

A. L. Kempton

Wagon seats, a hemorrhoid cure, and honing paste for straight razors were several of the products once manufactured in Wawanesa by Alonzo Fowler Kempton. But the enterprising native of Nova Scotia is best known as the founder of one of Canada's largest and most innovative fire and casualty insurance companies.

The Wawanesa Mutual began in 1896, when twenty district farmers met in Wawanesa, and put up \$20 each to launch a company which was prepared to offer low-premium fire insurance on wooden threshing machines. Kempton, whose experience as an insurance salesman had led him to propose the scheme, was elected secretary-treasurer. The farmer directors provided the financial stability that saw the firm through the initial lean years — a link with the past that has been retained. The sleepy village of Wawanesa still boasts the head office, and "The Mutual" continues to recruit officers and directors from the Wawanesa district.

The Wawanesa Mutual's imaginative methods — for instance, an astute decision in 1952 to give old pensioners policy writing positions in the Montreal branch office — may be traced to the flair of its founder. Kempton was fond of whiskey, Turkish cigarettes, oysters, salt cod, automobiles and business sidelines. It is said that he became irascible as time went on, however, his many acts of generosity have not been forgotten.