

Following is a sketch of a fine gentleman. For the time his initials are "G. E. S." and because he is a modest and unassuming gentleman and has no idea that this article is appearing in print, the name will be mentioned at the end.

He was for many years a farm lad in the Long Point, Balsam Lake district where he attended day school. Being a natural student he had very little difficulty in passing examinations. For a time he attended McGill University in Montreal until his funds ran out, or became dangerously low, and he found it necessary to forego studies although he was doing well. When he decided to take up the profession of a teacher, he decided his first pedagogical claim to fame should be in the Cavan area where his ancestral fathers first broke up the land. The hours were long, the salary small, but it appeared to be the best occupation at the time. Besides he liked the idea of teaching boys and girls.

Answering a smallprint ad in the Toronto Globe he was in a certain degree of ecstasy when his application was given consideration by the School Trustees at Cavan and his chances were excellent for the position until one canny trustee shook his head in doubt. This trustee could not understand why a young man attending McGill should want to teach in a small rural school. "He is well qualified — there must be some other reason" said the Trustees and consequently the application with all the testimonials of character and scholastic ability were turned aside.

Perhaps it was all for the best, for this young man turned to the cold business of being a store keeper. The natural thing was to return to the home village of Victoria Road and there for some time he conducted a merchantile business. He did well and by close application to business and helping in worthwhile village affairs the business prospered.

It is interesting to note that he had associated with him two men bearing the same name, one was a brother and the other a cousin. By coincidence they celebrated their birthdays on the same day, on the same date, although there was a difference in their ages. The first day of January was the date. This record, if it can be called a record, probably has not an equal.

### **MOVED TO KIRKFIELD**

Having a desire and ambition for greater things in the business world, this young merchant wished to expand and was able to find just the right store he was looking for in the village of Kirkfield where he purchased the McInnes Hardware Store.

Business began to boom when the Federal Government decided to build the Trent Valley Canal and the Valley route was extended through Kirkfield, where in time what is claimed to be the second largest Lift Lock in the world was erected. The largest is at Peterboro.

Business began to boom in the hardware line. The village of Kirkfield also, at this time, received a tremendous lift when William Mackenzie (later Sir William), wedded a Kirkfield girl and was largely instrumental in putting the pretty little village "on the map".

Business really boomed when Mackenzie linked his business venture with Donald Mann, (later Sir Donald Mann), which partnership resulted in the building of a number of pioneer railroads in Ontario and Northern Ontario.

At the same time the Mackenzie family built two or three palatial summer homes on Balsam Lake. The village of Kirkfield took on new life and became one of the loveliest and prettiest places in this part of Ontario. A large sized Inn was erected on the main corner, it was of old English architectural beauty, built of stucco with doors and windows trimmed with dark wood. It became a stopping place for many commercial men as well as visiting tourists. The village suffered a great loss when the Inn was completely destroyed by fire. The MacKenzie Dairy was also an important institution and at one time it was operated by R. J. Fleming, who later on became well known as the Mayor of Toronto. The Mackenzie estate had one of the largest and finest homes to be found east of Toronto.

When the estate was enlarged Lady Mackenzie purchased the old Presbyterian Church, demolished the brick structure and built a new church on the opposite side of the road. Many years ago the mansion was taken over by the Roman Catholic Church, a bequest from Lady Mackenzie.

It is of interest to note that Sir William Mackenzie and Sir Donald Mann became world famous as pioneer railway men. Sir William became a financial wizard in raising much needed funds in the British Money Market for the construction, in partnership with Donald Mann of Acton, Ontario of the Canadian Northern Transcontinental railway, Mann carrying the responsibility for construction and Mackenzie mainly that of business manager for the operation. Patrick Burns as a young man, migrated to Calgary in Western Canada, where, through his integrity and square dealing became known as "The Western 'Meat King'" with representation in most towns in Western Canada.

While in a reminiscent mood "G.C.S." recalled school teachers who reached prominence in the North Victoria Villages around the beginning of the century. They were Morris of Coboconk, Graham at Victoria Road and Mosgrove at Kirkfield. It is recalled that Morris had a boy pupil

who took situations as they occurred, into his own hands for solution. Called upon by the teacher to read a sentence in class, difficult for him, he threw his book into Morris's face and turned tail for the nearby Gull River. To solve the situation it is said Morris followed to the river bank and through some dexterous use of convenient stones delivered in the general direction of the delinquent pupil managed to convince the said pupil to land and return to class.

In order to increase their salaries to living proportions it was frequently found necessary for teachers to add a side line. Examples were Graham of Victoria Road, who added conveyancing; Mosgrove of Kirkfield - Management of the local village bank etc.

Deciding to try his fortune in other fields "G.C.S." was for a time associated with the Executive of J. J. Turner and sons in Peterboro and he was the business man who later started the Burtol Dry Cleaning establishment in Peterboro. In the life of the community of Peterboro he was well and favourably known because of his connection with George Street United Church where he was an Elder and for a time was Chairman of the Music Committee. Members of the church well remember the many years of faithful service he rendered to this particular church.

As a hobby this gentleman assembled a replica of the liner "Saxonia", a beautiful masterpiece which is now located under glass in the Lindsay Collegiate Institute, his Alma Mater.

For several years past he has been living in Oshawa where his hobby has resulted in one of the loveliest gardens in the district. He never fails to attend church and his life has been exemplary in many respects.

This fine, cultured, well informed gentleman is now enjoying life in his 'Nineties.' He is Mr. G. C. (Clarke) Staples, a gentleman the writer is very

“Uncle Clarke”.

The two other gentlemen referred to at the store at Victoria Rd. were a brother Frank Staples and a cousin Wesley Staples.