

John McIntosh (5)

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Mr. John McIntosh at McIntosh Brothers Store, Front Street

October 30, 1974

M: Mr. McIntosh
N: Nancy Foster
B: Miss Marie Nash (buyer for store)

N: How long has McIntosh Brothers been in Belleville?

M: Eighty-three years.

N: Who started it up?

M: Mr. John McIntosh Sr. my father.

N: Was he originally from this area?

M: No, he was from Scotland, from a place called Petty near Inveness.

N: Do you know when he came to Canada?

M: Well a few years before that. I don't know just what year, no.

N: What did he do when he first came here?

M: When he first came here he went out west and he wanted to be in the same type of business but he ended up as a cowboy for a short time which he didn't like.

It wasn't long till he came back to Ontario.

N: What did he do in Ontario? Did he set up the store?

M: He worked for a firm that bought businesses and sold them out and it was another Scotchman that he knew and had this business in Toronto, Asher and Co. They were burned out in the big fire of nineteen and four. He was the one that staked my father and started him in business. He worked for him for quite a few years. And then he decided that he would like to start in business for himself. He said John where would you like

to go. He said Belleville and he came to Belleville.

N: What sort of things did he sell in his store when he first set it up?

M:- Oh, when he first started it was china and toys, notions, patent medicines, tea, coffee, blankets, horse blankets, pails, all kinds of aluminum pails, granite and things of that type.

N: About when was it that they changed over into basically a clothing store.

M: Oh, he died in 1925. When he died there were six stores in Kingston, Napanee, Belleville, Cobourg, Madoc and Campbellford. And after he died kept on in the same type of business which had expanded alot from when he started, but then I got out of the importing business china and that type of thing and went into the dry goods and started to trade up into clothing and since I guess we've just kept trading up into better things.

N: Do you still have the six stores?

M: No, just two now, Belleville and Coburg.

N: So, you took over the business in 1925.

M: 1915.

N: Have you always lived in ~~Belle~~ Belleville all your life?

M: Born in Belleville and always lived in Belleville, yes.

N: What school did you go to?

M: Queen Victoria School which was not the one up on Pine Street. It was the one where the collegiat is now. The public school was down stairs and the high school was up stairs.

N: And did you go to the high school there?

M: I went to high school there too, yes.

N: So, would that be before the building that is there now was built?

M: Oh, yes, before that was, before Pine Street school any of the schools. There was only the one school, there was that school and there was Octavia Street school and then there was the separate school on John Street. That's all the schools there were.

N: What about other stores in Belleville. Are there any you remember in particular, any competition?

M: Oh there was lots of them. Ritchie's, Sinclair's, Earl and Co k, Simmin's, Al Simmins, Carol Simmins, and I don't know if I can think of any others.

N: Did they all sell basically the same thing?

N: No they sold, like a lot of those sold, Ritchie's sold dry goods read to wear, men's wear, draperies, carpets which we didn't sell at that time.

N: What about food stores in Belleville?

M: There was a lot of individually owned food stores in Belleville. Wallbridge and Clark, Parkers, Fairfield's, Wallace's, McGetty and Lynch, Boyle's, Young's Green's meat market, Clark's meat market, Oliphant's meat market, Thomas's meat market, there was Hanley's, Hanley's a grocery store up the street. That's only some of them.

N: What about places of entertainment in Belleville?

What was there say back in the 1920's?

M: I can remember going as a young lad, not in the 1920's, but in 19-8,9,10 going to a show for a cent. We'd got ten cents and ten of us would go to the old Theatro theatre which was down on Bridge Street, where LOGAN's Jewelry store was the last store in it, it was in that district anyway. And then there was the Star theatre on the corner of Victoria Avenue. Oh it got to five cents and then ten cents. The Marx Brothers used to come to town to the old Griffin Opera House which is where Dr. Forrester lives now. They would put on plays and they would stay for a week. It was 10,20, and 30 cents to get in. That was for all stage productions. There was quite a few of this Marx family. They lived in Perth Ontario. There was Maybell Marx, Robert Marx, Joey Marx, and so on and they all had their own companies. They were quite a big family. Then twenty and thirty cents. They were good shows.

N: What else did you do for entertainment besides the shows?

M: Well, I didn't play much hockey or anything like that. I always had to wear glasses. Oh dance, go to dances. I used to do a lot of Scotch dancing.

N: (to Miss Nash) You just said he won a lot of competitions for his dancing. Where were they held, do you know?

M: Well, they were the gathering of the clans. They were held one year in Belleville, the next year in Madoc, the next year in Campbellford, they just kept going around. And there was people there was competitors come in from Toronto, as far a way as Milwaukee. Always, the 48th Highlanders Band from Toronto. It was a big in Belleville, the gathering of the clans.

N: You were in the first war? Where were you stationed?

M: Well, I joined the Cobourg Heavy Battery and left with the Coburg Heavy Battery. Within England, Whitley Camp, Shore Cliff Camp and in France. I left France in the battle of Passendale and came back to England and didn't go back to France.

N: What about the store during the wars? Did that have any effect on your business?

M: The which?

N: The stores, during the war, here? Did that have any effect on your business?

M: Merchandise was hard to get here and after the war it was hard to get. Cotton goods, flannelettes all sorts of things were hard to get.

B: You're talking the first world war?

M: The first world war.

B: And after the second world war.

M: Well, no after the first world war they were very hard to get but then all of a sudden, why it just popped out, they had reserves and they released them and you could get all kinds of the things that were scarce....back in those days my father used to go to New York for the whole month of February. Being an importing business and selling toys and chin^{as} and fancy goods of all kinds . A firm called George Borgfeld and Company ran a building on Irving square in New York and there were twenty one floors to the building and each floor represented a certain country or maybe two floors to a country and it was nothing but samples. It took them a whole month to buy thin merchandise then it would start to come in in August, July and August for the christmas and fall. There^s was no china, nothing like that was made in Canada in those days and very little cooking ware which came in from Germany, Austria, Saxony, Hungary, Austri^a-Hungary. Gloves and all that type of thing came in from Saxony and soon."

N: Was there any other big country you imported from besides Germany?

M: Oh, yes there was lots of it from England in chin^{as} and pottery and old toilet sets. Peop^e didn't have bath-rooms, they used to have this toilet set for each bedroom. Lamps, china lamps for their parlours and things. These lamps today are selling at fabulous prices.

N: How much would they sell for then?

M:

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M: Seven, eight dollars, ten dollars, fifteen dollars, twenty dollars. I know one that was sold at an auction sale and they sold it for seven hundred dollars. And just a sale here at the Four Seasons Hotel the other day there was a pair of cranberry glass candle sticks sold for seven hundred dollars.

N: Can you remember any other prices from the stores, like toy prices and things like that?

M: "Yes, a toy would run from twenty five cents to two dollars. And there was alot of mechanical toys and dolls. The dolls were quite different they were all china heads. And then when the war started, there was a firm, Dominion Toys started to make toys, dolls in Canada and they made the heads from paper mache and they were unbreakable and they called them unbreakable dolls. The china heads were done when Gremany went out, when the war started. We used to rent a building right next to us here and it was filled with toys, dolls, doll carriages, doll's houses, **bricks**, toy bricks and you name it anything in toys. And all these climbing toys like the climbing monkey and all that stuff, mechancal toys."

N: What about your family, did you have any brothers and sisters?

M: Six of them.

N: Six. Whereabouts in Belleville did you live?

M: I was born on Octavia Street but I spent most of my time on 5th Hillcrest Avenue where I'm living right now. We moved from Octavia Street to Forin Street, weren't there very long, to **Albert** Street to 52 Hillcrest Avenue, in 19 hundred and 9. No, when I was married I lived on John Street. My son Murry is now living on John Street.

N: Are any other members of the family, any brothers and sisters in the family in the business with you?

M: Well I have two sons, I think I mentioned that earlied didn't I?

N: Yes, but non of your brothers and sisters.

M: No.

B: You could compare your two stores, like what you're selling today and some of your achievements today as opposed to when you opened.

M: You fill that in.

B: You can boast of having won a Judy Award for merchandising. This award is ~~is~~ given out by the Garment Salesmen, Ontario Market for all of Ontario. We're in competition with larger centres in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, all over Ontario and we are the first store in Belleville to win this award. Because of this we have attracted customers from larger centres and it enables us to show our merchandise much better because we can boast of having won this award.

N: Were there any sort of awards like this when the store was first getting started.

M: First getting started?

B: Back in the older days.

M: No I don't think there were any awards.

B: Because at that time Mr. McIntosh's father was almost a whole saler, he sold to other stores. Isn't that correct?

M: That's right, as well as doing a retail business he did quite a wholesale business on laundry soaps, patent medicines, toilet soaps, teas, coffee and all kinds of heavy work clothes, overalls, horse blankets, hammacks and sealers. He used to bring sealers in by the carload, laundry soap in by the carload.

N: Where would he sell these things, just locally?

M: To stores in the surrounding country, like in Point Ann, Corbyville, Howlaway, all the big cities. Little store keepers would come in and buy them.

N: Can you tell us a little bit more about your schooling? Some of the teachers you might of had or subjects you took?

M: Mr. Gardener was the principal of the public school, Mr. McCluren was the principal of the Collegiate. There were mostly women teachers at that time. In the public school there was Miss Fleming, the two Northcotts, Miss Northcott, and Miss McCorgy was a primary teacher, the first teacher I went to. And in the collegiate, I forgot their names.

N: What sort of subjects did you take?

M: Oh, same as the ones they take today, arithmetic, reading writing and arithmetic and in the collegiate, chemistry, algebra, etc. etc. (Miss Nash mumbles something about O. B. C.)

Well I attended that when I first came back from overseas.

N: What year was that?

M: Nineteen-nineteen.

N: What did you take at the business college?

M: Well I didn't take typing, I just took book-keeping and business law, things of that type. Belleville befor the first world war was a very pretty city. The trees, the lawns, especially along Bridge Street. It's been spoiled now with high rise and the trees are cut down and so on. George Street was a very pretty street with pretty trees, there all gone. And in the old days they used to float the logs down the river and boon them up and take some to Deroronto to the mill there and others were, there was a saw mill where Victoria Park is now. They were sawn up and that was quite an industry especially in the spring wnen they were floating the logs down and booning ~~them~~ them up.

N: Do you know who ran the saw mill in Belleville?

M: No I can't tell you that. The Rathbun's ran the one in Deseronto. Whether they operated the one in Belleville I don't know. They

M: also operated a boat service for picnics and so on on the Bay .
Went to Kingsotn, Brockville, Rochester.

N: How much would it cost for one of these tours.

M: A boat trip? I think if you went to Picton it was about fifty
cents, it wasn't very expensive..... in the same family you
mean?

B: Well, even the oldest active merchant on Front Street

M: I would say yes.

N: And about the oldest family business?

M: NO, Geens would be older, I think we would come next

N: Are there any others that are still around that would be the
same age as you.

M: No, Woodleys family, they were nineteen.. early ninteen hundreds,
I think, but Geens and ourselves are the two oldest.

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McINTOSH, John A. — Of 37 Hillcrest Ave., Belleville at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto on Sat., Jan 1 1977. In his 80th year. Dear son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John McIntosh, beloved husband of the late Ethel Frances Vandervoort. Dear father of Mrs. Ralph Morton, (Shirley), Douglas McIntosh and Murray McIntosh, all of Belleville; Dear brother of William C. McIntosh of Belleville and Mrs. Harriett Bannerman of Middletown, Conn., Mrs. Clarence Saylor (Jean) of Trenton and Mrs. Grace Walters of Toronto predeceased. Dear Mr. McIntosh and Mrs. Alice Anderson. Mr. McIntosh is resting at John P. Burns Funeral Home, 30 Highland Ave., until Tuesday noon, Jan. 1, 1977. Thereafter to Bridge Street United Church for funeral service at 2 p.m. Rev. George Ward officiating. Interment Belleville Cemetery.

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JOHN A. (Jack) McINTOSH

Funeral for John A. (Jack) McIntosh, long-time prominent Belleville businessman, was held Tuesday at Bridge St. United Church.

Mr. McIntosh, president of the long-established downtown McIntosh Bros. clothing and dry goods operation, died Jan. 1 in St. Michael's Hospital Toronto, after a month's illness.

The service was conducted by Rev. George Ward and burial was in Belleville Cemetery.

Honorary bearers were Ernest Dickers, Wilfred LaPorte, Dr. Gerald Morton, Dr. Reg Anderson, Clarence Saylor, Bryson Leslie and Ivy Shulman.

Active bearers were John Saylor, Robert Anderson, Kenneth McClintock, William S. Wills, William Bishop and H. Myles Morton.

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