

Backward, turn backward O
time in thy flight,
And make me a boy again,
just for tonight.

Forty-six years ago Percy Menzie, a well known local boy, shook the mud off his feet, left Lindsay, and commenced working in Pontiac, Michigan where he has resided ever since.

Every year he has managed to return to his old home town and it was while renewing acquaintances with a friend of long standing that he recited the piece of poetry above.

"I remember well the days I spent in the old Union School, once known in history as the Grammar School, located on Kent Street, just east of the L.C.V.I." said Mr. Menzies.

"It was a fantastic school, from an architectural point of view" he continued. "It looked more like a picture post card we used to see of castles in the Old Country. A little short man named Frampton was the caretaker and my teachers included Sammy Armour and Duncan McDougal"

There are many residents of Lindsay and district who will remember Mr. Menzies' father, the late R. J. (Bob) Menzies, who was the drygoods man in the Bradburn store, and he also had the job of manager of the old Opera House (Owned and operated by Bradburn) which was located in the top floor of the present Town Hall.

The stage was at the west end, and at the front or east end of the Hall was the stairway over which there was a large gallery. "It was fun" said Mr. Menzies, "when we boys would hide in the gallery and see the shows."

“My father was quite a character. He was connected for a time with the Lindsay Red-birds, champions of the Midland baseball league. He was somewhat of an artist with pen and brush and had some noble ideas to boost attendance at the ball park. One day he placed a barrel on the wide walk in front of the Post Office, on which he tacked a sign which read “Don’t look in this barrel”, but most passers-by did. Looking into the barrel, they read all about the game of ball to be played between Lindsay and Peterboro.”

Mr. Menzies recalled the days when the family lived on Sussex Street, when after a heavy rain storm, waters rushed down from Ops Township, poured down through the south ward and carried away portions of the sidewalk. “It was generally my job to wade through the water and mud and haul that sidewalk back from Kent Street at Victoria Park. There was an old wooden box drain running through the park, and the sidewalk generally was

wedged against a small bridge which was on Kent Street."

"I remember Richard Sylvester, for I worked for the Company for some time. Sylvester owned a number of small frame cottages which were on his property (now Victoria Park). In fact he took the cottages down and turned the property over to the town. The park should have been named Sylveser Park".

"When I quit school I lived for a time in Peterboro with my Aunt, and as I always had a hankering for machinery, I was taken on the payroll at the C.G.E. In order to get the job I put on a pair of long pants and told the foreman I was 13, because they would not hire anyone under that age. It was a good move for me. I was given the big pay of five cents an hour, and after I paid \$1.50 for my room and board, I had a dollar and a half left for myself for the week. I was, however, allowed to go on piece work, and when I quit and returned to Lindsay I was getting a dollar a day and that was big pay. I wanted to get back to Lindsay, but had to start at Sylvester's at my old pay of five cents an hour. It was not long before I was earning as much or more than I did in Peterboro" Mr. Menzies said.

Percy Menzies was a member of the first Lindsay Y.M.C.A. which was located on the second floor of the Blackwell and Adams store, now the Royal Bank. The "Y" was chiefly a reading and game room with Bible classes on Sunday, and was managed by a man named Walker.

Later the "Y" started up in grand fashion at the corner of Kent and Lindsay Streets, now the present Jake Houzer store, and in the basement was a large swimming pool and bowling alley. It was shortly after manager Walker was electrocuted in the "Y" that the institution folded up.

In the meantime, Percy Menzies was identified in sport, particularly as a short distance sprinter, then as a five-miler. When the famous Tom Longboat, the elongated Indian runner, came to town, young Menzies ran eight miles and received second prize. Longboat continued on for twenty miles. Later Longboat represented Canada at the Olympic games.

Having a long memory, Percy Menzies remembered the days of wooden sidewalks and wooden verandahs on Kent Street, with hitching posts for horses. In those days runaway teams often galloped down Kent Street and the pedestrians had to run into stores to avoid getting run down.

One of Lindsay's parks, probably the only one at the time, was on the east side of Victoria Avenue, between Kent and Peel Streets.

"I remember someone telling me that the original ball park was located at the rear of the then McCarty's hotel. The hotel later became the Children's Shelter, and is now the Moose Hall. It was told that this entire block was surrounded by a board fence, and that many baseball games were played there. Many kids spied on the game through knot holes in the fence".

Our friend from Michigan almost became a soldier, and this was when he tried as a lad to enlist for the Boer War. He was turned down by the officer in Peterboro. "It was a great day" stated Mr. Menzies, "when the Lindsay boys returned from the Boer War. The main street was decorated with evergreen trees, flags flew, and there was a large triumphal arch across Kent Street

made from evergreen trees."

Major General Sir Sam Hughes was in the Boer War, and there was a chap named "Tubby" Williams who worked at the stone grist mill".

Historical progress in Lindsay was mentioned when the days were brought back to mind when Lindsay had gas street lamps. According to Mr. Menzies, the plant was first located on Kent Street west, and a large reservoir was partly unearthed when the late Pat Jakins was digging out a rear lawn. Afterwards the gas plant apparently moved to William Street north, and it has stated that a large gas reservoir is still underground behind the stone wall at Macdonnell park at the rear of the present hydro property.

Carbon street lamps came next, according to our informant. Large glass globes, fitted with carbon sticks were apparently lowered each week and fitted with new carbons. Youngsters used to pick up the used carbon sticks and use them for marking or drawing on boards or paper.

Electric lights followed with the introduction of electricity to Lindsay, by B. F. Reesor who was followed as manager nine years later by his son Walter E. Reesor.

The tall overhanging electric lights were replaced by modern magnetite lights in the days when R. M. Beal was mayor. These street lights were more ornamental in their appearance, and located on short standards. The present system followed as more improved lighting was brought into vogue.

Being an expert machinist, Percy Menzies was engaged at highly skilled work at the Sylvester plant, and had considerable to do with the early days of the lorry, manufactured by this firm for railway companies and the United States. He also designed and made his own inboard boat motor, and made one of the first radios in Lindsay, a set which was turned over to the Victoria County Museum.

By this time the second cup of coffee was cold, and Mr. Menzies and his chauffeur, former Mayor Bert Hick, left the lakeside cottage for Lindsay. The memoirs of this genial gentleman would fill a book. For over half a century he has returned annually to Lindsay.