

Walter Schroeder Memoir of boyhood in New Edinburgh and being a pupil of "Teacher Hartwick" in primary school (1906-1913).

Dear Mr. Donaldson¹:

I have completed my scheduled sittings in the Court of Appeal for the present and all my judgments have been written so that, as I promised, I am free to record a few of my recollections of New Edinburgh centering mainly upon the Lutheran parochial school which I attended during the early period of the late George E. Hartwick's career.

It is difficult to know just how and where to begin this narrative. Perhaps it will bring everything into focus if I were to state that I was born in New Edinburgh on the 24th January 1901 when my parents were residing at 145 Crichton Street. My forebears on both the paternal and maternal sides of the family were among the early settlers in the village, my mother's parents, whose name was Haul (later spelled Howell) having come there in the 1860's and my father's parents about a decade later. New Edinburgh was then an incorporated village and became part of the City of Ottawa on the 1st of January 1887. My Maternal grandfather, Henry Haul (or Howell) was one of the founders of old St. Paul's Lutheran congregation which is now housed in the beautiful old stone Gothic Church edifice situated at the corner of King Edward Avenue and Wilbrod Street in Sandy Hill. The church records indicate that forty men met at his home on November 14th, 1874, and it was at this meeting, over which he presided as chairman, that the congregation

¹This memoir takes the form of a letter (dated March 15, 1968) to Edward S. Donaldson, a person with a special interest in the history of New Edinburgh. Justice Walter Schroeder had been Judge in Ontario since 1945. "Teacher Hartwick" (George Hartwick, d. 1945) was the older brother of Frederick W. Hartwick, grandfather of John M. Hartwick. As John Hartwick has noted in his memoir, "Out of Arvida" (2007), George Hartwick greatly influenced the life of his younger brother, Fred. Fred in fact receives a passing reference in this Schroeder memoir.

was founded. The first pastor to serve the congregation, although not as resident pastor, was the Rev. H.W. Schroeder (no relation of mine) who was then pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Locksley, about six miles from Pembroke, Ontario.

My reference to the founding of St. Paul's Church may seem irrelevant to you, but it is pertinent to my account in this respect, that it was the mother church of the present St. Luke's church in New Edinburgh which was organized in 1914, the church building having been dedicated on October 24th, 1915 when the Rev. Albert Orzen was ordained as its first pastor. St. Luke's school on Dufferin Road was formerly one of two parochial schools operated by the congregation of St. Paul's, the other, a larger school, being located nearer to St. Paul's church, on Nelson Street.

A large proportion of the members of St. Paul's church had made their homes in New Edinburgh, approximately one and one-half miles distant from the church and the Nelson Street School. Both church and school attendance proved burdensome for this reason and in 1895 the branch school was established on Dufferin Road in New Edinburgh. As so frequently happened in the synod's past experience, the new branch school became the core around which the daughter congregation grew and developed with the results already indicated. It is interesting to note in these days of extravagant land prices, that the parcel of land at the corner of Mackay and Noel Streets, on which St. Luke's church was erected, was acquired for the modest price of \$700.00. It is also worthy of observation that the church and parsonage were erected in 1914-15 for the contract price of \$21,000.00. They could not be reproduced today for many times that amount.

It is not generally realized that the members of these two congregations were public school supporters who were not only obliged to pay the general school rates, but also supported their own schools without any financial assistance whatsoever from the state. They carefully shouldered this expense because they firmly be-

lieved that the school as well as the home and church had a vital role to play in moulding the character of the younger generation. Solomon's educational psychology, expressed in the quotation which follows, might well be compied in these modern times

"Train up achild in the was he
should go and when he is old
he will not depart from it."

Pope in his essay on Man, wrote these pertinent lines:-

"Tis education from the
common mind;
Just as the twig is bent the
tree's inclined."

The late Mr. George E. Hartwick was appointed as teacher of St. Luke's parochial school in or about 1896. He was a graduate of Concordia Teacher's College conducted by the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church at Addison Illinois, but now located at River Forest, Illinois, not far from Chicago. At this institution the students were given a thorough course in pedagogy with particular emphasis being laid upon religious knowledge. They were also required to study music, and when they were graduated tehy were accomplished organists and choir-directors. Those congregations which had established parochial schools thus acquired not only the services of a well-trained teacher qualified to instruct the pupils in everything that pertained to secular learning, but also in the field of religion. They also enjoyed the services of a well-qualified church organist and choir-director.

I first ventured into the educational sphere at the tender age of five years when I was enrolled in the kindergarten connected with Crichton Street Public School.

I almost hesitate to admit that I was a kindergarten "drop-out". I have looked into the recesses of my memory for a possible explanation of this and only received a satisfactory answer to the question when I learned that my little five-year-old grandson, Peter, who now attends Kindergarten in Toronto frequently voices his disappointment at the fact that he is not being taught how to read and spell like his older sister and brother. This led me to conclude that I had experienced a similar frustration and did not find the curriculum intellectually stimulating, in consequence of which I lost interest in the pursuit.

At the age of six I was enrolled in the little old school on Dufferin Road which had been attended by my older brother and sisters under the inspiration and guidance of "Teacher Hartwick", as he was known to everyone. I developed an almost insatiable appetite for learning. At the end of the first year I was given a document certifying that I had not been absent or late during the entire year and received a book by way of an award for my constancy. In those days our classes were not graded by numbers as they are today. They ran from junior first to senior fourth. Mr. Hartwick taught all grades, and in addition he had to serve as church organist and choir leader. The school programme was opened each morning with a prayer which we prayed in unison, and with the singing of a hymn. This was followed by instruction in bible history and Dr. Martin Luther's Catechism – then on to the three R's. Before dismissal we said another prayer in unison, sang a hymn and were on our way, viz. those who had not merited a detention.

In addition to the many duties which he was required to discharge, Teacher Hartwick had to instruct the children in singing for the annual Reformation festival in October, and for the annual children's Christmas service held in the church on Christmas eve. He also assigned them the verses which they were required to recite at these important events. I often wonder how he found the energy to accomplish so much and to do it so effectively. He was a God-fearing and dedicated man who

carried on his work from day to day in cheerful godliness. He was an excellent teacher of all subjects, especially mathematics, and if any pupil showed particular promise, he would tutor him privately and advance him to ensure that he would not lose interest in his studies.

In the days when I attended St. Luke's school we were required to remain there until we were confirmed. This worked out satisfactorily in most cases but since we were obliged to spend a year in the last grade or public school in order to write our entrance examinations, it worked out unfairly to pupils who reached the senior fourth class before confirmation age which had been fixed at fourteen years. I was in senior fourth at age 10 or 11 and our beloved teacher, appreciating my dilemma, taught me High School mathematics, and assigned literary and historical reading to me in order to keep me happy. In the result I was granted the privilege of being confirmed at the age of thirteen and while, according to the calendar, I may have been held back two or three years in my education, thanks to Mr. Hartwick the flame was not extinguished and I entered Lisgar Collegiate as a student who perhaps enjoyed something more than the average student's seasoning. In any case it can make little difference in a full life-time, and I entertain no doubt that it was highly beneficial to me to remain a little longer under the wholesome influence of my revered preceptor.

I should have mentioned the fact that Mr. Hartwick, who had been born in Fisherville, Ontario, married my older first cousin, Rose Schroeder. They were close friends of my family and he became my god-father. I still have among my prized possessions a handsome bible which he presented to me on the occasion of my confirmation in 1914. It was also my privilege to become involved in his life in another way. When I was about 16 years of age he arranged to spend the summer months of that year with his brothers in Fisherville and had to secure an assistant organist to take over that part of his duties. When he requested me to substitute

for him I was somewhat aghast, for while I had some proficiency as a pianist I had never played a pipe-organ. He made little of my protest and assured me that he could instruct me in the mysteries of the two-manual Casavant in two hours. He did his part and I struggled manfully to do mine. I was soon launched upon a new career but it was not achieved without strenuous effort on my part. While my family were enjoying the summer week-ends at the cottage on the Rideau I spent my Saturdays practising for the two Sunday services to be held the next day. However, in retrospect, it worked out very well for me, for when I went to Toronto to attend Osgoode Hall Law School, the St. John's congregation where I now worship was a small struggling church which was in dire need of an organist who would serve without compensation, and I was thus enabled to make some contribution during my student years. I continued to assist my old teacher from time to time in the years that followed and did so for some years after I entered upon the practice of law as a member of the firm of MacCracken, Fleming and Schoeder.

Mr. Hartwick had a fine presence and in his comparative youth might well be described as "tall, dark and handsome". He had a commanding presence and his pupils gave him the full measure of respect which was his due. While a kind and understanding man he was also a strict disciplinarian. His relationship to his pupils was in a very real sense analogous to the relationship between a prudent and benevolent parent and his children for whose welfare he was responsible. One could not impose upon him, yet he was fair and just and there was a real bond of affection between teacher and pupil. His entire teaching career was spent at St. Luke's School where he remained until he reached retirement age. He devoted his remaining years to his hobby as an apiarist which he had pursued during his active working years. He went to his eternal rest in 1945 mourned by two generations of students whom he had taught during his 49 years of his incumbancy.

Perhaps it will not be amiss at this point to relate two short anecdotes which will serve to emphasize the interest and concern which this beloved teacher felt for his students and ex-students. When I was a small boy I occasionally permitted my mischievous proclivities to control me during school hours with the result that the "C's" which I was given for conduct marred an otherwise satisfactory report. My mother made a bargain with me whereby she would buy me a violin if I received an "A" for conduct for three successive months. I decided to have that violin, and when I measured up to the terms of the contract mother kept her word. The teacher noticed the vast change which had come over his high-spirited pupil and was so gravely concerned that he asked mother if I were ill. When he learned the reason which underlay my conversion he was greatly amused. I rather fear that having won the coveted prize, I reverted now and then to my old ways but I had proven to myself and others that I could discipline myself when I found it desirable or necessary to do so.

I was appointed to the Supreme Court of Ontario on the 28th December 1945 by the late Prime Minister, The Rt. Honourable W.L. MacKenzie King when the Rt. Honourable Louis St. Laurent was Minister of Justice. Teacher Hartwick had died a short while before that date. His brother Fred, who was the office accountant in my law firm, related to me that his brother had read a press dispatch in which it was rumoured that I was soon to be appointed to the Bench. He was immensely pleased about it and chuckled as he said "and to think, Fred, that I used to spank a future Judge of the Supreme Court".

The little old school house was demolished in 1958 and replaced by a larger modern structure which was named the Hartwick Memorial School in honour of that dedicated Christian gentleman who had served it with fervent devotion for almost half a century. St. Luke's congregation has now abandoned the school and it is under lease to a new occupant. Time and change will never efface the

pleasant memories which I associate with the little old school-house on Dufferin Road in which I spent the most impressionable years of my life.

At the time of which I write New Edinburgh had the true atmosphere of a village and afforded many opportunities for diversion which would have delighted the heart of any boy. I cherish many happy memories of the old swimming hole on the banks of the Rideau River beside the "woodpiles". After our swim we used to play a game called "peggy" in the deep sawdust that lay between the large piles of cordwood. I also recall to mind the "Cedar bush" which fronted on Ivy Avenue where we used to play "Cow-boys and Indians". Every boy in New Edinburgh learned to skate at about the age of four or five years. A group of enterprising young men attending St. Paul's Church but residing in New Edinburgh erected a large skating rink on the property now occupied by St. Luke's Church. There were heated shacks provided for the convenience of the skaters, and every Saturday night the members could skate to the music of a brass-band. If I recall correctly, season tickets were available for an entire family at the modest cost of five dollars. Those days are gone forever.

During my boyhood years we were not far away from pleasant wooded areas such as Larmonth's Hill, which we sometimes referred to as the butternut grove, where our annual church and school picnic was held on Dominion Day. What pleasant memories that evokes! An even more densely wooded area surrounded old Beechwood Cemetery and the waters of MacKay's Lake. Then, too, Ottawa's magnificent Rockcliffe Park, a truly natural park, was a paradise for young skiers. I was first introduced to that pleasant outdoor activity by the Loa boys who were descended from Norwegian stock. They taught us how to make skis out of barrel-staves. I can still recall smoothing the bottom of the staves with a piece of glass, putting a crude harness in the centre which was nothing more than a fitting for the toe-cap, and waxing the smoothed under-surface of the so-called skis with

candle wax. Unrefined as our equipment was, it adequately served the immediate outdoor activity. In later years when I was beckoned by the lure of the Gatineau Hills, I often reflected upon the days when, under the direction of the Loa boys, we learned the rudiments of that delightful sport on home-made skis.

In 1924 when I returned to Ottawa to practise my profession, the city's population was less than 100,000. It was still a far cry away from "the madding crowd's ignoble strife" of a large and bustling metropolis and possessed a charm which set it apart from any city in Canada. New Edinburgh, the seat of Government House, and situated on high ground overlooking both the Rideau River and the Ottawa River was a pleasant residential area. My mother told me that her people chose it because of its elevation and because "the air was so good". Ottawa's own poet, Archibald Lampman, refers to it in one of his sonnets as

"The far-off city towered and roofed in blue,
A tender line upon the western red."

I have always disliked the title chosen by the late Austin Cross for his book about Ottawa viz. "The City of Snobs and Spires" for I have always found its inhabitants, especially those residing in New Edinburgh, warm and friendly. I infinitely prefer Duncan Campbell Scott's reference to it in his sonnet about Ottawa as

"The maiden queen of all the towered towns."

I often think of those lines when in New Edinburgh and turn my gaze upon the entire city which can be so clearly seen through any of the open spaces. In the same sonnet, Scott wrote:

"City about whose brow the north winds blow

Girdled with woods and shod with river form.”

Doubtless he was thinking about the Chaudiere Falls, but he must also have had his mind directed to our own Rideau Falls which can become quite turbulent during the spring run-off, and certainly he thought of the woods girdling New Edinburgh to which I have made reference.

When one reflects upon the past, memory opens many doors and there are so many things about which I could write. I recall, however, that you did not require me to go too far afield and I must end what I fear is in danger of becoming a tale of length. I would like to record one more memory of Ottawa before I conclude this epistle. Every New Year’s eve at midnight it was my custom to open the front door to ”let the New Year in”. I shall never forget how my native city always ushered in the New Year by the ringing of church-bells everywhere. It recalled to mind the words of Lord Tennyson

”Ring out wild bells, to the wild sky

...

Ring out the old, ring in the new,

Ring out the false, ring in the true.”

This probably a good note on which to end. I hope that these rambling reflections will be of some interest to you in the writing of the work upon which you have embarked. Even if they should not be helpful, it has given me much pleasure to put on paper some of my most pleasing recollections of my birth-place which will always have an abiding claim upon my affections.

Kindest regards,

Sincerely,