

# Two Historical Plaques Unveiled At Middlemarch

OCTOBER  
1960

The marking of the Talbot road as one of Upper Canada's most important highways and the commemoration of Dr. John Rolph, one of its earliest residents, was delayed too long, according to Dr. Wilfrid Jury, curator of the University of Western Ontario's Museum.

Dr. Jury, speaking at the Middlemarch Women's Institute Hall before about 75 residents of the road and their guests, took part in a dedication service that included the unveiling of two plaques Sunday afternoon.

In choosing the Talbot road and Dr. Rolph for commemoration, Dr. Jury stated the Department of Travel and Publicity, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board sponsors of the plaques, had made wise selections. It was the duty of the nine-member board, he added to mark memorable places and also to keep people aware of the contributions to society made by early Canadians.

The ceremony was held at the hall prior to the unveiling of the two plaques, the one to Dr. Rolph being unveiled by Dr. J. D. Curtis, 92-year-old St. Thomas physician and representative of the Elgin County Medical Association, and the plaque commemorating the Talbot road by Warden Harvey Liddle, of Elgin County.

## AT ROLPH SITE

Erected in front of the site of the old Rolph homestead, the plaque to Dr. Rolph reads: "The Honorable John Rolph, M.D. 1793-1870. This property once belonged to John Rolph, a prominent physician, lawyer and legislator. Born in England, he emigrated to Upper Canada in 1812. In 1824, with Dr. Charles Duncombe, he established at St. Thomas the province's first medical school, the 'Talbot Dispensary'. A reformer, Rolph represented Middlesex in the Assembly, 1824-29, and Norfolk, 1836-37. Although not an active participant in the Rebellion of 1837, he was so seriously implicated that he was impelled to flee to the U. S. He returned to Canada in 1843 and established a medical school at Toronto, and became the founder of the radical clear Grit party, 1849-50, and president of the legislative Council 1855-57."

## TALBOT ROAD PLAQUE

Closer to St. Thomas, in front of the home of Dr. Neil Munro, the plaque in honor of the Talbot road is inscribed with the following words: "This road, named after Col. Thomas Talbot, founder of the Talbot Settlement, was one of Upper Canada's earliest pioneer highways. Surveyed in 1804 by John Bostwick, it ran from Sayle's Mills (Waterford) to Port Talbot. In 1909 portions of the road line were changed by Mahlon Burwell, who ran it through

the site of St. Thomas. Two years later he was ordered to extend the road to Amherstburg and to survey branch lines connecting with the settlement to the north. By means of this early colonization road much of the north shore of Lake Erie was settled."

The dedication ceremony was presided over by Mrs. J. R. Fitcher, chairman of the Elgin County Museum Committee and a member of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board.

Warden Liddle, who lauded the Middlemarch Women's Institute for their efforts in securing the plaques, said "They will serve to remind us of the pioneer leaders and what they had to go through in order to make this community a better place in which to live."

Mayor V. A. Barrie, of St. Thomas, in echoing Warden Liddle's sentiments, added that "Important early people and places would soon be forgotten if plaques were not erected in their memory."

James A. McBain, M.P. for Elgin, spoke of the important work done by John Rolph, both as a physician and lawyer and stated he had a picture of the prominent gentleman that would be donated to the Elgin County Museum "when I find time to dig it out of my attic."

In summing up the work of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board R. K. McNeil, M.P.P. for Elgin, pointed to four other unveilings in Elgin County within the last couple of years. He mentioned the plaques at old St. Thomas Church, to Captain Daniel Rapelje at the City Hall, St. Thomas; to Mahlon Burwell at Port Burwell and to John Bostwick at Port Stanley.

A detailed account of the history of the Talbot road, including the naming of Middlemarch and Fingal was given by Mrs. Alex Lyle while F. Nimmo, reeve of Southwold Township, also related some interesting facts about its early beginning.

Rev. George Johnstone, president of the St. Thomas and Elgin County Ministerial Association, felt that some men were made by the times and some for the times. Dr. Rolph, he said, came under the latter category.

Others who spoke briefly were Mrs. Lenore Butler, president of the Middlemarch Women's Institute and Mrs. Neil Munro, who played a major part in having the plaques erected.

Following the unveiling ceremony a social hour was held at the hall.

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Unveiling and Dedication  
Historical Plaques  
Talbot Road, West  
Elgin County, Ontario

|||  
The Honourable John Rolph, M.D.  
1793-1870  
The Talbot Road

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2nd, 1960  
AT 2:30 P.M.

|||  
MIDDLEMARCH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE HALL



## PART II

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### THE TALBOT ROAD

MRS. ALEX LYLE  
Member of Middlemarch Women's Institute

MR. F. NIMMO  
Reeve of Southwold Township

MR. HARVEY LIDDLE  
Unveiling of Plaque

REV. GEORGE JOHNSTONE  
President of the Elgin County Ministerial Association  
Dedicatory Prayers

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You are invited to afternoon tea following the ceremonies,  
served by the members of the Middlemarch Women's Institute,  
sponsors of the unveiling ceremonies.

## PART I

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THE HONOURABLE JOHN ROLPH, M.D.  
1793-1870

MRS. J. R. FUTCHER, Chairman  
Chairman of the Elgin County Museum Committee

MR. HARVEY LIDDLE  
Warden Elgin County

MR. VINCENT A. BARRIE  
Mayor, City of St. Thomas

MR. JAMES McBAIN  
M.P. Elgin County

MR. RONALD McNEIL  
M.P.P. Elgin County

PROFESSOR J. M. S. CARELESS  
History Department, Toronto University  
Representing Archaeological and Historic Sites  
Advisory Board of the Province of Ontario

Representative Elgin County Medical Association

DR. JAMES D. CURTIS  
Unveiling of Plaque

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# Named Village After Famed Fingal Caves

By A. S. Garrett

On the south side of the main thoroughfare, and east of the cross-roads at Fingal, is a large two-storey brick house with many gables on the roof. This is the house built by Amasa Wood when he was in business in Fingal. He is remembered for his many philanthropies.

The house is now in the possession of Fergus L. Cron & Son known as "Gable Terrace." It has walls three bricks thick, hard wood floors and a fine fireplace with metal front. There is a large two-storey brick kitchen at the rear.

Mr. Cron, a horticulturist, was busy perfecting a purple gladiolus to be known as "The Lord's Prayer," when the writer called at his house recently.

## First Stores

The two earliest stores in Southwold were kept by George Elliott, east of Fingal, and by Col. McQueen on his farm a short distance west of Elliott's. Amasa Wood, a young half-brother of McQueen's wife, had his early training with him.

In 1830, Wood purchased a tavern, built by William Burwell, at the corner of Talbot and Union roads, and set up a hotel keeper. Levi Fowler, whose sister Wood had married, opened a store nearby in the 1830's and became first postmaster of the village which was named Fingal, after the Fingal Caves in Scotland.

In 1841, Amasa Wood joined Fowler in his business and continued it after his partner retired. Having succeeded McQueen as a contractor for supplies to the Indian reserve near-by, Wood soon laid the foundation of a large fortune. Many years afterwards he removed to St. Thomas and founded the Amasa Wood Hospital.

Mr. Wood made many benefactions to his Indian friends of the reserve before his death.

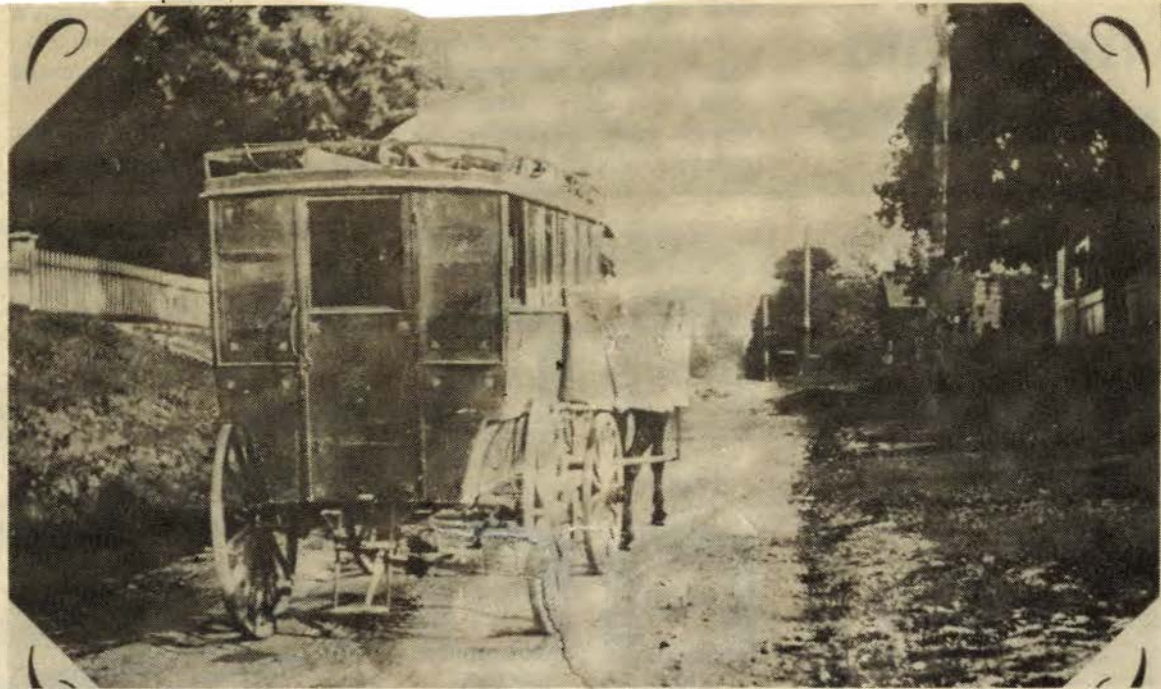
## Laid Out In 1830

Fingal was laid out as a village in 1830, the four corner lots being owned by the two Burwells (Samuel and Lewis) and Nevills and Cowal. Later well-known merchants in Fingal included Robert Blackwood, William Arkell, George McKenzie and J. P. and Philip Finlay.

In 1872, the population of Fingal was rated at 500 and the following firms were listed — Macpherson, Glasgow & Co. Foundry, John Conn's cheese factory, William A. Doyle's marble works, George Metcalfe's cabinet works, Thomas Casey's tannery, Tomkin Bros. grist, flour and lumber mills, and Fulton Bros. sawmill and veneer factory. There were three hotels — the Fulton House, run by Fulton Bros.; the Fingal House, kept by Capt. John Sweeney; and the Farmer's Inn, conducted by Joseph Smith.

By far the most important industry was the Macpherson, Glasgow & Co., which manufactured threshing machines. Commencing in 1848, they continued for a half century until their plant was burned down and never rebuilt. The business was then transferred to Clinton where the firm had operated a branch for many years. Matthias Hovey, who had learned the art of separator making at Lockport, N.Y., was the mechanical genius of this concern which is claimed to have been the first to make threshing equipment in Upper Canada.





**Back before 1920, a stage coach took travelers from Sparta to St. Thomas everyday**

**as is shown in this postcard supplied by Irene Locey, St. Thomas.**

May 1945.

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### The Middlemarch Church.

The history of our little Church is an interesting one and dates back before 1879. Before that time Bible Christian Readers came from Talbotville and held meetings in the school house and at different homes, boarding at the home of Mr & Mrs Fitcher. Some of these readers were Messrs. Mallot, Rice, Allen and Rev Mr. Whittock and Son. At this time it was decided to build a church and the late Mr. Peter Smoke & Son, Caleb, donated the land. A Mr. Geary was engaged to build the church. The contract price was \$1000.00. The late Mr. John Curtis, and John Stubbs teamed the lumber from London and Lambeth. All the neighbours and friends helped at bees until the church was erected. The first preacher was Rev. Mr. Williams. He remained until 1882 when the church became a Methodist Church, and Rev Cobb became pastor. It then became affiliated with Fingal.

The first organ in the church came from a church at Waton's Corner and the first organist was Mrs W. Webb. The quaint lights in the church came from the church at Fingal and as they used to drip oil, a Mr. Page of Fingal, made little pails that hung on them.

In the year 1907 a cyclone blew out both end walls of the church. Thus it had to be rebuilt. An alcove was added and a new organ procured.

There has been one wedding in the Church. The Bible, the linen cloth, for the communion table, the collection



Rev. J. A. McKim

1943-1944

Rev Poulter is the Present Minister.

THE ORGANISTS.

Mrs W. Webb.

Mrs George Campbell

Miss Saunders

Mrs. I. W. Welter

Miss Clara Humphries

Mr. Trevor Stinchcombe.

Mrs. Robert Dawley.

Mrs Ross Tufford.

Mrs Eva Gilbert Tufford.

Note.

I am indebted to Mrs James Palmer and Mr John Lutts, St. Thomas. for most of the above information. The list of ministers came from the United Church Archives. London.

C. G. T.

Ministers (cont'd)

Rev. Poulter

Rev. Killim

Rev. H. Bunt

During Rev. Poulter's pastorate, two weddings were held in the church. Mr. Trevor Stinchcombe, the organist for many years passed away in 1953. In the fall of ~~1953~~ 1954, the congregation became so small that a meeting was held at Mr. Ross Tufford's home to decide what to do. Rev. H. Johnson, St. Thomas, chairman of Elgin Presbytery and Rev. Bunt addressed the gathering, and it was decided to close the church the end of the year, dispose of the property and go to the Fingal church. In the spring of 1956 the church was sold to Mr. M. Duff for \$1000.00 - and two bonds held by the Middlemarch Treasurer, namely, Miss Humphries and Miss Wardell transferred to the Fingal Treasurer. Before the Women's Association disbanded they had the Humphries Monument in the Fingal Cemetery suitably engraved in loving memory of the family

"Cora Tufford"  
June 1956

The church was later torn down and Mr. Duff sold his property to Mr. Frank Crabe and a new home now stands where the church stood.

The Pulpit, the settee and two side chairs and the Communion Set from the Middlemarch Church are in use at the Iona Christian Fellowship Church .

The gas lights from the Middlemarch Church are in the barn at the Elgin County Museum.



# Churches in Huron Diocese



St. Thomas Church, pilgrimage centre for two counties, and its Chisholm Memorial (inset).

By GERTRUDE JOHNSTONE  
This is the centennial year of the Anglican Diocese of Huron, and during the summer months a series of pilgrimages to historic churches in the diocese has been arranged. The old St. Thomas Church in St. Thomas, as the oldest church in the counties of Elgin and Middlesex, will be the first pilgrimage centre for these two counties on the afternoon of June 2, 1957.

Churches in the neighboring deaneries in Norfolk, Oxford, Perth, Huron, Lambton and Kent are being invited to take part in the pilgrimage to St. Thomas, and Rt. Rev. G. N. Luxton, Bishop of Huron, is extending an invitation to the Bishop of Toronto and to other neighboring bishops. Several thousand persons are expected to attend the ser-

hill-top overlooking Kettle Creek valley, on land donated by an early settler, Daniel Rapelje, the church is made of bricks baked in the valley below. The brick transepts and chancel as well as the wooden tower and its steeple were added some years later. In 1824 St. Thomas consisted of about 30 dwellings, two stores, two taverns, a blacksmith's and a tailor's shop.

Many will pause at the pilgrimage service to think of the first small group of worshippers at St. Thomas Church. They arrived by various means—some on foot, some on horseback, some by carriage (though the roads of the day were almost impassable).

Farmers, tavernkeepers, tailors, jailkeepers, blacksmiths, carpenters, bricklayers and some who called themselves

and the church bell and the pulpit had been removed. In 1890 an improvement committee undertook the restoration of the closed and dilapidated church, and today the little old church and churchyard are something of which St. Thomas can be proud. In 1931 the Masonic Order unveiled a beautiful three-panel memorial window in honor of Masons of the Talbot Settlement.

Many memorial tablets have been placed in the church by descendants of families who contributed so much to the development of Elgin County. There are memorials to Judge Charles Ermatinger, author of the Talbot Regime; Col. Mahlon Burwell, pioneer surveyor, registrar and member of the Legislative Assembly, Daniel Rapelje, and many others.

In 1929 a guest book was placed in the church, and guests from all part of the world have signed. Ralph Connor visited the church that year and made this entry: "This memorial church and churchyard stand at once a reminder of great hearts gone and of the pious regard of the living for things noble in our past which great nations will never let die."

The stones in the churchyard bear the names of families associated with the settlement from earliest times.

The Chisholm family monument marks the graves of seven members of an aristocratic family of early settlers who died within a period of seven years. This monument was erected by the only surviving child, who left the community, made a fortune, and later returned to his native country in 1873.

He commissioned a firm in London, Ont., to design and erect a memorial to his brothers and sisters and his parents. This extraordinary monument, made of Italian marble, consists of seven tablets each dedicated to a member of the family. In the middle is a life-sized statue representing Hope. Two wrought iron benches stand in front of the monument.

The Chisholm family was long thought to have fallen victim to the so-called Chisholm Curse, but in the light of modern science it is believed that this family died of a fever, possibly typhoid.

The ceremony on June 2 will be one of impressive beauty. A large altar is to be built at one end of the community centre. There will be a massed choir of several hundred voices and a 60-piece military band to provide music for the occasion. Bishop Luxton is expected to preach. Following the service a picnic will be held at Pinafore Park.

Owing to the large number expected at the pilgrimage service, it was decided not to hold the service at the old church. But all will wish to visit this little pioneer edifice overlooking the valley at the western edge of the city.

The atmosphere of the church and the green and quiet graveyard is full of peace and strong links with the past.



Two memorial tablets.

vice, which will be held in the Community Centre. Visitors in St. Thomas that day will also have the opportunity, before or after the service, to visit other pioneer churches in the deanery of Elgin—beautiful St. Peter's at Tyrconnell, Christ Church at Port Stanley, and Trinity Church at Port Burwell.

All four churches were built in Col. Thomas Talbot's day and their early congregations were made up of settlers he brought to this part of Ontario.

St. Thomas is a beautiful little church inside and out. It is kept up by free-will offerings and by a small endowment, and considerable voluntary work goes into its upkeep. Built in 1824 on a jutting

gentlemen. The choir sang in a gallery over the front door, and the warden took the offering with a collection bag on the end of a pole.

In 1838, 1839 and 1840, when St. Thomas was a garrison town, there were many military weddings of officers and men of the 32nd and 85th British regiments. The weddings are listed in the church register.

The little church was closed in 1875, when Trinity Church was built to accommodate a rapidly growing congregation, and for many years it fell into disrepair. The pipe organ—built by George Voght of Elmira, father of the late Dr. Voght of Toronto who organized the Mendelssohn Choir—



St. Thomas' interior.



The Middlemarch School

S. S. # 14. Southwold.

This community lying as it does in the Talbot Settlement and near St. Thomas has always received cultural and educational advantages from each and the disadvantages of a transient population especially since the 1st Great War.

In <sup>1824</sup>1848 or 4 years after St. Thomas was first laid out as a village Mr. Stephen Randall opened a Grammar School near the present site of Loveday's Service Station (the Lisgar House at Church & Talbot St). In an upper room Judge Sherwood held court and Sir John Beverley Robinson was Crown Attorney.

<sup>when</sup>  
^ Alma College was erected in 1877 and many boys and girls of this section of the country <sup>had been</sup> attended either Alma College or Randall's Grammar School, as it ~~was~~ more difficult to reach either Roger's Corner School in Malahide-the first in Elgin County in 1816, or Watson's Corners erected in 1818 by Colonel Burwell and friends. Mr. Alexander Weldon and Colonel Burwell's two sons attended Watson's Corners and Mr. Weldon later taught there in 1833-57. A huge fireplace filled one end of the room and the seats were slabs of wood smoothed a little with the axe. Salaries were \$300.00 to \$400. 00 but the teacher had no board bill, as each family with children helped board the teacher in their homes. By 1830 there were 20 schools in Elgin, 3 in Southwold 2 Built in 1822 not stated where. Ewen Cameron who came from Innverness, Scotland to Canada in 1819 taught probably at Watson's Corners before he settled on his farm nearby on the shore of Lake Erie.



The first school it is said in S. S. # 14 district was taught by Mr. Phylard in a small slab sided building on the top of St. Thomas hill. In 1840 it was moved to a log hut Lot 42 where Mr, Alex D. Lyle now resides, and Elizabeth Wood taught there. Among her pupils were Thomas Fitcher and sister Sara. David King and sister, and Lewis Sanagan and sisters and earlier descendants of the Nicols who then owned the land. J. P. Fleak then taught in a log dwelling on Lot 41 for a short time to be followed by Nobles and David McKenzie a minister. Miss Maude Wardell's mother, Mrs J. M. Wardell (Fanny Metcalfe) attended one of the early schools of this district.

Re-arrangement made two sections, one running from Harry Thorton's home at Talbot & Pleasant to C. S. Butler's side road Lot 39. Miss Spades, Miss Dodd, and Miss Andrews taught in a frame school on the east side of St. Thomas bridge. The other section ran from Butler's side road, then Joan Lyle's Lot 39, to Smoke's Corners or Middlemarch. The school was a log one built on Lot 38 south now owned by J. F. McNiven. J. P. Sears & M. F. Sears, James Begg and Mr. McCormick were its teachers, Then Lot 33 (south side) at Middlemarch, Mr. Howe & Sheriff Munroe taught in a log school on the south side, Later school was conducted on the north side in a frame school with just a narrow walk separating it from the blacksmith shop which was located on the very north west corner. Mr. Fraser,

Thomas Huff, Maria Caughell, Ann Spades, Charles Jones, Duncan Ferguson, Marsden Wardell, John Mills, M. Cole, Mrs Capsey, Mrs McCallum, Thomas Farrel and M. Andrews were teachers.

Mr & Mrs Albert Stinchcombe lived in the school two years when they moved from Lambeth in 1887. Then the shop was moved back and the school replaced by a cottage, later a store and upper storey added. It is said Mrs. Stinchcombe and relatives provided fancy backing for 100 labourers when the Pere Marquette Railway was built in 1900.

A last change of boundaries completed the present section, No 14 Southwold from Humphries sideroad Lot 29 to the west boundary of Kettle Creek. A white brick school was built on the present location in 1865 on a third<sup>rd</sup> acre bought from Mr Sutton Lot 36. When it was found to be too small a play ground, it was increased to half an acre at a cost \$ 4.20 and later to one acre-the last purchase price being \$100.00. Many residents donated work and material. Later Mr. David Gooding for many years keeper at the House of Industry, donated the flag pole from his farm at Sparta.

Miss Andrews was teaching when the school was moved to its present site, and was followed by Lloyd, A Sutton, F. Jones , A. McLarty, M. Carmeron, A. Taylor, N. Shaw, Miss Hattie Robinson, A. Carmichael, J. Cloes, Ogilvie,



A. McKillop, Mr. Smith, Mr. Inglesly, Elson, Chamberlain, Mr. Chambers. Eliza Potticary, Ellen Potticary, W. Ellison. D. Campbell, Miss McLean. Dr. Lipsey, Mary M. Reid, Mrs Albert Fatcher supplied for Miss Reid while she was ill; and Mrs Etta Campbell. From an account of S. S. #. 14 written while Mrs Campbell was teacher is the following "Some left this section to gain prominence. Charles B. & Jesse D. Robinson, veterinary surgeons in Washington D. C. Frank Robinson, a civil engineer who surveyed the Manitoba, Ontario Boundary, Thomas B. Fatcher, became a prominent doctor in John<sup>S</sup> Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore; Dr. Sutton of Madoc received his early education here, Dr. J. D. Curtis, St. Thomas is a son of John Curtis. J. M. Wardell became a doctor in Michigan, James King a doctor in Staples, Ontario; A. King a veterinary surgeon in St. Thomas."

Other pupils of this school became teachers, nurses, business graduates and graduates of Ontario Agriculture College, Guelph; while many more have stayed on the land from generation to generation to help make this section part of the "Garden of Ontario."

Many of our boys served in the Great War, and the Present War, and some have made the supreme sacrifice. The honour roll in Middlemarch Church shows the names of many pupils and graduates from our school. Robena Lyle of Chicago served as a nurse in the 1st Great War. She graduated also from this school, 15 teachers followed, 7 of them graduates of this school. Miss Bertha King, Mrs Neil Munro, Mrs William Lyle, Velma Kaiser, Alenna Campbell,

Grace Noble, Mrs Alex Lyle. Mrs S. Fulton.(now teaching at River Rd.)  
Mrs J. R. Fitcher, Mary Campbell, Elsie Pretty, Mrs Frank Curtis.  
Fergus McCall (now Overseas) but who had the longest record 12  
years, Mrs Edna King Silcox, supplied for Mr. McCall for a time.  
Marvell Kniffen, Anne Tufford, and our present teacher Katherine Young.

Here we wish to mention ~~two~~ teachers who graduated from S. S. #. 14  
but never taught the school; Annie Lyle of Edmonton, Alberta, of whom  
it is said that many men and women of the west attribute their  
success in life to her splendid teaching. <sup>and</sup> ~~The~~ other teacher is  
Mrs William Ayearst, daughter of Salathiel Curtis.

X.  
During 1944 we mourn the passing of two former teachers of  
S. S. #. 14, Miss Mary Reid of Acton, who taught here many years  
ago but kept in touch by letter with many of her pupils and  
friends; and Mrs Erie Taylor (Alenna Campbell) whose sudden  
death in London was a shock to her many friends here.

The white brick school of 1865 was replaced by our  
present red brick school in 1906, and Mrs Neil Munro taught in the  
Grange Hall during its construction. The yard was levelled and  
improved in 1928, perennials planted and spirea hedge planted  
under the sponsorship of Middlenarch Women's Institute,  
under the direction of Ross Tufford, C. S. Butler, and  
Salathiel Curtis.

Mr, Salathiel Curtis is one of the oldest Secretary Treasurers  
in the Province of Ontario with our forty years of service in 1944,  
according to an appreciative address sent by the Inspector J, C. Smith.

X. Other teachers, graduates from S.S. 14. are, -  
Mrs. Earl Lindsay (Pearl Welton); (Kathleen Buxton).  
Dr. James Curtis. Miss Barbara Begg.