

THE WAY IT WAS

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The Cass City Historical Society met in the Rawson Memorial Meeting Room on Monday afternoon, February 13th. The program consisted of viewing the video of the Cemetery Walk that was recorded in 2014. This program featured stories of the lives of former citizens Arthur Holmberg, Frederick Klump, Lucy Lee, Jacob Maier, Dr. Frank Morris, Elizabeth Pinney, Helen Stevens and Milo Warner. A discussion of memories and refreshments followed.

"HE LEFT HIS HEART IN CASS CITY"

Dr. Norman Lamont MacLachlan was born in 1854 in Middlesex County, Ontario, Canada. He was the son of Alexander and Mary MacLachlan who were both born in Scotland.

The family moved to Argyle in Sanilac County when he was 7 years old. He attended school in Canada, in Argyle and then he graduated from public school in Cass City.

Although Norman would leave this area later he developed many fond memories in his life here. He loved to share his memories in letters of stories he wrote to the Cass City Chronicle after he had left the area. One of his most prized possessions was his subscription to the paper which kept him informed of activities going on in his prior home town.

An early story happened when a young lad. His father, Alexander, casually mentioned to a neighbor that they should get together on Christmas day and have a little rifle shooting contest, but didn't think any more about it. On Christmas day families unexpectedly started

showing up for the get together. Norman's mother knowing nothing about it was unprepared to provide a meal for all of their guests. Due to the weather they had not yet been able to take their sleigh to Forestville to pick up their supplies of flour, sugar and other food necessities for the winter.

Mrs. MacLachlan scrubbed up a wash tub, filled it with potatoes and the little meat they had and boiled up a dinner. Their guests were very understanding and enjoyed the potatoes and their social time together.

They decided to stay a little longer and have a dance. Everyone had a good ole time and the event was remembered as "The Potato Dance".

Norman recalled when a young lad he and two neighbor boys rode a raft down the south branch of the river to Cass City where they bought a half bushel of seed corn from Jesse Fox's store. They walked all the way back to Argyle the next day.

He also recalled as a young man he worked for a lumber company driving logs down the

north branch of the Cass River. There was a dam built across the river where Holbrook is now that they would close at night to build up back water, and open it in the morning with enough current to float logs down the river. His job was to be sure the logs cleared a sand bar in the river with his pike pole. One day the log on which he was riding hit a submerged stump and threw him head first into the icy water. Completely soaked he hauled himself up to shore, took all of his clothes off, wrung the water out, put them back on, and went back to work to keep from freezing to death. He was afraid if he left the job and went back to camp that he would be fired. Surprisingly he had no ill effects from the ordeal, and also discovered the kind of stuff he was made of.

Another challenge he took on as a young man was digging out a huge pine stump on the main corner of town where the Cass City



The Potato Dance



State bank would be built. This stump had prevented anyone from building on this choice site because apparently no one else seemed to want to take the job on.

When Norman completed his local schooling he decided to become a doctor. He worked for a time assisting Dr. W. H. Greene. There were two doctors in town at the time, Dr. Greene and Dr. Daniel Deming. Dr. Greene was tall, slender and alert, and Dr. Deming as short, stubby and always ready with a hand shake and an argument. He then went to Toronto where worked for a time with a Dr. McConnel and a Dr. Harvey. After that training he enrolled in the University of Michigan and graduated with a doctor's degree.

In 1878 he married Miss Emma Jackson of Blenheim, Ontario. To this marriage one daughter, Ethel May, would be born.

He returned to Cass City and opened his medical practice. He had a small office in a new building next door to Curtis McPhail's Cass City State Bank which was where he had earlier dug out the large stump. His office was on the first floor along with a drug store and the post office operated by Homer Gordon. He and Mrs. MacLachlan lived in an apartment on the second floor.

In like manner the McPhails lived in an upper story of the bank. The two families became life-long friends. The McPhail's son, Herman, and the MacLachlan's daughter, Ethel would eventually marry as a result of this friendship.

Ethel was only eight months old when the Great Fire of 1881 swept across the Thumb. Mrs. MacLachlan and their baby daughter spent the night under blankets on the newly plowed field on the hill north of town with many other village residents. Norman stayed in town fighting the fire and being on call all night long and helping others who

couldn't make that trip up the hill. He was blinded for two days after from all the smoke and dust.

When Norman began his practice he needed a horse. Dr. Deming had a balky horse named Buckskin that he let him have for \$50. Not having the money he borrowed it from the merchant John Laing, whom he regarded as one of nature's most noble creatures. If Mrs. MacLaughlan was riding with him and Buckskin started to balk she



would jump right out of the carriage.

As a doctor he made many house calls in those days sometimes traveling distances as far as from Wilmont to the Pigeon River and from Ellington to Tyre. Often he came back with little to show for it as many people had very little money. One reward etched in his memory was a big grin of relief that broke out on a poor man's face when he was told he could have all of his children vaccinated for small pox and the county would pay for it.

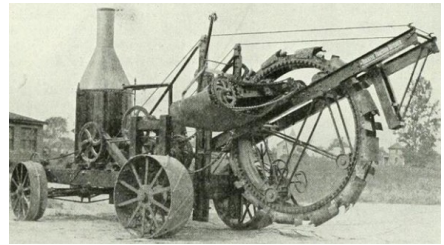
Norman built himself a new office and residence which still stands across the street to the south of the Rawson Memorial Library.

In addition to his work Norman was involved in public activities. He was a member of the Masons, Elks and the Odd Fellows. He attended the Presbyterian Church. He served as the president of the village for two terms.

In 1899 Norman moved his practice to Findlay, Ohio, a much larger and prosperous community. It is not known how the connection was made or why he left, but it provided him with much greater challenge and opportunity. He may have been recruited through the university.



Not much is known about his practice in Findlay except that it was successful. He kept up his public involvement. Over time he served as vice president of a bank, president of the Findlay Publishing Company which published a daily newspaper (The Morning Republican), president and councilman of the city, school board member, vice president of the Buckeye Traction Ditcher



Buckeye Traction Ditcher

Company, and membership in the Masons, Elks and the Odd Fellows.

While in Findlay his wife, Emma, passed away and he later remarried.

In April of 1923 Norman was enroute to attend to an ill child when his automobile was struck in the rear by a city street car. He got out of his car to assess the damage and when he bent over to look under his car he fell. When they picked him up he was dead of no apparent injury or cause. This brought to an end of a long career of service to many, many people wherever he happened to have been. He loved the challenge. He loved people and stories, and he loved his memories. We are fortunate that he so willingly shared some of them with us.



Memory, all alone in the moonlight
I can smile of the old days
I was beautiful then
I remember the time when I knew
what happiness is
Let the memory live again

From "Cats"