

This narrative history of a Residential School was researched and produced by the Government of Canada as part of its response to litigation and the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has not verified the content of this document. It is provided here for reference purposes only. Documented incidents of sexual and physical abuse are based on the documentary record and do not take into account survivor testimony.



You are welcome to contact the NCTR if you wish to add, comment on, or challenge any versions of the history presented herein.

Mount Elgin Indian Residential School School Narrative

This School Narrative summarizes documents that provide an over-view of the history and administration of the school.

NAME OF SCHOOL and VARIANTS

Mount Elgin Indian Institution or School
[MER-000002, MER-000051]
Mount Elgin Industrial and Training School
[MER-000300]
Mount Elgin Industrial Farm (and Institution)
[MER-000225, MER-001167]
Mount Elgin Industrial Institute or Institution or School
[MER-000011, MER-000017, MER-000391a]
Mount Elgin Institute and School
[MER-000044, MER-000416]
Mount Elgin Residential School
[MER-000811]
Mount Elgin Indian Residential School
[MER-000095, MER-001130]
Muncey Indian or Industrial Institute
[MER-000145a, MER-000427]
Muncey Institution
[MER-000035]

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

- In **1847**, the Wesleyan Methodist Society at the request from the Department assumed charge of an industrial school at Muncey [MER-000007a] and the Mount Elgin Industrial Institute was established by the Methodist Missionary Society [MER-001235].
- In **1849**, the Mount Elgin Institute was built [MER-000498] and its four acre site was dedicated by the Chippewas of the Thames on 13 Feb, with an additional 200 acres for its use [MER-000170].
- The school building was completed and officially opened in **1851** [MER-000498, MER-000008, MER-000145b, MER-000308, MER-000170, MER-000882], and the Institute was founded by the Methodist Church [MER-000784a].
- In **1854** the building was enlarged [MER-000784a] and again in **1856** and **1857** [MER-000008, MER-000170, MER-000882].

- Starting in **1862**, the school was closed for four years [MER-000007a, MER-000008].
- In **1866**, the Government agreed to fund the school if it was reopened under certain conditions [MER-001357], and the school reopened either that year [MER-000012] or in **1867** [MER-000007a, MER-000482].

CLOSING DATE(S):

June 30, 1946

- The Mount Elgin IRS was closed on 30 Jun 1946 [MER-001356a, MER-000001].

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

Dates managed by Church

- The school was always managed by the Church, first managed by the (Wesleyan) Methodist Church Missionary Department or Society and then by the United Church Board of Home Missions [See especially MER-000320, MER-000323, MER-001365 and MER-000966].

Dates managed by Government

- The school was never managed by the Government

Dates managed by Band or other aboriginal group

- The school was never managed by a Band or other aboriginal group

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Dates buildings owned by Church

- In a memo dated 9 Nov 1942, it was explained that the school's main building was rebuilt in **1895**, "...probably by the Methodist Church, with a contribution from the Government" [MER-000498].
- On 10 Apr **1911**, the Assistant Deputy and Secretary of Department mentioned that the capital expenditure on the buildings had been made jointly by Indian Bands, the government and the Methodist Church [MER-000417].
- In a letter dated 23 Jun **1920**, the principal of the school wrote to the department that he thought they were quite clear in their understanding that all buildings, farm, etc., were the property of the department while all live stock, farm implements, tools, grain, etc., belonged

to the school management [MER-000660].

Dates buildings owned by Government

- In a letter dated 31 Mar **1883**, the Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves, wrote to the Acting Deputy Superintendent General that the school building belonged "...to the Government of Canada, presumably to the Dept of Indian Affairs" [MER-000016].
- In a memo dated 9 Nov 1942, it was explained that the school's main building was rebuilt in **1895**, "...probably by the Methodist Church, with a contribution from the Government," that records indicate that from 1896 to 1911-1912, \$21,000 of government funds were spent on the school and \$11,600 from band funds. In 1912-1913, a new addition was built to the main building at a cost of \$17,260.60 to the government [MER-000498].
- In a 24 Feb **1908** memo, an accountant wrote that although the Department did not insure any buildings in which public funds alone were invested, the buildings that were owned by the various Indian Bands who had funds invested in them were insured and the premiums paid from Band funds. He explained that in this school's case, the investment was a mixed one, with the Indians having the larger portion of it and the Department the smaller [MER-001354].
- On 10 Apr **1911**, the Assistant Deputy and Secretary of the Department mentioned in a letter that the capital expenditure on the buildings had been made jointly by Indian Bands, the government and the Methodist Church [MER-000417].
- In a memo dated 6 Oct **1913**, the Deputy Superintendent General reminded that the institute belonged to the government [MER-000622].
- On 4 Sep **1915**, the Department's Deputy Superintendent General wrote that it was not the policy of the government to carry insurance on any of its buildings but that a limited amount of insurance was carried on the old buildings at the school to protect the Indians funds invested in them. He also said that there were no Indian funds being expended on the present structures [MER-000217].
- On 6 Dec **1916**, the Department's Assistant Deputy and Secretary wrote to principal that the new barns had been paid for from parliamentary appropriation and that as far as the department was aware, the Indians contributed nothing toward the support of the institution [MER-000387].
- In a letter dated 7 Nov **1919**, the principal pointed out that the Department "...under our new agreement owns the buildings and lands used by the school..." [MER-000095].
- In a letter dated 23 Jun **1920**, the principal wrote to Government that he thought they were quite clear in their understanding that all buildings, farm, etc., were the property of the Department while all live stock, farm implements, tools, grain, etc., belonged to the school management [MER-000660].

- On 13 Nov **1920**, the Department's Deputy Superintendent General wrote in a memo that the school was the property of the Department and that some of the Indian Bands of Ontario contributed toward the cost of erecting its original building [MER-000663].
- On 25 May **1927**, the principal, when asking DIAND for renovating funds for the annex building, reminded that it was the Department's property [MER-000720].
- On 15 Mar **1932**, in an Auditor General's letter to the government, it was inquired whether the school was Crown property and if so why fire insurance was placed on it, contrary to an Order in Council directing that no fire insurance be effected on Crown property [MER-000235]. In the response dated 23 Mar 1932, it was explained that insurance was placed on the building to protect the equity of the various Bands interested but that this equity would have nearly disappeared when the current insurance expired, because of depreciation and that the insurance would then be allowed to lapse, "...as the school will then practically belong to the Government" [MER-000237].
- On 27 May **1935**, in a memo from the government, it was written that the school's insurance had been allowed to lapse because it was considered that after 39 years, the Bands' equity in the building had almost disappeared through depreciation so that the school property practically belonged to the Government [MER-000238].

LAND

Location

- The Mount Elgin IRS was located on the Caradoc Reserve, on the north bank of the Thames River, in the township of Caradoc, county of Middlesex. It was about one mile from Muncey, 13-15 miles north-west of St. Thomas, and 20 miles from London [MER-000376, MER-001205, MER-000068].

Dates owned by the Church

- The land was never owned by the Church.

Dates owned by the Government

- The land on which the Mount Elgin IRS buildings were located was at all times owned by the Government.
- In a 4 Apr **1911** memo, the Chief Accountant for the department wrote to the Deputy Superintendent General, explaining that since the land on which the school buildings were erected was part of an Indian Reserve, the Church did not own it, but it was considered Government property, and as such he felt that the Government should also assume the

payment of the rental for farming property [MER-000416]. The Department assumed land rental costs as of 1 Apr 1911 [MER-000251].

Date turned over to Band or other aboriginal group

- After the school's closure on 30 Jun **1946**, 547 acres of land was to revert to the Agency. This land was made up of 210.5 acres, owned by the Government, on which the school buildings were located (presumably the land that had been surrendered to the school), 219.4 acres of pasture land, leased from Oneidas until 1 Apr 1947 and 117 acres of Chippewa land, also rented until 1 Apr 1947 [MER-000941].

PHOTOS, PLANS and OTHER MEDIA

Documentation	Date	Description
MER-000068a	1891	Lands Mount Elgin wanted to lease
MER-001383	1896	School land
MER-000077b	1899	Land leased on Oneida Reserve
MER-000882a	1937	Diagram of Annexe building and layout of school buildings
MER-000873b	1937	Diagram of Annexe building and layout of school buildings
MER-000883b	1937	Diagram of vacuum pump connections
MER-000977a	1944	Plan of School buildings
MER-000985a	1944	Survey of Farm buildings

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

(Wesleyan) Methodist Church Missionary Department or Society [MER-000320, MER-000323]

United Church Board of Home Missions [MER-000474, MER-000476]

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

- 1867 Operational funding for Mount Elgin [MER-001357]
- 1869 Financial responsibilities towards Mount Elgin Industrial Institution [MER-001359]
- 1898 Lease for land on Oneida Reserve [MER-000391a]
- 1899 Description of land leases and length of lease [MER-000084a]

1910 Lease for land in the County of Middlesex [MER-000087a]

1943 Agreement to lease Oneida lands to Mount Elgin IRS [MER-000935]

DOCUMENTS REFERRING TO SCHOOL INCIDENTS

Suggested Incidents (Physical) Perpetrated by Staff:

- A parent's letter of complaint dated 7 Oct **1914** included the claim that her older girl had been strapped on her hand, causing it to swell, for telling her things [MER-000380].
- On 24 Jun **1943**, an Indian Agent forwarded a Band Council Resolution carried by the Chippewas of the Thames which stated that in view of the sworn statements of complaints made by some of the pupils of the school against a staff member for his ill treatment to the pupils. The Agent explained that this resolution, with sworn statements attached, was the result of numerous complaints and continual runaways from the school and that it was thought, locally, that there must be some reason for this condition [MER-000508].
- Parents' sworn statements included with the Band Council Resolution mainly criticised the food, the clothing, and a particular staff member for his physical actions [MER-000508b, MER-000508c, MER-000508d, MER-000508e].

Suggested Incidents (Student on Students):

- On 26 May **1939**, a personnel of the Muncey detachment of the RCMP reported on the conclusion of a case in which the defendants were students charged with assault. The staff member had reported that the pupils, had assaulted a classmate, and that a doctor had been called and that the complainant had been put to bed for about a week under his care [MER-000491, MER-000492].
- On 20 Feb **1940**, a member in charge of the Caradoc Agency, responded to Department's Secretary's letter [MER-001129] along with which was enclosed a letter by the parents of a pupil at the school who wished that their child be discharged [MER-001129b]. He advised that he had discussed the matter with a school staff. It was reported that the student was threatening and forcing younger pupils to steal things for her [MER-001130].

CONVICTIONS

To date, we are unaware of any convictions for abuse at Mount Elgin IRS or of any convicted abusers present at the school.

PRINCIPALS/ADMINISTRATORS

Name	Tenure
Rev Samuel Rose.	1859
R.E. Tupper	1868 -1870
Rev James (Jas.) Gray	1871-1872
Ephraim Evans, D.D.	1873 -1874
Thomas (Thos)Cosford	1875 - Jun 1881
Rev William W. Shepherd	Jul 1881 - May 1903
R.G. Howes	8 Aug 1902 - at least 25 May 1903 (Vice-Principal)
Rev T.T. George	1 Jul 1903 - Jun 1909
Rev S.R. McVitty	30 Jun 1909 - 30 Jun 1934
Rev C.W. Mc Kenzie	May 1927 (Assistant Principal)
Rev Oliver B. Strapp	May or fall 1929 -1933 (Assistant Principal) 20 Apr 1934 - 25 May 1934 (Acting Principal) 23 Jun 1934 - Jun 1944 (Principal)
Rev S.H. Soper	16 Jun 1944 - 30 Jun 1946 (School closure)

Research completed: June 7, 2006
Research updated: August 16, 2006

The original school narrative document produced by Canada also contains a number of records that have been separated pending review.



National Centre for
Truth and Reconciliation

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA