



historically speaking

THE WAY IT WAS

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The Cass City Historical Society held its regular meeting on Wednesday evening, August 22nd, at the Library. A very interesting program was presented by members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars about their experiences in the Viet Nam War. A much greater appreciation for what they went through in fighting the enemy as well as the environmental conditions when you hear them tell about it first-hand.

A Tale of Two Irishmen

In 1967 Cass City's park was getting very overcrowded. Many activities were conflicting with other activities. The basketball hoops were set on the tennis courts which didn't set too well with the tennis players. There was only one baseball diamond. Although the track encircled the football field there was little room for the field events. The softball field was on the north end of the football field, and there was no room for any new activities. There was no room for the needed expansion



Scotty McCullough

municipal office and equipment garage.

Enter two very important Irish citizens in Cass City's history, Morton "Mort" Orr, and Glen "Scotty" McCullough. Mort was the son of Robert Orr who was one of Cass City's first pioneers. Born in 1844, he came here direct from Ireland, and was probably the first person to purchase the property to be considered since

Governor Lewis Cass negotiated the treaty of 1819 with the Indians. Mort owned his father's farm which bordered the park to the east, and totaled 23 acres including 12 acres of woodland on the north end.

Mort was a well known citizen farmer, bee keeper, maple sugar maker, and volunteer fireman. In 1961 Mort was feted along with Charley Patterson for their individual service of 50 years on the fire department. Their records went back to the early days of hook and ladder, hand pushed carts, and fire wells located in various places around the village. Although the Orr family owned the woodland to the north of the park they freely allowed people, especially children



Mort Orr

to enjoy spending some enjoyment time in this enchanted place. Mort knew his time was growing short and he was looking to sell his property, and he favored having it bought by the village with the stipulation that the woodland was never to be lumbered off.

Scotty McCullough happened to be serving on the village council at the time, and was an avid park promoter. He had been one of Cass City High School's finest athletes as a football quarterback and a pole vaulter. He once held the upper thumb record in pole vaulting, when they had wooden poles and saw dust for a landing pit. While pole vaulting he sustained an injury which later, along with arthritis, plagued him the rest of his life. When Scotty learned of the availability of Mort's land he grabbed the ball, and being a charter member of the Gavel Club, he passed it to the club. The Gavel Club in turn ran with it spearheaded by Dick Wallace and Harold Isard, and included several other volunteers.

The PEP (Park Expansion Program) drive was born to raise enough money to purchase Mort's land for the park.

A city-wide campaign began to

solicit contributions from businesses and individual donors who were issued symbolic deeds for their share of park to be purchased. The drive was successful and along with some other sources to raise enough money to eventually purchase the land.

It's interesting that both these men, Mort and Scotty, were Irishmen. But how could someone nicknamed Scotty be Irish along with his brother, Raymond, nicknamed Mac, with whom he was a partner in the Mac and Scotty Drug Store? It is just assumed names starting with Mc or Mac are Scottish, but McCullough is actually an Irish name. Mac and Scotty's grandparents, John and Ellen McCullough, were born in Ireland. Their father, Robert Nelson



McCullough was a pioneer farmer in the area that became a well known auctioneer working with another farmer pioneer, Jacob Striffler.

The property purchase was finally completed in late 1971 just a few

months after Mort had passed away. Scotty had passed away three years earlier. Later, after the land was purchased the entry road into the new addition of the park from M-81 was named Scotty McCullough Drive, at the Gavel Club's request, in Scotty's honor.



In short order good things began to happen. The high school decided they needed new lights for the football field and the old lights were moved to the new addition lighting up two new softball diamonds built side by side. The Lions Club built a new pavilion to accommodate reunions, chicken barbeques, and other get together activities. The old swimming pool was closed and a new junior Olympic pool was built in the new addition. A new Park Activities Building was built. A winter sliding hill was developed, and several new Little League baseball diamonds were developed. Now even soccer fields are being developed on the new land. All of this makes Cass City's the finest in the thumb area. The village maintenance facilities have also been expanded.

It is a sad thing that these two exemplary Irish-American citizens who left so much to be remembered by could not live to see their dreams for the park come to fruition. But there is solace in the old Irish saying, "The Lord may take them home to Heaven before the devil even knows they're gone."

Be A Land "Owner"

Here's your chance to be a land "owner". The committee has figured just how much land you can "purchase" with donations of various amounts.

- \$10.00.40 square yards
- 25.00.100 square yards
- 75.00.one square rod
- 1,200.00.one acre