

### High School Had a Rocky Start in Lethbridge

To see Lethbridge's thriving high schools today, it's hard to believe the city's original high school was almost shut down due to lack of attendance.

In 1894 the School District (which became the Lethbridge Public School District No. 51) passed a motion to close the high school unless attendance could be guaranteed from 15 pupils.

Fortunately, the students decided to show up and by 1902 more classroom space was needed. A four-room addition was built onto Central School at 5 Avenue and 9 Street South, which was housing the high school department.

In 1909 the high school finally found its own home, moving into the vacated Manual Training building along 5 Avenue South.

The building served Lethbridge's high school students until 1927 when overcrowding and deteriorating building conditions forced the school board to seek out money to build a new high school.



*Central School 1891 - 1931*

After several failed attempts by the board to convince the city's ratepayers to contribute money for a new high school, such a bylaw was finally passed that year.

In February 1928, sod was turned for the construction of the Lethbridge Collegiate at 4 Avenue and 15 Street South.

The school opened in October 1928 with 13 classrooms operating and an enthusiastic student body which even built their own skating rink on the grounds.

On May 24, 1929 a fire broke out in the new school, causing considerable damage and forcing classes to be relocated to the Bowman School and t. Patrick's School. On Sept. 13, 1929 the rebuilt Lethbridge Collegiate was formally opened.

By 1931 the school was again bursting at the seams as more and more students arrived. At the time the school was servicing all high school students in city limits and added courses to the curriculum further stretched the building's capabilities to house the students.

In 1933, the boy's Technical and girl's Domestic Science classes were moved to an old dairy building on 13 Street North.

It wasn't until 1946, however, that plans were made for a new high school. The new Lethbridge Collegiate Institute, located on 5 Avenue South between 16 and 18 Streets, was opened on Nov. 22, 1950.

### High School (Cont'd)

The school population continued to increase rapidly and in 1956 an 18-room addition was built onto the school. In 1969 another large addition was added.

North Lethbridge was also growing rapidly in the 1950s, when LCI was operating at capacity serving all high school students.

In 1959 the public school district set about securing land at 9 Avenue and 20 Street North for a new junior-senior high school.

Construction on Winston Churchill High School began in 1960 and official opening ceremonies were held Jan. 19, 1961.

A space crunch again had the board looking for a new school site in 1965. Land was found along 15 Avenue North between 16 and 19 Streets. A new Winston Churchill High School was built, and the former building became Wilson Junior High (now Wilson Middle School).

High school classes were moved to the new building April 11, 1968. Small additions were built onto the school in 1969 and 1973.

Today Winston Churchill still boasts V-shaped cement abutments along its front, meant to symbolize the "V" for victory sign Winston Churchill made famous during World War II.

The history of Lethbridge's public high schools was compiled with notes from Audrey Baines' book Lethbridge School District No. 51, The First 100 Years, From Cottage to Composite.



100 Years  
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