

# History Makers

## Northville History Makers



*Dr. Mary E. Lapham*  
1860 - 1936

Born in Northville in 1860 to Jared and Martha Gregory Lapham, Mary Lapham's legacy of altruism began in Northville and continued throughout her life. She longed to be a doctor but was discouraged in that pursuit by her father. She served as cashier in her father's bank, J.S. Lapham & Company, but kept test tubes and a microscope in a vault to study during cashiering breaks. In 1889, the village council asked her to chair Northville's library organizing committee; she was later elected president of the Ladies Library Association. She donated the first 250 books to the library and gifted the library building to the community (it is now the New School Church in Mill Race

Village). She also served as a trustee and treasurer of the Northville School Board.

She joined Lucy Stout Dowd in organizing the Northville Woman's Club in 1892 and served as the organization's second president. She also was a member of the Northville Woman Suffrage Association.

Following her father's death, Lapham attended the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1900. She pursued graduate studies at the University of Munich in Germany. The scourge of tuberculosis in the early 1900s led Lapham to Switzerland where she studied therapeutic pneumothorax or artificial collapse of the lung for treatment of lung disorders.

In 1908, she opened the Highlands Camp Sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis in Highlands, North Carolina, and was the first physician in the United States to successfully treat tuberculosis with the new collapse therapy method.

In January 1918, the Highlands sanatorium burned. Called to head a Red Cross mission in war-torn Europe, Lapham left for France in 1918 and set up a dispensary and hospital in LaRochelle for refugees from France and Belgium. In 1919, Lapham was appointed director of medical services for the Red Cross in Prague.

Lapham returned to the U.S. in 1920, and served as head of tuberculosis research at Johns Hopkins University and later at the University of Pennsylvania. She became the first woman president of the American Sanatorium Association (now the American Thoracic Society). She did not rebuild her Highlands sanatorium.

She retired to St. Augustine, Florida, where she died on January 26, 1935 at age 75. She is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit.

— *Highland Historical Society Archives*

*Photograph by Murdock Bros of Windsor, Ontario, ca. 1905*

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*Francis R. Beal*  
1836 - 1923

Francis Beal was born in Northville in 1836, less than a decade after the community's first settlers staked their claim. The son of James and Rachael (Light) Beal, he followed in his father's footsteps as a journeyman cabinetmaker until 1863, when he opened a hardware store on Main Street.

In 1864, Beal persuaded Charles G. Harrington to convert his small foundry into a furniture factory after receiving an order of school desks for the Northville Union School. By 1873, Beal pulled out of the hardware business and with the help of several prominent community leaders incorporated the Michigan School Furniture Company.

Over the next decade, the Michigan School Furniture Company became Northville's most dominant and profitable business. Its school desks and accessories (globes, blackboards, pointing rods) soon led to the addition of church pews and pulpits. Beal, who took out numerous patents, originated the first curved-back school seat and the noiseless seat hinge.

In 1887, the company reincorporated as the Globe Furniture and Manufacturing Company with Beal as president and general manager. It became the catalyst for a myriad of other Northville manufacturing including organ makers Granville Wood and Sons, Columbia Refrigerator Company, American Bell and Foundry, Ely Dowel Works, Victor Sleigh Company, Stanley Air Rifle Company and others.

At its peak of production — with 200 workers employed — the Globe became the largest school and church furniture manufacturer in the world. It opened several branch offices in the U.S. and Canada to meet demand, and fueled the economy of the village as well as lumber mills throughout the area. The company also owned and operated Northville's first electric street lighting system.

By 1890, Northville had become Wayne County's third largest manufacturing area. Detroit and Wyandotte were the largest, respectively. The residential area north of the manufacturing complex housed Globe workers and became known as Bealtown. Beal Street also is named for the manufacturer. Fire destroyed the Globe factory in 1899.

In addition to his business prowess, Beal also was a community leader. He served as Village President from 1870-71, was superintendent of the Methodist Church Sunday School for 25 years, and was a past master of the Northville Lodge, No. 186.

Beal died on April 5, 1923 in Detroit at age 86. He is buried in Northville's Rural Hill Cemetery.

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