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A Glance at The Town and Some of its Various Manufacturing Business Interests and General Surroundings

In the present article the aim is to present in brief form a description of Acton with a short review of the manufacturing and mercantile businesses located within its borders.

That the village possesses many real and permanent advantages which being utilized and developed by men of enterprise and ability is fast placing Acton foremost among the towns of Ontario, is a fact so well known as to require no comment here.

In reference to the early history of the place little need be said here, as it is probably familiar to most of our readers. It may be said to have taken its start about the year 1840. It was first called Danville after a clerk in the first dry goods store, which was owned by Wheeler Green. The next name it bore was Adamsville, so called after the first settlers in the place. In 1844 a post office having been obtained the name was again changed to Acton, on request of Mr. Robert Swann, a native of Northumberland, Eng., who died in Acton some years ago.

The first grist mill was situated on lot 24, in the 2nd concession, - foot of Mill street - and was known as McCallum's mill.

In 1873, the population having reached the required number, it severed its connection with the township of Esquesing and became an incorporated village. The first council was composed of W.H. Storey, Reeve, and Messrs. John Speight, Asa Hall, C.T. Hill, and Dr. McGarvin, Councillors. Acton has one of the most substantial school houses in the county of Halton, being built of stone and employing an efficient staff of teachers. There is no subject in which the inhabitants take more public interest than in providing a liberal education for the young. The number and character of the church edifices indicates to some extent the religious zeal of the people. The following denominations have comfortable church edifices:- Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Disciple and Roman Catholic.

Acton has the finest town hall in the Country, and, indeed, we very much doubt if there is another country town in Canada that can show a public hall possessing the architectural beauty and convenient appointments exterior and interior as ours.

A feature of decided merit is the excellence of the private dwellings, which are mostly constructed of brick.

In the matter of manufactories Acton is particularly favored, and few if any country towns of its size possess so many and important factories, mills and workshops as does our own.

First and foremost of course is the immense Glove Works of Messrs. W.H. Storey & Son, where from 175 to 250 persons are given employment, and gloves, mitts and moccasins of every description are made for the markets of the Dominion. Much of Acton's growth is due to this extensive business.

The trunk and traveling bag manufactory of Messrs. J.E. McGarvin & Co., is a flourishing industry, and turns out a surprisingly large quantity of goods, in fact the shipments of this firm are larger than those of any other in town owing to the bulky character of their products. An evidence of the excellence of their trunks and valises was seen at the

Toronto Industrial Exhibition last fall where they secured a silver medal for merit, in a contest against the oldest firm in Ontario. This business employs about 30 hands.

The sole leather tannery of Messrs. Beardmore & Co., here, is one of the largest in Canada and employs 30 to 35 men.

Canada Cordovan Works, P. Jacobi, proprietor, turns out a large quantity of fine leather, under the superintendence of Mr. W. Smith. Improvements are in progress and when completed some twenty or more experienced workmen will have steady employment.

Mr. I. Francis operates a tannery and finishing shop where he manufactures kid and other glove leathers of various qualities and colors, all of which are consumed by the Canada glove works.

Another tannery has lately been put into operation by Mr. William Ramsay, where buckskins, calf and russet leathers are turned out. These are also for the glove factory.

The planing mill and box factory of Mr. Thomas Ebbage is a hive of industry, and is always filled up with orders. He supplied the trunk factory with boxes and trays and the glove factory with packing cases.

Mr. Peter McCann also runs a planing mill and sash and door factory in connection with his building and construction business.

The shop of Mr. John Cameron, architect and builder, turns out a large quantity of work. Mr. Cameron is the most extensive builder in town.

Mr. James Brown does quite an extensive saw mill business. Some six or eight years ago he had about concluded that business in his line was nearly ended for this vicinity, but with his own stock and the usual custom work each successive year found his yard filled with a good season's cutting.

Acton shingle, stave and heading mills and cooperage, owned and operated by Mr. Thomas C. Moore, is an old and successful business. It was established by Moore Bros., some thirty years ago and has done a busy trade ever since.

The roller grist mill of Mr. John Harvey is one of the first businesses Acton ever had. The mill gave the street upon which it is located its name. Mr. Harvey has made considerable improvement since coming into possession of the property and further improvements are contemplated.

The old established undertaking and carriage and wagon works of Speight & Son, are a landmark in Acton. This business was commenced by the late John Speight and Rev. Matthew Swann, now of Brussels, some thirty odd years ago. Since the death of his father Mr. J.A. Speight has managed the business with successful results.

The blacksmithing business of the place is done by Mr. James McLam in the south and Mr. A. Stephenson in the west of the town. Both are practical men and give their businesses personal supervision.

While many of the private residences and some of the factories and public buildings in town are ornaments to the place and generally attractive in appearance, we regret that generally speaking the mercantile establishments present a very indifferent external appearance. There are a number of neat brick and rough cast stores, but none of the fine blocks of stones which many other places can show. However, the mercantile interests are represented by capable and pushing businessmen, and the appended review will show that

we have a considerable number.

Commencing at the corner of Main and Mill streets we have: R.B. Jermyn. This gentleman is too well and favorably known over the surrounding country to require any introduction by this edition of the *Free Press*. Although not so long established as some of our other merchants, he has built up a flourishing business which is now counted among the first in the county. Mr. Jermyn enjoys the advantage of a thoroughly practical experience, and his store exhibits this in its exceedingly tasty arrangement and the selection of goods that meet the wants of the people. The large trade that this business has built up is the best evidence of its popularity. Nothing succeeds like success, and acting on this plan Mr. Jermyn's efforts have been in the direction of giving to the people a class of goods that offers the very best value for the money. The stock includes staple and fancy dry goods, dress goods, millinery, gloves, hosiery &c., tweeds and worsteds, hats and caps, gents' furnishings, carpets and house furnishings, boots and shoes, groceries, &c. The spring goods are carefully selected and offer great inducements. The different departments are managed by a competent and obliging staff who are always willing to show customers and visitors through. We are pleased to see this gentleman meeting with the success he so well deserves.

A new grocery and provision store is being opened next door by Mr. W. King.

Then we have the tin and stove depot of Mr. George Havil, a live business man.

In our business sketch of Acton, we have pleasure in devoting space to a brief reference to the merchant tailoring business of Mr. M. Brennan. This business has gained an enviable reputation for the excellence of the work turned out. Mr. Brennan enjoys the advantages of a long experience. His abilities as a cutter are too well known to require any comments here. He keeps on hand a first class stock of goods to select from consisting of foreign and domestic tweeds, fine French and English worsteds, &c., which cannot fail to suit the wants of every customer.

The popular boot and shoe store conducted by Mr. Wm. Williams should not be omitted from this review. In other articles we have referred to the high standard of efficiency of our mercantile interests and in referring to the boot and shoe trade, Mr. William's business may be taken to represent this branch of mercantile industry. The business has been before the public for about five years with the result of a large yearly output of goods and an increasing trade. The stock kept is large and well selected and consists of everything from the ladies' finest French kid to the mens' and boys' heavier wear, also a good selection of trunks, valises, &c. Boots and shoes are also made to order from the best of material.

Next door is the well conducted jewellery and fancy goods store of Mr. Geo. Hynds, which is one of the neatest stores in town.

The fancy store of Miss Perryman is a favorite spot with many of the ladies.

Mr. J.B. Pearson carries a fine stock of hardware, paints and oils, while wall papers, chinaware and groceries receive the attention they deserve. He does a flourishing trade.

The Post Office Store, now owned by Mr. L.G. Matthews, was established by his father many years ago in connection with his post office business. It is now separated however, and Mr. Matthews does a good business in groceries, crockery, flour and feed, &c. He has also an excellent bakery in connection.

Mr. Sweetman has a harness business in the same block.

The meat show of Mr. W.H. Rutledge is an establishment which supplies hundreds of

customers with the best the country affords every day.

Next in the list is the *Free Press* steam printing office, of which nothing need to said, for with it our readers are all perfectly familiar.

On the north side of Mill street we first visit the very neat and attractive store of Mr. John C. Nelson, and a better kept stock is nowhere to be found. He has staple dry goods, groceries and boots and shoes.

Coming westward we have Mr. J.C. Hill's stove and tinware business, where a good stock is always to be found.

Next to this is the Metropolitan Studio of Mr. H. Ramshaw. A glance at the portraits in his show window will give an idea of his artistic skill.

One of the pioneer merchants of the place is Mr. C.T. Hill, who opened his general store before many of the present population were born. He is the only merchant in town who has uninterruptedly continued his business in the same place from those early days.

We have pleasure in devoting space in our business review to a brief reference to the popular merchant tailoring business of Mr. O. H. Ryder. This gentleman has been established about a year and already has a good trade worked up. Mr. Ryder is a cutter of acknowledged ability and his work is well able to speak for itself. He keeps on hand a select stock of goods, consisting of foreign and domestic tweeds, fine French worsteds &c. We heartily recommend this business to the public and predict for Mr. Ryder a large measure of success.

Next in order as we proceed is the general store and merchant tailoring business of Messrs. Kelly Bros. They are enterprising young men and push business right along. The tailoring department is comparatively new but is meeting with much favor.

The drug and stationary store of Dr. N. McGarvin comes next. This being the only drug store in town it does a large and profitable trade. In these premises the immense proprietary medicine manufactory of Messrs. T. Milburn & Co., Toronto, originated and here Mr. Milburn conducted the business for a number of years.

In presenting the public an edition of the *Free Press* descriptive of Acton's business interests, a business that will come in for prominent mention is that of Messrs. Henderson, McRae and Co. This business has been established nearly half a century. About fifteen years ago Messrs. Christie, Henderson & Co. became its proprietors by purchase. About five years ago the firm was reorganized and Mr. McRae became a partner. We are only giving expression to a well known fact when we say that the firm enjoys the entire confidence of the public and a large share of public patronage. They should also be given credit for drawing much outside trade to the town, as farmers from a long distance come here to do their trading. In reference to the stock kept, want of space will not permit of any detailed mention. Buying in large quantities from the best markets the firm is noted for handling a superior line of goods, and offer to their customers all the advantage of an extensive and varied selection. In staple and fancy dry goods, dress goods, millinery, gloves, hosiery, &c., tweeds, worsteds, &c., hats and caps, gents' furnishings, boots and shoes, carpets and house furnishings, &c., and groceries. Each department is fully stocked. Goods for the spring trade are on hand and a large spring trade business is looked for.

Next door to the Glasgow House Miss Alice Vanatter does an extensive dressmaking and mantle business.

Miss Freeland has a well appointed fancy goods store and Miss McKeown a dressmaking

establishment in the premises formerly occupied by W. P. Brown, grocer.

On Main street Mrs. J. Adams has a confectionary and fancy goods store.

Messrs. Graham & Graham have a neat butcher shop next door and are doing a nice trade.

Kenney Bros. This firm has been connected with the boot & shoe trade of Acton for over ten years, and are so well and favorably known over the surrounding country that little more than a mention of the business is needed here. Messrs. Kenney Bros., have many advantages in their business which enables them to make the success they have of it. Practical in the mechanical parts, and long experienced, they possess that essential of success which is a thorough knowledge of the business. Their store is always found well stocked with boots and shoes of all grades, secured from the best wholesale manufacturers. They also do a large amount of custom trade, as well as repairing of all kinds.

Prominent in the grocery trade of the town is the well known and popular business of Mr. T. H. Harding which has been established about seven years. Mr. Harding is a thoroughly practical grocer, and spares no pains to keep his business to the front. His store is always found well filled with a choice line of groceries of all kinds, pure teas, coffees, sugars, spices, canned goods, flavoring extracts and all the table delicacies, also crockery, glass and chinaware, provisions, vegetables, &c. The business has grown in much public favor which is owing to the fact mainly of the superior line of goods kept.

Messrs. R. & J. Holmes have recently opened a meat shop next door to the premises formerly occupied by Mr. Robert Holmes and where for some years he did a thriving business.

The harness emporium of Mr. J.A. Halsted does a nice trade in harness and supplies.

South of Mill street on Main we have the tasty little shop of Mr. C. C. Speight where picture frames, mirrors, scroll work, fancy designs in bracket work and turning are found in profusion.

Across the street is Geo. Stoddard's spring bed factory, where quite a business is transacted in an improved bed.

On the corner above is the Excelsior Bakery of Mr. T. Statham whose reputation for first class bread is wide.

On Willow street Mr. D. Maloney has a boot and shoe shop since the days of Acton's early history.

The new store in the east is owned by Mr. W.H. Denney, who keeps a neatly assorted stock of groceries and notions. This store is a great convenience to the residents in this rapidly growing section of the town.

The monetary institution of the town is Acton Banking Company, of which Mr. D. Henderson, the member for the House of Commons of the County is the manager. This institution transacts a large volume of business, is a great convenience to our business men, and enjoy the confidence of the public.

The oldest butcher in town is Mr. W. L. Worden whose shop is found on Church street, nearly opposite St. Joseph's Church.

The legal business of Acton and vicinity is looked after by the firms of Messrs. Johnston & McLean and J.A. Mowat, both of whom have offices in Guelph as well.

Quite a business is done by the agricultural implement agencies, which are carried on by Messrs. A. F. Smith, Wm. Hemstreet, Edw. Nicklin and J.A. Murray.

The new roller mill of Messrs. Fruere Bros., a mile below Acton, built a couple of years ago to replace the George Tolton property destroyed by fire, does a good trade.

The hotels here have ample accommodation for visitors.

Acton has neither a store or dwelling unoccupied, and large numbers of new buildings are being erected every year. Property is being purchased and new surveys being made on all sides for new buildings, and everywhere the spirit of progress is apparent.

The location of our little town is advantageous and picturesque. Municipally the place has been well governed and carefully managed. We have good sidewalks, clean and tidy streets, well lighted, and planted in many parts of the town with maples and other shade trees. We have no expensive bridges to keep up and our roads are in fairly good condition, though we understand the Council had under consideration improvements in this direction. Acton's municipal debt is nominal.

The finest agricultural part and surroundings to be found in the country is located here. Last year the most successful fair in the history of Esquesing Society was held on these grounds and the coming fall will see one of even larger proportions, as an organization of wider scope has recently been effected.

One of the most attractive points the municipality can show is Fairview Cemetery. The premises include nineteen acres of the most picturesque beauty that could be desired. The front six acres is very level, which the remainder is undulating, dotted here and there with pretty little groves and natural miniature lakes. The interest now being taken by our citizens in beautifying the graves of the departed loves ones is commendable and much is likely to be accomplished in this direction the coming summer. From Monument Hill in the rear of the cemetery there is a delightful view of the town and broad acres of field and forest in the distance. The large mill pond of fresh springwater, deservingly christened "Fairy Lake", nestles a short distance to the west, and a view from here in the summer when the crops are growing, the forests in their rich green foliage and the orchards in bloom is really enchanting.

The above is but a brief review of our little town and what it contains. We might go on to describe more minutely the processes of manufacture, &c., of some of our factories; we might give biographical sketches of our citizens in public life, but we leave these features for some future edition; and hope that above will tend to give the outside world a better acquaintance of Acton and its attractions than they have had heretofore.
