

LOOKING BACK OVER THE CENTURY

CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE MARKS CENTENNIAL THIS WEEK

This week, when Bradford's oldest bank marks its centennial, a review of banking in Bradford is becoming.

At the time of The Witness centennial the manager of The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce here, Mr. Ellis Tapp, contributed a history of banking in Bradford for our special issue, and to refresh memory, that history is being republished, in part, upon this important bank anniversary. Quote:

"We have gathered most of our information from Mr. Thomas Bell, a retired Bank Manager, well known in this area. Mr. Bell and the writer will stand corrected on the dates which we record below, but they are approximately correct.

We are advised that the first Bank in Bradford was the "Western" Bank, which was situated in the building now owned by Aubrey Stewart Insurance. We are unable to learn when it was opened, but it was succeeded by the Standard Bank of Canada in early 1900's and that bank was under the management of John Elliott from that time until 1906. Thomas Bell took over the management of the Standard Bank of Canada in Bradford at that time and was Manager in 1918, when the location was moved to the present Bank of Commerce corner. He then continued as Manager of the Standard Bank until that Bank was taken over by the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1928, after which time he continued as Manager of the "Commerce" until his retirement in 1932.

During the period of Mr. Bell's banking in Bradford, there was another Bank opened in town. As closely as we are able to establish, the Bank of Toronto was opened in 1907 in the present Kleiss building, and continued to operate until the business was taken over by the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1932.

After the retirement of Mr. Bell in 1932, the management of the "Commerce" was taken

over by Mr. H. L. Blackwell, who continued until his untimely death in 1935. Mr. Blackwell will be well remembered by many readers, and his widow and family are well known and respected in our community today. The new, or younger members of the community, who know Dr. "Gib" Blackwell, may not be aware that he is the elder son of the late H. L. Blackwell.

After the death of Mr. Blackwell, Mr. Rutherford, who many will remember, took over the management of the "Commerce". He continued until his death in 1938, and was followed

by Mr. L. T. Foster. Mr. Foster was manager until 1948, when he was transferred to Barrie branch, where he subsequently retired. He still resides in Barrie, and has many friends in Bradford.

Mr. Foster was followed by Mr. A. L. "Bob" Veale. Mr. Veale was manager until his retirement in 1957, and was, and is, in his retirement, known and respected by virtually everyone in the community. During Mr. Veale's term, The Royal Bank of Canada opened a branch in
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Bradford in 1955 in a new building, built on the property which was formerly the site of a cold storage building owned by Frank Maurino. The "Royal" was firstly under the management of Frank Lee, later by Al Besley and now by Bill Verlaan.

The present Manager of the "Commerce", Ellis Tapp, was accountant at the branch during the last two years of Mr. Foster's management, and the first two years of Mr. Veale's management. Then upon the retirement of Mr. Veale, he returned "home" to Bradford as manager.

Mr. Bell, manager, then retired manager, and resident here for about sixty years, died suddenly early this year. Miss Adelaide Keaney, who is known and highly regarded by everyone in the area, joined the Standard Bank in Bradford in 1917 with Mr. Bell and served with every Manager of the "Commerce" up to the present management, retiring in 1959. Miss Keaney's

years of service in the Bradford bank are said to have been the longest of anyone in one branch in the Bank of Commerce.

Another former Bank employee in Bradford, who is well known here as the Clerk-Treasurer of West Gwillimbury Township, Arnold Meredith, was with Mr. Bell from 1922 until 1924.

We are sure that all will agree that the business transacted in any town can be measured by the Bank personnel required to service that town. Not too many years ago, one Bank, with about four or five employees was sufficient, while now Bradford has two Banks with a total personnel of about twenty, with modern mechanical equipment, to service the area.

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