

The Middleton School, 1906

Division No. 4 – Digby and Annapolis
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...The greater number of the schools were found to be in fairly satisfactory condition. Some were classes superior, some good and some poor. The same classification applies to the teachers employed inasmuch as it may be considered an axiom that the “teacher makes the school.” That some poor schools are to be found should not be considered strange when the large number of inexperienced and untrained teachers entering the profession each year is considered. This year forty-six new and untried teachers entered the profession in this division. During the proceeding year fifty-two teachers entered upon this work for the first time. It would be strange, if out of so many untried teachers a few should not be found to be comparative failures. As nearly all new teachers are from sixteen to eighteen years of age, the wonder is that there are so few failures. More maturity and a little experience most commonly make fairly good teachers of those at first classed as poor. It is to be regretted that the short period which most teachers remain in the profession makes so large an influx of new teachers each year necessary. The salaries are so low that there is but little inducement for teachers to remain long in the school-room. This condition has driven many young men to other occupations who would otherwise engage in teaching, and has left this sphere of labour largely to young women. Of the two hundred and fifty-five teachers and substitutes employed in this division this year, forty-seven only were males. The remedy for this state of affairs lies with the ratepayers. The Government cannot reasonably be expected to do more than it has been doing. An increase of salaries to good teachers, and the enactment of a good pension law, would probably induce more of the young men to adopt teaching as a life profession. A pension scheme should derive some of its income from the Government. The small remuneration received by the great majority of the teachers will not permit them to contribute largely towards a pension fund. Their salaries will barely suffice for present necessities. A pension fund is necessary to make provision for sickness and old age.

It might, perhaps, be considered invidious to eulogize the work done in particular schools to the exclusion of others, but space will not permit me to mention all. As the Macdonald Consolidated School at Middleton was established as an object lesson for the whole Province, it is quite proper that I should refer to that specially. In my report last year I referred to this school as an unqualified success from an educational point of view. It has still continued to be such, and has fully demonstrated the benefits of bringing pupils from outlying sections to a central school. Eleven teachers were employed during the year, with Mr. George B. McGill as principal. Three of these taught the High School Grades, six taught the Common School Grades, and one in each of the Mechanic and Domestic Science departments. The whole staff proved to be efficient teachers and did excellent work. It would be surprising if such were not the case with the facilities for work which they enjoyed. Three of the teachers held Agricultural diplomas, and did effective work in that line by means of the excellent school garden on the premises. The attendance was even better than during the previous year. A larger county grant was obtained as a consequence, and the cost of conveyance of pupils slightly reduced. The

ultimate fate of the school is problematical. Another year will tell the tale. It cannot be maintained without the aid of the Macdonald fund, unless the sections submit to a much larger rate of taxation than at present.

Source: Nova Scotia, "Annual Report on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia, 1906," *Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia, Appendix 5*, (1906): 92–93.