Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Kent Ontario
containing biographical sketches of prominent and representative citizens and of many of the early settled families
JH Beers & Co., Toronto, 1904 (cont. by Corinne Simser-Wagg)



J. K. MORRIS, postmaster at Blenheim, County of Kent, and a popular and very highly esteemed citizen of that section, was born in the County of Leeds, Ont., July 26, 1832, son of Henry and Elizabeth (Kidd) Morris, both of whom were natives of Ireland.

Henry Morris, the grandfather of J. K., lived out his life in Ireland. He was the father of the following-named children: Henry, John, Elizabeth, Ann and Mary, all of whom came to Ontario with their mother, who later married a Mr. Singleton. They located in the County of Leeds, and there Henry Morris (2), the father of J. K., resided until his death. He was born in 1805, and was eleven years of age when he reached Ontario and settled in the forest in Leeds. His life was one of industry and hard work and he succeeded in clearing a fine farm and placing it under cultivation. He was a man of high morality, a consistent member of the Church of England. In 1824 he married Elizabeth Kidd, a native of Ireland, and a daughter of Joseph Kidd. The Kidd family came from Ireland to Toronto, and Joseph Kidd became the owner of the land on which Yorkville now stands. After selling that property he moved to the locality known as Hog's Hollow, near Toronto, where he died and was buried.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Morris died in their home in the County of Leeds. They had children as follows: Mary Ann, who married Nathan Fennel; J. K.; Henry, Susanna and Eliza Jane, deceased; Joseph, who is a resident of the County of Bruce; S. B., who is a banker in Rodney, Ont.; William, a merchant at Rodney; and Richard, who is a tinsmith at Portland, Ontario.

Postmaster Morris was born on the old homestead in the County of Leeds, Ont., and remained beneath its hospitable roof until the age of twenty-three. In 1854 he entered the post office service at Brockville as assistant postmaster and remained there one year, com-ing then to Blenheim and taking charge of the office of this place on May 1, 1856, the former official, John Cavanagh, having died. In October of that year he was regularly appointed to the position, which he has filled with ability ever since. It has been Mr. Morris's constant aim to increase the efficiency of his office in the interest of the public, and many of methods have met with the commendation of the community. In 1870 he was appointed issuer of marriage licenses, which position he still holds.

In 1861, when Volunteer companies were organized throughout Canada, Mr. Morris was appointed lieutenant in No. 3 Company, 24th Kent Battalion, and served at annual drill under Col. Woolsey, at Thorold. He also did service during the Fenian Raid, in 1866, and then was appointed captain, which office he held for two years. Resigning the captainship he was allowed to retire, retaining his rank, for which since he has been granted 160 acres of land in New Ontario.

Mr. Morris has taken an active part in politics, especially during the campaign of 1869, when his support of the Conservative candidate was productive of many votes. He has ably filled a number of offices, has been reeve of Blenheim, warden of the County of Kent, and, for nearly twenty years, member of the county council. His business interests have also been important. When he first came to Blenheim the present flourishing place was then but a village, containing three brick houses, one of these standing on the site of the "Royal Hotel." Not a half dozen persons are now alive of those who were residents when he took charge of the post office in Blenheim. It is strange to know that at that time there was not a single church edifice, preaching being done in the schoolhouse. In 1856 the members of the Methodist body erected a frame building and called it "The Union," and this was used for religious services until other houses of worship were built as the town grew. Mr. Morris, in connection with his official duties, which at the beginning were insignificant, carried on a large lumbering and mercantile trade in which he continued until 1879. During his business career he was prosperous, although several times he lost heavily by fire, on one occasion losing a mill worth $6,000, and at another time one worth $40,000.

In 1856 Mr. Morris was married (first) to Hester Cavanagh, who died in 1863, leaving no children. In 1866 he married (second) Sarah Green, and a family of eleven children was born to this union, nine of whom still survive, namely: Charles E. is with his father; Joseph H., who lives in the Northwest, married Dilly Jordan, and has three children. Harry, Maxine and Godfrey; John W. (who married Lillie Johnson). Ormand K. and Garnet G. all live in the Northwest; Fred, a lawyer at Fort William, married Miss Cora McDougal, and they have one son, Royden; Bertha married Clarence H. Jackson, merchant and mayor of Fort William, Ont.; Hester married Dr. David Mitchel, and has a daughter , Margaret; Bertram S. is at home.

Mr. Morris has always taken a deep interest in the development of the County of Kent and has been identified with much of its improvements. He was a member of the committee that built Harrison Hall, at Chatham. Fraternally he associates with both the Masons and the A. O. U. W. The religious home of the family is in the Church of England

Addend

John also had a younger brother Thomas Kidd Morris (he is not
mentioned in the article.) Thomas was a farmer and later worked for his
brother John in the post office for many years