

# KHC

**Kristi's Heritage Corner**  
Kristi Johnson brings life to  
Calgary's Hidden Heritage Gems.

## A History of King Edward School Part Two 1720 - 30 Avenue SW

In this second installment of the history of King Edward School, we wanted to focus more on the people who spent time at the school rather than the school itself. These stories were an excellent source by which one could understand what the daily life experiences of Calgarians for the last 50 years, and also served to illustrate what a profound impact King Edward School had for many of the staff and students.

It was not that long ago that the children of Calgary had to negotiate their own way to and from school each day. For many of the older boys attending King Edward, they would ride their horses to and from school. At the noon hour, they would often go out with their horses and play polo on the grounds.

Activities after school at King Edward were as important to the students as those during school hours. These clubs helped students to develop a wide variety of interests and were considered an integral part of their education. The Literary Society held debates, the Drama Club performed plays and musical numbers for their fellow students, the school's paper, "The Clarion", was staffed by students, Mr. Stanley

held oratory and elocution competitions and Miss Eva Jajoe headed a camera and photo club whose members were known as "The Venerable Order of Shutterbugs and Hypo-Consumers of King Edward". During the 1940s, it cost a



*King Edward School, South Facade Today*

nickel for a student to be a member of the photo club, and each year a contest was run for the best picture of the year. The prize awarded to the winner was a new roll of film. For many of the boys in the club, their favorite past time was to take photographs of the girls at school.

The depression years at King Edward saw a lot of changes for students and staff alike. Many of the students had to take whatever jobs they could to help out at home. Some took

paper routes or helped the milkmen with their deliveries. For those people lucky enough to still be able to afford to golf, some of the more resourceful students sold lost golf balls back to their owners. During these lean years, a child's entertainment was often a measure of their inventiveness. In the evenings, many of the boys would go out to the trolley line along 34<sup>th</sup> avenue and pile tumbleweeds along the tracks. They would then throw gasoline soaked rags on the tumbleweeds and set them alight. Much to the delight of the boys, the conductor, upon seeing the flames, would then have to come to a screeching halt in front of the fire. Trolleys appeared to be an immense form of entertainment for the boys as they were also inclined to ride the trolley down 17<sup>th</sup> Ave and rock the trolley to such an extent that the brakes wouldn't hold. Often, the trolley wouldn't stop until 8<sup>th</sup> Street!

The staff was always very passionate about their role as teachers, and they all had a huge impact on the students. In fact, many of the memories that students had about their experiences at King Edward often involve their teachers. Captain Ferguson taught the cadets at King Edward during the First World War. In the summer, he would organize a summer camp for cadet training where they would go off to Morley Flats. At the end of the summer they would hold an event with various competitions held between the boys and the Indians that lived there. During the school season, Captain Ferguson taught rifle practice on the playground and drill practice on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the school. Much to the dismay of the other teachers and students, the boys would dress up in full uniform and march up and down the stairs. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Miss Cook, recalled that the soldiers were instructed to "break step" on the stairs for fear that the rhythmical marching would do harm to the integrity of the staircase! Miss Topp taught science from

around 1912-1918. She often had her classes outside and on some occasions would take the students on a field trip to Sandy Beach. If Miss Topp was amenable, she would let the students wade down the river to look for fossils. The only rule was that you had better come back with something to account for your time away or you would get the strap. Fortunately for most students, they always came back from their dalliance with a fossil. Perhaps the most curious person to be a part of King Edward's history is a ghost by the name of Ed who is said to reside on the fourth floor. People claim to have heard him playing the piano though he has never been seen playing one.

After researching King Edward School, it is not at all surprising to see the level of concern for its' future. The diversity of experiences that connect people to King Edward, whether they are students or tradesmen, has made King Edward an important conduit to the history of Calgary. As such, King Edward School is undeniably worthy of people's dedication to its preservation.

#### Research Material

- Stamp, Robert M. *School Days. A Century of Memories.*  
King Edward School Alumni. *Long live the King. The History of King Edward School.*  
Kay Bourassa et al. *From Slate Pencil to Instant Ink: Calgary's public, separate and private schools.*  
DeBoni, Walt, Photo of South facade, King Edward School, 2007