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The Gabriola School District 1872–79

by Barrie Humphrey with Lynda Poulton

EDITOR: Barrie and Lynda’s article cites newspaper items, government reports, and approaching 250 letters in the BC Archives. The letters, all handwritten, have been painstakingly located, copied, and transcribed. This has been a lot of work. Transcription is not easy when handwriting is poor, and the quality of the microfilming and photocopying is low, as it commonly was. Misfiled documents and fruitless searches for missing documents also added disproportionately to the work load.

Interesting though all of these documents may be, it was not feasible to reproduce them all here; so instead, they have been entered into [a database](#) that is available online [Google: Gabriola School District Source Documents]. Items in this database have an identifier with the format BL-000-yy, where yy is the year 18yy.

Introduction

In an earlier *SHALE* article on the history of the schools on Gabriola Island,¹ author, historian, and long-time island resident, June Harrison,² wrote:

It was around 1870 that the families on Gabriola first saw the need for a school. On July 1, 1872, the Superintendent of Education visited the island from Victoria and noted that the population of school-age children was fifteen. Shortly after, the Provincial Secretary declared Gabriola and Mudge to be members of a newly-created Gabriola School District.

The island’s first school duly opened in October 1873. It was built on what is now the parking lot of the Community Hall on the south side of Gabriola.

According to official reports—the Annual Reports of Public Schools—all went well at first. Attendance at the school was high; the pupils were reported to be making rapid

progress in their studies; and trustees and parents were commended for their co-operation with the teacher.³ It was “still progressing satisfactorily” in 1876,⁴ but by 1878, things did not look quite so rosy. The report for that year says, “...the school was no model in neatness; the reading of the scholars was not good; and the progress made in writing, grammar, and geography was fair, but the answering in history was neither ready nor accurate”.⁵

In spite of an increase in the number of school-age children on the island, the school did not re-open at the end of the summer break of 1879, and it remained closed for two years.

In this article, we want to delve deeper into the history of this early period and investigate what was involved in setting up a school district. We also want to explore how the island’s settlers and the government attempted to deal, not always successfully, with the problems that inevitably arose.

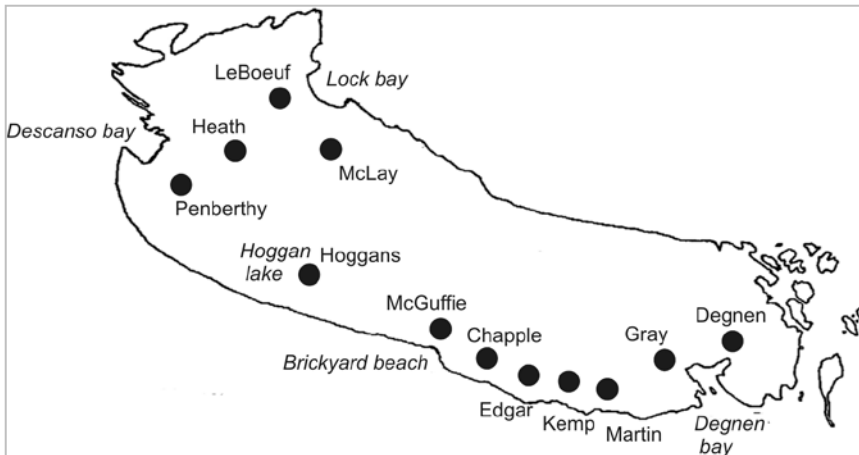
¹ June Harrison, *The four schools of Gabriola*, *SHALE* 11, pp.11–21, May 2005. In Printing 1 of this article, the caption for the photograph on p.14 was wrong, the EDITOR’s mistake. The children are standing on the steps of the Gabriola South School, not the Community Hall.

² June Lewis-Harrison, *The People of Gabriola*, Frieson & Sons BC, 1982.

³ BL-011-74 1873–74.

⁴ BL-016-76, 1875–76.

⁵ BL-028-78, 1877–78.



Approximate location of some of the settler families in the 1870s.

The history of the Gabriola School District can be gleaned from correspondence between trustees and authorities, contemporary newspaper reports, official government reports, and what little communication of a private or semi-private nature that has survived. These various sources sometimes give interestingly disparate accounts. Matters that must have been seen by the bureaucrats in far-away Victoria as tiresome distractions, were to islanders, matters of vital interest, and often sources of passionate disagreement.

The superintendent's visit

At 5:30 a.m. on July 1, 1872, John Jessop set off for Gabriola by canoe from Nanaimo. As Superintendent of Education, he was about to play a significant role in bringing formal education to the island's children. Earlier in the year, the newly-constituted Province of British Columbia had passed the Public School Act of 1872, which decreed that non-sectarian education, paid for by the government, should be available to all children in the province between the ages of five and sixteen.

The settlers on Gabriola welcomed this initiative, but it would not be easy to implement. For the school, they required a

building and a teacher, and that meant finding a site on the island that could be reached by all children, finding a qualified individual to teach, and providing a house for the teacher.

Resolving these issues would require patience, negotiation, a considerable

commitment on the part of islanders, and the direct involvement of

the superintendent.

Most of the men living on Gabriola at that time had settled on the island during the 1860s. According to June Harrison's account,² Robert Gray and Thomas Degnen had moved to the island from Nanaimo in about 1863. They were Irish immigrants determined to leave behind the harsh conditions of coal mining to become farmers. At about the same time, Richard Chapple came over to pre-empt land. Magnus Edgar and Thomas McGuffie had arrived the previous year, also leaving the mines. Jean Barman estimates that Henry Heath was on the island by 1866, and John Kemp by 1868.⁶

All these men married Aboriginal women, who, as Barman points out, with their knowledge of the country, youthful energy, and their relationships to existing communities, contributed greatly to the stability and security of the island families. By the time the province was offering free education, these families had children ready for school, and they made it clear to Jessop that they wanted a school on the island.

⁶ Jean Barman, *Island sanctuaries—Early mixed-race settlement on Gabriola and nearby coastal islands*, *SHALE* 2, pp.5–14, March 2001.

From Jessop's diary,⁷ we learn that on his first visit, he travelled by canoe "down one side of the island and up the other". Families were clustered in two groups. In North Gabriola (geographically also the west end) were John and Mary White Penberthy⁸ with two children; Henry and Mary Heath with one; and there was the expectation of the arrival of the Emricks moving to the island from Nanaimo with four children.⁹

In South Gabriola (geographically also the east end), Thomas and Adeliza McGuffie had two children; Richard and Mary Chapple three; Magnus and Mary Ann Edgar two; John and Lucille Kemp one; Robert and Mary Gray two; and Thomas and Jane Degnen five.

There was also the Stubbings family, Robert and Margaret, on Mudge Island who had children that they wanted to send over to school on Gabriola.

Of these 24, Jessop determined that 15 were of school age. According to the Public School Act, that number qualified Gabriola both to become a school district and to receive funding for their school.

Establishing the school district—1872

Following Jessop's visit, and probably with his help, the Gabriolans petitioned the Lieutenant Governor, requesting that Gabriola be made a school district. The petition hasn't survived, but Jessop's supportive covering letter has.¹⁰ He forwarded both to Charles Good, Assistant

Provincial Secretary, on August 19, 1872. It reads as follows:

Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a petition from the settlers of Gabriola Island asking the Lieut. Governor to create a school district on that Island.

For the information of His Excellency in Council, I beg to state that in Gabriola there are fifteen children of school age—Emrick's three being still at Nanaimo—he is, however, preparing a house for his family on his farm & is preparing to move over to the island this fall.¹¹ Stubbings (*sic*) [with two children] lives on Mudge Island which should be incorporated with Gabriola for school purposes as it is but a few rods across from the one to the other.

The children are all half-castes—Gabriola is about seven miles in length and not more than two in width—Mudge is only a few hundred acres in extent.

I have the honor to be Sir, your very obt. servt., John Jessop, Supt. of Education.

Only ten days later, on August 29, Jessop received this reply from the Provincial Secretary's office:¹²

Sir: I am directed by the Lieut. Governor to acquaint you that, for School purposes, the Islands known severally as Gabriola and Mudge have been incorporated and created a School District under the title of the Gabriola School District.

I have the honour to be Sir, your obedient servant, A. Rocke Robertson, Prov'l Sec'y.

The Board of Trustees

On September 21, 1872, Gabriolans began the process of creating a school district. The first requirement was an organizing committee. Following the School Act and

⁷ BL-002-72.

⁸ BL-002-73, Note 1.

⁹ Jessop evidently did not visit Theodore and Maria LeBœuf down near Lock Bay who at the time would have had two children, but both too young to go to school.

¹⁰ BL-006-72.

¹¹ Emrick's family never did move to Gabriola. They appear in the census for Nanaimo in 1881, 1891, and 1901, but not 1911.

¹² BL-007-72.

directions sent them by Jessop on Aug. 30;¹³ the Gabriola electors assembled and elected temporary officers. These were Magnus Edgar as Chair and Richard Norris as Secretary. The electors then went on to vote for three trustees. Elected were Thomas Degnen, Thomas McGuffie, and Henry Heath.

Of the three, two were from the south end of Gabriola, and the third, Heath, was from the north end, a distinction that has frequently been a factor in the politics of the provision of public services on Gabriola. Providing a school system was going to be no exception to this, for the first problem facing the board was where to put the school.

Siting the new school

A meeting of settlers was held on October 3, 1872. Magnus Edgar and Richard Norris reported the proceedings to superintendent John Jessop at some length, describing the possibilities the electors had considered.¹⁴

Recognizing the distances between settler families, they had decided they preferred that there be two schoolhouses, one for the north end, and one for the south end. The south-end school would be “at the foot of the Ridge (south side)”.¹⁵ The north-end school would be “on the Ridge between the houses of H. Heath and Le Buff [Boeuf]”.¹⁶ But, should only one schoolhouse be built,

the majority agreed that it should be erected in “the neighbourhood of Rock Creek”.¹⁷

However, to their statement addressed to the superintendent, reported with dutiful impartiality, Edgar and Norris, joined by Chapple, added a *post script*.¹⁸ It read:

The voters were a little in disorder, when the School House was proposed to be erected on Rock Creek part of them having left—We the undersigned think it would be out of the way. There are no roads—no settlers in the neighbourhood & that if the School was built there, no children would be able to attend—We think that at present, the only fit place is the site first chosen, at the foot of the Ridge (south side)—There is only one child over 5 years old at the North end.

What appears to be common sense reasoning in this *post script* may not have been communicated to the school board trustees. Almost a month later, on November 1, 1872, one of the trustees, Thomas Degnen, felt it necessary to write to Jessop independently, to elaborate on the reasons for choosing “the Ridge (south side)” as the site for the school.¹⁹ As well as drawing attention to the conflicts and personal interests that had influenced talk about the sites proposed, he also pointed out that the majority vote by the electors went to a site, Rock Creek, which he felt (with good reason) was so inconvenient for everyone, that no one would ever send their child to a school built at that location.

¹³ BL-008-72.

¹⁴ BL-010-72.

¹⁵ The “Ridge” was the high ground running slightly south of east from the top of the bluffs at False Narrows toward Thompson Point, so “the foot of the Ridge (south side)” was somewhere near the Maples; there is a year-round free-running spring there.

¹⁶ Heath’s land was in the vicinity of Dogwood Crescent (NW¼ of Section 13) and LeBoeuf’s down by Lock Bay. They must have meant somewhere on the land at the end of Church Street, perhaps not far from where the Gabriola Medical Clinic is now.

¹⁷ An 1875 map in the BC Ministry Lands Office (found by Kathy Dunster) shows Rock Creek as being the creek now called Stoney Creek. It runs northeast from the Turkey Shoot Road Swamp to the north shore. The source (“Spring”) is marked on at least two pre-emption sketch maps. Although Rock Creek *might* have been one of the creeks running into Hoggan Lake, Hazel Windecker, a member of the Hoggan family, doesn’t remember a “Rock Creek” and no map is known that shows one in that area.

¹⁸ BL-011-72.

¹⁹ BL-012-72.

Gabriola School District Trustees, 1872–79			
DATE ELECTED			
September 1872 (note 1)	Henry Heath	Thomas McGuffie	Thomas Degnen
January 1873 (note 2)	Magnus Edgar	Robert Stubbings	John Kemp
January 1874 (note 3)	Magnus Edgar	Thomas McGuffie	John Kemp
January 1875 (note 4)	Magnus Edgar	Richard Chapple	John Kemp
January 1876 (note 5)	Magnus Edgar? Jonathon Martin ?	Richard Chapple ?	John Kemp
June 1876 (note 6)	Jonathon Martin	Richard Chapple	John Kemp
June 1877 (note 7)	Jonathon Martin	Magnus Edgar	John Kemp
June 1878 (note 8)	Richard Chapple (disputed)	Magnus Edgar	John Kemp
June 1879 (note 9)	Richard Chapple	Magnus Edgar	Thomas Degnen
<p>Note 1: BL-009-72.</p> <p>Note 2: BL-002-73. Stubbings offered to resign BL-005-73, but this was not accepted BL-008-73.</p> <p>Note 3: Public Schools Annual Report for the 1873-74 school year.</p> <p>Note 4: Public Schools Annual Report for the 1874-75 school year.</p> <p>Note 5: The change in election date from January to June leaves it unclear as to when Martin replaced Edgar. Peggy Imredy (Gabriola Three schools Reunion, 1984) lists Edgar, Chapple, Kemp for 1876; however, the Public Schools Annual Report for the 1875-76 school year lists Martin, Chapple, Kemp.</p> <p>Note 6: BL-013-76.</p> <p>Note 7: BL-028-77 implies Edgar, Degnen, Chapple; but BL-034-77 etc. implies Kemp and Martin. Presumably Edgar was elected too and for more than one year because his position as trustee was not challenged in the dispute over the validity of the June 1878 election. The Public Schools Annual Report for the 1876-77 school year also lists Martin, Edgar, Kemp.</p> <p>Note 8: The June election was disputed, Martin claiming his replacement by Chapple in an election where he was not present was invalid. The official position reflected in the Public Schools Annual Report however was Chapple, Edgar, Kemp for the 1878-79 school year.</p> <p>Note 9: BL-011-79. These three remained in office for 1879-80, 1880-81, and 1881-82.</p>			

In the letter campaign of the south-enders to have the school built at the south end of the island, the number of children at the north end began to dwindle, along with their ages. According to the 1881 Census, the

Penberthy family would have had two children in 1872, Jane aged four, and Alice aged three. On October 3, Magnus Edgar had told Jessop that there was only one child older than five at the north end. The total

count of children, according to Degnen, was now down to “only” one two-year old.

No responses from Jessop could be found in his letterbook on the problem of the two geographically separate communities on Gabriola, but, in any case, the decision was made to locate the school on the slope of the ridge at the south end of the island on land donated by John and Lucille Kemp.

Funding the new school

The next step in the process was to secure funds for building the school.

Following a meeting at his home, Thomas McGuffie who had been designated Treasurer, wrote to the Lieutenant Governor on December 6, 1872. On behalf of the Gabriola Island School District, he asked for “a grant for the Sum of four Hundred Dollars \$400 for the purpose of Erecting a school House...”²⁰

Jessop replied early in the New Year, to say that “...a grant of \$300 for building a school house in Gabriola Island has been made by His Excellency in Council” and “...is at the disposal of the trustees when required”.²¹

The \$100 shortfall may have been the first sign that the province had underestimated the cost of implementing their ambitious plan for a province-wide school system.²²

On January 16, 1873, the electors of school districts across the province were required

by the School Act to hold their annual general meeting and to choose new trustees.

John Penberthy chaired the Gabriola meeting, with Robert Stubbings as Secretary. Magnus Edgar was elected to a three-year term, and to serve as both Secretary and Treasurer; Robert Stubbings won a two-year term; and John Kemp, one year.²³ Again, south-enders were in control.

Soon after, Edgar sent Jessop a request for the allocated funds.²⁴ Jessop was quick to reply to the effect that there would be a delay in providing money for procedural reasons, but, he added, “...can you not go on with the building” while waiting for the money that, “...I may guarantee you...in two weeks”.²⁵

Although we don't know when Gabriola learned of the budget cuts being made for 1873, we can be sure from Jessop's other correspondence that it was not spared any of these reductions. In a letter sent to the Provincial Secretary on February 8, 1873,²⁶ all Jessop could recommend to the schools was:

Any additional expenditure will have to be provided for from local sources, either by voluntary contribution or a small monthly [rate?] on pupils [illegible].

Finding a teacher—1872-3

The people of Gabriola had not been inactive meanwhile. While awaiting money for the building, it seems that the families were eager to ensure that if they had a school, they also had a teacher.

On February 16, 1873, Robert Stubbings wrote to Jessop informing him of his wish to be a candidate for the position. Stubbings,

²⁰ BL-013-72.

²¹ BL-001-73.

²² A recession was brewing, and Jessop had learned, probably around the end of December, that, because of budget shortfalls, his budget for 1873 had been cut to \$40,000, including arrears of \$5,546 continued from the previous year. In an effort to accommodate, he reduced salaries more than 10%, the budget for school house building and repair by 20%, and incidental expenses by 50%.

²³ BL-002-73.

²⁴ BL-004-73.

²⁵ BL-006-73.

²⁶ BL-003-73.

as required by the School Act, offered his resignation as trustee. The letter was signed by the other two trustees, Kemp and Edgar.²⁷

Stubbings followed up his letter on February 26 with another letter to Jessop signed by a group of eight electors²⁸ to show their support for hiring him (Stubbings) as Gabriola's teacher.

John Jessop, the Superintendent of Education, however, did not appear overly enthusiastic. Following policy set out in the School Act, he outlined the requirements Stubbings would have to fulfil to become even a temporary teacher.²⁹

Ed. Off. Vict. March 3, 1873

R. Stubbings Esq.

Dear Sir; ...In reply, I beg to state that it will be necessary for you to qualify as a School teacher before you can be appointed to the school (See section 23 of School Act). I send you herewith my Report; on pages 28–30 of which you will find a list of examination questions upon which Third class certificates were issued last year. It is only right for me to inform you, however, that the examination in July next will be more difficult. As you will not have an opportunity of [?_____ing?] an examination till July there will be no necessity for you to resign your trusteeship till that time and not then even should you fail in obtaining a certificate. A careful perusal of my report pages 21–23 respecting an examination will give you further instructions—I may just say, however that correct spelling will be required in the lowest grade of certificate... I have &c...

Questions from the 1872 examination:

No. 1 – Arithmetic: Time three hours.

#5. Divide 85 lbs. 7 oz. 15 dwt. 1 gr. by 67.

²⁷ BL-005-73.

²⁸ Thomas Degnen, Magnus Edgar, Robert Gray, Richard Norris, Marcus Roe, John Kemp, Henry Heath, and William Hoggan.

²⁹ BL-008-73.

#17. If 20 men can perform a piece of work in 12 days, how many men could perform another piece of work 3 times as great in one-fifth part of the time?

#18. Find the present value of \$4800 due in four years, without grace, at 5 per cent. per annum.

No. 2 – Geography: Time two hours.

#7. Give the eastern boundaries of all the continents, and specify the countries and capital cities.

#11. Describe the several motions of the earth.

No. 3 – English Grammar: Time two hours.

6. How many degrees of comparison are there? Name them, with examples.

#12. How many moods have verbs? and name them.

No. 4 – English History: Time two hours.

2. Who was the greatest monarch of the Plantagenet race?

#11. What was the greatest event in the reign of George III?

No. 5 – Vocal Music: Time one hour.

#8. Name, illustrate and define dynamic characters used in vocal music.

No. 6 – School Organization and Government: Time, one hour.

#1. On what should obedience, particularly in young children, be based; and what expedients would you employ to produce it?

No. 7 – Composition: Time, one hour.

Males – Influence of Canadian Pacific Railway on the future of British Columbia.

Females – Write what you know of “Dolly Varden.”³⁰

³⁰ EDITOR: All I'm going to say is that I thought a “Dolly Varden” was a kind of trout. Did the girls fail if they didn't know it was a woman's outfit that was fashionable for a few years starting in 1869? It was, I quote, “generally understood to mean a brightly patterned, usually flowered, dress with a polonaise

Not only was Stubbings cautioned about what would be required of him, it seems that at least one of the electors may have had reservations about him. Richard Chapple, who had not co-signed Stubbings' February 26 offer to serve as the teacher, wrote to Jessop on March 25 to ask a question about dismissing teachers.³¹

Unfortunately his letter is missing—we only know of it from a letter sent by Jessop to Magnus Edgar, on April 17, 1873. This letter also refers to another missing letter from Stubbings, dated March 31. Judging from the context provided by Jessop's letter, Stubbings was probably asking when the school might open.³²

Building the school—1873

While the question of a teacher was being addressed, work proceeded on building the school. In April, Jessop also wrote:²⁹

Ed. Off. Victoria Apr 17, 1873
Magnus Edgar Esq.—Sec'y
...in reply I have to inform you that the amount of your grant (\$300) has been paid over to Mr. A. Finny of Nanaimo³³—subject

overskirt gathered up and draped over a separate underskirt". But then, maybe what was actually expected was a discourse on the character, Dolly Varden, in Charles Dickens' historical novel *Barnaby Rudge*. It makes the CPR question sound easy.

³¹ Section 7 of the 1872 Act specified that it was the duty of the Board of Education in Victoria to remove teachers if good cause had been shown. In the 1873 amendment, trustees were also given the right to dismiss teachers, but only with the support of the majority of the Board of Education. It wasn't until 1879 that local school boards had the unfettered right to dismiss teachers with cause.

³² BL-012-73.

³³ Finney was a Nanaimo contractor and secretary of the school trustees. Presumably Gabriola was expected to pay for materials and be reimbursed. Finney is best known for finishing construction of the Entrance Island lighthouse after his predecessor absquatulated with the building funds.

to your order as soon as the school house shall be properly completed.

Early in May, 1873, the Provincial Secretary began keeping a closer eye on Jessop's activities and expenditures, adding to the superintendent's already substantial workload a request for detailed monthly reports. Information in these reports helps us fill in some blanks here regarding the inspection of the school building.³⁴

16th [June]. Started for Nanaimo [?Harbour] by Str. *Emma* from Esquimalt at 10 am—[?landed] at Nanaimo at 2 am.

Saturday 17th. Went to Gabriola Island by canoe, got there with some difficulty—strong head wind—Examined new school house & held meeting with Trustees—Got back to Nanaimo at 6 pm.

The Annual Report for 1873 suggests that construction must have been satisfactory and a meeting in May with the trustees must have gone well enough:³⁵

GABRIOLA ISLAND—This island, together with Mudge, were incorporated as a school district last autumn; since which time a school house has been built; but the Trustees have not yet been able to procure a teacher.³⁶

The first teacher—1873

Although correspondence between Jessop and Gabriola is missing for the last half of 1873,³⁷ it is evident that Stubbings' offer to be the teacher was not accepted. In the Register of persons (teachers and others) holding certificates from the Board of Education for the Province of British

³⁴ BL-013-73.

³⁵ BL-014-73.

³⁶ The 1872 Public School Act specified that it was the Board of Education's responsibility to hire teachers. However, in 1873, the act was amended to give school trustees the option of appointing teachers—they "may" do so, it said.

³⁷ BL-016-73.

Columbia,³⁸ we read that Mr. J.E.L. Seneker, was appointed in October 1873 to the Gabriola school. This appointment would have been temporary, and contingent on his success in writing and passing the exams required for a teaching certificate in the summer of 1874.

When he arrived on Gabriola, John Seneker would have found an almost completed school, but nowhere for him to live. A sum of \$25 for building the teacher's residence was not allocated until early in 1874,³⁹ and remained unspent after more than a year.

According to a letter written later from Edgar to Jessop,⁴⁰ Seneker stayed with the Chapple family who were paid \$3 a month, which probably included board.⁴¹

Paying for the school—1874

Despite a teacher being found and starting work, the schoolhouse still needed more funding. The trustees wrote to Jessop requesting money. Jessop's reply was firm.⁴² He wanted more details about their claim for reimbursement of \$54.25 and justification for some of their expenditures. "It seems to me", he remarks, "that your desks and benches for such a small room cost entirely too much".

In this letter, Jessop also refused what seems to have been an additional request, for an increase in Seneker's salary on the grounds that he is not a properly qualified teacher.⁴³

³⁸ BL-015-73.

³⁹ BL-001-74.

⁴⁰ BL-023-75.

⁴¹ An interesting contrast is provided by a classified advertisement in the *British Colonist* of 1870 in which there was an offer to board a horse in Victoria for \$15 a month.

⁴² BL-003-74.

⁴³ Jessop's own salary that year was \$2000 plus travel expenses—the highest for a civil servant in BC at the time.

Jessop's next letter,⁴⁴ written on March 2, 1874, is interesting for its detail. As superintendent, he was responsible for a broad range of concerns about the schools under his supervision. In the letter, he encloses a cheque for \$177.25, keeps track of the district's bookkeeping, and offers to help arrange building insurance.

Progress at the school

Three weeks later, on March 23, 1874, Jessop set off from Nanaimo to visit Gabriola and see for himself what was happening in the community and at the school. He wrote in his diary:⁴⁵

March 23rd [1874]. Started for Gabriola Island at 7am. Landed at Heaths and then over to Whites [White-Penberthy] and McLays—across to Hoggans & then to McGuffys by canoe—over to the school house calling at Chapples and Edgars— Found 16 children in attendance—Register shows an average of 13 from 1st of January—every pupil within reach of school has attended regularly.

Classes making gratifying progress in reading, spelling, & arithmetic—Grammar & geography just commenced. The whole school started with 1st book last autumn [October 1873]—One class now reading fairly in 2nd reader—The teacher, Mr. Seneker, is very painstaking & is deserving of great credit. Parents also (in great contrast with other districts) are much interested in the school & careful to keep up the attendance.

Children in district 22—March 24th. Went to Harewood in the forenoon....

Clearly, Jessop was impressed with what he witnessed and drew particular attention to Seneker's skill and effort, and to the interest of parents, which he saw as "in great

⁴⁴ BL-004-74.

⁴⁵ BL-005-74.

contrast with other districts”.⁴⁶ Coming from the man who inspected every school in the province at least once a year, this was high praise.

Almost immediately after this March visit, Jessop wrote to tell the Gabriola trustees that he would take their request for more salary to the Board of Education “tomorrow evening”. Just a few weeks later, he wrote to Edgar again:⁴⁷

Education Office, Victoria April 27, 1874

Mr. Magnus Edgar

Dear Sir: I enclose herewith cheque for \$125—salary of teacher month April \$50 & \$75 for fencing, building wood shed &c— If the settlers [? have the time?] [? to do so?] after spring work is done, to [?assist in?] putting up fence you [?might] be able to spare more than \$20 for a wood shed—At any rate you must do the best you can until then—Salaries for May & June will be paid on my return from the Interior.

Yours very truly, John Jessop.

Although Jessop made no comment on it, he had increased Seneker’s salary to \$50 a month. While he provided money for some schoolyard building, he also made it clear that no more would be coming in the short run.

At about the same time, Gabriola’s school attracted praise from another quarter. In May 1874, the *Nanaimo Free Press* published an article about Gabriola that included a comment about Seneker:⁴⁸

An efficient Public School with Mr. Seneker as teacher has existed for some time, and the main want at present is a regular mail service with Nanaimo. COM.

⁴⁶ Jean Barman has noted particularly the favourable contrast with Nanaimo, p.26 of *Lost Nanaimo—taking back our past*, *SHALE* 8, pp.19–26, June 2004.

⁴⁷ BL-007-74.

⁴⁸ BL-008-74.

Jessop returned to Victoria early in July to supervise the examinations for teacher certification.⁴⁹

Qualifying the teacher—1874

John Seneker was one of ten candidates who spent the beginning of their month’s holiday writing the exams in Victoria. Between July 6 and July 11, 1874, they subjected themselves to an academic marathon that covered fifteen subjects, each exam lasting between one and three hours.

Although Seneker did well in Grammar and Spelling, scoring the highest mark—88% in the latter, his scores in Reading, Writing, and Geography, (just over 60%), put him fifth in the group of ten examinees. His 50% scores in Natural Philosophy (science), Composition, and Mensuration⁵⁰ earned him eighth place. He came last in Arithmetic, History, English literature, and Education and the art of teaching. Perhaps wisely, he did not attempt the exams for Bookkeeping, Algebra, or Euclid.⁵¹

Overall, he answered 46% of the questions correctly.⁵² The Schools Act required 40% for a Grade 3A certificate to be awarded. The results of the examination were duly reported in the *British Colonist*, a Victoria newspaper.⁵³ Seneker received his certification on July 20, 1874, and was thereby entitled to teach for another year at the same salary.

In his 1874 report to the legislature, Jessop lamented “the scarcity of trained Teachers”

⁴⁹ In his annual report for 1873–4, Jessop claimed to have travelled “1200 miles by steamer, 425 by canoe, 540 by stage, 1255 on horseback, and 184 on foot” for a total of 3600 miles (5800 km).

⁵⁰ Geometry dealing with shapes, dimensions, surface areas, and volumes.

⁵¹ Geometry dealing with theorems and their proofs.

⁵² BL-015-73.

⁵³ BL-010-74.

and “admitted that the rate paid is too low to attract good Teachers”. This and Seneker’s “admirable” performance may have combined to persuade Jessop to increase his salary in April, contrary to the board’s ruling, and to ignore his poor performance in science, arithmetic, and mathematics.

Another examinee with a similar score was also awarded a Class 3A certificate, and two, who did even worse, 37% and 33%, were given Class 3B certificates.

Further progress—1874–75

Despite the importance to Gabriola’s school of Seneker’s gaining this qualification, Jessop did not acknowledge it in his August letter to Edgar,⁵⁴ nor comment on Seneker’s performance. Instead, he sent the July salary and reminded Edgar that the school’s Annual Report was due.

The superintendent made another visit to Gabriola on October 8, 1874, and was again impressed by what Seneker was accomplishing with the children:⁵⁵

Went to Gabriola Island in canoe—At school in the afternoon—Thirteen children in attendance—all half breeds. Second-class reading and spelling very good—All in first Reader last spring—First Reading classes making fair improvement—whole school a fair knowledge of the Map of North America—the first times in arithmetic well recited. Grammar just commenced—Children orderly & well behaved & making good progress—School opened & closed with prayer.

Over to the northern end of the Island in the evening—Six children of school age too far away to attend school—Advised the erection of a small School house this fall so as to commence school in early spring—Promised to recommend \$100 in aid—Two white and four half breed children in this portion of the

⁵⁴ BL-012-74.

⁵⁵ BL-014-74.

district—Travelled 20 miles in canoe & 10 on foot—Stayed at Hoggan’s for the night.

On February 1, in the New Year 1875, Jessop sent Edgar the usual salary of \$50, and added:⁵⁶

Give Mr. Seneker my thanks for his letter of the 16th ult. Am much pleased to find that the school is getting along so well.

Although the letter referred to is one of those missing, it appears that Seneker wished to personally assure the superintendent about progress at the school. Jessop, quite correctly, replied through the Secretary of the trustees.

Jessop paid another visit in April 1875, and was again much impressed:⁵⁷

April 1st. Went to Gabriola Island. Found 14 pupils in school—all making admirable progress under Mr. Seneker—Attendance all through the winter very good. Lectured at 3 pm—nearly all the parents of the children present and several others—about 35 in all. Went back to Nanaimo in the evening—Met a heavy squall & reached the harbour with difficulty at 8 pm.⁵⁸

Jessop’s experience on Gabriola was very different from what he had seen the day before in Cedar. Of that visit, he wrote in his diary:

March 31st To Cedar School...thirteen pupils—six of whom live too far away to reach the school & are consequently boarded near the school house—without them the school would have to be closed.⁵⁹ Held a meeting at 1 pm but few of the parents present. Returned to Nanaimo in the evening.

⁵⁶ BL-002-75.

⁵⁷ BL-004-75.

⁵⁸ This is but one of several references to bad weather encountered during visits to Gabriola.

⁵⁹ The Schools Act required that schools unable to maintain an attendance of 10 pupils be closed.

Gabriola also stood up well when compared to other schools around the province. On March 1, 1875, Jessop's annual report for the year ending July 31, 1874 was tabled in the legislature. Some highlights from the report were quoted in the *Daily British Colonist* of March 3, 1875:

Across the province there had been a significant increase in attendance.

Year ending: July 31, 1872: 534 pupils;
1873: 1028 pupils; 1874: 1245 pupils.

Although attendance had more than doubled in two years, 794 of the province's children did not attend any school in 1873-4. This is almost 40% of those eligible to attend, a figure that contrasted with what Jessop described as “very good attendance” on Gabriola throughout the winter.⁶⁰

The newspaper report continued:

There are employed thirty-two teachers—17 males and 15 females—only four of whom hold first-class certificates. The Superintendent deplors the want of interest manifested in many districts in the success and progress of the schools both by parents and trustees.

Again, Gabriola stood up well in comparison with other schools and districts in the province.

The teacher leaves—1875

At this point in the story, the reader could be forgiven for thinking that everything was proceeding satisfactorily in the new school district. But it was not so. It must have come as a considerable disappointment to Jessop to receive a letter from the Gabriola trustees on July 8, 1875, informing him that

the school would need to replace their teacher.⁶¹

Jessop's reply was matter of fact—he wasted no time on the details of Seneker's leaving, but turned to finding a replacement.

At the end of July, Jessop presented his Annual Report on the Public Schools of British Columbia for the year ending July 31, 1875 in which he noted:⁶²

...Gabriola Island—An attempt was made early in the past school year to give the few children on the northern part of this island a portion of the teacher's time; but it failed, in consequence of the settlers not being able to agree on a site for the second school house. All the children living on the south-eastern extremity are attending school regularly, and have made tolerable progress. A change of teachers occurred at the commencement of the present term; the former incumbent having gone East on a visit.

The last word on Mr. Seneker's time on Gabriola appeared to have been said without our having found even the slightest communication from the man himself. A brief mention in *The British Colonist* of July 3, 1875, only added to the mystery by suggesting that his departure might have been unexpected even to himself:⁶³

The following Oddfellows have been elected as office bearers for the ensuing six months: Jas. McKay Sabiston, NG; John E. Davis, VG; J.E.L. Seneker, Rec. Sec; W.E. Webb, (re-elected) Treas.; Frederick Wild, Permanent Secretary.

Both his teaching performance, and Jessop's comments about him, seem incompatible with his taking on an office, then walking out on the office and his teaching job within five days. There must have been a reason for this, but we resigned ourselves to never

⁶⁰ We don't know how many Gabriola children were eligible to attend but unable to do because of distance. In his 1874–5 report, Jessop simply says that there were “a few” children on the northern part of the island.

⁶¹ BL-007-75.

⁶² BL-010-75

⁶³ BL-006-75.

knowing what happened beyond “he went back east on a visit”. However...

Seneker’s departure

It later turned out that the Seneker story did not end in 1875. Two years later, Jessop received a letter from him—the first to survive into the present, and our first view of his handwriting:⁶⁴

Seneker, Clear Spring [?Acres], Greene Co. Tennessee, Dec 21st 1877

Respected Friend: Many months have elapsed since I took up my line of march over the Rockies & far away to the Sunny South. You remember it was my intention to return—Since then I have decided otherwise—Though the “Fates” may decree that I revisit the shores of Vancouver, yet for the present I can make more & enjoy life to a higher degree here. I am at present teaching [?Have?] a very flourishing school—I am also reading medicine besides. As I have told you my father is growing old & having near a thousand acres of very fine land—the superintendence of which devolves on upon me & my brother. Why should I return to Gabriola [?!/?] I now move in a different sphere & am altogether a different person.

But I am growing egotistical—Should you see any of my [--?--] quondam friends give them my regards. I would be pleased to see [?some] last Reports. Also please send me some of your local papers. I have not heard from BC for months. Let me hear from you & will write more at length.

Yrs in haste &c, ?Seneker.

In addressing Jessop as “Respected Friend”, Seneker seems to be indicating a previously unsuspected level of personal familiarity with Jessop. Two months later, this was followed by a “postal card”:⁶⁵

Rheatown, Tennessee, March 1st 1878

Mr. Jessop: I wrote you some months since but have as yet rec’d no answer. I enclosed

⁶⁴ BL-047-77.

⁶⁵ BL-009-78.

stamps for you to send me a few papers—
May be it did not reach you—I am now teaching. Getting on very finely—Where is Brooke⁶⁶ & how are [?you] getting on would be glad to [?hear] from you.

Resp., J E L Seneker.

In his reply on April 1, 1878, Jessop uses the usual “Dear Sir” convention in his salutation; however, the tone and details in his letter do seem to indicate that he and Seneker had a cordial relationship:⁶⁷

Education Office, Victoria, April 1st 1878
JEL Seneker Esq

Dear Sir: Your letter reached here last fall while I was away on a visit to the Eastern Provinces—After my return late in January, the new School Report was sent to your address which I hope arrived in due course—Since you left the Coast a Dep^y Sup^t of Ed. was appointed which enabled me to obtain three months leave of absence. I am sorry to say, however, that in the general retrenchment that has been inaugurated, my deputy has been cut off & I am again alone in the work.

I am very much pleased to find that you are still “getting along very finely”—I wish you every possible success—I have entirely lost track of Brooke—he left here for [?Sou/Nor]thern California where I am afraid he succumbed to the terrible disease that so nearly carried him off here⁶⁸—The [?state] of things in your old School District are not at all satisfactory—The old gentleman who has been there for nearly two years⁶⁹ will probably have to leave at the expiration of this term—Will send you further reports as they are issued.

Yours very truly, John Jessop

⁶⁶ Charles Seymour Brook, a hop grower who was on the island briefly.

⁶⁷ BL-013-78 & further comments in BL-048-77.

⁶⁸ Other correspondence, BL-016-75, suggests Brook had tuberculosis (inflammation of the lungs).

⁶⁹ Capt. Wake, who was then 65. More of him later.

We found no more letters from, or to, Seneker in Jessop's correspondence. Fortunately, Seneker's return addresses provided us with clues to his location, and we were able to find records of a large tribe of Senekers living in and around Rheatown and Green County in north-eastern Tennessee. Among them, we found John Elias Lafayette Seneker in the United States census for 1880, listed as JEL Simcker (*sic*), age 32, living in Greene County, Tennessee, his birthplace and that of both parents given as Tennessee, and his occupation as "teaching". We noted that he had married in 1879, and the couple had a son, George, a year old.

Seneker went on to have a successful career in education, and although there is no space to go into that here, it was interesting for us to see how, in making his contributions, he appears to have drawn extensively on his experiences "in the far west".⁷⁰

Meanwhile...back at the school—1875

Following the news from the trustees of Seneker's unanticipated departure in 1875, Jessop wrote back:⁷¹

Education Office, Victoria July 12th 1875
M. Edgar Esq.
Dear Sir: ... We will do the best we can in the [?this] matter of another teacher next week & I shall be able to let you know who we may be able to send up...
Yours very truly, John Jessop.

Just two week later, he recommended a new candidate to the Gabriola trustees:⁷²

Education Office, Victoria 26th July 1875
M. Edgar Esqr.

Dear Sir: A young man named Gregory who took examination week & came within a few marks of getting his certificate is desirous of taking your school so that he may have an opportunity of working up for another year—The Board of Education have given him permission to teach & perhaps you [?could] not do better than to engage him—Let me hear from you in this matter by return steamer....

Although Jessop recognised that it was for the trustees to decide whether or not to hire this young man, he doesn't hesitate to make the strong suggestion that this might be the only chance on offer, and goes on to describe arrangements for paying the teacher for the next five months.

Almost immediately following Seneker's departure, letters from Gabriola again began to appear in Jessop's Correspondence IN file, after 2½ years of being empty. The first of these, dated August 4, 1875, was from Charles Brook who offered himself as a teacher "until such time as you are able to obtain a certificated instructor".⁷³ The only qualification he claimed was straightforward, "...because my funds need replenishing". He closed his application with a *post script*:

Before Mr. Seneker left, he informed me that the School Trustees were quite favorable to my taking charge of this School.

Brook's timing was off.⁷⁴ Two days before Brook wrote to Jessop, the latter had sent the "young man named Gregory" to Gabriola with a letter of introduction to the trustees.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ J.E.L. Seneker: *Frontier Experience, or Epistolary Sesquipedalian Lexiphanicism from the Occident*, 1906, 2008. This work echoes in some respects writings of Jessop, and both (we are told) are in the spirit of Ontario educators of the time.

⁷¹ BL-008-75.

⁷² BL-009-75.

⁷³ BL-013-75.

⁷⁴ But he possibly did find employment on Saltspring Island. BL-016-75.

⁷⁵ BL-011-75. Jessop's favouring Ontario-trained teachers had often been criticized by the *Victoria Daily Standard* at the time of his forced resignation in 1878. Gregory was from Ontario.

Mr. Gregory's stint—1875-76

At the beginning of August 1875, Magnus Edgar had written to Jessop on behalf of the trustees indicating their enthusiasm for opening the school on time for the new school year.⁷⁶

Gabriola Island, August 3, 1875

J. Jessop Esq. Education Office Victoria

Dear sir: Your letter of the 26th July comes to hand, and with regard to the School teacher ^Mr. Gregory^ it is advisable he should come at an early opportunity should you [?acquiesce] in the matter—I send the Report filled up, as also the vouchers with my explanation attached according to your wish as I understand by letter.

The School House has been painted and white-washed and is ready for opening upon the teacher's arrival.

Yours truly, Magnus Edgar.

Mr. Orlanzo Gregory, however, was not entirely pleased at what he found to be the situation on Gabriola. On August 16, 1875, he wrote a lengthy letter to Jessop giving his first mixed impressions:⁷⁷

Gabriola School House, August 16, 1875

Dear Sir: When the little 'Maud' [a mail steamer] passed the dredge boats and had taken in farewell glances (to some a longing look) at Victoria with her church spires and business houses, I sat down and said to myself where am I going, and what am I going to do? Now as 'Posh Billings' [?] says, 'Nature will have its course'. ...

...On Land at Nanaimo: I saw Mr. Planta on the wharf in 'real life' with all the jolly, nervous activity, which is peculiar to none, but MR PLANTA. With his generous assistance, I was enabled that evening to secure an Indian Canoe to convey me to Gabriola Island the following morning. The trip was a pleasant one, being the first time I ever entered a canoe.

On landing here I was received very kindly by Mr. Edgar, who took me to the school house an object in which my imaginings had surpassed the reality for I surely expected to one about twice the size. As the trustees thought it rather short notice to open on Thursday, we concluded to open up on the following Monday, with the neighbors assurance however that the attendance would be small during the harvest.

Monday came and I found that I had been overrating the literary qualifications of my school. But after considering the length of time this school has been open, I, taking in the fact that they (the scholars) could scarcely understand any English when they commenced, one must conclude that they have done remarkably well. My present attendance is ten to thirteen.

The trustees told me that I would have a rough lot to deal with, and I find as I am most Happy to say that though the children are wild (by nature) they are not at all incontrollable.

[...more on needed school supplies]

Yours etc. O.M. Gregory

By early December 1875, memories of Gregory's pleasant trip by canoe from Nanaimo had faded; winter had set in; and his first term was either over or almost over. He wrote to Jessop again:⁷⁸

Gabriola School House, December 3, 1875

Superintendent of Education

Dear Sir: I am sorry to be compelled, as it were, to complain of an apparent lack of active interest on the part of the S.S. [South School] in general.

They have not built steps, fence, or house for me to live in, nor have they dug a well; all of which they not only could, but should have done since July last.

The School House stands as destitute and unchanged as it did when I first took I the key, with the trifling exception of a trap door

⁷⁶ BL-012-75.

⁷⁷ BL-014-75.

⁷⁸ BL-022-75.

in the ceiling and a window in the garret, both of which I cut in to make a sleeping apartment above. In so far as I am permitted to judge the school is progressing. The scholars sing well, play lively, and study diligently. I can ask no more.

... Yours in trust, O.M. Gregory.

Shortly afterward, Edgar also wrote to Jessop on the topic of lack of progress and the matter of a teacher's house:⁷⁹

Gabriola Island, Dec 8th, 1875

J Jessop. Esq.

Dear Sir: In reply to your letter of the 29th, I beg to state that the improvements about the school is not done yet—when it could have been done, we could not get the lumber and then bad weather set in and it is not done yet—and there is no place for the teacher to stop in—he is sleeping above the school house—he went to stop in that house that Mr. Seneker was in and ^we^ were to pay Mr. Chapple 3 dollars for one month thinking to have some place put up for him and there was none put up—and he stopt in Mr. Chapple's house about 3½ months and he wants \$12 and we have not payed ^him^ yet—and that will be about the half of the 23 dollars for Residence and no Residence yet—and we would like to know what we shall do and if we can put any of the money we have on hand for an addition to the school house for the teacher to stop in—I think if we had the material, the settlers would put it up—hoping to hear from you.

Yours very truly, Magnus Edgar.

A house for the teacher

It couldn't have been a pleasant winter for a few weeks later, the frustrated Gregory formally threatened to resign for lack of a house:⁸⁰

School House, Gabriola, Dec 30, 1875

To The Trustees of S.S. of Gabriola Island:

If gentlemen; you do not build, or cause to be

built, a suitable house for a Teacher's Residence and make the necessary improvements, or until the time when they shall be made, I will resign on the 31st March 1876.

I remain, gentlemen, your most obedient faithful servant, O.M. Gregory.

In contrast to Seneker's disappearance without warning, Gregory again gives a hint that he is getting fed up—just in case anybody hadn't noticed. Less than two weeks later he writes to Jessop:⁸¹

Gabriola Island, January 12, 1876

Dear Sir [Jessop]: Today the school meeting was attended by about a dozen parties coming from both ends of the island, the proceedings of which you will learn shortly by Trustees' report. Since the Trustees [chose? chanced?] to leave my notice to them in the school house, I enclose it to you; but state with pleasure that they promised today to perform what circumstances have so boldly demanded of them ever since my persevering Predecessor first took the reins. I have been waiting patiently for you to come and inspect my school, pronounce me a deserving teacher, and raise my salary to \$50 per mo[nth] for the remaining six months. But alas! you never came and without wherewith to rest my head, else than pay half my salary for my board,⁸² I am labouring on for a cash compensation that would have been a disgrace to me [in] pick and shovel days; well to speak of the more pleasant toil between the plough handles.

This neighbourhood says that I am as well deserving of a reasonable sum as any who has come before. I do not know how this may be, but leave it for your more worthy judgment.

I am not at all satisfied with [?—I was going to say actions—but will say stingy lack of

⁸¹ BL-001-76.

⁸² Chapple charged \$3 a month, not \$20, and this was supposed to be covered by the trustees in lieu of a house for the teacher. Gregory must have been referring to money owed to Chapple for unpaid rent.

⁷⁹ BL-023-75.

⁸⁰ BL-025-75.

action that was hither pervaded the [?whole] section. ...

...I have been carrying on a Sunday School here ever, or nearly, since I first came—but, to use the vulgar expression, the people had taken me up for a chinaman and had I taught every day in the week and preached on Sunday, they would not have made me comfortable for it. They seem to think since they got the written note that they have mistaken this man and I say do better in the future.

Yours in truth, O.M. Gregory.

Gregory's exasperation becomes palpable when we read the report of the trustees. It was just another routine business meeting with no mention of the teacher's threat to resign:⁸³

January 12, 1876, Gabriola Island School Meeting: Moved by T. Degnen and seconded by J. Martin that J.W. Pemberthy take the chair. Taken accordingly. Moved by J. Martin and seconded by T. Degnen that J. Kemp act as secretary and treasurer for the coming three years. Elected accordingly. Moved by T. Degnen and seconded by R. Chapple that J. Martin act as trustee for the coming three years. Elected accordingly.

Edgar briefly reported to Jessop the intention of the trustees to build a house for the teacher on January 14, 1876.⁸⁴

In February, Jessop visits the school, but makes no mention of Gregory's problem with not having a house:⁸⁵

Feb. 26 [1876]—Started for Gabriola Island at 5 a.m.—by canoe—Arrived at 8:30—Went to school at 9:30—Found 16 children in attendance—all halfbreeds but well-behaved & anxious to learn—Heard classes in reading, spelling, geography, arithmetic & grammar—All reading in Arithmetic above

⁸³ BL-002-76.

⁸⁴ BL-003-76.

⁸⁵ BL-005-76.

1st Book—a great help to them in understanding the use of signs & the meaning of terms—Classes all did very well—Instruction as far as is attempted is very thorough—A Sunday School is conducted by the Teacher—Mr. Gregory—Addressed the children & parents present at close of school....

Superintendents were obliged under the School Act to deliver in each School District, at least once a year, a public lecture on some aspect of education. Jessop continues:

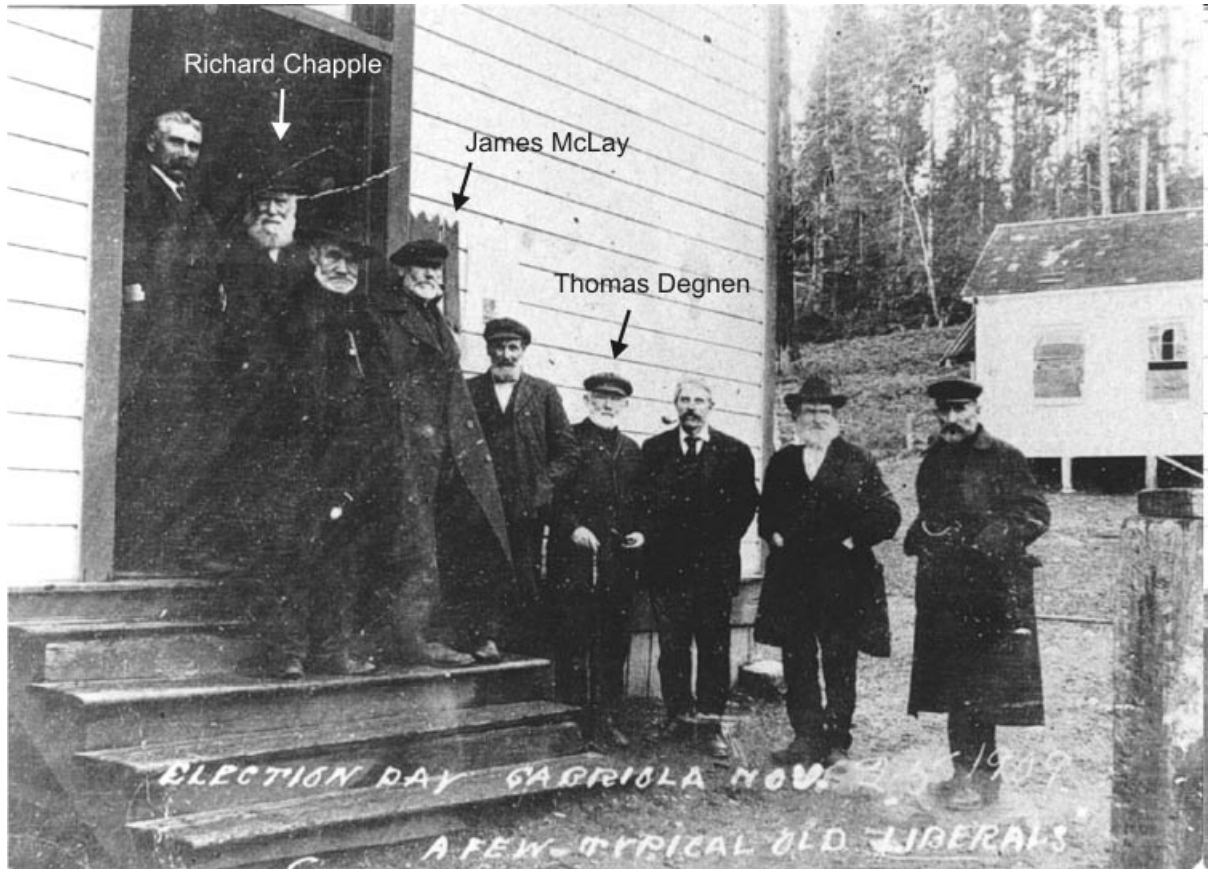
...Started for the northern end of Island at 2 p.m. Calling at Hogans, Penberthys & Heaths—About 12 children of School age unable to attend school on account of distance, namely Hogan [Hoggan] 5; Penberthy 2; Heath 2; LaBeouf [LeBœuf] 1; McClay [McLay] 2. Reached Nanaimo at 5:30 p.m.—Went to Comox Camp to look for Indians—Bargains with two for \$12, to start for Comox early next morning.

The north end aside—1876

Tucked away in Gregory's January 12, 1876 letter to the superintendent was the observation, "...we have some newcomers causing the necessity, if not the possibility, of demanding a school on the other end of the Island." As observed by Jessop for himself, the population was growing.

It is interesting to track the shift of Gabriola's "balance" away from the south end toward the north end. Accurate population statistics aren't available for a number of reasons⁸⁶ but, if we leave aside the Hoggan Lake area, there were in 1872, roughly 7 families at the south end and 2 at

⁸⁶ Censuses were too infrequent; pre-emption applications were often not filed until after land had been occupied for a few years; pre-emption applications were sometimes filed by off-island speculators; not all pre-emptors had families; and not all pre-emptors participated in island affairs.



Election day 1909. Voters, including some involved in the establishment of a school on Gabriola, are standing on the steps of the South School; in the background is the teacher's residence.

Gabriola Museum Archives



Formal Victorian wear tends to mute hints of the adventurous pasts of some of the participants.

Jessop, *top left*, travelled across Canada by fur-trade routes and prospected for gold in the Cariboo; Captain Wake, *top middle*, joined the navy at an early age; Magnus Edgar, *top right*, was born in the Shetlands and had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company; Jonathon Martin, *bottom left*, born in Kent, also had worked for the HBC; and John Seneker, *bottom right*, was from Tennessee.

In the picture above: Richard Chapple was from Cornwall and "a very good dancer"; James McLay from Scotland came with no previous farming experience; and Thomas Degnen from Ireland had been a coal miner.

the north end.⁸⁷ By 1875, there were 10 families at the south end and 9 at the north end.⁸⁸ And by 1878, there were 11 families at the south end, but there were now 13 at the north end.⁸⁹ The balance had shifted.⁹⁰

On January 18, 1876, the settlers presented a petition to Jessop for a schoolhouse and teacher “for the upper or NW end of the island”. The petition claimed 13 children of school age,⁹¹ and 6 children under five years old. It was signed by eleven of the settlers, and included both north- and south-enders: David Hoggan, Alex Hoggan, J. Degnen, Robert Stubbings, Robert Gray, Richard Chapple, J.W. Penberthy, John Kemp, Jonathan Martin, H.E. Heath, and Magnus Edgar.

Nothing came of this petition. It would not be until 1883 that the north end of the island would acquire a school of its own.

A house, but...

Back in 1876—and jumping ahead a few months—the house that Gregory demanded was finally completed. It was built next to the schoolhouse in what are now woods just

beyond the Community Hall parking lot on the east (uphill) side.⁹²

This was the good news. The bad news was that it was too late. Gregory had already left the island:⁹³

Gabriola Island, June 14th, 1876

J. Jessop Esq.

Dear Sir: I wright (*sic*) to inform you that our teacher have left us and gone to Nanaimo to teach school. And Capt Wake, R.N. is car[y]ing on the school for another month which I hope you will have no objection to ‘is teaching. We have expended the money and we are \$18.00 in de[b]t—we have got a nice house for the teacher....

Yours truly, John Kemp.

Gregory had indeed left. He had written, as was his wont, in detail to Jessop in May to inform him of his plans:⁹⁴

School House, Gabriola, May 15, 1876

Dear Sir [Jessop]: I can only express my regret that the Government Treasury should be so nearly exhausted as not to admit of more prompt measures in matters which would appear to be trifling to them, while they are of so great importance to a private individual circumstanced as I am.

On hearing that the Nanaimo Teacher had resigned, and that the selection of a suitable successors was left to you, I would say that as I have a well founded idea of the cause of failure resting both with Mr. Planta and Mrs. Young, I would take the school on the same conditions that Mr. Planta held it, not wishing to accept of any less per month as I should intend to give more satisfaction. Nanaimo needs a Hoosier Schoolmaster⁹³ for a commander, but if perchance there should be a few pupils there who are so advanced in

⁸⁷ South: McGuffie, Edgar, Chapple, Degnen, Gray, Stubbings, Kemp; North: Penberthy, Heath.

⁸⁸ South: plus Dick, Easson, J. Martin; North: plus Caulfield, Easthom, Goss, Hall, LeBœuf, J. McLay, Manly.

⁸⁹ South: plus A. Martin; North: plus A. Hoggan, J. Jamieson, T. Jamieson, T. McLay, Rollo, less Goss who died in 1875.

⁹⁰ The division between south and north has had several ramifications over the years, see for example, the disagreement between north-enders and south-enders over the formation of a Fire Protection District, Jenni Gehlbach, *Gabriola’s ambulance service*, *SHALE* 21, pp.4–5, July 2009. At one time, there were two community halls on the island, one at the south end, and one at the north end.

⁹¹ Faint pencil marks suggest the 13 were: Heath (2), Penberthy (2), McLay (2), Alex Hoggan (4), ?LeBoeuf (1), unidentified (2).

⁹² E. Joyce White, *The South Gabriola Public Hall, 1913–79*, *SHALE* 22, pp.27–28, January 2010.

According to Nelder Boulton (phone call to Joyce), Danny McKay, a bricklayer, used to live in the old house on the property. It was derelict *ca* 1970.

⁹³ BL-012-76.

⁹⁴ BL-008-76 with a note on Hoosier Schoolmasters.

any branch in which Mrs. Young can instruct better than I, I would with pleasure give them over to her, as a mixed or naturally formed school is in my mind far superior to an artificial division which Nature so definitely points out to be detrimental.

Waiting for an answer. I remain as ever,
O.M. Gregory.

Gregory's move to Nanaimo was noted in the *Nanaimo Free Press*, May 31, 1876 under the headline TEMPORARY:⁹⁵

Mr. Gregory, the teacher at Gabriola Island will take charge of the Nanaimo Public School for a short term. Captain Wake will supply his place on Gabriola Island.

It would appear that Gregory was quite content to have Wake stand in for him, and the two had in fact co-operated in making the arrangement. In June, Gregory again writes to Jessop, this time from Nanaimo:⁹⁶

Nanaimo, June 11, 1876

Dear Sir [Jessop]: I have delayed writing under the impression that you were away from your Office. I have given Gabriola over to the fatherly care of an old Captain OHMS [on her majesty's service] during the present month, and am now trying my hand on Nanaimo which I can manage much better than many seemed to expect, better even than I expected myself....

Yours as ever, O.M. Gregory

Earlier in May, Wake had also written to Jessop recommending Gregory for the position in Nanaimo. Unfortunately, the copy of this letter is almost completely unreadable, but it begins in part:⁹⁷

Gabriola [near?] Nanaimo, May 14, 1876
[crest of undetermined significance]

To John Jessop Esq.: As I perceive a schoolmaster for Nanaimo is wanted, I [?...]to mention to you...Gregory as a young man of many excellent qualities, moral,

upright and a good disciplinarian, and if he is qualified for the Office it may not be possible to make a better selection. [?...] What is wanted at Nanaimo is a man who can manage the Boys and Girls and [?...] keep on good terms with the parents, Trustees, as may be. regular attendance can be second to [?...].

I remain...yours, B.A. Wake.

The Captain makes a move

Shortly after completion of his short spell of teaching while standing in for Gregory after his departure on April 30, 1876, Captain Wake began lobbying for a permanent position. In July, he wrote to Jessop:⁹⁸

Gabriola Island, July 4, 1876

To John Jessop Esq.

Dear Sir: The Trustees have asked me to continue in charge of the Gabriola School, which I should be glad to do if it meets your approval for next session.

I [?took] charge for last month to enable Mr. Gregory to undertake the Nanaimo school, and like the work better than I expected. The children are doing their best and I am becoming attached to them; therefore I should be very glad to continue their teacher until I am able to have my own Family with me.

Faithfully yours, B.A. Wake.

Captain Wake appeared initially to have had the support of the parents and trustees. John Kemp had already written to Jessop on their behalf:⁹⁹

Gabriola Island, June 30, 1876

Dear Sir [Jessop]: I write to inform you that we had an election on Friday June 30th that myself, Martin, Chapple, were elected again as trustees. There were only six attended the meeting—the voters wish me to recommend Capt. Wake R.N. to you as a teacher as he would like to teach the children and he takes a great interest in them....The

⁹⁵ BL-009-76.

⁹⁶ BL-011-76.

⁹⁷ BL-007-76.

⁹⁸ BL-015-76.

⁹⁹ BL-013-76.

voters wish me to ask you for a little more money for school improvements.

Yours truly, John Kemp.

Captain Baldwin Wake was a very different man from either of his predecessors—Seneker and Gregory. They were young; he was retired. They were teachers by profession; he had spent his entire career in the navy.¹⁰⁰

His views, we can safely assume, were also quite different from those of his predecessors. The captain was unhappy with the secularization of the education system; didn't believe in spending time on the "bright intellects" at the expense of "the great mass of the dull and stupid"; advocated the formation of "good habits"; and held that "education was not the first object that God placed before women's eyes".¹⁰¹

His approach to teaching couldn't be more diametrically opposed to that of Gregory, who in a letter to Jessop from California, extolled the virtues of a liberal education for both men and women equally.¹⁰²

Wake lived on Valdes Island, where he had pre-empted 760 acres, much to the annoyance of the Lyackson people with whom he did not have good relations. He and his family had acquired a residence in Esquimalt in 1866, and although we are not sure, we suspect that he spent much of his time alone on his Valdes property.

¹⁰⁰ Lynda Poulton, *Captain B.A. Wake and his family*, *SHALE* 5, pp.3–13, 2002. His obituary was published in the *London Times*, April 7, 1880.

¹⁰¹ BL-030-77.

¹⁰² BL-008-76 & BL-026-76. Seneker too was a "progressive" teacher, writing: "True learning is that which takes hold of the child, awakens him to thought and action, and causes him to depend on himself." Seneker, *Frontier Experience*, *ibid.*

Who are the trustees?—1876

The letter quoted above and written by John Kemp in his capacity as trustee and secretary in June 1876, records an election for trustees. Hitherto, elections had always been held in January. The Public School Act was very specific about this, requiring elections to be held "on the second Wednesday in January in each year, commencing at twelve of the clock noon". From records in subsequent years, we gather that the date had been changed from winter to the last week in June.

In this election, Kemp, Martin, and Chapple became the trustees;¹⁰³ however, only six voters were present, all of whom had previously involved themselves in the school board's business. Questionable election procedures were to become a serious issue on the island later on in the story.

The 1876–7 school year

The summer passed with no word from Jessop, so in August 1876, with the new school year about to begin, Captain Wake again writes to Jessop:¹⁰⁴

Gabriola, [*vicinity*] Nanaimo, August 8th, 1876

Dear Mr. Jessop: Not having heard anything to the contrary I thought it best to comply with the wishes of the Trustees, and accordingly opened the Gabriola School after the recess; I shall be glad to hear that my doing so is approved of.

¹⁰³ It is not clear when Richard Chapple took over from Magnus Edgar whose three-year term would have been up at the meeting on January 12, 1876, BL-002-73. Edgar's letter to Jessop on January 14, 1876, BL-003-76 and Jessop's to Edgar, BL-006-76, seem to imply he was re-elected; yet, John Kemp does not record this and implies instead in the report of the June 30, 1876, meeting, BL-013-76, that Chapple, not Edgar, was the already-elected trustee.

¹⁰⁴ BL-019-76.

I remain dear Sir, faithfully yours,
B.A. Wake.

At the same time, Jessop was writing to the trustees c/o John Kemp to authorize Wake to “go on with the school till such time as we have a qualified teacher in want of a situation”.¹⁰⁵ Wake does so, and writes in September in reply to an enquiry by Jessop:¹⁰⁶

Gabriola Island, Nanaimo, Sept. 23rd, 1876
Dear Sir [John Jessop]: The number of Children on the Register of the Gabriola School is 19. Boys 13, girls 6. The attendance 8 boys, 4 girls. This is the greatest attendance since midsummer.
Yours faithfully, B.A. Wake.

Finally, on October 20, 1876, Gregory lets everyone know that his hopes of finding a senior position in Nanaimo had not worked out. He writes from the Normal School¹⁰⁷ in San Jose, California, where he was enrolled as a student, saying that he is applying for a teaching position—“as I have been unfortunate in money matters”—noting that he was not keen to return to Gabriola:¹⁰⁸

...I grew very weary of it before & fear I would do so again, though I must say I left just when things in connection with the school was being righted & my plans in the school [?room] were but half carried out...

Jessop responded late in November, the tone of which was “we don’t need you anyway” though his actual words were:¹⁰⁹ “...there were no openings anywhere” and “teachers with high qualifications are still waiting for situations”.

Much of the remainder of the correspondence for the first half of the

¹⁰⁵ BL-018-76.

¹⁰⁶ BL-024-76.

¹⁰⁷ Normal Schools were training schools for teachers, nowadays called Teachers’ Colleges.

¹⁰⁸ BL-026-76.

¹⁰⁹ BL-029-76.

school year is concerned with payment of Captain Wake’s salary. The proper procedure appears to have been for Jessop to send blank “vouchers” to the trustees, who then gave them to the teacher to be signed and returned to Jessop, who then returned a cheque to the trustees, who then paid the teacher. As bureaucratic procedures go, it was fairly straightforward.

Communication between the trustees and Wake however, seem not to have been the best, so Jessop sensibly resorted to corresponding with Wake directly. On one occasion, Wake simply returned the vouchers not properly signed—they are “useless” remarked Jessop—and on another Wake asked, after not receiving his cheque, if “there is likely to be a continuance of such an unsatisfactory state of affairs”.¹¹⁰ The cheque that Wake was awaiting was in fact “in the mail”.¹¹¹

On December 19, 1876, with Captain Wake as the teacher, Jessop visited the Gabriola school, where he found:¹¹²

...improvement not as marked as on former occasions...children not as much interested in their lessons...attendance likewise falling off...while the teacher is evidently doing as well as he can and has considerable influence for good over the half breed children, of whom the school is entirely composed
...instruction is not as efficient as formerly.

We get a good idea of why Gregory had been such an asset to the school in his letter to Jessop in October, 1876. In part, he says:¹¹³

...The teachers [at the school in San Jose] all make their work so interesting by lecturing on those interesting points which ordinary text book[s] leave out that it would be a real

¹¹⁰ BL-002-77.

¹¹¹ BL-001-77.

¹¹² BL-033-76.

¹¹³ BL-026-76.

punishment to be shut out from the class during an exercise. I have long been studying a method of teaching which would do away entirely with corporal punishment & I have concluded that the best way is to make the work so interesting that it would be a great [?punishment] to be sent off from an exercise & I [?thus] punish in that way in preference to any other.

The next thing to happen was for a letter to be sent to Jessop from the trustees, who presumably were still Martin, Chapple, and Kemp, and two others. It bluntly requested a change of teacher.¹¹⁴

Gabriola Island, Febry 5th 1877

Dear Sir [Jessop]: The Parents of the children are frequently laying complaints that the children are not learning anything and they wish you would remove Capt. Wake the Teacher.

Yours very truly, John Kemp: signed
Thomas Degnen, Magnus Edgar, Jonathan Martin, Richard Chapple.

Jessop, as was his duty, passed this on to the Board of Education, who would have had to approve Wake's dismissal.¹¹⁵ Having done this, he also informed Captain Wake of the request.¹¹⁶

It is probably quite safe to say that when Wake heard of the trustees' request, he was "pained". On March 11, he writes a long letter to Jessop emphasizing his surprise and grief that such a request had been made; the lack of justification for it—none of the complainants has "ever given me reason to suppose I did not perform my duties to their his own satisfaction"—; and the poor communications between himself and the trustees.¹¹⁷ He respectfully asks for a copy of the letter from the trustees to Jessop.

¹¹⁴ BL-004-77.

¹¹⁵ BL-007-77.

¹¹⁶ BL-013-77.

¹¹⁷ BL-016-77.

No doubt with the failure to impress Jessop during his December visit in mind, he also throws in the accusation that Dignen's [*sic*] daughters "did not answer questions, as they might have done if their attendance had been regular". A plausible defence of course, and one that emphasised the importance of teacher-parent co-operation.

Firing the teacher

In early March 1877, the situation was not looking too good for Captain Wake. The trustees had formally requested his removal and it needed only the Board of Education's approval to put it into effect; several parents were very dissatisfied with his teaching methods; Wake was not a qualified teacher; and the superintendent thought his performance lacklustre compared to that of his processors. Unbeknownst to Wake, that was not all that was not in his favour.

On January 30, 1877, Jessop had written to the *The Globe*, as it was then, a daily newspaper published in Toronto. The gist of his long letter was that although in the early days of the establishment of a public school system in British Columbia there had been a shortage of qualified teachers, and that shortage had "...obliged us to put forth vigorous efforts to induce young and promising pupils to enter the profession. Those efforts are likely to prove successful, so that here-after British Columbia, to a great extent at least, will be in a position to provide her own teachers..."¹¹⁸

On February 5, 1877, this don't-call-us-we'll-call-you message to aspiring teachers was sent also to the *New Brunswick Telegraph*.¹¹⁹

This is what may have been behind Jessop's comment in his letter of February 12, to the

¹¹⁸ BL-003-77. The letter has not been found in the Globe & Mail Archives.

¹¹⁹ BL-006-77.

trustees, acknowledging receipt of their request to dismiss Wake:¹²⁰

...At present we have no one put in Capt. Wake's place—It is likely however that more teachers will arrive shortly.

The other development that Wake was unlikely to have been aware of was that Gregory had been in contact privately with some of the trustees, and that despite his reservations expressed to Jessop, he was now interested in having his old job back. We know this from two letters, one from trustee Chapple to Jessop,¹²¹ and another from Jessop to Gregory:¹²²

Gabriola Island, March 10th 1877

Dear Sir [Jessop]: I rece'ved a letter from Mr. gregary and he want for me to inform you that he wood come back here again if you would gev him the chance. I think that he wood do verry well and I think the children wood learn a bit better than the are now.

Plese try what you can do for him.
I remain yours truly, Richard Chapple.

Chapple, we should note, was said to have had a strong Cornish accent, and this clearly influenced his spelling.

Education Office, Victoria, March 5th 1877
Dear Sir [O.M. Gregory]: Your letter of 20th ult. is to hand—Mr. Chapple was somewhat premature in stating that the Gabriola school was vacant—Capt. Wake is still teaching—The trustees however have asked for a change; but the application has not yet been laid before the Board of Education.

When the matter has received the [?consideration] of the Board I will inform you of the result.

Yours truly, John Jessop.

So now everything hinged on the decision of the Board of Education in Victoria. But, no

¹²⁰ BL-007-77.

¹²¹ BL-015-77.

¹²² BL-014-77.

doubt to the exasperation of those waiting for it, the board were in no hurry to address the matter. They either did not hold meetings in March, or if they did, they did not get around to talking about the affairs of the Gabriola School District. This hiatus gave Jessop a chance to visit the island to judge for himself what was going on.

Jessop visits on March 27, 1877, and reports as follows:¹²³

Started for Gabriola at 6 am in canoe—arrived at 9:30—Found 11 pupils in school—none [?below] [?second] [?book]. Reading & spelling fair—Arithmetic not satisfactory—Geography & Grammar somewhat better—The teacher's methods not very good but his moral influence is very considerable.

Children's [?conduct] well [?looked] after & great pains taken to [?inculcate] right principles—Register & Progress [?books] well-kept.

Complaints against Capt'n Wake as teacher—Some of the parents desirous of a change. Went over in the afternoon to Penberthys & Heaths calling at Hoggans.

About six children [?there/three?] of school age - [?Promised] them [?part] [?time] from the other end of island if they [?would] [?provide] a room for the teacher—Penberthy & Heath promised to consider the matter.

School house on one acre of John Kemp's land—Preemption claim—no certificate—is asked to do [?] improvements yet—Will do all he can in securing the [?ground] for school purposes—Reached Nanaimo at 6 pm.

The captain may not have been a good educator but he certainly knew how to maintain discipline and instil "right principles".

Jessop's next letter to Wake conveys the feeling that although he, Jessop, might be

¹²³ BL-018-77.

concerned about the complaints, he was also not exactly in a panic over the situation:¹²⁴

Education Office, Victoria, Apr 1st 1877
Dear Sir [Capt. Wake RN]: I enclose herewith cheque for March salary \$40.

If you [-?-] [?excite] a little [?emulation/consultation?] - a [?desire] to excel among the pupils in your classes I think it would [?rub] off some of the opposition that is [?now] [?arrayed] against you as a teacher—Perhaps this might be done by [?making] [?them] [-?-] places in class & by getting them interested in the months or seasons—I am anxious to hear that the people are again satisfied with the [?conduct] of this school.

Yours very truly, John Jessop.

Closing the school?

During the remainder of the 1876-77 school year, the dispute between Captain Wake, the trustees, and some of the parents degenerates into a fair amount of mud slinging. The tactic adopted by the anti-Wake faction—principally Edgar, Degnen, and Chapple—seems to have been to keep their children away from school,¹²⁵ thereby making the teacher look bad, and playing on the threat to have the school closed by the authorities because of poor attendance.¹²⁶

Wake for his part continues to claim the high ground in his letters to Jessop—all I am trying to do is help the children—while pointing out to trustees the “...unlawful means by which some illiterate persons are combining to remove him from his office”. The fact is, he goes on to say in a letter to the trustees:¹²⁷

...my utmost efforts (which have been cheerfully given) have failed to give satisfaction—...whilst [--?--] illiterate people

wish to have their children educated, they begrudge the time that is necessary to teach them. To carry out the Education according to the act is a great consideration with me as I propose locating my family [?on/in] the next island and I cannot but regret that my neighbors fail to appreciate the efforts the Government are making to bestow an Education on their Children.

The position of the trustees—1877

During the summer break of 1877, there was a significant change in the position of the School Board of Trustees.

It is fairly clear from the records that although John Kemp was the author of several letters to Jessop critical of Wake, he was writing in his capacity as the trustee with secretarial duties, and that without his saying so, he had been out-voted 2:1 on some of the board’s decisions.¹²⁸ This becomes apparent when in July, a letter is sent to Jessop, not by the trustees, but by Edgar, who was a former trustee, Degnen, who was also a former trustee; and Chapple, the only one of the three to be a current trustee. Conspicuously absent are the signatures of the two other trustees, Martin and Kemp.

The reason for this is that trustee Martin had changed his mind. He joined with trustee Kemp in signing a note handed to Captain Wake indicating that the official position of the board was now that Wake should not be sacked:¹²⁹

July 1877: A requisition to remove Captain Wake the Teacher being about to be laid before the Board of Education, we the

¹²⁴ BL-021-77.

¹²⁵ BL-022-77.

¹²⁶ BL-027-77.

¹²⁷ BL-026-77.

¹²⁸ Kemp’s discomfort in being required as secretary to report decisions of the trustees that he did not agree with is evident in BL-080-78 & BL-083-78.

¹²⁹ BL-034-77.

undersigned inhabitants of Gabriola Island hereby signify our disapproval of the same.

Signed: John Kemp (trustee), Jonathan Martin (trustee), and James McLay.

We do not know why Martin changed his mind, but one theory might be that he had been talking to the electors among whom there appears to have been broad support for retaining Wake as teacher judging by a petition signed a year later in August 1878.¹³⁰

Jessop's contribution to the Annual Report of Public Schools gives as a fair notion of what was going on. Jessop's report reads:¹³¹

...Dissatisfaction with, and opposition to, the teacher in this district, which have existed for the greater part of the year, appear to be almost laid aside, and in their place it is hoped that confidence, good-will, and mutual respect will spring up.

Although his method of imparting instruction is somewhat defective from want of professional training, yet painstaking industry and great influence over the children, which is exercised for their good, should more than counterbalance what may be considered objectionable in other respects.

School population on the island now reaches 30; of these 19 are in attendance, giving an average of 12; eleven are reported absentees; some of these however, are not living within reach of the school. The parents of those children have repeatedly had the offer of half-time tuition, if they would provide a room for that purpose, but so far they have not availed themselves of it

Qualifying the teacher—1877

Given the competitiveness of Wake and Gregory for the position as teacher on Gabriola, it is with some surprise that we learn Gregory had not taken the examination

¹³⁰ BL-033-78.

¹³¹ BL-038-77.

in the summer break of 1877.¹³² He claimed to hold a second class teaching certificate in Oregon,¹³³ so he should have been confident of passing.

Wake had taken the examination, but had only scraped through with a Class 3B qualification,¹³⁴ which was the lowest passing grade possible and valid for only one year.

The 1877–78 school year

August 1877, and again the question as to who, if anyone, was to be teacher for the coming year needed to be settled. Jessop's observation that "opposition to the teacher in this district...appear[s] to be almost laid aside" and that "Captain Wake was intending to retire "was wishful thinking.

Jessop was facing a situation where the majority of the trustees now supported Wake, but the majority of those who had been most active in establishing the School District and the South School were opposed. Someone, probably Magnus Edgar, had suggested during the summer that an island-wide vote be held on the matter despite the procedural incorrectness of that being done.

In a letter to Edgar, Jessop expresses his hope that, should Wake win such a vote, it would settle the matter:¹³⁵

Sir [Edgar]: In reply to your letter of 31st ult [July] I beg to state that the [?occations/tious?] difficulty with your teacher is now virtually taken out of the hands of the Board of Education by [?two] of the Trustees being in favor of retaining him in the school—so we can take no action in the matter against the wishes of a majority of trustees—If Capt. Wake is still willing to canvass the District

¹³² BL-029-77.

¹³³ BL-032-77.

¹³⁴ BL-039-77.

¹³⁵ BL-041-77.

thoroughly & abide by the results one way or the other, I shall be glad to hear of such a [?course] being taken... [Jessop]

In a letter to Captain Wake written the same day, Jessop appears impatient, and he adopts, understandably, a detached attitude to the whole business despite the uproar on the island:¹³⁶

Education Office, Victoria, August 6th 1877
Dear Sir [BA Wake, Esq]: ...Enclosed herewith... I have a letter from Edgar, to which I shall reply today, stating in substance that you did not canvas the district to ascertain whether there was a majority in your favor or not—He asserts the contrary—would it not be advisable to test this matter thoroughly regardless of the ill feeling which such a course would engender?—With two of the trustees in favor of retaining your services the matter is virtually out of our jurisdiction; but those opposed seem determined not to let it rest.

Yours very truly, John Jessop.

Jessop's phrase "regardless of the ill feeling" suggests a degree of lack of personal experience on his part of the intensity of the polarization of political controversy that can occur in small, geographically-isolated communities like Gabriola.

Wake was not too keen on the idea of a vote and regarded it as unnecessary:¹³⁷

Gabriola School House, August 14th 1877
To John Jessop Esq. Dear Sir: In reply to your letter 356/77 Augst 6, ...With respect to the suggestions of Magnus Edgar that I [?] should canvass the district to ascertain whether there was a majority in my favor. Although I have every wish to comply with the wishes of any person concerned in the education of the Children under my charge I cannot think what is proposed would be a proper proceeding for a Teacher or to go beyond what I did in sending you a paper

¹³⁶ BL-040-77.

¹³⁷ BL-042-77.

signed by two of the Trustees and the only magistrate¹³⁸ on the Island...

Having made a legitimate point in his letter, he then reverts to the mud slinging:

...[?] condemning Mr Edgars conduct— Yesterday Mr Edgar brought me your letters to read—I cannot help fearing that if either you or I were to play into the hands of this contumacious individual [?or] of the [?Ignour] (who I am told are agitators in this matter) so far as to put the young girls of this island under the charge of a batchelor we should [?raise] a hornet's nest, if nothing worse. I remain dear Sir Faithfully yours BA Wake.

On October 3, 1877, there is a letter in the government files granting Jessop three months leave of absence. His stand-in was to be the Deputy Superintendent of Education, Robert Clemitson. During Jessop's absence back east, there are a few exchanges between Clemitson and Wake on file,¹³⁹ but these are only concerned with salary payment—\$50 a month—not the controversy over Wake's employment.

Jessop returned from leave in January 1878, but an inspection of the Gabriola School was made in February by his deputy Clemitson.¹⁴⁰ On the whole, Clemitson's assessment doesn't differ a lot from what we would have expected from Jessop:

Diary (Clemitson) for Monday:

11th [Feb.]. Reached Gabriola school a few minutes before opening hour, and introduced myself to the teacher. Exercises began punctually at 9:30, with eleven pupils present. School room by no means a model of neatness. Teacher apparently painstaking & conscientious, and exercising a good moral influence over the scholars. Examined

¹³⁸ James McLay JP.

¹³⁹ BL-045-77; BL-046-77; Letters in a similar vein after Jessop's return from leave are: BL-001-78; BL-003-78; BL-004-78; BL-011-78.

¹⁴⁰ BL-005-78.

classes in Reading, Spelling History &c. Reading not good—Spelling somewhat better. Writing fair. Answering in History neither ready nor accurate. Arithmetic up to, and including, compound rules, not quite up to the mark. Definitions in Geography and Grammar, fair. Blackboard requires re-coating. Fair attendance of visitors. Heard complaints of parents respecting the non improvement of their children and teacher's reply. Considerable animus displayed on both sides. Advised the cultivation of more friendly feelings and the co-operation of parents and teacher. Am inclined to think complaints against teacher somewhat exaggerated. Teacher labours, however, under the disadvantage of being to some extent new to the work—consequently producing less result from a specific amount of teaching than would be the case with one specially trained. Returned to Nanaimo in the evening.¹⁴¹

There's another routine letter¹⁴² from Wake to Jessop in February reporting 16 children on the register, with an average attendance of 8—“the roads having been almost impassable for Degnen's four children”—and a largest attendance of 13.

The Gabriola School District was continuing to function but with....

...*Considerable animus*—1878

In March 1878, the now out-numbered trustee Richard Chapple proposes to Jessop that Gregory be given his old job back:¹⁴³

Gabriola Island, March 15th 1878.

Dear Sir [Jessop] I am requested by Digman and Edgar too wright two you—two know wither you have any objections too Gregory on the next turm if he pass the Board for we intend two have a Change of Some kind and I hope that you will not object too it, not that we wish to do the old man any harm but we

are doing the Children far moor harm than him. Please answer this.

I remain yours truly Richard Chapple.

Jessop's response is, as might be predicted, a change could occur if Gregory became qualified, and if a majority of the trustees requested it.¹⁴⁴ The issue was probably becoming tedious to Jessop. It is with some relief therefore that it appears that Captain Wake managed to carry on teaching until the end of the 1877–78 school year in July.

Qualifying the teacher—1878

Given Jessop's disapproval of Gregory having declined to seek to become a qualified teacher in the summer of 1877, and Wake's poor performance in the examination, both endeavored to rectify this in the summer of 1878. Gregory was unequivocal:¹⁴⁵

Occidental Hotel

Victoria, BC, June 28th, 1878

To The Honourable Body, The Board of Education: Gentlemen, I desire admittance to the coming Examination as a Candidate for a Certificate of Qualification.

Most Respectfully Yours, Orlanzo M Gregory.

Wake however initially prevaricated, arguing that the cost and inconvenience of travelling to New Westminster, where, at the request of mainland candidates the examination was to be held, was too great.¹⁴⁶ He won his argument, and examinations were held simultaneously at New Westminster and Victoria.

Although Gregory's name does not appear on the list of candidates—7 ladies and 5 gentlemen,¹⁴⁷ his name does appear in the

¹⁴¹ BL-006-78.

¹⁴² BL-008-78.

¹⁴³ BL-010-78.

¹⁴⁴ BL-012-78.

¹⁴⁵ BL-018-78.

¹⁴⁶ BL-021-78.

¹⁴⁷ BL-022-78.

results of the examination, which was held on July 11.¹⁴⁸ Gregory finished ahead of Wake in the rankings, but both earned only a Class 3A certificate. Class 3 certificates were regarded by the Board of Education as temporary certificates issued for only one year. In the Seventh Annual Report of Public Schools (1877–78), we read:

...Temporary certificates still continue to be granted, and unavoidably so. It would, however, be advisable in future to limit their issue to those teachers who have taught satisfactorily in the Province... In order to discourage the practice, it would be necessary, in all cases, to grant only the lowest salary to teachers holding such certificates.¹⁴⁹

The eventful summer and fall of 1878

The election of a new trustee

Sometime in June 1878, probably the 28th, there was another election for school trustees—we don't know when because we could not find a letter from secretary Kemp to the Superintendent of Education, John Jessop, informing of this. The outcome was that trustee Jonathon Martin was gone. The new trustees were John Kemp, Magnus Edgar, and Richard Chapple.¹⁵⁰ The “old-timers” at the south end were back.

The optics however were not good. It is a fair bet that the election had been held with very few electors present, as was the case in June 1876 when the election probably did not attract a lot of interest,¹⁵¹ and as was to

be the case in June 1879 when only four voters appear to have been present.¹⁵²

The results of the 1878 election were hotly disputed by Captain Wake and his supporters, among them Jonathon Martin himself, who insistently and persistently claimed throughout the fall of 1878 that the election had not been advertised as required by law, and that Richard Chapple was not a duly elected trustee. Examples of letters making this claim are:

October 1, 1878

To the Superintendent of Education ¹⁵³

At a public meeting of the inhabitants of the Gabriola School district (it having proved that the annual meeting was attended only by two of the Trustees, Richd Chapple, and two others prepared to vote for his election in place of Jonathan Martin who was not present, and that no notice of the time, and place of that meeting had been posted beyond Chapple's door), it was decided that the proceedings of that meeting be declared null and void.

Under these circumstances the authority recognized by the inhabitants of the School district as a Trustee [board] consists of

John Kemp Secty & Treasurer
Jonathan Martin
Magnus Edgar.

Signed BA Wake.

November 11, 1878

To the Superintendent of Education ¹⁵⁴

...Under (those) circumstances we req(u)est that you dismiss Mr Chapple, the man who elected himself at that time as Trustee, and cause or give instructions that another meeting be held for the purpose of electing another Trustee in an open and fair manner. Or if you think proper, to allow Captain Wake to go on as usual—it dont matter to us....

Signed James McLay.

¹⁴⁸ BL-029-78.

¹⁴⁹ BL-029-78.

¹⁵⁰ The first evidence we have of this is in a letter from Wake to Jessop dated June 30, 1878, BL-020-78.

¹⁵¹ BL-014-76.

¹⁵² BL-011-79.

¹⁵³ BL-060-78.

¹⁵⁴ BL-077-78.

In reply to the charge that the election had not been fair, Edgar, Chapple, and Kemp maintained that "...we put notices up the same as other years and [duly] elected a Trustee..."¹⁵⁵ They also pointed out that, "the [Public Schools] act state [*sic*] that two voters shall lay their complaints within twenty days of the election. Their [*sic*] were no complaints laid before the Trustees till the 13 Sept."

The importance of all this is that Captain Wake was, by all accounts, not a good teacher, and certainly not as good a teacher as his predecessors, Seneker and Gregory. Island reactions to this included: "he shouldn't teach"; "he should teach only so long as no better qualified teacher is available"; and "he's good enough". Trustees Magus Edgar and Richard Chapple however, adamantly wanted nothing to do with him.¹⁵⁶

On July 12, 1878, the Board of Education resolved to close the Gabriola School¹⁵⁷ but with the proviso that it could be re-opened in August provided arrangements were made to share the teacher's time between the south and north ends of the island. Wake was perfectly willing to do this, and consequently earned the support of many of the newcomers at the north end. Gregory on the other hand was ambivalent. He wanted an increase in salary for sharing his time, and he wanted government money for building another schoolhouse; two conditions that were very unlikely to be met.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ BL-051-78. In response to a question by McLay later in the year, BL-093-78, Kemp admits: "I posted one by the School and one I sent to [?Degnen] and one to Chapple [?but] I could not tell you [?where] they posted them." BL-094-78.

¹⁵⁶ BL-026-78.

¹⁵⁷ BL-023-78.

¹⁵⁸ BL-054-78 & BL-010-79.

Ominously for Gabriola, although presumably nobody knew this at the time, the new Public Schools Act passed in February 1879 was to require trustees "to locate one school in a central position, in the place of two in a district, or to close one of two such schools".¹⁵⁹ The South School, which had been so successful in the early years, was being endangered by the growth in the population of the north end of the island.

So, who is the teacher?

Officially, the Gabriola (South) School remained closed during the month of August, 1878, Wake, the teacher having been dismissed by the new trustees,¹⁶⁰ and his replacement, Gregory, not arriving until the end of the month.¹⁶¹ Wake however continued to live in the teacher's residence at the South School site,¹⁶² and, with the support of at least a dozen islanders,¹⁶³ began teaching in a makeshift schoolhouse at the north end of the island, albeit without pay.¹⁶⁴

Provincial politics intervenes

While the school situation on Gabriola Island was complicated enough, events in far-off Victoria, were only to add to the general confusion. On August 25, John Jessop resigned as Superintendent of Education,¹⁶⁵ his resignation having been

¹⁵⁹ BL-013-79.

¹⁶⁰ BL-026-78.

¹⁶¹ BL-047-78.

¹⁶² BL-098-78.

¹⁶³ BL-033-78.

¹⁶⁴ BL-063-78 & BL-070-78. Being without pay was probably a hardship for Wake. We can't be sure of all of his motives for holding on to his teaching job so tenaciously, but one might have been that he needed money to supplement his service pension of £65 [\$340] per year, BL-075-78.

¹⁶⁵ BL-043-78.

forced by, according to a newspaper account,¹⁶⁶ a “savage assault on the Superintendent” in the Legislature by the Premier of the Province, Mr. Walkem. All six members of the Board of Education resigned at the same time.

What was behind this resignation is a topic we cannot delve into here, but we cannot resist noting in passing that Jessop had in July that year,¹⁶⁷ sent to the Provincial Secretary a copy of a memorial,¹⁶⁸ passed unanimously at the Teachers’ Convention in July, which requested that the Government, “keep Educational Matters wholly separate and apart from politics, for we [the Teachers] feel and know by experience in this and other provinces of the Dominion, that any change in the administration of the School System whereby Educational Matters may become dependent on the vacillations of policies would retard progress, and strike a serious blow at the root of the Free School System of the province”.

Jessop’s successor was to write, I find “that every attempt to alter or improve the previously existing state of things was met with strenuous and determined opposition, not least from teachers, who had had a free hand and abused it by setting their own hours and days of opening, inaccurate reporting of their activities and of the progress of the children. Some teachers still evince a sublime indifference as to whether [reports] are made out at all.” He added, “...certificates had not been altogether impartially granted by the late Board”, and called for the revocation of those certificates.

¹⁶⁶ BL-042-78.

¹⁶⁷ BL-024-78.

¹⁶⁸ BL-025-78. Jessop was severely reprimanded by the Provincial Secretary for having sent such a memorial, declaring his action “most irregular and mischievous”, BL-027-78.

This was not an auspicious start to a new Government-Teacher relationship.

The new superintendent

The new Superintendent of Education was Colin McKenzie who officially took office on September 9, 1878.¹⁶⁹ The usual grant for travelling was not made, so McKenzie was initially confined to Victoria and sought monthly reports by teachers to the Education Office. These reports were to be provided to trustees, and the teacher was also required to report monthly on each child to its parent(s). He hoped that this would “guard against the evils of defective inspection”.

McKenzie, in an attempt to clean up the Gabriola situation, promptly notified the trustees and Wake that his position as teacher had indeed terminated.¹⁷⁰ In his letter to the trustees, he pointed out:

...the desirability of carrying on business connected with your responsible office as much as possible in a spirit of amity and consideration, so as not to jeopardise in any way the important educational interest you seem to have so much at heart. I trust I shall be able to visit you as soon as possible and hope that in the meantime matters will proceed more peacefully than they have hitherto done.

Having failed to have the desired effect, he wrote again to the Secretary of the trustees (Kemp) on September 23, to express,¹⁷¹

...apprehension that unless you arrive at some peaceable solution yourselves, the only rational way of dealing with the case will be to close the school for such a period as will be sufficient to enable you at some future day to commence again in a calmer and cooler spirit...

¹⁶⁹ BL-044-78.

¹⁷⁰ BL-049-78 & BL-050-78.

¹⁷¹ BL-058-78.

During September and October, letters from the trustees (Kemp, Edgar, and Chapple) continued to arrive at the superintendent's office to the effect that they were the legitimate trustees and Gregory was their man.¹⁷² Gregory also wrote to report that attendance at the school was good, the children no longer needed to “drum their feet to keep the teacher awake”, and that the state of the district was one of, “peace and quietness in spite of the apparently unceasing efforts of Capt. Wake to create a disturbance”.

Wake and his several supporters¹⁷³ had indeed been creating a “disturbance”. They had organized a public meeting protesting the election of Chapple and declaring their intention of electing a trustee who would support a teacher prepared to divide his time between the two ends of the island. The proceedings of the meeting were reported at length in the *Nanaimo Free Press*.¹⁷⁴ The north-enders also made a temporary conversion of a cabin to schoolhouse,¹⁷⁵ the building being provided by Alex Clarkson and its opening as a school being announced in the *Nanaimo Free Press* on October 16,

1878.¹⁷⁶ Wake also made a personal visit to Colin McKenzie at his office in Victoria.¹⁷⁷

A no doubt by this stage rather-perplexed McKenzie sent individually addressed letters in October to Kemp, Edgar, and Chapple asking, just who were the trustees, and who was the teacher in the school district.¹⁷⁸

Resolving the issue

By the end of October, McKenzie had decided how to proceed. While not coming across as an unsympathetic or impatient character, he lacked firsthand knowledge of the island and its settlers and his only recourse, he felt, was to fall back on a strictly legalistic interpretation of events, favouring Gregory and the trustees.

Everyone concerned seemed to share the opinion that it would have been better had McKenzie had an opportunity to visit the District in person and learn the true state of affairs for himself.¹⁷⁹ But it was not to be. McKenzie had, he felt, no evidence that could withstand scrutiny in court that the election of Chapple was invalid, and that therefore the dismissal of Wake by the trustees was valid, as was the trustees' subsequent hiring of Gregory.

There followed in November an interesting exchange of lengthy letters between Wake and McKenzie,¹⁸⁰ and McLay and McKenzie,¹⁸¹ in which Wake basically protests vehemently his perceived unfairness of the process, and McLay, a Justice of the Peace, questions McKenzie's disregard of

¹⁷² BL-051-78, BL-053-78, BL-057-78, BL-68-78, BL-072-78 (Trustees to McKenzie), BL-059-78 (Chapple to McKenzie), BL-069-78 (Kemp to McKenzie).

¹⁷³ BL-033-78. There are 12 signatories other than Wake to a letter? saying they are anxious to retain the Services of Capt. Wake as Teacher of the Children in the Gabriola District. The signatories include Jonathon Martin who signs himself as a trustee, and the undisputed trustee John Kemp. Of the 12 signatories to the Aug.1 letter, eight are unmarried or have no children of school age; and all those who lived on Gabriola and were not trustees were from the north-end, which may say something about the importance of neighbourliness in those days.

¹⁷⁴ BL-052-78.

¹⁷⁵ BL-060-78.

¹⁷⁶ BL-063-78.

¹⁷⁷ BL-058-78.

¹⁷⁸ BL-062-78, BL-065-78, BL-066-78, BL-067-78. Kemp's reply is evasive. He says only, “there has been no change since last June”.

¹⁷⁹ BL-068-78.

¹⁸⁰ In particular, BL-071-78, BL-079-78, BL-082-78, & BL-085-78.

¹⁸¹ BL-077-78, BL-081-78, & BL-091-78.

the evidence that the June 28 election of Richard Chapple and the ousting of Jonathon Martin was rigged.¹⁸²

But McKenzie stays firm, and even declines to allow a re-run of the election of trustees requested by Martin and William Flewett.¹⁸³

Blows are struck

Had there been newspapers on the island during this altercation, there is no doubt that an incident in late October and the subsequent court case would have been the subject of more than one splashy headline. As it is, all we could find is an account of the incident written by Wake in a letter to McKenzie, and a fragment of a report of proceedings in the Magistrate Court in Nanaimo.¹⁸⁴ Wake's letter reads:

October 19, 1878. Gabriola

Dear Sir

I am much concerned that there should be trouble in this district where I am the appointed Teacher, but I think by this time you must be aware what a set of lawless men I have to deal with in Chapple, Edgar and Gregory.

For two years, they have been attempting to displace me, and by omitting to post this notice as said by Mr. Kemp (their Secretary) contrived to elect Chapple as Trustee. Mr. Gregory was then written to & told that the Trustees would dismiss me.

Chapple and Edgar having succeeded in closing the School during the month of Augt, Mr. Gregory appeared at the end of that Month and having got the key of the School from Mr. Kemp by explaining that he had

been sent by Mr. Walkem & [?Abrams] & that Mr. Jessop "had got the sack".

These three worthies proceeded to open the School, putting the big Cornishman to prevent my entrance. Edgar & Gregory cleared out the Teachers desk & put all my property out of the School.

On my attempting to enter I was collared by Chapple, & when I threw him off, the door was shut & locked inside. Chapple, as he got up from the ground proceeded to abuse me, calling me a d-d old hypocrite.

When the Children were admitted, I forced my way in, & taking my place at the desk, informed all present that I was the Teacher & warned them against the consequences of their lawless conduct.

Chapple & Edgar removed the desk & seating themselves at it, told Mr. Gregory to go on Teaching. I rang the Bell to dismiss the Children & Mr. Gregory snatched it out of my hand.

Chapple has been fined for the assault & bound over to keep the peace, but I am anxious to avoid proceeding against Edgar, although he is much more [illegible] having at a public meeting, falsely & maliciously asserted that Captain Wake was in the habit of going drunk to the School.

I have opened the School at the North end with an attendance of 7 on the first day & hope to increase to 12.

If Mr. Gregory can be got rid of, I think Kemp & Martin, the Trustees, [illegible] be in a position to open the School at the School house next month, and that I may go on with the Teaching on alternate months weeks or half weeks.

There will never be a [illegible] attendance of the Elder Children who are already advanced far beyond their Parents, but I trust with your support I may get all my young neighbours so instructed as to be rather more useful members of society than the lawless fellows who are opposing me.

I will not trespass further on your time at present but shall be glad to give you any information you may require in dealing with

¹⁸² This was not the last election in which Martin was in trouble. In 1894, he and Henry Petersen, rowed to Victoria together to interview the Superintendent of Education to resolve Henry's claim that "several of the votes recorded for Martin were given by married women who had not yet reached 18 years of age". Martin had won by only two votes.

¹⁸³ BL-096-78 & BL-097-78.

¹⁸⁴ BL-064-78 & BL-090-78.

this affair and remain
Faithfully yours, BA Wake

Wake resigns

On December 10, 1878 Wake proffered his resignation from the Office of Teacher,¹⁸⁵ and on December 27, Gregory reported that Captain Wake had withdrawn from the School's residence.¹⁸⁶

The 1879 half of the School year

The new calendar year was marked by a precipitous drop in the number of letters being exchanged between Gabriola and Victoria. Apart from one or two letters of a routine nature concerning payment of Gregory's salary, nothing worthy of note occurs until May 7 when James McLay writes to tell McKenzie that as a result of an increase in the number of settlers, there were now 20 children of school age waiting the opportunity of attending school.¹⁸⁷ If true, this is in sharp contrast with the situation at the other end of the island, where John Kemp reported that the average attendance at the South School for the first four months of the calendar year was only 8.4, which was below the government mandated minimum of ten.¹⁸⁸

With this new reality, it comes as no surprise that the tone of letters from the trustees, Kemp, Chapple, and Edgar, and the teacher, Gregory, become much more conciliatory and show an active interest in having the teacher share his time. The trustees' letter of

¹⁸⁵ BL-099-78. Wake is defiant to the end. As we know, the official viewpoint was that Wake's employment had ended on August 31, and it was therefore meaningless in the eyes of officialdom for him to say that he was resigning, BL-100-78.

¹⁸⁶ BL-102-78.

¹⁸⁷ BL-004-79.

¹⁸⁸ BL-005-79 & BL-006-79.

May 29 contains a report of a meeting on the island:¹⁸⁹

School House, Gabriola

At a meeting of the Voters in the Gabriola School District ...it was found that there are Twenty children of the school age at the Northeren [*sic*] end of the Island.

It was moved and seconded and carried that the Alexander Clarkson's house be obtained to be used as a temporary School House.

The conditions on which it may be obtained has not yet been learned. Moved by R. Chappel seconded by J. McLay [*sic*] that the permanent School-house be situated within a quarter of a mile of the junction of the McLay [*sic*] & Le Bouf [*sic*] roads.¹⁹⁰

Moved by White Pemberthey and seconded by Theodore LeBouf [*sic*] that the Trustees be requested to desire the Superintendent to forward money for the construction of the School-house and purchase of furniture necessary to carry on the School in the Temporary house.

Gregory adds a comment to this in a letter to the superintendent a day later:¹⁹¹

The School meeting of the 29th inst. [May] passed off very agreeably. The people seem to be united in the determination to keep the school in existence.

I am not unwilling to teach on both ends of the Island. Considering the distance between the two houses I think it will be necessary to teach every alternate week in each neighborhood.

I would like to know what salary can be allowed for such services as one will be compelled to perform under the circumstances....

Yours very truly...

¹⁸⁹ BL-009-79.

¹⁹⁰ McLay Road would be North Road and Le Bœuf's would be Horseshoe Road.

¹⁹¹ BL-010-79.

Gabriola School District Teachers, 1872–79				
School year	Teacher	Qualification	Nationality	Salary per month
1872-73	—			
1873-74	J.E.L. Seneker		American	\$40
1874-75	J.E.L. Seneker	Class 3A	American	\$50
1875-76	O.M. Gregory	no certificate	Canadian	\$40
	B.A. Wake (May-June)	no certificate	English	\$40
1876-77	B.A. Wake	Class 3B	English	\$50
1877-78	B.A. Wake	Class 3B	English	\$50
1878-79	no official returns In the fall of 1878, B.A. Wake taught unpaid at the north end before quitting in December. Beginning in October, O.M. Gregory with a Class 3A certificate, taught at the south end until the end of the school year.			

The final fling at electing trustees, June 1879

The adage, old habits die hard, is no better illustrated than by the procedure used to elect new trustees in June. With just four members present, elected were Edgar, Chapple, and Thomas Dignen [Degnen] to replace John Kemp.¹⁹² The “old-guard” south-enders were back. We probably will never know what the north-enders thought of this manoeuvre, but in any case, it was to prove self-defeating.

As June Harrison noted at the beginning of this article, “at the start of the new academic year in August 1879, available records show that the school failed to open. Details as to the circumstances of the closure are rather sketchy, but the school remained closed for

¹⁹² BL-011-79.

two years.”¹⁹³ By the 1883-84 school year, there were two schools and two boards of trustees: Chapple, McGuffie, and Peterson for South Gabriola; and McLay, A. Hoggan, and Penberthy for North Gabriola. ◇

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Gabriola Museum’s History Committee, members of which read and re-read photocopies of the letters and brilliantly guessed what most of the squiggles meant. We also thank the staff of the British Columbia Archives who were unfailingly helpful. The editors of this article were Wendy Strachan and Nick Doe.

¹⁹³ BL-014-79. The Eighth Annual Report of Public Schools notes that the school on Gabriola was not re-opened by trustees after July holidays, implying by the context of the remark, that attendance below the legal average was the problem. There is also, we note, no record of Gregory ever attempting to renew his Class 3A teacher’s qualification in BC, which would have expired at the end of June.