

# The History of D.A. Williamson & Sons



**Built in 1921; Photo circa 1948**



**Photo taken in 2005**

David Williamson was born March 13, 1880 in Ayr, Ontario, the third son of David and Sarah (Lynch) Williamson. He came to Manitoulin at the age of 7 months with his parents and his two older brothers, James and William. He was raised on the family farm on Lake Mindemoya, along with his eight brothers and two sisters. He married Jessie Mae Ferguson on November 7, 1917, in Mindemoya. They had five children: Alden (Si), Lorna Geraldine, Anita, David (Bus), and Eloween.

David, or 'Davy' as he was called, started his hardware business in 1921 and called it the D.A. Williamson Store. David Williamson actually only had one name, as many people did at that time. He chose to add the letter "A" to his name when he opened the store, as he thought it sounded and looked better to have the two initials, D.A.

He sold many wood heating stoves called box stoves and many wood heating cook stoves, as well as many washing machines and a general type of hardware. He also did eaves-troughing and installed lightning rods on barns and houses in many parts of the Island.

Davy had a good hardware business and was handy at doing small repair jobs. He even put soles on peoples shoes. His wife Jessie Mae died November 4, 1942. A grocery section was added after the war, in approximately 1948. At that time his son, Bus, had returned from the War Services, and he worked with his Dad in the store. David Orion Williamson was his real name, but everyone knew him by his nickname, "Bus".

Bus married Doris Hutchinson, daughter of Elias & Grace (Mitchell) Hutchinson, on May 16, 1953 and Davy lived with them for the rest of his life. Davy passed away in 1967 at the age of 87. He had been active in the store until the last years. From about 1956 until 1973, Williamson's sold all kinds of appliances, electric stoves, wringer washers, Hoover washers, automatic washing machines, freezers, fridges, etc. and Bus serviced them all.

Business was good. The hardware store was expanded to include another 25 ft. x 50 ft. area and was fully stocked by December 1971.

Unfortunately, Bus died on December 12, 1971, before the official opening of the new section. Since then, Doris and her two sons, Blaine and Barry, along with their other employees, carried on the business. Doris passed away October 28, 2006.

About three years after Bus passed away, they discontinued selling all appliances. The business has continued to expand. The "Up Top Sports Shop" was build over the new hardware part in 1981. In 1988, a 50 ft. x 70 ft. addition was built on the back of the main floor for more hardware and the same size was built over top for more "Up Top Sports". This addition was completed in 1989.

Groceries were also sold at the store for approximately 50 years but were discontinued in 2000.

Doris' philosophy, which came from her father-in-law and husband, was to carry "everyday things that people need". If people came in wanting an item that they do not have, they will try to get it for them.

Doris said, "With our good customers and out wonderful help, we are still carrying on with the business".

Note: It is interesting to note that salesmen who travelled the Manitoulin area said that it seemed like they couldn't get away from the Williamsons. Everywhere they went they ran into a Williamson, or a relative of the Williamsons, who operated a store business. For example:

1. Stuart McPhee, who married Davy's youngest sister, Elizabeth (Lizzie) had the Manitowaning General Store
2. Joe Ward, who married Davy's other sister, Molly, had the Tehkummah General Store
3. Austin Hunt, who married Anita Williamson, daughter of Davy, had Hunt's Store in Kagawong

4. Andy Watson, who married Dot Williamson, a niece of Molly, Lizzie, and Davy, had the Sandfield General Store
5. Lester Williamson, a nephew of Molly, Lizzie, and Davy, and who married Rhea Watson (sister of Andy), had the White Fish General Store
6. Allan Little, who married Marguerite, daughter of Joe and Molly Ward, had a store in Little Current
7. Tommy Dunn, who married Elda Williamson, niece of Molly, Lizzie, and Davy, had the hardware store in Little Current.

Williamsons continues to be a thriving business in downtown Mindemoya. People are always surprised at the variety of items that are carried in their store. “You can likely get it at Williamson’s” seems to be the general comment.

Written by Doris Hutchinson Williamson and Pat (Williamson) Costigan in August 2005.

Blaine and Barry have continued to carry on the family business ever since. All four of their daughters, Brittany, Jade, Jenna, and Nikki Williamson, also work there. Because of this, some say that the business is going to have to be renamed to ‘D.A. Williamson & Daughters.’

**Celebrating 90 Years**