

THE WAY IT WAS

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On Monday evening, December 18th, The Friends Of The Library and The Cass City Historical Society held their Annual Christmas Sing-A-Long at the Rawson Memorial Library. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate and only ten singers attended including Barbara Kirn, the pianist, and Connie Iwankovitsch, the song leader. Fortunately a good time was had by those who did attend and the refreshments were tasty and plentiful.

The Man of a Pleasant Home

Doctor Daniel Polk Deming was born on December 18, 1844 on a farm near Clarkston, Michigan. He was the sixth of ten children born to Orrin and Lydia Ann Winslow Deming who had migrated to Michigan from the Seneca Lake area in New York. Deming comes from an old English word meaning “thinking



Dr. Daniel P. Deming

about” which fits with his picture holding his hand to his head. His father, Orrin, was a carpenter and joiner, and he also had a farm.

Daniel attended the public school in Oakland County until the age of 16 in the fall of 1861 when he left school and home and enlisted in Company “1” of the 10th Michigan Infantry.

His company reported to General Halleck of Pittsburg Landing and

became part of the Army of Cumberland, first under General Rosecrans and then under General William Tecumseh Sherman. He served for three years and nine months as one who took part in the March from Atlanta to the Sea (Savanna). That march left a trail of destruction. He was wounded in the battle of Resaca but was able to continue in service. Resaca was a strategic battle because it served as a railroad supply terminal for the



Civil War Wagoner

rebel forces. He mustered out in July of 1865 and returned home. The Civil War officially ended in August of 1866.

Maybe it was experience with horses on their farm that he was assigned to be a wagoner. A wagoner’s responsibility was to transport supplies needed by his company and to take care of his team of horses or mules. His cargo was anything his troops required including food, medical supplies, weapons, ammunition, clothing, tents, knapsacks and the officer’s luggage. The army

couldn't move without its supply wagons. The wagoner would also wait upon, and transport their sick, wounded and dead comrades from the fields of battle. Witnessing and possibly assisting the medics of wounded comrades including amputations often without medical pain killers must have been a difficult responsibility for a teenager.

After receiving his discharge and returning home, he went back and finished his high schooling. He taught for three terms and worked with a doctor Joslyn at St. Johns before enrolling in Medical School at The University of Michigan. After two years of study he graduated with an Allopath Doctor’s Degree. He returned to St. Johns and worked with Dr. Joslyn for one year. In the fall of 1873 he came to Cass City and made it his home.

It is not known why Dr. Deming came to Cass City to set up his practice. There were other Demings living in the area but no family connections could be found between them.

Much of the doctoring at that time was done in the homes of his patients. A doctor would have had a small office in town, but it could not accommodate any

number of patients. Doctor Deming had a drug store, but the remedies were not sophisticated in that day and likely included elixirs and tonics. Even aspirin wasn't available until the turn of the century. For a while his office also functioned as the village post office, and he held the title of postmaster.

Traveling was done by horse and



Country Doctor, horse and buggy

buggy. Most of the births of children were often facilitated in the homes by midwives.

Doctoring conditions in most of the homes were not often too conducive to good medical procedures. There was no electricity yet for lighting nor indoor plumbing for washing. Water would have to be hand pumped and heated in a tea kettle on a wood or coal fired stove. The doctor would arrive, take care of his horse and do his best to clean himself off from the dust or mud from the road. There were no hard surfaced roads, and little protection from the weather. Medical equipment and supplies were limited to what he could carry in his carriage and leather satchel. If that was not limiting enough the patient often didn't have the money to pay for his services and there was no Medicare or Medicaid to compensate for the services.

In spite of all the problems and limitations, the doctoring profession was more prosperous than most.

In the fall of 1877 Dr. Deming was united in marriage with Miss Clara Armstrong, the daughter of James and Ordell Armstrong from the state of Ohio. To this marriage five children would be born: Harriet, Irene, Charles Orrin, Margaret and William. Irene died in infancy.

Doctor Deming was active in civ-

ic affairs of the community and was one of the founders of The Milo Warner Chapter of The Grand Army of the Republic, the VFW type organization of Civil War veterans.

Dr. Deming purchased a piece of land on East Third Street and formed a sub division of 24 building lots named the Deming Addition to the Village. He had a house built in that division, but he was not known to have lived in it. About that time a new large house on Seeger Street became available which he purchased.



This house, presently owned by Mrs. Opal Schneeberger has a history of it's own. It served as the Stevens Nursing Home for many years under the Registered Nurse, Helen Stevens.

In 1906 Dr. Deming built a brand new hospital and called it The Pleasant Home Hospital. It was located on the east side of Seeger



Pleasant Home Hospital

Street across from the present Frontier Telephone building.

Electric power had just become available along with deep well water in the village a few years earlier. This was a progressive, innovative move for the community, and it brought the practice of medicine to a whole new level. Now pa-

tients could be brought into a sanitary environment, and cared for by a professional staff with the latest equipment available.

A former registered nurse who had worked there in the late 1950s racked her memory and recalled the interior structure of the building. There had been a fire escape which was a large metal tubing sloping down from an upper story window. The basement included the laundry, storage room and the kitchen. Meals were transported to the upper floors in a dumbwaiter. The main and the second floors were divided by aisle ways down the middle from front to back. There was a single stairway between the floors. The top floor contained the operating room, a nursery, two 3 bed wards and two private rooms and a toilet. The first floor contained the doctor's office, a record room, a pharmacy, a nurses station, three 3 bed wards, a toilet and two private rooms. There was no elevator between the floors.

This hospital was an important factor in the growth and development of the community. There are probably many people who can still claim The Pleasant Home as the place of their birth, and the place where they once received treatment for various needs. Several physicians have owned the building and contributed to its history. They include Drs. Daniel Deming, Malcolm Wickware, Ira McCoy and Harold Donahue.

The hospital was torn down in 1960 after the new Hills and Dales Hospital was built, ending an important era in Cass City history.

Sadly Dr. Deming who had been a champion in his time was also a victim of his time. In December of 1913 he became infected with blood poisoning known as sepsis, which was likely contracted on the job at the hospital. The antibiotics that could have treated this condition and prolonged his life were not yet available. He died on December 22, 1913.