

McLeans Hardware & Building Supplies



LORE TURN BASK.

This being the 80th continuous year McLean's have been in the hardware business in Loreburn, we thought it might be of some interest to review a little of family and business.

The roots of this family lie in the Isle of Skye, Scotland - where James Ross Graham McLean was born in 1819. James Ross lost his first wife in 1841 and later emigrated to Ontario, Canada where he married Barbara MacKay, a widow of John O'Groats. Their only child, John Alexander McLean, was born at Embro, Ont. in 1855.

John Alex married Elizabeth Fraser in 1879 at the age of 17 and moved to a farm near Tiverton, Ont. In 1880 leaving his wife and young son in his father's care, John Alex came west to see the prairie country, spent about a year at Brandon, Man. helping to build the CPR depot. His most notable excursion was a trip to Moosomin, Sask. with his friend, Dan Morrison - walking there and back, a distance of 150 miles. They waded streams when necessary and slept on the ground. He liked the west and in 1892 he and Betsy took their seven children by train to Shoal Lake, Man. which was the end of the line, remaining there for about a year. Then with their belongings loaded in a farm wagon and a tent, made their way across the prairie and settled on a farm near Reston, Man. In 1893 they built a sod shanty and stable for the animals, later a stone barn and frame house. Seven more children were born to the couple while they lived at Reston, two dying in infancy - but they adopted two to make a happy family of 14 no less.

To help meet expenses John Alex worked in the woods during the winter months. He was one of the first elders of the Reston Presbyterian Church, involved in its funding and as a stone mason helped build the church. The family grew up - James Ross, Willie Munro, John Alexander, Charles Edward, Oliver Gillis, Gordon Macalester Fraser; girls, Clara Ceclela (McIvor), Barbara Ann (Edwards), Johanna McBeth (Bryenton), Elizabeth (Tysdale), Mable Caroline (Menzies), Mary Catherine (Lee). In 1906, after having talked about it for two years over their porridge, three of the McLean boys took off for the west, after the crops were seeded, in an old Democrat and tent, Willie, John and Charlie. Willie and John wanted to start a hardware and harness business and Charlie to stake his homestead at Tullis, Sask. Willie and John stayed, deciding to build in Loreburn and Charlie went back to Reston for the winter to help out at home.

They built the hardware and opened for business in 1908. In 1909 John wanted to go on his own and build at Bridgeford, Sask. so Charlie gave up his homestead (always said it was the mistake of his life), borrowed money to buy John's share, sold their building to the Bank of Hamilton and built McLean's Hardware where it stands today - 80 years later and still in business.

In 1910 John Alex Sr. decided to leave the farm and move west with the boys, arriving March 10 in Loreburn with the younger members of the family and they all lived above the store. They built an addition using the east wall for Dad and J.A. opened up an implement business - used to drive everywhere with his driving team and new buggy which he had brought from Reston; it was one of the first rubber tired buggies, used to go across the river on the old stone boat ferry to

sell and deliver, really proud of it and of the business.

In 1912 J. Alex joined sons, Willie and Charlie, forming a limited company and bought the Best Hardware in Moose Jaw and called the company The Western Hardware Co. Ltd. for the purpose of buying and selling hardware, harness, furniture, implements and caskets.

From this Loreburn hardware they also ran stores in Mossbank, Scotsguard, Val Marie, Gravelbourg, Bridgeford, Gilroy, Demaine and Punichy.

In 1914 Charlie married Davidina Cochran and had a family of four, Muriel, Eugene, Charles Fraser and Shirley Ann. In 1928 John Alex and Elizabeth retired from the business and moved to Moose Jaw, at that time the store was registered as J.A. McLean & Son. John Alex died in 1931 and Elizabeth passed away in 1934. Charlie bought out the interests and the store was registered as C.E. McLean Hardware.

These were the days all the wholesalers wanted their name on the front of your hardware, whether it be Marshall-Wells, J.H. Ashdown, Thrift, McLeods, Gambles, Stedmans, Sterling, Walter-Woods, Falcon, you name it, but Charlie said when his name went off, McLeans had better get out of business, he had been in the game too long.

In 1947 Charlie and Ina moved to Vancouver, a block from his brother and old business partner, Willie. Charlie passed away in 1955 and the store from 1946 had been managed by Eugene McLean under the name of McLeans Hardware & Building Supplies with the help of so many good and faithful employees over the years; to mention some: Jack Woods, Buster Goodman, Fred Bradley, Geo. Page, Sheila Chrestensen, Geo. Chrestensen, Barb Baker, Marion Howat, Nola Davidson, Ruth and Mabel Book, John Southam, Dale Lemcke and our customers, the most wonderful people in the world.

These are the joys of retailing - much water has gone down the river and much dust has been in the air and a lot of snow and rain has fallen. We have sold lots of hardware, harness, freezers, stoves, furnaces and furniture, caskets, beds, mattresses, dishes to jack knives, radios and TV's to a lot of wonderful people, and tried at all times to see they got quality products at a competitive price.

The McLean Hardware at Loreburn was our first one and is our last one. It always seemed to be home base, even in the early years and decisions were made here. We never made much money, but always paid our debts and made a living. We never went broke, but I guess they came close lots of times and had the bank breathing down their necks.

Many a young married couple have started in the honeymoon suite above the hardware. Seldom a year goes by that someone doesn't drop in and tell us a story about carrying water up and slops down, wood and coal up and ashes down, with rents from \$3.00 to \$30.00 per month - if only those walls could talk!

This being our 80th continuous year in the hardware business in Loreburn, third generation, we would like to continue doing what we have been doing, only doing it better and extend our appreciation to all the people of the community for their patronage. Drop in and say hello - we always have time to visit - happy and enjoying life.

Sylvia and Eugene McLean