

Business since 1905

All in the family--for years

By MARG HAYLOCK
Staff Reporter

WELLINGTON - A decade ago, Ruth Nash decided to take a part-time job "just to keep busy". At 70 years of age she became a weekend employee at Nash Dominion Hardware, a business founded by her father-in-law in 1905.

"I gave it (the job) up this year, with the arrival of my 80th birthday," she says.

"I used to dust on Fridays and Saturdays and visit with the customers."

"I never went in the store to serve in the early days. If my father-in-law were to go in there today, he'd have a fit. There is everything there but hardware - they even sell garden supplies," says Mrs. Nash.

She recalls that the hardware store was opened, originally in 1903 by the Macdonald brothers who decided to dissolve their partnership because of personal differences, "My husband's father, Tom, was a hardware traveller and he saw the opportunity in the store."

Founder of Nash Hardware, Tom Morley Nash; was born at Roblin's Mills and was the son of Dr. and Mrs. S.L. Nash. He was a traveller for Chown's of Kingston and, until the purchase of Macdonald Bros' Hardware; had lived in Belleville with his wife and son.

Nash and his wife, Mabel, died in their 50s and the hardware business passed to their eldest son, Harold, in 1935. He was a graduate of Albert College in Belleville and had learned the plumbing and tinsmithing trades at the family store.

His wife, Ruth, recalls that in the early days of the store, there was a large stock of cookstoves and Quebec heaters on display. Today, wood-burning stoves are again a popular seller.

"They used to sell horse collars and buggy whips. The old whip rack is still on display in the store window. Now they use it to hold fishing rods."

Mrs. Nash says her late husband also sold gasoline, for a time and there were two pumps in front of the hardware store.

"On Sunday morning you would get a call because some girl was crying for a trip to see her mother and the husband needed gas. My husband would have to get out of bed and gas the car and often in the Depression there was no money to pay for the gas. As soon as he could get out of that, he did."

"The weather and the crops were always poor, just before the (Second World) war. The men who worked in the factories here earned 15

cents an hour. A lot of them enlisted because they were driven to it."

The village was dependent on the canning factories and on Quinte Milk for job opportunities. "There was the Canadian Cannery seed house where the women were busy all winter sorting seeds and the men worked in the cannery's greenhouse where the plants were raised."

In the Depression years and during the last war, many families faced a tough economic struggle. "We owned the block where the store was located and when I started helping out I found that the rent paid in the summer was owing from the winter before. There was no help (welfare or unemployment insurance), no assistance and for those who outlived their means it was a real humiliation to get the \$25 a month old age pension in the early days."

Since 1949, Mrs. Nash's son, Tom has been a part of the family business. He joined his father, Harold, in the store after graduating from Albert College in business administration. When his father became ill, in 1967, he was made a partner in the operation and has been running it for the past 16 years. His son, Ted, now has joined the business.

PE Co - Business
Irish Sept 29/83



Tom Nash tests original cash register--now restored as novelty--in Wellington store his family's been involved with since 1905. His son Ted

(left) is fourth generation to work the operation. They're assisted by employee John Barrett.

NASH, TOM

Prince Edward County - - Biography N