

# Time after time

## A mason jar full of history is uncovered after renovation

By DEBORAH QUAILE

Imagine the surprise of an excavation crew as their heavy machinery claws and gouges through earth, removing a dilapidated porch at the front of an 1854 home when they spot the glint of glass below. Stopping to inspect the object, the group realizes that they've uncovered an antique teal-coloured mason jar with items inside. Upon further examination, their excitement increases as they discover a treasure trove of photographs, newspapers, and a note.

At 57 Victoria Street in Milton, owners Max Giancola and Vince Piscopo were amazed to find not just one, but two time capsules at their stately brick house.

"They were put in the front porch in 1911," says Mr. Giancola. "One was tied with twine and not in as good shape as the items in the jar. There are four consecutive issues of *The Champion*, some photos of the family, and a copy of another paper which no one has heard of before: *The Pioneer* from Toronto. They were probably placed there over about a four-week period when the family rebuilt the porch."

To those who may chance to open this jar, the handwritten note reads, *This verandah was rebuilt by Thos. A. Gorham, County Judge, Halton, workman John Trimble. Judge Gorham used his personal stationery with its top imprint to let future finders know who he was and what had been done.*

Bits and pieces of the family life of Judge Gorham, his wife and daughter have been uncovered slowly during the period that Mr. Giancola and Mr. Piscopo have lived in the home, known as Felsgarth in the Judge's day.

They've uncovered pieces of an English newspaper named *The Graphic*, an unopened box of ointment circa 1910, a piece of fabric, intact and fragments of china and glassware, an unfiltered pack of cigarettes, wallpaper scraps, and a large box of brittle yellow letters.

"The Gorhams must have come from Markham," adds Mr. Giancola, referring to the addresses on the delicate epistles, still in the original stamped envelopes and some bearing postmarks from 1876.

Perhaps the most intriguing articles are the photographs. Judge and Mrs. Gorham obviously thought the world of their daughter, Ruth, since it is her photograph that is most frequent in the jar. Ruth poses by a large cupboard of preserves in the kitchen, standing demurely by her bedroom window with a ruffled parasol in the background, by a chair, with her mother, or in her father's arms. One photograph seemed to be a couple of years after the others, wherein Ruth is taller, but has her hair cropped close, perhaps due to an illness.

As the restoration continues, the front wooden pillars, capitals, brickwork and chimneystacks are all being carefully reconstructed or

remade. The capitals that top off the pillars are being carved to the

exact imperfections of the originals, with wood carefully glued together to mimic the same specifications. Another unique discovery in the house was a fireplace threshold that when turned over clearly showed the large handwritten name of an owner previous to Judge Gorham, Judge Millar. The house was originally heated with stoves and the chimneystacks for fireplaces were added circa 1860. Judge Millar was proud of his open hearths and wanted his own place in posterity.

Mr. Giancola and Mr. Piscopo have continued the time capsule theme at their home a couple of times, most notably at the new millennium when they collected several items (including copies of newspapers such as *The National Post* or *The Toronto Star*) and buried them.

"Our next time capsule will be



Judge T.A. Gorham and Ruth, February 20, 1908



Above: Ruth Gorham, February 10, 1909

Left: Felsgarth, as it looks today under reconstruction  
PHOTO BY DEBORAH QUAILE



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