

Chas J.L. Godin general store

The Chas. J.L. Godin general store is a good example of a typical general store in an Acadian community at the turn of the 20th century. Like most such businesses in Acadian regions of New Brunswick, it remained modest in size throughout its history and its owner did not get rich operating it. At the end of the 19th century, these stores offered a wide variety of domestic and utilitarian products, but little in the way of foodstuffs. Only in the early 1900s did they become true grocery stores and offer a variety of products.

As to the owner Charles Godin, born in 1850 in Haut-Caraquet, he first married in 1878 Caroline Poirier, then in 1883, in a second marriage, Olésine Doucet. From these two marriages he had nine children, including Alexis who succeeded him in 1920, though the business becomes the property of Olésine.

He was named postmaster in 1880, an office he held until his death. He certainly took thus opportunity to establish his business. It is not known exactly at what time he opened his store, but the first of his account books to be available dates from 1889.

One thing is certain: it was not unusual at the time for storekeepers to accommodate a post office in their store. However, not all postmasters were general merchants.

One may believe that Charles Godin's store was rather modest according to the standards of the time. First, like many of its competitors, the business owned less than \$500 in capital. In the early 1900s, his credit rating passes to "L" which means that his credit is qualified as "fair" at that time. Also, like many storekeepers of the day, Charles Godin practiced farming.

Some idea of the importance of the Godin general store may also be inferred by realizing that from a structural standpoint, nothing really sets it apart from a small home. We may assume that commerce was not the primary function of this building originally, considering its small size and its features similar to those of a small dwelling. Lastly, it would appear that Charles J.L. Godin was known chiefly as postmaster rather than merchant.

Distinctive features:

- Backstore
- Wall shelves
- Closed corner used as post office

