

Ed Thomas Cigar Store



BENZIE
SANGMA

Intelligencer

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The room above the popular store once located on 182 Front St. in Belleville gained much notoriety in the 1920s as a gambling den where some locals hobnobbed Friday and Saturday afternoons and evenings over a game of poker. But that was long before the former Belleville resident and the last owner of what used to be the most popular cigar store in the city, Ed Thomas Cigar Store, came on the scene.

Bill Bailas and his wife, Sue, today residents of Wellington, owned and operated the popular downtown store for three years in the late '80s. By that time, the colourful past of the room upstairs had receded into the crevices of its four walls and into the recesses of the local lore.



Ed
THOMAS

The store was thought to be 150 years old when the Bailases took possession of it.

"Years ago, it was a happening spot. The store carried ice cream,

newspapers, magazines to cigarettes and what have you," recalled Bailas who bought the store from Emmanuel Georgiou.

Originally, it operated as a general store where, in the early days, natives brought furs to trade. It used to be a regular meeting place of sorts for the local residents and in later years, was mostly famed for its ice cream in a cone, said Bailas.

Belleville resident Marjory Smart, in her early '80s today, recalled Ed Thomas's store as a popular general tobacco store.

"I remember it also carried newspapers ... We'd have to go into the store and buy them. My father would usually pick it up on his way from work and if he didn't, he'd send me for it. It was a nice little store. I remember seeing people standing and talking in there all the time. Well, I suppose it was like the old country store

where people would come in and chat," said Smart.

While the store's younger clientele mostly came in for ice cream, the adults would come in for a variety of items including snuff, tobacco and reading material. In some cases, the store provided a much appreciated service.

"Prior to 1969, Belleville was a railroad