

SCHOOL HISTORY

Just one hundred years ago, in June 1879, the first settlers arrived in this area. It is indeed fitting that we, in this year of 1979, may honor the memory of the White Bank Lea School District by joining together in this celebration.

We will dedicate the cairn, located near the site of the original school, so that future generations may know, that here once stood the first institution of learning in this area.

This cairn will serve as a memorial symbol, to the contribution, made by the school, in the development of the people who have been enrolled; or in any way associated with it throughout the years. It is true that for many, even to-day, the School District of White Bank Lea exists only in memory as a part of the ever changing pattern of education. To others, it is still a vital part of their being, holding memories of days when the school was not only the centre of learning, but was also the heart of the social life of the small district. In the days before telephone, radio, television and even adequate mail service, transportation or roads, the country school was an integral part of the life of the area. It has been twenty-four years since the School District was closed. Both the original building and its 1929 replacement have been removed from their locations, but it seems fitting that each building is still serving in a particular way. The original building stood on Section 1 - 14 - 22, close to where this cairn now stands. Canadian grain grows on the land enclosed by the spruce trees across the road on 12 - 14 - 22, where so many children first set foot on the school grounds of the second school, which was constructed in 1929. In tribute, we have endeavoured to compile some facts which we have secured.

We apologize for any errors or omissions and we have tried to be as accurate in our record as was possible.

The first settlers came to the area in 1879 and many pioneer names are still a part of this community. True to the pattern of pioneer settlements, the settlers turned their attention to the education of their children, as soon as they had secured provision for food and shelter. And so it was, that on Sept.9th, 1889, after considerable ground work had been done, that the first meeting of the people was called by the Superintendent of the Board of

Education, with the purpose of forming the White Bank Lea School District. After surveys of areas and available children, the time was right for the following motion made by E.D. Cardale and seconded by John Hall Stewart Jr. and unanimously carried - - -

"That the secretary be instructed to get the necessary books and papers in connection with the said office, for conducting the business of the said Corporation.

The secretary to be instructed to purchase a seal, to be the seal of the said Corporation of White Bank Lea School District No. 593."

Thus it was, that White Bank Lea was born. Many meetings followed to plan, to build and to furnish the first school house. Those who formed the first board were Trustee John Hall Stewart Jr., Trustee W.R. McKenzie and Trustee William Henry. John Hall Stewart Sr. served as secretary-treasurer and Thomas Davidson was auditor. The School District was authorized to borrow the sum of \$500.00 by the issue and sale of ten debentures, to be repaid to the Government of Canada. J.McCance was named contractor to be responsible for the construction of the building. Lumber was freighted from Rapid City and the school was built. The complete cost of the building was \$558.46. The early minutes of the School Board record that three dollars were to be used for the construction of the teacher's desk and two dollars were to be allocated to make three forms, or benches.

The school was opened in 1892 when it was verified that 40% of the eligible pupils would attend from May to December.

It is of interest to note that it was not until 1910 that the school was open for a complete school year. We should not fail to realize, that this was an important achievement, to have established a school in the area, as the first settlers arrived on this virgin soil in 1879. Children born to the early settlers, previous to 1892 must have received all their education from their parents. The family unit was strong then, and the pioneer spirit seemed to enable them to achieve their goals, in the face of unbelievable difficulties.

The little school was set on the ground level on a stone foundation. It was 26X36 feet with a small porch to the south. Some of those who attended the school in years past have said that it always seemed to be in need of a coat of paint. The tall, narrow windows were on both the