

## CAMPBELL COLLECTION

### **A Word of Introduction...**

From Dean Robinson, Project Co-ordinator

Frank Adair [Baldy] Campbell (1903-1974) was a community leader in Mitchell in every sense of the designation. A jovial man with a ready smile, he inspired by example, whether by running a successful insurance agency, by chairing a town-wide fundraising or reunion committee, or advancing the affairs of the municipality from his position as councillor or mayor. In addition, he amassed in the basement of his insurance business a collection of photographs and documents that chronicle a lot of what Mitchell looked like and what went on in the town from the late 1800s through the 1960s. In the days before there was a branch of the Stratford-Perth Archives in Mitchell, the basement of the Campbell Insurance offices became a repository for photos and assorted other materials related to the history of Mitchell...

All the while, F. Adair made the collection available to anyone in need of a photo, or one of the many documents he had acquired. Some were loaned to help celebrate church anniversaries, or school reunions, or old-home week celebrations. Many were returned as promised, but not all, so the scrapbooks developed gaping holes.

Regardless, public access to the materials was more important to F. Adair than keeping the collection in pristine condition. It was a sentiment that passed effortlessly to his son Frank Alexander Campbell (1932-2007), to whom stewardship of the collection fell upon F. Adair's death. By then, much of the "gathering" had ended, but not the lending. The collection remained as popular as ever, and Frank was just as generous as his father in keeping it accessible. All the while, however, he was not without worry about its safekeeping.

In 1999, when the town celebrated another homecoming, the organizing committee recognized the contribution of the Campbells for collecting and making available their photographs. Frank was presented with a bronze plaque that has been affixed to the exterior of the insurance office.

At the same time, there was talk of preserving in a permanent way the contents of the Campbells' collection. In 2008 that talk turned to action. With monies from the Township of West Perth and the Stratford-Perth Archives, and the blessing of Frank's son, the late Alan Campbell, a decision was made to digitize the photos and make them available to the public through the archives.

As someone who had accessed the collection many times through the years, it fell to me to disassemble the scrapbooks, sort through and categorize the photos, and to each attach information in terms of time, place and contents. Help in that regard came from scores of people, some of them drawn to the task by Andy Bader's inclusion of a number of the photos on the pages of the Mitchell Advocate. I am grateful to all who provided information. It fell to Peter and Kathleen Schlemmer of Wellesley to scan the photos - more than 1,000 of them, and store their images on digital video discs (DVDs). They also produced five binders containing hard copies of the photos. While an effort was made to furnish as many facts as possible for each

photo, in some cases the information is scant. It is hoped that as members of the public access the collection they will be able to provide more details.

The photographs have been sorted into subject categories and scanned as PDFs (see below) and TIFFs. The entire collection is available electronically at the Archives. For those who prefer a more traditional interface, the images and the research notes that Dean Robinson has prepared for each one have been printed out and put into binders also available for research.