

Many years ago the town of Lindsay had its share of interesting people, such as a phrenologist, a business man who boasted he could tell a man's character by his handwriting; a fortune teller who had a large clientelle, a ventriloquist, a business man who was an expert on the slack wire, as well as a juggler, a pair of midget twins who gained renown on the stage, six brothers who became famous as a saxaphone sextette in Europe -- plus many other interesting people.

The gentleman who read bumps on the head and announced the character, or more often, the predicted future of his admirer was Professor Dean. He was also a

staff writer for a local newspaper and a gardener who had choice strawberries. He was professionally known as a phrenologist.

E. E. W. McGaffey owned a drygoods store but it was when he was a member of council that he practiced his idea of reading character by one's handwriting. This he always did when the council had to hire new employees. Some times he was right.

The McGaffey store was located where the Don Scott Store is now situated on Kent St., and this honourable gentleman, who was a bachelor, owned and occupied the large brick house one door east of the bowling alley.

## **PALM READERS**

Fortune tellers were numerous, and at times the Gypsies spent two or three days in town reading the palms of many a young or old man or woman, but more particularly those of girls who wished to know something about their future boy friends.

For some reason the Gypsies were usually chased out of town by the police, but they managed to rake in many shillings when they coaxed the gullible people to cross their Gypsy hands with coins.

Lindsay also had so-called fortune tellers, particularly one who lived in the east ward three or four decades ago. This little woman who lived all alone had a string of customers and she was actually loved for the manner in which she read fortunes at the bottom of tea cups. The same fortune teller could do a satisfactory job reading cards.

A local was well and favourably known as a ventriloquist. His Punch and Judy show on the market was always a crowd getter.

### **UNDER THE SPELL**

Hypnotists were strong attention getters when traveling shows came to the Academy Theatre, and it was a common sight to see young men hypnotized in the audience and see them walk up the steps to the stage.

At one show a young man under the spell climbed down from the gallery to the auditorium floor, and it was a common practise to stick pins into the bodies of those under the spell.

Another crowd getter was when the show promoters hypnotized young girls, carried them to a local store, and placed them on view in the window. The subjects, stretched out at full length, were apparently suspended in mid-air, and remained perfectly motionless for hours. This was an advertisement for the night's show in the Academy Theatre.

Lindsay also had a smart unusual youth who made sets of artificial teeth although he never attended dental college and had no diplomas. Two or three times this young man faced the magistrate because he practised dentistry without having a license. The teeth, however, were perfect and hard to break. When some buyers were dubious about the perfection of the ivories, this would-be dentist thought nothing of dashing the teeth on the cement walk to demonstrate they would not break.

## **BOOTLEGGERS**

Bootleggers the town always had, as well as the surrounding villages. One officer of the law got a conviction when he told the court that after being unsuccessful several times in catching this particular bootlegger, he noticed two or three hens staggering across the yard and

they appeared to be ill and dazed. They were actually tipsy, and the officer traced the intoxicated hens to a corner in an old shed where a real stiff mash was found. The contents would cause any man, or hen, to stagger.

Past records show that Lindsay had a number of young business men who were adept at walking the slack wire and juggling, like Felix Forbert. He was a dapper young boot and shoe merchant and he was a real booster for the Town of Lindsay as a member of the Advancement Club, the Board of Trade, the Town Council, and other bodies. Many performances at amateur shows were never complete without the talent of Felix Forbert, who was also good at juggling tennis balls and swing clubs.

Lindsay had a number of talented stage performers. For instance the Pepper Twins, young gentleman midgets who were clever at dancing and singing and could

play trumpets. The Twins were a hit on Broadway in New York and in other cities abroad.

The six Brown Brothers, of international saxophone fame, were native sons of Lindsay. There were many other names of talented Lindsay people whose connection with local stage performances will be brought to print in a succeeding issue.

A Lindsay actress, Mrs. Charles Smith, was equally popular as the wives of the Marks brothers, although a later vintage than Maybell and Kitty Mark. Mrs. Smith, whose maiden name was Edwards, was born and raised in Lindsay and entered her stage career as a member of her husband's travelling show troupe.

May Edwards as leading lady in the Smith Shows, was particularly popular in the New England States with headquarters at Portland, Maine. This talented actress had a big and wide range of repertoires and excelled in dramatic roles.

Charlie Smith retired in Lindsay and for some time operated a tobacco store on Kent Street where the Sally Ann store is now located. He became president of the Lindsay Kiwanis Club and for a

time was manager of the Kiwanis Arena in conjunction with Don Osborne, also a Kiwanian.

When in Lindsay the Smiths brought back to the Academy Theatre one of their most popular shows "The Old Homestead". Mrs. S. Elsdon, Regent Street, Lindsay, is a sister of the late Mrs. Charles Smith.