

# William Whyte School

**200 Powers Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R2W 4P3**

Prepared September, 1992  
Updated 2010

William Whyte School, named in memory of Sir William Whyte, Vice-President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, opened its doors on March 4, 1915. The school had 16 classrooms with an additional 5 rooms on the 3rd floor for Home Economics and a suite for the accommodation of a caretaker. The total cost was \$170,660.75.

When William Whyte opened in 1915 it was the first public girls school in Canada. In addition to academic studies, the girls were taught cooking, sewing and homemaking skills. Only girls attended Grades 4 to 9. Both boys and girls attended Grades 1 to 3. The public girls' school lasted until 1955 when the school became a co-educational elementary school. However, the home economics department on the third floor of the three storey building was retained to train older girls from neighbouring schools in cooking, sewing and homemaking.

That arrangement survived another six years until 1961, when the home economics department moved to Aberdeen junior high school and Aberdeen School's Grades 4 to 6 classes were moved to William Whyte School. William Whyte's home economics rooms were turned into classrooms.

Today, William Whyte is a community school with improved recreation and educational facilities to meet the needs of the students and the community.

Built in 1976 at a total cost of \$1,223,090.00 the new school consists of a gymnasium, arts & crafts room, multi-purpose room, a community adult centre (including office, storage, and kitchen), office space, a caretaker's room, an open-area nursery and kindergarten, a library, and open-area classroom space. The new building encompasses 40,000 square feet.

## Sir William Whyte

Sir William Whyte was born on September 15, 1843, at Charleston, Fifeshire, Scotland. His father was the factor or supervisor on the Lord Elgin estate. When William became old enough, he attended the local school where he received an elementary education. In those days few girls and boys attended university and William was no exception.

As a boy he was interested in trains, his first job being that of a call-boy or one who was sent to call out emergency crews. One day he was sent to call a trainman to work. As he was about to set off, he saw an engine going in the same direction. "Why should a boy walk when he could ride?" Disobeying the rules of the company, he hopped on the engine. When it was time to get off, he jumped, but the jump ended in a hard fall.

The railway doctor was called. William had a broken leg, and the doctor said the leg would have to be taken off.

How sad William's mother felt! Something must be done. She could not let them take off her son's leg. She called in the old family doctor. He was told what had happened and what was to be done. He did not agree with the railway's doctor, and under his care William's leg was saved.

When William was twenty years old, he left his home in Scotland and came to Canada. He was eager for adventure. Canada he knew, was a young country and offered many opportunities for anyone who was willing to work. He settled in Toronto where he got a job as Brakeman on a train. Passengers on the train loved to hear him call out the names of the stations in his rich voice and Scottish accent. He was soon promoted to Freight Agent, then to Station Master and Ticket Agent.

In 1871, when William was twenty-eight years old, he married Jane Scott of Toronto. They had five children, four daughters and a son, William, named after his father.

He entered the service of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1884 as Superintendent of the Ontario Division. In 1886 he went to Winnipeg as General Superintendent of the Western Division, which extended from Fort William to Vancouver. He became assis-

tant to the president of the C.P.R. in 1901 and Second Vice- President in 1910. He retired in 1911.

More settlers were needed in Western Canada and getting them became an important part of Mr. Whyte's work. Farmers from Europe, England, and Eastern Canada were brought to the West where the climate and soil were ideal for farming.

William Whyte took a keen interest in every settlement. The newcomers needed help in getting started on their farms and Mr. Whyte helped them to select suitable grains and encouraged them to use the best methods of farming. It is said that he was known in every town on the C.P.R. in the West. He knew the difficulties that faced the pioneers in the new country. He was sympathetic and did much to help the settlers help themselves.

He had a good sense of humour and could always enjoy a joke, especially if the joke was on himself.

Once when he was on an inspection trip, his train stopped at a small town. In an effort to help the conductor of the train, he went into the railway station and asked if there were any telegrams for him. The station agent looked at Mr. Whyte, and not recognizing him, said impatiently, "Is your photograph on your telegrams?" Mr. Whyte burst into laughter at this remark and gave his name. The agent was most embarrassed and apologized for his impatience.

At the time of King George V's coronation, William Whyte was made a Knight for his outstanding work in the Canadian West, and was then known as Sir William Whyte. Congratulations were sent to him from far and near across Canada.

In 1914 two new schools were built in Winnipeg, one in the south part of the city and one in north Winnipeg, on Powers Street. The School Board wished to call one of these new schools after Sir William. They invited the Whyte family to decide which school should bear his name. They chose the school in north Winnipeg, and it was officially named William Whyte School.

(Much of the material for the foregoing biography was obtained by Grade V pupils in William Whyte School.)

## Technical Data

William Whyte School is a two storey steel structure supported on a combination of precast and cast-in-place pile foundation. The main floor is constructed of a two way reinforced concrete slab, while the second floor is a concrete slab supported by steel joists. Steel joists also support an insulated steel roof deck system.

Heating is provided by means of a gas fired hot water generating plant with minimal perimeter radiation.

Two multizone air handling units equipped with heating and cooling coils provide a controlled temperature environment for the total building.

The school is equipped with a sound and program system designed to provide two program channels. An intercommunication system is provided for easier administration. Fire and life safety is provided for by a smoke detection system linked to the city signals department.

## Construction

Built: 1914

- Opened: Spring, 1915
- Official Opening: December 22, 1915
- Cornerstone: May 7, 1914 by J.G. Graig, Trustee
- Contractor: Claydon Bros.
- Contract: \$141,650 (actual cost \$142,057)
- No. of rooms: 17
- Demolished: 1976

Built: 1976

- Opened: September, 1976
- Official Opening: November 25, 1976
- Architect: Macdonald Cockburn McLeod

McFeetors

- Consulting: W.I. Enns
- Structural: Penner Lack Keeler & Partners
- Elec. & Mech.: Scouten Mitchell Sigurdson & Associates Ltd.
- Area of Bldg: 44,891 sq.ft.
- Area of Site: 2.38 acres
- Net Cost: \$1,223,909
- Sq.Ft. Cost: \$27.26
- No. of rooms: fifteen classrooms, group instruction areas, kindergarten space, crafts room, resource room, common room, multipurpose room and gymnasium.