

Log Cabin School

MAP ID: D-14

DESIGNATION: City of YK Heritage Building

ADDRESS: Franklin Avenue

CURRENT OWNER: YK School District #1

OCCUPANT: YK School District #1

CURRENT USE: Summer tourism

BUILT: 1937

CONSTRUCTION:

Log cabin, 16' x 18', hip roof



DESCRIPTIVE HISTORY:

This log cabin was built by Ray McPhee and Jim McDonald in about 1937 and was occupied by the Mining Corporation of Canada as a bunkhouse or kitchen. It was originally located in Old Town, Lot 10 North, Block 1, near the Mining Corporation warehouses and oil tank storage. In 1938, it was being used as an office for the Northern Exploration Company (who held title on this lot beginning on August 1, 1938 with a five year lease). During November 1938 a provisional school board for the community was organized with Charles Perkins as secretary, and D.T. Munroe, Walter Hill, and Bill Williams as directors. The group was tasked with finding a location for a school house in Yellowknife. Vera Lane's house was the first classroom, and in January 1939 this log cabin was acquired on a rental basis from Mining Corporation to be used as a semi-permanent school. D.A. Davies was the first school teacher. Twenty pupils were enrolled at the start of classes on January 31, of varying ages. The school followed the Alberta Curriculum. In March 1939, Mildred Hall arrived in Yellowknife to take over as full-time teacher, replacing Mr. Davies. The first season of classes ended in June with nine graduates. One of the early challenges to operating a school at the Old Town location was its proximity to the trail to the Glamour Alley district so there were always drunk miners snooping around the premise.

School reopened for a second season on September 5, 1939 with 21 pupils under the direction of Mrs. Hall, located in the same log cabin. Soon thereafter, it moved to a larger facility. The School Board elected a permanent slate of directors in August 1939 under Bill Williams, chairman, Albert Mercer, secretary, and director Fred Buckley. Motions were made to acquire a larger structure, owned by Mining Corporation and previously used as a bunkhouse. It is uncertain the exact date of the move, but Mildred Hall wrote that the second year of schooling (1939/1940) was held at the new building.

It is said that Francis McGurran and Denise Bouvier operated a laundry business in the log cabin in 1939 or 1940. In February 1940, Sid & Dorothy MacAulay, a radio operator with the Signal Corp, was living in the cabin. Its occupants and use after that date are unclear. The lease for Lot 10 North was assigned to Garnett Chambers on October 5, 1945, and a new-five year lease was signed by Chambers on August 1, 1948. Frank W. Anderson, mining engineer, then held title beginning in July 1952. With the transfer of property administration to the Municipality in the 1950s, the property was sold to Mr. Anderson under the new free-hold system in February 1955. The property was eventually owned by John Anderson-Thomson and he used it for storage. In 1987, because of the historical significance of the log cabin, it was decided by the City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee to preserve the building. It was moved from Old Town to beside the current Abe Miller Centre. In 1998 it was designated a City Heritage Building. In 2000, it was moved again to its current location in front of the new Mildred Hall School and the YK School District #1 made plans to renovate it to showcase early education in the city. No work was completed at that time however, and it took a group of community-minded women of the Red Hat Society (Yvonne Quick, Mildred Wilke, and BJ Miller) to open the cabin for summer-time educational programs in 2009 and 2010.

NOTES:

The second school was located on Lot 2, Block 1, where the Boyles Brothers shop is now. It was also only a temporary location, until the School Board could raise the funds to erect a permanent school. This facility was completed in November 1940 and was located at the so-named School Draw Avenue area. Mildred Hall did not live in this cabin and apparently lived in a rented house on Jolliffe Island and then in The Rock area. She did however live in the second schoolhouse which was larger.

REFERENCES:

The Prospector newspaper, January 28, 1939; February 18, 1939; March 4, 1939; July 1, 1939; July 8, 1939; September 3, 1939; September 9, 1939
Yellowknife: An Illustrated History
The Edmonton Journal, Nov. 5, 1938; The Calgary Herald, Jan. 6, 1940
News of the North newspaper, March 16, 1961; November 3, 2008
AANDC Lands Office, City Files