

NMU PRESIDENTS OVER THE YEARS

Russell M. Magnaghi

This morning I would like to focus on NMU presidents over the last 124 years and I dedicate the paper to President Tessman, our 17th chief executive.

Presidents taught high school and college, were superintendents. The first president, Dwight Waldo, was a Social Science teacher at Albion College, who heard of the future opening at Northern, applied, and received the position. He came to Marquette and oversaw the development of the institution beginning in the summer of 1899 and went on to become the first professor history. His wife, Minnie, was the first librarian, who passed away from cancer and he went on to marry a student.

Webster Pearce who became president in 1933, while teaching math at Central (1917-27) served as mayor of Mount Pleasant and then was state superintendent of public instruction. When he lost re-election, the State Board of Education gave him the Northern presidency. He was the only president who died in office in 1940.

The longest serving president was Kaye – 19 years (1904-1923) and then spent another nine years as professor. He spent summers on his farm east of Ludington and taught philosophy and education courses in the winter.

Henry Tape, who arrived in 1940, was the first president with a Ph.D. Bill Vandament authored, *Managing Money in Higher Education*.

John X. Jamrich was the second longest serving president who served for 15 years and saw the campus infrastructure dramatically grow. The shortest serving president was Ogden Johnson serving for several months in 1967-1968. By the way the “X” stands for nothing but to fill a space on his U.S. Army enlistment papers.

Numerous presidents interacted with the community. President Kaye was a member of Rotary of Marquette and served as the district governor. He enjoyed walking home up Third Street and pleasantly commenting on the rose gardens to their gardeners. William Vandament had lunch with students, would visit with passersby while smoking at the entrance to Cohodas and eventually served on the board to convert Sawyer into a town.

What happened to the presidents? Many retired. Waldo in 1904 became president of Western as did Judith Bailey in 2003. John Munson went on to become president of Eastern. Harden, after a bout at Story Auto, became president of MSU. Wong became president of San Francisco State University. James Appleberry became president of American Collegiate Association. The only alum to serve as president was David Haynes.

How have presidents been remembered? Two streets in Marquette are named after Waldo and Kaye. On campus there was Kaye Hall built in 1915, later demolished and honored him in 1949 at the time of the college’s 50th anniversary. Later Kaye House, presidential residence, honored him. Harden and Jamrich Halls honor two presidents and there is the Vandament

Volleyball-Basketball court, where the ashes of the former president are in the wall at the entrance. There are biographies on NMU presidents from Waldo to Tape and another focusing on Jamrich. Oral histories have been conducted with all of the presidents since Edgar Harden and are available in the University Archives. For a unique memorial, go to Park Cemetery and check out the Jamrich grave stone!

Until 1954 there was no presidential residence and presidents and their families lived primarily on Marquette's East Side. In 1900, President Waldo and his family lived in the student dorm, where St. Michael parking lot is, where they took their meals with the students. Presidents Pearce and Tape lived in a home directly across Presque Isle Avenue from Cohodas Hall. President Tape moved into the presidential home in 1954 and later Kaye House was constructed. In a rather unique development, President Munson, the only bachelor president, lived in an apartment in the present Tessman home on East Ridge Street!

Thank you for this opportunity to share the history of Northern with you.