



*Dr. Wiseman
when we were
married*

Dr. Robert Wiseman

To: My children and grandchildren
From: Don Moses

Today, I drove up to Pine City to visit Wiseman Square, a memorial to my mother's father. Two elderly women were sitting in the open area waiting for their husbands. They asked me why I was snapping photos and spending so much time looking at the picture of Dr. Wiseman that hung on the wall. I told the ladies that I wanted my children and grandchildren to know something about this man.

In the next ten-to-fifteen minutes the women told me what they had heard from their parents and others about the heroic Dr. Robert Wiseman.

The ladies knew that thousands crowded into the Armory for his funeral, and that the pastors of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and the Catholic priest, took part. They also heard that there was not a dry eye in Pine County on that day. He was declared "The Beloved Physician".

The women knew he made house calls through forests and blizzards, any hour of the day or night, all over the county and into Wisconsin. They said he didn't have just one horse like most wild-west heroes, he had a stable full of horses that he rode and rode until they dropped from exhaustion. Dr. Robert was known as someone who was always there in times of pain and suffering. Everyone's best friend.

But "saving the county from small-pox and various plagues" was not the only thing Robert was known for. One hundred years ago, Pine County was as wild as any western territory. There were many rough and tough lumberjacks in the area and eight saloons in the small town of Pine City (population of about 700), alone. According to the women, the territory was terrorized by outlaws. They said the most dangerous gang was headed-up by a man named Doyle. According to the ladies, Sheriff Robert is remembered for chasing all of the tough outlaws out of the county. This may be overstated. However, most of what the women said about Dr. Robert was true.

DR. WISEMAN, THE PHYSICIAN

Dr. Robert Wiseman was 30 years old when he began his 20 year practice in Pine City. Dr. Wiseman *went to* his patients. He would travel over corduroy roads in which the logs were floating in water and mud, and through swamps where the horses would sink up to their bellies in search of some lonely one room cabin from which a call for a doctor had been sent. He was often accompanied by his good friend W. P. Gottry. Gottry and the doctor would have to stop many times to unhitch the horses and lift the buggy out of mud holes. When the snow was heavy they were often forced to walk ahead of the horses to find the trail.

Once, on a journey to a Wisconsin town, the dauntless doctor's buggy sank into the St. Croix River as the ice gave-way. Miraculously, his life was spared.

Another time, when he was pushing his team along on the ice of the Snake River, the weight of his sled and horses kept cracking the ice beneath him leaving open water in his wake. He had no choice but to proceed since that was the only way to reach his destination, a matter of life or death for his patient.

Dr. Rob's wife, Mary, was an educated woman of striking beauty. She wrote in her book, "For much of his practice he was the only doctor serving a very large district. Other doctors came but never stayed long.

"At first he kept five horses going over sandy or corduroy roads in the summer, up the river on the ice in the winter, on the lake, and so-called 'winter' roads through the woods. Dust galore, and mosquitoes in summer.

"At last came the automobile, the first one in our town with hard rubber tires. Then our second one. The air-cooled engines always overheated, and you had to pull off the road and just wait for it to cool down. Then came balloon tires, and then the 'self-starter'."

The good doctor would always travel with a 'stump puller', a winch that he could attach to a tree and pull his vehicle out of sand and mud.

Mary: "Often emergency operations had to be performed on a kitchen table, by the light of a kerosene lamp

"The first years were quite exciting for me coming from the city.

"But the year that he was sheriff and always carried a revolver—it was then that I felt

absolutely alone, and just how scared I felt no one will ever know."

DR. WISEMAN, THE SHERIFF

Sheriff Wiseman solved two important murders, and he was sheriff for only 19 days.

Dr. Robert Wiseman became sheriff when Sheriff James McLaughlin died in 1898. Mary was 21 years old at this time.

On payday the lumberjacks would come into town to spend their money and raise hell. Women would stay home, locked inside their houses.

Mary wrote, "Fights ensued, and at times while I was alone in the dead of night, drunks would come and rouse me, and I would shake so that I could hardly speak through the locked door.

"At the time when Rob was serving as sheriff there were two serious murders. After a long search he found and arrested one of the murderers. He kept most of the details from me as I was so horrified by it and so afraid that my husband would be shot, as these were perilous times in the rough lumber towns."

Rob's first arrest was made in a 'confrontation' at Willow River. He had the help of his deputy.

Mary: "There were many saloons of the worst type and the owners were after as much of the lumberjack's wages as they could get, by fair means, or foul.

"There was one especially evil place owned by two rascals—the name of one was Doyle.

"Many of the lumberjacks had been relieved of their wages there and some of the men had vanished quite mysteriously—but there was no real proof.

"My husband was called to the place because a man had dropped dead, suddenly.

"Rob entered the saloon and cordially greeted the owners and the crowd of men.

"He casually inquired about the case and said 'A heart attack, no doubt, I'll see to him.'

"Then, although not a drinking man, he called everyone to the bar to have a drink—then another. Then while they were enjoying themselves he sauntered into the back room trying to appear calm, but inwardly most fearful.

"He was sure that the man had been poisoned with 'knock-out drops' in his liquor.

"There was fear on the faces of the owners—they fingered their guns while watching his every move. He realized that his life was in danger.

"But somehow he must be able to prove his suspicions and stop this terrible poisoning.

"He said, as casually as possible, 'I'll just remove the heart in case we need any proof.'

"He again saw Doyle reach for his gun, but they finally agreed that it was the best way.

"As he took out the heart, he managed by some sleight of hand to also remove the stomach. He did it so very quickly and had it in his little black bag and the men watching so carefully didn't realize what had happened. But he greatly feared that they may suspect him.

"Then he called everyone up for another drink so that perhaps they might not realize the terror that he was in, and then bidding them all 'Good day', he left.

"He had to walk a quarter of a mile through the woods to the train depot, and he was so scared that they would discover that the man's stomach was missing that when he finally got on the train he was a nervous wreck.

"Now comes my part of the story. He had to tell me some of the story as he wished me to take the little black bag to the lab at the University.

"O! No! I can't!" I screamed. I was certain now that everyone would know what I had in the bag. But of course I did go on the next train to the Cities.

"I'll never forget that trip. I was so scared that they would 'get' Rob and kill my husband while I was gone, or 'get' me on my way. But I arrived safely and delivered the bag's contents."

The good citizens of Bruno were in an uproar when they heard that their trusted friend and sheriff ruled the murder a heart attack. They were very indignant and angry. They called Sheriff Robert a 'coward', and lots of other nasty things. They protested all the way to the governor's office, where the good doctor was summoned for a meeting.

Robert asked for a delay in the meeting, and then, with great satisfaction, showed up with the lab report in his hand.

With the help of his deputy, R. J. Hawley, Robert arrested the Doyle gang in a shoot-out after chasing them to the Cloquet river, 48 miles northwest of Duluth. I don't know if the part about the 'shoot-out' is true, but I doubt they gave up without a fight.

The governor had great praise for Dr. Rob. The people of Bruno and the surrounding area "were most enthusiastic in their praise of the young sheriff."

The newspaper report differs from Mary's journal entry, indicating that Sheriff Rob's feat was

tougher than he told his beautiful, young (terrified) wife. According to the newspaper the body had already been buried when Robert arrived on the scene and he had to convince the outlaws to exhume the body before he could collect the stomach.

THE HEIRS OF THEIR CHARACTER

Robert and Mary had three children, Ruth, George and Grace.

Ruth married Clair Shuey three and a half years before her father's death. She died at an early age, after ten years of marriage and six children. This was the Shuey branch of Robert's and Mary's family.

George was a senior in high school at the time of his father's death. He married Helen Engler, and that was the continuation of the Wiseman family name.

Grace (my mother) married Wadia Moses. This was the Moses branch. Grace was fifteen years old at the time of her father's death.

LIFE AFTER ROBERT'S DEATH

Dr. Rob's death was just the beginning of many challenging events.

In the summer after Rob's death Mary thought a vacation trip to La Crosse, Wisconsin would be good for her spirits. She had a very special friend in La Crosse.

A friend offered to drive her to La Crosse and on the way back they stopped at a gas station. The attendant allowed the gasoline to overflow. In those days the gas tank was mounted in front of the driver. Gasoline flowed through the crack under the windshield and onto Mary's lap. It then ignited. She was on fire, jumped out of the car and rolled on the ground.

Mary ended up in a St. Paul hospital all summer with serious burns. She was close to death but the friend who was driving the auto told Grace that she was fine and would be home "in a day or two".

George was a hard working young man who had a construction job up north. Grace waited at home. Each evening she would go to the bus depot expecting to greet her mother.

Money was a problem. Rob knew he had a fatal illness before he died, and made financial arrangements for Mary. He told her to keep her money in government bonds and live off of the interest. But a friend talked her into investing her money in South American stocks, and she lost it all

in the depression. Her rental property in town lost money. So, she had turned her home into a rooming house.

All summer Grace waited for her mother to return. At the age of 16 this lovely girl was left alone to run the rooming house, with many unpleasant experiences, as you can imagine.

When Mary finally returned home she had to learn to walk all over again.

She had high medical bills. The service station's insurance company agreed to settle but her friend, the driver, took all the money, leaving none for Mary's medical expenses.

She sold the cottage, but received only a fraction of it's worth. Again, because of a friend.

Mary went to summer school at the University in the Cities so she could work as a librarian. She received a job offer at Mayo Clinic, where Grace could attend a special college, but she was persuaded to remain in Pine City and worked at the high school.

Then, in a second accident Mary was nearly trampled to death when a gasoline tank car exploded in Pine City. She never fully recovered from that accident, and was unable to work after that.

Mary lived with my family. She seemed to only remember the good times, and the good people. She was a refined lady of class and dignity.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can always read Mary's book, talk to Grace, or talk to a "Wiseman", a "Shuey", or a "Moses". Ask Grace to show you some of the love letters Rob sent to Mary during their courtship. He described his practice as a new, young doctor.

Love,
-Don



Dr Robert Wiseman
1874 "The Beloved Physician" 1927

Pine City to Build Memorial to Its 'Country Doctor'

Starts Fund With \$1,000 for
Tribute to Dr. R. L. Wiseman
—300 Children He Brought
Into World Buy Flowers

While 300 children—virtually every one in the Pine City public schools—mourned the death of the physician who brought them into the world, citizens of Pine City and its vicinity today planned a great memorial to the country doctor who devoted his life to them and their families.

It has been less than a week since Dr. Robert L. Wiseman, known and loved all over Pine county for the last 30 years, died. Today more than \$1,000 had been subscribed toward a monument to his memory—and that in a town of some 1,300 population.

When he died the whole county mourned. At his funeral last Saturday nearly 2,000 persons crowded the Pine City armory. On the platform sat clergymen of every faith. From miles outside Pine City the farmers and their families drove in to the funeral services.

Never Missed a Call

As they talked outside the armory they told how Dr. Wiseman was for many years the only physician in Pine City, how he drove miles through snowdrifts and storms to answer sick calls—and how if his horse was blocked by drifts or, in later years, his car was stalled, he would get out and walk. He always got there, they said—never in all the years failed to answer a call no matter what distance it came.

Chief among the flowers at the funeral services were those sent by the children in the Pine City schools—practically every one of whom was brought into the world by Dr. Wiseman, it is said. They brought pennies and nickels and, in all, raised approximately \$20.

Graduate of University

Dr. Wiseman was a Minnesotan, born and reared. Born at Stockton in 1874, he moved to St. Paul with his parents when he was a few years old. There he lived until he went to Pine City in 1897. He was a graduate of St. Paul Central high school and of the University of Minnesota school of medicine.

Since 1897 he has practised continuously at Pine City. He was married in 1900 to a Miss Louise Davis of St. Paul.

Twenty years ago he was resident physician at Pokegama sanatorium, at Pine City. He was a former mayor of Pine City and at one time served as a member of the city council.

All business houses in Pine City closed during his funeral and the whole town attended.

Business men are raising the fund for a memorial. It has not yet been decided exactly what form the memorial will take. A park may be established or a library may be built in honor of his memory, it was said today.

Frederic, Wisconsin
Oct. 9, 1978

Dear Mr. Kuzel,

I think this article from the Pine County Pioneer of January 28, 1927 "tells it all" - some of the things I mentioned to you on the telephone are included in this eulogy.

I think you will have a better knowledge of Doctor Wiseman, a deeper understanding as to why we think his memory should be honored - for his life was indeed one of service and love.

I might mention that his memorial service was the first in Pine City, in which pastors of almost every church participated - that says something, too. He would be so pleased to know that we who call ourselves Christians have made some real advances toward the brotherhood of all since that time.

Thank you for your interest. We wish you the very best always, and we wish the best for our "home town", too.

Sincerely,

P.S. Dr. also had some "hair raising" experiences as he served as Coroner in those rough pioneer days.

We know that quite a large sum was given as memorials. It was our understanding that this was to have been used to develop the park and to maintain it. . . It is our firm belief that we humans need roots - something fine that has gone before - something for the young to strive toward!

GRACE (WISSEMAN) MOSES

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GRACE (WISEMAN) MOSES

Open House

Sunday, October 22, 1978

You are cordially invited to attend the dedication of the
new Wiseman Square Municipal Building and Library on
Sunday, October 22nd starting at 1:30 p.m.

There will be a short parade from the High School to the
Municipal Building starting at 1:30 with the dedication
ceremony following.