

NORMAN & GLADYS LESLIE

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Dimsdale PO Finally Closes

By JOHN PIFER

Herald - Tribune Staff Writer

The Dimsdale post office is officially closed — 35 years later than the federal government originally intended.

The reason they didn't shut it down 35 years ago? Norman Leslie.

Mr. Leslie was honored here

yesterday by the Postmaster-General of Canada for those 35 (nearly 36) years as postmaster in this small community.

It was because he "protested" the closure of the post office in 1931 that it continued until now to function.

Mr. Leslie was assistant at that time, and when the postmaster left, the government sent an order to have all the equipment crated and shipped out on the next train.

Instead, Mr. Leslie wrote to the government saying there was a need for a postal headquarters in that area, having travelled throughout the countryside gathering opinions.

So, the government decided to let it operate "a while longer."

Like 35 years.

In recognition of his service to the department, Grande Prairie postmaster Carmen Edgson presented Mr. Leslie with a plaque from Postmaster - General Jean Pierre Cote, and written appreciation of his work.

There was someone else who helped Mr. Leslie throughout his years at Dimsdale, and also when he was postmaster for the Glen Leslie area — his wife Gladys.

She has been assistant - postmaster at Dimsdale since her husband took over, and when he joined the armed forces for

World War II, Mrs. Leslie stepped in as postmistress those four years.

Now, more than 50 years in the postal service have ended for Mr. Leslie.

Dimsdale is now set up under a rural route system and people in the area collect their mail in Grande Prairie, or in a few cases, at Beaverlodge.

What are the Leslies going to miss the most?

"The people. The ones who come to mail a letter or pick up their mail and sit and talk with us. In the winter we gathered around the potbellied old stove and spoke of everything under the sun," said Mr. Leslie.

"I like to think people will still drop in, as they have always done since we've been here," chipped in his wife.

"We have had our hard times, but it has generally been an extremely pleasant life here, and we have made, I trust, many friends," said Mr. Leslie.

Postal service is nothing new in his family. His father Thomas was the postmaster at Glen Leslie for quite a while, as was his brother Edward, before he himself took over there.

Now 78, Mr. Leslie doesn't believe in inactivity. He will be with the corps of commissioners in Grande Prairie and come into the city each day, from the centre.

Peace will long remember him



Norman Leslie

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 Roslin, 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 to the sports committee made up of Grande Prairie and district 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 townsite of Bezanson." By July 14, "A new post office has been opened in the Smoky district at Mr. Leslie's residence 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 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 Officer 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 a 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, 1935, 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 to his second call to 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, on Saturday night was given a farewell dance in 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&AM, he presided as Master of the Lodge in 1938; is remembered as well, in the following capacities: Past District Deputy, Grand Lodge of Alberta; Past 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 Rooney) 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.



LESLIE - William James Norman Leslie passed away at Grande Prairie on May 27, 1972 at the age of 83 years.

Mr. Leslie was born in 1888 at Roslin, Ontario and has been a resident of the Glen Leslie, Dimsdale and Grande Prairie areas for the past 60 years. He leaves to mourn his passing his loving wife Mrs. Gladys Leslie; 1 son Keith of Lethbridge; 1 daughter Mrs. Elwood (Jean) Rooney of Clairmont; 7 grandchildren; 1 great grandchild; 1 brother Bruce of Queenborough Ontario, he was predeceased by one brother Edward in January 1948.

Funeral services were held on May 30 at 2 p.m. from the Oliver Funeral Chapel with Rev. C. Biglow officiating, interment followed in the Glen Leslie Cemetery.

Donations to the Heart Fund would be appreciated.

Arrangements were by the Oliver Funeral Chapel.

GP seniors' problems reach beyond the dollar

By BRENDA BROCHU
of our staff

Second of two parts

If most senior citizens in Grande Prairie are able to manage on their incomes, many face problems less tangible than dollars and cents.

The major unmet needs identified in a survey conducted by the Senior Citizens' Recreation Centre about 1½ years ago were for companionship, transportation and handyman-type services. Homemaker services are already provided by Preventive Social Services (PSS) and home nursing by the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON). The recreation centre provides a wide range of recreational activities.

In the survey, conducted door-to-door by the senior citizens themselves, it turned out that less than a quarter of Grande Prairie residents aged 60 and over still had spouses or partners of the opposite sex.

With only 115 in lodges and 125 in nursing homes, nearly three-fourths of Grande Prairie's 900 senior citizens were living in houses or apartments — the majority of them alone.

In the survey, 50 single senior citizens and 12 married couples indicated a desire to be phoned weekly —

suggesting that even marriage is not a fool-proof buffer against loneliness. Two individuals and one couple requested daily phone calls, while one person requested a regular visitor.

The survey also showed that only 108 individuals, mainly men, and 71 married couples had motor vehicles — leaving over 70 per cent of senior citizens without their own transportation. Sixty people requested help with transportation.

Most of the other help requested in the survey was for handyman-type things — window cleaning, snow shovelling, gardening and lawn care.

PLAN SERVICES

Recreation centre co-ordinator Myra Haugseth said the seniors are planning to set up services in all three major areas of need in the new year. Volunteers will phone the lonely, and those with cars will chauffeur those without. The senior citizens' council at the centre is exploring the possibility of obtaining a New Horizons grant to set up a handyman service.

Some local seniors, however, have found other solutions to some of these problems.

Sisters Gladys Leslie and Pearl Moon, two widows in their 70's, have been living

together since Mrs. Leslie's husband died in 1972.

Until this fall they stayed in Mrs. Leslie's home near the hospital, but moved into a two-bedroom apartment this fall to avoid the heavy chores involved in maintaining a house.

"I couldn't do the work in the yard," Mrs. Leslie said. "My daughter had to do it, and I decided she had enough to do at home. She also works."

Mrs. Moon said their main motivation for living together is companionship, not finances. Apartment living, even for two, doesn't come cheap and both occasionally have to dip into their savings, though not every month.

Chores are shared along lines of ability and interest — Mrs. Moon, who is physically stronger, does the upstairs-downstairs work like washing clothes and emptying garbage. Mrs. Leslie does most of the cooking, while the rest of the chores are shared fairly evenly.

NO LONELY TIME

With regular visits and phone calls from relatives, neither finds time to be really lonely. They watch TV, talk, read and Mrs. Leslie is helping with the preparation of a history of the Dimsdale area. Her daughter takes the two ladies shopping every week.

Another senior citizen who

has gotten a new lease on life is Georgina Sutherland, 84. Although she lives with her husband William and receives many visits from friends and relatives, she is almost completely housebound due to a medical condition.

Through the VON's Meals-on-Wheels program, she said, she has been able to meet many new people. Under the program, volunteers from various community groups deliver hot meals to shut-ins over the noon hour.

"I've met so many nice ladies," she said. "Everybody I've met has been so nice."

One of the volunteers, after finding out it was Mrs. Sutherland's birthday, brought her a birthday cake and card in the evening, she said. The volunteer now phones or visits every other day.

From discussions with seniors from a wide range of life situations, those with declining health and eyesight seem to be most in need of the companionship of others.

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