

In Memoriam

Morris Lamprey

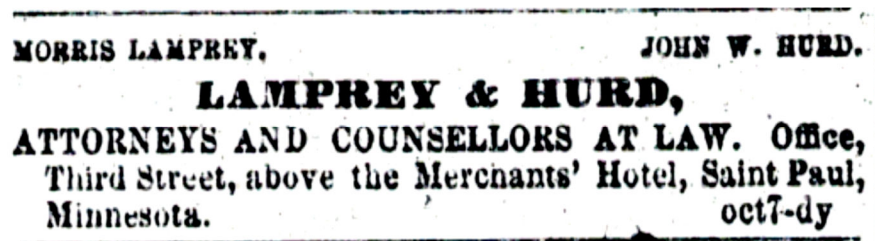
December 9, 1827 • April 9, 1879

**St. Paul Bar Association
Ramsey County District Court
St. Paul, Minnesota**

April 10, 1879

Preface

Morris Lamprey was a successful businessman and a well-known lawyer in St. Paul in the 1860s and 1870s. A member of the New Hampshire Bar, he relocated to St. Paul in 1855. For a while he practiced with John Hurd, and their business card was published in the *Daily Minnesotian*:¹



Years later Edmund R. Hollinshead clerked in his law offices and became his associate.²

His death from diphtheria on April 9, 1879, was front-page news. The *St. Paul Dispatch* was the first newspaper to break the story. That article and those in the *Globe* remind us of the significance writers and biographers during this period placed on the deceased's final days and hours of suffering, his last words, the identities of those present at his death bed, the relatives who were notified of his passing—what biographer Hermione Lee called “the prayers and weeping and solemn family gatherings of the traditional Victorian deathbed.”³

¹ *Daily Minnesotian*, October 26, 1857, at 1.

² For a biographical sketch, see “Edmund Rice Hollinshead (1855-1883).” (MLHP, 2018).

³ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography* 118 (Princeton University Press, 2005).

These stories also show how close the bar and bench were at this time. The day after Lamprey's death, General Sanborn appeared in the Supreme Court and moved that it adjourn out of respect for his memory and because the funeral would take place that morning. The motion was granted.

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St. Paul Dispatch

Third Edition

Wednesday, 5 P. M. April 9, 1879 Page 1

DEATH OF MORRIS LAMPREY.

**His Brief Illness and Its Supposed Origin
—Biographical Sketch.**

In a previous edition the Dispatch announced the death of Morris Lamprey, Esq., a distinguished lawyer of this city, from that terribly fatal disease, diphtheria, which in his case first manifested in its presence on Friday last. Mr. Lamprey himself believed—and it is not improbable—that he contracted the disease on Thursday last in handling and counting a considerable sum of money which was paid to him that day. The payments was mostly in

OLD AND WORN CURRENCY

and, being in haste and counting it, Mr. Lamprey occasionally wet his finger at his lips so that he could more readily separate the bills. Friday noon he was troubled with sore throat and from Friday night he remained in bed, but did not call a physician until Sunday morning, when, finding that he was continually growing worse, he consented to have Dr. F. Dedolph called. Monday morning Dr. D. W. Hand was also called. At that time hopes of Mr. Lamprey's recover were entertained, but the disease continued to prevail over all remedies which could be employed. This

morning at 7 o'clock Dr. G. Stamm was called to a consultation on the case with Doctors Hand and Dedolph and his conclusion agreed with theirs that the condition of the patient was hopeless. At 11:45 he died.

Mr. Lamprey was born in Hampton, New Hampshire, in 1828, and was there for about fifty-one years old. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1851 and for some time was a teacher in the Hampton, N. H., academy. He studied law with Judge Christy at Dover, N. H., and was admitted to the bar there. He came to St. Paul in 1856 and his practiced law here for over twenty-one years, during which time he had established an extraordinarily good reputation in his profession and built up a large and lucrative practice, to which he was closely devoted.

He married in St. Paul in 1869 Miss Eve Goodhue, and has four children, girls, living. Besides his brother resident here he has two brothers living in Massachusetts and one in New Hampshire. They have been notified by telegraph of his death. The funeral, out of deference to supposed public fears of the spread of disease much Mr. Lamprey died, will be private.

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St. Paul Daily Globe

Thursday morning, April 10, 1879

Page 1

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MORRIS LAMPREY.

Sudden Death of This Estimable Citizen After Three and a Half Days' Illness.

This community received a startling shock yesterday noon as the news passed rapidly along the streets that Morris Lamprey was dead. "I did not know he was ill," or "I saw him on the street two or three days ago," was the almost universal response made to the announcement, as comparatively few were aware of his illness and only his most immediate friends knew of the serious character of the attack.

He first complained last Friday, but treated the symptoms with indifference, supposing that he was only afflicted with a cold. Saturday his ailment was increased by fever and he complained of pains in his limbs and shoulders, but still feared nor entertained no apprehension even of a severe illness. In fact, on this day, he attended to business as usual, only returning home earlier than was his custom. Sunday morning his symptoms assumed a more aggravated nature, and for the first time he complained of his throat. During the day he was induced to let Dr. Dedolph, who was in attendance upon one of his children, examine his case and prescribe for him. Becoming worse almost hourly, Monday morning about 4 o'clock Dr. Hand was called to his bed-

side. Dr. Dedolph had pronounced his disease an aggravated and malignant case of diphtheria. When Dr. Hand was called in he at once declared that Mr. Lamprey's case was hopeless. He found his throat greatly swollen and coated with a thick membranous substance, a sure and fatal index of the disease.

From that time to the hour of his death, 12 o'clock yesterday, all in the power of the physicians, Drs. Hand, Dedolphe and Stamm, was done to alleviate his suffering. Death was produced from exhaustion, superinduced by suffocation, but even in the event that he had escaped death from this symptom of the disease, his demise would have happened from blood-poisoning, the disease having progressed to this fatal and hopeless stage. He was unconscious the last twenty-four hours of his life.

No satisfactory reason is given for his having the disease, or for its virulent type, as it is not known how or when he could have been exposed. He visited Litchfield last week, and it is thought may have contracted it on that trip, as the diphtheria has been somewhat prevalent in that locality.

Morris Lamprey was born in Concord, New Hampshire, fifty-one years ago. His early life was marked by nothing peculiar, though being the eldest child of parents of quite moderate means he was early thrown upon his own resources. Determined to engage in a learned profession he took a college course at Dartmouth and subsequently studied law in the office of Mr. Christy at Dover, N. H. He was admitted to the bar at that place and for a short time thereafter remained in the office of his preceptor. As that section fur-

nished but limited opportunities for a young man he resolved to come west in the spring of 1855. He had no definite plan as to location, and when he reached Galena he drew lots to determine whether he should settle in St. Paul or St. Louis. The hazard turned in favor of St. Paul, and hither he came, now nearly twenty-four years ago. In St. Paul, he first entered the office of Sanborn & French, and in the fall of 1855 he opened his first law office, on Third street, between Jackson and Robert.

The next year he formed a partnership with John Hurd, which was terminated in 1857 by the death of Hurd. He continued the practice of his profession from the day he opened his office until last Saturday, with a zeal and industry rarely witnessed. He was literally absorbed in the practice of law, and long since reached a commanding position as one of the leading attorneys of the state.

In June, 1869 he married Eve Goodhue, the daughter of the late J. M. Goodhue, founder of the *Pioneer*, and besides his wife leaves four daughters, the eldest eight years of age.⁴ Four

⁴ Their wedding was noted in the local press:

Matrimonial—Morris Lamprey, Esq., a prominent attorney of this city, and generally regarded as an incorrigible old bachelor, was yesterday married to Miss Eve Goodhue, of Cottage Grove. Miss Goodhue was recently a pupil in the Adams School and is well known to many of our citizens. Rev. S. Y. McMasters, Rector of Christ Church, tied the knot which united the happy couple. The ceremony took place at the residence of miss Goodhue's guardian, Dr. T. T. Mann, Cottage Grove. Soon after which they departed for a bridal tour East. It was a quiet affair and much less ostentatious than the wealth and standing of the parties had caused the public to anticipate.

Saint Paul Daily Pioneer, September 3, 1869, at 4.

brothers and four sisters survive him, both of his parents being dead. One brother, Uri, resides in St. Paul, two others in New Hampshire, and the fourth in Boston. Two of his sisters also reside in New Hampshire. These relatives have been advised by telegraph of the sudden death of their brother, and the shock will be all the more severe from the fact that being their senior, and having been prospered in worldly affairs, he had to a degree given them the advantage of his prosperity. He was an active member of Christ church congregation, and by his liberality and energy that church lifted a large debt a few years ago.

Politically he was a Democrat, but never a politician, and never held an office of any description save that of regent of the State university, a position, without emolument, which he has held for the past three years. It can be literally said that he never received a dollar from the public treasury.

Mr. Lamprey leaves a large property, which is variously estimated at from \$200,000 to \$250,000.⁵ This had been entirely accumulated

⁵ An inventory was published in the *St. Paul Daily Globe*, August 8, 1879, at 4:

The Lamprey Estate.	
The inventory and appraisement of the property of the late Morris Lamprey was filed in the probate court, yesterday afternoon, from which was obtained the following information:	
Real estate.....	\$131,100 00
Real estate under agreement to sell.....	9,683 00
Notes.....	57,836 00
Household furniture, etc.....	3,676 50
Office furniture, etc.....	184 60
Stocks and life insurance.....	10,000 00
Sheriff's certificates.....	4,131 00
Law library.....	2,882 50
Judgments.....	340 00
Miscellaneous.....	9,459 88
Total.....	\$235,998 48

during his residence in St, Paul, and so careful have been his business habits that it is probable no estate of magnitude in this county has ever presented so little complication as this will. He never allowed a liability to stand against him. His affairs could not have been placed in better shape if he had had ample warning of his fate.

Owing to the malignant character of the disease the funeral will be strictly private, only the immediate family being present, and the hosts of friends who would otherwise desire to pay the last tribute of respect to his memory will be deprived of the privilege. He will be buried from his late residence, No. 88 College avenue, at 10 A. M. to-day, Rev. William P. Ten Broeck officiating.

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Editorial
St. Paul Daily Globe
April 10, 1879, page 2.

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DEATH OF MORRIS LAMPREY.

For the second time within a brief period we are compelled to record the death of a prominent citizen, whose career has suddenly terminated just at the time when the period of activity seemed the greatest. By the death of Mr. Lamprey, St. Paul and the State lose one of the most prominent members of the bar. He was a man who was passionately devoted to his profession, and probably confined himself more closely to his legal work than any other lawyer in

the State. He never engaged in a case without giving it the closest study, and familiarizing himself with every detail, and his success can be largely attributed to this careful, painstaking custom. Many a time he has succeeded in court by his care in preparing his case, where in other respects his suit was weak.

In business matters he was scrupulously punctilious and most thoroughly honest. When he made an agreement he expected to fulfill his part to the letter, and he demanded only such treatment for himself as he accorded to others. While his exact business notions might not be popular with those more lax, they were correct principles, and if all would follow them there would be a business punctuality which would be surprising. As is quite common, a man's inner life becomes better known after his death than while living, and many notable acts of Mr. Lamprey's are now recalled which have never before been generally known. The characteristics of the man were well displayed by an incident during the war. At the first battle of Bull Run the Minnesota First was engaged, and upon the news of the disaster Gov. Ramsey sent Gen. J. B. Sanborn, Adjutant General of the State, to Washington to look after the Minnesota sick and wounded. Mr. Lamprey, just previous to Gen. Sanborn's departure, called on him and handed him two hundred dollars in gold to use in caring for the Minnesota sufferers. No other man in St. Paul made a contribution at that time, there being no call for aid, and his action was purely voluntary. There was no ostentation or desire for public notoriety and we believe this is the first newspaper mention of the fact ever made. It was his peculiarity to shun publicity, and hence it is that only when death breaks the seal

of privacy, the acts which show the real character of the man come to light.

The death of Mr. Lamprey is a loss to the city and State. His long residence in St. Paul made him seem like a portion of the actual city and his large property interests gave him an additional incentive for aiding in building up the place. He was cut off in his prime, and at a time when his counsels and great financial strength were eminently advantageous to the public. We speak of him above as a public citizen, understanding full well that his death creates a private and personal affliction which is wide spread, but which is not in our province to consider. It is in this circle, where he is best known, that he is most mourned, and it would surprise those who never knew him, save in business, if they could be informed of the real nature of the man as developed in a thousand generous and endearing ways in home and private life. The world will move on, though the fountain of private grief bubbles over, and aching hearts fail to be comforted but the niche in public and private life which Morris Lamprey filled is vacant and cannot soon, if ever, be occupied.⁶

⁶ The *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press's* obituary included a much shorter description of Lamprey's death and his accomplishments. April 10, 1879, at 7. The next day it carried the following:

SUPREME COURT.

GENERAL TERM.

At the opening of the court yesterday Hon. John B. Sanborn announced the death of Morris Lamprey, Esq., and stated that he had been a constant practitioner for more than twenty years before the court, that the funeral would take place at 10 o'clock to-day, and moved that, out of respect to his memory, the court adjourn without transacting further business. The court accordingly adjourned until this morning at 9:30 o'clock.

April 11, 1879, at 3.

**Funeral and Bar Association Services
St. Paul Daily Globe**

Friday, April 11, 1879

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THE LAST OF EARTH.

**Burial of the Late Morris Lamprey-
The Action of the Bar-
A Friend's Tribute to
His Memory.**

Though the funeral of Morris Lamprey was announced as strictly private, the statement in the Globe that it would occur at 10 A. M. yesterday, brought quite an array of friends to his late residence, despite the contagious character of the disease with which he died. Rev. Mr. Ten Broeck, pastor of Christ Church, read the burial service, after which the remains were taken to the cemetery.

The pall bearers were those he had already been exposed to the disease by their attendance upon the deceased, and hence no new risk was run. They were as follows: J. R. Cleveland, Lamprey, Dr. Hand, Dr. Dedolph, Chas. A. Moore and Edmund H. Hollinshead.

At the cemetery some forty or fifty assembled to pay the last tribute. The concluding burial service was read and the coffin committed to the earth, the grief-stricken family remaining until the grave was filled up. But for the announcement of a private funeral the attendance would undoubtedly

have been very large, even though the nature of his disease was well known.

The announcement that he was unconscious for some time previous to his death was an error. He retained full consciousness to the last, and a few minutes before his death said to his wife that while he was very sick he thought his strong constitution would enable him to pull through. Soon after the disease seemed to go to his heart and all was over. It is understood that he left no will.

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Meeting of the Bar Association.

A special meeting of the St. Paul bar association was held in the district court room yesterday afternoon, for the purpose of taking appropriate action with regard to the untimely death of the late Morris Lamprey, Esq., A large representation of lawyers were in attendance, prominent among whom were the following named gentlemen: H. R. Bigelow, Judges Brill and Wilkins, James Smith, Jr., I. V. D. Heard, J. B. Sanborn, Ex. Gov. C. K. Davis, H. L. Moss, J. H. Davidson, E. S. Chittenden, W. P. Murray, J. B. Brisbin, W. H. Grant, J. B. Beals, T. R. Huddleston, Judge Flandrau, W. K. Gaston, Greenleaf Clark, Charles N. Bell, J. J. Eagan, J. F. O'Brien, G. L. Otis, W. Parsons, C. J. Thompson, Otto Dreher, C. M. McCarthy, W. T. Barr, W. D. Cornish, C. D. O'Brien, W. H. Mead, G. Seigenthaler, T. Parker, W. S. Moore, Clerk Kiefer, Sheriff King, Frank Carleton, George Squires, W. P. Warner, Harvey Officer, W. L. Kelly, S. L. Pierce, J. Mainzer, C. D. Kerr, Geo. P. Wilson, R. J. Reed and others.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. H. R. Bigelow, who said that the association was called upon to mourn the death of one of the most prominent members of the bar, and the vice-president of their association a man whose sterling virtues and respected memory should command some marked tribute of condolence and respect, while the association should express their sympathy with the bereaved and afflicted family. The regular secretary being absent, Mr. I. V. D. Heard was unanimously chosen secretary pro tem.

On motion of Gen. Sanborn the chair was authorized to appoint a committee of three on resolutions. The chair appointed Gen. Sanborn, Gov. Davis and James Smith, Jr., to serve as such a committee; who retired for the purpose of drafting the resolutions. After a short absence the committee returned and submitted the following resolutions of respect, which were read by Gen. Sanborn:

Resolved, That in the sudden death of Morris Lamprey, Esq., we recognize a dispensation of Providence which calls us from our busy pursuits and bids us to consider the uncertainties of life, and the vanity of all earthly things, and which brings forcibly to our minds the words of divine wisdom, "Surely man walketh in a vain show, surely man is disquieted in vain."

Resolved, That in this death the bar of this State has lost one of its most honorable and energetic and able members, who for more than twenty years has applied himself with an intelligent and upright zeal to the duties of his high profession, the satisfaction of his clients and

to the courts before which he has practised, and which have frequently acknowledged the great assistance they have derived from his arguments.

Resolved, That in the departure of our brother and friend the poor have lost a friend who was a friend in need; the church and institutions of learning a defender and supporter; the community a conservative and wise citizen; and the family a generous, faithful and affectionate father and husband, whose place can never be failed.

Resolved, That their bereavement we tender to the members of his family our sincere condolence and sympathy, and commend them to Him who alone is always a friend to the widow and the fatherless.

Resolved, That the president of this association cause a copy of these resolutions to be forwarded to the widow of the deceased, and that a committee be appointed to present copies of the same with proper remarks to this court and to the supreme court of the State, and also to the circuit court of the United States for the district of Minnesota, and move that the same be spread upon the minutes of the respective courts, on occasion which we will attend in a body.

Mr. J. B. Brisbin arose and moved their adoption, which was unanimously earned. On motion, the chair appointed Messrs. Sanborn, Davis and Smith as a committee to present copies of the resolutions to the family of the deceased and the courts, with Gov. Davis as chairman, following which the meeting adjourned.

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Action of the University.

The faculty of the university of Minnesota, of which Morris Lamprey was one of the regents, met yesterday and appointed a committee to draft a set of resolutions of respect and esteem.

In honor to his memory no session will be held at the university on Saturday.

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Morris Lamprey – His Death a Public Loss.

[An old and valued friend of the deceased sends us this tribute to his memory]

The autumn leaves die. Spring reproduces the glory of autumnal death in the beautiful foliage of May. Nature is a living and dying lesson to mankind. Death's messenger, whether in nature's decay, or when spring's Æolian lyre awakes the music of life, summons the most distinguished citizen and the child in the cradle. Death is the great mystery of life. Immortality crowns human hopes and arches the family, the community, and state with the promise that the same all wise Providence, in infinite mercy, will preserve and protect all alike.

The death of an eminent citizen is always, according to weak human judgment, a public calamity. But the mysterious, wonderful, strange laws of life and death, taking away citizens of the greatest promise, men of far reaching usefulness, men of industry, working men, in all life's best and worthiest relations, men of inner life's charity and public life's prospects, startle and thrill society. It is a mystery that passeth all human understanding.

Morris Lamprey was a distinguished and respected citizen of this city. He came to St. Paul in 1855. Born in the granite State of New Hampshire, a poor boy, his own nature seemed to have been inspired by the firmness and steadiness of his own native mountains.

His boyhood was almost manhood. He learned, in classic old Dartmouth, the ambition of a student, and taught school to get the means to learn, and to succeed in the West. He did succeed, and died at the age of 51 the most successful lawyer in Minnesota.

Mr. Lamprey was pre-eminently a business man. His clients were the best business men in the State. As a lawyer, coming to St. Paul, scarcely of age, he sprang into a practice, that gave him little time for deep, careful, legal study. His business pressed on him. He never neglected any man's business. He was a man of resistless, good humor; he never yielded to insults; his superior nature rose; above he was a lawyer of boundless industry; he gave his days to work and his nights to study. He appeared to have caught the spirit of Chief Justice Story's advice to young lawyers, approaching the temple of justice.⁷ His energy

⁷ Story's advice, in verse, was delivered in 1831. Sometimes it is shortened, but the following is complete:

**BE brief, be pointed; let your matter stand
Lucid in order, solid, and at hand;
Spend not your words on trifles, but condense;
Strike with the mass of thought, not drops of sense;
Press to the close with vigor, once begun,
And leave, (how hard the task!) leave off, when done.
Who draws a labored length of reasoning out,
Puts straws in line, for winds to whirl about;
Who draws a tedious tale of learning o'er,
Counts but the sands on ocean's boundless shore.
Victory in law is gained, as battles fought,**

and physical nerve yielded not to the will, until the golden bowl was broken.

Mr. Lamprey's death is a great public calamity. He was in the prime of life. He had accumulated, by ceaseless work and steady business habits, a fortune. Few understood him as he deserved to be understood. As a man, his charities were done in secret. He contributed to all he thought deserving, and not with a miserly hand, but he did not seek notoriety. There are men and women, and children who knew of his benevolence. When it was business with him, who made his fortune through great and undeserved opposition, it was business, but when it was charity, he never refused. The writer of these lines can attest. He was devoted to the city and to the people. He was opposed to all speculative jobs, whether of corporations or anything else, not directly benefiting the poor people and the city and the State.

**Not by the numbers, but the forces brought.
What boots success in skirmish or in fray,
If rout and ruin following close the day?
What worth a hundred posts maintained with skill,
If these all held, the foe is victor still?
He, who would win his cause, with power must frame
Points of support, and look with steady aim;
Attack the weak, defend the strong with art,
Strike but few blows, but strike them to the heart;
All scattered fires but end in smoke and noise,
The scorn of men, the idle play of boys.
Keep, then, this first great precept ever near,
Short be your speech, your matter strong and clear,
Earnest your manner, warm and rich your style,
Severe in taste, yet full of grace the while;
So may you reach the loftiest heights of fame,
And leave, when life is past, a deathless name.**

Thus far as to Morris Lamprey as a citizen. The sacred inner life is not for the public. There is a holy of holies in man's love, life and death. Sorrow, and sadness, and mourning and dark shrouds enshrine the altar. Mr. Lamprey was a devoted, fond, loving, kind husband and father. His whole heart seemed to go out in love for his family. So suddenly called from earth, he retained his mind, in the presence of death, when disease almost choked his utterances. He, in his last moments, called his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, the daughter of James M. Goodhue, the old pioneer editor of Minnesota, Eva Goodhue, and in the presence of her sister's husband, Charles A. Moore, Uri Lamprey, his brother, he said consciously: "My darling wife, I have loved you well. May be, we will pull through yet; stand by me, dear." And he died. They were the last words of Morris Lamprey.

Rev. Mr. Ten Broeck was present and recited the Lord's prayer, Mr. Lamprey responding, and in a louder voice answered, "Amen."

And Morris Lamprey has gone to the grave whither all must follow. He has left behind many mourning, faithful friends, with love and friendship for his family, and who will never forget his unostentatious kindness, and whose faith is:

"Immortality o'er sweeps,
All pains, all tears, all time, all fears —and peals,
Like the eternal thunders of the deep,
Into my ears this truth—Thou liv'st forever!"

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THE LATE MORRIS LAMPREY.

The following resolution, presented by Regent Marshall with appropriate remarks, was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the death of our late associate, Regent Morris Lamprey, has deprived the board of an eminently useful member, and the State university of a devoted friend. That we place upon the records this expression of our sense of loss and feeling of sorrow, and tender to the family of the deceased our heartfelt sympathy in their affliction. That the secretary transmit a copy of this resolution to Mrs. Lamprey. ■



Related Articles

"Uri Locke Lamprey (1842-1906)" (MLHP, 2018).

"Edmund R. Hollinshead (1855-1883)" (MLHP, 2018).

"Henry Clay James (1849-1930)" (MLHP, 2012).

