

SANDWICH SOUTH UNION SEPARATE SCHOOLS

S. S. No. 2 (St. Peter's)

S. S. No. 2 URCSS (St. Peter's) was originally built in 1904 about 65 years ago, of frame construction. In 1960 the structure was in two sections, an addition having been built in the intervening years. Mostly children of French ancestry attended this school, situated on Highway No. 2, east of Lesperance Road in Sandwich South Township. In 1960 it housed 85 students attending from Maidstone, Sandwich East and Sandwich South. Paul Pelchat was chairman of the old trustee board, and Robert Leblanc, secretary-treasurer.

Early in 1960 this school came in for much criticism as a firetrap and after a survey of schools of Essex County by the Windsor Star an official of the Ontario fire marshal's office stated that St. Peter's Separate School in Sandwich South Township was not satisfactory for student occupancy.

John R. Bateman, of the engineering department of the fire marshal's office made a two hour inspection of the school then. Although he did not elaborate on his findings, Mr. Bateman said he would file a complete report to his Toronto headquarters, a duplicate copy would be forwarded to the school board. He stated it would be a very expensive undertaking to make the necessary changes and renovations. "As far as combustibility is concerned, the school was about as bad as you could get", Mr. Bateman said.

The condition of St. Peter's School has been the subject of argument and criticism on the part of parents and municipal officials for several years. Sandwich East Council started a public controversy by calling the school a fire trap. Sandwich

S. S. No. 2 (St. Peter's) Cont.

Since the Feb. 1st objection of Sandwich East, municipal officials met and outlined a course of action.

They decided to: Immediately seek safer schools to accommodate the pupils temporarily.

Investigate costs and problems of building a school on a site offered in Sandwich East Township.

Call for a ratepayers' vote to provide the necessary approval for the purchase of a site offered in Sandwich East Township. The meeting was held Feb. 6th, 1960.

March 29th, 1960 - A new separate school would be built in Maidstone Township this year to house students of that municipality that are now attending the condemned St. Peter's School in Sandwich South Township. Recent appointees to the Board of Trustees were Norbert Baillargeon, chairman, Edward Chittle and Raymond Maitre. This means that there will be ~~two~~ schools as Sandwich South supporters earlier announced that they would build a school for their students in Sandwich East Township. The Ont. Dept. of Education has tentatively approved construction of both schools.

Feb. 9th, 1961 - Supporters of Separate School Section No. 2 Sandwich South voted 16-4 in favor of a union with S. S. No. 2, Sandwich East at a heated meeting in the now-vacated St. Peter's School on Highway 2. A second meeting would be held in S. S. No. 6 Sandwich East to see if supporters of that section favor the union supporters of S. S. No. 2. Most of the protests launched came from a small group of supporters from S. S. No. 10, Maidstone which claimed the meeting slayed to capture the support of S. S. No. 2 for S. S. No 6 was illegal.

Trouble was anticipated prior to the meeting and Provincial Police were requested to stand by. However, nothing developed beyond the shouting stage.

February 21st, 1961 - Sandwich South Council instructed its solicitor to draft a letter requesting the dismantling of the now vacated firetrap, St. Peter's Separate School on Highway 2 near Lesperance Road. Council took action after receiving a petition signed by 26 persons living near the school which requested that the building be torn down.

The signers of the petition claim the structures are a distinct fire hazard in their present condition. The petition came before Council almost a year from the time that the old school was exposed by the Windsor Star as a firetrap.

However, school supporters could not agree on a site and consequently a four-room school was built in Sandwich East and a two-room school in Maidstone Twp.

With the split of Sandwich East and Maidstone supporters developed a tug-of-war over the unclaimed support of the Sandwich South supporters. Both Sand. East and Maidstone would like to have this support and the assessment and provincial grants that go with it.

March 7th, 1961 - OLD SCHOOL LIVES ON - was the caption on this date in the Windsor Star.

An old separate school section never dies; it simply fades away. And that likely is what will happen to R.C.S.S. No. 2 Sandwich South Township which was served by the old St. Peter's School.

That was the opinion of Richard Walker, township solicitor, who said the old school section board would live on according to school statutes. Presumably the board ceases to function when all of the three last elected members have died. Mr. Pelchat, chairman, wanted to retain the old school until the Dept. of Education had ruled on the union school proposal of old S. S. No. 2 with the new St. Peter's School in Sandwich East Twp. Mr. Walker said the proposal had been turned down.

If the department turns down the union school proposal we will then get authority from it to tear the old school down. It will be down in three months one way or the other, said Mr. Pelchat. Two schools were built, St. Peter's in Sandwich East Twp. and St. Mark's in Maidstone Twp.

August 23, 1961 - Higher Court suggested for appeal to have assessment reduced on the old school by Sandwich South solicitor William Willson. It was assessed under the same taxation formula as a house. Assessor Bert R. Bedford it was assessed as a house less 50% depreciation allowance and again less 20% for obsolescence. Mr. Willson asked for a basic 50% reduction, total assessment was \$1,760 on the property with \$1,590 of this on the buildings. Assessment was left as was until the buildings would be torn down. On Monday, January, 30th, 1961 pupils were in their new school on St. Alphonsus St. and the FIRETRAP SCHOOL WAS NO MORE.