



BENZIE
SANGMA

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When the late John J. Trudeau, an established automobile dealer from Tweed since 1924, first arrived in Belleville looking to make a business expansion in the early 1930s, he was met by what the historians described as a community in transition. It was a period in Belleville's transformation when, they noted, "milk wagons were still hauled by horses, as were ice wagons and many farmers' conveyances" — an aspect of Belleville that Trudeau would help phase out gradually over the following decades with his array of shiny automobiles tempting customers, first at its downtown location and later, at two others in the city.

Bruce Prindle, 83, of Belleville, a former employee at Trudeau Motors Limited, was hired 1947 as a mechanic to work at the company's original location downtown, next to where Park Theatre used to be



JOHN J.
TRUDEAU

between Market and Dundas streets. He said he had heard stories of the old days when local farmers used to simply bring in their horses to the family-run business and trade them in for a car.

"That was before my time. But I do know of a local farming couple who came into the business to buy a car one day with their money in a sock. They didn't trust the banks so they had kept their money in socks. They (the salesmen) took them to the office and sold them a new car for cold cash," recalled Prindle.

"That happened all the time those days," agreed Jamie Trudeau, one of the two Trudeau sons who ran the business after their father died in 1977.

Trudeau Motors was a Ford dealership and then switched to Chrysler dealership in 1941 and opened a new garage on a six acres lot on Station Street. The company

had both Front and the Station street locations running at the same time for a while but after further expansions at the later location, the original location was closed down, said Trudeau.

Prindle recalled a fire, described as "spectacular" by a local news reporter, which razed the newly built garage on December 20, 1948. About 20 cars in the garage for repairs at the time were destroyed. A large stock of tires in an annex at the west end of the new building and a supply of stored oil too burned and further fuelled the raging fire.

"Thankfully, nobody got hurt but the garage was completely destroyed. All that was left was the showroom. The loss was huge. It happened a week before Christmas and most of us went back to work night shifts at the Front Street location. They'd kept us working," said Prindle.

Following the renovations that were completed in 1950, the Station Street location was eventually converted to Chevrolet and Oldsmobile lines in 1952. The business also handled used cars and ran parts and service department, body shop, and a propane gas outlet in the early '80s. At

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