

# The Magnet



Toronto Grammar School  
Centennial Souvenir Number  
1807=1907.

Published by the Students of Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute,  
Toronto, Canada.



Cricket  
Boots,

Tennis  
Boots,

Baseball Boots,

Sweaters,

Gymnasium Jerseys,

Knickers,

School Pendants, etc.

---

---

*J. Brotherton*

*550 Yonge St.*

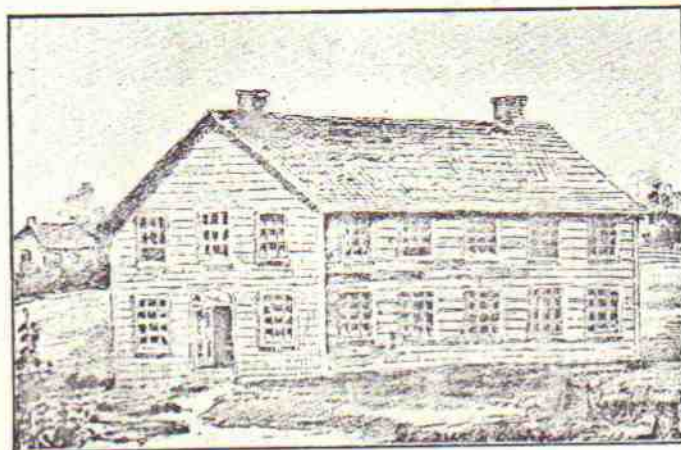
Phone North 2092.

## The Changes of a Century.

By W. H. ROBERTSON, B.A.

**T**HE Centennial of the Old Grammar School is an event which should interest not only its legion of pupils past and present, but the citizens of Toronto generally, for this school is practically the first public institution of the city to pass the century mark. At its inception it was the sole fountain of learning in the district of which "Muddy York" was the chief place, and it has lived through a hundred years and witnessed the growth of its village parent into one of the great cities of the world.

During all these years the school has changed both its name and site many times, yet its history may be traced back in an unbroken line to the



"THE OLD BLUE SCHOOL," 1816.

time of its founding in the reign of King George III. In the year 1807 an Act was passed by the Legislature of Upper Canada providing for the establishment of Public or Grammar Schools. Upper Canada at that early period was divided into eight districts, and at the most important centres of each the schools were established. Toronto, or the town of York, as it was then called, received one of the schools, to which the name of "Home District School" was given. The school was opened on the 16th of April, 1807, being situated on King Street, near George Street. The building was small and made of rough-hewn stone drawn from the near-by quarries. In fact, it resembled very much the older type of school now found in many of the earliest settled districts of Ontario. For six years this building was occupied by the Home District School. In the year 1813, the attendance having greatly increased, the accommodation proved inadequate for the scholars; so

we find the school being next held in a large barn, which was of course somewhat remodelled to suit its new purpose and was located at the corner of King and Yonge Streets. At this time Dr. Strachan, who had but recently come over from Scotland, upon the invitation of the Government of Upper Canada, took charge of the school.

The first year of the Grammar School in its new home was a very eventful one. General Dearborne, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army, had taken the town in April, and for a time it was filled with American troops.

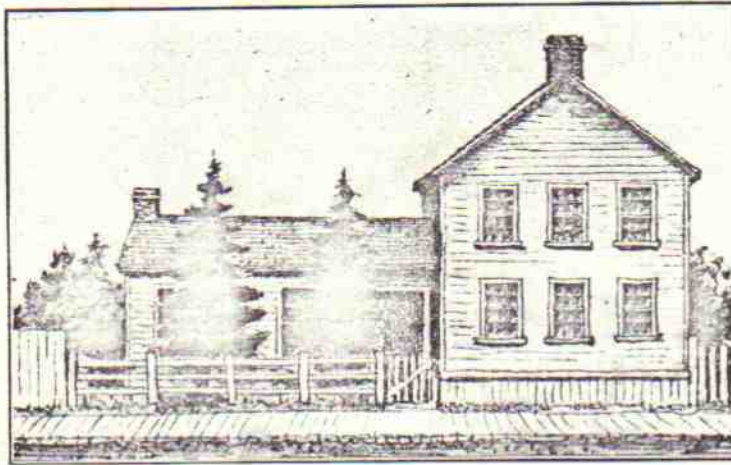
Those were indeed stirring days for the boys of the school! One can imagine the excitement there must have been when the word passed around in school, on that morning in April, just ninety-four years ago, that the Americans were coming upon the town, and that even then their fleet of sixteen vessels, with full sail set, could be plainly seen approaching the land. The school being in such close proximity to the water-front, it would be safe to say the masters lost no time in getting the boys out of harm's way. During this occupation of York, many of the public buildings in the town were destroyed by fire, but happily the school escaped the flames, owing no doubt to the intercession of the head master—Dr. Strachan.

After the war, times became better, and as a result, the school again found itself overcrowded. Accordingly in the summer of 1816 a new building was erected upon the site where our Public Library stands. The whole of this block now bounded by Church, Adelaide, Jarvis and Richmond Streets had been set aside in 1797 for educational purposes. In those early days, Toronto was but a very small town, and this college square, as it was called, was considered as being out in the suburbs, and altogether a very suitable site for an educational centre that was expected to endure for all time! The new building, on this account, was a great improvement on the two preceding schools. It was composed almost entirely of timber which had been cut down in the forest that covered all the land immediately to the north. It was now two stories high, and about sixty feet long by forty wide. This structure was painted a vivid blue, and on that account was known for many years as the "Blue School." It is estimated that the total cost amounted to something like \$3,000; in those days a very considerable sum. The appearance of the interior was characteristic of the English schools of that period. The master's desk stood in one corner of the room, while around the walls, on the north and south sides, were ranged desks and benches facing inward. The large central space was also filled with long double desks and benches running at right angles to those by the wall.

The playground in connection with this school was indeed an ample one, for it consisted of the whole school block—six acres in all. In this large field the boys of course found no difficulty in working off their superfluous energy, though the pastime by which this was accomplished is rather uncertain, for cricket and football had not then been introduced, baseball being yet unborn. It is quite likely, however, that the boys of this period were just as resourceful as those of to-day, and so their games and amusements,

though somewhat primitive, afforded them as much exercise and pleasure as any in vogue at the present time.

This immense playground was by no means level, for here and there were found miniature hills and valleys, which formed excellent sliding places in winter. When the hard frost of this season abated and the snow became soft, the boys erected huge snow forts, and in mimic warfare fought over again the battles of 1812. These forts were of such generous proportions, that they remained standing long after all the rest of the snow had disappeared. In summer a favorite amusement was to hunt in the hollows for crayfish, which were found living in holes burrowed in the soft clay. Over all the ground the stumps and undergrowth of the original forest still remained; among this the birds built their nests, which the boys took great delight in searching out and robbing of their contents. For the more adventurous spirits, the dark, forbidding forest to the north always lay open. From out



HOME DISTRICT GRAMMAR SCHOOL, NELSON AND STANLEY STREETS, 1829.

its depths came the Indians, and swarthy traders, bringing with them tales of the wild life of the woods. The effect of these stories on the impressionable minds of the boys was very great. These traders soon came to be regarded in their eyes as heroes, and the forest was looked upon as a vast unexplored region that seemed always to be inviting them to come and partake of its wild and free life.

In the year 1829 the Blue School was moved to the north-east corner of the school block, and there it remained until as late as 1864. Upon its opening on the new site, the name of the school was changed to Upper Canada College, or Royal Grammar School. This college was supposed to supersede the old Blue School, and probably all the masters and boys were transferred from the old to the new school. However, it was not long before dissatisfaction arose. The new systems of education and correction which had been introduced did not find favor in the eyes of many people, so we find that in 1831

