Newspapers.com by Ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image-view/455706910/

Downloaded on Dec 7, 2025

OLD TIME STUFF"

Reminiscences of the Ottawa of Earlier Days. Personages, Scenes and Incidents Recalled by Evening Citizen Readers

There are few houses in Ottawa older than No. 240 Sparks street, the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Brigham. It is doubtful whether there is a house in Ottawa which has more local history attached to it. The exact date of the erection of this fine old stone building is not known, but it is certain that its history dates back to the very earliest days of Bytown. It was erected by the late H. V. Noel, who for many years was manager of the Quebec Bank here. Mr. Noel came to Bytown from Quebec and opened trade with the lumbermen. In those days there was little or no money in the country, and nearly all the trade was done on the "barter and exchange" system. Mr. Noel put up as a warehouse the building which the Brighams now occupy. The building was erected by Mr. John Christie, who was one of the leading contractors of the period. Mr. Christie, by the way, built the former suspension bridge between Ottawa and Hull about 1845. Mr. Noel, from the house now occupied by the Brighams, supplied the lumbermen with staple pork and the various staples of the life of the period. He prospered, he took square timber and other products of the mills, which he sold at Quebec. The roomy stone cellar and the rear part of the house were once piled high with all kinds of merchandise.

Housed First Bank.

Some years later, when money became more plentiful, the Quebec Bank opened a branch in Ottawa and Mr. Noel was appointed manager. It was in the drawing room of this same building that the bank was located. This branch of the Quebec Bank was the first bank operated in Bytown. Later, Mr. Noel went out of the trading business and devoted his attention exclusively to banking. It was about this time that the Quebec Bank erected on Wellington street, near O'Connor, the splendid stone building which for many years was one of the show spots of the Capital.

About 45 years ago Mr. George Brigham purchased No. 240 from Mr. Noel and has lived in it ever since. Before his marriage he lived in this house with his mother.

It was in this house (after Mr. Noel left) that Sir Percy Sherwood, the late superintendent of Dominion Police, was born. Sir Percy's father, the late Edward Sherwood, was then sheriff of Ottawa and the county. Sheriff Sherwood lived in this house for a number of years.

Nothing Flimsy There.

This house is typical of the solidity of the houses of the period. The walls are massive and the plaster is directly on the stone. The beams which support the floors are made of round cedars, to which the bark still adheres. The wide pine boards of the original floor are hand cut. The hearthstone of the fireplace is cut from a massive stone slab.

As a further evidence that this house is real "old time stuff" it may be told that the steam radiators in the large living rooms were taken from the "England," the first steamboat which plied on the Ottawa 50 years ago and which boasted the first expansion tube steam boiler of the period.

Mr. Brigham, who is descended from the earliest settlers on the Quebec side, has a wide knowledge of the history of Ottawa and tells many interesting stories of the earlier days from his own boyhood recollections.

The Old Christ Church.

Mr. Brigham remembers the former Christ church, which was a small building with a square tower, built after the design of many of the old churches in England. He remembers the erection of the present church about 1870, and recalls that one of the first weddings in the new edifice was that of the late Mrs. Nicholas Sparks to the late Sheriff Sweetland.

Some Former Schools.

Mr. Brigham says that in the yard of Landreville's livery on Sparks street, west of Bay street is an old stone building which housed one of the earliest schools of Bytown. In this same building was later published one of the Capital's earliest newspapers. He does not remember the name. Mr. Brigham recalls that on Welling street near Pooley's bridge, late in the sixties, was a school kept by a Mr. McLarry, which was attended by many children who today play a prominent part in the city's activities. Sir George Perley was one of the pupils. At a little earlier period there was a well known private school which was conducted by the Misses Sproule. This was in a one and a half storey frame building at the corner of Sparks and Lyon streets, on the site of Strachan's grocery store. The Misses Sproule moved to a family which left its mark on the early history of Bytown and Ottawa and the descendants of which are still active.

Home of War Cabinet.

Mr. Brigham recalls the time when Wellington street, between what is now Powers boiler shop and Pooley's bridge, was so crowded that drivers of vehicles had to stop and about to secure right of way. At that period the Sparks street hill extended to Bank street, Bank was not opened, and the cliff below Bronson avenue had not been cut away and Wellington street was little more than a cow path. It was not till the eighties that Sparks street was cut through.

A Sand Hill Slide.

Mr. Brigham remembers the time when he was a boy there were no buildings between Elgin street and the canal except Lockwood's photo shop, and there was a sand hill which ran from the site of the present post office to the bank of the canal. The boys used to roll down this sand hill.

On Wellington street, between Elgin and Metcalfe, in the early seventies there was a row of small frame stores. At the corner of Metcalfe street, however, was a fine stone building occupied as a hotel by the late Michael Kavanagh, father of the late Joseph Kavanagh, who for many years was a grocer on Sparks street (Kavanagh Bros.). This was known as the Queen's hotel. Mr. Brigham and his brother, Bernard Brigham, remember this hotel by the big turtle shell which adorned the front of the building and which bore the name of the hotel.

Ottawa in '57.

Mr. Brigham owns a fine large steel engraved picture of Ottawa in 1857. This picture, which gives nearly every building in Upper Town in the foreground and a general view of Lower Town in the background, was drawn by Stent and Oliver, who were later connected with the erection of the Parliament Buildings. The engraving was done by Sarony, Major and Knapp, of New York. This picture shows the former Christ church and also the present Basilica on Sussex street, which had then been erected.

IN BYTOWN DAYS

Mr. R. J. Drummond, of Ganonoque, a son of a former Bytown man, writes the editor of the "Old Time Stuff" a very interesting letter about the very early days when he (Mr. R. J. Drummond) was a boy here. Mr. Drummond contributes some very interesting facts. He writes:

"I have read the article 'Old Time Stuff' in last Saturday's Citizen and note that you invite facts from any who, more than 35 years ago, were residents of Ottawa and are living now.

"I am the son of Andrew Drummond, who was engaged by his uncle, Robert Drummond, to keep the accounts of his contract with the home government to build the Kingston Mills locks and dam. Father kept the accounts also of John Redpath, who similarly carried on and completed the Jones Falls dam and locks. I have father's account of these costs, and of the whole costs of the Rideau Canal, built by the British government as a safer entrance to the upper lakes than by the exposed St. Lawrence.

"I may say that as a boy I recollect Mr. McKay, who built the locks from the Ottawa River, also in existence and use, over which he also built the Sappers' bridge.

Built Rideau Hall.

"Mr. McKay built Rideau Hall, now the residence of the Governor-General in Ottawa. In 1846 or '47, when I was a boy, father was agent of the Commercial Bank in Bytown. The bank was on Sussex street. Along 1848 father was appointed agent of the Bank of Montreal, and moved to their branch, which was in Upper Town.

"Sparks street, then, was a road between cedar trees, with Government Hill on the right, Government Hill had picket fences on it, guarding against Indians. On the left of Sparks street was a cedar swamp as far as a boy could see.

Fishing in Locks.

"Father was one of four who owned a fish net, with landon sinkers on one side and corks on the other side. The leaden sides were dropped into one of the locks, and held by hands on each side of one of the locks. It was then pulled along the bottom to the other end. Then the two who held the ropes at the cork side of the net came onward and the leaded side was pulled up and brought together into a bag, with all the fish in the lock bagged in it. I remember being sent home with two fish which were so heavy I had to drag them.

"John Redpath was then a director of the Bank of Montreal. The head offices was in Montreal. Father, in 1849, was moved to Kingston, and I went there with him in the steamer Prince Albert, then a two days' journey.

Saw "Building" Erected.

"As a boy of 12 I was appointed to a junior position in the Bank of Montreal, Ottawa. This was about 1857 or '58, when Queen Victoria made it the Capital, and I watched from my boarding house window the excavation for the Parliament Buildings."

A GREAT MAGISTRATE

Police Magistrate Martin O'Gara, who presided over the police court sessions twenty-five years and more ago, has long gone to his rest, but in police circles his memory is still green. Mr. O'Gara left a mark which time will not quickly efface. He was one of the best magistrates the city ever had, and one of the best Canadi. has produced.

The late Mr. O'Gara was a lawyer, a member of the law firm of O'Gara, Wyld and Hermon. Mr. Wm. Wyld and Mr. Edward Hermon are also dead. In those days magistrates were only paid for part time service. Mr. O'Gara received $1,000 for his work on the bench. This, however, is only parenthetical to the story.

Magistrate O'Gara was a silent man, but there graff in his manner but with a splendid sense of humor. He seldom even smiled in court, but the twinkle in his eyes now and again told the reporters and audience that he had caught the humor of the case.

Ruled by Equity.

Though a lawyer with high standing at the bar, his police court judgments were marked more by equity than by law.

He had many little mannerisms which were like weathervanes to the reporters. For instance, whenever he turned his eyes toward the ceiling and assumed a contemplative appearance the newspapermen always knew the prisoner was going to get a severe sentence. Whenever he cleared his throat preparatory to a sentence that indicated a particularly severe sentence. A rubbing of the nose or his eyebrows indicated a longer sentence than ordinary.

Got the Facts.

But while he often ranged poisoners pretty hard, the lenient and first offenders found in him a real friend. He had a way of getting at the inner facts of a case that was surprising. Frequently he turned on prosecuting policemen who were showing a disposition to hounds poisoners, often, too, after a few searching questions he would suddenly dismiss a case and censure the policeman.

Mr. O'Gara was a great stickler for police court decorum. He could not tolerate anything savoring of levity or disrespect even from the lawyers.

Magistrate Sympathized.

A book full of humorous O'Gara stories could be told. One that is still kept green among the older policemen is this. On one occasion a man who will be called Johnson was haled to court by his wife for abusing her. Johnson, she said, had come home drunk and manhandled her. The lady was a tall, angular person with sharp features. She was very keen in her effort to get Johnson punished.

Mr. O'Gara, in his characteristically gruff manner, gave Johnson a lecture on the duty he owed his wife and wound up: "I shall fine you $2 and costs. Don't come before me again. If you do, I will punish severely with you."

Johnson, in his defence, had claimed his wife was always nagging him and that her actions were enough to make any man drunk.

Mr. O'Gara's sentence was hardly out of his mouth, when Mrs. Johnson jumped up in the courtroom and pointing her finger at Johnson called out in a shrill voice, "Oh, oh, Johnson! Oh, oh, Johnson."

"Bring that woman here," shouted Mr. O'Gara.

She was brought in front of the bench. Without any preliminaries, Mr. O'Gara snapped: "I sentence you to twelve hours for contempt of court. Next case. The general opinion was that the magistrate had sympathy for poor Johnson.

Mr. O'Gara was a terror to professional evidence. On the other hand, he allowed many first offenders to go on suspended sentence.

Mr. O'Gara's family still lives here. The old home stead in Ottawa East is occupied by a daughter.

A CORONER OF NOTE

One of the conspicuous figures in Ottawa life in the nineties period was Dr. Herbert Mark. Dr. Mark was a practising physician and lived on Slater street. Dr. Mark was originally a minister in Methodist church, and before entering to practice medicine was pastor in the West End church here.

Dr. Mark was best known to the public in his capacity of coroner. There were four official coroners in Ottawa at the time—the late Dr. Robillard, medical health officer; Dr. Edwards, the late Dr. Anthony Freeland, and Dr. Mark. But somehow or other, Dr. Mark seemed to become known as "the coroner." In any event there were few cases which he was not called to.

Got the Facts.

Dr. Mark was intensely keen in the conduct of inquests, and if public was the slightest chance of foul play having taken place, he would be sure to find it. Dr. Mark was a real friend of the poor. It is known that he did a great amount of free visiting to those who could not pay.

System of Signals.

In those days there were no automobiles. Dr. Mark drove a horse which was particularly intelligent, and was as well known as the doctor himself. In his practice the doctor had a peculiar system of signals which used to interest the newspaper men who would tell from the signals whether the doctor was at home and also, if he was not at home, whether he would be busy after he got there, or he likely to have to go out again.

Thus the doctor arrived at his house he would look at the front window. If it held on the ledge a small piece of red glass, he knew that there was something urgent for him and he would not put the horse in the stable. If there was a piece of blue glass it meant that patients were waiting in the office. Different colors of glass meant different things. No glass at all meant a clear field, and that the horse could be put in the stable.

Dr. Mark was prominent in all sorts of philanthropic work. He was a perfect human dynamo, doing as much work as three ordinary men. He was greatly liked and had many fine personal qualities.

BIG CIVIC INCIDENT

Something happened in the City Council of 1897 which never happened before and which has never happened since. No less than five aldermen resigned at one time. A new election was held and they were all returned by acclamation. After having been absent from council for about two months.

The thing was a case celebre at the time. Old timers will remember it as the Lafrance fire engine trouble. It is a very long story, but may be briefly recalled as follows.

After a reorganization of the fire department (which is another story) it told elsewhere in these columns) the fire and light committee asked council to purchase some $45,000 worth of new fire fighting apparatus, including two fire engines. The committee asked council to purchase a Merryweather and a Waterous (Canadian). Among the tenderers had been the Lafrance Fire Engine Co., of Elmira, N.Y., the local agents of which were Ahearn and Soper. When the report came to council, Ald. White and Ald. Payment moved an amendment, which carried, to purchase two Lafrance engines, 13 to 10.

The purchase of the Lafrance engines was objected to by the minority, partly because they were being made in the United States, and partly because of a letter which Ahearn and Soper were alleged to have written to the Lafrance people containing a reference to their having "exceptional facilities" for selling the Lafrance engines to council. The minority objected to the words as an insinuation.

Between the council meeting of June 21 and that following, the minority endeavored to have the decision reversed, but failing, resigned in their resignations as a protest at the meeting of July 3.

The aldermen who resigned were: W. J. Campbell, Fred Cook, W. G. Black, J. B. Donaldson, Donald Mason, T. Butler, J. C. Grant, Robt. Hastey, Jos. Foster and R. J. Davidson.

Their resignations were accepted by the majority and a new election ordered.

Later Ald. Donaldson was induced to recall his resignation, and remained in council.

When the election came off there was no opposition to any of the nine, and at the first meeting in June they were all back in their seats. In the meantime the council majority had gone ahead, but only purchased one Lafrance engine, this probably as a sort of compromise with the minority. Messrs. Ahearn and Soper also wrote council that they would forego their commission of $500 and thus reduce the cost of the engine.

AUCTIONEERS OF THE OLD DAYS

In the period between 1875 and 1900 auctioneering was a fine art in Ottawa. In those days going to an auction was as good as going to a show. The auctioneers of that period considered it their duty to keep their audiences amused. As an auction then was something like an election meeting where the heckler held sway, the auctioneer had to be a master of repartee in order to hold his own. The selling of goods was interspersed with quips, jokes and stories to keep the audience in good humor and willing to pay the top prices. A certain auctioneer who was a postmaster at repartee had a favorite stand which generally crushed those who bothered him. It was "Give that calf more rope." Among the auctioneers of note since 1875 have been James Brewer, J. E. McKenzie, W. H. Lewis, J. R. Tackberry, A. H. Woodburn, T. W. McDermott, C. E. Taggart, A. B. Macdonald, Cyrille Levecque. Practically all of these auctioneers are dead. Between '75 and '25 there were several other auctioneers prominent. They were James Birmingham, W. Lee Falls and Hector McLean—all dead as far as known. Truly auctioneering is a very serious and sedate occupation.

(Continued on Page Six).

10 DAY SALE OF
Pianos and Phonographs
Prior to alterations, unheard of prices in pianos and phonographs. Here are samples of what we mean when we talk values.
NEW PIANO
Upright, Fully Guaranteed
$325
WE GUARANTEE EVERYTHING WE SELL
Console Model
$98
WE ARE OUT OF THE HIGH RENT DISTRICT
Robertson, Pingle & Tilley, Ltd.
Cor. Bank and Cooper Sts.

Women's Knit-Cotton Vests
These vests are made of good quality cotton in short sleeve or sleeveless styles with round necks, or comfy cut and opera styles. Medium sizes. Each 19c.
Whitewear Dept.—Second Floor.
Bryson Graham Limited
Phone Q. 7100
Store Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Infants' Barracoats
These Barracoats are well made of good quality flannelette. Edges are neatly finished with silk stitching. Each, 49c.
Infants' Flannelette Gertrude Slips. Nicely finished with hemstitched edges and worked with silk embroidery. Each, 65c.

Sale! Printed Linoleum and Congoleum Squares
Regular $18 each
Size 3 yards x 4 yards....
$15.95
Here is a sale that will enable you to save on the purchase of a large handsome square for kitchen, dining room or living room.
The printed linoleum and Congoleum squares are in very attractive designs, showing marble effects, and are a hardwearing style of floor covering that is easily and quickly cleaned.
Come on Monday when this sale starts, and secure best choice of patterns. All are perfect qualities. Size 3 yds. x 4 yds. Reg. $18 each. Sale Price, $15.95.

$4.50 Nickel-plated Tea Pots
These tea pots are made of a good quality copper which is nickel-plated. Have black wooden handles and knobs on top of attached lids. Six cup capacity. Regular $4.50, for $3.98 $3.98
2-qt. Aluminum Tea Kettles
Reg. $2 for $1.89
Handy tea kettles for the small family. Made of good quality aluminum in 2-quart size. Have black wooden grip handles and knobs. Regular $2 value. Monday only, each, $1.89.
Kitchenware Dept., Queen Street Entrance.

Pure Linen Table Cloths
Reg. $4.50
Refined looking table cloths. Made from finely woven linen yarns in a good large size, 68 in. x 88 in. In attractive shamrock or scroll patterns. Reg. $4.50 values. Special, each, $3.95. $3.95
Linen Napkins to match above table cloths. Size 21 in. x 21 in. Dozen, $5.25.
Linen Table Damask
$2.65 yd.
Mercerized Table Damask
Splendid wearing damask in rose and spot patterns, 72 inches wide. Yard $1.50
This damask is made of pure linen. It is a lovely fine quality, and is in an attractive scroll pattern. 49 inches wide. Yard, $2.65.
Bryson-Graham—Staple Dept., Main Floor.

Hygemo Carpet Sweepers
50 only
On Sale Monday at $2.98
Be here early Monday to share in this wonderful bargain. These are high-grade sweepers built to give long service. They have a beautiful mahogany finish and are fitted with rubber tire wheels, cushion braid bindings to protect furniture and nickel-plated trimmings. Brushes are made of genuine bristles. Remember the only to clear at, each, $2.98.
Rug Dept., Third Floor.

Attractive Living Room Suite
Here is a suite that you will certainly like, for it is well constructed and very distinctive in appearance. This suite—inset panel backs and A beautiful walnut finish. Consists of large sofa, rocker and arm chair all fitted with spring cushions and upholstered with high-grade figured tapestry. Special, suite, $139. $139
Stuff-Over Chesterfield Suite
A suite that is just as comfortable as its luxurious appearance. Consists of Chesterfield, arm chair and rocker all fitted with spring seats and upholstered with high-grade tapestry. Special, suite $125
Stuff-Over Arm Chairs
Big easy chairs that you will sink into contentedly. They are built for comfort as well as appearance, having padded arms and spring seats. Well upholstered. Special, each $27.50
Bryson-Graham—Furniture Dept., Third Floor.

Children's Serge Reefer Coats
Special, $6.95
Smart looking coats that children like so well. Excellently tailored of navy wool serge in double breasted style. Have brass button trimmings and worked emblem on sleeve in contrasting color. Yoke lined with black sateen. Sizes for ages 6 to 14 years. Special, coat, $6.95.
Sailor Tams to Match Reefers
Made of good quality serge. Trimmed with black ribbon streamers and gold lettering on band. Sizes 6 1-4 to 6 3-4. Each $1.50
Bryson-Graham—Children's Dept., Second Floor.

Lovely New Voiles
Displaying a wide range of fresh, new voiles so suitable for making summer frocks. In white with satin stripes with silver three-quarter inch squares in salmon, pink, green and black. Very pretty fabric. 36 inches wide. Yard, $1.45. $1.45 yd.
Striped Ratine, $1 yd.
Medium weight ratine, prettily striped in combination colors of blue and black; blue, black and white; black and white, etc. 36 inches wide. Yard $1.
Jersyl—a new fabric
$1.50 yard
New, fashionable material for making dresses, jacquettes, or Russian blouses. Made of a mixture of cotton and artificial silk in a honeycomb weave. In pink, mauve, grey, apricot, cream and salmon. 36 inches wide. Yard, $1.50.
High-grade Shirtings
49c to 65c yd.
Wide range to choose from. In single and double pin stripes and wide, narrow and novelty stripes. In mauve, blue, green, rose, black and combination effects. 38 to 42 inches wide. Yard, 49c to 65c.
Staple Dept., Main Floor.

It is Easy
Now to have
Home-Made Bread
THE Quaker Flour recipes show how easy it is to make bread at home. They are the recipes of home bread makers who use Quaker Flour.
Home bread making with Quaker Flour is always easy and always a success, because Quaker Flour is high in quality and rigidly uniform. It always bakes the same.
Send a postcard for our folder of recipes for home-made bread making. It will be sent free.
Quaker Flour
Always the Same-Always the Best
Made by the Quaker Oats Company at the
QUAKER MILLS
PETERBOROUGH and SASKATOON
216

PITZ FASHION SHOPS
WOMEN'S AND MISSES' EXCLUSIVE APPAREL
Popularly Priced.

1885 1923
38TH ANNIVERSARY SALE!
1,000 Gold, Gold-filled and Silver Watches
AT ABSOLUTELY HALF PRICE
If you buy a watch at this sale and can buy the same kind of a watch elsewhere for less than twenty-five per cent more money you can have your money back.
LADIES' WRIST WATCHES
17 Jewels, 14 karat Gold-filled Wrist Watches, worth $48.00. Anniversary Price $24.00
17 Jewels, 14 karat Gold Ribbon Wrist Watches, worth $40.00. Anniversary Price $20.00
15 Jewels, 14 karat Gold Ribbon Wrist Watches, very small, worth $46.00. Anniversary Price $23.00
15 Jewels 10 karat Gold Expansion Wrist Watches, worth $41.00. Anniversary Price $20.50
15 Jewels, Gold-filled Expansion Wrist Watches, very small, worth $38.00. Anniversary Price $19.00
15 Jewels, White Gold-filled fancy shape Ribbon Wrist Watch, worth $34.00. Anniversary Price $17.00
17 Jewels, Gold-filled Engraved Expansion Wrist Watches, worth $34.00. Anniversary Price $17.00
15 Jewels, Gold-filled Wrist Watch, Expansion Bracelet Watch, worth $30.00. Anniversary Price $15.00
15 Jewels, Sterling Silver, fancy shape, Ribbon Wrist Watch, worth $28.00. Anniversary Price $14.00
15 Jewels, White and Yellow Gold-filled Ribbon Wrist Watch, worth $22.00. Anniversary Price $11.00
15 Jewels, Gold-filled, fancy shape Wrist Watches, worth $25.00. Anniversary Price $12.50
15 Jewels, Gold-filled Wrist Watches, worth $20.00. Anniversary Price $10.00
15 Jewels, Sterling Silver Rectangular Wrist Watches, worth $30.00. Anniversary Price $15.00
Gentlemen's Gold and Gold-filled Watches
AT ABSOLUTELY HALF PRICE
17 Jewels, Gold-filled, 12 and 16 size, worth $30.00. Anniversary Price $15.00
15 Jewels, worth $20.00. Anniversary Price $10.00
14 karat Gold Watch from $27.00 to $200.00
AT HALF THE ABOVE PRICE
Every Diamond in the Store at 80 cents on the Dollar
20 Per Cent Off All Silverware—20 Per Cent Off All Cut Glass—20 Per Cent Off All Clocks
A. McMILLAN
JEWELER 82 SPARKS STREET

Accepted
The usual value of the new Gray-Dort Six is so apparent that in one showroom one salesman sold three of the first five prospects who came at his invitation to view the car.
Gray-Dort Motors Limited
Chatham, Ontario
24 models of open and closed four and six cylinder automobiles from $695 to $2500 f.o.b. factory, taxes extra.
WM. GRAY—SONS—CAMPBELL LTD.
Wholesale and Service
22 Redpath St. R. 2028
Retail Sales
GRAY-DORT MOTORS LTD.
343 Sparks St., Cor. Lyon. Q. 2729
GRAY-DORT

Copyright © 2025 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.