

Mike Robinson is a man with a passion.

Over the past eight years he has collected more than 200 glass bottles, 400 cardboard caps, countless calendars, newspaper clippings, cartons and other Nova Scotian dairy paraphernalia. His collection is valued around six thousand dollars. Mike's motivation is not the money, but an intense desire to preserve Nova Scotia's dairy heritage.

"I'm not interested in the money", says Mike. "I'm interested in the stories behind each piece".

Preserving the provinces' dairy history and telling other people about it has been Mike Robinson's goal since his interest was first sparked when his son found a small bottle while the family was doing some landscaping. The bottle turned out to be a jill from Woodlawn Dairy. A jill is a measurement equivalent of a quarter pint or 124 ml and was used for cream.

Mike plans to write a book and document his collection in it. He has a bottle for Aero Health Milk from Scotia Dairies – one of the first dairies in operation in Nova Scotia. The bottle dates back to the early 1880's. By writing about his many artifacts, he hopes to bring their history alive. He also wants to feature the milkman of days gone by and the part they played in peoples' daily lives.

Milk bottles line an entire wall in Mike's spacious basement rec. room. They represent 159 Nova Scotian dairies. He has found them in flea markets and yard sales, but seldom in antique shops.

People have given him pieces when they learn of his underlying interest. One individual has written Mike into his will and promised him his entire bottle collection. A few bottles and caps from out of province are kept on hand to trade for Nova Scotian memorabilia. More than anything, Mike hates to see pieces of our heritage traveling out of province and wants to maintain a piece of Nova Scotian history right here at home.

Mike's collection is nearly complete. He needs about 100 more bottles to round out the history Nova Scotia's milk bottling days. Among the bottles on display are a couple of large amber ones. They were used for a short time while companies tried to combat the oxidation of milk. Some bottles were made for local dairies in Texas and Virginia. There are painted bottles in mint condition. One reads "Milk Speeds Vitality Victory" and another has a World Champion Cow depicted on their bottle, claiming her as one of the dairy's contributors.

A self professed city-boy, Mike is too young to remember horse and wagon days, but old enough to remember hearing the clink of milk bottles as they hit the steps in the early

mornings. He lives in Dartmouth with his three teenage children and his wife Sharon. He works as a training officer at Employment and Immigration and besides hunting for collectibles, coaches ball and umpires in his spare time.

This article was originally published in "Farmers Forum", a quarterly publication for employees, shareholders and independents of Farmers Cooperative Dairy Limited. Used with the kind permission of Heather D. Selwyn-Smith, Editor.