

Gracious living of days gone by

VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

Tavistock and District Historical Society

This is the third in this series of Vintage Views of photos in the Lemp Studio Collection at the Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS).

Although John “Jack” Lemp took the vast majority of photos in the TDHS collection – almost 4,000 – between 1905 and 1950, itinerant photographers set up shop once a week in Tavistock advertising their services for at least 20 years before him.

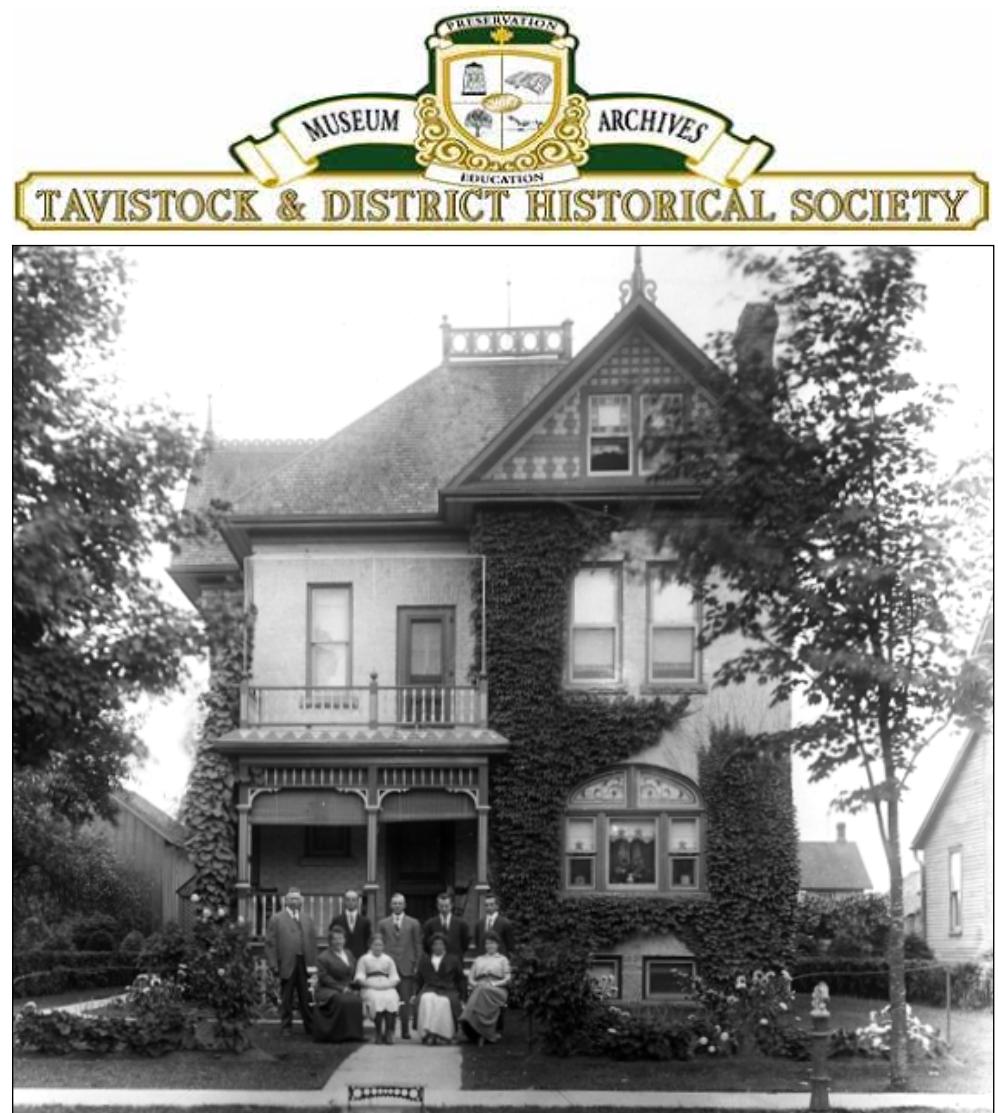
They were J. McEwen, J. Sutherland, A. Murry and W. Becker. It’s not known which of them took this photo in 1893. Clearly, the photographer was hired to set up his big tripod and camera with a large wooden negative holder that had two light-sensitive glass plates in it to take two pictures. He was likely thankful for what photographers call a “soft day” because it was cloudy. The clouds disperse the light so there are no hard shadows which can make it difficult to clearly see details in the brightest areas or the shadows of a photo. Sunny days do not always create the best pictures. The photographer also like-

ly asked them not to wear hats because, again, the shadows they create can obscure the faces.

The house is located at 9 Decew St. in Tavistock. Mr. Adam E. Ratz (pronounced ROT-ss) was the owner. Here, he poses with family and friends on what was likely a Sunday afternoon. The home is still there today. Mr. Ratz was the proprietor of the Tavistock Milling Company.

This week’s History Mystery is intended for readers up to the age of 16: What is the object on the grass silhouetted against the sidewalk in front of the group? The object usually doesn’t move so it’s there year-round. Email your answer stating your first and last names, age, the name of your community or rural route number to tim_mosher@hotmail.com. The person who sends the correct answer will have this information published in the next edition.

Last week’s History Mystery was: What is the connection between the mason’s trade and what’s in the photo? The picture was of two well-dressed children, posing in a photo studio, surrounded by cedar boughs and logs. No one had the correct response. The answer is the type of hat the boy is wearing is called a mortar board, so called because it’s flat on top with four corners, similar to what a mason holds in one hand to carry mortar on and a trowel in the other hand to apply it to the brick or stones that he’s working with. These traditional caps are often worn in graduation portraits.



(LEMP STUDIO COLLECTION IMAGE #0099)

The family, friends and home of Adam E. Ratz, Decew Street, Tavistock, circa 1893. Mr. Ratz is on the left.

Tick talk and all things Lemp

PAUL BARTLETT

Tavistock and District Historical Society

The 21st annual general meeting of the Tavistock and District Historical Society (TDHS) was held at Grace United Church in Tavistock on Saturday, April 5 with over 50 people in attendance.

The guest speaker for the event was Donna Dickson of Tavistock. She and her husband, Mike, are interested in clocks and have over 400 of them in their home. They were instrumental in bringing one of the five Lemp grandfather clocks back to Tavistock.

Dickson started her presentation with a

brief biography of John K. Lemp who was a master carpenter and mechanic in Tavistock in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Lemp became caretaker of the large clock in the Trinity Lutheran Church steeple and was intrigued by how it functioned. He made a scaled-down version of the clock using gears, wheels and bushings he fashioned in his machine shop. After four years of work, he was successful in producing a working grandfather clock.

Over the years, Lemp produced five grandfather clocks in total. He was helped by his nephew, Ernie Piehl. The clocks stood up to nine feet tall and each weighed

over two hundred pounds. One pendulum was actually made from the wheel plate of a Model-T Ford. The clocks were initially given as gifts to members of his family.

Dickson endeavoured to find out where the Lemp clocks are today. She discovered two remain in the possession of Lemp relatives, one is in storage at the Canadian Museum of Natural History, and one owned by the Queens Hotel in Stratford is currently in storage. And, of course, the fifth clock is now proudly displayed by TDHS and is working again, thanks to the care of Dickson’s husband, Mike.

While tracking down the Lemp clocks, Dickson was delighted to meet and get to know a number of Lemp relatives. Many of them were able to make it to the annual meeting.

John K. Lemp was not the only prominent Lemp businessman in Tavistock. His son, John, graduated with a degree in pharmacy

and in optometry, and ran the drug store in town where he also sold spectacles. He is best known perhaps for his photography – over 2,000 of his photographs can be viewed on the tavistockhistory.ca website. And John K. Lemp’s grandson, Leonard, was also a pharmacist.

Following Dickson’s presentation, the TDHS board of directors for the next year was introduced. This includes Brian Bennett, Paul Bartlett, Bob Rudy, Donna Dickson, Tom Zimmerman, Walter Kurzatz, Joan Bartlett, Susan Pellow and Denise McLachlin. In preparation for the AGM, the front room of the museum was reorganized by Sherrill Calder and Donna Wilson, and the back room was filled with displays of “All Things Lemp” courtesy of Marilyn Pearson, Tom, Susan and Donna.

Those attending the AGM were invited back to see the new Lemp clock acquisition and the Lemp displays.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM MOSHER)

Lemp family relatives who attended the TDHS annual general meeting. Pictured in the front row, from left to right, are Kathy Rosenberg, Sharon Tychoniak, Mary Lou Miller and Margaret Rose Cooper. In the back row, from left, are Michael Miller, Jessica Farr and Nancy Farr.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MARILYN PEARSON)

The interior of the TDHS museum showing the “All Things Lemp” display.