

To repeat a sentence which has been heard on many a lip in recent years "You cannot stop progress".

This fact has often been evidenced in the change of ownership and management in connection with many commercial and industrial firms. It is interesting to chronicle the fact that the old and reliable firm of Eaton's as a merchantile business in Lindsay is about to undergo a drastic change.

"Walkers" a name respected in places of merchantile competition for years past, will shortly take over the Eaton store and business in Lindsay, in conjunction with several other Eaton stores in Ontario.

One hundred and six years ago, (and that is a long way back) the store now occupied by Eatons at the corner of Kent and York Streets, was owned by Dundas and Flavelle, a firm which also operated a large produce and cold storage business known as Flavelle's Limited on King Street, afterwards known as Allanbury's, Chatco Steel, and Rosedale Plastics.

The block at Kent and York included three stores, but as time went on, the firm of Dundas and Flavelle and Eatons knocked out a couple of brick walls and spread out into one large store . . . The steel posts which held up the walls are still in use in the present store.

Away back in the pages of history of the Flavelle institution the firm owned and operated a grain exchange in the King Street store. This fact was established when the old east wall of the store was being redecorated. A large black-board was uncovered which had been used in former days to post market quotations.

The general office of the firm was located on the ground floor of the present building, and later moved to the second floor. The produce line was one of the largest in Ontario and many citizens of today recall with delight and interest, the days when chickens by the hundreds were placed in the large room in the basement of the King Street plant.

Men and women sat around the rooms on long benches, and as they were paid by the number of birds they plucked, feathers floated through the air, and at times the workers were almost knee deep in feathers. It was a profitable business for the firm and for the pickers.

The Flavelles were good business men and could see prospective business "around the corner," and in some respects they were geniuses in the produce business.

At one time the local business was augmented when carloads of what was known as "Doukabor Butter" was brought in from the West. Buckets of this butter of various colours was processed by hand labour and machinery and turned out by the Flavelle firm in larger containers and sold to the trade in Ontario.

Eggs were carted into the plant on King Street by the hundreds of thousands. They were submitted to a candle-light inspection by many workers who became expert at the job of sorting strictly fresh from the slightly tainted and all products were placed in their proper category for resale.

It is said the Flavelle firm were the first to manufacture ice cream in large quantities by the use of mechanical means, doing away with the old fashioned ice packed freezers.

Following the disastrous fire which engulfed the plant and burned it to the ground, hundreds of cheeses and tons of butter, it is stated, flowed from

the building as if from a huge spout, into the Scugog River. As the yellow mass floated down the river it was stopped at the dam and at the locks. One eye-witness to the episode said "as the hours went by the cheese and butter hardened and the whole river area at the locks, and across to the Flavelle grist mill, was one solid slab."

"Outside interests arrived in town one day, and by using large scoops, dipped out the mass of cheese, and I understand this old cheese was again processed and resold to the trade in small attractive containers".

Returning to the early days of the Flavelle Brothers and the link with the present Eaton store, one informant had this remark concerning the business and the men: "The Flavelle Brothers were men of keen foresight and keen in business. To them must go the credit of being big business men and the establishment and operation of one of the largest merchantile stores to be found in Ontario. My memory goes back 77 years ago, and Dundas and Flavelle owned the store at the corner of Kent and York Streets. John and William Flavelle built this town at that time and carried on through the years to follow.

OLD GRIST MILL

For years J. D. Flavelle, Thomas Sadler, and William Needler apparently ran the old stone grist mill employing upwards of one hundred men. Sadler and Needler dropped out and J. D. Flavelle entered the produce business with William heading the big store.

The store premises were once owned by John McDonald, and as business grew the store was extended to the north and to the east, and another store next to the Benson House was purchased. In the middle of this U shaped store was the first jewelry store owned by Thomas Beal. Later Mr. Beal moved into a new store near

the corner of William Street.

“Those were the days when the firm operated a large men’s clothing department, with everything a man wore, pants, vest, coat or overcoat, made on the premises. Jack McKnight was the first cutter. Later on the store branched into men’s furnishings and haberdashery, with Archie McIntyre at the head.

The store contained a large women’s department where all garments worn by women

were made from huge bolts of cloth. The skirts were long and wide, and the petticoates long and bulky and of heavy material. The complete dress was made in the store.

Andy O'Laughlin was in charge of the drygoods and yardage department, and Miss Emma Arnott was the first woman clerk in the department. In later years Miss Arnott was married to Dr. M. B. Annis.

Jack Fullerton, of Lindsay Minstrel Show fame, was at the head of the men's department. Bob Menzie was in the yardage section.

The millinery department was also a big end of the business when all hats were made in the store.

The original office of the firm was located at the rear of the Beal store and two of the best known and most beloved employees in the office were Miss Hattie Mimms (Mrs. W. G. Dunoon) and Miss Cora Walters.

Other clerks in the main store in latter years were Miss Minnie Markham, Miss Cora Henderson, and in the office Miss Dundas was the general manager and William Flavelle was the overall head.

As time went by, Harry Brimmel and Ed. Armstrong were in the men's department and Welsley Staples was manager of the ladies' department, which included many departments. At one time Miss Estella Mathie, Miss Agnes Coburn, and Miss Lily Ingram joined the staff. The first head book-keeper was Miss Joan Keith.

One of the tailors and cutters was Harry White. In later years and in the days of Canadian Departmental Stores, familiar names of managers and clerks included Jack Grey, Hilton Brown, Richard Butler, Lawrence Blackwell, Hallie McMullen, Bessie Reed, Maise Parkin, and for several years Albert Grier became manager,

and Minnie Gray was one of the sales girls.

"I look back to many happy years in the Dundas and Flavelle store" said one informant, and another added: "It was a big firm, a reputable firm and a firm which did much for the progress of Lindsay away back. To hear that the Eaton firm of today, the Flavelle firm of years ago, are passing out of the picture in favour of the Walker store strikes a sad note as far as I am concerned."