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My Canada... The Campbells of Bradford

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Special to The Bradford Times

During the last two years, my sister Suzanne and I have been immersed in Bradford history, and memories of Bradford.

Our mother, Doris Campbell, passed away, and we sorted through several lifetimes of belongings and correspondence, much of it reflecting on our family members' lives in Bradford.

My great grandfather, William Campbell, came to Bradford in 1862 from Newmarket. He was a weigher of grain, and was transferred to Bradford to start his own grain-buying business, and as a dealer in coal, lumber and shingles.

He married a local girl, Bessie Sutherland, and they had two sons and a daughter. Their oldest son became Dr. Lewis H. Campbell – the town's doctor until his death in 1935. Their second son, my grandfather, was William L. Campbell, who ran W.L. Campbell Drugs on Holland Street in Bradford for 57 years. Their daughter Libby went into business with her father, running the grain business.

The letters and postcards we have of that time show how involved our family was in the Methodist Church (now the United Church) on Barrie Street. William Sr. was a long-time Sunday school teacher, and one of Bradford's first reeves.

The family lived in a house where the plaza across from Century 21 now stands. After the Great Fire of 1871, they moved to John Street. Dr. Campbell would build his grand house next door, in 1906.

Many of the letters we found are from Lewis H., when he was attending medical school in Toronto, and from William L., when he was starting work as a pharmacist in Barrie. They are full of memories of Bradford events, and great pride in their hometown – and show the importance of trains to life in Bradford in an era before cars. There are constant trips to the train station to pick up or drop off family members.

Both boys were active in all sports, but especially proficient in lacrosse. They were both on the Bradford lacrosse team, and the letters are full of boasts



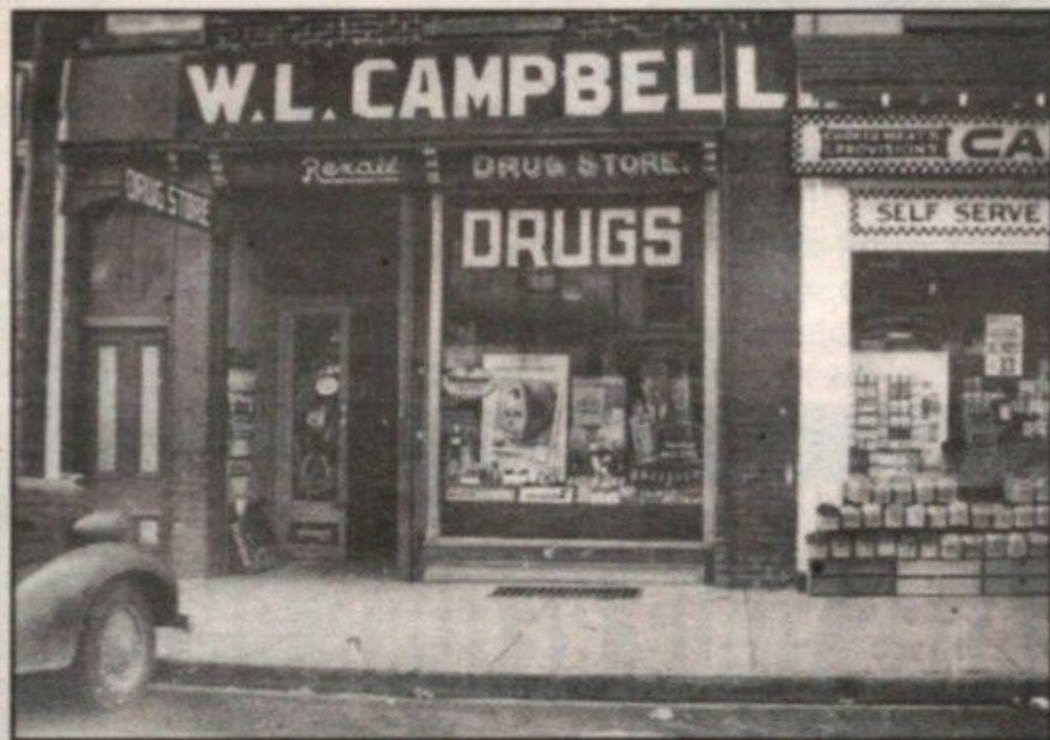
PHOTOS SUBMITTED

From lotions to poisons - items once offered for sale at the Campbell Drug Store in Bradford, and preserved by the family.

that the Bradford boys can beat anyone. Eventually, Dr. Campbell played on the Canadian Lacrosse team that went to Australia to play in 1904.

My grandfather and Dr. Campbell were well known for helping local people in need. We found receipts showing that Dr. Campbell paid his patients' medical expenses himself, and William would often give medicine free of charge to people in need. My mother often told us that while buying produce in the marsh in the 1960s, many people wouldn't let my father pay, because of the kindness shown them by William.

When my father, Lewis B. Campbell, was born in 1919, Bradford was still a small village. He talked about his childhood here, and remembered sledding down Church Street in winter, and exploring the countryside. He could remember who lived in every old house in town, and the names of all of the stores, and who worked in them. Going to get a haircut at Rusty Worfolk's barber shop, or hanging out in the billiard parlour above his father's drug store. He remembered how many people suffered during the depression, and his mother giving meals to men who would come to the back door of the house, wanting to do odd jobs.



A view of the W.L. Campbell Drug Store, as it appeared in the old days in Bradford.

My father started to work for his dad in 1937. William died in 1948, and my grandmother, Marjorie, sold the store to Clarence Ritchie. My father stayed on until the store closed in 1974.

My sister Suzanne and I were born in the 1960s, and have our own memories of Bradford. We remember going to Yoshi's Market, where Bradford Rental is now, buying paper straws full of flavoured sugar and visiting father at the drug store, watching the machine that warmed cashews near the cash register.

It made us very proud all of our lives when people would remember father from the drug store, and say hello.

I am sure my own daugh-

ters will have their own memories of Bradford that they will look back on fondly. Our family was part of the daily life of Bradford for more than 100 years. I am sure they would be amazed at the size of the town now, but not surprised that it is still flourishing.

For Canada's Sesquicentennial year, *The Bradford Times* is asking readers – both long-time residents, and newcomers to the country – to share some of their favourite places, events and memories of this country we call home. Stories, photos and comments can be sent to Mking@postmedia.com, subject "My Canada," or mail to "My Canada," Bradford Times, 74 John St. West, Box 1570, Bradford ON L3Z 2B8.