

So began the town's venture into the provision of a secondary school. Dr. Mearns and Gibson of the school board are awarded the credit for this accomplishment and in August of 1884, the two storey brick facility opened its doors to 74 pupils.

Fourteen of these students were from the surrounding farms.

The location of the building, however, left something to be desired in the early days of its existence. With the original site being where Bradshaw Hall stands today, the classes were disrupted on a regular basis by trains being shunted along the Canada Southern Railway track running directly past the school's east wall.

This source of disturbance was to continue for another 41 years.

The first principal of the two room school was Sylvanus Phillips, B.A. from Huntington, Quebec. His assistant was D.M. Grant, B.A. from Oakwood. Within a very short time, the men were presiding over one hundred students.

In 1885, the school expanded to include a laboratory. In 1887, plans were afoot to purchase a \$600 piano and to build a greenhouse on the site. Tax-payers, however, rebelled at these expenditures. The townsfolk felt that a greenhouse was too much out of the ordinary for a high school and that a \$150 harmonium would do just as well as the expensive piano.

But, Phillips had established some good community public relations. Richard Herring of "The Advertiser" took on the cause of the greenhouse and piano in his editorials. Even into the 1890s, though, Petrolians were generally opposed to what they classed as luxuries in education. By that decade, this included opposition to the \$2500 per year spent on the secondary school.

Along with the elementary schools of the day, the high school classrooms were dramatically affected by the building boom of the late 1880s. A fourth room was opened to accommodate the increase in students and the school board began to talk about constructing an extension on the original building. The proponents of this bid, however, were doomed to failure.

Reeve Westland of Wyoming led a strong resisitance to the extension at the county council level where ultimately the council refused to support the \$5000 debenture needed to begin construction. It is not recorded why Westland was so opposed to the plan since, like today, Wyoming children attended the Petrolia high school and were feeling the crush of too many students under one roof.

Another detriment to the educational system of the day was the failure of the average Petrolian to understand the scope of the "outside world". The emerging scientific age with its new terminology was beyond his grasp. Consequently, near the end of the 1890s, the high school was experiencing difficulty introducing courses that would better prepare its students for the 20th century.