

On October 12, 1966, an historical plaque was unveiled at the Seaforth District High School to commemorate the Honourable William Aberhart, founder of the Social Credit Party and former premier of Alberta. This plaque is one of a series being erected throughout the province by the Department of Tourism and Information, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario. Participants in the ceremony shown left to right included: Mr. Frank Sills Jr. of the Seaforth District High School Board; the Honourable C.S. McNaughton, Ontario's Minister of Highways and M.P.P. for Huron; Mr. Robert N. Thompson, Leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada; Prof. Morris Zaslow, President of the Ontario Historical Society and member of the Historic Sites Board; Mrs. Charles MacNutt of Calgary, a daughter of Premier Aberhart; Mr. MacNutt; His Worship Mayor J.F. Flannery of Seaforth; and Mr. Carl Dalton, Reeve of Seaforth.

Ontario

Department of Public Records
and Archives

Parliament Buildings
Toronto 5, Ontario.

30 March, 1966.

Mrs. Charles MacNutt,
919 Riverdale Ave. S.W.,
Calgary, Alberta.

Dear Mrs. MacNutt:

The Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario recently recommended that an historical plaque be erected to commemorate your father, the late Premier Aberhart.

Although the exact location has not yet been decided, it is hoped that a site somewhere near the original homestead in Perth County or near Seaforth in Huron County can be used. I enclose a copy of the proposed text and a photograph to illustrate the type of plaque we intend to erect. We would be grateful if you would check the inscription and let us know if we have made any factual errors. We realize that much more could have been said, but the text runs to the maximum number of words it is possible to put on the plaque.

In order to compile the press release we send out to local papers shortly before the ceremony of unveiling the plaque as well as to answer any questions which may arise, we are anxious to trace the movements of the Aberhart family after they left Hibbert. Mrs. C.E. Barrett of Burlington, Ontario, suggested that you might be able to help us with this.

The information that we have so far indicates that William Aberhart Sr. bought the East 50, Lot 29, Concession 8, Hibbert Township, Perth County in 1874. It was here that your father was born in 1878. In 1886 the family moved to the first of two farms on which they lived in Tuckersmith Township, Huron County. Do you know the locations of these farms? In addition we would like to know the schools he attended, dates of attendance, teaching appointments prior to 1905 when he went to Brantford, etc, etc, - in short, any information you have on your father's early life in Ontario would be most welcome.

We hope to erect the plaque this summer but the exact date has not yet been set. Since the manufacturing process takes considerable time we would appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

A copy of this letter has been sent to Mr. James Cooper, Halfmoon Bay, B.C. Naturally we will keep you both informed of further developments.

Sincerely,
Larry T. Ryan.
Historian.

UNVEILING
OF A
HISTORICAL PLAQUE
ERECTED BY
THE ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL
AND HISTORIC SITES BOARD
TO
COMMEMORATE
THE HON. WILLIAM ABERHART

WEDNESDAY, 12 OCTOBER, 1966

3 P.M.

ON THE
GROUNDS OF THE
SEAFORTH DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

SPONSORED BY
THE SEAFORTH DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL
BOARD

THE INSCRIPTION

HON. WILLIAM ABERHART 1878-1943

Founder of the Social Credit Party and Premier of Alberta 1935-43, Aberhart attended Seaforth Collegiate Institute, 1893-98, and later graduated from Queens University. In 1910 he moved to Calgary where from 1915-35 he was a High School principal. An ardent fundamentalist lay preacher he founded the Calgary Prophetic Bible Conference in 1918 to promote Bible study. His weekly religious radio broadcast beginning in 1925 won him a large audience. In 1932 he became interested in Social Credit movement, and promoted its doctrines in his broadcasts. Convinced of a need for monetary reform, he organized the Social Credit Party in 1935. His party won the election that year and he became Premier.

PROGRAMME

Chairman: Frank Sills Jr.

Speakers:

His Worship Mayor J. J. Flannery, Seaforth

Mr. K. Stewart, Warden of Huron County

Minister of Highways - Hon. C. S.
McNaughton, M.P.P. Huron

Mr. R. E. McKinley, M.P. Huron

Mr. L. P. Plumsteel, Principal S.D.H.S.

Dr. Morris Zaslow, President of Ontario
Historical Society representing
the Archaeological and
Historic Sites Board

Mr. Robt. N. Thompson - Leader Social
Credit Party in Canada

Mrs. Ola J. MacNutt, Calgary, a daughter of
Premier Aberhart

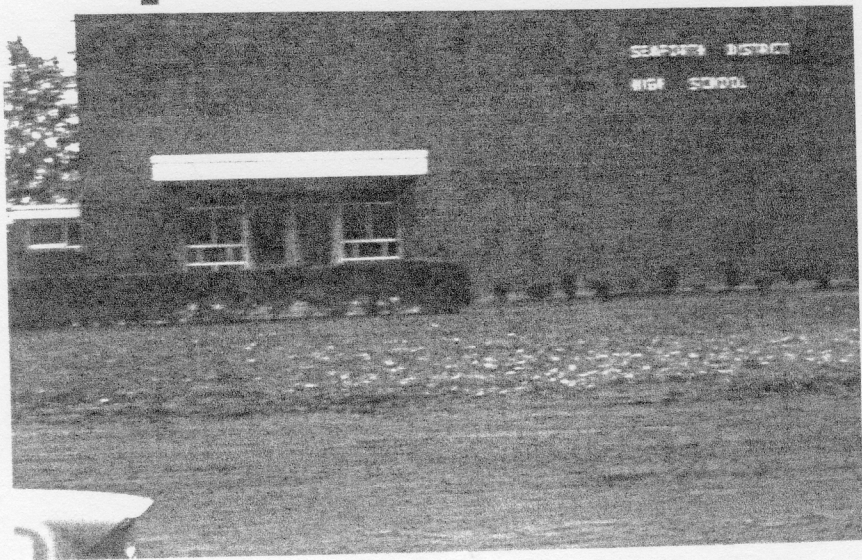
O Canada

Refreshments in School Auditorium

Charles & Ola McNutt



Seaforth District High School - 1966



PRESS RELEASE

ISSUED BY

TIME FOR RELEASE

Department of Public Records & Archives (Historical Branch)
October 4, 1966

Immediately

PLAQUE TO COMMEMORATE WILLIAM ABERHART

On Wednesday, October 12, 1966, commencing at 3:00 p.m., an historical plaque commemorating William Aberhart, founder of the Social Credit Party and former premier of Alberta, will be unveiled in Seaforth. It is situated at the Seaforth and District High School which Mr. Aberhart attended. This plaque is one of a series being erected throughout the province by the Department of Tourism and Information, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario.

Wednesday's ceremony is being arranged and sponsored by the Seaforth School Board and Mr. Frank Sills, Chairman of the Property Committee, will act as programme chairman. Dr. Morris Zaslow, President of the Ontario Historical Society, will represent the Historic Sites Board. The plaque will be unveiled by Mrs. Charles MacNutt of Calgary who is a daughter of Mr. Aberhart. Mrs. MacNutt will also give a resumé of her father's career. Among others taking part in the programme will be: His Worship J.J. Flannery, Mayor of Seaforth; the Honourable C.S. MacNaughton, M.P.P. (Huron), Ontario's Minister of Highways; Mr. R.E. McKinley, M.P. (Huron); and Mr. K. Stewart, Warden of Huron County.

William Aberhart was born in 1878 on Lot 29, Con. VIII, Hibbert Township, Perth County of German and English parentage. His father, William Aberhart, had been brought to Canada as a boy by his parents in the 1840's to escape, like so many others, from the oppressive military service regulations of Prussia. His mother was Louisa Pepper, an Englishwoman.

About 1886 the family moved to the first of two farms they occupied near Egmondville, Tuckersmith Township, Huron County. It was here that William grew up on his father's dairy farm with his two sisters and five brothers. The Aberhart children from the eldest to the youngest were: Augusta, Charles, John, William, Louis, Monetta, Henry and Wilfred. Although they are all deceased, the name of Aberhart is still well known in the Seaforth area.

Aberhart received his elementary education at the Egmondville Public School. He attended the Seaforth Collegiate Institute (now the Seaforth and District High School) from 1893 when he commenced in "A form" to his "senior leaving" in the spring of 1898. An excellent student, he never had a failure in the rigorous departmental examinations which were a feature of the Ontario educational system in the late nineteenth century. Although interested in all his subjects, mathematics--which he was later to teach so successfully--was his favourite. In this subject he exhibited the amazing powers of concentration and retention which were often remarked on later in his life.

Although as a farm boy he had his full share of chores, he managed to find time for participation in high school sports, and won local fame as a football player. Seaforth at the time had one of the best teams in Western Ontario and Aberhart was considered its best player.

After graduating from the Collegiate Institute, he attended Chatham Business College and Hamilton Normal School from which he received a teaching certificate. He taught school in Wingham until 1901 when he moved to Brantford. In 1902 he married Jessie Flatt of Galt. They had two daughters, Ola (now Mrs. Charles MacNutt of Calgary), and Khona (Mrs. James Cooper of Half Moon Bay, B.C.).

Aberhart soon became principal of Central School in Brantford where he taught

book-keeping and other commercial subjects. He lived in Brantford for nine years and during this time, in addition to his teaching duties, he managed, through a combination of summer school and correspondence courses to complete the B.A. requirements at Queen's University. He was always extremely proud of this degree which was granted in April, 1911, just after he had moved to Alberta.

In 1910, in search of greater opportunities, Aberhart decided to move to Calgary, then at the height of a boom period. He served as principal of various public schools in Calgary until 1915 when he was appointed principal of the newly organized Crescent Heights High School. He was to retain this position for twenty years until he assumed, in 1935, the premiership of the province. He is remembered during his years at Crescent Heights as one of the most dynamic teachers and efficient school administrators in Alberta.

Aberhart had always been an active church worker, strongly drawn to evangelical forms of religion. While in Brantford he had taught Sunday school classes and organized Bible study groups. He resumed these activities when he reached Calgary. The success of his Sunday lectures led to the formation in 1918 of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Conference which was intended to encourage the discussion of fundamental Biblical doctrines and prophecies. Begun first in a hall, the lectures became so popular they were moved to a downtown theatre.

By the middle 1920's, Aberhart had built up an enthusiastic personal following in Calgary. But it was the radio broadcasts he began to deliver in 1925, which enabled him to reach an even larger audience. His dynamic personality and gift of oratory soon made him the foremost fundamentalist religious leader in Alberta. At the height of his fame, his Sunday afternoon radio lectures were listened to by hundreds of thousands of people throughout the three prairie provinces

and in parts of British Columbia and the United States. In 1927, the Prophetic Bible Institute was erected in downtown Calgary to serve as a headquarters for Aberhart's various religious activities and to provide classroom space for three year courses in Bible study to be given on a regular basis.

By 1932, the people of Alberta began to be seriously affected by the depression--bread lines appeared, farmers lost their land when mortgages were foreclosed and growing numbers of unemployed were forced to go on relief. It was at this time that Aberhart, greatly distressed by the suffering around him, first encountered the theories of Major C.H. Douglas (1878-1952), a British engineer and originator of Social Credit. Aberhart became convinced that the only solution to the economic problems of the time lay in a complete reformation of the monetary and banking system. With evangelical fervour he promoted the doctrines of Social Credit in his radio broadcasts. People listened; Aberhart's voice became a voice of hope for thousands during the dark days of the early thirties.

Within a year public meetings and study groups were organized, pamphlets were distributed and Aberhart lectured tirelessly not only in Calgary but also in towns and villages throughout the province on his interpretation of Social Credit. Everywhere he went he found increasing support from the people of Alberta.

Although in the beginning the Social Credit movement was an educational and partly religious campaign, it emerged by 1935 as a powerful political force. Once political action was decided on a party structure was quickly organized, a platform was formulated and conventions were held to nominate candidates.

The election of August 25, 1935, was a Social Credit landslide. The party's candidates won 56 out of 63 seats; the United Farmers of Alberta, the former governing party, went down to total defeat. Although Aberhart had not been

a candidate in the election and stated that he was not interested in public office, his followers insisted that he become premier once the election had been won. He was called upon to form an administration and on September 3, with himself as premier and minister of education, his cabinet was sworn in to become the first Social Credit government in history.

William Aberhart served as premier of Alberta for ^{nearly 8} five years. During this time his government made many attempts to implement Social Credit theories of monetary reform at the provincial level. However, the specifically Social Credit measures passed by the provincial legislature in 1937 and the following years were declared unconstitutional by the courts or were disallowed by Ottawa. In practice, the fiscal policy of the Aberhart government developed into a financially orthodox and even conservative one.

While on a visit to British Columbia, Mr. Aberhart died suddenly in Vancouver on May 23, 1943.