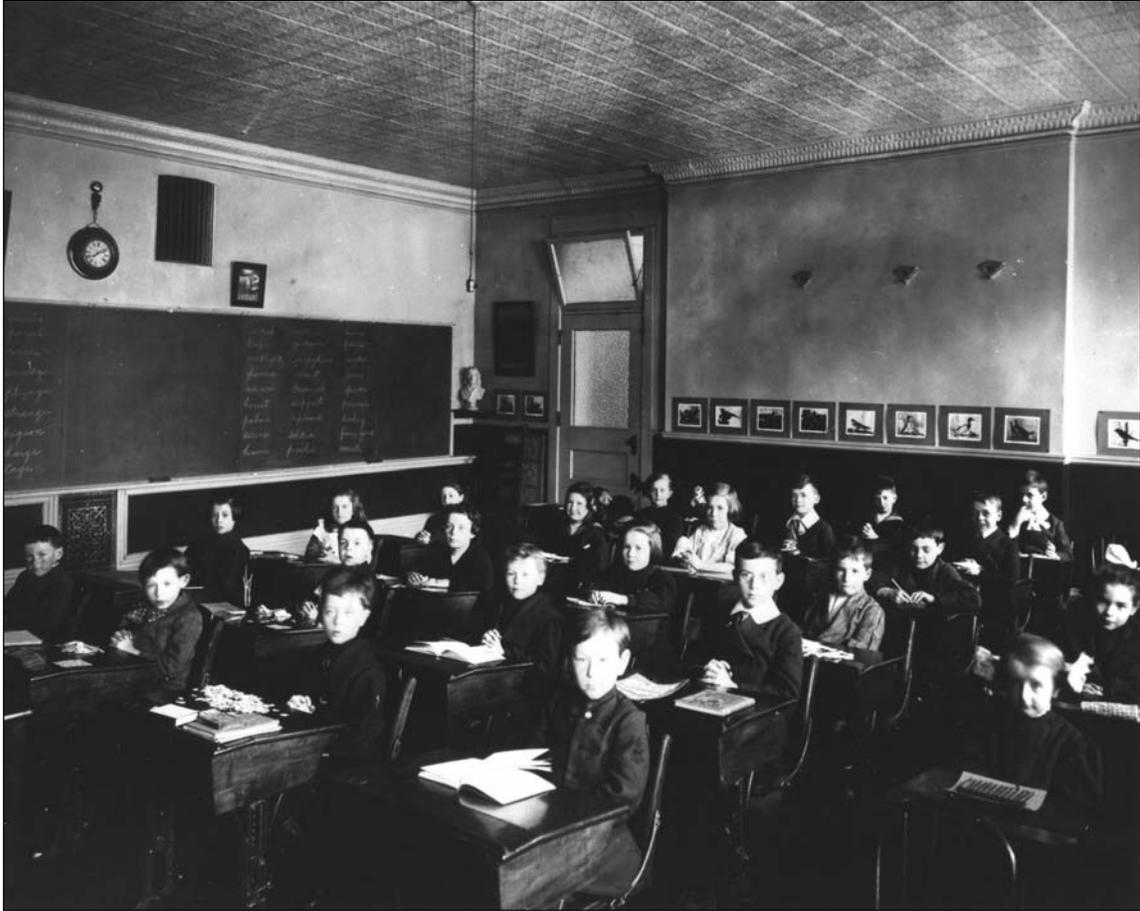


Plate 2 – A Model School class ca.1910. This was an official school within the Normal School. Students came from around the city. The Model School only lasted from 1907 to 1913. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 3 – The 1915 graduating class, grouped around the principal, Dr. W.A. McIntyre. From the Polish Canadian Pioneer Survey. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Polish Canadian Pioneer Survey Collection, No. 48.)

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Plate 4 – Provincial Normal School, 1969. . (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)