

Intelligencer - Sept. 8/02 p.2

The original Holden's and later, Geen's Drug Store was located on the corner of Front Street and Victoria Avenue. The drug store, which was wholesale-retail at the time, also dealt largely in coal oil and lamp goods.

Later, magazines and stationery began to be sold in the store. Included on the shelves were bibles and hymnbooks, a strong reflection of the religious ardour of Albert Geen, who was also an active preacher ordained in 1885.

A fire in the 1880s forced Geen to move his business across the street to 280 Front St. It remained there until in 1945, his son, Percival Geen, moved the business to the three-storied building on 276 Front St.

"The retail area was on the main floor and the basement was used for storage. The two top floors were at one time rented out to tenants.

Gradually, around the 70s, the tenants were moved out and the family set up the offices for all three stores on the second floor while the top floor was used as extra storage space."

The Geens expanded to their second location when they bought Jim Barton's drug store on North Front Street in 1977. Finally, in 1987, the business branched out to their Loyalist Plaza location.

One of the most significant shifts in the Geen's busi-

ness that Casselman noted was the gradual change from veterinarian to urban medicine since the 70s.

"The Geens used to have a large clientele from the surrounding farming areas. They used to have bag balm that was used to treat certain cow udder infection and a large variety of antibiotics for injections for farm animals. As Belleville started to grow, that business fell by the wayside," he says.

The only emergency Casselman said that he could recall was the time Belleville and area suffered from a large infestation of lice a number of years ago. He says the store could not keep up with the demand for lice products.

Area customers have been known to remain with the family-operated business for generations and Casselman attributes their loyalty to the store's caring atmosphere. In particular, he says, they were fond of

Lyle Twiddy, former employee of the Geen's who had passed away over a decade ago.

"He (Twiddy) showed them how a pharmacist can be a professional and at the same time, be someone who people seek out and go to. They trusted the way that he dispensed their medication accurately and brought them joy even at the time when they were not feeling joyful."

Recently, the Geens announced that they are closing down their downtown location and like many others, Casselman says he felt sad on hearing the news of the closure.

You can reach Benzie Sangma at bsangma@cogeco.ca with comments on or story ideas for Remember When