

The Inventive Mr. Kent



F.A. Kent came to Killarney in 1889. From an early age he demonstrated both a creative and an entrepreneurial turn of mind. While still a boy he had one of the first fret saws in the community, made for him by his grandfather out of a sewing machine. He used it to make and sold picture puzzles, shelves, brackets, cabinets and chairs. He also became interested in making candy, a skill he later turned to good account in his business. He was of an inventive turn of mind, one of his inventions being a glass enclosed rack for holding large spools of lace.

He worked for Angus McQueen for a time before he bought the Bakery and Store. He closed the bakery and started a candy manufacturing plant in the back of the store. "Kent's Corner" was the grocery corner for almost 80 years.



During World War I he attended Flying School in Chicago, and later assembled the first airplane ever seen in Killarney. It was a makeshift construction using a used engine

Over three summers, beginning in 1915, Charles experimented with his creation. It was difficult finding good level places for test flights. He started with taxiing and learning to steer the craft. There were mishaps, one quite serious one when he hit a pothole. Repairs were required. On another occasion one of the wheels came off. He persisted and was able to get off the ground a few times, and practice landing. The real test came and he was 100 feet in the air when the radiator began to boil. He started to turn back, but banked a bit sharply and was forced to attempt a landing on a little knoll. There was damage as the wheel came through the wing, but although Fred was wedged awkwardly into the seat belt he got out unharmed. But there was no doubt...the machine would fly!

W.J. Kellaway, whose pasture he had been using politely asked him to try elsewhere as he was scaring the cows.

Fred moved to the fair grounds and continued his practice. In the winter of 1918 he decided that the ice on the lake would make a nice level practice field.

His efforts continued until engine problems put his experiment to rest.

The J.A.V. David Museum has the wooden rudder from his plane, which was damaged when a wheel came loose and the plane flipped while taxiing. It was ash, planed to the proper size and soaked in a cistern a few days to soften it. The covering for the whole plane was bleached cotton treated with banana oil.





He was a very community minded citizen, and put both his creative mind and energy to tasks that would have a real impact on his home town.

He was one of the founders of the Golf Club and acted as secretary for many years. He also took an active part in establishing the present Fair Grounds and Erin Park and in having waterworks installed in Killarney.

He was responsible for convincing the Provincial Government that Killarney should be the site for the central hospital for the district.

There is no doubt the town wouldn't be the same without him.