

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

GASPÉ SCHOOLS OF YESTERDAY

As reflected in THE EDUCATIONAL RECORD,
1940-1964.

KEN ANNETT

GASPÉ SCHOOLS OF YESTERDAY

FOREWORD

Prior to the creation of the Ministry of Education in March, 1964, the school commissioners and teachers of the Protestant schools of Quebec looked forward to the quarterly issues of THE EDUCATION RECORD, published by the Department of Education. After a lapse of three years (1937-1940) publication had resumed in December, 1940 with Volume XI and from then until the end of December, 1963, ninety-four issues appeared quarterly for the information of school boards and teachers. In retrospect the complete file of these issues is a veritable "gold-mine" of information of all aspects of education in the Protestant schools of Quebec. The wide range of topics and the uniform standard of excellence provided material of lasting value. The ideas of many of Quebec's outstanding leaders, as well as those of Canada and the world, are to be found there. A DIRECTORY to these issues, organized on the basis of some forty topics, ranging from ADMINISTRATION to VISUAL AIDS was prepared and published as Volume LXXIX, No. 4, October-December, 1963.

As this series included information on education in the schools of Gaspesia, "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" proposes to recall such material from time to time, commencing with the following "GASPÉ SCHOOLS OF YESTERDAY".

THE
EDUCATIONAL
RECORD

OF THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

●
*Published
Quarterly*

HALF A CENTURY IN QUEBEC PROTESTANT SCHOOLS

Mary E. Bisson
Baie Comeau High School

Fifty years of teaching. What memories they evoke! Late in August 1913 I received a letter from the Secretary-Treasurer of the School Board in Peninsula on the Gaspé Coast, asking me if I would consent to teach in their Number Two Rural School for the coming term. I was then seventeen years of age and the thought of being asked to accept a teaching position made me very happy. The salary offered was one hundred seventy-five dollars for a ten-month term, which seemed to me at that time a fabulous sum. Since cost of board and lodging was only six dollars per month, I felt that I would soon be rich.

Early in September I travelled down the coast by train to the village of Gaspé. My feelings were mixed. I was excited at the prospect, but I had many feelings of uncertainty. Would I be successful? Would I be able to discipline big boys perhaps almost as old as I? Would I be homesick?

Finally the train puffed into Gaspé Station. I had reached the point of no return. I was met at the Station by the Chairman of the School Board who took me across the bay in his little boat. He had left his horse on the Peninsula side, so we drove the last two miles to his house. It had taken me approximately nine hours to make the journey, as compared with three or four hours needed to travel that same trip today. I shall never forget the kindness of the Chairman and his wife who made me feel comfortable that night in their pleasant home. Their warm welcome did much to dispel my fears.

The next morning was an exciting one because I was to be taken to the home where I would board, and I would also get my first glimpse of my new school.

The school was the usual one-room rural school of those days; but this one was bright and pleasant, set on a hill, surrounded by fir trees and overlooking the sparkling waters of Gaspé Bay. A small table served as the teacher's desk. The children's benches were homemade to accommodate three or four children each; a wooden chalkboard, painted black, was at the back of the room; and the inevitable wood-burning stove occupied the middle of the room.

The first school day arrived and although I reached school early that morning, the pupils were earlier. They had come to greet "the new teacher." They little knew how I was trembling inwardly.

School routine was soon established with emphasis on the Three R's. To have a scribbler and a lead pencil was indeed a luxury. Slates were the order of the day. Each child had a damp cloth to clean his slate when both sides were filled. The ink bottles were made of brown crockery, and sat on the desks of the older pupils. One bottle would contain about six months' supply of ink. The occasional accident was inevitable.

The drinking water from a nearby well was kept in a galvanized pail with a tin cover. One tin cup served the fourteen thirsty children.

In winter we faced other problems. Sometimes the wood refused to burn, so that the classroom was often uncomfortably chilly until about ten o'clock. Since matches were expensive, great care had to be taken that we didn't use too many at one time. By the end of May I had become an excellent stoker. Darkness came early in the afternoon and there was no illumination of any kind. Janitors were unheard of in those days, therefore monitors were appointed to haul wood and

water, and to clean the room. If a monitor "forgot" his duties. I swept and dusted before leaving school and carried the wood from the porch to the classroom early next morning.

Life at my boarding house was pleasant but uneventful. Lessons were prepared and homework corrected by the light of an oil lamp. Mail arrived three times a week. How eagerly I listened for the courier to pass with his old horse going cloppety-clop.

For entertainment on Saturday evenings we visited the neighbours' homes where we had gay sing-songs and played parlour games. Sundays were devoted to morning and evening church service and a quiet walk or afternoon rest.

Four months thus passed and finally the magic words "Going Home for Christmas" became a reality. In order to go home, it was necessary to drive by horse and sleigh across ice for many miles to reach Gaspé Station. The journey to my little village station seemed endless, but at last I arrived to be greeted joyfully by my father. To this day I can still remember sitting cosily beside him, warmed by buffalo robes as he drove his prize mare merrily homeward to the music of sleigh bells.

After teaching on a permit for three years at the Peninsula School, I was convinced that I wanted to make this my career, and so I entered a teacher training class at Macdonald College. I little realized, when I graduated, that I would give my life to such a noble work.

I returned to the Gaspé Coast to another rural school, followed by three years in my home school. Then I moved to the little Sayabec School which was owned and operated by the John Fenderson Lumber Company for the benefit of their employees' children. This delightful little building was later moved to Rimouski.

A couple of years later the urge to move and see more of beautiful Quebec Province took me to small schools in the Pontiac and Gatineau Districts.

The lure of the Gaspé was strong and I returned to the warm hospitality of the Gaspésians. For the next thirteen years I taught Primary classes in New Carlisle High School. This was a new departure after so many years in rural schools. At that time it seemed to be a huge school.

In September 1944 I left the Gaspé Coast. The next twenty years found me in four different types of communities: a mining town in northwestern Quebec, a paper-mill town in the lovely St. Maurice Valley, large elementary suburban schools in our two largest cities, and a bustling industrial town on the north shore of the Lower St. Lawrence.

I am thoroughly convinced that if I could re-live the fifty years which I am about to complete, I would again choose the teaching profession as my career. I remember vividly that as a little child my greatest pleasure was to play school and have dolls for pupils. Over the years I have found that wide-awake, wriggling boys and girls are not as tractable as dolls. Truly one becomes weary and discouraged at times, but the rewards usually far outweigh the disheartening aspects.

About one thousand children have been my pupils. To my knowledge none has become famous. However, a fair number have become teachers and nurses. Perhaps one of these will influence an artist, doctor, engineer, lawyer or musician of a future generation.

The time is near when I must say Good-bye to the classroom and all the pleasant things connected with a great profession. When I leave Baie Comeau in June I expect to fly to Rimouski and travel the remainder of the journey by train. To cover the two miles from the village station to my little cottage, it would be nostalgically delightful if someone could meet me with a horse and buggy and I could return in the same way that I left fifty years ago. However, as "the old order changeth, yielding place to new," I shall have to settle for a ride in a shiny automobile, modern but not nearly so exciting!

THE
EDUCATIONAL
RECORD
OF THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

Published
Quarterly

Vol. LX, No. 1

JANUARY-MARCH, 1944



THE FIRST BUS BUILT EXPRESSLY FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF PROTESTANT PUPILS

DEVELOPMENTS IN CONVEYANCE

On the cover pages will be found photographs of the first bus built expressly for Protestant schools. This bus is being operated by the Matapedia Consolidated School between that school and Mann Settlement six miles away.

The bus is modern in every respect. It has seating accommodation for thirty-eight pupils. The chassis is a new Ford two-ton truck. The bus body is made of best quality hardwood reinforced where necessary with steel. The roof and exterior walls are completely covered with steel securely fastened to the frame. The floor is of hardwood covered with two layers of heavy asphalt—impregnated, waterproof, felt paper over which is laid a heavy grade of battleship linoleum. The inside walls and ceiling are of Masonite, the windows of shatterproof glass. Only four of the windows open; these are the first on the right front, the last at the right rear, the first at the left front (the chauffeur's window) and the window in the emergency door on the left rear. Protective grilles have been placed over the windows.

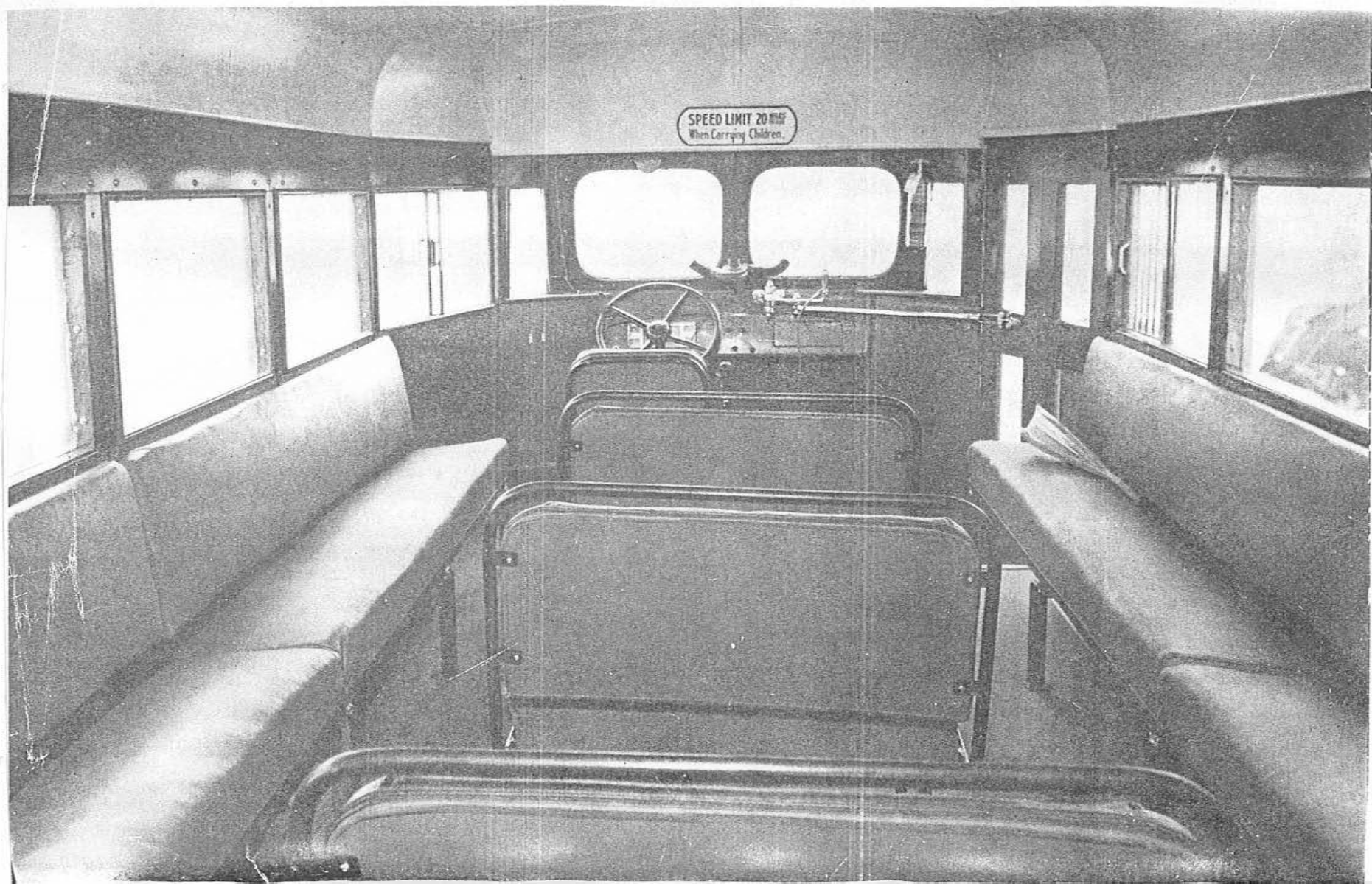
The right front main door, which is manually operated by the chauffeur, has four glass panels. The door cannot be locked from the inside. At the rear is an emergency door which also has an upper panel of shatterproof glass. The door, however, can easily be opened by the chauffeur, either from the inside or outside.

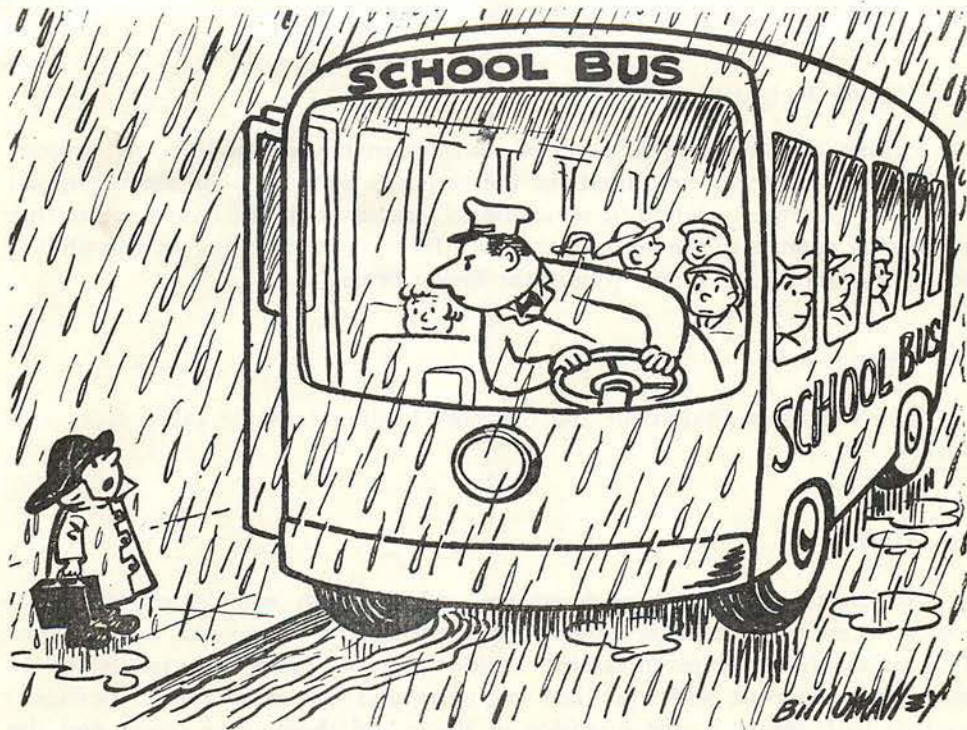
The seats are in two rows, along the walls and five rows crosswise in the middle of the bus, one being against the rear wall. All seats except the chauffeur's have a horizontal width of twelve inches. The two rows of seats along the side walls have their seating surface sixteen inches clear above the floor. All the seats are leather covered and have an adequate number of springs. Two large heaters and a double duty windshield defroster of the blower type are provided. A Pyrene fire extinguisher is fastened to the front wall on the right side of the windshield.

On the exterior walls of the vehicle is printed "Matapedia Consolidated School". Outside, above the windshield and at the rear end, are printed the words "School Bus". Inside, a printed sign calls the chauffeur's attention to the fact that the speed limit must not exceed twenty miles per hour when carrying children.

The bus was driven down to Matapedia by Mr. H. S. Billings, Special Officer of this Department, and the mothers of Matapedia were invited to enter it and take a short ride. They are enthusiastic about the conditions under which their children can be expected to proceed to and return from school.

Forty-nine consolidated schools are now in operation with a total enrolment of 4,911 pupils of whom 2,259 are conveyed to and from school daily in 143 buses. The enrolment in these schools is as follows: Grades I to VII, 3,723; Grade VIII, 459; Grade IX, 329; Grade X, 273; Grade XI, 127.



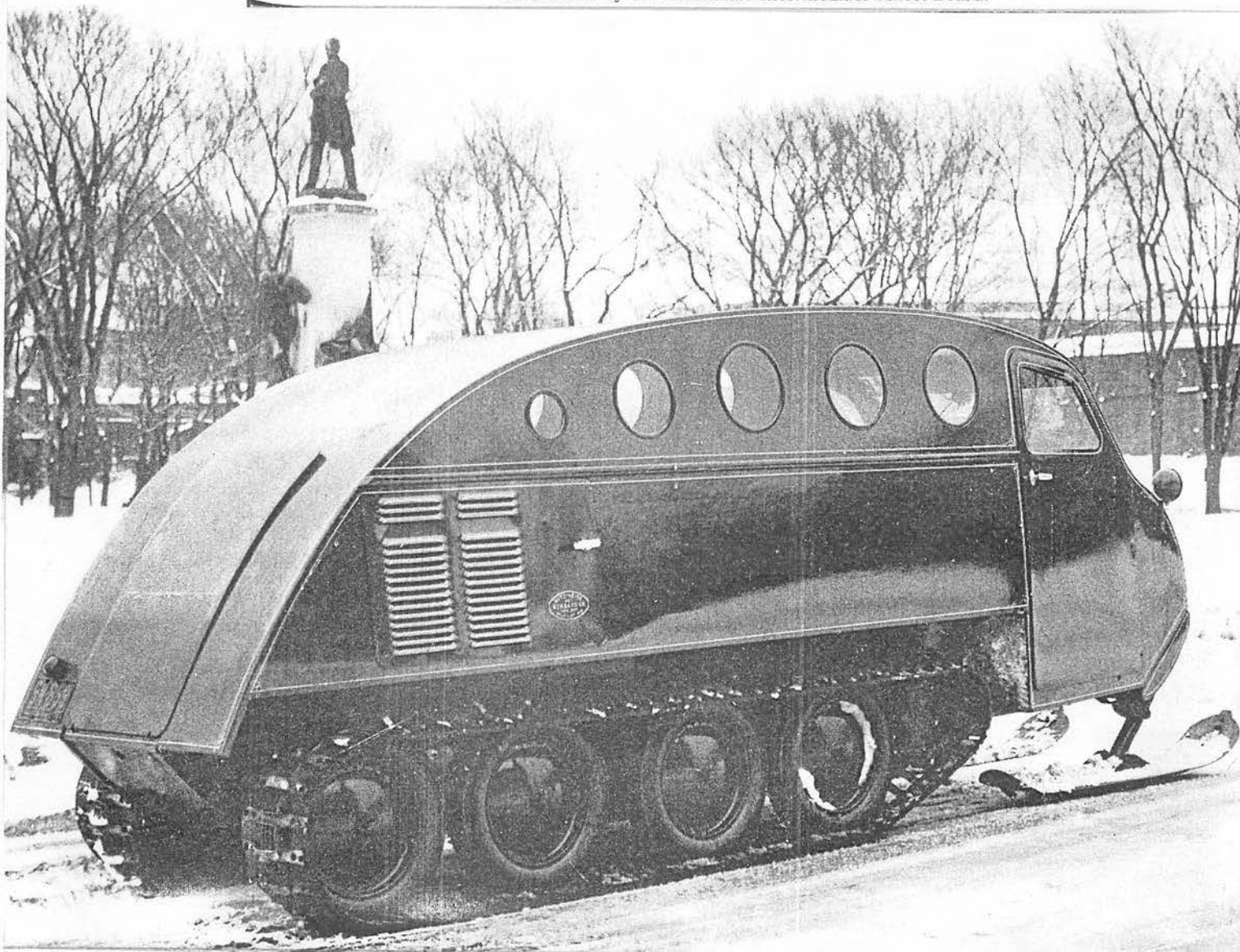
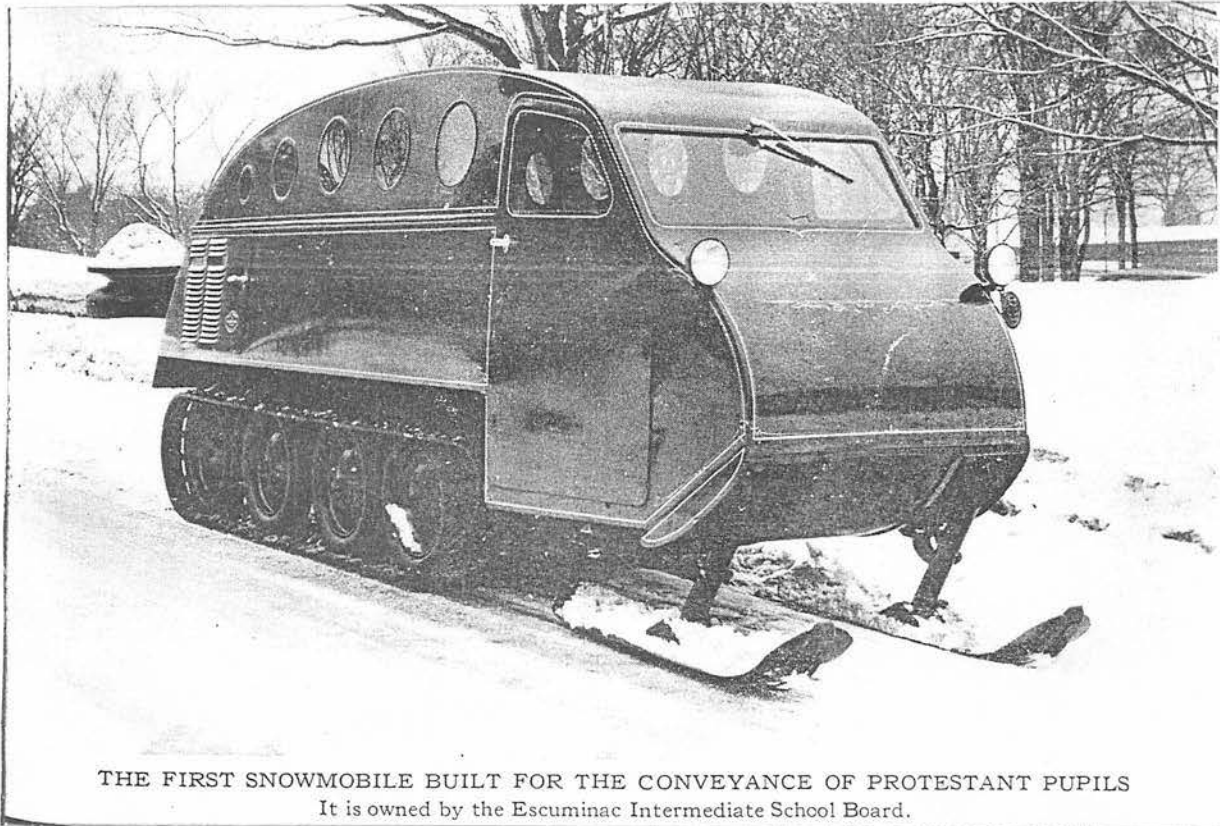


"IT'S SUCH A NICE DAY . . . I'VE DECIDED TO WALK."

DEVELOPMENTS IN CONVEYANCE - EDUCATIONAL RECORD

1944

"... A priority has been secured by the Department of Education for the building of a snowmobile. It is hoped that this will be delivered at an early date to Escuminac. Its operation will be closely watched, and, if it is successful, its use should be greatly extended. It should serve to solve the problem of pupils rising at too early an hour in the morning, being driven slowly over difficult roads by horse teams and returning by the same means at a late hour in the evening. Moreover, it will result in the conveyance of pupils over much greater distances with a consequent alleviation for pupils of difficult weather conditions. Furthermore it should result in a large number of pupils receiving a more regular education for an increasing number of years..."



FROM THE 1945-1946 DIRECTORY OF SCHOOL STAFF

NEW CARLISLE HIGH -	<u>Miss Mabel A.Young</u> , Miss Lumia Sepall, Mrs.Isabella Ward, Mrs.Isabelle McColm, Mrs.Vera Campbell, Mrs.Norma Robertson, Miss Irene Beebe, Miss Mildred Matthews.
BLACK CAPE INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Miss J.A.MacNair</u> , Mrs.Mary Tozer LeQuesne.
ESCUMINAC INTERMEDIATE -	<u>Mrs.L.M.Edwards</u> , Mrs.Myrtle Kery, Miss Helen Michel.
GASPE BAY SOUTH INTERMEDIATE--	<u>Miss Winnifred V.LePage</u> , Mrs.Doris E. Furlong, Mrs.Alice G.Eden, Miss Audry D.Patterson.
GASPE INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Mr.Donald T.Fenwick</u> , Miss Patricia Patterson, Mrs.Maynard Miller.
GRAND CASCAPEDIA INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Miss Kathleen E.Campbell</u> , Mrs.Colin Barter, Mrs.Percy Barter.
HOPETOWN INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Mrs.Eileen A.B. McRae</u> , Miss Ila M.Sawyer.
MATAPEDIA INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Mr.J.Egbert McOuat</u> , Mrs.R.B.Fraser, Mrs.J.E.McOuat, Miss Nancy Adams.
NEW RICHMOND CENTRE INTER- MEDIATE.	<u>Miss Kathryn Livingston</u> , Miss Lena Brown, Miss Helen MacWhirter.
NEW RICHMOND WEST INTER- MEDIATE (1943-1944)	<u>Mrs.Henry Sinclair</u> , Miss Edith E.Fitz.
SHIGAWAKE CENTRE INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Mrs.Olga de la Haye</u> , Miss Ruth Ramier.
YORK INTERMEDIATE-	<u>Mrs.Beatrice E.Coffin</u> , Miss Alice Robson, Mrs.Jack Eagle, Miss Doreen Miller.
METIS (Special)	Miss Viola C.MacLellan
PORT DANIEL (Special)	<u>Miss Ethel M.LeGrand</u> , Mrs.W.O.Lawrence.