

Mildred Hall Schoolhouse

As compiled by members of the Yellowknife Chapter of the Red Hat Society, June 2009

This original structure (log cabin 5m x 5m) was built by Ray G. "Red" McPhie and "Sleepy Jim" McDonald in 1936 or 1937 and served as a bunkhouse for the first couple of years before being converted into a school, near Pilot's Lane in Old Town. Its tenure as an educational facility however was short-lived. After only a year, a new school was built on School Draw, and the original single-room school was moved nearby to serve as a laundry facility. It has been moved to its present location (next to Yellowknife #1 District Office) in June 2000.

Mildred Hall who was well educated was the first teacher hired through the provisional school board in Yellowknife in 1939.

Young people ages 6 to 14, attended school in this little building. The juniors to grade 5 attended in the morning and the seniors in the afternoon.

Learning materials were in short supply but her students remembered her as cheerful but strict as she taught them their basics. There were few books but she used all the other resources available to her.

In 1940, Yellowknife was as cold as it is now. Mildred Hall enjoyed outdoor activities such as long hikes on snowshoes and trips with her dog teams. She also liked to curl up in front of the fire reading books. Recording with her motion-picture camera, she shared the beauty of the Northwest Territories with her family and friends.

In 1941 Mildred Hall married Jock McMeekan who was the local newspaper editor; "YK Blade" the only newspaper in a million square miles.

Mildred McMeekan raised her niece, who was born in 1943. Her home was a spot of warm hospitality to all who lived in the small settlement of Yellowknife.

In 1947, Mildred McMeekan became the first female member of the Yellowknife School Board. She was also active in the Home and School Association for many years.

She died, at age 72 just prior to the official opening of Mildred Hall Elementary School in 1969.