

School Section #19 – Fanshawe School
Original Building
London Township, 1871

Contributed by Carling Marshall

In April 1992, the Fanshawe School Fund had successfully raised the \$25,000 needed to relocate School Section #19 four kilometres down Fanshawe Park Road to its new home at Fanshawe Pioneer Village. The school, slated for demolition, was the last of a number of 19th century buildings once located in the hamlet of Fanshawe near the corner of Highbury Ave and Fanshawe Park Road.¹

The property for the schoolhouse had been acquired by purchase from Samuel Perkins on July 11, 1871. Perkins received \$100 from the trustees of S.S. #19 and the brick building was built on Caesar McLeod's farm on the fifth concession.²

The School Act of 1871 mandated compulsory attendance and a prescribed curriculum. According to the Act, essential subjects included reading, writing, arithmetic, and use of the English language. Also included were geography, history, civics, and principles of Christian morals.³ Revisions to the Act added practical subjects such as agriculture, bookkeeping and mechanical arts. Despite the School Act, most schools concentrated on reading, writing, spelling, composition, arithmetic and geography.⁴

Rough physical conditions at S.S. #19 prevailed into the early 20th century. The building was designed without consideration for proper ventilation and was often filled with smoke. In 1931, a wood-burning stove was still the sole source of heat for the building, and students had to constantly feed the fire on cold days. Also in 1931, approximately \$300 was spent on the installation of "sanitary closets," which were installed along the north wall of the school. A well was drilled in 1945, and a few years later a complete water system was installed. Electricity was not installed in the schoolhouse until 1938.⁵

In April 1954, the trustees of S.S. #19 received estimates for the cost of building a new school, but ratepayers voted down the motion. However, by the year's end, public opinion was changing in favour of a modern school. Construction began in May of 1955 but as the school was not completed in time for the next school year, students returned to the old one-room school once more. For its final school year, the S.S. #19 schoolhouse was divided into two halves by a curtain. Ada Woods taught grades one to four on one side, while Lloyd Flannigan taught grades five to eight on the other.⁶

The school closed in 1955 after serving the families of School Section #19 for eighty-four years,⁷ though the building continued to function as a community centre.⁸ Larger, more centrally located facilities had replaced the network of small brick schools like S.S. #19 that still dot the rural landscape.

Many visitors to the Village remember Fanshawe School in its original location; some even recall their time spent as students in this very building or in a similar one-room schoolhouse. The building continues to fulfil its intended purpose as a 19th century schoolhouse for Fanshawe Pioneer Village's education programs and the award winning Museum School project, where students make S.S. #19 their classroom for a week of experiential learning.

¹ London Free Press, "Back to the one-room school," Sept. 8, 2004.

² Calbeck, 1-2.

³ Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario: 1876-1976* (1982), 7.

⁴ Stamp, 7.

⁵ Calbeck, 27-35

⁶ Calbeck, 39.

⁷ Scott Calbeck, *A History of S.S. No. 19, London Township* (1992), 1.

⁸ London Free Press, "School on Wheels," April 23 1992.