

Local News January 1869

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N.R.L.A.S.

The Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the North Riding of Lanark Agricultural Society was held on Saturday last, in the town hall, pursuant to notice given. The number of members present was not as large as it should have been, or as the importance of the meeting deserved; and it is quite probable that the out – of – the way place in which the meeting was held, deterred many from being present. When a good hall can be had in the village, with all the necessary accommodation for man and beast, we fail to understand why people should be dragged, through wind and rain, in foul weather and fair, two miles into the country, simply because they can there meet in *the Town Hall*, and have their horses *comfortably* sheltered by the trees of the forest!

Previous to proceeding to the object of the meeting – the election of officers, &c., for the current year – the President of the Society, Dr. Mostyn, addressed the members upon the condition and prosperity of the Society. As the Doctor's remarks are well worth re producing here, we give them entire. He said: "It is right and proper that the President of your Agricultural Society should sometime during the year of his holding office – either at the Annual Meeting or at the Fall Show – deliver an address to you; and I only regret that the office of President has not been filled by one whose practical knowledge and experience would enable him to deliver an address on the science of agriculture, which would not only be interesting but also instructive to the members of the Society. I cannot, however, pretend to give you such an address, but maybe of some interest to make a few remarks on some subjects not altogether scientific but connect with the Society. This agricultural Society has been in existence, as a distinct Society, since 1853, when it was separated from the Lanark and Renfrew Agricultural Society. The annual show of the old society was held in Carleton Place – that of 1850 of the 26th day of September – and there was about \$190 given in prizes. These meetings were carried on and upheld by men, some of whom I now see here to day, they labored under many disadvantages which now they have not to contend against the agricultural implements then in use were of the rudest nature, and agriculture was altogether in a most imperfect state. What a contrast there is between the splendid instruments now made and those made twenty years ago, when you were confined to a plough that would now force you to laugh at its uncouthness and rusticity – when you were obliged to use an article without leverage, and when farming was altogether a laborious task. At our exhibitions now can be seen splendid iron ploughs, harvester, and immense variety of agricultural implements; there has been, in fact, a complete revolution in agriculture since those days. In the show of 1859 we find the names of Lawrence Naismith, Peter Naismith, John Steel, James Hart, John Shaw, Robert Young, Andrew Cochran, Stephen Young, and a number of others, some of whom keep up a lively connection with the Society, while

others do not. Why is this? With there increased facility and knowledge they should do more then they are now doing. In 1850, on the 11th October, there was a ploughing match held under the auspices of the Lanark and Renfrew Agricultural Society on the farm of Mr. Walter Black, and although there was only \$28 given in seven prizes, *thirteen* ploughs turned out, at which the ploughing, according to the papers of the day, was excellent; yet in 1867, when a Scotch plough, and iron plough and \$28 were offered in prizes, only *ten* ploughs turned out to compete. The question may well be asked, how is this? is the interest in the grand work of agriculture falling away, or is it not as necessary now as at any former time to have good ploughmen? I think it must be that our young men have not the same commendable ambition to excel in those things that their fathers were wonte to exhibit; it can not be that the prizes are not large enough, for the prizes recently offered were much larger than they were some years ago. This part of the country was once noted for its ploughmen, for at the ploughing match held in Brockville, on September 26, 1851 under the auspices of the Provincial Exhibition, Mr. Wm. Young son of Robert Young Esq., took the second prize and Mr. Wm. Young son of Peter Young Esq., took the third prize. Why don't the people of North Lanark still keep up the ploughing matches and up hold their ancient prestige. There is little use in the Society offering prizes if there is no competition – if there is only a plough for every prize. There should be double the number of ploughs on the ground that there is prizes offered; then the Society would lend its aid to the good cause and give liberally. But to go back to the Society; in 1851 we find a good report of the Show, there being 217 entries and about \$190 given in prizes. This was the year of the Provincial Exhibition in Brockville, and judges were appointed to recommend set roles fit to be sent to it from the counties' society. A number were sent, and quite a lot of prizes were rewarded to competitors in these counties. Why would not this be done every year? We constantly here from persons attending the Provincial Exhibition that they saw articles and animals there that could be easily beaten at our county show. It is no doubt true, but the owners will not send them – it either costs too much or the distance is too great; but I think in a matter of such paramount importance as this, parties should “strain a point” and endeavour to uphold the credit of their own section of country. It is this apathy that gives such persons as spoke at the last Provincial Exhibition the chance to say that “Central Canada, particularly about Ottawa, produces nothing but grass, rock and lumber.” Without doubt the man showed his perfect ignorance of this county, as it is quite evident he had never visited it, or been present at any of our shows; but at the same time he could not have then libeled the skill of our farmers or the productiveness of our soil if we were always represented at the Provincial Exhibition. With regard to distance, there is no doubt but it is a great drawback to many, and the Association should as far as in their power, remedy it by bringing the exhibition within the reach of every part of the province, in rotation; and I think that the Hon. James Skead deserves the thanks of every agriculturist in this part of the country for his endeavours to bring it to our own doors, and it is possible that before very long, we will see the exhibition at Ottawa. The next thing of importance that occurred in agricultural matters in this section was the organization on 22nd, January, 1858, of the present Society, of which J. Menzies, Esq., was elected President, Wm. Wallace, First Vice-President, and W. Dickson, Second Vice President. The Society gradually improved in numbers and importance; but it wasn't until 1862 that it was decided to purchase a piece of ground for the purpose of having a permanent site for a show ground. For that

purpose the Directors, at the meeting held in January, appointed a committee composed of J. D. Gemmill, R. McFarlane, Jas. Wallace, L. Naismith, John Menzies, to select a site to be decided on at a general meeting which was called for that purpose on 28th March, when it was decided to accept of Mr. Anderson's offer of 3 ½ acres of ground for the sum of \$300. At the meeting on the 16th June, it was decided to erect a shed for exhibition purposes 50 by 28, 14 feet posts, but a week later the subject was reconsidered and finally allowed to drop, and it was not until October 1865, that it was again taken up and decided to build a hall sufficiently large to allow the volunteers to drill in it. Accordingly, the following year a building was erected by Messrs O'Brien and Naismith, at a cost of over \$1,200, which almost paid the same year. In 1867, I had the honor being elected president – since which time I have held the office and performed the duties appertaining thereto to the best of my ability, and, I hope, to the satisfaction of the members. In 1867 the balance of the debt on the hall was paid after which the Society purchased six rams, at a cost to the Society of \$165.50. There is no doubt but that improvement in our breeds of cattle is one of the best signs of an enlightened agricultural country, and in a pecuniary point of view the dearest are the best and in the end the cheapest. The rams of the Society have done well with the exception of a Leicester ram lamb, which died during the first year it was the property of the Society. It is the intention of the Directors of the Society to encourage as much as possible the introduction of pure blooded animals, by offering suitable prizes, and, when they can, to purchase them for the benefit of the Society. Those having rams in their possession, belonging to the Society, should remember the regulations required that they be exhibited at the fall show. This has not been generally done. In 1867 the amount offered in prizes by this Society amounted to the very handsome sum of \$628, of which \$87.50 was for crops, &c. Compare that with the amount offered by the united Society in 1850, and you will be able to see the very great progress made. In 1868 the Society increased very much, the fall show of that year being the largest ever held in this county – to quote the words of the reporter of the *Courier* who was present, that 'taken in every point of view, was a credit to the enterprise, the husbandry, and skill of the agricultural and manufacturing interest of the Riding. No former exhibition equaled it in the number of people in attendance or in the number of entries made; while the improvement in stock and other farming products was very observable.' Such was the opinion of an impartial observer, and who told the members of the South Lanark Society that we were far ahead of them, and so we were, for the whole number of entries was 1100 being 300 more than at any previous exhibition and twice as many as at the show held in Perth the same fall. This year the Society lost a staunch friend in the person of D. Campbell, Esq., who had been its Secretary – Treasurer from its organization till his death. On December of the same year owing to the great quantity of snow which had fallen, and the insecurity of the roof of the hall, it was crushed in, and completely destroyed. This misfortune necessitated the building of a new one on a more secure plan. Accordingly, at the January meeting of last year, your Directors went to work and gave the contract to Mr. Eagen, who constructed the building from plans kindly given to the Society by Mr. A. Bell, who, at the same time superintended the work, and which has now been finish, in the opinion of almost every one in a proper manner. I have now to congratulate the Society on the possession of a building which will last them for some time to come. This building cost about \$1,100 and as we would not expect a grant from the county again for the same purpose as they given but two years before it has put

the Society a little in debt, but much less than was first supposed we having to borrow only \$300, which can be very easily, with economy, paid this year. Last year there was a Township Society organized in this township, which merged its funds in that of this society for exhibition and building purposes. A statement of its affairs, as well as that of the other branch societies, will be laid before you. Last year the fall show was superior in some things, particularly horses, to other shows, and again not quite so good in other departments; still the number of the entries were only a few short of that of the previous year. There might have been a great improvement, and I hope subsequent exhibitions will eclipse anything that has been held in Almonte yet. The amount of money offered in prizes was \$616, to which if you add \$87.50, which had been left out of the prize list for crops, you will see the increased amount offered for general purposes for the past year. I am very sorry for the hasty manner in which the exhibition was closed last year, as well as the attack made on myself by our Secretary Treasurer in the *Courier*, in stating that I did not intend to address the members. I did not answer the letter, as I regard all newspaper wars as very hurtful to both parties concerned and no benefit to the public. The persons here present are the only ones interested in the matter, and they are now no doubt conversant with the facts. I may only say that at every public meeting of the society I have always addressed them, and that it was my intention to have done so that day. Last year your Directors took advantage of an arrangement which is becoming very general, of exchanging judges with other societies, thus giving a wider range for selecting men properly qualified. I think the plan works well, and should be continued, only that the preparations for their reception should be more complete than it has been. You are met here today to elect office – bearers for the ensuing year. There is not sufficient attention generally paid to the election of officers – that is, the members do not take sufficient interest in it, and then are not satisfied after they are appointed. See that you today elect men who will advance the interest of the society to the best of their ability. You will also have to nominate a person to represent this division on the Board, the members of the first four divisions having to retire, among whom is Mr. Skead. I need not recommend him to you, as you are as well aware of what he has done as I am. Thanking you for the position which I have occupied among you for some time I now place the office in your hands.

The allusion made by the President to the action of the Secretary Treasurer, at the close of last exhibition, brought that gentleman to his feet. He said that he had been informed by one of the members that the President had been called away on a professional visit, and was not likely to return in time to close the proceedings with an address; and further that he had been pressed by the Vice – President “or Directors” to read the prize list as many exhibitors were already, at that early hour in the afternoon, removing their articles from the hall, and he could not resist their authority. He disclaimed any intention of seeking a newspaper war, but simply wished to place the matter correctly before the public. After considerable desultory conversation, the whole matter was allowed to drop when it was.

Moved by Mr. Lawrence Naismith, and seconded by Mr. James Stewart, That a vote of thanks be given to the President for his very able address. Carried unanimously.

The first order of business was then taken up. The report of the Ramsey Township Society was the only report received from the branch societies – on account of the weekly mail system adopted by the B.&O.R. the report was adopted by the meeting.

The Secretary – Treasurers accounts, were audited after an unlimited amount of talking, and finally adopted, when the meeting proceeded to the election of officers for the current year, with the following result:

President – Wm. Mostyn, M.D.

First Vice President – Peter McArthur, Esq.

Second Vice President – Andrew Wilson Esq.

Directors – Messrs. James Black, Robt Young, John C. Stevens, John Robertson, David Snedden, Joseph Yuill, John Gilmour, Andrew Toshach, and John Tom.

Secretary Treasurer – Mr. Wm. Templeman

Auditors – Messrs. James Stewart and Oscar E. Henderson

The Hon. James Skead received the nomination of the meeting as member for this district in the Council of the “Agricultural and Arts Association of Ontario”.

It was intended to have made some amendments to the constitution of the society at this meeting, but many of those present had left the hall and the meeting was without a working majority; it was consequently postponed to a future time period.

Before adjourning, it was

Moved Mr. Lawrence Naismith and seconded by Mr. John Bowland, That the Secretary Treasurer receive the thanks of this meeting for his efficient service during this past year, carried unanimously.

Mr. Baird thanked the members their kindness during the past and their vote.