



King Edward School

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Between 1892 and 1920, Calgary's public school board built some twenty sandstone schools to accommodate the city's rapidly growing student population. These imposing structures reflected the city's growing prosperity prior to World War I, and their Edwardian designs evoked the connection to the British Empire in the minds of Anglo-Saxon and immigrant schoolchildren, their parents, and the population at large.¹

In 1912, the peak year of Calgary's pre-World War I boom, Calgary Protestant Public School District No. 19 commenced four new sandstone school projects which architectural historian Bryan P. Melnyk has termed "...a significant change in school construction in Calgary."² King George, Ramsay, and Sunalta schools were built to an identical plan prepared by Hugh McClelland, Superintendent of Buildings for the public school district from about 1908-1915.³ (McClelland was evidently assisted in this work by William A. Branton, who had been hired as a draftsman. Branton later served as the board's Building Superintendent and Architect.)

King Edward School, with its nineteen classrooms and two cupolas, was a larger variation of the same plan.⁴ It was built on land acquired for the purpose in 1910 in the relatively new and sparsely settled district of South Calgary.⁵ A building permit was recorded on March 29, 1912, and the estimated cost of construction was \$172,000.⁶ The contractor was Doyle, Thomas & Christensen Ltd.⁷ The stone was quarried from the Oliver Brothers quarry near the modern intersection of Crowchild Trail and 17 Avenue S.W.⁸

King Edward School opened on November 1, 1913, with William Aberhart as its first principal.⁹ Aberhart, who remained as the school's principal until 1915, served as Alberta's first Social Credit premier from 1935 until his death in 1943. The next principal, T. A. Florendine (1915-40), also served as organist and choirmaster at nearby St. Mark's Anglican Church.¹⁰ Another notable faculty member was P. N. R. Morrison, a teacher who went on to become a longtime

city alderman (1946-63).¹¹ Jack Leslie, who later served as Calgary's mayor from 1965 to 1969, attended Industrial Arts classes at the school.¹²

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, cadet training commenced at King Edward.¹³ The school also became a community social centre, providing a venue for card games and dances before the construction of the South Calgary Community Hall in the mid-1930s.¹⁴

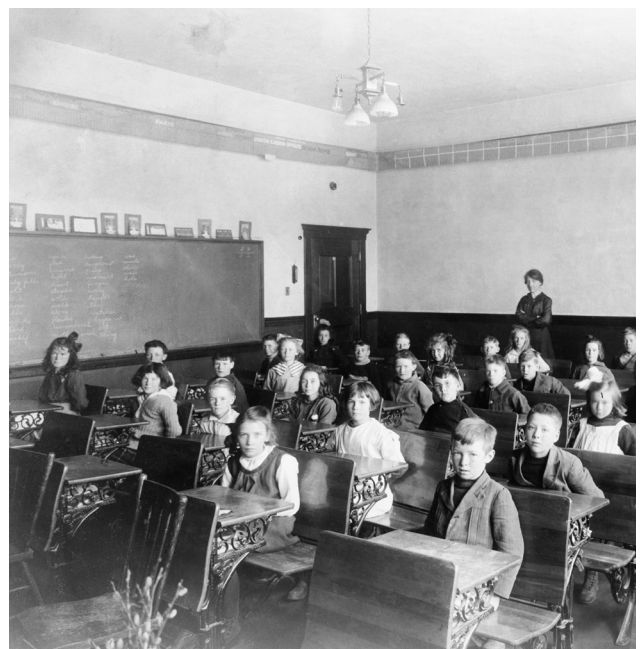
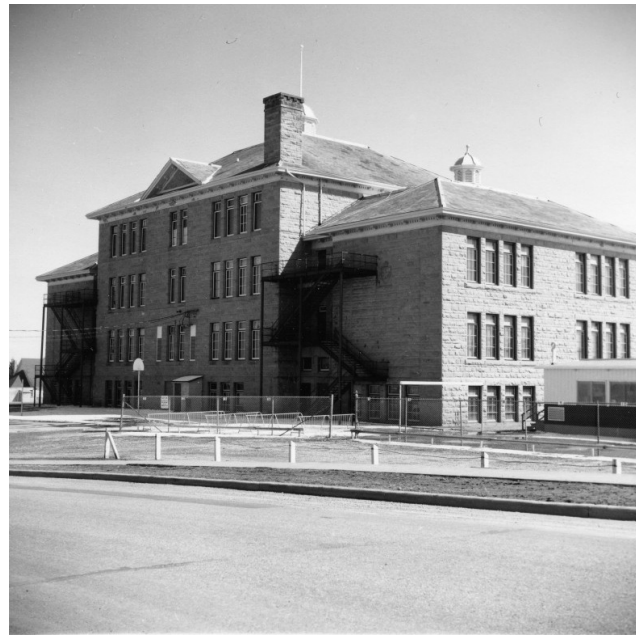
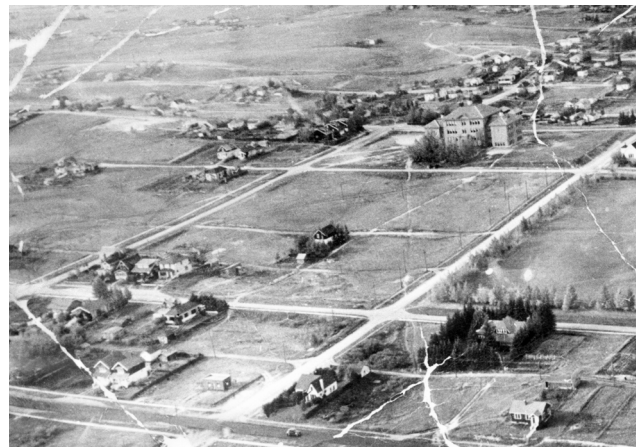
The school became overcrowded by 1922 when some classes were moved to a nearby church.¹⁵ From 1918 to 1929, the building housed two separate educational institutions: King Edward School, under the principalship of T. A. Florendine, and South Calgary High School, under Principal T. E. A. Stanley, which occupied the building's top two floors. The high school classes were moved to the new Western Canada High School in 1929.¹⁶ One notable alumnus of South Calgary High was broadcaster and local historian Jack Peach.¹⁷ Grade 10 classes were again held at King Edward in 1946-48 owing to overcrowding at Western Canada.¹⁸ In September 1931, King Edward School became the forerunner of intermediate (junior high) schools in Calgary, grouping grades 7-9.¹⁹ The junior high school system was officially adopted and expanded to other schools by 1934.²⁰



The building's function changed drastically during the Second World War. The city became an important centre for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which took over the campus then being shared by the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (later renamed the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) and the Calgary Normal School (the city's teacher training college). Both institutions had to be relocated, and from 1940 to 1945 the Calgary Normal School was housed in the King Edward School facility. King Edward School students were educated during this period by Normal school student teachers.²¹

While the original structure remains essentially intact, two unsympathetic additions affect the building's appearance. In 1956, Walden Construction Ltd built a gymnasium addition, which also included Home Economics and Industrial Arts rooms, for a tender price of \$202,594.²² The architect was J. A. Cawston.²³ A second addition to what had become known as King Edward Elementary-Junior High School was constructed in 1967. Designed by architect W. G. Milne, it included a library and laboratory. The contractor was Cascade Builders Ltd., whose tender price was \$439,339.²⁴ The school's original west wing was demolished in 1978 because of a dangerous crack in the outer wall connecting it to the main building. Sandstone saved from the demolition was evidently used to rebuild the adjoining outside wall.²⁵

King Edward Elementary/Junior High School was closed in 2001.





¹Bryan P. Melnyk, *Calgary Builds: The Emergence of an Urban Landscape, 1905-1914* ([Edmonton]: Alberta Culture, Regina; Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985) 101-102.

²Ibid 98.

³Glenbow Archives, Calgary Board of Education fonds. According to his obituary in the *Calgary Daily Herald* 27 Sept. 1928), McClelland—who served as Calgary's fire chief from 1896-1898—served as superintendent of construction for seventeen large stone schools in the city.

⁴Ibid.

⁵William McLennan, *From Slate to Computer* (Calgary: Fort Brisebois Publishing, 1995) 52.

⁶City of Calgary, Corporate Records, Archives (CCCRA), City of Calgary Papers, building permit ledgers.

⁷Calgary Board of Education (CBE) minutes, 18 Mar. 1912.

⁸McLennan 61.

⁹Ibid; *Long Live the King: The Story of 'King Edward'* (Calgary: King Edward School, n.d.) 13. In an apparent error, the 1913 Henderson's Directory lists Miss A. Foster as the school's principal.

¹⁰*Past and Present: People, Places and Events in Calgary. Century Historical Series I* ([Calgary]: Century Calgary Publications, 1975) 349-50.

¹¹*Long Live the King* 37.

¹²Ibid 40.

¹³McLennan 61.

¹⁴*Long Live the King* 14.

¹⁵McLennan 87.

¹⁶Ibid 61.

¹⁷Jack Peach, "Memories often tastier than school reunions," *Calgary Herald* 16 May 1987: G9.

¹⁸McLennan 61.

¹⁹Ibid 107.

²⁰Ibid 113; Robert M. Stamp, *School Days: A Century of Memories* (Calgary: Calgary Board of Education and McClelland and Stewart West, 1975) 83.

²¹*Long Live the King* 32.

²²CBE minutes, 22 May 1956.

²³Canadian Architectural Archives, Cawston fonds, 10A/77.49.

²⁴CBE minutes, 29 Aug. 1967.

²⁵"Age has taken its toll of 'grand old lady,'" *Calgary Herald* 29 Aug. 1978; "Calgaria," *Saint John's Calgary Report* 9 Oct. 1978.