

NOV. 6/74

# **Relics from -      - a gracious era**

## **Window into history**

PRB

By TINA IVANY

You've just got to laugh as you watch Helene Thurston reach down underneath her couch in the living room and haul out a huge serving platter from 1833. Helene has simply run out of room in which to store all her "treasures". But, throw them out? Never!

Her interest in collecting "old items" is one that was actually forced upon her by the death of two of her maiden aunts. They had lived in their father's house in Hamilton since their birth in the 1880s, until four years ago when the house was expropriated and the ladies were forced to move.

Having been brought up in an age of frugality, when one simply did not throw anything out, the two aunts had dozens of trunks stored with every item they had ever owned. Helene helped move her aunts and their dozens of trunks from the 13-room house still in the Hamilton area.

"The move, however," says Helene, "certainly hastened their death last

year. They were both so disoriented."

It was Helene's duty to sift through the thousands of items her aunts left behind. That's when her interest in the past began.

### **UNIQUE**

Now her home is bedecked with the most unique items, including silver serving spoons, carved brass hooks, beautiful hand-blown glass salt and pepper shakers and a host of eating utensils, each with its own sense of history.

"It was a truly gracious age," says Helene, "one which would be impossible today to recapture.

"Of course, they had the time and the necessary help and the room to keep all these lovely treasures in those days."

Because she finally ran out of room in her home to display many of these unique items, Helene came upon the idea of making a huge collage of some of the more interesting ones.

She gathered together such things as black jet buttons, intricate flowers from the ladies' finest

hats, pieces of old lace curtains from the late 1800s, a bill of sale from Eaton's, dated 1897, antique spectacles, photographs of some of the family, a program from the World's Fair in Chicago in the 1890s and a variety of other memorabilia. She arranged them all on a huge board, covered it with a windowpane and called it Circa 1850-1950. It truly is a window into the past.

The collage, along with a selection of choice items from her aunts' home, is currently on display at the Streetsville Library. The collage, by the way, is for sale.

### **WOOD HANGINGS**

But that's not all that Helene has on display at the library this month. There is also a collection of lovely wall hangings of wildflowers painted on wood pieces.

The wood hangings are an offshoot of Helene's regular pastime - oil painting. Although she has always had an artistic bent, it flourished once her children had grown up and freed her to pursue that bent.

"The great outdoors is my love," she says. "I once tried working at a regular job indoors, and it nearly drove me crazy.

"I enjoy painting outdoors, and even if weather forces me inside, my subject will still be the outdoors."

She often incorporates unique differences into her paintings. An example is the autumn scene, presently hanging in her living room. Painted in the Haliburton area, it actually has real leaves dotted here and there in the painting.

Helene is presently in the midst of literally making a dream come true. An avid birdwatcher, she actually had a dream in the latter part of the summer about painting birds in the abstract. She recalls,

"I awoke very excited and immediately sketched my dream out on paper. I've now completed four of the "bird" series and have many others sketched."

Although Helene's current interest is with our feathered friends, her art is certainly "not for the birds".



Exhibiting some of the items from the past now on display at the Streetsville Public Library is Helene Thurston, a local artist and collector of "old treasures". Most of the items came from the home of Helene's maiden aunts. They present a provocative picture of life back when.