

YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

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THE WILLING WORKERS:

Left to right: Lottie (Kalbfleisch) Stockman; Pauline (Veit) Kalbfleisch; Ellen Murray; Christina (Ratz) Weitzel; in front: Kate (Kruspe) Krug.



Tavistock ... It was 1917

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The year started ... on fire!!

A major fire broke out in Shakespeare, quickly burning three stores to the ground. At the time Shakespeare did not have a fire department and relied on its citizens to form a bucket brigade to douse the flames. The blaze soon threatened to burn down the entire village and a call went out for help. Tavistock responded and within minutes 150 people were on their way in their buggies, farm carts, cars and bicycles. With everyone's hard work, Shakespeare was saved.

Just one week later, on a misty morning, disaster struck again. Two trains collided outside of Tavistock and, once again, hundreds of villagers turned out to help. No lives were lost but both engines, two flat cars and a steel car were complete wrecks. Damage was estimated at \$50,000 (\$1M in today's dollars).

Because seemingly all bad things come in sets of three, a third catastrophe happened in Hickson in March when one of the worst fires in Hickson's history destroyed the General and Hardware Store owned by Messers Rowe and Nichol. The store was a new red brick structure located on the corner of the 12th line. It burned to the ground but a heroic effort by the local citizens saved the nearby buildings.

At the same time the Tavistock community was fighting a measles epidemic with schools closed and homes put under quarantine restrictions. Quarantine was lifted after a fixed number of days and, more importantly, after the building was thoroughly fumigated to kill any remaining germs. Back then, fumigation involved copious quantities of cyanide, sulphuric acid and carbon bisulphide ... a truly lethal combination if not properly administered.

It wasn't all bad news. The Willing Workers (a group of women dedicated to helping the war effort with homefront events) were busy organizing patriotic dances where everyone could trip the light fantastic. Reverend



EMPLOYMENT: In 1917 George McKay was looking for a smart boy to learn clerking in his store at ?? Hope Street West in Tavistock. (Photo from The Lemp Studio Collection)

Gishler's wife celebrated her birthday with a towel shower resulting in 112 towels being donated to the Red Cross. The Tavistock Gazette (still \$1 a year payable in advance) ran ads featuring Labatt's wine and liquor available by mail order from Montreal direct to the consumer. Two gallons of Extra Old Cognac was just \$14.

Employment was on the rise. George McKay, who owned a grocery store, was looking for a smart boy to learn clerking. Ed Berlett wanted a girl to learn tailoring. The Gazette would hire either a boy or a girl to learn the printing trade but the applicants had to be good spellers. The military was still looking for men, this time to build railway lines.

Of course, recruits were always needed to fight overseas. The battles were seemingly never ending. One stood out amongst the rest ... Vimy Ridge, a name forever enshrined in Canadian military history.

Back on the homefront, the big summer news was ice cream. The Oxford Hotel offered Neilson's ice cream bricks in both walnut and neopolitan flavours every

Saturday. Not to be outdone, Weston's Bakery started selling strawberry, vanilla and banana-flavoured ice cream. The price was \$1.40 a gallon or 20 cents a pint. Customers could pay by cash or in butter and eggs.

The local general stores were changing hands at an unprecedented rate. Fred Krug sold his Glasgow Warehouse to four local gentlemen who continued in the same location (where Home Hardware is today). Hansen and Peppler's business needed larger quarters and moved to the location formerly occupied by Valentine Stock's General Store (where the Post Office is today). Weitzel and Heinbuch set up shop in the former Hansen & Peppler General Store location (where D&Ds is today). Business was brisk everywhere as everyone in the village, which had a population of about 1,100 people, and the surrounding area shopped locally.

Farmers were enjoying a bumper year. Albert Wettlaufer boasted about his timothy which grew 6 feet 3 1/4 inches tall. Adam Mansz topped that with timothy reaching 6 feet 9 inches. Corn, for reasons unexplained,

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Executive:
Secretary – Mary Nicklas
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Membership: \$10/year

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languished at only 4 feet. Any young man who could be spared was encouraged to join the 36,000 farm labourers needed to help with the harvest in the Prairies. Many local boys jumped on the train and headed west.

Then the news, both local and worldwide, took a grim turn. Private Milton Capling, age 23, died from wounds received on the battleground in Flanders. He was the first local soldier killed in action.

Tavistock boys living and working in Detroit unexpectedly found themselves drafted by Uncle Sam as the United States entered the war in 1917. Back home in Canada, the Conscription Bill (Compulsory Military Act) was signed into effect by the Governor General. The effect was two fold ... an upturn in recruiting and an upturn in requested exemptions for a whole host of reasons.

The ever-escalating cost of war saw the passage of the Income War Tax Act, an income tax meant to be temporary but which continues to this day.

There was a bit of relief and bit of fun at Fall Fair season. People had 197 different Fall Fairs to choose from all across Ontario but, of course, the very best Fall Fair was in Tavistock. Entries in the Ladies Work section included embroidered underwear, best darned stocking and best buttonholes.

Then came Passchendaele ... a word that is still synonymous with overwhelming death but also with overwhelming courage. The horrors of Passchendaele were directly felt in Tavistock. Private Herbert Spencer Weston, a British homeboy who came to Canada at age 11, made the supreme sacrifice at age 27.

While conflict takes a human toll, every war results in prosperity for some businesses. Such was the case with the Tavistock Woollen Mill. The woollen



PRIVATES WESTON, BUCHAN, NETTLETON AND COMRADE ...
Photo courtesy of Jason Lichti, Tavistock



Private
Milton
Capling



Private
Herbert
Spencer
Weston

mill had been working until 9 pm every night except Sunday for the previous two years making yarn used for socks and gloves for Canadian soldiers. In 1917 J.G. Field, the owner, signed a contract with the US government for socks for the United States army. It was the largest contract ever received in Tavistock, reported to be "of such proportions as to keep the mill running night and day for six months".

Another factory, the Tavistock Milling Company on Maria Street, was not so fortunate. While business had been booming throughout the year, misfortune struck at the end when a fire broke out in the basement and quickly extended up to the roof. Thanks to quick thinking and almost superhuman effort, the blaze was kept reasonably contained.

The year ended as it had begun ... on fire.

Membership dues are still \$10.00. Simply complete the Renewal form found at <http://tavistockhistory.ca/membership>. Payment can be sent by mail at Box 280 or dropped off at the museum at 37 Maria Street, Tavistock.



The Tavistock & District Historical Society invites you to a very special musical evening!

"Till We Meet Again"

An evening of wartime songs

featuring Ted Comiskey and Jim Gonder (famous for their "Music At The Mess Hall" concerts)

Wednesday, October 18, 2017 at 7 pm

Tavistock Legion Hall, 223 Hope Street West, Tavistock

Accompanying display ... Goodwill Donation. Everyone welcome. Please come, enjoy and sing along.

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Early immigration

The Hanke family in Tavistock

By Bill Gladding

There are many family names that have been associated with the village since before there was a village. Still others have come and gone over the years, but their legacy remains in our homes and landmarks. One of these names is the Hanke family.

When I was growing up on William Street South, the maiden Hanke ladies were all I knew of that family. Later I found that their father, Charles Hanke, was a highly-regarded mason and home builder in the community. He was also responsible for erecting the Queen's Park stone gates in 1928. It is also a fact that he built the home we are currently living in at 41 Elizabeth Street that same year.

So it seems fitting to me to be able to share with you the Hanke's immigrant story, just recently come to my attention. Through a letter from Charles' elder brother, August, we learn of a remarkable journey from Germany to Canada in 1872. We also learn of the hardships these families faced, not only on the voyage, but becoming established and content with their life in a new land.

The story begins in Lenz, Pomerania, Germany in 1826 when Wilhelm Hanke was born. At the age of 20, he married Wilhelmina Fischer and they lived for a time in Kitzerow where Wilhelm worked in a distillery. Poor health forced he and his family to move to the rural countryside where they worked for a landlord. There were six children - Louisa, August, William, Emelia, Frederick, and Charles. At age 14, eldest son, August, was moved into the manor house with the rest of the labourers.

In the fall of 1871, Wilhelm encouraged his son August, who was about to be pressed into military service at age 18, to immigrate to Canada to live with his aunt and uncle (Dorothea Fischer and Carl Behrenwald) near Tavistock. On October 15, 1871, August made his way by horse and wagon and then by train to the seaport of Bremen. The next nine weeks were spent aboard a sailing ship.

"The first two days everything went fine. The weather was clear and the water quite smooth. On the third day, towards evening, a storm came up. That sure was a terror. I

didn't expect that I would ever see America. Much more I expected to go to the bottom of the ocean. The storm raged all night. At about eight o'clock the next morning it passed off and became quiet. We had more storms off and on. After the first one had passed and I came through unscathed, I wasn't so afraid any more," August wrote.

Arriving in New York, the ship anchored off the port due to an epidemic, and they were quarantined for another two weeks. Without money, August waited another four



Charles and Bertha Hanke on Elizabeth Street in Tavistock

days until his uncle could send money for the fare from New York to Tavistock. Two days later he arrived in what he said was "a little cluster of small houses, mostly built of logs. All around and above, I could see nothing but sky and woods," he wrote.

At first he took a job clearing land and hauling timber for Heinrich Fuhr, then for the summer with John Miller. The climate didn't agree with him and he developed pneumonia. When he recovered, although wanting to return to Germany, he was convinced to stay. His uncle sent for his elder sister, Louisa, to come that fall. Louisa and August worked hard and saved enough money to send for the rest of the family, however, their father had since passed away. William, Fred, Emelia and Charles (then 8 years of age) arrived in the fall of 1873.

In the spring of 1873, August worked in the flax mill and drove a team. He then decided to learn a trade and was hired by John Kalbfleisch as a cabinetmaker. The

family lived in the Behrenwald's for about a year when they had a house built at 92 Hendershot Street. "Mr. Kalbfleisch did the building and we all worked together and paid on it."

In November 1877, at age 24, August married Anna Reidt, who had emigrated from Germany in the same year that his mother did. They had two children, Lizzie and Emil. In order to make more money he searched for a job in Ayton, Newstadt and Hanover, but was unsuccessful. Rev. Sam Becker, a Baptist minister in Tavistock, recommended August to go to Buffalo to find work. This was in 1880 when he found work in the building trade for a Mr. Bingel. He brought his family to Buffalo a month later. August then found work with Murray Smith in a machine shop, where he stayed for 11 years.

In the meantime, his mother and siblings remained in Tavistock. Louisa had married Jacob Wettlaufer in 1872 and moved to North Dakota; William married Sarah Sharp; Emelia died at age 30; Fred married Augusta Frank; and Charles married Bertha Schmidt.

This is where the story turns to Charles Hanke who had come to Tavistock as an 8-year-old. He married Bertha Schmidt in June of 1891 and they had six children - Hedwig, Frederick, Anton (died at age 2), Talitha, Olivia and Ella Beth. Charles and his brother, William, operated a broom factory out of the old Opera Hall block on Woodstock Street North. According to Fact & Fantasy, they "imported their broom corn

from Decatur, Illinois and bleached it with burning sulphur to whiten their brooms."

However, sometime later, Charles learned the trade of a stone mason and bricklayer and became well-known for his workmanship in stone. He also built several homes in the village. He subdivided two lots off Jacob Street East and made three lots facing Elizabeth Street and built three new homes. He built a 2-storey, white brick home (#53) on the corner in 1909, a 2-storey red brick home (#45) in 1917, and a rug-brick arts and crafts home (#41) in 1928. It was also in 1928 that he was responsible for constructing the stone gates at the entrance to the newly named Queen's Park. He had built his own residence at 164 William Street South, another arts and crafts home, in 1922.

Although the name Hanke has long since faded from the list of residents in the community, it has not diminished their contribution to the early life of the village.