

Life and times

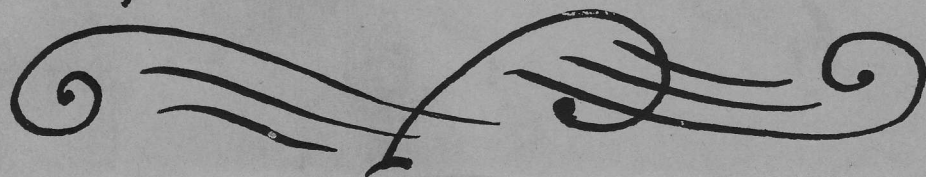
of

James Palmer Kirkwood

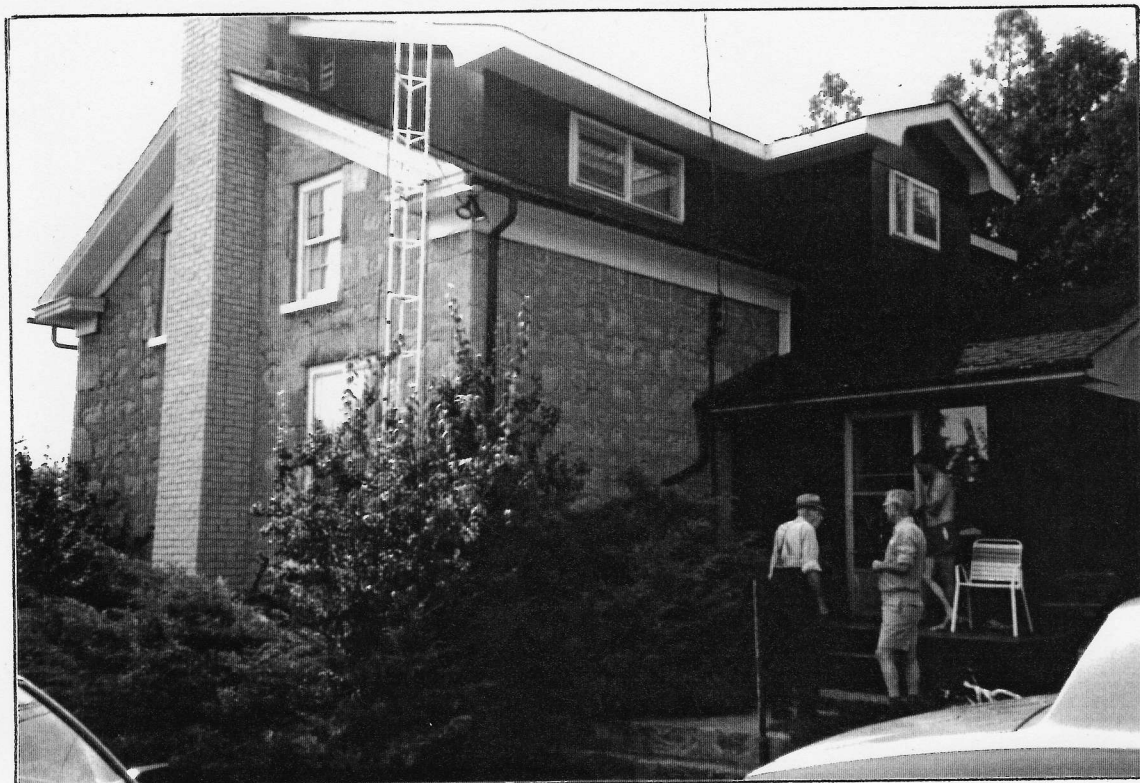
born September 28, 1900

produced for celebration of 90 years

Brampton: September 9, 1990



James Palmer Kirkwood was born on September 28, in the first year of this century, 1900, on the family farm, lot 5, 10th line, Erin Township, Wellington County, Ontario. He was the third son of William Kirkwood and Mary McKay, born after Oliver (1896), and William (1898), and to be followed by Donald (1904). He assumes he was born in the family farm house, as most babies were at that time, though he wasn't himself in a good position to observe this historical event!

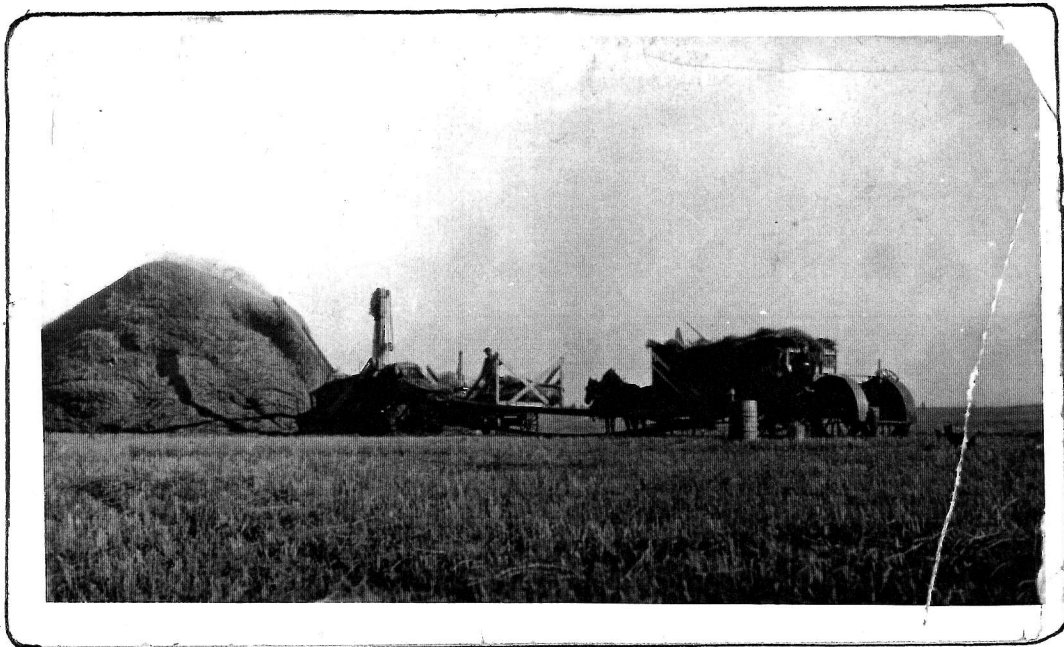


The Kirkwood "homestead" as it appears August 1990. Jim and Jim Jr. talk to the present owner Tim Lawrence



Jim's parents, William and Mary Kirkwood on the right, at the time of Donald's wedding to Kathleen Young (her parents on left)

He went to the neighbourhood school which was very close by on the opposite side of the 10th line and just north of the Concession line. He says himself he was 'not overly smart' and hated school. He completed primary education (Senior 4th as it was then or Grade 8 to-day) and passed his entrance exam for High School, but didn't want to go on.



Old style "stook threshing"

So in 1914 he began to 'work out' and to bring income into the family. His first job was helping with the fall plowing for Frank Wigglesworth. In 1915 he worked for Dan Campbell during haying and harvest. From there he went to Jack McLean's. Since that was a terribly wet year part of his job was carrying stooks out of the water in the lower spots and setting them out to dry on higher ground. Everyone thought that when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and when the minister asked God to bring dry weather that the rain would stop but it didn't! Dave McNally said when he was operating his thrashing machine at Sinclair's farm that "He had never thrashed such damn dung as this year". Still enough harvest was gathered for people and animals to scrape through the winter.

Bill was the brother who worked at home on the farm. Oliver had gone to Georgetown to work in Creelman's machine shop, and one year later Jim followed him there. The work was drilling and lathing, the product was knitting machines which produced socks in knitting mills such as Beaumonts' in Glen Williams. Large cylinder blocks were drilled and a series of 24 needles were inserted which went in and out to 'knit' the sock. The wages were 10 cents per hour for a 59 hour week, and out of this he had to pay \$4.50 per week for room and board.



On Saturday the factory closed an hour early at five o'clock, and he would walk 'home' to Sandy McKay's farm on the 8th line of Esquesing township for the week-end. The extra hour off on Saturday felt like getting out of jail a year early!



Sandy McKay's barn as it appears August 1990.  
Now part of Silvercreek Recreation area.

Because Bill was there to work at home on the farm, and his maternal uncle Sandy needed help he spent a lot of time at that farm, especially for the heavy work of haying and harvest. He remembers with affection his Aunt Kate who lived with her brother Sandy. Though Oliver was drafted into the army during the first world war, Jim was just too young for the service, which indeed pleased him as he wanted nothing of army life. (In fact he was later too old for the second war, as well as being the sole operator of an important business by that time.)



Sandy and Kate in later life at their Silvercreek home, with George and Kathy McMenemy



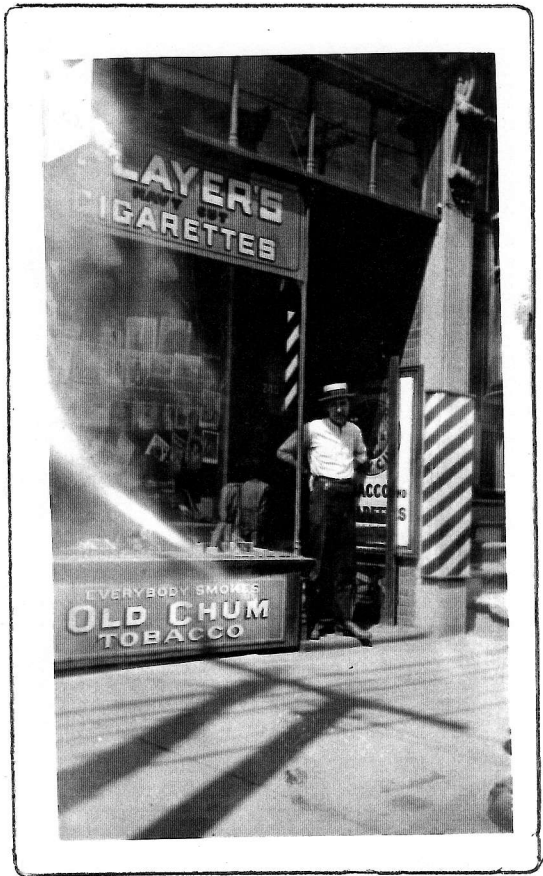


In 1919, Jim went west with his brother Bill on the 'Harvest Excursion'. They worked with McKay relatives near Portage la Prairie, Bill working for Hector and Jim for Bob McKay in the fall, after working for a family named 'Stanger' in the summer. In 1920 he went out again to Bob McKay's for the summer, and spent the fall and winter with Scotty McKay working in his coal and wood business in Portage La Prairie itself. In 1921 he worked with Alex McKay and learned the rudiments of carpentry and enjoyed 'the McKay connection' very much, and has kept in touch ever since. Later he went out for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of their arrival in the region.

← Bill (left) and Jim Kirkwood  
Photo taken about 1921

McKays of Portage →  
Bob, Hector, Alex  
and Will (rear)  
Tena, Liza, Kate  
and Jessie (front)





Coming back from the west, he used his new-found skills to work as a carpenter in Toronto doing part-time work wherever he could find it. The pay was good (more than his brother Oliver was making as a machinist) even if he did not have all that much experience. However there was no certainty of work or security, so he decided to take the money he had saved and rent a tobacco store at the corner of Broadview and Dundas in a building owned by the Home Bank.

← Jim in doorway of tobacco store at Broadview and Dundas in Toronto about 1923. Was he his own best customer?

Most will know about Jim's great skills at saving money. His motto: "It's not what you make but what you don't spend that counts". Nor was he ever afraid to start something new, and about store-keeping he knew nothing, and had no one to give him advice. He just tried to stock what people wanted, and to avoid dead stock. (Unsold magazines could be returned, but unsold newspapers were just a loss.) Of course the travelling salesman would tell him that everything of theirs was selling well, but he soon learned by experience.

In the next room there was a barber shop owned by Bob Town, and he would 'keep an eye on the store' while Jim would rush down to the restaurant on Queen St. and get a bite of lunch. Jim had been living in a single room over his store, but later Bob and his family came to rent in the building, and Jim could rent space with them and get his board as well. (Being a bachelor cook has never been one of his goals in life, in fact he hates it though he can do it!)

The Home bank was directed by a man name Frost, and Board members included Gough (of Sellers, Gough), and Russell. Jim did not think much of their business ethics as he came to learn of them. Sometimes they would put two mortgages on the same building. Still he was completely surprised one morning to see a line of people outside the bank wanting to withdraw their money! They never succeeded, for the bank had gone

bankrupt, and his friend Jack Leighton the manager became unemployed. (The demand for bank managers was not great as the country headed into the depression, and Leighton ended up selling dental supplies.) In the end the Government paid about 35 cents on the dollar, but in the meantime, without capital, Jim headed back to farming life.



The Home Bank appears to-day as the Dennis House Tavern. The entrance on the right was the tobacco shop.

It was an ill wind that did not blow some good, for he found a farm to rent next to Sandy McKay's on the ninth line and he also married the farmer's daughter, Mildred Frieda McMenemy. They were married on March 18, 1925 in the Presbyterian Church in Ballinacree, by Rev. Waddell.

Wedding Day for Jim and → Millie, March 18, 1925 with Donald Kirkwood (best man) and Ada McMenemy (brides maid) at the McMenemy farm. Ada later married Gear Sinclair.





Jim Kirkwood's and Millie McMenemy's Wedding  
 Reception at McMenemy's farm, 9th line



Back row: (left to right) Archie McKay, George McMenemy (Millie's father), ? , ? , Grandma McMenemy, Earl McKay, Rev. Waddell, ? , Donald Kirkwood, Bill Kirkwood, ? , James Palmer Kirkwood, Mildred Freda McMenemy, Ada McMenemy, Mary McKay Kirkwood (Grandma), Dave McEnery, William Kirkwood, Kate McKay, Bert McMenemy, Sandy McKay, ? , Kate Sinclair

Front row: Donald McKay, Renee and Norma McKecknie, and a "home girl" from England.



George (and left)  
and Wilhelmina  
(right) (Felker) McMenemy  
with Mr. and Mrs.  
Bill Felker

They rented the farm of 125 acres from Millie's parents George and Wilhelmina for three years, renting some machinery and sharing others with George. When the 3 year lease was up, the farm was needed for his brother-in-law Bert, and there were no others to rent, and he had not enough to buy a farm, so he decided to go back to store-keeping. He bought the business in the Ballinafad General store from Graham Farnell's father, paying him mostly in notes for the business and the stock. The building was rented from Lizzie Sinclair and her sister, and the young couple lived upstairs.



Ballinafad General store, August 1990.  
Owned by Jim and Millie Kirkwood 1927-1936



In 1933 the two big events were the birth of James Jr. ... and the decision to build a grist mill in the village. Jim saw farmers driving by, often with team and wagon or sleigh to take their grain to be ground in Erin, Acton, or Georgetown, each six miles away, and thought how much easier it would be for them to have it ground into feed closer to home. Though the country was now in the middle of the depression, he borrowed money from his Uncle Sandy and D.J. Sinclair to go with money he had. He did most of the carpentry, getting a millwright to install the machinery. Through this business he became well known and appreciated by the farmers of the Ballinafad area. For three years he owned both the mill and the store but sold the store to Mr. Merriam in 1936 when the mill was well established.

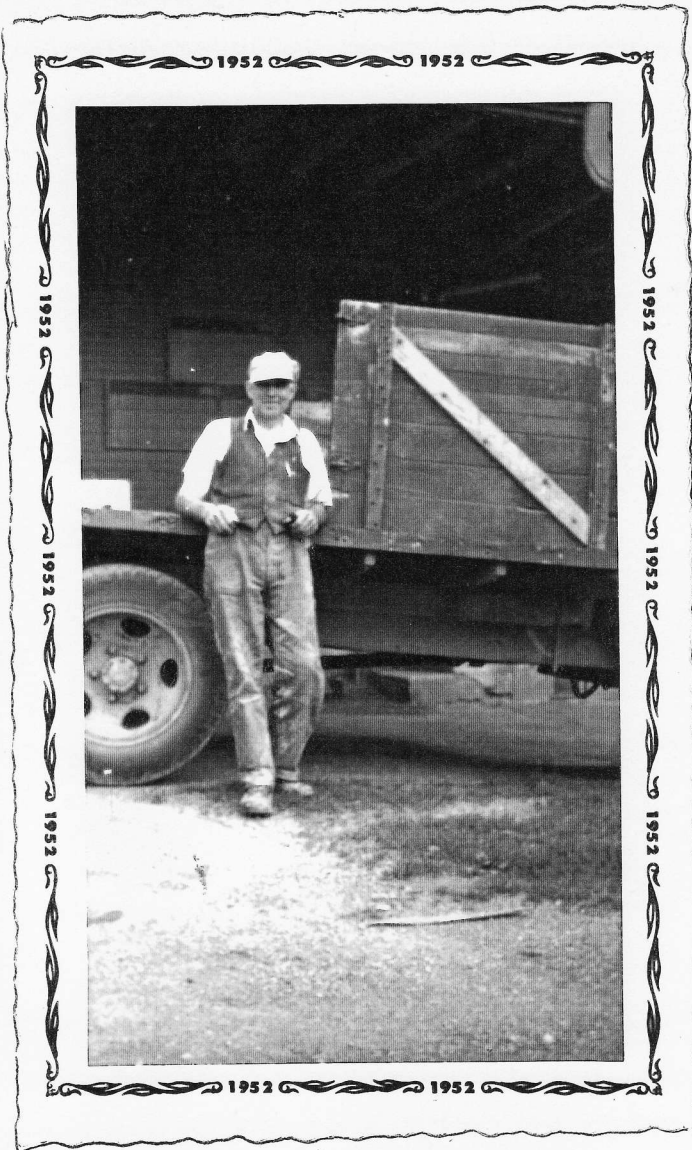


James Alexander Kirkwood, born Jan. 14, 1933



J.P. Kirkwood Grist Mill and Seed Cleaning plant still running today.





← Jim beside his delivery truck - the "Rio Speed wago"

2 storey home →  
built by Jim in 1936.



The family moved into space in a house owned by Annie Shortill until in 1939 he built the family a house beside the mill. He did all the building work except the cabinets, hiring Norm Ward, from Portage, to run the mill while he built the house.

In 1941, Shirley Maud Kirkwood was born, named after a neighbour Maud Young.



Shirley and Jimmy <sup>↑</sup>

Jimmy and his wife  
Marion at first  
parish, Marsden, Sask.  
in 1957 →



Maud Young and her mother  
with Shirley.



In the 50's it became clear, and indeed very disappointing to Jim, that son Jimmy was not going to take over the family business. (Jimmy had decided to enter the ministry, and was ordained in 1957.) So in 1956 Jim decided to sell out the business to John Black of Fergus. In that same year, Jim and Milly drove west to Stone, Sask. to visit Jimmy on his summer mission field, and drove through the Rockies with him. On their return the three stopped to visit the McKay connection in Portage, where they had dropped off Sandy on the way out.

Under strong pressure from Mildred, Jim agreed reluctantly to move to Georgetown at New Years time of 1957. They purchased a house at 4 Pauline St, in a subdivision named after Tyers (Pauline was Tyer's daughter). He returned to work as a carpenter to keep money coming in, and invested proceeds from the sale of the mill and house in the 'Fad, while paying off the government mortgage on the new house. He got lots of business, he says, because he was the cheapest carpenter available and willing to do roofing. He also installed a machine in his basement for custom sharpening of saws.



At 4 Pauline St. Georgetown, late 50's.  
Jim, Jim Jr., Marion (in front) Shirley, Paul Kirkwood, Millie

In fact in all his time as a businessman he was never really profit-oriented: it's a wonder he succeeded so well but his old motto was his key to success. Though he knew how to save, he was generous to people in need, and often helped out with credit for farmers who were up against it during the depression years. He tells the story of Nick Smudsky, a Polish immigrant farmer during those years, who found on Saturday night that there was neither food nor money in the house. He said to his wife that he was going to Ballinafad to the store because he had heard that the storekeeper there might give food on credit. He told his tale to Jim and received the credit, paid back later and refused to shop anywhere else from then on.

For several years Jim worked with his cousin Ken Kirkwood on the RR#1 Georgetown mail route, serving the 7th, and 8th lines of Esquesing from Georgetown north to the Halton-Wellington County line, including the Balinafad Post Office. He can still tell you a lot of information about most of the families on that route. In Georgetown as in the 'Fad, he cultivated a garden - a habit he has kept until now, though space has reduced his production to a few tomatoes.



On March 18, 1975, Jim and Milly celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, with his brother Donald and her sister Ada who had stood up with them at the wedding 50 years before.

18 - The Independent, Georgetown, Wed., March 19, 1975



MR. AND MRS. J. P. KIRKWOOD at their golden wedding celebration.

## Kirkwoods celebrate golden anniversary

Fifty years ago on March 18, 1925, Mr. and Mrs. James P. Kirkwood were married in Ballinafad United Church, by Rev. N. Waddell.

On Saturday, friends and relatives gathered in Masonic Temple, Georgetown to honor the couple on their golden wedding anniversary.

Mrs. Kirkwood, the former Mildren McMenemy was born in Glen Williams and her husband James was born in Erin.

Following their marriage

the couple farmed at Lot 32, Ninth Line, Esquesing, but two years later in 1927 bought the Ballinafad General Store.

The Kirkwoods operated the store for nine years, and during that time, in 1931, built the grist mill in Ballinafad, which they ran until 1956.

After selling the mill they moved to their present home on Pauline Avenue, Georgetown.

Mr. and Mrs. Kirkwood have two children, Rev. James A. Kirkwood of

Lusaka, Zambia, and Shirley Mrs. Gerald Funk of Brampton, and six grandchildren, Stephen and Pamela Funk, and Paul, James, Joy, and Kenneth Kirkwood.

Surrounded by congratulatory cards, and messages from Governor General Jules Legere and M.P. Frank Philbrook, the couple welcomed guests from Erin, Ballinafad, Brampton, Georgetown, Acton and Toronto.

Very Serious Event!

Unfortunately, Milly died a few months later in hospital from internal bleeding. For the next two years Jim lived alone although he didn't enjoy it much. In 1977 he had a serious gall bladder operation and was invited to move in with Shirley and her husband Gerry Funk. He had a big room and basement built on the back of their house at 16 Greystone Crescent in Brampton where he still resides to-day.



Jim Jr's Family, Christmas 1989

Backrow: Larry Lazazzera with daughter Laurena,  
Ken, Jim Jr., Joy

Front row: Jane Kirkwood-Lazazzera, Marion, Paul.

He follows with interest the progress of his seven grandchildren, Stephen, Pamela and Michael Funk, and Paul, Jane, Joy and Kenneth Kirkwood.

Shirley's family at Stephen's wedding, August 1989



Stephen, Lori, Pam, Michael



Gerry Funk

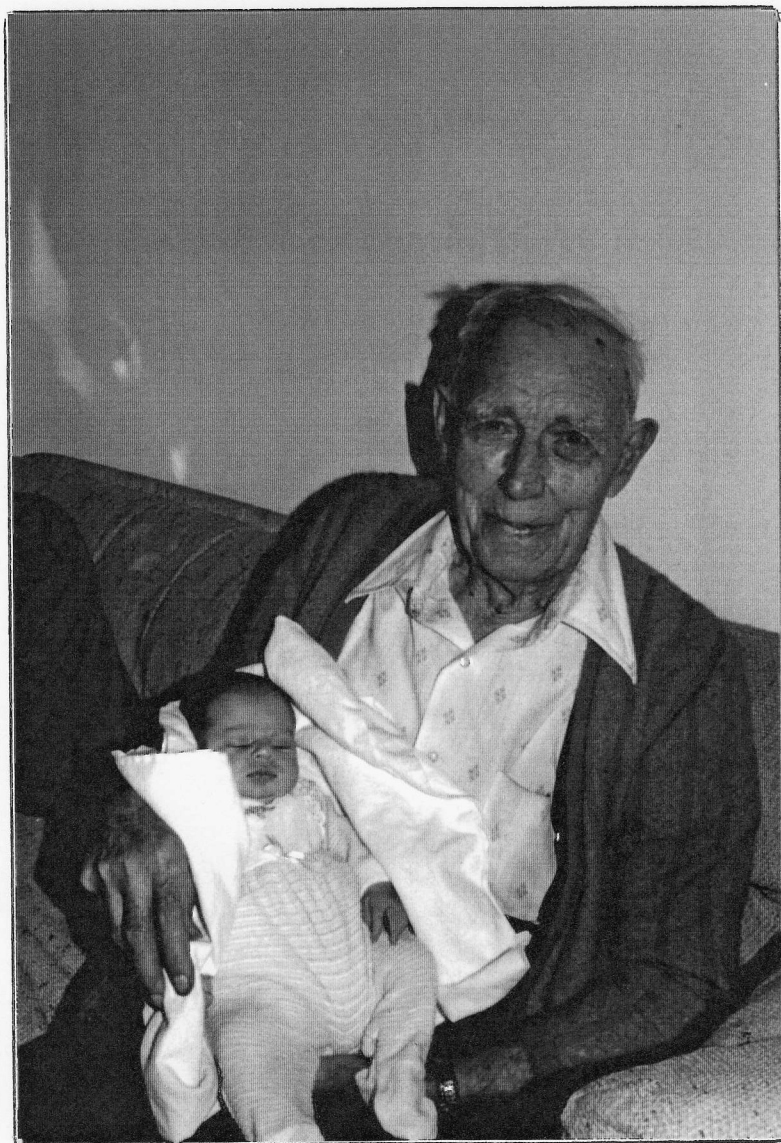


Jim

Shirley



Also he welcomed the arrival on Oct. 17, 1989 of the first of the next generation, Laurena Lilian Lazazzera, born to Jane Kirkwood and Larry Lazazzera. And so he remains as interested in the future of the clan as he has in its past!



Jim, age 89, with Laurena Lilian  
Lazazzera, aged 12 days  
Photo taken Oct. 29, 1989

During his life-time he had an abiding interest in sports. He played right field for the 9th line team and for the 'Fad teams. They started out playing hardball, but switched to softball when it was introduced by Eddie Oldham into the area. He also seemed to end up being the unofficial manager for the teams, organizing and arranging games. They played wherever they could find a field, after the hay was off. He also liked hockey but never had anywhere to play except frozen ponds.



The Ballinafad Ball Team  
 back: Dick Shortill, Walter Kentner, Herb Allan, Fred Shortill, Bob Shortill  
 front: Jim Kirkwood, unknown, Jack Cole

He spearheaded a community attempt to scrape out a rink in the Fad between our house and the creek, which was to be used for flooding. It proved impossible to hold the water in the rink long enough for it to freeze hard. When he was ready to pass over ball glove and skates, he found Jimmy very ready to take over, and he followed with interest the exploits of Ballinafad teams in places like Erin and Hillsburgh and farther afield.



It seems the Sports network TSN was invented just for him and he never misses hockey, Blue Jays or football. It was quite a struggle for him to pay the extra rental on it, but he screwed up his courage and paid for it, (Shirley got it in for him when it first came), only to find to his dismay that one payment wasn't enough, you had to pay every month!

←  
 Jim and Millie  
 on Roger's Pond



He was always an avid hunter and fisherman. There are many tales to be told of hunting expeditions around the 'Fad for fox and rabbit in winter and ground hogs in summer. He later bought a small boat and trailer to go fishing to Rice Lake or other places.

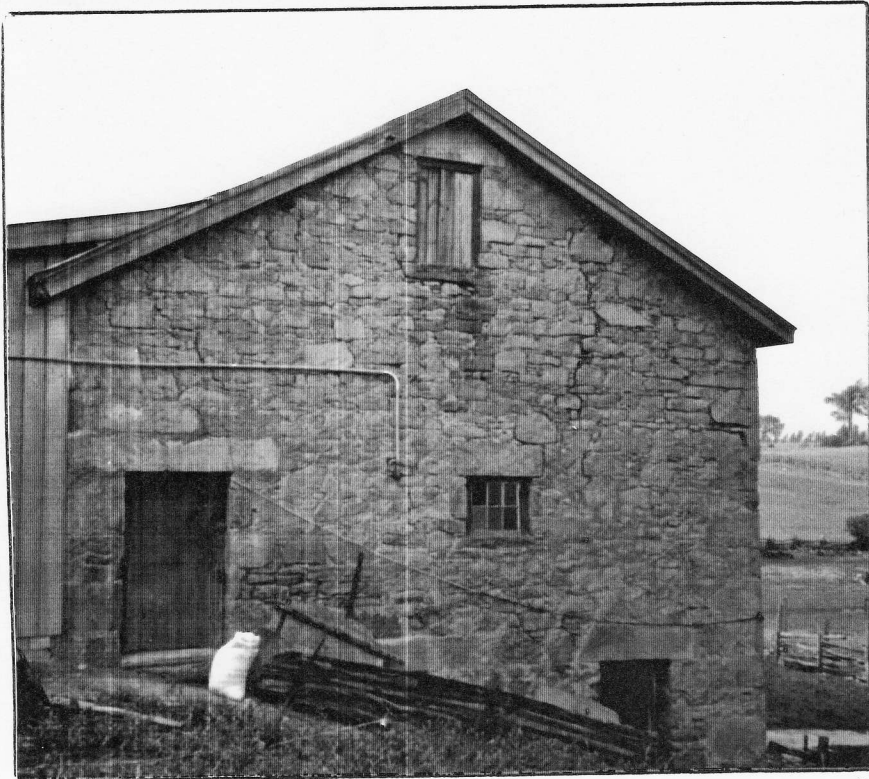
Jim with 2 pickerel at Jumping Cariboo lake, North Bay

Jim was always conscious of his Scottish heritage and culture. He read what he could of the history of the Kirkwoods and the McKays back to the time his direct ancestors left Scotland, William Kirkwood and Mary MacDonald in 1832, and Donald McKay and Jessie Coubrough in 1865. He has written down his recollection of the family chronology from then to now!



Jim and Jim Jr. in Aug. 1990, at the tombstone of his great-great grandfather William Kirkwood in Melville church cemetery. William came to Canada with his wife Mary in 1820, and settled at Rockside. Her stone is just off to the right. The second stone here is in memory of their daughter Ann.





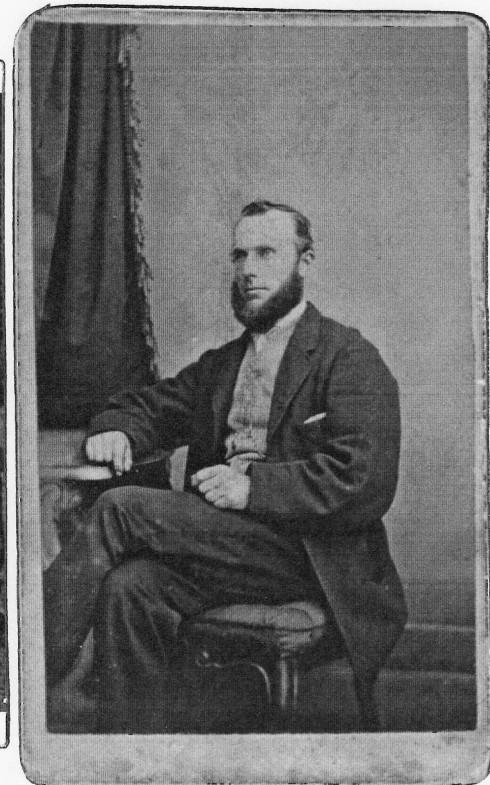
End wall of original William Kirkwood homestead barn, still used today as barn by Westerveld family.



Jessie Coubrough,  
Jim's grandmother

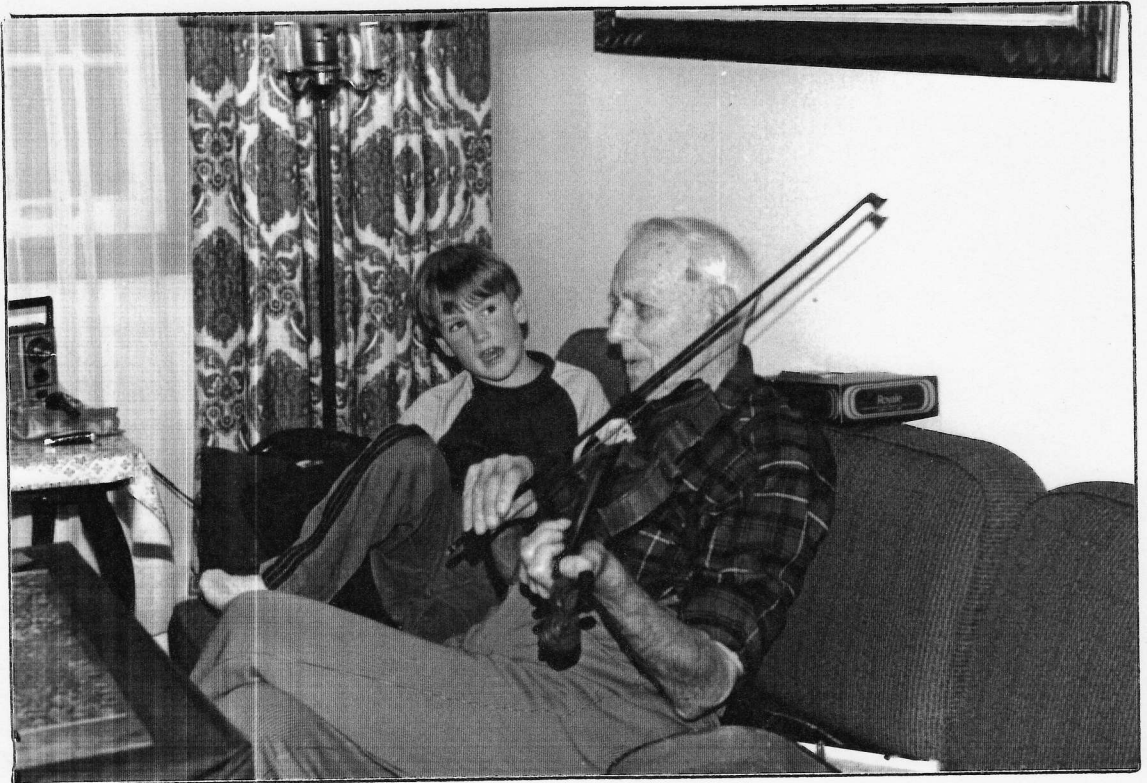


Kirkwood family reunion, late 1940's.



Donald McKay  
Jim's grandfather

He tried to learn to play the fiddle like his Uncle Sandy but discovered later that he was tone deaf and gave it up! He has the gift of humour of the dour Scot; the trick is to make the listener laugh without laughing oneself, and he usually manages the trick very well.

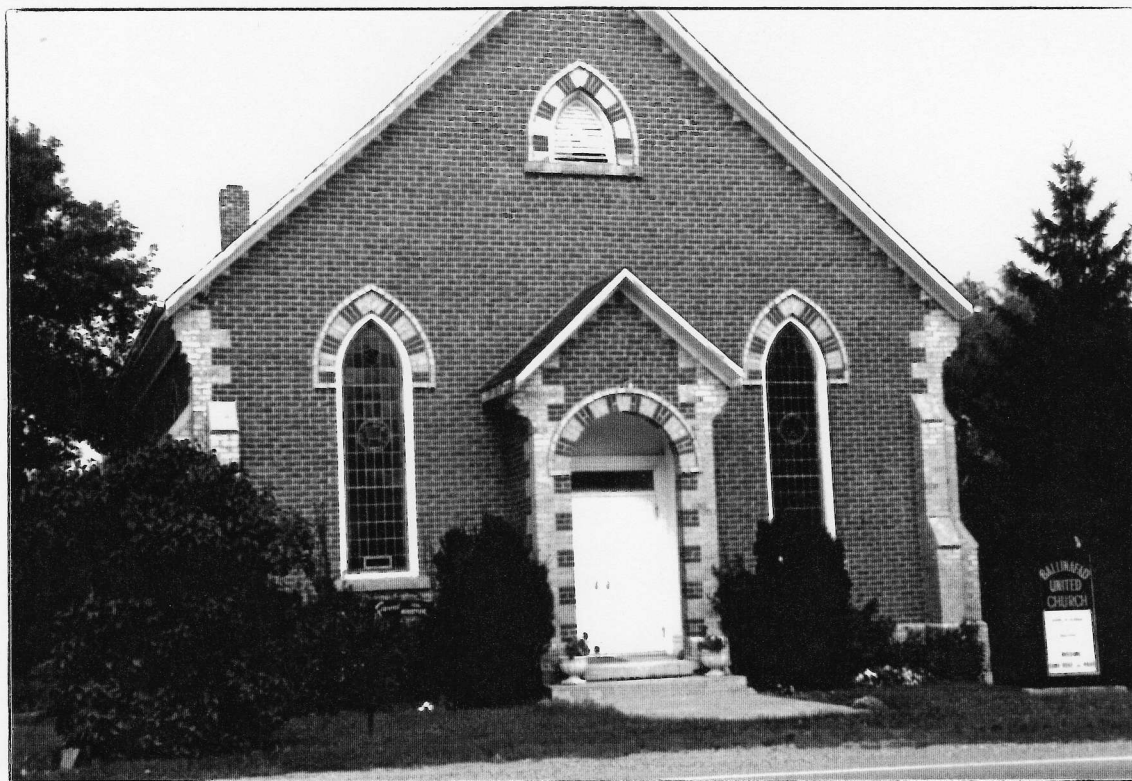


Jim shows his grandson Michael Funk how he used to play the fiddle.

In politics he was an active Liberal most of his life, though it is said he actually once voted NDP in a weak moment. He gets his news from the Toronto Star and Radio station CFRB, and follows closely what is happening in the world.

He took an active interest in education, and served as a school trustee for the Halton School Board for 5 years. He supported the local school S.S.#14, where Shirley and Jimmy went to public school. He remembers the year when Mrs. Herb Allen started her son Freddy who was a year away from being ready to start, so that there would be 7 pupils, because if there were not at least 7 the school had to close. Later the school became crowded and some had to be bussed to Stewarttown. Now of course the school has been closed for many years.

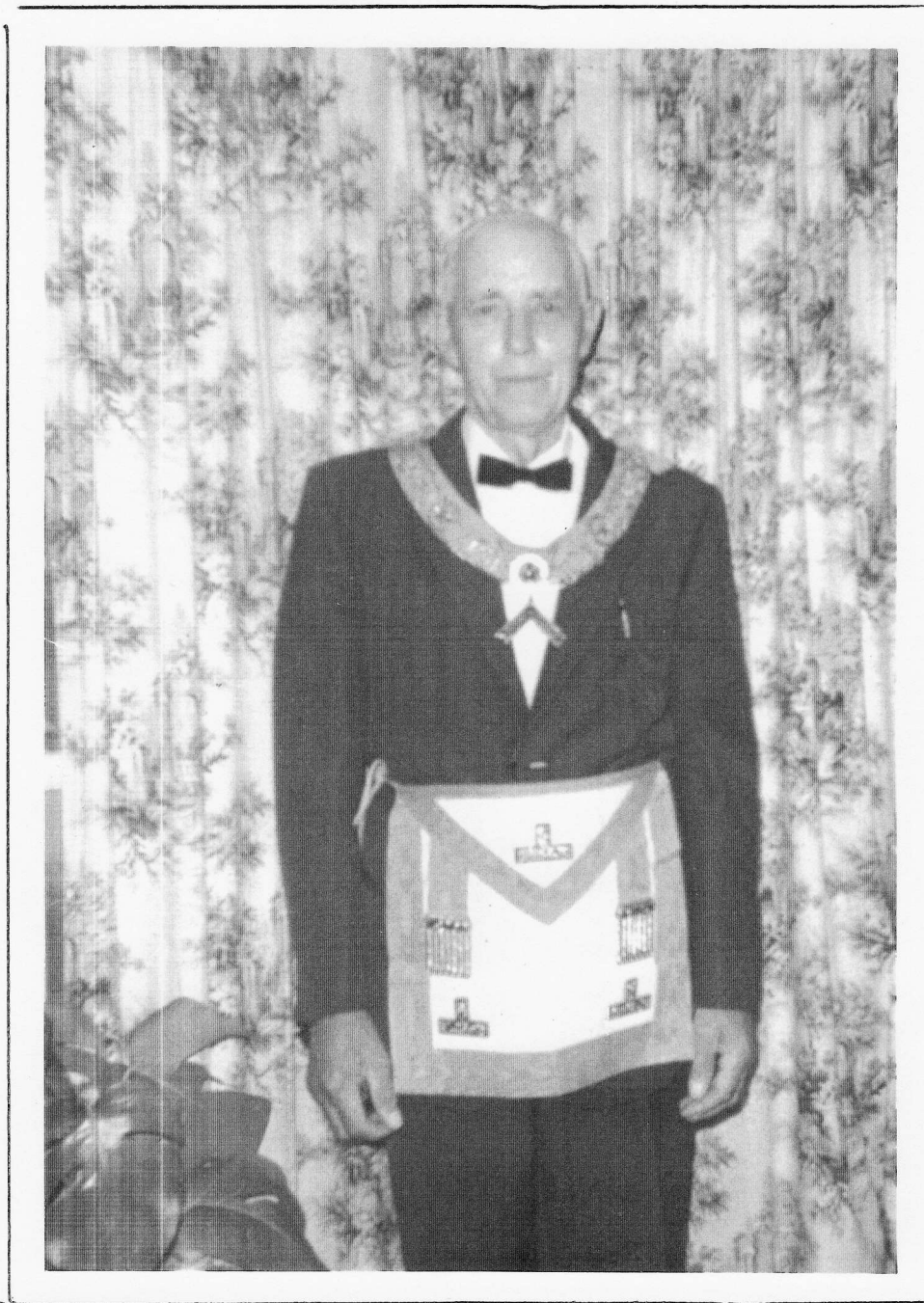
For many years he was an active leader in the United Church at Ballinafad, and still likes to attend anniversary services there, though there are not many of his generation left. At various times he served as steward, elder, trustee, as well as volunteer caretaker, and repairman. Fires had to be lit before 8 in the morning in winter and even the two wood stoves and the long strings of stove pipes could not make it warm by church time at eleven. He was happy to see the many improvements since those days. Perhaps his toughest job was being church treasurer especially during the 30's and the depression. "We were always behind with paying ministers like Rev. Gandier; there wasn't enough money. Even then I had to pay him the nickels and dimes which came in on the collection plate." Then his children would come to the store with the same fistfull of change to buy groceries and it still wasn't enough to pay Jim, just as it wasn't enough to pay Gandier!



Ballinafad United Church, August 1990  
(formerly Presbyterian before 1925.)



He has been an active member of the Masonic order, starting in the Erin Lodge when he became a past Master, and then an honorary life member in Georgetown. He helped to build the lodge at the 7th line and the Highway 7 corner. He still values his membership and his friendships in the order.



Jim in Mason apron and paraphernalia



With Six-horse team, Manitoba, 1920.

In his nine decades he has seen fantastic changes in society, in technology, agriculture, and in the communities he knows which have become mainly dormitory communities for the metro Toronto region. He regrets the almost total lack of food production now in the Ballinafad area, in spite of the greatly increased population. Still, he was never one to be overwhelmed by change: he accepted it and sometimes led it, especially in the little community of Ballinafad where his heart and many of his memories still lie.



Modern tractor in front of barn at Jim's parents' home place, 10th line, August 1990. On the end, notice how the old barn was enlarged by being split in two and a whole new centre section added.

