

Peace will long remember him



Grande Prairie's Royal Arch Chapter AF&AM and Canadian Legion Branch lost one of their outstanding pioneer officials when death of William James Norman Leslie occurred Saturday in his 84th year.

Born at Rosland, Ont. Dec. 12, 1888, Mr. Leslie headed out over the Edson Trail with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Leslie and brothers Edward and Bruce, in 1912 for the Peace Country Readers of the Grande Prairie Herald of Nov. 4, 1913 were first introduced to the popular young man when a news item read "Norman Leslie, accompanied by his parents Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Leslie, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Milne of Madoc Ont. and Mrs. McKinley of Spruce Grove Alberta arrived last Wednesday by way of Grouard and Sturgeon Lake."

The Leslie family settled in the area later to be known as the Glen Leslie district. By the April 14, 1914 issue of the press, Norman Leslie was named in the sports committee made up of Grande Prairie and area men, in preparation for Victoria Day celebrations.

The post office of "Leslie" was officially established that summer, the May 26, 1914 press noted. "In about 15 days a mail service will be established between Grande Prairie and (old) Bezanson, the route is via Leslie Post Office, Thos. Leslie postmaster to the town site of Bezanson. By July 14, "A new post office has been opened in the Smoky District at Mr. Leslie's resident to be known as Leslie Alberta." Serving the community as Postmaster for seven years, the elder Leslie handed the office over to son Norman who later moved it to the hamlet's one general store.

The Presbyterian Church at Glen Leslie, built by Rev. A.S. Forbes, and opened October 31, 1915 bears the adz marks, marks of Norman Leslie who hauled logs from the Wapiti banks, and with the help of his brother Bruce, helped construct it.

World War One was snatching sons, fathers and sweethearts from Peace River District homes for overseas battle duty. The call made a week ago by Col. McKinney commanding officers of the 66th batt, Canadian Overseas Force has been answered by 23 young Men from the district" the Grande Prairie Herald reported September 7, 1915. "Examinations took place at Lake Saskatoon and Grande Prairie by Dr. M.L. MacDonald." That night, "At Lake Saskatoon supper and dance is being given in honor of the recruits who are leaving Wednesday morning." Norman Leslie was one of them. Wounded at the Front, he was welcomed back to Glen Leslie three years later following the Armistice.

Married to the former Gladys Bryenton, Jan. 1, 1923, the couple left the Glen Leslie farm to settle at Dimsdale in 1930, where Mr. Leslie operated a general store. By March 14, 1965, the Northern Tribune reported, "Some 30 friends tendered a surprise farewell party to Norman Leslie on the eve of his departure for Beaverlodge where he has taken over the Massey-Harris agency. One of the many pleasing incidents of the evening occurred when he was presented with a gold Gillette razor. J. L. McIntosh who made the presentation, referred to the regret the district felt on losing such a valued citizen."

However, the community didn't lose him for long. In another year, Mr. Leslie had returned as Dimsdale's storekeeper and had added the Alberta Wheat Pool elevator to his duties. He was to remain in both for the next thirty years.

By 1940 long, active in and now president of the Grande Prairie Branch, Canadian Legion, Mr. Leslie was toastmaster when 95 World War One veterans met at Speke Hall for Remembrance Day observances. Already World War Two was overshadowing family hearths and the Norman Leslie hearth was one of those. In 1942 he was again honored along with others. The press of July 16 reported "Veterans of the First Great War were guests of the Army at a banquet held at the Grande Prairie Military Training Centre during Army Week."

Responding in his second call at his country's Colors, Mr. Leslie was about to rejoin the Army. The Herald-Tribune of Sept. 17, 1942 carried this news "Norman Leslie, veteran of the first Great War and civilian recruiting representative in the present war for the Grande Prairie district, all Saturday night was given a farewell dance at the Dimsdale Hall by people of the community on the eve of his departure to become a member of the Veterans Guard of Canada. At midnight the dance was halted and Lewis Hawkes, on behalf of the district, presented Mr. Leslie with a purse of money. Mr. Leslie was president of the Grande Prairie Branch, Canadian Legion, in 1940 and has served on the executive since the early days. For the last six years he has operated the Pool elevator at Dimsdale."

At the end of war hostilities, he returned to his store and elevator duties, to remain until retirement and to move to Grande Prairie in 1968.

Sometime in the years he was honored as a Life Member of the Legion Branch.

Mr. Leslie also helped establish the Corps of Commissionaires serving in that capacity from 1962-1970.

In addition to contributions to home and country, Mr. Leslie served the Order of Masonry for 60 years, both in Ontario and in Alberta. Early member of the Royal Arch Chapter, AF&A.M, he presided as Master of the Lodge in 1938; is remembered as well, in the following capacities: Past District Deputy, Grand Lodge of Alberta; Part First Principal, Wapiti Chapter; Past Grand Superintendent, District One, Royal Arch; and as a member of the Shrine Club.

Beside his widow, Mr. Leslie is survived by son Keith of Lethbridge; daughter Jean (Mrs. Elwood Mooney) of Clairmont; seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild: also brother Bruce of Madoc, Ont. His brother Edward predeceased him in 1948.

Members of Grande Prairie Lodge Number 105, AF&AM, and Legion members are requested to attend the funeral of Norman Leslie at 2 p.m. tomorrow at Oliver Funeral Chapel.