

YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

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LEMP CLOCK COMES HOME

It was a grand day when a noteworthy piece of Tavistock history ... a grandfather clock built by John K. Lemp ... returned home. Obtained at auction earlier this year the almost 8-foot-tall clock was described by the auction house as “monstrous”. We prefer “monumental” in both its size and importance to Tavistock.

John K. Lemp (1860-1938) was a man of many talents. He was widely known for his exceptional skills as a woodworker. The stately home at 218 Woodstock North that John K. built in the late 1800s is a testament to the woodworker’s art. An outstanding mechanic, John K. built Tavistock’s first horseless carriage (automobile) in 1908.

Those accomplishments notwithstanding, John K. Lemp is best remembered for his grandfather clocks. He built his first clock in his 30s and finished four more in his 70s. In his later years he was assisted by his grandson, Ernest Piehl. The mechanisms in all of John K.’s clocks were completely his work. All the cases were his design and all were different in appearance.

The Lemp clocks were originally



John K. Lemp with one of the clocks in front of his home at 218 Woodstock Street North, Tavistock.

made as gifts to members of John K.’s family. John K. was married to Mary Leonard and the couple had two children ... John who married Lucy Trachsell and Katherine who married John Piehl. In time some passed to other owners. One, most notably, was acquired by the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. One is at a commercial establishment. Two are still with family members, one in Kitchener Waterloo, Ontario and one in British Columbia.

The clock that the Tavistock & District Historical Society acquired was built by John K. for his nephew W.J. (Billy) Leonard. It is 7’11” in height, 35” wide and 17” deep. It has a mahogany case, inlaid and embellished with carved rosettes and has two large dials (clock and date) stacked vertically over a glass door showing the pendulum.

On the back is a handwritten note reading, “Machinist J. K. Lemp (Uncle Lemp), Tavistock, Ont. Maker of the Clock 1931. Clock Mahogany presented to W.J.”

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THE LEMP
STUDIO
COLLECTION

The Envy of Photo History Buffs

by Tim Mosher

Tavistock and district has been clearly blessed with a collection of early photos that I'm sure is the envy of many communities. To think that more than 4,000 glass and plastic negatives that comprise the Lemp Studio Collection (L.S.C.) were stored in an uninsulated attic and endured decades of summer heat and winter cold and remained in good condition is astounding.

There are records of nine professional photographers working in Tavistock starting in the mid-1870s. Three resided in the village and six were itinerant, so they would visit the town for a few days every month and on their return they'd have the finished pictures. A c. 1897 photo of the south side of Woodstock Street shows two skylight-type windows on the top floors of two buildings in these pre-electricity days. Perhaps there were two photographers working concurrently. Studio photography at the time was mainly a warm weather profession, as the studio's high ceiling and glass being a poor insulator made it difficult for customers to be comfortable sitting for the camera during the winter. They advertised their services in *The Tavistock Gazette* sometimes with typical late-Victorian flowery language. Don't "... lead your beauty to the grave, and leave the world no perfect copy." and the like.

The *New Hamburg Independent* printed Tavistock's business directory in 1878 noting a photo gallery, so pictures were being created in the community only a few years after Confederation. Sometimes the early photographers stamped or wrote their name on the corners of the photo mounts and this is mainly how we know about them today. They were: Elliot; George Davidson; Evans; Cozens; J. McEwen; J. C. Sutherland - the mid-1890s; Adrian Osmond Murray - 1896 to 1903; W. I. Becker - 1903 to 1905; and John Lemp - 1905 to c. 1950.

John Lemp is credited with taking the vast majority of images in the collection because he was the primary photographer in the district for four and a half decades. Sometimes Mr. Lemp worked in local communities as an itinerant photographer too and visited lumber camps and a gold mine in the town of Swastika, Ontario.

John Lemp was born in Tavistock in 1884. His parents are John K. Lemp and Mary Leonard. John K. was an expert machinist, maker of five monumental grandfather-style clocks and the village's first horseless carriage. John attended the College of Pharmacy, Toronto graduating in 1904. He did post-graduate work in Chicago and finished at the head of his class earning degrees in pharmaceutical studies and ophthalmology (eye ailments), in addition to otology (hearing). In July 1905 he purchased the already established drug store at 16 Hope Street, West in Tavistock and spent his career there. A short time later he built a spacious second floor studio with a large skylight window to illuminate his subjects. Electricity had not come to Tavistock for another few years, so the east-facing huge window provided the light that he required. He developed his pictures in a darkroom that measured barely 6 x 8 feet (1.83 x 2.44 meters) at the back of the drug store, up a 4-step ladder. It's not known where John received his photo training.

Billy Leonard was Mr. Lemp's cousin and assistant in the early years and so it's very likely he who tripped the shutter of various pictures that include Mr. Lemp posing for family pictures or in clubs and committee photos.

John Lemp was very involved in the community serving on many boards and active in his church. He married Lucy Trachsell in 1908 and they had four children: Leonard (Lenny), Ann (Girlie), Lucille (Babs) and Jeanne. Len became a pharmacist and took over his father's dispensary at the same location in 1928, though he didn't continue the picture-taking side.



This c. 1892 photo is an historian's dream showing the hardware of the business, period clothing and a backdrop used in other photos.

The only known photo of John Lemp with a camera was taken in 1948, most likely by Len's wife, Mary. It's an informal snap of him on the main street of town taking a photo of the Tavistock band in front of what was then the Post Office. It's a surprising little picture because he's still using his big, old 8x10 camera. These were very ungainly things that shot enormous negatives where you had to put your head under a dark cloth to focus on the upside-down subject. There were numerous up-to-date hand-held smaller cameras available at the time and he sold many Kodak cameras and film etc. from his store, but this monster could create sharper images and he was clearly comfortable with it after decades of practise, now late in his career.

Mr. Lemp's 1957 obituary notes that he died at age 73 at home above the store and was the town's druggist for 52 years. He was the main local photographer almost as long and so produced the bulk of the glass negatives and all the plastic negatives. He acquired the glass negatives of at least two of the cameramen who preceded him, as well as props and backgrounds that appear in different early photographers' pictures. There's a possibility too that the earliest photographers sold their negatives etc to each successive photo business as these men knew they could sell reprints of them for years to come. Even though the name of the photo archive is the "Lemp Studio Collection" it includes images by the earlier picture takers as well.

This collection is what was stored in the attic of Lemp's Drug Store until 1977. Lenny Lemp was aging by then and preparing to sell his business to Sinclair Pharmacy and so the negative collection went to the *Tavistock Gazette* at that time. I did some of the initial sorting of the negatives and was Len's next door neighbour. At the time I was a photo student, so I printed a few of the pictures in my college's darkrooms. This is what sparked my interest in antique photographica. In 2006 the collection became the possession of the Tavistock and District Historical Society (T.D.H.S.) where most of the very delicate negatives have been labouriously scanned and are now available to all on the T.D.H.S. website. The historical society also has Mr. Lemp's mahogany and brass 8"x10" camera, the one he likely used in the 1948 band photo.

Today John Lemp's drug store and studio have both been converted to private residences.

The exchanging, guarding and reproducing of this vast archive of images is now the town's treasure trove of local history in photo form. I stand in recognition of John Lemp, Phm. B., Oph. D. and his predecessors.

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Historical Society Inc.**

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MUSEUM

HOURS:

Third Saturday
each month 1-4 p.m.

Other times
by appointment

www.tavistockhistory.ca

Secrets of a successful newspaper

by R. Paul Bartlett

If you wanted to start up a newspaper in a town, how would you go about doing it?

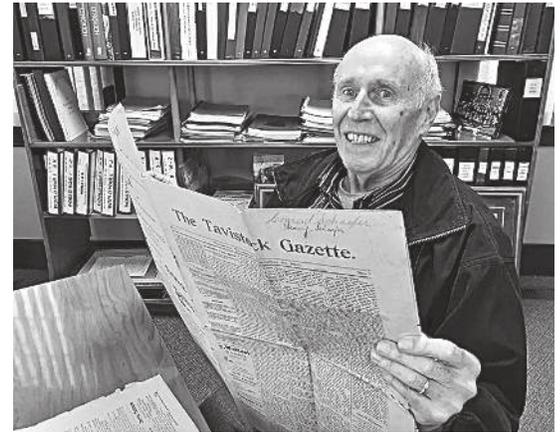
James W. Green had 29 years of experience in the newspaper business when he came to Tavistock in 1895 and he used all of the tricks of his trade when he presented the first edition of The Tavistock Gazette to the community on September 26 of that year.

First of all, he praised the village itself. Tavistock, he wrote, "is a fine rising, well-built village of 1000, beautifully situated in a magnificent farming section. It contains...a first-class representation of all the lines of business. Two excellent brass bands, five churches, Mechanics Institute and numerous societies are located here...It is a very desirable place for residence."

Then he put onto the front page of the paper as many names of local residents as he could possibly fit in. Who doesn't like having their name in the paper? Mr. Green's first edition coincided with the close of that year's Tavistock Fall Fair and that gave him the opportunity to list the first and second prize winners of every prize category in the Fair. The list filled the entire front page.

How many winners in the apple category could you get, for instance? In 1895 there were winners for Roxburgh russets, northern spys, spitzenbergs, baldwins, golden russets greenings, seek-no-furtherers, Canada Reds, phoenixs, Ben Davis, Bleinheim pippins, ribston pippins, King of Tompkins, snows, maiden's blushes, Cayuga redstreaks, colverts, Duchess of Oldenburgs, St. Lawrences, 20-oz pippins. Most of these heirloom apples have now been lost and replaced by more grocery store-friendly varieties that can be grown en masse.

All of the entries in the Show were "of the highest order...splendid...marvelous...enjoyable." The Directors had reason to "congratulate



Walter Scholz donor of a copy of the first edition of the Tavistock Gazette, September 26, 1895

themselves on unqualified success" of the Show. Mr. Green then reported on the latest births, deaths and marriages. He filled his

eight-page newspaper with local sporting news, farm market reports, a letter advocating for fire protection for the village, a column from Shakespeare...and of course local gossip. And sprinkled through the international news, a short story, and secrets of how to make money were jokes and a humorous poem.

To top it all off, Mr. Green announced that the first four issues of his new paper would be available free of charge! He certainly knew what he was doing. The Tavistock Gazette had a very successful launch



J.W. Green, founder of the Tavistock Gazette

and continued to be published weekly for the next one hundred and thirty years later.

The Tavistock and District Historical Society is grateful to Walter Scholz, currently of Stratford, for his donation to the museum of a first edition of The Tavistock Gazette which belonged to his grandfather, Conrad Schaefer. It is a valued addition to our collection.

LEMP CLOCK ...

(continued from page 1)

Leonard, 29 Jessie Street, nephew 1931". Family lore has it that John K. travelled to Jessie Street in Brockville in about 1929 to measure the height of the ceiling in the Leonard home and then returned on June 8, 1931 to deliver the finished clock. The floor in the Brockville house wasn't quite level so John K. used shims to ensure a perfectly vertical look and a perfectly running mechanism. On the death of W.J. Leonard the clock passed to his daughter and then on to other owners. And then, best of all, back

home to Tavistock. To our surprise and delight the shims came too.

What a joy it is to have this beautiful grandfather clock standing proud in the front room at the museum. What a joy to watch people enter the building and just stare in awe at the clock before coming closer to examine its workmanship and all the many detailed elements. What fun to see visitors taking "selfies" by the clock.

The current museum display "All Things Lemp" is just that. It features John K.'s clocks and then goes on to showcase all the many businesses and hobbies and talents of one of Tavistock's best-known families. Drop in, check out the exhibit and take a selfie with the clock!

Sebastopol School, South Easthope

by Sherrill Calder

Hope, faith and hard work. These are the words that guided the lives of the pioneers in the 1830s in South Easthope Township. In time they built a simple log hut that served as both a school and Lutheran Church in the then unnamed hamlet that is now Sebastopol. A growing population soon necessitated a larger church and a larger school.

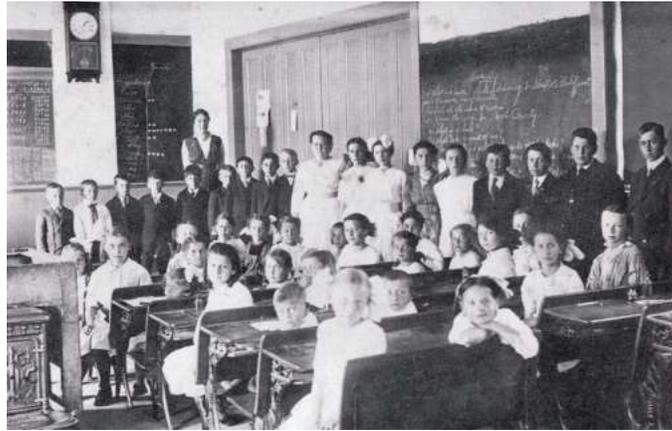
A new schoolhouse was built west of the original location. All too soon that building was at capacity. In 1872 the Stratford newspaper reported that “The new schoolhouse is a handsome brick structure, erected on the site of the old school and will cost something like \$3,000. It is undoubtedly one of the best rural schoolhouses in the county.”

In the early years the school was officially known as USS No. 3 SEH / USS No. 13 EZ. USS stands for Union School Section, a designation given to schools that serviced more than one township or area. In this case it was South Easthope Township and East Zorra Township.

While Sebastopol had once been a bustling little hamlet Tavistock was now seen as the village with a bright future and its own school. Ratepayers in SEH petitioned for a new school section to be created. USS No. 3 was dissolved and S.S. No. 8 was officially registered in 1879.

From the beginning lessons were primarily in German with some English. For decades many pupils learned their first English words at school. For some English was only spoken at school, never at home. By 1915 classes were mainly in English. Of the many teachers at Sebastopol School perhaps the most beloved was Miss Katherine Kalbfleisch, known to her students as “Mother Teacher”. She began her teaching career in 1918 at S.S. No. 8. It was a different world back then. An essay prepared by Tim Mosher, then a student at the University of Guelph, talks to the differences.

“Early on cold mornings the caretaker would light the big box stove to heat the main classroom. There was a slant-topped teacher’s desk, a pump organ in the corner and great sheets of natural slate blackboards lining two walls. At the back, between the cloak rooms by the bell rope, was a small granite cistern of



Sebastopol School Interior - 1915 - Teacher - Evelyn Fraser

well water with a single drinking cup, and behind the school were two “2- holers” (outdoor privies) for both pupils and teacher alike.

Most of the children walked the long concessions year round with lunch boxes under arm. Just before 9 am Miss Kalbfleisch would swing the hand bell in an open doorway to have pupils assemble from the schoolyard in two lines: the girls at the east door, the boys at the west. Little Florence Berger would pump the organ and play a march as her schoolmates filed between the rows of cast iron and hardwood desks. Standing at

attention ‘God Save The King’ would be sung, the Lord’s Prayer recited and the pupils would then sit — two per desk.

Behind the school was a ball diamond and woodshed where games of ‘Andy, Andy Over’ would be played. Sometimes, at recess, the more daring older boys would sneak off the property, run down to the corner to Feick’s Hotel, walk into the barroom and buy licorice plugs. They’d eat the licorice on the way back to school unaware that their blackened lips spoke volumes.

The school week ended about 3 pm on Fridays. Slates would be washed and the hymn ‘Abide With Me’ was sung. The pupils filed out of the classroom, empty lunch pails under arm but nary a textbook nor scribbler for, in those days, homework was unheard of.”

Years came and went with new pupils, new teachers, Home Gardens, School Fairs, Christmas concerts and all the joys and memories of a one-room school. By the 1960s rural schools were being closed in favour of district schools. Sebastopol School officially closed its doors in June 1966. In September students were bussed to Sprucedale Public School in Shakespeare.

The school was purchased by Trinity Lutheran Church. In 1970 the building was demolished. Trinity used the site to add a new educational wing to the church.

To end on a happy note, in 1976 a school reunion was organized. Twenty-two pupils from the 1920 classes enjoyed a delightful time with Miss Kalbfleisch (Mrs. Gordon Ratz). Mother Teacher, then 80, remembered all of their names.

This is a condensed version of a detailed story with many pictures available on the TDHS website.

HERITAGE OF HICKSON DISPLAY

TDHS has partnered with the local Hickson 4-H Club to produce a series of displays featuring the “Heritage of Hickson” that will be changed every two months. Fourteen display boards of researched material and photos were completed by the Hickson 4-H Club in 2016 under the leadership of Shonna Ward. TDHS prepares a showcase of artifacts and vintage photos from its collection or from loaned items to compliment each display..

The individual displays include the Hickson railroad, township building, bank, library, fire department, church, former businesses, park (1921), service clubs, sports teams, and people from the Hickson community.

The display is located in the lobby of the Township of East-Zorra Administration Building, 45 Loveys Street in Hickson which is open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-4:30 pm