



Preserving, promoting and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

Our Cultural Moment for January takes a look back at The Rural Doctor

It is part of our story, our pioneers who settled and cleared the area, our ancestors. Who was there to help? Many in the village and town would rely on the local pharmacy to help cure their ailments. The rural community would rely on the country doctor who would arrive by horse and buggy or sleigh depending on the weather.

A most notable person of our past and contributor to the well being of our ancestors was Dr. Abraham Groves. He was born in Peterborough in 1847 and his parents moved to the 1st Line of Garafraxa by sleigh in 1856. After his graduation from Medical School in Toronto in 1867, he came back to the area to establish his practice. As a pioneer in the medical field himself as a surgeon, he was well known, and his services were requested from Kincardine and Owen Sound and south to Guelph. Many overnight trips by train would keep him in a town when word got out that he was there. He would serve the locals; Belwood, Arthur and Mount Forest by horse and buggy. The first known appendectomy and hysterectomy were performed on patients on their kitchen tables in Garafraxa. On one occasion, his wife noted that Abraham left for Arthur first thing in the morning to attend to a patient, was summoned to Mount Forest so he changed horses, went north, performed a surgery, changed horses again and went on to Varney to another patient, turned around and got home the next morning.

Dr. Groves's son, William Abraham Groves graduated Medical School in 1904 at the same time as a hospital and nursing school were being established in Fergus by his father. Dr. William Groves practiced in Arthur until his wife died in 1910. Meanwhile, Dr. Abraham Groves trained nurses to assist his surgeries at the new hospital. From Arthur, Ruth Buckland, Millie Buschlen, Agnes Mitchell, Bertha McDowell, Elizabeth Morrison, Florence Povey and Maude Coffey. Mount Forest nursing graduates include Charlotte McDonald, Rebecca Robinson, Lillian Dodds, Sadie Connelly and Mabel Anderson. From Kenilworth, Ada Lynes and from Conn, Nola Mournahan. He felt it would save time if the patients could come to him and with the assistance of onsite nurses, he could do more. One of his nurses timed an appendectomy from open to close at 2 minutes, 40 seconds. He performed his last surgery at 82 and died in 1935 at the age of 88

Dr. Abraham Groves was a small in stature, curly haired, witty Irishman who served our ancestors well, maybe a contributing factor to why we are here and through family research, I am proud to call him cousin!

Submitted by Bonny McDougall; Wellington North Cultural Roundtable