

Success Was Not Confined To the Business World

So far, in the Barber story, we've been mainly concerned with the family's contributions in the field of industrial development, in Georgetown and Streetsville. Now, in this final instalment, let's take a more personalized look at the life of the Barber brothers.

Not too much information is available, but there is more than enough to make us realize these early pioneers must have had tremendous energy and drive, for their success was by no means confined to the world of business. As you will see, they were also leaders in political, religious, military, and educational spheres as well.

William Barber, eldest of the sons of Joseph, from County Antrim, Ireland, came to Georgetown with his brothers to establish a woollen mill, and when the mill was moved to Streetsville, he remained in Georgetown to become one of the founders of the Georgetown Paper Mills. He built the large brick home on the hill overlooking the original mill (now Delta-Craft). The house is presently owned by the MacLaren family. William Barber was reeve of Esquesing for six years, and was one of the oldest members of the County Council. He was the first Justice of the Peace for Halton.

After the partnership of the brothers dissolved in 1869, William Barber moved to Streetsville, where he concentrated on the family's Streetsville operations. There, he served six years on Gore District Council, and was elected to the Toronto & Streetsville Council. After he died, his widow, Elizabeth, lived for several years in one of the "terrace" houses on Church Street, opposite the Public Library.

Another son of Joseph Barber James, learned his trade of paper-maker and machinist after coming to Canada, and as we have seen, put it to good advantage in the Barber woollen and paper mills, to say nothing of their foundry, machine shop, window shade factory and various other enterprises. The large brick home on the south side of the C.N.R. tracks at Mountainview Road, was built by James. He was one of the oldest coroners in the county. A leading member of the Congregationalist Church here, in 1877 he was largely instrumental in the building of the fine stone church at the corner of Church and Market Streets, which was deeded to Georgetown in 1913, to be used as a Public Library.

Joseph, the brother who learned the trade of millwright and builder, was in charge of the manufacturing operations of the

various Barber brothers' enterprises. He took little part in public affairs. The large brick home on the north side of the C.N.R. tracks at Mountainview Road, was built by him. His daughter, Beattie, married Dr. Nixon, who practised medicine in Georgetown for many years.

The youngest of the four brothers from Ireland, Robert, had concentrated on learning all the facets of the manufacture of woollens. After the original woollen factory in Georgetown was consolidated with the Streetsville operation, and enlarged to become the Toronto Woollen Mills, he moved to Streetsville. There, he and his brother-in-law, Benjamin Franklin, established several other businesses, and built many houses for the employees, thus creating the nucleus of a village. This was elaborated upon in last week's column.

At some time, however, Robert Barber built the house at the corner of Market and Church Streets, now owned by the Sykes family. The Sykes are an old Georgetown family too, having originally owned and operated a hotel in Georgetown's early days.

Among the second generation of Barbers, the member who most influenced the destiny of Georgetown, was John R. Barber, second son of James, he was born here in 1841.

Twice married, John R.

Barber's first wife was Mary Barclay, daughter of Francis Barclay, who was a Registrar for Halton County. They married January 1st, 1868, and had a family of three sons and two daughters. The first Mrs. Barber died in 1899.

John R. Barber's second marriage was to Agnes Alberta Bessey, whose family farmed on crown lands on the 5th line south of Limehouse. Her mother, Isabella MacKenzie, from the Scotch Block, was related to William Lyon MacKenzie. Isabella MacKenzie's father-in-law was a water-boy at the battle of Stony Creek. In return for his military service, as was the custom of the day, he was given a grant of crown land, from the 7th to 5th Line and Maple Avenue, to Limehouse Sideroad.

Col. Barber's father had an illustrious career in politics and the army, as well as in industry, and making a niche for himself in history as innovator of the transmission of hydro-electrical power for industrial use.

He was elected to the Ontario Legislature for Halton County as the Liberal member in 1898. He was reeve of Georgetown from 1865 to 1875; warden of Halton County in 1878, and a member of the Georgetown High School Board.

John R. Barber enlisted in the Volunteer Militia in 1861 and served as an officer in the Georgetown Light Infantry Co. and the 20th Halton Rifles, from 1861 to 1905. He served twenty years as a Combatant Officer, and twenty-two years as a Quartermaster and Paymaster. He ranked as Major from October, 1876. John R. Barber was in active service during the Fenian Raid in 1866, under Col.

H. B. Dennison. During that time, he was quartered at Suspension Bridge. He received a medal for service in the Fenian Raid, and a long service medal. In 1905, he retired from military service.

Now, to recap, John R. Barber's outstanding business career: he was sole owner of William Barber & Brothers Paper Mill on the Credit, and the Toronto Paper Company, Mille Roches. He founded the firm of Barber-Ellis Paper Dealers and Envelope Manufacturers, Toronto, as a sales outlet for the paper products from the mills he owned. He was president and manager of Toronto Paper Manufacturing Co. Ltd.; president of Nipigon Pulp & Paper Co. Ltd.; president of Floral View Greenhouse Co. Ltd.; vice-president Spanish River Pulp Co. Ltd.; vice-president and Manager of Canada Coated Paper Mills Ltd.; and director of Dominion Consolidated Mines Co. Ltd. He was at one time president of the Mechanics' Institute, a past master of Credit Lodge, No. 219, A.F. & A.M., and a member of the Congregational Church.

In 1912, John R. Barber retired from active business, at the time when a group of men bought the paper mills, and gave them the name Provincial Paper Limited. It was during the 1880's that John R. Barber built the handsome house in Georgetown, on Main Street South. It was in "Queen Anne" style architecture and he named it Berwick Hall, probably after the birth-place of his English mother, Hannah Patrick, who was born in Berwick-on-Tweed. A prominent architect of the day designed the house - Edward J. Lennox, who



Col. John R. Barber

also designed the old Toronto City Hall and the King Edward Hotel.

John R. Barber died March 3rd, 1917.

Of his first family of three sons and two daughters, only one daughter, Hazel, Mrs. M. G. Bell survives. She lives in Syracuse, N.Y., and has three sons, one in Gananoque, and two in the U.S.A. John R. Barber's oldest son, Frank, died 10 years ago. Of his family, two sons are no longer living, but a daughter, Mrs. Harold E. Coffin (Kathleen), lives in Charlotte, N.C. Her husband, Harold Coffin, is also a native of Georgetown. His parents owned the hotel called the "Bennett House" where the Royal Bank now stands.

This branch of the Barber's married into the Search family of Georgetown. Frank Barber married Jennie Search, a granddaughter of one of Georgetown's most important early citizens, Edwin Search, about whom I wrote a Chatting column called "The Lamplighter". Thus, Mrs. H. Coffin is the great granddaughter of Mr. Search; and Mrs. Frank Watson,

Edith Street, is Mrs. Coffin's aunt.

John R. Barber's second eldest son, C. H. "Berty", died 10 years ago. He was an outstanding athlete, having played on the world championship lacrosse team. Bert Barber had seven sons and one daughter. Several of his family live in Georgetown: Robert, Market St.; Paul, Market St.; Keith, King St.; George Sr. Main St. North, Eric, in Toronto. The eldest son, John, lives in Sydney, Australia; and the youngest, Norman, on Long Island, N.Y. Bert Barber's only daughter, Natalie, died in the 1950's.

The youngest son of John R. Barber's first marriage, Colonel Rene Raoul (Ray) died in England in 1935. His son is living in London, England.

Mary Aileen (Daisy), daughter of John R. Barber, died in England two years ago.

So now we are fairly up-to-date in the Barber family story, as it relates to Georgetown, particularly. It speaks for itself - testimonial to the amazingly diversified accomplishments of this family, who, in the process of fulfilling their personal destinies, were largely responsible for the development of the towns of Georgetown and Streetsville.

Attend Hydro Session

The three members of Georgetown Hydro Commission were included in more than 1400 delegates attending the Ontario Municipal Electric Association convention last week at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Gerald McCallum, John T. Armstrong and Mayor Wm. R. Smith heard addresses by John Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent business; Dean Munceaster, chairman of the steering committee, Task Force Hydro; G. E. Gathercole, Ontario Hydro chairman; and Andrew Frame, OMEA president.

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From left, James, Robert and Williams Barber.

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