

POST CARD ADDS TO LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

by Lewis Zandbergen

This is an exciting find for local historians—a previously unknown post card of Stirling. It shows the building (known in 2008 as the Mason block) at the dawning of the 20th century. Even more interesting is the fact that the United Empire Bank of Canada occupied the corner store. Later it would move to the



This postcard shows the location of the United Empire Bank of Canada in what is the Mason Block in 2008. Now the question is did the United Empire Bank of Canada move here after they occupied the southwest corner across the street (Henry and Front Streets) or did they move to this location after the Union Bank opened in the corner of the Empire Block?

Empire/Moon block across the street and occupy the corner location there. Another old photo shows that corner was once the site of the Bank of Montreal. By 1908 the Bank of Montreal had moved to the Mill Street/North Street corner and the United Empire Bank had moved to the Henry/Front location.

The office on the other side of the alley was a travel office by the looks of the sign attached to the corner of the building. “Manitoba” and “London” are the only words that can be deciphered. But a note attached to the card says it could be the office of Morden Bird.

According to *Pioneer Life on the Bay of Quinte* (1983 Mika facsimile of 1904 Rolph and Clark book), Morden Bird, eldest son of John C. Bird, was born in Sidney Township in 1847. He attended area schools, but when his father died he took over the family farm. He then worked for William Peck in his general store in Halloway for two years. In 1872 Mr. Bird foresaw a bright future in the cheese business and he learned to make cheese. He took charge of the cheese factories in Wallbridge and then Marmora. In 1885 he settled in Stirling and began a business of cheese buying, later expanding to include the general insurance business.

Perhaps the light coloured building housed his business interests. Mr. Bird became deputy-reeve of Sidney Township, a member of the Stirling School Board, a Mason, a member of the Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL), Ancient Order of United Workmen (AOUW) and the Chosen Friends. Morden Bird died in 1932 and is buried in Stirling Cemetery.



The “blowup” clearly shows that the Bank of Montreal once occupied the southwest corner of the Empire block



This is a view of Front Street at the turn of the 20th century.