

THE BELMONT BAND

During the winter of 1920-21, a Band was formed in Belmont. John Dawes, George E. Faulds and several other local men were the prime movers of the project. At the outset Mr. Tinling of Ingersoll acted as Bandmaster and was later replaced by Colonel McKeown of Woodstock. Members fees were \$15 and tuition fees 75¢ a night.

The roster of musicians went as follows. There was John Dawes and his two sons, Austin and Boxer, but the boys did not stay with the band until its close. John played Baritone and Alto Horn. Frank Weaver and Evan Morgan took over on the Bass Horn while Mr. Robert Laur officiated on the Bass Drum. Bill Goff and Frank B. Taylor were responsible for the Tenor and Alto horns. Serman Minard played Clarinet while Murray and Gordon Walker carried the Baritone horn and Piccolo or flute. Gordon Walker of course filled in on any instrument and when finances grew low, acted as Bandmaster in the closing days of the organization. Walter Knowles, Jack Campbell, George E. Faulds, Wilfred Faulds and Ross Barton all played Cornet. Murray Moore was also one of the old originals and played Trombone. Earl Demaray was one of the early members who was with the band until it disbanded. He played alto horn. There were others whose membership was of shorter duration.

The band was most fortunate in having the services of a few skilled musicians. Walter Knowles had served with one of the old English bands overseas, prior to coming to Canada. Gordon Walker had served with one of the Canadian Regimental Bands overseas during the First World War. Ed Banner who was employed by the C.P.R. was a former member of the Ingersoll Salvation Army Band.

At various times the Belmont Band was joined by members of the old Springbank Band as well as by members of a St. Thomas Band.

It was very difficult to find a place to practice. This could well be attributed to the fact that sometimes there was more noise than music. Colonel McKeown sometimes became so disgusted that he would shout, "All right now, all together, one at a time!" However, practices were held above Frank B. Taylor's store (Goodhue's) at Bradley's Tin Shop and in Alan Wright's house on West Street.

During its short life the band played at many Garden Parties and social gatherings, both locally and farther afield. (The Belmont school grounds was a favourite location). It also played for the Belmont Oddfellow Lodge annual walks. Once it played all afternoon at the Barons family picnic at the fairgrounds. Perhaps the crowning glory of the band's history was the day it played at Springbank Park at the U.F.O. (United Farmers of Ontario) picnic. Several bands were in attendance and a friendly competition was part of the program. With the help of a gallon of elderberry wine well spiked with brandy, the Belmont Band was chosen the winner.

Like many good things the band broke up - about 1924.

By Ross Barton

HISTORY OF BELMONT POST OFFICE

The late W. H. Odell was appointed postmaster circa 1864 and was succeeded in 1874 by his brother, Mr. Peter Odell, who continued in that office until his death in November 1914.

In the summer of 1914 three mail routes were started from Belmont office. Courier on route #1 going toward Avon was Mr. John Charles; on route #2 going north of Belmont was Mr. Daniel McCallum and Route #3, going into Yarmouth and South Dorchester was Mr. Amos Carrothers. These men carried on for years with horse and buggy through mud, snow and rain with rarely a miss. Mr. Carrothers had a twenty-six mile route and drove it about twenty-five years. During the winter months, it was often dark when he returned to the office with letters picked up on his route. The other routes were shorter.

In 1864, the Post Office was located in the building now used (1962) as a grocery store by Mr. Jas. E. Jenkins. It was later moved next door to Mr. Peter Odell's residence, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Tribe.

Mr. A. W. Venning was appointed postmaster in 1914 following the death of Mr. Odell. Miss Dora Carrothers, niece of Mr. Odell was his sworn in assistant, and was in charge until Mr. Venning took over. Nellie Venning, daughter of A. W., at home for one year because under age for normal school went daily from the Venning farm home to the Post Office to learn the work from Dora (now Mrs. W. C. Barons). It was not until the next spring, the Venning family moved to Belmont and Mr. Venning assumed his duties. In the meantime a part of the residence was moved from the south side to the north side to form an L with the remainder of the residence. This portion was divided into the main office for the public and a back room fitted with racks for the couriers and a 3 partition bin on rollers for their mail to be tossed into. A new two-story wing was built on the south end of the residence to replace this part. After Mr. Venning's death, the Post Office portion was detached from the residence and sold to Mr. J. C. Jenkins who moved it to his farm for use as an implement shed. It blew down during a severe wind storm.

Mail was dispatched and received twice daily. It was taken to the C.P.R. station around noon and again about 3:30 p.m. Mr. John Charles had this contract but the driver was usually Mr. Johnnie Byrne with a two-seated carriage. He also conveyed passengers to and from the station.

Aylmer Post Office was being remodelled and lock Post Office boxes were for sale. Mr. Venning bought these and erected them in his office replacing glass fronted wooden ones in use. Now people could have a key for these modern metal boxes and come in and get their mail themselves by paying twenty-five cents per year rental--one dollar for large ones.

In the winter of 1914 a bad snow storm took place. It took all day for snow plows to clear the railway tracks. The postmaster could not leave until the mail arrived from the train. That night it was two a.m. when Wesley and Nellie arrived home.

After the boys went overseas in World War I the mail increased enormously. During war years the Christmas season became very busy and extra help was required. Some days the office was so filled with Christmas boxes, there was not standing room for the sorters. All letters at that time also had to be back stamped by hand with the date stamp which slowed up the process of sorting. Fortunately, this has been discontinued.

When Nellie left in 1915 to attend Normal School, her younger sister, Leda, now Mrs. J. C. Jenkins was sworn in as assistant and so continued until her marriage.

Mr. Venning then engaged another Nellie Venning, a daughter of Mr. Andrew Venning and a distant cousin as assistant. Nellie continued until Mr. Venning's death in 1939. She carried on alone for some little time until Mr. Harold Archer was appointed in 1940.

Mr. Archer opened an office in his residence on the hill. Mrs. Norma Cornish and Mrs. Elsie Collard became assistants. The railway discontinued carrying mail and it was brought in by truck twice daily.



WAR :

HISTORIES :