

Charles J. MacGregor



There are more than sixty windows on the front of Elizabeth Ziegler Public School but when Principal Charles J. MacGregor left each day, the blinds on every window hung at the same height.

MacGregor's insistence that the face of his beloved school be symmetrical at the close of every day was part of the precision that inspired generations of math students in Waterloo. MacGregor taught at the Moore Avenue school during the Second World War and a former student remembers that "C.J." ran a very tight ship.

"There weren't any issues in C.J.'s class. You did what you were expected. There was no question. This was a different age. This was the 1940s," recalls Mary Johnston, who went on to become a well-known educator herself.

MacGregor came to Waterloo in 1921 after teaching in rural schools in Sebringville and Parry Sound, Ontario. He became a highly respected teacher and was soon appointed principal at Central and Alexandra schools before joining Elizabeth Ziegler Public School.

While he was there, all grade nine students in the City came to Elizabeth Ziegler due to overcrowding at Kitchener Collegiate Institute. The plan began in 1933 and the Township of Waterloo paid \$57.55 tuition for each student attending these classes.

MacGregor taught the grade nine students math and music while attending to his duties as principal during the war years. There were no secretaries at the time, so he had to frequently step out of class to deal with school business.

He was also actively involved in the community, serving on the Waterloo Public Library board in the 1940s and stepping up as chairman for one term. He was also treasurer of First United Church and a member of the Waterloo Young Men's Club.

MacGregor was born in a small town in Bruce County, one of nine sons to Alexander and Grace MacGregor. He went on to become the supervising principal for the city of Waterloo and in 1952 a senior public school on Central Street was named in his honour.

MacGregor, who lived at 230 King Street South, died at the age of sixty-three in December 1954. His obituary described him as a man who was "highly respected in teaching circles."

Despite his reputation as a strict disciplinarian, Charles MacGregor was known for his sensitivity to the poorest students. "He would always help a child who didn't have gloves or mittens . . . he was very well respected."

Portrait courtesy of Elizabeth Ziegler Public School.