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**PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOL
1875-1978**

Jan Burnswood
Directorate of Planning Services
Department of Education
1978

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOL

The Paterson district was settled before 1820, and as the town grew the children were educated at a Church of England school established before any government schools existed in the colony of New South Wales. Church schools were substantially subsidised by the government, and the system of church schools continued to operate side by side with the government school system established in 1848. It was not until the 1870s that Public Schools began really to replace church schools, and that decade saw a substantial decline in the number of church schools. State aid to church school was finally abolished by the Public Instruction Act of 1880, which set up the Department of Education.

In the early 1860s the Church of England school at Paterson had an enrolment of some 50 to 60. However, possibly because the district mixed religiously, an application was made in 1865 for the establishment of a National School (as government schools were then known) at Paterson. The application was not granted in 1865 because the Board of National Education was too short of funds to build any schools, but in 1866 the Board did purchase a site from William Corner, and plans were drawn up for a building. For some reason the school never eventuated, and nothing more was to be heard of a Public School for Paterson until 1874.

From 1870 the Church of England school was under the charge of George Browne, "an earnest but unskilful" teacher. The enrolment was still about 50, although there were probably at least 100 children of school age in the district. Some were attending a private school in Paterson and the remainder were not going to school at all: there was not even a limited form of compulsory education until 1880. When a second private school opened in Paterson, the enrolment at the Church of England school fell to 35 in 1873 and to 31 with an average attendance of only fifteen early in 1874. Since teachers' salaries were related to the attendance and part of their income came from school fees, such a drop was catastrophic. As Browne said in asking for a transfer early in 1874, "I am being almost starved out". When his request was granted in

March, the school was left without a teacher, and on 22 October 1874 the Council of Education decided to withdraw the school's 'certificate', thus depriving it of funds.

The closure of the Church of England school led directly to the establishment of Paterson Public School, for the Council expressed its willingness to consider an application for a Public School, and asked District Inspector Jones to advise on the educational needs of the district. Jones began a correspondence with William Corner junior immediately, and by 31 December 1874 Corner had most of the families in the area and obtained promises to send 72 children to a Public School, and had arranged to rent the Oddfellows Society Hall for use as a temporary school. On that date he wrote to Inspector Jones enclosing the list of guaranteed pupils. (See appendix 1.)

The official application form was dated 14 January 1875, the day a public meeting was held in the Oddfellows hall to discuss the opening of a Public School. It was signed by a local committee which took responsibility for the arrangements: the chairman, William Corner senior, who was retired; James Cann, storekeeper; Green Smith, blacksmith; William Keppie, wheelwright; and the secretary, William Corner junior, who had no occupation. All the necessary information was given to show why Paterson should have a Public School. Apart from the small private school in Paterson, the nearest school was at Vacy Five miles away. There were said to be 126 school-age children within two miles, and the committee expected an enrolment of 73, far more than necessary to secure the prescribed average attendance of 25. The Oddfellows hall was a substantial brick room 30 feet by 22, centrally located opposite the Court House, and was to be rented together with a suitable residence for the teacher, next to the hall, for the reasonable sum of nine shillings a week.

The Council granted the application on 15 February 1875. Some delay then occurred while Corner organised the signing of a lease for the hall and the acquisition of desks from the then closed school at Iona. David Ritchie, a good teacher of ten years' experience, was appointed the first teacher of Paterson Public School on 2 April, but it was not until Monday 19 April that he opened the school, with an initial enrolment of 30. By the end of the year this had reached 81, with an average attendance of 59. (See appendix 2.)

The success in attracting such numbers made the school's operation in the hall very difficult, as Ritchie pointed out in December 1875. He also correctly forecast that a pupil teacher would soon be appointed to help him (the young Emily Sluman was appointed on 20 March 1876, and was to remain Paterson's apprentice teacher until the end of 1879); it was obviously unsatisfactory having two teachers and so many pupils in such a building. The Council having referred the matter to Inspector Jones, he reported on 1 February 1876 that the erection of permanent buildings was urgent; but this meant the acquisition of a site, a problem which was to take some time to solve.

Jones wrote a long report on 3 April in which he discussed seven possible sites; fortunately he enclosed an excellent plan of the town (see attachment 1). Before that date he had rejected the 1866 site because it was on the side of a mountain, and offers to sell Mrs. Purty's [Puxty's] and Mr. Thomson's inns because the buildings were unsuitable and the prices asked too high. Together with the members of the local

school board, he had inspected many sites. Mrs. Broderick's land was unanimously rewarded as the best, but the old lady refused to take her children's advice to sell. Other good, central sites were held by the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, the Courthouse and Mrs. Brown, but although none was being used it was unlikely that their holders would give them up. The next preference was a residence and a rubble stone building, which could possibly be enlarged for a school, owned by William Corner, together with adjacent land owned by Mr. Holmes; the Council's architect would need to advise on the usefulness of the buildings, but even so the price asked was high. The remaining sites were too hilly or too subject to drainage problems.

The Council took Jones' advice and asked the Bishop of Newcastle if he was willing to give up his land, but he replied in June that it was intended to build a new church there. The Council next wrote to Corner and Holmes, and in mid July received offers to sell from them. But simultaneously Mrs. Broderick's son-in-law wrote to say that she had now decided to sell her land. There was some confusion at this point, since Jones thought she was asking £180 for less than an acre, and recommended against the purchase. After more correspondence it was discovered that she was offering one and a half acres for this price, and the purchase was therefore finalised in October 1876.

Once the site was decided on the buildings could go ahead, and the Council's architect had a sketch plan ready on 1 November (see attachment 2). Both the school and the residence were standard plans for brick buildings on stone foundations. The schoolroom had long desks and forms arranged on galleries or stepped platforms, and a separate gallery at one end containing forms but no desks for the infants (they perched their slates on their knees). There was also a small classroom, to be used for some ordinary teaching and also for religious instruction and sewing lessons. Tenders were called twice before Stephen and William Stanbridge of Paterson were awarded the contract for £1725 in June 1877: this was still £300 higher than the estimate, but the architect had failed to allow for extra foundations needed because of the sloping site. The builders were rather slow, and the work was not completed until October 1878.

In the meantime the school had remained in the Oddfellows hall, with a stable average attendance of around 60. The only problem encountered had been Ritchie's ill health, which caused him to take two months leave in mid 1877: the school was closed for about a month, then reopened with William Masters in temporary charge. Ritchie's request for a transfer was granted the following year (see attachment 3 for his inventory of school stock), so that it was Francis Phillips who took possession of the new school and residence immediately after receiving permission by telegram on 12 October 1878. Improvements made afterwards included levelling and draining the playground in 1879 and the erection of a weathershed in 1881.

Paterson's enrolments rose to 100 in 1880 and to a peak of 118 in 1881 with an average attendance of 85. Early the following year the residents petitioned the Department of Education for additions to the school (see attachment 4). But the district inspector pointed out that the accommodation was sufficient for 100, that all the eligible children in the district were enrolled and that there "was no immediate

prospect of a population increase. He did however recommend that four desks be supplied for the classroom (it only had forms) and two extra forms for the school-room, and this was done. The school's numbers fell somewhat after 1882, but throughout the 1880s and 1890s Paterson was staffed by a teacher and a pupil teacher: Carl Schumacher was in charge for 25 years from 1881, while pupil teachers came and went fairly frequently.

Schumacher was a hard-working and popular teacher, although a number of inspectors criticised him for some weakness in discipline and a certain lack of "penetrative force" in his teaching. Yet after a series of less than satisfactory inspection reports in the mid 1890s, Schumacher suddenly began receiving good marks from Inspector John Kevin, the district inspector from 189. Kevin may simply have been more lenient than other inspectors, but he was also a very encouraging inspector who placed less emphasis on rigid discipline and rote learning and more on children's activity and enjoyment. Kevin was the father of the school library movement in New South Wales, and a keen advocate of nature study in Public Schools. That Kevin had converted Schumacher to his causes became obvious in 1901, when Schumacher applied for promotion. Kevin not only praised his character and his teaching, but also said Schumacher's 400 volume school library was the finest in the district and that he had "a Natural History Cabinet that is the admiration of everyone who has seen it". Schumacher himself wrote a report on these activities the following year (see attachment 5).

Education in New South Wales underwent a number of reforms from 1904. The 'new education' involved a much more child-centred pedagogy, and the curriculum became broader and more related to children's activity and interest: Inspector Kevin had anticipated some of this. Other reforms involved the phasing out of the pupil teacher system and improvements in building design and furniture. Schumacher seized the opportunity in 1904 to ask for Paterson's pupil teacher, Gilbert Filshie, to be replaced by an assistant teacher, mainly on the grounds that it was very difficult to supervise Filshie's teaching of First and Second Classes in the little classroom. Schumacher's request was unsuccessful, but Filshie was nevertheless the last pupil teacher at Paterson: he was replaced by an assistant teacher, Grace Elworthy, in April 1906.

The ordinary routine of the town of Paterson and its school was disrupted from 1907 by the building of the Maitland-Dungog section of the north coast railway line. The school and its headmaster underwent a major upheaval, because half the school site was resumed for the railway. Amongst the effects were the acquisition of a new site, the school's temporary occupation of the Oddfellows hall and a portable building, the addition of a classroom to the 1878 building and the erection of a new residence on the new site. The children of Paterson and the Education Department were fortunate that the headmaster during this busy period, William Ross, was a man of considerable initiative and common sense.

Ross ascertained the approximate route of the railway line in May 1907, and from then on regularly kept the Department informed of progress. Since it was certain that part of the school site would be resumed, he immediately suggested that the Department acquire a two acre site next to the Oddfellows hall — none other than the

site the Council of Education had asked the Bishop of Newcastle to give up in 1876. For many years this reserved land had been used to paddock the curate's horse, but at this period the Church was leasing it to a layman for the same purpose; the reserve having been revoked, the Lands Department was planning to offer the land for sale. Once the railway surveyors had indicated that half the school site would be resumed, including the back portion of the residence, Ross made a strong plea in October 1907 for the acquisition of the new site. He argued that it might be needed for the school building itself but that even if, as he recommended, the school remained where it was, the new site should be used for a residence and for a paddock for the children's horses. The Department was convinced, and the land was reserved for it in January 1908 pending permanent dedication.

The next initiative taken by Ross came in February 1908, when he applied for an additional Classroom and major renovations to the school building. The building was badly in need of repair and, by the reformed accommodation standards, overcrowded with 92 pupils and two teachers. By June, when the railway workers were moving into the area, the enrolment was 103 and Ross made an urgent plea not only for extra accommodation but also for a second assistant teacher. It was finally decided that the Oddfellows hall should be rented as a temporary classroom, and it was occupied on 3 August; an extra assistant, Gladys Broadfoot, was appointed the following month.

The Department had hesitated about the addition of a classroom because of a belief that it might be preferable to build a new school on the new site. On the advice of Ross and Inspector Hunt, it was finally decided in August that so long as the old residence was removed, it was better (and cheaper) to build a new classroom on the old site rather than a new school on the rather hilly new site. Plans were therefore prepared for 23 feet by 20 classroom with dual desks for 48 pupils, plus a verandah; the addition incorporated the old porch, and had doorways into the schoolroom and the little classroom. The tender of Mr. R. Partridge-Wall of Maitland was accepted in February 1909; he also had the contract to erect two new toilets and relocate the weathershed, since the old ones were in the way of the railway line. The new classroom was officially opened and occupied in July 1909 (see attachment 6 for a newspaper account).

In the meantime the school had undergone further disruption, when it proved necessary to vacate the building while blasting was underway. A portable wooden building was therefore put up on the new site, and from January to July 1909 the school was conducted in this building and in the Oddfellows hall adjacent to it. In July the Oddfellows hall was given up but the portable building remained, first being used to store the teacher's furniture and then from 1910 as a classroom for manual training.

Although late in 1908 the railway authorities decided to narrow their resumption so as to avoid the necessity to demolish the back part of the residence, the Department was by then committed to removing the residence anyway in order to make sufficient playing space for the pupils. Ross and his family left the residence in January 1909, when railway construction through the site began, and lodged with a friend at Bona Vista two miles away. The sale and demolition of the residence were delayed until the school was reoccupied in July, so that Ross could move his furniture into the portable

school building. Not until March 1910 was the new weatherboard residence completed and occupied by a much relieved Ross.

The new accommodation made necessary by the railway served Paterson unaltered for many years, especially since enrolments declined from the late 1910s. Only the most routine files were created for many years, until major renovations became necessary for the school and residence in the late 1920s; the work was done in 1929. An active Parents and Citizens Association was responsible for the installation of electricity in the residence in 1932, the parents paying half the cost, and for the creation of a tennis court in the school grounds a little later.

Through the 1920s and 1930s Paterson was a two teacher school, the infants accommodated in the 1909 classroom and the older children in the 1878 schoolroom, which still had its original long desks and forms. The 1878 classroom served more varied purposes, as storeroom, staffroom and school library. While a new site was acquired in 1950, it was to be two decades before a new school was erected. In July 1971 the old school building and the Oddfellows hall, which had once again served as a classroom, were finally vacated, and Paterson Public School moved into its new building.

Appendix 1

List of parents who guaranteed their children's attendance at a Public School,
December 1874.

Parent	Number of Children	Religion
J. Stanbridge	2	Presbyterian
George Clarke	4	Church of England
William Keppie	1	"
Frederick Wilson	1	"
William Edwards	2	"
Henry Brooker	3	"
William Corner	2	Presbyterian
Samuel Patfield	2	Church of England
Joseph Patfield	3	"
Henry Wilson	1	Roman Catholic
Robert ?	1	Church of England
William Thomson	6	"
E. Gould	1	"
Green Smith	2	"
John Donnelly	3	Roman Catholic
Stephen Phillips	2	Church of England
Benjamin Singleton	2	"
John King	2	Presbyterian
Richard Martin	1	Protestant
Mrs Purty [Puxty?]	1	"
?	3	"
T. Lindsay	2	"
J. Tucker	1	Church of England
J. Smith	1	"
William Sherwood	2	"
John Whyte	2	Protestant
Edward Jones	2	"
George Gardner	2	"
Henry Kanter	1	Church of England
Henry Fry	2	"
Charles Crittenden	3	"
Usher Tinkle [Tinkler]	3	"
David Dunning	4	Presbyterian
James Cann	2	"

Appendix 2

Enrolment and attendance

Year	Enrolment	Average Attendance
1875	81	59
1876	95	57
1877	87	63
1878	93	56
1879	89	59
1880	100	66
1881	118	85
1882	116	78
1883	103	72
1884	111	60
1885	103	75
1886	102	68
1887	96	68
1888	108	75
1889	105	69
1890	108	72
1891	101	64
1892	95	64
1893	102	62
1894	102	69
1895	93	68
1896	82	56
1897	82	56
1898	90	54
1899	79	56
1900	85	55
1901	82	56
1902	79	55
1903	92	56
1904	93	54
1907	90	64
1908 (June)	103	
1915	110	88
1920	91	71
1925	71	52
1930	87	73
1935	92	78
1940	74	58
1944	82	
1950	65	54
1956	59	54
1960	56	53
1965	70	65
1970	75	72
1975	52	49

To be forwarded to the Council of Education.



INVENTORY

of the property of the Council of Education in the _____

Public School at Paterson

I hereby certify that I have this 3^d day of July, 1878,

handed to the Local Board of the above

School the articles herein mentioned.

D. Ritchie,
Teacher.

We certify that we have this 3^d day of July, 1878, received
in good order and condition the articles herein specified.

Wm. L. ...
William Keppie } Members of

believed
Examined and found Correct,

J. P. ...
Inspector. ACCOUNTANT.

30 - 7 - 78.

3 July, 1898

ARTICLES.

Number	
24	Scripture Lessons, Old Testament No. 1
24	Do. do. No. 2
24	Do. New Testament No. 1
24	Do. do. No. 2
0	First Book of Lessons, L.N.B.
42	Second do.
37	Sequel No. 1 to do.
31	Sequel No. 2 to do.
29	Third Book do.
23	Fourth Book do.
13	Supplement do.
19	Australian Class Book, No. 1, Part I.
42	Do. II.
64	Do. III.
	First English Reading Book, Constable's
	Series, Part I.
	Do. do. II.
	Do. do. III.
	Second
	Third
	Fourth
	Fifth
62	Reading Lessons, in Sheets
90	Framed Slates
7	Boxes of Slate Pencils
122	Dozens of Pencil Cases
3	Box of School Pens
84	Dozens of Penholders
5	Bottles of Ink
"	Ink Powders
4	Box of Chalk
14	School Maps, viz., <i>World (2); Aust. (2); N. S. Wales, (2); Africa, (1);</i> <i>America, (2 N. S. S.); Asia (1); Palestine, (1);</i> <i>Europe, (2); and British Isles, (1); Ceylon, small.</i>
2	Ball Framed
3	Black Boards
3	Easels
40	Ink wells
18	Diagrams <i>Aust. Animals (16); Astronomical Diagram, (1);</i> <i>One Hundred Animals, (1);</i>
16	School Registers, viz., <i>Class Rolls, 2; Daily Reports, 2; Fee Books, 2;</i> <i>Lesson Registers, 4; Admission Reg. 1;</i>
6	Fowles' Drawing Books <i>Visitors' Book, 1; and Inspectors' Report Book.</i>
15	Salary Abstracts
6	Quarterly Returns
1	Annual ditto

Nil

11

Paterson 1st Feb. 1882.

To the Hon. ^{Walling attention to}
~~The Hon.~~ ^{and the present accommodation}
The Minister of Education.

Sir.

We the undersigned residents
of the town and environs of Paterson most res-
-pectfully call your attention to the state of
the accommodation afforded to the children
attending the Public School here.

We understand that the building barely satis-
-fies the minimum requirements of the Public
Instruction Act, while from its exposed and
arid site we deem it necessary that that
apportionment of space should be largely
exceeded, having regard to the health
and comfort of the pupils.

As the compulsory clause is now being
strictly enforced, the attendance is fast
increasing, and we therefore earnestly
request that you will take this pressing
matter into your early and favorable
consideration.

We have the honor to be

Sir

Your Obedient Servants,

Benth Newbury
John Swan ^{Jr}

Robth Park ^{Jr}

H. H. Thorne ^{Jr}

Printed by
W. H. W. W. W.
Paterson 1st Feb. 1882

17. 3.
6577

Recd. (Mr. Brown)

Jan. 21. 1882

THE CHIEF INSPECTOR

For report.

Jan. 25. 1882

Name	Occupation	Residence
E. Dimmock	Saddler	Patterson
P.P. Hungerford	Land holder	"
George Simpson	Agent Police	"
W.H. Odgers	C.P.	"
E. Daint	Postmaster	"
John Bejgs	farmer	"
Guatae Blancheth	Gardener	"
W. Kelder	Gardener	"
Frederick Wilson	Hotel Keeper	"
James Waite	Baker	"
John Kippie	Wheat Wright	"
Henry Mounsey	Grazier	"
William Kippie	Auctioneer	"
John Hagan	Tobacco manufacturer	"
Henry Wilson	Blacksmith	"
G. A. Studdert	Taxman	"
Geo. Osmond	Farmer	"
Jas. Harris	Farmer	"
James Bacon	Sheepkeeper	"
Walter Dickler	Farmer	"
Alfred Osmond	Farmer	"
Walter Osmond	Farmer	"
William Dickler	Farmer	"
Moses Smith	Farmer	"
Joseph Pafford	Labourer	"
Samuel Pafford	Carpenter	"
Joseph G. Smith	Publican	"
John Brooker	Butcher	"

Cut off: John Brooker, Butcher; Henry Brooker, Butcher

Annual Report.

JAN 1903
LIBRARY & INSTRUCTION

Public School.
Paterson 19.12.02

Memo: Chief Inspector. Fully read. For reports as to year
31.12.02. J.B.

Sir,

I have the honor to forward a few details in connection with our Library, Cabinet and Microscope.

Our Library contains 1000 volumes a number of Monthly parts of Cassell's Magazine - ^{two} numbers of the Commercial Annual - some Illustrated London papers the late Queen Victoria's funeral - and the present King's accession and coronation. I have paid for a few improvements to the Bookcase out of last year's concert. To night we are having a School Concert in aid of our Library and Cabinet.

Cabinet - about 500 specimens & very fine etc.

Since last year (last July) I have purchased for the Cabinet, "9 Practical Object Lesson Cards @ 3/- each" illustrating:
(1) Buttons. (2) Metric System. (3) Steel Pens
(4) Pocket Knife. (5) Brushes. (6) Needles. (7) Pins
(8) Sponges. (9) Wood. - and I hope to add more.

Read F.M.H.

Our Microscope has been a success. We have 81 slides in a neat box. The children take much pleasure in their instrument. Adults have also visited me for the purpose of spending a couple of hours at night with the above.

Letter to School Done 16.10.02

Altogether we have spent on it £9.9.0. Trusting that our endeavours to benefit the above three objects may be successful in the coming year, and that you will be pleased by Teachers generally.

J. W. Haven Esq. Inspector of Schools. Raymond Terrace

FILED 22 JAN 3

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
C. Schumacher.

P.S. Books Issued this year 1902

(see top of next page for the bottom part of this page)

P. S. Books Issued this year 1902

Month	Arts	Misc	Fiction	Biog	Mat	Hist	Lab.	Total
March	19	34	183	12	10	6		261
June	11	44	238	24	16	12		345
Sept	18	112	261	40	31	21		483
Dec	18	111	261	21	15	6		432
	66	134	943	97	72	45		1357

There were 111 issues - an average of 30¢

Attachment 6 is not reproduced here. It is an account of the official opening of the new classroom that appeared in the *Maitland Daily Mercury* on Saturday 17 July 1909, page 6. It is available online at:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/12625104>