

TIME TRAVELLER'S DIARY: A most desirable residence

By Jacqueline Stuart

The other day, the Time Traveller threw down his newspaper in despair and decided to read something less worrying. In a moment it was March of 1894 and he was sitting in the Mechanics Institute reading room on Yonge Street.

He picked up the local paper and noticed an unusually long advertisement on the front page. Offered for sale was the home of the late David W. Doan, just east of Yonge on the north side of Wellington Street, opposite the Baptist church.

On the main floor there were three 'nice' rooms and a kitchen and scullery. Upstairs there were six bedrooms, along with (politely put) 'every convenience without going out of doors.' It was indeed 'one of the most desirable residences in Aurora.'

David W. Doan (1838?1892) was a son of Charles Doan, one of Aurora's founding fathers. The younger Mr. Doan was involved in the Doan general store and in due course succeeded his father as postmaster, serving from 1882 until 1892. The Wellington Street house had been built for David Doan about 1866.

In Aurora's early days there had been a deep rivalry between Charles Doan and another merchant, Richard Machell of 'Machell's Corners,' Aurora's first name. Both men may have at least trembled in their graves when the Wellington Street house finally sold. The purchaser of the Doan house was Lillian Machell Taylor, a granddaughter of Richard Machell. Lillie and her husband, a lawyer, owned the property from 1898 until 1905 when they moved to Lambton county where Albert Taylor had been appointed a judge.

Judgment was likely seen by the school children of York County as part of the job description of the next owner of the house, Charles W. Mulloy. He was principal of the Aurora high school from 1896 until 1906 and went on to serve as the county public school inspector until 1929. All school children just knew that he was inspecting them, not the teachers or the general management of the schools. One of Charles and Gertrude Mulloy's children, Harold, had the sad distinction of being the first man from Aurora to be killed in action in World War One. Another had a happier claim to fame: daughter Edna married local boy H. R. MacMillan, who would be co-founder of the gigantic MacMillan-Bloedel forestry company.

Following the deaths of the senior Mulloys the house became home and office (in a small addition) for two physicians in succession: Charles Boulding (also mayor 1933?1939) and

Donald Hutchins. The house later accommodated the Sormeh day spa for several years.

In 2013 plans to redevelop the property were announced. It was agreed that the front of the old house, with its columned porch, would be retained as the facade of the new multi-unit accommodation. This proved to be structurally impossible, but the porch was reconstructed with close attention to detail.

The Time Traveller, now calmed down and back in the present, hopes that the new occupants will find their residences as desirable as in the past, but for himself he can't decide: should one copy that attractive past, or introduce good twenty-first century architecture?