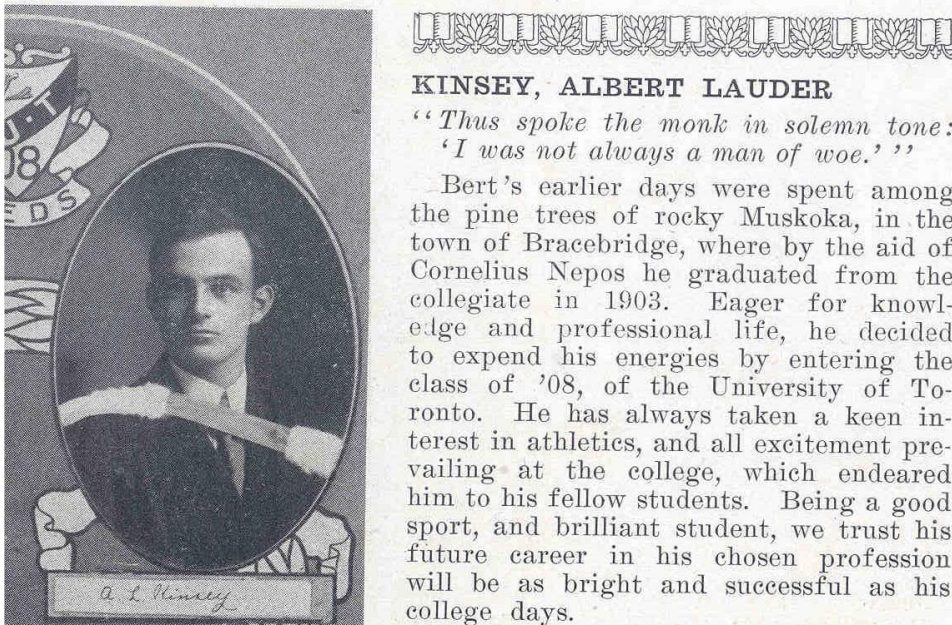


Hearst's First Doctor Rises above Tragedy

by Frank Pellow based upon interviews with Michael Kinsey (great grandson of Albert) and Bill Kinsey (grandson of Albert)



from the University of Toronto archives

Albert Kinsey, was born in Bracebridge, Ontario in 1884. His father, Walter William Kinsey, was one of the first settlers in Bracebridge in 1872. Walter arrived in the Muskoka region about the time the railway was arriving just as, later on, his son Albert arrived in Cochrane and later Hearst as the railway was arriving in those communities. Walter Kinsey was a leading figure in Bracebridge and was the mayor for a year.

Albert graduated in both medicine and pharmacy from the University of Toronto in 1908. The motto beside Albert's grad photo¹ is quite telling. Like many of his time, death permeates his life, and he has to rise time and time again to overcome sadness and grief. Albert's mother died when he was 2 and his stepmother when he was 11. His aunt, Anne Maud Kinsey, died of TB in 1898 a year after graduating as a nurse at the

Toronto Children's Hospital. His other elder siblings also passed away in their early years.



Dr.. Albert Kinsey

¹ From Sir Walter Scott's 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'

After graduation, Dr. Kinsey worked on the remote Burin Peninsula in the then country of Newfoundland for about a year.

In 1909, Albert moved to the site that was about to become Cochrane in order to look after the health of railwaymen and settlers for many miles along the National Transcontinental Railway. As the railway expanded west, Dr. Kinsey switched his base of operations to Hearst in March of 1912. Legend has it that Albert walked north to Hearst from Franz along the Algoma Central Railway right of way –a distance of about 100 miles.

Albert Kinsey photo album contains the earliest photo of the Hearst site that we are aware of. This photo shows the Grand Trunk right of way at the Mattawishquie River just east of the future town of Hearst and was probably taken in 1910:

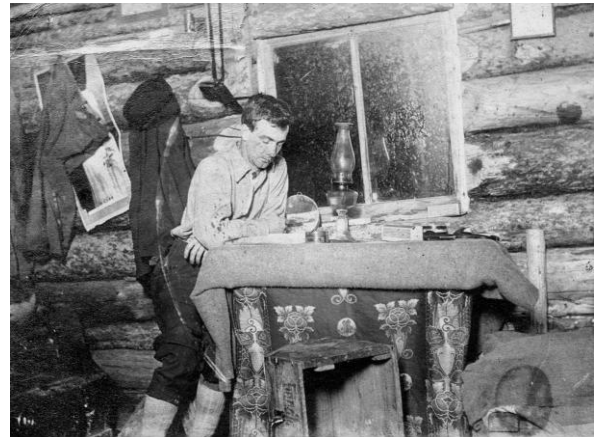


The photo below, also from his album, was taken in 1912 and shows some log buildings of the railway, the cookery, dining hall and warehouse, Dr. Kinsey's residence and hospital :



Agnes Cavanagh was born in South Dakota, USA in 1889. Her family moved close to Orillia, Ontario when she was quite young. She married Albert Kinsey in 1913 and they set up residence in Hearst. The building that was their home was expanded to become the first hospital in Hearst.

From his base in Hearst, Dr. Kinsey continued to serve a very wide region.



Albert Kinsey reading by lamplight

Medical facilities were primitive and the work took a severe toll on Albert's health.

Dr. Kinsey was widely respected and in demand throughout Cochrane District and not just for his medical skills. For example, in 1920 when the Ontario government created a commission to investigate who was to blame for the Great Matheson Forest Fire, Dr. Kinsey was appointed to represent the property holders of Matheson. Albert also managed to find time to advise both the local school boards and the government concerning public education.

Furthermore, Albert Kinsey along with Edward Talbot Howard (Gertrude (Howard) West's father) were partners in the establishment, in 1917, of the Howard Drug Company, the first drug store in Hearst.



Albert Kinsey (far right) & some patients (posed but close to reality)

Agnes and Albert Kinsey had three children. Peter was born in Toronto in 1914, Katherine in Hearst in 1916, and Walter in Hearst in 1918.



—, Agnes Kinsey, Katherine Kinsey, —,
Albert Kinsey, Peter Kinsey
-1917

In a letter written to her aunts in Toronto in December 1918, Agnes describes the “normal” life a family with three young children. Extracts follow:

Hearst. Dec 1/18

Dear Everybody:

Of course, I am up against it, as usual, to think of something for you people. Have sent M today parcels to Mother & Cecil. As I can't think of anything, will you and Aunt Jean kindly accept enclosed cheques and get yourselves whatever you would like.

We are also sending money to Margaret Kinsey

(9)

I would be very glad indeed if Aunt Jean will send me the Gingham when she goes back. 54 yds each of two different kinds and good and strong.

Bert and Pete got home about 10.30 Sunday night. Pete rode over on top of the trunk, which Lucie and Bert pulled in a hand sleigh. The first thing that greeted me was "Hello mama, I feel off twice."

"Where's Kashin? Where's Bortie? Take off my things. Oh gee! I want to play. Where's my block. I must

...

(6)

terrible time persuading him that he is to do as his dad and mama says. He thinks he should not wear his sweater and coat, too.

The little coats are lovely, also the waists. what do we owe, Mrs Little. You never said. Well I must close as it is getting late.

Much love from all

Agnes

One month later, in January of 1919, tragedy struck his family while Albert was away from home. As reported in the Bracebridge Gazette:

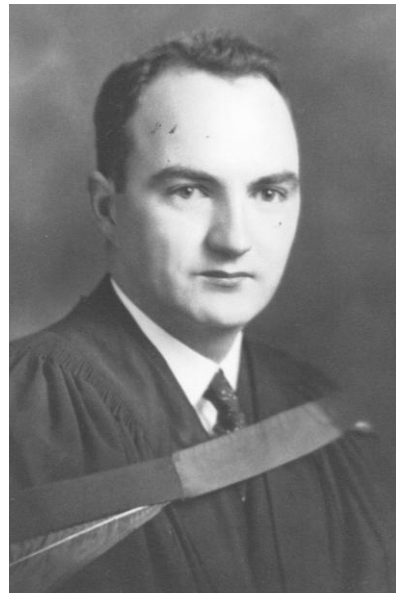
During the raging of the flu in the winter of 1918-19 his work was overpowering. Not only were hundreds of sick among the families he usually ministered unto, but farther away were unfortunate Indians dying in scores. "Bert" never spared himself. Night and day he toiled. His own wife and three little children were

stricken, yet he could only give them their share of attention. His young wife and two children died in January 1919 and he could not even take time to see them laid to rest in his own home town. The lives of so many were depending upon his labour.

Dr. Kinsey became ill with tuberculosis and left Hearst early in 1922 for the Sanitorium in Gravenhurst, Ontario. Before leaving, Albert donated all his medical instruments to the hospital in Hearst. He lived only until May 1922. Continuing the above article from the Bracebridge Gazette:

The scourge passed. The young doctor, never too robust, was badly shattered by the ordeal. This probably had a great deal to do with the illness which ultimately carried him away. From a severe attack of pneumonia he never quite recovered. He leaves one son, Peter, seven years old who is being lovingly cared for by his grandmother.

Peter was raised by two aunts in Toronto. Like his father, Peter became a medical doctor and, like his father, Peter had a brief but significant and selfless life.



Dr. Peter Kinsey

Following is an extract from the Canadian Medical Association Journal in November 1966:

Dr. Peter A. Kinsey did much to prolong so many lives well beyond the duration he was able to achieve for himself. As one of those he aided, it is difficult for me to write of his passing. He died on September 26, 1966, at the age of 51 years.

Dr. Peter Kinsey's death has been a tragic loss to his family, his patients, the medical profession and the associations he served so well. He was dedicated to the belief that family doctors could provide high quality services and he found this field absorbing. He was skilful in the interrogation of people and in his examination of them with his small knowing hands. When he became medical consultant to a family, he had the happy faculty of quickly seeming to become one of its members. He was adept at sensing what was really worrying the sick person.

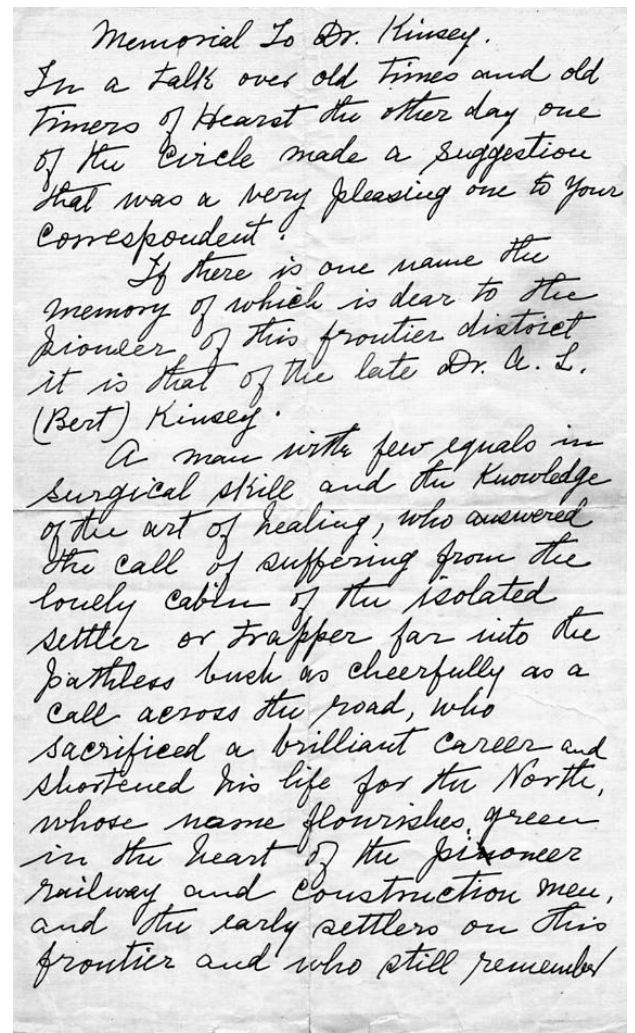
His father was Dr. Albert L. Kinsey, who during the early part of this century helped to open up the Hearst area, one of the far northern reaches of Ontario. When he was 4 years old, his family received a hard blow with the death of his mother, his brother, and sister during the influenza epidemic of 1918-in one week. His father died two years later, leaving Peter the only surviving member of this family. Fortunately, he had two aunts in Toronto who were able to bring him up and give him an education.

He attended Jesse Ketchum School and the University of Toronto Schools before entering the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, from which he graduated in 1939. After interning at St. Michael's Hospital he practised medicine in Timmins, Ontario, until he enlisted in the first medical branch of the R.C.A.F. During five years of distinguished service he became a Squadron Leader and was senior

medical officer at several R.C.A.F. training stations in Canada. He returned in 1945 to practise in the Yonge and Lawrence area in Toronto.

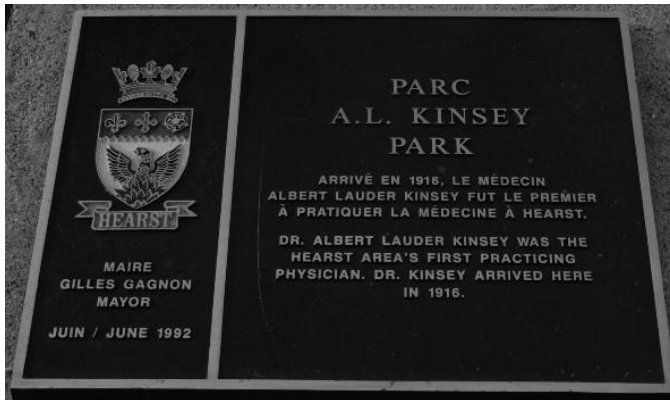
Dr. Kinsey became one of Canada's best-known family doctors. He was one of the pioneers who helped to establish the College of General Practice of Canada.

Returning to Dr. Albert Kinsey, here is a tribute to him written many years after his death by another Hearst pioneer:



Memorial To Dr. Kinsey.
In a talk over old times and old
times of Hearst the other day one
of the Circle made a suggestion
that was a very pleasing one to your
correspondent.
If there is one name the
memory of which is dear to the
pioneer of this frontier district
it is that of the late Dr. A. L.
(Best) Kinsey.
A man with few equals in
surgical skill and the knowledge
of the art of healing, who answered
the call of suffering from the
lonely cabin of the isolated
settler or trapper far into the
pathless bush as cheerfully as a
call across the road, who
sacrificed a brilliant career and
shortened his life for the North,
whose name flourishes green
in the heart of the pioneer
railway and construction men,
and the early settlers on this
frontier and who still remember

In 1992, the Town of Hearst opened a small park on the banks of the Mattawishkwia River dedicated to the memory of Albert Kinsey.



You will observe that the researchers at the time of the dedication got Dr. Kinsey's date of arrival wrong; but, memories of what he overcame and achieved live on.