

**MAINTAINING ANGLO-CELTIC
CULTURAL HEGEMONY IN SASKATCHEWAN:
REV. E.H. OLIVER, PROVINCIAL EDUCATIONAL
POLICY, AND THE GERMAN CATHOLICS¹**

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During World War I, Reverend Edmund H. Oliver, lecturer in history at the University of Saskatchewan and principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon, figured prominently in Saskatchewan's educational reform movement. In the summer of 1915, he investigated elementary schools in parts of the province settled by people of various backgrounds: Mennonite, Doukhobor, French, Ukrainian, and German Catholic. What he learned he was soon able to put to use, since shortly thereafter, at the founding convention of the Saskatchewan Public Education League, he was made first vice-president and asked to deliver a major address. In concluding his speech, Oliver called on the league to go on record as supporting a "policy of seeing that every child on leaving school should be at least able to read, write and speak English,"² and almost all of his recommendations for changes in educational policy were designed to facilitate reaching that goal.³

Oliver's speech, repeated on two occasions and soon published, was widely acclaimed and led many to view him as an expert on the elementary school situation in non-Anglo-Celtic Saskatchewan. It also had significant repercussions, the most notable being one which Oliver himself may have hoped to

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1. This is a revised version of a paper presented to the meeting of the Canadian History of Education Association Conference at Lethbridge, Alberta, in October, 1992.
 2. Rev. Edmund H. Oliver, *The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities in Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: Saturday Press and Prairie Farm, c1915), 18.
 3. He urged the government to investigate private schools in unorganized districts and to tax land in such areas for school purposes, to treat all non-English languages uniformly and to strictly enforce regulations respecting the teaching of such languages, to provide for use of the direct method when pupils were being taught English, to eliminate shortcuts by which individuals whose mother tongue was not English were able to enter the teaching profession, and to arrange for the creation of larger administrative units for school purposes. He also said that government should promote school gardening and school fairs and provide for the medical inspection of rural schools. *Ibid.*, 11, 18.

precipitate: demands by numerous parties that the provincial government adopt a policy of "English only" in all elementary schools. Such a policy would reduce opportunities for groups like the Germans and Ukrainians to have their languages taught to their children, and ensure that English would more rapidly become their medium of communication. In the process, twin goals which Oliver cherished would be achieved: the cultural hegemony which Anglo-Celtic people wielded in the province would be strengthened and their future hegemony made more secure.

It is not the purpose of this paper to examine Oliver's role in directing public attention to the issue of English only in all elementary schools at the expense of the more comprehensive reform programme advocated by the League. That subject has already been dealt with.⁴ Nor will it discuss why Oliver may be regarded as believing that Anglo-Celtics should enjoy cultural hegemony in Saskatchewan. Other writers have described his activities in sufficient detail to conclude both that he did and that he harboured anti-German sentiments.⁵ Rather, the purpose of this paper is to examine certain of Oliver's statements and actions in order to reveal the means he appears to have employed to achieve that goal. The paper might be said to illustrate what J.E. Rea in his "The Roots of Prairie Society" calls the "nastier side"⁶ of the campaign by Oliver and others to oblige people of different backgrounds to conform to "proper" Canadian standards.

Central to the discussion is a segment of Oliver's 1915 tour of Saskatchewan and his comments on one of the ethnic groups he investigated. Specifically, the paper focuses on his journey through the Humboldt district situated in St. Peter's Colony, an area settled by German Catholics, most of whom came from the United States, and the evidence relating to their parochial schools which he used to support his call for a change in provincial educational policy. It would appear that Oliver set out to discover and publicize matters relating to education in that community which Anglo-Celtic Canadians would find most deplorable, especially in time of war, and to omit others which they would not, or which they

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4. Duane Mombourquette, "The Saskatchewan Public Education League and Its Activities" (Honours Paper, Department of History, University of Regina, 1986), 17-21, discusses Oliver's speech and its significance as regards public opinion. He also suggests that certain officers of the league may have come to regret sponsoring publication of the speech.
 5. Gordon Barnhart, "Prairie Pastor—E.H. Oliver," *Saskatchewan History* XXXVII, 3 (1984): 90, quotes a letter in which Oliver demonstrates an anti-German bias; and Michael Owen, "'Building the Kingdom of God on the Prairies': E.H. Oliver and Saskatchewan Education, 1913-1930," *Saskatchewan History* XL, 1 (1987): 32, states that Oliver's views differed little from those of Dr. J.T.M. Anderson. Anderson's activities both before and when he was Premier of Saskatchewan attest to his being an Anglo-Celtic cultural hegemonist of the first rank.
 6. J.E. Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," in *Prairie Perspectives*, ed. David P. Gagan (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 52.

might even have applauded. Not only can it be said that he knowingly presented an erroneous and incomplete picture of the elementary school situation among German Catholics, but also that he may have sought to convince his listeners that Saskatchewan's educational problems were more serious than they actually were, and by doing so to encourage them to demand "English only" in Grades I through VIII.

Any discourse designed to support what has just been alleged must proceed step by step. First, two matters, one relating to the entire Saskatchewan German Catholic community and the other to Oliver's investigation, must be noted. Second, both what he said or implied that he knew or did not know and what he said he would do when he began his inquiry must be compared with what in all likelihood he knew and with what he first did. Third, his tour of the Humboldt district must then be contrasted with the itinerary an impartial or careful investigator could have laid out for himself. These tasks having been accomplished, it will be clear that the scope of Oliver's inquiry was not as he portrayed it. Fourth, differences between a situation and how it came to exist as described by Oliver and that situation as it actually was and how it had evolved must be set out. Fifth, Oliver's comments on schools elsewhere in St. Peter's require examination to assess their merits. Finally, it is desirable to show by additional means that his inquiry was inferior to one which an individual interested in a broad range of educational reforms would have conducted. Rather, it will be seen as more characteristic of a study undertaken by what Michael Owen calls an educational leader "'reared in provincial bondage' of small town Ontario,"⁷ who, among other things, viewed Catholic nuns through jaundiced eyes. Had that not been so, his report to the league, while calling for changes in provincial educational policy, would have included mention of important educational reforms which were occurring in St. Peter's precisely when he visited the area.

Before evaluating Oliver's speech itself, an address which German Catholics regarded as at best an unjustified attack on their community by an ill-informed individual,⁸ two points which he left unstated need to be made. Only by doing so can his words, whether accurate or not, be considered in a broader context or be judged as to their significance. He did not acknowledge, though he may well have known, that the vast majority of Saskatchewan's German Catholic children, including about seventy-five percent of those in St. Peter's, were enrolled in English-only public schools.⁹ The omission encouraged his audience to attribute

7. Owen, "Building the Kingdom of God," 24.

8. St. Peter's Abbey Archives, Muenster, Sask. (hereafter SPAA), Rev. Bruno Doerfler, *German Schools in the Humboldt District* (Muenster, Sask.: n.p., 1916), Exhibit A, Parochial School Folder; and Archives of Saskatchewan (hereafter AS), Calder Papers, 2652, Doerfler to Calder, 15 Jan. 1916.

9. During 1915 twelve parochial schools which taught at least some German operated in St. Peter's. That year thirty-nine public schools also operated in districts where

to an entire community what he said of a small minority.¹⁰ Similarly, he did not state why he chose St. Peter's for investigation. But that is no mystery. For anyone wishing to expound on bilingual German-English parochial schools, to castigate German Catholics for teaching their language, or to accuse them of resisting Canadianization, it was the only logical place to visit. None of their other settlements contained a significant number of such institutions.¹¹ These omissions by Oliver are by themselves cause to suspect that he might have been selective in what he chose to examine or reveal respecting his subject of study.

The suspicion that Oliver did not intend to treat the German Catholics objectively is strengthened by analysis of his description of the first stage of his investigation. He states that after reaching St. Peter's, he began his inquiry by examining a map at the municipal office in Humboldt in order to determine where "unorganized areas" containing German Catholic parochial schools were situated. The map showed such an area north of Humboldt, and he promptly decided to visit it. He also mentioned that St. Henry Public School District appeared on the map, and remarked, both at the time and later, that he would go there, too, so as to learn why its residents had chosen to establish a public school. To accomplish his mission, Oliver set out for Fulda. But when he got there, he discovered that its parochial school, St. Joseph, was located in an organized public school district, Epsen, the existence of which, he would have us believe, he had been totally unaware.¹²

The problem with what has just been stated is that significant discrepancies exist, first, between what Oliver said or implied that he knew or did not know and what he probably knew when he left Humboldt and, second, between what he indicated he would do and what he actually did upon commencing his inquiry. On one hand, he states that he learned of St. Henry Public School District when he examined the map at the municipal office. On the other, he implies that he did not know of Epsen District until he spoke to the teacher at Fulda. But can one

German Catholics were either the only residents or formed the majority of residents. For all practical purposes, instruction was entirely in English. German Catholics, who formed only a minority in thirty other districts lying wholly or partly within the colony, also sent their children to public schools, where instruction was also in English only. German Catholic children also attended the Humboldt and Watson Separate Schools, but only in the former did they receive an hour of instruction in German daily on a fairly regular basis. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that at least three-quarters of German Catholic children in the colony were educated in English only.

10. For example, see SPAA, Doerfler, *German Schools*, Exhibits C and D. The Minister of Education, James A. Calder, admitted to being misled. See AS, Calder Papers, 2653, Calder to Doerfler, 17 Jan. 1916.
11. AS, Calder Papers, 2678, Statement by Premier Walter Scott at a meeting with members of the Loyal Orange Lodge, 20 Jan. 1916.
12. Oliver, *The Country School*, 9-10.

believe him in both instances? Both St. Henry and Epsen were non-functioning districts; both had been established in 1904, and both had operated public schools during only a single year.¹³ Since St. Henry appeared on the map, it is reasonable to believe that Epsen would have as well. For Oliver to have been aware of one and not of the other therefore is highly improbable. Nor is that all of the information which Oliver may well have possessed but not disclosed when he set out on his tour. He very likely knew that parochial schools were functioning in both districts. And that being so, it follows that he began his inquiry into parochial schools in an organized public school district where he knew a parochial school existed rather than in an unorganized area as he implied that he would. Even more significantly, it suggests, contrary to what he stated, that he did not intend to visit a district where German Catholics were operating a public school.

One's suspicions as to what Oliver had in mind when he visited the Humboldt area are confirmed by contrasting his entire tour of the district with one he could have taken had he really planned to examine both parochial and public schools. He travelled first to St. Joseph at Fulda, next to St. Michael and then to St. John at Willmont. Having acquired some knowledge of those parochial schools, he journeyed to St. Henry to discover (as he emphasizes) why its ratepayers preferred a public institution. However, upon reaching what was known as the Dead Moose Lake area, he learned that they had replaced their public school with a parochial facility.¹⁴ What an unfortunate turn of events, we are left to conclude. But the truth of the matter is that had Oliver been searching for a functioning public school in a German Catholic district, he could have arranged his trip so as to have visited three such districts together with three parochial schools and at the same time reduced his day-long buggy ride from forty-five to about forty miles.

When Oliver drove from Humboldt to Fulda, he may have seen St. Bernard Public School. At the very least, because the distance he travelled indicates that he did not take a roundabout route, he would certainly have crossed the district. Upon leaving Fulda, he could have driven about four miles west and an equal distance north to St. John at Willmont. To have done so would have taken him within a few yards of Keller Public School. And when he left St. John, he could have gone east to St. Michael and then to Canvasback Public School District.¹⁵

13. For details respecting the organization of the districts see AS, Department of Education, Public School Files (hereafter PSF), No. 1046, St. Henry and No. 1055, Epsen. For evidence that Epsen operated in 1904, see PSF, No. 1055, Thames to Deputy Minister of Education, 13 Oct. 1911, and that St. Henry did so in 1907, see *St. Peters Bote* (Muenster, Sask.), 23 Jan. 1908.

14. Oliver, *The Country School*, 10.

15. The vast majority of pupils in the three public schools were German Catholic, and in 1915 they were taught by individuals who would probably have met with Oliver's approval: St. Bernard's teacher was Michael Clarence Connors; Canvasback's, Arthur W. Sweet; and Keller's, William J. Johnstone. See AS, Teachers Register, 1915, for districts 1299, 1973, and 2350.

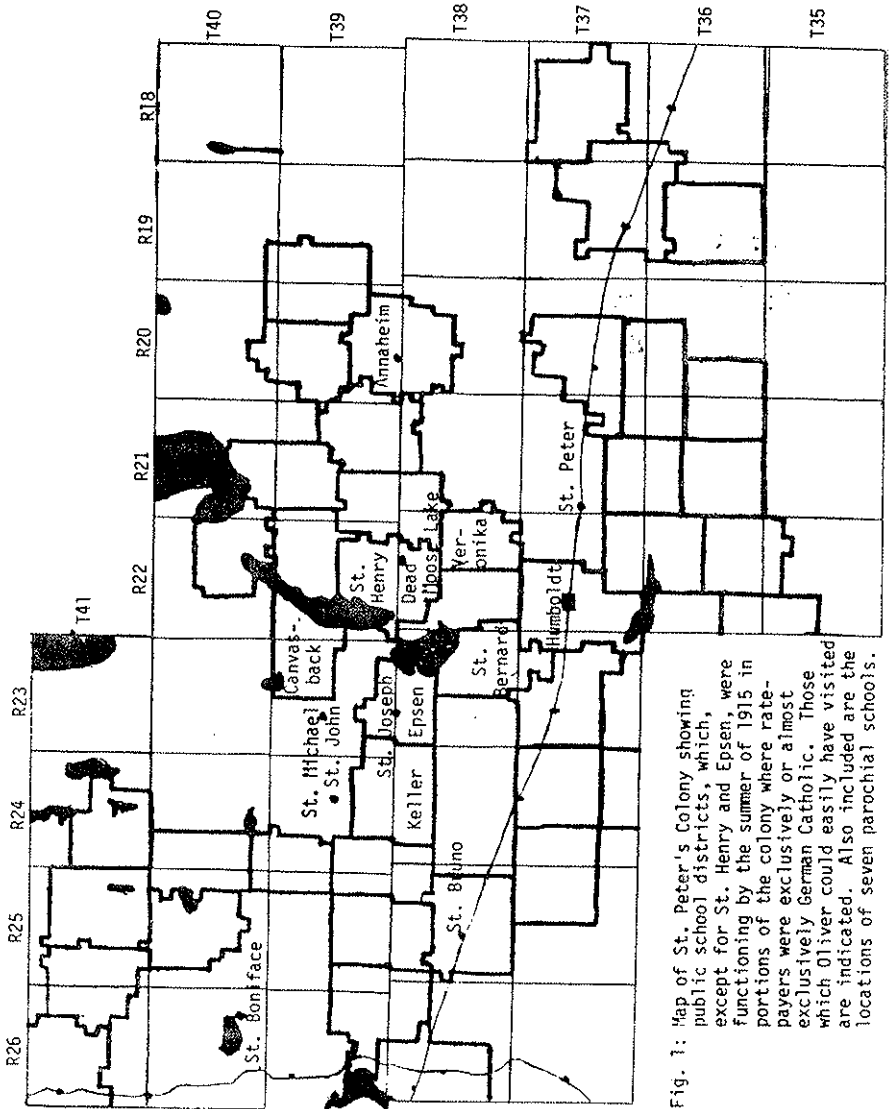


Fig. 1: Map of St. Peter's Colony showing public school districts, which, except for St. Henry and Epsen, were functioning by the summer of 1915 in portions of the colony where rate-payers were exclusively or almost exclusively German Catholic. Those which Oliver could easily have visited are indicated. Also included are the locations of seven parochial schools.

From there he could have returned directly to Humboldt, avoiding what amounted to a side trip to St. Henry and the Dead Moose Lake store (see Figure 1). In addition, he had another option. After reaching Dead Moose Lake and “learning” that St. Henry was no longer operating, he could have visited Veronika Public School District, situated between St. Henry and Humboldt. That Oliver had ample opportunity to visit districts where German Catholics operated public schools therefore is beyond dispute, and his failure to do so can be attributed only to lack of intent on his part. His examination of the municipal map must have informed him of the existence of St. Bernard, Keller, Canvasback, and Veronika schools. Otherwise, one would have to assume that municipal officials, involved in establishing and operating public schools, would show a district which had not functioned for eight years on their map and fail to include four where schools had operated continuously during the last four to ten years.¹⁶ The obvious conclusion is that Oliver misrepresented the scope of his inquiry.

Both Oliver’s presentation of his findings and his selection of facts also suggest that he was not impartial, but rather bent on portraying the German Catholics in a bad light. He appears to have structured his speech and included or omitted details with a view to arousing his audience increasingly as he delivered his message. He spoke well of St. Joseph, the first parochial school he visited, and described St. Michael as essentially the same. When commenting on St. John, however, he did not content himself with merely remarking that instruction was provided half in German and half in English; rather, he went on to describe the pupils as German in both “language and outlook.” And when he “discovered” the parochial school in the St. Henry District, he criticized its residents even more severely. They had disorganized a public school district; they were guilty of evading public school regulations relating to inspection and language of instruction; their school had not been bilingual until recently; and they were not promoting the Canadianization of their children by flying the flag.¹⁷

In three of four instances Oliver mentioned the teachers in the parochial schools north of Humboldt. St. Joseph’s teacher, he noted, was from Wisconsin, and St. John’s was from Minnesota. Those at Dead Moose Lake, until recently, were “German speaking.” Oliver let his audience decide how long such teachers alone had been providing instruction. Granted, presuming he possessed such knowledge, he could have characterized the Dead Moose Lake teachers in more inflammatory terms, given that he made his comments midway through World War I. He might have referred to them as Ursuline nuns from Germany. But even without doing so, he singled out those whom he mentioned as something less than Canadian. Meanwhile, he said nothing of the teacher at St. Michael.

16. See *ibid.*, Teachers Registers, 1906-1915, for St. Bernard District No. 1299; 1910-1915, for Canvasback District No. 1973 and Keller District No. 2350; and 1911-1915, for Veronika District No. 2568.

17. Oliver, *The Country School*, 10.

Why did he not? To have had accurate information as to where two teachers made their homes,¹⁸ one must assume that Oliver quizzed them on the subject and that he probably asked the St. Michael's teachers the same question. If he did, she would have responded, "Saskatchewan." Though she was of German American origin, her home and that of her family for at least four years had been St. Peter's Colony.¹⁹

Oliver's remarks about teachers pale in significance when contrasted with the limited nature of his investigation and the superficiality of his comments on the situation at Dead Moose Lake. His inquiry, as he describes it, consisted of a brief exchange with the local merchant. In addition, it was not in accord with what he twice cited as his purpose for visiting St. Henry: to learn why certain German Catholics might want public schools. Given his objective, one would expect him to have interviewed people of that background who were well represented in the area. Its residents were practically all German Catholic except for a Czech family and a Dane. By coincidence, the Dane, Carl Lindberg, ran the Dead Moose Lake store.²⁰ After speaking with him and apparently no other person, Oliver returned to Humboldt.

Had Oliver sought to become well informed and capable of reporting accurately on the school situation at Dead Moose Lake, Lindberg could have directed him to individuals well versed in a variety of relevant matters. Lindberg might have begun by having him meet Robert Blume, who, in addition to having served as a parochial school trustee and being fluent in English, was the founder and champion of a recently opened public school on which the Department of Education had seen fit to bestow the name Blume.²¹ Blume was consequently very familiar with local developments respecting education and might even have possessed copies of letters he had written to provincial authorities on that subject. As well, Lindberg would probably have advised Oliver to contact Franz Xavier Strueby, the community's first teacher, and members of the Ursuline Order, who in 1915 had charge of the school. Through discussions with such parties, he could have learned how the district actually came to have a parochial school, about

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18. St. Joseph's teacher was Agnes Litschauer, who returned to her home in Wisconsin every winter. St. John's teacher was Hildegard Hilgers, whose home according to the *St. Peters Bote*, 21 Apr. 1915, was St. Cloud, Minnesota.
 19. St. Michael's teacher was Christine Schauwecker, who in later years was the aunt of one of my sisters-in-law, Mrs. Esther Schmeiser of Humboldt, Sask. She is reported as teaching in St. Bernard Parochial School in 1911; see *St. Peters Bote*, 4 May 1911; and had earlier taught the children of a Czech family on a farm. See Marysburg History Book Committee, *Beyond Our Dreams, Marysburg and Area* (Muenster: St. Peter's Press, 1987), 144, which also refers to her home.
 20. *Beyond Our Dreams*, 85.
 21. For his service as a parish school trustee, see *ibid.*, 229, and for the school in his district being named Blume, see AS, PSF, No. 3073, Blume to Department of Education, 2 July 1913.

teachers who had instructed or were instructing in it, and, among other things, about German Catholic parochial schools in general.

How the Dead Moose Lake Parochial School came to exist should first be summarized, to provide insights into the local German Catholic community in particular and St. Peter's German Catholics in general. It is an over-simplification to say, as Oliver did, that the school arose as a result of the "good people" of the area disorganizing a public school district and replacing its school with a parochial facility. Another party, whose actions the provincial government chose not to challenge, was responsible for that development.

In 1904 residents of the area established St. Henry Public School District.²² It is not known whether they also immediately requested Territorial authorities to provide a teacher. However, if they did they would have learned that qualified Canadian teachers were very scarce, that their district was too far from a railway to attract one, and that educational authorities did not readily grant provisional certification to German American teachers settling in the colony.²³

Whatever the case, since they were determined to educate their children, early in 1905, before the Canadian Northern Railway spanned St. Peter's, they opened a parochial school in their church with Franz Strueby providing instruction.²⁴ As things turned out, the school was soon beset by problems. For example, obtaining sufficient voluntary contributions to finance its operation was no easy matter—Strueby eventually announced that arrears owing him were to be considered a donation to the church.²⁵ In addition, in 1906 the school did not open until September 24,²⁶ and children as a consequence received little instruction that year. For these and other reasons, such as having to make annual payments on the public school building they had erected, residents of the district opened St. Henry Public School in 1907 and employed a certified Canadian teacher for six months, the period of operation required by law.²⁷ At their 1908 annual meeting, they also reached two decisions: the parochial school was a thing of the past and the public school would continue to function, there being unanimous agreement that it do so.²⁸

22. AS, PSF, No. 1046. See documents for 1904.

23. Clinton O. White, "Pre-World War I Primary Educational Developments among Saskatchewan's German Catholics: A Revisionist View," *Prairie Forum* XVIII, 2 (Fall 1993).

24. *Beyond Our Dreams*, 229, and *St. Peters Bote*, 30 Nov. 1905.

25. SPAA, Assumption Parish Ledger, 1907-8. See 8 Nov. 1907.

26. *Humboldt Journal*, 28 Sept. 1906.

27. AS, PSF, No. 1046, By law No. 1, 16 Jan. 1905, for \$800; *St. Peters Bote*, 23 Jan. 1908; and AS, Teachers Register, 1907, district 1046. The teacher was John D. McEachern, with Second Class certification.

28. *St. Peters Bote*, 23 Jan. 1908.

Three years earlier, in February 1905, for reasons explained elsewhere,²⁹ the Benedictine clergy, whose responsibility it was to provide for the religious needs of St. Peter's Catholics, called for the establishment of parochial schools in all parts of the colony settled by few people save Germans. A subsequent formal statement by the Benedictines meeting in Chapter also shows that they were particularly desirous of having such schools at locations where churches existed,³⁰ of which Dead Moose Lake was one. As a result, they sought to prevent the opening of St. Henry Public School in 1907 and, having failed to do so, took even stronger action to see that it did not continue to function in 1908. In a letter to J.A. Calder, Commissioner of Education, Blume singles out the Benedictine Prior as having intervened in district affairs during both years and describes his activities in considerable detail. Blume states, among other things, that during the course of two meetings, Prior Bruno Doerfler pressured St. Henry's trustees into renting their building to the parish and insisted that members of the congregation resume educating their children in a parochial institution. Of the final meeting (at least a substantial portion of which was conducted in English) and its decisions, Blume asserts:

There were many objections raised and some very hot disputes, but Rev. Bruno Doerfler had the whole say, and would not be dictated to. Is such right? I call it a high handed affair, and I and many others do not think [sic] that the Department of Education will sanction such a deal. It is a pity that only a few of these people understand English, but they feel the injustice. I...am requested by many to report this transaction to you.³¹

While the birth of Dead Moose Lake's parochial school in 1905 may have been free of controversy, its rebirth in 1908 was quite the opposite. The fact that it reopened must be attributed to Prior Bruno. Left to themselves, local Catholics would have continued to operate St. Henry Public at least for some years. Meanwhile, Blume's letter apparently had one result. Though no documentary evidence exists, one must conclude that provincial authorities struck down the rental agreement. St. Henry's building was never used as a parochial school and stood empty for years on end. That personnel in the Department of Education took no further action was no doubt determined by an understanding reached between the Scott government and the Benedictine Order. According to the *St. Peters Bote*, members of that government assured Prior Bruno in June, 1908, that

29. See White, "Pre-World War I."

30. SPAA, Chapter Resolutions, 13 May 1909, I.H. Chapter of St. Peter's Abbey.

31. AS, Turgeon Papers, M3, 10a Interdepartmental Memoranda, Education Matters, 1906-1908, Blume to Calder, 13 Mar. 1908,

their officials would not seek to establish public schools where they were not desired.³²

Before discussing the staffing and functioning of the Dead Moose Lake Parochial School in 1915, the year Oliver visited the community, one must comment on its earlier instructors and the position of local Catholics on one aspect of its operation. Oliver implied that until shortly before his visit, teachers were not fluent in English. That was untrue. There is not a shred of evidence that any of the ten individuals employed prior to 1915 was unable to teach in both German and English. Indeed, one of them is said to have taught only in English during the year she had charge of the school.³³ Meanwhile, district residents appear to have wanted their parochial school to operate for at least six months each calendar year as was required of public and separate schools and saw that it did most of the time.³⁴ Finally, in 1914, when they made new arrangements respecting elementary education, they probably did so in the belief, as will be seen, that not only would the school term be longer but the instruction better.

Had Oliver claimed that teachers instructing at Dead Moose Lake in 1915 alone were unable to do so in English, he would have been every bit as wrong as in his portrayal of those employed in earlier years. Throughout 1915 three Ursuline Sisters lived at the school. All came from convents in Germany and for the moment will be treated as speaking only German. But that does not mean that instruction was solely in German during any part of the year. The sisters opened the school on 7 January.³⁵ Three days earlier a Mary Pastors had joined them, having decided to enter their Order.³⁶ She had grown up in West Bend, Wisconsin, had obtained a teacher's certificate in that state, and had taught for three years in St. Peter's parochial schools.³⁷ Therefore, contrary to what Oliver alleged, there was an English-speaking teacher on the staff throughout the year.

Earlier the sisters at Dead Moose Lake were described as coming from Germany and therefore might be considered as lacking fluency in English. However, it would be erroneous to so characterize at least one of them, Mother

32. *St. Peters Bote*, 18 June 1908.

33. Anna Hinz, born in Germany about 1890, completed elementary school in Ogden, Kansas, taught at Dead Moose Lake in 1909, and shortly thereafter enrolled in a collegiate in Regina, where she won a Governor's General Medal. Mrs. Cecelia Kaller (*née* Hinz), interview with the author, Humboldt, Sask., 19 June 1978.

34. SPAA, Assumption Parish Ledgers, 1907-08, 1909-16, and Cash and Account Book, Parish School, 1908-14. These records list all teachers employed and, from 1908 to 1916, how long they taught and how much they were paid. Only in 1906 and 1912 can the school be said to have operated significantly less than six months.

35. *St. Peters Bote*, 24 Dec. 1914.

36. Ursuline Convent, Bruno, Sask., Diary of Mother Anna Catherina Wuesthoff, 1912-14, 6 Dec. 1914 (hereafter Mother Anna Catherina's diary).

37. *St. Peters Bote*, 9 May, 28 Nov. 1912; 3 Apr., 30 Oct. 1913; 9 Apr. 1914; and Mother Anna Catherina's diary, 29 Aug. 1914.

Clara Erpenbeck, and some of her colleagues teaching elsewhere. One has to be aware of a few details regarding the members of her Order residing in St. Peter's and some of their recent activities.

On January 1, 1915, thirteen Ursulines lived in the colony. Seven had come to Canada in 1912 and six in August 1914. Though all came directly from Germany, some were not German. Mother Xaveria Sutcliffe, one of the first group, had been born, raised, and educated in England and had lived in India, where her father served as a judge. Later, while studying German at the Ursuline Convent in Haselunne, Germany, she entered the Order. A member of the second group, Mother Antonio Mackey, was like Mother Xaveria a British subject, and left Ireland for Haselunne at seventeen to become a nun and a teacher.

Upon arriving in Canada, most of the first group began teaching at St. Joseph Parish School in Winnipeg. The exceptions were Mother Clara and a colleague who settled in Windthorst, Saskatchewan, where German and Irish Catholics were about to open a separate school. Having examined her "certificate from the Royal Commission of Examinations of Germany," and no doubt satisfied himself that she could instruct in English, Saskatchewan's deputy minister of education authorized her to teach, first for eight months and later for all of 1913. Among other German Ursulines fluent in English were Mother Anna Catherina Wuesthoff, who also arrived in 1912, and Sister Paula Holtershinken, a member of the second contingent.³⁸

38. For data on Mother Clara and her employment at St. Pius Separate School at Windthorst see AS, Department of Education, Catholic Separate School Files, No. 21, 1912-13 Documents. AS, Inactive Teachers Register, 1912-38, also shows her as having qualified to teach in German elementary, middle, and high schools in 1895. Information respecting individual Ursulines who taught in Winnipeg is contained either in Mother Anna Catherina's diary or in Sister Benedict Plemel, OSU, "History of the Ursuline Convent, Bruno" (TS, n.d.), Ursuline Convent, Bruno, Sask. References indicating fluency in English in the former include the following. When told that "an English Father from St. Boniface College" would offer their retreat, Mother Anna Catherina stated, "we must have a German father because some of the Sisters do not understand English" (16 June 1914). The statement suggests that people other than Mother Xaveria knew English. In July, 1914, Mother Anna Catherina was slated to attend normal school either in St. Boniface, Manitoba, or in Regina, but was unable to do so, in the first instance because she moved to St. Peter's, and in the second because she was assigned to teach at St. Boniface school in Leofeld. Her plan to attend normal school indicates competence in English as does the fact that pupils who knew no German were placed in her classroom when they enrolled in her school in the fall of 1914. Finally, "Mother Angela and Mother Clementina are to have an English lesson every afternoon with our little Mother Antonio" (20 July 1914). The Mother Antonio referred to here was not Mother Antonio Mackey of Haselunne, who had yet to come to Canada, but Mother Antonio Hebestreit from Dorsten. Similar statements are found in Plemel's work which is described as relying heavily on Mother Ignatia Breme's chronicle of her experiences in Canada. Both

While Oliver's comments respecting the parochial schools north of Humboldt reflect an anti-German bias and a lack of knowledge, what he said of their functioning elsewhere or of their failure to gain a foothold in a particular locality also warrants criticism. When discussing such matters he described three situations. What he presented as fact in one case was mere speculation. A conclusion he put forward in another was so exaggerated as to be immediately suspect. And insofar as what he stated in the last instance embodied a prediction as to the future performance of a group of people, his prediction could scarcely have proven more ironic.

When explaining the absence of parochial schools in a portion of St. Peter's Colony, Oliver remarked:

I understand...that the priest at Annaheim came out flatly against establishing private schools in all his territory....[Had he not done so] that whole north country beyond Muenster and Humboldt would have been dotted with private schools teaching German.³⁹

The claim rests on three assumptions: that the Benedictines were divided in the question of establishing parochial schools; that the priest at Annaheim acted contrary to the wishes of his prior and at least a portion of his fellow Benedictines; and that bilingual teachers were available for more than the dozen parochial schools operating in 1915. There is no conclusive evidence supporting any of these propositions. About all that can really be said is, on the one hand, that while certain occurrences tend to substantiate his remark about the Annaheim area, a greater number do not; on the other, that additional bilingual teachers might have been obtained had German Catholics been more willing to pay parochial school assessments and their trustees to offer higher salaries.

Oliver also passed judgement on the operation of two parochial schools which had ceased to function. Of the first he stated: "Ives [Public School District No.] 3594 was a private school [St. Paul] up to the end of 1914. Last year they had a young girl with grade 8 for teacher—the best teacher they ever had." And of the second he asserted: "Down at St. Gregor...they had a private school [St. Gregory] for years. The result is that one who is in a position to know declares that the children are in many cases crippled for life."⁴⁰

What Oliver said of St. Paul's teachers cannot be conclusively proven incorrect. Though the "young girl" he referred to, fifteen-year-old Margaret Junk, completed Grade VIII at Laurier Public School in June 1913, and began teaching

Mother Anna Catherina's diary and Mother Ignatia's chronicle were written in German but were later translated into English by members of the Ursuline community.

39. Oliver, *The Country School*, 10.

40. *Ibid.*

at St. Paul about a year later,⁴¹ she may have performed her duties in an outstanding manner. However, to categorize her as the best teacher ever to have charge of the school seems ridiculous. St. Paul, which opened in 1908, employed at least six teachers prior to Junk. Consider the background and experience of Franz Strueby, the first person to instruct there. He was born, grew up, and was educated as a teacher in Switzerland. In 1880 at the age of twenty-five he moved to the United States and after learning English taught for many years in Martinsville, Wisconsin. In 1904 he and his family settled at Dead Moose Lake, where he was the first parochial school teacher.⁴² In view of Strueby's many years in a classroom, one would expect him to have been at least as capable a teacher as Junk. Not without significance, too, is the fact that Junk was employed as a substitute teacher. In May 1914, St. Paul's trustees hired a Mary Muench, but she soon became ill and had to be replaced.⁴³

Oliver's assessment of St. Gregory Parochial School was of a different type. He referred to its pupils in an insensitive manner and to their parents by implication even more unkindly. The latter, he said in effect, had by their ill-advised actions "crippled" many of their children "for life." Two things about his statement stand out. First, it was evidently based on a total lack of knowledge of conditions which residents of the area had faced when trying to educate their children during the preceding seven years. Second, to the extent that it hinted at how people of the district might perform regarding the operation of a public school in the years ahead, it could not have been more inaccurate.

Throughout the pre-war years, the St. Gregor district was sparsely populated. Indeed, it was so sparsely settled that it is doubtful if there were sufficient children in the twenty square miles surrounding the community to have established a public school in 1908, the year the parochial school opened.⁴⁴ As well, when a public school district was formed in 1914, a dispute arose concerning precisely that subject. A Department of Education official who looked into the matter stated that there appeared to be less than the required ten children, "though some of the ratepayers pretended there were eleven."⁴⁵ At the same time, a local businessman explained to the Minister of Education why creation of a district was necessary and provided only one reason: "We have been working along with a private school, which however proved very unsatisfactory, owing to the scant

41. Mrs. Margaret Dauk (nee Junk), interview with author, Anaheim, Sask., 12 July 1978 (hereafter Dauk interview). Among other things, she showed me her Grade VIII diploma, dated 30 July 1913.

42. *Beyond Our Dreams*, 160.

43. Dauk interview. Also see *St. Peter's Bote*, 9 July 1914.

44. *Homesteading to Homecoming 1903-1971: A History of St. Gregor and District* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, n.d.), 8.

45. AS, PSF, No. 3196, Meyer to Ball, 29 Aug. 1913.

support it received financially.⁴⁶ In short, it is quite conceivable that prior to 1914 parents of children in the St. Gregor area believed they had only two options: an inadequately funded parochial school or no school.⁴⁷

St. Gregor Public School opened in July 1914, and during the next sixteen years established records respecting both staffing and scholastic achievement which residents of all of the approximately 110 other rural and village districts operating one-room schools and lying wholly or partly within St. Peter's could only have viewed with envy. First, to the extent that retaining the services of teachers once hired is a sign of good management and creation of conditions which teachers must have found satisfactory, the St. Gregor board rapidly came to stand head and shoulders above all others and by 1930 was in a class by itself. The average length of service of teachers it employed between the time its school opened and December 31, 1930 was 3.4 years. Its closest rival, the Belmont District board, whose ratepayers were mainly of Hungarian background, had to find a new teacher every 2.75 years. The longest average period of employment of teachers in a predominantly Anglo-Celtic district, meanwhile, was 1.83 years in Lac Vert; while in Manor Park, the most English and Anglican district in the colony, it was a mere 0.89 years. Second, in the 1920s provisionally qualified teachers came to be employed much less frequently than in earlier years. Of the ninety rural and village one-room schools which had begun to function by 1920 and were operating in St. Peter's at the end of that year, only ten, including St. Gregor, never employed such an individual between the time that they opened and December 31, 1930. Third, the St. Gregor board employed a teacher with Third Class standing during only the first four years that its school was open. During the remaining twelve years, its teachers had Second Class certification about two-thirds of the time and First Class for the balance. Of the ninety schools described above, only eight possessed equal or better records for the years between their opening and December 31, 1930.⁴⁸ Such statistics suggest that the

46. *Ibid.*, Ries to Minister of Education, 26 May 1913.

47. In 1910, St. Gregory Parish revenues totalled only \$411.80, of which \$157 was for the school. The parish was able to pay only \$53 of the \$210 it owed the teacher for that year. SPAA, St. Gregory Parish, Financial Statement, 1910.

48. The data set out in this paragraph are derived from a number of tables which were produced after doing the following research. First, using resources in the Saskatchewan Archives, I prepared a map showing the boundaries of all 114 public school districts established between 1904 and 1932 which lay wholly or partly within St. Peter's Colony. Next, I examined the Department of Education files for those districts and collected the following data in a table: the name and number of each district; the date or dates on which ratepayers petitioned for the creation of each district; the date or dates on which they held polls to approve or reject establishment of each district; the results of each poll; the date each board passed a bylaw to raise funds for construction of a school and the amount raised; the year each school opened; the year in which each of the schools which became two-room schools did

St. Gregor trustees, whose actions were of course scrutinized by their ratepayers at their annual meetings, decided immediately upon or soon after taking office to employ only the best qualified teachers they could afford. And, be it noted, the Department of Education never found fault with their performance in that regard.

Finally, by the mid-1920s, the St. Gregor board and its ratepayers could boast of something even more remarkable than the staffing of their school, an achievement the significance of which is most apparent when considered in conjunction with the accomplishments of students in another school, the Humboldt Public School, which possessed six rooms and as many teachers. When commenting on the latter's operation during the years 1921-24, Inspector J.J. O'Brien stated that of the 101 Humboldt students writing the Grade VIII exams, 98, including all 1924 candidates, had passed. He then remarked that such a performance perhaps surpassed that of any other student body in Canada.⁴⁹ However, during the last

so; and the periods of time that certain schools were managed by official trustees. Also included in the table were the number of ratepayers in each district at the time of its formation and, for the sixty-one which were set up before mid-1911, the religious affiliation of the ratepayers—Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Rite. While collecting the foregoing data, the names of all ratepayers in each district at the time of its formation were assembled. Then, through examination of local histories, numerous interviews, and other means, the ethnic background and, where necessary, the religious affiliation of ratepayers in each district were determined. When that had been done, another column was added to the table, showing which if any ethnic group, German, Anglo-Celtic, Scandinavian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, or French, constituted a majority in each district. Where no majority existed, minorities were listed in a sequence according to what was judged to be their size. Minorities in districts containing a majority were shown in the same manner. The completion of that table makes it possible to speak of the Belmont district as being inhabited mainly by Hungarians, Manor Park mainly by people of British background who belonged to the Church of England, and so forth. When the foregoing work had been completed, the names of all teachers employed in each school from the time that it opened until 1931 were copied from annual Teachers Registers, together with such other information as the type of certificate each possessed and what each was paid. A number of additional tables were then constructed. One is entitled "Cumulative Totals of Teachers and Their Average Length of Employment in One Room Public Schools in St. Peter's Colony for Selected Periods from Their Opening Until 1930" and another, "Numbers of Each Class of Certificate Held by Teachers Employed in One Room Public Schools in St. Peter's Colony for Selected Periods from the Year Each School Opened Until 1930." A third table is entitled "Numbers of Years Taught in One Room Public Schools in St. Peter's Colony by Each Class of Teacher from Opening until 1930." The statistical data contained in these tables form the basis for my statements about St. Gregor and other teachers. Since it is doubtful that the tables will ever be published owing to their length, copies will soon be deposited in the Campion College Archives at the University of Regina and in the Saskatchewan Archives for use without restriction.

49. *Humboldt Journal*, 26 Nov. 1925.

year he referred to, the St. Gregor school exceeded it. The eight St. Gregor students who wrote Grade VIII exams that year not only passed but in all cases did so with honours.⁵⁰ And that was not all. Each year the Department of Education awarded a medal to the boy and girl attending a rural or village one-room school who obtained the highest standing among all Saskatchewan students writing those exams. At the close of the 1923-24 school year one of the medals went to a St. Gregor student.⁵¹ Not until 1930 would a student in another of the 110 similar schools established in St. Peter's achieve such a distinction.⁵² In the light of what is known of conditions prevailing in the district prior to 1914 and the functioning of the St. Gregor Public School between then and 1930, Oliver's characterization of the people of the area, German Catholics almost to the last individual, was most unfair.

As indicated at the beginning of this paper, Oliver called for only a few changes in educational policy when he addressed the Public Education League. Perhaps one reason was what Owen calls "his fixation on 'one issue'—the uniting of the diverse ethnic population [of the prairies] into a Christian and British nation."⁵³ That fixation, together with such things as his anti-German bias, may also explain why important educational reforms which had recently occurred or were occurring in St. Peter's Colony when he toured the area either escaped his notice or, if he became aware of them, were passed over without mention. Whatever the case, that developments warranting mention were taking place and could readily have been discovered by a professional historian like Oliver can be demonstrated by digressing briefly to another subject.

Oliver's address, together with the activities of league members and others, resulted in 1918 in the Martin government engaging Dr. Harold W. Foght, a Washington, D.C., educational expert, to examine and report upon the condition of rural education in the province. When he completed his work, Foght made numerous recommendations for changes in educational policy and discussed a variety of problems which his proposals were designed to overcome. Particularly relevant to this paper are his comments on school buildings, school boards, teachers, length of the school term, attendance, and high schools.

Of rural and village schools in general, Foght asserted: "The reason for closing many schools during the coldest months is due more to cold, flimsily constructed buildings than to fear of storms overtaking the children."⁵⁴ Two

50. *St. Peter's Messenger* (Muenster, Sask.), 7 Aug. 1924.

51. *Ibid.*, 15 Nov. 1924. Also see AS, PSF, No. 3196, Chief Inspector to Plemel, 27 Nov. 1924. The student was Sylvester Reifferscheid.

52. *Ibid.*, No. 2848. In 1930 the boy's medal was won by Alec Kobatoff of Quill Plains District.

53. Owen, "Building the Kingdom of God," 29.

54. Harold W. Foght, *A Survey of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada* (Regina: King's Printer, 1918), 50.

means by which the situation might be improved, other than by simply upgrading existing buildings, were the establishment of larger consolidated schools and the erection of what Foght called "Model" schools at strategic locations throughout the province, especially in non-English districts. As regards the latter, he elaborated:

The chief departure in the new school plant is the teacherage. Without a permanent home in the school community at his disposal, it is difficult to conceive of a permanent rural teacher. The teacherage must be a "home" not a shack such as are erected on some...school grounds.⁵⁵

Model or consolidated schools, Foght also observed, would serve larger areas than existing schools, and it would therefore be necessary to provide a system of conveyance for some of the pupils. But their establishment would produce desirable results. Being larger than existing schools, they would have "two or more departments"; and, judged on the basis of what had been accomplished where consolidation had occurred, they would be marked by "better attendance, a group of advanced pupils, better equipment, better teachers, better instruction, and a somewhat improved study course."⁵⁶

When examining the management of schools, Foght described another problem which at times adversely affected education, and indicated how it might be dealt with. Some schools, he stated,

were found to have been closed for three or more months either because the board had outright neglected to procure a teacher or because they could not find the type of teacher they desired....the average school board in rural districts is not able to choose a teacher wisely. This function should be vested in some educational authority in closer touch with the teachers.⁵⁷

Foght also dealt extensively with problems relating specifically to teachers. "The most difficult phase in the whole educational problem in the province," he asserted, "is how to get and retain a sufficient number of well-prepared teachers in the schools."⁵⁸ Later, he pointed out that this was especially true of rural schools.⁵⁹ To encourage experienced teachers not to seek other types of employ-

55. *Ibid.*, 61-62.

56. *Ibid.*, 67.

57. *Ibid.*, 28.

58. *Ibid.*, 24.

59. *Ibid.*, 36.

ment, Foght called on the government to establish a "retirement plan," among other things.⁶⁰

Three additional matters which Foght saw as meriting government attention were the length of the school term, attendance, and high school facilities. Some boards, he observed, operated their schools for as few as 124 days annually, others for as many as 212, an unsatisfactory situation which could not be explained by reference to the varying wealth of districts. He also found attendance, "even after allowing for natural handicaps," to be very poor,⁶¹ and he concluded:

The ultimate solution of school terms and school attendance must lie in well taught, all year schools—i.e., community schools with permanent teachers dwelling on the school grounds twelve months in the year, keeping the school open at least 210 days annually, and being occupied with other phases of community education for the remainder of the year.⁶²

Finally, after categorizing the proportion of rural children enrolled in high schools as "most unsatisfactory," Foght added, "This condition is deplorable; but it can be attributed to the almost entire lack of high school facilities outside the cities and larger towns."⁶³

Foght completed his study about three years after Oliver visited St. Peter's Colony. Had Oliver more thoroughly investigated its parochial schools, he would quickly have encountered educational reformers. While at Dead Moose Lake he need only have crossed the road to have met most if not all of the Ursuline Sisters.⁶⁴ Perhaps he chose not to do so because he disapproved of employing nuns as teachers.⁶⁵ Be that as it may, a brief conversation with them would have revealed that St. Peter's contained two types of parochial schools, what German Catholics called the *Privat aber Pfaarschule*, the private or parish school, and the *Schwestern Schule*, the sisters' school. Oliver would also have learned that the two types were by no means the same and, more important, that many of the reforms Foght would recommend had been, were in the process of being, or soon would be implemented by the sisters.

60. Ibid., 114.

61. Ibid., 29, 42.

62. Ibid., 49.

63. Ibid., 17, 41.

64. Ursuline Convent, Bruno, Sask., M. Benedict, OSU, "Preview of Fifty Years in the Northwest, a History of Ursuline Work, 1913-1963," *Ursuline Bulletin* II, 1 (n.d.), (TS), 9, states that the community gathered at Dead Moose Lake, where their motherhouse was first located, from sometime in July to 15 Sept. 1915.

65. Owen, "Building the Kingdom of God," 26.

In the summer of 1915, twelve parochial schools operated in St. Peter's Colony. Throughout most of their existence, all had been ordinary parish schools whose physical structures then and in earlier years varied. For example, a number of functioning churches such as St. Peter at the Benedictine Monastery and St. John at Willmont at one time or another also served as schools, and for about ten years the Dead Moose Lake School was a log building which had originally been the church. Sacred Heart and St. Paul, abolished in 1913 and 1914 respectively, were also log structures built to serve as schools. On the other hand, St. Boniface, St. Michael, and St. Mary, constructed of lumber, differed little from the average rural public school, while St. Joseph, as of 1913, would probably have been classed as better than most.

All schools while operating as ordinary parish schools contained only one classroom. They generally opened sometime in April or early May, closed for the winter in October or November and offered about six months of instruction, half in German and half in English, to fifteen to fifty pupils in Grades I through VI.⁶⁶ Initially, practically all of their teachers were German American Catholic men, who taught in the United States prior to settling in St. Peter's. Within about three years, these men were for the most part replaced by German American Catholic women, frequently also experienced teachers. Some of these women taught only briefly, then married and settled permanently in the colony. Others, who often taught for longer intervals, journeyed to Canada annually to take charge of schools. In about 1910, children of the settlers, most commonly daughters, who had completed at least Grade VIII either in the United States or in one of St. Peter's public or separate schools, appeared in the ranks of parochial school teachers.

Between September 1913 and January 1915, the Ursuline Sisters began teaching in four of St. Peter's parochial schools: St. Peter at the Benedictine Monastery, St. Boniface in Leofeld, St. Bruno in Bruno, and the Dead Moose Lake School, thereafter known as St. Angela. It has at times been said that Catholics sought to replace lay teachers with nuns because they saved money by doing so, and there is some basis for that assertion. In 1914, for example, the St. Joseph's teacher received \$50 per month.⁶⁷ That year the Ursulines agreed to instruct in St. Boniface for a similar sum.⁶⁸ However, for their \$50, the St. Boniface trustees obtained three sisters, two to teach and one to keep house.

66. In some instances there were significant variations. St. Paul, for example, never operated more than four months, while St. Boniface, St. Peter, and St. John were at times open for as long as eight months. Pupils attending St. Maurus never received instruction in German and those attending St. Francis did so only during its first year of operation.

67. SPAA, St. Joseph Parish, Cash Book, 1 Jan. 1913 - 11 Mar. 1942. The St. Bernard teachers received about the same that year, in one case \$50 and in the other \$55 per month. *Ibid.*, St. Bernard Parish, Account Book.

68. Mother Anna Catherina's diary, 1 Oct. 1914.

Three nuns might therefore be said to have cost the same as one lay teacher. But that was not really the case. Simply arranging for the Ursulines to take charge of a school cost a substantial amount. Moreover, and of significance for this discussion, employing them immediately produced what according to Foght were at least six educational reforms.

To prepare for the arrival of the Ursulines, St. Peter's and St. Bruno's trustees modified their schools so as to have two classrooms. Before long, they also constructed entirely new facilities. At Leofeld and Dead Moose Lake, on the other hand, new schools, each with two classrooms, were built at once. Each of these new schools also contained dormitories and dining areas for approximately two dozen boarders. The nuns of course had also to be accommodated. They needed a kitchen, parlour, bedrooms, and a chapel (see Plate 1). To obtain the services of the Ursulines, St. Boniface trustees spent about \$6,000 and their St. Angela counterparts \$8,000,⁶⁹ sums far in excess of the \$700 to \$1,600 spent to erect one-room, public schools in St. Peter's during 1914 and 1915.⁷⁰ Establishment of a *Schwestern Schule* resulted in the creation of a school quite similar to the "Model" school proposed by Foght for non-English districts. Such schools differed from the ordinary parish or one-room public school in that they were larger, served expanded areas, contained at least two departments, possessed teacherages which were certainly not shacks, and employed what to all intents and purposes were permanent teachers who lived in their districts at least ten months of the year and had what might be called their own "retirement plan." In addition, though no provision was made to convey students to them, the need to do so was reduced by the fact that they accepted boarders.

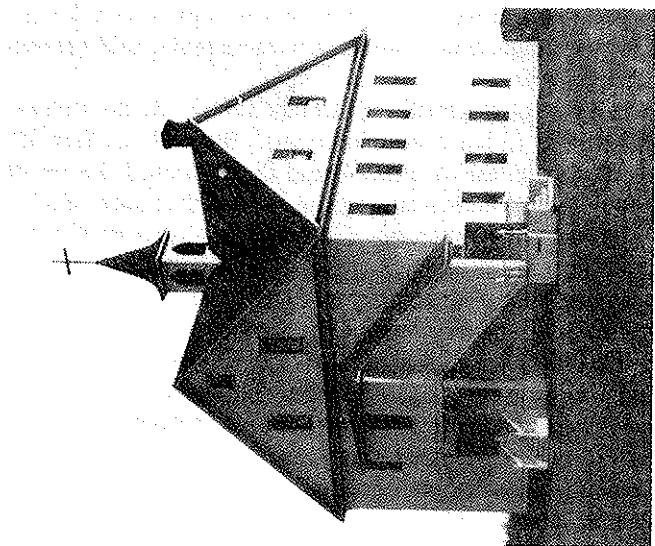
The takeover of a parish school by the Ursulines also had other results which, viewed from Foght's standpoint, constituted reforms. When a parish school board signed a contract with the sisters, it rid itself of such often onerous tasks as finding a teacher and boarding facilities for the person selected. However, when freeing itself of such responsibilities, its members, together with their parish priest, also relinquished control over certain matters to the Ursulines. Though a board or priest might lobby to obtain the services of a particular teacher, the Ursulines, who were usually either professional teachers or people aspiring to that status, thereafter decided specifically who would staff each of their schools.⁷¹ The selection of teachers for a particular school was thus vested in an authority in closer touch with teachers, as Foght proposed. But that development was trivial compared to others.

Not only did the Ursulines deem it desirable that their charges be separated into departments for instructional purposes, they also believed that schools should

69. AS, Department of Education, Private Schools, Private Schools and Colleges, Annual Reports, 1920, No. 48, St. Angela and No. 50, St. Boniface.

70. The cost of public schools is included in the first table described in footnote 48 above.

71. Mother Anna Catherina's diary, 18 Aug. 1914.



St. Angeia Parochial School, Dead Moose Lake, 1915.

The St. Peters Bote, 10 September 1914, described St. Angela as a building measuring 42 x 44 feet, with a basement containing a concrete cistern and a ground floor made of concrete.

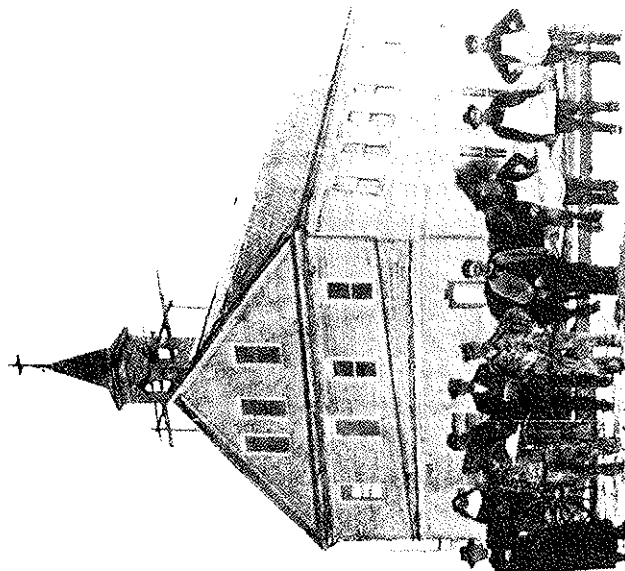


Plate 1: St. Boniface Parochial School, nearing completion in 1914.

Source: Sister Benedict Plemel, OSU, *Ursuline Convent 1913-1973 Diamond Jubilee Sail On* (Saskatoon: Mercury Printers, n. d.).

operate throughout the year. Consequently, they immediately increased the length of the school year from about six months to 200 or more days.

In addition, they divided the school year into two terms and proceeded from there to do something which would have been very difficult, perhaps impossible, for a number of separate boards to have done. They established common opening and closing dates for all their schools. All opened in early September, closed about mid-December, reopened in early January, and closed for the year about mid-July.⁷² In short, the Ursulines instituted a school year comparable to that of elementary schools in Saskatchewan's towns and cities.

Though too few daily registers have survived to demonstrate conclusively that attendance also improved when the Ursulines took charge of a school, it is perfectly reasonable to maintain that it did. Boarders could be expected to attend classes practically every day their school was open. In 1914 a quarter of the students enrolled in St. Boniface lived at the school, and in 1915 the proportion of boarders among St. Angela's pupils was substantially higher, fully forty percent.⁷³ In addition, even if an individual student's frequency of attendance did not improve, that student would obtain a somewhat improved education owing to expansion of the school year.

The Ursulines also instituted other changes in the parochial school system whereby education in St. Peter's benefited. Even before Oliver visited the area, they decided to teach all elementary grades and by 1915-16, with three students taking Grade VIII at St. Angela,⁷⁴ were beginning to create the "group of advanced pupils" of which Foght spoke. By the following year, students are also known to have completed their elementary education in St. Peter.⁷⁵ Intent on accomplishing even more, the sisters opened their schools to boys as old as nineteen for four months during the winter to give them an opportunity to brush up on their "four Rs" or to obtain an education previously unavailable. And on occasion they also taught adults.⁷⁶ For example, in 1917, Mother Antonio Mackey offered Latin after hours to two young men, a Bruno resident and a teacher from a neighbouring public school, to prepare them for university. Those

72. For reference to common opening dates and very similar closing dates see *St. Peters Bote*, 3 Sept. 1914, 21 July and 1 Sept. 1915.

73. For St. Boniface boarders see *St. Peters Bote*, 10 Sept. 1914, and Mother Anna Catherina's diary, 22 Nov., 6 Dec. 1914. For St. Angela see *St. Peters Bote*, 3 Feb. 1915. Mother Anna Catherina in her diary, 25 Oct. 1914, also describes her colleagues at St. Peter as having "the house full of boarders."

74. AS, Department of Education, Daily Registers, St. Angela's School, Dead Moose Lake, 1915-1916.

75. Frances Weber (Sister Magdalen, OSU), interview with author, Bruno, Sask., 19 July 1978, informed me that she completed Grade VIII at St. Peter in the summer of 1917.

76. Benedict, "Preview of Fifty Years," 10.

students became sources of pride and joy to her entire community. One went on to become a Benedictine priest and the other, a medical doctor and Member of Parliament.⁷⁷ Finally, except for one hour of instruction in German each day, the sisters taught only in English.⁷⁸

Of the other desirable results that operation of schools by the Ursulines brought, only two will be mentioned. One was the product of what Ursulines throughout the world saw as part of their mission and the other of what German Ursulines settling in Canada and the United States viewed as a mission all their own. Ursulines in general, like their foundress, were committed to improving the status of women. They therefore encouraged girls, more so than St. Peter's Benedictine priests apparently did,⁷⁹ to obtain not only an elementary but a secondary school education; and to encourage and assist girls to do so, they strove from the day they arrived to establish a high school for girls as the Benedictines were planning to do for boys. That goal was reached in 1922 when they opened their academy, not in a town or city, but in the village of Bruno.

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77. Sister Benedict Plemel, OSU, *Ursuline Convent 1913-1973, Diamond Jubilee: Sail On* (Saskatoon: Mercury Press, n.d.), 13. This account provides no date but includes the name of the teacher, H.R. Fleming. He taught in neighbouring schools in both 1917 and 1918. See AS, Teachers Registers, 1917, Ironside District No. 1310, and 1918, Theil-Krentz District, No. 3612.
78. Soon after the Ursulines began teaching in various parochial schools, new rules and regulations were published governing St. Peter at the Benedictine monastery. They read in part: "In our parochial schools the language of instruction is the English language. However, one hour's instruction is to be given in every class in the German language daily from which no pupil can be excused." See SPAA, St. Peter's Parochial School, Rules and Regulations, Parochial School Folder, classed by the archivist as being effective 1914-16. While all parochial schools did not adhere to this regulation, those taught by the Ursulines did. See Parochial School Folder for a hand-written, abbreviated copy of the above-mentioned rules and regulations, which Father Chrysostom produced for St. Bruno. Sister Katherine Distil, OSU, interview with author, Bruno, Sask., 15 Jan. 1993, who was taught by the sisters, first in St. Angela and then St. Peter, and entered the order in 1921, states that when the Ursulines took over a school they adapted their teaching to the Saskatchewan system: English only except for one hour per day. For her early life see *Beyond Our Dreams*, 38-39. Instruction was similar in at least one school run by lay teachers: Carmel Catholic, which opened in July, 1914, according to Mrs. Mary Hepp (née Engele), interview with author, Humboldt, Sask., 7 June 1978, and Mrs. Catherine Dale (née Engele), interview with author, Carmel, Sask., 7 July 1978.
79. Among the rules issued by St. Peter's pastor for his parish's parochial school was one which stated: "Boys should be encouraged at an early age to address the class" in order that they might become future Catholic leaders. SPAA, St. Peter's Parochial School, Rules and Regulations, 1914-16. "Boys" were mentioned elsewhere in the rules but "girls" not at all.

Their second mission, referred to briefly in Mother Anna Catherina's diary⁸⁰ and expressed more fully in other Ursuline writings, would probably have shocked, perhaps even pleased, Oliver had he learned of it. As teachers coming from Germany, the sisters were familiar with both their own and German history. They had suffered, for example, during Bismarck's *Kulterkampf*, when at least some Ursuline convents had been closed and their residents driven out of the country.⁸¹ Though later permitted to return, they remained apprehensive. According to Mother Benedict Plemel, "as early as 1911...when the first rumblings of war sounded...the Ursulines of northern Germany feared another expulsion or an interference in their apostolate as teachers and educators."⁸² Elsewhere, she comments:

Convents in Germany, prominent in the field of education, excellently equipped, could become targets of a government which needed ready-made facilities for war purposes. Therefore Ursuline convents looked to the western world for a refuge and a new field of work for their members; hence their venture into Winnipeg in 1912.⁸³

That mission of course raises a question. Would a group of nuns bent on establishing a permanent refuge for colleagues remaining in Germany, even though they might be daughters of a once-prominent German politician or a retired general or the sister of a soldier who fell in battle, seek to promote "a narrow" German nationalism or to create a "polyglot Austria" on the Canadian prairies, as Oliver feared parochial schools would do?⁸⁴ Ursuline writings do not mention such things, but their records suggest they would not.

Consider the contents of Mother Anna Catherina's diary. On her second July 1 in Canada she opened her entry with the words "Dominion Day." About as quickly as possible after taking charge of St. Boniface School, she had a map of Canada hung on her classroom wall. A few weeks later she obtained a number of books of "English songs." Those books or others already in her possession no doubt contained such selections as "O Canada" and "The Maple Leaf Forever," which she and her colleagues had had their charges sing while in Winnipeg.⁸⁵ Shortly after the Ursulines began teaching at St. Peter Parochial School, new rules governing its operation were also published. They read in part: "Pupils are to be taught patriotic songs, such as: God Save the King, O Canada, the Maple Leaf,

80. Mother Anna Catherina's diary, 17 Apr. 1914.

81. Benedict, "Preview of Fifty Years," 16.

82. *Ibid.*, 6.

83. Plemel, *Ursuline Convent 1913-1973*, 9.

84. Oliver, *The Country School*, 7, 11.

85. Mother Anna Catherina's diary, 22 May, 1 July, 3 Nov., 24 Dec. 1914.

etc.”⁸⁶ The rules were issued by the pastor of St. Peter Parish, but, given the wording of the 1909 resolutions of the Benedictines’ meeting in Chapter, they would apply to all of St. Peter’s parochial schools.⁸⁷ Prior to the arrival of the Ursulines, only children in St. Boniface Parochial School are known to have sung any of these songs.⁸⁸ Finally, when the Ursuline Convent at Bruno opened, its blessing by the Benedictine Prior included these words addressed to parents: “may your children, now under the guidance of the Sisters...develop into good Catholic citizens of this land.”⁸⁹ Of the numerous reforms the Ursulines had instituted or were instituting by late 1915, Oliver failed to mention even one.

A NUMBER OF CONCLUSIONS can be drawn respecting both Dr. Oliver and the elementary school situation existing in rural Saskatchewan when he addressed the Public Education League and for a time thereafter. First, assuming that he wanted an aroused Anglo-Canadian public both to demand and obtain English only in all publicly sponsored elementary schools, he achieved his goal. As of 1919 all instruction was in English, except for a primary course in French. Private schools also came under increasing supervision by the Department of Education. Through these changes in provincial educational policy, the hegemony of Anglo-Celtic people in Saskatchewan was strengthened and their future hegemony rendered more certain. However, Oliver obtained his ends by means which can scarcely be admired. To do so, he donned the mantle of the ultra-Anglo-conformist described by J.E. Rea. On one hand, he extolled the virtues of his own group and one of its institutions, the Ontario public school; and, on the other, he berated people of a different background and one of their institutions. In order to portray the German Catholics and their parochial schools adversely, he resorted, consciously and perhaps partly through haste, to half-truth, innuendo, speculation, and omission of practically every detail about their activities respecting education which showed them to be desirable residents of Saskatchewan. Second, in view of how Oliver treated the German Catholics, little stock can be placed in what he said of the Ukrainians, French, Doukhobors, or Mennonites. Even what he presented as fact pertaining to them must be considered of questionable validity. Third, since the employment of the Ursulines led to major reforms in St. Peter’s parochial school system—developments which went unmentioned not only by Oliver but also by subsequent investigators such as Foght and Dr. J.T.M. Anderson—one cannot avoid the conclusion that the elementary schools operat-

86. SPAA, St. Peter’s Parochial School, Rules and Regulations, 1914-1916.

87. Chapter Resolutions, 13 May 1909.

88. AS, Department of Education: Office of the Administrative Officer, Deputy Minister’s Correspondence, Schools, E.3, M1, reports on nine parochial schools and the Humboldt Catholic Separate School, Kramer to Calder, 24 July 1911 (Private and Confidential).

89. Ursuline Convent, Bruno, Sask., *Ursuline Bulletin* II, 2 (n.d.), (TS), 9.

ing in rural Saskatchewan during and immediately following World War I were often less riddled with problems than they were alleged to be.

It might also be noted that reform of the schools within St. Peter's parochial system directly affected only one-third of their number because of the outbreak of war.⁹⁰ Had war not erupted for another year or so, additional sisters would have immigrated to the colony and taken over more schools. It has also been intimated that the outbreak of war almost prevented reform from becoming as extensive as it did. When Germany and Canada became enemies, the second contingent of nuns was crossing the Atlantic. Owing to hostilities they landed at Boston rather than a Canadian port. Fortuitously, the first American official that Mother Antonio Mackey met was an Irish Catholic, who recognized her accent and, when informed that she and her party were headed for Saskatchewan, stated that he would take care of the matter. The upshot was that enemy nationals were whisked across the Canadian border to Montreal and placed on a west-bound train by Irish Catholics in the American and Canadian immigration services.⁹¹ If the story is true, it was by an odd twist of fate, rather than through the efforts of people like Oliver, that St. Peter's obtained some reform-minded educators and the benefits they began bestowing on its residents, months before Saskatchewan's Public Education League was founded.

90. The reforms instituted by the Ursulines in their four schools of course benefited a substantial number of children enrolled in other parochial schools. Children from the latter constituted a substantial proportion of the boarders at the former.

91. Benedict, "Preview of Fifty Years," 8. Sister Katherine Distel also spoke of the matter when interviewed. On the other hand, another source, Plemel, *Ursuline Convent, 1913-1973*, 58, states: "A top official...of the Lloyd firm introduced himself to the Sisters as a brother of the Archbishop of Cologne and offered to take care of their customs and ticket worries" when they debarked in Boston.