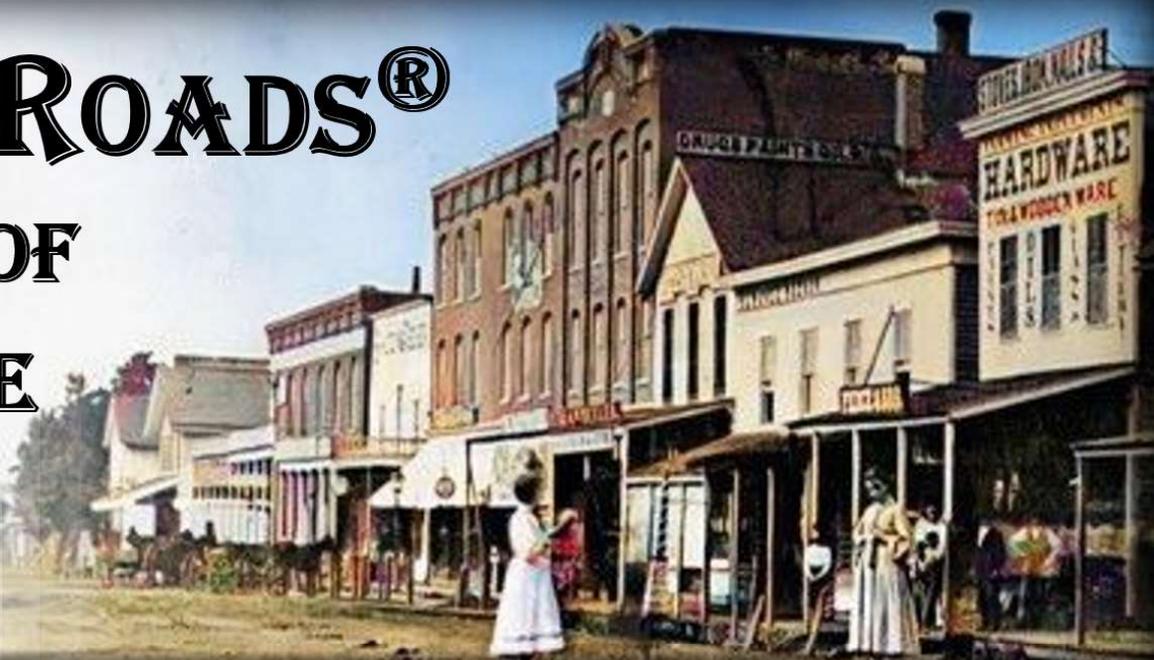


DUSTY ROADS®

STORIES OF

KEWANEE

PAST & PRESENT



Dean Karau

August 2022

Dean De Witt Lewis

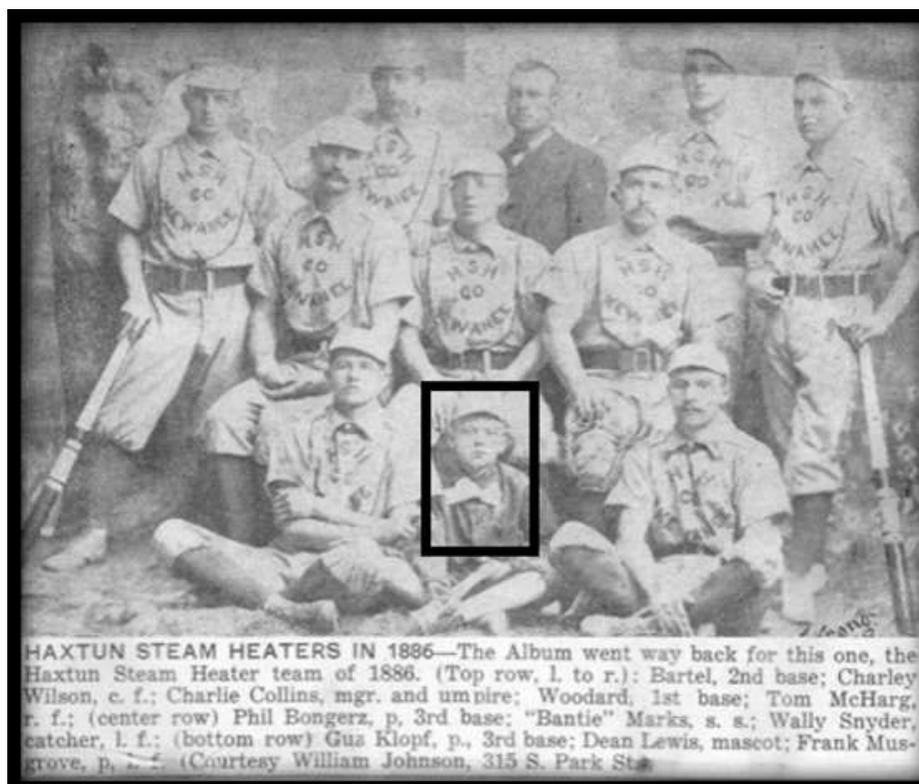
From a Kewanee Batboy to a World-Famous Surgeon

On September 7, 1885, the Chicago White Stockings (later the Chicago Cubs) beat Kewanee's top team 12 – 1 on the North Main Grounds on North Main Street before a crowd of 2,000 fans.

The White Stockings had two soon-to-be famous men on their team: “Cap” Anson, an early baseball

legend, and Billy Sunday, then a ballplayer but later a renowned evangelical.

However, the Kewanee club had fame coursing through its veins, too, in the form of a young batboy who would become a world-famous surgeon, chairman of the department of surgery at the Johns



HAXTUN STEAM HEATERS IN 1886—The Album went way back for this one, the Haxtun Steam Heater team of 1886. (Top row, l. to r.): Bartel, 2nd base; Charley Wilson, c. f.; Charlie Collins, mgr. and umpire; Woodard, 1st base; Tom McHarg, r. f.; (center row) Phil Bongertz, p, 3rd base; “Bantie” Marks, s. s.; Wally Snyder, catcher, l. f.; (bottom row) Gus Klopff, p., 3rd base; Dean Lewis, mascot; Frank Musgrove, p. (Courtesy William Johnson, 315 S. Park St.)



Dean Lewis, “mascot” (batboy), 1886 Haxtun Steam Heaters baseball team

Hopkins University School of Medicine, and surgeon-in-chief for The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Dean De Witt Lewis was born on August 11, 1874, in Kewanee, to Lyman Wright Lewis, a merchant, and Virginia Winifred (Cully) Lewis. The family lived near the corner of Tremont and First Streets in a house which had been built the year of Kewanee's founding.

The young Lewis was smart as a whip in his classes while attending our hometown's schools. Lewis also loved sports. But baseball was his true love.

He played ball with friends and neighbors growing up. They played in open lots in the neighborhood as well as in Rockwell's pasture, a field located a little north and west of the future site of St. Francis hospital, bounded by today's Prospect, Rockwell, and Beach Streets.

Lewis also hung around older ball players, soaking up the nuances of the game. He'd watch the best players during the week when they'd take batting practice to the west of the old city hall, on the corner of today's Third and Tremont Streets, hitting west toward the old freight terminal, north of the intersection of today's Chestnut and Third Streets.

Lewis then watched those top players play games on Sundays at the field on a lot on Fifth Street east of the Western Tube (later Walworth) plant, where the batter faced north, which made it a very short left field to the railroad tracks. Later, he'd see them play at the North Main Grounds in a natural amphitheater on the northwest corner of Ninth and Main Streets.

Of course, Lewis saw them play close-up, serving as the team's "mascot" - its batboy!

In 1885, the city's top team was the "Reds," which

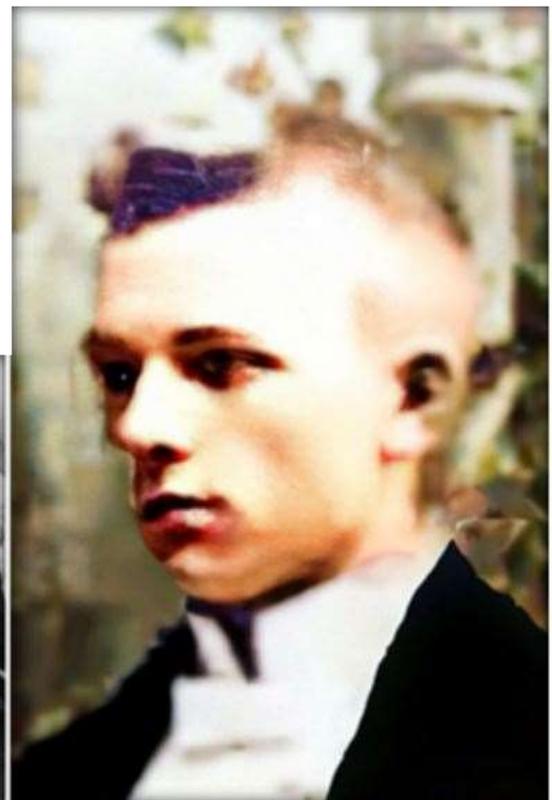


Lewis home, Tremont St. south of First St.

had a state-wide reputation. Its second nine was the "Blues," another good team. Its third team was led by "the kid," 11-year-old Lewis, "the irrepressible small boy" who was the captain, the top pitcher, and "the heavy batter of the organization."

His reputation as a ballplayer grew as he grew and while he continued to excel academically, graduating third in a class of 27 from Kewanee High School in 1891.

Even after he left for college, he continued to play



*Dean DeWitt Lewis
Kewanee High School Class of 1891*

ball in Kewanee during the summers. In 1892, the *PRINCETON NEWS*, after seeing Lewis hurl for John P. Brady's Shamrocks and blanking the Princeton nine, wrote "we understand that the Kewanee pitcher is a professional." Kewanee's *INDEPENDENT* concurred, saying that he "may be a good enough player [to be] a professional . . ."

But Lewis eschewed professional ball. In the fall of 1891, he entered Lake Forest (Ill.) University, graduating with B. A. in 1895.

At Lake Forest, Lewis played for his college's team in the Western Col-



Dean Lewis
1892 Lake Forest baseball team

lege Baseball League. While the team had previously been a "tail-ender," it won the conference Lewis's first year. Lewis eventually became captain while pitching and playing left field when not on the mound.

Then medicine overtook baseball as Lewis' passion. He entered the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City but transferred the next year to Rush Medical College in Chicago, where he received his M. D. degree in 1899. After that, Lewis spent a year at Chicago's Cook County Hospital as an intern.

Lewis then returned to Rush Medical College, now affiliated with the University of Chicago. As an



Dean D. Lewis
1899 Rush Medical College graduate

assistant in anatomy, he worked on a process of vital staining of tissues and used it to demonstrate the microscopic changes and proliferation of cells in the pituitary gland. In 1903, after six months in Leipzig, Germany, working with a famous anatomist, Lewis returned to Rush and became an instructor. In 1905, he joined the department of surgery, eventually becoming a professor in 1919. He grew a large private practice while teaching courses in surgical anatomy and operative surgery.

After the United States entered World War I in 1917, Lewis received a commission as a major in the Army Medical Corps and organized Base Hospital 13 from the staff of his fellow Chicago physicians. In 1918 they left for France to set up several evacuation hospitals that specialized in reconstructive and neurological surgery. Lewis rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel by the time of his discharge in 1919. He was awarded the Army Distinguished Service Medal as Chief of the Surgical Service of Evacuation Hospital No. 5 during the operations on the Marne, and the St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, and Ypres-Lys offensives. Lewis successfully demonstrated that war wounds could be operated upon in large numbers in frontline hospitals with limited personnel, thus saving many U. S. soldiers' lives.



Between 1920 and 1925, Lewis was offered major vacant surgical chairs across the country. In January 1925, he became professor of surgery at the University of Illinois. But six months later he moved to Baltimore to

become a professor of surgery at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and surgeon-in-chief of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Lewis held those positions until 1939 when illness forced him to retire.

Lewis was a highly skilled operator, researcher, and inspiring lecturer, gaining prominence in the field of surgery and always in demand as a speaker. From 1933 through 1934, he served as president of the American Medical Association.

Lewis continued his associations with Kewanee, speaking to groups, contributing to organizations, and continuing to provide support for the Kewanee schools. He returned as often as possible.

Lewis died in 1941 at his home in Baltimore and was buried in his adopted city. He was 67 years old.

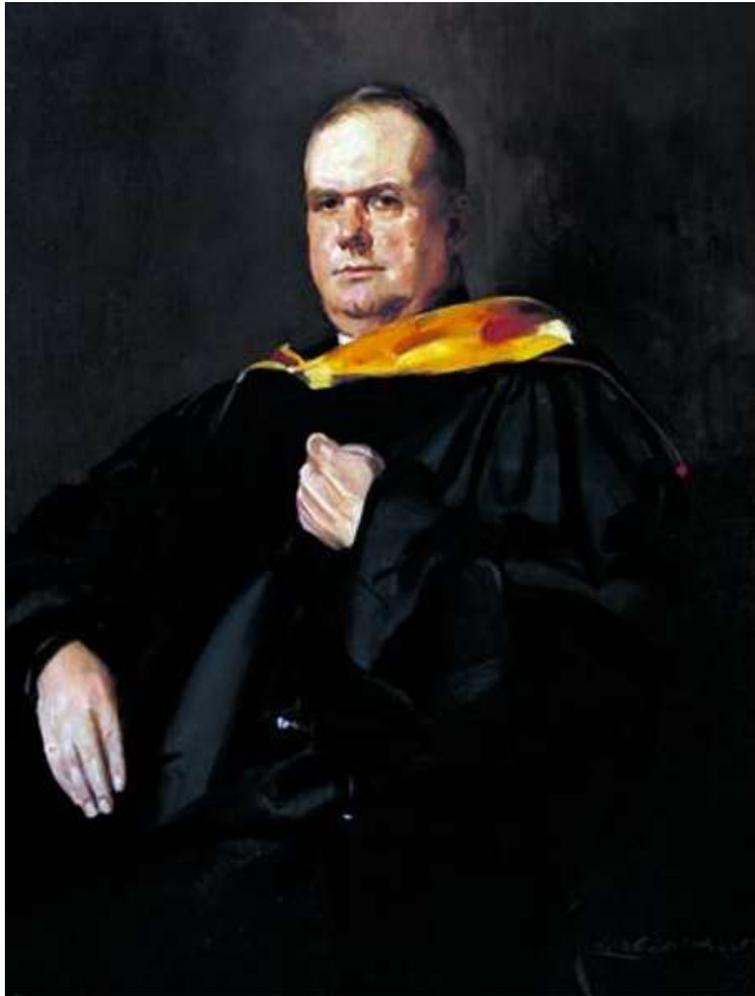
Throughout his entire life, Lewis was active in everything – a medical colleague said that Lewis “attended everything – surgical meetings, opera, athletic contests, and

crab feasts!

That same colleague said that Lewis “*knew more doctors than any man in the country, so it was not surprising that he was elected president of the Medical Association. . . . Dr. Lewis was colorful. His vitality, exceptional memory, clinical judgment, and charm, carried him a long way.*”

But Lewis also looked out for and became a protector of the little man. His colleague said that he “*was the idol of the parttime staff. He was the first professor to make them feel that they were an integral part of the department. [He was] . . . responsible for breaking down the isolation of the surgical department.*”

Dean De Witt Lewis – from his humble beginnings in Kewanee, Illinois, he garnered fame and greatness few from our hometown ever achieved. Not bad for the little “*Kewanee kid,*” the “*irrepressible small boy*” on the ball field who grew-up to be a giant in the medical field.



*Dean De Witt Lewis
by Erik G. Haupt, oil on canvas, 1931*