

Index—Mr. Joseph Blackburn (51)

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Founding of Stroud's store 1872 | 1 |
| First as a "tea store" | 1 |
| Discount coupons distributed on tea | 1 |
| Mr. Blackburn takes over in 1935 | 1 |
| Flood damage - 1936 | 2 |
| Major fire in 1932 | 2 |
| Source of merchandise | 2 |
| The old store | 2 |
| Popular gifts of thirties and forties | 3 |
| Staff in 1935 | 3 |
| Heat and Lighting | 3 |
| Effect of the depression on downtown business | 4 |
| Effect of the war on Stroud's | 4 |
| Stroud's attempt to remain a "local Business" | 5 |

Subject: Mr. J. Blackburn (B)
Case Number: 51
Subject Code: I/1/B
Date of Interview: July 31, 1975
Interviewer: Robert Miller (M)

B: I have a lifetime in business in Belleville Front Street downtown here.
You want something of that?

M: First of all, could you tell us when the store was founded?

B: The store started in Belleville a hundred and three years ago and it's
year 1872. And maybe if I could tell you that...here, I'll tell you some-
thing here that happened in 1872.

"The year Strouds opened, these now historic names were making news:
John A. Macdonald was prime minister.
Alexander McKenzie was Opposition Leader - and would topple John A. the
following year.
William Gladstone was prime minister of England.
Gen. Ulysses Grant was U.S. president.
Lord Dufferin became governor-general.
A Bellevillian, Mackenzie Bowell, later to be prime minister, was re-elected
Grand Master of the then powerful Grand Orange Lodge.

Well anyway, maybe that's incidental but anyway ... Belleville...now if you
want to...this store has always been...in the early days was known as a
tea store. They carried teas extensively and china and gifts for a prem-
ium. Belonged to what they called the premium department. You bought
tea and you received a ticket, or what they call a coupon. You saved the
coupons and you paid them out on the chinaware. You see, do you. So if you
had...say you bought five dollars worth of tea they'd give a coupon for it:
maybe fifty cents oh. Something like that. I think maybe Canadian Tire
or something like that. Don't they have a bonus too? Well anyway, that's
the way it worked. The chinaware was the point and you'd pick out stalk.

M: Who were the original owners of Strouds?

B: Stroud brothers, years ago. Strouds.

M: And what year did you take over?

B: I took over in 19...September 1935 and it's been during the depression. You

know the great depression was on then. Probably you wouldn't remember that. And shortly after I took it, in '36, one of Belleville's big floods... the Moira River flooded and my whole...practically my whole store, stock in the basement was under water, so if you want to mention that.

M: Do you remember any other particular incidents from the floods related to you or your store:

B: Well I had another experience. In '32 I was gutted here, burnt out. Do you want to mention that?

M: Sure.

B: Next door where Eaton's is was burnt out. We were burnt out, the bank, and there was three stores on Bridge Street. It was a multi-million dollar fire here. We had to start life all over again.

M: Where did you purchase or bring in some of your materials? Well first of all your china. Where did most of it come from?

B: Oh, the majority of it comes from England. We're great for English china. You see, when I first bought the store, we were over, you know where Lipsen is?

M: Yeah.

B: That was our old store over there. Right next to MacIntosh's. There was our store there, MacIntosh's, and Leslie's, right there in a row. We had...and I bought it in '35 over here and I owned my own building here. Anyway, we've had very good years. This once was always called a tea store and sort of general merchandise, including china.

M: If you might elaborate a little more on your products. Can you tell us if there has ever been, as a gift store...have you had any gifts over the years that have been particularly popular or have there been any fade in gifts that you've noticed in the thirties and forties?

B: In the thirties and the forties, let's see. When I first took over, silver was the...silver was the big thing for wedding gifts, back in the thirties and forties you know. Today it's gone very high and it's popularity's fallen off a lot. You know. Silver tea services and casseroles, and butter dishes. We used to have a table: small items for a dollar. Many many items and a good big table, pretty near twice as big as that. Imagine selling silverware for a dollar. Those were the good old days. Is there anything else I can tell you there?

M: I just have a few questions about the store and what it was like generally. First of all, what has been the staff hired over the years. How many people when you started out?

B: Oh I had about...started out with about four clerks and a packer you know, way back then: about four or five people. Had to have...always had to have a packer because that's you know stuff coming in, and then the china'd be packed going out and things like that. They call them china-packers. And now I have a staff of around twenty.

M: How was the store lit and heated originally?

B: Oh, let me see. There was a hot air furnace back then. Yeah, we had a hot air, yeah.

M: With coal or oil?

B: Ah, coal, yes. Now we have a central heating.

M: And you would have had electric lights?

B: Oh yeah, sure, since I owned it, but of course I don't know... '72 I wasn't here. I don't know how they had it lit. That was before me time. Of course in the old store there used to be the gas pipes there you know. Ever since I've been connected there's always been electric lights. I suppose years ago it would be gas, because in the basement there was lines of gas. You know the little black pipe that had the line of gas in it.

M: Connected with the city mains.

B: Yeah, they came in from the main street. But that was before my time. All I can remember is electric lights.

M: The...since you started the business in the depression, can you just briefly say how you feel the downtown business in general was affected by the depression.

B: Oh there was quite a few. They had to give up, the odd one. Pretty tough you know. Anybody that made more than twenty-five dollars a week, you were lucky. That's about tops. Most people made about eight to ten dollars a week, they'd do well. There was hundreds and hundreds out of work. It was very bad then.

M: What about the wars? How did they effect Stroud's?

B: Oh the merchandise was scarce. You bought anywhere you could find merchandise. Some of our ships got sunk out in the Atlantic there. Torp boats...got torpedoed and the odd one went down to the bottom of the ocean. Not too many. Merchandise was very hard to get. They just rationed it out to you. You got whatever you could get. We got through it.

M: Did you switch to more domestic supplies when that happened?

B: Oh, of course we've always featured china so we just sold what we could get. Our business's built on English china pretty well you know. And now we're into the jewelry business. See this fellow up here (referring to picture): That's my jew eller and my man who does rings and he'd a stone setter.

M: So that's anew aspect of the business.

B: Yes.

M: There's one last question I'd like to ask and that's if you recall in your business any stories or amusing incidents that stick in your mind.

B: Oh let me see. You mean something relating to my customers or something like that?

M: Yes, whatever you like. Anything relating to the business that you.

B: Oh, let's see I don't know. Here's something about the depression years.

"They were bad years to take over. But every year has been better than the year before. Now we have more business than we can handle. That's actually a fact. At first there were fears plazas might hurt but this hasn't been born out. As for any success secrets, these include advertising, keeping well stocked and contemporary. None out of ten people can find something in a store with the big inventory we have. There's one more thing: "Today you have to be a specialist. I like to carry something unique and different...more or less what the other fellow doesn't carry. You have to stay away from the chain store type of operations...."

M: So you try to maintain your image as a local business.

B: A local business. Say I'll let you have that if you want that. Do you want this thing (referring to enclosed Intell special edition, June 12, 1972) Maybe it's a little bit torn but I think it...

M: It isn't your only copy is it?

END OF RECORDING

/ram

392-2111
Locally Owned and
Operated

THOMPSON'S
Funeral Chapel
Since 1883
Family Owned and Operated
38 Everett — 962-8651

DEATHS

BLACKBURN, Joseph Alger U. E. — Of 237 Dundas St. West, Belleville, passed away at Belleville General Hospital on Tuesday, October 21, 1975, in his 72nd year. Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Albert Blackburn. Beloved husband of **Mae Wheeler**. Dear father of **Arthur** (Mrs. H. W. Johnston) and **Captain Joyce Blackburn**. Loved by granddaughters **Kim** and **Wendy**. Beloved brother of **Clarence Blackburn**, **Edna** (Mrs. H. MacBain). Predeceased by brother **Arthur**.

Friends may call at the Thompson Funeral Chapel, 38 Everett St. Funeral services will be held on Friday, Oct. 24, at 2:00 p.m. at the Victoria Avenue Baptist Church. Reverend J. C. MacFarlane officiating.

Interment Belleville Cemetery.

Donations to the Heart Foundation and Hospital for Sick Children would be appreciated. O22-21

COUCH, William Arthur — At Peterborough Civic Hospital, Monday, Oct. 20, 1975. William Arthur Couch, R.R. 3 Stirling, Ont., in his 83rd year. Beloved husband of **Martha Ellen Leonard**. Dear father of **Harvey Couch**, **Stirling** and **Lyle Couch**. Peterborough and remembered by 4 grandchildren.

Mr. Couch is resting at the Hogle Funeral Home, 87 James St., Stirling. (from Wednesday, Oct. 22 at 10 a.m.). Service in the Funeral Home Thursday, Oct. 23 at 1:30 p.m. Reverend **Theodore Shelgrove** officiating.

Interment Belleville Cemetery. O21-21

EGGLETON, Leva Fern — Of 14 Bell Blvd., Belleville, at Kingston General Hospital on Monday morning, October 20, 1975, in her 44th year. Beloved daughter of **Sarah Scero** and the late **Lazarus Brant**. Loving mother of **Mrs. Keith Green** (Brenda), Peterborough. Dear sister of **William J.** and **Vernon Brant**, both of R.R. 2, Deseronto. **Harvey** and **Clayton** and **Mrs. Eric Simpson** (June), all of Toronto and **Mrs. Alfred Gordanier** (Hazel) of Deseronto. Loved by 7 grandchildren. Dear

Stroud's Gift Shop Owner Dead at 71

J.A. (Joe) Blackburn, owner-operator of Stroud's Gift Shop, died Tuesday at the age of 71.

For many years, his father, **Albert Blackburn**, operated Stroud's for its Montreal owner. In 1932, young **Joe Blackburn** took over as manager and later purchased the store.

Once a tea merchandising store which offered trading stamps that could be redeemed for fine china, the store's character was altered to cater to the graceful elegance of the world's finest china.



J. A. BLACKBURN

"It's my delight to rather sell china and crystal than anything else," he was quoted as saying in a special brochure commemorating the store's 100th anniversary.

China became the centre piece of the downtown store — setting the shop apart from its Quinte area contemporaries.

A resident of 282 Dundas St., he died Oct. 21 in Belleville General Hospital. He was born on Huff's Island and was the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. **Albert Blackburn**.

He had been a lifelong resident of the area and is survived by his wife, the former **Elsie Mae Wheeler**. He is also survived by his daughters **Mrs. H.W. (Eleanor) Johnston**, **Capt. Joyce Blackburn** his granddaughters **Kim** and **Wendy**, a brother **Clarence** and a sister **Mrs. H. (Edna) MacBain**.

He was predeceased by a brother, **Arthur**.

The funeral will be held from the Thompson Funeral Home to Victoria Ave. Baptist Church Friday, Oct. 24 at 2 p.m.

Rev. J.C. MacFarlane will conduct the service with burial in Belleville cemetery.

Mr. Blackburn was an honorary deacon and active member of the church and was also a life member The Belleville Lodge, No. 123.

Jaipo
ried a
young
his 144

"Th
said.
was c
sue

damaj
Jaipo
has rej
All the
ried in
ered it
their fi

But
In Aru
India's
where
hunted

The
League
against
custom
have

wants.

Tasa
says.
tomed
I know
27 time
ening a
mole a

When
1947.

schools

Arunac
mounta

Commu
are mo

a total
of them

B

is m
case
ther
neak

| | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| nd bb. | <p>McGeschy.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">JOSEPH ALGER BLACKBURN</p> <p>Funeral for Joseph Black- burn was held Oct. 17 from Thompson Funeral Chapel.</p> <p>Interment was at Belleville Cemetery with Rev. J. C. MacFarlane officiating. Bear- ers were: Robert Irvin, L. G. Hamilton, Joseph Large, William Halcs, William Sobie and Murray McIntosh.</p> | <p>aweso lion cu</p> <p>But figure we do are st</p> <p>"If proved Canad ations years, But — inc being States</p> |
|-----------|--|--|

toy
music
com-