

SCHOOL SYMBOLIZES LAKEVIEW PRIDE

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Above the bright red front entrance at Lakeview Park Public School, a brass plaque proclaims its name and pedigree as part of School Section #7.

It's unique to the school. No other building constructed before the local educational "sections," established in 1846 and abandoned in 1952, incorporates this number.

"Even the S.S.#7 Lakeview Beach School built the same year (1923) less than a mile away did not have an identifying plaque," notes historical researcher and former Museums of Mississauga employee Richard Collins, in a detailed history of the building.

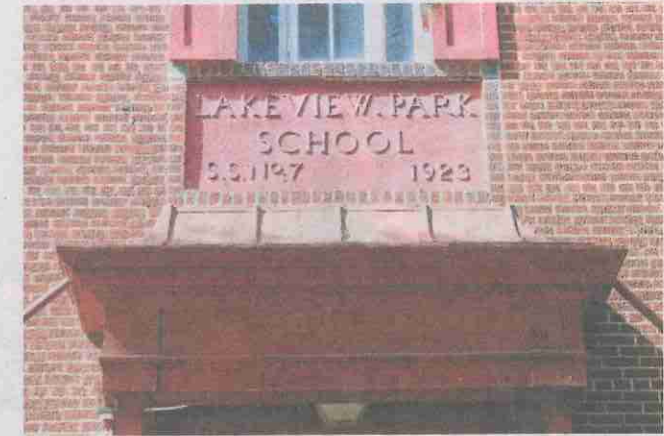
"It's as if the Lakeview Park school is proud to be in Lakeview."

If the school is proud to be in its community - which has seen aerodromes and rifle ranges and arms factories and power plants in its embattled existence - the community is equally proud that the venerable building still stands in Lakeview.

A group of citizens wants to ensure it endures as a symbol of the hardscrabble, indomitable community.

It's easy to miss Lakeview Park behind a veil of mature pine, sugar maple and black maple trees on the north side of Lakeshore Road half-way between Orchard Road and Fergus Avenue.

Its defenders want it designated a heritage site but aspire to make it a community



John Stewart photos

Left, Cliff Dobson (left), George Ketchen (centre) and Sandy Smith point out somewhat younger versions of themselves in a 1940s photo of the hockey team they played on at Lakeview Park Public School. Right, A group of Lakeview citizens, many graduates of Lakeview Park Public School, want to preserve the building, which served students for a record 92 years, as a community hub and location for seniors' programming and housing.

hub, a living museum housing community memories. One of them, Krystyna Stechly, told Mississauga's heritage committee that "given this architecturally beautiful and historic school was built in 1923, you have a unique opportunity to get this accomplished to celebrate the 100th birthday."

Stechly's parents settled on Haig Boulevard to farm in 1932. She and much of her family still live nearby. Every year from 1936-79, at least one Stechly attended Lakeview Park.

She remembers skating to school along frozen culverts. Kindergarten featured nap time. In Grade 5, Mr. Kennedy let the class listen to Ricky Nelson. In Grade 6, students practised ducking under their desks in case of

nuclear attack.

"So many people went there. That's where all their memories are," says Stechly, who joined a group of reminiscing former students at George Ketchen's Clarkson home recently. Ketchen's father Mansel, a S.S. #7 school board trustee, sent six kids there.

George was once caught in the off-limits school basement and got the strap from Principal Ted Burrows, a polio victim. Although he could use only one hand, Burrows still effectively rendered punishment, Ketchen laughs.

Cliff Dobson, 82, was "teacher's pet" to Kathleen Morrison, later Mrs. Mel-drum.

She also made an indelible impression on Jane

Stechly. "She was a very compassionate and kind teacher. When I went to the 50th reunion, she called me by name. I asked her how she remembered me. 'By the eyes,' she said. 'You never forget the eyes of a person.'"

Stechly also recalls the trailer park beside the school, the Grade 5 shifts, the kids from the army camp across the street and her part-time job at the fruit market, owned by Mississauga's first mayor, Robert Speck.

Lakeview Park housed Hurricane Hazel evacuees. The school's darkest day came when student Danny Patterson was sent home for misbehaving. He was struck and killed on the CNR tracks.

The heritage assessment

notes Lakeview Park's "simple, elegant form" merges Georgian revival and Edwardian design. No other Mississauga school served students longer, 92 years. It served elementary students until 2001 when it became the public school board's south alternative high school, which moved in 2015.

The board initially circulated the property for sale. It was pulled off the market and assessed for a K-8, 850-student school for the Lakeview Inspiration development to the south.

It was deemed inappropriate because students must cross busy four-lane Lakeshore Road and is only half the eight acres required, says Randy Wright, the board's planner.

It is not accessible, the

basement floor's heaving, the foundation walls are porous, there's water infiltration though mortar joints and chronic flooding. The basement "has the quality of a sieve," says Wright.

The board is again proposing sale. The school's striking architecture "would have made it a landmark" in its halcyon days, notes Wright.

Stechly dreams that the building could still be a landmark, a satellite site for the Mississauga Seniors' Centre or home to seniors' assisted/affordable housing.

She's recruiting advocates to forge a sustainable community model. A new vital role that honours and reinvigorates a classic building would really be something to celebrate on its centenary.