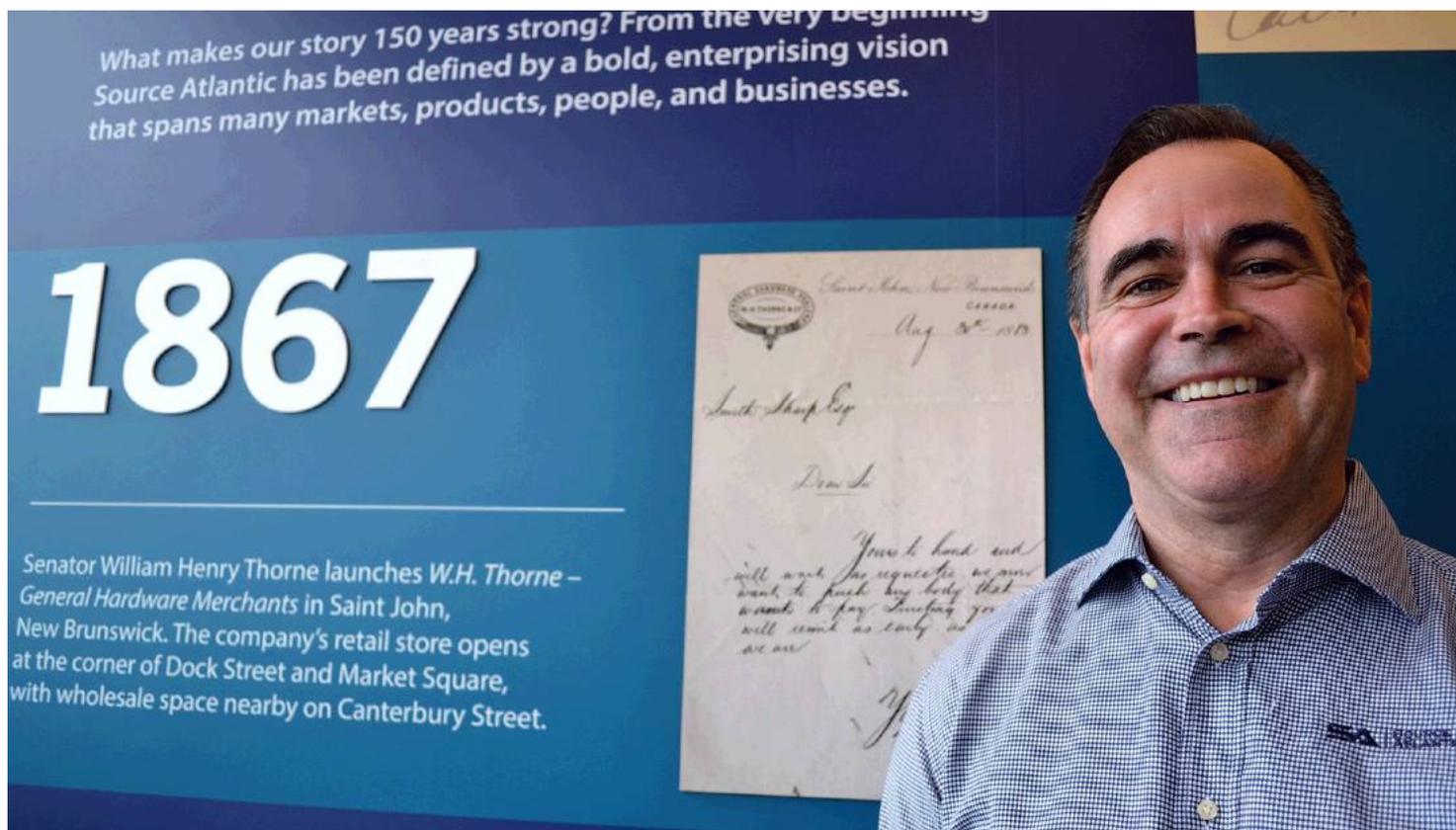


# From hardware to wholesale distribution

## Source Atlantic sees changes and adaptations over 150 years

SARAH SEELEY TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Steve Drummond, the president of Source Atlantic Ltd. PHOTO: SARAH SEELEY/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

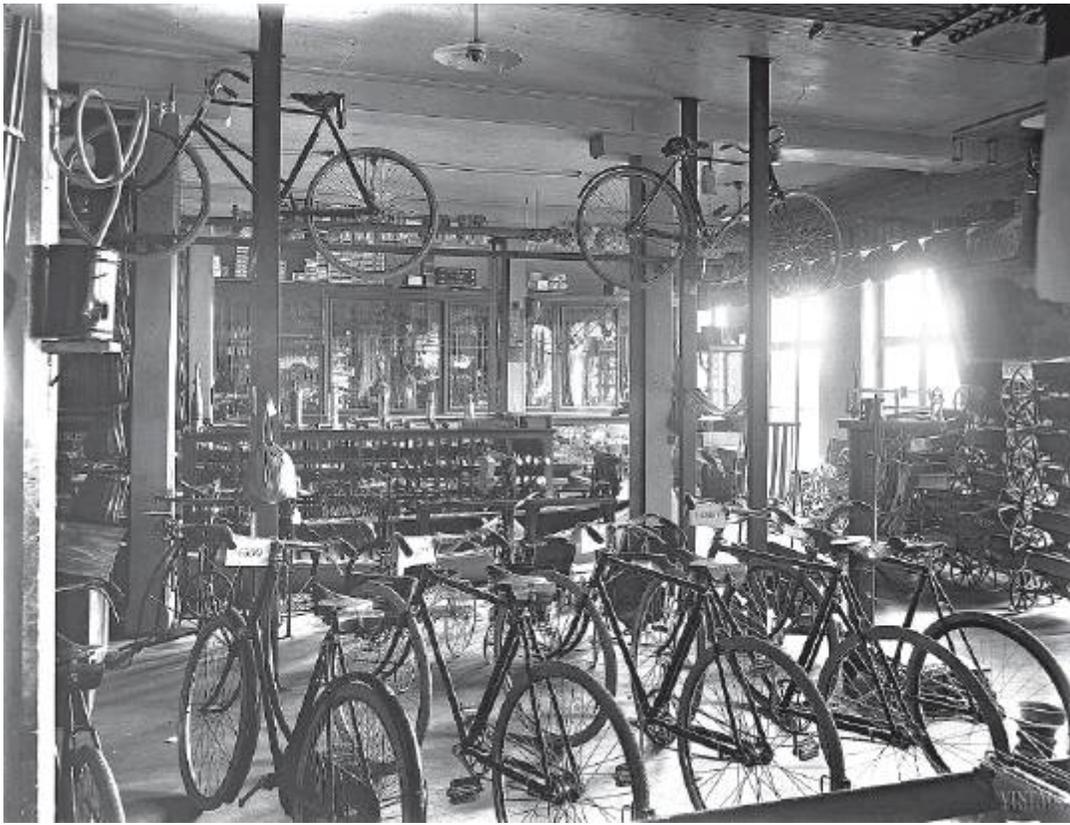
*This is the last part in a three-part series profiling Saint John businesses that are celebrating their 150th anniversary.*

SAINT JOHN • While the Fathers of Confederation were going over the final details of a new nation, a hardware store had opened in Saint John.

W.H. Thorne General Hardware Merchants was created in May, 1867 by Senator W.H. Thorne. The business started as a retail and wholesale store located on the corner of Dock Street and Market Square.

When Richard Scovil joined Thorne to form W.H. Thorne & Company, the wholesale part of the business separated and moved to Canterbury Street.

Like many Saint John businesses at the time, the hardware store went up in flames in the Great Fire of 1877. Thorne did not waste any time after the fire and a temporary two-storey structure was



The inside of W.H. Thorne General Hardware Merchants.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF GRANT KELLY

built. It eventually expanded its retail space into another building on King Street in 1910.

Thorne's nephew, J.G. Harrison, took over as president in 1923 until 1943 when K.C. Irving acquired the company and renamed it Thornes Industrial. The company opened a new 200,000-square-foot facility on Chesley Drive where the current building is located and the company is known as Source Atlantic Ltd.

Company president Steve Drummond

joined the business in 2001. He said it was the beginning of a new direction.

"There were pretty major changes at that point where the focus became a little bit more on wholesale distribution and expansion throughout the Maritimes. The business started to grow at that point."

"At the time, we had an Atlantic Canadian focus and we became a source for business in Atlantic Canada. We thought it had a ring to it," said Drummond of the name change.

Source Atlantic provides a variety of services for its clients, including wholesale distribution of equipment to industrial, oil and forestry industries. In the past decade, it has added engineering and technical solutions to its list, said Drummond.

"As we build the brand, we think the brand is strong enough that we can do business anywhere across the country."

During the last few years, he said Source Atlantic solidified bases in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and Newfoundland. Last year, the company extended its reach to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba with the acquisition of Moore Industrial Ltd., a machine-tool supplier.

Drummond said the business was able to prevail for 150 years because it is plugged in to the direction of its client market and adapts to technology. He said Source Atlantic now serves thousands of businesses.

"It's been a story of adaptation, change and evolution."

During its history, Source Atlantic has acquired several businesses such as Mobile Valve Repairs Ltd., Universal Sales Ltd., N.L. Eldridge, and Schooner Industrial Ltd.

The biggest hurdle the company faces is related to the changing demands of its customers, said Drummond.

"It's continuing to understand customers needs, which in this changing environment shifts really, really fast," he said.

"It's a big challenge."

When he looks to the future, Drummond sees the business growing, even doubling in size.

"We can see a stronger footprint across the country," he said. "We also think there's more organic growth here in Atlantic Canada and a developed use of technology."

Source Atlantic is celebrating its 150th anniversary, along with Moose-head Breweries and G.E. Barbour Inc. The three companies are organizing a fireworks display, which will light up the Saint John waterfront on Thursday at 9:30 p.m.