

## *Upcoming Events*

### **Toronto's French Presence - almost 400 years**

Join us on **September 23, 2008** at LAMP, 185 Fifth Street at 7:00 PM for a presentation by Lisset Mallet of the Société d'histoire de Toronto. She will be speaking on the almost 400 years of French presence in Toronto and the society's proposal for a historical park on the Humber River. This will also be our Annual General Meeting which postponed from earlier in the year.

### **William Lyon Mackenzie, Toronto's First Mayor**

Join us on **December 2, 2008** at LAMP, 185 Fifth Street at 7:00 PM. Our guest speaker will be John Sewell who will tell us more about this fascinating individual – Toronto's first Mayor - based on the research for this book *Mackenzie: A Political Biography of William Lyon Mackenzie*, published in 2002.

### **Oldest Continually-Operated Plant Boxer Came To New Toronto in 1908**

The oldest continually-operated plant in New Toronto, the Boxer Division of Canadian Wallpapers Manufacturers Limited, was founded by

years before electricity, water, sewage systems and sidewalks were installed in the town.

The buildings which housed the early Boxer plant were erected in 1897, the year New Toronto was incorporated as a town [this is a mistake as New Toronto did not become a village until 1913 and a town until 1923]. The site was shared by a tinware factory, a silk factory and a portion of the Pease Foundry. In 1903 the Menzie firm opened wallpaper manufacturing operations in the building. This firm failed, and the holdings were sold to the Reg. N. Boxer Co. Ltd.

Then 100,000 square feet, the plant has since undergone two expansion programs the first in 1923 when factory area was added and again in 1936 when a new and enlarged warehouse was added. Today, the plant covers an area of 296,000 square feet.

When the Boxer Division commenced operations in 1908, the employees numbered about 75. Today the payroll reaches as high as 250 persons several of whom joined the firm before or during the year 1920. They include Richard Kettlewell, Reuben Gregory, Percy Ansell, George Brandon, Sidney Crothall, Herbert Turner, Cliff Schram and Ross Wylie. Dean of all the employees is Leslie Barrett.

His service record dates back to March 9, 1908, the year the plant opened.

A staff member of the Boxer firm since 1909, Lewis K. Redman, vice-president of Canadian Wallpaper Manufacturers Limited and director of the Boxer Division in New Toronto.

Manufacturing wallpaper in the days when electricity was supplied by small dynamos was a tricky proposition, according to Mr. Redman. The machinery was operated by steam and due to lack of sufficient illumination; matching wallpaper was a tedious and often painful process. When electrical power came to New Toronto in February 1914, "matching" was no longer a major problem.

Machinery in the Boxer Division, pioneers in wallpaper manufacturing, is much the same today as in years past although major changes in the paper itself began in 1922 when the width increased from 18 to 22 inches.

Semi-trimmed papers were introduced in 1925 and light-fast or Sunworthy wallpapers a few years later.

Following World War II, washable and plastic-coated papers were produced and semi-trimmed papers, manufactured under a Canadian patent, were further improved by the introduction of precision-trimming in 1950.

Perhaps the most revolutionary change in wallpaper was made this Fall with the emergence of pre-pasted paper on the consumer market. "This is the first major change in applying wallpaper since it was first introduced in Europe in the 1500's", states Mr. Redman.

It took four years to develop pre-pasted wallpaper. Experts within the plant experimented with and tested various types of paper for durable wet tensile strength and pastes which would give good adhesion to any type of surface, "slip" easily on the walls to allow time for matching patterns and still have good resistance to humidity and temperature change.

As changes occur in the product, new machinery is designed within the plant to produce the new features. For example, one of the outstanding problems in producing pre-pasted wallpaper was obtaining machinery which would distribute the dry paste evenly over the printed wallpaper. A special chamber, controlled by air pressure, was designed so that a uniform and predetermined layer of paste is distributed on the back of the paper. As the paper leaves this chamber it is "smoothed out" by a fine spray of water.

With the paper already pasted, a carton of water, a pair of scissors and a sponge are all the "tools" necessary for applying the paper. Any mistakes in matching or wrinkles that creep in are

remedied by merely pulling the paper off the wall and applying it again.

In factory tests, strips were applied to a wall, pulled off, crumpled in a ball and then put back on the wall, with a smooth, professional appearance. Even the occasional air bubble caused no concern as drying pulls the paper flat against the wall.

Dealers and manufacturers claim a housewife won't even have to wear an apron to wallpaper a room using the new pre-pasted papers.

A far-cry from the early days of wallpaper manufacturing when up to 12 different colors were used in one pattern, are the subdued tones of between five and six colors in today's wallpapers. Simplicity in patterns and a greater use of sketchy, more airy designs, abstracts, geometrics and diminutives mark the trends dictated by 20<sup>th</sup> century housewives.

*The Advertiser, November 10, 1955.*

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