BENZIE
SANGMA

Intelligencer

btell Jan 8/05 p. D2

His love for a woman kept him from leaving Canada and following his two brothers to the country south of the border in search of better prospects.

Instead, he opted to get married to this same woman and attempted to make a go of it in his own hometown, the city of Toronto. In 1918, however, he decided to move to Belleville along with his wife and their two-year-old daughter looking for a fresh start.

That two-year-old was Audrey McMurray, now a Belleville resident in her late 80s, who recalled herself working, beginning at the tender age of five, at the downtown bicycle store that her father, Stephen Licence, opened in 1918. Licence had bought the store from Christopher Lewis who was moving on to the automobile repair service business.

"I remember mother kept going back to Toronto because she missed her family there. She'd take the new baby and go. So, I'd be down at the store with my father all the time. I learned to stamp scribblers with my dad's name and he would give out those scribblers to students who came in to the store for them to use at school. It was his way of advertising," recalled McMurray.

With time, she moved on to other jobs in the store including sweeping the store's floor and running errands for her father.

The store, when owned by Lewis, carried only motorbikes, she said. Her father replaced the inventory with bicycles.

"At the time, most people went everywhere on bicycles. They couldn't afford cars and when my dad's store opened, it became popular both for its stock and the on-site bike servicing that he offered."

A competitive bike racer in Toronto, her father had always been fascinated with bikes, recalled McMurray.

Stephen Licence is shown in an undated photo. He died in 1952 at the age of 64.

"He had to give that up though because he wasn't a terribly strong person. He was a rather delicate person with a bad heart from childhood."

Her seventh birthday was especially memorable, she said, because of the gift that she had received from her father.

"It was a bike painted all gold with my name on it. I was very proud of it and rode it in parades. I really had a lovely time with it," said McMurray, her easy laughter breaking out as she tells her tale. That gift was her prized possession until she turned 16 when she returned home from a guide camp and found out that her mother had given it away. She never saw it again.

Belleville's downtown area was very busy those days, she said. Especially on Saturdays when out-of-town farmers came