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The Acton Free Press

Acton, Ont.

Phone 174

"PRINTING IS OUR BUSINESS"

Halton's Pages of the Past

Imported Silks, Prints and Velvets Once Hung In 'Tom' Whyte's General Store in Old Kilbride

On December 2, 1869, Timothy Eaton opened a small dry goods store in Toronto at the corner of Queen and Yonge. He had little capital, merchandise was ordinary, equipment primitive and he employed very little help. At that time T. L. Whyte's Department Store in Kilbride had been doing a thriving business for several years.



KILBRIDE REUNION in 1921 was recorded by the photographer in this group shot of celebrants clustered about a band of musicians. In the background, all in a line, are assembled canvas-topped examples of the latest productions in automobiles.

A study of the progress of the two stores indicates that a matter of location was the main reason why the one store increased its business while the other eventually ended in bankruptcy. The organizing ability of the two men, Eaton and Whyte, was evidently at par.

T. L. Whyte, known locally as "Tom Whyte" took over a store previously owned by John Bell, Kilbride and nearby Cumminsville were busy and prosperous villages, mainly because they were heavily timbered. There were grist mills, saw-mills, hotels and a cheese factory. Oxen and horses teaming all day and every day kept the blacksmiths busy.

Just north of Kilbride was Montgomery's Woolen Mills and George Lee's Tannery. In the village proper a cooper's shop, a tinsmith's, Vanfleet's harness shop and general store, a drug store and a wagon shop. There was work for all who needed it, even for strangers coming from distant parts seeking employment.

The Stage offered good transportation for travellers—for the times—and for years was driven by John Duncan. Hotels were busy and provided good accommodation. It was an era of prosperity for the village and Tom Whyte was quick to take advantage of the opportunities provided. He determined to make his shop a first class department store, offering merchandise so varied and attractive that the village folk would not be tempted to shop in the city. In this venture he was successful.

He enlarged the store he had bought from John Bell, using the back part as a millinery department, where seven or eight hands were employed as trimmers. An elderly lady at Kilbride well remembers the millinery department at Whyte's store. "It was wonderful," she says, "and oh! did they ever make beautiful hats!"

The tailoring department was upstairs, under the efficient management of W. B. Thomson and was kept so busy that five men and eight women were employed full time to keep up with the orders. Of course, there was a shoe store, with a large stock of footwear for men, in a short time the fire was beyond women and children — everything

from boots for lumber-jacks to my lady's evening slippers. The meat department carried choice meats that could be bought in large or small quantities. Beef, pork, lamb, smoked meats and poultry—taken in trade from the farmers. But it had to be of the best quality; otherwise Mr. Whyte wanted none of it.

Business Trips Abroad
Naturally there was a good line of groceries, and of hardware and farm supplies. There was also the inevitable liquor store. But it was in dry goods that T. L. Whyte really excelled. He made frequent trips to England and Scotland and selected the most beautiful dress goods from the best known wholesale houses — or sometimes from the manufacturers themselves.

There was no doubt about it, Whyte's Department store was "big business", employing the year round 22 clerks — and sometimes more. Thomas Coulson, writing home in 1866, said, "Tom Whyte does more business than any three stores put together."

But alas, in less than two years the store was burnt to the ground. A junior clerk struck a match to see which of several barrels contained coal oil. Carelessly he dropped the smouldering match to the floor where coal oil and turpentine had been spilt. It quickly ignited and, in a short time the fire was beyond control.

residence caught fire. The wind was driving the flames straight towards the Methodist parsonage. Neighbours rushed in to remove the furniture before it was too late. But they were stopped by the minister, the Rev. Clappison, who was on his knees praying that the parsonage be spared.

Rising to his feet he said with a calm, confident voice to his wife and their kindly neighbours—"Do not trouble yourselves—the parsonage will not burn." Hardly had he spoken when the wind shifted from north-west to south-west, fanning the flame in the direction of the creek with no intervening buildings in its path.

Tarred and Feathered
Generally speaking the village folk were church-going, law-abiding citizens. But if the occasion demanded they were not above taking the law into their own hands. An early settler in Kilbride, writing home in 1862, related the following incident. "I was witness to a tar and feathering scene not long ago. The victim was a man who had mistreated another man's wife. B— went to Nassagaweya and raised a party of young chaps who came in the night, took M— out of his house, tore every stitch off him, and then tarred and feathered him from head to foot. Then they carried him on a rail to a little creek below the old Church. They made him roll over three times in the creek and then walk home before the company. Next day M— lit out for parts unknown."

In 1921 there was a great Reunion at Kilbride. Never before or since has such a large crowd gathered in the village. Native sons and daughters came from all parts to retrace old acquaintances and to meet descendants of those with whom they had worked and played in days gone by. One reason for the Reunion was to raise funds to pay off the debt on the Community Hall. The amount needed was over-subscribed, and amounted to \$1,500.

Many visited the old store, its exterior much as they remembered it. But inside — meats, groceries and general merchandise—but no lovely imported silks, prints and velvets. And never a beautiful hat at all! How true it is—"the old order changeth".

BIG ABBATOIR
St. John, N.B. (CP)—Work is under way by Canada Packers Ltd. on an addition to the municipal abattoir here. The new building will be used for processing and packing meat. Council granted the company a 31-year lease on the abattoir.

Chronicles of Ginger Farm
Written Specially for the Acton Free Press by Geraldine P. Clarke

Louis Bromfield, author, farmer, naturalist and owner of the famous Malabar Farms at Mansfield, Ohio, is selling his herd of Holstein cows because he finds dairy farming no longer profitable. Mr. Bromfield says that almost any type of farming pay off better than milking cows and that if the present trend continues, more farmers will realize it and there is liable to be a shortage of good, clean milk within a couple of years. In his area farmers are getting seven cents a quart for milk that sells at 22 cents.

Well, Mr. Bromfield isn't the only one that has made that discovery. Plenty of other farmers are of the same opinion. The trouble is, unlike the owner of Malabar Farms, there isn't much they can afford to do about it. Dairy farming may no longer be actually profitable but if a farmer can only break even he has at least got something to live on.

Another little news item I read last week was quite significant. It related to rising unemployment figures and said this was no surprise to farm economists because once the farm income shows a serious decrease, trade and industry is bound to suffer.

Less farm income equals less buying power, less articles that need to be manufactured—and so, less employment. A logical sequence, isn't it? — especially since farmers are still the largest buying group in the country?

The trouble is farm incomes fluctuate to such an extent that very often the average farmer doesn't realize how badly his income is reduced until it is too late to do something about it. But sometimes there will be a general day of reckoning and it won't be a happy occasion.

The good old bell will come in for a little tightening once again and maybe it won't do us any harm either. Easy come, easy go, isn't always a state to be desired. As a direct contradiction to what I have just written we shall probably hear that a record volume of Christmas sales has again been chalked up in retail stores. Quite confusing, isn't it?

In the meantime there are dozens of ways in which service charges have been increased during the post-war period of expansion and prosperity. There are inspectors for this, that and the other, unheard of 25 years ago.

Every new inspection department, federal, provincial and county, gives someone a job and increases cost of production. Some are necessary, some seem to be quite superfluous. Some inspectors do a good job, others are over-furious.

Even the postal department has inspectors running around the country making sure that the names of rural box-holders are painted on their mail boxes! Such identification is an excellent idea but why an inspector?

Seems to me inspection into other branches of the postal service would be more appreciated so that it wouldn't sometimes take three or four days for a letter to come 20 or 40 miles.

Coming back to rural mail boxes — We got into trouble ourselves because we have our name-plate illuminated on the gate post instead of the mail box! We obeyed the spirit of the law but not the letter, in that we provided identification of our abode but did not print our name on both sides of the mail box as required by law, so of course we are liable to have our mail service suspended.

Our reason for doing it the way we did? Well, since we bought a large mail box, it has had the post knocked off three times, holes shot through it by hunters, the box several times removed by Halloween pranksters, used as a nesting place by starlings, backed into by passing motorists, and clipped off by snow plows and graders. Maybe we have a little more mail box trouble than the rest of the people on our highway because it so happens that our laneway is the only one for half a mile without a grade so it comes in very handy for motorists looking for a place in which to turn.

Of course if they happen to turn short and back into our mail box, what does it matter? Another dent or two in a battered mail box won't make any difference.

Just the other day I went down to put a letter in the box and found yet another car had hit it, jamming the sides in so that the box wouldn't open. With these various conditions in mind, when we acquired a name-plate we thought it would be less likely to come to grief a little piece back from the mail box. But apparently that doesn't satisfy the inspector of rural services.

We think it's just another case of quibbling at straws. If we had a legitimate complaint to make to the postal department — which could have been done many times in the past—how much attention would it receive? Most of our mail couriers have been good men—we have no complaints on that score. They have a difficult job these days and we appreciate the service they give.

STOKELY'S FINEST

STOKELY'S FANOV UNGRADED
PEAS 2 15-OZ. TINS 35c
10-OZ. — 2 TINS 29c

STOKELY'S FINEST
BEANS WITH PORK 2 15-OZ. TINS 25c
FANOV GREEN BEANS — TIN 15c, 18c
Stokely's Fancy Cream Style

Corn 2 15-OZ. TINS 27c
10-oz. tin 12c — Kernels 14-oz. tin—2 for 35c

STOKELY'S FINEST
SPAGHETTI 2 15-OZ. TINS 27c

STOKELY'S FANOV
APPLE SAUCE 2 15-OZ. TINS 35c
10-oz. tins — 2 for 29c

CHRISTMAS CAKES
CHRISTIE'S IMPERIAL 55c LB.

FRUIT PUDDING
EACH 40c

GRAND UNION
Carroll's

SPECIAL — Aylmer Ontario
PIE PEACHES
2 15-OZ. TINS 21c

Shelled Almonds 1/2-LB. 39c
LEXIA RAISINS SEEDED POUND 25c
Seedless Raisins Australian 2-LB. BAG 39c
CURRANTS 15-OZ. BAG 23c
PITTED DATES LB. 19c

CANDY for CHRISTMAS
If you are planning a Christmas Party at your church or other organization, contact your Grand Union-Carroll's store manager. He will show you samples and quote you special prices on case lots of Christmas Candy.

CADBURY'S INSTANT CHOCOLATE
The Creamiest, Smoothest Chocolate Drink Ever
TIN 31c

GRAND UNION
COFFEE 1-LB. BAG \$1.09

FREE COLGATE'S TOOTH PASTE with
VEL GIANT PKG. 77c

ORANGES
FLORIDA U.S. No. 1 5-lb. BAG 35c

GRAPEFRUIT U.S. No. 1 Size 96 10 for 45c
APPLES Fancy MacIntosh 6 qt. bskt. 69c
HEAD LETTUCE Arizona Large Firm, Head 19c
COOKING ONIONS Canada No. 1 3 lb. 19c
WAXED TURNIPS lb. 4c

SANTA SAYS: If you don't like cooking up gift ideas, try RIDSDALE'S Recipe!

RECIPE FOR HOLIDAY POPULARITY

TAKE _____
A SNOW WHITE ARROW SHIRT with the special mitoga tailored body and the perfect fitting Drew Collar FROM \$4.95

ADD _____
A DISTINCTIVE SET OF GOLD PLATED CUFF LINKS by Hickock, or Forsyth FROM \$2.00

TIE IN _____
A NEAT WEMBLEY TIE, tailored from smart, exclusive patterns being sold for the first time in Canada FROM \$1.00

YOU KNEAD _____
A SMART PAIR OF WOOL OR NYLON SOX from Interwoven Monarch Knit or McGregor from 49c

ADD _____
A HANDSOME FELT HAT by Stetson—a perfectly tailored pair of Pyamas by Arrow—or an initialed belt by Hickock, gloves, scarves and a host of other wonderful gifts

WITH THE "CHRISTMAS MORNING MALE"

● We don't understand the tastes of everybody, but we do our best to satisfy their appetite for quality clothes. That's why Dad or the Lad will feel good when he gets a Christmas Gift from Ridsdale's!

● This recipe here is just one of the many ideas at Ridsdale's that are sure to smooth out Christmas Shopping worries for the those "CHRISTMAS MORNING MALES"—whether younger or older.

BOB RIDSDALE
QUALITY CLOTHES FOR DAD AND THE LAD

LET SET FROM ONE TO SEVEN DAYS UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE... THAT'S ALL