



EHS, Alison Walker photos

This two-storey brick, Gothic Revival-style building was the first Halton County branch of the Bank of Hamilton when it opened in 1885. The manager lived on the right, the bank was on the left. It was built by the Barber family and later was the home of William Alexander Fraser, a well-known author. The building was eventually used for offices, businesses and restaurants, as it is today.



► OPINION

INSPIRATION TO DIG DEEPER INTO THE PAST

JEALOUS OF MARTY MCFLY, WRITES TED BROWN



TED BROWN
Column

our old farmhouse.

I studied the original window frame, and thought about the past.

I recalled an old photograph of my grandparents sitting on lawn chairs in front of the house. I was about six years old at the time.

Without even finding that photo I recalled seeing a maple tree beside the house in the photo, more than 60 years ago.

The tree is gone. I'd almost forgotten that tree. I wondered how many other things I've forgotten.

Countless times, I've tried to imagine what the farmhouse looked like in the 1830s when it was originally constructed.

I wish I could just turn a dial, and be transported back in time to see how things looked back then. I'm sure almost everyone has moments of being intrigued with the possibility of travelling in time.

Many of us have seen the 1985 movie *Back to the Future*, and were green with envy as Marty McFly (played by Michael J. Fox) and Dr. Emmett Brown (Christopher Lloyd) flip-flopped from present to past in that famous DeLorean sports car.

As a lifelong resident of the farmhouse, I haven't seen extreme changes in the house, or have I?

My grandfather died when I was eight. When

one is that young, the last thing on a little boy's mind would be to ask about the history of the farm.

As I became an adult, I had my dad around to fill in the historical blanks. But he too hadn't asked his father that many questions simply because he figured he had lots of time to do so.

Dad could fill in the blanks for me from the 1930s until I was an adult, but what about those things that happened further back?

For instance, Dad told me the original driveway into the farm was located south of where it is today. Looking into the marshy area where the lane goes through, there is evidence of another gravel mound on each side of the stream, supporting that story.

It was long before Dad's time, but his dad said it was there before him.

Back then, the driveway also veered over to the front of the farmhouse.

It begs the question, why move it?

Over the decades the house has had additions. I see evidence of different layouts in the house, including two summer kitchens added in the 19th century as my great-great grandfather's family grew.

Standing in the living room that morning, staring out the window to the driveway outside, I imagined holding an apparatus in my hand, equipped with a large dial.

I fantasized turning that dial, the numbers appearing on a screen: 2000, 1990, 1980 ... 1885, 1865, 1850, 1840

... 1826, and beyond, as the house in front of me morphed into a brand-new 1830s farmhouse.

Pushing the dial further, I found myself standing in a forested area, surrounded by huge virgin trees, not a building in sight.

It was truly amazing to fantasize.

Sometimes I feel disappointed I no longer have living sources to my family farm's history. Dad and I did our best to gather together the facts as we knew them, but there's always that thirst for more.

But as I continue to wind the old grandfather clock, with its moon face smiling back at me, I know I'll always have some inspiration to dig a bit deeper into my family's history.

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