

Fifty Years in Business

W. H. Thorne & Co., Ltd. celebrate their 50th anniversary this month. In this connection the following review has been issued by the company.

"Fifty years ago the business now conducted by W. H. Thorne & Company, Limited, was founded by the present president, Hon. W. H. Thorne. May, 1867, saw its commencement—a store being opened at the corner of Dock street and Market Square, on the site now occupied by the Bank of British North America. This was successfully carried on until 1876, when the late Richard C. Scovill, formerly

lough building, while different departments were equipped with the most modern fixtures and facilities for doing business. We can safely say that ours is the best equipped hardware establishment in Canada.

The buildings now occupied by the firm on King street and Prince William street have a floor space of 53,000 square feet; while the Water street warehouses, where iron, metals and heavy goods are stored, have a floor space of 36,000 square feet.

We are deeply indebted to loyal customers in the city of St. John, in New

Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and parts of Quebec, who have patronized the firm and made the success of the business possible.

With better facilities, better buildings and warehouses, and larger stock, we trust to receive the confidence of the business community throughout the lower provinces for many years to come."

DIRECTORS:



residing in Shediac, conducting a large lumber business there, entered into partnership, and the firm of W. H. Thorne & Company was formed.

To better provide for the conduct of the retail and wholesale business, these were separated, and a new building erected especially for the firm on Canterbury street, on the site now occupied by the S. Hayward Co. In which the wholesale business was conducted, while the retail was carried on at the original stand in charge of Mr. T. C. Lee.

In 1877, the great fire in St. John took place. Both stores, with their contents, were totally destroyed. To provide for the continuation of the business, a temporary two-story structure was built on the Market Square, a permit for its erection having been issued by the late Dr. Earle, who was mayor of the city of St. John. Inside of ten days, business was resumed. Meantime provision was made for the building on Prince William street, and in about eighteen months the new premises were occupied, which have continued as the main building since that time.

In 1884, in consequence of ill-health, Mr. Scovill retired from the business, and in 1885, Mr. T. C. Lee and Mr. A. T. Thorne were admitted to partnership.

The McCullough building on Prince William street was acquired in 1891 and connected with the original store.

In 1895 the business of W. H. Thorne & Company was taken over by W. H. Thorne & Co., Ltd., a joint stock company formed under the New Brunswick Act, W. H. Thorne and other members of the late firm becoming directors.

Iron, steel and heavy hardware were formerly stored in warehouses at the corner of Smythe and Nelson streets, which property was afterwards acquired by the St. John Railway Company. Having purchased a Water street property, new warehouses were there erected with a harbor frontage, besides the warehouse accommodation was rented from the Thorne Wharf & Warehousing Company, Ltd. on adjoining properties.

In 1910, in order to provide better accommodation and enable the business to be run in departments, the Montgomery building on King street was purchased and connected in the rear with the Prince William street buildings. This extension enabled the firm to separate over-crowded departments and open up new ones. These now include builders' hardware, kitchen utensils, paints, oils and glass, mill supplies, rope and fishing supplies, sporting goods, silverware and fancy goods, toys and New Edison Diamond Disc and Amberola Phonographs—in all nine distinct departments.

Unfortunately, in December, 1915, a disastrous fire destroyed the original hardware store and damaged the other buildings to a minor extent. During the past year, however, repairs have been made and practically a new building erected. Two new stores were added in the rear of the McCul-

Lid. In fact, few in any trade have had a continuous successful record for fifty years. Of the names that were familiar in the business life of St. John fifty years ago, only a few remain. I call to mind: C. & E. Everett; Geo. S. DeForest & Son, Ltd.; Jas. Fleming; Saint John Globe; Hall & Fairweather, Limited; J. & A. McMillan; Manchester, Robertson & Allison; T. Rankine & Sons; Vassie & Co., Ltd.; William Thomson & Co., Ltd.

The following men or firms had been engaged in the hardware business during the past fifty years with more or less success, but I can hardly recollect an instance where one in the trade has retired wealthy and independent: W. H. Adams; Barry & McLaughlin; C. G. Berryman; Berryman & Olive; Fulton Beverly; I. & F. Burpee; E. A. Everett; John Carlin; Clark, Kerr & Thorne; Lewin & Allingham; C. S. Melick; W. H. Olive; Stillwell & Goggin; Harry Thomas; Walker Tisdale & Son; Warwick, Hayward & Clark; William Waterbury; W. W. Whelpley.

Nearly all have passed out of our business life.

Fifty years ago the imports of St. John were brought chiefly by sail. Regular packet lines of sailing ships ran between Liverpool and St. John. Many will recollect the Black Ball Line. Large numbers of small schooners brought supplies from the United States ports. Flour and pork were largely imported from New York for consumption, not only in the Province of New Brunswick, but also came through St. John to the upper waters of the State of Maine. Our wharves were busy places, continually covered with goods, so that wharf property in those days was valuable and most remunerative to owners.

The merchants in St. John always looked forward for the arrival of spring and fall vessels with much interest. Little or no hardware was manufactured here, with the exception of cut nails. Wrought nails, horse nails and all kinds of general hardware were chiefly brought from Great Britain.

In former years traders throughout the country visited the city as a rule twice a year, for the purpose of purchasing their season's requirements. Today, travellers visit all parts, and the merchant makes his purchases of all kinds of goods from the traveller. Every clerk in those days was a salesman and had to put up his own orders, and much of the work was of a character the salesmen of today would not be called upon to do. The handling of putty, ochres, oils and paints was, if possible, shirked by clerks. The hours were much longer and the work harder.

In receiving goods into the store, everything had to be hoisted by hand. No electric elevators, cranes had to lend a hand hoisting. Horses, wrought and other nails packed in bags, the sharp ends of the nails sticking out of the bags continually lacerated the hands.

After navigation opened in the

spring the routine was to take orders by day from the visiting buyers, putting them together and packing them at night. The spring rush continued for about eight or ten weeks, and the autumn business commenced in August or early in September, and lasted until the close of navigation.

During these busy seasons, we seldom left the store before midnight, and, in many cases, worked into the "wee sma' hours."

What a change has taken place, due to the railways and steamships taking the place of the sailers. Goods from all parts of the world come to hand in every month of the year, and distribution has ceased to be dependent upon open navigation.

It is hardly necessary for me to speak of the great fire of June 29th, 1877, which destroyed such a large portion of the city, and by which nearly every business firm suffered irreparable loss. It is now a matter of history.

However, when the fire occurred, I, with others, was enjoying a holiday

salmon fishing on the Bonaventure River in Quebec. Telegrams sent to our camp advised us of a great fire, but could get little information as to its extent and the loss I had sustained. The telegraph offices were burned and out of business. We immediately decided to break camp and return to St. John. When we reached the mouth of the Bonaventure we chartered a fishing smack in order to cross the Bay of Chaleur and catch an Intercolonial train for home. After spending a rough night in the Bay, we reached New Mills on the New Brunswick side and caught a freight train for Moncton. At Moncton, we first obtained a definite account of the destruction in the city. The first issue of the "Daily Telegraph" gave us this information. No printing establishment remained in St. John, and the first issue of the "Daily Telegraph" was printed and appeared in Moncton.

I reached home two days after the fire and immediately prepared to again commence business. The first two or three days were spent in wiring and

cabling for immediate shipments of stock and arranging for the temporary construction of a building on Market Square. We successfully carried on business there for upwards of a year, and then moved to our new building, built especially for us on Prince William street, where we have remained ever since.

In my first few years in business I made many friends, more especially amongst young men in the country districts, who, like myself, were commencing business on their own account. These friendships continued during their lives, and it is most gratifying to me that I retained their confidence as well as that of many who are still alive and prosperous. Retaining the confidence of customers after many years of strenuous business life is one of the great rewards of a business man; it is therefore that I take this opportunity of thanking all those who generously patronized my firm in the past, and I trust the present management will continue to merit the confidence of the public."

W. H. THORNE.

Rebuilt are really Rebuilt when bought from my selected list. The sort of typewriter for the man who wants to get a Reliable machine at a low price. A. Milne Fraser, Jas. A. Little, Mgr., 37 Dock street, St. John, N. B.

Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Simonds announce the engagement of their daughter, Hildred Stewart, to J. Alwyn Tait, the marriage to take place early in June.

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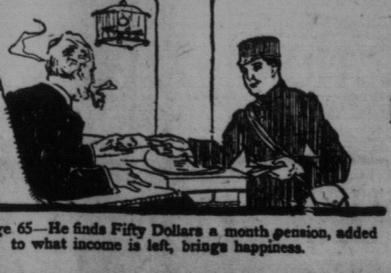
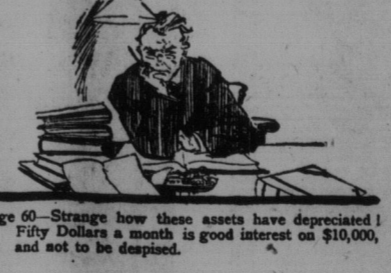
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