

THE LITTLE/KIRKLAND FAMILY LOT – 2008
(Cemetery File Photo)

DR. WILLIAM LITTLE

(November 18, 1842 – November 19, 1875)

Section H, Block 40, Lot 4

Although he lived in Petoskey only two short years, Dr. William Little's list of contributions to the area is anything but small. He was a man of many "firsts": the first postmaster of Petoskey, first physician, first to build and operate a hotel, first to open a drug store, organize a school board, and one of the first to be buried in the town's first cemetery.

Raised in Darlington, Ontario, the oldest of seven children, Dr. Little pursued a brief career in teaching. He married Anne Devitt, also of Ontario, on Christmas Day, 1863, and by spring of 1864 had decided to pursue medicine rather than education. He enrolled in the University of Michigan Medical School that fall and graduated in 1867 with high hon-ors. He practiced in Chicago and Ionia then moved to Reed City where, in 1870, his budding career took a sad turn. The selfless doctor treated a family with smallpox and, when no one else would risk it, helped carry and bury the body of the daughter who had died from the disease. Rather than praise his magnanimity, his patients deserted him for fear of contagion. What must have seemed a desperate situation to Dr. Little proved to be incredibly beneficial to Petoskey – for it prompted him to pursue a fresh start in a new settlement.

Dr. Little and his brother Robert arrived to Petoskey on a steam tug in June 1873, both looking for a place to establish business. H. O. Rose, whom the brothers met aboard the barge, convinced them of the region's potential for growth once the railway was completed, and the Little brothers decided to stay. Dr. Little returned to Reed City for wife Annie and two-year-old daughter May, and together they arrived on November 1, 1873, aboard the very first train to service this area.

Dr. Little lost no time gathering building materials and spent that first isolated winter building a motel with his brother. Located at 433 East Lake Street, this first "real" hotel, which the brothers named the Rose House in honor of friend H.O. Rose, opened in 1874. The brothers, anxious to see what spring would bring, were thrilled by the number of passengers who arrived on the first trip of the year and who boarded at

the Rose House. Tourism boomed so quickly, in fact, that by the second season the brothers chose to add on, doubling the capacity of the hotel to meet demand.

The hotel soon housed not only guests but also the town's post office (where Dr. Little served as Petoskey's first postmaster), first drug store, and first Protestant church services. Beyond the hotel, Dr. Little also helped promote education and local government. With the close of Porter's mission school in 1874, Dr. Little, A. McMillan, and L. Ingalls organized a school board and hired Mrs. Rachel Oakley to teach. Dr. Little also served as Bear Creek Township Supervisor – thanks to Ingalls' sneaky substitutions of Little ballots for every Porter vote that was made. (Supposedly, the doctor never even knew of this scandal.)

Despite all his community and business interests, Dr. Little's first love was always medicine. Known for his compassion and generosity, Dr. Little traveled wherever there was need, treating Indians, railway work-ers, or settlers as far north as Cross Village, often receiving little or no pay for his services. He frequently crossed the bay to Little Traverse by horse, and even walked across for supplies one night in the winter of 1874 when starvation threatened the village. His last trek across the ice occurred in the early spring of 1875. On his way to Cross Village to set the broken leg bone of an Indian boy, Dr. Little's cutter got caught in ice, forcing him to trudge through slush and water to free it. He cared for the boy and returned home without further incident – but thoroughly soaked and chilled.

It was this event on which his brother Robert Little blamed his brother's death at age 33. Whether due to the weather or the sheer stress of serving his settlement in so many ways, Dr. Little suffered from chest pain for some time. He had decided to escape to Florida for some much needed rest and relaxation, but suffered a heart attack on the way and died in Grand Rapids on November 19, 1875. A large crowd gathered as his body was carried into Petoskey by locomotive, paying tribute to the man whose impact on the region in only two years had made such a difference. Dr. Little was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, which he as Supervisor had purchased for the town just weeks prior to his passing. He and his son, Willie, (transferred from a burial site in Reed City, where he had died at age one) were the second and third to be buried in Greenwood, just after Mrs. Nathan J. (Hattie) Tracy, who died Oct. 16, 1875.



DR. WILLIAM AND ANNIE LITTLE
AS PORTRAYED BY
JERRY CHRISTIN AND BETSY WILLIS
(Cemetery File Photo)

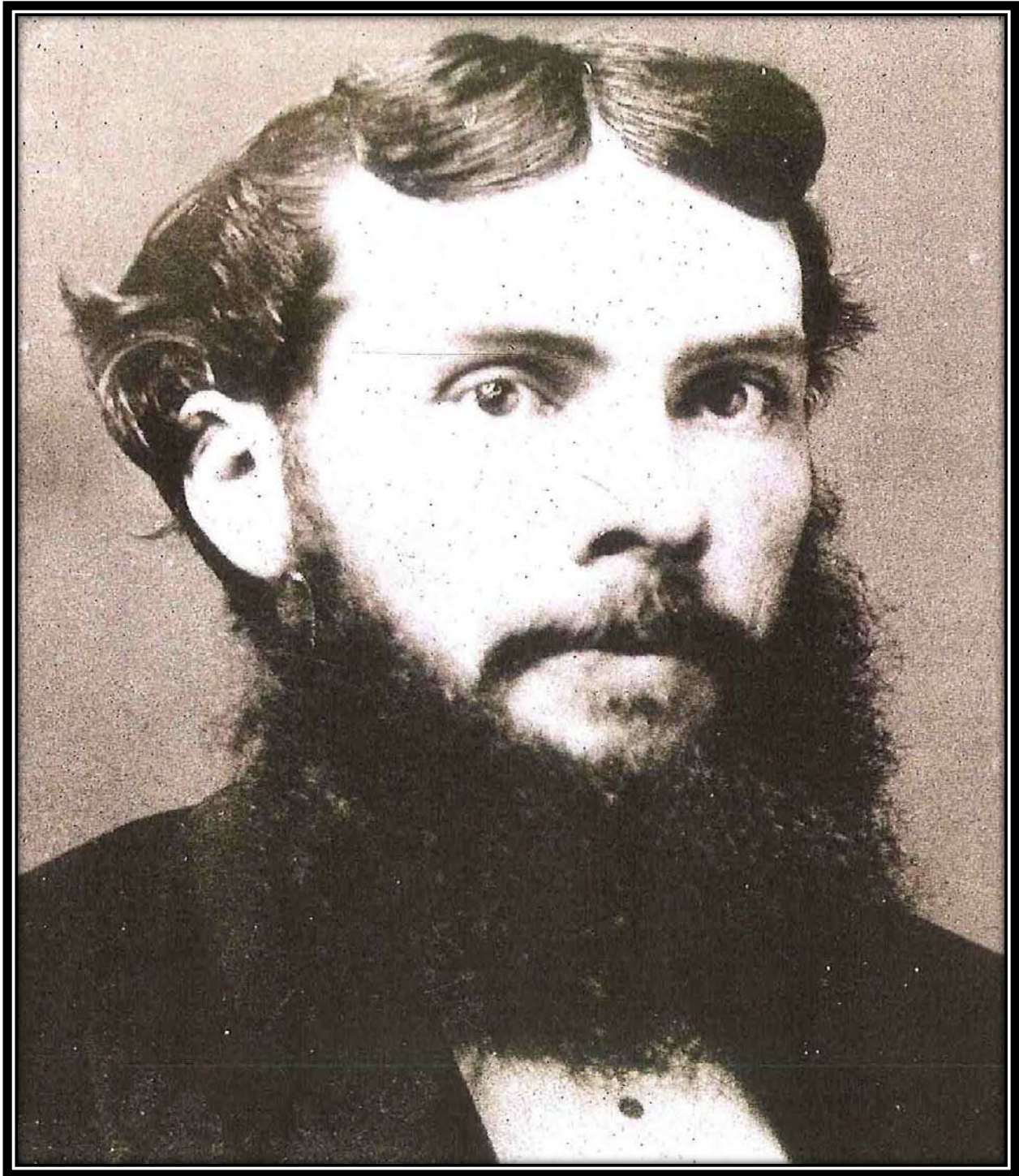


PHOTO OF DR. WILLIAM LITTLE
(Source Unknown)

Yonkers, in the city of Grand Rapids, Nov. 19, 1875, Dr. Wm. Little, of Perotkey, aged 33 years and one day.

Dr. Little was born in Darlington, Durham County Canada, where he lived until he was 22 years of age, at which time he was married to Miss Annie Devitt of the same place. He afterwards chose the medical profession for a life work, and came to Ann Arbor, and attended the Medical School, graduating with high honors the 27th of March, 1867. He then attended the Rush Medical College of Chicago, and received a diploma from that institution Feb. 2, 1868. Mrs. Little remained the entire time with the Dr. during his studies. He was a most successful practitioner of medicine ever attain the profession to which he resorted, although few knew in this town, of his skill, an account of his ill-health being unable to practice medicine to any great extent. He commenced the practice of his chosen profession at Iowa in this State, where he met with unqualified success, but thinking if he could live in some other climate he might become free of his complaint of neuralgia. He came to this place and with undaunted courage and an unlimited amount of perseverance, he commenced the erection of the Rose House, of which he was proprietor until the time of his death. Few know the difficulties he was obliged to labor under, with no communication with the outside world except by team, that in almost trackless forest for a distance of 70 miles. But through his perseverance, the railroad found open its way to this place. He was a most comfortable hotel, well filled with modern conveniences awaiting them and to-day his hotel stands again to none in northern Michigan.

Probably his hard work and exposures which he was obliged to undergo hastened instead of alleviating his sufferings, this fact is demonstrated so very painful that I thought perhaps if he could pay a visit to Florida, he might recover, and accordingly on Thursday of last week, he arose from a sick bed and started on his journey in search of health, and the best wishes of our people went with him. When he arrived at Clam Lake he partook of dinner, and said he felt he was on his arrival at Grand Rapids he ate a hearty supper and appeared well better.

On Friday morning a pronouncement was made that the Dr. was worse, and Mrs. Little had gone to him, still we hoped for the best, until afternoon a dispatch was received which told us that Dr. Little was no more, which cast a gloom over the entire community. While Mrs. Little has lost a loving husband and little May a kind father, at the same time our village has lost one of its most honored citizens, a man who was always foremost in every enterprise pertaining to the interest of our town, and the advancement of those interests.

Dr. Little was a fine man, taken from us in the prime of life, and while we deplore his loss, let us each and every one of us, so live that when we are called upon to go—which we all must sooner or later—that people will have as deep and true respect at our loss, as our village has to-day for the loss of Dr. Little.

To the people of Perotkey my friends elsewhere:

I desire to extend my sincere thanks for your manifest respect, exhibited to the memory of my late husband, in the last solemn rites of burial, and the assurance, sympathy and relief extended to me in my great bereavement.

Mrs. Annie Little

DR. WILLIAM LITTLE OBITUARY

(From Emmet County Democrat, November 26, 1875)

DR. WILLIAM LITTLE OBITUARY

(This obituary (from 1875) was very difficult to read and some portions were impossible. In those places we entered three dots (...) to let you know there is a portion missing.)

Died in the city of Grand Rapids, Nov. 19, 1875, Dr. Wm. Little, of Petoskey, aged 33 years and one day.

Dr. Little was born in Darlington, Durham County Canada, where he lived until he was 22 years of age, at which time he was married to Miss Anne Devitt of the same place. He afterwards chose the Medical profession for a life work, and came to Ann Arbor, and attended the Medical school, graduating with high honors the 27th of March 1867, he then attended the Rush Medical College of Chicago, and received a diploma from that institution Feb. 8, 1868. Mrs. Little remained the entire time with the Dr. during his practice medicine ever attain the proficiency to which he reached, although few knew in this town, of his.... skill, on account of his ill health; unable to practice medicine to any great extent. He commenced the practice of his chosen profession at Ionia in this State, where he met with merited success, but thinking if he could live in some other climate he might become free of neuralgia. He came to this place and with undaunted courage and an unlimited amount of perseverance, he commenced the erection of the Rose House, of which he was proprietor until the time of his death. Few know the difficulties he was obliged to labor under, with no communication with the outside world except by train, through the almost trackless forest for a distance of 70 miles. But through his perseverance, the railroad found upon its arrival plush, comfortable hotel, well filled with modern conveniences awaiting them and today his hotel stands second to none in northern Michigan.

Probably his hard work and exposures which he was obliged to undergo hastened instead of alleviating his sufferings, this fate ... became so very painful that the thought perhaps if he could...to Florida, he might recover and accordingly on Thursday of this week he arose from a sick bed and started on his journey...

health, and the best wishes of the people sent with him. When he arrived at Clam Lake, he partook of dinner, and said he felt better, upon his arrival at Grand Rapids he ate a hearty supper and apparently was better.

On Friday morning pronouncement was made that the Dr. was worse and Mrs. Little had gone to him, still we hoped for the best, until afternoon a dispatch was received which told us that Dr. Little was no more; which cast a gloom over the entire community. While Mrs. Little has lost a loving husband and little May a kind father, at the same time our village has lost one of its most honored citizens, a man who was always foremost in every enterprise pertaining to the interest of our town, and the advancement of those interests.

Dr. Little was a true man, taken from us in the prime of life, and while we deplore his loss, it is each and every one of us, to live that when our call upon to go – which we all must sooner or later – that people will have so deep and true regret at our loss, as one village feels today for the loss of Dr. Little.

To the people of Petoskey, and friends elsewhere:

I want to extend my sincere thanks for your manifest respect, exhibited to the memory of my late husband, in the rites of burial and the assurance, sympathy and solace extended to me in my great bereavement.

Mrs. Annie Little