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"OLD TIME STUFF".

Reminiscences of the Ottawa of Earlier Days. Personages, Scenes and Incidents Recalled for Evening Citizen Readers

This is the story of Dr. E. Stone Wiggins, Ottawa's once world-renowned weather prophet—though the truth must be told that while he was alive Ottawa did him scant honor, despite the fact that all over the English-speaking world, and also in many countries of Europe, he had been largely accepted and appreciated by the ordinary people at least.

In the records and documents which he left, and which are in the possession of his brother, Mr. C. Malcolm Wiggins, of Ottawa, there is ample evidence of widespread appreciation—in the form of hundreds of letters of sympathy and acknowledgment from all parts of the United States, Great Britain, Australia, South Africa and India.

"A prophet hath honor save in his own country," and so it was with E. Stone Wiggins. Perhaps the fact that Mr. Wiggins was a working civil servant (a member of the Finance Department) and not a professional prognosticator, had something to do with the lack of real recognition here.

E. Stone Wiggins died in 1910, after a residence in the Capital of 22 years. Since 1910 the population of Ottawa has increased 24,000, it follows that many of the old Time Stuff readers know little or nothing about him than one did much over a period of thirty years to advertise Ottawa to the outside world. The story which follows should therefore prove enlightening to many new citizens, as well as mentally-awaking to the old timers.

Came in 1878.

Stone Wiggins came to Ottawa in 1878 from Queen's county, New Brunswick, shortly after Sir John Macdonald had come into power that year on the Pacific Scandal issue. Mr. Wiggins had been a successful candidate for the Conservative party in Queen's county.

Not Star Gazer.

This fact is thrown in merely to show that he was an ordinary everyday, normal practical being and not some mere dreamer or star gazer. As an additional proof of this it should be told that in his early days Dr. Wiggins had been a superintendent of schools in Prince Edward county, Ont. Later he attended the university of Pennsylvania and surgery at Philadelphia and graduated as an M.D. After that he became headmaster of the high school at Ingersoll, Ont. In 1871 he was appointed principal of the institute for the blind at Brantford. In 1874 he went back to his old home at New Brunswick and established a boys' college at St. John. In this connection it should be said that Mr. Wiggins was a man of great erudition. From Albert College he received the degree of master of arts. Before coming to Ottawa he had written several books on astronomy, one entitled "Architecture of the Heavens," another "Days of the Creation."

In 1878 he contested Queen's county, and then obtained the appointment to a position in the Finance Department.

As Weather Prophets.

So much for the background of the story. And now to the story itself. The first that was heard of Stone Wiggins as a weather prophet was in 1881, by the following year he had attracted to himself a measure of attention.

His first prediction was made early in June of 1881, and was sent by mail to every one of the leading newspapers of Canada. That letter was published in The Citizen under the heading, "An Astronomer's Warning."

First Prediction.

He wrote:

"As the sun will be at its inferior conjunction on the 24th instant, and as the planets will be but a few degrees out of conjunction, I would advise seamen to get their vessels into safe harbors till that date be passed. Terrific gales, accompanied by hail, will blow from the southeast along the Atlantic coast. Brilliant showers of meteors will occur within the period, and the tides will be unusually high in the West Indies, and hurricanes will prevail on the east side of the Rocky Mountains."

The Associated Press correspondent at Ottawa, knowing that Dr. Wiggins had written works on astronomy, got the prediction on the wires, and that evening and the following morning it found space in every newspaper of importance on this continent and in Mexico.

Storm Came Off.

Among Dr. Wiggins' papers is an article cut from the Hamilton Spectator date not given, in which the spectator enthusiastic over the remarkable fulfilment of Dr. Wiggins' prophecy, as follows:

"This gale, which was so accurately foretold and which for its wide area, its violence and destructiveness has had few equals, first showed itself in the Southern States, its fury increasing as it proceeded northward, where many lives have been lost and millions worth of property destroyed.

"On Saturday, 25th June (1881), it swept over Georgia and Virginia, uprooting trees, throwing down chimneys and prostrating buildings, burying many in the ruins and carrying timbers through the air as if made of straws.

"Thousands of bushels of wheat were literally pounded into the earth and for 24 hours the hailstones lay six inches deep upon the ground.

Hit Gulf as St. Lawrence.

"On Sunday, 26th, it appeared as far east as the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and at points in New Brunswick the hail could have been collected in bushels. On Monday it appeared at Washington, doing immense damage to the city.

"At the same moment it struck into New Hampshire. At Penacook half the houses in the town had their windows smashed. Many buildings were severely damaged and freight cars, at Concord, on the Northern Railway were blown off the track.

Train Derailed.

"A similar event took place at Wabash, Indiana, where a whole train of freight cars were lifted from the track and thrown down the embankment.

Loss of Life.

"The states of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania appear to have been the greatest sufferers, owing to the loss of life and the destruction of churches and public buildings.

"Ontario had a share in this wide stretch of destruction. From Milverton, Erie, St. Catharines and Welland come despatches describing the destruction of property, ruined fields and uprooted fruit trees, and the destruction of buildings to an extent never before known in these latitudes. At Welland the hurricane was accompanied by hailstones as large as walnuts. In the township of Erie it swept everything before it."

To the Letter.

Toronto Mail extracts are also recorded. In one the Mail says: "The prediction was fulfilled to the letter."

Such was Dr. Wiggins' first effort and the acknowledgment it received.

A February Blizzard.

The next prediction concerned a blizzard which was to hit Canada and the United States on February 23rd, 1882. In Dr. Wiggins' papers is a column clipping from The Citizen of February 22, 1882, in which The Citizen discusses in detail the fulfilment of the prediction under the heading, "The Wiggins Blizzard."

Great Storm of 1882.

Dr. Wiggins' third effort was made in August of the same year. In The Citizen of August 21st, Dr. Wiggins wrote:

"A heavy gale, accompanied by rain and high tides, will occur on the coast of the Maritime Provinces September 12. It will strike Ottawa from the northeast. In Manitoba it will occur 36 hours later and will be especially furious."

This storm came as per schedule, and was the one in which H.M.S. Phoenix was stranded on Prince Edward Island and the Asia was lost on Lake Huron with a hundred souls, including Mr. Sparks, of Ottawa.

Big Storm of 1883.

Then followed predictions of storms for February 9, 1883, and March 7, 1883. The storm came on March 8, 1883, was predicted by Dr. Wiggins as for September 22nd, 23rd, 1882.

In The Citizen of September 22, 1882, Mr. Wiggins predicted that a great storm, accompanied by a tidal wave, would occur March 8 following, or almost exactly three months later.

His letter making this prediction was telegraphed verbatim by the Associated Press and the following morning appeared in all the daily newspapers of America, Great Britain, and Europe. In this time the papers had begun to take notice of Dr. Wiggins and to give his prominence to his prediction.

The Globe Open-minded.

The Toronto Globe, commenting on the forecast, said:

"We are not among those who are disposed to ridicule the idea that such meteorological disturbances can be foretold and that such effort prevents the timely action. Prof. Wiggins should explain to the public upon which his prognostication is based."

Dr. Wiggins' documents contain a number of such favorable comments. The Belleville Ontario of September 27, 1882, said: "Dr. Wiggins on two previous occasions foretold with remarkable accuracy the date of important storms and has by this means acquired a prophetic reputation of wide range."

The Church Herald of Halifax advised its readers to offer prayers that the tempest might be warded off.

Half Opinions.

But while the press and some European scientists were inclined to await results, the prediction was scoffed at by the government weather bureau men.

A Mr. Burnett, underwriter, of Toronto, telegraphed to the meteorological office at London asking advice. The reply of the bureau replied sarcastically:

"The information to which you allude emanates from some man in the Finance Department of the Canadian government. It is utterly groundless, and anything can predict the weather two days before such a storm set in. The idea that the Admiralty have cruising ships in every part of the ocean is absurd and utterly false."

Storm Arrives.

The storm was due at Halifax on the afternoon of the 16th of March and up to the last moment the signal officers declared the storm would be fine. The Toronto bureau had predicted:

"Fair; considerably milder weather."

In his diary Dr. Wiggins wrote on the 16th:

"The New York Herald sent its special reporter to interview me to say that they had despatches from every part of the continent, and that almost a perfect calm prevailed everywhere."

Prediction Fulfilled.

The next entry in the diary (a few days later) is in a triumphant tone. He wrote:

"Such a change. All the great newspapers of the continent are now crowding out the front page columns of telegrams announcing the fulfilment of my prediction. It would be useless to attempt to quote the long columns of telegrams, but a few are selected herewith:

"Toronto Globe: 'His prediction verified.'

"Mr. W. G. Black (of Ottawa) wired me from Montreal: 'Yesterday he was slaying: Your storm accordingly.'

"The Montreal Witness: 'Signally verified the storm arrived.'

"The Ottawa Free Press in large type and, like true prophet, how his prediction was fulfilled."

The following extractions of headings from the Sydney Herald, and the Halifax Chronicle, Dr. Wiggins quoted the Hull, England, Nova Scotia and Boston papers, which have literally fulfilled and that the storm had been the worst in the history of the Hull fishing fleet, that Halifax and thirty-seven of its vessels having been lost. The lord mayor of London asked for subscriptions to aid the poor destitute widows.

He Was Right.

The Montreal Herald of March 12 said:

"Whatever the sceptic may affect to think about Dr. Wiggins, who has been so persistent, even dogged, in foretelling up to the last moment, in face of apparent improbability and popular resentment, that we were on the eve of the most terrific storm that has ever been witnessed, THE EVENTS OF SAT-URDAY AND YESTERDAY HAVE PROVED THAT HE WAS RIGHT.

"The gale at Halifax, where Mr. Wiggins desired so much to go that he wrote to Halifax for it, was fully what he anticipated."

Worst Ever Experienced.

The Yarmouth, N.S., Times of March 14 said: "The storm of Saturday has come and gone. Looking back on the signs and its rise and roaring winds of last week, actual observations show that the storm was the worst we ever experienced since observations have been taken here. The storm was sufficient of a hurricane that it had come upon us unexpectedly there would have been a great loss of life." The Times gives Mr. Wiggins the credit for the source of knowledge, free credit for the warning of many vessels in port.

The diary continues to quote newspapers from all parts of Canada, the United States and Mexico in much detail, showing that the storm had not only great with violence practically the entire continent but that it had been very heavy all over the Atlantic Ocean. Many vessels limped into port telling of terrible battles with the elements and of shipwrecks witnessed.

Other Storms.

Let us pass on.

Dr. Wiggins predicted bad storms for February 27, to 29, 1884; 19th to 21st March, 1883, and March 7 to 9, 1884. In all these cases the storms appear to have come off on scheduled time, and were severe. The storms were described in many newspaper clippings in proof of the fulfilment of the prediction.

Grey Famous.

Up to this period (1885) scores of letters were received by Dr. Wiggins from private persons from all over America, some asking details, others congratulating. In fact, even as far back as 1883, after his first successes, Dr. Wiggins received many requests to lecture, and in April, 1883, he secured leave of absence from the Finance Department, and did lecture in Montreal, Quebec, Halifax and several points in the Maritime Provinces.

Issued Storm Herald.

About the same time, through the Grip Company of Toronto, he began to publish what he called "The Storm Herald with Almanac" (almanac). The first issue was in 1883. In this Storm Herald he predicted a number of what he called "secondary" and "third" (lesser) storms, due to occur in various parts of the continent.

One copy of a letter directed to the Hop Bitters Co., of Rochester, N.Y., would indicate that they were endeavoring to secure the United States rights for the Storm Herald. Dr. Wiggins wrote them that he had already two good offers from people in the United States.

Attacks Weather Bureau.

In September, 1883, Dr. Wiggins started a campaign against the methods of the meteorological bureau at Toronto, which was then under the direction of Prof. Carpmael. On December 9 he wrote a long letter to Hon. A. W. McLellan, minister of marine, in which he scored the weather bureau, which, he alleged, "though costing over $15,000 per year, was not able to advise shipping interests of the approach of storms in time to be of service to them." He asked that a bureau had recently been established in the "far northwest," the home and the miles from the sea, and for what? "It is to advise Manitoba of the approach of wind or snow? He charged that though it was the duty of the weather bureau to predict Atlantic storms so that people could get the Labrador fishing fleet, "no fore-warning such are ever received. The idea that the Admiralty have cruising ships in every part of the ocean is absurd and utterly false."

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Solid Sense.

On their arrival the Oblate fathers placed the presbytery at the disposal of the Sisters, but as soon as they were able to enter a building of their own to carry on a hospital, the building was a small one but suited the needs. The sisters later received a charter from the legislature to carry on a hospital, the name of General Hospital was given the institution. At first the sisters endured great hardships, but so glad were the people to have a hospital among them that at they contributed liberally towards the support of the Lakefield hospital in food of various evts.

Fever Broke Out.

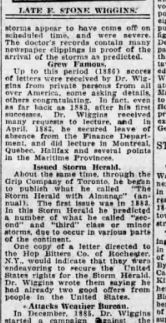
In 1847 the Grey sisters built a large (frame) building for the use of the Water street, near the site of the present Water street.

The work grew and by 1849 the hospital was ready for occupancy. In 1861 the corner stone of the first part of the present large building was laid and in 1862 the building was formally opened by Bishop Guigues and due formalities.

Built Contagious Hospital.

In 1879 the Grey sisters built the St. Anne's contagious diseases hospital on Bronson Hill street, and owned and operated it till the civic contagious diseases hospital was erected on Bronson avenue. The treasurer of the General Hospital consisted of Mr. Jos. Cossitt, Mr. Thos. Ryan and Robillard. In 1859 a medical staff was formed, Dr. Hamilton Hill being the president and consulting physician. In 1897 the hospital was enlarged and in October, 1898, the new wing was formally opened by Governor General, the Earl of Aberdeen. The hospital is today one of the largest and best equipped in the Dominion.

LATE E. STONE WIGGINS.



PHILANTHROPIST

Mrs. Lillian Boutin of Seattle, once an Ottawa girl, Miss Lillian, is going to adopt a baby soon. A Yakima (Wash.) family, hard hit by economic conditions, are going to give away their sixth child. And Mrs. Boutin seems to be the one who'll get it.

CRETONNE FACING

A Paris paper says facings of blue taffeta is faced with cretonne having for a pattern of crimson roses on a cream-colored ground.

WITH RECORD OF SIXTY YEARS OF SERVICE PROTESTANT ORPHANS HOME WILL MAKE ITS FIRST PUBLIC APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL AID

Splendid Institution Has Cared For More Than 4,000 Children and Many Aged Women.

CAMPAIGN WILL BE OPENED FOR $60,000

New Home to be Built in West-End of Ottawa.

The Protestant Orphans' Home of Ottawa has just reached its sixtieth birthday. And what a wonderful record of service the community can be given by this home!

With a beginning of sheltering just one little Protestant homeless woman, this organization has, through six decades, progressed and developed into a large institution in the well-established home, situated now for a number of years on Elgin street, where 60 little children are given a home, and besides there is a refuge branch for aged ladies with accommodation for twenty or more. Since the beginning, the institution has had its varying statistics: children have come, children have gone, or into chosen homes of adoption, and there are now hundreds of people in touch with the young lives who have found in the protective home influence of this orphanage. Among these thousands of young thousand children have been under the care of the home.

Pioneer Workers.

But anniversaries always recall beginnings, and most timely is it to pay tribute to those pioneer workers of sixty years ago who started this institution in Ottawa. Having a true vision of a greater and better city to be, they hearkened to the urgent call of homeless orphans and set about to provide as good a substitute for mother's love and homelike influences as was possible. Mrs. John Grohart, of 211 Daly avenue, is the only surviving member of the original corporation, and despite her eighty-eight years she was good enough to furnish me with all the accuracy of the written record of the early days of the life of the Protestant Orphans' Home. The Mrs. M. F. Bronson, who died not so long ago, and her son, the late Hon. E. H. Bronson, Messrs. Walter and Frank Bronson, Mesdames Ross, Mc-Connell, Lave played so prominent parts in the philanthropic life of Ottawa, is recognized by Mrs. Grohart as one of the first women people with whom the work of the home originated. Then, there another lady, still alive, who came to Ottawa a few years ago and who took a most active part on the staff of the orphanage, is Mrs. John Tilton, widow of the late Col. Tilton. Mrs. Tilton resides at 46 McLaren street.

So closely through all these years has Mrs. Thorburn been identified with the work of this orphanage that a complete record of the boards and friends of the home associate with her would be almost the foundation. Full records of all the boards, members of the board and friends of the home associate with her would be almost the foundation. Full records of all the boards, members of the board and friends of the home associate with her would be almost the foundation. Included in the most precious documents and mementoes of her library is quite a large collection of Protestant orphans' and Protestant Orphans' Home. Peopling the pages are photos of carefully handled some of these well-loved faces, and the inscriptions underneath give valuable information gleaned from the inscriptions on the reverse side of the photo, a collection has been bequeathed to the home.

Missed One Meeting.

In all these sixty years, Mrs. Thorburn only missed attending one meeting of the board, and that a very rare occurrence, and she would not be there if she could not make an extra effort, leave the elements and get to that meeting. Mrs. Thorburn is the last one, however, to be mentioned in this story of her part in building up this institution. It was a labor of love, and to talk with her one realizes how dear to her was the work of the home.

Twenty years ago, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the home, Mrs. Thorburn wrote an "Ode to Orphans" which was published in book form and well illustrated. Just this recent is quite the most accurate and complete of the first 40 years of the life of the Orphans' organization. An extract from a letter of 1877 written by Rev. Dr. Spence, then minister of St. Andrew's church, to the late Mrs. M. F. Bronson is appended to the Thorburn book. This reads: "You refer to the Orphans' Home. Nothing would be more dear to me. I am told, it is prospering well and that you are its shelter for many a poor child. I remember well that it was through your energy and conversation between Mrs. Sewell and Mrs. Jas. Fraser, whom I consulted and spoke to her husband, who then called on me, and with one or two other friends we set about the matter at a meeting. I fear that without your exertions and those of your friends from beyond the St. Lawrence, it could not have reached that state of prosperity it now enjoys."

Initial Plans.

Mrs. Sewell was the wife of Dr. C. S. Sewell, one of the resident physicians, and Mrs. Fraser was a friend of Colonel and Mrs. W. F. Maclaren, of Maclaren's Landing, Ont. Initial plans in organizing the home were laid with the Mrs. Mary Hamilton. To this meeting Mrs. Coffin had invited a few of those whom she thought would be likely to assist in carrying out the purpose.

To quote Mrs. Thorburn as to those who should be paid the credit of the founding of the home, is the following: "The idea of the home originated with Dr. Sewell or Mrs. Coffin, neither can be positively determined. In a notice in the Daily Citizen of the meeting held December 5th, 1862, it says: 'We believe the credit of this convenient is due in a great measure, if not entirely, to the indefatigable exertions of Dr. Sewell.' Mrs. Coffin, who herself wrote the first annual report, calls Dr. Sewell the promoter and also says that, in her opinion, he succeeded in organizing the different denominations.' But the Mrs. Mary Edward Griffin, who was one of those present at the drawing room meeting, always felt that to Mrs. Coffin belonged the credit of the first steps. In the absence of positive proof, we are inclined to think that they should share alike in the honor.

"It is evident from what followed that Mrs. Coffin and Mrs. Coffin's house decided on the desirability and feasibility of undertaking the undertaking, consulted with others, and succeeded in interesting a still wider circle, prominent among whom were Mrs. M. F. Bronson and Mrs. Alex. Spence, wife of the pastor of St. Andrew's church. In singling out these four names as the principal originators of this charity, I would not for one moment undervalue the services of many others who threw themselves heart and soul into this undertaking and gave, when the home was once organized, much of their time and talents to the support of it."

Thus wrote Mrs. Thorburn of the founders. It might be said that Mrs. Coffin's residence, where that drawing room meeting was held, stood at the foot of the locks and was a most picturesque place in early days.

But Two Centres.

In the early cities there were but two public charitable institutions—in Ottawa and there were the two hospitals; the Protestant, at the extreme east of Rideau street, and the Roman Catholic, on Water street. That was why the founding of the Protestant Orphans' Home the third public charitable institution was added.

Mrs. Thorburn was present at the first meeting called by public announcement, and that meeting took place in a hall in the upper storey of an adjoining shed Mr. George Hay had made to his block at 54 and 56 Sparks street. Mr. Hay's block was sold in 1862 to Messrs. Absarm and Bennett, and the foundation