



Keith Felton, 24, is seeing a dream come true in Georgetown. The London, England-trained bookbinder has opened his own business, Felton Bookbinding, at 53 Armstrong Avenue. Besides repairing library books and journals, Mr. Felton does antique restoration. Recently he was working on a number of family Bibles dated from the 16th century in his three-room business.

(Herald photo)

Keith Felton doesn't mind if job's a 'bind'

New Georgetown resident carries on ancient trade

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 friends he was living with in Georgetown, Mr. Felton decided to make his dream come true and open up his own bookbinding business.

"My dream has always been to have my own place but I didn't expect to get it so soon," said the young man. "I haven't touched the ground yet since I came. It's quite a big jump from the ordinary 9 to 5 routine back home."

Sixteen years old when he began his apprenticeship with the London bookbinding company, Mr. Felton said he fell into the trade by accident.

"I wanted to be a printer when I left school. I was told the money was in printing," he said. "I had an interview with a bookbinder. It was a tiny broken-down place. I didn't think I would like the work, but after two weeks I loved it and stayed on past the 'probation' period."

A bookbinder in his sixties took him under his wing and taught Mr. Felton everything he now knows about antique book restoration and hand-crafted-bookbinding.

With few bookbinders in

Canada, Mr. Felton hasn't had much trouble bringing business to his workshop.

He dropped his business card at book dealers in Toronto and at a book fair in St. Catharines.

"So far I've been getting people to know what I do and that I'm here," Mr. Felton said. "My name is just starting to get around."

He's met some hand bookbinders and was advised to actively look for work and make connections with antique book dealers who can pass on potential customers to him.

So far he's been doing a consignment of 16th and 17th century law books that need repairing and rebinding for York University in Toronto.

"It's amazing. People just don't know where to take books. I did two volumes of Shakespeare for an actress and she said she'd been looking for years for someone to do it," Mr. Felton said.

The owner of the Scarborough firm that cancelled his job has been helpful

too, passing on book repair work people have brought to his company.

Mr. Felton has been invited to do an exhibition in Toronto's Masonic Temple where a rare book fair is to be held for about 43 book dealers and the general public. They've offered to pay his expenses down.

As there aren't many hand book binders or restorers of old books in Canada, equipment and tools for the trade were brought by Mr. Felton from England. He orders the leather for replacing book covers from a tannery in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Some of the hand tools book binders use are over 100 years old and very expensive. With such tools, there's no end to the designs that can be done on a book's leather binding.

Originally, books were all hand-bound and a book that was fully leather-bound was common, Mr. Felton said. Today, a leather-bound book is considered a luxury and machines bind the books

that we see in book shops.

However, repair work is still a job done by hand and will continue to be one, Mr. Felton said. No machine can take over the work of the book restorer.

Besides sewing book sections that have fallen apart together, Mr. Felton also puts on new leather bindings when a book requires it, saving as much of the original binding on the book as possible. He also rubs preservative into the leather bindings to make them keep fresh longer. If desired, Mr. Felton can also adhere 23 karat gold letters and fancy lines and scroll work onto the binding.

"The help I've had from other people here is amazing," he said. "That's what I've found about Canadians. They're so friendly, so easy-going."

Mr. Felton is so happy with his new life in Canada that he's bringing his English bride back to Georgetown with him Sept. 22. The wedding is in London, England Sept. 18

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